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# Notes From The Third Year: **WOMEN'S LIBERATION**



Getting Angry ● Susan B. Anthony ● Why I Want A Wife ●  
Women's Private Writings ● Rape ● ADC: Welfare Women  
Prostitution ● Children's Books ● Lesbianism ● Marriage

# EDITORIAL

In its few years of existence, the feminist movement has grown at an extraordinary rate. We are no longer only a small collection of organized groups; the "women's movement" today is found as well in the myriad new women's studies programs; in job actions for better pay; in child care and abortion projects; in the wealth of new writing by feminist journalists and writers; in the speak-outs and teach-ins; in the legal suits challenging sexist laws; and in the changing consciousness of literally millions of individual women.

This explosion, rather than being a sign of disorganization or failure, is a sign of our success as a grass roots movement. *The women's movement is thus not only an organized political force but a state of mind as well.* The contents of *Notes From the Third Year* reflect this expansion. This year has seen fewer manifestoes and more work on specific issues such as prostitution, women's literature, rape, and lesbianism. It has been a period of intensive rather than extensive analysis.

But there are problems to solve if the feminist movement is to achieve its end of eliminating sex roles. A euphoric period of consciousness-raising has come to an end, and a more sober evaluation has replaced it. Women are beginning to see that consciousness-raising is meant as a stage of growth, not the ultimate stage of growth. *It is limited as a tool. If we don't move on from consciousness-raising both as individuals and as groups, we face the danger of stagnation.* Instead we must begin to use the knowledge gained to make both internal and external changes. Groups must move to analysis, small group actions and, most difficult, large collective actions and organization.

In moving from the small amorphous rap group toward a more outward-directed group, the problem of "structure" arises. The women's movement will need to work out for itself a satisfactory form which can avoid the typical pitfalls of authoritarian leadership or inflexible ideology which so many other movements have experienced. With so many women's present dislike for authoritarianism, perhaps one of the major achievements of feminism will be to work out new ways of organizing ourselves that will encourage responsibility in all members, but discourage elitism—a form which can encourage strength in all women rather than create followers. Our success in accomplishing this goal will in no small part depend upon our ability to be as actively supportive of each other's new strengths and achievements as before (especially during consciousness-raising) we have been supportive and compassionate of each other's failures.

Another important development in the women's movement over the past year has been the increased cross-fertilization between the so-called "women's rights" sector and the "women's liberation" sector. Feminists are discovering not only that moderate and radical feminists can be found in both camps (coming from the Left, for example, does not guarantee radical feminism), but also that they have a great deal more in common than was originally thought. Each sector makes important contributions to the larger feminist struggle; the "rights" sector's strong emphasis on legal changes, for example, must be united with the "liberation" sector's stress on internal changes. Together we can win important victories, always with the understanding that no one issue wins the whole fight, and that the final victory lies both in destroying the institutions of sexism and in the changed consciousness of all women.

**Editors:** Anne Koedt, Shulamith Firestone (on leave); **Associate Editors:** Anita Rapone, Ellen Levine; **Distribution Manager:** Anita Rapone; **Cover Photos:** Ellen Levine. □ **Notes From the Third Year, P.O. Box AA, Old Chelsea Station, New York, N.Y. 10011.** □ **NOTES** is a yearly collection of radical feminist writing. We welcome articles throughout the year; final selection of material is made immediately before publication. □ **RATES:** Single issue: \$1.50; 10 issues or more, 90¢ each. For women's liberation groups: 10 issues or more, 75¢. All prices include postage. □ Copyright © 1971 by Notes From the Second Year, Inc. All Rights Reserved. No quotation without permission.

## Abortion Information

1. **How to find an abortion:** Contact  
1. Women's Health and Abortion Project, 212-691-3396 or  
2063 (c/o Women's Liberation Center, 36 West 22nd  
Street, New York City 10010). The Project works closely  
with doctors to bring prices down; it's still about \$100 for  
a first-trimester outpatient abortion. The Project asks those  
who can pay to give a \$10 donation to help them carry on  
their work.
2. **ZPG Referral Service, 212-489-7794** (Zero Population  
Growth, New York Chapter, 353 West 57th Street, New  
York City 10019). ZPG can get you an early outpatient  
abortion for \$125-150.
3. **Family Planning Information Service, 212-677-3040** (c/o  
Planned Parenthood of New York City, 300 Park Avenue  
South, New York City 10010). As of late 1971, the prices  
of abortions through pp were still relatively high, but they  
do have suggestions for sources outside New York State, if  
you live far away.

(Lists of clinics and doctors are quickly outdated, but the reliable referral sources listed above have the most current information. Post-16-week abortions and free or low-cost abortions are harder to arrange, but each of these services does try, so ask them if they can help. Post-16-week abortions cost more: \$250 and up; after 24 weeks abortion is illegal in New York unless your life is in danger.)

**B. How to start solving the problem by getting rid of the laws in your state:** Every state has laws against abortion; 21 states still have laws restricting contraception. If you want to work to erase them, New Yorkers for Abortion Law Repeal has material that can probably help you; NYALR is still working on both kinds of repeal in New York and has literature useful to people in every state (\$5c for a sample packet). NYALR will help you draw up actual repeal bills to have your legislators introduce, and has made up a chart (25¢) showing every state and federal restriction on both contraception and abortion. \$5 puts you on the mailing list for a year. NYALR, P.O. Box 240, Planetarium Station, New York City 10024.

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Photo: Culver Pictures



# 1. LIBERATING HISTORY

## The First Feminists

by JUDITH HOLE and ELLEN LEVINE

Judith Hole and Ellen Levine are the authors of *Rebirth of Feminism*, a study of the resurgence of feminism in the United States. The book is a history and analysis of the origins, organizational development, philosophy, issues, and activities of the new women's movement. The following excerpt, the introductory chapter, is a brief discussion of the first feminist movement in America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is not meant to be a detailed description of the earlier movement, but rather to serve as an indication that the contemporary women's movement has a much ignored historical predecessor.

The contemporary women's movement is not the first such movement in American history to offer a wide-ranging feminist critique of society. In fact, much of what seems "radical" in contemporary feminist analysis parallels the critique made by the feminists of the nineteenth century. Both the early and the contemporary feminists have engaged in a fundamental reexamination of the role of women in all spheres of life, and of the relationships of men and women in all social, political, economic and cultural institutions. Both have defined women as an oppressed group and have traced the origin of women's subjugation to male-defined and male-dominated social institutions and value systems.

When the early feminist movement emerged in the nineteenth century, the "woman issue" was extensively debated in the national press, in political gatherings, and from church pulpits. The women's groups, their platforms, and their leaders, although not always well received or understood, were extremely well known. Until recently, however, that early feminist movement has been only cursorily discussed in American history textbooks, and then only in terms of the drive for suffrage. Even a brief reading of early feminist writings and of the few histories that have dealt specifically with the woman's movement (as it was called then) reveals that the drive for suffrage became the single focus of the movement only after several decades of a more multi-issued campaign for women's equality.

The woman's movement emerged during the 1800's. It was a time of geographic expansion, industrial development, growth of social reform movements, and a general intellectual ferment with a philosophical emphasis on individual freedom, the "rights of man," and universal education. In fact, some of the earliest efforts to extend oppor-

tunities to women were made in the field of education. In 1833, Oberlin became the first college to open its doors to both men and women. Although female education at Oberlin was regarded as necessary to ensure the development of good and proper wives and mothers, the open admission policy paved the way for the founding of other schools, some devoted entirely to women's education.<sup>1</sup> Much of the ground-breaking work in education was done by Emma Willard, who had campaigned vigorously for educational facilities for women beginning in the early 1820's. Frances Wright, one of the first women orators, was also a strong advocate of education for women. She viewed women as an oppressed group and argued that, "Until women assume the place in society which good sense and good feeling alike assign to them, human improvement must advance but feebly."<sup>2</sup> Central to her discussion of the inequalities between the sexes was a particular concern with the need for equal educational training for women.

It was in the abolition movement of the 1830's, however, that the woman's rights movement as such had its political origins. When women began working in earnest for the abolition of slavery, they quickly learned that they could not function as political equals with their male abolitionist friends. Not only were they barred from membership in some organizations, but they had to wage an uphill battle for the right simply to speak in public. Sarah and Angelina Grimké, daughters of a South Carolina slaveholding family, were among the first to fight this battle. Early in their lives the sisters left South Carolina, moved north, and began to speak out publicly on the abolition issue. Within a short time they drew the wrath of different sectors of society. A Pastoral letter from the Council of the Congregationalist

Ministers of Massachusetts typified the attack:

The appropriate duties and influence of woman are clearly stated in the New Testament. . . . The power of woman is her dependence, flowing from the consciousness of that weakness which God has given her for her protection. . . . When she assumes the place and tone of man as a public reformer. . . she yields the power which God has given her. . . and her character becomes unnatural.<sup>2</sup>

The brutal and unceasing attacks (sometimes physical) on the women convinced the Grimké sisters that the issues of freedom for slaves and freedom for women were inextricably linked. The women began to speak about both issues, but because of the objections from male abolitionists who were afraid that discussions of woman's rights would "muddy the waters," they often spoke about the "woman question" as a separate issue. (In fact, Lucy Stone, an early feminist and abolitionist, lectured on abolition on Saturdays and Sundays and on women's rights during the week.)

In an 1837 letter to the President of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society—by that time many female anti-slavery societies had been established in response to the exclusionary policy of the male abolitionist groups—Sarah Grimké addressed herself directly to the question of woman's status:

All history attests that man has subjugated woman to his will, used her as a means to promote his selfish gratification, to minister to his sensual pleasure, to be instrumental in promoting his comfort; but never has he desired to elevate her to that rank she was created to fill. He has done all he could to debase and enslave her mind; and now he looks triumphantly on the ruin he has wrought, and says, the being he has thus deeply injured is his inferior. . . . But I ask no favors for my sex. . . . All I ask of our brethren is, that they will take their feet from off our necks and permit us to stand upright on that ground which God designed us to occupy.<sup>3</sup>

The Grimké sisters challenged both the assumption of the "natural superiority of man" and the social institutions predicated on that assumption. For example, in her "Letters on the Equality of the Sexes," Sarah Grimké argued against both religious dogma and the institution of marriage. Two brief examples are indicative:

. . . Adam's ready acquiescence with his wife's proposal, does not savor much of that superiority in strength of mind, which is arrogated by man.<sup>4</sup>

. . . man has exercised the most unlimited and brutal power over woman, in the peculiar character of husband—a word in most countries synonymous with tyrant. . . . Woman, instead of being elevated by her union with man, which might be expected from an alliance with a superior being, is in reality lowered. She generally loses her individuality, her independent character, her moral being. She becomes absorbed into him, and henceforth is looked at, and acts through the medium of her husband.<sup>5</sup>

They attacked as well the manifestations of "male superiority" in the employment market. In a letter "On the Condition of Women in the United States" Sarah Grimké wrote of:

. . . the disproportionate value set on the time and labor of men and of women. A man who is engaged in teaching, can always, I believe, command a higher price for tuition than a woman—even when he teaches the same branches, and is not in any respect superior to the woman. . . . [Or] for example, in tailoring, a man has twice, or three times as much for making a waistcoat or pantaloons as a woman, although the work done by each may be equally good.<sup>7</sup>

The abolition movement continued to expand, and in 1840 a World Anti-Slavery Convention was held in London. The American delegation included a group of women, among them Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. In Volume I of the *History of Woman Suffrage*, written and edited by Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joselyn Gage, the authors note that the mere presence of women delegates produced an "excitement and vehemence of protest and denunciation [that] could not have been greater, if the news had come that the French were about to invade England."<sup>8</sup> The women were relegated to the galleries and prohibited from participating in any of the proceedings. That society at large frowned upon women participating in political activities was one thing; that the leading male radicals, those most concerned with social inequalities, should also discriminate against women was quite another. The events at the world conference reinforced the women's growing awareness that the battle for the abolition of Negro slavery could never be won without a battle for the abolition of woman's slavery:

As Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton wended their way arm in arm down Great Queen Street that night, reviewing the exciting scenes of the day, they agreed to hold a woman's rights convention on their return to America, as the men to whom they had just listened had manifested their great need of some education on that question.<sup>9</sup>

Mott and Stanton returned to America and continued their abolitionist work as well as pressing for state legislative reforms on woman's property and family rights. Although the women had discussed the idea of calling a public meeting on woman's rights, the possibility did not materialize until eight years after the London Convention. On July 14, 1848, they placed a small notice in the *Seneca* (New York) *County Courier* announcing a "Woman's Rights Convention." Five days later, on July 19 and 20, some three hundred interested women

and men, coming from as far as fifty miles, crowded into the small Wesleyan Chapel (now a gas station) and approved a Declaration of Sentiments (modeled on the Declaration of Independence) and twelve Resolutions. The delineation of issues in the Declaration bears a startling resemblance to contemporary feminist writings. Some excerpts are illustrative:<sup>10</sup>

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness . . . .

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world . . . .

He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she has no voice . . . .

He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead . . . .

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration. He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.

He allows her in church, as well as State, but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the Church.

He has created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated, but deemed of little account in man.

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God.

He has endeavored, in every way that he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

Included in the list of twelve resolutions was one which read: "Resolved, That it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise."

Although the Seneca Falls Convention is considered the official beginning of the woman's suffrage movement, it is important to reiterate that the goal of the early woman's rights movement was not limited to the demand for suffrage. In fact, the suffrage resolution was included only after lengthy debate, and was the only resolution not accepted unanimously. Those participants at the Convention who actively opposed the inclusion of the suffrage resolution:

. . . feared a demand for the right to vote would defeat others they deemed more rational, and make the whole

movement ridiculous. But Mrs. Stanton and Frederick Douglass seeing that the power to choose rulers and make laws, was the right by which all others could be secured, persistently advocated the resolution . . . .<sup>11</sup>

Far more important to most of the women at the Convention was their desire to gain control of their property and earnings, guardianship of their children, rights to divorce, etc. Notwithstanding the disagreements at the Convention, the Seneca Falls meeting was of great historical significance. As Flexner has noted:

[The women] themselves were fully aware of the nature of the step they were taking; today's debt to them has been inadequately acknowledged . . . . Beginning in 1848 it was possible for women who rebelled against the circumstances of their lives, to know that they were not alone—although often the news reached them only through a vitriolic sermon or an abusive newspaper editorial. But a movement had been launched which they could either join, or ignore, that would leave its imprint on the lives of their daughters and of women throughout the world.<sup>12</sup>

From 1848 until the beginning of the Civil War, Woman's Rights Conventions were held nearly every year in different cities in the East and Midwest. The 1850 Convention in Salem, Ohio:

. . . had one peculiar characteristic. It was officiated entirely by women; not a man was allowed to sit on the platform, to speak, or vote. *Never did men so suffer.* They implored just to say a word; but no; the President was inflexible—no man should be heard. If one meekly arose to make a suggestion he was at once ruled out of order. For the first time in the world's history, men learned how it felt to sit in silence when questions in which they were interested were under discussion.<sup>13</sup>

As the woman's movement gained in strength, attacks upon it became more vitriolic. In newspaper editorials and church sermons anti-feminists argued vociferously that the public arena was not the proper place for women. In response to such criticism, Stanton wrote in an article in the Rochester, New York *National Reformer*:

If God has assigned a sphere to man and one to woman, we claim the right to judge ourselves of His design in reference to us, and we accord to man the same privilege . . . . We have all seen a man making a jackass of himself in the pulpit, at the bar, or in our legislative halls . . . . Now, is it to be wondered at that woman has some doubts about the present position assigned her being the true one, when her every-day experience shows her that man makes such fatal mistakes in regard to himself?<sup>14</sup>

It was abundantly clear to the women that they could not rely on the pulpit or the "establishment" press for either factual or sympathetic reportage; nor could they use the press as a means to disseminate their ideas. As a result they depended on the abolitionist papers of the day, and

in addition founded a number of independent women's journals including *The Lily*, *The Una*, *Woman's Advocate*, *Pittsburgh Visitor* [sic], etc.

One of the many issues with which the women activists were concerned was dress reform. Some began to wear the "bloomer" costume (a misnomer since Amelia Bloomer, although an advocate of the loose-fitting dress, was neither its originator nor the first to wear it) in protest against the tight-fitting and singularly uncomfortable cinched-waisted stays and layers of petticoats. However, as Flexner has noted, "The attempt at dress reform, although badly needed, was not only unsuccessful, but boomeranged and had to be abandoned."<sup>15</sup> Women's rights advocates became known as "bloomers" and the movement for equal rights as well as the individual women were subjected to increasing ridicule. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, one of the earliest to wear the more comfortable outfit, was one of the first to suggest its rejection. In a letter to Susan B. Anthony she wrote:

We put the dress on for greater freedom, but what is physical freedom compared with mental bondage? ... It is not wise, Susan, to use up so much energy and feeling that way. You can put them to better use. I speak from experience.<sup>16</sup>

When the Civil War began in 1861, woman's rights advocates were urged to abandon their cause and support the war effort. Although Anthony and Stanton continued arguing that any battle for freedom must include woman's freedom, the woman's movement activities essentially stopped for the duration of the war. After the war and the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery (for which the women activists had campaigned vigorously), the abolitionists began to press for passage of a Fourteenth Amendment to secure the rights, privileges, and immunities of citizens (the new freedmen) under the law. In the second section of the proposed Amendment, however, the word "male" appeared, introducing a sex distinction into the Constitution for the first time. Shocked and enraged by the introduction of the word "male," the women activists mounted an extensive campaign to eliminate it. They were dismayed to find that no one, neither the Republican administration nor their old abolitionist allies, had any intention of "complicating" the campaign for Negroes' rights by advocating women's rights as well. Over and over again the women were told, "This is the Negroes' hour." The authors of *History of Woman Suffrage* analyzed the women's situation:

During the six years they held their own claims in abeyance to the slaves of the South, and labored to inspire the people with enthusiasm for the great measures of the Republican party, they were highly honored as "wise, loyal, and clear-sighted." But again when the slaves were emancipated and they asked that women should be recognized in the reconstruction as citizens of the Republic, equal before the law, all these transcendent virtues vanished like dew before the morning sun. And thus it ever is so long as woman labors to second man's endeavors and exalt his sex above her own, her virtues pass unquestioned; but when she dares to demand rights and privileges for herself, her motives, manners, dress, personal appearance, character, are subjects for ridicule and detraction.<sup>17</sup>

The women met with the same response when they campaigned to get the word "sex" added to the proposed Fifteenth Amendment which would prohibit the denial of suffrage on account of race.<sup>18</sup>

As a result of these setbacks, the woman's movement assumed as its first priority the drive for woman's suffrage. It must be noted, however, that while nearly all the women activists agreed on the need for suffrage, in 1869 the movement split over ideological and tactical questions into two major factions. In May of that year, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized the National Woman Suffrage Association. Six months later, Lucy Stone and others organized the American Woman Suffrage Association. The American, in an attempt to make the idea of woman's suffrage "respectable," limited its activities to that issue, and refused to address itself to any of the more "controversial" subjects such as marriage or the church. The National, on the other hand, embraced the broad cause of woman's rights of which the vote was seen primarily as a means of achieving those rights. During this time Anthony and Stanton founded *The Revolution*, which became one of the best known of the independent women's newspapers. The weekly journal began in January, 1868, and took as its motto, "Men, their rights and nothing more; women, their rights and nothing less." In addition to discussion of suffrage, *The Revolution* examined the institutions of marriage, the law, organized religion, etc. Moreover, the newspaper touched on "such incendiary topics as the double standard and prostitution."<sup>19</sup> Flexner describes the paper:

[It] made a contribution to the women's cause out of all proportion to either its size, brief lifespan, or modest circulation.... Here was news not to be found elsewhere—of the organization of women typewriters, tailresses, and laundry workers, of the first women's clubs, of pioneers in the professions, of women abroad. But *The Revolution* did more than just carry news, or set a new standard of professionalism for papers edited by and for women. It gave their movement a forum, focus, and direction. It pointed, it led, and it fought, with vigor and vehemence.<sup>20</sup>

The two suffrage organizations coexisted for over twenty years and used some of the same tactics in their campaigns for suffrage: lecture tours, lobbying activities, petition campaigns, etc. The American, however, focused exclusively on state-by-state action, while the National in addition pushed for a woman suffrage Amendment to the Constitution. Susan B. Anthony and others also attempted to gain the vote through court decisions. The Supreme Court, however, held in 1875<sup>21</sup> that suffrage was not necessarily one of the privileges and immunities of citizens protected by the Fourteenth Amendment. Thus, although women were citizens it was nonetheless permissible, according to the Court, to constitutionally limit the right to vote to males.

During this same period, a strong temperance movement had also emerged. Large numbers of women, including some suffragists, became actively involved in the temperance cause. It is important to note that one of the main reasons women became involved in pressing for laws restricting the sale and consumption of alcohol was that their legal status as married women offered them no protection against either physical abuse or abandonment by a drunken husband. It might be added that the reason separate women's temperance organizations were formed was that women were not permitted to participate in the men's groups. In spite of the fact that temperance was in "women's interests," the growth of the women's temperance movement solidified the liquor and brewing industries' opposition to woman suffrage. As a result, suffrage leaders became convinced of the necessity of keeping the two issues separate.

As the campaign for woman suffrage grew, more and more sympathizers were attracted to the conservative and "respectable" American Association which, as noted above, deliberately limited its work to the single issue of suffrage. After two decades "respectability" won out, and the broad-ranging issues of the earlier movement had been largely subsumed by suffrage. (Even the Stanton-Anthony forces had somewhat redefined their goals and were focusing primarily on suffrage.) By 1890, when the American and the National merged to become the National American Woman Suffrage Association, the woman's movement had, in fact, been transformed into the single-issue suffrage movement. Moreover, although Elizabeth Cady Stanton, NAWSA's first president, was succeeded two years later by Susan B. Anthony, the first women activists, with their catholic range of

concerns, were slowly being replaced by a second group far more limited in their political analysis. It should be noted that Stanton herself, after her two-year term as president of the new organization, withdrew from active work in the suffrage campaign. Although one of the earliest feminist leaders to understand the need for woman suffrage, by this time Stanton believed that the main obstacle to woman's equality was the church and organized religion.

During the entire development of the woman's movement, perhaps the argument most often used by anti-feminists was that the subjugation of women was divinely ordained as written in the Bible. Stanton attacked the argument head-on. She and a group of twenty-three women, including three ordained ministers, produced *The Woman's Bible*<sup>22</sup>, which presented a systematic feminist critique of woman's role and image in the Bible. Some Biblical chapters were presented as proof that the Scripture itself was the source of woman's subjugation; others to show that, if reinterpreted, men and women were indeed equals in the Bible, not superior and inferior beings. "We have made a fetish [*sic*] of the Bible long enough. The time has come to read it as we do all other books, accepting the good and rejecting the evil it teaches."<sup>23</sup> Dismissing the "rib story" as a "petty surgical operation," Stanton argued further that the entire structure of the Bible was predicated on the notion of Eve's (woman's) corruption:

Take the snake, the fruit-tree and the woman from the tableau, and we have no fall, nor frowning Judge, no Inferno, no everlasting punishment;—hence no need of a Savior. Thus the bottom falls out of the whole Christian theology. Here is the reason why in all the Biblical researches and higher criticisms, the scholars never touch the position of women.<sup>24</sup>

Not surprisingly, *The Woman's Bible* was considered scandalous and sacrilegious by most. The Suffrage Association members themselves, with the exception of Anthony and a few others, publicly disavowed Stanton and her work. They feared that the image of the already controversial suffrage movement would be irreparably damaged if the public were to associate it with Stanton's radical tract.

Shortly after the turn of the century, the second generation of woman suffragists came of age and new leaders replaced the old. Carrie Chapman Catt is perhaps the best known; she succeeded Anthony as president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, which by then had be-



come a large and somewhat unwieldy organization. Although limited gains were achieved (a number of western states had enfranchised women), no major progress was made in the campaign for suffrage until Alice Paul, a young and extremely militant suffragist, became active in the movement. In April, 1913, she formed a small radical group known as the *Congressional Union* (later reorganized as the *Woman's Party*) to work exclusively on a campaign for a federal woman's suffrage Amendment using any tactics necessary, no matter how unorthodox. Her group organized parades, mass demonstrations, hunger strikes, and its members were on several occasions arrested and jailed.<sup>23</sup> Although many suffragists rejected both the militant style and tactics of the Congressional Union, they nonetheless did consider Paul and her followers in large part responsible for "shocking" the languishing movement into actively pressuring for the federal Amendment. The woman suffrage Amendment (known as the "Anthony Amendment"), introduced into every session of Congress from 1878 on, was finally ratified on August 26, 1920.

Nearly three-quarters of a century had passed since the demand for woman suffrage had first been made at the Seneca Falls Convention. By 1920, so much energy had been expended in achieving the right to vote that the woman's movement virtually collapsed from exhaustion. To achieve the vote alone, as Carrie Chapman Catt had computed, took:

... fifty-two years of pauseless campaign ... fifty-six campaigns of referenda to male voters; 480 campaigns to get Legislatures to submit suffrage amendments to voters; 47 campaigns to get State constitutional conventions to write woman suffrage into state constitutions; 277 campaigns to get State party conventions to include woman suffrage planks; 30 campaigns to get presidential party conventions to adopt woman suffrage planks in party platforms, and 19 campaigns with 19 successive Congresses.<sup>24</sup>

With the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment the majority of women activists as well as the public at large assumed that having gained the vote woman's complete equality had been virtually obtained.

It must be remembered, however, that for most of the period that the woman's movement existed, suffrage had not been seen as an all-inclusive goal, but as a means of achieving equality—suffrage was only one element in the wide-ranging feminist critique questioning the fundamental organization of society. Historians, however, have for the most part ignored this radical critique and focused exclusively on the suffrage campaign. By virtue of

this omission they have, to all intents and purposes, denied the political significance of the early feminist analysis. Moreover, the summary treatment by historians of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century drive for woman's suffrage has made that campaign almost a footnote to the abolitionist movement and the campaign for Negro suffrage. In addition, the traditional textbook image of the early feminists—if not wild-eyed women waving placards for the vote, then wild-eyed women swinging axes at saloon doors—has further demeaned the importance of their philosophical analysis.

The woman's movement virtually died in 1920 and, with the exception of a few organizations, feminism was to lie dormant for forty years.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Mount Holyoke opened in 1837; Vassar, 1865; Smith and Wellesley, 1875; Radcliffe, 1879; Bryn Mawr, 1885.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>*History of Woman Suffrage* (reprinted by Arno Press and The New York Times, New York, 1969), Vol. I, p. 81. Hereafter cited as *HWS*. Volumes I-III were edited by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joselyn Gage. The first two volumes were published in 1881, the third in 1886. Volume IV was edited by Susan B. Anthony and Ida Husted Harper and was published in 1902. Volumes V and VI were edited by Ida Husted Harper and published in 1922.

<sup>4</sup>Sarah M. Grimké, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman* (Boston: Isaac Kanapp, 1838, reprinted by Source Book Press, New York, 1970), p. 10ff.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>8</sup>*HWS*, p. 54.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 70-72.

<sup>11</sup>*HWS*, p. 73.

<sup>12</sup>Flexner, p. 77.

<sup>13</sup>*HWS*, p. 110.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 806.

<sup>15</sup>Flexner, p. 83.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>17</sup>*HWS*, Vol. II, p. 51.

<sup>18</sup>The Thirteenth Amendment was ratified in 1865; the Fourteenth in 1868; the Fifteenth in 1870.

<sup>19</sup>Flexner, p. 151.

<sup>20</sup>*Loc. cit.*

<sup>21</sup>*Minor v. Happersett*, 21 Wall. 162, 22 L. Ed. 627 (1875).

<sup>22</sup>(New York: European Publishing Company, 1895 and 1898, Two Parts.)

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, Part II, pp. 7-8.

<sup>24</sup>Stanton, letter to the editor of *The Critic* (New York), March 28, 1896, quoted in Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), n. 11, p. 86.

<sup>25</sup>A total of 218 women from 26 states were arrested during the first session of the Sixty-fifth Congress (1917). Ninety-seven went to prison.

<sup>26</sup>Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics* (New York, 1923), p. 107. Quoted in Flexner, p. 173.



# Account of the Proceedings on the Trial of Susan B. Anthony on the Charge of Illegal Voting at the Presidential Election in November, 1872

JUDGE HUNT—(Ordering the defendant to stand up), "Has the prisoner anything to say why sentence shall not be pronounced?"

MISS ANTHONY—Yes, your honor, I have many things to say; for in your ordered verdict of guilty, you have trampled under foot every vital principle of our government. My natural rights, my civil rights, my political rights, my judicial rights, are all alike ignored. Robbed of the fundamental privilege of citizenship, I am degraded from the status of a citizen to that of a subject; and not only myself individually, but all of my sex, are, by your honor's verdict, doomed to political subjection under this, so-called, form of government.

JUDGE HUNT—The Court cannot listen to a rehearsal of arguments the prisoner's counsel has already consumed three hours in presenting.

MISS ANTHONY—May it please your honor, I am not arguing the question, but simply stating the reasons why sentence cannot, in justice, be pronounced against me. Your denial of my citizen's right to vote, is the denial of my right of consent as one of the governed, the denial of my right of representation as one of the taxed, the denial of my right to a trial by a jury of my peers as an offender against law, therefore, the denial of my sacred rights to life, liberty, property and—

JUDGE HUNT—The Court cannot allow the prisoner to go on.

MISS ANTHONY—But your honor will not deny me this one and only poor privilege of protest against this high-handed outrage upon my citizen's rights. May it please the Court to remember that since the day of my arrest last November, this is the first time that either myself or any person of my disfranchised class has been allowed a word of defense before judge or jury—

JUDGE HUNT—The prisoner must sit down—the Court cannot allow it.

MISS ANTHONY—All of my prosecutors, from the 8th ward corner grocery politician, who entered the complaint, to the United States Marshal, Commissioner, District Attorney, District Judge, your honor on the bench, not one is my peer, but each and all are my political sovereigns; and had your honor submitted my case to the jury, as was clearly your duty, even then I should have had just cause of protest, for not one of those men was my peer; but, native or foreign born, white or black, rich or poor, educated or ignorant, awake or asleep, sober or drunk, each and every man of them was my political superior; hence, in no sense, my peer. Even, under such circumstances, a commoner of England, tried before a jury of Lords, would have far less cause to complain that should I, a woman, tried before a jury of men. Even my counsel, the Hon. Henry R. Selden, who has argued my cause so ably, so earnestly, so unanswerably before your honor, is my political sovereign. Precisely as no disfranchised person is enti-

tled to sit upon a jury, and no woman is entitled to the franchise, so, none but a regularly admitted lawyer is allowed to practice in the courts, and no woman can gain admission to the bar—hence, jury, judge, counsel, must all be of the superior class.

JUDGE HUNT—The Court must insist—the prisoner has been tried according to the established forms of law.

MISS ANTHONY—Yes, your honor, but by forms of law all made by men, interpreted by men, administered by men, in favor of men, and against women; and hence, your honor's ordered verdict of guilty, against a United States citizen for the exercise of "*that citizen's right to vote*," simply because that citizen was a woman and not a man. But, yesterday, the same man made forms of law, declared it a crime punishable with \$1,000 fine and six months' imprisonment, for you, or me, or any of us, to give a cup of cold water, a crust of bread, or a night's shelter to a panting fugitive as he was tracking his way to Canada. And every man or woman in whose veins coursed a *drop of human sympathy violated that wicked law, reckless of consequences, and was justified in so doing*. As then, the slaves who got their freedom must take it over, or under, or through the unjust forms of law, precisely so, now, must women, to get their right to a voice in this government, take it; and I have taken mine, and mean to take it at every possible opportunity.

JUDGE HUNT—The Court orders the prisoner to sit down. It will not allow another word.

MISS ANTHONY—When I was brought before your honor for trial, I hoped for a broad and liberal interpretation of the Constitution and its

recent amendments, that should declare all United States citizens under its protecting aegis—that should declare equality of rights the national guarantee to all persons born or naturalized in the United States. But failing to get this justice—failing, even, to get a trial by a jury *not* of my peers—I ask not leniency at your hands—but rather the full rigors of the law.

JUDGE HUNT—The Court must insist—

(Here the prisoner sat down.)

JUDGE HUNT—The prisoner will stand up.

(Here Miss Anthony arose again.)

The sentence of the Court is that you pay a fine of one hundred dollars and the costs of the prosecution.

MISS ANTHONY—May it please your honor, I shall never pay a dollar of your unjust penalty. All the stock in trade I possess is a \$10,000 debt, incurred by publishing my paper—*The Revolution*—four years ago, the sole object of which was to educate all women to do precisely as I have done, rebel against your man-made, unjust, unconstitutional forms of law, that tax, fine, imprison and hang women, while they deny them the right of *representation in the government; and I shall work on with might and main to pay every dollar of that honest debt, but not a penny shall go to this unjust claim*. And I shall earnestly and persistently continue to urge all women to the practical recognition of the old revolutionary maxim, that "*Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God*."

JUDGE HUNT—Madam, the Court will not order you committed until the fine is paid.

"These chicks are our natural enemy . . . It is time to do battle with them . . . What I want is a devastating piece that takes the militant feminists apart. [They are] unalterably opposed to the romantic boy-girl society that Playboy promotes . . . Let's get to it and let's make it a real winner."

—Inter office memorandum from Hugh Hefner to Playboy editorial director, A. C. Spector; quoted in *Newsweek*, May 18, 1970

## 2. WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE

### Why I Want A Wife

by JUDY SYFERS

Judy Syfers has been in the women's movement for almost two years and is a member of Sudsofioppen, a small California group. She was one of the organizers of Breakaway, a community liberation school for women's studies and was a co-teacher in an introductory seminar called "A Wide Range Look at Women's Oppression" at Breakaway. She worked on and spoke at the August 26 demonstration last year in San Francisco and is now active in the Women's Abortion Coalition. On the less glamorous side, she says, "I am married, am a housewife, and have two female children; all three of those factors serve to keep my anger alive."

I belong to that classification of people known as wives. I am A Wife. And, not altogether incidentally, I am a mother.

Not too long ago a male friend of mine appeared on the scene from the Midwest fresh from a recent divorce. He had one child, who is, of course, with his ex-wife. He is obviously looking for another wife. As I thought about him while I was ironing one evening, it suddenly occurred to me that I, too, would like to have a wife. Why do I want a wife?

I would like to go back to school so that I can become economically independent, support myself, and, if need be, support those dependent upon me. I want a wife who will work and send me to school. And while I am going to school I want a wife to take care of my children. I want a wife to keep track of the children's doctor and dentist appointments. And to keep track of mine, too. I want a wife to make sure my children eat properly and are kept clean. I want a wife who will wash the children's clothes and keep them mended. I want a wife who is a good nurturant attendant to my children, arranges for their schooling, makes sure that they have an adequate social life with their peers, takes them to the park, the zoo, etc. I want a wife who takes care of the children when they are sick, a wife who arranges to be around when the children need special care, because, of course, I cannot miss classes at school. My wife must arrange to lose time at work and not lose the job. It may mean a small cut in my wife's income from time to time, but I guess I can tolerate that. Needless to say, my wife will arrange and pay for the care of the children while my wife is working.

I want a wife who will take care of my physical needs. I want a wife who will keep my house clean. A wife who will pick up after my children, a wife who will pick up after me. I want a wife who will keep my clothes clean, ironed, mended, replaced when need be, and who will see to it that my personal things are kept in their proper place so that I can find what I need the minute I need it. I want a wife who cooks the meals, a wife who is a *good* cook. I want a wife who will plan the menus, do the necessary grocery shopping, prepare the meals, serve them pleasantly, and then do the cleaning up while I do my studying. I want a wife who will care for me when I am sick and sympathize with my pain and loss of time from school. I want a wife to go along when our family takes a vacation so that someone can continue to care for me and my children when I need a rest and a change of scene.

I want a wife who will not bother me with rambling complaints about a wife's duties. But I want a wife who will listen to me when I feel the need to explain a rather difficult point I have come across in my course of studies. And I want a wife who will type my papers for me when I have written them.

I want a wife who will take care of the details of my social life. When my wife and I are invited out by my friends, I want a wife who will take care of the babysitting arrangements. When I meet people at school that I like and want to entertain, I want a wife who will have the house clean, will prepare a special meal, serve it to me and my friends, and not interrupt when I talk about the things that interest me and my friends. I want a wife who will have arranged that the children are

fed and ready for bed before my guests arrive so that the children do not bother us. I want a wife who takes care of the needs of my guests so that they feel comfortable, who makes sure that they have an ashtray, that they are passed the hor d'oeuvres, that they are offered a second helping of the food, that their wine glasses are replenished when necessary, that their coffee is served to them as they like it. And I want a wife who knows that sometimes I need a night out by myself.

I want a wife who is sensitive to my sexual needs, a wife who makes love passionately and eagerly when I feel like it, a wife who makes sure that I am satisfied. And, of course, I want a wife who will not demand sexual attention when I am not in the mood for it. I want a wife who assumes the complete responsibility for birth control, because I do not want more children. I want a wife who will remain sexually faithful to me so that I do not have to clutter up my intellectual life with jealousies. And I want a wife who understands that my sexual needs may entail more than strict adherence to monogamy. I must, after all, be able to relate to people as fully as possible.

If, by chance, I find another person more suitable as a wife than the wife I already have, I want the liberty to replace my present wife with another one. Naturally, I will expect a fresh, new life; my wife will take the children and be solely responsible for them so that I am left free.

When I am through with school and have acquired a job, I want my wife to quit working and remain at home so that my wife can more fully and completely take care of a wife's duties.

My God, who *wouldn't* want a wife?



"...The charge that male doctors harbor an underlying sadism against women is increasingly being heard.... A discussion took place among surgeons on attitudes toward orchiectomy (removal of the testicle) and oophorectomy (removal of the ovary) and it was agreed that surgeons rarely hesitate to remove an ovary but think twice about removing a testicle. The doctors readily admitted that such a sex-oriented viewpoint arises from the fact that most surgeons are male. Said one of them wryly, 'No ovary is good enough to leave in, and no testicle is bad enough to take out.'"

—"Women M.D.'s Join the Fight,"  
Medical World News, October 23, 1970

# Getting Angry

by SUSI KAPLOW

In 1970 Susi Kaplow was part of the nucleus of the now expanded women's liberation group in Paris. When she returned to New York in the fall of 1970 she joined New York Radical Feminists. She organized four consciousness-raising groups and was on the organizing committee for the speak-out on Rape held in New York City.

Two scenarios. An angry man: someone has infringed on his rights, gone against his interests, or harmed a loved one. Or perhaps his anger is social—against racism or militarism. He holds his anger in check (on the screen we can see the muscles of his face tighten, his fists clench) and then, at the strategic moment, he lets it go. We see him yelling, shouting his angry phrases with sureness and confidence—or pushing a fist into his opponent's stomach with equal conviction. In either event, the anger is resolved; our hero has vented it and is content with success or accepts what he knows to be unmerited defeat.

Dissolve to scene two. An angry woman: angry at her man for cheating on her or (more likely) at the other woman. If we're in the good old days, she stomps up to her man and begins to scream wildly, he holds her down with his pinky, her anger melts in his embrace. After the fade-out, we find a puzzled heroine wondering how she could have been angry at such a good man. Or she marches over to the local saloon, hurls a few choice epithets at her rival, and then the hair-pulling begins. This ludicrous scene is always broken up by the amused and slightly scandalized gentlemen on the sidelines. In modern dress the same episode would be played differently. Discovering her husband's or lover's infidelity, the woman would smolder inwardly until the anger had burned down to a bitter resentment or become such a pressurized force that it could only come out in a rage so uncontrollable that the man (and the audience) can dismiss it as irrational. "I can't talk to you when you're like this." Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.

For a woman in our society is denied the forthright expression of her healthy anger. Her attempts at physical confrontation seem ridiculous; "ladies" do a slow burn, letting out their anger indirectly in catty little phrases, often directed against a third party, especially children. A woman has learned to hold back her anger: It's unseemly, aesthetically displeasing, and against the sweet, pli-

ant feminine image to be angry. And the woman fears her own anger: She, the great conciliator, the steadier of rocked boats, moves, out of her fear, to quiet not only others' anger but also her own. Small wonder that when the vacuum-sealed lid bursts off, the angry woman seems either like a freaked-out nut or a bitch on wheels. Her frenzy is intensified by the shakiness of her commitment to her own anger. What if she's really wrong? What if the other person is right?—Or worse (and this is the greatest fear) hits back with "You're crazy, I don't know what you're so mad about."

Why can't women allow themselves the outlet of their contained anger? Why do those around them find an angry woman so frightening that they must demoralize and deflate her into a degraded, inauthentic calm? Healthy anger says "I'm a person. I have certain human rights which you can't deny. I have a right to be treated with fairness and compassion, I have a right to live my life as I see fit, I have a right to get what I can for myself without hurting you. And if you deprive me of my rights, I'm not going to thank you, I'm going to say 'fuck off' and fight you if I have to." A person's anger puts him or her on center stage. It claims attention for itself and demands to be taken seriously, or else. (Or else I won't talk to you, I won't work with you or be friendly toward you, or else, ultimately, our association is over.)

Expressing anger means risking. Risking that the other person will be angry in return, risking that he or she will misunderstand the anger or refuse to deal with it, risking that the anger itself is misplaced or misinformed. So you need strength to say you're angry—both the courage of your convictions and the ability to accept that your anger may be unwarranted without feeling crushed into nothingness. You must not have your total worth as a person riding on the worth of each individual case of anger.

Thus anger is self-confident, willing to fight for itself even at the jeopardy of the status quo, capa-



ble of taking a risk and, if necessary, of accepting defeat without total demise. Above all, anger is assertive. The traditional woman is the polar opposite of this description. Lacking confidence in herself and in her own perceptions, she backs away from a fight or, following the rules of chivalry, lets someone else do battle for her. Strong emotions disturb her for the disruption they bring to things-as-they-are. So shaky is her self-image that every criticism is seen as an indictment of her person. She is a living, walking apology for her own existence—what could be more foreign to self-assertion?

Although the reality has changed somewhat, most women will recognize themselves somewhere in this description. And society clings to this model as its ideal and calls an angry woman *unfeminine*. Because anger takes the woman out of her earth mother role as bastion of peace and calm, out of her familial role as peacemaker, out of her political role as preserver of the status quo, out of her economic role as cheap labor, out of her social role as second-class citizen. It takes her out of roles altogether and makes her a person.

It is no accident, then, that the emotion which accompanies the first steps toward liberation is, for most women, anger. Whatever sense of self-worth you have been able to emerge with after twenty or thirty years of having your mind messed with gives you the vague feeling that your situation is not what it should be and sends you looking tentatively at the world around you for explanations. Realizations are, at first, halting, and then begin to hit you like a relentless sledge hammer, driving the anger deeper and deeper into your consciousness with every blow.

Your fury focuses on the select group of individuals who have done you the most damage. You are furious at your parents for having wanted a boy instead; at your mother (and this fury is mixed with compassion) for having let herself be stifled and having failed to show you another model of female behavior; at your father for having gotten a cheap bolster to his ego at your and your mother's expense.

You are furious at those who groom you to play your shabby role. At the teachers who demanded less of you because you were a girl. At the doctors who told you birth control was the woman's responsibility, gave you a Hobson's choice of dangerous and ineffectual devices, then refused you an abortion when these failed to

work. At the psychiatrist who called you frigid because you didn't have vaginal orgasms and who told you you were neurotic for wanting more than the unpaid, unappreciated role of maid, wet nurse, and occasional lay. At employers who paid you less and kept you in lousy jobs. At the message from the media which you never understood before: "You've come a long way, baby!"—down the dead-end, pre-fab street we designed for you.

Furious, above all, at men. For the grocer who has always called you "honey" you now have a stiff, curt "don't call me honey." For the men on the street who visit their daily indignities on your body, you have a "fuck off," or, if you're brave, a knee in the right place. For your male friends (and these get fewer and fewer) who are "all for women's lib" you reserve a cynical eye and a ready put-down. And for your man (if he's still around), a lot of hostile, angry questions. Is he different from other men? How? And when he fails to prove himself, your rage explodes readily from just beneath the surface.

This is an uncomfortable period to live through. You are raw with an anger that seems to have a mind and will of its own. Your friends, most of whom disagree with you, find you strident and difficult. And you become all the more so because of your fear that they are right, that you're crazy after all. You yourself get tired of this anger—it's exhausting to be furious all the time—which won't even let you watch a movie or have a conversation in peace.

But from your fury, you are gaining strength. The exercise of your anger gives you a sense of self and of self-worth. And the more this sense increases, the angrier you become. The two elements run in a dialectic whirlwind, smashing idols and myths all around them. You see, too, that you can get angry and it doesn't kill people, they don't kill you, the world doesn't fall apart.

Then this anger, burning white hot against the outside world, suddenly veers around and turns its flame toward you. Sure, they fucked you up and over, sure, they oppressed you, sure they continue to degrade and use you. But—why did you let it happen? Why do you continue to let it happen? All of a sudden you are up against the part you played in your own oppression. You were the indispensable accomplice to the crime. You internalized your own inferiority, the pressing necessity to be beautiful and seductive, the belief that men are more important than women, the conviction that



marriage is the ultimate goal. Seeing this, you are violent against yourself for every time you were afraid to try something for fear of failing, for all the hours lost on make-up and shopping, for every woman you missed because there was a man in the room, for getting *yourself* stuck as a housewife or in a job you hate because "marriage is your career."

This phase of anger turned inward is terrifying. You are alone with your own failed responsibilities toward yourself, however much you can still blame others. It is this phase that some women find unbearable and flee from, returning to the first phase of anger or dropping out altogether. Because this inturned anger demands action—change—and won't let go until its demands begin to be satisfied. You can fall back on your inability to control others and their behavior toward you. But you can't comfortably claim powerlessness over your own conduct. Nor can you, at least for long, go on being furious at others (the forty-five year old who still blames mommy founders) if you don't even try to get yourself together.

This inturned anger is a constructive or rather reconstructive catalyst. For what you can do under its impetus is to restructure yourself, putting new images, patterns, and expectations in place of the old, no longer viable ones. As you use your anger, you also tame it. Anger becomes a tool which you can control, not only to help you make personal changes but to deal with the world outside as well. You can mobilize your anger to warn those around you that you're not having any

more bullshit, to underscore your seriousness, to dare to drive your point home.

Through the exercise of your anger, as you see its efficacy and thus your own, you gain strength. And the growing feeling that you control your anger and not vice versa adds to this strength. As you gain this control, become surer of yourself, less afraid of being told you're crazy, your anger is less enraged and, in a sense, calmer. So it becomes discriminating. You reserve it for those individuals and groups who are messing with your mind—be they men or other women.

This progression of anger finds its ultimate meaning as an experience shared with other women. All striving to understand their collective situation, women in a group can help each other through the first, painful phase of outward-directed anger. Through consciousness-raising each woman can (at least ideally) find sufficient confirmation of her perceptions to be reassured of her own sanity—and can find growing strength to do without such confirmation when necessary.

In the second phase of inturned anger, women can support one another in their attempts at self-definition and change, change which others will try to forestall. And, at the same time, they can start to move together to create new social forms and structures in which individual changes can come to fruition. Controlled, directed, but nonetheless passionate, anger moves from the personal to the political and becomes a force for shaping our new destiny.

## ON LOVE

"Shut up in the sphere of the relative, destined to the male from childhood, habituated to seeing in him a superb being whom she cannot possibly equal, the woman who has not repressed her claim to humanity will dream of transcending her being toward one of these superior beings, of amalgamating herself with the sovereign subject. There is no other way out for her than to lose herself, body and soul, in him who is represented to her as the absolute, as the essential. Since she is anyway doomed to dependence, she will prefer to serve a god rather than obey tyrants—parents, husband, or protector. She chooses to desire her enslavement so ardently that it will seem to her the expression of her liberty; she will try to rise above her situation as inessential object by fully accepting it; through her flesh, her feelings, her behavior, she will enthrone him as supreme value and reality; she will humble herself to nothingness before him. Love becomes for her a religion."

—Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*  
("The Woman in Love")

# Woman in the Middle

by FLORENCE RUSH

Florence Rush came into the women's movement last October as a member of OWL (Older Women's Liberation) and soon after began to write on subjects pertaining to women. She now belongs to an independent consciousness-raising group and is a member of the New York Radical Feminists and the Westchester Women's Liberation Coalition.

The woman in the middle is between forty and fifty-five years of age and at the point in her life when her aging parents are becoming increasingly dependent and her children, past eighteen, should be increasingly independent, but are not. Her parents may become helpless, ill, and although her children may be in college or living away from home, they come back for holidays, also become ill, get into trouble and mother is needed. The woman in the middle is caught between two generations. *She has about ten or maybe fifteen good years left and if she does not use them for herself, she will never have another opportunity.*

Contrary to popular opinion, many women look forward to this period in life when, free at last, they can be concerned with only themselves. Some women plan to go back to school, take a job, study music, travel, or just enjoy some well-earned leisure. There may be those who break down from lack of household chores, absence of children, or the feeling of not being wanted, but that is only because these women have had no alternative way to live beyond child care and housework. If a woman has skills, job opportunity, lives in a world that does not discriminate against women, particularly older women, and is not programmed to believe in her own uselessness, loss of dependent children will never be a problem. The woman in the middle is depressed not because she is going through her menopause or her children have left home, but because wherever she turns, she is prevented from fulfilling herself as a human being. She is not even allowed to control the few years of her life between the end of child rearing and old age.

For the woman who tries to salvage those years, there may be a strange feeling after the last child leaves home, but not for long. It is easy to become accustomed to the lack of chores and obligations, but this happy state, if reached at all, does not last. In this age of interminable child

dependency, children, long after maturity, continue to look to their parents for help.

We live in a society that does not assume responsibility for the most elementary human needs and provides inadequate public service for the poor, sick, aged, and young. The old, sick, and poor individual is at the mercy of a community with so little concern for human life that it allows old people to die alone every day from neglect and starvation. Similarly, young people with few legal rights are subject to abuse, exploitation, and forced destructive relationships with parents and guardians. Children and the aged have no protection beyond the family. Because society has failed to make provision, it is, as always, the wife, mother, or daughter who must cope with and find solutions for the needs of the family members. She may do a good job, a bad job, or overwhelmed, may even walk away from the job, but no matter which way it goes, the responsibility for the care of the dependent person belongs to the woman.

My training as a female to fill this role started at an early age. I was the baby daughter, cute, and, I'm told, always had a lot of feeling for other people. At age four, when I saw my mother scrubbing the kitchen floor, I said, "Mommy, why do you work so hard for everyone?" My mother remembered the words well and told them to me very often. She was grateful to have a daughter who could really feel for her. She often commented that a boy is wonderful but a girl really cares.

At age eight I was awakened in the middle of the night by my father's angry shouts and my mother slamming down the window so the neighbors wouldn't hear. Soon I became aware that my parents' quarrels were part of our normal family life. When I asked my mother why she and father hated each other so much, she told me not to be silly, they really loved each other, but, since I was her only daughter and showed interest, and, since she had to have someone to talk to, and since I

was a big girl (age ten), she thought it was time I knew what kind of a man my father really was.

When my father learned that my mother confided in me, he demanded equal time and they both complained to me about each other. I was later surprised to learn that my brother, ten years my senior, was totally unaware and unaffected by my parents' actively hateful relationship. They never involved him because he was, after all, a man.

Later, after I married and my children were finally grown and in the process of leaving home, my father had two massive heart attacks. I was drawn into a nightmare of nurses, doctors, and hospitals, while my mother, crying and helpless, also needed attention. I asked my brother to help and he gladly agreed but since he had no preparation for this kind of work, the instruction and supervision required more effort than the job itself, so I did everything. I was soberly informed by family and friends that I had this neurotic attachment to my father which would not allow me to have anyone else care for him. My father got better and enjoyed one good year when we learned he had terminal cancer. Doctors agreed that he had nine months to live but he survived for two years, and I was needed more than ever. I became very efficient at dealing with hospital personnel, became an expert at sick benefits and insurance, and even learned how to read X-rays.

Anyway, my father died and left all his money to my brother. I didn't get a penny but fortunately my mother had enough money to manage. At my father's funeral, my mother's widowed state was much discussed but was not of great concern because she had a daughter to care for her. Later, I saw her regularly. I took her shopping, for doctor's appointments, kept her finances in order and responded, in addition, to frequent emergencies—she fell, was cheated by Macy's, or a neighbor insulted her. After a year, it struck me that half my life was spent with my mother. I figured out that my mother, now eighty, in good health and with a family history of longevity, would probably live till ninety and, if I owed her for the rest of her life, I would not finish paying my dues until I was fifty-five.

During this period, I noticed that my husband was never plagued by similar problems. His mother lived with and was supported by an unmarried sister. When, at my suggestion, my husband sent a check to help with the burden of support, his

mother returned the money. She would take help from her daughter but not from her son. I once asked a young woman who was active in the women's liberation movement and wise in the ways of sexism, why men responded so differently from women to human needs and suffering, and she told me to examine how differently the sexes are raised by their parents. I compared the attitudes of my parents to myself and my brother, and then my husband's parents' attitudes to him and his sister. Males are trained to do different jobs, have different responsibilities, and are programmed to feel different feelings than females.

At the other end of the spectrum, I had to cope with my grown children and these problems were no less disturbing or complicated. For eighteen years I had raised my children practically alone because this is regarded as woman's work and my husband had little to do with the job. I nursed them when they were ill, ran to school when called, helped with homework, made costumes for Halloween, prepared birthday parties, supervised their sex education, worried about stammering, thumbsucking and other neurotic symptoms, in addition to doing the usual cooking and cleaning.

Before I married, I had been trained and worked as a social worker, so when Bob, my oldest son, went off to college, and Anne, my daughter, was in high school, and Bill, my youngest son, was in junior high, I decided to go back to work. I found an agency that would employ me after my long years of absence. Although initially nervous, I soon found the change of scene, the challenge of the job, and the weekly pay check the most rewarding experience in eighteen years. Even though extremely busy, I managed children, husband, home, and job. Six weeks after Bob left for school, he returned in a succession of holidays, usually with guests, that made my head spin and kept me hopping. I never realized that Thanksgiving, Christmas, and intercession were so close. I looked forward eagerly to the free time between intercession and Easter when, soon after intercession, Bob called from school to tell us that he had seriously injured his knee. His father fetched him home and this represented the total sum of his parental obligation.

Bob had to be put in traction for about six weeks. Hospitalization was impossible because of the length of time involved, so there was no question but that I would take care of him at home. I carried trays, turned TV channels, entertained visi-

tors, got books from the library, and, because he was a young, healthy man who became bored and irritable from being confined, I also received a large amount of abuse. My supervisor kept wanting to know when I'd come back to work and finally I suggested she find someone to take my place. After seven weeks, Bob went back to school and I was without a job.

It took me six months to find other employment. After a year and a half on my second job, the agency offered to send me back to school, at their expense, to get my master's degree. It would mean giving up income for a year but I would receive, in return, after a year, a supervisory position and a substantial increase in salary. While completing my school application, Bill's school counselor informed me that my youngest child was failing miserably in junior high. He had never been a good student and since third grade I ran regularly to school conferences, supervised his studies and forced him to do hated homework. Nothing helped. The counselor offered no solution to the present problem, thought the difficulty might stem from the home, put it to me to figure something out, and of course I did.

I found a very expensive private school fully staffed with hand-picked educators and psychiatric experts dedicated to help the underachiever. I gave up my school plans in order to earn the money necessary to pay for Bill's private school. Almost every penny I earned went for tuition, psychiatric treatment, carfare, lunches, etc. The school, steeped in psychiatric principles, maintained that students who could not function academically usually suffered from disturbed parental relationships. Since Bill's father had little to do with raising his son, it was naturally I who was the controlling and domineering parent unable to let her son grow up. With years of experience and authority in all matters pertaining to education, and in order to obtain each student's confidence, the school established the rule that parents were not permitted to communicate with any staff member. Since the mother was usually the greatest threat to the child, the school director emphasized for my benefit that I would not be given any information regarding my son's progress. I was not permitted a phone conversation with a teacher and I was warned against trying to wheedle information from my son. I was advised to trust the school and relax control. No one seemed to notice that since I had previously given so much time and energy to Bill

and his school problems, what they suggested was like a welcomed vacation. I gladly obeyed.

One year later, I received a phone call from the school psychiatrist who did not bother to disguise his annoyance and impatience with me. He questioned my lack of interest in my son, wondered why I never contacted the school or asked for a progress report. Before I could protest, I was informed that my son was not only failing everything, but was also using hard drugs. When I broke down in tears and confusion, I was told I had good reason to cry because my son was seriously emotionally ill and needed to be hospitalized.

Later, when I confronted Bill, he swore he did not use drugs, was having the same problems in private school as in public school, and never spoke of this before because he was advised to consult only with staff and never to discuss anything with his parents. I didn't believe him. I dragged him to doctors, put him through physical and psychological tests until one kind psychologist held me down long enough to convince me that Bill was not on drugs, was not sick, and there was no reason to have him hospitalized. When the panic passed, I gained my senses and took Bill out of school. Very soon after, he got himself a job in a hospital working on a brain research program, ran a computer, experimented with cats, loved his work, and is now getting along just fine.

When my daughter Anne graduated from college, she embarked on a career to conquer the world, and I was her assistant. She went on a diet, lost fifteen pounds, went shopping, got great clothes, got her hair done at Sassoon, got an exciting job, and, thus armed, moved out of my home to the world, life, and adventure.

To her horror and mine, she discovered that there were millions out there like herself. Her work, which consisted of an enormous amount of detailed and boring writing, was credited to her boss, and with all her clothes and fantastic figure, no one cared if she lived or died. Married women would not associate with a single girl and a single woman would not be seen with another single woman who was looking for friends. Men, generally in great demand, did not find it necessary to be even passingly polite, and their style was one of utter contempt, particularly toward a woman eager for a relationship. Anne, far away from the security and community of friends at college, had no one but me and this forced dependency result-

ed in hostility and fear. Unable to cope with the outside rejection and isolation, Anne moved back home, let her frustration out on me, and we fought constantly.

Finally she left her job and experimented with different life styles. She moved to a farm and came home; she went to the coast and came home; she found a commune and came home and nearly exhausted me with her activity and anxiety. Anne's father never got too involved because he did not wish to interfere in problems between mother and daughter. Finally, Anne became aware of her desperate behavior, stopped, found a better and more independent way to live, and we were again good friends.

It is hard, if not impossible, to estimate the cost to a human being in terms of time, energy, pain, and guilt as a result of the above relationships. The woman in the middle is the target of all negative emotions stemming from each family member's failure and frustration, and the damage can never be measured. When things go wrong, and they always do, she bears the burden, the responsibility, and the blame.

If she is to save herself, the woman in the middle must learn to reject the myths regarding her family ties and responsibilities. She must no longer accept as natural her designated role as servant to

all. She must question and challenge the privilege that excludes men from responsibilities and involvement with other human beings. She must reject the passivity of husbands, fathers, and brothers who sit by while wives, daughters, and sisters struggle alone with the devastating hardships involved in caring for the dependent. She must reject the lies and advices of the patronizing professionals and experts who, because of their own incompetence and inadequacy, have mystified reality and have shifted the blame for their failure to find social, economic, psychological, and educational remedies onto the mother, wife, and woman.

I am told that the women's liberation movement is for young women, but older women are looking to be liberated from their particular oppression, as well as the oppression common to all women. The only reason I am writing this paper instead of sitting with my poor old mother or sweating over a large family dinner for children and relatives is because my right to my own life has been supported by my sisters in the movement. Being fifty is not so bad if you are not torn by guilt, brutal obligation, and socially induced feelings of low self-esteem. Sooner or later, the woman in the middle is you and me, and together we must find a way not to be crushed.

## Black Feminism

by CELLESTINE WARE

The following article is a revision of a chapter from Celestine Ware's first book, *Woman Power: Transitions in American Feminism* (Tower Publications, 1970). She was a founder of New York Radical Feminists, is active in the New York movement, and is currently at work on her second book.

The rejection of black women by black men is a phenomenon best explained by the black man's hatred of blackness and by the need to dominate that underlies male-female relationships. As such, this rejection is an excellent study for feminists. The strength of the resistance to women's independence is shown by the strong epithets directed against black women. The black male's reaction is

the forerunner of what all feminists will face as they grow in strength. As women begin to assume positions of equality with men, they will meet virulent abuse, much like that endured by black women now. They will also discover that men will reject them for more "feminine" women.

Black sociologist Calvin Hernton's *Sex and Racism in America* is filled with examples of the defa-



mation and rejection, now subtle, now blatant, that are the lot of black women. For example:

It is no mystery why white society is now tending to accept the black woman more readily than the black male. First of all, the Negro woman, like the white woman, does not represent to the white world as much of an aggressor against the present power structure as does the Negro man.

It wasn't true any time in the Sixties that black women were hired before black men. On the contrary, black women got little benefit from the drive to find black talent.

The rare black woman who had achieved a position of prominence was bitterly resented by black males. Black personnel men have been known to lose the resumes of promising black women. *One such administrator at a famous radio and television station told a black woman applicant: "We already have enough sisters in the communications industry. It's time the brothers got ahead."*

In the executive talent shortage of the 1960s, some organizations encouraged women in the patronizing way they had encouraged promotable Negroes when the Negro rights movement was popular; but the efforts to see that qualified women were promoted were much more half-hearted than those promoting Negroes. In 1967, for instance, 15 percent of a group of companies queried by the Bureau of National Affairs said they had undertaken aggressive recruiting of promotable Negroes in response to Title VII, but only one company reported an aggressive policy of recruiting women. In the business world sex is more of a barrier than race.

Yet history has made black women more independent than most American women. Unable to depend on the black man for the economic necessities or for protection, they did not acquire the habit of subordination to masculine authority. Because of this failure to develop subserviency to the male, black women are belittled by both middle- and lower-class black men. The middle-class black man, such as Mr. Hernton, sees the black woman as domineering and castrating. To wit:

Repeatedly I have witnessed Negro women virtually dominating their white husbands. There may be fights, but she capitalizes on her Negroism and on her sex image by wielding a sort of *Amazon mastery* [my italics] over the white male. In all but a few black woman - white man relationships, it is the man who must do the adjusting—and what he must adjust to is nothing less than what is referred to as the Negro's mode of existence or the Negro's conceptualization of life in the United States.

Mr. Hernton is displaying common anxieties and fears in his emotionally charged statement about the "Amazon mastery" that he says black women develop over their white husbands. His translation of circumstantial necessity into a deliberate attempt at oppression ignores social realities: Discrimination and intolerance invariably force interracial couples to live in black communities, or at least in well-integrated ones.

The lower-class black male sees black women as bitches. The welfare check has made the poor black woman economically independent of the men who come and go in her life, and on whom she cannot rely. Poor black males complain of being told to "Get out! And don't bring your ass back here until you've got a job!" There is antagonism between black males and females, especially in the poorest segments of the community. The women are contemptuous of the men for not being able to find work and provide for their families, or for throwing their money away on gambling, other women, and drinking. The men curse the women for not being feminine and comforting.

The mistake that sociologists are making and that black men seem to be making is the assumption that these women have chosen to be heads of their families. They have become heads of households by default—as the only responsible adults in their families. It is interesting to note that the state menaces and subordinates these women in much the same way that the salary-earning male head of the house does his wife. Protection has its price.

It is the pressures of poverty and slum life that grind down the black family and destroy the role of the male as father-protector. It is these pressures, not black women, that make the confidence man the ghetto hero. In Harlem, in Watts, in Hough, the admired man beats the game: dresses sharp, has a string of girl friends, and doesn't have a steady job. He gets by doing a little of this and a little of that. For the poor black man, there is no ego aggrandizement in the traditional role of the head of the house. Economic and social racism force him to be inadequate in such a role. And so the black bitch was created to justify the confidence man.

According to Fletcher Knebel, Abbey Lincoln first verbalized the current black female unrest (it is as yet unorganized) in the face of this projection of the mythical black bitch. "We are the





Photo: Bettye Lane



Photo: Bettye Lane



Photo: Jo Freeman



Photo: Ellen Shumsky



Photo: Fred W. McBarrah



Photo: Ellen Levine

women," she declared, "whose nose is 'too big,' whose mouth is 'too big and loud,' whose behind is 'too big and broad,' whose feet are 'too big and flat,' whose face is 'too black and shiny,' who's just too damned much for everybody." She was referring to Sapphire, the Amazon of the black male imagination.

The distortions that underlie the transformation of the black mother into a witch-like figure with magical powers to destroy are obviously found in the educated as well as the ignorant. Recently a black educator said: "For the black man, the black woman is too much like his mother. He sees her as domineering, bossy, a woman who runs things. He wants a desirable, easy sex companion, and he finds her in the white woman." What will happen when this desirable white doll becomes real? Perhaps she will be rejected for an easygoing Oriental?

A black college student asserts: "We kind of *fear* [my italics] the middle-class black girl we meet around school. She's snobbish, uppity, and inclined to sneer at a black man unless he excels at something. White girls, for a lot of reasons, are easier, less Victorian, and let's face it, they have

their own money."

It is the fear and anxiety of the black male that lead to the construction of the "evil" black female. By now, the superstructure of the "black bitch" bears as little relation to the real black woman as any myth to the reality. The preceding quotes suggest that the men speaking have no honest contact with women of either race. The magical approach of the male to the female is an ancient orientation toward women as the aliens of the human world.

The complaint that black women challenge black men is further proof of the threatening nature of female independence to most men. Philip Roth's indictment of the omnipotent Jewish mother with her all-devouring love has become a familiar theme of our literature just as Jews have been assimilated into the power centers of American life. Although the parallels in the black and Jewish traditions are slight, both cultures are now remarkable for the vehemence of the attacks on their women. I suggest that black literature will increasingly consist of virulent attacks on the evil black mother as black men move into positions of power.

## Loving Another Woman

interview by ANNE KOEDT

Anne Koedt, a founder of the radical feminist movement in New York (New York Radical Women, The Feminists, and New York Radical Feminists), is the editor of *Notes From the Third Year* and is at work on a book about feminism and sexuality, to be published by Random House.

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*The following is from a taped interview with a woman who talked about her love relationship with another woman. Both these women had previously had only heterosexual relationships; both are feminists.*

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**Question.** You said you had been friends for a while before you realized you were attracted to each other. How did you become aware of it?

**Answer.** I wasn't conscious of it until one evening when we were together and it all just sort of exploded. But, looking back, there are always signs, only one represses seeing them.

For example, I remember one evening—we are

in the same feminist group together—and we were all talking very abstractly about love. All of a sudden, even though the group was carrying on the conversation in a theoretical way, we were having a personal conversation. We were starting to tell each other that we liked each other. Of course one of the things we discussed was: What is the thin line between friendship and love?

Or, there were times when we were very aware of having "accidentally" touched each other. And Jennie told me later that when we first met she remembered thinking, "abstractly" again, that if she were ever to get involved with a woman, she'd like to get involved with someone like me.

The mind-blowing thing is that you aren't at all

conscious of what you are feeling; rather, you subconsciously, and systematically, refuse to deal with the implications of what's coming out. You just let it hang there because you're too scared to let it continue and see what it means.

*Q. What did you do when you became aware of your mutual attraction?*

A. We'd been seeing a lot of each other, and I was at her house for dinner. During the evening—we were having a nice time, but I remember also feeling uncomfortable—I became very aware of her as we were sitting together looking at something. There was an unusual kind of tension throughout the whole evening.

It was quite late by the time we broke up, so she asked me whether I wanted to stay over and sleep on her couch. And I remember really being very uptight—something I certainly wouldn't have felt in any other situation with a friend. Yet, even when I was uptight and felt that in some way by staying I would get myself into something, I wasn't quite sure what—something new and dangerous—I decided to stay anyway.

It wasn't really until I tried to fall asleep, and couldn't, that all of a sudden I became very, very aware. I was flooded with a tremendous attraction for her. And I wanted to tell her, I wanted to sleep with her, I wanted to let her know what I was feeling. At the same time I was totally bewildered, because here I was—not only did I want to tell her, but I was having a hard time just facing up to what was coming out in myself. My mind was working overtime trying to deal with this new thing.

She was awake too, and so we sat and talked. It took me about two hours to build up the courage to even bring up the subject. I think it is probably one of the most difficult things I ever had to do. To say—to in any way whatsoever open up the subject—to say anything was just so hard.

When I did bring it up in an oblique way and told her that I was attracted to her, she replied somewhat generally that she felt the same way. You see, she was as scared as I was, but I didn't know it. I thought she seemed very cool, so I wasn't even sure if she was interested. Although I think subconsciously I knew, because otherwise I wouldn't have asked her—I think I would have been too scared of rejection.

But when I finally did bring it up, and she said

she felt the same way, well, at that point there was really no space left for anything in your mind. So we agreed to just drop it and let things happen as they would at a later time. My main, immediate worry was that maybe I had blown a good friendship which I really valued. Also, even if she did feel the same way, would we know what to do with it?

*Q. When you first realized that you were possibly getting involved with a woman, were you afraid or upset?*

A. No. The strange thing is that the next morning, after I left, I felt a fantastic high. I was bouncing down the street and the sun was shining and I felt tremendously good. My mind was on a super high.

When I got home I couldn't do any kind of work. My mind kept operating on this emergency speed, trying to deal with my new feelings for her. So I sat down and wrote a letter to myself. Just wrote it free association—didn't try to work it out in any kind of theory—and as I was writing I was learning from myself what I was feeling. Unexpectedly I wasn't feeling guilty or worried. I felt great.

*Q. When did you start sleeping with each other?*

A. The next time we were together. Again, we really wanted each other, but to finally make the move, the same move that with a man would have been automatic, was tremendously difficult... and exhilarating. Although we did sleep together, it wasn't sexual; just affectionate and very sensual. After that evening we started sleeping together sexually as well.

I guess it was also a surprise to find that you weren't struck down by God in a final shaft of lightning. That once you fight through that initial wall of undefined fears built to protect those taboos, they wither rapidly, and leave you to operate freely in a new self-defined circle of what's natural. You have a new sense of boldness, of daring, about yourself.

*Q. Was it different from what you had thought a relationship with a woman would be like?*

A. Generally, no. Most of the things that I had thought intellectually in fact turned out to be true in my experience. One thing, however, was different. Like, I'd really felt that very possibly a relationship with a woman might not be terribly physical. That it would be for the most part warm

and affectionate. I think I probably thought this because with men sex is so frequently confused with conquest. Men have applied a symbolic value to sex, where the penis equals dominance and the vagina equals submission. Since sensuality has no specific sex and is rather a general expression of mutual affection, its symbolic value, power-wise, is nil. So sex with a man is usually genitally oriented.

Perhaps I wasn't quite sure what would happen to sexuality once it was removed from its conventional context. But one of the things I discovered was that when you really like somebody, there's a perfectly natural connection between affection and love and sensuality and sexuality. That sexuality is a natural part of sensuality.

**Q. How is sex different with a woman?**

**A.** One of the really mind-blowing things about all this has been that it added a whole new dimension to my own sexuality. You can have good sex, technically, with a woman or a man. But at this point in time I think women have a much broader sense of sensuality. Since she and I both brought our experiences as women to sexuality, it was quite something.

Another aspect of sexuality is your feelings. Again, this is of course an area that has been delegated to women; we are supposed to provide the love and affection. It is one of our duties in a male-female relationship. Though it has been very oppressive in the context that we've been allowed it, the ability to show affection and love for someone else is, I think, a fine thing—which men should develop more in themselves, as a matter of fact. Love and affection are a necessary aspect of full sexuality. And one of the things I really enjoy with Jennie is this uninhibited ability to show our feelings.

**Q. Is the physical aspect of loving women really as satisfying as sex with a man?**

**A.** Yes.

**Q. You've been together a while now. What's your relationship like?**

**A.** Once we got over the initial week or so of just getting used to this entirely new thing, it very quickly became natural—natural is really the word I'd use for it. It was like adding another dimension to what we'd already been feeling for each other. It is quite a combination to fall in love with your friend.

We don't have any plans, any desire, to live together, although we do see a great deal of each other. We both like our own apartments, our own space.

I think one of the good things we did in the beginning was to say: Let's just see where it will go. We didn't say that we loved each other, just that we liked each other. We didn't immediately proclaim it a "relationship," as one is accustomed to do with a man—you know, making mental plans for the next ten years. So each new feeling was often surprising, and very intensely experienced.

**Q. What would you say is the difference between this relationship and those you have had with men?**

**A.** Well, one of the biggest differences is that for the first time I haven't felt those knots-in-the-stomach undercurrents of trying to figure out what's really happening under what you think is happening.

I think it all boils down to an absence of role-playing; I haven't felt with Jen that we've fallen into that. Both of us are equally strong persons. I mean, you can ask yourself the question, if there were going to be roles, who'd play what? Well, I certainly won't play "the female," and I won't play "the male," and it's just as absurd to imagine her in either one of them. So in fact what we have is much more like what one gets in a friendship, which is more equalized. It's a more above-board feeling.

I don't find the traditional contradictions. If I do something strong and self-assertive, she doesn't find that a conflict with her having a relationship with me. I don't get reminded that I might be making myself "less womanly." And along with that there's less self-censorship, too. There's a mutual, unqualified, support for daring to try new things that I have never quite known before.

As a result, my old sense of limits is changing. For example, for the first time in my life I'm beginning to feel that I don't have a weak body, that my body isn't some kind of passive baggage. The other day I gritted my teeth and slid down a fireman's pole at a park playground. It may sound ordinary, but it was something I had never dared before, and I felt a very private victory.

**Q. Given the social disapproval and legal restrictions against lesbianism, what are some of the external problems you have faced?**



A. One thing is that I hesitate to show my affection for her in public. If you're walking down the street and you want to put your arm around someone or give them a kiss—the kind of thing you do without thinking if it is a man—well, that's hardly considered romantic by most people if it's done with someone of your own sex. I know that if I were to express my feelings in public with Jennie, there would be a lot of social intrusion that I would have to deal with. Somehow, people would assume a license to intrude upon your privacy in public; their hostile comments, hostile attitudes, would ruin the whole experience. So you're sort of caught in a bind. But we have in fact begun to do it more and more, because it bothers me that I can't express my feeling as I see fit, without hostile interference.

Q. *What made you fall in love with a woman?*

A. Well, that's a hard question. I think maybe it's even a bit misleading the way you phrased it. Because I didn't fall in love with "a woman," I fell in love with Jen—which is not exactly the same thing. A better way to ask the question is: How were you able to overcome the fact that it was a woman? In other words, how was I able to overcome my heterosexual training and allow my feelings for her to come out?

Certainly in my case it would never have happened without the existence of the women's movement. My own awareness of "maleness" and "femaleness" had become acute, and I was really probing what it meant. You see, I think in a sense I never wanted to be either male or female. Even when I was quite little and in many ways seemed feminine and "passive"—deep down, I never felt at home with the kinds of things women were supposed to be. On the other hand, I didn't particularly want to be a man either, so I didn't develop a male identity. Before I even got involved with the women's movement, I was already wanting something new. But the movement brought it out into the open for me.

Another thing the movement helped me with was shedding the notion that, however independent my life was, I must have a man; that somehow, no matter what I did myself, there was something that needed that magical element of male approval. Without confronting this I could never have allowed myself to fall in love with Jennie. In a way, I am like an addict who has kicked the habit.

But most important of all, I like her. In fact I

think she's the healthiest person I have ever been involved with. See, I think we were lucky, because it happened spontaneously and unexpectedly from both sides. We didn't do it because we felt compelled to put our ideological beliefs into reality.

Many feminists are now beginning to at least theoretically consider the fact that there's no reason why one shouldn't love a woman. But I think that a certain kind of experimentation going on now with lesbianism can be really bad. Because even if you do ideologically think that it is perfectly fine—well, that's a political position; but being able to love somebody is a very personal and private thing as well, and even if you remove political barriers, well, then you are left with finding an individual who particularly fits you.

So I guess I'm saying that I don't think women who are beginning to think about lesbianism should get involved with anyone until they are really attracted to somebody. And that includes refusing to be seduced by lesbians who play the male seduction game and tell you, "you don't love women," and "you are oppressing us" if you don't jump into bed with them. It's terrible to try to seduce someone on ideological grounds.

Q. *Do you now look at women in a more sexual way?*

A. You mean, do I now eye all women as potential bed partners? No. Nor did I ever see men that way. As a matter of fact, I've never found myself being attracted to a man just because, for example, he had a good physique. I had a sexual relationship with whatever boy friend I had, but I related to most other men pretty asexually. It's no different with women. My female friends—well, I still see them as friends, because that's what they are. I don't sit around and have secret fantasies of being in bed with them.

But there's a real question here: What is the source, the impetus, for one's sexuality? Is it affection and love, or is it essentially conquest in bed? If it's sex as conquest in bed, then the question you just asked is relevant, for adding the category of women to those you sleep with would mean that every woman—who's attractive enough to be a prize worth conquering, of course—could arouse your sexuality. But if the sexual source lies in affection and love, then the question becomes absurd. For one obviously does not immediately fall in love with every woman one meets simply because one is able to sleep with women.

Also, one thing that really turns me off about



this whole business of viewing women as potential bed mates is the implied possessiveness of it. It has taken me this long just to figure out how men are treating women sexually; now when I see some lesbians doing precisely the same kinds of things, I'm supposed to have instant amnesia in the name of sisterhood. I have heard some lesbians say things like, "I see all men as my rivals," or have heard them proudly discuss how they intimidated a heterosexual couple publicly to "teach the woman a political lesson." This brings out in me the same kind of intense rage that I get when, for example, I hear white men discussing how black men are "taking their women" (or vice versa). Who the hell says we belong to anyone?

**Q.** Do you think that you would have difficulty relating to a man again if this relationship broke up? That is, can you "go back" to men after having had a relationship with a woman?

**A.** It's an interesting thing that when people ask that question, most often what they're really asking is, are you "lost" to the world of what's "natural"? Sometimes I find myself not wanting to answer the question at all just because they're starting out by assuming that something's wrong with having a relationship with a woman. That's usually what's meant by "go back to men"—like you've been off someplace wild and crazy and, most of all, unsafe, and can you find your way home to papa, or something. So first of all it wouldn't be "going back."

And since I didn't become involved with a woman in order to make a political statement, by the same token I wouldn't make the converse statement. So, sure I could have a relationship with a man if he were the right kind of person and if he had rejected playing "the man" with me—that leaves out a lot of men here, I must add. But if a man had the right combination of qualities, I see no reason why I shouldn't be able to love him as much as I now love her.

At a certain point, I think, you realize that the final qualification is not being male or female, but whether they've joined the middle. That is—whether they have started from the male or the female side—they've gone toward the center where they are working toward combining the healthy aspects of so-called male and female characteristics. That's where I want to go and that's what I'm beginning to realize I respond to in other people.

**Q.** Now that you've gotten involved with a woman, what is your attitude toward gay and lesbian groups?

**A.** I have really mixed feelings about them. To some extent, for example, there has been a healthy interplay between the gay movement and the feminist movement. Feminists have had a very good influence on the gay movement because women's liberation challenges the very nature of the sex role system, not just whether one may be allowed to make transfers within it. On the other hand, the gay movement has helped open up the question of women loving other women. Though some of this was beginning to happen by itself, lesbians made a point of pressing the issue and therefore speeded up the process.

But there is a problem to me with focusing on sexual choice, as the gay movement does. Sleeping with another woman is not necessarily a healthy thing by itself. It does not mean—or prove, for that matter—that you therefore love women. It doesn't mean that you have avoided bad "male" or "female" behavior. It doesn't guarantee you anything. If you think about it, it can be the same game with new partners: On the one hand, male roles are learned, not genetic; women can ape them too. On the other, the feminine role can comfortably be carried into lesbianism, except now instead of a woman being passive with a man, she's passive with another woman. Which is all very familiar and is all going nowhere.

I guess to me, at this point in my life, feminism naturally incorporates the possibility of sleeping with and loving women; but it is only one of many elements of what I define as radical feminism—that is, the elimination of sex roles. The main point of feminism is still to understand that we as women are a political group living on the margin of a male society, that sex roles define our inferior "place" for us, and that radical feminism means the ultimate destruction of that role system. Within that perspective, sleeping with and loving women is only one possibility, and becomes a purely personal solution to living within a sexist society unless it is seen in the larger light of destroying sex roles altogether.

The confusing of sexual partners with sexual roles has also led to a really bizarre situation where some lesbians insist that you aren't really a radical feminist if you are not in bed with a woman. Which is wrong politically and outrageous personally.

Q. Did the fact that lesbians pushed the issue in the women's movement have a major effect upon your own decision to have a relationship with a woman?

A. It's hard to know. I think that the lesbian movement has escalated the thinking in the women's movement, and to that extent it probably escalated mine.

But at the same time I know I was slowly get-

ting there myself anyway. I'd been thinking about it for a long time. Because it is a natural question; if you want to remove sexual roles, and if you say that men and women are equal human beings, well, the next question is: Why should you only love men? I remember asking myself that question, and I remember it being discussed in many workshops I was in—what is it that makes us assume that you can only receive and give love to a man?

## A Feminist Look at Children's Books

by the FEMINISTS ON CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Feminists on Children's Media is a collective of women who have prepared an annotated bibliography of non-sexist children's books called *Little Miss Muffet Fights Back*.<sup>\*</sup> The collective includes mothers, high school students, librarians, and other professionals in writing, publishing, and education. This article was part of a media presentation on Sexism in Children's Books given in cooperation with the Authors Guild on October 15, 1970.

Is the portrayal of females in children's books sexist? That is, are girls and women assigned only traditional female roles and personalities? And when the female foot fails to fit that often too-tight shoe, is the girl or woman then seen as an unfortunate, troubled human being?

These questions were the basis of a group effort to scrutinize some of the more highly praised children's books. In our view, a non-sexist portrayal would offer the girl reader a positive image of woman's physical, emotional, and intellectual potential; it would encourage her to reach her own full personhood, free of traditionally imposed limitations.

In selecting books to examine, we consulted a

number of influential lists. These were the *Notable Books of 1969* (American Library Association), the Child Study Association's annual recommendations for that same year, and the Newbery Award winners.

It was a shock to discover almost immediately that relatively few of the books on these lists even feature female characters, let alone what we would consider *positive* female characters. Of all forty-nine Newbery Award winners, books about boys outnumbered books about girls by about three to one. On that score, the years have brought little improvement. The ALA list for 1969 gave us a ratio of over two to one.

The Child Study Association list for the same year proved more difficult to analyze. It is very long, divided into innumerable categories, and many of the books can't yet be found in the libraries. However, we made a separate check of

<sup>\*</sup>For a copy of this bibliography send 50 cents in coin plus a stamped (16 cents) self-addressed 4 x 9½ envelope to Feminists on Children's Media, P.O. Box 4315, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10017.

several categories. Under the heading of "Boys and Girls" we found a male to female ratio of two to one. Under "Growing Up" the ratio was over three to one. And "Sports," of course, like certain bars we could formerly name, was 100 percent male. The rest of the book list may not follow the pattern of this sampling, but suspicion runs high!

The thoughtful introduction to the Child Study Association list makes the following statement: The books a child reads "should not shield him from knowledge of destructive forces in the world, but rather help him to cope with them." We agree, for the most part. But why does the sentence read "shield *him*" and "help *him*"? Sexism is such a destructive force in the world that we feel the implicit sexism in this sentence should not be overlooked.

The introduction states also that a book's "possible emotional and intellectual impact on a young reader" must be considered. Right on! Not even a problem of gender there. The CSA continues: "...From its inception, it has been aware of the mental health aspects of reading and asks that books for children present basically honest concepts of life, positive ethical values, and honest interpersonal relationships." We ask no more than that. The CSA has clearly been struggling to encourage greater sensitivity to racism in books for children. If only their future book selections could be made with an equally growing sensitivity to the impact of sexism! Many of the present selections fail to realize the promise of their own introduction. The list is guilty of sexism—if only through indifference.

Of course, a greater sensitivity to sexism would greatly curtail the current lists of recommended children's books, at least for the next few years. Yet a scrupulous attitude on the part of prestigious organizations would surely serve powerfully in raising the general feminist consciousness of the children's book world, making forever obsolete Eve Merriam's recent and accurate comment that "sex prejudice is the only prejudice now considered socially acceptable." Habit dies hard.

We'd like to apologize for seeming to pick on CSA. It is just that such a praiseworthy introduction deserved attention in terms of its implications for the female image. Nor were we being picky in our examination of specific books: Checking the prevalence of so virulent a disease as sexism requires the isolation of even potential carriers.

What would we like to see in children's books? What were our criteria? We wanted to see girl readers encouraged to develop physical confidence and strength without the need to fear any corresponding loss of "femininity." We would have liked to see the elimination of all those tiresome references to "tomboys." Why can't a girl who prefers baseball to ballet simply be a girl who prefers baseball to ballet?

Many women have to—or simply prefer to—earn a living. Can't we encourage girls to find satisfaction and fulfillment in work, and lay aside forever the suspicion that for a woman, work outside the home is primarily proof of her inability to love a man, or to land a sufficiently lucrative one? Women do study seriously, work with enjoyment—or at least pride in their competence—get promoted, and (of course) fight sexism at work and in their families in order to progress. Let's show them as no less "feminine," despite the assertiveness and firm sense of self required in this untraditional role.

Margaret Mead has written that "man is unsexed by failure, woman by success." That is another brutal truth we would like to see changed. And while we're about it, let's not overlook the fact that boys, too, are denigrated and cramped by sexism. Our current rigid role definitions require that a boy be all that a girl should not be: unafraid, competent at "male" jobs, strong. A weeping boy is a "sissy." Words like "sissy"—and "hero," too—should be dissected and exposed for the inhuman demands they make on growing boys. Children's books could help.

We object to a woman's being defined by the man she marries, or the children she bears, or the father she once obeyed. Let's see women who are people in their own right—independent of such compensatory affiliations. And if a woman doesn't want children, or even a husband, must this be seen as peculiar? Why not encourage girls in a search for alternate life styles? Give a girl all the possible options for her future life choices that you give a boy, all his freedom to inquire and explore and achieve. Her options don't have to be slanted toward certain currently socially imposed preferences.

There are books on superwomen. Okay. Superwomen do exist. But many more books are needed on women who simply function very well and freely wherever they choose—or are forced—to apply their abilities.

We are bitterly tired of seeing depictions of the

woman as castrator. Even a well-known writer, whose portrayal of girls we frequently admire, slipped badly in some recent picture books. In one of these, the mother reproves her son for spilling the mud he is playing with—even though the scene is outdoors! In another, little sister (and we know where she learned *her* lesson) reproves brother for accidentally spilling paint off his easel. Little girls are as capable of making a casual mess and as freely lost in creative play as little boys. A picture book that shows this beautifully is *Rain Rain Rivers* by Uri Shulevitz (Farrar, 1969) which we were delighted to find on both the ALA and CSA lists. (We were as pleased to find the two previously mentioned books ignored by both lists.)

And when, as must sometimes happen if books portray real life, there is an overcontrolling or too-bossy woman, she should not be made a fool or villain. A little understanding—of her problem, her frustration at not being allowed to play an equal role in her family or her world, and her consequent misuse of energy to project her ideas and ego through the lives of others—is long overdue.

How about books showing more divorced and single-parent families? And, for heaven's sake, every divorced or widowed mother does not solve her problems through remarriage—or even wish to do so. (Few do, you know!) Maybe she can start on the career she never had, and discover a new concept of herself. The difficulties and the loneliness are real, as are the child care problems. But let the woman find a new self-reliance in fighting her own battles, and joy in winning at least some of them.

There is also the question of language. No more automatic use of "he" to mean "child," or "mankind" to mean "humankind." If at first the alternatives seem forced, and they will, they won't sound that way for long.

Despite our criticism of socially assigned roles, we don't mean to diminish or ignore the mother or housewife. She is often a strong, wonderfully rich human being. Her role can be vital, and sometimes she finds satisfaction in it. But let's not insist on that as *her* role. Men can also cope skillfully with household tasks, and not necessarily look for a woman or daughter to take them off the hook.

#### Sexist Books

The books we read—most from the lists mentioned earlier—fell, or were pushed by our merci-

less analysis, into several categories. One, plain and simple, was the Sexist Book, in which girls and women are exclusively assigned traditional female roles, although the material may, unhappily, be fairly true to life.

We were forcibly struck by the purposeful sexist propaganda between the covers of some of the recommended children's books. Young women who have found it an uphill struggle to identify with the popular female image will recognize it as propaganda and not simply as a natural reflection of life. Unfortunately the girl reader is not yet so experienced. Books that outline a traditional background role for women, praising their domestic accomplishments, their timidity of soul, their gentle appearance and manners, and at the same time fail to portray initiative, enterprise, physical prowess, and genuine intellect, deliver a powerful message to children of both sexes. Such books are a social poison.

Take, for a horrible example, the attitude exemplified in the following line: "Accept the fact that this is a man's world and learn how to play the game gracefully." Those words fell from the lips of a *sympathetic* male character in Irene Hunt's 1967 Newbery winner *Up the Road Slowly* (Follett, 1966). Or take this juicy bit from the 1957 winner *Miracles on Maple Hill* by Virginia Sorenson (Harcourt, 1956):

For the millionth time she was glad she wasn't a boy. It was all right for girls to be scared or silly or even ask dumb questions. Everybody just laughed and thought it was funny. But if anybody caught Joe asking a dumb question or even thought he was the littlest bit scared, he went red and purple and white. Daddy was even something like that, old as he was.

Does that passage describe real life? Indeed it does! But a good book for children should comment and leave the child feeling something is wrong here. This one does not. In fact, we voted it our supreme example of the most thoroughly relentless type of sexism found in children's literature. The girl, Marly, never overcomes her hero worship of brother Joe or her comparative inferiority. And it certainly would have been relevant to explore the toll that maintaining hero status takes on Joe's character.

Such perfect examples, of course, are not the rule. But there was a surplus of books whose thesis might seem less obvious, but whose refrain was predictably the same. A little girl in the 1955 Newbery winner *The Wheel on the School* (Harper, 1954) asks her boy playmate: "Can I go,

too?" And the response is "No! Girls are no good at jumping. It's a boy's game." Meindert DeJong leaves it at that—and another eager little girl reader is squelched.

Those fictional girls who join the prestigious ranks of male adventurers often do so at the expense of other members of their sex. And small wonder, the tomboy-turned-token-female is simply the other side of the coin. The message is clear: If a girl wishes to join the boys in their pranks and hell-raising, or to use her imagination and personality in leading them, she renounces all claim to supposedly feminine characteristics—tears and fears and pink hair ribbons. The line between traditionally assigned sex roles is drawn sharp and clear. The girl who crosses that line is forced to desert her sex rather than allowed to act as a spokeswoman for a broader definition.

Take *Lulu's Back in Town* (Funk & Wagnall, 1968). The proof provided by author Laura Dean to show Lulu's final acceptance by the boys is the clubhouse sign: "FOR BOYS ONLY. No Girls Allowed. (Except Lulu.)" This is seen by the author, who unfortunately happens to be a woman, as a satisfactory ending. But our committee was not so pleased. (Except to find that neither ALA nor CSA had listed it.)

#### Cop-Outs

The Cop-Out Book is often the most insidious. At its worst, it promises much and delivers nothing. But the better ones are the most infuriating, for often they are only a step away from being the exact kind of literature we'd like to see for girls and boys about girls. The actual cop-out may be only a crucial line, a paragraph, the last chapter. But somewhere a sexist compromise is made, somewhere the book adjusts to the stereotyped role of woman, often for the sake of social pressure and conformity. The compromise brings with it a change, and this change is not only disturbing, but often distorts the logical development of the character herself. Suddenly her development is redirected, or, rather, stunted.

The many Cop-Out Books we found are probably a fair reflection of the social uncertainties and inner conflicts of writers, publishers, and reviewers in our sexist society.

*Caddie Woodlawn* by Carol R. Brink (Macmillan, 1935) is a Newbery winner. Not a recent one, but still extremely popular. Caddie is a young pioneer girl, allowed to run free with her brothers.

She is happy and strong in her so-called tomboy role. Though her mother pressures her to become more of a "lady," the reader feels serenely certain that Caddie will remain her own person. Alas, as the book draws to a close, Caddie's father pleads: "It's a strange thing, but somehow we expect more of girls than of boys. It is the sisters and wives and mothers, you know, Caddie, who keep the world sweet and beautiful . . ." Thus subdued, she joins the insipidly depicted girls at the weaving loom. True, the boys do ask her to teach them how to weave. Apparently they may choose to join women at their work, but no longer may Caddie choose to run free in the woods. And we are left feeling cheated. Why should it be the right choice for her obediently to join the "sweet and beautiful" women of the world on their pedestals? Why shouldn't she continue to struggle for a life in which she might fulfill some inner potential?

The linking of a girl's growing up to the abandoning of her "tomboy" ways is a depressingly frequent theme in these books. As a stage in growing up, tomboy behavior appears to be acceptable. But the girl must in the end conform to more socially approved behavior. In a widely used bibliography compiled by Clara Kirchner in 1966 entitled *Behavior Patterns in Children's Books*, there is an entire section called "From Tomboy to Young Woman." Here are two random descriptions:

*A Girl Can Dream* by Betty Cavanna (Westminster, 1948): Loretta Larkin, tops in athletic but poor in social graces and jealous of a classmate who shines socially, finds out that being "just a girl" can be fun.

*Billie* by Esphyr Slobodkina (Lothrop, 1959): Billie, who wore faded jeans and played boys' games because she didn't like being a girl, came to think differently after she took ballet lessons to limber up a sprained ankle.

These books fit into the following categories: Womanliness, Growing Up, and Popularity.

Young readers of such grievous cop-outs are forced to believe that the spunk, individuality, and physical capability so refreshingly portrayed in tomboy heroines must be surrendered when girls grow up, in order to fit the passive, supposedly more mature image of a young woman. But where is that earlier energy to be spent? Is depression in the adult woman perhaps linked to the painful suppression of so many sparks of life? In a way we could call the Cop-Out Book the "co-op" book, for it permits the tomboy reader to believe she can pass comfortably over into that other world at a safely future date. Real life is rarely like that.



A new book recommended on both the ALA and the CSA lists is Constance Green's *A Girl Called Al* (Viking, 1969). The main character comes across as a nonconformist who truly enjoys her individuality, and throughout most of the book she eschews traditional female worries—how she looks, hooking boy friends, etc. Wonderful. But the ending is a neat little all-American package. Al gets thin, gets pretty, and now she will be popular. All these sudden switches hit the reader in the last few pages. Her pigtails make room for a feminine hairdo. Her closest friend explains:

Her mother took her to the place she gets her hair done and had the man wash and set Al's hair, and now she wears it long with a ribbon around it. It is very becoming, my mother says. She is right. But I miss Al's pigtails. I wanted her to wear it this way but now that she does I'm kind of sorry. She looks older and different, is all I know.

Again, we are led to believe that another character in our long line of individual heroines will conform to the role society has rigidly defined for her. We find it hard to buy the sudden change in Al. And we also miss the pigtails.

Sometimes it is the focus of a book that makes it a cop-out. When we read the 1959 Newbery winner, Elizabeth Speare's *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* (Houghton Mifflin, 1958), we praised Kit's independent spirit, her rejection of bigoted values, and her truly striking courage at a time when women were burned for witchcraft. From a feminist standpoint, the book is marred only by the plot's revolving around the standard question: "Whom shall Kit marry?" In too many books we find the male character worrying about what shall he be while the female character worries about who shall he be.

Only a few hairs are out of place in *Next Door to Xanadu* by Doris Orgel (Harper, 1969), also listed by ALA and CSA. The main character faces the too-often very real hatred of pre-teen boys toward girls. She meets it with strength, earning respect. The only boy-crazy girl in the book is de-emphasized. But one scene allows our society's pervasive sexism to come shining through.

At a going-away party for one of the girls, a woman parades as a fortuneteller. "She took out a bowl, put it on the table, filled it with all sorts of strange little things. Then she said 'Who among you dares to delve into the secrets the future holds in store?'" Here were the fortunes of the girls: The girl who pulled out two safety pins would be "the mother of a fine pair of twins." Chalk meant another would be a teacher. The one

who picked a little sack of soil would be "a farmer's wife." One pulled a penny: she would be very rich. One picked a little plastic boy doll and she would meet a "fine young man." "Great happiness" was in store for the one who got a bluebird's feather. When one of the girls pulled out a jack, the fortuneteller chanted: "Butcher, baker, candlestick-maker; tailor, sailor, teacher, preacher; doctor, lawyer, carpenter, smith—she would have kept it up, but Helen guessed it. Betsy would marry a jack-of-all-trades."

Not be a jack-of-all-trades, but marry one. Not be a farmer, but be a farmer's wife. The only vocation predicted was that of teacher. Unfortunately, fortunetellers will be like that, until we have feminist fortunetellers. That would certainly bring brighter futures.

At the risk of carping, we felt that such a fine book as *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeline L'Engle (Farrar, 1962), the 1963 Newbery winner, had a hint of acceptance of woman's second-class status. This is almost the only science fiction book in which a girl is the main character. We even find a mother who is a scientist, perhaps one of the only scientist moms in juvenile fiction. But why did father have to be a super scientist, topping mom by a degree or two?

#### Positive Images

Happily, if not of course, there are some books for children which show female characters in flexible, diverse roles. They allow for character development beyond the stereotype, and do not disappoint us in the end. At first we tried calling these "Non-Sexist." But we found many books were not precisely either Sexist or Cop-Out, though somehow they did not quite fit our exacting feminist standards, usually because they did not deal with the questions they posed in a sufficiently clear, real, and affirmative way. The rare book that did succeed, even in this, is our Positive-Image Book.

Certainly, these categories overlap a bit. *A Wrinkle in Time* really belongs among the Positive-Image Books. We just couldn't resist putting down papa's degrees. Unfair, we admit, because of the especially fine, honest relationship between Calvin (the boy who is a friend, as opposed to Boy Friend) and the girl protagonist. They respect each other's heads, and his ego does not stand in the way of her saving the day with an act of courage that rescues her little brother from it. We also applauded the image of the mother as a brilliant scientist who instills pride in her children.

Another Newbery we salute is the 1961 winner, *Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell (Houghton Mifflin, 1960), one of the rare books showing a girl with strong physical skills. She kills wild dogs, constructs weapons, kills a giant tentacle sea fish, and hauls a six-man canoe by herself. The Indian girl protagonist, Karana, spends eighteen years alone on a bleak and lonely island. And there we are indeed tempted to ask why such a marvelous heroine can only be encountered alone on an island—and never in the midst of society?

While on the subject of positive intages, there is a new book we hope will appear on the 1970 recommended lists. *Rufus Gideon Grant* by Leigh Dean (Scribners, 1970) is about a boy, but we were taken by the following reference to a woman: "There inside this magazine was this lady, climbing giant trees and playing with wild chimpanzees . . ." And Rufus asks: "Can a boy be a zoologist?"

If we had time we would also like to discuss such essentially positive-image books as *Strawberry Girl* by Lois Lenski (Lippincott, 1945), *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* by E. L. Konigsburg (Atheneum, 1967), Vera and Bill Cleaver's *Where the Lilies Bloom* (Lippincott, 1969), and *Pippi Longstocking* by Astrid Lindgren (reissued in paper by Viking, 1969). Padding our Positive-Image list a bit we might add commendable classics like Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (first published in 1865), *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy M. Montgomery (Grosset & Dunlap, 1908), and *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* by Kate Douglas Wiggin (Macmillan, 1903). Of course there are some positive books that escaped our notice, just as some of the negative ones may have slipped by, but we wanted to cover a fourth and extra category that seems to overlap all the others.

#### Especially for Girls

This category appears on a number of publishers' lists and on lists of recommended books. It is called "especially for girls." The reason advanced by librarians and publishers for having such a category at all is that while girls are perfectly happy to read "boys'" books, no self-respecting boy will read books about girls. In our male-dominated society, unfortunately, this is probably true. But listing a separate group of books for girls provides boys with a list of books *not* to read, further polarizing the sexes.

There seems only one possible justification for a separate category of books for girls: to spot and recommend those books which, according to our highest, most stringent feminist standards are not sexist. Pursuing this logic, when children's literature no longer supports sexism, there will no longer be any reason to list books "especially for girls."

The current lists of girls' books promoted by publishers show a preponderance of stories about love, dating, and romance. And there are the companion books about young girls with problems like shyness, overweight, glasses, acne, and so on, that are supposed to interfere with romance. Certainly, problems facing young girls should be dealt with in the books they read, but we resent the implication forced on young girls that romance is the only fulfilling future for them. Boys, too, are involved in romance, but their books are about other things.

The lists for girls also include career books about nurses, secretaries, ballet dancers, stewardesses. Why not more female doctors? Bosses? Pilots? Aquanauts? Present books simply reinforce the sex roles imposed by society, and even then virtually all the careers end in a cop-out. When the girl marries she gives up the career. But *must* marriage and career be mutually exclusive? For their publishers, these books are justified by the market—they are meant to sell rather than edify. We happen to believe that career books that edify will also sell, and far more lastingly, as women gain in the struggle for their freedom.

But what about those lists of currently recommended books that *are* intended to edify? In 1969, for example, the Child Study Association listed eight books "Especially for Girls." Of these, we were disheartened to find that only one was free—or almost free—of sexism. Two more were Cop-Out Books. The rest were middling to very bad.

Let's start with the best. *The Motoring Millers* by Alberta Wilson Constant (Crowell, 1969) not only shows delightful girls and women behaving responsibly and delightfully and doing many things that men do, but the question of sex roles is specifically aired. In the story, the winner of an auto race turns out to be a young girl. When the wife of a college president says to her, "I want you to know that I am highly in favor of your driving in this race. Women should advance their cause in every field," the winner replies, "I didn't think about that. I just love to drive. Taught

myself on our one-cylinder Trumbull when I was ten." We welcome both reactions.

Two more books on this list, *A Girl Called Al* and *Next Door to Xanadu*, have already been described above as Cop-Outs, though we did consider them both *almost* commendable. To those three acceptable books, we would also add *Julie's Decision* by Rose A. Levant (Washburn, 1969) except that we were disturbed by what seemed a paternalistic white attitude especially inappropriate in a book about a black girl.

But, after these titles, the CSA girls' list deteriorates into sexism. It is shocking to find "recommended for girls" a book like *The Two Sisters* by Honor Arundel (Meredith, 1969), which not only reinforces the stereotype of girls as romantic, clothes-crazy, and spendthrift, but whose moral says that, when all is said and done, love is a woman's proper vocation and her future ought to be subordinated to her husband's. The young heroine in *The Two Sisters* has just told her father that she may abandon her university scholarship to follow her husband who has gone off to find a better job in another city. Her father says gently: "Geoff's quite right to be ambitious and you're right not to stand in his way. A man who doesn't get a chance to fulfill his ambition makes a terrible husband." It doesn't occur to either that a woman who sacrifices her potential can also end up making a terrible wife.

John Rowe Townsend's *Hell's Edge* (Lothrop,

1969) is just as bad. The motherless teenage heroine cooks all the meals and does the housework for her teacher-father, whose domestic ineptitude is paraded as one of his endearing qualities. A pair of sisters in the book are set up with mutually exclusive stereotyped female traits—and then shot down for them. One is described as a "half-wit" for being concerned with looks and clothes; the other sister, a bookworm, is denigrated for not caring about her looks or clothes. Damned if you do and damned if you don't.

In another CSA recommendation, the boys in the family are considered more important than the girls, even though the book is supposedly for girls. (Well, it happens in real life too!) The name of that prize is *One to Grow On* by Jean Little (Little, Brown, 1969).

In *A Crown for a Queen* by Ursula Moray Williams (Meredith, 1969), the plot revolves around—get ready—a *beauty* contest with the boys as judges! The most memorable (and most offensive) line occurs when the heroine, Jenny, finally gets the beauty crown. As we might predict, she "never felt happier in her life." This is scarcely the positive female image we'd been looking for, even if we could all be beauty queens.

As our consciousness of "woman's place" changes, our recommendations of books for girls must change. As must books themselves. Eventually, we will have no more need for any list recommended "Especially for Girls."

Dear Mrs. Roth:

Thank you for your thoughtful note concerning Tonka Toys. We are pleased to learn that your daughter loves her Tonka Pick-up.

Regarding our slogan, "You can't raise boys without Tonka Toys," there is a psychological factor involved in that little boys don't want toys that girls can also play with.

We and our advertising people decided we had to "give in" to the boys, as they were the majority — more boys than girls actually ask for and receive Tonka Toys. Thankfully girls aren't so fussy!

Thank you for taking the time to write, and thank you for being a Tonka customer.

Sincerely yours,

(signed by a representative  
of Tonka Toys Sales Department,  
Division of Tonka Corporation)

# Speaking Out on Prostitution

by SUSAN BROWNMILLER

Susan Brownmiller is a writer and critic and an active member of New York Radical Feminists. The following paper was presented at an all-day filibuster of a New York State Legislature hearing on "Prostitution as a Victimless Crime."

SUSAN BROWNMILLER: Gentlemen, you state that the purpose of your hearing today is to listen to testimony on the subject of prostitution, what you refer to as "a victimless crime." Prostitution is a crime, gentlemen, but it is not victimless. There is a victim, and that is the woman.

I understand in the last week you received some urgent phone calls from several women who consider themselves your peers—women from the New Democratic Coalition, a district leader or two—and they asked you to suspend the hearing. They told you that the women's liberation movement considers prostitution to be a women's issue, along with child care, along with equal pay for equal work, along with marriage, abortion, contraception, and rape. These women told you that they were planning a joint conference on prostitution with the Radical Feminists, and that this conference, to be held before the start of the legislative session, would evolve a new approach, a woman's approach, to the issue of prostitution. But you refused to cancel this hearing, giving ample evidence, I think, to the weight you give to the political power of women. And so, against our will, we are forced to use your hearing as our forum. We do this with regret, in heat and haste, without the proper thought, consideration, and democratic spirit of inquiry that our women's conference will have.

As with most other issues of women's liberation, the problem of prostitution is unbelievably complex, resting as it does on economics, psychology, sexuality, and the male power principle. There are some who'd say that the male power principle embodies the first three points I've mentioned: economics, psychology, and sexuality. To be perfectly honest, that's what I'd say. (Applause)

One fact about prostitution I'm sure has not escaped your notice: the buyers, the ones who hold the cash in their hand, the ones who create the market by their demand, they are all men, gentlemen, the same sex as yourselves.

In the 1940s, the Kinsey Report—which was probably the last really documented report on sex-

uality—the Kinsey Report stated that two-thirds of all American men have some experience with a prostitute. In 1964, R.E.L. Masters estimated that the figure was closer to 80 percent. Now, having counted the men in this room, I don't think we need to play a shell game to figure out which one of you might have a clean slate.

Now the stock your sex is buying with their dollar bills is human flesh, for the most part, but not always, the same sex as myself. And I say parenthetically "not always," because in this city at the present time, you can go any evening to the corner of 53rd Street and Third Avenue, and see men buying other men for sex. This is seldom talked about, but it is relevant. Again the buyers are always men.

Now the myth has it that the female prostitute is the seller of her own flesh, that she is a free participant in her act, that she has made a conscious choice to sell her body. That is a male myth, gentlemen, one that your sex has rather successfully popularized for your own self-interest. It has not only absolved you of your responsibility in this terrible crime of buying another human being's body, it has conveniently shifted your guilt onto our shoulders. The law in this city is applied to punish the woman and let the man go scot-free.

Now there is something else that the male sex has always tried to do to cover up its crime: it has tried to separate the woman engaged in prostitution from the rest of the women in the culture. It calls her "the other," it marks her the bad woman, it sends her to jail, and it tells the rest of us that we are very good and virtuous and we have nothing in common with her.

Well, gentlemen, I have good news for you. We have seen through that little myth: the feminist movement identifies itself with the female victim of the male-created institution known as prostitution. (Applause)

MAN: I take it you don't object to being interrupted.

BROWNMILLER: Now, I am white, and middle-

class and ambitious, and I have no trouble identifying with either the call girl or the street hustler, and I can explain why in one sentence: I've been working to support myself in the city for fifteen years, and I've had more offers to sell my body for money than I have had to be an executive. According to John Kenneth Galbraith, in a recent issue of *The New York Times Magazine*, 96 percent of all jobs over \$15,000 in this country are held by white men. The remaining 4 percent are divided among blacks, browns, and women. Now when I see a young girl hustling on the street, I see a young girl like myself who has ambition. But she has no options. I mean, what else could she be? She could be a waitress, she could be a comptometer operator, she could be a welfare mother, she could be somebody's wife.

There was a time when I was an unemployed actress, and working to support myself as a waitress and a file clerk. The disparity between my reality situation and my ambition for a better life was so great that I gave serious consideration to the social pressure to do a little hustling. And that is something, gentlemen, I really don't think that you comprehend. I don't think that anyone has ever asked you to sell your body, or presumed that your body was for sale. I wonder if a cab driver has ever turned around to you and remarked, "I see you're a little short of change. Perhaps we could work together. I could steer some customers your way." I wonder if a man has ever walked up to you in a hotel lobby, and muttered, "What's your price? Ten? Twenty? I'll pay it. I'll pay it." That happened to me in the Hotel Astor. I wonder if you've ever applied for work in a bar-restaurant, and the owner, or perhaps he was only the manager, looked you up and down and said, "Are you sure you're over twenty-one? Why don't you come downstairs with me and prove it?"

Now these were all experiences that happened to me at a time of my life when perhaps I looked more vulnerable than I am today, and when I was certainly more desperate. And I want to say without theatricality that I was lucky. I had options that most other women don't have. I managed to use my ambition in a positive manner. I managed to become a writer, what Caroline Bird called "a loophole woman." There was, of course, one other option I could have exercised. I could've gotten married.

So now, perhaps you can understand why I identify with the prostitute, and why, when I see

a front page headline in the *New York Times*, "Mayor Stepping Up Drive on Prostitutes and Smut," I know that in a very real sense it is me and my entire sex that the mayor and the *New York Times* are talking about. And when this mayor appoints a task force of six men and no women to study the problems of pimps, pornography, and prostitution, giving equal moral weight to each category, I know that his failure to appoint even one woman to this task force is not an oversight, it's just that the boys decided they've got to get together and do a little superficial something to preserve their fun.

Now I am worried that your purpose in holding this hearing today is to open the doors to the legalization of prostitution. Mr. Pete Hamill, for one, has waxed eloquent on the subject in *New York* magazine and in the *Village Voice*, extolling the virtues of a legal brothel he had visited in Curacao, where he got a clean lay at a fair price with a medical guarantee of no venereal disease. A recent article in *Look* magazine reports on the first legal American brothel outside of Reno, Nevada. Perhaps you saw the story. In an interview with the pimp in charge, a white man described as sporting two diamond rings on his fingers, this pig said, "First of all, the customer doesn't have to worry about getting VD. The girls are checked every week by a doctor, and once a month they get a blood test."

Gentlemen, if you intend to extend the definition of government-inspected meat to the sale of human flesh, you will do it over our dead bodies. The women's movement will not tolerate the legalization of sexual slavery in this state. Yes, there is a prostitution problem. It is expressed by Judge John A. Murtagh, who has written: "Most of the men who visit prostitutes would be considered normal." It is expressed by Judge Morris Schwab, who began to hold prostitutes in his court without bail after he got some complaints from friends of his who were in town for a Bar Association hearing. They claimed that they were actually being harassed by women on the street. Well, if Judge Schwab were to put on a skirt and walk down 42nd Street, or even Fifth Avenue, any afternoon, despite his hairy legs, I think he would begin to understand for the first time in his life what street harassment is all about. It is women who are being harassed on these streets in New York City, day and night, and they are being harassed by men and not the reverse. Yes, there is a prostitution problem, and it is expressed by Mr. Pete



Hamill who daydreams about women in clean little stalls, medically approved and at a price a workman can afford.

There is a serious problem in our society, when women with ambition must sell their bodies because there is no other way that they can earn fifteen thousand a year. There is a serious problem in our society when men think that access to the female body is, if not a divine right, at least a monetary right.

There has been but one in-depth study on the gratification men get from paying for sex, and that study was conducted in the 1920s. And perhaps that is the area in which you gentlemen could begin your research. Perhaps it is the only valid study a man could make in this day and age on the subject of prostitution. You might begin with Marshall Helfand, who, according to the *New York Times* of July 24th, was arrested and charged with promoting prostitution. Mr. Helfand is the owner of Tune Time Fashions at 520 Eight Avenue, if you want to know how to reach him. Or perhaps you might want to fly in Mr. Weldon Case of Elyria, Ohio. Mr. Case was arrested along with Mr. Helfand and charged with patronizing a prostitute. He said in court that he was the president of the Midwest Intercontinental Telephone Company, which operates in twelve states. I think a garment center boss and a major corporation president might have some very interesting insights on their concept of manhood and their psycholog-

ical need to pay a woman for the use of her body.

Prostitution will not end in this country until men see women as equals. And men will never see women as equals until there's an end to prostitution. So it seems that we will have to work for the full equality of women and the end to prostitution side by side. One cannot occur without the other. In the meantime, it seems to me, it's foolish to prosecute a woman for a crime in which she is the victim. But it is equally reprehensible to let a man go free for the criminal act of purchasing another's body.

Now that concludes the formal part of my testimony. I had a great deal of difficulty writing these words down because, as the poet Adrienne Rich once said in another context, "this is the oppressor's language." And it's very clear when you start to write about prostitution that you're using the oppressor's language, which is the male language. The institution is defined by the woman: prostitution; but it is the man who does the buying. There is no formal word to describe that man; we just have a couple of slang words like "John," "trick," that the prostitute uses. There is no formal word. Perhaps that's because it's all men, and men have never felt the need to use the specific word in the language that defines something that is their province. Anyway, I've had trouble, and because of that I feel that other women from the movement must speak now . . .

## Men and Violence

*The following is a transcript of a taped consciousness-raising session. It is one of twenty such tapes produced for WBAI-FM Radio in New York City.*

*The WBAI consciousness-raising group, consisting of seven women, was formed in the fall of 1970. The women met every week—sometimes twice a week and on Sundays—in the WBAI studios to produce a CR tape on a specific topic. The topics included Adolescent Puberty Rituals (How I First Learned About Menstruation), Housework, Masturbation, and Monogamy.*

*The program was broadcast in two parts on Fridays at noon. The daytime hour was chosen so that we would reach women who, because they*

*have small children and other female responsibilities, are often unable to join a CR group. During Part I of the program a forty-five minute edited version of a tape was played. During Part II women in the audience phoned in and did their own consciousness-raising on the air. The first broadcast of the CR program received more mail than any other first broadcast in WBAI history.*

*Members of the group are Kate Ellis, Sebern Fisher, Marian Meade, Vivian Nelmann, Gloria Schuh, Mary Winslow, and Rosemary Gaffney (who unfortunately was absent the night "Men and Violence" was taped). The program was produced and edited by Nanette Rainone.*

**SEBERN:** I just started a new job with a messenger service, and in the last two days when my son has been on vacation from school, he's been riding in the car with me mainly to save me from tow away zones. He's nine years old. And, as we go around the streets of New York, he points out to me every time a man is looking in my direction, or, which is more obvious to me, when a man is whistling at me. And he has this kind of grin on his face whenever he does it.

Finally today I asked him why he felt so compelled to point it out, and he said that he really didn't know. But it seemed that he was getting a grandstand view of male chauvinism and enjoying it, just as he was enjoying the sights of the World Trade Center or the heliport, you know? I came in on that level.

And it became difficult because I was dealing with that issue of the whistling which was out there, and here was my kid who was reflecting it all in my car. So I turned on the radio, which was the only thing to keep them... to keep all the sounds out.

**GLORIA:** What I feel is rage. I mean I feel outraged in terms of the street and in terms of my position on the street, in terms of the fact that the streets are owned by men. I just feel that the men stake out the street and each block is owned by different men, and that men travel those blocks with the consent and permission of other men. Women travel those blocks also with the consent and permission of men, but on a different level, in that you are at any time susceptible to those whims in far more of a real way than those men are.

You know, it's becoming a well-known thing that women in the movement hate to be whistled at. They hate to be stopped in the street. I mean, men laugh at it—other women laugh at it. They say that we're too sensitive, that we're too upset, that we get too outraged and that it's really a compliment to be stopped and to be whistled at and to be thought pretty and that we should start worrying when it stops.

But what I find outrageous is the fact that their fantasy can be activated into a reality at any time. And you're the object of it, so that you cannot escape. That's what happened tonight. I mean, we were coming to the studio and Vivian and I had stopped in front of a store, and a man came up to her and asked her for twenty cents. She said "No," and she proceeded to walk into the

store. He blocked her way and he shoved her against a plate glass window. And he called her a strange name. And all I could feel was contained rage, because if I hit him, he would've killed me. He was really a violent man. Much larger, much stronger. And I had no effective way of dealing with it.

If it happened again when we walked out of the studio, there would be no way of dealing with it. If you walk up to the police, as I wanted to do, the reality is that *they* probably wouldn't deal with it, because it's much too frequent. So you have to begin to choose your neighborhoods and choose the hours, and choose the circumstances that you can be out.

And that's the rage I feel as a woman. That complete physical powerlessness in a situation. And the only way of dealing with it is to react with some sort of violence, which women don't want to do. I don't want to become a man, in the sense of becoming someone that can beat the crap out of another person. Yet, the only alternative women have on the street is to become a part of the street. To react in the same way men do, which makes them immune in the sense that nobody walks up to a huge man in the street and beats him up, or presumes upon him.

**KATE:** Or a cis him for twenty cents, even.

**GLORIA:** Well, they might ask, but they'll ask politely. And certainly they're not going to beat someone up over twenty cents. It's really so heavy.

**SEBERN:** So what are you going to do?

**GLORIA:** I'm going to start learning to be violent, I guess. I mean I can only contain for so long my pure thoughts about how one power structure shouldn't presume upon another, and how you don't remove violence by being violent. That theory works only until you're ripped off against a wall or raped, or someone you know is killed. And then you begin to see that powerlessness is not the answer to that kind of street situation.

**KATE:** Because, in fact, it's not simply nonviolence, it's nonviolence combined with powerlessness, which doesn't make any sense at all.

**GLORIA:** I just remember an incident when I was visiting one night, and a man who was a friend of this family started to talk to me. I was talking about the movement, and I was telling him about myself and who I was and what I was doing. He tried the usual thing about, well, you

should wear lighter colors and you'll look better. And I just ignored him. I didn't pick up on any of that.

Toward the end of the evening we were talking about women and men's natural superiority over women, and he kind of looked in my direction. All of a sudden he became very agitated and said, "Well, if I really wanted to right now, I could kill you. I could beat the shit out of you." And I looked at him and I said, "Probably, but that doesn't make you a superior person." And he said, "But I really could. You know, I really could beat you up."

I've noticed a degree of violence that men have in relationship to me. I think maybe that's their second line of action when the first line doesn't really work. You know... like when they walk up to you...

*KATE:* A male chauvinist would say that you provoke that.

*MARY:* You only provoke it by assuming any kind of equality. The moment you begin to assume equality is that moment that it's provoked—if you want to use that word.

*GLORIA:* That's why the man stopped Vivian. And called her what he did. Like, which was a cold bitch. But the thing is that it was because she was walking down the street as though she had a right to be there. And as though she, you know, she was walking into a store, she wasn't aware of anybody, she wasn't looking at anybody... we were just talking. But I've noticed more and more that whenever we're together there's less of an attempt to pick us up than an attempt to be violent, because it's happened a couple of times.

*SEBERN:* Then there's the story of a friend of mine who went into a coffee shop-bar setup with her child in Pennsylvania. And the proprietor of the place came over and said that "You'll have to get that out of here." And she thought he was speaking of the chicken leg which the little boy was eating, and she went to great lengths to assure him that she was going to buy some food for herself. And he said, "No, I don't mean that, I mean your child. He is too young to be up so late." It was nine o'clock.

She became incensed, enraged. He was not only telling her that—that she couldn't partake of the services everybody else had, but he was also putting it in the context of her being a bad mother. She'd no other way than, you know, giving him a very hard time, trying to rouse up the other cus-

tomers who were bored with the whole scene, to get any kind of action going, and the feeling was overwhelming.

Her husband picked the child up and left because he didn't want a fight, which not only had undercut her argument, but really fulfilled a fear that, sure, that guy could and would beat somebody up over the issue of a child being up too late for his ethical standard. And, as he pushed her out the door, he said, "You know, you're a woman, and I could really beat you up."

*GLORIA:* It's so depressing.

*SEBERN:* But the level at which we take that in. You know, it's not only the circumstances that come from outside. It's the level to which you accept that in day-to-day situations which doesn't allow you to have an instantaneous reaction, and know that you're taking somebody off guard and chopping them or kicking them, but tells you rather that you have to submit to constant punishment of this kind.

*KATE:* Has anybody here... has anybody here ever been... I mean my husband really beat me up once. I mean really just absolutely tore me apart.

The way this arose, really, had a great deal to do with my own inability to express anger at him. And what I would do instead was burst into tears. I mean, there's some kind of relationship between bursting into tears and being beaten up.

And whenever I would do that with him, he would say, "I can't deal with you when you're so upset. Come back and talk to me when you're in a rational frame of mind." I would've liked to do anything to him. I just don't know quite what. To me this was just the most totally frustrating thing that he ever said: "Go away while you're so upset and then come back."

Now of course he couldn't deal with anger at all—we kind of complimented each other on that. I cried and he withdrew. The thing is, though, that finally the dam just broke and he lost control of himself completely. This was a thing where I was—I was just hysterical and upset with him, and I just wouldn't go away and control myself. I just kept coming back at him and coming back at him and finally he had just had as much as he could take and, though he was a very, very controlled person and found my anger hard to deal with and found his own anger hard to deal with, right in front of our son, who was two at the time, and who came over to me after, when I was lying on the ground and really just—just—I mean for about

ten minutes my husband just absolutely pummeled me like he was crazy.

But when I look back on that now, I think, you see, it was a time when I was asking him to move out and nothing was happening. The very next day he went out and got himself an apartment and moved out right like that. And so in a certain kind of way, it seemed to me at that time that at least Wayne finally *did* something. I mean, he saw only two alternatives: total withdrawal or the total opposite.

**SEBERN:** Because of the anger that has been repressed in us, the six of us in the room could eventually, you know, send this city like they had never seen King Kong.

**GLORIA:** But you see men allow themselves that option of becoming violent. Women don't. Not even with other women who they *can* beat up! Or even particularly maybe with their children. But that's the only visible way we allow ourselves an outlet: toward something totally powerless like a child or an animal.

**SEBERN:** Or yourself.

**GLORIA:** Or even yourself. But anything that has a modicum of consciousness, I mean, you just can't do it.

**MARY:** I was thinking just in relation to what you were saying, Kathy, about how we cry and they hit. Even when it doesn't come to that. Even when it's just a simple argument, there's always the potential for that kind of violence, even if you're in a situation where you're not getting hit or never have been.

Still, sometimes just the anger of my husband has made me realize, you know, why any anger is so intimidating, because ultimately for it to become physical is the only place it can go unless you begin to defuse that anger by doing something else or stopping the conversation or redirecting things, or becoming passive, or dropping the whole thing. It's always there with men.

**KATE:** I married my husband, who was 6'4", and I married him because he was tall and because I'm 5'8" and I somehow had a thing that finally I was accepting my role because he was big and strong.

And so, I mean I didn't *ask* to be beaten up, although in looking at it afterwards it seemed like a very masculine thing for him to do somehow since I had been nagging him because he never really asserted himself.

**GLORIA:** The thing that concerns me about the whole incident on Eighth Street tonight was

the fact that if I had thought about it, and I guess I *did* think about it, in the split second of Vivian walking through the door and him standing there just totally smug, you know, smiling—I could have, you know, kicked him or hit him. I could have hit him back and I didn't. I could have taken him totally by surprise and really hurt him, and I didn't. I was within three inches of him and he was totally secure about the fact that no one was going to retaliate. And I didn't *do* anything.

And I can kind of back that up even further because when I was young I played with boys all the time. I was a tomboy. And we used to rough-house and kid around and wrestle, and I was equally as strong as them. I never felt weaker than them because they were all about my age and I didn't really think in terms of strength... that these people were more powerful than me.

At ten I was having this puppy love kind of thing with this little boy on the block. And something I had done—I think I beat him in baseball or something like that—something ridiculous—and he turned around and he punched me in the arm. And my first reaction was to hit him back. And I had my hand up to hit him and I just stopped. There was no fear that he was going to beat me up, because we were equally strong at that point. I'm sure he's now stronger than me physically, but a boy of ten and girl of ten are about equally matched, since I was even bigger than him physically. He was a little boy, and I didn't hit back. And I think somehow that was a turning point for me.

**MARY:** The interesting thing to me is Gloria's being ten years old and an equal physical match and still not doing anything about it, which seems to me even more distressing.

I was thinking about my children who are very used to fighting with their father—roughhousing. My daughter is two years older than my son, so you'd think she'd be better at it, and she was up to a certain point. But now, at the age of eight, she's begun to play all sorts of so-called "femine" games where instead of coming in punching, she runs around or pinches toes or does all kinds of devious thing that really are not part of the scene. Whereas my son, who's smaller than she is, you know, still fights very directly with his fists or butts with his head, but it's all very direct, head-on. She's already pulling away—not liking real physical contact—would rather play tricks or use an implement, something to get distance between her and her father. So it starts at a very early age

where women begin to dislike or be conditioned to dislike any kind of real aggressive behavior.

**VIVIAN:** I don't travel the subway too much any more, but when I did every day I encountered two or three incidents always with extremely well-dressed businessmen, and slapped them each time across the face. And it works. Because they were really horrified. And I think it tends to make them think twice about doing it again. I don't recommend it at twelve midnight when the train is empty and you're looking at a man who possibly might have a knife on him. But if it's a packed subway and the man looks like he can be intimidated, I would say slap him across the face. But I should add to that that in the subway, most of the people were outraged at my behavior.

**SEBERN:** Yeah. That's what happened to me.

**VIVIAN:** Very strange. But the men especially thought I was just really horrendous.

**GLORIA:** The men, of course, because they've probably done it to a hundred women. I mean, I don't think it takes anything perverted or abnormal about a man making advances towards a woman in the subway. It happens every day. I see it. You know, you can see the men just walking around, going from one woman to another. The big thing seems to be to impose yourself in front of a woman and to make her aware that you're there and you have the power to do something. Maybe than even doing it. I mean I've had men just stand over me ominously, and you can always pick up those vibrations whether or not they're doing anything to you—you can just kind of look up and know that these men are just really gloating about the fact that you're uncomfortable and you're suddenly rearranging yourself and you're checking to see that nothing's showing and you're really upset and uncomfortable. And eventually maybe you'll even get up and move your seat. And I think that's an element too about it. That it's the feeling of power over you, aside from any cheap thrills they might get from rubbing up against you.

I remember a movie related to this. It was about a girl, a very normal young high school student. The girl was coming home from school. She got off the subway. She had this whole picture of

romantic love, because she'd seen this couple that she knew on the train and they were holding hands and stuff and it was very obvious that she was this very romantic kind of schoolgirl. So she's walking home through the park in broad daylight, and she's pulled into the bushes and raped. And the whole rest of the story focused on the changes that this girl went through and her inability to accept the fact that violence had come into her life, and had shattered so many illusions at once. And the whole inability to—not only react to the violence while it was happening, but to accept the existence of it in her own head. She couldn't even accept the fact that it existed at all.

For many of us, during a great deal of our lives, we have been protected in one way or another by either our family or by a strong male—a man who was going to shield us in some sort of way from the existence of violence. It's that lack of ease in that situation. That lack of knowing what your chances are. What your chances for escape are, what your chances to hurt that person are, the way any good fighter could estimate. A woman, I don't think, has that ability, and can only say "Well, he's going to kill me if I even raise my hand." So you don't do anything. When, in fact, maybe it would be better to fight because maybe the element of surprise would allow you to get away. Maybe it wouldn't. But the thing is you have no real way of assessing it because you have no experience. I think that's a part of it.

**KATE:** It seems to me that the reason we have such difficulty responding adequately either to being attacked or being put down or being used in some way, being disregarded, whistled at or whatever, is that on the one hand there is objectively a great deal of real danger, and to a certain extent if we're sensible we're going to back away. I mean that's a sensible reaction to real danger. But on the other hand we have internalized our fear of invoking male anger, and that we carry around within us—this powerlessness. We've allowed it to shape us on the inside so that internally we're debilitated and there are also external conditions that are really threatening. The combination of the two really, I think, is too much.

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"Once in cabinet we had to deal with the fact that there had been an outbreak of assaults on women at night. One minister . . . suggested a curfew; women should stay at home after dark. I said, "But it's the men who are attacking the women. If there's to be a curfew let the men stay at home, not the women."

—Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir



# 3. THEORY AND ANALYSIS

## The Building of the Gilded Cage

by JO FREEMAN

Jo Freeman is a graduate student in political science who, with any luck, will be the University of Chicago's first (unofficial) Ph.D. in women's studies. She has written extensively on women and women's liberation in feminist journals, and publications such as *Nation*, *Trans-Action*, and the *Valparaiso Law Review*. Currently she is compiling an anthology of feminist writings to serve as an introductory textbook for courses on women.

Hidden somewhere in the byways of social science is an occasionally discussed, seldom studied, frequently employed and rarely questioned field generally referred to as social control. We have so thoroughly absorbed our national ideology about living in a "free society" that whatever else we may question, as radicals or academics, we are reluctant to admit that all societies, ours included, do an awful lot of controlling of *everyone's* lives. We are even more reluctant to face the often subtle ways that our own attitude and our own lives are being controlled by that same society.

This is why it has been so difficult for materially well-off, educated whites—women as well as men—to accept the idea that women are oppressed. "Women can have a career (or do something else) if they really want to" is the oft-heard refrain. "Women are where they are because they like it" is another. There are many more. "Women are their own worst enemies." "Women prefer to be wives and mothers rather than compete in the hard, aggressive male world." "Women enjoy being feminine. They like to be treated like ladies." These are just variations on the same "freedom of choice" argument which maintains that women are free (don't forget, we are living in a *free* society) to do what they want and never question why they think they want what they say they want.

But what people think they want is precisely what society must control if it is to maintain the *status quo*. As the Bems put it, "We overlook the fact that the society that has spent twenty years

carefully marking the woman's ballot for her has nothing to lose in that twenty-first year by pretending to let her cast it for the alternative of her choice. Society has controlled not her alternatives but her motivation to choose any but one of those alternatives."<sup>1</sup>

There are many mechanisms of social control and some are more subtle than others. The socialization process, the climate of opinion in which people live, the group ideology (political or religious), the kind of social structures available, the legal system, and the police are just some of the means society has at its disposal to channel people into the roles it finds necessary for its maintenance. They are all worthy of study, but here we are going to look only at two of them—one overt and one covert—to see what they can tell us about women.

The easiest place to start when trying to determine the position of any group of people is with the legal system. This may strike us as a little strange since our national ideology also says that "all men are equal under the law" until we remember that the ideology is absolutely correct in its restriction of this promise to "men." Now there are three groups who have never been accorded the status and the rights of manhood—blacks, children (minors) and women. Children at least are considered to be in their inferior, dependent status only temporarily because some of them (white males) eventually graduate to become men. Blacks (the 47% who are male) have "been denied their manhood" since they were kidnapped from Africa and

are currently demanding it back. But women (51% of the population, black and white) —how can a woman have manhood?

This paradox illustrates the problem very well: because there is a longstanding legal tradition, reaching back to early Roman law, which says that women are perpetual children and the only adults are men. This tradition, known as the "Perpetual Tutelage of Women"<sup>2</sup> has had its ups and downs, been more or less enforced, but the definition of women as minors who never grow up, who therefore must always be under the guidance of a male (father, brother, husband or son), has been carried down in modified form to the present day and vestiges of it can still be seen in our legal system.

Even Roman law was an improvement over Greek society. In that cradle of democracy only men could be citizens in the polis. In fact most women were slaves, and most slaves were women.<sup>3</sup> In ancient Rome both the status of women and slaves improved slightly as they were incorporated into the family under the rule of *patria potestas* or Power of the Father. This term designated not so much a familial relationship as a property relationship. All land was owned by families, not individuals, and was under the control of the oldest male. Women and slaves could not assume proprietorship and in fact frequently were considered to be forms of property. The woman in particular had to turn any income she might receive over to the head of the household and had no rights to her own children, to divorce, or to any life outside the family. The relationship of woman to man was designated by the concept of *manus* (hand) under which the woman stood. Women had no rights under law—not even legal recognition. In any civil or criminal case she had to be represented by the *pater* who accepted legal judgment on himself and in turn judged her according to his whims. Unlike slaves, women could not be *enancipated* (removed from under the hand). She could only go from under one hand to another. This was the nature of the marital relationship. (From which comes our modern practice of asking a woman's father for her *hand* in marriage.) At marriage a woman was "born again" into the household of the bridegroom's family and became the "daughter of her husband."<sup>4</sup>

Although later practice of Roman Law was much less severe than the ancient rules, some of the most stringent aspects were incorporated into Canon Law and from there passed to the English Common Law. Interpretation and spread of Roman Law varied

throughout Europe, but it was through the English Common Law that it was brought to this country and made part of our own legal tradition.

Even here history played tricks on women. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, tremendous liberalizations were taking place in the Common Law attitude toward women. This was particularly true in the American colonies where rapidly accelerating commercial expansion often made it profitable to ignore the old social rules. In particular, the development of property other than land facilitated this process as women had always been held to have some right in *movable* property while only male heirs could inherit the family lands.<sup>5</sup>

But when Blackstone wrote his soon-to-be-famous *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, he chose to ignore these new trends in favor of codifying the old Common Law rules. Published in 1765, his work was used in Britain as a textbook. But in the Colonies and new Republic it became a legal Bible. Concise and readable, it was frequently the only book to be found in law libraries in the United States up until the middle of the nineteenth century, and inquiring lawyers rarely delved past its pages when seeking the roots of legal tradition.<sup>6</sup> Thus when Edward Mansfield wrote the first major analysis of *The Legal Rights, Liabilities and Duties of Women* in 1845, he still found it necessary to pay homage to the Blackstone doctrine that "the husband and wife are as one and that one is the husband." As he saw it three years before the Seneca Falls Convention would write the *Woman's Declaration of Independence* "it appears that the husband's control over the person of his wife is so complete that he may claim her society altogether; that he may reclaim her if she goes away or is detained by others; that he may maintain suits for injuries to her person; that she cannot sue alone; and that she cannot execute a deed or valid conveyance without the concurrence of her husband. In most respects she loses the power of personal independence, and altogether that of separate action in legal matters."<sup>7</sup> The husband also had almost total control over all the wife's real and personal property or income.

Legal traditions die hard even when they are mythical ones. So the bulk of the activities of feminists in the nineteenth century were spent chipping away at the legal nonexistence that Blackstone had defined for married women. Despite the passage of Married Women's Property Acts and much other

legislative relief during the nineteenth century, the core idea of the Common Law that husbands and wives have reciprocal—not equal—rights and duties remains. The husband must support the wife and children, and she in return must render services to the husband. Thus the woman is legally required to do the domestic chores, to provide marital companionship and sexual consortium. Her first obligation is to him. If he moves out of town, she cannot get unemployment compensation if she quits her job to follow him, but he can divorce her on grounds of desertion if she doesn't. Likewise, unless there has been a legal separation, she cannot deny him access to their house even if she has good reason to believe that his entry on a particular occasion would result in physical abuse to her and her children. He must maintain her, but the amount of support beyond subsistence is at his discretion. She has no claim for direct compensation for any of the services rendered.<sup>8</sup>

Crozier commented on this distribution of obligations; "... Clearly, that economic relationship between A and B whereby A has an original ownership of B's labor, with the consequent necessity of providing B's maintenance, is the economic relationship between an owner and his property rather than that between two free persons. It was the economic relationship between a person and his domesticated animal. In the English Common Law the wife was, *in economic relationship to the husband, his property*. The financial plan of marriage law was founded upon the economic relationship of owner and property."<sup>9</sup>

This basic relationship still remains in force today. The "domesticated animal" has acquired a longer leash, but the legal chains have yet to be broken. Common Law practices, assumptions, and attitudes still dominate the law. The property, real and personal, brought by the woman to the marriage now remains her separate estate, but such is not always the case for property acquired during the marriage.

There are two types of property systems in the United States—common law and community. In the nine community property states (Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Louisiana, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas and Washington), all property or income acquired by either husband or wife is community property and is equally divided upon divorce. However "the general rule is that the husband is the head of the 'community' and the duty is his to manage the property for the benefit of his wife and family. Usually, as long as the husband is capable of

managing the community, the wife has no power of control over it and acting alone, cannot contract debts chargeable against it."<sup>10</sup> In two of the states (Texas and Nevada) the husband can even dispose of the property without his wife's consent. Included in the property is the income of a working wife which, under the law, is managed by the husband with the wife having no legal right to a say in how it shall be spent.

In common law states each spouse has a right to manage his own income and property. However, unlike community property states, this principle does not recognize the contribution made by a wife who works only in the home. Although the wife *generally contributes domestic labor to the maintenance of the home far in excess of, that of her husband, she has no right to an allowance, wages or an income of any sort. Nor can she claim joint ownership upon divorce.*<sup>11</sup>

Marriage incurs a few other disabilities as well. A married woman cannot contract on the same basis as her husband or a single woman in most states. In only five states does she have the same right to her own domicile. In many states a married woman can now live separately from her husband but his domicile is still her address for purposes of taxation, voting, jury service, etc.<sup>12</sup>

Along with the domicile regulations, those concerning names are most symbolic of the theory of the husband's and wife's legal unity. Legally, every married woman's surname is that of her husband and no court will uphold her right to go by a different name. Pragmatically, she can use another name only so long as her husband does not object. If he were legally to change his name, hers would automatically change too, though such would not necessarily be the case for the children. "In a very real sense, the loss of a woman's surname represents the destruction of an important part of her personality and its submersion in that of her husband."<sup>13</sup>

When we move out of the common law and into the statutory law we find an area in which, until recently, the dual legal status of women has increased in the last seventy years. This assault was particularly intense around the turn of the century, but has solidified considerably since then. Some of the earliest sex discriminatory legislation was against prostitutes; but this didn't so much prohibit the practice of their profession as regulate their hours and place of work. The big crackdown against prostitutes didn't come until World War I when there was fear that the soldiers would contract venereal disease.<sup>14</sup>

There was also a rise in the abortion laws. Originally abortion was illegal only when performed without the husband's consent and the only crime was a "wrong to the husband in depriving him of children."<sup>15</sup> Prior to passage of the nineteenth century laws which made it a criminal offense it was largely regarded as a Church offense punishable by religious penalties.<sup>16</sup>

The most frequent new laws were sex specific labor legislation. Under common law and in the early years of this country there was very little restrictive legislation on the employment of women. It was not needed. Custom and prejudice alone sufficed to keep the occupations in which women might be gainfully employed limited to domestic servant, factory worker, governess, and prostitute. As women acquired education and professional skills in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, they increasingly sought employment in fields which put them in competition with men. In some instances men gave way totally and the field became dominated by women, losing prestige, opportunities for advancement, and pay in the process. The occupation of secretary is the most notable. In most cases men fought back and were quick to make use of economic, ideological, and legal weapons to reduce or eliminate their competition. "They excluded women from trade unions, made contracts with employers to prevent their hiring women, passed laws restricting the employment of married women, caricatured working women, and carried on ceaseless propaganda to return women to the home or keep them there."<sup>17</sup>

The restrictive labor laws were the main weapon. Among the earliest were those prohibiting women from practicing certain professions, such as law and medicine. But most were directed toward regulating work conditions in factories. Initially such laws were aimed at protecting both men and women workers from the sweatshop conditions that prevailed during the nineteenth century. The extent to which women, and children, were protected more than men varied from state to state, but in 1905 the heated struggle to get the state to assume responsibility for the welfare of workers received a major setback. The Supreme Court invalidated a New York law that no male or female worker could be required or permitted to work in bakeries more than sixty hours a week and in so doing made all such protective laws unconstitutional.<sup>18</sup>

Three years later the court upheld an almost identical Oregon statute that applied to females only, on the grounds that their physical inferiority

and their function as "mothers to the race" justified special class legislation.<sup>19</sup> With this decision as a precedent, the drive for protective legislation became distorted into a push for laws that applied to women only. It made some strange allies, who had totally opposing reasons for supporting such laws. On the one hand social reformers and many feminists were in favor of them on the principle that half a loaf was better than none and the hope that at some time in the future the laws would apply to men as well.<sup>20</sup> Many male union leaders were also in favor of them, but not because they would protect women. As President Strasser of the International Cigarmakers Union expressed it, "We cannot drive the females out of the trade but we can restrict this daily quota of labor through factory laws."<sup>21</sup>

Strasser soon proved to be right, as the primary use of "protective" laws has been to protect the jobs of men by denying overtime pay, promotions, and employment opportunities to women. The Supreme Court has long since rejected its ruling that prevented protective legislation from applying to men, yet there has been no move by male workers to have the laws extended to them. Most of the real benefits made available by such laws have been obtained through federal law or collective bargaining, while the state restrictive laws have been quoted by unions and employers alike to keep women in an inferior competitive position. The dislike of these laws felt by the women they affect can be seen in the numerous cases challenging their legitimacy that have been filed since Title VII of the Civil Rights Act was passed (prohibiting sex discrimination in employment).

These laws do more than restrict the hours which women may work. An examination of the state labor laws reveals a complex, confusing, inconsistent chaos. Thirteen states have minimum wage laws which apply only to women and minors, and two which apply only to women. Adult women are prohibited from working in specified occupations or under certain working conditions considered hazardous in twenty-six states; in ten of these women cannot work in bars.<sup>22</sup>

Laws restricting the number of hours a woman may work—generally to eight per day and forty-eight per week—are found in forty-one states and the District of Columbia. Twenty states prohibit night work and limitations are made in twelve on the amount of weight that can be lifted by a woman. These maximums range from fifteen to thirty-five pounds (the weight of a small child).<sup>23</sup>

The "weight and hours" laws have proved to be the most onerous and are the ones usually challenged in the courts. In *Mengelkoch et al. v. the Industrial Welfare Commission of California and North American Aviation, Inc.* the defending corporation has admitted that the women were denied overtime and promotions to positions requiring overtime, justifying their actions by the California maximum hours law. In *Roig v. Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Co.*, the plaintiffs are protesting that their current job is exempt from the Louisiana maximum hours law but that the higher paying job to which they were denied promotion is not. One major case which challenged the Georgia weight lifting law is *Weeks v. Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph*. It received a favorable ruling from the Fifth Circuit Court but the plaintiff has yet to be given the promotion for which she sued.

But perhaps most illustrative of all is an Indiana case,<sup>24</sup> in which the company tried to establish maximum weight lifting restrictions even though its plant and the plaintiffs were located in a state which did not have such laws. By company policy, women were restricted to jobs whose highest pay rate was identical with the lowest pay rate for men. Many of the women, including the defendants, were laid off while men with less seniority were kept on, on the grounds that the women could not lift over thirty-five pounds. This policy resulted in such anomalies as women having to lift seventeen and a half tons of products a day in separate ten-pound loads while the male supervisors sat at the head of the assembly line handling the controls and lifting one forty-pound box of caps each hour. "In a number of other instances, women were doing hard manual labor until the operations were automated; then they were relieved of their duties, and men were employed to perform the easier and more pleasant jobs."<sup>25</sup> In its defense, the company claimed it reached this policy in accordance with the union's wishes, but the Seventh Circuit Court unanimously ruled against it anyway. This is only one of many instances in which corporations and male-run unions have taken advantage of "protective" legislation in order to protect themselves from giving women equal job opportunities and equal pay.

With the passage of Title VII, the restrictive labor legislation is slowly being dissolved by the courts. But these laws are just vestiges of what has been an entirely separate legal system applicable particularly to women. At their base lies the fact

that the position of women under the Constitution is not the same as that of men. The Supreme Court has ruled several times that the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits any arbitrary class legislation, except that based on sex. The last case was decided in 1961, but the most important was in 1874. In *Minor v. Happerset* (88 U.S. 21 Wall, 162 1873), the court first defined the concept of "second-class citizenship" by saying that some citizens could be denied rights which others had. The "equal protection" clause of the Fourteenth Amendment did not give women equal rights with men.

Other groups in society have also had special bodies of law created for them as a means of social control. Thus an examination of the statutes can clearly delineate those groups which society feels it necessary to control.

The statutes do not necessarily indicate *all* of the groups which a particular society excludes from full participation, but they do show those which it most adamantly excludes. In virtually every society that has existed, the caste cleavages, as distinct from the class lines, have been imbedded in the law. Differentiating between class and caste is often difficult as the two differ in degree that only at the extremes is seen as a difference in kind. It is made more difficult by our refusal to acknowledge that castes exist in our society. Here too we have allowed our thinking to be subverted by our national ideology. Our belief in the potentiality, if not the current existence, of high social mobility determined only by the individual's talents, leads us to believe that mobility is hampered by one's socio-economic origins but not that it is made impossible if one comes from the wrong caste. Only recently have we reluctantly begun to face the reality of the "color line" as a caste boundary. Our consciousness of the caste nature of the other boundaries, particularly that of sex, is not yet this high.

The law not only shows the caste boundaries, it also gives a fairly good history of the changes in boundaries. If the rigidity of caste lines fades into more permeable class lines, the legislation usually changes with it. The Middle Ages saw separate application of the law to the separate estates. In the early years of this country certain rights were reserved to those possessing a minimum amount of property. Today, nobility of birth or amount of income may affect the treatment one receives from the courts, but it is not expressed in the law itself. For the past 150 years, the major caste divisions have been along the lines of age, sex, and ethnic



origin; these have been the categories for which special legislation has existed.

The law further indicates when restricted castes are seen to be most threatening and the ways in which they are felt to be threatening. If members of a group will restrict their own activities, or these activities are inconsequential, law is unnecessary. No law need be made to keep people out of places they never considered going. It is when certain prerogatives are threatened by an outgroup that it must be made illegal to violate them. Thus Jim Crow laws were not necessary during slavery and restrictive labor legislation was not extensively sought for until women entered the job market in rapidly accelerat-

*South* that "The kind of slavery is adapted to the men enslaved. Wives and apprentices are slaves, not in theory only, but often in fact. Children are slaves to their parents, guardians and teachers. Imprisoned culprits are slaves. Luratics and idiots are slaves also."<sup>27</sup>

The progress of "out castes," particularly those of the wrong race and sex, also have been parallel. The language of the Nineteenth Amendment was borrowed directly from that of the Fifteenth. The "sex" provision of Title VII (only the second piece of corrective legislation pertaining to women that has been passed)<sup>28</sup> was stuck into the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as a joke by octogenarian representa-

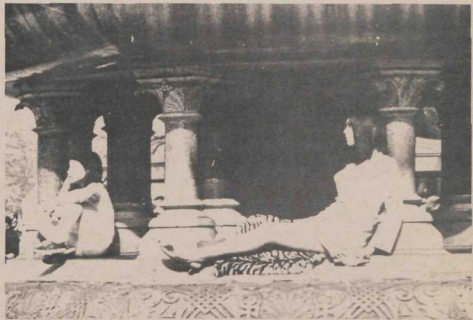


Photo: Ellen Levine

ing numbers at the end of the nineteenth century.

Frequently, members of the lower castes are lumped together and the same body of special law applied to all. Most of the labor legislation discussed earlier applies to "women and minors." The state of New York once worded its franchise law to include everyone but "women, minors, convicts and idiots." When a legal status had to be found for Negro slaves in the seventeenth century, the "nearest and most natural analogy was the status of women."<sup>26</sup> But the clearest analogy of all was stated by the Southern slave-owning class when trying to defend the system prior to the Civil War. One of the most widely read rationalizations was that of George Fitzhugh, who wrote in his 1854 *Sociology for the*

ive Howard W. Smith of Virginia.<sup>29</sup>

Many of the same people were involved in both movements as well. Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass were staunch feminists. Douglass urged the first Convention at Seneca Falls in 1848 to demand the franchise when many of the women were reluctant to do so. Similarly, the early feminists were ardent abolitionists. The consciousness of two of the most active is dated from the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840 when Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were compelled to sit in the galleries rather than participate in the convention.<sup>30</sup> Many of today's new feminists also come out of an active background in the civil rights and other social movements.<sup>31</sup> Almost without ex-

ception, when one of the lower castes in our society begins to revolt, the others quickly perceive the similarities to their own condition and start the battle on their own grounds.

Thus it is not surprising that these groups quickly find that they have more in common than a similar legal situation. All of them, when comparing themselves to the culture of the middle-aged white male,<sup>32</sup> find that they are distinctly in the minority position. This minority position involves a good deal more than laws and a good deal more than economic and social discrimination. Discrimination *per se* is only one aspect of oppression and not always the most significant one. There are many other social and psychological aspects. Likewise, being subject to separate laws and having poorer access to the socio-economic system are only some of the characteristics of being in a minority group. This point has been well explored by Hacker, who has shown the similarities in the caste-like status of women and blacks.<sup>33</sup>

The Negro analogy has been challenged many times on the grounds that women do not suffer from the same overt segregation as blacks. This point is well noted. But it is important to realize that blatant discrimination is just one mechanism of social control. There are many more subtle ones employed long before such coercion becomes necessary. It is only when these other methods fail to keep a minority group in its place that harsher means must be found. Given that a particular society needs the subservience of several different groups of people, it will use its techniques to a different degree with each of them depending on what is available and what they are most susceptible to. It is a measure of the blacks' resistance to the definition which white society has tried to impose on them that such violent extremes have had to be used to keep the caste lines intact.

Women, however, have not needed such stringent social chains. Their bodies can be left free because their minds are chained long before they become functioning adults. Most women have so thoroughly internalized the social definitions which tell them that their only significant role is to serve men as wives and raise the next generation of men and their servants that no laws are necessary to enforce this.

The result is that women, even more than other minority groups, have their identities derived first as members of a group and only second, if at all, as unique persons. "Consider the following— When a

boy is born, it is difficult to predict what he will be doing twenty-five years later. We cannot say whether he will be an artist or a doctor or a college professor because he will be permitted to develop and fulfill his own identity. But if the newborn child is a girl, we can predict with almost complete certainty how she will be spending her time twenty-five years later. Her individuality does not have to be considered; it is irrelevant."<sup>34</sup>

Yet until very recently, most women have refused to recognize their own oppression. They have openly accepted the social definition of who and what they are. They have refused to be conscious of the fact that they are seen and treated, before anything else, as women. Many still do. This very refusal is significant because no group is so oppressed as one which will not recognize its own oppression. Women's denial that they must deal with their oppression is a reflection of just how far they still have to go.

There are many reasons why covert mechanisms of social control have been so much more successful with women than with most other minority groups. More than most they have been denied any history. Their tradition of subjection is long and even this history is purged from the books so that women cannot compare the similarities of their current condition with that of the past. In a not-so-subtle way both men and women are told that only men make history and women are not important enough to history.

Further, the agents of social control are much nearer to hand than those of any other group. No other minority lives in the same household with its master, separated totally from its peers and urged to compete with them for the privilege of serving the majority group. No other minority so thoroughly accepts the standards of the dominant group as its own and interprets any deviance from those values as a sign of degeneracy. No other minority so readily argues for the maintenance of its own position as one that is merely "different" without questioning whether one must be the "same" to be equal.

Women reach this condition, this acceptance of their secondary role as right and just, through the most insidious mechanism of social control yet devised—the socialization process. That is the mechanism that we want to analyze now.

To understand how most women are socialized we must first understand how they see themselves and are seen by others. Several studies have been done on this. Quoting one of them, McClelland

stated that "the female image is characterized as small, weak, soft and light. In the United States it is also dull, peaceful, relaxed, cold, rounded, passive and slow."<sup>35</sup> A more thorough study which asked men and women to choose out of a long list of adjectives those which most clearly applied to themselves showed that women strongly felt themselves to be such things as uncertain, anxious, nervous, hasty, careless, fearful, full, childish, helpless, sorry, timid, clumsy, stupid, silly, and domestic. On a more positive side women felt they were: understanding, tender, sympathetic, pure, generous, affectionate, loving, moral, kind, grateful and patient.<sup>36</sup>

This is not a very favorable self-image but it does correspond fairly well with the social myths about what women are like. The image has some nice qualities, but they are not the ones normally required for that kind of achievement to which society gives its highest social rewards. Now one can justifiably question both the idea of achievement and the qualities necessary for it, but this is not the place to do so. Rather, because the current standards are the ones which women have been told they do not meet, the purpose here will be to look at the socialization process as a mechanism to keep them from doing so. We will also need to analyze some of the social expectations about women and about what they define as a successful woman (not a successful person) because they are inextricably bound up with the socialization process. All people are socialized to meet the social expectations held for them and it is only when this process fails to do so (as is currently happening on several fronts) that it is at all questioned.

First, let us further examine the effects on women of minority group status. Here, another interesting parallel emerges, but it is one fraught with more heresy than any previously observed. When we look at the results of female socialization we find a strong similarity between what our society labels, even extols, as the typical "feminine" character structure and that of oppressed peoples in this country and elsewhere.

In his classic study *The Nature of Prejudice* Allport devotes a chapter to "Traits Due to Victimization." Included are such personality characteristics as sensitivity, submission, fantasies of power, desire for protection, indirectness, ingratiation, petty revenge and sabotage, sympathy, extremes of both self and group hatred and self and group glorification, display of flashy status symbols, compassion for the underprivileged, identification with the dom-

inant group's norms, and passivity.<sup>37</sup> Allport was primarily concerned with Jews and Negroes but compare his characterization with the very thorough review of the literature on sex differences among young children made by Terman and Tyler. For girls, they listed such traits as: sensitivity, conformity to social pressures, response to environment, ease of social control, ingratiation, sympathy, low levels of aspiration, compassion for the underprivileged, and anxiety. They found that girls, compared to boys, were more nervous, unstable, neurotic, socially dependent, submissive, had less self-confidence, lower opinions of themselves and of girls in general, and were more timid, emotional, ministrative, fearful, and passive.<sup>38</sup> These are also the kinds of traits found in the Indians when under British rule,<sup>39</sup> in the Algerians under the French,<sup>40</sup> and elsewhere.

Two of the most essential aspects of this "minority group character structure" are the extent to which one's perceptions are distorted and one's group is denigrated. These two things in and of themselves are very effective means of social control. If one can be led to believe in one's own inferiority then one is much less likely to resist the status that goes with the inferiority.

When we look at women's opinions of women we find the notion that they are inferior very prevalent. Young girls get off to a very good start. They begin speaking, reading, and counting sooner. They articulate more clearly and put words into sentences earlier. They have fewer reading and stuttering problems. Girls are even better in math in the early school years. They also make a lot better grades than boys do until late high school. But when they are asked to compare their achievements with those of boys, they rate boys higher in virtually every respect. Despite factual evidence to the contrary, girls' opinion of girls grows progressively worse with age while their opinion of boys and boys' abilities grows better. Boys, likewise, have an increasingly better opinion of themselves and worse opinion of girls as they grow older.<sup>41</sup>

These distortions become so gross that, according to Goldberg, by the time girls reach college they have become prejudiced against women. Goldberg gave college girls sets of booklets containing six identical professional articles in traditional male, female and neutral fields. The articles were identical, but the names of the authors were not. For example, an article in one set would bear the name "John T. McKay" and in another set the same article would be authored by "Joan T. McKay."

Questions at the end of each article asked the students to rate the articles on value, persuasiveness, and profundity and the authors for writing style and competence. The male authors fared better in every field, even in such "feminine" areas as art history and dietetics. Goldberg concluded that "Women are prejudiced against female professionals and, regardless of the actual accomplishments of these professionals, will firmly refuse to recognize them as the equals of their male colleagues."<sup>42</sup>

But these unconscious assumptions about women can be very subtle and cannot help but to support the myth that women do not produce high-quality professional work. If the Goldberg findings hold in other situations, and the likelihood is great that they do, it explains why women's work must be of a much higher quality than that of men to be acknowledged as merely equal. People in our society *simply refuse to believe that a woman can cross the caste lines and be competent in a "man's world."*

However, most women rarely get to the point of writing professional articles or doing other things which put them in competition with men. They seem to lack what psychologists call the "achievement motive."<sup>43</sup> When we look at the little research that has been done we can see why this is the case. Horner's recent study of undergraduates at the University of Michigan showed that 65% of the women but only 10% of the men associated academic success with having negative consequences. Further research showed that these college women had what Horner termed a "motive to avoid success" because they perceived it as leading to social rejection and role conflict with their concept of "femininity."<sup>44</sup> Lipinski has also shown that women students associate success in the usual sense as something which is achieved by men, but not by women.<sup>45</sup> Pierce suggested that girls did in fact have achievement motivation but that they had different criteria for achievement than did boys. He went on to show that high achievement motivation in high school women correlates much more strongly with early marriage than it does with success in school.<sup>46</sup>

Some immediate precedents for the idea that women should not achieve too much academically can be seen in high school, for it is here that the performance of girls begins to drop drastically. It is also at this time that peer group pressures on sex role behavior increase and conceptions of what is "properly feminine" or "masculine" become more narrow.<sup>47</sup> One need only recall Asch's experiments

to see how peer group pressures, coupled with our rigid ideas about "femininity" and "masculinity," could lead to the results found by Horner, Lipinski, and Pierce. Asch found that some 33% of his subjects would go contrary to the evidence of their own senses about something as tangible as the comparative length of two lines when their judgments were at variance with those made by the other group members.<sup>48</sup> All but a handful of the other 67% experienced tremendous trauma in trying to stick to their correct perceptions.

These experiments are suggestive of how powerful a group can be in imposing its own definition of a situation and suppressing the resistance of individual deviants. When we move to something as intangible as sex role behavior and to social sanctions far greater than simply the displeasure of a group of unknown experimental stooges, we can get an idea of how stifling social expectations can be. It is not surprising, in light of our cultural norm that a girl should not appear too smart or surpass boys in anything, that those pressures to conform, so prevalent in adolescence, prompts girls to believe that the development of their minds will have only negative results.

But this process begins long before puberty. It begins with the kind of toys young children are given to play with, with the roles they see their parents in, with the stories in their early reading books, and the kind of ambitions they express or actions they engage in that receive rewards from their parents and other adults. Some of the early differentiation along these lines is obvious to us from looking at young children and reminiscing about our own lives. But some of it is not so obvious, even when we engage in it ourselves. It consists of little actions which parents and teachers do every day that are not even noticed but can profoundly affect the style and quality of a child's developing mind.

Adequate research has not yet been done which irrefutably links up child-rearing practices with the eventual adult mind, but there is evidence to support some hypotheses. Let us take a look at one area where strong sex differences show up relatively early: mathematical reasoning ability. No one has been able to define exactly what this ability is, but it has been linked up with number ability and special perception or the ability to visualize objects out of their context. As on other tests, girls score higher on number ability until late high school, but such is not the case with analytic and special per-

ception tests. These tests indicate that boys perceive more analytically while girls are more contextual—although the ability to “break set” or be “field independent” also does not seem to appear until after the fourth or fifth year.<sup>49</sup>

According to Maccoby, this contextual mode of perception common to women is a distinct disadvantage for scientific production. “Girls on the average develop a somewhat different way of handling incoming information—their thinking is less analytic, more global, and more perseverative—and this kind of thinking may serve very well for many kinds of functioning but it is not the kind of thinking most conducive to high-level intellectual productivity, especially in science.”<sup>50</sup>

Several social psychologists have postulated that the key developmental characteristic of analytic thinking is what is called early “independence and mastery training,” or “whether and how soon a child is encouraged to assume initiative, to take responsibility for himself, and to solve problems by himself, rather than rely on others for the direction of his activities.”<sup>51</sup> In other words, analytically inclined children are those who have not been subject to what Brofenbrenner calls “over-socialization,”<sup>52</sup> and there is a good deal of indirect evidence that such is the case. Levy has observed that “overprotected” boys tend to develop intellectually like girls.<sup>53</sup> Bing found that those girls who were good at special tasks were those whose mothers left them alone to solve the problems by themselves while the mothers of verbally inclined daughters insisted on helping them.<sup>54</sup> Witkin similarly found that mothers of analytic children had encouraged their initiative while mothers of non-analytic children had encouraged dependence and discouraged self-assertion.<sup>55</sup> One writer commented on these studies that “this is to be expected, for the independent child is less likely to accept superficial appearances of objects without exploring them for himself, while the dependent child will be afraid to reach out on his own and will accept appearances without question.” In other words, the independent child is likely to be more active, not only psychologically but physically, and the physically active child will naturally have more kinesthetic experience with spatial relationships in his environment.<sup>55</sup>

When we turn to specific child-rearing practices we find that the pattern repeats itself according to the sex of the child. Although comparative studies of parental treatment of boys and girls are not extensive, those that have been made indicate that the traditional practices applied to girls are very

different from those applied to boys. Girls receive more affection, more protectiveness, more control, and more restrictions. Boys are subjected to more achievement demands and higher expectations.<sup>57</sup> In short, while girls are not always encouraged to be dependent *per se*, they are usually not encouraged to be independent and physically active. “Such findings indicate that the differential treatment of the two sexes reflects in part a difference in goals. With sons, socialization seems to focus primarily on directing and constraining the boys’ impact on the environment. With daughters, the aim is rather to protect the girl from the impact of environment. The boy is being prepared to mold his world, the girl to be molded by it.”<sup>58</sup>

This relationship holds true cross-culturally even more than it does in our own society. In studying child socialization in 110 non-literate cultures, Barry, Bacon, and Child found that “pressure toward nurturance, obedience, and responsibility is most often stronger for girls, whereas pressure toward achievement and self-reliance is most often stronger for boys.”<sup>59</sup> They also found that strong differences in socialization practices were consistent with highly differentiated adult sex roles.

These cross-cultural studies show that dependency training for women is widespread and has results beyond simply curtailing analytic ability. In all these cultures women were in a relatively inferior status position compared to males. In fact, there was a correlation with the degree of rigidity of sex-role socialization, and the subservience of women to men.

In our society also, analytic abilities are not the only ones valued. Being person-oriented and contextual in perception are very valuable attributes for many fields where, nevertheless, very few women are found. Such characteristics are valuable in the arts and the social sciences where women are found more than in the natural sciences—yet even here their achievement is not deemed equivalent to that of men. One explanation of this, of course, is the repressive effect of role conflict and peer group pressures discussed earlier. But when one looks further it appears that there is an earlier cause here as well.

As several studies have shown, the very same early independence and mastery training which has such a beneficial effect on analytic thinking also determines the extent of one’s achievement orientation<sup>60</sup>—that drive which pushes one to excel beyond the need of survival. And it is precisely this kind of training that women fail to receive. They



are encouraged to be dependent and passive—to be “feminine.” In that process the shape of their mind is altered and their ambitions are dulled or channeled into the only socially rewarded achievement for a woman—marriage.

Now we have come almost full circle and can begin to see the vicious nature of the trap in which our society places women. When we become conscious of the many subtle mechanisms of social control—peer group pressures, cultural norms, parental training, teachers, role expectations, and negative self concept—it is not hard to see why girls who are better at most everything in childhood do not excel at much of anything as adults.

Only one link remains and that requires taking a brief look at those few women who do manage to slip through a chance loophole. Maccoby provided the best commentary on this when she noted that the girl who does not succumb to overprotection and develop the appropriate personality and behavior for her sex has a major price to pay: the anxiety that comes from crossing the caste lines. Maccoby feels that “it is this anxiety which helps to account for the lack of productivity among those women who do make intellectual careers—because [anxiety] is especially damaging to creative thinking.” The combination of all these factors tells “something of a horror story.” It would appear that even when a woman is suitably endowed intellectually and develops the right temperament and habits of thought to make use of her endowment, she must be fleet of foot indeed to scale the hurdles society has erected for her and to remain a whole and happy person while continuing to follow her intellectual bent.<sup>61</sup>

The plot behind this horror story should by now be clearly evident. There is more to oppression than discrimination and more to the condition of women than whether or not they want to be free of the home. All societies have many ways to keep people in their places, and we have only discussed a few of the ones used to keep women in theirs. Women have been striving to break free of these bonds for many hundreds of years and once again are gathering their strength for another try. It will take more than a few changes in the legal system to significantly change the condition of women, although those changes will be reflective of more profound changes taking place in society. Unlike blacks, the women's liberation movement does not have the thicket of Jim Crow laws to cut through. This is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, the women's liberation movement lacks the simple handholds of oppression which the early civil rights movement had;

but at the same time it does not have to waste time wading through legal segregation before realizing that the real nature of oppression lies much deeper. It is the more basic means of social control that will have to be attacked as women and men look into their lives and dissect the many factors that made them what they are. The dam of social control now has many cracks in it. It has held women back for years, but it is about to break under the strain.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Sandra and Daryl Bem, “We’re All Non-Conscious Sexists,” *Psychology Today*, Nov. 1970, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Sir Henry Sumner Maine, *Ancient Law* (London: John Murray, 1905), p. 135.

<sup>3</sup>Alvin W. Gouldner, *Enter Plato* (New York, London: Basic Books, 1965), p. 10.

<sup>4</sup>Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1959), pp. 126-128.

<sup>5</sup>Richard B. Morris, *Studies in the History of American Law* (Philadelphia: Mitchell & Co., 1959), pp. 126-8.

<sup>6</sup>Mary Beard, *Woman as a Force in History* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), pp. 108-109.

<sup>7</sup>Edward Mansfield, *The Legal Rights, Liabilities and Duties of Women* (Salem, Mass.: Jewett & Co., 1945), p. 273.

<sup>8</sup>Sophonisba Breckinridge, *The Family and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), pp. 109-110.

<sup>9</sup>Blanche Crozier, “Marital Support,” *15 Boston University Law Review* 28 (1935).

<sup>10</sup>Philip Francis, *The Legal Status of Women* (New York: Oceana Publications, 1963), p. 23.

<sup>11</sup>Citizens Advisory Council on the Status of Women, *Report of the Task Force on Family Law and Policy*, 1968, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>13</sup>Leo Kanowitz, *Women and the Law: The Unfinished Revolution* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969), p. 41.

<sup>14</sup>George Gould and Ray F. Dickenson, *The American Social Hygiene Association, Digest of State and Federal Laws Dealing with Prostitution and Other Sex Offenses*, 1942.

<sup>15</sup>Bernard M. Dickens, *Abortion and the Law* (Bristol: MacGibbon & Kee, Ltd., 1966), p. 15.

<sup>16</sup>Alan F. Guttmacher, “Abortion—Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow,” *The Case for Legalized Abortion* Nov. Guttmacher, ed. (Berkeley: Diablo Press, 1967), p. 4.

<sup>17</sup>Helen Mayer Hacker, “Women as a Minority Group,” *Social Forces*, Vol. 31, Oct. 1951, p. 67.

<sup>18</sup>*Lockner v. New York*, 198 U.S. 45 (1905).

<sup>19</sup>*Mueller v. Oregon*, 208 U.S. 412 (1908).

<sup>20</sup>British feminists always opposed such laws for their country on the grounds that any sex specific laws were fraught with more evil than good.

<sup>21</sup>Alice Henry, *The Trade Union Woman* (New York: Appleton & Co., 1915), p. 24.

<sup>22</sup>U.S. Department of Labor, *Summary of State Labor Laws for Women*, Feb. 1967, passim.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>*Sellers, Moore and Case v. Colgate Palmolive Co. and the International Chemical Workers Union*, Local No. 15, 272 Supp. 332; Minn. L. Rev. 52: 1091.

<sup>25</sup>*Brief for the Plaintiffs/Appellants in the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals*, No. 16, 632, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup>Gunnar Myrdal, *An America Dilemma* (New York: Harper, 1944), p. 1073.

<sup>27</sup>George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South* (Richmond, Va.: A. Morris, 1854), p. 86.

<sup>28</sup>The first was the Equal Pay Act of 1963 which took 94 years to get through Congress.

<sup>29</sup>Caroline Bird, *Born Female: The High Cost of Keeping Women Down* (New York: David McKay Co., 1968), Chapter 1.

<sup>30</sup>Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle* (New York, Atheneum, 1959), p. 71. They were joined by one white and one black man, William Lloyd Garrison and John Cronan.

<sup>31</sup>Jo Freeman, "The New Feminists," *The Nation*, Feb. 24, 1969, p. 242.

<sup>32</sup>Myrdal, p. 1073.

<sup>33</sup>Hacker, pp. 10-19.

<sup>34</sup>Bern and Bern, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup>David McClelland, "Wanted: A New Self-Image for Women," *The Woman in America* ed. by Robert J. Lifton (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), p. 173.

<sup>36</sup>Edward M. Bennett and Larry R. Cohen, "Men and Women: Personality Patterns and Contrasts," *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, Vol. 59, 1959, pp. 101-155.

<sup>37</sup>Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Co., 1954), pp. 142-161.

<sup>38</sup>Lewis M. Terman and Leona E. Tyler, "Psychological Sex Differences," *Manual of Child Psychology* ed. by Leonard Carmichael (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1954), pp. 1080-1100.

<sup>39</sup>Philip Fisher, *Gandhi* (New York: New American Library, 1954).

<sup>40</sup>Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963).

<sup>41</sup>S. Smith, "Age and Sex Differences in Children's Opinion Concerning Sex Differences," *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, Vol. 54, 1939, pp. 17-25.

<sup>42</sup>Phillip Goldberg, "Are Women Prejudiced Against Women?," *Transaction*, April, 1969.

<sup>43</sup>McClelland, *passim*.

<sup>44</sup>Matina S. Horner, "Woman's Will to Fail," *Psychology Today*, Vol. 3, No. 6, Nov. 1969, p. 36. See also: S. Horner, *Sex Differences in Achievement Motivation and Performance in Competitive and Non-Competitive Situations*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1968.

<sup>45</sup>Beatrice Lipinski, *Sex-Role Conflict and Achievement Motivation in College Women*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1965.

<sup>46</sup>James V. Pierce, "Sex Differences in Achievement Motivation of Able High School Students," Co-operative Research Project No. 1097, University of Chicago, Dec. 1961.

<sup>47</sup>Lionel J. Neiman, "The Influence of Peer Groups Upon Attitudes Toward the Feminine Role," *Social Problems*, Vol. 2, 1954, p. 104-111.

<sup>48</sup>S. E. Asch, "Studies of Independence and Conformity: A Minority of One Against a Unanimous Majority," *Psychological Monographs*, Vol. 70, 1956, No. 9.

<sup>49</sup>Eleanor E. Maccoby, "Sex Differences in Intellectual Functioning," *The Development of Sex Differences* ed. by E. Maccoby (Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1966), p. 26ff. The three most common tests are the Rod and Frame test, which requires the adjustment of a rod to a vertical position regardless of the tilt of a frame around it; the Embedded Figures Test, which determines the ability to perceive a figure embedded in a more complex field; and an analytic test in which one groups a set of objects according to a common element.

<sup>50</sup>Eleanor E. Maccoby, "Woman's Intellect," *The Potential of Women* ed. by Farber and Wilson (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), p. 30.

<sup>51</sup>Maccoby, *ibid.*, p. 31. See also: Julia A. Sherman, "Prob-

lems of Sex Differences in Space Perception and Aspects of Intellectual Functioning," *Psychological Review*, Vol. 74, No. 4, July, 1967, pp. 290-299; and Philip E. Vernon, "Ability Factors and Environmental Influences," *American Psychologist*, Vol. 20, No. 9, Sept. 1965, pp. 723-733.

<sup>52</sup>Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Some Familiar Antecedents of Responsibility and Leadership in Adolescents," *Leadership and Interpersonal Behavior* ed. by Luigi Petrucci and Bernard M. Bass (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961), p. 260.

<sup>53</sup>D. M. Levy, *Maternal Overprotection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937).

<sup>54</sup>Maccoby, "Woman's Intellect," *loc. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>55</sup>H. A. Witkin, R. B. Dyk, H. E. Patterson, D. R. Goode-nough, and S. A. Karp, *Psychological Differentiation* (New York: Wiley, 1962).

<sup>56</sup>James Clapp, "Sex Differences in Mathematical Reasoning Ability," unpublished paper, 1968.

<sup>57</sup>R. R. Sears, E. Maccoby, and H. Levin, *Patterns of Child Rearing* (Evanston, Ill.: Row and Peterson, 1957).

<sup>58</sup>Bronfenbrenner, p. 260.

<sup>59</sup>Herbert Barry, M. K. Bacon, and Irving L. Child, "A Cross-Cultural Survey of Some Sex Differences in Socialization," *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 55, Nov. 1957, p. 328.

<sup>60</sup>Marian R. Winterbottom, "The Relation of Need for Achievement to Learning Experiences in Independence and Mastery," *Basic Studies in Social Psychology* ed. by Harold Proshansky and Bernard Seidenberg (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), pp. 294-307.

<sup>61</sup>Maccoby, "Woman's Intellect," *loc. cit.*, p. 37.



*i sometimes wonder  
if you're the right one  
for me to be submissive to . . .*

# Independence from the Sexual Revolution

by DANA DENSMORE

Dana Densmore has been active in the women's movement in Boston since June, 1968. She helped start *A Journal of Female Liberation* (*No More Fun and Games, The Female State*) and her main energies have been devoted to it, as she believes that the dissemination of ideas and analysis is the most critical need in making the feminist revolution. Her second priority is self-defense. She has studied Tae Kwon Do for two and a half years, the last six months with Jayne West's Feminist Tae Kwon Do School. She is a member of Cell 16, which puts out the *Journal* and is in a feminist study group as well.

We human beings are not creatures who spring from the earth, our integrity round and tight, our will free and objective. We are not only influenced by what goes on around us, we are conditioned and created by it.

Desires and even needs can be created. We are all familiar with the ingenious techniques of Madison Avenue to generate insecurity in order to offer their product or service as a means of assuaging the insecurity. The most effective techniques zero in on our fears of not being socially acceptable, not being loved, not being sexually attractive.

The seeds of this insecurity exist already in a society whose ideology of individualism isolates people and throws the blame for all maladjustment and failure onto the individual. We constantly hear the variations on this theme. It is used to avoid admitting that anything could be wrong with the way our society is set up. "If you can't make a satisfactory adjustment to life, it's your own problem: perhaps some professional help is in order." "Don't try to change the world—you'd better free your mind instead."

And we hear it thrown at us in response to the threat of female liberation. "You should be intimidated by being put down by men." "Leave your family if it's so oppressive." "If you don't like the way your lover treats you, you can get out of bed." "It's your own fault if you don't get good jobs—you let yourself be discouraged, you took the unchallenging, 'feminine' courses of study in school."

The assumption implicit in all these things is the individualist ideology that if you are unable to do something which is theoretically possible (or which is thought to be theoretically possible) it is because of a personal hang-up and consequently you have no legitimate gripe. This isolates people and tends to make them insecure and unself-confident. They often can be brought to despise them-

selves because they see in themselves so many supposed weaknesses and psychological problems that prevent them from being happy, well-adjusted, and effective. This is a characteristic of our society and isolates all of us, not just the women. (However, women, being the most oppressed, are forced to blame themselves the most for their impotence and thus despise themselves the most and are most isolated and afraid and anxious that no one will love them.)

The very isolation the individualist ideology imposes makes us desire even more to be loved and accepted, and fear even more being unlovable. But we cannot escape our fears of being unlovable. "Who would want me?" we ask; "I have all these hang-ups." A man may know he's not a "real man." He can't adjust to *his* role, either: he's afraid of women. As real people with free will capable of challenging his right to rule (and thus his virility), they are threatening, castrating. A woman may know she's unwomanly, neurotic, and selfish: sometimes she feels trapped and hates her family.

The solution offered to all this is often to open yourself up until you can merge selflessly with another person. In many cases it is explicitly sex. But the solutions all point to sex one way or another. Sex becomes magic, assumes a life of its own, making anything interesting, everything worthwhile. It's for this that we spend those hours trying on micro-dresses, loading up with jingle-jangle chains, smoothing on lacy white stockings and Instant Glow Face Gleamer.

It is this that many girls who would be most free to fight in the female liberation struggle are squandering valuable energy pursuing as an indispensable part of their lives. They lavish and dissipate their valuable time and talents and emotional strength on attempts to be attractive to men and to work things out with lovers so that "love"

might be less degrading. And too often all they reap is demoralization, damaged egos, emotional exhaustion.

Under the banner of "not denying our sexuality" and pointing to repression in the past when women were denied the right to any pleasure in their bodies at all, many of us now embrace sexuality and its expression completely uncritically. As if present excess could make up for past deprivation. As if even total sexual fulfillment would change anything. Except... is this true?—except private dead-of-the-night fears that maybe we really are the sexually frustrated, neurotic freaks our detractors accuse us of being. Are we chasing sexual fulfillment so earnestly because we have to prove that our politics are not just a result of our needing a good fuck?

Then there is the issue of orgasms. Among those who were never well-adjusted and womanly enough to psych themselves into an orgasm while being vaginally stimulated by a man, there are some who, when they discover that their shame and misery were not only not unique but in fact extremely common and due to very straightforward anatomical causes, react to this discovery by feeling that they must make it up by demanding all the physical fulfillment they had been providing the men all along and missing themselves.

What we lost wasn't just X many instances of physical pleasure. The suffering that countless women have endured because they were told that if they didn't have vaginal orgasms they were frigid—that they were neurotic and selfish and unwomanly and sexually maladjusted and unable to let go and give and secretly resented the power of their husbands and envied them—this suffering is staggering and heartbreaking.

The best analysis and rebuttal of this evil fraud, this crippling delusion that routinely sacrifices the happiness of one sex to the vanity of the other, is Anne Koedt's article "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm." Every woman should read Anne's paper over and over until that vicious, pervasive ideology of oppression is purged forever.

The liberation of sexual equality and the right to sexual pleasure is the solution for the future. But is there any solution for the past? Is it a solution to go out and collect orgasms in order to make up for all those frustrated, self-loathing years? I say you can never make up for all that suffering, and certainly not through a mere physical sensation. And as for the psychological rewards of getting my due at last, I can feel no triumph

in that, especially when I'm still fighting the old habits and old guilts that remain long after the intellect and the will have plunged on.

The worst part about it is that even with perfect sexual fulfillment, mutual guilt-free pleasure, we are still oppressed. After all, some women managed to have vaginal orgasms all along, and they were still oppressed; in fact, that was how you were supposed to *achieve* orgasm—by surrendering completely to the man's will, by loving being a woman and everything that that implied. Sexual relations in the world today (and perhaps in all past ages) are oppressive. The fact that your lover gives you an orgasm changes only one small part of that oppression (namely the part that dictated that you had to see yourself as a creature who was allowed only the muted, sensuous, semi-masochistic pleasure of getting fucked and never the direct active transcendent pleasure of orgasm).

If that were the only injustice, or even the major injustice, done us, we would be very well off indeed. In fact, we would probably be able to bear it without concern, certainly without misery and self-loathing. It's the general oppression and degradation we suffer in the world that causes us to be humiliated in the sex act, as Simone de Beauvoir points out. If it weren't for the sense of inadequacy and impotency we learn from all other aspects of our lives, we *would* kick our lover out of bed if he was arrogant, inconsiderate, or ungentle.

Some men do the dinner dishes every night. That doesn't make their wives free. On the contrary, it's just one more thing she has to feel grateful to him for. He, in the power and glory of his maleness, condescended to do something for her. It will never mean more than that until the basic power relations are changed. As long as men are the superior caste and hold the political power in the class relationship between men and women, it *will* be a favor your lover is doing you, however imperiously you demand it. And beyond that one thing, nothing else need have changed.

But the issue isn't just orgasm. We weren't even allowed to engage in sexual intercourse without giving up social dignity and the respect of men. We weren't allowed to love, to make love, to enjoy making love, even with our *husbands*. *Husbands* were commanded to love their wives, wives to obey their husbands. It was cruel and insufferably hypocritical.

But whatever we were denied in the past, it cannot be argued that access to sexual pleasure is

denied to us now. Our "right" to enjoy our own bodies has not only been bestowed upon us: it is almost a duty. In fact, things have been turned around to the point where the "fact" (actually a smear device) that we do *not* engage in sex is whispered about and used by men to discourage "their" women from having anything to do with us. This is one development that makes me laugh out loud whenever I think about it. What would "Ask Beth" think about that! How can men pull this off with a straight face? They must be terrified indeed at the thought of losing their power to define what is proper for proper women. (For that power is exactly what we are challenging.)

The right that is a duty. Sexual freedom that includes no freedom to decline sex, to decline to be defined at every turn by sex. Sex becomes a religion, existing independently of the individuals who share its particular physical consummation. The media totally bombard us with it. Sex is everywhere. It's forced down our throats. It's the great sop that keeps us in our place. The big lift that makes our dreary worlds interesting. Everywhere we are sexual objects, and our own enjoyment just enhances our attractiveness. We are wanton. We wear miniskirts and see-through tops. We're sexy. We're free. We run around and hop into bed whenever we please. This is the self-image we have built up in us by advertising and the media. It's self-fulfilling. And very profitable. It keeps us *in our place* and *feeling lucky* about it (the freedom to consume, consume, consume, until we swallow the world). It makes us look as if we're free and active (actively, freely, we solicit sex from men).

And people seem to *believe* that sexual freedom (even when it is only the freedom to actively offer oneself as a willing object) is freedom. When men say to us, "But aren't you already liberated?," what they mean is, "We said it was okay for you to let us fuck you, that guilt was neurotic, that chaste makes waste; you're already practically giving it away on the street, what more do you want or could you stomach?" The unarticulated assumption behind this misunderstanding is that women are purely sexual beings, bodies and sensuality, fucking machines. Therefore freedom for women could only mean sexual freedom.

Spiritual freedom, intellectual freedom, freedom from invasions of privacy and the insults of degrading stereotypes—these are appropriate only to men, who care about such things and can appreciate them. Woman, remember, is a sexual being,

soft, emotional, expressive, giving, close to the earth, physical, imprisoned by the frightening disgusting delicious all too perishable flesh. For such a creature to presume upon the territory of transcendence is horrifying, unthinkable, polluting the high, pure realms of the will and spirit, where we rise *above* the flesh.

Unfortunately, the oppressed often adopt the psychoses of the ruling class, transformed, sometimes, until they seem no longer vicious and intellectually dishonest projections but a reasonable acceptance of reality (and for the oppressed, reality *is* in a sense what the ruling class believes). So we recognize that we have something of an intellect, and perhaps even use it openly with tolerant or sophisticated men. But we still recognize that insofar as we are also *women*, we are soft, emotional, expressive, giving, close to the earth, ruled at times by our sensuality, our profound, undeniable sexuality.

There are rewards for us in this. In losing ourselves in sexual surrender we bring that masterful, rational, hard, unemotional analytical man to abject, total, frenzied *need* of the flesh he likes to fancy himself above. And there is no question that for a woman sexual love contains as a strong component the desire to become powerful by merging with the powerful. She sees herself as impotent and ineffectual, him as masterful and competent. She longs for that sense of competence and the confidence that comes to him from knowing it's "his world." In the intimacy and ecstasy of sex she seeks to lose herself, become one with him.

Children who are told over and over that they are liars or thieves become liars or thieves. People who are told over and over that they are crazy become crazy. If you are told over and over that you are a being who has profound sexual needs the odds are very good that you will discover that you do. Particularly when other outlets are forbidden or discouraged. Particularly when it is emphasized that those who do *not* feel these needs are frigid, neurotic, sexually maladjusted (which for a woman means *essentially* maladjusted), dried up, barren, to be pitied.

*This stereotype too is self-fulfilling. A woman who cannot enjoy sex, for whatever reason (her husband, it may be, is repulsive to her either because of his style as a lover or because of the contempt with which he treats her out of bed), may become bitter believing she is missing her womanly fulfillment, the great soul-shaking pleasure that would make the rest of the misery of*



being a woman worthwhile. It's useless to claim that we aren't programmed to desire sex, to reach for it, to need it. Even when we know something is false our conditioning drives us to continue to act it out. In this case it is very difficult even to sort out what is true and what is false.

A woman in her forties wrote to me as follows: "Now I realize all that about its being an instinct, but I think there's something more to the story. When I reflect on my own past experience, I can rarely find a time when I was driven to it from inside need. I'm not saying if I didn't have it for a long period (which hasn't ever happened to me), I might not feel the instinct, but I'm saying we need some evidence of just how much because I suspect that even the minimum is far, far less than is believed. . . . I know I talked myself into most sex probably looking for the 'earth-moving orgasm' which maybe was a hoax anyway. What if no one had given me those words with which I talked myself into it? I begin to distrust it all. Reminds me of that line from *Notes From the First Year*: sometimes you'd rather play ping pong."

No doubt there are some innate needs, or at least propensities. But a propensity can be culturally built into an obsession or culturally killed off, sometimes simply by never reinforcing it. I personally suspect that some form of sex urge may turn out to be innate. Human beings reproduced before they had an elaborate social organization institutionalizing sexual intercourse and before full-page color ads in magazines urged women to "Be Some Body."

And if it turns out that this urge is not that strong, it might still be worth keeping (i.e., reinforcing) if it affords people physical pleasure or pleasures of intimacy. But it should be taken for granted that it must be pleasurable to *both parties*, always: which means it must never be institutionalized by law or culture. And if it is a basic "drive" felt by both men and women, there is no need to institutionalize it to ensure its survival.

What we "see" when we look inside may correspond very poorly with reality. We're saturated with a particular story about what's inside. Moreover, we've been saturated with this all our lives, and it has conditioned us and made us what we are. We *feel* that we need sex, but the issue is very confused. What is it we really need? Is it orgasms? Intercourse? Intimacy with another human being? Stroking? Companionship? Human

kindness? And do we "need" it physically or psychologically?

Intercourse, in the sense of the physical act which is the ultimate aim of so much anxiety, plotting, and consuming, is not necessarily the thing we are really longing for, any more than, in the more obvious cases, it is the consumer products advertising builds up neurotic longing for. Physically, there is a certain objective tension and release, at least for a man, when excitation proceeds to orgasm. With a woman even this physical issue is much less clear: most women don't have orgasms at all, and very few always have them. I think we might all agree that *that* isn't why we go to bed with a man. In any case an orgasm for a woman isn't a release in the same sense that it is for a man, since we are capable of an indefinite number, remaining aroused the whole time, limited only by exhaustion. The release we feel, therefore, is psychological. A psychological tension to get this man, to possess him in a certain intimate sense, is released when we "get him" through *his* orgasm. We then enjoy the pleasure of closeness because *he* is more open to us (provided *he* is open, and doesn't just turn over and go to sleep, or jump up to attend to something else on his mind, his attention easily distracted now).

Without denying that sex can be pleasurable, I suggest that the real thing we seek is closeness, merging, perhaps a kind of oblivion of self that dissolves the terrible isolation of individualism. The pleasure argument doesn't impress me very much. A lot of things are pleasurable without our getting the idea that we can't live without them, even in a revolutionary context. I can think of certain foods, certain music, certain drugs, whose physical pleasurable compares favorably even to good sex.

Moreover, destruction of the sense of isolation through communication, community, human kindness, and common cause are all available from other women as you work together in the struggle against oppression. With other women you are more than friends, you are sisters. It would be a mistake to brush off too quickly the spiritual strength to be gained from sisterhood or to overestimate the solace in the arms of a man, just because that is, traditionally, women's only resort.

What I want to suggest is not that sex is by its *nature* evil and destructive, but that it is not an absolute physical need: the assumption that it is an absolute physical need is evil and the patterns

of behavior that grow out of that assumption are destructive. Most of us recognize that sexual relationships often turn out to be evil and destructive in a society where dehumanization, exploitation, and oppression of women is so deeply imbedded into the culture. What we seek is the exception, the rare case where we have, or think for a little while that we might have, the right guy and the right circumstances.

But even in love we are limited when we believe that we must screw to express love. We are programmed to think that not only is sex the only way to demonstrate or prove our love, it is the only (or best) way to *express* it. And in this dangerous and alienating society we are always very anxious to demonstrate, to prove, and to express our love, and to have the affections of our lover demonstrated, proved, and expressed to us. For men this is doubly compelling because sex for a man is the only or best way to prove or express his virility, both by the demonstration of sexual potency and by the imposing of his will on her.

To the extent that this is true, then, we are conditioned to that one mode of expression and turn to it uncritically. But we need to develop *new nonsexual ways of relating to people, to men as well as women*. The obsession with genital sexuality, and screwing in particular, cheats us out of a world of rich possibilities. We think that love is sex love, genital sex love. Therefore we can't love women or men we aren't sexually involved with or interested in. Affection too is identified with genital sex and except for children, pets, and a few close relatives, all physical affection must be limited to our assigned male sex partner. Even communication, human contact and understanding, is assumed to be available only in the intimacy of genital sexual contact.

All desire for love, companionship, physical affection, communication, and human kindness therefore translate to us into a desire for sex. This is pathetically narrow, impossibly limiting. Especially since it can be asked with some justice whether it is very common to obtain this communication, this human kindness, this companionship and affection we seek. It's what we want, all right, but we must ask of it, as we ask of the patent medicine which promises just what we want: does it really do that? And if not, perhaps it is, in practice, a fraud.

In fact, as women have frequently observed, sex can be a fast way to ruin a good relationship.

Either because the man just can't treat her as an equal when he's so personally involved, or because he doesn't know how to treat a woman equally in a sexual relationship, or because he was secretly or subconsciously after the conquest all along.

Another problem is that men have a different view of love and sex than women and for the most part women do not know this. They assume they are making equal and similar investments. Studies have been made of what men and women think love is, what love means to them. Affection and companionship are first on the women's lists, with security and other elements following, and sex turns up as number 8. Men reverse this with sex first. Companionship and affection are *secondary* goals for men. This orientation of men, coupled with the set of cultural attitudes (and fears) men have toward women, make the sexual love relationship a poor place for a woman to seek communication and human understanding.

However, as long as we are able to make clear demands of a relationship, to insist that the man fulfill certain requirements or we shall do without him, thank you, then we can keep our heads above water. These requirements might be: (1) *He is sexually interested in me, not just interested in sex with me the one who is closest at hand.* (2) *He is not indifferent to me aside from the sex; he has tender feelings, loyalty, perhaps even love for me.* (3) *He respects me as a person, is willing to discuss things with me, does not browbeat me, lecture me, or disparage my opinions or projects.*

It is when we are not free, or do not feel free, to make such a set of minimum demands on a relationship that the serious trouble arises. And we are not free when we are in the grip of the false conditioning that decrees that we need sex. We are not free if we believe the culture's ominous warnings that we will become "horny" (*what a callous, offensive word*) and frustrated and neurotic and finally shrivel up into prunes and have to abandon hope of being good, creative, effective people. We are not free if we believe that we, like the lower animals, are driven by something which is not only instinctual but mindlessly, hopelessly, ineluctable. If we believe all that, then, due to the rarity of good, healthy, constructive relationships between men and women in the world today, we will be forced to accept, even seek out, evil and destructive relationships where we are used, and accept that humiliation in return for the privilege of "using him."

If it were true that we needed sex from men, it would be a great misfortune, one that might almost doom our fight. (Meanwhile, the belief that it is true can serve the same function.) Fortunately, it is not true. When we seek sex it is by conscious, intelligent choice. We wish to experience through intimacy human kindness, communication, back-to-the-womb merging and oblivion, childlike openness. We do it because we think it's the right thing to do. We may be mistaken. We may only think it's the right thing because we think that we will turn into neurotic bitches if we don't. But we *don't* do it because we are sexual beings who cannot "deny our sexuality." According to this argument, to have sexual feelings, or an energy that could be rapidly converted into sexual energy, and yet to choose not to engage in sexual intercourse but rather to expend that energy on something else which seems, at the moment, of higher priority, is to "deny" our sexuality.

This is what men have done to us all along. (They do not apply this same logic to themselves.) Because they only relate to us sexually they conclude that we are just sexual beings. If we then function on any other level, something is seriously out of joint since in effect we are "denying" that we are primarily sexual beings. But in fact, it is only if we are *merely* sexual beings, *exclusively* sexual beings, that choosing to put our energy elsewhere indicates any kind of denial. (The great scientist or artist or writer who puts all his energy in his work is not *denying* anything—that would be to insult him; he simply feels that the day is only so long and for this particular time his work is the most important thing to him.)

Personally, I recognize that I have sexual feelings. Their exact nature and origin is open to debate, but I have no doubt that there is an objective, physical reality involved at least to some ex-

tent. However, I and I alone will decide what importance these feelings have in my life as a human being. We are not living in an ideal society, and "post-revolutionary" characters or life styles might well hinder revolution or make it impossible. The fact that in a good society women might want to produce children, at least until the perfection of the artificial womb, is no reason for me to take myself out of the struggle by having children now under these conditions. Similarly, the belief that sex would have a place in a good society does not necessarily mean that we must engage in it now. That decision must be based on the objective conditions of the present.

Let me say something about the objective conditions of the present. We are crippled people living in an evil and destructive world. We have a great deal to do beyond the mere business of living. There is much work that needs to be done, and not, by any means, just the work of liberating people and making a revolution. There is the work of rebuilding ourselves, learning to know ourselves and our potentials, learning to respect ourselves, learning to respect and work with other women. We must overcome all the self-destructive patterns we have been taught in a lifetime of being female.

This work of reclaiming ourselves and making a revolution in women's minds in order to free all of us is the most important work. If a particular sexual relationship or encounter is convenient, appropriate, and pleasurable, if it is not demeaning or possessive or draining in any way, you might decide to choose to invest some of your precious self in it.

But remember how precious your time and your energy and your ego is, and respect yourself enough to insist that the rewards be equal to the investment.



now that we've been liberated we can relax and be ourselves . . .

# Marriage

by SHEILA CRONAN

Sheila Cronan was a founding member of Redstockings and was active in THE FEMINISTS for more than two years. At present she is attending law school at the University of California, Berkeley.

Marriage has been a subject which has generated considerable controversy in the Women's Movement. So far as I know, no group other than The Feminists has publicly taken a stand against marriage, although I'm sure it has been a topic of discussion in most.

One widely held view in the Movement is represented in the following statement:

We women can use marriage as the "dictatorship of the proletariat" in the family revolution. When male supremacy is completely eliminated, marriage, like the state, will wither away.<sup>1</sup>

The basic assumption behind this concept, and one that I myself shared at one time, is that marriage benefits women. This idea is very much part of the male culture and is always being reinforced by men's complaints about marriage and by the notion that women are the ones who want to get married. We've all heard plenty of jokes about how women "snare" husbands, and popular songs with lines like "the boy chases the girl until she catches him." Mothers give their daughters advice on how to get their boy friends to marry them, etc. The propaganda tells us that marriage laws are operating in the interest of women and in fact exist to provide protection for the woman. From this assumption it is logical to conclude that we must retain the institution of marriage until such time as discrimination against women no longer exists and consequently "protection" is no longer necessary.

The Feminists decided to examine the institution of marriage as it is set up by law in order to find out whether or not it did operate in women's favor. It became increasingly clear to us that the institution of marriage "protects" women in the same way that the institution of slavery was said to "protect" blacks—that is, that the word "protection" in this case is simply a euphemism for oppression.

We discovered that women are not aware of what marriage is really about. We are given the

impression that love is the purpose of marriage—after all, in the ceremony, the wife promises to "love, honor, and cherish" her husband and the husband promises to "love, honor, and protect" his wife. This promise, which women believe to be central to the marriage contract, is viewed as irrelevant by the courts. For example, in a well-known case here in New York State, a woman attempted to obtain an annulment on the grounds that her husband had told her that he loved her prior to the marriage and then afterward admitted that he did not and never would. This was held *not* to give grounds for annulment,<sup>2</sup> despite the fact that the man committed fraud, which is normally grounds for nullifying any contract.

There is nothing in most marriage ceremonies specifically referring to sex, yet the courts have held that "the fact that a party agrees to and does enter into the marriage implies a promise to consummate the marriage by cohabitation, so that failure to do so gives grounds for annulment on the basis of fraud in the inducement."<sup>3</sup> An annulment was granted a New York man on the grounds that his wife was unable to have sex with him due to an incurable nervous condition.<sup>4</sup>

But then, one might ask, how is this particularly oppressive to women? After all, men also enter into marriage with the understanding that love is central. Many of us, in examining our personal histories, however, have suspected that "love" has a different meaning for men than it does for women. This has been substantiated by a study done by a man, Clifford R. Adams of Penn State University, who spent thirty years researching the subconscious factors involved in mate selection, studying 4000 couples. His conclusion was:

When a man and a woman gaze into each other's eyes with what they think are love and devotion, they are not seeing the same thing . . . For the woman, the first things she seeks are love, affection, sentiment. She has to feel loved and wanted. The second is security, then companionship, home and family, community acceptance, and sixth, sex. But for the man sex is at the top of the list, not at the bottom. It's second only to companionship. The single category of love-affection-sentiment is below sex.<sup>5</sup>

Sex is compulsory in marriage. A husband can legally force his wife to have sexual relations with him against her will, an act which if committed against any other woman would constitute the crime of rape. Under law, "a husband cannot be guilty of raping his own wife by forcing her to have sexual intercourse with him. By definition, the crime [of rape] is ordinarily that of forcing intercourse on someone other than the wife of the person accused."<sup>6</sup> Thus the threat of force is always present even if it is not necessary for the man to exert it—after all, most women are aware of the "right" of the husband to insist on and the "duty" of the wife to "submit"<sup>7</sup> to sexual intercourse.

It is clear that the compulsory nature of sex in marriage operates to the advantage of the male. The husband theoretically has the duty to have intercourse with his wife also, but this normally cannot occur against his will. Furthermore, as far as the enjoyment of the sex act is concerned, figures show that men (with the exception of impotent men who generally cannot have sex at all) nearly always experience orgasm when they have sex. Women, however, are not so fortunate. Surveys have shown that:

fifteen to twenty percent of all [American] married women have never had an orgasm. About fifty percent reach orgasm on a "now and then" basis, meaning that they experience full culmination about one sex act out of three. Thirty to thirty-five percent of American wives say that they "usually" reach orgasm, meaning that they get there two out of three times or thereabouts. Only a very few women can claim that they have an orgasm every time they take part in sexual activities.<sup>8</sup>

Thus sex as practiced in American marriages clearly benefits the male far more than the female. Despite the emphasis that has recently been put on the husband's duty to give pleasure to his wife, this is not happening most of the time, and we all know that intercourse without orgasm is at best a waste of time. From the above figures we see that 70 percent of American wives have this boring and often painful experience over two-thirds of the time.

In Alabama's legal code of 1852 two clauses, standing in significant juxtaposition, recognized the dual character of the slave.

The first clause confirmed his status as property—the right of the owner to his "time, labor and services"—and to his obedient compliance with all lawful commands . . .

The second clause acknowledged the slave's status as a person. The law required that masters be humane to their slaves, furnish them adequate food and clothing, and provide care for them during sickness and in old age. In short, the state endowed masters with obligations as well as rights and assumed some responsibility for the welfare of the bondsmen.<sup>9</sup>

The following is a description of marital responsibilities:

The legal responsibilities of a wife are to live in the home established by her husband; to perform the domestic chores (cleaning, cooking, washing, etc.) necessary to help maintain that home; to care for her husband and children.

The legal responsibilities of a husband are to provide a home for his wife and children; to support, protect and maintain his wife and children.<sup>10</sup>

The word "slave" is usually defined as a person owned by another and forced to work without pay for, and obey, the owner. Although wives are not bought and sold openly, I intend to show that marriage is a form of slavery. We are told that marriage is an equitable arrangement entered into freely by both husband and wife. We have seen above that this is not true with regard to the sexual aspect of marriage—that in this respect marriage is clearly set up to benefit the male. It also is not true with regard to the rest of the marital responsibilities.

Women believe that they are voluntarily giving their household services, whereas the courts hold that the husband is legally entitled to his wife's domestic services and, further, that she *cannot be paid* for her work.

As part of the rights of consortium, the husband is entitled to the services of his wife. If the wife works outside the home for strangers she is usually entitled to her own earnings. But domestic services or assistances which she gives the husband are generally considered part of her early duties. The wife's services and society are so essential a part of what the law considers the husband is entitled to as part of the marriage that it will not recognize any agreement between the spouses which provides that the husband is to pay for such services or society. In a Texas case David promised his wife, Fannie, that he would give her \$5000 if she would stay with him while he lived and continue taking care of his house and farm accounts, selling his butter and doing all the other tasks which she had done since their marriage. After David's death, Fannie sued his estate for the money which had been promised her. The court held that the contract was unenforceable since Fannie had agreed to do nothing which she was not already legally and morally bound to do as David's wife.<sup>11</sup>

Whereas the legal responsibilities of the wife include providing all necessary domestic services—that is, maintaining the home (cleaning, cooking, washing, purchasing food and other necessities, etc.), providing for her husband's personal needs and taking care of the children—the husband in return is obligated only to provide her with basic maintenance—that is, bed and board. Were he to employ a live-in servant in place of a wife, he would have to pay the servant a salary, provide her with her own room (as opposed to "bed"),



food, and the necessary equipment for doing her job. She would get at least one day a week off and probably would be required to do considerably less work than a wife and would normally not be required to provide sexual services.

Thus, being a wife is a full-time job for which one is not entitled to pay. Does this not constitute slavery? Furthermore, slavery implies a lack of freedom of movement, a condition which also exists in marriage. The husband has the right to decide where the couple will live. If he decides to move, his wife is obligated to go with him. If she refuses, he can charge her with desertion. This has been held up by the courts even in certain cases where the wife would be required to change her citizenship.<sup>12</sup> In states where desertion is grounds for divorce (forty-seven states plus the District of Columbia), the wife would be the "guilty party" and would therefore be entitled to no monetary settlement.

The enslavement of women in marriage is all the more cruel and inhumane by virtue of the fact that it appears to exist with the consent of the enslaved group. Part of the explanation for this phenomenon lies in the fact that marriage has existed for so many thousands of years—the female role has been internalized in so many successive generations. If people are forced into line long enough, they will begin to believe in their own inferiority and to accept as natural the role created for them by their oppressor. Furthermore, the society has been so structured that there is no real alternative to marriage for women. Employment discrimination, social stigma, fear of attack, sexual exploitation are only a few of the factors that make it nearly impossible for women to live as single people. Furthermore, women are deceived as to what the nature of marriage really is. We have already seen how we are made to believe that it is in our interest. Also, marriage is so effectively disguised in glowing, romantic terms that young girls rush into it excitedly, only to discover too late what the real terms of the marriage contract are.

The marriage contract is the only important legal contract in which the terms are not listed. It is in fact a farce created to give women the illusion that they are consenting to a mutually beneficial relationship when in fact they are signing themselves into slavery.

The fact that women sign themselves into slavery instead of being purchased has significance

from another point of view. A purchased slave is valuable property who would not be merely cast aside if the master no longer liked him, but would be sold to someone else who would be obligated to care for him. Furthermore, the necessity for purchasing slaves ensured that only people with money could be slave masters, whereas almost any man can have a wife.

Given the existence of marriage and the fact that women work for no pay but with the expectation of security—that is, that their husbands will continue to "support" them—divorce is against the interests of women. Many of us have suspected this for some time because of the eagerness with which men have taken up the cause of divorce reform (i.e., making it easier to get one). When a man "takes a wife" he is obtaining her unpaid labor in return for providing her with basic maintenance. After twenty years of marriage in which she has provided him with domestic and sexual services, given birth to and raised his children, and perhaps even put him through medical school and helped him build a thriving practice, he is free to cast her aside in order to replace her with someone more exciting. If there are minor children involved, he will probably be required to provide child support—which is only fair since they are his children. If he is well off financially and the judge is sympathetic to the woman, he may be required to pay alimony; if this occurs you can be sure that he will complain bitterly and claim that it constitutes oppression for him. But what is alimony after all? Isn't it ridiculous to require an employer to give his employee severance pay when he in fact owes him twenty years' back wages?

Very few women get alimony anyway. Often child support payments are camouflaged as alimony because it is beneficial to the man tax-wise to do so.<sup>13</sup>

It is hardly necessary to go into the situation a woman finds herself in after the divorce, particularly if the marriage has lasted any length of time. Her productive years have been devoted to her husband's interests rather than her own and she is consequently in no position to fend for herself in this society. She is not trained for any job besides that of domestic servant. Her only hope is to find another husband, and if she is past a certain age this may be very difficult. In other forms of slavery this tragic situation would not occur as the monetary value of the slave would ensure his security.

While wives are "owned" by their husbands in the same sense that slaves are owned by their masters—that is, that the master is entitled to free use of the slave's labor, to deny the slave his human right to freedom of movement and control over his own body—the scarcity of slaves resulted in their monetary value. Any man can take a wife and although he is legally required to support her, there is very little anyone can do if he is unable to fulfill this responsibility. Thus many women are forced to work outside the home because their husbands are unemployed or are not making enough money to support the family. This in no way absolves us from our domestic and child care duties, however.<sup>14</sup>

Since marriage constitutes slavery for women, it is clear that the Women's Movement must concentrate on attacking this institution. Freedom for women cannot be won without the abolition of marriage. Attack on such issues as employment discrimination is superfluous; as long as women are working for nothing in the home we cannot expect our demands for equal pay outside the home to be taken seriously.

Furthermore, marriage is the model for all other forms of discrimination against women. The relationships between men and women outside of marriage follow this basic pattern. Although the law does not officially sanction the right of a man to force his sweetheart to have sex with him, she would find it very difficult to prove rape in the courts, especially if they have had a regular sexual relationship. Also, it is not unusual for a man to expect his girl friend to type his term papers, iron his shirts, cook dinner for him, and even clean his apartment. This oppressive relationship carries over into employment and is especially evident in the role of the secretary, also known as the "office wife."

One of the arguments in the Movement against our attacking marriage has been that most women are married. This has always seemed strange to me as it is like saying we should not come out against oppression since all women are oppressed. Clearly, of all the oppressive institutions, marriage is the one that affects the most women. It is logical, then, that if we are interested in building a mass movement of women, this is where we should begin.

Another argument against attacking marriage has been that it is dying out anyway. The evidence cited for this is usually the growing rate of divorce. But the high rate of remarriage among divorced persons show that divorce is not evidence for the decline of marriage. We have seen that divorce is in fact a further abuse so far as women's interests are concerned. And the fact is that marriage rates have been on the increase. From 1900 to 1940 approximately one half of all American women over twenty years of age were married at any given time. After 1940 the figure began to rise noticeably: by 1960 it had reached the rate of two-thirds of all women over twenty.<sup>15</sup>

The Women's Movement must address itself to the marriage issue from still another point of view. The marriage relationship is so physically and emotionally draining for women that we must extricate ourselves if for no other reason than to have the time and energy to devote ourselves to building a feminist revolution.

The Feminists have begun to work on the issue of marriage. It is only a beginning, however; all women must join us in this fight.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Kathie Sarachid, "Hot and Cold Flashes," in *The Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 3, May 1, 1969.

<sup>2</sup> *Schaeffer v. Schaeffer*, 160 AppDiv 48, 144 NYS 774.

<sup>3</sup> Eugene R. Canudo, *Law of Marriage, Divorce and Adoption* (Gould Publications, 1966), p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Hiebink v. Hiebink*, 56 NYS(2) 394, aff'd 269 AppDiv 786, 56 NYS(2) 397.

<sup>5</sup> Reported in *Glamour Magazine*, November, 1969, p. 214.

<sup>6</sup> Harriet F. Pipel and Theodora Zavin, *Your Marriage and the Law* (New York: Collier Books, 1964), p. 215.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>8</sup> L. T. Woodward, M.D., *Sophisticated Sex Techniques in Marriage* (New York: Lancer Books, 1967), p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth M. Stamp, *The Peculiar Institution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 192.

<sup>10</sup> Richard T. Gallen, *Wives' Legal Rights* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1967), pp. 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> Pipel and Zavin, *op. cit.*, p. 65. For a New York case similar to the Texas one cited, see *Garlock v. Garlock*, 279 NY 337.

<sup>12</sup> Gallen, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> *Report of the Task Force on Family Law and Policy to the Citizen's Advisory Council on the Status of Women*, April, 1968, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Gallen, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> *American Women: Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women*, 1963, p. 6.

"Men are all alike—except the one you've met who's different."

—Mae West

# ADC: Marriage to the State

by ANDRÉ LEO

Most women on welfare are on ADC (Aid to Dependent Children) because they have children and they left the man they were living with or he left them. Maybe their husband died, or they were never living with a man but got pregnant and had a child. The majority of people on welfare live under ADC and the majority of women receiving ADC are white (contrary to myth); the average length of time on ADC is approximately two to three years. Almost all ADC clients are women, and the only parent in the home; they are referred to as "ADC mothers" in this article.

The average ADC mother has three children and applied for assistance when she and her husband separated because she had no income and needed financial help. I have never had an ADC case where the woman received alimony. According to a lawyer I know, the vast majority of divorces do not involve alimony, but often do involve child support payments. However, when the courts track down a father to pay for his children (which isn't too often) he will have to pay only about \$10-15 a week per child. None of the ADC mothers I serviced ever got more than \$15 a week, if they got that. Child support payments ordered by the courts are well under subsistence level and so ADC is available and pays the woman very little more.

In Michigan the budgets are set up to include \$44 per month per person in the family. A maximum budget for a four-person family (one parent and three children) looks like this:

	\$176	food, clothing, incidentals
	100	maximum for rent or home purchase
	29	utilities (heat, electricity, and water)
Total	\$305	monthly allotment
		(If the woman gets support payments from the man they are subtracted from this total and she gets the remainder—she's not ahead.)

That's hardly enough to live on, and there's nothing for an emergency. On top of that, the ADC is "given" out by the Department of Social Services

\*Pen name of Elizabeth Demitrieff, a feminist in the Paris Commune of 1871.

as if the mother is begging for it, and the state is doing her a "favor" by doling out money to "help" her family.

A social worker next to me at work said, "These women have no pride. Why don't they go out and work instead of getting handouts from ADC?" That same social worker's mother never "worked." But she is proud of her mother and would be thoroughly insulted if you said to her, "Why didn't your mother have enough pride to go out and work instead of taking handouts from her husband?"

The fact is that ADC is just a substitute MAN and I will refer to ADC as "The Man" from now on as it makes the whole issue a lot more clear. Let me explain.

## "Woman's Work"

The principal economic fact about this society is the division of labor between male and female with "man's labor" being paid for and "woman's work" not. Women's work is defined as child bearing, child raising, and housework. That's what every little girl is told she will do when she "grows up." She is taught to think of "women's work" as her *main* goal in life, and to be proud of thinking this way—since everything in the culture engraves this image upon her mind. Probably her mother was a housewife and she will be one too. Such is the rigidity of the sexual caste system.

In the conventional image the girl will become a housewife and child raiser only if she lands a man in marriage. The man has to bring in the bread for her to play house. So the essential thing to being a housewife and child raiser is having a man to dole out the money for food, clothes, and rent from *his* check which *he* gets from "working."

Work has been defined by male-dominated culture to mean work which you get paid for. Housework has been excluded from this definition of work because male-controlled society has made sure that women do not get paid for their labor as housekeepers and child raisers. All things in this materialistic society are given a monetary value,

but household work and child raising have no monetary value if done by a wife and mother for a man. The only time women get paid for housework is when they go to another woman's house and do "her" work for her, either because she's working outside her home (and she certainly can't get a househusband to do this work for her), or because her husband is wealthy enough to give her money to get out of the low-status housewifely chores. Rich or poor, the woman still has the responsibility to do the housework or to get someone else to do it for her.

The fact that housework is low-status work is important. Housework when done by a "domestic worker"—i.e., paid for—is one of the lowest paid jobs in this society. But really, what is the difference between the actual work done by a housewife and the work done by a maid or domestic worker? It's clear that almost all women are domestic workers, whether paid or unpaid. Women in male-dominated society are primarily a servant caste. With the passing of the days of cheap and plentiful servants, one vast class of servants still remains with us: women. Women are servants in their roles as wives, housekeepers, child raisers, etc. Women's real and ancient servant status and function in male society remains basically unchanged in spite of industrialism and modern technology.

The male-dominated Left also defines work as what you get paid for. When talking about the "working class," they include those domestic laborers who work for other women for pay. But they conveniently exclude all women who work as housewives full- or part-time for men, because they don't get wages—only room and board and handouts now and then from their man (employer). The male supremacism of the Left has time and again interfered with the development of a clear perception of how women are economically in bondage to men of all classes and races.

#### The Working "Unemployed"

What if a housewife and mother, working without pay, is suddenly without that man who got paid for *his* work? Does it enter this woman's mind to now demand pay for the work she is doing? No. She has been too well conditioned to think that her work is "special women's work," "you can't put a price on motherhood," and "it's not a job—it's unselfish devotion."

But where would she go, who would pay her

for her work, if she did demand pay? No one. They'd even laugh her out of the unemployment security commission offices if she applied for unemployment compensation. Besides, she's still doing "her work" and not getting paid for it. It's the only layoff where the employee has to keep right on working.

So she goes to the only place that is available, to the S.S. (Social Services, that is) to get "welfare." She is made to feel that she is being "given" something for nothing. Meanwhile she's still doing that housework and child raising she was supposed to devote her life to. But now she's bad, lazy, and a leech for doing all that hard work.

The ADC mother learns that there are two kinds of housewives, the "good" ones and the "bad" ones. The "good" ones do the same work as she does but they are still living with a man who "provides" them with their needs from *his* pay from *his* work. The "bad" ones are those who are not living with or being paid for by a *man* and so the state replaces him in the form of an ADC check ("The Man").

#### "They Should All Go To Work"

What about the argument that ADC mothers could find jobs to support their families if they had enough pride to get off welfare? The stigma of ADC is so great that many ADC mothers believe this themselves. But the argument is shallow and does not hold up for the majority of ADC mothers. If a woman has a large family (two or more children), she will most likely not be able to support her family on a woman's wage rate. If you don't believe this, here are figures on women's wages (they are for 1966 but the situation has gotten worse for female labor since then): In 1966 the median income for a white man was \$7,164; for a nonwhite man, \$4,528; a white woman, \$4,152; a nonwhite woman, \$2,949 (full-time year-round work only).

Things are getting worse, and the gap between men's and women's income has been widening. More than two thirds of all women working full-time, year-round jobs had incomes under \$5,000, while fewer than one fourth of all men were in this bracket. Men often make more money than women in the same job. Women sales workers earn 60 percent less than male sales workers. Women managers, officials, and proprietors earn 45 percent less than men in those same jobs. Women clerks earn 44 percent less than male clerks. Besides,

women are systematically kept out of the labor market and discriminated against more strongly than any other group; their unemployment rates are highest.

Even if a woman does get a job, she's likely to get more money on ADC than from work outside her home. She will also have problems finding and paying for baby-sitters or day care. This has been a very effective way, so far, for this male-controlled economy to keep mothers with pre-school children out of the labor market. When she has finally got her job, she will realize why so many ADC mothers stay home. Now she has two full-time jobs, and only one for pay! Her life will be a continual round of back-breaking labor with hardly any time for leisure or the enjoyment of her children. And all that for poverty-level wages.

#### The Man and Patriarchal Society

When you put all these facts together some curious patterns begin to emerge. "The Man" (ADC) has been set up to preserve the family system in which men get paid and the women are unpaid and kept in a colonized position economically and psychologically. This is done by refusing to pay women for honest work done in the home, but rather treating them as "welfare recipients"; by making ADC checks so low that women have to live with a man to be adequately "provided" for; by not providing child care centers, and, in fact, making it difficult to set them up; by perpetuating sex discrimination in the Work Incentive Program

and throughout the agency; etc. ADC makes a concerted effort to strengthen the patriarchal family system and works to prevent the development of other forms of social structure for child raising and work division. The agency literature is full of patriarchal male-supremacist drizzle all sugar-coated in terms of "helping" these women who are ADC mothers.

There is no just solution to the situation of women under welfare within the present male-dominated family system. The only way out is for women to get together themselves and to create new structures which do not treat women as a caste labor group or oppress children. Structures where women and men share all tasks and decisions of the society for equal rewards and treatment. The women's liberation movement has already begun to bring women together to try to work out alternatives to the present family system; *women on welfare are also beginning to organize themselves to confront the welfare system.* The two groups need to work more closely with each other as they are confronting many of the same issues—and the same white male-controlled system.

The saddest thing about "The Man" is that "he" turns woman against woman. Some women say with pride, "Well I got along without ADC [The Man], why can't they?" But chances are, those same women couldn't have made it without *some man* to pay for them. For remember, sister, if you have a child or the potential to bear a child—in other words, if you're a woman—you are a potential recipient of "The Man."

## Slavery or Labor of Love

by BETSY WARRIOR

This is part of a longer article published in *A Journal of Female Liberation — The First Revolution* by Cell 16, 2 Brewer St., Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138. Betsy Warrior is a feminist and an anarchist.

In every period of labor reform, the lot of the houseworker has lain outside the sphere of interest of reformers and radicals alike, and has remained untouched by any improvements accruing to those workers whose jobs are outside the home. This continues to be the case today. Energy is being directed at improving the conditions of the migrant worker, minority groups in the labor force, and even women if they happen to be in the

"outside" labor force, i.e., in work situations analogous to male workers. No such energy is being directed at the situation of the household worker. The oppression of females who work outside the home is more easily recognizable because general standards that are accepted for male workers can theoretically be applied to females also. Thus their inequality in relation to male workers can be exposed. There are no such standards for house-



workers nor has the labor they perform ever been recognized as such.

The most obvious reason that no attention has been given to the situation of the houseworker is simply the fact that men aren't engaged in this work. As this position is unique to women, men don't see any direct benefit for themselves in the improvement of it; therefore, it remains unchanged. In this respect, as in many others, men constitute an upper caste who have a monopoly on economic and political power and will use it only when it is directly in their interest. Females, on the other hand, although they would benefit from improvements in this area, are relatively powerless and so unable to implement the necessary changes. The failure of men to use their power to improve the situation of the houseworker is also due to the fact that they rightly feel that any major changes in this area would undermine male supremacy. Men now have their domestic work done for them free. If a change occurred in this area it might mean that men would have to share this now low-prestige work and/or pay to have someone else do it.

It has been suggested that women will gain equality only when they are all employed in the "public" labor force and that this step will by some magic free them from the status of unpaid domestic slavery. The solution to this dilemma can't lie in the hope that all women will leave the home and join the outside paid labor force. First of all, women working outside the home receive the lowest wages and fill the lowest positions in the paid labor force. Secondly, even in times of economic expansion when new jobs are created, there aren't enough jobs to go around.

Besides these two factors that deprive women of incentive to join the "outside" labor force, there are other deterrents. One of the main deterrents is the fact that there are no facilities set up by society for child care or home maintenance in the event that a woman decides to work outside the home. The few existing facilities can't even be considered by the majority of women because of their prohibitive cost and their inability to accommodate more than a tiny percentage of those who might have use for them. Someone has to perform the vast amount of labor entailed in raising children and maintaining living quarters. This labor continues to devolve on women even when they have jobs outside the home. Doubly burdened, women are unable to devote their full attention to

either job and are effectively kept at the lowest levels of the paid labor force. On top of that they have been used as scapegoats for every ill of society because they are unable to give their full attention to the roles of mother, wife, and housekeeper.

There are other equally discouraging deterrents of a psychological nature such as the belief that it is the duty of a woman to be solely a wife and mother and that she can't overstep these limits except at the risk of losing her "true" identity. Also a woman's education isn't geared to facilitate a successful or fulfilling career outside the home. Indoctrination and tracking take care of this. In spite of this, a woman decides to work outside the home, it can be taken for granted that some of the psychological deterrents have been at least partially overcome. But having decided to work outside the home, she comes up against other obstacles that are impossible to remove by a mere change of thinking.

This brings us back to the problem of child care and housework. In other countries attempts have been made to improve the status of women and release them from their unpaid drudgery by drawing them into the paid labor force. These attempts failed and were doomed to failure from the outset because no adequate provisions were made for housework or the care of children. Because of the reformist nature of the changes in the role of women in these societies, the very basis of woman's oppression remained untouched. Females didn't actively share in the decision-making of these revolutions and in fact weren't equally represented in any important areas of these revolutions.

I don't think the feebleness of these reformist attempts is wholly attributable to innocent error or a faulty analysis on the part of male socialist planners but more likely to the unwillingness of males to share the responsibility for home maintenance and child care and an indifference on their part to something they think need not concern them. To equalize the status of the female would have entailed such major and drastic reorganization of society that, judging by the results of the revolutions, it was something the "revolutionary" leaders were unwilling or afraid to undertake. This attitude led them to attack only a symptom of the problem (i.e., the inequality of women in the paid labor force) rather than its root, woman's primary oppression as unpaid domestic—the underlying rea-

son for this inequality. The revolutionary goal of complete emancipation for the female half of the human race has in all revolutions been a goal of low priority which has later been neglected and finally betrayed. But this is an old story to the woman's movement.

The reorganization of ordinary home maintenance service is long overdue. Household workers have, historically, been low paid, without standards of hours and working conditions, without collective bargaining, without most of the protections accorded by legislation and accepted as normal by other workers, and without means and opportunity adequately to maintain their homes. (From *American Women (1963-1968): Report on the Status of Women - Interdepartmental Committee*)

This quote from *The Report on the Status of Women* gives an understated and inaccurate account of the situation of houseworkers: In fact it is meant only to apply to the tiny minority of houseworkers who actually do get paid! To say that a segment of the labor force is low-paid is quite different from stating that roughly half of the labor force is un-paid—the half that produces and maintains all labor power. Also the quote doesn't recognize that this situation will exist by necessity under the present economy and a real change can be effected only along with a complete change in the sex role system. The situation of the paid houseworker is indelibly tainted by the economic status of the majority of unpaid houseworkers. How much remuneration is society willing to give for a service that is usually provided free?

In another pamphlet put out by the Woman's Bureau of the US Department of Labor, this question is posed, "What is Equal Pay?" It goes on to explain that "Equal pay means payment of 'rate for the job' without regard to sex—in the factory, in the office, in the school, in the store—and in all other places where men and women perform work of a comparable character."

In other pamphlets put out by the Department of Labor, it is cited that women on an average work anywhere between 36 and 99.6 hours a week in the home. This is a job at which all women are employed at one time or another in their lives, if not all their lives. But there is no mention of "rate for the job" for this work, and this oversight holds true for socialist publications as well. The socialist analyses, including those by women, state that woman's oppression arises at the point of production. What production? They mean, of course, the production that men are engaged in—the production of the "public" sector of

the economy! The maddening persistence of this oversight lies in the male orientation of all this literature which does not recognize labor except "where men and women perform work of a comparable character."

The phrase "comparable character" betrays the pseudo-equality offered by these analyses. The main function of women, which she is confined to because of sex and which distinguishes her from the male, is just what is responsible for her inferior status in the outside labor force and everywhere. This function is in no way comparable to anything done by males. To offer the illusion that women will be equal by receiving equal pay for work that is also done by males, is a conscious effort to keep women's slavery intact. Women are not just laborers in the male-defined sense of the word. Women are the source of all labor in that they are the producers of all laborers. This is the basic means of production (reproduction) in any society. It creates the first commodity, female and male laborers, who in turn create all other commodities and products. Men as the ruling class profit from this commodity through its labor. These profits come in two sizes: king-size and super. The individual man who is king of his castle (the patrilineal family) has his labor power produced, prepared, and maintained for him free. When he sells his labor power on the market he is selling a commodity he owns but did not produce, thereby profiting from the slave labor that went into the making of this product. The male capitalist class makes a super-profit when it buys this labor power and then receives the surplus value of its "outside" economy production.

It is clear to me that women will not be freed from their sexual status (slavery) by being given equal opportunity in the "outside" labor force; it has been tried already and has failed. Rather they will be given the basis for equal opportunity by being freed of their function as domestic slaves and its form, the patrilineal family. If we attempt to improve the situation of the houseworker without attacking the economy and sex role attitudes which make this situation possible, then, in effect, we will be trying to make the slavery of women more palatable.

As it is not possible to make any improvements in the institution of slavery, and this is the only accurate counterpart we can find for housework, we must take housework out of the realm of slavery and thereby change its very nature and social

meaning. This means, in effect, the abolition of "housework" and "domestic" service in the sense that it is now known. Once this work has to be paid for, it will be incorporated into the "public" economy. This means that the work that was formerly done in separate, duplicated, single units will be collectivized and industrialized on a large

basis with a more efficient use of both time and labor and without the waste, alienation, and duplication now involved in child care and home maintenance. Only when this is accomplished will women be able to fight for their equality on a more nearly equal footing with men.

## Prostitution

by PAMELA KEARON and BARBARA MEHRHOF

Pamela Kearon and Barbara Mehrhof were founding members of Redstockings and are now active in THE FEMINISTS; they were contributors to *Notes From the Second Year*. The following is the second part of a longer article by the authors arising out of the group's activities on the issue of prostitution. The *function theory* first presented in "The Rise of Man" is here given further development and has become basic to THE FEMINISTS' theoretical analysis of women's oppression.

Prostitution, Marriage, and Motherhood<sup>1</sup> are the three institutions which exist solely for the exploitation of women. These institutions are related in our oppression because they encompass all the oppressive functions imposed upon women by men.

We cannot discuss prostitution and what it really is without reference to the Function/Activity Theory. This theory differs significantly from the Role Theory of women's oppression. The theory states that a person's power in society is relative to the activity she/he performs, and that the essence of woman's oppression is neither arbitrary assignment of roles nor an artificial status attached to what she does, but instead can be found in the activity itself. An activity is defined by us as an on-going and integrated set of acts which have a purpose and to some extent define the actor. There are three categories of human activity, in ascending order of power and influence:<sup>2</sup>

1) Labor: "the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism and eventual decay are bound to the vital necessities produced and fed into the life process by labor."

2) Work: "the activity which corresponds to

the unnaturalness of human existence... work provides an 'artificial' world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings."

3) Action: "the only activity that goes on directly between human beings without the intermediary of things or matter... Action, in so far as it engages in founding and preserving political bodies, creates the condition for remembrance, that is, for history."

The hierarchy of power among these activities depends on the amount of influence over things and people inherent in them. Influencing people is more powerful than having control of things.

By Function we mean an activity which is assumed to be "natural" or fitting for a particular group in society without the consent of the group, and which defines the nature of group members. A function is usually a form of Labor and never a form of Action. Men as men have no Function in society. Men are not a priori totally defined, especially in a society in which upward mobility is possible. Although some men are eventually stuck in labor activities, the definition of the human male is originally open: to create the world of things, to control the world of human events.

Women are obligated to perform four basic

functions in male society. They all come under the heading of Labor and together they can be understood as the single function of Servant. The four functions are:

- 1) child-bearer: not as a biological ability but as an imposed obligation.
- 2) child-rearer: attending to children coupled with the duty to instill in them male ideology.
- 3) personal servant to the male: the obligation to care for the biological needs of the male so that he is free for Work or Action.
- 4) sex object: the obligation to service the male sexually and to act as Object to the male Subjectivity.

These functions are by their nature powerless activities and when assigned exclusively to one of two groups, demeaning.

The root of our oppression is the imposition of these four functions, not the "role" we are forced to play nor even the institutions. The role of women is rather the behavioral form dictated by the four functions. The institutions are the particular political forms which embody these functions and standardize their performance. We are forced to perform these functions, though in a less stringent way, even if we manage to avoid these institutions.

Prostitution is limited to the performance of only one of these functions: sex object. The woman involved is customarily entitled to a set fee for her services. Marriage, on the other hand, includes all four functions (by law) and the woman is entitled to room and board and medical expenses—or just what a slave was legally entitled to in the South. Further, she is obligated to live in the residence established by her husband and is *by law* subject to forced sexual intercourse—otherwise known as rape. Motherhood outside of marriage includes the functions of child-bearing and rearing. Neither wife nor mother is entitled to pay for her services.

The function of sex object is two-fold. First, it is the obligation to serve men sexually, to gratify their physical desires. But it is also the obligation to serve as "object" for the male. There is a basic difference between the object status of women and that of other oppressed groups. For example, white supremacy is ideologically based on the physical fact of white skin. In the *ideology of sexism*, male supremacy is based on the physical fact of the possession of a penis. But there is no act intrinsic to the white/black dichotomy. A white person can beat, rape, castrate, or lynch a

black, but he could do the same to an Oriental or another white. However, there is an act intrinsic to the male/female dichotomy. That act is sexual intercourse. Every male can engage in it repeatedly throughout his lifetime. (This does not mean that sexual intercourse is inherently oppressive to women. If women were the oppressors of men, the same act might serve just as well to express that oppression, because it perfectly expresses the dichotomy.) Therefore, sexual intercourse is not merely a means for men of obtaining physical gratification. It is most significantly the easiest and most incontrovertible way of defining himself as a member of the upper caste. It renews a sense of power for him and a sense of powerlessness for the woman. It is the daily means of reminding the sexes of their relative positions.

The "object" part of the sex object function can be seen more clearly in the street scenes between men and women: the cat-calls, obscenities, molesting, and worst of all, the conversations they start up with us on the assumption that we are their collective and always available confidantes. Here there is no question of sexual gratification. It is purely the expression of woman's "object-ness" couched in the convenience of sexual terms. Prostitutes exist to satisfy both these aspects of the sex object function.

A person used as an object and denied the right of reciprocity is degraded. Prostitution exists to meet the desire of men to degrade women. Studies made by men reveal that very few even pretend they frequent prostitutes primarily for sexual gratification. Young boys admit they go to achieve a sense of male camaraderie and freedom. They usually go in groups and gossip about it at length afterward in a way that is good for their egos. Other men have expressed the prime motive as the desire to reaffirm the basic "filth" of all women, or to clearly separate "good" from "bad" women in their own minds, or for the opportunity to treat another person completely according to personal whim.

Most men cannot treat their wives completely as objects because the main inducement to wifehood is a certain measure of respect relative to other women. In addition, a wife belongs to her husband and her total degradation would reflect upon himself. Wifehood is slavery with a measure of status and security; prostitution is a bit of freedom coupled with the stigma of outcast. That sexual gratification is not the prime motive for males frequenting prostitutes is further demonstrated by

the fact that although both marriage and free love have been on the increase, so has prostitution. Economic depression and war always cause an increase of prostitution because both these situations impel men more furiously than ever to define their male status.

Laws concerning prostitution have always been part of the institution. They either define females engaged in it as criminals or regulate their activities and even dress in such a way that they are clearly distinguishable from other women. The United States for the most part outlaws prostitutes. (An exception is Nevada, where prostitution is legalized. Here prostitutes *must* live in brothels and are forbidden by law to mingle with the general population.) In New York State prostitutes are arrested under four laws:

- 1) Prostitution: defined as sexual relations for a fee.
- 2) Soliciting for the purpose of prostitution; this is a Class B misdemeanor carrying a sentence of up to six months.
- 3) Loitering: A much vaguer and easier means of rounding up prostitutes, loitering is a violation with a maximum sentence of fifteen days.
- 4) Disorderly Conduct: An even more encompassing law, it refers to causing public inconvenience by annoyance or alarm, abusive or obscene language, physically offensive acts, etc.

There is another law in New York State known as PINS (persons in need of supervision) which can be used against girls who are "potential" prostitutes. Under this law boys up to the age of sixteen, and girls until they are eighteen, can be jailed for actions that would not be crimes for adults, such as truancy and something called "in-corrigibility." However, only females are jailed under PINS for acts of promiscuity or pregnancy.

It might strike one as odd that males, who use prostitutes, also outlaw them. The reason for these laws, and for laws that come under the heading of "legalized prostitution," are to regulate and restrict the activity of prostitutes. (Where prostitution is illegal, this is done through graft, bribery, and uneven enforcement of the laws.) But these laws also serve to degrade women who engage in prostitution and to intimidate "our wives and daughters" into not dipping into it.

Male explanations of these laws are quite different. Males are constantly referring to prostitution as an "affront to public decency" and giving this as the reason for laws regulating, restricting, or

even outlawing prostitutes. The impression they hope to create is that the sight of prostitutes is somehow offensive to "nice" women. Some women have given in to this male pressure and are, or pretend to be, offended. Actually, the sight of prostitutes standing passively on street corners, like slaves on the block, could clue women in to the basic *shame* of our existence. Or, the sight of prostitutes aggressively pursuing a client might turn a woman onto the idea of acting aggressively and hostilely herself. Both these impressions are potentially radicalizing. That is the reason men want to hide these women away, to confine them to houses or certain districts as an "affront to public decency."

Ultimately, however, the real affront is to men themselves. Males generally walk the streets in the pleasant anonymity of one who meets the norm. Women are "different" and therefore conspicuous. But prostitutes make men feel conspicuous-eyed, peered at like objects. They invade male privacy. A recent English government paper on the subject<sup>3</sup> states that the aggressive behavior of prostitutes is hateful because it is an expression of man-hating. Prostitutes on the street often put males in the position usually reserved for us. We are told to take uninvited touching, comments, and soliciting as "flattery." When it happens to men it is called "harassment" and the wheels of justice turn.

The money element in prostitution is somewhat ambiguous. Males feel they debase the prostitute by offering money. Yet prostitutes feel vindicated by the fact that they get money for their work, which, unlike "love," can get you on the subway. This ambiguity upsets men, who then complain that prostitution actually exploits them. The laws against prostitutes have often emphasized this money element.<sup>4</sup> But relations between men and women are nearly always economic in nature, because women are able to make much less money in this man's world. Marriage for women is basically a means for economic survival, security, or well-being.

#### How the Existence of Prostitution Affects all Women

To see the way the oppression of women really operates in male society, it is necessary to understand that each woman is not merely oppressed by the particular institution in which she is trapped (Marriage, Motherhood, Prostitution); rather, each



woman is oppressed by all of these institutions at once.

The institution of Marriage is bad for the class of women. The "status" of wife depreciates the position of other women. The desire for "status" is nothing petty for members of oppressed groups. Thus, prostitutes and spinsters enjoy at best a fringe existence in society, the prostitute being relegated to the underworld, the spinster often deprived of an ordinary human and continuous connection to the heart of the world she inhabits. Marriage provides a minimum of security for women, which militates against the drive to achieve economic power for the class of women. Marriage also divides women from one another by ensuring loyalty above all to a male, since he is the means to both status and security. Therefore, it weakens any political movement women attempt to create for themselves. Most importantly, it devalues and discourages the need for freedom and independence in women.

Motherhood is a male institution which confines women to the duty to bring up properly trained citizens for their place in male society. According to men, just as we are all really whores at heart, so we are all *supposed* to be born mothers. The result is that an apolitical sentiment and posture is imposed upon all women. We are obliged to forgive and understand even the rapist, since he was once only a lonely, confused boy himself. What's more, women are "naturals" for all low-paying jobs that require service, especially with respect to children.

Prostitution, too, does not just oppress prostitutes. Since there is no physical sign at birth to distinguish prostitutes from other women, all women are potential prostitutes. The existence of prostitution is co-relative to the existence of the categories of "bad woman," "loose woman," or even "sexually liberated woman." The judgment of women's sexual behavior is still dominated by the virgin/non-virgin dichotomy. No woman knows just how much sexual experience will be sufficient to push her over the line into the debased class. This depends on the surrounding male opinion. According to male whim, the prostitute and the sexually liberated woman can be considered indistinguishable. On the street, any woman unaccompanied by a male is assumed to be a prostitute/loose woman—that is, up for grabs.

A spinster is always subject to this accusation in her personal life. The individual male, however insignificant, is the final arbiter of who is and

who isn't a "tramp." You can be his beloved one minute and the next, nothing but a "slut." All women, including wives, are potentially "fallen women." A man is never defined in these terms. The existence of a category of women defined by this function of sex object, plus the fact that every woman must guard against "slipping" into this category or being assigned to it (and the absence of a comparable group of men), is sufficient to understanding prostitution as oppressive to all women. By the ubiquitous "threat" of being treated like a "common prostitute," we are kept in our places and our freedom is further contracted.

The unabashed hatred and scorn men freely express toward and about prostitutes is thinly disguised hatred of women. The wife and the mother are associated with individual males and consequently cannot be so openly degraded. Remember, she has in some way to be induced to carry out all those other powerless and depressing activities for the male.

Yet men have it both ways. When convenient, they can throw it up to women that they do not have the "spirit" a prostitute exhibits in flouting society's rules—they are cowardly and conventional. Wives are ridiculed for the pettiness and frivolity which are actually part of the nature of their servitude and dependence on men. Mothers are accorded the responsibility for every evil in society from juvenile delinquency to the war in Viet Nam. Worse, both wives and mothers are spuriously represented as powerful in society. This is really a double bind: damned if you do, damned if you don't. Men never experience this essential dilemma: to choose a bit of security and respect and forego freedom, or to choose a kind of freedom (freedom from personal servitude, not freedom to accomplish aims and wield power) and have to live in conspicuous ostracism from the mainstream of society and from the majority of women.

#### Feminist Strategy

The first thing we must do is to fight for the repeal of all laws against prostitutes. At the same time we must see to it that prostitution is not legalized. Legalization of prostitution always indicates a lowering of the status of women in a society. Our goals can be accomplished only through raising the consciousness of all women on prostitution and by making sure that the women's movement continues with meaningful political action on this issue.

We are opposed to legalization because it is the

ultimate in degradation for women and legally sanctions this kind of abuse of women by men. It would mean forced examinations, licensing, and inspections. Women who did not comply with the regulations would, of course, still be subject to arrest. From the evidence of countries that have legalized prostitution, this would be most women. We do not want women photographed, fingerprinted, and identified for life by this trade. At least now women are free to move in and out of it according to need. As long as prostitution exists we want it as free as possible from any male regulation and laws that would punish women for it.

This does not mean that we are in favor of prostitution, any more than we support the institution of marriage. Needless to say, this is what the women's movement is all about: women getting together and creating enough power to throw off these institutions (and the functions particular to them) which oppress us all. But this must begin with every woman who can do so leaving these institutions now, even if it means a lower standard of living or months of emotional distress. Sacrifice and courage are necessary to change the world significantly. Therefore, we call upon all women who

possibly can to leave prostitution as we have called upon women to leave marriage. Those who cannot leave now must begin to work at a plan to achieve independence. This will not only weaken the institution but will strengthen the women's movement. Finally, right now it is important for prostitutes to realize our common oppression as women and to become actively involved in the movement. We must all work together to devise an effective strategy for action.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>We are referring not to the physical abilities of conception, carrying, bearing, and suckling children, but to the institution of motherhood as a political concept which defines women as the bearer and rearer of man's children.

<sup>2</sup>The following distinction between Labor, Work, and Action is quoted from Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (New York, Doubleday Anchor, 1959), pp. 9-10.

<sup>3</sup>*The Wolfenden Report: Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offenses and Prostitution* (New York: Stein and Day, 1963).

<sup>4</sup>In the *Breitung Case* of 1923, Magistrate Moses R. Ryttenberg held that customers cannot be subject to arrest since "a man cannot participate in an act of prostitution because prostitution is a practice of women only... one cannot be said to participate in unlawful acts unless he profits therefrom." If "profit" means money, then of course any crime not involving money would by this decision go by the board.

## The Spiritual Dimension of Women's Liberation

by MARY DALY

Mary Daly belongs to NOW and is active in the task force on women and organized religion. She is also active in women's liberation at Boston College, where she teaches, and is one of the organizers of the Catholic Women's Caucus. She holds several degrees in theology and philosophy and is the author of *The Church and the Second Sex* (Harper & Row, 1968) which explores sexism in the history of the church.

Women who are committed to achieving liberation and equality often turn away from organized religion, seeing it either as irrelevant or as a stubborn and powerful enemy, placing obstacles to all they seek to attain. Having been turned off by institutional religion they choose to leave it behind and forget it, except when it really shows muscle—as in the struggle over abortion laws. Some, on the other hand, have opted to continue their relationship with church or synagogue in the hope of changing sexist beliefs, laws, and customs in these institutions. The second choice is based upon a conviction that there are important values transmitted through these institutions that make it

worth the pain and effort of staying in and fighting the system.

These are personal choices and no one can set down hard-and-fast rules for everyone to follow. However, it is important that women be aware of the issue of religion. First of all, it is necessary to understand institutional religion's role in the oppression of women, which it continues to exercise in this culture whether they personally relate to it or not. Second, women should be sensitive to the fact that the movement itself is a deeply spiritual event which has the potential to awaken a new and post-patriarchal spiritual consciousness.

### Institutionalized Christianity and the Oppression of Women

The Judaic-Christian tradition has been patriarchal down through the millennia, although sometimes this has been modified or disguised.<sup>1</sup> The Bible reflected the oppressed condition of women in ancient times. In the Decalogue of the Old Testament a man's wife is listed among his possessions, along with his ox and his ass. The biblical story of Eve's birth, which has been called the hoax of the ages, fixed woman's place in the universe. The story of the Fall of Adam and Eve perpetuated the myth of feminine evil, giving a powerful image of woman as temptress—a dominant theme in Western culture for thousands of years. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul put women in their place: veiled, silent, and subordinate. In the early centuries of Christianity the Fathers of the Church classified women as fickle, shallow, garrulous, weak, and unstable. In the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas decreed that they are misbegotten males, and theologians dutifully taught this for centuries.

In the modern period Popes and theologians greeted the first wave of feminism with the double-talk of the feminine mystique: Women should be equal but subordinate. On childbirth, Pope Pius XII pontificated: "She loves it [the child] the more, the more pain it has cost her." Today, some liberal Catholic and Protestant theologians admit that sexism exists in the churches but show little inclination to do anything about it. All of this, of course, is in blatant contradiction to Christian teaching about the worth and dignity of every human person.

Although there have been outstanding "exceptional women" in every period of Christian history, their existence has had almost no effect upon the official ideology and policies of the churches. This fact can be understood when it is realized that the Judaic-Christian tradition has functioned to legitimate male-dominated society. The image of God as exclusively a father and not a mother, for example, was spawned by the human imagination under the conditions of patriarchal society and sustained as plausible by patriarchy. Then, in turn, the image has served to perpetuate this kind of society by making its mechanisms for the oppression of women appear right and fitting. If God in "his" heaven is a father ruling "his" people, then it is in the "nature" of things and according to divine plan and the order

of the universe that society be male-dominated. Within this context a mystification of roles takes place: the husband dominating his wife can feel that he represents God himself. A theologian such as Karl Barth could feel justified in writing that woman is "ontologically" subordinate to man.

It might seem that intelligent people do not really think of God as an old man with a beard, but it is quite possible for the mind to function on two different and even contradictory levels at the same time. For example, many speak of God as spirit and at the same time, on the imaginative level, envisage "him" as male. The widespread concept of the Supreme Being has been a not very subtle mask of the divine father figure, and it is not too surprising that it has been used to justify oppression, especially that of women, which is said to be "God's plan."

#### In the third chapter of Genesis:

"... And thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee . . ."

Doctrines about Jesus also have often reflected a kind of phallic obsession. Some theologians have argued that since Jesus was male and called only males to become apostles, women should not be ordained. The doctrine of a unique "incarnation" in Jesus reinforced the fixed idea of patriarchal religion that God is male and male is God. So also did the image of the Virgin kneeling in adoration before her own Son. The mechanism that can be seen in all of this is the familiar vicious circle in which the patterns of a particular kind of society are projected into the realm of religious beliefs and these in turn justify society as it is. The belief system becomes hardened and functions to resist social change, which would rob it of its plausibility. (In a matriarchal or a diarchal society, what credibility would the image of a divine patriarch have?)

Patriarchal religion tends to be authoritarian. Given the fact that the vicious circle is not fool-proof, there is always the possibility that beliefs may lose their credibility. For this reason they are often buttressed by notions of "faith" that leave no room for dissent. For example, the believer is often commanded to assent blindly to doctrines handed down by authority (all male). The inculcation of anxieties and guilt feelings over "heresy" and "losing the faith" has been a powerful method used by institutional religion to immunize itself from criticism. Women especially have been victimized by this.

Traditional Christian ethics also have been to a great extent the product and support of sexist bias. Much of the theory of Christian virtue appears to be the product of reactions on the part of men—probably guilt reactions—to the behavioral excesses of the stereotypic male. There has been theoretical emphasis upon charity, meekness, obedience, humility, self-abnegation, sacrifice, service. Part of the problem with this moral ideology is that it became generally accepted not by men but by women, who have hardly been helped by an ethic which reinforced their abject situation.

This emphasis upon the passive virtues, of course, has not challenged exploitativeness, but supported it. Part of the whole syndrome has been the reduction of hope to passive expectation of a reward from the divine Father for following the rules. Love or charity has been interpreted to mean that people should turn the other cheek to their oppressors. Within the perspective of such a privatized morality, "sin" often becomes an offense against those in power, or against "God"—the two being more or less equated. The structures of oppression are not seen as sinful.

It is consistent with all of this that the traditional Christian moral consciousness has been fixated on the problems of reproductive activity to a degree totally disproportionate to its feeble concern for existing human life. The deformity of perspective was summed up several years ago in Archbishop Roberts's remark that "if contraceptives had been dropped over Japan instead of bombs which merely killed, maimed, and shriveled up thousands alive, there would have been a squeal of outraged protest from the Vatican to the remotest Mass center in Asia." Pertinent also is Simone de Beauvoir's remark that the church has reserved its uncompromising humanitarianism for man in the fetal condition.

"... But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man but to be in silence; for Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression."  
(Timothy 1,2:12-14)

Although both of these remarks are directed at the Catholic Church, the same attitudes are widespread in Protestantism. Many theologians today do, of course, acknowledge that this passive and privatized morality has failed to cope with structures of oppression. However, few seriously face the possibility that the roots of this distortion are

deeply buried in the fundamental and all-pervasive sexual alienation which the women's movement is seeking to overcome.

### The Spiritual Potential of the Movement

As the women's revolution begins to have an effect upon the fabric of society, beginning to transform it from patriarchy into something that never existed before—into a diarchal situation that is radically new—it will, I think, become the greatest single challenge to Christianity to rid itself of its oppressive tendencies or go out of business. Beliefs and values that have held sway for thousands of years will be questioned as never before. The movement, if it is true to its most authentic and prophetic dimensions, is possibly also the greatest single hope for the survival and development of authentic spiritual consciousness over against the manipulative and exploitative power of technocracy.

The caricature of a human being which is represented by the masculine stereotype depends for its existence upon the acceptance by women of the role assigned to them—the eternal feminine. By becoming whole persons women can generate a counterforce to the polarization of human beings into these stereotypes, forcing men to reexamine their own self-definition. This movement toward the becoming of whole human beings, to the degree that it succeeds, will transform the values and symbols of our society, including religious symbols.

The women's liberation movement is a spiritual movement because it aims at humanization of women and therefore of the species. At its core it is spiritual in the deepest sense of the word, because it means the self-actualization of creative human potential in the struggle against oppression. Since the projections of patriarchal religion serve to block the dynamics of creativity, self-actualization, and authentic community by enforcing reduction of people to stereotyped roles, the challenge to patriarchy which is now in its initial stages is a sign of hope for the emergence of more genuine religious consciousness. The becoming of women may be not only the doorway to deliverance from the omnipotent Father in all of his disguises, but, to many, also a doorway to something, namely, to a more authentic search for transcendence, that is, for God.

Women's liberation is an event that can challenge authoritarian, exclusivist, and non-existential ideas of faith and revelation. Since women have

been extra-environmentals, that is, since we have not been part of the authority structure which uses "faith" and "revelation" to reinforce the mechanisms of alienation, our emergence can unmask the idolatry often hidden behind these ideas.

"... The head of every man is Christ; and the head of every woman is man . . ."

Saint Paul: (Corinthians 1,11:3)

There could result from this becoming of women a remythologizing of Western religion. If the need for parental symbols for God persists, something like the Father-Mother God of Mary Baker Eddy will be more acceptable to the new woman and the new man than the Father God of the past. A symbolization for incarnation of the divine presence in human beings may continue to be needed in the future, but it is highly unlikely that women or men will find plausible that symbolism which is epitomized in the Christ-Mary image. Perhaps this will be replaced by a bisexual imagery which is non-hierarchical.

The becoming of women can bring about a transvaluation of values. Faith can come to be understood in a non-authoritarian and universalist sense. Hope, rather than being restricted to expectation of rewards for conformity, can come to be experienced and understood as creative, political, and revolutionary. Love will mean uniting to overcome oppression. It will be understood that the most loving thing one can do for the oppressor is to fight the oppressive situation that destroys both the oppressor and the oppressed. Suffering, which has been so highly esteemed in Christianity, will be seen as acceptable not when abjectly and submissively endured, but when experienced in the struggle for liberation.

"And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in church."

(Corinthians 1,14:35)

The ethic emerging in the struggle has as its main theme not prudence but existential courage. This is the courage to risk economic and social security for the sake of liberation. It means not only risking the loss of jobs, friends, and social approval, but also facing the nameless anxieties encountered in new and uncharted territory. There is the anxiety of meaninglessness that can be overwhelming at times when the old simple meanings, role definitions, and life expectations have been rooted out and rejected openly, and a woman

emerges into a world without models. There is also the anxiety of guilt over refusing to do what society demands, an anxiety which can still hold a woman in its grip long after the guilt has been recognized as false. To affirm oneself and one's sisters in the face of all this requires courage.

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands . . ."

Saint Peter (Peter 1,3:1)

Such courage expresses itself in sisterhood, which is not at all merely the female counterpart of brotherhood. Sisterhood is a revolutionary fact. It is the bonding of those who have never bonded before, for the purpose of overcoming sexism and its effects, both internal and external. It is the coming together of those who are oppressed by sexual definition. The Christian churches have been fond of preaching the "brotherhood of man," which included women incidentally, as baggage. However, the concept has never been realized because brotherhood in patriarchy, despite frequent attempts to universalize the term, is exclusive and divisive. "Brother" means us versus them. It begins by excluding women as "the other" and continues its divisiveness from there, cutting off "the other" by familial, tribal, racial, national, economic, and ideological categories.

Women are learning to be aware that brotherhood, even when it attempts to be universal, means a male universalism. The churches, the peace movement, the New Left, for the most part fail to notice the need for change in the situation of the more than 50 percent female membership of the groups to which they would extend their brotherhood.

The "sisterhoods" of patriarchal society have really been mini-brotherhoods, following male models and serving male purposes. The religious sisterhoods within the Catholic Church, for example, have been male-dominated according to Canon Law. These communities, though they have offered an alternative to marriage and attracted some gifted women, have used the word "sister" in an elitist and divisive sense and have supported the ideology of sexism.

The sisterhood of women's liberation involves a strategic polarization which is different from all of this. It implies polarization for the sake of women's internal wholeness or oneness, because as in the case of all oppressed groups, women suffer from a duality of consciousness. We have internalized the



image that the oppressor has of us and are therefore divided against ourselves and against each other by self-hatred. We can only overcome this by bonding with each other. Sisterhood implies polarization also for the sake of political oneness, to achieve liberation. However, its essential dynamic is directed to overcoming the stereotypes that reduce people to the role of "the other." That is, it points toward a unity deeper than most theologians are capable of envisaging, despite the great amount of ink that has been spilled on the subject of "the bonds of charity."

Sisterhood is an event that is new under the sun. It is healing, revolutionary, and revelatory—

which is what Christian brotherhood was claimed to be but failed to be. It is at war with the idols of patriarchal religion, but it is in harmony with what is authentic in the ideals of the religious traditions. In this sense, the movement in its deepest dimension is itself both anti-church and church: It has the potential to release the authentic values that have been distorted and suppressed by the sexism of synagogue and church.

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#### FOOTNOTE

<sup>1</sup>A documented historical study and criticism of this can be found in my book, *The Church and the Second Sex* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

## Rape: An Act of Terror

by BARBARA MEHRHOF and PAMELA KEARON

To see rape within the system of female oppression is to understand its non-accidental and non-arbitrary nature and to gain insight into its special purpose for the class of men. There is no group other than slaves that has been singled out for such systematic and total exploitation and suppression as the class of women. The condition of women exceeds the bounds of the definition of oppression and in the modern Western world her situation is unique.

We are given to understand that in Western society the rule of law operates in contradistinction to the rule of men. This implies that society is built upon *principles* derived from Nature or God which are generally assented to by the governed. By its nature law deals in generalities; the governed are viewed as equal and indistinguishable. Women and slaves, however, have traditionally existed outside this rule of law, since law is the means by which the *public* affairs of freemen are stabilized. The public realm is where male interest groups vie with each other to create history and the world of things. Its essence is visibility and therefore it constitutes accepted Reality. Women and slaves are relegated to the private sphere which is the vague, hidden, unseen world of superior/inferior relationships. The definitive activity of the private sphere is labor—that is, the maintenance of biological life for oneself and others. This is the function of women and slaves.

The imposition of the duty to labor exemplified in marriage cancels out whatever "paper rights" (i.e., legal or public) women might possess because it maintains her private status—servant to the male. It is in this that women are distinguished as a group and subjected to a rule of governance by which they are treated differently from other citizens. This rule of governance is the direct rule by men. This fact, that woman qua woman exists outside the protection of the law, is crucial in understanding rape and how it can be used by men as a terror tactic.

The justification of this rule of women by men is the *Ideology of Sexism*, which from a single assumption seeks to explain the meaning of human life. It posits the human male as the highest expression of Nature, his destiny as Nature's development. Thus, anything which interferes with this destiny, or his needs or desires, must be controlled or suppressed—all of the natural world, including the human female. Male dominance over the female is therefore a *natural* condition. If man is the highest expression of Nature, it follows that man is the Good. Woman, having a will and her own self-interest, is a potential obstruction to male destiny and is therefore *a priori* Bad, Evil, the Criminal—and consequently the justifiable Victim.

The Ideology of Sexism is totally inured to experience or history. Its basis is not male achieve-

ment but rather maleness itself. So the ideology is not subject to criticism or adjustment despite the obvious existence of droves of grotesque or pathetic male individuals. Like Nazism and racism which also posit superiority *a priori*, sexism is grounded in a physical manifestation of the assumed superiority. For Nazism it is blond hair and blue eyes, for racism skin color, for sexism the penis. But skin, eye, and hair color are physical traits which are simply exist. They cannot engage in activity. There is, then, no unique act which affirms the polarity Aryan/Semite or white/black. Sexual intercourse, however, since it involves the genitals (that particular difference between the sexes selected by the Ideology of Sexism to define superiority/inferiority), provides sexism with an inimitable act which perfectly expresses the polarity male/female. The Reality created by the Ideology makes the sexual act a renewal of the feeling of power and prestige for the male, of impotence and submission for the female. Rape adds the quality of terror.

Terror is an integral part of the oppression of women. Its purpose is to ensure, as a final measure, the acceptance by women of the inevitability of male domination. The content of terror includes the threat of death, destitution, and/or inhuman isolation for the female. The most important aspect of terrorism is its indiscriminateness with respect to members of the terrorized class. There are no actions or forms of behavior sufficient to avoid its danger. There is no sign that designates a rapist since each male is potentially one. While simple fear is utilitarian, providing the impetus to act for one's safety, the effect of terror is to make all action impossible.

The earlier and more thoroughly the woman is terrorized, the more completely she is incapable of acting against the existing Reality modeled on the Sexist Ideology and brought into being by the power of the male class. As long as one is free to act one can invalidate and transform reality. When free action is eliminated one can only incorporate reality as created by others, or go mad or die. The woman assaulted by a rapist is not merely hampered by real or imagined lack of kinetic energy relative to the attacker; she is also restricted by her fragile sense of her own reality and worth. Rape is a punishment without crime or guilt—at least not subjective guilt. It is punishment rather for the *objective* crime of femaleness. That is why it is indiscriminate. It is primarily a lesson for the

whole class of women—a strange lesson, in that it does not teach a form of behavior which will save women from it. *Rape teaches instead the objective, innate, and unchanging subordination of women relative to men.*

Rape supports the male class by projecting its power and aggressiveness on the world. For the individual male, the possibility of rape remains a prerogative of his in-group; its perpetration rekindles his faith in maleness and his own personal worth.

Rape is only a slightly forbidden fruit. It is assumed to be condemned by law in our society, yet an examination of law reveals that its forbidden quality is more of a delectable fantasy than reality. In New York State, for instance, the law stipulates that the woman must prove she was raped by force, that "penetration" occurred, and that someone witnessed the rapist in the area of the attack. Although the past convictions of the defendant are not admissible evidence in a rape trial, the "reputation" of the rape victim is. The police will refuse to accept charges in many cases, especially if the victim is alone when she comes in to file them. In New York City only certain hospitals will accept rape cases and they are not bound to release their findings to the courts. Finally, the courts consistently refuse to indict men for rape.

It is clear that women do not come under the law on anything like an equal footing with men—or rather, that women as women do not enjoy the protection of law at all. Women as victims of rape, unlike the general victim of assault, are not assumed to be independent, indistinguishable, and equal citizens. They are viewed by the law as subordinate, dependent, and an always potential hindrance to male action and male prerogative. Rape laws are designed to protect males against the charge of rape. The word of a peer has a special force; the word of a dependent is always suspicious, presumed to be motivated by envy, revenge, or rebellion.

Rape, then, is an effective political device. It is not an arbitrary act of violence by one individual on another; it is a political act of *oppression* (never rebellion) exercised by members of a powerful class on members of the powerless class. Rape is supported by a consensus in the male class. It is preached by male-controlled and all-pervasive media with only a minimum of disguise and restraint. It is communicated to the male population as an act of freedom and strength and a male right nev-

er to be denied.

Women, through terror unable to act, do not test the Reality dictated by Sexist Ideology. When an individual woman manages to experience rape as *an act which oppresses and degrades her and limits her freedom, when she sees it as political and useful to all males, she cannot count upon support from other women. Many women believe that rape is an act of sick men or is provoked by the female. Thus women as a class do not yet have a consensus on a counter-reality which defines the true meaning of rape for us. Women do not yet have the means of communication to build such a consensus. We have no media providing instant and constant communication; we are physically, economically, and socially isolated by the institution of marriage which requires lonely*

labor in service to the male and primary loyalty to him.

The first step toward breaking the debilitating hold on us of the Sexist Ideology is the creation of a counter-reality, a mutually guaranteed support of female experience undistorted by male interpretation. We must build a consensus among us. Power for a group is consensus and organization. Terror depends upon the scattered, confused character of the terrorized class. We *must* understand rape as essentially an act of terror against women—whether committed by white men or minority group males. This is the only means of freeing our imagination so that we can act together—or alone if it comes to it—against this most perfect of political crimes.

## The Woman Identified Woman

by RADICALESBIANS

What is a lesbian? A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion. She is the woman who, often beginning at an extremely early age, acts in accordance with her inner compulsion to be a more complete and freer human being than her society—perhaps then, but certainly later—cares to allow her. These needs and actions, over a period of years, bring her into painful conflict with people, situations, the accepted ways of thinking, feeling and behaving, until she is in a state of continual war with everything around her, and usually with her self. She may not be fully conscious of the political implications of what for her began as personal necessity, but on some level she has not been able to accept the limitations and oppression laid on her by the most basic role of her society—the female role. The turmoil she experiences tends to induce guilt proportional to the degree to which she feels she is not meeting social expectations, and/or eventually drives her to question and analyze what the rest of her society more or less accepts. She is forced to evolve her own life pattern, often living much of her life alone, learning usually much earlier than her "straight" (heterosexual) sisters about the essential aloneness of life (which the myth of marriage obscures) and about the reality of illusions. To the extent that she cannot expel the heavy socialization that goes with being female, she can

never truly find peace with herself. For she is caught somewhere between accepting society's view of her—in which case she cannot accept herself—and coming to understand what this sexist society has done to her and why it is functional and necessary for it to do so. Those of us who work that through find ourselves on the other side of a tortuous journey through a night that may have been decades long. The perspective gained from that journey, the liberation of self, the inner peace, the real love of self and of all women, is something to be shared with all women—because we are all women.

It should first be understood that lesbianism, like male homosexuality, is a category of behavior possible only in a sexist society characterized by rigid sex roles and dominated by male supremacy. Those sex roles dehumanize women by defining us as a supportive/serving caste in relation to the master caste of men, and emotionally cripple men by demanding that they be alienated from their own bodies and emotions in order to perform their economic/political/military functions effectively. Homosexuality is a by-product of a particular way of setting up roles (or approved patterns of behavior) on the basis of sex; as such it is an inauthentic (not consonant with "reality") category. In a society in which men do not oppress women, and sexual expression is allowed to follow

feelings, the categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality would disappear.

But lesbianism is also different from male homosexuality, and serves a different function in the society. "Dyke" is a different kind of put-down from "faggot," although both imply you are not playing your socially assigned sex role... are not therefore a "real woman" or a "real man." The grudging admiration felt for the tomboy, and the queasiness felt around a sissy boy point to the same thing: the contempt in which women—or those who play a female role—are held. And the investment in keeping women in that contemptuous role is very great. Lesbian is the word, the label, the condition that holds women in line. When a woman hears this word tossed her way, she knows she is stepping out of line. She knows that she has crossed the terrible boundary of her sex role. She recoils, she protests, she reshapes her actions to gain approval. Lesbian is a label invented by the Man to throw at any woman who dares to be his equal, who dares to challenge his prerogatives (including that of all women as part of the exchange medium among men), who dares to assert the primacy of her own needs. To have the label applied to people active in women's liberation is just the most recent instance of a long history; older women will recall that not so long ago, any woman who was successful, independent, not orienting her whole life about a man, would hear this word. For in this sexist society, for a woman to be independent means she *can't be* a woman—she must be a dyke. That in itself should tell us where women are at. It says as clearly as can be said: women and person are contradictory terms. For a lesbian is not considered a "real woman." And yet, in popular thinking, there is really only one essential difference between a lesbian and other women: that of sexual orientation—which is to say, when you strip off all the packaging, you must finally realize that the essence of being a "woman" is to get fucked by men.

"Lesbian" is one of the sexual categories by which men have divided up humanity. While all women are dehumanized as sex objects, as the objects of men they are given certain compensations: identification with his power, his ego, his status, his protection (from other males), feeling like a "real woman," finding social acceptance by adhering to her role, etc. Should a woman confront herself by confronting another woman, there are fewer rationalizations, fewer buffers by which to avoid the stark horror of her dehumanized condi-

tion. Herein we find the overriding fear of many women toward being used as a sexual object by a woman, which not only will bring her no male-connected compensations, but also will reveal the void which is woman's real situation. This dehumanization is expressed when a straight woman learns that a sister is a lesbian; she begins to relate to her lesbian sister as her potential sex object, laying a surrogate male role on the lesbian. This reveals her heterosexual conditioning to make herself into an object when sex is potentially involved in a relationship, and it denies the lesbian her full humanity. For women, especially those in the movement, to perceive their lesbian sisters through this male grid of role definitions is to accept this male cultural conditioning and to oppress their sisters much as they themselves have been oppressed by men. Are we going to continue the male classification system of defining all females in sexual relation to some other category of people? Affixing the label lesbian not only to a woman who aspires to be a person, but also to any situation of real love, real solidarity, real primacy among women, is a primary form of divisiveness among women: it is the condition which keeps women within the confines of the feminine role, and it is the debunking/scare term that keeps women from forming any primary attachments, groups, or associations among ourselves.

Women in the movement have in most cases gone to great lengths to avoid discussion and confrontation with the issue of lesbianism. It puts people up-tight. They are hostile, evasive, or try to incorporate it into some "broader issue." They would rather not talk about it. If they have to, they try to dismiss it as a "lavender herring." But it is no side issue. It is absolutely essential to the success and fulfillment of the women's liberation movement that this issue be dealt with. As long as the label "dyke" can be used to frighten women into a less militant stand, keep her separate from her sisters, keep her from giving primacy to anything other than men and family—then to that extent she is controlled by the male culture. Until women see in each other the possibility of a primal commitment which includes sexual love, they will be denying themselves the love and value they readily accord to men, thus affirming their second-class status. As long as male acceptability is primary—both to individual women and to the movement as a whole—the term lesbian will be used effectively against women. Insofar as women want only more privileges within the system, they

do not want to, antagonize male power. They instead seek acceptability for women's liberation, and the most crucial aspect of the acceptability is to deny lesbianism—i.e., to deny any fundamental challenge to the basis of the female. It should also be said that some younger, more radical women have honestly begun to discuss lesbianism, but so far it has been primarily as a sexual "alternative" to men. This, however, is still giving primacy to men, both because the idea of relating more completely to women occurs as a negative reaction to men, and because the lesbian relationship is being characterized simply by sex, which is divisive and sexist. On one level, which is both personal and political, women may withdraw emotional and sexual energies from men, and work out various alternatives for those energies in their own lives. On a different political/psychological level, it must be understood that what is crucial is that women begin disengaging from male-defined response patterns. In the privacy of our own psyches, we must cut those cords to the core. For irrespective of where our love and sexual energies flow, if we are male-identified in our heads, we cannot realize our autonomy as human beings.

But why is it that women have related to and through men? By virtue of having been brought up in a male society, we have internalized the male culture's definition of ourselves. That definition consigns us to sexual and family functions, and excludes us from defining and shaping the terms of our lives. In exchange for our psychic servicing and for performing society's non-profit-making functions, the man confers on us just one thing: the slave status which makes us legitimate in the eyes of the society in which we live. This is called "femininity" or "being a real woman" in our cultural lingo. We are authentic, legitimate, real to the extent that we are the property of some man whose name we bear. To be a woman who belongs to no man is to be invisible, pathetic, inauthentic, unreal. He confirms his image of us—of what we have to be in order to be acceptable by him—but not our real selves; he confirms our womanhood—as he defines it, in relation to him—but cannot confirm our personhood, our own selves as absolutes. As long as we are dependent on the male culture for this definition, for this approval, we cannot be free.

The consequence of internalizing this role is an enormous reservoir of self-hate. This is not to say the self-hate is recognized or accepted as such; indeed most women would deny it. It may be expe-

rienced as discomfort with her role, as feeling empty, as numbness, as restlessness, as a paralyzing anxiety at the center. Alternatively, it may be expressed in shrill defensiveness of the glory and destiny of her role. But it does exist, often beneath the edge of her consciousness, poisoning her existence, keeping her alienated from herself, her own needs, and rendering her a stranger to other women. They try to escape by identifying with the oppressor, living through him, gaining status and identity from his ego, his power, his accomplishments. And by not identifying with other "empty vessels" like themselves. Women resist relating on all levels to other women who will reflect their own oppression, their own secondary status, their own self-hate. For to confront another woman is finally to confront one's self—the self we have gone to such lengths to avoid. And in that mirror we know we cannot really respect and love that which we have been made to be.

As the source of self-hate and the lack of real self are rooted in our male-given identity, we must create a new sense of self. As long as we cling to the idea of "being a woman," we will sense some conflict with that incipient self, that sense of I, that sense of a whole person. It is very difficult to realize and accept that being "feminine" and being a whole person are irreconcilable. Only women can give to each other a new sense of self. That identity we have to develop with reference to ourselves, and not in relation to men. This consciousness is the revolutionary force from which all else will follow, for ours is an organic revolution. For this we must be available and supportive to one another, give our commitment and our love, give the emotional support necessary to sustain this movement. Our energies must flow toward our sisters, not backward toward our oppressors. As long as woman's liberation tries to free women without facing the basic heterosexual structure that binds us in one-to-one relationship with our oppressors, tremendous energies will continue to flow into trying to straighten up each particular relationship with a man, into finding how to get better sex, how to turn his head around—into trying to make the "new man" out of him, in the delusion that this will allow us to be the "new woman." This obviously splits our energies and commitments, leaving us unable to be committed to the construction of the new patterns which will liberate us.

It is the primacy of women relating to women, of women creating a new consciousness of and



with each other, which is at the heart of women's liberation, and the basis for the cultural revolution. Together we must find, reinforce, and validate our authentic selves. As we do this, we confirm in each other that struggling, incipient sense of pride and strength, the divisive barriers begin to melt, we feel this growing solidarity with our sisters. We see ourselves as prime, find our centers inside of ourselves. We find receding the sense of

alienation, of being cut off, of being behind a locked window, of being unable to get out what we know is inside. We feel a real-ness, feel at last we are coinciding with ourselves. With that real self, with that consciousness, we begin a revolution to end the imposition of all coercive identifications, and to achieve maximum autonomy in human expression.

## Lesbianism and Feminism

by ANNE KOEDT

Female homosexuality is becoming an increasingly important problem. It is believed by some that women are becoming rapidly defeminized as a result of their overt desire for emancipation, and that this "psychic masculinization" of modern women contributes to frigidity. . . . Some sexologists fear that this defeminization trend may seriously affect the sexual happiness of modern women. They claim it will more than likely influence the susceptibility of many to a homosexual way of thinking and living.

—Frank S. Caprio, M.D.,  
*Variations in Sexual Behavior*

Feminism is the theory; lesbianism is the practice.

—Attributed to Ti-Grace Atkinson

When Gertrude Stein entertained friends, she conversed only with the men and left Alice Toklas the duty of talking with the ladies.

—Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

Only women can give each other a new sense of self. . . . We must be available and supportive to one another, [and] give our commitment and our love. . . .

—Radicalesbians, "Woman Identified Woman"

I like her breasts and don't understand her legs.

—Jill Johnston

### Lesbian Baiting

Feminists have been called "lesbian" long before they may have, in fact, considered its application in their personal lives; it has been an insult directed at them with escalated regularity ever since they began working politically for women's liberation. Their reaction to lesbian baiting has been mixed. On the one hand it was clear that feminism was threatening to men, and that men were retaliating with whatever verbal weapons were at hand. But the threat of being called lesbian touched real fears: to the extent that a woman

was involved with a man, she feared being considered Unfeminine and Unwomanly, and thus being rejected. There was also the larger threat: the fear of male rejection in general. Since it is through a husband that women gain economic and social security, through male employers that they earn a living, and in general through male power that they survive, to incur the wrath of men is no small matter. Women knew this long before they put it in feminist terms. Thus it is not just vanity and personal idiosyncrasy for women to wish to remain in the good graces of men. It is a practical reflection of reality.

For feminists the main educational value of lesbian baiting has been its exposure of the very clear connection in men's minds between being "unfeminine" and being independent. Being called unfeminine is a comparatively gentle threat informing you that you are beginning to waver, whereas being called a lesbian is the danger signal—the final warning that you are about to leave the Territory of Womanhood altogether.

Acts of feminine transgression may take different forms. A woman may appear too self-reliant and assertive; she may work politically for women's rights; she may be too smart for her colleagues; or she may have important close friends who are women. Often women have been called "lesbian" by complete strangers simply because they were sitting in a cafe obviously engrossed in their own conversation and not interested in the men around them. (Curiously enough it is precisely on the most seemingly "feminine" women that men will frequent this kind of abuse, since the

purpose is more to scare the women back into "place" than to pinpoint any actual lesbianism.)

The consideration of lesbianism as a personal option grew out of very different reasons. For many feminists there had always been a logical, theoretical connection between the elimination of sex roles and the possibility of loving other women. With some this became a reality when they met a woman they were attracted to. For others, lesbianism has meant a freedom from male relationships in general, a release from the task of looking for that elusive "special" man who wasn't a male chauvinist. Other feminists saw a love relationship with a woman as a positive thing because they felt other women could not encourage the passivity and submissiveness that they had previously found themselves falling into with men. Most important of all, perhaps, women found that there were other women to love in their own right as persons.

#### Definitions

With the increased interaction between the gay and women's liberation movements, a heightened consciousness about lesbianism has evolved among feminists—and along with it a corresponding disagreement and confusion as to what exactly it means to be a lesbian. It is clear that more is being implied than the straight dictionary definition of women sleeping with members of their own sex. Some women define it as meaning having sex *exclusively* with women, a more rigid definition than the one commonly used. Other gay women see lesbianism as much more than a defining term for the sex of your bed partner; to them it is a "total life commitment to a life with women" and "an entire system of world view and life living."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, some gay women seek to equate their lesbianism with vanguard radical feminism since "we rejected men and sex roles long before there even was a women's liberation movement." For the purposes of this discussion the meaning of the word lesbianism is restricted to its simplest definition of "women having sexual relations with women," so that the various "life style" arguments which are sometimes added to the basic definition can be looked at separately.

I think that the first thing to do is to define radical feminism: To me it means the advocacy of the total elimination of sex roles. A radical feminist, then, is one who believes in this and works politically toward that end.\* Basic to the position

of radical feminism is the concept that biology is not destiny, and that male and female roles are learned—indeed that they are male political constructs that serve to ensure power and superior status for men. Thus the biological male is the oppressor not by virtue of his male biology, but by virtue of his *rationalizing* his supremacy on the basis of that biological difference. The argument that "man is the enemy" is then true only insofar as the man adopts the male supremacy role.

What then is the relationship between lesbianism and radical feminism? Taking even the most minimal definitions of lesbianism and feminism, you can find one major point of agreement: biology does not determine sex roles. Thus, since roles are learned there is nothing inherently "masculine" or "feminine" in behavior.

Beyond these basic assumptions, however, there are important differences. Radical feminism naturally incorporates the notion of lesbianism\*<sup>†</sup> but with strict reservations. Mainly I think that many radical feminists have resented the whole baggage of assumed implications that some gay women have tagged onto lesbianism. It has been presented too often as a package deal where if you accepted the idea of lesbianism, you would necessarily also have to accept a whole gay position which frequently runs contrary to radical feminism.

The following are some of the points of disagreement:

#### Homosexuality as "Sick" or "Healthy"

The agreement that there is nothing innately sick about persons having sex with someone of their own sex does not mean that therefore all gay behavior is healthy in feminist terms. A lesbian acting like a man or a gay man acting like a woman is not necessarily sicker than heterosexuals acting out the same roles; but it is not healthy. *All role playing is sick*, be it "simulated" or "authentic" according to society's terms.

The fact that there has occurred a role transfer, and that now it is being acted out by the "wrong" sex, does not change the nature of what

\*She does not by this definition live a life untouched by sex roles; there are no "liberated" women in that sense.

† Reform feminism which envisions *only* an "equal partnership with men" clearly has in mind improved male-female relationships, not new possibilities for loving and relating sexually to women as well.

is being acted out. A male homosexual who dresses up with make-up, makes catty remarks about other women, worries excessively about boy friend approval, and in general displays the insecurity and helplessness that have been the symptoms of women's oppression, is as far away from being the full person he could be as the woman acting out that same role. The point is that they are, in a sense, both in drag.

On the other hand, two lesbians who have chosen not to fall into imitative roles, but are instead exploring the positive aspects of both "masculine" and "feminine" behavior beyond role-forming something new and equal in the process—would in my opinion probably be healthy.

#### Gay as Radical Feminist Vanguard

One position advanced by some lesbians is the idea that lesbians are the vanguard of the women's movement because 1) they broke with sex roles before there even was a feminist movement, and 2) they have no need for men at all. (Somehow they are the revolution.) The following is one example of this position:

Feel the real glow that comes from "our" sisterhood. We can teach you something about being gentle and kind for we never felt competitive. Remember WE long before YOU have known discontent with male society and WE long before YOU knew and appreciated the full potential of everything female. . . . It is WE who say welcome to you, long blind and oppressed sisters, we have been fighting against male supremacy for a long time, join US! We are not intimidated by relational differences, for we have never felt mortgaged by society.<sup>2</sup>

Several points seem to be ignored with this kind of argument. For one, there is a confusion of a personal with a political solution. Sex roles and male supremacy will not go away simply by women becoming lesbians. It will take a great deal of sophisticated political muscle and collective energy for women to eliminate sexism. So at best a lesbian relationship can give a woman more happiness and freedom in her private life (assuming both women are not playing roles). But a radical feminist is not just one who tries to live the good non-sexist life at home; she is one who is working politically in society to destroy the institutions of sexism.

Another assumption implicit in the argument of "lesbian-as-the-vanguard-feminist" is that having balked at one aspect of sexism—namely, exclusive heterosexuality—they are therefore radical feminists. Any woman who defies her role—be it refusing to be a mother, wanting to be a biochemist, or simply refusing to cater to a man's ego—is de-

fying the sex role system. It is an act of rebellion. In the case of lesbianism, the act of rebellion often has earned the woman severe social ostracism. However, it becomes radical only if it is then placed in the context of wanting to destroy the system as a whole, that is, destroying the sex role system as opposed to just rejecting men. Indeed, there can be reformism within lesbianism too; when a lesbian says "I have nothing against men; I just don't want to be involved with them," she is really describing an accommodation within the sexist system even though she has performed the rebellious act of violating that system by being a lesbian. It is also in this context that a statement like "feminism is the theory; lesbianism is the practice" is erroneous. For not only is the sex of a woman's lover insufficient information to infer radical feminism, but there is also the false implication that to have no men in your personal life means you are therefore living the life of fighting for radical feminist change.

The notion that lesbians have no need for men at all also needs clarification. First of all, since we are all women living in a male society, we do in fact depend regularly upon men for many crucial things, even if we do not choose to have men in our personal relationships. It is for this reason that one woman alone will not be fully liberated until all women are liberated. However, taking the statement to mean having no need for men in *personal relationships* (which can be an important achievement for women, since one should obviously want the person, not the man), one must still ask the question: has the male role been discarded? Thus again the crucial point is not the sex of your bed partner but the sex role of your bed partner.

#### Gay Movement as a Civil Rights Movement

The organized gay movement seeks to protect the freedom of any homosexual, no matter what her or his individual style of homosexuality may be. This means protection of the transvestite, the queen, the "butch" lesbian, the couple that wants a marriage license, or the homosexual who may prefer no particular role. They are all united on one thing: the right to have sex with someone of one's own sex (i.e., "freedom of sexual preference").

As is clear from the wide range of homosexual behavior, not all modes necessarily reflect a dislike for sex roles *per se*. Nor was the choice necessarily made deliberately. The boy who grew up trained as a girl, or the girl who was somehow

socialized more toward the male role; did not in their childhood choose to reverse sex roles. Each was saddled with a role (as were we all) and had to make the best of it in a society that scorned such an occurrence. Merle Miller in an article in the *New York Times* (January 17, 1971), where he "came out" as a homosexual, said: "Gay is good, Gay is proud. Well, yes, I suppose. If I had been given a choice (but who is?), I would prefer to be straight." His point was not that gay is sick but rather that he did not choose his gayness. And, furthermore, had he been trained heterosexually, society would have been a great deal easier on him. Which is a very understandable sentiment given the cruelty and discrimination that is practiced against homosexuals. In such cases the bravery and rebelliousness is to be found rather in the ability to act out homosexuality in spite of social abuse.

In uniting to change oppressive laws, electing officials who will work toward these ends, and changing social attitudes which are discriminatory against homosexuals, the gay movement is addressing itself to its civil rights. It is my feeling that the gay liberation issue is in fact a civil rights issue (as opposed to a radical issue) because it is united around the secondary issue of "freedom of sexual preference." Whereas in fact the real root of anti-homosexuality is sexism. That is, the radical gay person would have to be a feminist. This tracing of the roots of gay oppression to sexism is also expressed in Radicalesbians's "Woman Identified Woman":

It should first be understood that lesbianism, like male homosexuality, is a category of behavior possible only in a sexist society characterized by rigid sex roles and dominated by male supremacy. . . . In a society in which men do not oppress women, and sexual expression is allowed to follow feelings, the categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality would disappear.

#### Bisexuality

One position taken by some lesbians is that bisexuality is a cop-out. This is usually argued in terms like "until all heterosexuals go gay, we are going to remain homosexual," or "lesbianism is more than having sex with women; it is a whole life style and commitment to women. Bisexuality is a sign of not being able to leave men and be free. We are women- (not men-) identified women."

The first position mentioned is an apparently tactical argument (though it has also been used by some, I think, to dismiss the discussion of bisexuality altogether by safely pushing it off into the

Millennium), and makes the case for politically identifying yourself with the most discriminated against elements—even though you might really believe in bisexuality.\*

Taking that argument at face value (and I don't completely), I think it is a dangerous thing to advocate politically. For by, in effect, promoting exclusive homosexuality, they lend political support to the notion that it *does* matter what the sex of your partner may be. While I recognize the absolute necessity for the gay movement to concentrate on the freedom of people to sleep with members of their own sex (since it is here that discrimination exists), it must at the same time always be referred back to its larger, radical perspective: that it is oppressive for that very question even to be asked. As a matter of fact, if "freedom of sexual preference" is the demand, the solution obviously must be a bisexuality where the question becomes irrelevant.

I think in fact that the reason why bisexuality has been considered such an unpopular word by most gays is not to be found primarily in the arguments just discussed, but rather in gay adherence to a kind of fierce homosexual counter-definition which has developed. That is, a counter identity—a "life style" and "world view"—has been created around the fact of their homosexuality. This identity is so strong sometimes that to even advocate or predict bisexuality is considered "genocide." The following is an example: In a response to a statement by Dotson Rader that "as bisexuality is increasingly accepted as the norm, the position of the homosexual *qua* homosexual will fade," one gay response was that "The homosexual, like the Jew, is offered the choice between integration or the gas chamber."<sup>3</sup>

It is not with the actual gay counterculture that I want to quarrel; I think it is a very understandable reaction to an intolerable exclusion of homosexuals from society. To be denied the ordinary benefits and interaction of other people, to be stripped of your identity by a society that recognizes you as valid only if your role and your biology are "properly" matched—to be thus denied must of course result in a new resolution of identity. Since gays have been rejected on the basis of their homosexuality, it is not surprising that homosexuality has become the core of the new identity.

\*See for example *A Gay Manifesto* by Carl Wittman (Gay Flames Pamphlet No. 9.)

The disagreement with feminism comes rather in an attempt to make a revolutionary political position out of this adjustment. The often heard complaint from feminists that "we are being defined once again by whom we sleep with" is correct, I think. The lesson to be learned from a feminist analysis of sex roles is that there is no behavior implied from our biology beyond, as Wilma Scott Heide has noted, the role of sperm donor and wet nurse.<sup>4</sup> A woman has historically been defined, on the basis of biology, as incomplete without a man. Feminists have rejected this notion, and must equally reject any new definition which offers a woman her identity by virtue of the fact that she may love or sleep with other women.

It is for this reason, also, that I disagree with the Radicalesbian concept of the "woman-identified-woman." For we ought not to be "identified" on the basis of whom we have relationships with. And there is a confusion in such a term; it seems to mix up the biological woman with the political woman. I think the often used feminist definition of "woman-identified" as meaning having identified with the female *role* in society is more useful; it refers to a specific political phenomenon of internalization. So far as finding a term which describes women's solidarity or sisterhood on the basis of our common oppression, the term is feminism. Beyond that, what is left is the biological female—an autonomous being who gains her identity by virtue of her own achievements and characteristics, not by virtue of whom she has a love relationship with.

Once we begin to discuss persons as *persons* (a word which doesn't ask the sex of an individual), even the word "bisexuality" may eventually be dropped, since implicit in its use is still an eagerness to inform you that it is *both* sexes. Perhaps we will finally return to a simpler word like "sexuality," where the relevant information is simply "sex among persons."

#### If you don't sleep with women . . .

If you are a feminist who is not sleeping with a woman you may risk hearing any of the following accusations: "You're oppressing me if you don't sleep with women"; "You're not a radical feminist if you don't sleep with women"; or "You don't love women if you don't sleep with them." I have even seen a woman's argument about an entirely different aspect of feminism be dismissed by some lesbians because she was not having sex-

ual relations with women. Leaving aside for a minute the motives for making such accusations, there is an outrageous thing going on here strictly in terms of pressuring women about their personal lives.

This perversion of "the personal is the political" argument, it must be noted, was not invented by those gay women who may be using it now; the women's movement has had sporadic waves of personal attacks on women—always in the guise of radicalism (and usually by a very small minority of women). I have seen women being told they could not be trusted as feminists because they wore miniskirts, because they were married (in one group quotas were set lest the group's quality be lowered by "unliberated women"), or because they wanted to have children. This rejection of women who are not living the "liberated life" has predictably now come to include rejection on the basis of the "unliberated" sex life.

The original genius of the phrase "the personal is political" was that it opened up the area of women's private lives to political analysis. Before that, the isolation of women from each other had been accomplished by labeling a woman's experience "personal." Women had thus been kept from seeing their common condition as women and their common oppression by men.

However, opening up women's experience to political analysis has also resulted in a misuse of the phrase. While it is true that there are political implications in everything a woman *does* woman experiences, it is not therefore true that a woman's life is the political property of the women's movement. And it seems to me to show a disrespect for another woman to presume that it is any group's (or individual's) prerogative to pass revolutionary judgment on the progress of her life.

There is a further point: Even the most radical feminist is not the liberated woman. We are all crawling out of femininity into a new sense of personhood. Only a woman herself may decide what her next step is going to be. I do not think women have a political obligation to the movement to change; they should do so only if they see it in their own self-interest. If the women's movement believes that feminism *is* in women's self-interest, then the task at hand is to make it understood through shared insights, analysis, and experience. That is, feminism is an offering, not a directive, and one therefore enters a woman's private life at her invitation only. Thus a statement like "you don't love women if you don't sleep



with them" must above all be dismissed on the grounds that it is confusing the right to discuss feminism with the right to, uninvited, discuss a woman's private life and make political judgments about it.

However, taking the issue presented in the above accusation (outside of its guilt-provoking personal context\*), there are several points to consider. One element of truth is that some women are unable to relate sexually to other women because of a strong self-hatred for themselves as women (and therefore all women). But there may also be many other reasons. A woman may not be interested in sleeping with anyone—a freedom women are granted even less often than the right to sleep with other women. She may not have met a woman she's attracted to. Or she may be involved with a man whom she likes as a person, without this necessarily being a rejection of women. It should also be noted that the women who suffer from strong self-hatred may not necessarily find it impossible to relate sexually to women. They may instead find that taking the male part in a lesbian relationship will symbolically remove them from their feminine role. Such a woman then may become one who "balls" women so as not to be one.

All in all, as has been noted earlier, there is no magic that makes lesbianism proof positive of any high feminist motives. Rather, what the woman brings to her relationship as far as relinquishing sex roles will, I think, determine her ultimate attitude about really loving other women.

#### Conclusion

Homosexuality, with its obvious scorn for the "rules" of biology, challenges a cornerstone of sexist ideology and consequently makes most men nervous. There is at this time less fear of female homosexuality than of male homosexuality, possibly because men still feel secure that isolated lesbian examples will not tempt most women away from their prescribed feminine roles, and perhaps also because lesbianism is frequently seen by men as something erotic (it seems, alas, we can still remain sex objects in men's eyes even when making love to each other).

With male homosexuality, however, men (and thus male society) are more personally threatened. The precise irony of male supremacy is that it is a system rationalized on the basis of biology but

\*Regarding motives: provoking guilt is a tactic not so much for informing as it is for controlling others.

actualized through socialization. Deviants who inadvertently were socialized differently, or who chose differently, are thus a threat to the *premise* that biology is destiny. Thus, to have another man break rank is to threaten all men's group-supremacy status. Also, for a man to leave the "superior" group is to go down—that is, become "inferior" or "feminine." Frequently male homosexuals may touch on the unspoken fears in many men that they are not powerful and "manly" enough to fulfill their supremacy destiny, and the gay male thus becomes the symbol of total male "failure." Still other men display a robust camaraderie (*à la Mailer*) where "buggering" a fellow male obviously means that one would have to play woman, and good fellowship wouldn't allow another man such degradation.

To understand men's fear of homosexuality, then, is above all to understand men's fear of losing their place of power in society with women. And to hold that power, men must preserve both the "absoluteness" of their ideology and the group unity of their members.

It must be kept in mind that while homosexuality does contain an implicit threat to sexist ideology, it is, at best, only a small part of the whole fight to bring down the sex role system. (Indeed, if the gay movement were to be seen as only the demand for the right of making role transfers within society, for example, it would work against feminism by supporting a reformed version of the sex role system.)

Thus it is only in the most radical interpretations that lesbianism becomes an organic part of the larger feminist fight. In this context it joins the multitude of other rebellions women have been making against their prescribed role—be it in work, in law, or in personal relationships. As with all such rebellions, they are only personal accommodations to living in a sexist society unless they are understood politically and fought for collectively. The larger political truth is still that we are women living in a male society where men have the power and we don't; that our "female role" is a creation that is nothing more than a male political expediency for maintaining that power; and that until the women's movement alters these ancient political facts we cannot speak of being free collectively or individually.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Anon., *Vortex*, Lawrence, Kansas.

<sup>2</sup> T.B., letter, *Everywoman*, March 26, 1971.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to the Editor, *Evergreen*, May, 1971.

<sup>4</sup> Judith Hole and Ellen Levine, *Rebirth of Feminism* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1971), p. 76.

# A Woman's Place is in the Oven

by SHERRY SONNETT TRUMBO

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One of the most valuable qualities of television is its ability to keep us in touch with the past. Tune in any time and there, in the form of countless old movies, the American past, unadorned and without comment, unwinds before our eyes. The movies of the past forty years provide a history of what this country was thinking, feeling, valuing, admiring, and condemning at any given time. The message may not be at all what was intended, since time has a way of distilling intentions until only actualities remain. But intended or not, the message is there and it is ours if we sit back and bear with the commercial interruptions.

The other night I watched a movie called "The Bachelor Party." Made in the middle 1950s, it's about a young married couple in New York. He works as a bookkeeper during the day and attends school four nights a week to qualify as a CPA. She discovers she's pregnant and that means of course she'll have to stop working (her job is so inconsequential that we never learn what it is), which is a blow both to the current finances and their future plans.

The wife, upset at first, quickly adjusts to the idea of parenthood and looks forward to it. The prospect of fatherhood, however, throws the husband into a crisis. Does he love his wife, does he want to be a CPA, is it all worth it?—"it all" meaning the emptiness, the boredom, the fatigue. In the course of a single night, he works it out with the help of assorted neurotics, including the standard nympho ("Just say you love me!"). In the end, he returns to his own bed and board, reaffirmed in his love for his wife, his desire for the baby, and the rightness of the course of his life. Somehow, the film seems to inform us, he has come through, he has grown up, he has accepted responsibility.

Well, what can you expect? The movie was made in the Fifties, right? And things have changed: if the movie was made now, the young man would see it's all hype—empty, pointless—and he would split, searching out who knows what, but at least free and together. Progress, right? May I now draw your attention to the little woman?

In both the actual and hypothetical versions of this story, it is the woman who represents home, family, and duty. Whether this is seen as security hence good, or security hence stultifying, the woman's role and position have not actually changed. In spite of all the progress we are eager to tell ourselves has been made in the last few years, we can count on the depiction of woman's place to be pretty much the same. ("A woman's place is in the oven.")

Lately, we have had a rash of "tell it like it is" movies—all with men as the central characters. These movies are about men who try the System and leave, or men who from the beginning have nothing to do with the System, or System men who somewhere toward the last reel begin to see the light. (Whether they really tell it like it is remains a question worth asking.) These men are at odds with society in one way or another and the story of each movie is the coming to terms with that conflict. Above all, the important characteristic these men share is their *awareness* that something is very wrong with the society as it reveals itself to them; they sense that the fault does not lie entirely within themselves, that it also lies in a society which forces them into dehumanizing, dead-end, and even unnatural roles.

To men watching these movies, it is relatively unimportant what a particular hero's problems are or what particular answers he finds, if any. The important thing is that the male audience has a

chance to see a man, some man, trying to work out solutions and pursuing alternatives. Characters like Bobby in "Five Easy Pieces" and the driver in "Two-Lane Blacktop" give their male audience a model and a starting point. Depending on the degree of response and identification, men who see these movies are at least made aware that other men in other places are trying other possibilities. This almost subconscious transmission of abstract ideas is where the real power of any art form lies.

But where is the movie about a woman going through the same processes? Where is the movie that shows us what alternatives and possibilities are open to us as women? A script for that movie is probably lying right now on some female writer's desk—or more likely in her head, unwritten, because who would make it anyway?

For women, there are very few relevant models offered by movies or the rest of the culture that will help ease the fear and pain of liberation. Consider the movies just mentioned as useful to men. The girl in "Two-Lane Blacktop" screws her way around the country; if she didn't, it isn't likely the men in the movie would want her around for very long. At no time are we given a clue to who this girl is. She is not permitted to express a single desire, thought, or feeling. She is totally non-person, without even the single emotion credited to the driver and the mechanic—love for the car, an inanimate object. In all fairness, it should be noted that *no one* in the movie is alive—it has a certain kind of austerity and super-coolness that is no more real in our time than college movies of the Thirties and Forties were in theirs.

In "Five Easy Pieces," Rayette, the waitress, is a typical dumb broad, great for shacking up with but you wouldn't want to introduce her to your family. She loves the lug even though he treats her mean. We've seen her many times before (Shirley MacLaine in "Some Came Running," for instance) and she's more than a bit dull. The second woman, the musician, is more interesting and for a while it looks as if she might have something original to say to us. On the surface, she is the new woman—active, purposeful, sure of herself. But, after all, she turns out to be what we know all women *really* are; turned on and conquered by brutality, she is a cold-hearted security seeker who denies our hero his one apparent chance of happiness.

Perhaps the most interesting female character in a recent movie is Olive, the wife in "Drive, He

Said." Sister to Catherine in "Jules and Jim," she very clearly exemplifies the waste and confusion that make up the lives of most women. The fact that she must be described as the wife, while the men are the basketball player, the revolutionary, the professor, etc., is the sum of her problem. She is the victim of men's attitudes toward her. Indulged, placated, protected, she is partially forced and partially allowed to remain in a virtual state of childishness—irresponsible, unpredictable, without direction or purpose. Expected to do nothing, allowed to do nothing, she slips into boredom and apathy, the central emotions of her life.

This seeming contradiction is at the heart of the dilemma in which women often find themselves—prized yet ignored, prized as object, ignored as person. It is this that makes it extremely difficult for many women to perceive the prison in which they live and compels them to attribute their unhappiness to faults and neuroses within themselves. Suffering from that particular despair which comes from having nothing to do, unable to account for her condition or to see how she can change it, Olive can only alleviate it through temporary distractions—*adultery and, finally, pregnancy*. Of course she has contempt for the men around her; it is they who, through unconscious conspiracy, keep her there.

By this time we can all cite the discrimination and the prejudices with which we as women are confronted every day. But if we are to go beyond this awakening, we must deal with the ways in which this discrimination has damaged us. Above all, we must realize that it has left us without any structures, traditions, or guidelines to support us in the search for freedom. Perhaps the bravest, the most determined and the luckiest of us can make it on our own, but most of us, in order even to start on the road to liberation, need some sort of help. We need suggestions of possibilities. We need to know that we are not alone and that we are not peculiar. We need to know that others have tried, are trying, or want to try.

The fact is that almost nowhere in our culture and society are women exposed to this knowledge. Women's Lib spokeswomen, as presented by the media, are often the sort who alienate the average woman, locked in as she is by concern for male reaction and approbation—a concern only natural since in most cases she thinks her very existence depends on a man. Indeed, so many women are so afraid of the ideas of liberation that any direct

approach is too threatening. Never taught to function as total, independent beings, these women don't believe they *can* assume full and total responsibility for their own lives. For them, it is safer to remain in a familiar prison than to venture out into an unfamiliar freedom.

This is not cowardice. It is the understandable fear of, say, a woman, married, out of the labor market or perhaps never in it, totally dependent and totally defined by the man to whom she is married. How is she to deal with the challenges thrown at her by young women who have turned away from the ideas and values which she has been told make her life worthwhile? How is she to face the possibility that most of her life has been, if not exactly wasted, then at least a lot duller and emptier than it needed to have been? What is she to think of the women who tell her this? And how is she to prefer them to the men who tell her that she is right not to respond to these women who challenge her?

For these reasons we must realize that while a direct battle cry mobilizes some, it alienates others. We must make certain that the message is sent out in all sorts of ways, directly and indirectly, gently and stridently, subtly and outrageously.

Unfortunately, it is the subtle, gentle, and indirect voice that is completely smothered by the culture at large. Because the ideas of Women's Lib are so foreign and threatening to the people who control the dissemination of ideas in this society (men and some bamboozled women), and because they threaten very basic structures of the society, those ideas are rarely presented as a natural, completely integrated part of life. Rather, the process of liberation is always made to seem as if it requires special circumstances, special strength. We are made to think that any try at change and development will leave us isolated, irrevocably cut off from what has given us comfort and support in the past. No attempt is made to show how all of us can help each other, can support each other through shared experience with compassion and sympathy.

And yet it is this very idea of the necessity of shared experience and mutual aid that is at the heart of all aspects of Women's Lib—from equal pay for equal work to lesbian liberation. Only through mutual support and concerned action will all women, no matter what their political and social preferences, gain the right and *know* they have the right to live their lives in the way they

choose. No one claims that all women must live in a certain way, but every woman must be free to select from all possibilities. All options must be open to her; it is she, and not society, who will close some of them. Women as a group will find liberation only through unity, but what we make of that liberation depends on who we are as individuals.

In the past, we were told that if we were good, quiet and didn't make any trouble, some of us would be allowed into the real world, the man's world. We were told that if we wanted to be among those few, we had better play by the rules and make the required adjustments. It was, for example, a woman who wrote "Five Easy Pieces," a fact which says a great deal about what women are forced to do in order to compete.

What we need now are women who speak, write, and act as women. There have always been women who have managed to "beat the system" and "make it in a man's world." But too often in the past, these women have jealously guarded their success and purposely disassociated themselves from other women. These are women whose identity and self-assurance comes precisely from viewing themselves as different from and better than other women. Tell them they think like a man and it is a compliment; tell them they are like a woman and it means weak and emotional. They would not wish to work for another woman, but are puzzled when they are not promoted or given jobs of real responsibility.

This must stop. Those of us who manage, despite all the odds, to achieve some influence and to speak where we can be heard, must learn to help each other. We must remember that we are only one of a larger group and that our strength as individuals is directly proportional to our strength as a group. We must learn to speak to each other, to make each other aware of our possibilities, capabilities, and alternatives. Our freedom will not be handed to us by society, but it will be taken when we as a group have the strength and force to demand it.

We must all do what we can, either by addressing ourselves directly to the issues of Women's Lib or by making sure that in all areas of our lives we don't bow to the demands and expectations of conventional male (and often female) thinking. No matter which road we follow, we all have two things to do: to liberate ourselves and to liberate each other. We can't do one without the other and we can't do either unless we do both.

# 4. BUILDING A MOVEMENT

## Free Space

by PAMELA ALLEN

### Introduction

I joined my group, Sudsofloppen, at its second meeting in September, 1968. I was new to San Francisco, having moved from New York City where I had been active in women's liberation. I brought to the group a political commitment to building a mass women's movement. The group experience has helped me to synthesize and deepen my emotional and intellectual understanding of the predicament of females in this society and of the concerns with which we must deal in building a women's movement.

We have defined our group as a place in which to think: to think about our lives, our society, and our potential for being creative individuals and for building a women's movement. We call this Free Space. We have had successes and failures in utilizing this space. Usually our problems stem from our failure to be completely honest with ourselves and each other—failing to question and disagree with another's ideas and perspectives and to say what we think is an alternative. Our failure to be truthful has always had a negative effect on the functioning of our group. Thus individual integrity—intellectual and emotional honesty—is our goal. It has been a difficult struggle.

Precisely because the group does become so meaningful to our lives as we start to separate ourselves from dependence on male values and institutions, it is a temptation to transfer our identities onto the group, to let our thinking be determined by group consensus rather than doing it ourselves. Although we are not sure that full autonomy is a possible goal, we believe that our hope lies in developing as individuals who understand themselves, their own needs, the workings of our society, and the needs of others. Thus we try to resist the temptation to submerge our individuality in the group and struggle instead to make contact with our own feelings and thoughts. Freedom is frightening and difficult to use. We are always struggling to take advantage of the Free Space we have created for ourselves.

*We have developed four group processes to help*

us in our endeavor to become autonomous in thought and behavior. We call these processes "opening up," "sharing," "analyzing," and "abstracting." They are our way of keeping in touch with our emotions, giving one another information about experiences we have had, trying to understand the meaning of those events, and finally fitting that understanding into an overview of our potential as human beings and the reality of our society—i.e., developing an ideology.

The group processes are described below. It should be understood that they are not totally separate processes; rather there is a great deal of overlap. But the emphasis in opening up is on our feelings; in sharing, on our experiences; in analyzing, on our thinking; and in abstracting, on our evolving theory.

I have chosen to write about one structure that has developed in the women's movement, the small group, because I think the small group is especially suited to freeing women to affirm their own view of reality and to think independently of male-supremacist values. It is a space where women can come to understand not only the ways this society works to keep women oppressed but ways to overcome that oppression psychologically and socially. It is Free Space.

\* \* \*

The group processes described in this paper were discussed and identified by Sudsofloppen after we had been meeting for over a year. This was one of the first times that we turned our growing ability to analyze onto ourselves and our own activity. The experience of working out these concepts collectively was very exciting for us all. For some, the processes may seem a little arbitrary and too structured, but we are a group which believes that there is always a structure, that the issue is to consciously choose one that will encourage our growth rather than just hope that it will happen. We think this way because our early activity was consciously unstructured—we thought—and we found that letting things just happen meant that the strongest personalities controlled



the meetings and that it was very easy to avoid areas of discussion that were difficult.

The group processes as described here are impersonal and they ensure that those of us who find it hard to open up about our feelings will be challenged to do so. The same is true for women who fear analysis and would rather remain only on the subjective level. The total process is not easy but we feel that *each* process is necessary to understanding the human experience. We believe that theory and analysis which are not rooted in concrete experience (practice) are useless, but we also maintain that for the concrete, everyday experiences to be understood, they must be subjected to the processes of analysis and abstraction.

### Opening Up

This is a very individual need: the need for a woman to open up and talk about her feelings about herself and her life. In the beginning of a group experience opening up is a reaching out to find human contact with other women. Later it becomes a way to communicate to others about one's subjective feelings—about the group, about the women's movement, about one's life.

Our society alienates us from our feelings. However, this is less true for women than for men. It is imperative for our understanding of ourselves and for our mental health that we maintain and deepen our contact with our feelings. Our first concern must not be with whether these feelings are good or bad, but what they are. Feelings are a reality. To deny their existence does not get rid of them. Rather it is through admitting them that one can begin to deal with her feelings.

Opening up is an essential but difficult process for a group. In its early stages a group usually fosters a feeling of intimacy and trust which frees women to discuss their fears and problems. This is because most women have been isolated and alone and the group experience is the first time they have found others who like themselves are frustrated with their lot as women in this society. Every woman who has tried to articulate her loss of a sense of identity to her husband knows the despair of not being understood. Any woman who has tried to explain her driving need to have a life of her own and sees her words falling on the uncomprehending ears of family and friends knows the horror of being alone, being seen by others as some kind of freak. Any woman who has admitted that she is unhappy and depressed but can't explain why knows the pain of not being taken

seriously. Isolated, always getting negative responses to her attempts to communicate her feelings about her condition, the woman finds it easy to begin to question herself, to see her problems as personal ones.

The group offers women a place where the response will be positive. "Yes, we know." "Yes, we understand." It is not so much the words that are said in response that are important as the fact that someone listens and does not ridicule; someone listens and acknowledges the validity of another's view of her life. It is the beginning of sisterhood, the feeling of unity with others, of no longer being alone.

The early group experience of closeness—the honeymoon period as some call it—fosters opening up about one's feelings toward oneself and one's life. But as the group begins to function on a long-term basis and the members participate in activities in a women's movement, it becomes harder to be honest about one's feelings for sometimes they are negative and may involve another woman. Yet such disclosures are necessary if trust and sisterhood are to become long-term realities. Neither a group nor a movement can function if there is latent distrust and hostility or overt backbiting going on. In addition an individual cannot be free to trust in herself and in others if she is suppressing feelings and allowing them to cloud her thinking and activity.

Opening up is a personal need to admit to and express one's emotions—her joys as well as her sorrows. In addition it is a group need in that no group can continue to function over a long period of time which does not deal with the feelings of its members. Unless women are given a *non-judgmental* space in which to express themselves, we will never have the strength or the perception to deal with the ambivalences which are a part of us all. It is essential that the group guarantee confidentiality, that we know that our feelings will not be revealed elsewhere or used against us. This is a group commitment without which there can be no trust.

### Sharing

The opening up process is centered on the individual's expressive needs, and carried to an extreme it can become self-indulgence. However, there is another experience that can take place in the group which is similar to the first yet different, for the emphasis is on teaching one another through sharing experiences. Not only do we re-

spond with recognition to someone's account, but we add from our own histories as well, building a collage of similar experiences from all women present. The intention here is to arrive at an understanding of the social conditions of women by pooling descriptions of the forms oppression has taken in each individual's life. Revealing these particulars may be very painful, but the reason for dredging up these problems is not only the therapeutic value of opening up hidden areas. Through the common discussion comes the understanding that many of the situations described are not personal at all, and are not based on individual inadequacies, but rather have a root in the social order. What we have found is that painful "personal" problems may be common to many of the women present. Thus attention can turn to finding the real causes of these problems rather than merely emphasizing one's own inadequacies.

Almost any topic can be used for the sharing process. All that is necessary is that women have experience in that area. Some of the topics we have used for discussion have been communal living, job experiences, experiences in the civil rights movement, SDS, and the peace movement, relationships with men focusing on examples of male chauvinism, relationships with women with emphasis on our adolescent experiences and how these affect our present feelings toward women, and our self-images—how we perceive ourselves and how we think others perceive us. Agreeing on a topic and preparing for the discussion for a week or so seem to ensure the most productive sharing discussion.

The sharing occasions have shown us that the solutions to our problems will be found in joining with other women, because the basis of many of our problems is our status as women. It was not only sharing the stories of our childhood, school, marriage, and job experiences that led us to this realization. It was as much the positive feelings, the warmth and comradeship of the small group which reinforced the conviction that it is with other women both now and in the future that solutions will be found. The old stereotypes that women can't work together and don't like one another are shown in practice to be false.

After sharing, we know that women suffer at the hands of a male-supremacist society and that this male supremacy intrudes into every sphere of our existence, controlling the ways in which we are allowed to make our living and the ways in which we find fulfillment in personal relationships. We know that our most secret, our most private

problems are grounded in the way women are treated, in the way women are allowed to live. Isolation turns frustration into self-doubt, but joining together gives women perspective that can lead to action. Through sharing they can see that they have been lied to, and begin to look critically at a society which so narrowly defines the roles they may play. But before they can take their destinies into their own hands, they must understand the objective condition of women and the many forms that oppression takes in the lives of women.

### Analyzing

A third stage now takes place in the group: the experience of analyzing the reasons for and the causes of the oppression of women. This analysis rises out of the questions which are posed by the basic raw data of the opening up and sharing periods. It is a new way of looking at women's condition: the development of concepts which attempt to define not only the why's and how's of our oppression but ways of fighting that oppression. Because the analysis takes place *after* the sharing of individual examples of oppression, it is based on a female understanding of the reality of women's condition.

This period is important because it is the beginning of going beyond our personal experiences. Having gained a perspective on our lives through the sharing process, we now begin to look at *woman's predicament with some objectivity*. This new approach is difficult for many of us, for as women we exist predominantly in the realm of subjectivity; we perform functions but seldom get on top of a situation to understand how something works and why. Analyzing is a new and difficult procedure to learn.

In analyzing the role the group has played in our lives, for example, we have come to understand the ways in which women are kept from feeling they are worthwhile. We have discussed the need to have a social identity and the ways women are prevented from acquiring one. Women's roles as wife and mother have been analyzed. We have come to see that women are relegated to a private sphere, dependent both psychologically and financially on their husbands. The group is a first step in transcending the isolation. Here, sometimes for the first time in her life, a woman is allowed an identity independent of a man's. She is allowed to function intellectually as a thinker rather than as a sex object, servant, wife, or mother. In short, the group establishes the social worth of the wom-



Photos: Eilen Levine





en present, a necessity if women are to take themselves seriously.

We have had to face realistically the inability of many of us to think conceptually. This inability comes from being encouraged to stay in the private sphere and to relate to people on personal levels even when working. We are training ourselves to get out from under our subjective responses and to look at our reality in new ways. Although this is not easy for us, we see the absolute necessity of analysis, for our oppression takes both obvious and subtle forms which vary with our class and educational status. The complexity of women's situations necessitates our bringing information outside our individual experiences to bear on our analysis of women's oppression. This is the period when questions can be asked about how the entire society functions. This is the period when books and other documentation become crucial.

It is our contention, however, that this period of analysis belongs *after* the opening up and sharing experiences, for concepts we find must answer the questions which come from our problems as women. It is not in our interest to fit experiences into preconceived theory, especially one devised by men. This is not only because we must suspect all male thinking as being male-supremacist, but because we must teach ourselves to think independently. Our thinking must grow out of our questions if it is to be internalized and if we are to have the tools to look objectively at new experience and analyze it correctly. Thus a period of analysis will come after each new experience and will add new thinking to an ever growing ideology.

#### **Abstracting**

A synthesis of the analyses is necessary before decisions can be made as to priorities in problems and approach. For this to happen a certain distance must exist between us and our concerns. When we remove ourselves from immediate necessity, we are able to take the concepts and analysis we have developed and discuss abstract theory. We are able to look at the totality of the nature of our condition, utilizing the concepts we have formulated from discussions of the many forms our oppression takes. Further we begin to build (and to some extent, experience) a vision of our human potential. This does not mean we become more "like men. Rather we come to understand what we

could be if freed of social oppression. We see this abstracting experience as the purest form of Free Space.

We are only beginning to experience this Free Space, abstracting, now that we have had a year of opening up, sharing, and analyzing behind us. We are beginning to see how different institutions fulfill or prevent the fulfillment of human needs, how they work together and how they must be changed. We are beginning to gain an overview of what type of women's movement will be necessary to change the institutions that oppress women.

Specifically we have begun to have a clear understanding of what role the small group can and cannot play in this social revolution. It is clear to us that the small group is neither an action-oriented political group in and of itself nor is it an alternative family unit. Rather, this is where ideology can develop. And out of this emerging ideology will come a program grounded in a solid understanding of women's condition that will have its roots, but not its totality, in our own experience. Intellectually this is the most exciting stage. It is a joy to learn to think, to begin to comprehend what is happening to us. Ideas are experiences in themselves, freeing, joyous experiences which give us the framework for formulating our actions.

It is important to stress that opening up, sharing, analyzing, and abstracting are not limited to certain periods of time. One never completes any of the processes. Opening up is not limited to the past and one does not graduate through the various processes until one is abstracting to the exclusion of all else. Analyzing and abstracting are only valid processes if they continue to be rooted in the present feelings and experiences of participants. The order may be fixed but the processes themselves are ongoing.

The total group process is not therapy because we try to find the social causes for our experiences and the possible programs for changing these. But the therapeutic experience of momentarily relieving the individual of all responsibility for her situation does occur and is necessary if women are to be free to act. This takes place in both the opening up and sharing phases of the group activity and gives us the courage to look objectively at our predicament, accepting what are realistically our responsibilities to change and understanding what must be confronted societally.

"Santa Claus must have been a woman. Who else would have done so much for so little?"

Joreen, Christmas, 1970



# Consciousness Raising: A Dead End?

by CAROL WILLIAMS PAYNE

Carol Payne is a relative newcomer to the women's movement. She has been a member of an unaffiliated consciousness-raising group in New York for a year and a half.

For almost a year and a half I have been a member of a group of women which has met regularly on Thursday evenings. Some of us are married, some single, some divorced, some with children, some without, some established in professions, some trying to decide what kind of work to do. Our ages range from mid-20's to mid-30's. Membership in the group has shifted; some people have moved away; others became frustrated with the direction the group was taking or felt that they didn't want to contribute.

The group was formed when two women began talking to each other about starting a group to talk about starting a group to talk about problems women have in working and wondering whether their self-doubts and lack of self-confidence were related to their being women. They found enough friends and friends of friends interested in the same problems to start a group. There were seven of us to begin with; then two more joined. The number has remained between six and nine.

We have talked about many problems which concern us—work, competitiveness with other women, jealousy, relationships with men, our childhood, our parents. We have tried to understand how we have been shaped by society's expectations of us, how we share problems and fears and how we can help each other.

Sometimes we used the approved consciousness-raising technique of choosing a subject and having everyone speak about it. More often, whoever wanted to speak about something initiated the discussion. Doing this created problems because the people who were the most vocal or the most competitive tended to dominate meetings and we spent many evenings struggling with destructive tendencies and personality conflicts.

Periodically, we asked ourselves, "What is the purpose of this group? What are we trying to accomplish? What direction should we be going in?"

We argued about this. A women's group shouldn't be group therapy, we decided. But there

were elements of group therapy in what we were trying to do, to help each other deal with personal problems. We finally realized that we could not handle confrontation and hostility in the manner of group therapy because we did not have a trained leader who could remain objective and call a halt if someone was being hurt. We decided that we should be supportive and avoid confrontation.

We never resolved the question of what a women's liberation group was supposed to do. There was always a conflict between those who favored the personal, psychological approach and those who felt that a women's group should be building a bridge between the personal insight gained by being in a small group and political action with a larger body of women.

We would discuss one person's problem in balancing work and family responsibilities, another's in handling the aftermath of a divorce, another's with her husband who felt threatened by her belonging to a women's liberation group, but we never tried to relate these problems to the structural problems of women in society nor did we think about how they could be dealt with beyond the personal level of these particular women in their particular situations.

Some women in our group were engaged in political action or work which involved them with other women and they looked upon the group as a haven from the hassles they were going through elsewhere. All of us were busy and could not spare much more than one evening a week. And it was easier to continue the way we had started than to find some meaningful action that we could all agree we wanted to do.

I kept asking myself, "What is the point of just continuing to talk about ourselves? Why bother? Where is it leading?" Some evenings we didn't get down to serious discussion until 10:30 or 11:00 when everyone was ready to go home. Some meetings degenerated to the level of comparing bra sizes and talking about what vitamins we bought

at the health food store. At these meetings we were all unconsciously expressing our frustration with our purposelessness.

I continued to come for several months after I had realized that things would probably not change and that the majority of the members were not as frustrated as I was with what the group was doing. Because I had become attached to the group and didn't want to leave, I kept hoping that we would come to a resolution.

I left because the group did not change and I needed to relate to the women's movement in a different way. I felt that nothing could be accomplished by becoming more and more intimate with a small group of women and that if women's groups are not political then they are nothing more than amateur group therapy or social clubs.

The consciousness-raising group was one of the great successes of the beginning of the women's liberation movement. It was a great way to reach large numbers of women and to provide a setting in which women could develop self-confidence and a realization of what they shared. The groups met a need and they proliferated.

But now, my staying in a small group which just talks and which does not relate to the rest of

the movement is stagnation. It is pointless to develop the self-confidence to challenge assumptions about women's roles and an understanding of the way society channels women without then collectively doing something about these problems. There must be a way to retain the intimacy and sense of belonging that comes from being part of a small group and link it to a sense of purpose and relationship with other groups.

I am not sure where to go from here. I feel isolated because I was not connected with any women's organization except the small group. Beyond the group I am related to nothing but the barrage of distorted images of women's liberation projected by the mass media.

Where should I fit in among the ideological schisms which are dividing the movement? What organizations are still in existence? At this point, is developing a theoretical base and a strategy for action more important than specific actions? And if action, what action?

I don't think my time in the group was wasted but now I need to work with women in a different way on specific projects with tangible results. The question is what? and how? and with whom?

## The Selling of a Feminist

by CLAUDIA DREIFUS

Claudia Dreyfus is a writer and an active member of Media Women in New York. She has worked as "one of the few female labor union organizers" for Local 1199 of the New York Hospital Workers.

(Review of THE FEMALE EUNUCH by Germaine Greer)

Early last year, when the high priests of publishing began to discover that their female readers were insatiably curious about the women's liberation idea, there was much discussion as to which of the bountiful crop of feminist authors would become the big femme lib superstar. Betty Friedan had no appeal for the literary lions—she was too old, too bourgeoisie, too organization-conscious. Shulamith Firestone, the author of *The Dialectic of Sex* and organizer of New York Radical Feminists, was strikingly attractive; but alas, anti-love, perhaps even anti-men. Ti-Grace Atkinson, an advocate of extra-uterine birth, was considered too far out for a whirl through the major networks. For a while it seemed as if the brilliant and beau-

tiful Kate Millet, whose *Sexual Politics* was for a short time on the best-seller list, might be star material. But she made the mistake of openly asserting her bisexuality. *Time* took due note of this state of affairs, and that finished Millet. So who was left to launch on the Dick Cavett-Johnny Carson-Virginia Graham-Time-Life circuit? American feminists, with their dogged determination to be themselves, were a publicity man's nightmare. Someone more palatable would have to be found.

Or even imported. On a warm spring day, Germaine Greer, the author of the English best seller, *The Female Eunuch*, jetted into New York from London. Miss Greer was everything those messy American feminists were not: pretty, pre-

dictable, aggressively heterosexual, media-wise, clever, foreign, and exotic. Her background was fascinating. At thirty-two, she was an accomplished actress, a Ph.D. who lectured in Shakespeare at Warwick University, editor of the European pornographic journal, *Suck*, and contributor to various London underground newspapers. Her philosophy, as outlined in *The Female Eunuch*, could be expected to appeal to men: women's liberation means that women will be sexually liberated; feminism equals free love. Here was a libbie a man could like.

Full-page ads announced that Miss Greer had written the women's liberation book of the year, and that despite this achievement, she was "a feminist leader who admittedly loves men." Six feet tall, fashion-model beautiful, Miss Greer was the toast of *The Tonight Show*. Dick Cavett was enthusiastic about her. Norman Mailer suggested that her book was worth reading.

There is a catch to this fairy tale. Germaine Greer is not the feminist leader she is advertised to be. Back home in London she has no active connections with any women's liberation group. And the book she has written is hardly feminist. True, *The Female Eunuch* does contain an obligatory enumeration of the many economic and psychological horrors that women are subjected to. But Miss Greer's information is hardly new, and could be gleaned from a half-dozen other books. What's more, the whole tone of *The Female Eunuch* is shallow, anti-woman, regressive, three steps backward to the world of false sexual liberation from which so many young women have fled.

Miss Greer quite rightly asks women to abandon the institution of marriage, but she means to replace it simply with the dehumanizing, anonymous, and spiritually debilitating thrusting that men call sex. In her view, sex is something to be collected—like money. The more of it you get, the richer you are. The difficulty is that many feminists have been to that movie before. Many of the younger women in the movement recall a period, four or five years ago, when in order to qualify as hip, emancipated females, their alternate-culture brothers insisted they perform as sexual gymnasts. *Resentment at this treatment is one powerful motive for the current women's movement.*

*The author's insistence that "sexual liberation" is the prerequisite for women's liberation has a lot to do with the fact that she thinks like a man. She has done very well in the male world, and she*

has yet to identify herself with the essential condition of women. From her book, one learns that Germaine Greer has rarely (except during a miserable youth) had to suffer the kinds of misfortune that most women endure. She was always accepted in the world of men. She was always treated as an equal. That good fortune just about disqualifies her for writing a feminist book. She has had no experience of what it means to be adult and female in the world inhabited by most women, and she does not have the gift of imagination that could make up for that lack. Indeed, she consistently takes a viewpoint that is not merely male but inimical to women. Her book is littered with unkind and unfeminist snipes at her sisters. Most of the women in her book are described as whiny, simpy, and boring. "As a female lecturer at a provincial university," she complains in a typical passage, "I have to tolerate the antics of faculty wives, but they are strikingly easy to ignore." What separates Germaine Greer from women's liberationists is that a sensitive feminist would regard a faculty wife's failings as the end product of a useless, oppressive, and unfulfilling life. A feminist would feel sisterly sympathy for the faculty wife, and be interested in working with her to help change her condition.

Aside from the author's obvious misogyny, she exhibits very little respect for those women who are organizing against sexual oppression. Her chapters on "Rebellion" and "Revolution" are packed with contradictory ranting about how the women's revolution must be part of *The Bigger Revolution*, how the feminist movement is not militant enough, how the movement is too middle class. On the one hand, she exhorts the women's liberationists to be more militant in their fight against sexism. On the other, she suggests that women make love, not war. "Women cannot be liberated from their impotence by the gun. . . . The process has to be the opposite: women must humanize the penis, take the steel out of it and make it flesh again."

If Miss Greer has no patience with the state of the feminist movement, she has even less love for the literary women who have aligned themselves with it. Betty Friedan is described as middle class and boring. Kate Millet "persists in assuming that [Norman] Mailer is a cretin." Anne Koedt, author of the important *Women's Liberation* pamphlet, "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm," is dismissed this way: "One wonders just whom Miss Koedt has gone to bed with."

On the whole, *The Female Eunuch* is a grossly inconsistent book. Yes, Germaine Greer says all the right things about the economics of sexism. Yes, she is extraordinarily observant about some of the physiological results of our sexual conventions. Her chapters on female anatomy are brilliant. Where she falls down is in her inveterate dislike of women, her idiotic exhortations to revolution and nonviolence alike, and her passionate identification with all things male.

Throughout history there have always been a few women who have been able to fight and seduce their way to the top of the patriarchy. In pre-revolutionary France, these women were highly educated, highly cultivated courtesans who provided intellectual and sexual stimulation for the male nobility. (What self-respecting noble would try to carry on an intelligent discussion with his wife?) Germaine Greer is the closest thing we have

to this old-world, old-style courtesan. Nor would she be offended by this description. By her own admission, she is a *groupie*, a *supergroupie*—which means that she is a sexual and intellectual consort to the royalty of rock music. On television programs she has made comments like: "I'm really just an intellectual superwhore!"

*The Female Eunuch* is designed to provide intellectual and sexual thrills to those men who would like to see a feminist revolution because it would take that *one* woman off their back and make a lot more women available to them. How nice to be told that women's liberation will mean the liberation of more women for bed service! One reading of *The Female Eunuch* suggested to me that it had been written to assuage the fears of jittery male chauvinists. A second reading convinced me that if Germaine Greer didn't exist, Norman Mailer would have had to invent her.

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## The Fourth World Manifesto

by BARBARA BURRIS

In agreement with Kathy Barry, Terry Moon, Joann DeLor, Joann Parent, Cate Stadelman.

Barbara Burris had an early involvement in the civil rights movement, the peace movement, and SDS. She became a feminist in 1966 and joined the women's movement in early 1967, where she became very active. She is currently "trying to find myself as a complete person—now writing and learning sculpture."

### Background

The "Fourth World Manifesto" was originally written partly as a reply to the way in which a "women's liberation" conference was planned. We were upset at the dishonesty of the call for a "women's liberation" conference with Indochinese women in the spring of 1971.

The women who planned and worked on the conference defined themselves as anti-imperialist women. Some of them have also been active in the women's movement. While stating in one of their planning leaflets that it was necessary to be "upfront about our politics," they discussed, sometimes subtly and sometimes very blatantly, the use of the women's liberation movement to further their own political ends.

As we stated in the original "Manifesto," we do not concede to the women who planned the conference the title of "anti-imperialists." We feel

they used a very narrow definition of imperialism taken without question from the male-dominated Left. We find it self-evident that women are a colonized group who have never—anywhere—been allowed self-determination. Therefore, all women who fight against their own oppression (colonized status) as females under male domination are anti-imperialist by definition. In the second part of this "Manifesto" is a detailed discussion of women as a colonized group.

It should go without saying that those of us connected with the "Fourth World Manifesto" are deeply opposed to the war in Indochina. As individuals all of us have strong commitments against this war. There are plenty of anti-war groups (however male-dominated) that women, as individuals, can relate to if they wish. But it would be disastrous to turn the independent feminist movement into simply another adjunct to the anti-war

and anti-imperialist movements—with the same *male-dominated perspective* which those movements have.

The anti-imperialist women, like the rest of the anti-war and anti-imperialist Left movement, never question war and national imperialism as male-supremacist institutions. They ignore the roots of domination, aggression, imperialism, and war in male-supremacist society. Because they do not see imperialism and war in their deepest aspects as male-supremacist institutions in *all* societies, the anti-imperialist women are anxiously concerned that an "anti-imperialist consciousness" be injected into the women's movement. They make a strong effort to change the direction of the women's movement from independent feminist issues to anti-imperialist activities as these have been narrowly defined by the male Left.

The anti-imperialist women were less than honest in calling their conference a women's liberation conference with the Indochinese women. We would have had no objections to their conference if they had stated honestly that they were calling an anti-imperialist conference for women interested in anti-war work. It was the dishonesty of the anti-imperialist women's attempt to use and convert the women's liberation movement to their brand of anti-imperialist politics that roused our anger. We have experienced too much of this kind of manipulation of the women's movement by Left groups.

Most of our criticism of the conference was developed in the original "Manifesto." We do not want to go over the details of it here. However, we do feel that it is crucial to open up a discussion of the emotional and ideological reasons underlying attempts to co-opt the women's movement into other "more important" struggles.

In an expanded edition of the "Manifesto" we have worked out a deeper analysis of the emotional, psychological, and social assumptions underlying the attitude that women's liberation is less important than black liberation, anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, etc. In the expanded "Manifesto" we criticize the male definition of oppression which does not recognize the unique position of females as a subjugated group.

But we feel it is necessary in this limited space to focus strongly on the male-dominated Left. The anti-imperialist women are criticized here only as they are one of the most recent examples in a series of attempts to re-direct the women's movement into male Left-dominated priorities.

Now that the women's movement (thanks to independent women) has become a force to be reckoned with in society, there are many Left groups trying to get a finger in the women's movement pie. Over the last year and a half the SWP-YSA (Socialist Workers Party-Young Socialist Alliance) has made a nationally coordinated attempt to infiltrate and take over women's centers and organize women's liberation groups (which they hope to mold to their "single issue" approach and subordinate to their organizational aims). This "Manifesto" is not simply directed at the "anti-imperialist" women. What is said of the anti-imperialist women's manipulation of the women's movement applies equally well to every other Left group—the Communist Party, Socialist Workers Party, Young Socialist Alliance, International Socialists, Students for a Democratic Society, Progressive Labor, Youth Against War and Fascism, etc. The criticisms we make of the anti-imperialist women apply equally to all of the male Left and the women in the male-dominated Left.

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#### The Invisible Audience

In an honest article in the February issue of *Radical America*, Marlene Dixon described the pressures on women radicals to conform to a male-dominated movement.

In discussing the First National Conference of Women's Liberation near Chicago in 1968, she says:

The Invisible Audience at the Chicago Conference were the very "male heavies" who had done so much to bring about the existence of a radical Women's Female Liberation Movement. [p. 27]

The radical women were decimated by the invisible male audience. Thus the real split among the women hinged upon the significant audience that women addressed: other women, or Movement men. [p. 28]

But why were these women so super-conscious of a "male presence" at an all-women conference of women's liberationists at a camp near Chicago—with no Left males for miles around?

Because women had learned from 1964 to 1968 that to fight for or even sympathize with Women's Liberation was to pay a terrible price: what little credit a woman might have earned in one of the Left organizations was wiped out in a storm of contempt and abuse. [p. 27]

But perhaps becoming a "success" in the male Left is not the highest of all possible goals for a woman—or for anyone.

Women must face facts. Men will never, until forced by circumstances, place first, or even urgent, priority upon a struggle against the oppression of women. Witness the fact that there is not one male dominated organization, from



the Left-liberal New University Conference to the radical Youth Movement, that has been willing to place top priority upon the women's struggle. Indeed the idea is so repugnant to many men that they cannot tolerate a woman who refuses male leadership in order to address her energies primarily to the liberation of her sisters. [p. 33]

Women who still are acting for the Left male invisible audience but who now form women's collectives to organize women in relation to the priorities set up by a male Left are little more independent than they were working with the males. They are somewhere between fear and open rebellion. They fear to work on their own definition of women and women's issues and so still relate primarily to the invisible audience of "male heavies."

What a difference it would make—in terms of male approval—if the women working in "anti-imperialist" collectives or on "anti-imperialist" issues were working on their own women's issues. —If they themselves developed a perspective on how women are a colonized group in relation to men all over the world, in all classes and races, including the Third World. With that perspective they would no longer be a part of the male Left. But it doesn't even seem to occur to the "anti-imperialist" women that the male definition of imperialism may be extended and perhaps truly was originally applicable to women.

The "anti-imperialist" women are trying to get women to work on "anti-imperialist" issues in a certain way in which they are defined by the male Left. We quote an article describing the last planning meeting that was held in Baltimore (October 24-25). "In order to spread the word about the Conferences [planning] more widely and to get women involved in anti-war activities, a series of actions are being planned as part of a whole anti-imperialist offensive of women." (From "Battle Acts," published by Women of Youth Against War and Fascism.)

It is one thing to be against the Vietnam War and all wars and quite another for a group of women to try to draw women working in their own Movement away from it into the male-dominated, very narrowly defined anti-war and anti-imperialist movements. The same mistake happened at one point (there's always something more "important" than female liberation) when a large segment of the earlier Feminist Movement went into the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and fizzled out as a threatening force in the society.

The demand for an end to sex roles and male imperialist domination is a real attack on the mas-

culine citadel of war. After all, women don't declare or fight in offensive wars. War is a male institution—as are all other institutions in the society—and war is simply an extension of the colonial policy of the subjection of the female culture and "weaker" male cultures, i.e., "weaker" national cultures. Women, who have nothing to say about running the country or fighting in the war, will never end war except by attacking and ending male domination and the sex roles where men learn their war mentality. The women who went into WILPF took the safest and therefore totally ineffective and reactionary (for women) way out. They opted to reinforce the split between male and female and to use their "feminine myths" to act as adjuncts to the male peace movement and claim that women's voice was needed (in the same old role, of course) to save men from themselves—their own self-imposed slaughter. The oppressed are going to "save" with their oppressed "virtues" (defined by males and unsifted and unquestioned) their own oppressors.

The anti-imperialist women, in a new refrain to an old song, are in essence asking that women in the independent Women's Movement focus their energies on "anti-imperialism" as the male Left defines it. This is like asking the Women's Movement to move from a position of independence to a position of subservience to the male-dominated Left.

But the Women's Liberation Movement started out from the Civil Rights Freedom Movement, Student Movement, and Anti-War Movement. Women got the notion working in these movements that the idea of freedom should apply to women too. But the males in these movements never intended the freedom struggle to extend to women. It is still too subversive an idea for any of these movements to tolerate on any real level. So many women who got the freedom bug too bad left to relate to women in a Female Movement.

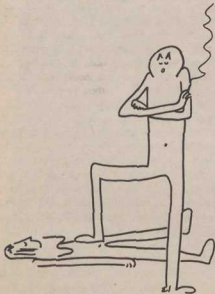
And just as the freedom and anti-war struggle never applied to women, so neither does the present Left anti-imperialist movement. Is there any analysis about imperialism against women? Is there any recognition in writing or action that women are a colonized group, brutally exploited by their colonizers—men—and that this is a primary fact of women's existence? No. And this kind of analysis will never happen in the male-dominated Left or its periphery because males are the colonizers. And the colonizer has never yet defined his privileges out of existence—only the colonized will.

The male Left has absolutely no interest in a female revolution. Rather, the male Left has a direct interest in perpetuating the status quo, i.e., male privileges, and preventing any real threats to male supremacy from both within the Left and without it.

#### A Specter is Haunting the Left— The Specter of Feminism

The only real threat to male supremacy is the independent Women's Movement. Therefore the male Left has done a great deal to impede the development of independent Women's Liberation and tried in numerous ways to co-opt the energies of women away from working independently with other women on women's issues. There have been numerous devices used by the Left to this end depending on the situation and the consciousness of the women involved.

The first tactic in reaction to Women's Liberation was laughter. But that didn't stop some women—in fact it made some of them so furious they left and began "organizing" other women. The next tactic was anger. "You castrating bitches." "What do you women want anyway?" And that didn't work either—even more women left to join the newly emerging independent Women's Movement.



*I couldn't live with myself  
if I didn't fight the oppression  
of all those 3rd world people...*

Then the men began to get really nervous—after all women were leaving the Left in increasing numbers—and the men began to play guilt games. "So what makes you think *you're* oppressed, you white middle-class chick?" (Notice the order of the defining words the male Left uses—"chick" is last.) That tactic made some women even madder but it began to cut deep into many women. And this tactic began to work on some of the less strong women—those who were still full of white male-imposed guilt and self-hatred. The Left males realized that they had struck a tender nerve. And they began to manipulate women's guilt and started becoming very liberal toward the Women's Liberation Movement—that is, when they weren't chucking about those "frustrated bitches" in male-only company. And they had to be liberal anyway because that God-damned Women's Liberation Movement composed only of females was putting the heat on them and they might lose "their" women to it if they didn't play it cool. So they put up with the discomfort of women's caucuses rather than lose all "their" women to the independent Women's Movement. At first it was pretty rough and more than one male Left organization folded under the pressures of the women's caucuses.

But then the Left males began to see that the women's caucuses could have some real value for their organizations. They could be used as important organizing tools for recruiting new members and for working with women associated with the males whose problems the Left organization was concerned with. Such as having the women work with GI wives while the men worked at "organizing" the GI's in the army. Women in the caucuses express best the male attitudes of the organization toward "women's issues" and women's struggle for liberation. We give only two examples out of many. One is a leaflet passed out by PAR (People Against Racism) women at a women's liberation conference in Detroit in 1968. They list as one of their concerns something which reveals the manipulative way in which the Women's Movement is viewed: They wish to use Women's Liberation "as an organizing tactic for broader political movement."

Bernadine Dohrn's equally blatant statement in the *New Left Notes* special issue on women is every bit as revealing. She says, "Everywhere around us there are concentrations of women: dorms, women's schools, education and home eco-

nomics departments, high schools, jobs—women can be mobilized to fight against imperialism and racism.” Maybe women’s caucuses were really a boon to the male Left and not the threat they had expected them to be and which they were at first.

So a pattern was generally established throughout the male Left that women could stay in the caucuses and organize other women into the Left male-dominated Movement as long as they concentrated on:

- (1) Raising women’s issues mainly as they related to the structure of the male-dominated organization which the women remained working for;
- (2) Raising women’s issues on the periphery of the male-defined “important” issues of the organization;
- (3) Relating to the Women’s Liberation Movement as caucus members only of the primary male organization to “raise” the issues of the male organization in the Women’s Movement, and, if possible get its focus off independent women’s struggle and onto how women can relate to male-defined Left issues.

Women’s collectives, unless they are truly autonomous women’s collectives working from their own analysis on women’s issues, can be and are used in much the same manner as the Left women’s caucuses. Because they too relate primarily to the male Left Movement and only secondarily as females to female liberation issues. They are one step ahead of the women’s caucuses if only because they know they can no longer work with the males in the organization—but they still remain working for them even though now working in women’s collectives. Also, “women’s collectives” is now being used by a number of women as synonymous with caucus group—but a more “hip” term than caucus.

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#### The Myth of the White Middle-Class Woman

The male Left tries to intimidate Left women into not taking a strong and independent stand on the female liberation struggle with the “abusive” statement, “They’re only a bunch of white, middle-class women.” It would take another long article to refute this statement, but we will do it in a very cursory manner here.

White is the first defining word of “white mid-

die-class women.” This implies that the primary position of women in the society is due to white privileges. If this is so, then all whites must have the same privileges, i.e., all whites must control the institutions, make the laws, control the army and police, control the government, the religion, education, and business, and have the very best positions in jobs, etc. But it is white males only who are in positions of power and control in all of the institutions of the society. Women are excluded from control and decision-making, are discriminated against in jobs more than any other group, get the lowest pay, are defined as inferiors and as a sexual caste, etc. Also, women were the first group to be subjected as a caste all over the world, thousands of years ago—long before blacks were subjected to whites in America or anywhere else. Obviously whiteness does not overcome the caste position of being a woman in this society. There are some incidental advantages to being white for a woman who is white, but there are also advantages for black males in being males in this society. But the incidental advantages—which are meaningless in terms of woman’s true caste position as a sex—come to her mainly in her affiliation with a dominant white male.

The Left very shallowly sees women associating and living with white males and therefore assumes that women share white male privileges. This is false. Being integrated as *subordinates* does not mean that women share the privileges of the ruling caste—white males. Women get the crumbs. In fact, as the black liberation struggle found out, there are distinct disadvantages to being “integrated” with your oppressor, especially when he still has all the power. The control over the oppressed is just that much more complete.

The second defining word in the series, “white middle-class women,” is middle-class. If class defines women before her sex does, then she should be able to compete with any male for any job on an equal level. But this is not the case. Women are almost in a different labor market than men because of the extremely rigid female caste labor role. The discrimination against females in the economy is the most intense of any group. Female labor is the lowest paid. Doesn’t everyone know the statistics by now? In 1966, the median income for a white man was \$7,164; for a nonwhite man, \$4,528; a white woman, \$4,152; a nonwhite woman, \$2,949 (full-time year-round labor). In 1955, the median wage of women working full time was 64 percent of that of men; in 1967, it was down

to 60 percent. Things are getting worse and we could go on and on quoting statistics you have probably already heard. But it is clear that the white male and the black male get paid more and the white female and the black female get paid less. The black female is doubly disadvantaged as a female and black, and has the lowest pay level of all. That "female" work is the lowest and the caste lines of labor are most rigid in terms of sex can be proved by the fact that black males—while demanding integration in jobs in male fields, i.e., better paying jobs—have never demanded to integrate (sexually, that is) as secretaries, waitresses, salesgirls, etc. When black males integrate into a female job (which is rare) such as nursing, they are paid more than the females doing the same job.

A woman's class is almost always determined by the man she is living with. From her father's house to her husband's house, his income determines her class. Her income and job are only "extra." In fact, if all women were to be put out of all their men's houses and had to depend on their own earning power, almost all of them would be lower or working class—no matter what their class positions were when living with the man. They would be lower or working class because of women's sexual caste position in the economy. Class is therefore basically a distinction between males, while the female is defined by her sexual caste status.

So we have only the last word left in the "taunt" of "white middle-class women." And woman—a sexual caste subordinated to the dominant ruling sex, man—is defined primarily by that relationship.

But it is true that women—through self-hatred and manipulation by male culture (as evidenced by the male Left example above)—do not necessarily identify with their true caste position as women. She often identifies with her oppressor's privileges as white or middle or upper class or even as male. But the Left, which is so upset about her identification with whiteness and class, does not have a comparable critique of black and Third World male identification with male supremacy and privileges (humorously referred to as "foreskin privileges"). This is because the identification with male privileges by black and Third World males—even in their movements—fits in with white male movement domination.

But as women, we are upset about any inequality—any identification with privileges—between

women or within the Women's Movement. We have tremendous barriers to overcome. As the Female Liberation Movement must cut across all (male-imposed) class, race, and national lines, any false identification of women with privileges that are really male (such as whiteness or class, etc.) will be fatal to our Movement. Any identification with privileges will destroy the basis of communication which we females share as a suppressed caste and will divide us up as enemies where we should be friends and equals. And the male Right and the male Left movements will manipulate these differences among women to prevent women from overcoming the barriers that keep us apart and therefore unable to effectively change our sexual caste position as females.

Many women do identify with white and class privileges. Our task as women is not, as the male Left does, to write them off as white bourgeois but to patiently discuss and communicate with women, as sisters, what our true caste position in society is. Once we really understand our suppressed caste status and begin to move to free ourselves from it we women can then understand other groups' oppression—but not before. But it is not an automatic result. People can see their own oppression clearly and be blind to others' oppression. So the understanding of the oppression of other groups needs to be a very conscious and important part of the Women's Liberation Movement, but only from the basis of an understanding and struggle for our own freedom as females—not as an imposed lecture by some "movement" "organizers" who will "raise our consciousness" about oppression, and try to impose their white male guilt on us.

The male Left tries, through guilt, to play one oppressed group off against another oppressed group in much the same way the Establishment plays one against the other. They are always going in circles with the "who's most oppressed" musical chairs. How does one decide who is "most oppressed"? Surely the male white Left—as oppressors—cannot decide this. But they do and try to impose their decision on everyone, especially women. And women are—of course—defined as "least oppressed" by the male-dominated Left.

Let us suppose, for a moment, that we are in a male Left meeting and they are trying to decide who is "most oppressed," therefore who most deserves their solicitous attentions and rhetoric. First of all they decide that blacks are most oppressed.

But then someone says that black females are more oppressed than black males. Someone else counters that black females in Third World countries are even more oppressed than are black females in the U.S. Then another person realizes that a black female in the Third World who is in the working class is more oppressed. But someone else says that a black female in the Third World country who is in the working class and under eighteen years of age is even *more* oppressed. But the *most* oppressed, and therefore logically and morally the only people they should try to "organize" and work with, are black females in Third World countries, in the working class, under eighteen years of age, pregnant, and culturally defined as ugly.

Such is the "logic" of the "most oppressed." But we can take one last look at it from another angle.

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**A Dramatic Meeting of Two Oppressed/Opressors, or "Who is More Guilty?"**

A black man meets a white woman on the street. He is oppressed because he's black and so need feel no guilt toward her. She feels guilty because she's white. But then the balance shifts as she realizes she's a woman and therefore oppressed and needn't feel guilt. But then he feels guilty because he's a male. Then she begins to feel guilty because she's middle class. Then he feels free of guilt because he's working class. But he begins to feel guilty because he's older and she's very young and oppressed. She feels oppressed as a youth and therefore doesn't feel guilty... *ad infinitum*.

The fact that has to be faced by the male Left at some point is that *everyone* in the society—including the white male—is both oppressor and oppressed. Psychologically this could be a revolutionary concept for the Left. If we can only identify with our oppression and not see how we also oppress others we are fooling ourselves. If we feel only guilty about being oppressors we are also fooling ourselves.

The male Left is in a vicious circle of guilt and righteousness, because people in the male Left refuse to go deep enough into their own personal processes of guilt and anger at their own oppression, which becomes a confused mixture of violence and revenge. The male Left has become so hung-up on guilt and "who's most oppressed" that they have lost an elemental sense of justice for *all* human beings.

We, as women, do not want males to feel guilty. We don't care about guilt; what we want is change. All we demand is justice for our sisters, and that cannot come from a guilt-ridden movement which has defined half of humanity's freedom as a "side effect" of the "real" revolution which will be made by other "vanguard," "more oppressed" groups.

The males in the Left continue, through control of leadership, control of the Left organizations, control of writing and publishing, to define the issues which Left workers will concentrate on. This often goes in fads. The latest one is anti-imperialism. (Which is not to negate the importance of imperialism but to say it has been taken up in a shallow and faddish manner and as an escape from the realities of American society.) The definition of imperialism is carefully male-controlled and does not include women's colonial status.

The women who are organizing this "women's" Conference have accepted the male Left priorities and their definition of "anti-imperialism," which excludes women's movements for self-determination.

The women who call themselves anti-imperialists made this statement in their planning leaflet:

Discussions followed concerning the level of anti-imperialist consciousness within the Women's Liberation Movement in the various cities represented. It was evident that although there was both a high degree of women's consciousness and of anti-imperialist consciousness in various parts of the Movement, the relation between the two has not been made clear to most women in the Movement. [p. 3]

Let us explain to the "anti-imperialist" women what imperialism and anti-imperialism really are to women.

There are two definitions of imperialism. The Webster dictionary states that imperialism is:

... the policy and practices of forming and maintaining an empire; in modern times, it is characterized by a struggle for the control of raw materials and world markets, the subjugation and control of territories, the establishment of colonies, etc.

The imperialist is defined by Webster's as a person favoring imperialism.

Fanon and the whole black liberation struggle have recently extended the dictionary definition of imperialism or colonialism to mean a group which is prevented from self-determination by another group—whether it has a national territory or not. The psychological and cultural mutilation is partic-



ularly intense and the colonialism more brutal when the group that colonizes and the group colonized have different defining physical characteristics that set them clearly apart.

All of the above definitions apply to the subjection of women, as a sex.

The dictionary definition of imperialism included "the subjection and control of territories . . ." Women, set apart by physical differences between them and men, were the first colonized group. And the territory colonized was and remains our women's bodies.

Our bodies were first turned into property of the males. Men considered female bodies as territory over which they fought for absolute ownership and control. Consider the imperialist implications of the language: He related his sexual "conquests," she "surrendered" to him, he "took her," etc. Marriage (exclusive of property rights) and the patriarchal family system are colonial institutions created and controlled by males for the subjugation of females.

Our bodies are free territory to other male colonizers when not "protected" by an individual male colonist. What is rape but an imperialist act upon the territory of our bodies?

There are two forms of the colonization of our bodies (territories) by males. Most males have an individual colonial relationship to an individual female and most males identify with and act on the group colonization of women. For instance, rape is an individual male imperialist act against an individual woman while the abortion laws are male group control over their collective female territories. (We realize that we are generalizing here about males and that some of them do not perceive women simply as open territory for conquest. But unfortunately, there are too few males who perceive females as equal human beings to change the generalization much at this point.)

Another example of group colonization of women is the way our bodies are defined as open territory for exploitation (compare the exploitation for sexual satisfaction of the male colonizer to exploitation for raw materials—female bodies are the raw materials). In all forms of the dominant male culture—advertising, pornography, the underground press, literature, art, etc.—female bodies are exploited as territory to demean, subject, control, and mock.

The fact that each male petty colonialist has an individual interest in perpetuating the subjection of

his individual territory, i.e., woman, makes the colonization of women more complete than that of any other group. The colonial rule is more intense for females as we have no escape into a ghetto and at all times are under the watchful eye of the male colonizers, from father to lover to husband. Therefore our suppression as a group (culture) and as individuals has been more complete as has been our identification with our masters' interests (much like the proverbial house nigger).

Fanon shows that it is not enough for the colonizer to control the territory and subject the inhabitants of it to his rule. The colonizer must destroy the culture and self-respect of the colonized. And colonialism's condemnation of the colonized's culture transcends any national boundaries, for it is the essence of the colonized physical and cultural differences that threaten the colonizer.

Fanon says in *The Wretched of the Earth* that "Colonialism . . . turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it." [p. 210] He says that the colonized (in his book, speaking of blacks) "must demonstrate that a Negro culture exists."

The great mass of women have been totally ignored in history except where they appear as adjuncts to men. And the history of Female Liberation Movements has been distorted and almost completely censored. Through the almost complete censorship of the realities of women's condition throughout history, women have been robbed of the means to knowledge about the origins and extent of their subjugation. History (of art, politics, literature, etc.) as related by males has engraved upon women's minds a male image of the world.

*Women Are Now in the Process of Having to Prove that a Female Culture Exists.*

Culture is defined by Webster's as the "concepts, habits, skills, art, instruments, institutions, etc. of a given people in a given period." We will show that the concepts, habits, skills, art, and instruments of women in any period have been different from men's and have been ridiculed and/or suppressed by them. We will show that in all the major institutions of society women receive unequal treatment and the appearance that these institutions are the same for men and women is false.

A female culture exists.

We also hold that female and male culture began with the definition of females as embodying all those human attributes which males as dominators could not reconcile with their own self-

image and therefore projected onto females, thus causing a schizophrenic split of personality into masculine and feminine. —That women, defined by these attributes (such as emotional, intuitive, etc.) by males and further limited by their physical position in society as to work and tools, developed a female or "feminine" culture, and a culture of resistance to male domination. Although the concept of the "feminine" was imposed upon women, we have, through the centuries, developed and created within the confines of the feminine, a female culture.

#### Female and Male Culture

What do most people imagine when they think of differences in culture? They most often think of strange customs and a different language. The traveler to a foreign culture will notice women carrying pails of water on their heads or men riding donkeys, different and strange costumes and white-washed houses. In another culture she will notice people riding bicycles, small towns, sidewalk cafes, small shops, more chic dress, different foods, etc. Especially will the traveler notice the difference in language if there is one.

Although these are just a few of the differences of national culture that distinguish the lives that both women and men lead, and we respect these differences, they are the superficialities that cover up the fundamental similarity of all national cultures the world over. This fundamental similarity is the split between male culture and female culture.

Let us go back to some of those superficial differences that the traveler noticed. In the first culture, the women were carrying pails of water on their heads and the men riding donkeys to market. What was seen as one whole is now divided up by sexual work role. The different costumes which were seen as a whole unit are now divided up into male costumes and female costumes. The small shops noticed are owned by men and sometimes staffed by women. A split is now seen between male ownership and female workers. The cafes are served by women, if cheap, and staffed by male waiters if more expensive. A difference in value of work and pay between male and female is perceived. The food production in agriculture is done primarily by males but prepared in each home by females. What was seen as culinary differences now reminds the traveler of the role of women in the home and woman's

caste work roles all over the world. The traveler in this second look at the culture begins to notice the basic sameness of the male-female cultural split under the superficial differences that were so striking to her at first.

The problem is that the split is so obvious and taken for granted that practically nobody can see it. Things which are conceived of as "natural" cannot ordinarily be perceived. But the emperor had no clothes in spite of what everybody "saw," and a female culture exists whether or not most people will acknowledge the facts of its existence.

Let us again take up those things (habits, skills, art, concepts, and institutions) which distinguish one culture from another according to Webster's definition. Part of the customs of a culture are its habits. Habits here means what people do in their daily lives. It can also include how they go about doing these things. It is clear that women and men have very different daily habits. Women in practically all parts of the world, whether they are working outside the home or not, have responsibility for the cooking, cleaning, and child "raising" chores of the society. This means that most women spend their time with children. This in itself is a cultural split, as men go out and mix mainly with other males in the male world outside the home. Generally males do not do any of the work designated as "female work." Women, mainly in the company of other women and children, organize their time and routines and socializing on an entirely different basis than males. Female work, being so completely caste labor, is organized and done by women in ways peculiar to the female view of things (which is very much determined by woman's secluded work place, i.e., the home and its environs). The whole daily routine of a man and a woman is totally different.

The woman develops skills associated with her work role. Her skills are usually entirely different than the male's. She usually knows a lot about cooking, child care, washing, sewing, colors, decorating, and cleaning, while he knows mechanical or carpentry skills and anything he may learn as a skill at his job. The instruments or tools a woman uses are defined by the work and skills she is allowed.

If the woman goes out to "work" she will have all the home chores in addition to her outside "job." But women's skills outside the home are limited by what the male-run economy will train her for or let her do. She usually fills "service" roles which utilize the "skills" she has learned in

her role as wife and mother. She is allowed limited acquisition of physical skills in such things as typing and small tedious work. She fills completely different job roles than males in the male-dominated economy and is segregated into "female jobs" almost completely. Males do almost all the specialized skillful work—for higher pay.

At one time in the process of the cultures, women did almost everything and men did nothing but hunt and make weapons and war. As men had free time due to women's performing all the drudge work for them (as slave labor, really), they began to develop skills in certain things. As a skill developed women were no longer allowed to perform the task and it was passed on from father to son. As specialization increased women had more of the skills and trades taken away from them and were left only with the drudge chores of cleaning, washing, cooking, "raising" children, etc. This culminated in Europe in the all-male guilds of feudal times.

When the feudal guild system broke down with the onset of industrialism, cheap unskilled labor was needed and women were used again—sewing, weaving, mining, working metal in factories, etc. It was on the backs of cheap "unskilled" female labor (and child labor) that the grotesque edifice of Western industrialism was built. Female slave labor in the cotton mills and black slave labor in the cotton fields produced industrialism for the white male Western world.

And when industrialism was achieved, hordes of women were sent back home and men replaced them in the factories. So that now we have a small body of lowest-paid female labor in the factories but almost totally female personnel in sales and service roles (typing, nursing) which were once male "skills" but are now just very low-paying drudge work.

The final three parts of Webster's definition of culture are the art, concepts, and institutions of a people.

Women have been excluded from contributing to the art, philosophy, and science of all national cultures. These things are in tight male control. The male culture, which is the dominant culture in every nation, i.e., is synonymous with the national culture, cannot accept a female view of things as expressed by female writers, artists, and philosophers. When some women break through male prejudice to create truly great art—which is often very sensitive to the female culture and val-

ues—they are not given the recognition they deserve, because males, looking through their own culturally distorted view of the world, cannot give any credence to an art that expresses the female view. In fact, most males cannot understand what is going on in female culture and art. The worth of female art is thoroughly suppressed in a male-dominated society.

The female soul, suppressed and most often stereotyped in male art, is defined by negative comparisons to the male. The eternal feminine is seen as a passive, earthy, malleable, mysterious, unthinking, emotional, subjective, intuitive, practical, unimaginative, unspiritual, worldly, evil, lustful, super-sexual, virginal, forever waiting, pain-enduring, self-sacrificing, calculating, narcissistic, contradictory, helpless, quivering mass of flesh.

The fact that women live under the power of belief in these characterizations causes a certain outlook which molds the female culture. Woman's position in society, her economic and psychological dependence, reinforce the female stereotypes. Because of the belief in these attributes and woman's position in society—not because of our inherent "female nature"—women's concepts of the world are much different than men's.

Almost everything that has been defined as a male view of the world has its opposite in a female view. Because of the child raising role and the emphasis on personal relationships, women have a more personal, subjective view of things. Because of our subjection, women have a more fatalistic, passive view of the world. We are more in touch with our emotions and often find it necessary to use emotions in manipulating men. Through the imposition of a servant status on women, the female culture has elaborated a whole servile ethic of "self-sacrifice." As the major ethic of the female culture, self-sacrifice has been one of the most effective psychological blocks to women's open rebellion and demand for self-determination. It has also been a major tool of male manipulation of females.

The institutions of a people are an essential part of their culture. The major institutions of every culture are the same: the family, religion, government, army, and economy. Men and women have a completely different relationship to the institutions of "their" culture. In fact there are two cultures hidden by the appearance of one culture under one set of institutions.

Women are excluded, except sometimes in to-

ken numbers and in the lowest working ranks, from participation in government, the army, and religion. There are basically two economic institutions of a society: the substructure or family and the superstructure or outside world of work. Women are limited to an economic dependence in "their" caste work in the family. In work outside the family, women are caste laborers in the lowest-paid drudge work. Women are kept from management or decision-making in work outside the home.

Though it appears that both men and women live together within the institutions of a society, men really define and control the institutions while women live under their rule. The government, army, religion, economy, and family are institutions of the male culture's colonial rule over the female.

**A FEMALE CULTURE EXISTS: IT IS A CULTURE THAT IS SUBORDINATED AND UNDER MALE CULTURE'S COLONIAL, IMPERIALIST RULE ALL OVER THE WORLD, UNDERNEATH THE SURFACE OF EVERY NATIONAL, ETHNIC, OR RACIAL CULTURE IS THE SPLIT BETWEEN THE TWO PRIMARY CULTURES OF THE WORLD—THE FEMALE CULTURE AND THE MALE CULTURE.**

National cultures vary greatly according to the degree of the suppression of the female culture. The veil and seclusion of women and their almost total segregation in Arab culture make for differences between them and, for example, Swedish women. A Swedish woman may not be able to tolerate the suppressed life of Arab women but she also, if she is sensitive, may not be able to tolerate her suppression as a female in Sweden. Crossing national boundaries often awakens a woman's understanding of her position in society. We cannot, like James Baldwin, even temporarily escape from our caste role to Paris or another country. It is everywhere; there is no place to escape.

The repression of female culture is only a question of degree all over the world; the underlying reality is basically the same: the denial of self-determination for women. Women traveling to a foreign country can readily communicate and understand other women in that country because female work and roles (culture) are basically the same all over the world. But it too often happens that women falsely identify with "their" country's dominant male culture and so cannot communicate

with their sisters in subjection in other lands or in other races. This female identification with male cultural supremacy must be overcome if the Women's Movement is to be a truly liberating force.

Most males all over the world perceive and compare females as a caste group. A male of any culture perceives a woman as a woman first and only secondly as "representing" a national or ethnic culture. And he treats every woman as females as a caste are treated. The "Miss World" and "Miss Universe" etc. female flesh auctions, comparing various nationalities of female flesh, are only one example of many. The best way for any woman to find out the truth of this statement is to do some traveling to different countries.

#### **"National" Culture is the Dominant Male Culture**

Who defines and controls the institutions of a society controls that society. Males define and control all the institutions of all "national" cultures—including every purportedly socialist nation that has ever existed.

Because the male culture is dominant and in control in every nation, the "national" culture becomes synonymous with, and in fact is, the male culture. The female culture exists "invisibly," in subjection to the male-defined "national" culture.

What appears as one national culture, due to male propaganda, is in reality the male culture setting itself up as *the* national culture through subordination of the female. The male army, the male government, the male religion, the male-run economy, the male-defined institution of the family, along with the male culture in the "narrower" sense—i.e., the male arts, sciences, philosophy, and technology—are defined as *the* national culture when in fact they represent nothing but the male view and male interests.

One national culture vs. another national culture is simply one male-dominated society vs. another male-dominated society, with women carried along or used outside their subservient role temporarily if this is necessary for victory of the male national culture. Women are obviously hurt doubly by the imposition on them of two male-dominated cultures—one "their" own males', the other the foreign males'. But the confusion comes when "our" own males, who dominate and define the female culture, refuse to recognize that for women it is simply two dominant male cultures that have to be resisted. "Our" own male dominators always want us *only* to resist the *other* males' domination

in the guise of fending off the destruction of "our common culture"—which they have always excluded us from and subordinated us to.

Because of this identification of the male culture with the national, ethnic, racial, or revolutionary culture, some very oppressive male-supremacist attitudes are widespread in national and racial liberation movements. For this reason it is extremely important to make a clear distinction between national or racial liberation and female liberation, although the basis is the same: self-determination. Fanon, for example, in the chapter called "Algeria Unveiled" in *A Dying Colonialism*, makes the mistake of confusing the two and exposes his own identification with male cultural supremacy. Fanon takes the veil as the symbol of Arab and Algerian culture:

The veil worn by the women appears with such constancy that it generally suffices to characterize Arab society . . . . The way people clothe themselves, together with the tradition of dress and finery that custom implies, constitutes the most distinctive form of a society's uniqueness . . . . [p. 35]

Now the veil can be seen as a distinctly Arab-cultural trait or a national cultural trait. We have shown that the national culture is synonymous with the male culture. In this case the male Arab culture has a unified way of defining and limiting the female through the veil. The female cultural suppression is symbolically represented by the veil, which must be worn by females from the age of puberty on.

Fanon is correct in saying that the French tried to destroy Algerian (male) culture and that this is a typical colonial tactic of one male culture vs. another colonized male culture. But Fanon shows a typical male inability to see the brutal colonization of females by males. In his use of the veil as a symbol of Algerian culture that the French were trying to destroy, he oversimplifies in order to avoid a recognition of his own male guilt and the Algerian males' culpability toward the Algerian females' repressed and demeaned culture.

If Fanon were more honest he would recognize that the French, as a male culture, had no more interest in the Algerian woman's freedom than the Algerian male had. But Fanon, who has such passionate anger against the French colonizers, does not extend his vision to demand justice for the Algerian female. In fact he pooh-poohs the idea that Algerian women are oppressed at all. Nowhere, except in what he reveals unknowingly, does he admit the fact of female oppression by

the male in Algeria. (We will later quote an Algerian woman who, for obvious reasons, does not share his bigoted blindness on the colonized status of women in Algeria.) Fanon says:

To begin with there is the much-discussed status of the Algerian woman—her alleged confinement, her lack of importance, her humility, her silent existence bordering on quasi-absence. And "Moslem society" had made no place for her, amputating her personality, allowing her neither development nor maturity, maintaining her in a perpetual infantilism. . . . Such affirmations, illuminated by "scientific works," are today receiving the only valid challenge: the experience of revolution. [pp. 65,66]

For one who is so concerned with the psychological mutilation of the colonized group, this statement shows a callousness equaled only by colonial French statements about the "non-oppression" of French rule. Compare this to a statement Fanon made about the mutilation of the Algerian personality by the French:

French colonialism has settled itself in the very center of the Algerian individual and has undertaken a sustained work of cleanup, of expulsion of self, of rationally pursued mutilation. [p. 65]

But not only does Fanon deny the existence of female oppression in Algeria, like any other colonizer he must justify it as chosen by the colonized:

The Algerian woman's ardent love of the home is not a limitation imposed by the universe [no, it was imposed by males]. It is not flight from the world. The Algerian woman, in imposing such a restriction on herself [in not taking off the veil, and staying home], in choosing a form of existence limited in scope, was deepening her consciousness of struggle and preparing for combat. [p. 66]

In this a typical male-supremacist attitude emerges. Women who give up their own struggle for freedom are the most "conscious" women if they are then prepared to fight alongside their male oppressors. Fanon says: "What was most essential was that the occupier should come up against a united front." [p. 66] And a united front means women must give up their "silly, trivial" ideas of a female anti-colonial movement and fight in the male-dominated "anti"-colonial revolution.

Fanon shows that the Algerian national liberation struggle was a male struggle and that when, out of necessity, women were included, they were under male leadership and control.

Until 1955, the combat was waged exclusively by the men. The revolutionary characteristics of this combat, the necessity for absolute secrecy, obliged the militant to keep his woman in absolute ignorance. [p. 48]



Fanon never questions what made possible the male's position of fighting and the female's of being kept in ignorance. He never questions male control of the revolution. He states: "As the enemy gradually adapted himself to the forms of combat, new difficulties appeared which required original solutions." [p. 48] Among the "original solutions" was the possibility of including women in the fighting—but not really in the revolution, because women were not to be freed by it. The excuse given before was male chivalry: after all, women might get tortured and killed. But when it was necessary to use women the chivalry arguments were conveniently forgotten.

The decision to involve women was made wholly by males. "The decision to involve women as active elements of the Algerian Revolution was not reached lightly." [p. 48] But before it was decided to include women in the revolution, the male revolutionists came up against the effects of their own colonization of women. They pondered how the Algerian woman's colonized status in relation to Algerian males might interfere with her "use" in the revolution. Fanon never says it occurred to the Algerian males that Algerian women needed to engage in an anti-colonial resistance to Algerian male domination. Women's colonized status was seen simply as an obstacle to her "use."

Having been accustomed to confinement, her body did not have the normal mobility before a limitless horizon of avenues, of unfolded sidewalks, of houses, of people dodged or bumped into. This relatively cloistered [i.e. slave] life, with its known, categorized, regulated [by males] comings and goings, made an immediate revolution seem a dubious proposition. The political leaders were perfectly familiar with these problems [i.e., with the suppressed status of Algerian females], and their hesitations expressed their consciousness of their responsibilities. They were entitled to doubt the success of this measure. Would not such a decision [to involve Algerian women] have catastrophic consequences for the progress of the Revolution? [p. 49]

Here the revolution is defined as male and women are to be used; but female liberation is never considered. In fact, the idea is how to use women without too much upsetting their colonial status.

In the final decision to "admit" them to the revolution, women, naturally, were not consulted:

After a final series of meetings among leaders, and especially in view of the urgency of the daily problems that the Revolution faced, the decision to concretely involve women in the national struggle was reached. [p. 51; emphasis added]

Fanon waxes euphoric in discussing Algerian womanhood's role in the revolution. Even though wom-

an's position in Algerian society did not change during or after the revolution, he continues to state that women fought as sisters alongside the Algerian brothers and this proves that the Algerian women are not slaves of the Algerian men. In fact it only shows that the Algerian men needed them and were able to tolerate them outside of their traditional role in order to win the revolutionary battle. There are many quotes from Fanon to show that women within the revolution had a subservient role. He makes some incredibly paternalistic remarks about "accepting" women's "support" in the revolution. This seems to show a subconscious understanding on his part that it was a revolution made by and for the Algerian males. He says:

The married women whose husbands were militants were the first to be chosen. Later, widows or divorced women were designated. In any case, there were never any unmarried girls—first of all, because a girl of even twenty or twenty-three hardly ever has occasion to leave the family domicile unaccompanied. But the woman's duties as mother and spouse, the desire to limit to the minimum the possible consequences of her arrest and her death, and also the more and more numerous volunteering of unmarried girls, led the political leaders [male] to make another leap, to remove all restrictions, to accept indiscriminately the support of all Algerian women. [p. 51]

Notice that he said "support" instead of "equal participation."

The Algerian woman's role was limited and defined by the males in spite of Fanon's glowing rhetoric about her equality in the revolution and how this gave the lie to accusations of Algerian male unfairness to her.

... the Algerian woman assumes all the tasks entrusted to her. Among the tasks entrusted to the Algerian woman is the bearing of messages or complicated verbal orders learned by heart, sometimes despite complete absence of schooling. But she is also called upon to stand watch for an hour and often more, before a house where district leaders are conferring. [p. 53]

That the district and revolutionary leaders are all male and do not include women in the decision-making is evident from a number of statements (emphasis is added):

During those interminable minutes when she must avoid standing still, so as not to attract attention, and avoid venturing too far since she is responsible for the safety of the brothers within, incidents that are at once funny and pathetic are not infrequent. [p. 53]

Meanwhile the woman who might be acting as a liaison agent, as a bearer of tracts, as she walked some hundred or two hundred meters ahead of the man under whose orders she was working, still wore a veil. . . . [p. 51]

Fanon reveals the hypocrisy of the male Third

World when he mocks the "allegations" that the Algerian female is oppressed. His defense of Algerian male culture is every bit as smooth as the French justification of colonial rule. And he denies female oppression under the guise of defending the Algerian national culture from culture-like attacks by the French. No one will doubt that the French were brutal colonizers of the Algerians, but that does not either deny or excuse the equally brutal colonization of Algerian females by Algerian males. Fanon says:

... the dominant administration solemnly undertook to defend this woman, pictured as humiliated, sequestered, cloistered. . . . It described the immense possibilities of woman, unfortunately transformed by the Algerian man into an inert, demonized, indeed dehumanized object. The behavior of the Algerian was very firmly denounced and described as medieval and barbaric.

Lamentations were organized. "We want to make the Algerian ashamed of the fate that he metes out to women." Algerian women were invited to play a "functional, capital role" in the transformation of their lot. They were pressed to say no to a centuries-old subjection.

After it had been posited that the woman constituted the pivot of Algerian society, all efforts were made to obtain control over her. [p. 38]

Never once does Fanon see the Algerian woman simply as a pawn of both the French male-supremacist culture and the Algerian males, neither of whom were interested in her humanity. What he does instead is to deny her oppression and then to sympathize with Algerian male colonists who used her oppression as a symbol of their manhood and Algerian culture. In fact he is terribly moved by the plight of the Algerian male in his fight to retain control over "his woman." The Algerian male has his manhood (synonymous with male culture and control) destroyed by any attempts to "free" the Algerian woman. So he clings more tenaciously to his dominance, which he equates with his culture.

Converting the woman . . . wrenching her free from her status, was at the same time achieving a real power over the man and attaining a practical effective means of destructuring Algerian culture.

The Algerian men, for their part, are a target of criticism for their European comrades, or more officially for their bosses. "Does your wife wear the veil? Why don't you take your wife to the movies, to the fights, or to the cafe? . . . The boss will invite the Algerian employee and his wife. Before this formal summons, the Algerian sometimes experiences moments of difficulty. If he comes with his wife, it means admitting defeat, it means prostituting his wife, exhibiting her, abandoning a mode of resistance. . . . [There are] traps set by the European in order to bring the Algerian to expose himself, to declare: "My wife wears a veil, she shall not go out," or else to betray: "Since you want to see her, here she is," would bring out the sadistic and perverse character of these contacts and relationships and

would show in microcosm the tragedy of the colonial situation on the psychological level, the way the two systems directly confront each other, the epic of the colonized society, with its specific ways of existing, in the face of the colonialist hydra. [pp. 39, 40]

It seems never to occur to Fanon that the "sadistic and perverse character of these contacts and relationships" between the male and female in Algerian culture shows also the "tragedy of the colonial situation" of females "on the psychological level." Fanon, for all his justified bitterness and hatred of the French and European colonizer, does not have a corresponding sense of justice for the plight of the colonized Algerian female.

Perhaps it would be too difficult, psychologically, to admit that the Algerian males have been doing to the Algerian females for many centuries what has been done to Algeria for 130 years by the French. Perhaps it would not be so easy to appear the "innocent" oppressed if the Algerian males had also to admit their own colonial rule of Algerian females. Because the Algerian male then might have to identify consciously with his own French oppressor to see his own role in relation to "his" women. This is why Fanon reacts so vehemently against the idea—the actual facts—of female domination by the Algerian male. And this is probably why the French male colonizers knew they could cut so deep on this issue.

But there is such a thing as justice, whether our own personal guilt is touched or not. And if, as Fanon so passionately argued, anything necessary to win freedom for the oppressed colonial culture is to be done, then he should honestly accept that principle for the colonial oppression of women. Otherwise he should reconsider whether he himself as a male does not have a strong interest in and identification with being a colonial oppressor. Perhaps he should then consider what this means in terms of his philosophy of violence and terrorism for the "unredeemable" oppressor. Perhaps women too can achieve catharsis through terrorism against the colonial male culture. But does Fanon want that? Does any male "revolutionary" want that?

#### The Betrayal of Female Culture in the Anti-Imperialist Revolution

All of Fanon's emotional sympathy is wrapped up with the male Algerian wherever it is a question of two male cultures—European and Algerian—clashing over who will control the colonized status of the female Algerian. But a female has a

different view of things—that is, a female who can see through both the European and Algerian colonial male cultures.

A few years after Algeria won its independence, Fadela M'Rabet, an Algerian woman, wrote a book entitled *La Femme Algérienne* (published by Maspero). In it she charged that the women who fought in the Resistance were used in the Algerian nationalist revolution only to be returned to their former subservience after "independence" was gained. She said that not very many women participated in the struggle and their lives were never affected in any way. She compared the position of women in Algeria before and after the "revolution" to the position of black Africans in South Africa, and cites case after case of the oppression of women in "liberated" Algeria. She says:

In order to understand the situation of the woman (and her reactions) it is necessary to start with the man; if she submits or revolts, if she accepts her condition or does not, the Algerian woman has evolved in a world which is made by men, for men, and at his advantage only. The Constitution, without doubt, and the resolutions of the Congress proclaim the equality of all citizens; but the gap is such between the texts and the facts that all is as if the texts did not exist.

Socially the most honorable, the state of the married woman is, *in fact*, as degrading as that of the concubine. . . . The mother, the wife, there is for the Algerian man a third category of women—the sister. And if it is not very comfortable to be the mistress or the wife of an Algerian man, it is nearly a calamity to be his sister. . . . it is allowed to him to completely dominate her.

Let us listen to another Algerian woman concerning the "cultural symbol" of the Arab culture, the veil. Claudine, in an interview in a New York *Times* magazine article (October, 1967) after Algerian independence was won, said that she was lucky that her father allowed her to go to school and not wear the veil. Most Algerian girls get no schooling—even after the revolution—because, as Fadela M'Rabet has said, too much schooling for a girl is considered very dangerous by the male society. But the local Mufti intervened when Claudine was sixteen. By that time there were only two other girls in her class at the lycée, and twenty-five boys. The other girls went veiled. The Mufti insisted that Claudine do the same or quit school; her father would be banned from the Mosque if she refused. She says:

. . . so I had to agree. The Mufti still complained though. When I rode to school, he always stood watching for me, and I had to get down off my bicycle and kiss his hand on my way to and from school. It wasn't easy because in Constantine they don't use the nose veil. There is just a great big square you wrap all around you, covering everything except one eye. You have to hold it closed with your teeth and your hands. . . .

It is also interesting to note that Ben Bella in 1964—two years after independence—did not share Fanon's opinion that women's oppression was a fabrication of the French colonialists. Ben Bella said at this time:

There are in our country five million women who submit to a servitude unworthy of Socialist and Moslem Algeria. The liberation of the woman is not a secondary aspect which is to be put under our other objectives: it is a problem, the solution of which is a preliminary to the whole nature of socialism. [quoted in *La Femme Algérienne*]

But Fadela M'Rabet lays the blame for women's oppression on the Moslem tradition of male privilege in the home, separation of the sexes in



ours has been  
a true revolution  
of liberation—  
we got rid of  
the French  
chauvinist  
imperialist  
fascists . . .

school, and perpetuation of a racist notion that women are objects worthy only of disdain. She says, "If we really want to end our underdeveloped status, then let's not wait. Let's ban apartheid." She argues eloquently for a female revolution now.

Must we wait several generations under the pretext that our society is not "ready"? We [Algeria] are the product of 130 years of colonialism. But how many centuries of exploitation have women lived under: Their colonizers have been the men. [Emphasis added]

We use the example of Algeria only to show that a nationalist, anti-imperialist revolution does not free women because the dominant male culture is identified as the national culture and male supremacy is never attacked.

Women have always been used and abused in male revolutions because the male revolutionists are colonialist imperialists in relation to females. It is as if the Algerians fighting with the French in World War II expected the French to liberate Algeria. The French didn't want to be dominated by another country but they wanted to continue their own domination of Algeria. Males don't want to be dominated by other males or another male culture, but they have no intention of discontinuing their domination of the female culture.

No anti-capitalist, working-class, Third World, anti-imperialist etc. movement will ever free women. There is too much at stake for the male colonialists to ever give up their privileges without a struggle. And they control all of those movements as they control all the national cultures.

The female culture will continue to be betrayed by the ruling male culture and by male revolutionaries whose primary identification is with male culture.

The anti-imperialist movement as it is defined by males is a dead end for women. Males, as members of the dominant male culture in the Third World as well as in the imperialist countries, are equally concerned with maintaining male dominance though they may be in a death struggle between themselves.

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#### Oppressed Groups and the Feminine

There have been a great deal of comparisons of woman's position with the position of minority groups in feminist literature. Particularly, there have been comparisons between stereotypes of black people and women. Women are described as fitting the typical Negro stereotype and comparisons are made between black oppression and female oppression to prove that females are in fact an oppressed group.

But really the analogy should go the other way around. One should compare the stereotypes of blacks and other minority groups and suppressed cultures to the female stereotypes.

Woman was the first group to be oppressed and subordinated as a caste to another group—men. Without going into all the reasons for this subordi-

nation, we can still discuss the psychological and cultural results. A schizophrenic split developed when the dominating males projected onto women all of their emotions which they could not reconcile with their self-image and role as dominators, and which they were afraid of and would not allow themselves to be "weakened" by.

This schizophrenic split made female and male definitions into opposites. Generally, since males are defined as the human norm, females are defined as their subhuman negatives. Yin and Yang define the male and female stereotypes as opposites, with females getting the negative characteristics. Men are seen as "day," positive, forceful, aggressive, dominant, objective, strong, intellectual, etc. Women have been defined for thousands of years as weak, "night," passive, emotional, intuitive, mysterious, irresponsible, quarrelsome, childish, dependent, evil, submissive, etc.

(A study was done at Worcester State Hospital in Massachusetts using a sex-role questionnaire with over a hundred polar items, one pole being stereotypically male and the other stereotypically female. The subjects, a group of clinical professionals, assigned a mentally healthy adult and a mentally healthy male the same characteristics. But a mentally healthy female was seen as passive, emotional, dependent, less competitive, non-objective, submissive, and more easily influenced. —*Psychology Today*, September, 1970, p. 53.)

As females were the first colonized group and the first to be stereotyped as a caste, male culture, when it extended its boundaries and subjected other males or male cultures to its rule, defined them as inferior by assigning them female characteristics. Female characteristics were the only negative characteristics the male culture knew.

A male as a male in relation to females is defined by all the masculine stereotypes, but that same male in subjection to another male is defined as inferior through having female qualities. He is then "effeminate" or passive, or weak—all of which are female stereotypes. This idea can be extended to a culture. One male culture which dominates and controls another male culture defines the subservient males and their culture as feminine, i.e., all the female stereotypes become the minority stereotypes for the subjected males. They are defined, by being subservient, as mysterious, emotional, intuitive, personal, childlike, evil, irresponsible, quarrelsome, passive, dependent, etc. This holds for all subjected male national cultures and racial cultures.

But the female within the subjected male national or racial culture is defined twice as female. In other words, her definition as a female is her primary definition. For example a black woman is defined as a woman by all the female stereotypes—as passive, emotional, intuitive, personal, mysterious, quarrelsome, irresponsible, dependent, etc. The imposition of these stereotypes on her again in the form of racial stereotypes is unnecessary as they are basically the imposition of female stereotypes on the males of the race. And when the racial battle is won and her race is free, she will realize that the stereotypes—though they no longer oppress her man—are still her defining stereotypes as a woman. He now has his manhood back (defined as opposites of female stereotypes), but she continues to be defined by her womanhood as inferior.

The problem of male supremacy comes in again when national (male) and racial (male) cultures repudiate the female characterizations and stereotypes assigned to them in revolting against their male dominators. What happens is that they assert their manhood, i.e., male dominance stereotypes, against the female stereotypes which they have come to loathe as depriving them of virility and their "natural" "birthright" as dominators, i.e. males. They make a super-identification with the male culture in reaction to the female. They try to become tough super-males in reaction to the imposition of female stereotypes upon them. Then we have the "don't deprive me of my manhood, i.e. balls" and "stand behind me, woman, where you belong" syndrome. Often there is such a strong open reaction against the female culture that the females of the suppressed national or racial group are threatened and defined as castrating females if they don't become invisible and get where they belong—in the subservient female culture, into silence, and "prone" as Stokely Carmichael once said.

The males of the suppressed national or racial group never question the values of the male culture which impinges upon them and which they impose upon "their" women. They accept the right of a male to dominate but feel it should be limited to females and revolt to overthrow the dominant male culture's rule over them.

The problem is that the original split between the stereotypes of male and female which started this whole mess will never be resolved by the suppressed male national or racial culture, as the suppressed males are too busy trying to prove they

are super-males and that they don't have female characteristics in any way. They loathe the female principle as having defined them as inferiors—with its symbolic castration.

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### Up With the Female Principle

Only the suppressed female culture in all races, in all lands, can be proud of the female principle. For females need not prove their "manhood," as they can never be males or a part of the dominant male world culture. Therefore women will be forced, by the very fact of being female, to defend and raise the banner of the female principle.

All of the female culture traits are defined as negatives by the dominant world culture. We do not believe them to be so (except all those that keep us subservient, such as passivity, self-sacrifice, etc.).

We are proud of the female culture of emotion, intuition, love, personal relationships, etc., as the most essential human characteristics. It is our male colonizers—it is the male culture—who have defined essential humanity out of their identity and who are "culturally deprived."

We are also proud as females of our heritage of known and unknown resisters to male colonial domination and values.

We are proud of the female principle and will not deny it to gain our freedom.

It is only by asserting the long suppressed and ridiculed female principle that a truly human society will come about. For the split between the male and the female will only be bridged and a fully human identity developed—encompassing in each person all human characteristics which were previously split up into male and female—when the female principle and culture is no longer suppressed and male domination is ended forever.

We identify with all women of all races, classes, and countries all over the world. The female culture is the Fourth World.

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### Author's Postscript

The female culture and the male culture are not natural; they are artificial creations of a male-dominated world. The artificial split between what has been defined as female and what has been defined as male has nothing to do with the inherent nature or potential of females or males. The



definitions of the male principle and female principle and the female and male cultures are social definitions only. They are abstractions of a primal abstraction—the splitting up of the whole human personality into the caricatures known as male and female, masculine and feminine.

This "Manifesto" was never intended to be a glorification of the female principle and culture. It was never intended to imply that women have more "soul" than men or that women are inherently more human than men. It is simply a truth that there is a split between the female and male and that the female half of life has been suppressed by the male half of life. Those things which have been socially defined as female have been suppressed in males and suppressed in society through the oppression of females.

If one is born a male one is taught to repress one's "female" self and to develop only those things which will make one a true "man" and a part of the male culture. If one is born a female one is taught to repress that part of oneself which is "male" and to develop only those parts of the self which will make one a "true woman" and able to fit into the submissive female culture.

The extreme of the male culture has become a grotesque caricature of part of the potential inherent in every human being, whether female or male. Why are so many blind to the grotesqueness of the tough, hard, super-balls, insensitive, unemotional male image in John Wayne, James Bond, the Marines, etc.? Or so blind to the grotesqueness of the super-mind, intellect, reasoning, and abstraction removed from any connection with life in the "think tanks" of the Rand Corporation, the academy, the corporations, the Army Corps of Engineers, most scientific research, war games strategies, etc.?

The extreme of the female culture has also become a grotesque caricature of the potential inherent in every human being. Why are so many blind to the grotesqueness of the super-sex goddesses, the sex-object removed from mind and emotion, the motherhood myth, the pettily personal existence which is not allowed to transcend itself into the individual autonomous existence, the enforced delicacy without full feeling and intensity, the sentiment turned into bathos because removed from direct sexual or creative expression, etc.?

The abstractions of male and female are extreme and many people are not molded wholly into either category—there is a great deal of overlap. But no one in the society is allowed to be a

whole human being as long as the tyranny of the male and female culture or sex role split exists.

Recently there has been an unfortunate reaction among some women's liberationists and feminists. Some women have begun to call anything which they do not like "male." They seem to think that anything that has been defined as a "male quality" is inherently bad. A woman who is strong or takes initiative is told that she is "acting like a man" or "talking like a man." The crushing of initiative and strength and self-expression in women is now being done by other women in the movement under the guise of "anti-elitism," anti-"male-identification," and "collective self-suppression." It would be a tragedy of women were to make our oppressed state into a virtue and a model of humanity and the new society. We need to sift out what is good in our imposed definition as females and to honestly examine what is stupid and self-destructive. We need also to sift out what is good in what has been defined as male and therefore denied expression in us. We need no more glorification of the oppressed and their "super-soul" and "superior" culture, for that will blind us to our weaknesses and only lead us back into the same mire from which we have been trying to free ourselves.

Neither the male culture nor the female culture is a model for a human society.

It is true that women have no recourse other than to rise up in a strong feminist movement to end male domination. We must have our own independent women's movement free from male interference and domination. But we should not lose sight of our ultimate goals. There is a danger that the women's movement will help destroy its own ends if the split between the female and male is made into a new feminist orthodoxy. The women's movement has to be free enough to explore and change the entire range of human relationships and it must be open enough to heal the split between the female and male and draw out the total human potential of every person. If we want to be free as female human beings, we must really be willing to end the split of the human personality that has cut men off from a part of themselves and which has caused untold suffering to women.

"If men could get pregnant  
abortion would be a sacrament."

Florynce Kennedy

# 5. THE ARTS

## The Independent Female (or, A Man Has His Pride)

by JOAN HOLDEN

The San Francisco Mime Troupe is a self-supporting collectively run theater company whose aim is to make art serve the people. *The Independent Female* was the Troupe's first production to be written, directed, and designed by women. In the course of working on it, the company eliminated the position of secretary (but not the woman who had held it) and instituted women's and men's meetings. The play was performed free in Bay Area parks throughout the summer of 1970, toured the midwest and southern California in winter 1970-71, and will tour the southeast in fall 1971.

MATILDA PENNYBANK, 53, mother of two  
GLORIA, 22, her daughter, engaged to John  
JOHN HEARTRIGHT, 27, junior executive  
SARAH BULLITT, 25, feminist  
WALTER PENNYBANK, 58, president of the  
Chamber of Commerce, Matilda's former husband,  
long-lost father of Gloria  
THE BARKER

with us this evening, as it is in their interest—  
above all—to be reminded that:

In perfect trust, and mutual fondness twine  
The mighty oak tree, and the clinging vine.

(Music)

### Act I

The Pennybank Home  
Scene i: Mom, Gloria

#### Introduction

BARKER: Ladies and gentlemen. The San Francisco Mime Troupe proudly welcomes you to this evening's performance of *The Independent Female, or, A Man Has His Pride*. We humbly introduce you to the characters and the themes of this tender but passionate drama. Our heroine (characters enter as they are introduced)—the beautiful, innocent, but impressionable *Gloria*. Will this fragile creature be led down the road to ruin, and parted forever from the manly, promising, and courageous *John*? Or will our hero save her in time? Will this young couple know the bliss that *Gloria's Mom*—to her eternal regret—willfully denied to herself and her patient, long-suffering *Walter*? Will this honest capitalist be reunited with the daughter he has never known? Or will the mad lust for power and the devilish plotting of the unspeakable *Sarah Bullitt* push everyone—even the city of San Francisco—over the brink of destruction? We hope all present find our story instructive, and are especially pleased that so many of the fair sex could be

MOM (enters): Today must be the happiest day of my life—except the day *Walter* asked me to marry him—and the day little *Walter* graduated from college. My daughter *Gloria* just got engaged—and this engagement is extra special. *Gloria* sometimes acts a bit . . . independent; I often feared she might not have a future. But now it's all settled—and old *Mom* hasn't lived in vain! (*Gloria enters*) Darling—do you want the bridesmaids in aqua or salmon?

GLORIA: There may be no bridesmaids (sobs)—we just had our first fight!

MOM: Today? (*Aside*): A bad sign. (*Aloud*): But why?

GLORIA: John doesn't want me to work.

MOM: The sweetheart! But what did you fight about?

GLORIA: I like working.

MOM: Gloria! What are you getting married for?

GLORIA: Because John is the most wonderful man in the world—deeply intelligent—and serious,



Photos: Gerhard E. Gscheidle



Photos: Gerhard E. Gschelde

and commanding, and tall. But Mom, must a woman devote all her time to her marriage?

MOM: What else could she do? Oh, this might never have happened, had tragedy not obliged you to support us . . .

GLORIA: But Mom . . .

MOM: I know. I know who keeps putting these wild ideas in your head—it's that ugly Sarah Bullitt—that career woman you've grown so fond of! She knows she'll never find a husband, so she can't bear to see you happy with a young prince like John!

GLORIA: Well, at least Sarah's nice to me! And John was so mean! Oh, Mommy—he yelled at me! He called me a . . .

MOM: Don't cry, dear—you'll get used to it. You see, darling, there is one thing education and modern home appliances and the pill can't change, and that's the basic difference between a man and a woman. A man has his pride. We may not be slaves in our homes any longer, but our main job is still to help our man feel strong.

GLORIA: Is that what you did with Dad?

MOM: I failed as a woman. And I don't want to see you make the same mistake, Gloria! You children didn't know this, but—I used to criticize Walter.

GLORIA: You don't think he just left because you got old?

MOM: No, darling—he had to leave, because I threatened him. Don't suffer as I have! Tell John you've decided to give up your job. Be a woman, darling, before it's too late! Oh, my shame! (Exit)

GLORIA: Poor Mom! Can I be headed down the same road? And is it true what she said about Sarah? Oh, I mustn't be so headstrong and selfish—I love John, and I want us to be happy—but this crazy independence (*karate movements*)—sometimes it's stronger than I am!

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Scene ii: Gloria, John

(John enters and she hits him inadvertently)

JOHN: Do you still think I don't make enough money?

GLORIA: I never said \$50 wasn't enough! But my salary would help—but it's not just the money.

JOHN: I told you I would give you an allowance. Am I not enough for you, Gloria?

GLORIA: Darling, you're everything! But what about the job?

JOHN: What about it?

GLORIA: Mr. Peabody says he doesn't know how they'll replace me. He's sweet—do you know what he said about our engagement? "I hope this doesn't mean you'll be breaking up the team."

JOHN: Gloria. Once upon a time, not so long ago, man roamed the woods, hunting food, while woman stayed home and tended the fire. On the surface, things have changed since; but in his heart, man is still a hunter—at least I am; and I still want a woman in my cave!

GLORIA: Oh, John!

JOHN: I thought you were a real woman, Gloria—that's why I chose you for my wife. If you want a career, I won't stand in your way—but I want a wife, not a business partner. Goodbye.

GLORIA: No!

JOHN: A man has his pride.

GLORIA (*aside*): Mom was right! (To John): Wait, John—I'll do it—I'll quit! I'm going to make being your wife my full-time job!

JOHN: Little girl!

GLORIA: Forgive me, darling—I want us to have a good marriage—it's just that I've got the—independence habit. (*Hits him again*)

JOHN: I'll help you get over it. Lean on me, Gloria—I'm going to treat you the way my Dad said every woman ought to be treated—like the most precious thing a man owns!

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Scene iii: Gloria, John, Sarah, Mom

SARAH (*enters*) (*Aside*): Beauty—and the beast! (*Aloud*): Am I intruding? (*Mom peers around curtain, sees Sarah*)

JOHN (*aside*): Sarah Bullitt—the company malcontent! I fear her ill influence on Gloria!

GLORIA: Sarah! We're going to be married!

SARAH: This is quite a surprise.

JOHN: Miss Bullitt has some news of her own, I believe.



SARAH: I've been fired. *(She's happy. Mom checks and finds Sarah still there)*

JOHN: Terminated, I understand, for insubordination.

SARAH: I said if they refused to promote me, I'd have to put a hex on the company.

GLORIA: It seems so unfair. Why, Sarah was the best accountant the company had! And the cheapest. Don't feel too bad, dear—I guess a woman can't win. And you won't be all alone—I've decided to quit!

SARAH *(aside)*: Disaster—for her life and our plot! *(Aloud)*: Only last week you said you'd never been so happy at work.

GLORIA: I know, but John would prefer I stayed home.

SARAH: So you're signing over your independence.

JOHN: You girls were made for the lighter work—washing, cooking, raising children.

SARAH: And you for the heavy stuff eight hours a day. Why, men are so strong, they get paid for work we do; promoted for ideas we have; they get their names on books we write.

JOHN: This bitterness is what makes your life difficult. If men have privileges—it's because we've earned them. After all, *males* are responsible for every major achievement of our civilization.

SARAH: War, waste, competition, pollution, inflation . . .

GLORIA: What have we done?

JOHN: Take Gloria, forever prattling about the way things should be; she needs me to stand between herself and reality. Why aren't you girls content to be what we need? Competent secretaries . . . thrifty housewives . . .

SARAH *(To Gloria)*: What did you want to be?

GLORIA: A forest ranger.

JOHN: Ha, ha, ha.

GLORIA: What's so funny?

MOM *(enters)*: Why, Miss Bullitt. What a surprise!

SARAH *(aside)*: Uncle Mom!

MOM: A lovely dress—I believe I admired it at the Polish Emporium.

SARAH: Yes, didn't I see you there with Lawrence Welk?

MOM: Well . . . three's a crowd, don't you all think? So John, you'll let Gloria help her Mom with the tea?

JOHN: It's my pleasure.

MOM: Come, dear. *(To Sarah)*: I'm sorry you have to run off!

*(Gloria and Mom exit)*

JOHN: You're wasting your time trying to convert Gloria, Miss Bullitt. She's a normal girl.

SARAH: Anyone can see she's going to be very happy.

JOHN: She will be if I can help it! But this must be painful for you—I doubt there can be any happiness for a woman who wishes she were a man.

SARAH: I doubt it myself—after all, what sort of woman *would* wish to be oversized and underdeveloped—a vain, childish, life-hating under-sexed clod? It's true that some women want justice!

GLORIA: Darling—lemon or cream?

JOHN: My hat! The only justice a woman needs is a man to shut her mouth. *(Grabs Gloria and kisses her)* I'll call when you have time to see me. *(To Sarah)*: Do you know what the trouble with you is? You're frustrated. *(Exit)*

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#### Scene iv: Gloria, Sarah

GLORIA: How can I hate the man I love?

SARAH: How can you marry that swine?

GLORIA: We're engaged! And you can just save your breath—I've accepted my role as a woman.

SARAH: To gratify, amuse, cushion, flatter, and serve.

GLORIA: We should let men be boss, since it means so much more to them.

SARAH: To be seen as a piece of meat by every man who walks by?

GLORIA: That's the price we pay for being attractive.

SARAH: You're preparing to spend your days as personal property. You'll end up with no life.

GLORIA: What's the choice—to end up lost—the way you are?

SARAH: You could have a choice—if women demanded their rights.

GLORIA: What rights?

SARAH: All the ones men have—plus a few of our own. What do you think would happen if all the women in our office went on strike?

GLORIA: Oh, Sarah—don't be silly; a strike in the office? That's impossible—they don't even know how to type! I mean the machines—the correspondence—the phones—well, I just can't imagine, why, the whole thing would stop!

SARAH: Divine vision—and women would be fighting back. You've got to take my place—bring every woman at Amalgamated out on strike for equal work *with* men, equal work *by* men, equal pay for equal work . . .

GLORIA: Equal pay? But wouldn't that be wrong? Are you sure the company can afford it?

SARAH: Are you kidding? They own Argentina!

GLORIA: I could talk to the other girls—there's 100 of us in the department—then 200 downstairs—then the whole seventh floor—golly, there must be 500 women in the company!

SARAH: How many men?

GLORIA: Maybe 50 . . . Let's do it!

SARAH: Don't you think you'd better ask John?

GLORIA: Oh, I don't have to—he's bound to find out—what mad passion stirs in me?

SARAH: The righteous rage of female rebellion!  
(*Exeunt*)

## Act II

### Scene i: Outside the Office — Sarah and Gloria

SARAH (*Enters*): "In education, in marriage, in everything, disappointment is the lot of woman. It shall be the business of my life to deepen this disappointment in every woman's heart till she bows down to it no longer."—Lucy Stone, 1855. Lucy was a revolutionary history has made anonymous. In history, the slaves never rebelled, the Indians died of shame, and all women ever wanted was the vote. But black resistance is as old as slavery and there have been women fighting in this country since men first established it; and what

now is smoldering between the lines will soon break out and cover the page. Our work proceeds swiftly—in a week Gloria had every woman in her office on fire—in two weeks the fever was sweeping the city. Today any laundromat may harbor an agitator—every steno pool may be a dangerous cell. (*Gloria music*) But Gloria still wants her freedom and her fiancé—at any moment that balancing act could topple our plans. (*More Gloria music*)

GLORIA (*enters*): Equal power!

SARAH: Smash men! Let's hear your report.

GLORIA: Here's how the different departments line up. Accounting and billing are eager to move. Marketing only needs one more push to get started. The cafeteria girls are with us to a man. (*Pauses*) But I'm having a little trouble in—Personnel.

SARAH: Personnel? But that's your own department!

GLORIA: And—John's.

SARAH (*aside*): Gadzooks—just what I feared!  
(*Aloud*): He knows nothing?

GLORIA: Nothing—he still thinks I'm planning to quit; he thinks—oh, this makes me feel awful—he thinks we're planning a surprise for his birthday!

SARAH: He'll be surprised all right. Just how convincing do you think you can be, freeing other women from your own husband?

GLORIA: But what about love? To serve our cause can't mean I mustn't love John!

SARAH: That's not love—that's penal servitude. If you want your independence you'll have to sacrifice your chains. Very soon now you'll have to make a choice.

GLORIA: No! I'll tell John everything! I'll make him understand!

SARAH: Tell him—but not until after tonight.

GLORIA: Our first open all-women's meeting.

SARAH: Seize the time—this very night we will call for a strike.

GLORIA: Strike!

SARAH: And it won't end at Amalgamated Corporate Life: Business in San Francisco will grind to a halt—and it won't start up again until we change everything!

GLORIA: *Everything?*

SARAH: "We've tried peaceful education for 1900 years—now let's try revolution and see what it can do."—Helen Keller, 1916. Call in sick and go to work on your speech. And remember—at all costs our plans must be secret.

GLORIA: At all costs . . . *(Music)*

SARAH: Hairy race of tyrants—your doom is nigh! *(Music)*

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Scene ii: The Pennybank Home — Mom and John

MOM *(offstage)*: Coming! Another paper! What can Gloria be up to? The way she banged in and out of here . . . *(Another knock)* Come in! *(John enters)* Why, John!

JOHN: Good afternoon, Mrs. Pennybank. Is Gloria in? *(He is feigning calm)*

MOM *(feigns surprise)*: Ah, no! Shouldn't she be at work?

JOHN: She telephoned and said she was sick.

MOM: There must be some mistake. Why, I just can't imagine—

JOHN: Well, I can! Gloria's been acting very strange lately. She avoids me in the office. She's always whispering with the other girls. Today she—missed my birthday. Her mind's not on me. There's only one explanation. Mrs. Pennybank, *who is the other man?*

MOM: No . . .

JOHN: Your attempt to protect Gloria is short-sighted. Don't you see that her interest lies in my knowing everything?

MOM: Gloria doesn't confide in her Mom anymore! I admit she's preoccupied—seems driven, sometimes; makes phone calls at all hours; comes and goes without warning . . .

JOHN: That's enough—farewell, Mrs. Pennybank. *(Going)*

MOM: Wait—perhaps there's another explanation! *(She stretches out her hands and John sees the paper)*

JOHN: What's that? It's in Gloria's hand!

MOM: Oh, yes—she dropped this just now.

JOHN *(grabs it, reads)*: "Are women human?"

Adored and ignored—last hired and first fired." *(Looks accusingly at Mrs. P.)*

MOM: I don't understand.

JOHN: I'm afraid I'm beginning to. "When will women break the chains of slavery and assume their rightful place beside men in the life of the world?"

MOM: It doesn't sound like a love letter.

JOHN: It's much worse. Have you heard of "Women's Liberation," Mrs. Pennybank?

MOM: You mean "menstruation."

JOHN: Liberation.

MOM: Menstruation.

JOHN: Liberation.

MOM: Menstruation. I've heard of it.

JOHN: "Liberation" is the high-sounding term with which a clique of unwomanly, power-mad females masks its plot to destroy the family and enslave the male sex.

MOM: Gloria's a good girl! *(Mom kicks John and John gets hat)*

JOHN: I know it *(returns hat)*—but one gone far astray.

MOM: I know who's at the bottom of this—it's Sarah Bullitt!

JOHN: Good thinking *(receives hat)*—there's no villainy of which she's incapable! Here's another line—"We meet here tonight"—sounds. This makes it sound like a speech! Poor deluded Gloria is serving them as a carrier of the disease!

MOM: We must stop her.

JOHN: I mean to stop her—and when I bring her back she'll need your constant attention. *(Kisses her hand)* *(Going)*: Permit me to say, Mrs. Pennybank—this is what can happen when female "independence" is not nipped in the bud! *(Exit)*

MOM: Oh, I've failed again! Failed as a mother! *(Exit)*

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Scene iii: Back at the Office ("Ladies Lounge") —  
John, Gloria, Sarah

*(Enter Sarah and Gloria)*

SARAH: At last the stage is set for our all-female

revolution! It's taken only 10,000 years. Now to reach the meeting hall without being seen.

GLORIA: What we're about to do sets me tingling all over—my heavens, in a single month, how I have changed!

JOHN (*enters without being seen*): Something's afoot—(*Sees them*): Aha!

SARAH: Remember—no one must see us.

JOHN: Feeling better, Gloria?

GLORIA: No, I feel worse.

SARAH (*aside*): Meddling lout!

JOHN: You needn't sneak and lie anymore—I know all.

GLORIA: All? You know about the—

SARAH: Let him tell us what he knows.

JOHN: I know what a fool I was to allow you near Gloria—know what poison you've administered to her innocent mind—how you've provoked her to dissatisfaction; intoxicated her with insane ambition; hypnotized her into stirring up discontent!

SARAH (*To Gloria*): We're safe—he doesn't know about the strike!

JOHN: Thank God this is not going to go any further. (*Seizes Gloria*) Listen, darling—it's all a lie! It's a plot against our happiness! Don't you want children?

GLORIA: Oh John—happy birthday.

SARAH (*takes Gloria's arm*): Yes, happy returns—now you'll have to excuse us.

JOHN: Don't touch her!

SARAH: Gloria's not your property yet!

JOHN: Be very careful. There are laws to take care of people like you—new ones every day!

SARAH: "We are not bound to obey laws in which we have no representation."—Abigail Adams, 1776.

JOHN: Darling, forget this woman—let me take you home now!

GLORIA: I can't—tomorrow I'll explain!

JOHN: Tomorrow! Do you think I could live through the night?

GLORIA: Please, John—what I'm doing is for us! It's for all men and women!

JOHN: Gloria, the male spirit shrivels when deprived of the confidence, the trust, of the female. I tell you this thing is wrong—you scoff at my words! Of course, you can't know how you're hurting me—but I'll have to break off our engagement.

GLORIA: No!

JOHN: Then come home with me now!

GLORIA: Oh!

SARAH: Gloria!

JOHN: My darling, my angel, my sweet—is this the end, or only the beginning?

GLORIA: It's—the beginning.

SARAH: And the end of your independence! (*Gloria is seized with a terrible fit*)

JOHN: My God! It can't be hopeless!

SARAH: Precisely—it's hopeless for you! Women will soon be moving as one, and man will either move over—or go under, and learn for yourselves what it is to be kept for pleasure and breeding. (*Exit, helping Gloria*)

JOHN: Hideous affliction! But if it's too late to save Gloria, what must I do to spare others the same fate?

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Scene iv: Mom and the Above

MOM (*enters*): John!

JOHN: Mrs. Pennybank! You—here!

MOM: I've found another paper! (*Hands it to him*)

JOHN: "Strike meeting, 8 o'clock." Strike meeting—oh no! What hellish vision rises before me?

MOM: It's ten to eight now!

JOHN: After you—we haven't a moment to lose!

(*Exeunt. Chase scene*)

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Scene v: A Hall in San Francisco

SARAH: Welcome to our first all-women's meeting. I'm glad to see so many of you here. And now I'd like to introduce our speaker, our sister from Amalgamated Corporate Life—Gloria Pennybank.

GLORIA: My sisters! We're here to decide whether women are human. Men struggle to make themselves more than they are—women struggle to make themselves less. Masculinity is a cloak to cover up men's faults, and femininity is a drug to make slaves out of women. And when I say we're slaves, I'm not just talking about the housewife who works a sixteen-hour day for what she can beg from her husband. I'm talking about every woman who assumes she's worth less than a man—and we all know that's every woman here, regardless of how she's paid, or how many token privileges separate her from her sisters.

SARAH: Women aren't the only slaves in this country—a few men own all the others. But all men oppress women—even modern husbands who are happy to let their wives work, so long as they do the housework at night—even you hip ones who don't insist your old ladies be faithful so long as they take care of the kids—and how many women know the simple facts of our plain economic oppression? Our average wage is 50 percent of men's. Our relative salaries have been steadily *declining* for the past twenty years!

GLORIA: They tell us to get an education—a woman with a college degree earns less than the average male high school dropout! The only group that earns less than white women is women who aren't white. So white women, it's time we joined with our Third World sisters in the struggle to make us all free.

SARAH: A world where women are really equal would be a world with nobody on the bottom—because our egos don't die if we're not on the top! But men aren't going to give us equality—*(enter John and Mom)*—so it's up to us—we've got to show the men that drive this machine where the power is that runs it!

JOHN: Gloria!

GLORIA: That means—Strike!

SARAH: That means women say no! Stop typing, stop filing, stop taking orders, stop serving, stop spending—start moving—until we have a new society where no one needs to be dependent on one, because all are equally dependent on all!

GLORIA: Free our sisters!

SARAH: Free ourselves!

TOGETHER: Free our sisters! Free ourselves!  
*(They exit)*

JOHN: My worst nightmare come true...

MOM: Shri!l voices! Raised fists! Anger is so unbecoming! For the first time in my life I'm ashamed of my sex. What would Gloria's father say if he knew about this...

### Act III

Two Weeks Later —

Office of the Chamber of Commerce

Scene I: Walter, John

*(Walter enters, distraught. Steady chant of "Strike, strike, strike" is heard)*

WALTER: My fellow Americans. At this moment we face a serious challenge to our free, competitive way of life. Management has three choices of how to respond. One, we could do nothing, and be destroyed. Management has rejected this option. Two, we could unleash all the mighty forces at our disposal, and destroy everybody, including ourselves. We choose not to exercise that power at this time. Three, we can do exactly what I intend to do. Let me make one thing perfectly clear. In this crisis, management will not behave like a pitiful, helpless giant. We will behave like a merciless, cunning giant, and God help the underdog. *(Doorbell rings)* Aha! *(Calls)* Miss Jones! *(Bell rings again)* Miss Jones! *(Again)* Miss J—humbug! I keep forgetting. Come in!

*(Enter John, totally disheveled. Walter sniffs at a bad smell)*

JOHN: Forgive my appearance, sir. I had to come through the sewers.

WALTER: Take off the coat, Beefheart!

JOHN: Er—it's Cartfart, sir.

WALTER: *Cartfart?*

JOHN: Er—Heartfart! No—Heartright! That's it.

WALTER: What do you want?

JOHN: But sir—you sent for me.

WALTER: Right. Well, Heartcart, do you know why we sent for you?

JOHN: Something to do with the... strike?

WALTER: They've got 100,000 women on strike!



It's cost this city ten million dollars so far. And their demands: free abortions, free telephones, free transportation, free child care—why, next it'll be free Bobby and Ericka! Equal work of course is out of the question. You can't put men in those jobs.

JOHN: Men wouldn't take them! This can't mean you're going to give in?

WALTER: Not completely—after all, we still own everything. *(To Audience):* And what are you going to do about it? But it does mean we can't get around equal pay. We'll have to cut men's salaries.

JOHN: You couldn't cut—profit?

WALTER: You mean capital expansion? Are you suggesting we castrate the American eagle?

JOHN: I'm sorry, sir—I wasn't thinking.

WALTER: You'd better start thinking, my boy—their bargaining committee will be here any minute. Are you ready to hear about Operation Prostate?

JOHN: Yes, sir. *(Walter whispers in his ear)* You can't be serious.

WALTER: Dead serious, my boy—listen. *(Whispers)*

JOHN: I couldn't!

WALTER: You couldn't? Young man, at this moment the white man's burden is between your legs. Money. Money that could have been spent on poverty programs. Money that could have cleaned our polluted environment. Money that now is rotting in the banks—we can't move it! For the first time in my life, I can't make anything happen!

JOHN: But sir—before you go any further, there's one thing I must tell you: as Gloria's former fiancé, my first loyalty—

WALTER: Money that could have doubled the salary of every man in this city!

JOHN: —is to the American way of life. Tell me what I must do.

WALTER: Be square, my boy, and obey the law of the pack. *(Doorbell rings)* Hark—the enemy's trumpet! Let's step into my inner office. *(Exeunt)*

Scene ii: Sarah, Gloria, Walter, John

*(Music. Sarah and Gloria enter. Walter steps out)*

WALTER: Good morning. Are you girls looking

for work?

GLORIA: Equal work!

WALTER: So this is the bargaining committee. *(He bows. They hold out their hands, obliging him to shake hands)* It's a pleasure to meet two such dedicated ladies. *(To Gloria):* You look like a very dangerous adversary. *(Aside):* She would be, if we were alone!

SARAH: Spar: us your compliments—you know our demands.

WALTER: Yes: "free everything." I find them excessive. Management is prepared to make a very generous offer. *(Aside):* I wouldn't care to be alone with this one!

GLORIA: Pretty generous, giving us what we've won!

WALTER: Spunky—I like that. Our offer is prompted by concern for the families. *(Aside):* Where have I seen a face like that before?

SARAH *(To Gloria):* It seems your appeal has reached management.

GLORIA: Ugh—I hate older men!

WALTER: Who's tidying the home? Who is washing the clothes, who is taking care of Junior, while women are out parading in the streets? Management doesn't think any man should have to hold down two jobs, so it is acting fast to bring working women back to their posts.

GLORIA: We are waiting for your offer!

WALTER: I'm confident we can work out an agreement. But first meet the other half of management's team. *(He lifts curtain, revealing John with pistol to temple)*

GLORIA: Oh, no!

SARAH: Curses—foiled again by this idiot!

JOHN: Gloria, please renounce your demands.

GLORIA: What does this mean?

WALTER: It means that at least one American boy is not a curly-haired crybaby Communist!

SARAH: It means male supremacy is the pillar of capitalism.

JOHN: It means a man has his pride. I took a lot from you, Gloria. You challenged my masculine roles—I forgave you; you flaunted your disregard

for my will—I still loved you. Had you been content to attack me alone, God help me, you might have destroyed me; but when you threaten every red-blooded man in this country, when you would sap the very life-force of American business, that's when I come out fighting like a man. Either you sign this contract (*holds out paper*), or I blow my brains out.

SARAH: Tear it up. The gun's probably not loaded.

WALTER: Does she want to find out?

GLORIA (*reads*): "The San Francisco Women's Union hereby acknowledges its previous error in proclaiming the equality of the sexes. Henceforth our organization recognizes the superiority of the male. In addition its members agree to return to work at previous rates of pay." Why don't you shoot me?

JOHN: I couldn't.

GLORIA: But you're asking me to betray 100,000 women out there!

WALTER: What's 100,000 women against one brave man who loves you? By God, if there were still some lead in my pencil I'd do the same!

SARAH: Love—the tender trap to pacify women!

WALTER (*to John*): If you live I'll see you get a raise to start a good life with her.

JOHN (*to Gloria*): I couldn't look you in the face if I weren't man enough to do this.

GLORIA: The man I love—or everything I've worked for!

SARAH: Choose—your master or your independence. (*All look at Gloria*) Tear it up!

GLORIA: I can't—love is stronger. (*John lowers gun*)

WALTER: Thank God—just sign here.

SARAH: Not so fast! (*She has them covered with a .357 Magnum*) Now—tear it up. (*John starts to raise gun*) Drop that or I'll blow your hand off! (*He drops it. Walter tears paper*) Now, we're going to write a new statement—one that puts the workers at the head of every company in San Francisco: equal work, equal pay, and equal power.

WALTER (*clutches chest*): Ugh, my wallet—I think it's my heart . . .

SARAH: But first, we must arm our troops. Call the commander of the National Guard. Tell him you're sending 100,000 women over. Tell him they're strike-breakers—ha, ha, ha—and tell him you want them armed. Dare to win! Thus do we accomplish in minutes what I thought would take years to achieve.

GLORIA (*as in a daze*): "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun."

SARAH: Go on—call.

JOHN: You can't do it, sir—it will mean revolution!

WALTER: The woman is crazy—she'll kill us!

SARAH: "Where the broom does not reach, the dust will not vanish of itself."—Mao Tse-tung.

WALTER: "I don't understand these young people."—Pat Nixon.

SARAH: Make that call!

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#### Scene iii: Mom and the Above

(*Music*)

MOM (*offstage, calls*): Gloria!

GLORIA: Mom?

MOM (*enters*): I have something to say.

WALTER: *Matilda?* (*Looks at Gloria*)—oh, no!

MOM: Walter.

WALTER: Matilda.

MOM: Walter!

WALTER: Matilda!

MOM (*ferociously*): Walter—Walter—Walter!

WALTER: Aargh! (*Dies elaborately of a heart attack*)

(*Music*)

GLORIA: Dad?

MOM: I thought if you two knew each other, things might work out.

GLORIA: Now there's no one to sign anything!

SARAH (*who has turned her back in disgust*): Even death's a male chauvinist!

JOHN (*picking up his gun*): Truer than you think! (*He shoots her*)

GLORIA (*catching Sarah as she falls*): Sarah, darling! Say something!

SARAH: My last curse—their own works will destroy them. And my epitaph: "Shot in her back for refusing to live on it." (*Dies*)

JOHN: There's no fair play with pure evil.

MOM: I'm just glad it's all over. (*They move toward Gloria*)

GLORIA (*grabs Sarah's gun*): Don't you come near me!

MOM: She's very upset.

JOHN: Darling! Don't you love me?

GLORIA: I love my sisters! And my brothers, if I meet any. I'm going out to find everyone who wants to turn your prison homes, and your frozen

minds, and your whole profit, progress, power monster male system over. And we will turn it over. And when we all have our independence, then we can all have our pride. (*Exit and return*): Coming, Mom?

(*Mom looks at men, then at Gloria, and exits with upraised fist. Freeze at curtain. Finale music*)

BARKER (*enters*): Will headstrong youth's impetuous course be halted? (*Indicates Gloria*). Milks response from audience) Will manhood recover its pride? (*Indicates John*) Will responsible leadership withstand this assault? (*Walter gets up. If answer is no, falls down again*) Or does the implacable rebellious spirit of independent females portend this society's ultimate collapse? Young ladies and gentlemen, the future lies in your hands.

(*All bow*)

## Women's Private Writings: Anais Nin

by ANN SNITOW

Ann Snitow has been active in New York Radical Feminists and the Abortion Project, and has done feminist reviews for WBAI's radio program *Womankind*.

The following article is a radio talk, one of a series by Ann Snitow on women's diaries and letters to be heard on Nanette Rainone's *Womankind* program, WBAI-FM, and reproduced with her permission.

When I began this radio series on women's diaries and letters I had several goals. The first was to show how much women have written, and how well. The second was to show how hampered they have been by the necessity to think of their writing as largely a left-handed or private matter, not destined to be read by a large audience. However, out of this privacy came new subject matter and new forms. My third goal, then, was to explore what was unique about women's private writing which can and will become a part of the growth of our literature as a whole.

Until recently woman's subject matter has been a synonym for the trivial: Women are repetitive; women are subjective; women are gossips. All these qualities have a hard name in our culture. Women are frequently reminded of their ignorance of the world and their limitations are constantly being thrown in their faces. But the confined life most women have led is a historical fact, not an aesthetic judgment. Depth of experience is possible anywhere. Women do need a larger world, but the lack of one has not always doomed them to the inconsequence of which they are so often accused. Women are not without a subject matter; they are without respect for their subject matter. Nevertheless, the limitations placed on women have been, and continue to be, crippling. We, and our subject matter, must change.

Finally, my goal for the series has been to say

to women that our writing in diaries or in letters is serious and potentially a public form, and to stimulate all women to write in this way. When you have written something in a diary, it becomes permanent, like any form of art, while your life begins instantly to diverge from what it was at the moment of writing. Having a record of an earlier state of mind is both a satisfaction in itself, and a gesture toward the future. The desire to make such a record is at the source of all writing.

If you are keeping a diary or spend energy writing long letters to friends, please write to *Womankind* about your experience. Maybe other women will be moved by something you say to start writing themselves. Write to: DIARY, c/o *Womankind*, 359 East 62nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10021.

\* \* \*

Anaïs Nin began her diary when she was thirteen and there are now about 150 volumes of it stored in bank vaults. The small portion of this vast work available in print has become a kind of cult book for the feminist movement and I've been asking myself why this should be.

It's puzzling at first, because it's fairly plain Anaïs Nin isn't a conscious feminist as we understand the term now. For example, her closest friend in Paris in the Thirties was Henry Miller, who took incredible advantage of her energy and devotion. June Miller, his wife, Anaïs turns into a myth-like image of woman in the diary, and Anaïs's psychiatrist—Freud's famous disciple, Otto Rank—often gave her the kind of advice that would be intolerable to a feminist today. For example, he once told her that when neurotic men get cured, they become artists; when neurotic women get cured, they become—Woman.

It seems that then as now, psychiatrists were particularly bad offenders against women, and Anaïs Nin seems to be unaware of their treachery. Here, for example, is an exchange between her and the psychiatrist she went to before finding Otto Rank:

Anaïs: I am analyzing what you said, and I do not agree with your interpretations.

Dr. Allendy: You are doing my work, you are trying to be the analyst, to identify with me. Have you ever wished to surpass men in their own work, to have more success?

Anaïs: Indeed not. I protected and sacrificed much for my brother's musical career, made it possible. I am now helping Henry [Miller] and giving him all I can, to do his own work. I gave Henry my typewriter. There I think you are very wrong.

Dr. Allendy: Perhaps you are one of those women who are a friend, not an enemy of man.

Anaïs: More than that, I wanted to be married to an artist rather than be one, to collaborate with him.

The lack of feminist consciousness in the passage is staggering, especially when in a later episode Anaïs mentions quite casually that Henry Miller took that precious typewriter she gave him and pawned it to buy drinks. But this is the painful truth of her diary. After all, she doesn't care about a mere typewriter. She is forgiving and compassionate about Henry Miller's weaknesses, his limitations. She loves him, is inspired by him, learns from him, and teaches him, and she is the one who can tell us the things that are wrong with him, and with herself, living through him. The portrait of Henry Miller in these pages is devastating, and every stroke of it laid on with love.

Anaïs Nin was the mediator between Miller and his wife June. With a confused kind of bisexuality she adored them both and understood them both. Henry was the artist, selfish but full of life. June was the model, unsure of her own existence, a victim of Henry's portrait of her in his books. Anaïs was the androgynous go-between who wanted to play the man to June, and play the male companion, the fellow artist, to Henry.

The diary explores this painful kind of bisexuality—so unlike the kind feminists dream of—in which, to create, you must in some way become a man, but to live in a human way, you must support men, give them your typewriter, and sacrifice those things in you the world calls masculine.

This is the great conflict of the diary. On the one hand, Anaïs Nin wants to be, in her psychiatrist's dreadful phrase, "A friend, not an enemy of man." On the other hand, she wants to live.

It is interesting that in her novels she tries to be true to Art, which to her, and to all her psychiatrists, is primarily a male principle. These novels are abstract, poetic, and literally disembodied. We began this series on women's private writings partly to raise the question, "Why do women crave anonymity so much that they can only write if they think no one, or almost no one, will ever see what they have said?" Why is it that Anaïs Nin's diary is full-blooded and complete while what she calls her Art is pale, fragmented, over-conscious? Henry Miller was always nagging Anaïs Nin with a related question: "Why," he kept asking her, "do women lie?"

There are all kinds of answers in the diary:

I only regret that everyone wants to deprive me of the journal, which is the only steadfast friend I have, the only

one which makes my life bearable; because my happiness with human beings is so precarious, my confiding mood rare, and the least sign of non-interest is enough to silence me. In the journal I am at ease.

Playing so many roles, dutiful daughter, devoted sister, mistress, protector, my father's new found illusion, Henry's needed, all-purpose friend, I had to find one place of truth, one dialogue without falsity. This is the role of the diary.

So the diary is the place where a woman can speak the truth without hurting all those people she is supposed to protect and support. Women can't tell all, like Portnoy, since so much of what they feel would damn them in men's eyes. They are too dependent on men to be able to afford this luxury of self-revelation.

Here is the diary again:

Dear diary, you have hampered me as an artist. But at the same time you have kept me alive as a human being. I created you because I needed a friend, and talking to this friend, I have, perhaps, wasted my life.

Today I begin to work. Writing for a hostile world discouraged me. Writing for you gave me the illusion of a warm ambience I needed to flower in. But I must divorce you from my work. Not abandon you. No, I need your companionship . . .

Never have I seen as clearly as tonight that my diary writing is a vice. I came home worn out by magnificent talks with Henry at the cafe; I glided into my bedroom, closed the curtains, threw a log into the fire, lit a cigarette, pulled the diary out of its last hiding place under my dressing table, threw it on the ivory silk quilt, and prepared for bed. I had the feeling that this is the way an opium smoker prepares for his opium pipe. For this is the moment when I *relive my life in terms of a dream, a myth, an endless story.*

This should perhaps prompt us to examine the opium content of our own private writings. To what extent are we cutting ourselves off, both from danger and each other? Certainly we need new forms of writing—women's forms—and a diary like this one offers another whole way of working and of thinking about our daily lives. But this private, complex, flowing kind of writing must be published, as only an inadequate portion of Anaïs Nin's diary has been thus far. Her friends and relatives are evidently resisting publication of certain parts of the diary. Out of deference to them, Ana-

is Nin cuts herself off from the response of an audience.

People kept trying to get Anaïs Nin to stop writing the diary.

Is Henry right? He does not want me to write a diary any more. He thinks it is a malady, an outgrowth of loneliness. I don't know. It has also become the notebook of my extroversion, a travel sketchbook: it is full of others. It has changed its aspect. I cannot abandon it, definitely. Henry says: "Lock up the journal, and swim! What I would like you to do is to live without the journal, and you would write other things."

I would feel like a snail without its shell. Everyone has always stood in the way of the journal. My mother always urged me to go out and play. My brothers teased me, stole it, and made fun of it. It was a secret from my girl friends in school. Everyone said I would outgrow it. In Havana my aunt said it would spoil my eyes, frighten the boys away.

Otto Rank wanted her to give up the diary, too. "The diary is your last defense against analysis," he told her. "It is like a traffic island you want to stand on. If I am going to help you, I do not want you to have a traffic island from which you will survey the analysis, keep control of it. I do not want you to analyze the analysis. Do you understand?" For a time during the analysis, Anaïs Nin gave up the diary opium habit. Otto Rank comforted her during her withdrawal symptoms by saying, "Perhaps you may discover now what you want—to be a woman or an artist."

It is our good fortune Anaïs Nin never had the strength to make this absurd choice. Her strength lies elsewhere, in the diary itself. It was her traffic island, from which she judged them all.

In the diary she ceases to be a mirror for other people like Miller and Rank, and tries to become herself. But this is a terrible struggle. "... No one has ever loved an adventurous woman as they have loved adventurous men." So annihilating is this difference that the very images by which she expresses it are, of necessity, male:

This struggle to live by my own truth is so difficult, so wearing. A terrible algebra, always. I am like the adventurer who leaves all those he loves, and returns with his arms full of gold; and then they are happy and they forget how they tried to keep this adventurer from exploring, from his voyage and his search.

## CARNAL KNOWLEDGE

In a recent interview Jules Feiffer referred to some dialogue in an early draft of the script of his movie, "Carnal Knowledge," that "... I cut out because it seemed too on the nose and because I'd rather have audiences figure it out for themselves . . . Jonathan says to a young woman, 'Remember when you were a kid and the boys didn't like the girls? Only sissies liked girls? What I'm trying to tell you is that nothing's changed. You think boys grow out of not liking girls, but we don't grow out of it. We just grow horny.'"



# Women Writers and the Female Experience

by ELAINE SHOWALTER

Elaine Showalter has been active in women's liberation for three years. At the first Congress to Unite Women in New York, she met two academic women working on women's studies and discrimination; they encouraged each other to get women's studies going in several universities. Since then she has taught courses in women's studies at Douglass College and done research on women writers. Currently she is a member of the Modern Language Association Commission on the Status of Women and the Rutgers University Committee on the Status of Women. She has published several articles and edited a book on women's liberation and literature.

You might expect that women writers would be the most emancipated women in the world for a number of reasons. First of all, they have been allowed to practice their profession since the end of the eighteenth century: writing was a cheap hobby for daughters, and also a harmless one. Virginia Woolf, for example, recalls her father approving of the cheapness of paper and ink. Also, unlike many professional women, women writers could work at home. And this meant that they could work while they were baking the bread, which is what Emily Brontë did. And also that they could work at odd hours while the rest of the family was asleep. There have been many women writers like Frances Trollope, the mother of the Victorian novelist Anthony Trollope, who habitually got up at 4 A.M. and wrote a chapter before the baby woke up.

You might also expect that the length and breadth of the feminine experience would be recorded in the novels and poems and plays of women writers, because they couldn't have described anything else. After all, they didn't go to the university, they didn't go to the office, and they didn't go to war. Nonetheless, these expectations would be false, for the truth is that women writers, who are the second oldest of the female professions, have neither escaped the hostile stereotypes and repressive practices which have bound them from the beginning in their literary undertakings, nor have they succeeded in defining for the world the experience of their half of the human population.

We need not go back to 1850 to find hostile male criticism of female writers. Let me give you some recent examples. From the *New York Re-*

*view of Books* in June, 1965, Bernard Bergonzi writes:

Women novelists, we have learned to assume, like to keep their focus narrow. The female observer is happy with fewer properties; between one and four persons with bruised lives and fine understandings. I have an idea that female writers, in a fervor of emancipated zeal, have accepted too eagerly one of the major premises of modern—or at least post-Freudian—fiction, namely that sex is more important than money.

Taking an opposing viewpoint on this question, two poets, John Hollander and Anthony Hecht, wrote a double dactylic on the subject of sexual equality in literature, which goes as follows:

*Higgledy piggedly,  
Dorothy Richardson  
Wrote a huge book with her delicate muse,  
Where, though I hate to be  
uncomplimentary,  
Nothing much happens and nobody screws.*

Or, in the *New York Times* in May, 1970, the young male novelist, L. Wojwode, writing in review of female novelist Joanna Ostrow, said in praise, "Simon is one of the most four-square, full-bodied persons I've met in recent fiction. Everything about him rings true, and I find it almost inconceivable that he was created by a woman."

And, of course, the champion at this kind of thing, our archetypal male chauvinist, Norman Mailer, who has said about women writers:

The sniffs I get from the ink of the women are always fcy, old hat, quaintsy, goyisy, tiny, too dikiely psychotic, crippled, creepish, fashionable, frigid, outer-baroque, maquillé in manniquins whimsy, or else bright and stillborn.

And he concludes here, in a sentence, "In short, a novelist can do without everything but the rem-

nants of his balls."<sup>1</sup> You don't have to be an expert in syllogistic reasoning to understand that this effectively excludes women. More recently, in *The Prisoner of Sex*, Mailer has made some concessions about women writers: now, he says, they're writing like "tough faggots."

But even very conservative and very orthodox twentieth-century critics have treated women writers as an inferior group of artists who are inherently limited by their sex and easily identifiable in their language and style. For example, Ernest Baker, who has written a classic ten-volume history of the novel, devotes a separate chapter to women writers, and defends himself by saying:

The woman of letters has peculiarities of race or ancestral tradition. Whatever variety of talent, outlook or personal disposition may be discernible in any dozen women writers taken at random, it will be matched and probably outweighed by resemblances distinctively feminine.

Whether there are, in fact, these resemblances which are distinctly feminine is a question I'm going to try to discuss, because it is my experience, first of all, that the term "feminine" as it is used by literary critics is a pejorative. For example, Katherine Anne Porter said in an interview in the *Paris Review* a few years ago,

If I show wisdom, the critics say I have a masculine mind. If I'm silly and irrelevant—and Edmund Wilson says I often am—then they say I have a typically feminine mind.

And in a very witty book about female stereotypes, *Thinking About Women*, Mary Ellmann says that with regard to literature, "femininity" means formlessness, passivity, instability, piety, materiality, and complacency.

If it is true that women share literary traits, I think we're not in a society free enough to discover them. But we can say and agree that women have experiences in common—the experiences of daughterhood, adolescence, sexual initiation, marriage, and childbirth. In addition to these, women writers have their own individual experiences of life, and particularly their experiences as artists. It is my contention that these feminine experiences have not been fully explored, or honestly expressed by women writers, and that women have, in fact, been kept from their own experience by a double critical standard, by a double social standard, by external censorship, and, most dangerous, by self-censorship—which is sometimes exercised in self-defense, more frequently in self-hatred.

In order to demonstrate what I consider the longevity and the universality of these problems, I

would like to focus on four books, by four different women: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, published in 1847; George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, 1859; Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, 1899; and Mary McCarthy's *The Group*, 1963. The first two of these are by British women; the last two by American women.

First, Charlotte Brontë I think is a particularly good example of the double critical standard, because she published *Jane Eyre* under a masculine pseudonym. She used the name Currer Bell, and her two sisters used the names Ellis and Acton Bell, because, as she wrote:

Without at the time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not what was called feminine, we had a vague impression that authresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice. We notice how sometimes critics use for their chastisement the weapon of personality, and for their reward a flattery which is not true praise.<sup>2</sup>

In 1847 the stereotypes for male and female writers were very rigid. Critics expected from a male writer strength, passion, and intellect, and from a woman writer they expected tact, refinement, and piety. They depended on these stereotypes so much, in fact, that they really didn't know how to proceed, what to say, or what to look for in a book if they were unsure of the author's sex.

So *Jane Eyre* created a tremendous sensation, and it was a problem for the Brontës. The name Currer Bell could be that of either a man or a woman and the narrator of *Jane Eyre* is Jane herself. The book is told as an autobiography. These things suggested that the author might have been a woman. On the other hand, the novel was considered to be excellent, strong, intelligent and, most of all, passionate. And therefore, the critics reasoned, it could not be written by a woman, and if it turned out that it was written by a woman, she had to be unnatural and perverted.

The reason for this is that the Victorians believed that decent women had no sexual feelings whatsoever—that they had sexual anesthesia. Therefore, when Jane says about Rochester that his touch "made her veins run fire, and her heart beat faster than she could count its throbs," the critics assumed this was a man writing about his sexual fantasies. If a woman was the author, then presumably she was writing from her own experience, and that was disgusting. In this case we can clearly see how women were not permitted the authority of their own experience if it happened to contradict the cultural stereotype.

But even more shocking than this to the Victorians was Jane's reply to Rochester, a very famous passage in the novel. He has told her he is going to marry another woman, an heiress, but that she can stay on as a servant. Jane answers him thus:

"I tell you I must go." I retorted, roused to something like passion. "Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automaton, a machine without feeling and can bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips and my drop of living water dashed from my cup? Do you think because I am poor, obscure, plain and little, I'm soulless and heartless? You think wrong. I have as much soul as you and full as much heart. And if God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should've made it as hard for you to leave me as it is now for me to leave you. I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionality, nor even of mortal flesh. It is my spirit that addresses your spirit, just as if both had passed through the grave and we stood at God's feet equal—as we are."

This splendid assertion violated not only the standards of sexual submission, which were believed to be women's duty and their punishment for Eve's crime, but it also went against standards of class submission, and obviously against religion. And this sort of rebellion was not feminine at all.

The reviews of *Jane Eyre* in 1847 and 1848 show how confused the critics were. Some of them said Currer Bell was a man. Some of them, including Thackeray, said a woman. One man, an American critic named Edgar Percy Whipple, said the Bells were a team, that Currer Bell was a woman who did the dainty parts of the book and brother Acton the rough parts. All kinds of circumstantial evidence were adduced to solve this problem, such as the details of housekeeping. Harriet Martineau said the book had to be the work of a woman or an upholsterer. And Lady Eastlake, who was a reviewer for one of the most prestigious journals, said it couldn't be a woman because no woman would dress her heroines in such outlandish clothes.

Eventually Charlotte Brontë revealed her identity, and then these attacks which had been general became personal. People introduced her as the author of a naughty book; they gossiped that she was Thackeray's mistress. They speculated on the causes of what they called "her alien and sour perspective on women." She felt during her entire short life that she was judged always on the basis of what was becoming in femininity and not as an artist.

When she died—ironically enough, from complications of pregnancy at the age of thirty-nine—her

close friend and sister novelist, Elizabeth Gaskell, wrote a biography, in part to defend Charlotte Brontë's reputation against the implications of being unladylike and unwomanly. The effect of this biography, though certainly not its intention, was to provide those critics who had never been able to accept the idea of female genius with a theory which explained things for them. The Brontës had a brother, Branwell, who was an alcoholic and an opium addict; he died at thirty-one. The theory was that Branwell had written not only *Jane Eyre* but also *Wuthering Heights*. Branwell was sick, violent, and weak, but at least he was a man, and occasionally one finds articles and tracts claiming his genius even today.

George Eliot had a confrontation with Victorian society which was even more explosive than Charlotte Brontë's. Her use of the male pseudonym—her real name was Mary Anne Evans—was not merely to avoid unjust criticism because she was a woman, although that was what she claimed. She had to use a pseudonym because she was living with a married man, George Henry Lewes, in defiance of all the codes of Victorian society, and her publishers were really in fear that moral outrage at her life style would affect the review and sales of her books.

Her first novel, *Adam Bede*, was published in 1859. It contained an episode which deals with the plight of an unwed mother, an ignorant dairy-maid named Hetty, who gives birth to her child under tragic circumstances and subsequently murders it. This plot had been used previously by Sir Walter Scott in *The Heart of Midlothian*, but Scott was a stern moralist. George Eliot, on the other hand, views the incident from the point of view of the girl herself: a girl who is young and naive and terrified. She presents with sympathy the torment of this trapped creature, who also has a rather limited intelligence.

George Eliot's publishers were highly alarmed by this aspect of the book, not because Hetty murders the child but because she is said to be pregnant at all. To be on the safe side, the publishers sent the manuscript to the head physician in charge of obstetrics at the University of Edinburgh, who was to make sure that it was all decent. He did give it his seal of approval and sent it back, but they were still very anxious.

In spite of their fears, *Adam Bede* was an instant success; everyone acclaimed it, and virtually everyone took for granted this time that the author was a man. As the *Saturday Review* wrote,

the book was thought "too good for a woman's story."<sup>3</sup> The *Westminster Review*, another Victorian journal, wrote that there wasn't a woman in England capable of the intellectual profundity of *Adam Bede*. This comment was particularly ironic because George Eliot had edited the *Westminster Review* for three years. (Of course, she did it behind the scenes: she didn't get paid, she didn't get the credit—she let her lover take both of those.)

But *Adam Bede* was so good that people had to find the author . . . they had to find George Eliot. They went out to look for him using various clues in the book. And before long, they actually found him. A man named Joseph Liggins who lived near Nuneaton, George Eliot's home town, admitted very modestly that he had written *Adam Bede* and that he had also written the book of stories by George Eliot which had preceded it. Liggins, who was obviously a lunatic, received pilgrims at his home, where he would discourse on the art of fiction.

The real George Eliot had some difficulty claiming that she actually had written the book. She wrote letters to *The London Times*, for example, but ultimately it was necessary for her to drop her pseudonym and to reveal her identity in order to scotch the rumors. So about 1860 people knew that George Eliot was, in fact, a woman.

And then what happened to *Adam Bede*? Some critics went back and read it again. And this time they discovered that it was really not as distinguished a book as they had first believed. The editor of *The Athenaeum*, for example, wrote:

It is time to end this pother about the authorship of *Adam Bede*. The writer is in no sense a great unknown. The tale, though bright in parts, and such as a clever woman with an observant eye and an un schooled moral nature might have written, has no great quality of any kind.<sup>4</sup>

Also in 1860, George Eliot's second novel, *The Mill on the Floss*, appeared. This time, knowing that the author was a woman, the critics preached long sermons in their reviews on the indecency of the book. The indecency consists of the heroine, Maggie Tulliver, awakening to a physical passion for a man who is engaged to her cousin. She knows she has to resist this passion and ultimately she does and is drowned at the end of the book.

Critics couldn't deny the truth of what she wrote; *The Mill on the Floss* contains a woman's very modest acknowledgement of sexual feeling. The most daring scene involves a kiss on the arm. Critics did, however, object to sexual knowledge

of any sort on the part of a woman, and particularly if it was accurate. The *Saturday Review*, for example, wondered if women ought to even *think* about sex:

We are not sure that it is quite consistent with feminine delicacy to lay so much stress on the bodily feeling for the other sex. George Eliot lets her fancy run to things which are not wrong, but are better omitted from the scope of female meditation. Perhaps we may go further and say that the whole delineation of passionate love as painted by modern female novelists is open to very serious criticism.<sup>5</sup>

After this novel, George Eliot virtually dropped the autobiographical and personal element in her fiction and turned to historical and political modes. Her real experience—her life experience as a woman defying social convention—could not be used in any explicit or even subtle way in her novels without risking her private happiness. For example, although her whole life was affected by the British divorce laws—or rather the lack of British divorce laws—she could not have protested them in her books without incurring serious scandal.

What happened then to women who actually tried to write, using their own names, about feminine experience? Kate Chopin did try this in *The Awakening*, a novel about a young mother, Edna Pontellier, in New Orleans at the turn of the century, married to a very rich, adoring and demanding husband. She has stifled, more from inertia than from will, a real sense of herself, of her abilities, her needs, her wishes. In the course of the book "he is awakened sexually by falling in love with a young man, and this sudden understanding of her physical nature awakens her entire individuality.

This awakening is tragic for her. She can't fit into her society once she is awake. She gives up her social obligations: she tries to become a painter but she is not really a genius—she doesn't have that kind of discipline. She moves out of her home, she offers to get a divorce, but of course her lover won't marry her because he is going to protect her reputation. And so, in the last chapter of the book, there is nothing left for Edna and in a kind of hazy and sensual trance, she walks into the sea and drowns.

The book has recently been compared to *Madame Bovary*, and to the novels of D. H. Lawrence. It has been called "the most important piece of fiction about the sexual life of a woman written to date in America." So why have we never heard of it?

*The Awakening* was published in April, 1899. It was first reviewed in St. Louis because Chopin was a local author. Within twelve days it had been condemned by every critic in St. Louis; they said it was poisonous. One critic said that it was unacceptable that a real American lady should be allowed to disrupt "the sacred institution of marriage and American womanhood, and to disregard moral concepts without repenting it."<sup>6</sup>

The book was banned first in St. Louis and then nationally from Boston to Los Angeles. By the time Chopin had written a kind of ironic half-defense—not an apology, but a kind of grudging statement—the book had disappeared. Subsequently Kate Chopin discovered she could no longer get her short stories accepted for publication; even a collection which had previously been accepted for publication was returned. She lost confidence in her ability as a writer and, probably coincidentally, died shortly thereafter in 1904.

*The Awakening* is certainly not obscene. Male writers in the same period had published works which were equally frank and much more perverse: Strindberg, for example; Zola, Dreiser. But what was shocking in this was the insistence of the author, a woman, on defining the shape of her own experience. Even more disturbing was her rejection of the myth of domestic fulfillment.

Edna says to her best friend, "I would give up the unessential; I would give my money; I would give my life for my children, but I wouldn't give myself." She loves her children, but they don't fulfill her. Without being militant in any sense, she is also not apologetic. She simply seeks an authentic life for herself, however tragically and unsuccessfully, as a human being, with a kind of steadiness and quiet purpose.

It may appear that these are all ancient cases, that today women writers are free from this kind of Victorian prudery and sexual stereotyping. So I would like to consider, finally, the case of Mary McCarthy.

Mary McCarthy is, first of all, the only one of these four women who had a university education: she went to Vassar. She and Kate Chopin had children, the others did not. This, again, is not coincidental. Women writers—women artists in general—have always operated in a tradition where creativity for women meant childbearing, and where there is a kind of assumption that biological and literary creativity are mutually exclusive.

Like many American writers, Mary McCarthy

has used her life as the basis for her fiction. Many men have done this: Fitzgerald not only used his life but Zelda's. As Nancy Mitford's recent biography of Zelda tells us, when she wrote her own autobiographical novel, he insisted that she cut parts of it out because he was the great writer in the family and her life was his material. Philip Roth, for another example, has used so many incidents from his teaching experience at the University of Chicago in his novel, *Letting Go*, that Chicago people call this book "The Gripes of Roth."

But when the artist is a man, we make allowances for this. We don't criticize or tax these writers for their lack of personal loyalty, but rather we admire their daring, their honesty, and their ruthless appropriation of life for their art. But with women the case is something different. With Mary McCarthy, a very similar kind of artistic pattern has earned her the title (from *Life* magazine) of "The Lady with the Switchblade," or the title (from critics): "The Modern American Bitch."

In fact, up until 1963, when Mary McCarthy published *The Group*, she had been a good girl—as men define a good girl. She wrote her first short stories because her husband, Edmund Wilson, ordered her to produce fiction. As she describes it in an interview in the *Paris Review*, "He put me in a little room. He didn't literally lock the door, but he said 'Stay there.'" And so she wrote her stories. Her story is something like *Rumplestiltskin*: the princess shut up to spin flax into gold; and I think this experience probably contributed to her continuing vision of her heroines as fairy tale princesses. The girls in *The Group* live in a tower; Polly is later described as living like Snow White surrounded by little dwarfs. It is generally one way of looking at women in her fiction.

But other aspects of her early career also show that she was accepting pretty much the work men gave her to do, and the view that they had of her. She said about her first job, which was as a theater critic for the *Partisan Review*:

I was sort of a gay, good-time girl from their point of view. They were men of the thirties—very serious. That's why my position was so insecure on *Partisan Review*. It wasn't exactly insecure, but lowly. That was why they let me write about the theater. Because they thought the theater was of absolutely no consequence.<sup>7</sup>

But in *The Group* she said goodbye to all of that and struck out on her own. First of all, she was writing about feminine experience: the loss of virginity, buying a diaphragm, pregnancy, materni-



ty, nursing a baby, marriage, adultery, masturbation, lesbianism. These are not themes likely to please male critics: they're feminine themes, and therefore trivial.

Reading the reviews of *The Group* which came out around 1963 and 1964, one senses the delight of male critics that they were at last able to convict her of writing a female book. Norman Podhoretz wrote, for example, that *The Group* was "a trivial lady writer's book." And, of course, Norman Mailer went wild. He wrote a very lengthy essay called "The Case Against McCarthy." In this essay he raves against the detail of *The Group*, seeing in it what he calls "the profound materiality of women." In a classical Freudian equation, Mailer describes this detail as "the cold lava of anality which becomes the truest part of her group, her glop, her impacted mass."

In short, his theory of Mary McCarthy is that as a writer she is constipated, and her characters are shit. He can, in fact, see to a limited degree what she is trying to do in this book; but he can't understand why. He can see in some way that she is writing about the inexorable socialization of women into roles they never intended to choose; that these women wind up as what he calls "these piss-out characters with their cultivated banalities, their lack of variety or ambition."<sup>8</sup>

But although Mailer thinks of himself as the guru of good sex, he can't see that one of the most famous sex scenes in the book—Doty's sexual initiation—features the good old Freudian orgasm: one vaginal, one clitoral—with Doty, who is obedient and brainwashed, feeling exactly what her college textbooks have told her to feel. Doty evaluates her experience in the terms which she has been taught:

This second climax, which she now recognized from the first one, though it was different, left her jumpy and disconcerted. It was something less thrilling and more like being tickled relentlessly or having to go to the bathroom. "Didn't you like that?" he demanded. Slowly Doty opened her eyes and resolved to tell the truth. "Not quite so much as the other, Dick." Dick laughed. "A nice, normal girl. Some of your sex prefer that." Doty shivered. She could not deny that it had been exciting, but it seemed to her almost perverted.

She is describing the clitoral orgasm, and recalling the "vaginal" one.

All of the women in *The Group*, I think, are similarly alienated from their own experience. They feel that they have been programmed to feel. In this sense, *The Group* is really a subversive novel about women's roles, and about marriage. It

is not an accident that the most liberated woman in this book is a lesbian, and that she challenges Harold on his own territory, which is the bed. She suggests to him on their way to bury Kay, the heroine, that she has been there before him, that she has seduced Kay, and this suggestion defeats him totally. It is clear why Mailer hated this book.

Other male critics, like Brock Bower, took a different approach to Mary McCarthy. They treated her with chivalry, with charming condescension. Bower's profile of Mary McCarthy for *Esquire*, for example, doesn't say very much about her art; he doesn't talk about her particularly as a writer. But he starts with the description of her beautiful smile, and he ends with a lengthy account of her in the kitchen blissfully whipping up her famous cassoulet.

Where are women writers going to go from here? In the past, feminine experience has probably been more of a hindrance to women writers than a help. Katherine Anne Porter, for example, said it took her twenty years to write *Ship of Fools*,

... because you're brought up with the notion of feminine availability in all spiritual ways, and in giving service to anyone who demands it. And I suppose that's why it's taken me twenty years to write this novel. It's been interrupted by just anyone who could jimmy his way into my life.

There are some women who have made money out of the domestic cage that keeps other women from finding the time or the peace to write: Jean Kerr and Phyllis McGinley, for example, selling their housewives' trials, or Pearl Buck who advertises the Famous Writers' School as a service to homemaker shut-ins.

But in the future, women artists are going to have to be encouraged to take themselves seriously and perhaps even selfishly... selfishly enough to make their work come first. More important, I think, women have been taught always to regard their experience as dull and minor and tame, which is, of course, what "domestic" means. As Hortense Calisher says, "We've been taught that a man's role is to hunt experience, a woman's to let it come upon us."<sup>9</sup> And Elizabeth Hardwick writes: "Women have much less experience of life than a man, as everybody knows."<sup>10</sup> But I suggest that no one has less experience of life than somebody else. We have different kinds of experience. We don't want now to have female versions of

men's books; we don't want the female version of *Portnoy's Complaint*.

But women have always been overshadowed by the literary tradition which is masculine and splendid. Like the Romans inheriting Greek culture, we are not going to find our own originality as women by copying such a powerful past. If women artists are to liberate themselves from this past and discover their own originality, they are going to have to turn within and to explore the rich dowry of feminine experience which they all possess.

I think that this is taking place now. Some of the women writing today are engaged in this kind of search and exploration, coming into a kind of furious encounter with the fact of being female—the experience of being female—and I can give only a very brief sampling of what some of this new literature is like.

It is not feminine in any sense of that stereotype, but it is female. As Alicia Ostriker, a poet, writes in her long poem about pregnancy, "Once More Out of Darkness" (which is written in nine parts and a post-partum):

*What I have said and what I will say  
is female, not feminine.  
Yes, I said yes,  
not analytical, not romantic,  
but the book of practical facts.*

Women's poetry is extremely varied. There are some women poets like Elizabeth Sargent who are now trying erotic verse, enjoying the freedom to use sexual metaphors which were formerly taboo or reserved only to men. One of Sargent's most interesting pieces is called "A Sailor at Midnight":

*A sailor at midnight came ashore  
You know what he came looking for  
But he found me instead  
And he followed where I led,  
I took him home through dark streets, glad  
To have him. I took him home to bed.  
He had kisses, it seems, in store  
For man, woman or whore  
And soft caresses and stories  
Of wrecks and dead men and many more  
Things I liked: it wasn't so much what he said  
As how he said it—"Dead men floating all around" he  
cried, and shoved the head  
Of his thing into me (I led)  
A little, he was so large) A sort of dread  
Struck him. "What are you, anyway," he whispered.  
"Are you a virgin?"  
"No, I'm a poet," I said. "Fuck me again."*

There are others who are writing about the ages of sex roles. This is Anne Sexton's poem, "Housewife":

*Some women marry houses.  
It's another kind of skin; it has a heart  
a mouth a liver and bowel movements  
The walls are permanent and pink  
See how she sits on her knees all day  
faithfully washing herself down  
Men enter by force, drawn back like Jonah  
into their fleshy mothers  
A woman is her mother  
That's the main thing.*

She wants you to think about the title of the poem—"Housewife," the wife of the house. Many more women, like Adrienne Rich, Muriel Rukeyser, and Denise Levertov, are writing frequently about the cultural exchanges between men and women that we call love.

Less well known right now than the poets, but extremely exciting, are the new women writers who are working with fiction. Margaret Atwood, a Canadian novelist, has written a funny, scary book called *The Edible Woman*. It is a kind of satire about a woman who is engaged and who suddenly feels: (a) that she is being consumed as a person, particularly by her fiancé, and (b) that she can't eat any more. First she can't eat steak and then she can't eat pork, and then she can't eat chicken and then she can't eat eggs, and then she can't eat rice pudding, and she is finally subsisting on vitamins. At the end of the novel, in a terrible crisis at an engagement party, she rushes home and bakes a cake in the shape of a woman, and frosts it and decorates it to look like herself. Then she calls up her fiancé and tells him to eat the cake and to leave her life alone.

In a more serious mode, a novel that seems part of the new wave of what women are doing as writers is British writer Margaret Drabble's *The Waterfall*, published in this country by Knopf. The novel begins with a childbirth scene: a woman is alone in a house; her husband has left her. She has moved into one bedroom, the only room that has heat, and she gives birth to a daughter during a snowstorm, with only a midwife present. The book begins with the mystery and beauty of the heroine in this warm, hidden place with the child. While she is still convalescing from childbirth, she begins an affair with the husband of her cousin, who has come to be with her in her isolation. He is somehow captivated and seduced by the state of the mother and child. Most of what follows is about their love affair and about the heroine's sense of her life, for which the waterfall is a metaphor. At one point, the heroine, considering her life—a typical woman's aimless life—tries to com-

pare it to the past and particularly to heroines of fiction, all the sad sisterhood of fiction:

Sometimes, once a week or so, I would get myself into a total panic about the extent of my subjugation, and I even went so far as to look it up in a sexual textbook, an old-fashioned one, *Havelock Ellis, where I found the word "bondage,"* which seemed quite elegantly to describe my condition. I was in bondage. Having discovered this, I flipped through the rest of the book, gazing in amazement at all those curious masculine perversions, wishing I could attach myself to something more easily attainable than a living man. Perversions are cruel, but surely love is as cruel. It is too relative, too exclusive, too desperately mortal.

There didn't seem to be very many female perversions in that book. Perhaps that was because it was old. Perhaps women have developed these things more recently as a result of emancipation. But love is nothing new. Even women have suffered from it in history. It is a classic malady and commonly it requires participants of both sexes. Perhaps I'll go mad with fruit like Sue Bridehead, or drown myself in an effort to reclaim lost renunciations like Maggie Tulliver.

Those fictional heroines, how they haunt me. Maggie Tulliver had a cousin called Lucy, as I have, and like me she fell in love with her cousin's man. She drifted off down the river with him, abandoning herself to the water, but in the end she lost him. She let him go. Nobly she regained her ruined honor and, ah, we admire her for it, all that superego gathered together in a last effort to prove that she loved the brother more than the man.

She should have... well, what should she not have done? Since Freud we guess dimly at our own passions, stripped of hope, abandoned forever to that relentless current. It gets us in the end; sticks, twigs, dry leaves, paper cartons, cigarette ends, orange peels, flower petals, silver fishes. Maggie Tulliver never slept with her man. She did all the damage there was to be done to Lucy, to herself, to

the two men who loved her, and then, like a woman of another age, she refrained. In this age what is to be done? We drown in the first chapter.

In 1923, the poet Louise Bogan wrote, "Women have no wildness in them." She was wrong. Feminine experience is the wildness which women writers have only started to chart.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Norman Mailer, "Evaluations—Quick and Expensive Comments on the Talent in the Room," in *Advertisements for Myself*, 1959.

<sup>2</sup> Biographical Notice of Anne and Emily Brontë, prefaced to 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*.

<sup>3</sup> *Saturday Review*, Vol. IX (1860), p. 470.

<sup>4</sup> See Gordon S. Haight, *George Eliot: A Biography*, New York, 1968, pp. 290-291.

<sup>5</sup> *Saturday Review*, p. 471.

<sup>6</sup> See Per Seyersted, *Kate Chopin: A Critical Biography*, University of Louisiana Press, 1969, for details of the critical reception of *The Awakening*.

<sup>7</sup> *Paris Review*, Vol. XXVII (1962), pp. 72, 74.

<sup>8</sup> Norman Mailer, "The Case Against McCarthy," in *Cannibals and Christians*, 1966.

<sup>9</sup> Hortense Calisher, "No Important Woman Writer," reprinted in *Woman's Liberation and Literature*, edited by Elaine Showalter.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Hardwick, "The Subjection of Women," in *Woman's Liberation and Literature*, p. 209.



Photo: Amy Stronsten

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following is a brief selected bibliography of feminist literature. For a complete, annotated bibliography on women's liberation send 50 cents (includes third class postage) to: Lucinda Cisler, 102 West 80th St., New York, N.Y. 10024. Bulk rates: 10/\$4.50, 30/\$12, 100/\$30.

Press and the New York Times (1969), 229 W. 43rd St., New York, N.Y. The famous history written by suffrage leaders.

## Books

de Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex* (Knopf, 1953). A classic feminist work on the oppression of women in all its aspects.

Bird, Caroline, *Born Female: The High Cost of Keeping Women Down* (McKay, 1968, revised 1970). A readable overview of the new movement, focusing primarily on such women's rights issues as legal and economic discrimination against women.

Daly, Mary, *The Church and the Second Sex* (Harper & Row, 1968). Feminist analysis of sexism in the church, by a Catholic theologian.

*Discrimination Against Women*, House Committee on Education, Rep. Edith Green Hearings, 91st Congress, Second Session, in Section 806 of H.R. 16098, Washington, D.C., 1970, 2 vols. Write to your Congresswoman or Senator for a free copy of this excellent anthology of speeches, articles, and statistics.

Freestone, Shulamith, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (Morrow, 1970). Wide-ranging, penetrating radical feminist critique of women's oppression, covering Freud, Marx, love, children, art, and culture. By movement activist.

Flexner, Eleanor, *Century of Struggle*, (Harvard, 1959). A mind-blowing, analytic, and extremely readable study of the first feminist movement.

Friedan, Betty, *The Feminine Mystique* (Norton, 1963). The first contemporary feminist attack on the myth of the contented suburban housewife, by one of the founders of NOW.

Holt, Judith, and Ellen Levine, *Rebirth of Feminism* (Quadrangle, 1971). The first and, to date, only comprehensive study of the current women's movement. Covers the history of the various groups, feminist theory and analysis, feminist activities. Also includes an annotated chronology of the movement from 1961-71 and an extensive bibliography.

Herschberger, Ruth, *Adam's Rib* (Pellegrini and Cudahy, 1948; Harger & Row, 1970). Elegantly witty essays on sexuality, semantics, and science.

Kanowitz, Leo, *Women and the Law: The Unfinished Revolution* (University of New Mexico, 1969). Major work on women's legal oppression. Covers divorce, rape, employment, and marriage.

Millett, Kate, *Sexual Politics* (Doubleday, 1970). Basic work of new feminist analysis. Especially perceptive studies of D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, and Jean Genet.

Morgan, Robin, ed., *Sisterhood is Powerful* (Random House, 1970). Large anthology of articles ranging from socialist-oriented to radical feminist.

Tanner, Leslie, ed., *Voices From Women's Liberation* (New American Library, 1971). Excellent collection of current feminist writing. First part is a short anthology of writings from the past feminist movement.

Ware, Castelein, *Woman Power: The Movement for Women's Liberation* (Tower, 1970). Discussion of current movement, including an extensive chapter on black women.

## Books to Make Your Library Buy

Anthony, Susan B., Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Matilda Gage, and Ida Husted Harper, *The History of Woman Suffrage* (originally published 1881-1902), six vols. From Arno

## Other Information

The following is a brief selection of pamphlets, newsletters, journals, etc., from the vast amount of feminist materials now available. These entries have been selected for the primary purpose of indicating the wide range of topics and issues covered by women's media.

**Aphra**. Feminist literary quarterly. \$1 a copy; \$3.50 for 4 issues. Box 355, Springtown, Pa. 18081.

**Feminism and the Politics of Ageism** by Su Negrin. Feminist attack on the nuclear family and current hip culture alternatives. Part of a pamphlet called "Ageism: A Radical Approach to Summerhill," Times Change Press, 1023 Sixth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10018.

**Feminist Studies**. Analytic quarterly of original papers and reviews. \$2.00 per copy; from Feminist Studies, 606 W. 116 St., New York, N.Y. 10027.

**Human Rights for Women**. Inc. Newsletter on their activities, litigation, etc. \$3.00 to HRW, Box 7402, Benjamin Franklin Station, Washington, D.C. 20044. HRW is primarily a feminist legal rights organization.

**KNOW** is an excellent source for literature, information (for example, on women's studies programs), news. Bulletin \$3.00 per year from KNOW, Inc., Box 10197, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15232.

**No More Fun and Games** (A Journal of Female Liberation—The First Revolution). One of the first radical feminist journals, put out by Cell 16, 2 Brewer St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138. \$1.00.

**Spokeswoman**. Monthly newsletter on women's status and feminist movement. \$6.00 per year from Urban Research Corporation, 5464 South Shore Drive, Chicago, Ill. 60615.

**Valparaiso Law Review**, Symposium issue, 1971. Excellent collection of feminist articles on various aspects of women and the law—public accommodations, the Constitution, education and employment, USSR and US women's legal status, feminism in law schools, etc. Send \$3.00 to Valparaiso Law Review, School of Law, Valparaiso, Indiana 46383.

**Women's History Research Center**, 2325 Oak St., Berkeley, Calif. 94708. Send 10 cents and stamped envelope for list of items available: synopsis of women in history, running catalogue of extensive Center Library, women's songbook, back issues of SPAZM newsletter, etc.

**Woman's World**. Feminist newspaper. Send \$2.00 for the first 6 issues (and \$1.00 for every 3 thereafter) to Woman's World, P.O. Box 694, Stuyvesant Station, New York, N.Y. 10009. Feminist Revolution, an internal movement journal on theory and strategy, \$1.00.

**Women and Art: A Newspaper Quarterly**. Published by Women Students and Artists for Black Art Liberation (WSABAL) and Redstocking Artists. Contains articles, history, criticism, statistics, and news pertaining to women and art. \$2.00 a year to: Women and Art, 89 E. Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10002.

**Film: After the Vote: A Report From Down Under**. A 20-minute documentary by Canadian feminist Bonnie Kreps, originally made for Canadian TV. Excellent and enjoyable introduction to the basic issues of women's liberation. From B. Kreps, 47 Parkview Hills Crescent, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

**Tapes: WBAI Womankind**. A feminist radio program by Nannette Rainone. Write Womankind, WBAI, 359 East 62nd St., New York, N.Y. 10021, for a list of tapes on various feminist subjects and consciousness-raising.



Photo: Bettye Lane





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