

Donna Brogan  
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# Notes From The Second Year: **WOMEN'S LIBERATION**

Major Writings of the Radical Feminists

Love

The Politics of Housework

The Left Debate

Consumerism

Man-Hating

Consciousness Raising

The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm

# EDITORIAL

*Notes From the First Year* (1968) was the first feminist journal put out by the new Women's Liberation Movement. Almost impossible to get hold of even within the movement—one dare not leave one's tattered copy unguarded even now—its impact was nevertheless profound. It became clear that we urgently needed a radical feminist periodical in which to debate, a forum in which to present the proliferation of new ideas and to clarify the political issues that concerned us. We needed a movement periodical which would expand with the movement, reflect its growth accurately, and in time become a historical record, functioning politically much as did Stanton and Anthony's *Revolution* exactly a century ago.

*Notes From the Second Year* attempts to fill these needs. At the same time we have made it easily available outside the movement because we are sick and tired of having our views presented for to other women by (usually distorting) intermediaries. This, then, is the first overground publication by radical feminists rather than about them. We have been cautioned that to present our ideas undiluted to the public might be a mistake, that some if not all the writing we have included might scare off women unfamiliar with the movement, in the long run doing it a disservice. Our answer is that we give women more credit than that; that this movement belongs to all and every woman and they don't need a sales pitch; that women are smart enough to recognize their own interests; that we are *tired of being talked down to*. Our editorial policy is only this: authenticity. We have tried in a simple way to show women not yet in the feminist movement what is going on in it and how they might fit in, on the assumption that if they see it directly and honestly—firsthand—they can decide for themselves how they feel about it.

It is not easy to portray, without categorizing, so young and vital a movement as this. In the last year the movement has grown and changed so as to be virtually unrecognizable: where before everyone knew, or knew of, almost everyone else, now we are lucky even to be able to identify most of the groups. And if those of us in the movement since the beginning are having trouble, new women are overwhelmed. There are no roadmaps, and though an amazing number of women flounder through to find their niche, the movement cannot demand this from all women. The "roadmaps" we have set up in this journal (see contents, opposite) are meant to be flexible; the overlap to be found is the healthiest sign of all. Nor are the articles we have selected meant to cover comprehensively all aspects of the category in which they are found, but rather to open up that category for further debate. In each, we have chosen those articles we felt to be important and/or influential in political terms during the "second year" (roughly the year 1969), imposing no political criteria of our own other than that they fall roughly within "radical feminism." Where necessary we have chosen an unpublished over a much-circulated article on a given subject; we apologize for all omissions—articles we would like to have gotten in—but couldn't for lack of space. We have done our best to present the spectrum of current thinking on radical feminism: we do not necessarily endorse all the ideas as they stand—in fact contradictions are apparent—but we have let them stand, uncut and only minimally edited.

We have done this not only to retain the authenticity of the content but for another (equally political) reason: anti-professionalism. One of the most exciting things to come out of the women's movement so far is a new daring, a willingness—eagerness—to tear down old structures and assumptions and let real thought and feeling flow. There is no longer a right (stylish) opinion for women to have (like all those ads and quizzes encouraging women to read the newspapers in order to improve their cocktail chatter and thus keep up with—keep—their husbands), no longer a fear of being called "unfeminine" or worse, no more "style"—unless by that is meant courage to say what you mean however you choose as clearly as you can. For many of us this has been the most liberating thing of all: the freedom to think, say, do, and be anything we decide. Including freedom to fail. To unsmile. To dare to be bad.

And because we have dared to be bad—to throw away our safety nets—we end up doing better than we ever have before. The kind of thinking and writing going on in the women's movement now is so mind-blowing because it grows directly and organically from a real need for it—a functionalism rare these days. In the last two years we have seen the beginning of a much-needed merging of intellect and emotion, thought and sensibility, the personal and the political, all leading to a deep and genuine politics. The Women's Liberation Movement is not just an idea dreamed up by a smart ad man; within the next few years, we expect feminism to become a central issue in American life. For women this is just a beginning.

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Photo: Michael Hardy



# I WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE:

## The Bitch Manifesto

by JOREEN

Jo Freeman, organizer of the first independent women's liberation group in the nation (Chicago, 1967), editor of the first national newsletter, "Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement" (now disbanded), is currently active in the Chicago movement as well as nationally.

...man is defined as a human being and woman is defined as a female. Whenever she tries to behave as a human being she is accused of trying to emulate the male ....

—Simone de Beauvoir

BITCH is an organization which does not yet exist. The name is not an acronym.

BITCH is composed of Bitches. There are many definitions of a bitch. The most complimentary definition is a female dog. Those definitions of bitches who are also *homo sapiens* are rarely as objective. They vary from person to person and depend strongly on how much of a bitch the definer considers herself. However, everyone agrees that a bitch is always female, dog or otherwise.

It is also generally agreed that a Bitch is aggressive, and therefore unfeminine (ahem). She may be sexy, in which case she becomes a Bitch Goddess, a special case which will not concern us here. But she is never a "true woman."

Bitches have some or all of the following characteristics:

1) *Personality*. Bitches are aggressive, assertive, domineering, overbearing, strong-minded, spiteful, hostile, direct, blunt, candid, obnoxious, thick-skinned, hard-headed, vicious, dogmatic, competent, competitive, pushy, loud-mouthed, independent, stubborn, demanding, manipulative, egoistic, driven, achieving, overwhelming, threatening, scary, ambitious, tough, brassy, masculine, boisterous, and turbulent. Among other things, a Bitch occupies a lot of psychological space. You always know she is around. A Bitch takes shit from no one. You may not like her, but you cannot ignore her.

2) *Physical*. Bitches are big, tall, strong, large, loud, brash, harsh, awkward, clumsy, sprawling, strident, ugly. Bitches move their bodies freely rather

than restrain, refine and confine their motions in the proper feminine manner. They clomp up stairs, stride when they walk and don't worry about where they put their legs when they sit. They have loud voices and often use them. Bitches are not pretty.

3) *Orientation*. Bitches seek their identity strictly through themselves and what they do. They are subjects, not objects. They may have a relationship with a person or organization, but they never marry anyone or anything: man, mansion, or movement. Thus Bitches prefer to plan their own lives rather than live from day to day, action to action, or person to person. They are independent cusses and believe they are capable of doing anything they damn well want to. If something gets in their way, well, that's why they become Bitches. If they are professionally inclined, they will seek careers and have no fear of competing with anyone. If not professionally inclined, they still seek self-expression and self-actualization. Whatever they do, they want an active role and are frequently perceived as domineering. Often they do dominate other people when roles are not available to them which more creatively sublimate their energies and utilize their capabilities. More often they are accused of domineering when doing what would be considered natural by a man.

A true Bitch is self-determined, but the term "bitch" is usually applied with less discrimination. It is a popular derogation to put down uppity women that was created by man and adopted by women. Like the term "nigger," "bitch" serves the social function of isolating and discrediting a class of people who do not conform to the socially accepted patterns of behavior.

BITCH does not use this word in the negative sense. A woman should be proud to declare she is a

Bitch, because Bitch is Beautiful. It should be an act of affirmation by self and not negation by others. Not everyone can qualify as a Bitch. One does not have to have all of the above three qualities, but should be well possessed of at least two of them to be considered a Bitch. If a woman qualifies in all three, at least partially, she is a Bitch's Bitch. Only Superbitches qualify totally in all three categories and there are very few of those. Most don't last long in this society.

The most prominent characteristic of all Bitches is that they rudely violate conceptions of proper sex role behavior. They violate them in different ways, but they all violate them. Their attitudes towards themselves and other people, their goal orientations, their personal style, their appearance and way of handling their bodies, all jar people and make them feel uneasy. Sometimes it's conscious and sometimes it's not but people generally feel uncomfortable around Bitches. They consider them aberrations. They find their style disturbing. So they create a dumping ground for all whom they deplore as bitchy and call them frustrated women. Frustrated they may be, but the cause is social, not sexual.

What is disturbing about a Bitch is that she is androgynous. She incorporates within herself qualities traditionally defined as "masculine" as well as "feminine." A Bitch is blunt, direct, arrogant, at times egoistic. She has no liking for the indirect, subtle, mysterious ways of the "eternal feminine." She disdains the vicarious life deemed natural to women because she wants to live a life of her own.

Our society has defined humanity as male, and female as something other than male. In this way, females could be human only by living vicariously through a male. To be able to live, a woman has to agree to serve, honor and obey a man and what she gets in exchange is at best a shadow life. Bitches refuse to serve, honor or obey anyone. They demand to be fully functioning human beings, not just shadows. They want to be both female and human. This makes them social contradictions. The mere existence of Bitches negates the idea that a woman's reality must come through her relationship to a man and defies the belief that women are perpetual children who must always be under the guidance of another.

Therefore, if taken seriously, a Bitch is a threat to the social structures which enslave women and the social values which justify keeping them in their place. She is living testimony that woman's oppression does not have to be, and as such raises doubts about the validity of the whole social system. Be-

cause she is a threat she is not taken seriously. Instead, she is dismissed as a deviant. Men create a special category for her in which she is accounted at least partially human, but not really a woman. To the extent to which they relate to her as a human being, they refuse to relate to her as a sexual being. Women are even more threatened by her because they cannot forget she is a woman. They are afraid they will identify with her too closely. She has a freedom and an independence which they envy; she challenges them to forsake the security of their chains. Neither men nor women can face the reality of a Bitch because to do so would force them to face the corrupt reality of themselves. She is dangerous. So they dismiss her as a freak.

This is the root of her own oppression as a woman. Bitches are not only oppressed as women, they are oppressed for not being like women. Because she has insisted on being human before being feminine, on being true to herself before kowtowing to social pressures, a Bitch grows up an outsider. Even as girls, Bitches violated the limits of accepted sex role behavior. They did not identify with other women and few were lucky enough to have an adult Bitch serve as a role model. They had to make their own way and the pitfalls this uncharted course posed contributed to both their uncertainty and their independence.

Bitches are good examples of how women can be strong enough to survive even the rigid, punitive socialization of our society. As young girls it never quite penetrated their consciousness that women were supposed to be inferior to men in any but the mother/helpmate role. They asserted themselves as children and never really internalized the slave style of wheedling and cajolery which is called feminine. Some Bitches were oblivious to the usual social pressures and some stubbornly resisted them. Some developed a superficial feminine style and some remained tomboys long past the time when such behavior is tolerated. All Bitches refused, in mind and spirit, to conform to the idea that there were limits on what they could be and do. They placed no bounds on their aspirations or their conduct.

For this resistance they were roundly condemned. They were put down, snubbed, sneered at, talked about, laughed at and ostracised. Our society made women into slaves and then condemned them for acting like slaves. Those who refused to act like slaves they disparaged for not being true women.

It was all done very subtly. Few people were so direct as to say that they did not like Bitches because they did not play the sex role game. In

fact, few were sure why they did not like Bitches. They did not realize that their violation of the reality structure endangered the structure. Somehow, from early childhood on, some girls didn't fit in and were good objects to make fun of. But few people consciously recognized the root of their dislike. The issue was never confronted. If it was talked about at all, it was done with snide remarks behind the young girl's back. Bitches were made to feel that there was something wrong with them; *something personally wrong.*

Teenage girls are particularly vicious in the scapegoat game. This is the time of life when women are told they must compete the hardest for the spoils (i.e., men) which society allows. They must assert their femininity or see it denied. They are very unsure of themselves and adopt the rigidity that goes with uncertainty. They are hard on their competitors and even harder on those who decline to compete. Those of their peers who do not share their concerns and practice the arts of charming men are excluded from most social groupings. If she didn't know it before, a Bitch learns during these years that she is different.

As she gets older she learns more about why she is different. As Bitches begin to take jobs, or participate in organizations, they are rarely content to sit quietly and do what they are told. A Bitch has a mind of her own and wants to use it. She wants to rise high, be creative, assume responsibility. She knows she is capable and wants to use her *capabilities. This, not pleasing the men she works for, is her primary goal.*

When she meets the hard brick wall of sex prejudice she is not compliant. She will knock herself out batting her head against the wall because she will not accept her defined role as an auxiliary. Occasionally she crashes her way through. Or she uses her ingenuity to find a loophole, or creates one. Or she is ten times better than anyone else competing with her. She also accepts less than her due. Like other women her ambitions have often been dulled for she has not totally escaped the badge of inferiority placed upon the "weaker sex." She will often espouse contentment with being the power behind the throne—provided that she does have real power—while rationalizing that she really does not want the recognition that comes with also having the throne. Because she has been put down most of her life, both for being a woman and for not being a true woman, a Bitch will not always recognize that what she has achieved is not attain-

able by the typical woman. A highly competent Bitch often deprecates herself by refusing to recognize her own superiority. *She is wont to say that she is average or less; if she can do it, anyone can.*

As adults, Bitches may have learned the feminine role, at least the outward style, but they are rarely comfortable in it. This is particularly true of those women who are *physical Bitches. They want to free their bodies as well as their minds and deplore the effort they must waste confining their physical motions or dressing the role in order not to turn people off. Too, because they violate sex role expectations physically, they are not as free to violate them psychologically or intellectually. A few deviations from the norm can be tolerated but too many are too threatening. It's bad enough not to think like a woman, sound like a woman or do the kinds of things women are supposed to do. To also not look like a woman, move like a woman, or act like a woman is to go way beyond the pale. Ours is a rigid society with narrow limits placed on the extent of human diversity. Women in particular are defined by their physical characteristics. Bitches who do not violate these limits are freer to violate others. Bitches who do violate them in style or size can be somewhat envious of those who do not have to so severely restrain the expansiveness of their personalities and behavior. Often these Bitches are tortured more because their deviancy is always evident. But they do have a compensation in that large Bitches have a good deal less difficulty being taken seriously than small women. One of the sources of their suffering as women is also a source of their strength.*

This trial by fire which most Bitches go through while growing up either makes them or breaks them. They are strung tautly between the two poles of being true to their own nature or being accepted as a social being. This makes them very sensitive people, but it is a sensitivity the rest of the world is unaware of. For on the outside they have frequently grown a thick defensive callous which can make them seem hard and bitter at times. This is particularly true of those Bitches who have been forced to become isolates in order to avoid being remade and destroyed by their peers. Those who are fortunate enough to have grown up with some similar companions, understanding parents, a good role model or two and a very strong will, can avoid some of the worse aspects of being a Bitch. Having endured less psychological punishment for being what they were they can accept their

differentness with the ease that comes from self-confidence.

Those who had to make their way entirely on their own have an uncertain path. Some finally realize that their pain comes not just because they do not conform but because they do not want to conform. With this comes the recognition that there is nothing particularly wrong with *them*—they just don't fit into this kind of society. Many eventually learn to insulate themselves from the harsh social environment. However, this too has its price. Unless they are cautious and conscious, the confidence gained in this painful manner—with no support from their sisters—is more often a kind of arrogance. Bitches can become so hard and calloused that the last vestiges of humanity become buried deep within and almost destroyed.

Not all Bitches make it. Instead of callouses, they develop open sores. Instead of confidence they develop an unhealthy sensitivity to rejection. Seemingly tough on the outside, on the inside they are a bloody pulp, raw from the lifelong verbal whipping they have had to endure. These are Bitches who have gone Bad. They often go around with a chip on their shoulders and use their strength for unproductive retaliation when someone accepts their dare to knock it off. These Bitches can be very obnoxious because they never really trust people. They have not learned to use their strength constructively.

Bitches who have been mutilated as human beings often turn their fury on other people—particularly other women. This is one example of how women are trained to keep themselves and other women in their place. Bitches are no less guilty than non-Bitches of self-hatred and group-hatred and those who have gone Bad suffer the worst of both these afflictions. All Bitches are scapegoats and those who have not survived the psychological gauntlet are the butt of everyone's disdain. As a group, Bitches are treated by other women much as women in general are treated by society—all right in their place, good to exploit and gossip about, but otherwise to be ignored or put down. They are threats to the traditional woman's position and they are also an outgroup to which she can feel superior. Most women feel both better than and jealous of Bitches. While comforting themselves that they are not like these aggressive, masculine freaks, they have a sneaking suspicion that perhaps men, the most important thing in their lives, do find the freer, more assertive, independent Bitch preferable as a woman.

Bitches, likewise, don't care too much for other women. They grow up disliking other women. They can't relate to them, they don't identify with them, they have nothing in common with them. Other women have been the norm into which they have not fit. They reject those who have rejected them. This is one of the reasons Bitches who are successful in hurdling the obstacles society places before women scorn these women who are not. They tend to feel those who can take it will make it. Most women have been the direct agents of much of the shit Bitches have had to endure and few of either group has had the political consciousness to realize why this is. Bitches have been oppressed by other women as much if not more than by men and their hatred for them is usually greater.

Bitches are also uncomfortable around other women because frequently women are less their psychological peers than are men. Bitches don't particularly like passive people. They are always slightly afraid they will crush the fragile things. Women are trained to be passive and have learned to act that way even when they are not. A Bitch is not very passive and is not comfortable acting that role. But she usually does not like to be domineering either—whether this is from natural distaste at dominating others or fear of seeming too masculine. Thus a Bitch can relax and be her natural non-passive self without worrying about mascerating someone only in the company of those who are as strong as she. This is more frequently in the company of men than of women but those Bitches who have not succumbed totally to self-hatred are most comfortable of all only in the company of fellow Bitches. These are her true peers and the only ones with whom she does not have to play some sort of role. Only with other Bitches can a Bitch be truly free.

These moments come rarely. Most of the time Bitches must remain psychologically isolated. Women and men are so threatened by them and react so adversely that Bitches guard their true selves carefully. They are suspicious of those few whom they think they might be able to trust because so often it turns out to be a sham. But in this loneliness there is a strength and from their isolation and their bitterness come contributions that other women do not make. Bitches are among the most unsung of the unsung heroes of this society. They are the pioneers, the vanguard, the spearhead. Whether they want to be or not this is the role they serve just by their very being. Many would not choose to be the

groundbreakers for the mass of women for whom they have no sisterly feelings but they cannot avoid it. Those who violate the limits, extend them; or cause the system to break.

Bitches were the first women to go to college, the first to break through the Invisible Bar of the professions, the first social revolutionaries, the first labor leaders, the first to organize other women. Because they were not passive beings and acted on their resentment at being kept down, they dared to do what other women would not. They took the flak and the shit that society dishes out to those who would change it and opened up portions of the world to women that they would otherwise not have known. They have lived on the fringes. And alone or with the support of their sisters they have changed the world we live in.

By definition Bitches are marginal beings in this society. They have no proper place and wouldn't stay in it if they did. They are women but not true women. They are human but they are not male. Some don't even know they are women because they cannot relate to other women. They may play the feminine game at times, but they know it is a game they are playing. Their major psychological oppression is not a belief that they are inferior but a belief that they are not. Thus, all their lives they have been told they were freaks. More polite terms were used, of course, but the message got through. Like most women they were taught to hate themselves as well as all women. In different ways and for different reasons perhaps, but the effect was

similar. Internalization of a derogatory self-concept always results in a good deal of bitterness and resentment. This anger is usually either turned in on the self—making one an unpleasant person—or on other women—reinforcing the social clichés about them. Only with political consciousness is it directed at the source—the social system.

The bulk of this Manifesto has been about Bitches. The remainder will be about BITCH. The organization does not yet exist and perhaps it never can. *Bitches are so damned independent* and they have learned so well not to trust other women that it will be difficult for them to learn to even trust each other. This is what BITCH must teach them to do. Bitches have to learn to accept themselves as Bitches and to give their sisters the support they need to be creative Bitches. Bitches must learn to be proud of their strength and proud of themselves. They must move away from the isolation which has been their protection and help their younger sisters avoid its perils. They must recognize that women are often less tolerant of other women than are men because they have been taught to view all women as their enemies. And Bitches must form together in a movement to deal with their problems in a political manner. They must organize for their own liberation as all women must organize for theirs. We must be strong, we must be militant, we must be dangerous. We must realize that Bitch is Beautiful and that we have nothing to lose. Nothing whatsoever.

This Manifesto was written and revised with the help of several of my sisters, to whom it is dedicated.



Photo: Michael Hardy



# Woman and Her Mind: The Story of Everyday Life

by MEREDITH TAX

This is the first half of a longer article to be published by the New England Free Press, 791 Tremont St., Boston, Massachusetts 02118, under the title *Woman and Her Mind*. The other two parts of the article deal with psychological aspects of consumerism, and of work as it is defined for women, including sex as work. Meredith Tax is a member of Bread and Roses, a socialist women's liberation organization in Boston, many of whose members contributed to the conception and writing of this article.

## I. The Assaults of Daily Life

Open your hand.  
Empty? Empty. Here is a hand

To fill it and willing  
To bring teacups and roll away headaches  
And do whatever you tell it.  
Will you marry it?  
It is guaranteed

To thumb shut your eyes at the end  
And dissolve of sorrow.  
We make new stock from the salt.

—*Sylvia Plath, "Applicant"*

In our society, where competitive individualism and the cash nexus are the dominant values, men are raised to see the world as a series of "challenges." They are taught to view everyone as a competitor for money, prestige, women, and the rest; and to be constantly on guard. American men are brought up, moreover, to see these challenges in sexual terms, as if each involved their "masculinity," and to meet each embryonic threat with the maximum aggressive response.

They are taught that to be masculine is to be physically and verbally aggressive, hyper-active sexually, authoritarian in manner, and capable of abstract thought. Being observant of the ordinary details of daily life is not considered part of being masculine. Men are taught to chart the stars in their courses, but not to notice when someone in the room has been crying. Or, if they are forced to notice, to regard it as a threat and act aggressively or condescendingly or helplessly. Sensitivity to other people's needs is considered, in our society, to be feminine. So is vulnerability to other people. The ideal American male, in terms of the dominant values of our society, is a competitive machine, competent, achieving, hard-driving, and soulless, with a sexual life, but no personal life. Fortunately, most men can't live up to this ideal; but the strain of trying is considerable.

Further, men are relatively unaware of their social environment because they don't have to be. It's not their job. They don't have to notice the comparative cost and beauty of various costumes. They don't have to be tuned in to the nuances of social behavior so that they can please those whom it is essential to please. They don't have to listen for footsteps behind them in the street at night (though they have to more than they used to). The passing scene presents no social opportunities to them which must be seized or forever lost. Men are taught to be active, to go and seek what they need; not to look pretty and wait for it to come into their vicinity. Men don't observe each passing cloud over human relations as if their whole future depended on it.

There's a reason for that: it doesn't. Women are hyper-aware of their surroundings. They have to be. Walk down a city street without being tuned in and you're in real danger; our society is one in which men rape, mug, and murder women whom they don't even know every day. You'd better keep track of what car is slowing down, and of who is walking up behind you.

You must be constantly on the watch for other reasons. Without this radar, how can you be sure of taking advantage of your opportunities? The role you have been given is a passive one; you can't go out and promote what you want, but must think fast and grab it as it flies past. You must be prepared to return the right kind of smile to passing Prince Charmings. And since your role also includes being a mediator between the men in your life and their acquaintances, you must also be perpetually on guard to smooth out a fight, be conciliatory or forgiving or cute, and keep unpleasant things from happening.

The self-consciousness and consciousness of others that is trained into women is necessary, but it is also extreme and oppressive. There's a lot to be said for being conscious of other people's behavior and

needs; and even the self-effacing emotional service-station aspect of many women's behavior is preferable to the unconsciousness bred into men. But the price is high. Since our awareness of others is considered *our duty, our job, the price we pay when things go wrong*, is guilt, self-hatred. And things always go wrong. We respond with apologies; we continue to apologize long after the event is forgotten—and even if it had no causal relation to anything we did to begin with. If the rain spoils someone's picnic, we apologize. We apologize for taking up space in a room, for living. How willingly we would suffer to prevent someone else a moment's discomfort! This is one of the hardest habits to break. And it's a vicious circle—our self-hating desire to preserve men from the consciousness of the pain they are causing enables them to remain unaware that they are causing it, and thus to remain less human than they could be. If we could only break out of this circle, stop apologizing and effacing ourselves, and live less tortuously! But of course there are reasons why this doesn't happen easily. Men and women are brought up to be like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, with pieces carved out of their selves so they can fit into one another in the neurotic dependence most of us call love. If you make yourself whole, where are you going to find a jigsaw puzzle to fit into?

But those pieces that have been taken out of our heads! The self-consciousness we are filled with! It is so painful, so physical. We are taught to feel that our only asset is our physical presence, that that is all other people notice about us. The most minute blemish on a total person—a pimple, excess weight, a funny nose, larger than average breasts—*can ruin a day, or years, with the agonies of constant awareness of it*. The whole world is looking only at that pimple! These agonies are adolescent and excessive, if considered from a detached viewpoint. It is precisely in adolescence that we become conscious of how immensely we are impinged on by the world, how easily it can destroy us, how much we must have on the ball to survive. It is as we grow older that we desensitize ourselves and block out these agonies of consciousness in order to function. But we pay the price of false consciousness.

We make ourselves viable by blocking out the everyday realization of how we have been emotionally deformed by our socialization, and how convenient this deformation is for men, employers, advertisers, and anyone else who wishes to use us. What damage has been done to us as girls—what a sowing

of self-doubt and self-hate that is never completely harvested, always springing up again. How we have been denied the opportunity to *choose—a self, a man, a career, a life-style—until we become unable to make choices of the most trivial kind*. Our inability to choose is part of American folklore: the woman in cartoons who sits dithering in a shoe-store for hours, unable to decide between two pair of pumps. When you have been told all of your life that the right pair of shoes, or the right hair-do, can determine your whole destiny, it is difficult to make such decisions casually. Especially if the only sphere in which you have the scope to make decisions at all is this limited one.

To realize this is just to live with the everyday knowledge that one has lost an arm. But to block out this realization is to pay the price of false consciousness. It is to think that you are miserable because you have a pimple, rather than because you have been taught to think of yourself, and always been treated, as an object for sale, and your market value (thus your only value) has been temporarily impaired by the pimple.

First, are you our sort of person.

Do you wear

A glass eye, false teeth or a crutch,

A brace or hook,

Rubber breasts or a rubber crotch,

Stitches to show something's missing? No, No?

Then

How can we give you a thing?

Stop crying.

—Sylvia Plath, "Applicant"

We have to face the fact that pieces have been cut out of us to make us fit into this society. We have to try to *imagine what we could have been if we hadn't been taught from birth that we are stupid, unable to analyze anything, "intuitive," passive, physically weak, hysterical, overemotional, dependent by nature, incapable of defending ourselves against any attack, fit only to be the housekeeper, sex object, and emotional service center for some man, or men, and children*. And that only if we're lucky—otherwise we must act out a commercial mockery of even these roles as someone's secretary!

We didn't get this way by heredity or by accident. We have been *molded* into these deformed postures, *pushed* into these service jobs, *made* to apologize for existing, *taught* to be unable to do anything requiring any strength at all, like opening doors or bottles. We have been told to be stupid, to be silly. We have had our mental and emotional feet



bound for thousands of years. And the fact that some of the pieces that have been cut out of us are ones we can never replace or reconstruct—an ego, self-confidence, an ability to make choices—is the most difficult of all to deal with.

All of the women I know who have done things, jumped hurdles, and stepped even a pace outside of the charmed circle of the bourgeois family, have had to face the damage that has been done to them, and struggle with the rules they have internalized. To some of us, this process has taken the form of a "nervous breakdown"; for others, a long period of sheer personal horror; to others, a more drawn-out process of repeatedly sinking under despair, and rising again. I think that for some of my generation, caught in the kind of double binds we have all been caught in, it is impossible to achieve revolutionary consciousness without some sort of confrontation with the self. Politically, this is both a weakness and a strength. It is an asset to come to political understanding through personal pain: it makes possible a gut understanding of how society works as a system dependent on the personal suffering and deprivation of each of us. Such understanding is a help in building a revolutionary movement. Only by realizing what we might have been, can we imagine how different women in a post-revolutionary society might be able to be. But knowing that we cannot achieve this ourselves, that no matter how we struggle we are still in some part of ourselves "damaged goods" (to use the appropriate capitalist terminology), that we can see what has gone wrong within ourselves, and still be unable to put it permanently right—this is very painful and discouraging. But it is necessary: it is this realization that makes it evident that there really are no individual solutions to woman's oppression, no way that one can float free of our society and its conditioning. The pain of it is what makes us search so urgently for new forms of social organization that can help us, and others, change and transcend our limitations. This pain is what makes us realize, in our everyday lives, that *social* change is absolutely necessary. As Lucy Stone put it almost a century ago:

In education, in marriage, in everything, disappointment is the lot of women. It shall be the business of my life to deepen this disappointment in every woman's heart until she bows down to it no longer.

The things that mess us up are so built into the structure of society that only the most radical of

social changes—one far more radical in its attack on the basic institutions of this society that traps us, and far more drastic in the changes it effects on human consciousness, than previous revolutions—has a chance of doing the job, of freeing us and freeing those who will be born out of our lives.

## II. Female Schizophrenia

A young woman is walking down a city street. She is excruciatingly aware of her appearance and of the reaction to it (imagined or real) of every person she meets. She walks through a group of construction workers who are eating lunch in a line along the pavement. Her stomach tightens with terror and revulsion; her face becomes contorted into a grimace of self-control and fake unawareness; her walk and carriage become stiff and dehumanized. No matter what they say to her, it will be unbearable. She knows that they will not physically assault her or hurt her. They will only do so metaphorically. What they will do is *impinge* on her. They will demand that her thoughts be focussed on them. They will use her body with their eyes. They will evaluate her market price. They will comment on her defects, or compare them to those of other passers-by. They will make her a participant in their fantasies without asking if she is willing. They will make her feel ridiculous, or grotesquely sexual, or hideously ugly. Above all, they will make her feel like a *thing*.

You can say what you like about class and race. Those differences are real. But in this everyday scenario, any man on earth, no matter what his color or class is, has the power to make any woman who is exposed to him hate herself and her body. Any man has this power as *man*, the dominant sex, to dehumanize woman, even to herself.

No woman can have an autonomous self unaffected by such encounters. Either she remains sensitive and vulnerable to this pain; or she shuts it out, by saying, "It's only my *body* they are talking about. It doesn't affect *me*. They know nothing about *me*." Whatever the process, the solution is a split between mind and body, between one self and another. One may hate the body and consider the mind the real "self." One may glorify the body, as a means of satisfying one's desires by becoming an instrument to satisfy the desires of others; in this case the body becomes a thing, and the mind a puppeteer to manipulate it.

Both of these solutions (and most of us get sucked into one or the other) can be called *schizo-*

phrenic. R. D. Laing defines schizophrenia as a social process, in *The Politics of Experience*:

...no schizophrenic has been studied whose disturbed patterns of communication has not been shown to be a reflection of, and reaction to, the disturbed and disturbing pattern characterizing his or her family of origin.... When one person comes to be regarded as schizophrenic, it seems that *without exception* the experiences and behavior that gets labelled schizophrenic is a special strategy that a person invents in order to live in an unlivable situation.

In *The Divided Self*, Laing describes the experience of schizophrenia, the contradictory kind of self-consciousness that extends to one's very existence, that is, who is literally not sure he exists:

1. Being aware of himself and knowing that other people are aware of him are a means of assuring himself that he exists, and also that they exist.... The need to gain a conviction of his own aliveness and the realness of things is, therefore, the basic issue in his existence. His way of seeking to gain such conviction is by feeling himself to be an object in the real world; but, since *his world is unreal*, he must be an object in the world of someone else, for objects to other people seem to be real....

2. In a world full of danger, to be a potentially seeable object is to be constantly exposed to danger. Self-consciousness, then, may be the apprehensive awareness of oneself as potentially exposed to danger by the simple fact of being visible to others. The obvious defense against such a danger is to make oneself invisible in one way or another. (Penguin edition, pp. 108-109.)

Let us translate this into the terms of everyday life; go into the mind of a woman who is confined to her house, who goes out only to shop, to visit other women, or to chauffeur her kids, and whose only work, or function, is to take care of a man and some children. For her the contradiction will present itself this way:

"I am nothing when I am by myself. In myself, I am nothing. I only know that I exist because I am needed by someone who is real, my husband, and by my children. My husband goes out into the real world. Other people recognize him as real, and take him into account. He effects other people and events. He does things and changes things and they are different afterwards. I stay in my imaginary world in this house, doing jobs that I largely invent, and that no-one cares about but myself. I do not

change things. The work I do changes nothing; what I cook disappears, what I clean one day must be cleaned again the next. I seem to be involved in some sort of mysterious process rather than actions that have results.

"The only time that I think I might be real in myself is when I hear myself screaming or having hysterics. But it is at these times that I am in the most danger—of being told that I am wrong, or that I'm really not like what I'm acting like, or that he hates me. If he stops loving me, I'm sunk; I won't have any purpose in life, or be sure I exist any more. I must efface myself in order to avoid this, and not make any demands on him, or do anything that might offend him. I feel dead now, but if he stops loving me I am really dead, because I am nothing by myself. I have to be noticed to know I exist.

"But, if I efface myself, how can I be noticed?"

It is a basic contradiction.

Laing explores it further. His language is extreme, since he is describing extreme states; but they are only heightened versions of what most of us go through at some point in our lives, or every day.

As a death ray, consciousness has two main properties: its power to petrify (to turn to stone; to turn oneself or the other into things); and its power to penetrate. Thus, if it is in these terms that the gaze of others is experienced, there is a constant dread and resentment at being turned into someone else's thing, of being penetrated by him, and a sense of being in someone else's power and control. Freedom then consists in being inaccessible.

To turn people into stone is the ultimate way of objectifying them. To be able to penetrate them is to be able to see through them; the slang is an accurate description of that feeling: "I can see right through you" means "You don't fool me; I see what you're really like."

We often experience these states as projections from our own minds onto someone else's. It is that someone who turns us into stone, makes us objects, oxen sick-tongued and slow of motion. We are petrified with fear of someone else's power; someone else can see through us, can see what we are really like under our fragile veneer of normality. The person who sees through us has power over us.

In the walking-down-the-street scenario, our heroine can experience verbal assault in four different ways:

1) She can turn the construction workers to stone: "Look at them—what a mechanical response—they are like puppets. I don't have to listen to them. I can black them right out. I can petrify them with a look. How dare they speak to me!"

2) She can see right through them: "How ridiculous they are, to think they can attract me by behaving so obnoxiously. They are pathetic and gross. Probably no one loves them. They can't fool me. I know what they are really like, even if they're trying to act big." She may exchange a look with them, nod graciously, or ignore them.

3) Inversely, she can experience these states as projections onto the group of men:

i.) "Look at them staring at me! I'm petrified! What will they do? I can't move fast enough to get away! My hands and feet are so cold. I feel as if I'm moving through ice water. I will turn into a block of ice if I don't get away."

ii.) "I feel as if I'm naked—so ashamed. They are laughing at me. They are pretending to think I'm pretty, just so they can make fun of me. They know what I'm really like, that this dress and makeup are just a fake to hide my ineptness, terror, and ugliness. I feel like I'm being broken into little bits." She will walk miserably by like a dead thing.

These states of mind are heightened, metaphorical reflections of the real conditions of a woman's life in our society. For a woman is either an object (turned to stone), belonging to some man and getting her money, status, friends, and very identity from her association with him—or else she is nowhere, disappeared, teetering on the edge of a void with no work to do and no felt identity at all.

From the earliest age a girl is deprived of a sense of herself (ego), the sense of having an identity separate from other people's evaluations of her. She is also deprived of a sense of her own competence, of her ability to do and understand things. She is told she must be pretty and sweet; she must be loveable; she mustn't make messes or play rough; she must perform services for Mommy and Daddy and be useful. How different this is from the way boys are socialized—they know they will be loved even if they make messes, stay out late without phoning, get dirty, and act like brats. That's what boys are supposed to do: have strong, competitive egos. Whereas girls are taught to see themselves as *objects* rather than *subjects* (if only by being continually told what they look like, and how important it is to have other people like them). They are taught to be charming, yet passive. They are taught

to fail at most activities, so as not to be threatening or "unfeminine." They are taught to be of "service" to others, not to themselves, so that when they grow up they can be a wife and mother like their Mommy.

Women are stupefied, made *stupid*, by the roles they are pushed into. Books on educational psychology always remark the junior high and high school years as ones in which the boys "catch up" to the girls, and begin to surpass them scholastically and on IQ tests. It's no accident that these years are the ones of increased social pressure upon girls to take up their post-pubescent feminine roles and learn to live with them. It's not that the boys are growing smarter; the girls are becoming stupefied! Their IQ's—which, it is now recognized, are largely determined by social pressure and by the subject's expectations and sense of his own worth—continue to decline.

But this training in stupidity starts long before puberty. It starts before the small girl has enough ego to resist it. A teacher's training course at Boston University, that a friend of mine is taking, started with a snappy lecture on how children learn to read. The lecturer was a progressive educator; he believed in teaching people differently, according to the educational method most appropriate to them. "Little boys learn by taking things apart; they like to know how things work. The way to teach them to read is to show them an object, like a toy truck, and teach them the names of its different parts. They learn best through tactile and mechanical tools, so that's how to teach them language. Little girls learn best by rote. They learn faster than boys for this reason. All you have to do is show them flashcards." My friend was enraged: "But don't you see that that's how girls *get* this way," she said; "that's why we're unable to *think*!" The teacher admitted that the question might ultimately be one of socialization rather than nature, but "After all, you have to teach them the way they learn best, no matter what the cause is. And it makes your job easier—they're easier to teach." Less demanding. And so the cycle is perpetuated.

This remorseless stifling of a girl's intelligence and ego, this socialization into a life of service, this continued undermining of any possibility of independent achievement outside of the prescribed realm, all constitute a condition one could describe as *female schizophrenia*. Most women suffer from some form of it at some point in their lives. And most of them think of it as a "personal problem" rather than a social disease. That's part of the way

they're trapped. For this condition is too widespread and too structurally based to be merely "personal" in origin. Our society could be described as one which drives women crazy.

Many women are so systematically deprived of an ego that they must constantly refer to a mirror, to their physical presence, to reassure themselves that they are actually there, still in one piece. Women's lives are a series of small dramas in which they play shifting defensive roles. The necessity to do so is real, for they are under economic necessity, and often physical constraint as well, to faithfully play the parts of sister, daughter, wife, mother and lover. Many women see that these are a collection of roles, but the face behind the shifting masks is a mystery even to themselves. The only constant in their lives is misery and a never-ending unsureness of themselves. A woman must, in order to make it as a woman, reflect the desires and preconceptions of every man who has power over her. Otherwise she is out of a job, out of her parents' house, out of a marriage, with no available slot left to fill. Women have to play at being themselves—that is, their *nice* selves, the selves made to order on standard patterns. "Just be yourself, dear," we are told as we go off to the prom. And we wonder, "What does that mean? What am I expected to do?"

The greatest women writers, in all ages, have recorded the effects of such expectations upon their mind. Charlotte Brontë, a nineteenth-century feminist as well as a great novelist of feminine roles, wrote in *Shirley*:

Their sisters have no earthly employment but household work and sewing, no earthly pleasure but an unprofitable visiting, and no hope, in all their life to come, of anything better. This stagnant state of things makes them decline in health. They are never well, and their minds and views shrink to wondrous narrowness. The great wish, the sole aim of every one of them, is to be married, but the majority will never marry; they will die as they now live. They scheme, they plot, they dress to ensnare husbands. The gentlemen turn them into ridicule; they don't want them; they hold them very cheap. They say I have heard them say it with sneering laughs many a time the matrimonial market is overstocked. Fathers say likewise, and are angry with their daughters when they observe their manoeuvres they order them to stay at home. What do they expect them to do at home? If you ask, they would answer, sew and cook. They expect them to do this,

and this only, contentedly, regularly, uncomplainingly, all their lives long, as if they had no germ of faculties for anything else—a doctrine as reasonable to hold as it would be that the fathers have no faculties but for eating what their daughters cook or for wearing what they sew. Could men live so themselves? Would they not be very weary? And when there came no relief to their weariness, but only reproaches at its slightest manifestation, would not their weariness ferment in time to frenzy?

A contemporary novelist, Anaïs Nin, writes of such things at length in her diaries. The following excerpts are from her *Diary, 1931-1934* (Harcourt, Brace & World, and the Swallow Press, 1966):

They all want to sanctify me, to turn me into an effigy, a myth. They want to idealize me and pray to me, use me for consolation, comfort. Curse my image, the image of me which faces me every day with the same over-fineness, over-delicacy, the pride, the vulnerability which makes people want to preserve me, treat me with care. Curse my eyes which are sad, and deep, and my hands which are delicate, and my walk which is a glide, my voice which is a whisper, all that can be used for a poem, and too fragile to be raped, violated, used. I am near death from solitude, near dissolution.

I have always been tormented by the image of multiplicity of selves. Some days I call it a richness, and other days I see it as a disease, a proliferation as dangerous as cancer. My first concept of people about me was that all of them were coordinated into a whole, whereas I was made up of a multitude of selves, of fragments.

There were always, in me, two women at least, one woman desperate and bewildered, who felt she was drowning, and another who only wanted to bring beauty, grace, and aliveness to people, and who would leap into a scene, as upon a stage, conceal her true emotions because they were weaknesses, helplessness, despair, and present to the world only a smile, an eagerness, curiosity, enthusiasm, interest.

From the day she learns to understand signals, all a woman hears is a series of contradictory instructions and conflicting descriptions of the way she is to look and behave. She must be sexy and a virgin at once. She must be appreciative, yet challenging. She must be strong, yet weak. Vulnerable, yet able to protect herself. Smart enough to get a man, but not smart enough to threaten him, or, rather, smart

enough to conceal her intelligence and act manipulatively. Desired by all, but interested only in one. Sophisticated, yet naive at heart. And so on down the line.

She is in the position of the little boy Laing talks about in *The Self and Others*, whom a policeman saw run around the block ten times. The cop asked him what he was doing. The boy said, "I'm running away from home, but my father won't let me cross the street."

These contradictory injunctions are, of course, most acute in the realm of sexual behavior. For the first part of their lives, until they leave for college (if they do), most girls are still inculcated with an obsolete Puritanism that no longer accurately reflects either the social norms nor the necessities of the economic structure. When a girl becomes "independent," this older, repressive ideology is replaced by the new, improved, trendy, but equally manipulative, equally mystified, and equally destructive ideology of the "new morality," in which

women are defined as sex objects *even to themselves*. One of the definitive statements of this ideology can be found in *Cosmopolitan*, June, 1969. It is an article by a female gynecologist, Barbara Bross, entitled "How To Love Like a Real Woman." Dr. Bross states:

Sexual abstinence in a normally constituted person is always pathogenic. [Translation: that means "getting sick."] We have been given sex organs to use them. If we don't use them, they decay and cause irreparable damage to body and mind. This is blunt, firm, indisputable, and true . . . .

Woman is man's intermediary between himself and nature. He considers her as part of nature, though he will never say so, but that is what he feels. Her periods echo the rhythm of nature. Her ability to give birth makes her part of nature. She is the mother. She is the earth. She senses where he can only think or act. Woman *is*, man *does*. That is the strength and weakness of *both* sexes.

## Love

by SHULAMITH FIRESTONE

Shulamith Firestone is a founder of the radical feminist movement in New York (New York Radical Women, Redstockings, and currently New York Radical Feminists), editor of *Nores*, and author of *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (William Morrow, September, 1970). The following is a chapter from that book.

Wait! I'm not ready for this one yet, give me at least a few more years. But a book on radical feminism that does not deal with love? A political failure. For love, perhaps even more than childbearing, is the pivot of women's oppression today. I realize this has frightening implications: Do we want to get rid of love?

The panic felt at any threat to love is a good clue to its political significance. Another sign that love is central to any analysis of women or sex psychology is its omission from culture itself, its relegation to "personal life" (Whoever heard of a professor who was logical in the bedroom?). Yes, it is portrayed in novels, even metaphysics, but in these it is described, or better, recreated, not analyzed. Love has never been *understood*, though it

may have been fully *experienced* and the experience communicated.

There is reason for the lack of analysis: *Women and Love are underpinnings. Examine them and you threaten the very structure of culture.*

What were women doing while men created masterpieces? This tired question so often directed at feminists deserves more than the obvious reply: women were barred from culture, exploited in their role of mother. Or its reverse: women had no need for paintings since they created children (glorious). Sex is tied to culture in much deeper ways than that. *Men were thinking, writing, and creating, because women were pouring their energy into those men; women are not creating culture because they are preoccupied with love.*



That women live for love and men for work is a truism. Freud was the first to attempt to ground this dichotomy in the individual psyche: the male child, sexually rejected (the Oedipus Complex) by the first person in his attention, his mother, "sublimates" his "libido"—his reservoir of sexual (life) energies—into long-term projects, in the hope of gaining love in a more generalized form: thus he displaces his need for love into a need for recognition; the love of one person is transformed into love by the community. This process does not occur as much in the female. Most women never stop seeking direct warmth and approval.

There is also much truth in the clichés that "behind every man there is a woman," and that "women are the power [read "juice"] behind the throne." (Male) culture was built on the love of women, and at their expense. The female sacrifices to culture are too numerous to record: women provided the substance of those male masterpieces. For millenia women have done the work, and suffered the costs, of one-way emotional relationships the benefits of which went to men and to the work of men. So if women were a parasitical class living off, and at the margins of, the male economy, the reverse too is true: *(Male) culture was (and is) parasitical, feeding on the emotional strength of women without reciprocity.*

Moreover, we tend to forget that male culture is not universal, but rather sectarian, presenting only half the spectrum of life. The very structure of culture itself is saturated with limitations created by the sexual polarity, as well as being in every degree run by, for, and in the interests of, (male) society. But while the male half is termed all of culture, *men have not forgotten there is a female "emotional" half: they live it on the sly. Their inability to take love seriously as a cultural matter is the result of their battle to reject the female in themselves (the Oedipus Complex as we have explained it). But they can't do without love altogether. Love is the underbelly of (male) culture and love is the weak spot of every man, still bent on proving his virility in that large male world of "travel and adventure." Women have always known how men need love, and how they deny this need. Perhaps this explains the peculiar contempt women so universally feel for men ("Men are so dumb"), for they know their men are only posturing in the outside world—the way they come home to them every night tells them so.*

Of what does love consist? Contrary to popular

opinion, love is not altruistic. The initial attraction is based on curious admiration (more often today, envy and resentment) for the self-possession, the integrated unity, of the other and a wish to become part of this Self in some way (today, read: intrude or take over), to become important to that other equilibrium. The self-containment of the other creates desire (read: a challenge). Admiration (envy) of the other becomes a wish to incorporate (possess) its qualities. A clash of selves follows in which the individual attempts to fight off the growing hold over him of the other. Love is the final opening up to (read: surrender to the dominion of) the other. The lover demonstrates to the beloved how he himself would like to be treated. ("I tried so hard to make him fall in love with me that I fell in love with him myself.") Thus love is the height of selfishness: the self attempts to enrich itself through the absorption of another being. Love is being psychically wide-open to another. It is a situation of total emotional vulnerability. Therefore it must be not only the incorporation of the other, but an exchange of selves. Anything short of a mutual exchange will hurt one or the other party.

There is nothing inherently destructive about this process. A little healthy selfishness would be a refreshing change. Love between two equals could be an enrichment, each enlarging himself through the other: instead of being one, locked in the cell of himself with only his own experience and view, he could participate in the existence of another—an extra window on the world. This accounts for the bliss that successful lovers experience: Lovers are temporarily freed from the burden of isolation that every individual bears.

But none of this is now the case: for every successful contemporary love experience, for every short period of enrichment, there are ten destructive love experiences, post-love "downs" of much longer duration—often resulting in the destruction of the individual, or at least an emotional cynicism that makes it difficult or impossible ever to love again. Why should this be so, if it is not actually inherent in the love process itself?

To talk about love in its destructive guise—and why it gets that way—we shall again refer to the work of Theodore Reik. Reik's concrete observation brings him closer than many better minds to understanding the process of "falling in love." But he is off insofar as he confuses love as it exists in our present society with the love process itself. He notes that love is a reaction formation, a cycle of envy,

hostility, and possessiveness. He sees that it is preceded by dissatisfaction with oneself, a yearning for something better, created by a discrepancy between the ego and the ego-ideal; that the bliss love produces is due to the resolution of this tension by the substitution, in place of one's own ego-ideal, of the other; and finally that love fades "because the other can't live up to your high ego-ideal any more than you could; the judgment will be the harsher the higher are the claims on oneself." Thus in Reik's view, love wears down just as it wound up: dissatisfaction with oneself (whoever heard of falling in love the week one is leaving for Europe?) leads to astonishment at the other person's self-containment, to envy, to hostility, to possessive love, and back again through exactly the same process. This is the love process *today*. But why must it be this way?

Many, for example Denis de Rougemont in *Love in the Western World*, have tried to draw a distinction between romantic "falling in love" (the Pagan Eros) with its "false reciprocity which disguises a twin narcissism" and a genuine (unselfish) love for the other person as that person really is (the Christian Agape). De Rougemont falsely attributes the morbid passion of Tristan and Isolde (romanticism) to a vulgarization of certain mystical and religious currents in Western civilization. *I believe rather that love is essentially a much simpler phenomenon, but one that can be obstructed, distorted, or poisoned by an unequal balance of power. We have seen that love demands a mutual vulnerability or its turns destructive: the destructive effects of love occur only in a context of inequality.* But if, as we have seen, (biological) inequality has always remained a constant, existing to varying degrees, then it is understandable that "romantic love" would develop. (It remains for us only to explain why it has steadily increased in Western countries since the medieval period, which we shall attempt to do in the following chapter.)

How does the sex class system based on the unequal power distribution of the biological family affect love between the sexes? In discussing Freudianism, we have gone into the psychic structuring of the individual within the family and how this organization of personality must be different for the male and the female because of different relationships of the two sexes to the mother. At present the insular interdependency of the mother/child relationship forces both male and female children into anxiety about losing the mother's love, on which they depend for physical survival. When later the child learns that the mother's love is conditional, to be

rewarded the child in return for approved behavior (that is, behavior in line with the mother's own values and personal ego gratification—for she is free to mold the child "creatively," however she happens to define that), the child's anxiety turns into desperation. This, coinciding with the sexual rejection of the male child by the mother, causes, as we have seen, a schizophrenia in the boy between the emotional and the physical, and in the girl, an insecurity about her identity in general, creating a tremendous need for approval. (Later her lover replaces her father (as "superego")—she sees everything through his eyes—as the grantor of identity.) Here originates the hunger for love that later sends the child searching in one person after the other for a state of ego security. But because of the early rejection, to the degree that it occurred, the male will be terrified of committing himself, of "opening up" and then being smashed. How this affects his sexuality we have seen: to the degree that the woman is like his mother, the incest taboo operates to restrain his total sexual/emotional commitment; for him to feel safely the kind of total response he first felt for his mother, which was rejected, he must degrade this woman so as to distinguish her from the mother. This behavior reproduced on a larger scale explains many cultural phenomena, including perhaps the ideal love-worship of chivalric times, the forerunner of modern romanticism.

Romantic idealization is partially responsible, at least on the part of men, for a peculiar characteristic of "falling" in love: the change takes place in the lover almost independently of the character of the love object. (We have all noticed how people we really think a lot of fall in love with utter creeps.) Occasionally the lover, though beside himself, sees with another rational part of his faculties that, objectively speaking, the one he loves isn't worth all this blind devotion. But he is helpless to act on this, "a slave to love." More often he fools himself entirely. But others can see what is happening ("How on earth he could love her is beyond me!"). Such idealization occurs much less frequently on the part of women, as is borne out in Reik's clinical practice. A man must idealize one woman over the rest in order to justify his descent to a lower caste. Women have no such reason to idealize men—in fact, when one's life depends on one's ability to "psych" men out, such idealization may actually be dangerous—though a fear of male power in general may carry over into relationships with individual men. But though women know to be inauthentic



this male "falling in love," all women, in one way or another, require proof of it before they can allow themselves to love (genuinely, in their case) in return. This idealization process acts to artificially equalize the two parties, a minimum precondition for the development of (an uncorrupted) love—for we have seen that love requires a mutual vulnerability that is impossible to achieve in an unequal power situation. Thus "falling in love" is no more than the process of alteration of male vision—through idealization, mystification, glorification—that renders void the woman's class inferiority.

However, the woman knows that this idealization, which she works so hard to produce, is a lie, and that it is only a matter of time before he "sees through her." Her life is a hell, vacillating between that all-consuming need for male love and approval to raise her from her (class) subjection, to persistent feelings of inauthenticity when she does achieve his love. Thus her whole identity hangs in the balance of her love life. She is allowed to love herself only if a man finds her worthy of love.

But if we could eliminate the unequal (thus political) context of love between the sexes, would we not have some degree of idealization remaining in the love process itself? I think so. For the process occurs in the same manner whoever the love choice: the lover "opens up" to the other. Because of this fusion of egos, in which each sees and cares about the other as a new self, the beauty/character of the beloved, perhaps hidden to outsiders under layers of defenses, is revealed. "I wonder what she sees in him," then, means not only, "She is a fool, blinded with romanticism," but, "Her love has lent her x-ray vision. Perhaps we are missing something." (Note that this phrase is most commonly used about women; the equivalent phrase about men's slavery to love is more often something like, "She has him wrapped around her finger," she has him so "snowed" that he is the last one to see through her.) Increased sensitivity to the real (if hidden) values in the other, however, is not "blindness" or "idealization" but is, in fact, deeper vision. It is only the false idealization we have described above that is responsible for the destruction. Thus it is not the process of love itself that is at fault, but its political, i.e., unequal power context; the who, why, when and where of it is what makes it now such a holocaust.

But abstractions about love are only one more symptom of its diseased state. (As one female patient of Reik so astutely put it, "Men take love

either too seriously or not seriously enough.") Let's look at it more concretely, as we now experience it in its corrupted form. Once again we shall quote from the Reikian Confessional. For if Reik's work has any value, it is where he might least suspect, i.e., in his trivial (feminine) urge to "gossip." Here he is, justifying himself (one supposes his Superego is troubling him):

A has-been like myself must always be somewhere and working on something. Why should I not occupy myself with those small questions that are not often posed and yet perhaps can be answered? The "petites questions" have a legitimate place beside the great and fundamental problems of psychoanalysis.

It takes moral courage to write about certain things, as for example about a game that little girls play in the intervals between classes. Is such a theme really worthy of a serious psychoanalyst who has passed his 77th year? (Italics mine.)

And he reminds himself:

But in psychoanalysis there are no unimportant thoughts; there are only thoughts that pretend to be unimportant in order not to be told.

Thus he rationalizes what in fact may be the only valuable contribution of his work. Here are his patients of both sexes speaking for themselves about their love lives:

#### WOMEN:

No man can love a girl the way a girl loves a man.

I can go a long time without sex, but not without love.

Later on he called me a sweet girl... I didn't answer... what could I say?... but I knew I was not a sweet girl at all and that he sees me as someone I'm not.

It's like H<sub>2</sub>O instead of water.

I sometimes think that all men are sex-crazy and sex-starved. All they can think about when they are with a girl is going to bed with her.

Have I nothing to offer this man but this body?

I took off my dress and my bra and stretched myself out on his bed and waited. For an instant I thought of myself as an animal of sacrifice on the altar.

I don't understand the feelings of men. My husband has me. Why does he need other women? What have they got that I haven't got?

Believe me, if all wives whose husbands had affairs left them, we would only have divorced women in this country.

After my husband had quite a few affairs, I flirted with the fantasy of taking a lover. Why not? What's a sauce for the gander is a sauce for the goose. . . . But I was stupid as a goose. I didn't have it in me to have an extramarital affair.

I asked several people whether men also sometimes cry themselves to sleep. I don't believe it.

MEN (for further illustration, see *Screw*):

It's not true that only the external appearance of a woman matters. The underwear is also important.

It's not difficult to make it with a girl. What's difficult is to make an end of it.

The girl asked me whether I cared for her mind. I was tempted to answer I cared more for her behind.

Perhaps it's necessary to fool the woman and to pretend you love her. But why should I fool myself?

"Are you going already?" she said when she opened her eyes. It was a bedroom cliché whether I left after an hour or after two days.

When she is sick, she turns me off. But when I'm sick she feels sorry for me and is more affectionate than usual.

It is not enough for my wife that I have to hear her talking all the time—blah, blah, blah. She also expects me to hear what she is saying.

Simone de Beauvoir said it: "The word love has by no means the same sense for both sexes, and this is one cause of the serious misunderstandings which divide them." Above, I have illustrated the traditional differences between men and women concerning love that come up so frequently in parlor discussions of the double standard, where it is generally agreed that: women are monogamous, better at loving, possessive, "clinging," more interested in (highly involved) "relationships" than in sex per se, and that they confuse affection with sexual desire. That men are interested in nothing but a screw (Wham, bam, thank you M'am!), or else romanticize the woman ridiculously; that once sure of her, they become notorious philanderers, never satisfied; that they mistake sex for emotion. All this bears out what we have discussed—the different psychological organizations of the two sexes, originating in the relationship to the mother.

I draw three conclusions based on these differences:

1) That men can't love. (This is so consistent and undeniable that many women believe it to be some inherent congenital deficiency [male hormones?]. Thus they put up with an emotional invalidism in men that they would find unacceptable in a woman.)

2) That women's "clinging" behavior is necessitated by their objective social situation.

3) That this situation has not changed significantly from what it ever was.

1. We have seen why it is that men have difficulty loving and that while men may love, they usually "fall in love"—with their own projected image. Most often they are pounding down a woman's door one day, and thoroughly disillusioned with her the next; but it is rare for women to leave men, and then it is usually for more than ample reason.

It is dangerous to sympathize with one's oppressor, and women are especially prone to this failing—but I am tempted to do it in this case. Being unable to love is hell. This is the way it proceeds: as soon as the man feels any pressure from the other partner to commit himself, he panics and may react in one of several ways:

1) He may rush out and screw ten other women to prove that the first woman has no hold over him. If she accepts this, he may continue to see her on this basis. The other women verify his (false) freedom; periodic arguments about them keep his panic at bay. But the women are a paper tiger, for nothing very deep could be happening with them anyway: he is balancing them against each other so that none of them can get much of him. Many smart women, recognizing this to be only a safety valve on their man's anxiety, give him "a long leash." For the real issue under all the fights about other women is that the man is unable to commit himself.

2) He may consistently exhibit unpredictable behavior, standing her up frequently, being indefinite about the next date, telling her that "my work comes first," or offering a variety of other excuses. That is, though he senses her anxiety, he refuses to reassure her in any way, or even to recognize her anxiety as legitimate. For he needs her anxiety as a steady reminder that he is still free, that the door is not entirely closed.

3) When he is forced into (an uneasy) commitment, he makes her pay for it: by ogling other women in her presence, by reminding her in front of friends that she is his "ball and chain," by calling

her a "nag," a "bitch," etc., or by suggesting that if he were only a bachelor he would be a lot better off. His ambivalence about women's "inferiority" comes out: by being committed to one, he has somehow made the hated female identification, which he now must repeatedly deny if he is to maintain his self-respect in the (male) community. This steady derogation is not entirely put on: for in fact every other girl suddenly does look a lot better, he can't help feeling he has missed something—and, naturally, his woman is to blame. For he has never given up the search for the "ideal"; she has *forced him to resign from it. He will probably die feeling cheated, never realizing that there isn't much difference between one woman and the other, that it is the loving that creates the difference.*

*There are many variations of straining at the bit. Many men go from one casual thing to another, getting out every time it begins to get hot. And yet to live without love in the end proves intolerable to men just as it does to women. The question that remains for every normal male is, then, how do I get someone to love me without her demanding an equal commitment in return?*

2. Women's "clinging" behavior is required by the objective social situation. The female response to such a situation of male hysteria at any prospect of mutual commitment was the development of subtle methods of manipulation, to force as much commitment as *could* be forced from men. Over the centuries strategies have been devised, tested, and passed on from mother to daughter in secret tête-à-têtes, passed around at "kaffee klatches" ("I never understand what it is women spend so much time talking about!"), or, in recent times, via the telephone. These are not trivial gossip sessions at all (as women prefer men to believe), but desperate strategies for survival. More real brilliance goes into one one-hour coed telephone dialogue about men than into that same coed's four years of college study, or for that matter, than into most male political maneuvers. It is no wonder, then, that even women without "family obligations" always arrive exhausted at the starting line of any serious endeavor. ("To be in love can be a full-time job for a woman, like that of a profession for a man.") It takes one's major energy for the best portion of one's creative years to "make a good catch," and a good part of the rest of one's life to "hold" that catch. Women who choose to drop out of this race are choosing a life without love, something that, as we have seen, most men don't have the courage to do.

But unfortunately The Manhunt is characterized by an emotional urgency beyond this simple desire for return commitment. It is compounded by the very reality that produced the male inability to love. In a male-run society that defines women as an inferior and parasitical class, a woman who does not achieve male approval in some form is doomed. To legitimate her existence, an individual must be *more* than woman; she must continually search for an out from her inferior class definition. But men are the only ones in a position to bestow on her this state of grace. (Thus the peculiar situation that *women never object to the insulting of women as a class, as long as they individually are excepted.* The worst insult for a woman is that she is "just like a woman," i.e., no better; the highest compliment that she has the brains, talent, dignity, or strength of a man. In fact, like every other oppressed person, she herself participates in the insulting of other women, hoping thereby to make it obvious that *she* is above their behavior. Thus women are set against each other ["divide and conquer"], the "other woman" believing that the wife is a "bitch" who "doesn't understand him," and the wife believing that the other woman is an "opportunist" who is "taking advantage" of him—while the culprit himself sneaks away free.) But because the woman is rarely allowed to realize herself through activity in the larger (male) society—and when she is, she is seldom granted the recognition she deserves—it becomes easier to try for the recognition of one man than of many. And in fact this is exactly the choice most women make. Thus once more the phenomenon of love, good in itself, is distorted by a given political situation: women need love not only for healthy reasons but actually to validate their existence.

In addition, the continued economic dependence of women makes a situation of healthy love between equals impossible. Women today still live under a system of patronage. With few exceptions, they have the choice, not of either freedom and marriage, but of being either public or private property. Women who merge with a member of the ruling class can at least hope that some of his privilege will, so to speak, rub off. But women without men are in the same situation as orphans: they are a helpless sub-class lacking the protection of the powerful. This is the antithesis of freedom when they are still unfavorably defined by a class situation: for now they are in a situation of *magnified* vulnerability. To participate in one's subjection by choosing one's master often gives the illu-

sion of free choice; but in reality a woman is never free to choose love without external motivations. For her at the present time, the two things, love and status, must remain inextricably intertwined.

Now assuming that a woman does not lose sight of these fundamental factors of her condition when she loves, she will never be able to love gratuitously, but only in exchange for security:

1) the emotional security which, we have seen, she is justified in demanding.

2) the emotional identity which she should be able to find through work and recognition, but which she is denied—thus forcing her to seek her definition vicariously through a man.

3) the economic class security that, in this society, is attached to her ability to “hook” a man.

Two of these three demands are invalid in terms of love itself, but are imposed on it, weighing it down.

Thus in their precarious (political) situation, women can't afford the luxury of spontaneous love. It is much too dangerous. The love and approval of men is all-important. To love thoughtlessly before one has ensured return commitment would endanger that approval. Here is Reik:

It finally became clear during psychoanalysis that the patient was afraid that if she should show a man she loved him, he would consider her inferior and leave her.

For once she plunges in emotionally, she will be helpless to play the necessary games: her love would come first, demanding expression. To pretend a coolness she does not feel, *then*, would be too painful, and further, it would be pointless: she would be cutting off her nose to spite her face, for freedom to love is what she was aiming for. But in order to guarantee such a commitment, she *must* restrain her emotions, she *must* play games. For, as we have seen, men do not commit themselves to equal openness and vulnerability until they are forced to.

How does she then go about forcing this commitment from the other person? One of her most potent weapons is sex—she can work him up to a state of physical torment in a variety of ways: by denying his need, by teasing it, by giving and taking back, through jealousy, etc. A woman under analysis wonders why:

There are few women who never ask themselves on certain occasions “How hard should I make it for a man?” I think no man is troubled with

questions of this kind. He perhaps asks himself only, “When will she give in?”

Men are right when they complain that women lack discrimination, that they seldom love a man for his individual wants but rather for what he has to offer (his class), that they are calculating, that they use sex to gain other ends, etc. For in fact women are in no position to love freely. If a woman is lucky enough to find “a decent guy” to love her and support her, she is doing well—and usually will be grateful enough to return his love. About the only discrimination women *are* able to exercise is the choice between the men who have chosen them, or a playing off of one male, one power, against the other. But *provoking* a man's interest, and *snaring* his commitment once he has expressed that interest, is not free choice.

Now what happens after she has finally hooked her man, after he has fallen in love with her and will do anything? She has a new set of problems. Now she can release the vise, open her net, and examine what she has caught. Usually she is disappointed. It is nothing she would have bothered with were *she* a man. It is usually way below her level. (Check this out sometime: Talk to a few of those mousy wives.) “He may be a poor thing, but at least I've got a man of my own” is usually more the way she feels. But at least now she can drop her act. For the first time it is safe to love—now she must try like hell to catch up to him emotionally, to really mean what she has pretended all along. Often she is troubled by worries that he will find her out; she feels like an impostor; she is haunted by fears that he doesn't love the “real” her—and usually she is right. (“She wanted to marry a man with whom she could be as bitchy as she really is.”)

This is just about when she discovers that love and marriage mean a different thing for a male than they do for her. Though men in general believe women in general to be inferior, every man has reserved a special place in his mind for the one woman he will elevate above the rest by virtue of association with himself. Until now the woman, out in the cold, begged for his approval, dying to clamber onto this clean well-lighted place. But once there, she realizes that she was elevated above other women not in recognition of her real value but only because she matched nicely his store-bought pedestal. Probably he doesn't even know who she is (if indeed by this time she herself knows). He has let her in not because he genuinely loved her, but

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Photo: David Robison-Bethel



Photo: Michael Hardy



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only because she played so well into his preconceived fantasies. Though she knew his love to be false, since she herself engineered it, she can't help feeling contempt for him. But she is afraid, at first, to reveal her true self, for then perhaps even that false love would go. And finally she understands that for him, too, marriage had all kinds of motivations that had nothing to do with love. She was merely the one closest to his fantasy image: she has been named most versatile actress for the multi-role of Alter Ego, Mother of My Children, Housekeeper, Cook, Companion, in his play. She has been bought to fill an empty space in his life; but her life is nothing.

So that she has not saved herself from being like other women. She is lifted out of that class only because she now is an appendage of a member of the master class; and he cannot associate with her unless he raises her status. But she has not been freed, she has been promoted to "house nigger," she has been elevated only to be used in a different way. She feels cheated. She has gotten not love and recognition, but possession and control. This is when she is transformed from Blushing Bride to Bitch, a change that no matter how universal and predictable, still leaves the individual husband perplexed. ("You're not the girl I married.")

3. *The situation of women has not changed significantly from what it ever was.* For the past fifty years women have been in a double bind about love: under the guise of a "sexual revolution," presumed to have occurred ("Oh, c'mon Baby, where have you been? Haven't you heard of the sexual revolution?"), women have been persuaded to shed their armor. The modern woman is in horror of being thought a bitch, where her grandmother expected that to happen as the natural course of things. Men, too, in her grandmother's time, expected that any self-respecting woman would keep them waiting, would play all the right games without shame: a woman who did not guard her own interests in this way was not respected. It was out in the open.

But the rhetoric of the sexual revolution, if it brought no improvements for women, proved to have great value for men. By convincing women that the usual female games and demands were despicable, unfair, prudish, old-fashioned, puritanical, and self-destructive, a new reservoir of available females was created to expand the tight supply of sexual goods available for traditional exploitation, disarming women of even the little protection

they had so painfully acquired. Women today dare not make the old demands for fear of having a whole new vocabulary, designed just for this purpose, hurled at them: "fucked up," "ballbreaker," "cockteaser," "a real drag," "a bad trip," etc.—to be a "groovy chick" is the ideal. Even now many women know what's up and avoid the trap, preferring to be called names rather than be cheated of the little they can hope for from men (for it is still true that even the hippest males want an "old lady" who is relatively unused). But more and more women are sucked into the trap, only to find out too late, and bitterly, that the traditional female games had a point; they are shocked to catch themselves at thirty complaining in a vocabulary dangerously close to the old I've-been-used-men-are-wolves-they're-all-bastards variety. Eventually they are forced to swallow the old-wives' truth: a fair and generous woman is (at best) respected, but seldom loved. Here is a description, still valid today, of the "emancipated" woman—in this case a Greenwich Village artist of the thirties—from *Mosquitoes*, an early Faulkner novel:

She had always had trouble with her men . . . Sooner or later they always ran out on her . . . Men she recognized as having potentialities all passed through a violent but temporary period of interest which ceased as abruptly as it began, without leaving even the lingering threads of mutually remembered incidence, like those brief thunderstorms of August that threaten and dissolve for no apparent reason without producing any rain.

At times she speculated with almost masculine detachment on the reason for this. She always tried to keep their relationships on the plane which the men themselves seemed to prefer—certainly no woman would, and few women could, demand less of their men than she did. She never made arbitrary demands on their time, never caused them to wait for her nor to see her home at inconvenient hours, never made them fetch and carry for her; she fed them and flattered herself that she was a good listener. And yet—She thought of the women she knew; how all of them had at least one obviously entranced male; she thought of the women she had observed; how they seemed to acquire a man at will, and if he failed to stay acquired, how readily they replaced him.

Women of high ideals who believed emancipation possible, women who tried desperately to rid themselves of feminine "hangups," to cultivate what they



believed to be the greater directness, honesty, and generosity of men, were badly fooled. They found that no one appreciated their intelligent conversation, their high aspirations, their great sacrifices to avoid developing the personalities of their mothers. For much as men were glad to enjoy their wit, their style, their sex, and their candlelight suppers, they always ended up marrying The Bitch, and then, to top it all off, came back to complain of what a horror she was. "Emancipated" women found out that the honesty, generosity, and camaraderie of men was a lie: men were all too glad to use them and then sell them out, in the name of *true* friendship. ("I respect and like you a great deal, but let's be reasonable . . ."; and then there are the men who take her out to discuss Simone de Beauvoir, leaving their wives at home with the diapers.) "Emancipated" women found out that men were far from "good guys" to be emulated; they found out that by imitating male sexual patterns (the roving eye, the search for the ideal, the emphasis on physical attraction, etc.), they were not only not achieving liberation, they were falling into something much worse than what they had given up. They were *imitating*. And they had inoculated themselves with a sickness that had not even sprung from their own psyches. They found that their new "cool" was shallow and meaningless, that their emotions were drying up behind it, that they were aging and becoming decadent: they feared they were losing their ability to love. They had gained nothing by imitating men: shallowness and callowness, and they were not so good at it either, because somewhere inside it still went against the grain.

Thus women who had decided not to marry because they were wise enough to look around and see where it led found that it was marry or nothing: men gave their commitment only for a price: share (shoulder) his life, stand on his pedestal, become his appendage, or else. Or else—be consigned forever to that limbo of "chicks" who mean nothing or at least not what mother meant. Be the "other woman" for the rest of one's life, used to provoke his wife, prove his virility and/or independence, discussed by his friends as his latest "interesting" conquest. (For even if she had given up those terms and what they stood for, no one else had.) Yes, love means an entirely different thing to men than to women: it means ownership and control; it means jealousy, where he never exhibited it before—when she might have wanted him to (who cares if she is broke or raped until she officially belongs to him: then he is a raging dynamo, a veritable cy-

clone, because his property, his ego extension, have been threatened); it means a growing lack of interest, coupled with a roving eye. Who needs it?

Sadly, women do. Here are Reik's patients once more:

She sometimes has delusions of not being persecuted by men anymore. At those times of her nonpersecution mania she is very depressed.

And:

All men are selfish, brutal and inconsiderate—and I wish I could find one.

We have seen how a woman needs love, first, for its natural enriching function, and second, for social and economic reasons which have nothing to do with love. To deny her need is to put herself an extra-vulnerable spot socially and economically, as well as to destroy her emotional equilibrium, which, unlike most men's, is basically healthy. Are men worth that? Decidedly no. Most women feel that to do such tailspins for a man would be to add insult to injury. They go on as before, making the best of a bad situation. If it gets *too* bad, they head for a (male) shrink:

A young woman patient was once asked during a psychoanalytic consultation whether she preferred to see a man or woman psychoanalyst. Without the slightest hesitation she said, "A woman psychoanalyst because I am too eager for the approval of a man."

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And yet it is 1970, and some of us are determined to put an end to this. Our healthiest instincts lead into a blind alley: the choice between self-destruction or self-destruction. We ask only to be allowed to love freely. But our love is turned against us, is used as a weapon to keep us down and in our "place," isolating us from each other to keep us from gaining political strength: because we have truly loved our oppressor, we have come to participate gladly in our oppression, to beg for more. "We have forgiven the grossest damage to ourselves, all in the name of LOVE. But that love itself is poisoned love. It has been determined by the male sickness: the natural animal need for affectionate physical contact has been channeled into a (boring) sexual gymnastics—a phony passion its only outlet. We have had enough.

And yet we are in a dilemma: none of the several choices open to us is without penalty. (Note that the price of freedom is still on the heads of the oppressed rather than the oppressor.)

1) we can emulate men in cutting off our emotions, an awful way to live;

2) we can return to the traditional female games, playing them with a yet unequal vengeance to compensate for this latest male trick—the "sexual revolution"—but then we will be back where we started, damaging ourselves to avoid a worse damage by our enemies, using the negative strengths of the oppressed rather than taking the law into our own hands;

3) we can join the Search For the Mirage—the man willing to give up his male privilege (not "being a man" in our society has its own price)—expecting a big run of competition should we ever find him;

4) we can attempt to form total relationships with women: but this solution presents a whole new set of problems, for we would have to undo the fundamental organization of our personalities. Also, as we have seen, lesbianism at the present time must be an aberration of heterosexuality, one with its own dynamic of dominance/submission. Male/female patterns would be recreated in our ranks, thus seriously weakening our movement;

5) we could learn to masturbate without guilt—temporarily sacrificing a *social* physical love altogether—but this is a price few of us are willing to pay.

None of these are solutions. For at least several more years, until we have a movement strong enough to force change (when he goes to that "other woman," she will be with us), we will have to *accommodate ourselves as best we can to whichever of these (inadequate) adjustments each of us can best live with*—putting our energy into raising consciousness about the issues, destruction of the institutions which have created the problem, and, finally, the revolutionary reconstruction of society in a way that will allow love to function naturally (joyfully) as an exchange of emotional riches between equals, rather than in its present perversion: agent of destruction.

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Photo: Michael Hardy

# The Politics of Housework

by PAT MAINARDI

Pat Mainardi is a member of Redstockings. She has spoken frequently for People to Abolish Abortion Laws and has been associated with Women Artists in Revolution (WAR), a feminist caucus which has recently split from the Art Worker's Coalition (for the usual reasons). But, Pat says, "my primary identity is housewife."

Though women do not complain of the power of husbands, each complains of her own husband, or of the husbands of her friends. It is the same in all other cases of servitude; at least in the commencement of the emancipatory movement. The serfs did not at first complain of the power of the lords, but only of their tyranny.

—John Stuart Mill,  
*On the Subjection of Women*

Liberated women—very different from Women's Liberation! The first signals all kinds of goodies, to warm the hearts (not to mention other parts) of the most radical men. The other signals—HOUSEWORK. The first brings sex without marriage, sex before marriage, cozy housekeeping arrangements ("I'm living with this chick") and the self-content of knowing that you're not the kind of man who wants a doormat instead of a woman. That will come later. After all, who wants that old commodity anymore, the Standard American Housewife, all husband, home and kids. The New Commodity, the Liberated Woman, has sex a lot and has a Career, preferably something that can be fitted in with the household chores—like dancing, pottery, or painting.

On the other hand is Women's Liberation—and housework. What? You say this is all trivial? Wonderful! That's what I thought. It seemed perfectly reasonable. We both had careers, both had to work a couple of days a week to earn enough to live on, so why shouldn't we share the housework? So I suggested it to my mate and he agreed—most men are too hip to turn you down flat. You're right, he said. It's only fair.

Then an interesting thing happened. I can only explain it by stating that we women have been brainwashed more than even we can imagine. Probably too many years of seeing television women in ecstasy over their shiny waxed floors or breaking down over their dirty shirt collars. Men have no such conditioning. They recognize the essential fact of housework right from the very beginning. Which is that it stinks.

Here's my list of dirty chores: buying groceries, carting them home and putting them away; cooking meals and washing dishes and pots; doing the laundry, digging out the place when things get out of control; washing floors. The list could go on but the sheer necessities are bad enough. All of us have to do these things, or get someone else to do them for us. The longer my husband contemplated these chores, the more repulsed he became, and so proceeded the change from the normally sweet considerate Dr. Jekyll into the crafty Mr. Hyde who would stop at nothing to avoid the horrors of—housework. As he felt himself backed into a corner laden with dirty dishes, brooms, mops and reeking garbage, his front teeth grew longer and pointier, his fingernails haggled and his eyes grew wild. Housework trivial? Not on your life! Just try to share the burden.

So ensued a dialogue that's been going on for several years. Here are some of the high points:

● "I don't mind sharing the housework, but I don't do it very well. We should each do the things we're best at." MEANING: Unfortunately I'm no good at things like washing dishes or cooking. What I do best is a little light carpentry, changing light bulbs, moving furniture (how often do you move furniture?) ALSO MEANING: Historically the lower classes (black men and us) have had hundreds of years experience doing menial jobs. It would be a waste of manpower to train someone else to do them now. ALSO MEANING: I don't like the dull stupid boring jobs, so you should do them.

● "I don't mind sharing the work, but you'll have to show me how to do it." MEANING: I ask a lot of questions and you'll have to show me everything every time I do it because I don't remember so good. Also don't try to sit down and read while I'm doing my jobs because I'm going to annoy hell out of you until it's easier to do them yourself.

● "We used to be so happy!" (Said whenever it was his turn to do something.) MEANING: I used to be so happy. MEANING: Life without house-

work is bliss. No quarrel here. Perfect Agreement.

● "We have different standards, and why should I have to work to your standards? That's unfair." MEANING: If I begin to get bugged by the dirt and crap I will say, "This place sure is a sty" or "How can anyone live like this?" and wait for your reaction. I know that all women have a sore called "Guilt over a messy house" or "Household work is ultimately my responsibility." I know that men have caused that sore—if anyone visits and the place is a sty, they're not going to leave and say, "He sure is a lousy housekeeper." You'll take the rap in any case. I can outwait you. ALSO MEANING: I can provoke innumerable scenes over the housework issue. Eventually doing all the housework yourself will be less painful to you than trying to get me to do half. Or I'll suggest we get a maid. She will do my share of the work. You will do yours. It's women's work.

● "I've got nothing against sharing the housework, but you can't make me do it on your schedule." MEANING: Passive resistance. I'll do it when I damned well please, if at all. If my job is doing dishes, it's easier to do them once a week. If taking out laundry, once a month. If washing the floors, once a year. If you don't like it, do it yourself oftener, and then I won't do it at all.

● "I hate it more than you. You don't mind it so much." MEANING: Housework is garbage work. It's the worst crap I've ever done. It's degrading and humiliating for someone of my intelligence to do it. But for someone of your intelligence . . . .

● "Housework is too trivial to even talk about." MEANING: It's even more trivial to do. Housework is beneath my status. My purpose in life is to deal with matters of significance. Yours is to deal with matters of insignificance. You should do the housework.

● "This problem of housework is not a man-woman problem. In any relationship between two people one is going to have a stronger personality and dominate. MEANING: That stronger personality had better be me.

● "In animal societies, wolves, for example, the top animal is usually a male even where he is not chosen for brute strength but on the basis of cunning and intelligence. Isn't that interesting?" MEANING: I have historical, psychological, anthropological and biological justification for keeping you down. How can you ask the top wolf to be equal?

● "Women's Liberation isn't really a political movement." MEANING: The Revolution is coming

too close to home. ALSO MEANING: I am only interested in how I am oppressed, not how I oppress others. Therefore the war, the draft and the university are political. Women's Liberation is not.

● Man's accomplishments have always depended on getting help from other people, mostly women. What great man would have accomplished what he did if he had to do his own housework?" MEANING: Oppression is built into the system and I, as the white American male, receive the benefits of this system. I don't want to give them up.

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Participatory democracy begins at home. If you are planning to implement your politics, there are certain things to remember:

1. He is feeling it more than you. He's losing some leisure and you're gaining it. The measure of your oppression is his resistance.

2. A great many American men are not accustomed to doing monotonous repetitive work which never issues in any lasting, let alone important, achievement. This is why they would rather repair a cabinet than wash dishes. If human endeavors are like a pyramid with man's highest achievements at the top, then keeping oneself alive is at the bottom. Men have always had servants (us) to take care of this bottom strata of life while they have confined their efforts to the rarefied upper regions. It is thus ironic when they ask of women—where are your great painters, statesmen, etc. Mme Matisse ran a millinery shop so he could paint. Mrs. Martin Luther King kept his house and raised his babies.

3. It is a traumatizing experience for someone who has always thought of himself as being against any oppression or exploitation of one human being by another to realize that in his daily life he has been accepting and implementing (and benefiting from) this exploitation; that his rationalization is little different from that of the racist who says "Black people don't feel pain" (women don't mind doing the shitwork); and that the oldest form of oppression in history has been the oppression of 50% of the population by the other 50%.

4. Arm yourself with some knowledge of the psychology of oppressed peoples everywhere, and a few facts about the animal kingdom. I admit playing top wolf or who runs the gorillas is silly but as a last resort men bring it up all the time. Talk about bees. If you feel really hostile bring up the sex life of spiders. They have sex. She bites off his head.

The psychology of oppressed peoples is not silly. Jews, immigrants, black men and all women have employed the same psychological mechanisms to survive: admiring the oppressor, glorifying the oppressor, wanting to be like the oppressor, wanting the oppressor to like them, mostly because the oppressor held all the power.

5. In a sense, all men everywhere are slightly schizoid—divorced from the reality of maintaining life. This makes it easier for them to play games with it. It is almost a cliché that women feel greater grief at sending a son off to a war or losing him to

changes but it goes on. Don't fall for any line about the death of everything if men take a turn at the dishes. They will imply that you are holding back the Revolution (their Revolution). But you are advancing it (your Revolution).

7. Keep checking up. Periodically consider who's actually doing the jobs. These things have a way of backsliding so that a year later once again the woman is doing everything. After a year make a list of jobs the man has rarely if ever done. You will find cleaning pots, toilets, refrigerators and ovens high on the list. Use time sheets if necessary. He

### LITTLE POLITICS OF HOUSEWORK QUIZ

1. The lowest job in the army, used as punishment is a) working 9-5 b) kitchen duty (K.P.).

2. When a man lives with his family, his a) father b) mother does his housework.

3. When he lives with a woman, a) he b) she does the housework.

4. a) His son b) His daughter learns preschool how much fun it is to iron daddy's handkerchief.

5. From the New York Times, 9/21/69: "Former Greek Official George Mylonas pays the penalty for differing with the ruling junta in Athens by performing household chores on the island of Amorgos where he lives in forced exile" (with hilarious photo of a miserable Mylonas carrying his own water). What the Times means is that he ought to have a) indoor plumbing b) a maid.

6. Dr. Spock said (Redbook, 3/69) "Biologically

and temperamentally I believe, women were made to be concerned first and foremost with child care, husband care, and home care." Think about a) who made us b) why? c) what is the effect on their lives d) what is the effect on our lives?

7. From Time, 1/5/70, "Like their American counterparts, many housing project housewives are said to suffer from neurosis. And for the first time in Japanese history, many young husbands today complain of being henpecked. Their wives are beginning to demand detailed explanations when they don't come home straight from work and some Japanese males nowadays are even compelled to do housework." According to Time, women become neurotic a) when they are forced to do the maintenance work for the male caste all day every day of their lives or b) when they no longer want to do the maintenance work for the male caste all day every day of their lives.

that war because they bore him, suckled him, and raised him. The men who foment those wars did none of those things and have a more superficial estimate of the worth of human life. One hour a day is a low estimate of the amount of time one has to spend "keeping" oneself. By foisting this off on others, man has seven hours a week—one working day more to play with his mind and not his human needs. Over the course of generations it is easy to see whence evolved the horrifying abstractions of modern life.

6. With the death of each form of oppression, life changes and new forms evolve. English aristocrats at the turn of the century were horrified at the idea of enfranchising working men—were sure that it signalled the death of civilization and a return to barbarism. Some workingmen were even deceived by this line. Similarly with the minimum wage, abolition of slavery, and female suffrage. Life

will accuse you of being petty. He is above that sort of thing (housework). Bear in mind what the worst jobs are, namely the ones that have to be done every day or several times a day. Also the ones that are dirty—it's more pleasant to pick up books, newspapers, etc., than to wash dishes. Alternate the bad jobs. It's the daily grind that gets you down. Also make sure that you don't have the responsibility for the housework with occasional help from him. "I'll cook dinner for you tonight" implies it's really your job and isn't he a nice guy to do some of it for you.

8. Most men had a rich and rewarding bachelor life during which they did not starve or become encrusted with crud or buried under the litter. There is a taboo that says women mustn't strain themselves in the presence of men—we haul around 50 lbs of groceries if we have to but aren't allowed to open a jar if there is someone around to do it



for us. The reverse side of the coin is that men aren't supposed to be able to take care of themselves without a woman. Both are excuses for making women do the housework.

9. Beware of the double whammy. He won't do the little things he always did because you're

now a "Liberated Woman," right? Of course he won't do anything else either . . .

I was just finishing this when my husband came in and asked what I was doing. Writing a paper on housework. Housework? he said, *Housework?* Oh my god how trivial can you get. A paper on housework.

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## A Female Junkie Speaks

### Interview by LUCILLE IVERSON

Susan, the girl speaking here, has been a drug-user and junkie off and on for about ten years; she has recently joined Women's Liberation.

*No one can be liberated alone . . .*

To come home and be all alone, man, I can't take that.

I was turned on by an article in the *Village Voice* by Vivian Gornick, and a few days after that I ran into a friend who told me about a consciousness-raising group forming.

In the group I talked about the great resentment I felt toward my older brother who had a preferred status in our family. As the first son he had to be bought for the priesthood with gold—not just paper money, but real gold. His Bar Mitzvah was a great event, but nothing was done to celebrate the maturity of my sister and I. No one ever expected anything of us.

I resented having to play up to men, and I never could play the boy-girl game well. I always felt bad that I couldn't get along with men by making them feel good and putting myself down. It was a great relief to know that this was not a fault, but a strength.

Yesterday in a doctor's office where we were all waiting to get prescription drugs, I told some prostitutes about Women's Liberation. They were really interested. They have known it all along—how men have to be flattered. It's a lie they have to tell to get along.

I felt so good after going to the group that I

cut down on drugs—from two or three times a day to two or three times a week. I felt a release—buoyant. Before, I hardly related to anyone. But in the group you get a lot of love and attention—you feel important, you matter.

When I went to a clinic, I was told that they have so little success with women addicts—far less than with men—that they almost believe it's physiological. But I don't think so. It's because women have nothing important to do, nothing interesting—so why clean up?

I have a job, but I'm still a junkie. My first habit was acquired in 1965. I have kicked several times. I could kick again, but I need help. But I'm against using methodone as a substitute. It's harder to kick the methodone habit than it is to kick junk. And I can't do it alone—at night, to come home and be alone, man, I can't take that.

I told my group I was still a junkie and they seemed to resent it. I was feeling good about Women's Lib, feeling loved and close, but when I told them that, some of them were down on me. But I keep going back.

It would be great if Women's Liberation went into places like Daytop and Phoenix House to get the women together; it could be a whole new approach to the treatment of female junkies. We could use a "consciousness-raising" group.

# II THEORIES OF RADICAL FEMINISM:

## Radical Feminism

by TI-GRACE ATKINSON

Ti-Grace Atkinson, a past president of the New York chapter of National Organization of Women (NOW), left to form *October 17*, which later became *The Feminists*. She was one of the first to clearly articulate a radical feminist position. These are the first two parts of a seven-part essay. In the remaining parts, the political notions of class, class system, function, and institution are analyzed as revealed through the analysis of the class of women.

Almanina Barbour, a black militant woman in Philadelphia, once pointed out to me: "The women's movement is the first in history with a war on and no enemy." I winced. It was an obvious criticism. I fumbled about in my mind for an answer: surely the enemy must have been defined at some time. Otherwise, what had we been shooting at for the last couple of years? Into the air? Only two responses came to me, although in looking for those two I realized that it was a question carefully avoided. The first and by far the most frequent answer was "society." The second, infrequently and always furtively, was "men." If "society" is the enemy, what could that mean? If women are being oppressed, there's only one group left over to be doing the oppressing: men. Then why call them "society"? Could "society" mean the "institutions" that oppress women? But institutions must be maintained, and the same question arises: by whom? The answer to "who is the enemy?" is so obvious that the interesting issue quickly becomes "why has it been avoided?" The master might tolerate many reforms in slavery but none that would threaten his essential role as master. Women have known this, and since "men" and "society" are in effect synonymous, they have feared confronting him. Without this confrontation and a detailed understanding of what *his* battle strategy has been that has kept us so successfully pinned down, the "women's movement" is worse than useless: It invites backlash from men, and no progress for women.

There has never been a feminist analysis. While discontent among women and the attempt to re-

solve this discontent have often implied that women form a class, no political or *causal* class analysis has followed. To rephrase my last point, the persecution of women has never been taken as the starting point for a political analysis of society.

Considering that the last massing of discontent among women continued some 70 years (1850-1920) and spread throughout the world and that the recent accumulation of grievances began some three years ago here in America, the lack of a structural understanding of the problem is at first sight incomprehensible. It is the understanding of the *reasons* for this devastating omission and of the *implications* of the problem that forces one to "radical feminism."

Women who have tried to solve their problems as a class have proposed not solutions but dilemmas. The traditional feminists want equal rights for women with men. But on what grounds? If women serve a different *function* from men in society, wouldn't this necessarily affect women's "rights"? For example, do *all* women have the "right" not to bear children? Traditional feminism is caught in the dilemma of demanding equal treatment for unequal functions, because it is unwilling to challenge political (functional) classification by sex. Radical women, on the other hand, grasp that women as a group somehow fit into a political analysis of society, but err in refusing to explore the significance of the fact that women form a class, the uniqueness of this class, and the implications of this description to the system of political classes. Both traditional feminists and radical women have evaded questioning any



part of their *raison d'être*: Women are a class, and the terms that make up that initial assumption must be examined.

The feminist dilemma is that it is as women—or “females”—that women are persecuted, just as it was as slaves—or “blacks”—that slaves were persecuted in America: in order to improve their condition, those individuals who are today defined as women must eradicate their own definition. Women must, in a sense, commit suicide, and the journey from womanhood to a society of individuals is hazardous. The feminist dilemma is that we have the most to do, and the least to do it with; we must create, as no other group in history has been forced to do, from the very beginning.

The “battle of the sexes” is a commonplace, both over time and distance. But it is an inaccurate description of what has been happening. A “battle” implies some balance of powers, whereas when one side suffers all the losses, such as in raids (often referred to as the “rape” of an area), that is called a *massacre*. Women have been massacred as human beings over history, and this destiny is entailed by their definition. As women begin massing together, they take the first step from *being* massacred to *engaging in* battle (resistance) and, hopefully, eventually to negotiations—in the very far future—and peace.

When any person or group of persons is being mistreated or, to continue our metaphor, is being attacked, there is a succession of responses or investigations:

1. depending on the severity of the attack (short of an attack on life), the victim determines how much damage was done and what it was done with;
2. where is the attack coming from? —from whom? —located where?
3. how can you win the immediate battle? —defensive measures? —holding actions?
4. why did he attack you?
5. how can you win (end) the war? —offensive measures —moving within his boundaries.

These first five questions are necessary but should be considered diplomatic maneuvers. They have never been answered by the so-called “women’s movement,” and for this reason I think one cannot properly call that movement “political”: it could not have had any direction relevant to women as a class.

If diplomacy fails, that is, if your enemy refuses to stop attacking you, you must force him to

stop. This requires a strategy, and this strategy requires a map of the relevant landscape, including such basic information as:

1. who is the enemy?
2. where is he located?
3. is he getting outside support? —material? —manpower? —from whom?
4. where are his forces massed?
5. what’s the best ammunition to knock them out?
6. what weapons is he using?
7. how can you counteract them?
8. what is your plan of attack on him to force diplomatic negotiations? —program of action (including priorities) —techniques.

I am using some military terminology, and this may seem incongruous. But why should it? We accept the phrase “battle of the sexes.” It is the proposal that *women fight back* that seems incongruous; it was necessary to program women’s psychic structure to non-resistance on their own behalf—for obvious reasons: they make up over half the population of the world.

Without a programmatic analysis, the “women’s movement” has been as if running blindly in the general direction of where they *guess* the last missile that just hit them was based. For the first two years of the last organizing, I was very active in this running-blind approach. It’s true that we were attacking evils, but why *those* particular evils? Were *they* the central issues in the persecution of women? There was no map so I couldn’t be sure, but I could see no reason to believe that we knew what the key issues were, much less that we were hitting them. It became increasingly clear to me that we were incorporating many of our external problems (e.g., power hierarchies) into our own movement, and in understanding this and beginning to ask myself some of the obvious questions I’ve listed above, I came to the conclusion that at this time the most radical *action* that any woman or group of women could take was a feminist analysis. The implications of such an analysis is a greater threat to the opposition to human rights for women than all the actions and threatened actions put together up until this time by women.

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With this introduction to the significance of a feminist analysis, I will outline what we have so far.

As I mentioned before, the *raison d'être* of all groups formed around the problem of women is that women are a class. What is meant by that?

What is meant by "women" and what is meant by "class"? Does "women" include all women? Some groups have been driven back from the position of *all* women to some proposed "special" class such as "poor" women and eventually concentrated more on economic class than sexual class. But if we're interested in women and how women *qua* women are oppressed, this class must include *all* women. What separates out a particular individual from other individuals as a "woman"? We recognize it's a sexual separation and that this separation has two aspects, "sociological" and "biological." The term for the sociological function is "woman" (wif-man); the term for the biological function is "female" (to suckle); both terms are descriptive of functions in the interests of someone other than the possessor.

And what is meant by "class"? We've already covered the meaning as the characteristic by which certain individuals are grouped together. In the women's movement" or "feminism," individuals group together to *act* on behalf of women as a class in opposition to the *class* enemies of women. It is the interaction between classes that defines political action. For this reason I call the feminist analysis a *causal class analysis*.

We have established that women are a political class characterized by a sexual function. It is clear that women, at the present time at any rate, have the *capacity* to bear children. But the question arises: "How did this biological classification become a political classification? How or why did this elaborate superstructure of coercion develop on top of a capacity (which normally implies choice)?"

It is generally agreed that women were the first political class. (Children do not properly constitute a political class since the relevant characteristic of its members is unstable for any given member by definition.) "Political" classes are usually defined as classes treated by other classes in some special manner distinct from the way other classes are treated. What is frequently omitted is that "political" classes are *artificial*; they define persons *with* certain capacities *by* that capacity, changing the contingent to the necessary, thereby appropriating the *capacity* of an individual as a *function* of society. Definition of "political class": individuals grouped together by other individuals as a function of the grouping individuals, depriving the grouped individuals of their human status. A "function" of society cannot be a free individual—exercising the minimum human rights of physical integrity and freedom of movement.

If women were the first political class and political classes must be defined by individuals outside that class, who defined them, and why, and how? It is reasonable to assume that at some period in history the population was politically undifferentiated; let's call that mass "Mankind" (generic). The first dichotomous division of this mass is said to have been on the grounds of sex: male and female. But the genitals *per se* would be no more grounds for the human race to be divided in two than skin color or height or hair color. The genitals, in connection with a particular activity, have the *capacity* for the initiation of the reproductive process. But, I submit, it was because one half the human race bears the *burden* of the reproductive *process* and because man, the "rational" animal, had the wit to take advantage of that, that the childbearers, or the "beasts of burden," were corralled into a political class: equivocating the biologically contingent burden into a political (or necessary) penalty, thereby modifying those individuals' definition from the human to the functional, or animal.

There is no justification for using any individual as a function of others. Didn't *all* members of society have the right to decide if they even *wanted* to reproduce? Because one half of humanity was and still is forced to bear the burden of reproduction at the will of the other half, the first political class is defined not by its sex—sexuality was only relevant originally as a means to reproduction—but by the function of being the *container* of the reproductive process.

Because women have been taught to believe that men have protective feelings towards women (men have protective feelings towards their functions (property), *not* other human beings!), we women are shocked by these discoveries and ask ourselves *why* men took and continue to take advantage of us. Some people say that men are naturally, or biologically, aggressive. But this leaves us at an impasse. If the values of society are power oriented, there is no chance that men would agree to be medicated into an humane state. The other alternative that has been suggested is to eliminate men as biologically incapable of humane relationships and therefore a menace to society. I can sympathize with the frustration and rage that leads to this suggestion, but the proposal as I understand it is that men constitute a social disease, and that by "men" is meant those individuals with certain typical genital characteristics. These genital characteristics are held to determine the organism in every

biochemical respect, thus determining the psychic structure as well. It may be that as in other mental derangements, and I do believe that men behave in a mentally deranged manner towards women, there is a biochemical correspondence, but this would be ultimately behaviorally determined, not genetically.

I believe that the sex *roles* both male and female, must be destroyed, not the individuals who happen to possess either a penis or a vagina, or both, or neither. But many men I have spoken with see little to choose between the two positions and feel that without the role they'd just as soon die. Certainly it is the master who resists the abolition of slavery, especially when he is offered no recompense in power. I think that the *need* men have for the role of oppressor is the source and foundation of all human oppression: they suffer from a disease peculiar to Mankind which I call "metaphysical cannibalism," and men must at the very least cooperate in curing themselves.

(April, 1969)

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Perhaps the pathology of oppression begins with just that characteristic which distinguishes Mankind from the other species: rationality. It has been proposed before that the basic condition of Man is *Angst*—the knowledge and constant awareness that He will die and is thus trapped by existence in an inescapable dilemma. My proposal is more fundamental.

Man is not aware of the possibility of death until He is able to put together certain abstractions, e.g., descriptions of events, with the relevant descriptive connectives. It requires a fairly sophisticated intellect to be able to extrapolate from the description of an event to one's own condition, that is, from another person's *experience* to one's own essential definition. If instead of asking ourselves what particular *conclusion* rationality might arrive at, we ask what the nature of this distinguishing human characteristic is, we come to a more fundamental question.

The distinction between the nature of the animal and human brain seems to be that while an animal can imagine, that is, can mentally image some object before its eyes in a different position or some object not presently before its eyes in some *familiar* situation, an animal cannot *construct* with its imagination. An animal cannot imagine a new situation made up of ingredients combined together for the first time with each ingredient initiating consequences for the other ingredients to produce the new situation.

Man's rationality is distinguished by its "constructive imagination," and this constructive imagination has been a mixed blessing. The first experience of Man in His existence is usually called "awareness" or "consciousness"; we are *sensible*; our senses are operating unrestricted by external coercions (so far our description is also true of animals). What probably is first *known* to us as a distinct thing is our own body, since it is the object most consistently within our perception. As we see other objects with parts similar to our first object of perception, I think we can observe our first operation of rationality: We "imagine" that the second observation has *consequences* for the first observation. We see another human being as physically complete and autonomous (powerful) and ourselves as abbreviated, thus incomplete (powerless). We can never see ourselves as fleshly integral units; we feel and sense and analogize that we are each independent units, but we can never completely perceive ourselves as such. Each of us begins with this initial insecurity.

Rational action (intention) requires some sense of individual autonomy. We have choice only to the degree that we are physically free, and every Man by His nature feels ambiguity on this point. In addition, Man realizes early in His maturity that there is an enormous gap between what He can do and what He can *imagine* done. The powers of His body and the powers of His mind are in conflict within one organism; they are mockeries of each other. This second factor adds frustration to the first factor of insecurity.

We now posit Man as insecure and frustrated. He has two needs: (1) substance, as autonomous body—necessarily outside Himself—and (2) the alleviation of His frustration (the suppression of feeling) through anger—*oppression*. When we understand these two consequences peculiar to Man's nature, we can begin to understand the nature of "politics"\*

\*While I cannot go into it here in detail, I want to make clear that we must use our constructive imagination to devise a moral alternative. Such an alternative must provide an internal solution to the feelings of inadequacy. The solution would probably depend upon just that faculty that initiated the original dilemma, the human imagination. Rationality will have to construct the substance sufficient for individual autonomy from the inside. This would resolve both the problem of substantive incompleteness and the reconciliation of mind and body.

Man feels the need of something like Himself, an "extension." This presents a problem since *all* Men suffer this same need: all Men are looking for potency—the substantive power to close the gap between their bodily and mental powers. It seems clear that, once the resolution takes this external direction, some Men—ideally half (thus, one for each)—would have to catch *other* Men in some temporary depression of consciousness (when matured, rationality or constructive imagination) and at some physical disadvantage. This temporary depletion of Self provides the opportunity to simultaneously devour the mind of a member of the selected class and to appropriate their substance to oneself. It is this process that I call "metaphysical cannibalism." It is to eat one's own kind, especially that aspect considered most potent to the victim while alive, and to destroy the evidence that the aggressor and the victim are the Same. The principle of metaphysical cannibalism seemed to meet both needs of Man: to gain potency (power) and to vent frustration (hostility).

Some psychic relief was achieved by one half the human race at the expense of the other half. Men neatly decimated Mankind by one half when they took advantage of the *social* disability of those Men who bore the burden of the reproductive process; men invaded the being of those individuals now defined as functions, or "females," appropriated their human characteristic and occupied their bodies. The original "rape" was political, the robbing of one half of Mankind of its humanity; the sexual connotations to the term no doubt grew out of the characterizations made later of the Men in the original action. This rape in its essential features has been reenacted and rationalized and justified ever since. Firstly, those Men called women have been anchored to their position as victim by men devising numerous direct variations on women's capture, consolidating women's imprisonment. Secondly, men have devised indirect variations on the original crime via the principle of oppression against other Men. But all of these variations—what we call class systems and their supportive institutions—are motivated by Man's nature, and all political change will result in nothing but other variations on metaphysical cannibalism—rape—until we find a human and equitable alternative to Man's dilemma.

The male-female distinction was the beginning of the role system, wherein some persons function for others. This primary distinction should properly be referred to as the Oppressor (male) - Oppressed

(female) distinction, the first political distinction. Women were the first political class and the beginning of the class system.

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Certainly in the pathology of oppression, it is the agent of oppression who must be analyzed and dealt with: he is responsible for the cultivation and spread of the disease. Still a question arises: How is it that, once the temporary susceptibility to disease (aggression) has passed, the patient does not spontaneously recover? It must be that the external attack aggravates in the victim a latent disorganization which grows and flourishes in response to and finally in tandem with the pathology imposed from outside. The disease drawn out and cultivated from within can finally maintain the original victim in a pathological state with fewer external pressures. I propose that the latent disorganization in "females" is the same disorganization—dilemma—from which "males" opted for metaphysical cannibalism. The role of the Oppressor (the male role) is to attempt to resolve his dilemma at the expense of others by destroying their humanity (appropriating the rationality of the Oppressed). The role of the Oppressed (the female-woman role) is to resolve her dilemma by self-destruction (bodily destruction or insanity). Given an Oppressor—the will for power—the natural response for its counterpart, the Oppressed (given any shade of remaining Self-consciousness), is Self-annihilation. Since the purpose and nature of metaphysical cannibalism is the appropriation of and extension to substance, bodily self-destruction is uncommon in comparison with mental escapes. While men can "cannibalize" the consciousness of women as far as human Self-construction for the woman is concerned, men get no direct use from this except in so far as they *believe* it gives them magic powers. But rationality imprisoned must destroy itself.

Metaphysical cannibalism does not solve the dilemma posed by human rationality for either the Oppressor or the Oppressed. The Oppressor can only whet his appetite for power by external measures (like drugs to dull the symptom of pain) and thus increases his disease and symptoms; the Oppressed floats in a limbo of un-Consciousness, driven there by the immobilization of her vital organ—rejecting life but not quite dead—sensible enough to still feel the pain.

The most common female escape is the psycho-pathological condition of love. It is a euphoric state of fantasy in which the victim transforms her oppressor into her redeemer: she turns her natural

hostility towards the aggressor against the remnants of herself—her Consciousness—and sees her counterpart in contrast to herself as all powerful (as he is by now at her expense). The combination of his power, her self-hatred, and the hope for a life that is self-justifying—the goal of all living creatures—results in a yearning for her stolen life—her Self—that is the delusion and poignancy of love. “Love” is the natural response of the victim to the rapist. What is extremely difficult and “unnatural,” but necessary, is for the Oppressed to cure themselves (destroy the female role), to throw off the Oppres-

sor, and to help the Oppressor to cure himself (to destroy the male role). It is superhuman, but the only alternative—the elimination of males as a biological group—is subhuman.

Politics and political theory revolve around this paradigm case of the Oppressor and the Oppressed. The theory and the practices can be divided into two parts: those institutions which directly reinforce the paradigm case of oppression, and those systems and institutions which reinforce the principle later extrapolated from this model.

(May, 1969)

## The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm

by ANNE KOEDT

Anne Koedt, a founder of the radical feminist movement in New York (New York Radical Women, The Feminists, and currently New York Radical Feminists), is an editor of *Notes* and is now at work on a book about female sexuality, to be published by Random House in 1971.

Whenever female orgasm and frigidity is discussed, a false distinction is made between the vaginal and the clitoral orgasm. Frigidity has generally been defined by men as the failure of women to have vaginal orgasms. Actually the vagina is not a highly sensitive area and is not constructed to achieve orgasm. It is the clitoris which is the center of sexual sensitivity and which is the female equivalent of the penis.

I think this explains a great many things: First of all, the fact that the so-called frigidity rate among women is phenomenally high. Rather than tracing female frigidity to the false assumptions about female anatomy, our “experts” have declared frigidity a psychological problem of women. Those women who complained about it were recommended psychiatrists, so that they might discover their “problem”—diagnosed generally as a failure to adjust to their role as women.

The facts of female anatomy and sexual response tell a different story. There is only one area for sexual climax, although there are many areas for

sexual arousal; that area is the clitoris. All orgasms are extensions of sensation from this area. Since the clitoris is not necessarily stimulated sufficiently in the conventional sexual positions, we are left “frigid.”

Aside from physical stimulation, which is the common cause of orgasm for most people, there is also stimulation through primarily mental processes. Some women, for example, may achieve orgasm through sexual fantasies, or through fetishes. However, while the stimulation may be psychological, the orgasm manifests itself physically. Thus, while the cause is psychological, the effect is still physical, and the orgasm necessarily takes place in the sexual organ equipped for sexual climax—the clitoris. The orgasm experience may also differ in degree of intensity—some more localized, and some more diffuse and sensitive. But they are all clitoral orgasms.

All this leads to some interesting questions about conventional sex and our role in it. Men have orgasms essentially by friction with the vagina, not the clitoral area, which is external and not able to



cause friction the way penetration does. Women have thus been defined sexually in terms of what pleases men; our own biology has not been properly analyzed. Instead, we are fed the myth of the liberated woman and her vaginal orgasm—an orgasm which in fact does not exist.

What we must do is redefine our sexuality. We must discard the "normal" concepts of sex and create new guidelines which take into account mutual sexual enjoyment. While the idea of mutual enjoyment is liberally applauded in marriage manuals, it is not followed to its logical conclusion. We must begin to demand that if certain sexual positions now defined as "standard" are not mutually conducive to orgasm, they no longer be defined as standard. New techniques must be used or devised which transform this particular aspect of our current sexual exploitation.

#### Freud — A Father of the Vaginal Orgasm

Freud contended that the clitoral orgasm was adolescent, and that upon puberty, when women began having intercourse with men, women should transfer the center of orgasm to the vagina. The vagina, it was assumed, was able to produce a parallel, but more mature, orgasm than the clitoris. Much work was done to elaborate on this theory, but little was done to challenge the basic assumptions.

To fully appreciate this incredible invention, perhaps Freud's general attitude about women should first be recalled. Mary Ellman, in *Thinking About Women*, summed it up this way:

Everything in Freud's patronizing and fearful attitude toward women follows from their lack of a penis, but it is only in his essay *The Psychology of Women* that Freud makes explicit . . . the deprecations of women which are implicit in his work. He then prescribes for them the abandonment of the life of the mind, which will interfere with their sexual function. When the psychoanalyzed patient is male, the analyst sets himself the task of developing the man's capacities; but with women patients, the job is to resign them to the limits of their sexuality. As Mr. Rieff puts it: For Freud, "Analysis cannot encourage in women new energies for success and achievement, but only teach them the lesson of rational resignation."

It was Freud's feelings about women's secondary and inferior relationship to men that formed the basis for his theories on female sexuality.

Once having laid down the law about the na-

ture of our sexuality, Freud not so strangely discovered a tremendous problem of frigidity in women. His recommended cure for a woman who was frigid was psychiatric care. She was suffering from failure to mentally adjust to her "natural" role as a woman. Frank S. Caprio, a contemporary follower of these ideas, states:

... whenever a woman is incapable of achieving an orgasm via coitus, provided her husband is an adequate partner, and prefers clitoral stimulation to any other form of sexual activity, she can be regarded as suffering from frigidity and requires psychiatric assistance. (*The Sexually Adequate Female*, p. 64.)

The explanation given was that women were envious of men—"renunciation of womanhood." Thus it was diagnosed as an anti-male phenomenon.

It is important to emphasize that Freud did not base his theory upon a study of woman's anatomy, but rather upon his assumptions of woman as an inferior appendage to man, and her consequent social and psychological role. In their attempts to deal with the ensuing problem of mass frigidity, Freudians created elaborate mental gymnastics. Marie Bonaparte, in *Female Sexuality*, goes so far as to suggest surgery to help women back on their rightful path. Having discovered a strange connection between the non-frigid woman and the location of the clitoris near the vagina,

it then occurred to me that where, in certain women, this gap was excessive, and clitoral fixation obdurate, a clitoral-vaginal reconciliation might be effected by surgical means, which would then benefit the normal erotic function. Professor Halban, of Vienna, as much a biologist as surgeon, became interested in the problem and worked out a simple operative technique. In this, the suspensory ligament of the clitoris was severed and the clitoris secured to the underlying structures, thus fixing it in a lower position, with eventual reduction of the labia minora, (p. 148.)

But the severest damage was not in the area of surgery, where Freudians ran around absurdly trying to change female anatomy to fit their basic assumptions. The worst damage was done to the mental health of women, who either suffered silently with self-blame, or flocked to the psychiatrists looking desperately for the hidden and terrible repression that kept from them their vaginal destiny.

### Lack of Evidence?

One may perhaps at first claim that these are unknown and unexplored areas, but upon closer examination this is certainly not true today, nor was it true even in the past. For example, men have known that women suffered from frigidity often during intercourse. So the problem was there. Also, there is much specific evidence. Men knew that the clitoris was and is the essential organ for masturbation, whether in children or adult women. So obviously women made it clear where they thought their sexuality was located. Men also seem suspiciously aware of the clitoral powers during "foreplay," when they want to arouse women and produce the necessary lubrication for penetration. Foreplay is a concept created for male purposes, but works to the disadvantage of many women, since as soon as the woman is aroused the man changes to vaginal stimulation, leaving her both aroused and unsatisfied.

It has also been known that women need no anesthesia inside the vagina during surgery, thus pointing to the fact that the vagina is in fact not a highly sensitive area.

Today, with extensive knowledge of anatomy, with Kinsey, and Masters and Johnson, to mention just a few sources, there is no ignorance on the subject. There are, however, social reasons why this knowledge has not been popularized. We are living in a male society which has not sought change in women's role.

### Anatomical Evidence

Rather than starting with what women *ought* to feel, it would seem logical to start out with the anatomical facts regarding the clitoris and vagina.

*The Clitoris* is a small equivalent of the penis, except for the fact that the urethra does not go through it as in the man's penis. Its erection is similar to the male erection, and the head of the clitoris has the same type of structure and function as the head of the penis. G. Lombard Kelly, in *Sexual Feeling in Married Men and Women*, says:

The head of the clitoris is also composed of erectile tissue, and it possesses a very sensitive epithelium or surface covering, supplied with special nerve endings called genital corpuscles, which are peculiarly adapted for sensory stimulation that under proper mental conditions terminates in the sexual orgasm. No other part of

the female generative tract has such corpuscles. (Pocketbooks; p. 35.)

The clitoris has no other function than that of sexual pleasure.

*The Vagina* — Its functions are related to the reproductive function. Principally, 1) menstruation, 2) receive penis, 3) hold semen, and 4) birth passage. The interior of the vagina, which according to the defenders of the vaginally caused orgasm is the center and producer of the orgasm, is:

like nearly all other internal body structures, poorly supplied with end organs of touch. The internal endodermal origin of the lining of the vagina makes it similar in this respect to the rectum and other parts of the digestive tract. (Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, p. 580.)

The degree of insensitivity inside the vagina is so high that "Among the women who were tested in our gynecologic sample, less than 14% were at all conscious that they had been touched." (Kinsey, p. 580.)

Even the importance of the vagina as an *erotic* center (as opposed to an orgasmic center) has been found to be minor.

*Other Areas* — Labia minora and the vestibule of the vagina. These two sensitive areas may trigger off a clitoral orgasm. Because they can be effectively stimulated during "normal" coitus, though infrequent, this kind of stimulation is incorrectly thought to be vaginal orgasm. However, it is important to distinguish between areas which can stimulate the clitoris, incapable of producing the orgasm themselves, and the clitoris:

Regardless of what means of excitation is used to bring the individual to the state of sexual climax, the sensation is perceived by the genital corpuscles and is localized where they are situated: in the head of the clitoris or penis. (Kelly, p. 49.)

*Psychologically Stimulated Orgasm* — Aside from the above mentioned direct and indirect stimulations of the clitoris, there is a third way an orgasm may be triggered. This is through mental (cortical) stimulation, where the imagination stimulates the brain, which in turn stimulates the genital corpuscles of the glans to set off an orgasm.

### Women who say they have vaginal orgasms

*Confusion* — Because of the lack of knowledge

of their own anatomy, some women accept the idea that an orgasm felt during "normal" intercourse was vaginally caused. This confusion is caused by a combination of two factors. One, failing to locate the center of the orgasm, and two, by a desire to fit her experience to the male-defined idea of sexual normalcy. Considering that women know little about their anatomy, it is easy to be confused.

**Deception** — The vast majority of women who pretend vaginal orgasm to their men are faking it to, as Ti-Grace Atkinson says, "get the job." In a new best-selling Danish book, *I Accuse* (my own translation), Mette Ejlersen specifically deals with this common problem, which she calls the "sex comedy." This comedy has many causes. First of all, the man brings a great deal of pressure to bear on the woman, because he considers his ability as a lover at stake. So as not to offend his ego, the woman will comply with the prescribed role and go through simulated ecstasy. In some of the other Danish women mentioned, women who were left frigid were turned off to sex, and pretended vaginal orgasm to hurry up the sex act. Others admitted that they had faked vaginal orgasm to catch a man. In one case, the woman pretended vaginal orgasm to get him to leave his first wife, who admitted being vaginally frigid. Later she was forced to continue the deception, since obviously she couldn't tell him to stimulate her clitorally.

Many more women were simply afraid to establish their right to equal enjoyment, seeing the sexual act as being primarily for the man's benefit, and any pleasure that the woman got as an added extra.

Other women, with just enough ego to reject the man's idea that they needed psychiatric care, refused to admit their frigidity. They wouldn't accept self-blame, but they didn't know how to solve the problem, not knowing the physiological facts about themselves. So they were left in a peculiar limbo.

Again, perhaps one of the most infuriating and damaging results of this whole charade has been that women who were perfectly healthy sexually were taught that they were not. So in addition to being sexually deprived, these women were told to blame themselves when they deserved no blame. Looking for a cure to a problem that has none can lead a woman on an endless path of self-hatred and insecurity. For she is told by her analyst that not even in her one role allowed in a male society—the role of a woman—is she successful. She is put on the defensive, with phony data as evidence that she better try to be even more feminine, think more

feminine, and reject her envy of men. That is, shuffle even harder, baby.

### Why Men Maintain the Myth

1. *Sexual Penetration is Preferred* — The best stimulant for the penis is the woman's vagina. It supplies the necessary friction and lubrication. From a strictly technical point of view this position offers the best physical conditions, even though the man may try other positions for variation.

2. *The Invisible Woman* — One of the elements of male chauvinism is the refusal or inability to see women as total, separate human beings. Rather, men have chosen to define women only in terms of how they benefited men's lives. Sexually, a woman was not seen as an individual wanting to share equally in the sexual act, any more than she was seen as a person with independent desires when she did anything else in society. Thus, it was easy to make up what was convenient about women; for on top of that, society has been a function of male interests, and women were not organized to form even a vocal opposition to the male experts.

3. *The Penis as Epitome of Masculinity* — Men define their lives greatly in terms of masculinity. It is a *universal*, as opposed to racial, ego boosting, which is localized by the geography of racial mixtures.

The essence of male chauvinism is not the practical, economic services women supply. It is the psychological superiority. This kind of negative definition of self, rather than positive definition based upon one's own achievements and development, has of course chained the victim and the oppressor both. But by far the most brutalized of the two is the victim.

An analogy is racism, where the white racist compensates his feelings of unworthiness by creating an image of the black man (it is primarily a male struggle) as biologically inferior to him. Because of his power in a white male power structure, the white man can socially enforce this mythical division.

To the extent that men try to rationalize and justify male superiority through physical differentiation, masculinity may be symbolized by being the most muscular, the most hairy, the deepest voice, and the biggest penis. Women, on the other hand, are approved of (i.e., called feminine) if they are weak, petite, shave their legs, have high soft voices, and no penis.

Since the clitoris is almost identical to the pe-

nis, one finds a great deal of evidence of men in various societies trying to either ignore the clitoris and emphasize the vagina (as did Freud), or, as in some places in the Mideast, actually performing clitoridectomy. Freud saw this ancient and still practiced custom as a way of further "feminizing" the female by removing this cardinal vestige of her masculinity. It should be noted also that a big clitoris is considered ugly and masculine. Some cultures engage in the practice of pouring a chemical on the clitoris to make it shrivel up into proper size.

It seems clear to me that men in fact fear the clitoris as a threat to their masculinity.

4. *Sexually Expendable Male* — Men fear that they will become sexually expendable if the clitoris is substituted for the vagina as the center of pleasure for women. Actually this has a great deal of validity if one considers *only* the anatomy. The position of the penis inside the vagina, while perfect for reproduction, does not necessarily stimulate an orgasm in women because the clitoris is located externally and higher up. Women must rely upon indirect stimulation in the "normal" position.

Lesbian sexuality could make an excellent case, based upon anatomical data, for the extinction of the male organ. Albert Ellis says something to the effect that a man without a penis can make a woman an excellent lover.

Considering that the vagina is very desirable from a man's point of view, purely on physical grounds, one begins to see the dilemma for men.

And it forces us as well to discard many "physical" arguments explaining why women go to bed with men. What is left, it seems to me, are primarily psychological reasons why women select men at the exclusion of women as sexual partners.

5. *Control of Women* — One reason given to explain the Mideastern practice of clitoridectomy is that it will keep the women from straying. By removing the sexual organ capable of orgasm, it must be assumed that her sexual drive will diminish. Considering how men look upon their women as property, particularly in very backward nations, we should begin to consider a great deal more why it is not in the men's interest to have women totally free sexually. The double standard, as practiced for example in Latin America, is set up to keep the woman as total property of the husband, while he is free to have affairs as he wishes.

6. *Lesbianism and Bisexuality* — Aside from the strictly anatomical reasons why women might equally seek other women as lovers, there is a fear on men's part that women will seek the company of other women on a full, human basis. The establishment of clitoral orgasm as fact would threaten the heterosexual institution. For it would indicate that sexual pleasure was obtainable from either men or women, thus making heterosexuality not an absolute, but an option. It would thus open up the whole question of human sexual relationships beyond the confines of the present male-female role system.

#### BOOKS MENTIONED IN THIS ESSAY

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*Sex Without Guilt*, Albert Ellis, Grove Press  
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*I Accuse (Jeg Anklager)*, Mette Ejlersen, Chr. Erichsens Forlag (Danish)  
*The Sexually Adequate Female*, Frank S. Caprio, Fawcett Gold Medal Books

*Thinking About Women*, Mary Ellman; Harcourt, Brace & World  
*Human Sexual Response*, Masters and Johnson; Little, Brown

Also see:

*The ABZ of Love*, Inge and Sten Hegeler, Alexicon Corp.

# The Institution\* of Sexual Intercourse

by TI-GRACE ATKINSON

... our "society," ... if it's not deflected from its present course and if the Bomb doesn't drop on it, will hump itself to death.

—Valerie Solanas

The debate on vaginal orgasm is not central to feminism as a whole. The theory of vaginal orgasm was created quite recently to shore up that part of the foundation of a social institution that was being threatened by the increasing demand by women for freedom for women. The political institution I am referring to is the institution of sexual intercourse. The purpose, i.e., the social function, of the institution is to maintain the human species.

It used to be that the construct of marriage guaranteed the institution of sexual intercourse. It is still true that, when and where that construct in any of its original variants is properly entered into and protected, the activities sufficient to the definition of this construct and, thus, the purposes of the institution of sexual intercourse, are protected. The substitute theoretical construct of vaginal orgasm is necessary only when marriage is threatened.

The theory of vaginal orgasm was the concoction of a man, Freud, whose theories generally place women in an inhumane and exploited role. His theory of vaginal orgasm reaches the apex of these. The theory was inspired by his confrontations with women who were sick to death of the female role, and it adjusted women back into this female role by conning them that it was in a woman's interest, *by her very nature* (i.e., it is in the interest of her vagina), to be dehumanized and exploited. While Freud's theory is inconsistent with female anatomy,

it is excellent evidence in support of the theory that the concept of sexual intercourse is a political construct, reified into an institution.

The construct of vaginal orgasm is most in vogue whenever and wherever the institution of sexual intercourse is threatened. As women become freer, more independent, more self-sufficient, their interest (i.e., their need) in men decreases, and their desire for the construct of marriage which properly entails children (i.e., a family) decreases proportionate to the increase in their self-sufficiency. It is for this reason that the construct of vaginal orgasm is coming under attack among women radicals in the feminist movement (as opposed to radical feminists) while at the same time the construct of marriage is coming under attack among women in the feminist movement who are either politically conservative, or liberal-to-the-right (e.g., a McCarthyite), or, as is the case with most women, apolitical in the main. The latter group is both presently and potentially far larger than the former, which is the only reason the debate on the marriage-family<sup>†</sup> construct is central to feminism as a whole, whereas its more recent substitute, vaginal orgasm, is not.

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<sup>†</sup>This article is not on the interdependence of the two political constructs of marriage and the family, but the comments on the biological theory contained in the construct of marriage assumes this interdependence. The goal of the institution of sexual intercourse, i.e., child-bearing by women, is the bridge between the two constructs of marriage and family. If this article were not concentrating on political constructs by definition limited to two persons and as pertains to the institution of sexual intercourse, it might be more accurate to refer to the marriage-family construct. At the present time and in the foreseeable future, without the construct of the family, the marriage construct would serve no political purpose, i.e., there would be nothing to protect, and it would evolve out.

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\*The definition of "institution" used in this article = (John Rawls's df. of "practice" = any form of activity specified by a system of rules which defines offices, roles, moves, penalties, defenses, and so on, and which gives the activity its structure) + (Webster's df. of "institutional" = organized so as to function in social, charitable, and educational activities).



1.

Vaginal orgasm is, then, a substitute construct for marriage. Unfortunately for those women who are accepting the substitute, vaginal orgasm as a political construct is less in their interests than marriage. It takes time for women, simply because they are so much weaker politically, to build in compensations for themselves in any political construct in which they are a necessary member.

It is interesting to compare the correlative structures of these two political constructs. (I will not consider those protections built in at a later date into marriage so that the two constructs can be compared in their original and definitive forms.) The salient feature of both is that both constructs are in the interests of the male and against the interests of the female, and both constructs were, not surprisingly, conceived of by men. Both constructs limit a woman's human possibilities (the double standard is built into any double-role theory). Both constructs incorporate attempted justifications (excuses?) for the role assigned to women in sexual intercourse, which however in no way mitigates the initial exploitation.

1. Both constructs contain conveniently supportive unknown or unrecognized biological theories:

(a.) in marriage the supportive biological theory is the theory of maternal instinct. The biological argument for the maternal instinct goes something like this: Women *need* to have children, it's part of their *nature*. Can't you see that that's what their bodies were built for? And if women didn't *like* to have children, they wouldn't; this proves women *choose* to have children. And since they choose to have children in such large numbers, having children must come naturally to women. It's an *instinct*, the *maternal* instinct.

(i.) there's a confusion of priorities here: a capacity for some activity is not the same as a need for that activity, so that even if women's bodies were suitably formed for the activity of child-bearing, this in no way necessarily entails that they *want* to bear children, much less need to. Unfortunately for women, child-bearing wreaks havoc on their bodies and can hardly be defended as healthy. (a) *Pregnancy and birth distend and tear women's bodies out of their natural forms as women* (as opposed to mothers), so that it hardly can be held that women's bodies are constructed appropriately for the activity of child-bearing. (b) Reliable estimates indicate that in the U.S., the *maternal* death

rate was 29.1 out of every 1,000, the *female* death rate in 1966 was 8.1 out of every thousand (U.S.—*Vital Statistics*). Maternity triples the risk of death for the average woman in the years of her pregnancy. The maternal death rate for the entire world in 1966 was at least twice that of the U.S., so that the *average woman, appropriately enough, sextupled* her chance of death by becoming pregnant (U.N. figures). There is no other activity in the world, short of war, with that high a mortality rate that would be legalized. (It's interesting, albeit chilling, that the maternal death rate is almost never publicized, whereas the infant mortality rate is often seen: This is another indication of the low value placed on women.)

(ii.) at this point, it might be countered that while it might not make *sense* to engage in such an activity as pregnancy, that this is proof that maternity is indeed an instinct: It is an activity engaged in *in spite of its being contrary to the interest of the agent*.

(It is easy to see how nicely this argument feeds the theory of innate masochism into female psychology. The institutional strangleholds that coerce women into child-bearing are always overlooked here, but it is in fact these institutions that transform the alleged maternal instinct from what would appear to be a kind of death wish into an instinct for her own political survival.)

It is claimed then that women enjoy having or, at least, wish to have children. The evidence is against this, too. (a) does anyone wish to try to hold that the blood-curdling screams that can be heard from delivery rooms are really cries of joy? (b) how are you going to account for the fact that as much as two-thirds of the women bearing children suffer post-partum blues, and that these depressions are expressed in large numbers by these women *killing their infants, or deserting them, or internalizing their hostility to such an extent that the woman must be confined in mental hospitals for "severe depression"* (often a euphemism for attempted murder). Either it's necessary to fall back on some physiological explanation which will irrevocably damage the claim that child-bearing is good for a woman's health, or it's necessary to admit that *an overwhelming number of women do not like to bear children regardless of whether or not there is some theory that it is a woman's natural function to bear children*. (c) as for women wishing to possess children, it will be necessary to account for the fact that parents (and we all know who that is) are

the second highest cause of children's deaths ("accidents" rank first). If the theory is still maintained that women by their nature like to have, or take care of, children, and that this constitutes at least a necessary part of what is called "maternal instinct," it would seem that it is the duty of men, i.e., society, to protect children from women's care just because of this instinct.

(iii.) it seems clear that there is far too large a body of counter-evidence to try to maintain any biological theory of maternal instinct.

(b.) in vaginal orgasm, the supportive biological theory is that the institution of sexual intercourse is in the interests of woman's sexual instinct. The argument goes something like this: Man has a sexual instinct, and we know this because men like to have sexual intercourse so much. Since his desire for sexual intercourse is not determined by the recipient, it must be the activity itself which is desired. The activity is defined essentially as the penetration by the penis into the vagina. But the man may have an intense experience, called "orgasm," caused by some activity of his own within the particular environment of the vagina. The completion of his experience, or orgasm, is indicated by certain signs, e.g., ejaculation. This experience has been judged by society to be pleasurable. The environment of the vagina is necessary for sexual intercourse. Either a woman must be forced to provide this environment or it must be in her interests to do so. It's illegal to force her: that's called rape. Therefore, it must be in her interest to provide this environment. Therefore, it must be that she experiences the same experience that the man does because of the same activity. This will be called vaginal orgasm to distinguish it from the original sense of "orgasm," i.e., male orgasm. And it is pleasurable for the woman. If it is the same experience as the male orgasm, there should be no discrepancy between either the amount or conditions of the experience. Therefore, women also have a sexual instinct.

(i.) the maternal instinct is obviously too indirect an interest to justify sexual intercourse to a free woman. There has to be some direct connection between the act and the woman's interests. As exterior coercion lessens, it must be projected inside the victim.

(ii.) the construct of vaginal orgasm as even a second order biological need for women has been absurd from the beginning. First of all, animals don't have this need, that is, they don't have vaginal

orgasm. The whole point of vaginal orgasm is that it supports the view that vaginal penetration is a good in and for itself. It justifies vaginal penetration, i.e., a necessary condition of the institution of sexual intercourse, as in the direct interests of women. Since a necessary condition for a biological need is that it cover the species of mammals, the fact that animals do not experience vaginal orgasm is an extremely strong argument against its biological nature. Secondly, women don't possess the receptors in the vagina for any sensations that could cause anything like a male orgasm, that is, what has been proposed as vaginal orgasm.

2. Both the construct of marriage and the construct of vaginal orgasm contain conveniently supportive psychological theories to justify the institution of sexual intercourse to the female. These psychological theories are dependent on their respective physiological theories; without the biological basis, the psychological theory, instead of justifying, exposes the exploitative nature of the institution of sexual intercourse.

(a.) in marriage, the psychological theory is an analysis of the psychological characteristics inherent in the alleged maternal instinct. This varies somewhat from time to time depending on what sacrifices society deems necessary from the parent to keep the child in line, and how the political system needs, or regards as a liability, women in the outside world. The main constants are that woman, i.e., a mother, whether actual or potential, is adaptable and giving. It is the woman's role in marriage to meet the needs of others, and her joy to do so. But in the circular argument of the marriage construct, the woman's role is called her will and from there is transformed into her essential nature.

(b.) in vaginal orgasm, the psychological theory is based on the assumption of the physiological fact of vaginal orgasm, and the further assumption that that orgasm is caused not psychologically but physiologically by the penetration of the penis into the vagina. There is an equivocation at this point in the argument for the theory that even further assumes that what was defined by a male as vaginal orgasm is analogous to the orgasm the male experiences by penetration. It is only by claiming some such responsive equivalence that the institution of sexual intercourse can be justified between free parties.

## II.

So far here, sexual intercourse has been referred to as an institution. Since our society has never

known a time when sex in all its aspects was not exploitative and relations based on sex, e.g., the male-female relationship, were not extremely hostile, it is difficult to understand how sexual intercourse can even be salvaged as a practice, that is, assuming that our society would desire positive relationships between individuals.

The first step that would have to be taken before we could see exactly what the status of sexual intercourse is as a practice is surely to remove all its institutional aspects: We would have to eliminate the functional aspect. Sexual intercourse would have to cease to be society's means to population renewal. This change is beginning to be with in our grasp with the work now being done on extra-uterine conception and incubation. But the possibilities of this research for the woman's movement have been barely suggested and there would have to be very concentrated research to perfect as quickly as possible this extra-uterine method of pre-natal development so that this could be a truly optional method, at the very least.

This step alone would reduce sexual intercourse, in terms of its political status, to a practice. But the biological theories as well as the psychological ones would fall with the institutional purposes: Sexual "drives" and "needs" would disappear with their functions. But since a practice must have some sort of structure, and without a social function sexual relations would be individually determined and socially unpatterned, sexual intercourse could not be a practice either.

It is necessary to at least speculate on just what the status or place of sexual relations would be once the institutional aspects disappeared. If for no other reason, it is necessary to figure out some sort of projection because an idea like this frightens people so badly. Because of the implications of such a change, people must have some idea of a possible future. It should still be understood, however, that such projections must be very tentative guesswork because so many possible variables could appear later that can't be foreseen now.

Having lost their political function, one possibility is that perhaps we could discover what the nature of the human sensual characteristics are from the point of view of the good of each individual instead of what we have now which is a sort of psychological draft system of our sexualities. Perhaps the human sensual characteristics would have the status of a sense organ; they might even properly be called a sort of "sixth sense." This sense

organ, like the other five, would receive stimuli via the brain and the more direct contact appropriate to that sense. In the case of the sexual organs (although they would probably not be called that anymore since the term "sexual organs" assumes two sexes: the purpose of transforming that distinction into a definitive property has been the procreative function of the sexual organs), the direct stimuli would be tactile and the indirect stimuli would be the thought of someone or something that you would like to touch or be touched by.

Now since, for the sake of the argument, we will assume that the direct stimulus is a living being, even a human being, and that this human being is other than the human being stimulated, and that the procreative function of the activity is absent even in the concept of the activity (that is, it is not regarded as a practice since it is not a structured activity), why should there be this tactile contact with another person? We assume at this point that sexual contact is not a biological need and was formerly only the means to satisfy the social need of survival of the species.

It will be argued no doubt that this tactile contact is pleasurable. But what exactly is meant by this? Why is it more pleasurable than auto-contact? In whose interest is this physical contact between two persons, and what are the grounds of this interest? If masturbation has such strong arguments in its favor (assuming the sexual organs are a kind of sense organ) such as technical proficiency, convenience, egocentricity, on what grounds is an outside party involved? On what grounds is this party a positive addition to the experience?

Must this alleged pleasure be mutual? And if so, why? What motivates the desire to touch other people, and without the procreative function of sex, what would distinguish (for the average person) touching a child and touching an adult in whom one had an alleged "sexual" interest. Would you want to make an important distinction between an erotic and a sexual contact? Isn't it crucial to the argument for tactile contact as innately pleasurable whether or not you can hold the claim that touching the other person is directly pleasurable to the toucher, not only indirectly pleasurable to the toucher by witnessing the pleasure of the touched? How could it be claimed that the fingertips are as sensitive as the alleged erogenous areas of the body? Or would you have to establish some separate but equal, synchronized system of mutual indirect/direct stimuli? But wouldn't that force you back into a

practice, and under what justification? Wouldn't you be institutionalizing sex again? Given the nature of sex, once you deinstitutionalize it and it has no social function, and there is no longer any need for a cooperative effort, and when the physical possibilities of this sense can be fully realized alone, on what possible grounds could you have anything remotely like what we know today as sexual relations?

### III.

If the sense of touch alone were under discussion, it would be surely less complicated simply because there would be only one, in any way relevant to our discussion, fluctuating (i.e., changeable) party. And even more important to any ethical consideration, it wouldn't matter whether the touched wished to be touched. (The constructs of marriage and of vaginal orgasm as supportive practices to the institution of sexual intercourse are both based on the assumption that "it wouldn't matter whether or not the touched wished to be touched." The construct of vaginal orgasm differs from marriage only in that the coercive aspect is internalized in the female.)

The important distinction between "the sense of touch" and what is being called here the "sixth sense," the "sense of *being* touched," or the "sense of feeling," is the addition of a strong passive element. Since what is being received cannot be a technical or physical improvement on that same auto-experience, any positive external component must be a psychological component. It must be some attitude or judgment held by the person doing the touching, or the agent, about the person being touched, that is satisfactory to the person being touched most of the time and at other times is supportive to the person being touched. In short, the agent is trusted to either add to or to reinforce and diffuse the pleasure of the sensual experience. The contribution of the agent is firstly to extend the area of the sensual experience in the quite literal way of touching the recipient's body and being touched by it; this reinforces the auto-erotic sense by extending the feelings of pleasure and of well-being. The second, more important, contribution is that the recipient must make a psychological extension from the agent touching and giving pleasure and the attitude of good will the recipient deduces from that action to the outside world and its attitude towards the recipient. The extension of the recipient's intention for its own pleasure to the

world's intentions towards the recipient must be at least one good motive for the socialization of the sensual experience.

### IV.

The most difficult component to define in this projected, seemingly gratuitously, cooperative act is the psychological attitude of the participants each to the other. What is it about this psychological attitude, the two attitudes together transmitted through various physical contact being the relationship, that could render the two-party experience (1) relevant to what is essentially an independent experience, and (2) an improvement upon such an independent experience?

The first step might be to determine what the components of such a cooperative experience would be: two individuals and their respective erotic sensibilities. Since neither individual can *add* to the physical experience of the other, it must be that the contribution is a mental one, that it consists of the agent forming certain concepts and expressing these concepts in statements to the recipient. These statements, or thoughts, are not translated into a verbal medium but into a medium of gestures (or physical actions). These gestures are most fully understood when they are received directly, that is, in physical contact, by the person to whom they are addressed. This is because of the nature of the language, that it is not primarily heard but *felt* through being touched.

The most plausible explanation for a theory of cooperative sensual experience is probably some theory of psychic language, that is, a mime expressive of the agent's attitude towards the recipient and transcribed into gestures appropriate to a particular experience. (It must be remembered that this is the roughest sketch of some alternatives to institutionalized sex.) Some account must be given of this language which would be common to many different cultural languages, such as that it is emotive, that it is expressed by touch; some account must be given of its structure, whether some attitudes are required or some emotions must be expressed before someone could claim the use of the language; some account must be given of how the concept of style is relevant to the language, at what point do you have a dialect? what would count as a metaphor?

The agent is present to convey certain feelings. Assuming a healthy relationship, it's probably safe

to say that these feelings would be positive towards the recipient. But what would "positive" mean? It would have to satisfy the recipient, since the gesture would be received by that person and simultaneously interpreted. But why would such feelings have to be expressed by touching instead of verbally? What is significant about the connection between certain emotions and the sense of touch? But most important, what is the significance of this combination to the recipient?

How is the expression of approval related to the sensual experience? It must mean something that it is a *joining of extreme examples of the public (approval being a conventional judgment) and of the private (the auto-erotic)*. It must be that this mime has a symbolic aspect, and that in this essentially private act the outside participant expresses by its presence an identification with the recipient's feelings for itself. This could serve as a reinforcement to the ego and to a generalization from the

attitude of the agent towards the recipient to the attitude of the public as a whole toward the recipient.

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These are only a few suggestions. Our understanding of the sense of feeling, or intuition, is almost non-existent, and few people probably even realize that there is such a sense. It is as if our understanding of the sense of sight were modeled on the experience of being punched in the eye instead of on experiences such as seeing a Tunisian watercolor from Paul Klee. One might infer the possibility of assault from the art but not the possibility of art from the assault. We are unfortunately in the latter position, and there's not much hope of inferring an understanding of the sense of feeling from the institution of sexual intercourse. It has to be approached from some other direction. I have tried to suggest a possibility.





# Female Liberation as the Basis for Social Revolution

by ROXANNE DUNBAR

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The present female liberation movement must be viewed within the context of international social revolution and within the context of the long struggle by women for nominal legal rights. The knowledge that is now available, gained in past struggles, makes the current women's movement more scientific and potent. Black people in America and Vietnamese people have exposed the basic weakness of the system of white, Western dominance which we live under. They have also developed means of fighting which continually strengthen themselves and weaken the enemy. The dialectics of liberation have revealed that the weak and oppressed can struggle against and defeat a larger enemy. Revolutionary dialectics teach that nothing is immutable. Our enemy today may not be our enemy next year, or the same enemy might be fighting us in a different way tomorrow. Our tactics must be fitted to the immediate situation and open to change; our strategy must be formed in relation to our overall revolutionary goals. Black Americans and the Vietnamese have taught most importantly that there is a distinction between the consciousness of the oppressor and the consciousness of the oppressed.

I.

Women have not just recently begun to struggle against their suppression and exploitation. Women have fought in a million ways in their daily, private lives to survive and to overcome existing conditions. Many times those "personal" struggles have taken a self-destructive form. Almost always women have had to use sex as a tool, and have thereby sunk further in oppression. Many women still believe in the efficacy of fighting a lone battle. But more and more women are realizing that only collective strength and action will allow us to be free to fight for the kind of society that meets basic human needs. Collective activity has already had an enor-

mous effect on our thinking and on our lives. We are learning not to dissipate our strength by using traditional methods of exerting power—tears, manipulation, appeals to guilt and benevolence. But we do not ignore what seem to be the "petty" forms of female oppression, such as total identification with housework and sexuality as well as physical helplessness. Rather we understand that our oppression and suppression are institutionalized; that all women suffer the "petty" forms of oppression. Therefore they are not petty or personal, but rather constitute a widespread, deeply rooted social disease. They are the things that keep us tied down day to day, and do not allow us to act. Further, we understand that all men are our policemen, and no organized police force is necessary at this time to keep us in our places. All men enjoy male supremacy and take advantage of it to a greater or lesser degree depending on their position in the masculine hierarchy of power.

It is not enough that we take collective action. We must know where we have come from historically and personally, and how we can most effectively break the bonds. We have identified a system of oppression: *Sexism*. To understand how sexism has developed and the variety of its forms of suppression and mutations, female liberation must, as Betsy Warrior puts it, "re-examine the foundations of civilization."

What we find in re-examining history is that women have had a separate historical development from men. Within each society, women experience the particular culture, but on a larger scale of human history women have developed separately as a caste. The original division of labor in all societies was by sex. The female capacity for reproduction led to this division. The division of labor by sex has not put a lighter physical burden on women, as we might believe, if we look only at the mythology of

chivalry in Western ruling class history. Quite the contrary. What was restricted for women was not physical labor, but mobility.

Because woman's reproductive capacity led to her being forced into sedentary (immobile, not inactive) life, the female developed community life. Adult males were alien to the female community. Their job was to roam, to do the hunting and war-making, entering the community only to leave again. Their entrances and exits probably disrupted normal community life. What hunters experienced of the community were feasts and holidays, not day-to-day life. At some point, when women had developed food production and animal domestication to the point of subsistence, hunters began settling down. However, they brought to the community a very different set of values and behavioral patterns, which upset the primitive communism of the community.

In a very real sense, the hunter was less civilized than the female. He had little political (governing) experience. The experience of the hunter had led him to value dominance; he had become unsuited for living as equals in the community, because he knew only how to overpower and conquer the prey. Other masculine values, formed in the transient existence as hunters, included competition (with the prey) and violence (killing the prey). Hunters developed a taste for adventure and mobility. They developed technical skills and a sense of timing and accuracy and endurance. Though hunters worked together and developed a sense of brotherhood, their brotherhood developed outside community life.

Gradually in some cases, but often through violent upheaval, former hunters took over female communities, suppressing the female through domination and even enslavement. The political base for the taking of power often came from the secret male societies formed by men in reaction to female control of community institutions.

As societies became more affluent and complex, life was rationalized and ordered by introducing territoriality, or private property, and inheritance. Patrilineal descent required the control of a female or a number of females to identify the father. The offspring served as labor as well as fulfilling the function of transcendence for the father (the son taking over), and females were used for barter, as were cattle. This then led to the dominance of the male over a wife or wives and her (his) offspring. The female, like the land, became private property

under masculine dominance. Man, in conquering nature, conquered the female, who had worked with nature, not against it, to produce food and to reproduce the human race.

## II.

In competing among themselves for dominance over females (and thereby the offspring) and for land, a few males came to dominate the rest of the male population, as well as the entire female population. A peasant laboring class developed. Within that laboring class, males exploited females, though the male peasant had no property rights over females (or land). The landlord could take any young girl or woman he wanted for whatever purpose, and the peasant was not allowed to "protect" "his" woman.

The pattern of masculine dominance exists almost universally now, since those cultures where the pattern developed have come to dominate (colonize) pre-literate societies, and have introduced patterns of private property and nationalism. The Western nation-states, which have perfected colonialism, were developed as an extension of male dominance over females and the land. Other races and cultures were bought and sold, possessed, dominated through "contract" and ultimately through physical violence and the threat of destruction, of the world if necessary. *We live under an international caste system*, at the top of which is the Western white male ruling class, and at the very bottom of which is the female of the non-white colonized world. There is no simple order of "oppressions" within this caste system. Within each culture, the female is exploited to some degree by the male. She is classed with the very old and very young of both sexes ("the women, children, and old men"). White dominates black and brown. The caste system, in all its various forms, is always based on identifiable physical characteristics—sex, color, age.

Why is it important to say that females constitute a lower caste? Many people would say that the term caste can only properly be used in reference to India or Hindu culture. If we think that caste can only be applied to Hindu society, we will then have to find some other term for the kind of social category to which one is assigned at birth and from which one cannot escape by any action of one's own; also we must distinguish such social categories from economic classes or ranked groups as well as understand their relationship.

A caste system establishes a definite place into which certain members of a society have no choice but to fit (because of their color or sex or other easily identifiable physical characteristics such as being aged, crippled, or blind). A caste system, however, need not at all be based on a prohibition of physical contact between different castes. It only means that physical contact will be severely regulated, or will take place outside the bounds deemed acceptable by the society; it means that the mobility of the lower castes will be limited. It means that whatever traits associated with the lower caste will be devalued in the society or will be mystified in some way.

Under the caste system in the Southern states, physical contact between black and white is extensive (particularly through white male sexual exploitation of black women). In the South under slavery, there was frequent contact between black "mammy" and white child, between black and white pre-adolescent children, and between white master and black slave women.

Between male and female, thousands of taboos control their contact in every society. Within each, there is a "woman's world" and a "man's world." In most, men initiate contact with women, usually for the purpose of exploitation. Women have little freedom to initiate contact with adult males. The same is true for black and white in America.

The clearest historical analogy of the caste status of females is African slavery in English-speaking America. When slaves were freed during the Civil War, the female slaves were included, but when the right to citizenship was in question, female blacks were excluded. To many, comparing the female's situation in general with that of a slave in particular seems far-fetched. Actually, the reason the analogy is indicated has to do with the caste status of the African in America, not with Slavery as such.

Slave status in the past did not necessarily imply caste status by birth. The restriction of slavery to Africans (black people) in the English colonies rested on the caste principle that it was a status rightly belonging to Africans as innately (racially) inferior beings. (Of course, this was a rationalization on the part of the English, but it became a ruling ideology and was connected with the past.) If a person was black, he was presumed to be a slave unless he could prove otherwise. Caste was inclusive of the slave and free status, just as the caste status of females is inclusive of all economic classes, age, and marital status, though some are more "privi-

leged" and some are more exploited, depending on the female's relationship with a male, or whether she has one or not.

Caste, then, is not analogous to slavery. In Rome, where slaves were not conceived of as innately inferior, and did not differ racially from the enslaving group, slaves did not form a separate caste when they were freed. While they were slaves, however, they had no rights to property nor any legal rights. The master had the power of life and death over his slaves, just as in the slave South. As far as the legal category of the slave as property went, Rome and America had the same social form. It was caste which produced the contrast between the effects of the two systems of slavery. It was the system of caste which gave African slavery in America its peculiarly oppressive character. That caste oppression is analogous to the situation of females both legally and traditionally. (When jurists were seeking a legal category for the position of African slaves in Virginia, they settled on the code of laws which governed wives and children under the power of the patriarch, the head of the family.)

In order to understand the power relations of white and black in American society, of white imperialist America and the third world, and of male and female in all human societies, we must comprehend the caste system which structures power, and within which caste roles we are conditioned to remain.

Often, in trying to describe the way a white person oppresses or exploits a black person, or a man oppresses or exploits a woman, we say that the oppressor treats the other person as a "thing" or as an "object." Men treat women as "sex objects," we say; slavery reduced black human beings to "mere property," no different from horses or cattle. This interpretation of caste oppression overlooks the crucial importance of the fact that it is human beings, not objects, which the person in the higher caste has the power to dominate and exploit. Imagine a society becoming as dependent upon cattle as Southern plantation society was upon black people, or as men are upon women. The value of slaves as property lay precisely in their being persons, rather than just another piece of property. The value of a woman for a man is much greater than the value of a machine or animal to satisfy his sexual urges and fantasies, to do his housework, breed and tend his offspring. Under slavery, the slave did what no animal could do—planting and harvest, as well as every other kind of back-breaking labor for which no

machines existed. But the slave served a much larger purpose in terms of power. It is convenient and "fun" for a man to have satisfactions from "his woman," but his relation to her *as a person*, his position of being of a higher caste, is the central aspect of his power and dominance over her and his need for her.

(A further example of the importance to the higher castes of dominating human beings, not mere objects, is the way men view their sexual exploitation of women. It is not just the satisfaction of a man's private, individual, sexual urge which he fantasizes he will get from a woman he sees. In addition, and more central to his view of women, he visualizes himself taking her, dominating her through the sexual act; he sees her as the *human* evidence of his own power and prowess. Prostitution, however exploitative for the woman, can never serve this same purpose, just as wage labor, however exploitative to the wage slave, could not have served the same purpose in Southern society that black slaves served.)

Black people fell under two patterns of dominance and subservience which emerged under slavery, and which are analogous to patterns of male-female relations in industrial societies. One pattern is the *paternalistic* one (houseservants, livery men, entertainers, etc.). The second pattern is the *exploitative* pattern of the field hands. Among females today, housewives and women on welfare are subject to the paternalistic pattern. The *exploitative pattern* rules the lives of more than a third of the population of females (those who work for wages, including paid domestic work) in the United States. But it is important to remember that females form a caste within the labor force; that their exploitation is not simply double or multiple, but is *qualitatively* different from the exploitation of workers of the upper caste (white male).

Though the paternalistic pattern may seem less oppressive or exploitative for females, it is actually only more *insidious*. The housewife remains tied by emotional bonds to a man and children, cut off from the more public world of work; she is able to experience the outside world only through the man or her children. If she were working in public industry, however exploitative, she could potentially do something about her situation through collective effort with other workers.

However, even for women who hold jobs outside the home, their caste conditioning and demands usually prevail, preventing them from knowing even

that they have the *right* to work, much less to ask for something more. Also, the jobs women are allowed to have are most often "service" and domestic ones, demanding constant contact with men and children. Females and blacks, even under the alienating capitalist system, are subject to the paternalistic pattern of caste domination every minute of their lives. White men, however exploited as laborers, rarely experience this paternalism, which infantilizes and debilitates its victims.

A caste system provides rewards that are not entirely economic in the narrow sense. Caste is a way of making human relations "work," a way of freezing relationships, so that conflicts are minimal. A caste system is a *social system*, which is economically based. It is not a set of attitudes or just some mistaken ideas which must be understood and dispensed with because they are not really in the interest of the higher caste. No mere change in ideas will alter the caste system under which we live. The caste system does not exist just in the mind. Caste is deeply rooted in human history, dates to the division of labor by sex, and is the very basis of the present social system in the United States.

### III.

The present female liberation movement, like the movements for black liberation and national liberation, has begun to identify strongly with Marxist class analysis. And like other movements, we have taken the basic tools of Marxist analysis (*dialectical and historical materialism*) and expanded the understanding of the process of change. Our analysis of women as an exploited caste is not new. Marx and Engels as well as other nineteenth-century socialist and communist theorists analyzed the position of the female sex in just such a way. Engels identified the family as the basic unit of capitalist society, and of female oppression. "The modern individual family is founded on the open or concealed domestic slavery of the wife, and modern society is a mass composed of these individual families as its molecules." And "within the family, he [the man] is the bourgeois and the wife represents the proletariat." (Frederick Engels, *Origin of The Family, Private Property, and the State*.)

Marx and Engels thought that the large-scale entrance of women into the work force (women and children were the first factory workers) would destroy the family unit, and that women would fight as workers, with men, for the overthrow of capitalism. That did not happen, nor were women

freed in the socialist revolutions that succeeded. In the West (Europe and the U.S.), where proletarian revolutions have not succeeded, the family ideology has gained a whole new lease on life, and the lower caste position of women has continued to be enforced. Even now when 40% of the adult female population is in the work force, woman is still defined completely within the family, and the man is seen as "protector" and "breadwinner."

In reality, the family has fallen apart. Nearly half of all marriages end in divorce, and the family unit is a decadent, energy-absorbing, destructive, wasteful institution for everyone except the ruling class, the class for which the institution was created. The powers that be, through government action and their propaganda force, the news media, are desperately trying to hold the family together. Sensitivity, encounter, key clubs, group sex, income tax benefits, and many other devices are being used to promote the family as a desirable institution. Daniel Moynihan and other government sociologists have correctly surmised that the absence of the patriarchal family among blacks has been instrumental in the development of "anti-social" (revolutionary) black consciousness. Actually, in the absence of the patriarchal family, which this society has systematically denied black people, a sense of community life and collective effort has developed. Among whites, individualism and competitiveness prevail in social relations, chiefly because of the propagation of the ideology of the patriarchal family. The new sense of collective action among women is fast destroying the decadent family ideology along with its ugly individualism and competitiveness and complacency. Our demand for collective public childcare is throwing into question the private family (or individual) ownership of children.

Yet, under this competitive system, without the family unit and without the tie with a male, the female falls from whatever middle-class status she had gained from the family situation. She quickly falls into the work force or has to go on welfare. Such was the case for black slaves when a master voluntarily freed them, and when slavery was ended as an institution. In both cases, the "helplessness" is used as the rationale for continued domination. Lower caste status almost always means lower class status as well. For women who are supported by and gain the status of their husbands, working-class status is always a potential threat, if they do not perform their wifely duties properly. However, many of these supported women have chosen to

enter the work force in the vast pool of female clerical workers, in order to gain the economic independence that is necessary to maintain self respect and sanity. On these jobs, women are still subjected to patterns of masculine dominance. But often on the less personal ground of work place, a woman can begin throwing off the bonds of servitude.

#### IV.

How will the family unit be destroyed? After all, women must take care of the children, and there will continue to be children. Our demand for full-time childcare in the public schools will be met to some degree all over, and perhaps fully in places. The alleviation of the duty of full-time childcare in private situations will free many women to make decisions they could not before. But more than that, the demand alone will throw the whole ideology of the family into question, so that women can begin establishing a community of work with each other and we can fight collectively. Women will feel freer to leave their husbands and become economically independent, either through a job or welfare.

Where will this leave white men and "their" families? The patriarchal family is economically and historically tied to private property, and under Western capitalism with the development of the national state. The masculine ideology most strongly asserts home and country as primary values, with wealth and power an individual's greatest goal. The same upper class of men who created private property and founded nation-states also created the family. It is an expensive institution, and only the upper classes have been able to maintain it properly. However, American "democracy" has spread the ideology to the working class. The greatest pride of a working man is that he can support "his" wife and children and maintain a home (even though this is an impossibility for many and means misery for most). The very definition of a bum or derelict is that he does not maintain a wife, children, and home. Consequently, he is an outcast. It is absurd to consider the possibility of women sharing with men the "privilege" of owning a family. Even though 5.2 million families are headed by females in this country, they gain no prestige from doing so. In fact, the family without a male head or support is considered an inferior family. A woman supporting her family actually degrades the family in terms of social status.

At this point in history, white working-class



men will fight for nothing except those values associated with the masculine ideology, the ideology of the ruling class: family, home, property, country, male supremacy, and white supremacy. This force, the organized or organizable working class, has been vital in other social revolutions. However, because of the caste system which reigns here, the American democracy of white males, and the power of the nation in the world with which white workers identify, white male workers are not now a revolutionary group in America. Among the most oppressed part of the white working-class males—Irish, Italian, French Canadian (in the U.S.), Polish immigrants—the patriarchal Catholic church buttresses the masculine ideology with its emphasis on family. Even among lower caste (color) groups, Puerto Ricans and Mexican-Americans, the church reinforces masculine domination.

However, the women who "belong" to these men are going to revolt along with the women who belong to middle-class men, and women on welfare and women not yet in the cycle of marriage and family. Black women will probably continue to fight as blacks alongside black men with a reversal of the trend toward taking second place to the black man in order for him to gain his "due" masculine status according to the prevailing masculine ideology. When the white working-class man is confronted with the revolt of women against the family and the society, he will no longer have the escape valve of supremacy over those beneath him in the caste system.

#### V.

Feminism is opposed to the masculine ideology. I do not suggest that all women are feminists, though many are; certainly some men are, though very few. Some women embrace the masculine ideology, particularly women with a college education. But most women have been programmed from early childhood for a role, maternity, which develops a certain consciousness of care for others, self-reliance, flexibility, non-competitiveness, cooperation, and materialism. In addition, women have inherited and continue to suffer exploitation which forces us to use our wits to survive, to know our enemy, to play dumb when necessary. So we have developed the consciousness of the oppressed, not the oppressor, even though some women have the right to oppress others, and all have the right to oppress children. If these "maternal" traits, conditioned into women, are desirable traits, they are

desirable for everyone, not just women. By destroying the present society, and building a society based on feminist principles, men will be forced to live in the human community on terms very different from the present. For that to happen, feminism must be asserted, by women, as the basis of revolutionary social change. Women and other oppressed people must lead and structure the revolutionary movement and the new society to assure the dominance of feminist principles. Our present female liberation movement is preparing us for that task, as is the black liberation movement preparing black people for their revolutionary leadership role.

The female liberation movement is developing in the context of international social revolution, but it is also heir to a 120-year struggle by women for legal rights. The nineteenth-century feminist movement as well as its child, the women's suffrage movement, were comparatively modest in their demands. They fought from a basis of no rights, no power at all. In the first movement, women began fighting for the right of females to speak publicly for abolition of slavery. The cause of female rights and the abolition of slavery were inexorably linked. The early feminists did not see the family as a decadent institution. They wanted to find a way to force men to share responsibility in the institution they created by supporting their families. They saw alcohol as an enemy of family solidarity.

With the end of slavery, only black males received citizenship. Black women and white women remained unenfranchised. Women then began the long struggle for the vote. They felt they could make the large-scale and basic changes in society which they saw as necessary by their influence in politics. They believed that woman's political involvement would bring her out of privacy. Many of them questioned the very foundations of civilization, but their strategy and tactics for gaining the desired upheaval of their society revolved around political influence within the system.

In the process of their struggle, the feminists and suffragists opened the door for our present female liberation movement. They won not only the right to vote, but other legal rights as well, including the custodial rights to their children. More than that, women began to fight their oppression and lift up their heads. At the same time, working women were fighting their wage slavery. Women began to emerge from privacy and to know that they did in fact have rights for which they must fight. They gained confidence in the struggle, and asserted a

new independence, which we all inherited.

We also inherited an understanding of the weakness of single issue tactics, and of "organizing" women around issues rather than teaching a complete analysis of female oppression. We learned that there is no key to liberation. We must fight on many fronts at once. Thanks to gains made by our feminist predecessors, though, we have the confidence to assert feminism as a positive force, rather than asking for equality in the man's world. We can demand that men change. We can consider leading a social revolution, not just working in supportive positions, and hoping for the justness, benevolence and change of heart of men. We can assert the necessity of industrializing all housework, and, for right now, to have school cafeterias open to adults as well as children. We can demand the extension of public education facilities and funds to include in-

fant and childcare. We can demand the development of maternal skills and consciousness in men. We can insist on the necessity for revolution to be based on the needs and consciousness of the most oppressed of women. We can revoke any privileges we have which divide us from other women.

We are developing necessary skills—self-defense and physical strength, the ability to work collectively and politically, rather than privately and personally, and the ability to teach our ideas to many other women in such a way that they can become teachers as well. From these new relations and skills will be built the values of the new society. Right now they are our tools of struggle. Though we may work in isolated and difficult and dangerous situations, we can know our larger strategy and goals, and know that we are a part of a world-wide struggle for human liberation.



# III FOUNDING A RADICAL FEMINIST MOVEMENT:

## ISSUES: THE LEFT DEBATE

### Women and The Left

by ELLEN WILLIS

*Ellen Willis is a founder of Redstockings and the author of several important pieces on women's liberation, notably "Up From Radicalism: A Feminist Journal," in US #2 (Bantam, October 1969). The present article, published in the Guardian, February 1969, was a cornerstone for the establishment of a radical feminist movement independent of the male-dominated Left.*

The women's liberation movement was created by women activists fed up with their subordinate position in radical organizations. Their first goal was to take an equal, active part in the radical movement instead of being relegated to secretarial and other service chores.

This circumstance has led to certain assumptions about the women's movement. In the standard radical view, women's liberation is a branch of the Left and women a constituency like students or GIs. Granted that we suffer our own forms of oppression and that radical men have oppressed us as women, the emphasis is on contributing our special insights to the Left as a whole and using feminist issues as an organizing tool. In return, male radicals are expected to endorse women's liberation and combat their male chauvinism.

Many of us now reject this view of our purpose as anti-woman. We have come to see women's liberation as an independent revolutionary movement, potentially representing half the population. We intend to make our own analysis of the system and put our interests first, whether or not it is convenient for the (male-dominated) Left. Although we may cooperate with radical men on matters of common concern, we are not simply part of the Left. We do not assume that radical men are our allies or

that we want the same kind of revolution they want.

This divergence in outlook was apparent when several women's liberation groups met in Washington in January, 1968 to plan anti-Inaugural activities. The theme of the women's liberation was "Give back the vote." Since women's 80-year struggle for the vote had achieved a meaningless victory and vitiated the feminist movement, we planned to destroy our voter registration cards publicly as a symbol that suffragism was dead and a new fight for real emancipation beginning. Some women wanted to invite men to burn their voters' cards with us during or after our action. This idea was rejected on grounds that it would change the action from a repudiation of suffrage as a sop for women to a general protest against the electoral process.

There was also some wrangling over the speech we had scheduled. Some of us wanted to inform movement men that we were sick of participating in other people's revolutions and were working for ourselves. Others were horrified at the thought of criticizing the movement publicly. We decided on two short speeches—one a general statement of women's oppression, the other a militant declaration of independence from radical men.

Ensuing events bore out the separatist argument. The Mobilization Committee, supposedly

sympathetic, neither included women's liberation among the issues listed in its *Guardian* ad, nor mentioned our action in its mimeographed program. Mobe spokesman Dave Dellinger announced at the Saturday rally that the Mobe had come to demonstrate against the war and for black liberation. When some women on the stage yelled at him, he mentioned women's liberation as an afterthought. During our presentation—which began with the moderate, pro-movement statement—men in the audience booed, laughed, catcalled and yelled enlightened remarks like "Take her off the stage and fuck her." Instead of reprimanding the hecklers (as he did during an unpopular speech by a black GI), Dellinger tried to hurry us off the stage.

It is a mistake to think that education alone will change this. Radical men have a power position that they will not give up until they have to. They will support our revolution only when we build an independent movement so strong that no revolution at all is possible without our cooperation.

To work within the movement is to perpetuate the idea that our struggle is secondary. We will continually be tempted to defer to "the larger good of the movement" just as we have always deferred to "the larger good of the family." We must remember that women are not just a special interest group with sectarian concerns. We are *half the human race*. Our oppression transcends occupations and class lines. Femaleness, like blackness, is a biological fact, a fundamental condition. Like racism, male supremacy permeates all strata of this society. And it is even more deeply entrenched. Whites are at least defensive about racism; men—including most radicals, black and white—are proud of their chauvinism. Male supremacy is the oldest form of domination and the most resistant to change.

The radical movement has been dominated by men. Its theory, priorities and strategies reflect male interests. Here are some of the more obvious points radical feminists must consider:

Theory: An anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist analysis is insufficient for our purposes. Women's oppression antedated capitalism by some 2000 years

and has outlasted it in socialist countries.

Priorities: Women are the only oppressed people whose biological, emotional and social life is totally bound to that of the oppressors. The function of the ghetto, the army, the factory, the campus in reifying an oppressed group's separate existence must be assumed by women's liberation. We must provide a place for women to be friends, exchange personal griefs and give their sisters moral support—in short, develop group consciousness. Yet this function is often derogated by movement-oriented women—"How can we indulge in group therapy while *men* [my italics] are dying in Vietnam?"

Strategies: (1) In deciding what role, if any, confrontation and violence should play in our movement, we must consider that women are at a disadvantage physically and that our aggressiveness has been systematically inhibited. On the other hand, we must realize that one reason men don't take us seriously is that they are not physically afraid of us.

(2) We must admit that we will often have more in common with reformist women's organizations like NOW (National Organization for Women) than with radical men. Repeal of abortion laws, for example, is not a radical demand—the system can accommodate it. But it is of gut concern to radical as well as liberal women.

(3) We will never organize the mass of women by subordinating their concrete interests to a "higher" ideology. To believe that concentrating on women's issues is not really revolutionary is self-deprecation. Our demand for freedom involves not only the overthrow of capitalism but the destruction of the patriarchal family system.

It is not only possible but imperative for women to build a specifically feminist radical consciousness. As radicals we must do our best to foster this consciousness. But we should have the humility to realize that women who have never been committed to a male-oriented radical analysis may have clearer perspectives than we. Unless we shed our movement prejudices and help women's liberation go its own way, we will not be a revolutionary vanguard but reactionary obstructionists.



# FEMINISM LIVES



# Sequel: Letter to a Critic

by ELLEN WILLIS

Letters poured in to the *Guardian*, in response to "Women and the Left." Though most were favorable, the *Guardian* chose to print those that were not. Here is Ellen's unpublished reply to one critic, extremely valuable to us in the way that it cogently resolves the "Left Debate."

Dear Wanda,

I was disturbed by your comments on my *Guardian* article, not because you disagreed but because you accused me of not thinking seriously. On the contrary, not too long ago I was exactly where you are, but I changed because I did some serious thinking. To me, the first requirement of thinking is to look at a problem without preconceptions. For an oppressed group, the first step in a serious analysis is to think about one's personal experience. Why do I feel oppressed? (No glib quoting from some book about why I am supposed to feel oppressed, but what in my daily experience makes me feel oppressed?) What unpleasant experiences have I shared with other women? With both men and women? Who, specifically, is hurting me? (Husband, boss, parents, friends?) How? Then I look for an underlying pattern that fits the facts, always being open to new facts and refusing to accept any theory that doesn't fit *all* the facts, except as a partial truth or a helpful guide to something more. Unfortunately, too many radical women go about analysis in exactly the opposite way. They already have a theory, in which they have deep emotional involvement and a vested interest (all these years in the movement, have I really been going about things the wrong way?). They then select aspects of their personal experiences and try to fit it into the theory. That part of their experience that does fit they consider politically significant (though half the time it turns out they have mistaken effects for causes). Anything that doesn't fit in is labeled a personal, i.e., non-political, hangup or is twisted and misinterpreted out of recognition to try to make it fit somehow.

You say "the basic misperception is that our enemy is man, not capitalism." I say, the basic misperception is the facile identification of "the system" with "capitalism." In reality, the American system consists of two interdependent but distinct parts—the capitalist state, and the patriarchal family.

Engels, in *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, explains that the material basis of history is twofold: the means of production of commodities, and the means of production of new human beings. The social organization for the production of commodities is the property system, in this case the capitalist state. The social organization for the production of new human beings is the family system. And within the family system, men function as a ruling class, women as an exploited class. Historically, women and their children have been the property of men (until recently, quite literally, even in "advanced" countries). The mistake many radicals make is to assume that the family is simply part of the cultural superstructure of capitalism, while actually both capitalism and the family system make up the material substructure of society. It is difficult to see this because capitalism is so pervasive and powerful compared to the family, which is small, weak, and has far less influence on the larger economic system than vice versa. But it is important for women to recognize and deal with their exploited position in the family system, for it is primarily in terms of the family system that we are oppressed as women. Of course capitalism also exploits us, but the way in which it exploits us is primarily by taking advantage of, turning to its own purposes, our subordinate position in the family system and our historical domination by man, which stems from a time when the family system was all-powerful and the state did not yet exist. If you really think about our exploitation under capitalism—as cheap labor and as consumers—you will see that our position in the family system is at the root. This does not mean we shouldn't fight capitalism. Unless the power of the corporate state is broken, there can be no revolution in the family system. Furthermore, to attack male supremacy (i.e., man's class dominance in the family system) consistently inevitably means attacking capitalism in vulnerable areas. But if we simply work to destroy



capitalism, without working to destroy male supremacy on all levels, we will find that the resulting revolution is only vicarious. So feminists' insistence that men, as a group, are oppressing us (in so far as they uphold and exercise their privileged position in the family system) is not false consciousness—it has an objective basis.

So much for ideology. Now for some practical politics. Our position here is exactly analogous to the black power position, with male radicals playing the part of white liberals. White liberals (and radicals, too, before they got wise to themselves) made exactly the same argument you're making. "Racism affects us too, we should work together, divisions between us only help the common enemy." (Incidentally, I thought you were being a little disingenuous in saying there are no "women's issues." A women's issue—or a black issue—means, in the accepted usage, a way in which women are oppressed because they are women, or blacks because they are black. This doesn't mean that men, and whites, are not affected by such issues.) Blacks answered "We can't work together because you don't understand what it is to be black; because you've grown up in a racist society, your behavior toward us is bound to be racist whether you know it or not and whether you mean it or not; your ideas about how to help us are too often self-serving and patronizing; besides, part of our liberation is in thinking for ourselves and working for ourselves, not accepting the domination of the white man in still another area of

our lives. If you as whites want to work on eliminating your own racism, if you want to support our battle for liberation, fine. If we decide that we have certain common interests with white activists and can form alliances with white organizations, fine. But we want to make the decisions in our own movement." Substitute man-woman for black-white and that's where I stand. With one important exception: while white liberals and radicals always understood the importance of the black liberation struggle, even if their efforts in the blacks' behalf were often misguided, radical men simply do not understand the importance of our struggle. Except for a hip vanguard, movement men have tended to dismiss the woman's movement as "just chicks with 'personal' hangups," to insist that men and women are equally oppressed, though maybe in different ways, or to minimize the extent and significance of male chauvinism ("just a failure of communication"). All around me I see men who consider themselves dedicated revolutionaries, yet exploit their wives and girl friends shamefully without ever noticing a contradiction. Anyone who was at that incredible rally in Washington knows it will be a long time before the majority of men, even those on the Left that should be closest to us, grasp that we have a grievance, and that we are serious. When they do grasp this, then we can talk about working together.

*Sincerely,  
Ellen Willis*

#### HOT AND COLD FLASHES . . . Kathie Sarachild

There are no female privileges, only some compensations.  
Love, like war, is a continuation of politics by other means.  
Communism will seem like child's play compared to feminism.

# Hard Knocks: Working for Women's Liberation in a Mixed (Male-Female) Movement Group

by CAROL HANISCH

Carol Hanisch was an early member of New York Women's Liberation and an important contributor to *Notes From the First Year*. Here Carol describes her experience organizing women in the South for the Southern Conference Educational Fund, a civil rights organization sympathetic to Women's Liberation—we held our first meetings in their New York offices for over a year.

There were sisters who cautioned me that working for women's liberation in a mixed (male-female) organization would be a waste of time. It was, I guess, except for what I learned about the limitations of Women's Liberation's relationship to the "Movement" and what it means to be an organizer.

Let me make it clear that this is not a personal attack on SCEF (Southern Conference Educational Fund). That organization has shown a far better workers' consciousness than most "movement" organizations. This is evidenced by the simple, clear language which it uses in speaking to the working MAN of the South and in the efforts it is making to deal politically with the everyday economic problems which affect women, too.

On some important occasions SCEF has taken positions and actions which also seem to show a higher consciousness of the problems of blacks and of women. SCEF was one of the first white organizations which calls itself radical to endorse the idea of Black Power. It also stuck its neck out as probably the first movement organization in the country to have a full-time women's liberation organizer connected with the independent Women's Liberation Movement.

We are therefore criticizing SCEF for not going all the way toward policies which most radical organizations never dared take the first step toward. If we are singling out SCEF, it is *not* because it is worse than other groups. It is because it was better—or appeared to be—that we must study, analyze, and protest the experience I had with SCEF.

I think the established movement, at this point, poses some threat to our emerging movement. We could choose to go in the old wrong direction. We could go on abiding by their incorrect ideas because

they are familiar and therefore less scary and because it seems that we have to agree with them in order to get their help and support. It is risky to strike out on our own, both intellectually and politically. But from my experience with SCEF and from what I see going on in other white, male-dominated movement organizations, I believe it is necessary.

From these experiences I no longer believe we (WL) should have any connection as an organization with any such group, except perhaps to fight repression. I came to this conclusion only after a desperate attempt to merge the two fights in an organization for which I had much respect. That's why I want to share what happened to me and the changes it brought about in my thinking with as many sisters and groups as possible.

I first presented a proposal for a WL project to the SCEF staff in the fall of 1968. I had returned from the Sandy Springs Conference positive that the time had come for a new surge toward the liberation of women. I had been riding a high since the first WL meeting I had attended in January in New York. I felt I was seeing clearly and really thinking for the first time in my life because I was daring to look at the world through my own eyes, instead of in the "male" way I had been forced to view it. With a whole group of women saying many of the same things, the "force" seemed possible to overcome. Feelings and ideas that had been consistently trounced on by men and their theories were finding acceptance and support with other women. I went to that staff meeting giddy, enraged, excited, nervous, optimistic, and joyful. I was hoping against hope that I could combine my desire to fight for my liberation as a woman and as a worker (my

liberation from male supremacy and capitalism) in the same political organization.

At that time I felt SCEF was open enough to be able to support the new ideas and organizing methods which we women were developing in our separate movement. I thought SCEF really believed in self-determination for black people and would similarly support women. I was wrong, even though I had already been with the organization for nearly two years.

I should have known that the two fights could not be joined in the same organization, no matter what organization. I had spent a year in Mississippi in 1965-66, and I had watched the problems of racism that blacks ran into with movement whites long before Black Power became the proud cry of the Meredith March. I had watched white movement workers telling black people what to do. (I probably would have, too, except I didn't know what they should do, and besides, I was relegated to the research library and the mimeograph machine.) I was amazed that these white radicals seemed to have so many answers that were in conflict with those of the beautiful, plain-speaking black people who taught me so much about how they were oppressed by Senator Eastland, the local sheriff, the liberals, and ME. I learned from them more concretely how I wasn't so free myself, and I began to worry about that. I also learned about unity in struggle—that glimmer that things might not have to be the way they are if people get together.

I watched those black people struggle against white political lines in "integrated" (white-dominated) organizations. Sometimes I wanted to support what they were saying in arguments with white "radicals." But I usually didn't. I think it was partially because I am a woman that I was afraid to open my mouth around people with so many answers. It may have been a combination of being a woman (which allowed me to see that the black people were right) and being a white racist which made me "afraid" to disagree openly with my fellow whites. I also may have remained silent from fear of exposing my own racism to black people. Besides being racist in itself, this prevented black people from knowing exactly where I was at and delayed my having to correct my racist mistakes.

Nonetheless, when Black Power came along, it was hard to face the fact that I really didn't belong in that struggle anymore. I understood that racism was the fault of white people and a dog-eat-dog political and economic system. I had come to see

that Senator Eastland and the other rich people who own and rule this country were exploiting me, too. I had learned why my parents were poor—that it wasn't their fault any more than it was the fault of black people that they were poor and often starving. I was beginning to see that all people do the best they can with what they are allowed. I was beginning to look up with anger instead of down with gratitude.

So when black SNCC workers told us to fight our own oppressors, I didn't want to do it. I knew even then that it was easier to fight other people's battles than to deal with one's own. The investment was not so great. In other people's struggles you control your commitment—that is, you can get out when you want to. When you are fighting your own oppression, you can't get out. You can change from fighting as an individual to fighting with your group (and maybe back to fighting as an individual), but you can't stop struggling.

(At that time, "fighting your own oppressors" to me meant fighting capitalists. It wasn't until a year later that I began to see that my oppression as a woman was political, not personal, and that male domination was at least as oppressive as capitalism.)

With the Mississippi experience behind me, I should have known WL and SCEF (or any other male-dominated organization) could not mix. I wanted SCEF to support the organizing of an autonomous Women's Liberation Movement with no strings attached, without giving us a ready-made analysis and without telling us what to do. I wanted the WLM to have a closer working relationship to SCEF and other radical organizations than the black movement had. I didn't realize at the time that this was impossible. For one thing I thought SCEF had a better understanding of Black Power than it actually has and would therefore have a similar attitude toward women's liberation. (When I objected to a SCEF male caucus and was called a man-hater and objected to the idea of white caucuses and found out most of the staff favored them, I was shocked.) My own racist attitude of not having faith that black people know best what they are doing led me to overlook the sacrifices they would have to make to maintain a closer working relationship.

So the whole thing didn't work. Why not? Because the male movement can't accept an analysis about our own oppression arrived at in groups of women only all over the country. Because movement people think they are somehow smarter and better and therefore the leaders of "the masses."

Because they fail to recognize their privileged position as paid organizers and the necessities in the lives of people who have to work to survive (*I'll never work for the system again*)—gallant words of a paid movement male whose wife supports his family).

So here are several reasons why I think working for women's liberation in mixed groups is not an effective thing to do:

#### **It Takes a Fantastic Toll on the Individual who Attempts It**

I underwent constant insults from other staff people who were supposed to be my allies in struggle. I was called a reactionary for maintaining that women are a class. I was told by the SCEF male caucus that I shouldn't act as if I hate men if I really don't (in other words, don't be aggressive or hurt our feelings or blame US for your problems). After several hours of conversation with one staff man, he told me that I was politically wrong about women, but that I was attractive and the kind of woman he'd like to spend a few days on the beach with. I was told that if women thought men were to blame, we were just too stupid to recognize our long-range self-interest. I wanted desperately for SCEF to change, for the SCEF men to be my allies, for the SCEF women to understand what I was saying (which was impossible as only one of them had ever participated in a women's liberation group and she thought women were "sick"). I walked a tightrope for months—not really saying all of what I really believed out of respect for SCEF's official policy. I knew by *not* telling the whole truth as I saw it to other women that I was doing a great disservice to my sisters and myself. At times it even meant that I had to let my WL sisters go out on a limb without my support. It wasn't worth it.

#### **It Holds Back Our Movement**

We don't even begin with the basic right to question prevailing male ideologies. We must be able to take what's true and reject what's untrue in them. All mixed groups now operate on male terms and male ideologies, no matter how many women are in them. The only reason I survived in SCEF at all was because I had been in WL consciousness raising for a year and looked to WL for my analysis and support. Even then, I was torn at times because my money was coming from SCEF. I wasn't free to say what I really thought and still keep my job, and

that was bad for WL because honesty with women is so essential.

#### **You Can't Admit You Don't Know**

I found myself saying over and over again in answer to questions of the staff, "I don't know yet. We women will decide that as we get organized." This, of course, is unacceptable. The male ideal demands firm answers. We know we don't have a lot of answers and that those answers must come from group thinking and action.

#### **They Can't or Won't Understand You**

As James Baldwin put it, when asked "what Negroes want": "Negroes want to be treated like men," he said. "The request sounds simple enough. Yet people who have mastered Kant, Hegel, Shakespeare, Marx and Freud and the Bible find this statement utterly impenetrable."

I explained until I was blue in the face and they kept asking the same questions over and over: "But what is your program? Who is the enemy? Don't you hate men? What are you going to do for the working class? What are women's issues?"

Women's issues were, I admit, hard to talk about in terms of "program." Abortion, day care centers, equal pay for equal work, and other legal rights were the most obvious ones. It was difficult to talk about the rest, partially because I was intimidated because "all those body issues" were supposedly apolitical, and partially because the only program I could give was analysis and unity. We don't have any other program to deal with housework, orgasms, forced fornication, blaming mothers for everything, having to shuffle, being called honey in the supermarket and whore on the street, having babies, having to hold relationships together, marriage, having to be good, strong and sacrificing, always serving others, being given no credit for work, constant insults, being the mediator. I was attacked from all directions by both men and women, and I found myself pushed into saying things I wasn't sure I believed in—all those little hunches. I found that the women who hadn't participated in the women's movement considered themselves authorities on it.

#### **They "Man-Hater" Bait You**

If we don't blame the capitalist system for everything, they think we hate men. They can't seem to get it through their heads that we can

blame men *and* capitalism at the same time. They are so concerned that we think men are the enemy that they can't hear anything else we say. They call us everything from "reactionaries" to "cultural nationalists." It amazes me that people who are so much the targets of red-baiting can so easily turn around and "man-hater" bait us. Maybe that explains, at least, why they do most of it behind our backs.

#### **They Demand a Distinction Between the Organizer and the People**

Movement people tend to think of themselves as "special" people—smart, intelligent, self-sacrificing, good people who have THE GOOD WORD. Women's liberation taught me that the only real difference between other women and myself (besides class and race) is that I have had certain experiences of unity that give me hope that something can be done about my bad conditions and an end to blaming myself so that I am desperate for that change. Also, I have learned some true things about women, myself included, from being in consciousness-raising groups where we try to analyze the objective conditions from our own experiences.

In WL I am fighting my own oppression, I am the people. I know I'm not brainwashed, cowardly, conditioned, lazy, submissive, sick, dumb, or consenting to my own oppression. When I do or don't do something, it is for a very good reason. Paid organizers forget this sometimes. *If your love and money are coming to you FOR fighting the system, and other people's will get cut off if they DO, you are divided from the people.* Much as I would like to be a paid organizer for the WLM, I think it would be best for our movement if we never make that division. Let us live like everybody else so that we don't operate on false consciousness.

This really hit me in the gut when I got fired from SCEF and had to face what I would do with my life. I had been working in the movement for subsistence for the past four years and planned to go on like that forever. Then BAM!!! I was without a job, I have very little money saved, I have a college loan to pay off, my parents are too poor to help me (SCEF kept me on the payroll awhile). I have a history of involvement in the movement that will make it difficult to get a decent job, at least in the South. It changed the whole way I look at things. To be an organizer now simply means I have hope that we women and any men who will come

along on our terms can change the things that make our lives miserable. My task as an organizer, if I am one, is to take the risk of always being honest with other women and with men when possible.

#### **Movement Men Avoid Facing Their Own Exploiters**

By putting their emphasis on supporting Black and Third World struggles, and even sometimes, Women's Liberation, white male radicals avoid the consciousness that they themselves are exploited by the white men who control this country. I, for one, don't want male-dominated movement groups rushing to our aid except when we specifically ask for it. They should, however, always be willing to give us money, protection and support when we do ask for it. Radical men can fight male supremacy in mixed organizations, in their organizing work and in their own lives. There will be no revolution against capitalism in this country unless male domination goes down before it and during it. We women will see to that. And that is the major reason men should get rid of their sexism. It is in their long-range self-interest to do so. Only a strong united sisterhood of women can insure that.

I do not want to be in any vanguard in a struggle against capitalism. I am oppressed by men as well as exploited by capitalism; therefore, I am not as free to struggle against capitalism as is the white man. Nor do I want to continue to do all the work involved in changing things from which men will benefit the most. I don't want to work for worker control of factories if women will still end up doing the housework.

It is male supremacist for movement groups to latch onto WL as the new and live and growing thing and then try to direct us. Male radicals must start to look up instead of down, to be angry at the millionaires instead of grateful they aren't poor blacks or women, to analyze their own exploitation as working people and the stake they have in revolutionary change. We women will help where we can. We have another battle to fight.

"A stitch in time saves nine," and where possible women (as individuals, not as WL) should participate with men in the struggle against worker exploitation. Our consciousness is much higher and more down to earth in most cases than theirs. We sort of need to be around to bring these theoretical ideas up to practical day-to-day life and point out where they are wrong. Men who understand their own exploitation as working people are more likely



to recognize their stake in fighting male supremacy, both in themselves and in other men. Also, the idea of an all-male group makes me nervous. But it's useless to try to work in mixed groups except where WL has built enough strength that men are forced to accept us and our ideas. Women's caucuses are always a must. Our unity is our real strength. We must beware of divide and conquer tactics.

I hope other women are writing down their experiences. I'm having a little different one with a movement group here in Gainesville than I had with

SCEF, which sort of gives me some hope that it is possible to work against my exploitation as a worker in a mixed group. The reason is, of course, that we have two strong, united, radical feminist, consciousness-raising groups here. Nearly all the women in the movement group are in WL, though all the women in WL are not in a worker group. It's no bed of roses, of course, but it does seem to be an improvement. So we'll push on and see what happens.

SISTERHOOD FIRST IS THE ONLY WAY TO LIBERATION.

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## Them and Me

*Written by a member of Redstockings who has chosen to remain anonymous, this article expresses the frustrations of many women with the derivative nature of much of the women's movement in its early stages.*

I didn't take notes since the meeting was in the nature of a three-hour confrontation between them and me. This is what I remember except that it was loaded with jargon from the New Left which I cannot reproduce. So this report will look a little better for my side of it than it was, since what it actually was was them speaking New Leftese and me stumbling along in tattered bits—sometimes trying to use their terms, but every time being accused of using them incorrectly, and plain English was no good since they would translate it into New Leftese and I couldn't even know if they did it accurately or not. Many times I found myself defending a position I didn't believe in or know how I got there—they had twisted what I said very slightly and thrown it back at me. My overwhelming feeling was stupidity. I just didn't know what was going on verbally and couldn't respond to it although I knew very well what was actually going on but they wouldn't allow me to speak to that.

We started off by bringing out Juliet Mitchell's article, "The Longest Revolution,"<sup>8</sup> which the group had been reading out loud for seven weeks. The purpose was to criticize it. The criticism was on the order of "She mentions nineteenth-century phi-

losophers but she doesn't say which ones—that's very bad." I was reminded of college English courses. I brought up a point of my own which is that she says "there is no reason why the biological and social mother have to coincide." My point was that there is no reason why the socializer has to be a woman. Using the term "social mother" still presumes the old definition of mothers' role in bringing up children and implies that it can be foisted on another woman. This is the same old line. This started an argument in which I was attacked as follows:

Mother doesn't necessarily mean woman. It's a psycho-sociological term referring to the job, not the gender. I protested that it certainly did mean females and was brought low by the accusation that that's the bad thing about non-professionals reading an article like this. They just can't understand it. I had to back down when they all agreed that as a scientific term mother doesn't mean female. So I started on a semantic slide—implied gender in words which women know very well the political intent of. I mentioned "fellowship" as a masculine word. Also "fellow Americans," "Family of Man," "human," "woman," etc., and made everyone very mad. They claimed all these words include woman too and when I persisted they said I was dealing in

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<sup>8</sup>New Left Review, reprinted by New England Free Press in pamphlet form.

semantics and they didn't care enough to look them up in the dictionary. The semantics line was used against me constantly whenever I got too close as a way of saying that my argument may be true but it's shit. (We should make a study of the relation of "triviality" to feminism. I've come to realize that as soon as "trivial" is dragged out we've hit something important. After all, we're defined as trivia.)

No one had anything else to say about that so we decided to choose a name. I suggested "Brooklyn Union" and everyone announced it had to have "Socialist" in the title. I didn't like that because it implied a split allegiance. But everyone said they would quit unless they had "Socialist" in the title. One woman said politically she was a socialist first and that she was a woman so didn't have to keep saying it. I said politically I was a feminist. Everyone there agreed with her line. They said, "There can be no freedom for women until there is a socialist revolution." I heard that several times during the evening. I suggested that we work for women and let the revolution grow out of that. This was "bourgeois cultural nationalism," "reformist," etc. The idea is that women's oppression is part of the general oppression and cannot be changed without alleviating the general oppression. "There can be no private solution to woman's oppression without considering the rest of society." So they are going to work for the socialist revolution which will bring about our liberation. (I asked how they could be sure—it certainly hasn't so far: they said so far there have been only incomplete revolutions and that's why it was their responsibility to make sure the next one is complete. I'm sorry I have to keep saying "they," but the fact was that there was complete unanimity on all points. (Notice how *abstract* the whole thing was.) They kept saying Socialism is the answer. I asked how they knew. Complete scorn. They couldn't explain in less than four hours. I said that socialist writers had exhibited complete to inadvertent insensitivity concerning women. They said that that wasn't their fault—they were just carrying on the tradition. (Here's one place I got backed into attacking socialism when I meant to be attacking their dependence on dogma.)

Finally I realized what the basic issue was and asked who or what oppressed women. Capitalism. But women have always been oppressed. Engels said women were the first slaves. Yes, but even under feudalism women were economically oppressed. It's always been economic. I said that I thought that since all the important socialist writers had been

men, it was not accidental that they placed the blame for oppressing women on economics, which is more comfortable than putting the blame on men. This made everyone uncomfortable. They never mention gender conflict because they say it leads into personal statement and therapy and misses the main analysis. Someone brought up a cartoon they all love. It shows a hanging man fucking a woman up the ass. It's supposed to show that men cannot be blamed because they're oppressed too. I said yes, but they also oppress us; which is another construct—that the economic theory is too simple, that male supremacy may exist in conjunction with economic oppression but that male supremacy was a distinct oppressive construct, as was racism. I refused to allow that male supremacy was but a symptom of capitalism that would fall away after the revolution, and they refused to allow that it was anything else. I said that their analysis was a more comfortable one because it hurts less to be oppressed by economics than by your man. They all disputed this, except for one woman who said that she had realized through events in her personal life that this was true—that she knew women were oppressed by capitalism, etc., but had just this week realized that *she* personally was oppressed by the men in her life. Everyone got very uptight and began calling her a traitor because she allowed her personal life to confuse her analysis. ("Can't see the forest for the trees.") I supported her but she couldn't respond to the attack and say more.

Hostility towards men was equated with hostility towards cops. They don't oppress us but they are the carriers of oppression. I asked how they responded when their husbands oppressed them. Many said their men didn't (hmmmm). Others said you had to defend yourself but also understand that the men didn't want to do it. I said Bullshit, my husband didn't mind oppressing me at all because he got concrete benefits (like more leisure) out of it. Someone said "let's not get personal," which was to imply my man is a beast. This was the reaction whenever I tried to speak from experience. General revision. It's a very effective tool because I began to feel embarrassed and ashamed to share my experiences, although I fought these feelings. The week before they had listened to the abortion tape.<sup>5</sup> I

<sup>5</sup>A two-and-a-half-hour tape made at the Redstockings abortion testimonial at Washington Square Church, March 1969, in which women a "panel of experts" testified publicly about their own abortion experiences.

asked what they thought. They liked it but thought Redstockings had wasted the whole evening just talking. I asked what was more valuable about reading. They kept saying that rapping "didn't mean anything," was a waste of time, was therapy, and was "fucking around." I asked how with all the lies written about women they could accept the written word without examining it based upon their own experience. They said they thought about it and could pick out the inconsistencies *because* they were women. (Their whole implication is that they haven't been fucked over so they don't need consciousness-raising. Whenever I mentioned it they said they already knew women were oppressed, so I would say but did they know *they* were oppressed, and they said yes of course, how stupid of me, they were women, weren't they?)

I kept trying to make a case for building a movement from the ground up. Talking to women and finding out how we and they were oppressed. They thought that was a waste of time because they already knew how, and all that remained was to "organize" women for action (for socialism).

They brought out their program, which is a good one: birth control, abortion, child care, and socialism. They wanted to take this program and use it to organize. I questioned the value of imposing this program on women one has "organized," and said I didn't think abstractions convinced anyone. No woman is oppressed by an abstract capitalism and any attempt to convince her of same is foolish. She is oppressed by her *employer* or her *husband*, etc., and for her to fully realize this she has to examine her personal experiences. I asked how they were going to organize and this started a discussion of whom to organize. I said supermarkets and playgrounds seemed like ideal places because in a week you could probably reach every woman in New York. But they said housewives were non-productive workers and powerless anyway. I suggested secretaries. Business is run on the backs of secretaries. No, secretaries were parasitical workers. Teachers, social workers—both reach hundreds of women and girls—no, they are non-productive—and they work for the state. They had to find productive women workers (I said mothers—big laugh) because the goal was a general strike in cooperation with male workers to bring down the empire. I suggested there weren't many productive women workers since that's one way we were oppressed—we just don't have the power to shut down industry

(assembly lines, that is).

But finally they hit on it. Women steel workers. I had to laugh. Are there any? Come on, how many? No joke—these were voted the Most Important Women. I protested: The concept was anti-woman; if our oppression is real then we are all oppressed and all important. I was being a dreamer and unrealistic. I said they were trying to use women to organize them for their own ends. Wrong again. They were helping women. Their program was *for* women. If anything in it was not for women then they would change it because it wouldn't be good. They asked how I would organize women. I said I wouldn't in their sense. That the movement was too young and that what I felt was needed was an understanding of how we are oppressed. That I would have a group of women come together and have them talk together and from personal experience find out what oppressed them. This was undirected, they said. I said women have been oppressed by every experience in their lives and getting them together and reading them a list of their oppressions with the solution is oppressive too. That lecturing to women on their oppression is also oppressive. That their oppression is so real that every woman is an expert on her oppression and only needs to be encouraged. This frightened them because they don't trust women—they kept saying "We're privileged to be here reading Marx and they haven't read Marx so we owe it to them to straighten them out." *Noblesse oblige*. I said I'd never read Marx and I knew I was oppressed and how. Big Mistake. They stopped listening immediately. Also that they were being anti-woman to assume those who hadn't read Marx couldn't know. I said some of the best stuff at consciousness-raising meetings had come from women new to the movement. But they didn't think much of those meetings anyway. They quoted Marx etc. at me constantly.

I said I was not against reading but reading was what you do when you're alone. Rapping with a woman who's not there. They corrected my impression that only women wrote and when I said I didn't bother reading what men said because they lied too much and it was a waste of time to sort through all the lies unless one's studying that sort of thing they got very pissed off and dragged out the man-hater line. They read men to correct their anti-woman oversights. I said it was a waste of time. Men are not stupid and are not male supremacists from oversight but from real benefits to them. I said I thought that reading in a group—ten potential

revolutionaries reading aloud—was ludicrous. They said they were deepening their understanding and building strategy. I suggested a little less Marxism and a little more Feminism. Talked again about building the sisterhood as the first step to liberation and how anti-woman attitudes stop a woman before she begins. There was fantastic anti-woman feeling in the group; I tried to point it out. One woman said she could never organize her sister because the best thing she could do for her was to wear lipstick at the wedding. I said I sympathized with the sister and that she was probably under fantastic pressure from her man to make sure the other women conformed to *his* idea of what a woman should be.

Several times, "dowdy women" were mentioned. I tried to explain how those women were dressing for what their men expected as surely as we dressed for our men. Everyone denied it. Fashion is created by industry. Consumerism is the enemy. Their men didn't care how they dressed. I said women wouldn't buy the fashions unless they were forced to by their men, and that mini-skirts and wire glasses were no different from clumpy shoes and seamed stockings. Fashion does not oppress us but our men do. Notice how they picked an impersonal target for every complaint. I mentioned this and also that it was the easier thing to do since it is more painful to be personally oppressed by one individual. One woman agreed that her man really did decide what she wore by starting arguments when he didn't approve. (The same woman as before.) They said that maybe consumerism had affected him.

A few women reported on the social work conference\* and gave such a terrible report that, disturbed, I called a friend who had been there, who had an entirely different version of the story. For example, they said a crazy woman rushed up and grabbed the microphone and ranted into it until other women went up and very politely said "you're alienating people so you'd better stop," until she did. But my friend, on the other hand, says with 70% of social workers being women and 95% of welfare clients, there wasn't a female speaker allowed: when Stanley Aronowitz protested for them, they finally scheduled one and then "forgot" to introduce her. That all the feminist resolutions passed at the planning meeting were "accidentally" left out when a man read them from the platform.

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\*National Conference on Social Welfare, May, 1969, Washington, D.C.

infuriating two feminists into taking the microphone. That their group of New Left women became so uptight they supported four *men* in physically pushing the feminists off the stage. Obviously these leftist women have a very high consciousness of the results of crossing "the man." They even forgot what the feminists said. That's how scared they were.

They also told me that the large woman's caucus was a flop because they got a hundred women in the room who "had come to be instructed" and then "wasted the opportunity" by going around the room. I tried to explain that women always "come to be instructed" and that's how we're oppressed, that respecting each woman as a separate human being with thoughts and feelings and potential for action is the most revolutionary thing going. And that that's one reason the male Left is falling apart—they cannot conceal their feelings of superiority to workers. Finally they all agreed that the only thing it proved was that women can't work together. I said it would only prove that to someone who was anti-woman because to anyone else it would prove that political groups have a hard time working together. I was supported again by the same (lone) woman; everyone else got so uptight that they forbade me to use the word anti-woman again. They said it was a semantic question and meaningless and that no one could be anti-woman without knowing it—no one could be anti-anything without knowing it and they weren't anti-woman because they knew women were oppressed.

They also announced that the meeting was over and everyone should stop talking or else it would get unpleasant; I said I didn't mind if they continued talking (supposedly the silence was for my sake: they expressed concern because they had been ganging up on me). I figured I was getting somewhere but they all clammed up and refused to talk. The most peculiar thing about this group is that after meetings everyone is very embarrassed at still being together and very nervous and conversation is very stilted—I can't tell if it's my presence which causes this, but it's a feeling of great isolation. Conversations don't continue out the door; no one is comfortable.

One thing I forgot: In speaking of how to "organize" women, I said that it was only the specifics that are meaningful to us. That I could not walk up to a woman in the supermarket and tell her economics have oppressed her, but that certain topics such as abortion are the way in. This was re-

jected because 1) housewives are not important, 2) we shouldn't organize around issues—leads to reformism (I really couldn't believe they intended to try to "sell" a woman the whole abstract line, but they did), 3) they said they must be absolutely sure they don't bring up gender conflict. It turns women off. Since the only solution for a housewife is to get a divorce, and that's no good (for socialism). I thought it was a wonderful idea if it worked. I was accused of voluntarism (?) and making maximalist demands.



On rereading these notes, I'm confused—I don't know what's true. Everything I wrote really happened, but it sounds more promising than I remember. I was very pessimistic afterwards, perhaps because of the constant personal attacks, which hurt. But I can see now how scared and oppressed they are—they're not doing anything because they think it's hopeless. So I guess I'll go back. My real weakness is my inability to relate to intellectual jargon. I cannot give them an intellectual argument for consciousness-raising and they won't accept anything else.

P.S. On NOW: Someone brought up NOW and it was attacked as a bourgeois group. I said I thought we had more in common with them than with the male Left. The Plaza sit-in was quoted as showing we did not: it was bourgeois. I made the following points: The Plaza may not oppress us by not allowing us to eat there because we don't want to anyway, *but* we cannot speak for another woman's oppression. The women who sat in felt it *did* oppress them. It may be the only thing they are aware of regarding their oppression as women. It is not for us to put them down because any action like that will raise their consciousness to new forms of oppression like the reception they'll get from "the Man" at the Plaza. It's a way in. Also the Brooklyn women had been bitching about McSorley's\*, and suggesting a sit-in there. I tried to show the connection but they felt their choice of a place to sit in was superior. No one even made that connection, much less the anti-womanism inherent in it.

On the Florida Paper: \* Everyone hated it. They said it was ridiculous and overly melodramatic, that the hypothetical woman described in it was overdrawn—*nobody could be that oppressed. I couldn't believe it.* If anything we're even more oppressed than that, if possible. I said I didn't personally identify with everything, but I had had enough similar experiences and could see from my mother's life that it wasn't exaggerated. They refused to believe it could be that bad (women really aren't oppressed in their daily lives, right?). One note: All of the women in the group are under 30, single or married, and childless, no pregnancies (admitted to); most work at movement jobs and/or go to school. They all hate their mothers and families, and refuse to see that they (mothers and sisters) are also oppressed. This is another reason they are turned off housewives, women's magazines—anything that smells faintly middle-class. I suggested The Women's Club of Brooklyn as the name for the group and

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\*McSorley's is a male-only Ale House in the Village, dating from the 1890s.

\*The "Florida paper" is a widely circulated paper written by Beverly Jones and Judith Brown entitled "Towards a Female Liberation Movement" (originally printed by Southern Students Organizing Committee, P.O. Box 6403, Nashville, Tennessee 37212, 25 cents). It was one of the first papers in the WLM to articulate clearly a radical feminist position.



nobody even laughed. Another reason they were turned off the Florida paper is that it was too specific. It gets right in there and names names—his. They didn't think it kept the whole picture in perspective, meaning it wasn't abstract enough. From the vicious way they attacked it, it must have really gotten to them.

On the wall was a big handmade poster saying "thousands of American boys die in Vietnam while the bosses get rich and screw workers at home." I suggested they put up another one saying "thousands of boys die in Vietnam and the country is in revolt—thousands of women die of abortion every year and no one even knows it." Nobody believed it, so I guess I'll have to bring statistics.

Another thing that's interesting: the mind-body split. I remember when a new member complained

(in another group) that the trouble with WL was that it was changing her as a person and her political life and her personal life were merging. *These women are determined to never let that happen.* Movement women seem to suffer from a form of oppression in which they are allowed to be movement so long as they reject everything traditionally "feminine"—especially emotions—and exist only on an intellectual level. I think this is a disease pressed on them by men who all suffer from it anyway. They seem to have a very fragile sense of themselves: to survive, they've had to reject so much "woman-ness," including their own identity, that one false move and it'll all come tumbling down. Like walking a tightrope—they don't say a word or make a move without thinking it over.

## The Economic Function of the Oppression of Women

by SUZIE OLAH

The following piece was sent to us in New York from the wilds of Minnesota. We include it to show how widespread is the new radical feminist analysis—spontaneous combustion, it seems—as well as for its angry excellence.

We commonly meet with social critics who, when they think of women at all, argue that women are oppressed because they are made into "commodities," or forced to become "idle consumers," or because the ruling class connives to keep them as a "surplus labor force." It is my opinion that people who believe these propositions are simply ignorant of the mainstream of American life. The basic American institution for oppressing females is marriage, and this institution exists for the purpose of extorting domestic and personal services, including production and care of offspring, who become subordinates of the male-supremacist state. The performance of these domestic duties by exploited females is essential to the functioning of the American economy and culture, and the beneficiaries of

the exploitation of the female are not merely the ruling stratum of males, but the entire male population.

### 1. Marriage is the fundamental oppressive institution.

(a.) The main aim of the marital institution is the extortion of domestic and personal services from females, including production and care of offspring. The monetary value of these services is currently estimated at one-fifth of the gross national product. (Bird and Briller, *Born Female*, p. 227.)

(b.) The essence of the marital institution is the legal, economic, and, ideally, psychological subordination of the female to the male. Social approval of the sexual connection and of the resultant offspring are simply ideological and customary means

of forcing the female into the married state, and marriage is not basically a sexual matter but an economic matter. A male too inept to wheedle or purchase sexual gratification outside of marriage cannot get a wife. The individual female is free to choose among those males who will accept her as a subordinate, and a relatively small number of females, e.g., Vanessa Redgrave, are free not to choose any at all. It is clear that if the vast majority of American women were free not to marry, the institution could not be regarded as oppressive. We shall see that most American women are not free to remain unmarried.

(c.) The principal means of coercing females into the married state is alienation from any other access to the means of producing the necessities of life. This alienation is itself brought about through force, law, custom, and ideology. (It is well to note here that this ideology is male chauvinism, but that the institution which exudes this ideology is male supremacy.) The most detailed statistics available to me on female alienation from access to means of production are from 1960: 34.5% of the females were in the labor force; 30.7% of married females with husbands present were in the labor force; 19.2% of married females with own children under 6 years were in the labor force. All those who were not in the labor force at all (approximately 28 million) depended on their husbands for a pot to crap in and a window to throw it out. They were on relief. Most of those who were employed were dependent upon their husbands as well; more recent statistics (*American Women: Their Use and Abuse*, Lyn Wells, Southern Students Organizing Committee, Nashville, 1969) show that less than 25% of American females are self-supporting. The culturally provided mode of female survival is marital relief; the laughable frenzy of the young female searching for a husband is the laughable frenzy of someone trying to stay alive in the way the culture has taught her.

(d.) Once in the captive marital state, the female is coerced into domestic service by force, custom, ideology, male denial of funds, and, in most states, by the law:

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. (*Wives' Legal Rights*, Richard T. Gallen, Dell, 1967, p. 4.)

The laws also still require sexual performance by the wife:

A husband may force his wife to have sexual relations as long as his demands are reasonable and her health is not endangered. . . . For example, if a woman is in the final months of pregnancy, it would be considered unreasonable for her husband to demand nightly sexual relations. (Gallen, pp. 6-7.)

I do not see how these laws continue to stand in view of the constitutional amendment prohibiting slavery and involuntary servitude. An individual, for his own protection, cannot contract to perform any work for the rest of his life, in exchange for any consideration. The fiction of the marriage contract is that it is for life. But the discredit of legal enforcement of the marital slave system does not often fall on the male sex, because the culture has a smooth and effective mechanism for extorting slave labor without legal squabbling: the differential premarital training of males and females. Happily for the males, the force of the training (the female *shall* sweep and wash the dishes; the male *shall not*) is so great that the female is culturally expected to perform these tasks whether or not she is otherwise employed. It is Her Domestic Duty. The laws recognize it as Hers:

Can a wife take a job if her husband objects? Yes. The law allows a wife to take a job if she wishes. However, she must see that her domestic chores are completed, and, if there are children, that they receive proper care during her absence. (Gallen, p. 7.)

A recent sociological study shows that when "homemakers" are unemployed, husbands perform about 15% of all household tasks. When the "homemaker" has a full-time job, the husband increases his performance to ~25%. I fully recognize that some radical males have on occasion baked a tray of brownies to celebrate May Day. That does not alter the fundamental structure of American life. Nor does it oblige women to keep silent about that structure.

(e.) A female who remains outside the married state is subjected to severe penalties. If she remains childless, she still lives on a low level, and is commonly still subordinated to males, but for fixed periods of time only, and for wages instead of for a bed in her master's house and a share of his favorite dish. If the unmarried female has children, in addition to redoubled economic difficulties, she becomes a pariah. The ideal of the male supremacist

society is that no female shall function normally, that is, conceive and bear children, without legal and economic subordination to a male.

**II. The performance of these domestic services by exploited females is essential to the normal functioning of the American economy and culture**

(a.) There are two major modes of producing goods and services in immediately consumable form in the United States. One of these is the commodity system and the other is the domestic labor of females.

(b.) The commodity system, or the capital-wage-labor system, is created and controlled by the male sex and its staff is overwhelmingly male. The fundamental purpose of this system is not production of goods and services, but control of the entire populace by the upper regions of the male hierarchy—the ruling class. Within the ruling class, and on its near and far fringes, males compete for status and power. Profits are a means to this end; the overthrow of the profit system does not automatically imply the cessation of competition for status and power among the males.

(c.) Since the purpose of the commodity system is not production, but control, the ruling class need not feed, clothe, and shelter the populace which it commands. The ruling class has only to ensure that people cannot feed, clothe, and shelter themselves without obedience in certain major respects to the rulers. To achieve this purpose, the owners of the commodity system do not need to control finished products, but only all the requisite raw materials and machinery. Because there is competition between the ruling males for subordinates (the "consumer" is a subordinate as well as a wage-worker), the system tends to present raw materials in a more and more worked up state. Factory-produced cigarettes, for instance, appeal to more consumers than roll-your-own materials, principally because the purchaser can avoid the fuss and mess of rolling his own. Secondly, the cigarette is an item in which machine-aided socialized labor produces a product which is superior to individual efforts.

(d.) When it addresses itself to the problem of alienating the necessities of life, the ruling class is not forced by competition for consumers to present these items in finished, immediately consumable form. The commodity system merely produces, in the main, worked-up raw materials (e.g. raw hamburger) and machinery (e.g., stove). This is because

an overwhelming majority of the wage-earners have access to the consort-slave labor of their wives to

- 1) collect these raw materials
- 2) transform them into immediately consumable form.

This system is not the result of technological immaturity. Restaurants, hotels, and laundries are very simple conceptions, and workable models have existed since the most ancient times.

(e.) If the commodity system produced the necessities of life as immediately consumable goods, the United States would be a network of hotels, restaurants, nurseries, laundries and the like. About four-fifths of the food consumed in the U.S. in 1965 was not consumed in restaurants, but in the home. The United States is a network of little homes with private stoves, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, washers, and irons—the machinery of the individual domestic slave, which is then cried up as "labor-saving." I read where "electric timers on stewpots" have relieved women of "their" household drudgery, and that wash-and-wear fabrics have made the iron obsolescent. In fact, such women as actually possess these electronic gadgets received them as largesse, and are urged to direct their efforts to serving as ornamented sycophants and status symbols for their benefactors. Show up as a receptionist in your un-ironed wash-and-wear; a veritable *succes fou*, no doubt. Every sane person knows that it is simply possible to iron more wash-and-wear in a given period of time with a given amount of exertion, and that the standards of dress have gone up accordingly. Fewer people wear slightly soiled clothes. The washing machine, highly touted as lightening "woman's work," actually *decreased* the use of the socialized mode of washing clothes, namely the laundry, for the principal reason that the slave labor of the female is cheaper than the wage-labor of the laundry. The only invention which will relieve the female of Her Domestic Drudgery is the invention of the decision to quit doing it. The males will then demand the socialized services; otherwise, they can get in the kitchen and make some noise with the pots and pans.

(f.) The work which the females do is necessary work, but it does not necessarily have to be done by females. Since pre-historic times males have driven females into the position of domestic servants, and this class oppression is the historical source of the present alienation of the females from social "production." Because of this pre-existing aliena-

tion, the ruling-class males can then drag the females into the social labor force from time to time. Capitalists did not invent the homemaker. Ordinarily, the husband resists any drain on the energy of his personal servant and permits her to work only so long as she meets his needs satisfactorily.

(g.) The alleged riot of female "consumption" in the United States is simply the first step in *female domestic production*—the gathering of raw materials in their alienated commodity form. The commodity system overtly relies on this "consumption" to distribute its products to the individuals who really consume them.

(h.) The struggle for the necessities of life is the chief economic activity of the American people. Of the 1966 Gross National Product, viewed in terms of expenditure categories, the largest category was "personal consumption expenditures"—464.9 billion out of a total of 739.7 billion dollars. The apportionment of these expenditures was, roughly:

food, beverages, and tobacco	25%
clothing, accessories, and jewelry	10%
personal care	1.7%
housing	14.6%
household operations	14.3%
medical care	6.5%
personal business	5.1%
transportation	13.4%
recreation	6.1%
private education and research	1.3%
religious and welfare activities	1.3%
foreign travel and other, net.	0.7%

(The percentages are from 1965; the percentages have not altered greatly since 1950.) The largest single item is "food, beverages, and tobacco." It appears that in this category, "food" is the greatest item of expenditure; 85.4 billion dollars for "food" (from grocery stores, meat markets, etc.), and 19.9 billion dollars for "purchased meals and beverages." It is obvious that the female labor which is estimated as being worth 160 billion dollars is a crucial 160 billion dollar task. If we were in any kind of a bargaining position, we might charge a little more.

### III. The beneficiaries of the exploitation of the female are not merely the ruling males, but the entire male population

(a.) The institution of marriage provides each male with the luxury of a legal and economic subordinate. Our culture (more accurately, *their* culture) requires that the vast majority of males be

employed. An unemployment rate of 50-65% among the males is unthinkable; it is standard for females. Moreover, the wages of male employment must be sufficient to maintain the luxury of the consort-slave; the male worker has a culturally approved right to be able to "support a family" with his earnings. On the other hand, the male is not compelled by economic necessity to marry. If he foregoes this luxury, he may purchase others.

(b.) The principal luxury provided by the consort-slave, which cannot be provided by any form of socialized labor (whether under a wage system or a communal system) is the benefit of an intimate, personalized life-style without a proportional share in its burdens. The males as a class have opposed the socialization of household work in the capitalist system, not only because they have cheaper labor available, but because socialized production yields items which are acceptable to nearly everybody and just right for nobody. The consort-slave system ensures that the spaghetti is cooked precisely to the master's taste, that shirt collars are starched in a way no laundry can do. The only people who stand to gain from communal restaurants, nurseries, laundries and living quarters are females, who would thereby be freed from labor and isolation.

(c.) The class oppression of females by males is not a matter of biological predestination. A human being is not an oppressor by reason of possession of penis and testicles. Males oppress females by actively participating in or passively supporting male-supremacist institutions, and the rewards of this participation and support are so great that most males cannot forego them. Those males who do are scattered, solitary, and generally of small account anywhere in the male order, including in the male "revolutionary" organizations.

(d.) Friedrich Engels, in *The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, comments that the first class oppression was that of the females by the males. While Engels adduces some curious arguments, notably that females must have been the introducers of the "pairing marriage" system because the armed and organized males lost nothing by it; and while he distorts evidence which was available to him (compare his exegesis of Tacitus with what Tacitus actually says), and while more recent anthropological studies reveal facts which do not fit with some of his hypotheses, we can nevertheless agree with him in his formulation that the first and oldest form of class oppression is male supremacy. In view of Engels's long and cele-

brated advocacy of blood-and-thunder liberation of the wage worker, in the dangers of which the females are heartily exhorted to participate, it is interesting to study his recommendations for the oppressed female:

... the first condition for the liberation of the wife is to bring the whole female sex back into public industry, and this in turn demands the abolition of the monogamous family as the economic unit of society.

The "whole female sex" does not go back, it is brought back. Then what? Then nothing. How is the monogamous family to be abolished? It already has been, and the appearance of its persistence is an optical illusion:

And now that large-scale industry has taken the wife out of the home into the labor market and into the factory, and made her often the breadwinner of the family, no basis of any kind of male supremacy is left in the proletarian household—except, perhaps, for something of the brutality towards women that has spread since

the introduction of monogamy. [Plus a little something of ideology and tradition, and a little something of a concerted effort of all males to defend male supremacy; little somethings that have been "spreading" from Homer to Fidel Castro.] In short, proletarian marriage is monogamous in the etymological sense of the word, but not at all in its historical sense.

Is it not remarkable that this oppressing class was never overthrown, and yet it no longer oppresses? The Midwife Force has become the kindly obstetrician, Peaceful Change. Discuss this question with male "revolutionary Marxists." You will discover that their heroics of self-congratulatory ruthlessness conclude in a tee-hee.

It is not my intention to speak for or against violent revolution by females against male supremacy at this time. On the other hand, it seems a bit queer to ask us to kill and be killed for the liberation of the wage-worker, when for our own liberation we are to rely upon—the kindly and just sentiments of our former oppressors.

## **"Consumerism" and Women**

by ELLEN WILLIS

Perhaps the most widely accepted tenet of movement ideology, promulgated by many leftist thinkers, notably Marcuse, is the idea that we are psychically manipulated by the mass media to crave more and more consumer goods, thus powering an economy that depends on constantly expanding sales. It has been suggested that this theory is particularly applicable to women, for women do most of the actual buying, their consumption is often directly related to their oppression (e.g., make-up, soap flakes), and they are a special target of advertisers. According to this view the society defines women as consumers and the purpose of the prevailing media image of women as passive sexual objects is to sell products. It follows that the beneficiaries of this depreciation of women are not men but the

corporate power structure.

The consumerism theory has not been subjected to much critical debate. In fact, it seems in recent years to have taken on the invulnerability of religious dogma. Yet analysis demonstrates that this theory is fallacious and leads to crucial tactical errors. This paper is offered as a critique of consumerism based on four propositions:

1. It is not "psychic manipulation" that makes people buy; rather their buying habits are by and large a rational self-interested response to their limited alternatives within the system.

2. The chief function of media stereotypes of women is not to sell goods but to reinforce the ideology and therefore the reality of male supremacy—of the economic and sexual subordination of



women to men, in the latter's objective interest.

3. Most of the "consuming" women do is actually labor, specifically part of women's domestic and sexual obligations.

4. The consumerist theory has its roots in class, sex, and race bias; its ready acceptance among radicals, including radical women, is a function of movement elitism.

First of all, there is nothing inherently wrong with consumption. Shopping and consuming are enjoyable human activities and the marketplace has been a center of social life for thousands of years. The profit system is oppressive not because relatively trivial luxuries are available, but because basic necessities are not. The locus of the oppression resides in the *production* function: people have no control over what commodities are produced (or services performed), in what amounts, under what conditions, or how they are distributed. Corporations make these decisions solely for their own profit. It is more profitable to produce luxuries for the affluent (or for that matter, for the poor, on exploitive installment plans) than to produce and make available food, housing, medical care, education, recreational and cultural facilities according to the needs and desires of the people. We can accept the goods offered to us or reject them, but we cannot determine their quality or change the system's priorities. In a truly humane society, in which all the people have personal autonomy, control over the means of production, and equal access to goods and services, consumption will be all the more enjoyable because we will not have to endure shoddy goods sold at exploitive prices by means of dishonest advertising.

As it is, the profusion of commodities is a genuine and powerful compensation for oppression. It is a bribe, but like all bribes it offers concrete benefits—in the average American's case, a degree of physical comfort unparalleled in history. Under present conditions, people are preoccupied with consumer goods not because they are brainwashed but because buying is the one pleasurable activity not only permitted but actively encouraged by the power structure. The pleasure of eating an ice cream cone may be minor compared to the pleasure of meaningful, autonomous work, but the former is easily available and the latter is not. A poor family would undoubtedly rather have a decent apartment than a new TV, but since they are unlikely to get the apartment, what is to be gained by not getting the TV?

Radicals who in general are healthily skeptical of facile Freudian explanations have been quick to embrace a theory of media manipulation based squarely on Freud, as popularized by market researchers and journalists like Vance Packard (Marcuse acknowledges Packard's influence in *One Dimensional Man*). In essence, this theory holds that ads designed to create unconscious associations between merchandise and deep-seated fears, sexual desires, and needs for identity and self-esteem induce people to buy products in search of gratifications no product can provide. Furthermore, the corporations, through the media, deliberately create fears and desires that their products can claim to fulfill. The implication is that we are not simply taken in by lies or exaggerations—as, say, by the suggestion that a certain perfume will make us sexually irresistible—but are psychically incapable of learning from experience and will continue to buy no matter how often we are disappointed, and that in any case our "need" to be sexually irresistible is programmed into us to keep us buying perfume. This hypothesis of psychic distortion is based on the erroneous assumption that mental health and anti-materialism are synonymous.

Although they have to cope with the gyppery inherent in the profit system, people for the most part buy goods for practical, self-interested reasons. A washing machine does make a housewife's work easier (in the absence of socialization of housework); Excedrin does make a headache go away; a car does provide transportation. If one is duped into buying a product because of misleading advertising, the process is called exploitation; it has nothing to do with brainwashing. Advertising is a how-to manual on the consumer economy, constantly reminding us of what is available and encouraging us to indulge ourselves. It works (that is, stimulates sales) *because* buying is the only game in town, not vice versa. Advertising does appeal to morbid fears (e.g., of body odors) and false hopes (irresistibility) and shoppers faced with indistinguishable brands of a product may choose on the basis of an ad (what method is better—eeny-meeny-miny-mo?), but this is just the old game of *caveat emptor*. It thrives on naiveté and people learn to resist it through experience.

The worst suckers for ads are children. Other vulnerable groups are older people, who had no previous experience—individual or historical—to guide them when the consumer cornucopia suddenly developed after World War II, and poor people, who

do not have enough money to learn through years of trial, error and disillusionment to be shrewd consumers. The constant refinement of advertising claims, visual effects, and so on, show that experience desensitizes. No one really believes that smoking Brand X cigarettes will make you sexy. (The function of sex in an ad is probably the obvious one—to lure people into paying closer attention to the ad—rather than to make them “identify” their lust with a product. The chief effect of the heavy sexual emphasis in advertising has been to stimulate a national preoccupation with sex, showing that you can’t identify away a basic human drive as easily as all that.) Madison Avenue has increasingly deemphasized “motivational” techniques in favor of aesthetic ones—TV commercials in particular have become incredibly inventive visually—and even made a joke out of the old motivational ploys (the phallic Virginia Slims ad, for instance, is blatantly campy). We can conclude from this that either the depth psychology approach never worked in the first place, or that it has stopped working as consumers have gotten more sophisticated.

The argument that the corporations create new psychological needs in order to sell their wares is similarly flimsy. There is no evidence that propaganda can in itself create a desire, as opposed to bringing to consciousness a latent desire by suggesting that means of satisfying it are available. This idea is superstitious: it implies that the oppressor is diabolically intelligent (he has learned to control human souls) and that the media have magic powers. It also mistakes effects for causes and drastically oversimplifies the relation between ideology and material conditions. We have not been taught to dislike our smell in order to sell deodorants; deodorants sell because there are social consequences for smelling. And the negative attitude about our bodies that has made it feasible to invent and market deodorants is deeply rooted in our anti-sexual culture, which in turn has been shaped by *exploitive modes of production and class antagonism between men and women*.

The confusion between cause and effect is particularly apparent in the consumerist analysis of women’s oppression. Women are not manipulated by the media into being domestic servants and mindless sexual decorations, the better to sell soap and hair spray. Rather, the image reflects women as men in a sexist society force them to behave. Male supremacy is the oldest and most basic form of class exploitation (cf. Engels, *Origin of the Family*);

it was not invented by a smart ad man. The real evil of the media image of women is that it supports the sexist status quo. In a sense the fashion, cosmetics and “feminine hygiene” ads are aimed more at men than at women. They encourage men to expect women to sport all the latest trappings of sexual slavery—expectations women must then fulfill if they are to survive. That advertisers exploit women’s subordination rather than cause it can be clearly seen now that male fashions and toiletries have become big business. In contrast to ads for women’s products, whose appeal is “use this and he will want you” (or “if you don’t use this, he won’t want you”), ads for the male counterparts urge, “you too can enjoy perfume and bright-colored clothes; don’t worry, it doesn’t make you feminine.” Although advertisers are careful to emphasize how *virile* these products are (giving them names like “Brut,” showing the man who uses them hunting or flirting with admiring women—who, incidentally, remain decorative objects when the sell is aimed directly at men), it is never claimed that the product is *essential* to masculinity (as make-up is essential to femininity), only *compatible* with it. To convince a man to buy, an ad must appeal to his desire for autonomy and freedom from conventional restrictions; to convince a woman, an ad must appeal to her need to please the male oppressor.

For women, buying and wearing clothes and beauty aids is not so much consumption as work. One of a woman’s jobs in this society is to be an attractive sexual object, and clothes and make-up are tools of the trade. The chief consumer in this instance is really the man, who consumes woman-as-sexual-commodity. Similarly, buying food and household furnishings is a domestic task; it is the wife’s chore to pick out the commodities that will be consumed by the whole family. And appliances and cleaning materials are tools that facilitate her domestic function. When a woman spends a lot of money and time decorating her home or herself, or hunting down the latest in vacuum cleaners, it is not ideal self-indulgence (let alone the result of psychic manipulation) but a healthy attempt to find outlets for her creative energies within her circumscribed role.

There is a persistent myth that a wife has control over her husband’s money because she gets to spend it. Actually, she does not have much more financial autonomy than the employee of a corporation who is delegated to buy office furniture or supplies. The husband, especially if he is rich, may

allow his wife wide latitude in spending—he may reason that since she has to work in the home she is entitled to furnish it to her taste, or he may simply not want to bother with domestic details—but he retains the ultimate veto power. If he doesn't like the way his wife handles his money, she will hear about it. In most households, particularly in the working class, a wife cannot make significant expenditures, either personal or in her role as object-servant, without consulting her husband. And more often than not, according to statistics, it is the husband who makes the final decisions about furniture and appliances as well as other major expenditures like houses, cars, and vacations.

Consumerism is the outgrowth of an aristocratic, European-oriented anti-materialism based on upper-class *ressentiment* against the rise of the vulgar bourgeois. Radical intellectuals have been attracted to this essentially reactionary position (Herbert Marcuse's view of mass culture is strikingly similar to that of conservative theorists like Ernest Van Den Haag) because it appeals to both their dislike of capitalism and their feeling of superiority to the working class. This elitism is evident in radicals' conviction that they have seen through the system, while the average working slob is brainwashed by the media. (Oddly, no one claims that the ruling class is oppressed by commodities; it seems that rich people consume out of free choice.) Ultimately this point of view leads to a sterile emphasis on individual solutions—if only the benighted would reject their "plastic" existence and move to East Village tenements—and the conclusion that people are oppressed because they are stupid or

sick. The obnoxiousness of this attitude is compounded by the fact that radicals can only maintain their dropout existence so long as plenty of brainwashed workers keep the economy going.

Consumerism as applied to women is blatantly sexist. The pervasive image of the empty-headed female consumer constantly trying her husband's patience with her extravagant purchases contributes to the myth of male superiority; we are incapable of spending money rationally; all we need to make us happy is a new hat now and then. (There is an analogous racial stereotype—the black with his Cadillac and loud shirts.) The consumer line allows movement men to avoid recognizing that they exploit women by attributing women's oppression solely to capitalism. It fits neatly into already existing radical theory and concerns, saving the movement the trouble of tackling the real problems of women's liberation. And it retards the struggle against male supremacy by dividing women. Just as in the male movement, consumerism encourages radical women to patronize and put down other women for trying to survive as best they can, and maintains individualist illusions.

If we are to build a mass movement we must recognize that no personal decision, like rejecting consumption, can alleviate our oppression. We must stop arguing about whose life-style is better (and secretly believing ours is). The task of the women's liberation movement is to collectively combat male domination in the home, in bed, on the job. When we create a political alternative to sexism, the consumer problem, if it is a problem, will take care of itself.

You can be up to your boobies in white satin . . . and still be on the plantation.

—Billie Holiday, *Lady Sings the Blues*

## ISSUES: CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING

### The Personal Is Political

by CAROL HANISCH

For this paper I want to stick pretty close to an aspect of the Left debate commonly talked about—namely “therapy” vs. “therapy and politics.” Another name for it is “personal” vs. “political” and it has other names, I suspect, as it has developed across the country. I haven’t gotten over to visit the New Orleans group yet, but I have been participating in groups in New York and Gainesville for more than a year. Both of these groups have been called “therapy” and “personal” groups by women who consider themselves “more political.” So I must speak about so-called therapy groups from my own experience.

The very word “therapy” is obviously a misnomer if carried to its logical conclusion. Therapy assumes that someone is sick and that there is a cure, e.g., a personal solution. I am greatly offended that I or any other woman is thought to need therapy in the first place. Women are messed over, not messed up! We need to change the objective conditions, not adjust to them. Therapy is adjusting to your bad personal alternative.

We have not done much trying to solve immediate personal problems of women in the group. We’ve mostly picked topics by two methods: In a small group it is possible for us to take turns bringing questions to the meeting (like, Which do/did you prefer, a girl or a boy baby or no children, and why? What happens to your relationship if your man makes more money than you? Less than you?). Then we go around the room answering the questions from our personal experiences. Everybody talks that way. At the end of the meeting we try to sum up and generalize from what’s been said and make connections.

I believe at this point, and maybe for a long time to come, that these analytical sessions are a form of political action. I do not go to these sessions because I need or want to talk about my “personal problems.” In fact, I would rather not. As a movement woman, I’ve been pressured to be

strong, selfless, other-oriented, sacrificing, and in general pretty much in control of my own life. To admit to the problems in my life is to be deemed weak. So I want to be a strong woman, in movement terms, and not admit I have any real problems that I can’t find a personal solution to (except those directly related to the capitalist system). It is at this point a political action to tell it like it is, to say what I really believe about my life instead of what I’ve always been told to say.

So the reason I participate in these meetings is not to solve any personal problem. One of the first things we discover in these groups is that personal problems are political problems. There are no personal solutions at this time. There is only collective action for a collective solution. I went, and I continue to go to these meetings because I have gotten a political understanding which all my reading, all my “political discussions,” all my “political action,” all my four-odd years in the movement never gave me. I’ve been forced to take off the rose-colored glasses and face the awful truth about how grim my life really is as a woman. I am getting a gut understanding of everything as opposed to the esoteric, intellectual understandings and *noblesse oblige* feelings I had in “other people’s” struggles.

This is not to deny that these sessions have at least two aspects that are therapeutic. I prefer to call even this aspect “political therapy” as opposed to personal therapy. The most important is getting rid of self-blame. Can you imagine what would happen if women, blacks, and workers (my definition of worker is anyone who *has* to work for a living as opposed to those who don’t. All women are workers) would stop blaming ourselves for our sad situations? It seems to me the whole country needs that kind of political therapy. That is what the black movement is doing in its own way. We shall do it in ours. We are only starting to stop *blaming ourselves*.

We also feel like we are thinking for ourselves for the first time in our lives. As the cartoon in *Lilith* puts it, "I'm changing. My mind is growing muscles." Those who believe that Marx, Lenin, Engels, Mao, and Ho have the only and last "good word" on the subject and that women have nothing more to add will, of course, find these groups a waste of time.

The groups that I have been in have also not gotten into "alternative life-styles" or what it means to be a "liberated" woman. We came early to the conclusion that all alternatives are bad under present conditions. Whether we live with or without a man, communally or in couples or alone, are married or unmarried, live with other women, go for free love, celibacy or lesbianism, or any combination, there are only good and bad things about each bad situation. There is no "more liberated" way; there are only bad alternatives.

This is part of one of the most important theories we are beginning to articulate. We call it "the pro-woman line." What it says basically is that women are really neat people. The bad things that are said about us as women are either myths (women are stupid), tactics women use to struggle individually (women are bitches), or are actually things that we want to carry into the new society and want men to share too (women are sensitive, emotional). Women as oppressed people act out of necessity (*act dumb* in the presence of men), not out of choice. Women have developed great shuffling techniques for their own survival (look pretty and giggle to get or keep a job or man) which should be used when necessary until such time as the power of unity can take its place. Women are smart not to struggle alone (as are blacks and workers). It is no worse to be in the home than in the rat race of the job world. They are both bad. Women, like blacks, workers, must stop blaming ourselves for our "failures."

It took us some ten months to get to the point where we could articulate these things and relate them to the lives of every woman. It's important from the standpoint of what kind of action we are going to do. When our group first started, going by majority opinion, we would have been out in the streets demonstrating against marriage, against having babies, for free love, against women who wore makeup, against housewives, for equality without recognition of biological differences, and god knows what else. Now we see all these things as what we call "personal solutionary." Many of the actions

taken by "action" groups have been along these lines. The women who did the anti-woman stuff at the Miss America Pageant were the ones who were screaming for action without theory. The members of one group want to set up a private day care center without any real analysis of what could be done to make it better for little girls, much less any analysis of how that center hastens the revolution.

That is not to say, of course, that we shouldn't do action. There may be some very good reasons why women in the group don't want to do anything at the moment. One reason that I often have is that this thing is so important to me that I want to be very sure that we're doing it the best way we know how, and that it is a "right" action that I feel sure about. I refuse to go out and "produce" for the movement. We had a lot of conflict in our New York group about whether or not to do action. When the Miss America Protest was proposed there was no question but that we wanted to do it. I think it was because we all saw how it related to *our* lives. We *felt* it was a good action. There were things wrong with the action; but the basic idea was there.

This has been my experience in groups that are accused of being "therapy" or "personal." Perhaps certain groups may well be attempting to do therapy. Maybe the answer is not to put down the method of analyzing from personal experiences in favor of immediate action, but to figure out what can be done to make it work. Some of us started to write a handbook about this at one time and never got past the outline. We are working on it again, and hope to have it out in a month at the latest.

It's true we all need to learn how to better draw conclusions from the experiences and feelings we talk about and how to draw all kinds of connections. Some of us haven't done a very good job of communicating them to others.

One more thing: I think we must listen to what so-called apolitical women have to say—not so we can do a better job of organizing them but because together we *are* a mass movement. I think we who work full-time in the movement tend to become very narrow. What is happening now is that when non-movement women disagree with us, we assume it's because they are "apolitical," not because there might be something wrong with *our* thinking. Women have left the movement in droves. The obvious reasons are that we are tired of being sex slaves and doing shitwork for men whose hypocrisy is so blatant in their political stance of liberation



for everybody (else). But there is really a lot more to it than that. I can't quite articulate it yet. I think "apolitical" women are not in the movement for very good reasons, and as long as we say "you have to think like us and live like us to join the charmed circle," we will fail. What I am trying to say is that there are things in the consciousness of

"apolitical" women (I find them very political) that are as valid as any political consciousness we think we have. We should figure out why many women don't want to do action. Maybe there is something wrong with the action or something wrong with why we are doing the action or maybe the analysis of why the action is necessary is not clear enough in our minds.

## A Program for Feminist "Consciousness Raising"

by KATHIE SARACHILD

Kathie (Amatniek) is a founder of the women's liberation movement in New York and the originator of the concept of "consciousness-raising." She is now active in Redstockings. The following program was prepared for the First National Women's Liberation Conference outside Chicago, November 27, 1968.

We always stay in touch with our feelings.

Our feelings (emotions) revolve around our perceptions of our self-interest.

We assume that our feelings are telling us something from which we can learn... that our feelings mean something worth analyzing... that our feelings are saying something *political*, something reflecting fear that something bad will happen to us or hope, desire, knowledge that something good will happen to us.

Feelings aren't something we assume ahead of time that we should be on top of or underneath. Feelings are something that, at first anyway, we are *with*, that is, we examine and try to understand before we decide it's the kind of feeling to stay on top of (that is, control, stifle, stop), or the kind of feeling to be underneath (that is, let ourselves go with, let it lead us into something new and better... at first to a new and better *idea* of where we want to go and then to action which might help us get there).

Now male culture assumes that feelings are something that people should stay on top of and puts women down for being led by their feelings (being underneath them).

We're saying that women have all along been generally *in touch* with their feelings (rather than underneath them) and that their being in touch with their feelings has been their greatest strength.

historically and for the future. We have been so in touch with our feelings, as a matter of fact, that we have used our feelings as our best available weapon—hysterics, whining, bitching, etc.—given that our best form of defense against those with power to control our lives was their feelings toward us, sexual and otherwise, feelings which they always tried to fight themselves.

We're saying that for most of history sex was, in fact, both our undoing and our only possible weapon of self-defense and self-assertion (aggression).

We're saying that when we had hysterical fits, when we took things "too" personally, that we weren't underneath our feelings, but responding with our feelings correctly to a given situation of injustice. I say correctly because at that time in history (and maybe even still), by first feeling and then revealing our emotions we were acting in the best strategical manner. And this may be the reason we learned how to be so in touch with our feelings to begin with.

In our groups, let's share our feelings and pool them. Let's let ourselves go and see where our feelings lead us. Our feelings will lead us to ideas and then to actions.

Our feelings will lead us to our theory, our theory to our action, our feelings about that action to new theory and then to new action.

This is a consciousness-raising program for those of us who are feeling more and more that women are about the most exciting people around, at this stage of time, anyway, and that the seeds of a new and beautiful world society lie buried in the consciousness of this very class which has been abused and oppressed since the beginning of human history. It is a program planned on the assumption that a mass liberation movement will develop as more and more women begin to perceive their situation correctly and that, therefore, our primary task right now is to awaken "class" consciousness in ourselves and others on a mass scale. The following outline is just one hunch of what a theory of mass consciousness-raising would look like in skeleton form.

# I. The "bitch session" cell group

## A. Ongoing consciousness expansion

### 1. Personal recognition and testimony

- a. Recalling and sharing our bitter experiences
- b. Expressing our feelings about our experiences both at the time they occurred and at present
- c. Expressing our feelings about ourselves, men, other women
- d. Evaluating our feelings

### 2. Personal testimony — methods of group practice

- a. Going around the room with key questions on key topics
- b. Speaking our experience — at random
- c. Cross examination

### 3. Relating and generalizing individual testimony

- a. Finding the common root when different women have opposite feelings and experiences
- b. Examining the negative and positive aspects of each woman's feelings and her way of dealing with her situation as a woman

## B. Classic forms of resisting consciousness, or: How to avoid facing the awful truth

1. Anti-womanism
2. Glorification of the oppressor
3. Excusing the oppressor (and feeling sorry for him)
4. False identification with the oppressor and other socially privileged groups
5. Shunning identification with one's own oppressed group and other oppressed groups
6. Romantic fantasies, utopian thinking and other forms of confusing present reality with what one wishes reality to be
7. Thinking one has power in the traditional role—can "get what one wants," has power behind the throne, etc.
8. Belief that one has found an adequate personal solution or will be able to find one without large social changes
9. Self-cultivation, rugged individualism, seclusion, and other forms of go-it-aloneism
10. Self-blame!!
11. Ultra-militancy; and others??

## C. Recognizing the survival reasons for resisting consciousness

## D. "Starting to Stop" — overcoming repressions and delusions

1. Daring to see, or: Taking off the rose-colored glasses
  - a. Reasons for repressing one's own consciousness
    - 1) Fear of feeling the full weight of one's painful situation
    - 2) Fear of feeling one's past wasted and meaningless (plus wanting others to go through the same obstacles)
    - 3) Fear of despair for the future
  - b. Analyzing which fears are valid and which invalid
    - 1) Examining the objective conditions in one's own past and in the lives of most women throughout history
    - 2) Examining objective conditions for the present

- c. Discussing possible methods of struggle
      - 1) History of women's struggle and resistance to oppression
      - 2) Possibilities for individual struggle at present
      - 3) Group struggle
    - 2. Daring to share one's experience with the group
      - a. Sources of hesitancy
        - 1) Fear of personal exposure (fear of being thought stupid, immoral, weak, self-destructive, etc. by the group)
        - 2) Feeling of loyalty to one's man, boss, parents, children, friends, "the Movement"
        - 3) Fear of reprisal if the word gets out (losing one's man, job, reputation)
        - 4) Fear of hurting the feelings of someone in the group
        - 5) Not seeing how one's own experience is relevant to others, or vice versa
      - b. Deciding which fears are valid and which invalid
      - c. Structuring the group so that it is relatively safe for people to participate in it
  - D. Understanding and developing radical feminist theory
    - 1. Using above techniques to arrive at an understanding of oppression wherever it exists in our lives—our oppression as black people, workers, tenants, consumers, children, or whatever as well as our oppression as women
    - 2. Analyzing whatever privileges we may have—the white skin privilege, the education and citizenship of a big-power (imperialist) nation privilege, and seeing how these help to perpetuate our oppression as women, workers
  - E. Consciousness-raiser (organizer) training—so that every woman in a given bitch session cell group herself becomes an "organizer" of other groups
    - 1. The role of the consciousness-raiser ("organizer")
      - a. Dares to participate; dares to expose herself, bitch
      - b. Dares to struggle
    - 2. Learning how to bring theory down to earth
      - a. Speaking in terms of personal experience
    - 3. Learning to "relate"
      - a. To sisters in the group
      - b. To other women
      - c. Friends and allies
      - d. Enemies
    - 4. Particular problems of starting a new group

## II. Consciousness-raising Actions

- A. Zap actions
  - 1. Movie benefits, attacks on cultural phenomena and events, stickers, buttons, posters, films
- B. Consciousness programs
  - 1. Newspapers, broadsides, storefronts, women's liberation communes, literature, answering mail, others . . . ??
- C. Utilizing the mass media

## III. Organizing

- A. Helping new people start groups
- B. Intra-group communication and actions
  - 1. Monthly meetings
  - 2. Conferences

# Resistances to Consciousness

by IRENE PESLIKIS

Irene Peslikis is a founding member of Redstockings, and an originator of the "pro-woman line."

Thinking that our man is the exception and, therefore, we are the exception among women.

Thinking that individual solutions are possible, that we don't need solidarity and a revolution for our liberation.

Thinking that women's liberation is therapy. This, whether or not you belong to the organization, implies that you and others can find individual solutions to problems, for this is the function of therapy. Furthermore the statement expresses anti-woman sentiment by implying that when women get together to study and analyze their own experience, it means they are sick but when Chinese peasants or Guatemalan guerrillas get together and use the identical method they are revolutionary.

Thinking that some women are smart and some women are dumb. This prevents those women who think they're smart and those women who think they're dumb from talking to each other and uniting against a common oppressor.

Thinking that because we have an education privilege and can talk in abstracts we are somehow exempt from feeling oppression directly and talking about it honestly and therefore think of personal experience as something low on the ladder of values (class values).

Thinking that women consent to their own oppression (or anyone for that matter). This is a statement which puts the blame on the oppressed group rather than on the oppressor class which ultimately uses brute force to keep the oppressed where they are. It is an anti-woman and anti-people statement.

Thinking that only institutions oppress women as opposed to other people. This implies that you have not identified your enemy, for institutions are only a tool of the oppressor. When the

oppressor is stopped he can no longer maintain his tools and they are rendered useless. Present institutions and our feelings about them should be analyzed in order to understand what it is we want or don't want to use in the new society.

Thinking in terms of them and us. This implies that you are setting yourself off or apart from women (the people). In doing this you neglect to recognize your own oppression and your common interests with other people, as well as your stake in revolution.

Thinking that male supremacy is only a psychological privilege with "ego" benefits as opposed to a class privilege with sexual and economic benefits. The former implies a considerable amount of individual variation among men, therefore permitting you to find an individual solution to the problem.

Thinking that the relationships among men and women are already equal and thus immersing yourself in utopian fantasies of free love in spite of the fact that the objective conditions deny it. Love between men and women, free or unfree, is millennial, not real, and if we want it we will have to struggle for it.

Thinking you can educate the people. This implies that you are educated and you will get a revolution going by teaching other people what you know. Education does not bring on revolutions; but consciousness of our own oppression and struggle might. Unfortunately formal education and political consciousness do not usually coincide. Even formal education in Marxism-Leninism tends to make people think that they know more than they really know. What politicizes people is not so much books or ideas but experience.

# False Consciousness

by JENNIFER GARDNER

Jennifer Gardner was an original member of New York Radical Women and a contributor to *Notes From the First Year*. She is now active in the San Francisco Bay Area WL consciousness-raising groups. The following article is reprinted from *Tooth and Nail*.

That people are unaware of the oppression of women is a serious problem, but one that will be resolved as our movement grows and makes its presence felt. The problem of false consciousness, however, is harder to solve, and ultimately more dangerous, since our consciousness will determine our goals and our strategy.

Of all the wrong theories about who oppresses women, the most confusing and insidious is the theory that women oppress themselves. This false consciousness takes two forms.

First, women are put down for submitting to unequal, unrespectful treatment without fighting back. Second, they are accused of courting their own oppression. That is, they are accused of behaving in such a weak, passive, dependent way with men that men cannot possibly treat them as equals.

The first attitude is most common among women who feel that they have tried to be strong and independent, who look around them and notice that other women appear perfectly satisfied being weak and dependent. These other women seem to have made a conscious and ignoble bargain with life, sacrificing their dignity in return for protection and keep. Let us examine this bargain, and try to understand what the elements of choice really are.

Any woman, in any social class, who tries to insist on equality in relationships with men must be prepared to face the consequences of being a single woman in our society. She must face the difficulties of traveling alone, of being an obligation to her married friends, of knowing she can depend on no one for help and companionship when she wants them. These problems are real, not psychological, not in her mind. It is not a question of women being taught to believe that being single is undesirable. It is truly difficult for most unattached women to operate comfortably and effectively in a male chauvinist culture.

For many women, marriage means even more than the opportunity to avoid being single. It is also the only way out of a boring and alienating job—a job which moreover, is likely to require that she concede her dignity to men anyway. If, for ex-

ample, she is a secretary or waitress, and fails to placate the men who are her superiors or customers, chances are she will find herself job-hunting again.

Her only chance for respect—partial and phony though it is—is to have a family. Society has closed other roads to all but a few. Discrimination against women in jobs is a fact. Women's work is low-paid work. And for a woman with apparent opportunities for better-paying, less boring work, sexual discrimination in the professions and in graduate schools becomes important.

For most women, the consequences of losing—even of attempting—an individual struggle with a man are severe: poverty, isolation, even death, depending on the man's temperament and the woman's own class situation. Sure, every time we don't struggle we make it harder for a woman who does. But only when we have a movement, only when women can offer each other real support, can we begin to make such demands on each other. To blame women for not struggling is to forget what the risks of struggle are for us all.

The second form of this false consciousness—the theory that women are oppressed because they go around asking for it—is most dangerous to our movement. It implies that a man oppresses a woman simply as a reaction to the woman's own expectations, and that he will stop as soon as she shows him she has some self-respect. The theory denies a basic reality—that men benefit in real ways—socially, economically, sexually and psychologically—from male supremacy.

Our oppression is not in our heads. We will not become un-oppressed by "acting un-oppressed." Try it—if you have the economic independence to survive the consequences. The result will not be respect and support. Men will either not like you—you are a bitch, a castrator, a nag, a hag, a witch; or they will accuse you of not liking them—you don't care about me; you don't love me; you are selfish and hostile.

True, women suffer (because they are oppressed) from feelings of inferiority and self-hatred. True, too, that believing themselves to be inade-



quate and to deserve their place in a different and lower class from men, women have often thought themselves unjustified in demanding their freedom. In other words, the fact that women sometimes blame themselves for their situation may prevent them from becoming strong fighters on their own behalf. Surely one important task of our movement is to make it come clear to ourselves and to all women that our low social, economic and sexual status results not from any natural inferiority but from actual, recognizable, analyzable oppression, however subtle in form. But we cannot stop there;

the elimination of self-blame, the birth of self-respect, is not the elimination of oppression. Feeling convinced of the justice of our demands is not, alas, the same as having those demands met.

The job of our movement, then, is not to blame ourselves or any other women for passivity, weakness, dependence, or any other qualities that women seem to display. Nor is it simply to strengthen ourselves for personal confrontations. Our job is to provide the vision of liberation and the hope, through our collective strength, of finally overthrowing male supremacy—everywhere.

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## Man-Hating

by PAMELA KEARON

Pamela Kearon was a founding member of Redstockings. She is now active in The Feminists, for whom she has written several important pieces, notably *Power As a Function of the Group* and *Dangers of the Pro-Woman Line and Consciousness Raising*.

The question of man-hating among radical women seems like the most difficult one to get up a serious discussion on. And you really feel crummy dragging it all out again only to encounter the raised eyebrows, the surprised expressions, voices vibrating with moral indignation; or worse yet, some cute joke and a round of hearty chuckles—completely destroying your point. But hold on! Before you get indignant, before you make your little joke, allow me to try to convince you that man-hating is a valid and vital issue.

Hatred is certainly an observable human fact. And since women are human—not a link between man and the ape—not some innocuous, shadowy, fairy-tale version of the Man—since this is so, hatred, hostility and resentment probably exist somehow in us. And, further, since many of us have already come to the conclusions of feminism—that equal status and opportunity with the male is necessary to our full human existence—the realization of our past and continued subjugation has most likely aroused in us some sentiment resembling hatred. Now, each of us, in denying our hatred and explaining our astonishing magnanimity, relies upon some common argument. Among the most common:

### Argumentum ad Sexus:

"Men and women are made for each other sexually. I am perfectly 'normal.' Therefore, I must certainly love men."

### Answer:

Many men engage in sexual intercourse, often extensively, even marry, while yet hating women. These men are called misogynists. Now, there is no shame in being a misogynist. It is a perfectly respectable attitude. Our white society (including too many of the women in it) hates women. Perhaps we need a Latin or Greek derivative in place of "man-hating" to make the perfect symmetry of the two attitudes more obvious.

### Argumentum ad Superioritatem:

"Hate man? No! Definitely not! We must understand them; they depend upon us to show them how to love."

### Answer:

This argument is based upon the "Natural Superiority of Women." We are congenitally incapable of hatred. It is our mysterious XX chromosomal

structure. Failing to "understand" the man is a perversion of our second nature. Brushing aside forever the utterly unprovable fiction of our second nature, and speaking purely from personal experience, it would seem, on the whole, that people do not react to oppression with Love. I mean the poison seeps out somehow. Sometimes aggressively on those in an even meaner position; sometimes taking the form of an all-pervading and impotent resentment—a petty and spiteful attitude. When women take their hatred out on others, those others are likely to be other women, particularly their own daughters. In doing so they reconcile their own impulse for an object of hate with the demands of an authoritarian system which requires all hate and spite to be directed downward, while respect and "understanding" are reserved for higher-ups, thus keeping nearly everyone supplied with pre-ordained and relatively powerless victims.

Anyway, all arguments which tend to suppress the recognition of man-hating in our midst are reducible to this: *fear*. Man-hating is a subversive and therefore dangerous sentiment. Men, who control definition, have made of it a disgusting perversion. We have been unable to get out from under their definition. I've been at meetings where women actually left because they thought that "man-haters" were on the loose. One woman talked to me in awe and disgust about a woman who she felt had made an anti-male statement at a meeting. It has been the cause of a deep rift within Women's Liberation. It is a vital issue because it involves ultimately the way we feel about ourselves, and how far we are willing to go in our own behalf.

#### **Hatred and Man-Hating**

There is no dearth of hatred in the world, I agree. But the thing is, people keep on hating the wrong people. For instance, a lot of people apparently believe that we must fight to preserve our freedom against little Vietnam. Whites just now stepping out of poverty themselves, arm against the "menace" of the Poor and the Blacks. Upper-middle-class radical snobs despise the class of Whites just beneath them. And men hate women. Our hatred is such a shoddy and confused emotion. We indulge in the most circuitous and illogical prejudices. We have never given the idea of hating someone who has actually done something hateful to us a chance. Oh, I know we ought to hate the sin and



*(Continued on page 86)*



love the sinner. But too often we end up loving the sinner and hating his victim (as when one woman seeing another put down, or hearing about her unhappy affair, calls it masochism and that's the end of it).

If hatred exists (and we know it does), let it be of a robust variety. If it is a choice between woman-hating and man-hating, let it be the latter. Let us

resolve to respond immediately and directly to injury instead of taking it all out on a more likely victim. It is a difficult stance because it requires a fidelity to what is real in us and neither innocuous nor attractive to oppressors, to that part of you which turned you on to feminism in the first place. That part which is really human and cannot submit.

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## ISSUES: ORGANIZING

# A Critique of the Miss America Protest

by CAROL HANISCH

The protest of the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City in September told the nation that a new feminist movement is afoot in the land. Due to the tremendous coverage in the mass media, millions of Americans now know there is a Women's Liberation Movement. Media coverage ranged from the front pages of several newspapers in the United States to many articles in the foreign press.

The action brought many new members into our group and many requests from women outside the city for literature and information. A recurrent theme was, "I've been waiting so long for something like this." So have we all, and the Miss America protest put us well on our way.

But no action taken in the Women's Liberation Struggle will be all good or all bad. It is necessary that we analyze each step to see what we did that was effective, what was not, and what was downright destructive.

At this point in our struggle, our actions should be aimed primarily at doing two inter-related things:

1) awakening the latent consciousness of women about their own oppression, and 2) building sisterhood. With these as our primary immediate goals, let us examine the Miss America protest.

The idea came out of our group method of analyzing women's oppression by recalling our own experiences. We were watching *Schmearguntz*, a feminist movie, one night at our meeting. The movie had flashes of the Miss America contest in it. I found myself sitting there remembering how I had felt at home with my family watching the pageant as a child, an adolescent, and a college student. I knew it had evoked powerful feelings.

When I proposed the idea to our group, we decided to go around the room with each woman telling how she felt about the pageant. We discovered that many of us who had always put down the contest still watched it. Others, like myself, had consciously identified with it, and had cried with the winner.

From our communal thinking came the con-

crete plans for the action. We all agreed that our main point in the demonstration would be that all women were hurt by beauty competition—Miss America as well as ourselves. We opposed the pageant in our own self-interest, e.g., the self-interest of all women.

Yet one of the biggest mistakes of the whole pageant was our anti-womanism. A spirit of every woman "doing her own thing" began to emerge. Sometimes it was because there was an open conflict about an issue. Other times, women didn't say anything at all about disagreeing with a group decision; they just went ahead and did what they wanted to do, even though it was something the group had definitely decided against. Because of this egotistic individualism, a definite strain of anti-womanism was presented to the public to the detriment of the action.

Posters which read "Up Against the Wall, Miss America," "Miss America Sells It," and "Miss America is a Big Falsie" hardly raised any woman's consciousness and really harmed the cause of sisterhood. Miss America and all beautiful women came off as our enemy instead of as our sisters who suffer with us. A group decision had been made rejecting these anti-woman signs. A few women made them anyway. Some women who had opposed the slogans were in the room when the signs were being made and didn't confront those who were making the anti-woman signs.

A more complex situation developed around the decision of a few women to use an "underground" disruptive tactic. The action was approved by the group only after its adherents said they would do it anyway as an individual action. As it turned out, we came to the realization that there is no such thing as "individual action" in a movement. We were linked to and were committed to support our sisters whether they called their action "individual" or not. It also came to many of us that there is at this time no real need to do "underground" actions. We need to reach as many women as possible as quickly as possible with a clear message that has the power of our person behind it. At this point women have to see other women standing up and saying these things. That's why draping a women's liberation banner over the balcony that night and yelling our message was much clearer. We should have known, however, that the television network, because it was not competing with other networks for coverage, would not put the action on camera. It did get on the radio and in newspapers,

however.

The problem of how to enforce group decisions is one we haven't solved. It came up in a lot of ways throughout the whole action. The group rule of not talking to male reporters was another example.

One of the reasons we came off anti-woman, besides the posters, was our lack of clarity. We didn't say clearly enough that we women are all forced to play the Miss America role—not by beautiful women but by men who we have to act that way for, and by a system that has so well institutionalized male supremacy for its own ends.

This was none too clear in our guerrilla theater either. Women chained to a replica, red, white and blue bathing-suited Miss America could have been misinterpreted as against beautiful women. Also, crowning a live sheep Miss America sort of said that beautiful women *are* sheep. However, the action did say to some women that women are viewed as auction-block, docile animals. The grandmother of one of the participants really began to understand the action when she was told about the sheep, and she ended up joining the protest.

There is as great a need for clarity in our language as there is in our actions. The leaflet that was distributed as a press release and as a flyer at the action was too long, too wordy, too complex, too hippy-yippee-campy. Instead of an "in" phrase like "Racism with Roses" (I still don't know exactly what that means), we could have just called the pageant RACIST and everybody would have understood our opposition on that point. If we are going to reach masses of women, we must give up all the "in-talk" of the New Left/Hippie movements—at least when we're talking in public. (Yes, even the word FUCK!) We can use simple language (*real* language) that everyone from Queens to Iowa will understand and not misunderstand.

We should try to avoid the temptation to say everything there is to say about what is wrong with the world and thereby say nothing that a new person can really dig into and understand. Women's liberation itself is revolutionary dynamite. When other issues are interjected, we should clearly relate them to our oppression *as women*.

We tried to carry the democratic means we used in planning the action into the actual *doing* of it. We didn't want leaders or spokesmen. It makes the movement not only *seem* stronger and larger if everyone is a leader, but it actually *is* stronger if not dependent on a few. It also guards against the



time when such leaders could be isolated and picked off one way or another. And of course many voices are more powerful than one.

Our first attempt at this was not entirely successful. We must learn how to fight against the media's desire to make leaders and some women's desire to be spokesmen. Everybody talks to the press or nobody talks to the press. The same problem came up in regard to appearances on radio and television shows after the action. We theoretically decided no one should appear more than once, but it didn't work out that way.

The Miss America protest was a zap action, as opposed to person-to-person group action. Zap actions are using our presence as a group and/or the media to make women's oppression into social issues. In such actions we speak to men as a group as well as to women. It is a rare opportunity to talk to men in a situation where they can't talk back. (Men must begin to learn to listen.) Our power of solidarity, not our individual intellectual exchanges will change men.

We tried to speak to individual women in the crowd and now some of us feel that it may not have been a good tactic. It put women on the spot in front of their men. We were putting them in a position which we choose to avoid ourselves when we don't allow men in our discussion groups.

It is interesting that many of the non-movement women we talked to about the protest had the same reaction as many radical women. "But I'm not oppressed" was a shared response. "I don't care about Miss America" was another. If more than half the television viewers in the country watch the pageant, somebody cares! And many of us admitted watching it too, even while putting it down.

It's interesting, too, that while much of the Left was putting us down for attacking something

so "silly and unimportant" or "reformist," the Right saw us as a threat and yelled such things as "Go back to Russia" and "Mothers of Mao" at the picket line. Ironically enough, what the Left/Underground press seemed to like best about our action was what was really our worst mistake—our anti-woman signs.

Surprisingly and fortunately, some of the mass media ignored our mistakes and concentrated on our best points. To quote from the *Daily News*, "... some women who think the whole idea of such contests is degrading to femininity, took their case to the people.... During boardwalk protest, gals say they're not anti-beauty, just anti-beauty contest." Shana Alexander wrote in a *Life* magazine editorial that she "wished they'd gone farther." Together, *Life* and the *Daily News* reach millions of Americans.

We need to take ourselves seriously. The powers that be do. Carol Giardino of Gainesville, Florida, was fired from her job because of her activities in women's liberation and her participation in the protest. Police cars were parked outside the planning meeting one night. The next day we got a call from the Mayor of Atlantic City questioning us about just what we planned to do. Pepsi-Cola is withdrawing as a sponsor of the pageant. They produce a diet cola and maybe see themselves as next year's special target.

Unfortunately the best slogan for the action came up about a month after, when Roz Baxandall came out on the David Susskind show with "Every day in a woman's life is a walking Miss America Contest." We shouldn't wait for the best slogan; we should go ahead to the best of our understanding. We hope all our sisters can learn something as we did from our first foray.

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"If this bill passes, our society will be filled with childless families and society as we know it will perish and succumb. I wonder, if we could let God in here today whose side he would be on? Would he be on the side of the affluent pseudo-intellectual who says 'abortion on demand'?"

—Senator Thomas F. McGowan, Buffalo Republican

# On Abortion and Abortion Law

ABORTION LAW REPEAL (SORT OF): A WARNING TO WOMEN

by LUCINDA CISLER

Lucinda Cislér is the foremost expert on abortion in the feminist movement. For years, she has fought tirelessly (and without pay) for women's right to control their own bodies. She is also important in the movement for her excellent and comprehensive bibliography (see below).

One of the few things everyone in the women's movement seems to agree on is that we have to get rid of the abortion laws and make sure that any woman who wants an abortion can get one. We all recognize how basic this demand is; it sounds like a pretty clear and simple demand, too—hard to achieve, of course, but obviously a fundamental right just like any other method of birth control.

But just because it *sounds* so simple and so obvious and is such a great point of unity, a lot of us haven't really looked below the surface of the abortion fight and seen how complicated it may be to get what we want. The most important thing feminists have done and have to keep doing is to insist that the basic reason for repealing the laws and making abortions available is **JUSTICE**: women's right to abortion.

Everyone recognizes the cruder forms of opposition to abortion traditionally used by the forces of sexism and religious reaction. But a feminist philosophy must be able to deal with *all* the stumbling blocks that keep us from reaching our goal, and must develop a consciousness about the far more subtle dangers we face from many who honestly believe they are our friends.

In our disgust with the extreme oppression women experience under the present abortion laws, many of us are understandably tempted to accept insulting token changes that we would angrily shout down if they were offered to us in any other field of the struggle for women's liberation. We've waited so long for anything to happen that when we see our demands having any effect at all we're sorely tempted to convince ourselves that everything that sounds good in the short run will turn out to be good for women in the long run. And a lot of us are so fed up with "the system" that we don't even bother to find out what it's doing so we can fight it and demand what we want. This is the measure of our present oppression; a chain of aluminum *does*

feel lighter around our necks than one made of iron, but it's still a chain, and our task is still to burst entirely free.

The abortion issue is one of the very few issues vital to the women's movement that well-meaning people outside the movement were dealing with on an organized basis even before the new feminism began to explode a couple of years ago. Whatever we may like to think, there *is* quite definitely an abortion movement that is distinct from the feminist movement, and the good intentions of most of the people in it can turn out to be either a tremendous source of support for our goals or the most tragic barrier to our ever achieving them. The choice is up to us: we must subject every proposal for change and every tactic to the clearest feminist scrutiny, demand only what is good for *all* women, and not let some of us be bought off at the expense of the rest.

Until just a couple of years ago the abortion movement was a tiny handful of good people who were still having to concentrate just on getting the taboo lifted from public discussions of the topic. They dared not even think about any proposals for legal change beyond "reform" (in which abortion is grudgingly parceled out by hospital committee fiat to the few women who can "prove" they've been raped, or who are crazy, or are in danger of bearing a defective baby). They spent a lot of time debating with priests about *When Life Begins*, and *Which Abortions Are Justified*. They were mostly doctors, lawyers, social workers, clergymen, professors, writers, and a few were just plain women—usually not particularly feminist.

Part of the reason the reform movement was very small was that it appealed mostly to altruism and very little to people's self-interest: the circumstances covered by "reform" are tragic but they affect very few women's lives, whereas repeal is

compelling because most women know the fear of unwanted pregnancy and in fact get abortions for that reason.

Some people were involved with "reform"—and are in the abortion movement today—for very good reasons: they are concerned with important issues like the public health problem presented by illegal abortions, the doctor's right to provide patients with good medical care, the suffering of unwanted children and unhappy families, and the burgeoning of our population at a rate too high for any economic system to handle.

But the basis for all these good reasons to be concerned with abortion is, in the final analysis, simple expediency. Such reasons are peripheral to the central rationale for making abortion available: justice for women. And unless a well-thought-out feminism underlies the dedication of these people, they will accept all kinds of token gains from legislators and judges and the medical establishment in the name of "getting something done NOW"—never mind what that is, or how much it cuts the chances for real changes later by lulling the public into a false sense of accomplishment.

These people do deserve a lot of credit for their lonely and dogged insistence on raising the issue when everybody else wanted to pretend it didn't exist. But because they invested so much energy earlier in working for "reform" (and got it in ten states), they have an important stake in believing that their approach is the "realistic" one—that one must accept the small, so-called "steps in the right direction" that can be wrested from reluctant politicians, that it isn't quite dignified to demonstrate or shout what you want, that raising the women's rights issue will "alienate" politicians, and so on.

Others, however (especially in centers of stylish liberalism like New York City), are interested in abortion because they are essentially political fashion-mongers: Some of them aspire to public office and some just like to play around the pool. For them, it's "groovy" to be for something racy like abortion. You can make a name for yourself faster in a small movement, such as this one still is, than in something huge like the peace movement, and it's sexier than supporting the grape strikers in their struggle.

Unfortunately, the "good people" share with these pseudo-militants an overwrought attitude toward politicians, doctors, lawyers, and traditional "experts" of all kinds; they tend to view the women's movement as rather eccentric troops they can call

upon to help them with colorful things like unavoidable demonstrations, rather than as the grass-roots force whose feminist philosophy should be leading them in the right direction. Even those who have begun to say that the woman's right to abortion is the central issue show a good deal of half-concealed condescension toward the very movement that has brought this issue to the fore and inspired the fantastic change in public opinion witnessed in the last year or so.

Because of course, it is the women's movement whose demand for repeal—rather than "reform"—of the abortion laws has spurred the general acceleration in the abortion movement and its influence. Unfortunately, and ironically, the very rapidity of the change for which we are responsible is threatening to bring us to the point where we are offered something so close to what we want that our demands for true radical change may never be achieved.

Most of us recognize that "reforms" of the old rape-incest-fetal deformity variety are not in women's interest and in fact, in their very specificity, are almost more of an insult to our dignity as active, self-determining humans than are the old laws that simply forbid us to have abortions unless we are about to die. But the new reform legislation now being proposed all over the country is not in our interest either: it looks pretty good, and the improvements it seems to promise (at least for middle-class women) are almost irresistible to those who haven't informed themselves about the complexities of the abortion situation or developed a feminist critique of abortion that goes beyond "it's our right." And the courts are now handing down decisions that look good at a glance but that contain the same restrictions as the legislation.

All of the restrictions are of the kind that would be extremely difficult to get judges and legislators to throw out later (unlike the obvious grotesqueries in the old "reform" laws, which are already being challenged successfully in some courts and legislatures). A lot of people are being seriously misled because the legislation and the court decisions that incorporate these insidious limitations are being called abortion law "repeal" by the media.

It's true that the media are not particularly interested in accuracy when they report news of interest to women, but the chief reason for this dangerous misuse of language is that media people are getting their information from the established abortion movement, which wants very badly to think that

these laws and decisions are somehow repeal. (It seems pretty clear that when you repeal an abortion law you just get rid of it; you do not put things back into the statutes or make special rules that apply to abortion but not to other medical procedures.)

The following are the four major restrictions that have been cropping up lately in "repeal" bills, and some highly condensed reasons why feminists (and indeed anyone) must oppose them. No one can say for sure whether sexist ill-will, political horse-trading, or simple ignorance played the largest part in the lawmakers' decisions to include them, but all of them codify outmoded notions about medical technology, religion, or women's "role":

1. *Abortions may only be performed in licensed hospitals.* Abortion is almost always a simple procedure that can be carried out in a clinic or a doctor's office. Most women do need a place to lie down and rest for a while after a D&C or even a vacuum aspiration abortion, but they hardly need to occupy scarce hospital beds and go through all the hospital rigamarole that ties up the woman's money and the time of overworked staff people.

Hospital boards are extremely conservative and have always wanted to minimize the number of abortions performed within their walls: the "abortion committees" we now have were not invented by lawmakers but by hospital administrators. New laws that insure a hospital monopoly will hardly change this attitude. (The same committees regulate which women will be able to get the sterilizations they seek—even though voluntary sterilization is perfectly legal in all but one or two states.) The hospitals and accreditation agencies set up their own controls on who will get medical care, and doctors who want to retain their attending status are quite careful not to do "too many" abortions or sterilizations.

Hawaii's new law has this kind of restriction, and hospitals there are already busy setting up a new catechism of "guidelines," none of which insures that women will get more abortions and all of which insure that they will have to ask a lot of strangers for "permission" before they are allowed to spend the considerable amount of money hospitalizations inevitably cost. Maryland's new bill and the legislation proposed in several other states contain the same provisions that essentially shift the locus of control over women's decisions from the state to the hospital bureaucracies and their quasi-legal "regulations."

2. *Abortions may only be performed by licensed physicians.* This restriction sounds almost reasonable to most women who have always been fairly healthy and fairly prosperous, who are caught up in the medical mystique so many doctors have cultivated, and who accept the myth that abortion is incredibly risky and thus should cost a lot. But it is one of the most insidious restrictions of all, and is most oppressive to poor women.



Photo: Michael Hardy

Most doctors are not at all interested in performing abortions: even the ones who don't think it's dirty and who favor increasing the availability of abortion generally consider it a pretty boring procedure that they don't especially want to do. One reason they do find it tedious is that it is basically quite a simple operation, especially when the new vacuum aspiration technique is used, rather than the old dilation and curettage. The physicians who would like to see paramedical specialists trained to perform abortions with the aspirator (or who would like to perfect other promising new methods, such as hormone injections) would be completely thwarted by this restriction in their desire to provide efficient, inexpensive care on a mass basis. The general crisis in the medical delivery system in fact demands that paramedical people be trained to do a great many things that physicians do now.

If physicians themselves were to try to perform all the abortions that are needed, they would be

swamped with requests and would have to charge a great deal for their specialized training. Childbirth is statistically eight or ten times more dangerous than abortion, and yet nurses are now being trained as midwives in many medical centers. Why can't they and other medical personnel also be specially trained to use the aspirator so that five or six of them can perform clinic abortions under the general supervision of one physician? Only if paramedicals are allowed to do abortions can we expect to have truly inexpensive (and eventually free) abortions available to all women.

In the fall of 1969 a Washington, D.C. court threw out the District's limitations on a doctor's right to perform abortions—but upheld the conviction of the doctor's paramedical aide who said she had wanted to help poor women. Anyone who knows what the present situation in D.C. is will know that abortion is *not* readily available when its performance is limited to doctors only. The public hospital where poor women go has clamped down on abortions almost completely; private hospitals that serve middle-class women still operate restrictively and charge a lot; a few doctors willing to brave the stigma of being "abortionists" are performing abortions in their offices for \$300 or so. Although they work long hours, they are inundated with patients (one has a backlog of five weeks). Another is so swamped, partly because he continues to muddle through with D&C, that he does not even take the time to give the women an anesthetic (although they are assured before they arrive that they will get one).

Several attempts have been made to get D.C. doctors to devote a few volunteer hours each week to a free clinic for the poor; doctors have refused, expressing either indifference or fear of professional censure.

Some women insist that because *they* would prefer to go to a doctor, *all* women must be compelled by law to go to one. It is each woman's right to choose to spend \$300 for an abortion from a doctor, but she is obviously oppressing other women when she insists that all must do as she does. An abortion performed by a paramedical person with special training in a given modern procedure could easily, in fact, be safer than a D&C performed by a physician who hasn't done many abortions before.

In any case, it is only when doctors have the right to train the people they need to help them meet the demand, and women have the right to get medical care at a price they can afford, that butch-

ers and quacks will be put out of business. Existing medical practice codes provide for the punishment of quacks, but as long as poor women cannot find good abortions at a price they can pay, so long will butchers elude the law and women continue to die from their ministrations.

Looking not so far into the future, this restriction would also deny women themselves the right to use self-abortifacients when they are developed—and who is to say they will not be developed soon? The laws regulating contraception that still exist in thirty-one states were made before contraceptive foam was invented, at a time when all effective female contraception involved a visit to the doctor. That visit was frozen into a legal requirement in some states, and we still have the sad and ludicrous example of Massachusetts, where non-prescriptive foam cannot legally be bought without a prescription.

The "doctors only" clause is a favorite in legislation that masquerades as repeal. Hawaii, Maryland, Washington State, and New York are among the important states where this restriction was (rather quietly) included.

3. *Abortions may not be performed beyond a certain time in pregnancy, unless the woman's life is at stake.* Significantly enough, the magic time limit varies from bill to bill, from court decision to court decision, but this kind of restriction essentially says two things to women: (a) at a certain stage, your body suddenly belongs to the state and it can force you to have a child, whatever your own reasons for wanting an abortion late in pregnancy; (b) because late abortion entails more risk to you than early abortion, the state must "protect" you even if your considered decision is that you want to run that risk and your doctor is willing to help you. This restriction insults women in the same way the present "preservation-of life" laws do: it assumes that we must be in a state of tutelage and cannot assume responsibility for our own acts. Even many women's liberation writers are guilty of repeating the paternalistic explanation given to excuse the original passage of U.S. laws against abortion: in the nineteenth century abortion was more dangerous than childbirth, and women had to be protected against it. Was it somehow less dangerous in the eighteenth century? Were other kinds of surgery safe then? And, most important, weren't women wanting and getting abortions, even though they knew how much they were risking? "Protection" has often turned out to be but another means of control over



the protected; labor law offers many examples. When childbirth becomes as safe as it should be, perhaps it will be safer than abortion: will we put back our abortion laws, to "protect women"?

And basically, of course, no one can ever know exactly when any stage of pregnancy is reached until birth itself. Conception can take place at any time within about three days of intercourse, so that any legal time limit reckoned from "conception" is, meaningless because it cannot be determined precisely. All the talk about "quickening," "viability," and so on, is based on old religious myths (if the woman believes in them, of course, she won't look for an abortion) or tied to ever-shifting technology (who knows how soon a three-day-old fertilized egg may be considered "viable" because heroic mechanical devices allow it to survive and grow outside the woman's uterus?). To listen to judges and legislators play with the ghostly arithmetic of months and weeks is to hear the music by which angels used to dance on the head of a pin.

There are many reasons why a woman might seek a late abortion, and she should be able to find one legally if she wants it. She may suddenly discover that she had German measles in early pregnancy and that her fetus is deformed; she may have had a sudden mental breakdown; or some calamity may have changed the circumstances of her life: whatever her reasons, *she belongs to herself and not to the state.*

This limitation speaks to the hangups many people have, and it would be almost impossible to erase from a law once it were enacted—despite its possible constitutional vulnerability on the grounds of vagueness. It is incorporated in New York State's abortion bill, among many others, and in a recent Federal court decision in Wisconsin that has been gravely misrepresented as judicial "repeal." The Washington, D.C. decision discussed the "issue," and concluded that Congress should probably enact new laws for different stages of pregnancy. This is not repeal, it is a last-ditch attempt at retaining a little of the state ownership of pregnant women provided for under the worst laws we have now.

4. *Abortions may only be performed when the married woman's husband or the young single woman's parents give their consent.* The feminist objec-

tion to vesting a veto power in anyone other than the pregnant woman is too obvious to need any elaboration. It is utterly fantastic, then, to hear that some women's liberation groups in Washington State have actually been *supporting* an abortion bill with a consent provision. Although such a debasing restriction is written into law in most of the states that have "reform," some legal writers consider it of such little consequence that they fail to mention it in otherwise accurate summaries of U.S. abortion laws. The women's collective now putting out *Rat* in New York recently printed a very good map of the U.S., showing in ironic symbols the various restrictions on abortion in each state. For their source these radical women had used a legal checklist that did not include a mention of husband's consent—so their map didn't show this sexist restriction existing anywhere.

This may be the easiest of these restrictions to challenge constitutionally, but why should we have to? Instead we could prevent its enactment and fight to eradicate the hospital regulations that frequently impose it even where the law does not.

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All women are oppressed by the present abortion laws, by old-style "reforms," and by seductive new fake-repeal bills and court decisions. But the possibility of fake repeal—if it becomes reality—is the most dangerous: it will divide women from each other. It can buy off most middle-class women and make them believe things have really changed, while it leaves poor women to suffer and keeps us all saddled with abortion laws for many more years to come. There are many nice people who would like to see abortion made more or less legal, but their reasons are fuzzy and their tactics acquiescent. Because no one else except the women's movement is going to cry out against these restrictions, it is up to feminists to make the strongest and most precise demands upon the lawmakers—who ostensibly exist to serve *us*. We will not accept insults and call them "steps in the right direction."

Only if we know what we *don't* want, and why, and say so over and over again, will we be able to recognize and reject all the clever plastic limitations of our goal.

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The Abortion Handbook for Responsible Women; Patricia Maginnis and Lana Clarke Phelan (1969). \$3.00 ea. "Unfinished Business: Birth Control and Women's Liberation"; Lucinda Cislér (1960). \$.25 ea., 10/\$2.00. Women: a Bibliography (latest revised edition; over 600 entries); Lucinda Cislér. \$.25 ea., 10/\$2.25, 30/\$5.50. Prepaid orders only. Stamps & cash OK, but no foreign coins! Overseas orders: please calculate & add proper postage. Lucinda Cislér: 102 West 80th Street, New York City 10024.

# An Abortion Testimonial

by BARBARA SUSAN

We here submit an example of the many affidavits filed against the State of New York by the 400 plaintiffs in the current suit, illustrating the kinds of experiences—and now the kinds of public confessionals—women have to undergo due to sexist abortion laws.

*Barbara Susan, being duly sworn, deposes and says:*

I became pregnant. I had incomplete knowledge of contraception. I was sane and healthy, therefore ineligible for a legal abortion. Not being criminal or sophisticated I had no access to illegal means of abortion. I asked my mother for money to cover the cost of a trip to Japan where abortion was legal. She was not wealthy. She refused. She became hysterical. I became hysterical. Twenty-four hours later I was married. Eight months later I was delivered of an infant. Shortly afterwards the child was adopted and my marriage dissolved.

At the time of conception I was capable of a love relationship but not a parent-child relationship. The state forced me into becoming a parent by denying me the right to a legal abortion. I would like to sue the state for damages resulting from that maternity.

I was forced into a marriage relationship through pressure from my family. Pressure, which since I was in a vulnerable position, I was unable to resist. My husband had no money. I left college and took a full-time job. By taking a leave of absence from college I forfeited a regents scholarship (which was the only reason I was able to attend school). Also, the school had a rule which did not allow pregnant women to register. In effect, I had no freedom to pursue the goals which I had set up for myself. The state was punishing me for my sexual

behavior. I no longer had control of my life. At seventeen years of age it had been interrupted by forced maternity.

I decided to give the child up for adoption. I had to defend that decision against family and friends who had been so influenced by the legal sanctions given to motherhood that they found it impossible to accept my decision. They tried to convince me to stay married and become a mother. I was unprepared for motherhood financially, emotionally, and morally.

I decided to dissolve the marriage. After the birth of the child I returned to school. I was also working at that time to pay off legal bills, medical bills, and to support myself. (I had been fired from my previous job when they discovered I was pregnant.) After one term I left school and got a full-time job. My present occupation as an art teacher and a painter is not a very lucrative one, and can barely support me, let alone enable me to return to school.

When I tried to take control of my life (have an abortion), I faced opposition. The state was on the side of the opposition. I feel it is unconstitutional for the state to have taken any position in relation to the moral and emotional way in which I chose to conduct my life. The state should compensate me for the emotional ordeal it put me through. Moreover, the state should be made to support me while I finish my education.

# A Report from the Law School 1968-69

by MARION DAVIDSON

Marion Davidson was an early member of New York Radical Women and a founder of the Women's Rights Committee at New York University Law School. She is currently organizing a special "law" brigade of New York Radical Feminists.

Law schools did not foresee the consequences of doubling the number of women in the entering classes for the academic year of 1968. Taking a page from the World War II experience, the admissions departments saw women as a means of stabilizing an enrollment which would clearly diminish because of the new draft regulations.

But women who were admitted to law schools because of the draft were not quietly grateful that they had been allowed to make it. Immediately they began to attack the discrimination encrusting the institution of the law school.

At New York University Law School, women found that the most heavily endowed and prestigious scholarship was closed to women. Through the efforts of the newly formed Women's Rights Committee, the scholarship was made available to women. (Token) women now hold three of the over twenty scholarships available.

After this minor victory, the Committee looked into discrimination in the areas of admissions and

dormitory housing. Last summer the Committee mailed extensive questionnaires to 750 women attorneys in the New York area to ascertain types of discrimination in the hiring and promotion of women attorneys. The Committee also pushed the law school into offering a course in "Women and the Law" which not only provided information about the legal status of women but also enabled members of the class to get involved in litigation involving women's rights.

These developments at New York University Law School are not isolated occurrences. Similar actions are being taken by women law students at Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and many other law schools in the country. A crop of bright young women lawyers is preparing to defend what should turn into the largest radical movement of the Seventies. The abortion suits and equal rights amendment hearings now before the courts are only the beginning.

## What Do Women Want?

**We Are Often Accused of Not Being Specific Enough In Our Demands. Here Then is a Clear Listing of What Women Want. For Starters.**

### **The Congress to Unite Women**

The first Congress to Unite Women was a historic event in the unfinished revolution for women's liberation. Over 500 women from the Eastern United States, from cities and campuses, from New York, Pittsburgh, Syracuse, Cornell, Worcester, Baltimore, Boston, Princeton, Bryn Mawr, Clark, Buffalo, Penn State, Rutgers and so on, met in New York on the weekend of November 24, 1969, to set up a Congress to Unite Women. A Continuing Committee was established to carry out the decisions of the Congress and to set in motion procedures for a permanent nationwide coalition for women's liberation. The second Congress to Unite Women is planned for the first week in May, 1970.

The Congress to Unite Women is committed to the liberation of all women now. We know that only with power can we end the oppression of women. Together, in a united congress, we will fight for what is good for women.

#### **Childhood Education and Care**

With regard to early childhood education and care, we demand nationwide free twenty-four-hour-a-day child care centers for all children from infancy to early adolescence regardless of their parents' income or marital status, with child care practices decided by those using the centers. To encourage the breakdown of sex role stereotypes, these centers must be staffed equally by women and men. Their wages should be equal to those of public school teachers.

Until these free child care centers are established, we demand immediate national and state legislation for deduction of child care expenses from income before taxes.

#### **Education**

In the field of education we are against the tracking system. We believe high school and college guidance counseling must not restrict individuals to sex-determined roles. Home Economics, shop and other vocational courses must be made available to all without regard to sex. History texts and anthologies of literature must be changed to represent fairly and correctly the achievements of women. Workshops on women's problems should be conducted for parents, teachers, and teachers-in-training, and included in adult and continuing education courses. Women, regardless of marital status or pregnancy must be guaranteed the right to attend school.

We demand a women's studies section in all public libraries and school and university libraries.

We encourage the academic community to re-structure language to reflect a society in which women have equal status with men.

Educational institutions must no longer be ex-

empt from Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

We demand elimination of nepotism rules from colleges and universities.

We demand that all educational institutions set up day care centers for all students, faculties, and staff.

Women's studies programs should be established in all colleges and universities.

### Employment

On the subject of employment, we demand that working hours be made flexible for both men and women.

We demand legal steps to open trade schools and unions to women.

We support ACLU Women's Rights Project, and intend to create dossiers analyzing individual companies and the percent of women hired in each job category.

Part-time employment must be made available for women who want it.

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All women are oppressed as women and can unite on that basis; however, we acknowledge that there are differences among women, male-created—of economic and social privilege, race, education, etc.—and that these differences are real, not imaginary. Such divisions must be eliminated. They can only be eliminated by hard work and concrete action, not by rhetoric.

### Political Power

The Congress to Unite Women announces the formation of a women's political power bloc to fight for women's liberation. We now expand the definition of political to include women's "personal" lives, meaning personal institutions, e.g. the family, as well as the structure of government in the present society. While we demand representation on all bodies of the latter in proportion to our numbers (presently 51%), we see this as only one means to a much larger end—the total liberation of women by every avenue available.

1. We will work against people in politically powerful positions who have demonstrated that they oppose our interests.

2. We are determined to get priority in political attention for our issues, particularly child care,

abortion, civil rights and the Equal Rights Amendment.

### Sex Roles

1. We must proceed on the assumption that there are *no* biological bases for any sex-role differentiation beyond the basic reproductive functions. If we are truly free we will soon find out what differences there are, if any.

2. Children should be given *human* models to emulate, not just *male* and *female* models.

3. We must *each have the courage* to fight to live out our own beliefs in undifferentiated sex roles.

### Women and the Law

We resolve to direct attention to two issues now:

1. Civil Rights Act of 1964; includes sex in only Title VII which covers employment. There is no provision for penalty against discrimination or enforcement of the Act. There is no money available for suits, which must be instituted at the expense of the plaintiff.

2. Equal Rights Amendment is essential. While the 14th Amendment guarantees equal protection under the law to all persons who are citizens, the Supreme Court has refused to rule on the issue of whether women are persons.

### Abortion

The Congress to Unite Women recognizes women's basic human right to decide whether to have children and opposes in the courts, in the legislature, and in direct action all attitudes, practices, and laws that would compel any woman to bear a child against her will. We not only demand the *total* repeal *now* of all laws restricting access to contraception, sterilization and abortion and the free public provision of such birth control services in all hospitals and clinics; but concomitantly, we insist that appropriate safeguards be developed so that women are not coerced or in any way pressured into birth control, sterilization or abortion.

We protest the generally derogatory image of women presented by the media, and specifically the misrepresentation of the movement for women's liberation to the women of America.



# The "New Feminist" Analysis

by BONNIE KREPS

Bonnie Kreps is a founder of the new feminist movement in Canada, where she is active in the media promoting the cause of women's liberation. The following article is valuable as a clear and basic statement of women's oppression.

Put very bluntly, the traditional view of woman can be summed up in the words of Aristotle:

The female is a female by virtue of a certain *lack* of qualities; we should regard the female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness.

This may be a rather crass over-statement of the male chauvinist attitude, but the philosophical assumption exhibited here lies at the crux of the problem at hand: that is, man has consistently defined woman not in terms of herself but in relation to him. She is not regarded as an autonomous being; rather, he is the Subject, he is Absolute—she is the Other. Simone de Beauvoir has argued convincingly that, throughout history, no group has ever set itself up as the One *without at once setting up in opposition the Other*, which then tends to become an object. Otherness, she argues, is a fundamental category of human thought. Thus, good-evil, right-wrong, nationalism, racism, anti-Semitism, and male chauvinism.

In accepting the traditional view of herself as secondary and inferior, woman has provided justification for the charge of inferiority. We are all familiar with the contention that women are different in *their nature* from men. Biological differences which no one can deny are used with great enthusiasm by those who wish to justify the status quo vis à vis women, by those to whom freedom for women seems a profound threat to something deep in themselves.

Whatever biology may determine for us all—the question certainly is debatable—I think it is an obvious truth that one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman or a man. One is born a female or male child with certain given characteristics and certain potentials which are hereditarily and environmentally determined and must, therefore, be viewed developmentally. To understand woman's so-called "nature," we must, therefore, examine her situation: her history, the myths about her, her social environment, her education, and so forth. A look at history and mythology, for instance, will show that women have been written out of history and represented from a male point of view in mythology. The great

figures of history and mythology are always male; as DeBeauvoir says:

Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth.

Woman's immediate social environment puts enormous pressure on her to submit to male dominance. She is exhorted to play out the role of Cinderella, expecting fortune and happiness from some Prince Charming rather than to venture out by herself. Be pretty, be pleasant, use mouthwash and deodorant, never have an intellectual thought, and Prince Charming will sweep you off to his castle, where you will live happily ever after. Such is the carrot, and behind it is the stick: "Men don't make passes at girls who wear glasses," "wall flower," "spinster," "old maid," "loose woman" . . . the list goes on, and its message is: to have caught a man is proof of a woman's desirability as a human being; to be without a man is a social and moral disgrace.

The economic discrimination against the working woman is highly conducive to her seeing marriage as a liberation from ill-paid drudgery. She usually faces the prospect of being an underpaid worker in society's lowest echelons. She faces a discrimination based on sex which racial groups no longer tolerate. So it is little wonder that her desire to find a husband is reinforced.

Society's most potent tool for making female human beings into dependent adults is the socialization process. We have a society which is based on arbitrary and strictly enforced sex roles. We may see a loosening of this condition with the next generation, but it is still unhappily true that a certain role is now ascribed purely on the basis of sex. And what does this mean for the female sex? It means that the essential characteristic of the so-called "feminine" character is passivity. Through her upbringing and education, from girlhood up, a girl's sense of self is progressively crushed. Whereas boys get experimental, control-oriented toys, girls get role-playing toys. Boys

get tractors, rockets, microscopes, etc.; girls get dolls and vacuum cleaners. Whereas boys are dressed practically and are expected to get dirty, little girls are all too often dressed to be "lady-like"—in other words, they are dressed to be pretty objects, like dolls. Whereas boys are encouraged to be rough, tough and aggressive, girls are trained to become timid and docile (put euphemistically: good listeners, feminine, real helpmates, etc.). Whereas boys prepare themselves to become creators of their own future, girls are trained to relate through others and taught that to please they must *try* to please and therefore renounce their autonomy.

To please is to abdicate. That is the lesson the young girl learns. It is the lesson which finds its apotheosis in a recent best-seller by the American movie star, Arlene Dahl—its commercial success is redoubtable, its title totally indicative of its message: *Always Ask a Man*.

As long as marriage and motherhood are conceived of as a woman's entire destiny and the fulfillment of her "nature," her lot will involve the acceptance of a situation imposed from the outside rather than a free choice according to her individuality. As long as woman accepts this situation, she will endanger her individuality and possibility for growth as a human being. She will, in short, be abdicating the potential of her nature by giving in to the demands of her situation.

We all know about the alcohol and pill consumption of women, the large influx of female psychiatric patients with unspecified ailments, and the myriad of symptoms which suggest that something is troubling a great many women. When we add to that the enormous success of feminist books like *The Second Sex* and *The Feminine Mystique*, and the rising waves of new feminists in Europe and America, I think it becomes apparent to all but the most pig-headed that the picture of the happy housewife, the fulfilled woman who has bought all the garbage of the *Feminine Mystique*, that this picture is a gross distortion. The true picture spells out in large letters: FRUSTRATION.

For those many women who have acknowledged their sense of emptiness, their frustration, there has often followed a feeling of guilt. They feel that there must be something peculiarly wrong with them and that they should be able somehow to cope with their frustration. (Note here the rising success of the tension-reducing pill named COPE.) We are still the beneficiaries of Freud's claim that neurosis is a sign of sickness.

There has emerged recently, however, a new school of psychology with a new definition of sickness and health. Called, loosely, "The Third Force," it contrasts sharply with Freud and the behaviorists. Some of its major tenets are these: Each of us has an essential core, a potential and personality, which tends strongly to persist. One might liken it to the body's drive for health. If this psychological drive for health is frustrated or stunted, sickness results. No psychological health is possible unless this essential core of the person is fundamentally accepted, loved, and respected by others and by himself. And, they add, "adjustment is, very definitely, not necessarily synonymous with psychological health."

On this basis, it would seem that woman's present situation is not consonant with her optimal growth; further, that the frustrations engendered by attempting to force these disparities into consonance—these frustrations are a sign, not of mental sickness, but of mental health.

The most reasonable conclusion reached from the above arguments is therefore, I would think, that the traditional view of women and its attendant *Feminine Mystique* are a fraud. While they are to men's advantage in many (though ultimately not all) respects, they mean loss of growth, of full-humanness, to the woman who submits to their edicts. Such a woman will risk a loss of identity, she will risk becoming a thing.

Modern woman is in the grip of a vicious circle and in urgent need of liberation. The more she resigns herself to the demands of her situation, the more she will stunt her human growth, and the more she will thus be unable to escape from her situation. The ultimate success of the slave system was, after all, that it ultimately convinced the slaves themselves that they were fit for nothing else but being slaves and that being a slave wasn't all that bad. We women can learn a lot from the emergence of black people who are fighting for black dignity. The question for women is, what are the mechanics of our particular kind of oppression and how do we best fight it?

First of all, we must recognize that the liberation of women must be collective, it must be aimed at freedom for all women. Our goal must be that any and all women who want to escape from the sex role foisted upon them will have the freedom to do so. Therefore, no "token integration," no relieving of symptoms without getting at the causes. Secondly, we must get full economic rights for women, because only economic liberty can guarantee women that their theoretic civil liberties will provide them with

liberty in practice. We must do away with the woman-as-economic-parasite notion. Thirdly, women must be freed from their present partial or complete slavery to the species. They must have the right to decide over their own bodies. Fourthly, and most generally, *girls and women must be encouraged to seek self-fulfillment as human beings rather than merely as females.*

There is a growing feminist movement now at work to obtain these objectives. In the United States, the feminist movement numbers in the thousands. It spans all the states and most ages, though it so far is most heavily concentrated among the younger women. The movement is about three years old there, and it has made notable progress. I was a member of it before I came to Canada, where women now are attempting to set up the same kind of movement with a specifically Canadian emphasis. There is a new group in Toronto, *The New Feminists*, of which I am a founding member, which is just getting off the ground. We separated from a strongly politically committed group on the reasoning that we need to analyze the mechanics of the oppression of women as women and not as workers, students, etc. The sexual oppression underlies all the others, so we feel, and

therefore we think it obscures the primary issue to approach it with, say, a Marxist analysis. The New Feminists are also firmly committed to action. We are at this stage probing the possibilities of setting up a Canadian feminist theatre, much as the American feminists have done with their *New Feminist Theatre*. We have not acted on a great many issues yet, because we are so new and still need to get organized in preparation for what we hope is a large influx of new members. So far, we have grown very rapidly—both from person-to-person contact and from numerous television and other media programs about us.

It is our hope that The New Feminists will be successful in fighting for the liberation of women. I think we have made a good start. We are basing our analysis on the kind of thinking exhibited in this article, and it has so far steered us clear of major pitfalls. There is a great need for a feminist movement in Canada. We propose to start one. Hopefully, we will be able to report in later issues that we have made significant progress.

*Ed. Note: They have. This article was written in July, 1969.*



Photo: David Robison-Bethel

# The Founding of the New Feminist Theatre

by ANSELMA DELL'OLIO

Anselma dell'Olio is the founder and director of The New Feminist Repertory and Experimental Ensemble in New York City—the first serious attempt to create a protest art based on the new feminism. She is also a member of New York Radical Feminists (theatre brigade).

*"Searching for a path in uncharted territory . . ."*

In a review of our first performance which appeared in the New York Times Sunday drama section, May 16, 1969, critic Roz Regelson wrote:

The New Feminist Repertory, like the New Feminist movement, starts with no dogma, and is really working at what other radical theatres pretend to be doing—searching for a path in uncharted territory.

This is a fitting, if flattering, description of what we are about.

For we are indeed setting a precedent—a first. This is one more reason for the word "new" in our name—there has never been a feminist theatre in all of Western culture—as well as the more obvious reason: the renaissance of the feminist movement. Our name also forms the acronym "free"—and that is easily explained as the desire to contribute to the liberation of women from centuries of political, social, economic, and above all, cultural oppression. By this we mean not just "to give women a chance" in the arts, though necessarily, feminist theatre will be composed mostly of women, but primarily to give a dramatic voice to the new feminist movement.

The current cultural scene (especially, but not only, the theatre) is openly, proudly male chauvinist. In fact it is so biased that even men have begun to comment on it. Charles Ferguson, in *The Male Attitude*, writes:

In that grim world of entertainment known as the legitimate stage, men write, direct, produce, review, and advertise most of what appears. Women behave as men want, direct and imagine them to be . . . . The paradigm is the Battle of the Sexes. Woman has been casually accepted as culprit and villain since the first production of

Hamlet. Variations are for variety and do not alter the central notion that woman is to blame.

I submit that the much deplored sterility of Broadway and off-Broadway is due to the way in which, in even the most avant-garde production, 51% of the population is straitjacketed into stereotype, or, and this is the lesser of two evils, ignored. Any attempt to break through the sexual status quo is regularly thwarted.

If, as has been said, the proper study of the stage is man and the dilemma of his humanity, then perhaps we can describe feminist theatre as the study of woman and her sub-human status. For though women may be 51% of the population, they are not 51% of humanity. Unfortunately, it is only in this realistic light that we can talk about feminist theatre as "humanist" theatre.

Thus our primary goal is to provide a theatrical forum for the full expression of those views currently found unacceptable by the cultural world, particularly those in which sex roles are the fundamental determinant. We want to stimulate fresh thinking on a subject the conventions of which have become so hackneyed and acceptable that those political/cultural radicals who would scream bloody racist murder to hear such clichés about (male) Blacks do not even notice them. (I've often observed that conservatives, political or cultural, can respond even more readily than many radicals to the issues of women's liberation, if only to deplore the waste of human resources. It is ironic how often liberals and radicals fail to see that women form an oppressed class which cuts across and outnumbers every economic, political, national, religious, and color line.)

The question then arises, if the Feminist Repertory is devoted to social change, do we see, in the old Communist phrase, "drama as a weapon"? And if so, aren't we just devoted to political propaganda? This is a legitimate question, though I believe that it is asked far too often lately, perhaps in reaction to the failure of "social consciousness" art of the Thirties. But on the other hand, we have been counter-indoctrinated with the idea that true art is only "Art for Art's Sake"—that anything which smacks of real life and the world's vulgarity does not count. Such a backlash has resulted in a reluctance on the part of outraged artistic sensibilities to deal with the issues at the source of their anger—thus the long delay, for example, in the formation of a Black Theatre.

The most important qualification to be made about a theatre of commitment is that the playwright must at all times beware of simply illustrating acceptable dogmas. The pitfalls of didacticism can be overcome and art emerge only when the playwright continually develops his thinking, rather than presenting the audience with a re-hash of old conclusions. Political theatre must set itself the task of learning with the audience. The only sin, in my opinion, is the attitude on the part of either playwrights, directors, or cast, that one is out to "teach" the heathen rather than to share with the audience one's own learning process. I believe that guerrilla street theatre has been a failure both artistically and politically precisely because it is guilty

of this sin: talking only to the Believers and *preaching* to them at that. Perhaps it provides a (masturbatory) outlet for the rage of its participants, but it does not stimulate either them or their audience into developing new thinking.

As for those artists whose involvement with feminism is taboo as subject matter for their artistic (as opposed to journalistic) enterprises, I can only say: *Relax*. If you are writing, painting, dancing, filming, whatever, honestly, and from an emotional core, all you do will—*must*—reflect what is going on inside you. One does not have to force artificial political ideas into one's work—but any militant feminist with an integrated personality would necessarily *have* to do a different kind of art from a woman who was not. To ignore the outrage of sensibility would be a suppression and parody of art of another kind.

My biggest fear is that feminist artists, and writers especially, in an honest fear, will turn more and more away from art towards journalism or political theory because they find they *cannot* avoid dealing with feminism but wish to avoid the dangers of politicizing their art. But this can only lead to an *impoverishment, not just of feminist theatre, but of all the arts*.

In short: Dogma makes for poor theatre and poor art. Outrage, on the other hand, which affects the artistic sensibility, can produce art in its highest form.

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## CLASSIFIEDS

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Full-time women workers earn an average of 40% less than men in similar jobs in every major industry.

Half of all working women earn less than \$3,700. Poverty level is \$3,300.

Only 1.4% of working women earn over \$10,000.

Today only 1 in 10 Ph.D.'s is granted to a woman. This is fewer than in 1940.

—From the Voice of Women's Liberation 47

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The American Civil Liberties Union's Women's Rights Project is gathering information on employment discrimination against women. The data collected will be used to get a full-scale hearing before the New York State Division of Human Rights. We need detailed data to force a public hearing.

Mail descriptions of job discrimination against women to: Eleanor Holmes Norton, ACLU Women's Rights Project, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010.

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# On Class Structure Within The Women's Movement

by BARBARA MEHRHOF

Barbara Mehrhof was a founding member of Redstockings and is now active in The Feminists.

What has become known as the "equality issue" in the women's movement is viewed by many radical feminists as one of the most burning questions of our movement. That there is unequal participation among movement members is undeniable; in addition, a "star system" has developed whereby certain individuals have gained recognition as "leaders" or spokesmen for the movement. They have emerged both within the context of superficially structureless groups like Redstockings, as well as in organizations such as NOW whose hierarchical framework ensures that power will be concentrated in the hands of a few. Usually these are the women who talk the loudest, the longest, and the most often, but whatever their style the consequence is the same: they are in a position to unduly influence policy and to use the movement and other women for their own purposes. In the past this phenomenon has generally been ignored, denied, or put down. The result is that the problem is not discussed and the reasons for this situation go unexamined.

In the face of this kind of dismissal, some of us in the movement have nevertheless sought to understand the reasons for the inequities that exist and to further explore our feelings that we are being taken advantage of by other women. Our starting point in this examination has been the failure of the movement to broaden its class base with the result that it is still composed predominantly of middle and upper-middle class women with only a sprinkling of those of us from a lower-middle-class or working-class background. We have come to the conclusion that the existing inequality has its basis, to a great extent, in class. Therefore, in order to provide a better understanding of this issue, I will first describe the two basic class systems operating in society as they affect women, and then offer the proposition that the women's movement is in the process of

establishing a tertiary class system, a system under which the liberation of women becomes impossible.

## The Primary Class System

Males originated class and have fostered terrible inequities in society through the oppression of one group by another; their justifications for these inequalities began when they first declassed women out of humanity. Thus, "humanity" or "society" in effect refers only to those individuals making up the male class—all men. Society consists of an opposition of a group or groups of men to another group or groups of men. The class of men is self-defining and well organized vis à vis its counterclass—the class of women.

The class of women is a class defined by the class of men. Both classes together constitute all those individuals called human beings; since, in addition, this political division is the basic one in all societies, it is the *primary class system*. Through it each individual receives a primary class identification and is a member of one class or the other.

These two classes do not face each other on an equal footing nor are women in fact organized into a unit which can stand face to face with the correlative unit. In this division the male class is the oppressor, powerful class; the female class is the oppressed, powerless class. The original declassing of women serves as a model for all other class systems and the construction of levels of power among the males themselves.

## The Secondary Class System

The class of men is composed of a ranking of individuals within the class itself. That is, all men are not equal and a hierarchy exists. Having once thrown women out of humanity, males then went

about setting up divisions within their own ranks. Though each male in the hierarchy is an embodiment of the masculine role, and thus in a position to oppress women, all males do not have the same opportunity to oppress each other. This hierarchy of males we shall call the *secondary class system*.

Money and power are the major determinants of a particular male's position in the hierarchy of his class. Unlike the primary class identification in which all men stand united against women, the hierarchy is a place where men are poised one against the other in competition, or allied in groups against other groups. In this stratification all males do not always display a "class-consciousness," so that frequently one group, such as those on the top of the heap, are united against those on the bottom, whereas the lower-ranking men might be disorganized and uncertain of their real class interests.

The economic structure of the society is the basic instrument for distributing the money and the power among those individuals who make up the class. The males at the top of this hierarchy have the resources and the power to oppress all the females, as well as most of the other males. The power of these upper-class men is derived from their position in the hierarchy, education, money, access to knowledge, and an awareness of the workings and operations of the society. They have an individualistic mentality and also display the psychological benefits of self-confidence and feelings of superiority. Like all members of their class, they assume that men are the masters of women because men are better (superior) than women; but they are also superior, they think, to most of the other males. Their attitudes are based on the most precious value of the male value system—the idea that some people are just naturally better than others. It is the underlying premise implicit in the male/female contradiction, and it is used to rationalize all other class systems.

#### The Female Hierarchy

As a class defined by men, women have little or no comprehension of themselves as a class and little "class-consciousness" within the primary class system. A hierarchy of females such as could be juxtaposed next to that described as existing among the males is hardly possible. Instead, their ranking within their class is entirely dependent upon where they are distributed among the males through marriage and the family in the economic rankings of the male class. In these arrangements women make up a

part of the property these economic groups possess and which is a medium of exchange among them. Since women are dispersed among the entire male class, they will of necessity be attached to men along all the levels of the hierarchy. But as they are not men, they never enter into the secondary class structure; on the contrary, women form a part of the property to be distributed among the individuals who comprise the secondary system. What will happen is that women will reflect the position and power of the men, rather than becoming occupants of those positions or the possessors of that power. Thus, the female hierarchy is not a power source unto itself, although distribution among all levels of males will have its effect upon women too, so that there will also be divisions among the females, a ranking order which is the product of the construction of classes among the males themselves.

Lacking primary class consciousness, and more attached to particular males than they are to other women since their dispersal achieves their isolation from one another, women are in danger of losing sight of the real nature of their class interest, of recognizing the fact that their situation will always remain defined by their minor position in the primary class structure.

#### Class and the Women's Movement

The ranking of women in a hierarchy achieves significance *only* when women organize among themselves. When women separate off from men in a movement of their own and agitate specifically for "women's rights," the implication is clear that they consider their problems have something to do with the fact that they are women; but whereas in time they may become aware of themselves as a class vis à vis men, they tend to ignore the effects of their distribution in the secondary class structure—that is, what types of males they've been attached to, the ones on the top or the ones on the bottom of the male hierarchy. A situation arises in which all women are glad just to be getting together with other women. The idea emerges that we are all powerless and that the way in which men arrange themselves within their own class has nothing to do with the structure women are building among themselves.

In assuming this position, women in the movement are refusing to examine a basic contradiction in our situation: whereas in society *all* women are reduced to a subordinate, minor position in the male/female class system, they are at the same time



Photo: David Robison-Bethel



Photo: Irene Pestikis



Photo: David Robison-Bethel

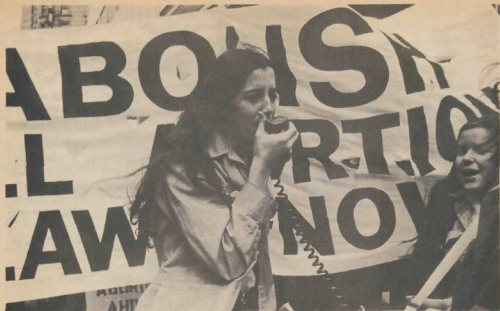


Photo: Michael Hardy

dispersed among males representing very different levels of power within the male hierarchy. Once women get together on their own without men, this contradiction in their situation will appear for the first time when the women of the upper-class males will move from a minor position in relation to men to a major position in relation to other women. This puts them into a position to oppress other women since the very fact that women are getting together is generating power and the women of the upper classes have been there to grab it so far. Thus, the women's movement has become the occasion whereby these class antagonisms will make themselves known, class conflicts which have their origin in the secondary class system.

Who are these women who have risen to the top of the women's movement and how are they able to maintain a leadership position? In general, they come from either the middle or the upper classes. As women belonging to the men of these classes they are often equipped with many of the same advantages and attitudes as the males—educational privileges, self-confidence (if not toward men, at least toward other women), feelings of superiority toward the masses, etc.—which would be put to use in the exercise of leadership and power if they were men and belonged to the male class. Equally important is the fact that the women of these classes have had the opportunity to observe at close range the male wielding his power so that, given the opportunity, they are able to imitate him to a remarkable degree. Like him, they often accuse the grumblers at the bottom of suffering from personality or psychological disorders and have even alleged that restive women in the movement are trying to castrate them.

Women of the upper classes, in addition to being better educated than lower-class women, usually have greater verbal ability and the resulting capacity to be able to come into a group and take over. Unequal participation among members of the movement is either accepted or overlooked by them. Some have money, some have connections; unfortunately, many still retain the hope of making a good life for themselves even if there is never a feminist revolution. The danger exists in that many of them feel they have an escape hatch they can still be great writers or painters or even worse, they see the movement as a place to perfect their tools of expression (opportunism) and become more concerned about being famous than with making a revolution. They use the movement not to destroy

the male class, but to "make it" in his world. But that world is really the distribution of power within the male hierarchy. Women cut themselves off from their class when they try to get a piece of the power that is reserved only for men, when they aim for an equalized pecking order. What they have failed to realize is that there is no place for them in the secondary class system—as token women they are constantly tested and the final test will be the betrayal of women.

Internalizing male values, since they so often deeply respect the male, they assume like him that some people are just naturally better and more talented than others. This idea is very prevalent in the women's movement and makes impossible any pretense at equality. To say in the women's movement that some people are better than others, to feel that some just naturally have leadership qualities, is to be thinking and acting on the basis of the male value system. It is to act toward other women—women with whom you supposedly identify your interests—as men do.

When we do not organize ourselves in the women's movement on the basis of equality, the female hierarchy which has its origins in the secondary class system is ossified in the movement itself, serving as it does the form along which women consciously structure themselves. In doing this, we not only reinforce the divisions within the female class, but take part in the creation of a viable female hierarchy of power. Once the female hierarchy becomes a source of power itself, it can be said to constitute a tertiary class system, and it puts some women in a position to oppress other women. This has in fact already happened in the women's movement. Here women are coming into the movement because they feel oppressed, and yet they're put down, only this time not by men but by other women. This will continue to happen unless the women's movement has the courage to examine the class issue.

The chances that this tertiary class system based on inequality among women will be capable of constituting a solid unit in opposition to the male class is extremely unlikely. The temptation for middle-class and upper-middle-class women not to move out will be too great. The reason for this is that middle and upper-class women are not really willing to throw in their lot with all women. For in not helping to root out the existing inequities among us, they sanction further exploitation of oth-



er women and give renewed vigor to the underlying assumptions of the primary class system.

What the women's movement has to do is to develop a self-defined class of women based on equality among all. If we keep within our class the hierarchical structure which results from our displacement among men, our struggles will be doomed to failure. It is within our power to change the

nature of the female class itself and to destroy the premises on which our class was set up in the first place. For if we do not change it, we cannot be expected to attract the great masses of women. We cannot be unified. We will not move out. To confront men we must stand in relation to them as an independent and autonomous grouping of human beings. Organized on the basis of equality, we will offer the alternative for the future society.

## Power as a Function of the Group

by PAMELA KEARON

### Strength Vs. Power

What seems to preserve us, to keep us going, might at the same time waste our energies and inhibit our development. In order to survive, women, scattered as we are throughout the economic classes and racial categories, and isolated from each other by intimate associations with individual men, have had to bury their strengths and talents, to forego personal development and to pervert their natural desires for active accomplishment.

The human being is a constant struggle between its parts—the will to survive and the will to overcome the given situation and prevail—to fulfill potential. For most people these have always been mutually exclusive goals. The enemy extracts our complicity in our own oppression by forcing us to make this specious choice. Self-preservation, as the necessary ground for development, will always come first for the majority of individuals. So we fight individually to survive in the system and unwillingly reinforce the system.

Women exist powerless to control their own destinies in a world organized by and for men. Women are strong. We have endured all these millennia without losing spirit. We have been creative and active whenever it was at all possible. But for most women the opportunity never arises. We are not allowed to use our strength. After showing

something of our abilities in industry, business, and the professions in the Twenties and Thirties, women were summarily sent back to the kitchens following World War II. From whence erupted the strident, self-indulgent male outburst against Mom ("MOM-ISM")—the strong woman, even safely tucked away at home, was condemned. The current solution is the further debilitation and crippling of women via the psychiatrist's couch.

Women are strong. What we need is the chance to use our strength. Power is the ability to mobilize strength.

Power, unlike strength, is not the quality of an individual. Strength adheres in the individual, whether of the physical, intellectual, or spiritual variety. Power exists only when two or more persons concur in a purpose. In complete isolation, no personal qualities are utilized above mere animal level, i.e., survival level. Women are relatively isolated by marriage, by male-inspired prejudices, by competition for the male commodity. Therefore, women are powerless.

### The Group Creates Power

The idea of the group is not simply to grab power. Power is more than a mere exchangeable commodity. In a coup d'état, for instance, one

group merely replaces another, takes over its power holdings. In a revolutionary situation the group creates its own power, its own institutions and societal organization. Power itself is infinite in potential. If we think only in terms of grabbing existing power, our cause seems hopeless because our thinking is confined to the present situation as interpreted by men. If we think rather in terms of creating power, of imposing a new interpretation on existing conditions, or projecting a new image of radical change for the future, the possibilities for action begin to emerge.

#### First Phase: The Group Strengthens the Individual

There is no place for women's strength in this world. Politics, the intellectual world, the arts and sciences, all belong to men. They set the standards and the goals. Women in these fields may only appeal to male standards or pass into oblivion. First off, then, the group creates a space, a stage for action and creativity. This space is not merely a physical enclosure but it exists wherever the group is. It is a province of the mind only, but it is something a woman can know she owns, like men know they own the world. It is the one place in the world where she can meet her equals and exchange ideas with them. It is a refuge from the male world where we are so conspicuous, where we cannot step out of line, be free, think free, where we are separated from each other.\* This space belongs to us†, we interpret it. It is up to us how the group will function, we say what a feminist is or isn't, we create the concepts that will become part of the feminist interpretation. The existence of the space reawakens the will to act. Action is itself a positive good apart from its practical utility. Only from feeling our strength does the will to struggle arise.

#### Second Phase: Collective Strength — Power

The conservation of the status quo is intimately related to a particular interpretation of the world, especially in terms of limits. (The whole idea of

"going too far" involves an acceptance of the oppressors' definition of limits.) The way things are is referred to as REALITY; the prevailing interpretation of the world is known as TRUTH. If examined, whether from a rational or introspective point of view, it becomes obvious that the logical or psychological cogency of this "truth" depends on nothing so much as the power mobilized behind it. The male interpretation of the world has behind it the army, navy, marines, and air force, billions of dollars, intricate bureaucratic traditions, ancient educational institutions and total control over scientific development. That is to say, it is extremely well organized and institutionalized. Men can afford to say at this point that feminism is a joke and can't fulfill its ends, that women just don't have it and that the way things are and have been clearly attests to this TRUTH.

The group creates its own reality and its own truth. Knowing that reality is whatever is agreed upon by society, the group creates its own society and thereby its own power. Power is the organization of many wills with a common purpose and a common interpretation. The group through its many individuals working together creates an interpretation and then stands collectively behind it. The meaning the group gives is not a static conceptual understanding but an active interpretation, always including how things shall become and the means for effecting change. For instance, the anti-woman woman is not seen as merely the result of such-and-such occurrences in her childhood or her present condition. Rather, the group strives to adopt a consistent way of acting toward her with respect to our ultimate aim—the union of all women. An attitude of friendliness and concern might be decided upon, taking her side whenever she is in opposition to a male, while at the same time expressing feminist views consistently, in an effort to win her over without watering down our interpretation, to show her the new meaning of being female.

The group adopts policies toward other classes in society and thereby strives to present a united front whenever possible. In this way the group insinuates its way into the society, creating a problem which no single individual has the power to effect. An individual can always be viewed as an aberrant, a criminal, an insane person, or even a genius or saint. (The society has provided prisons, insane asylums, monasteries, and various other institutions like VISTA and the Peace Corps to take care of freakish people.) An individual cannot by himself cast doubt

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\*For more on the idea of a space and its significance with respect to power, see *The Human Condition* by Hannah Arendt.

†This space belongs equally to each member. The method used to insure equal participation is the Lot System for distributing all tasks, both those tasks which are stupid and boring and those which totally involve the individual in a creative way.

on the prevailing interpretation of the world. A group, opposed to society and existing within it, is a challenge to its idea of REALITY and the security of its TRUTHS. By living their lives on a basis at variance with the beliefs of the society, the group gives the lie to those beliefs. For example, it is a TRUTH that women cannot live without marriage, that home and hearth are congenial longings, part of the female essence. A few freaks here and there manage to do without but only because of their masculine tendencies. We are constantly reminded that most women who are not married are rejects who would do so in a minute if only they could, but, as it is, can only live bitter lives of unfulfillment. When a group rejects marriage and clearly states its case against it, and the members of that group do not shrivel up and die but soundly flourish, society's quarantine is lifted and a germ of doubt enters the good citizen's mind.

#### Commitment and Continuity

The group has a commitment which is continuous. No individual is a total feminist. We all escape now and again. In everyday life, we have very often to communicate in terms which we know are mendacious and counterproductive. The group, however, by means of the collective, is always committed. It exists for a purpose and operates always with that end in view. The group creates continuity and continuous development for the ideas of its members.

The group preserves also the continuity of action. Acts of individuals which might otherwise be

absorbed by the society, or ignored, or labeled aberrant, are salvaged and preserved in memory by means of the group. Powerless people are always ignored by those who write history and the meanings of their actions are distorted in their own times. A woman, having shot a male, can be interpreted as a mere mental case or as another victim of penis-envy. The group preserves this deed as an act of resistance against the oppressor—and makes connections and awakens possibilities in women's minds.

#### A Program and a Structure

The group does not merely act haphazardly but it creates a program of action—a means for breaking down the institutions founded on our oppression. It is because the group has continuity and because the individual acts of its members can be coordinated that a group can adopt a program with some hope of mobilizing strength to effect its ends. The program grows logically out of the group's analysis, and as it unfolds, a new world, a counter-world, emerges in the midst of a hostile society.

The group, resisting anarchy, declares its principles and lays down rules among its members to translate these principles into action, into reality. But the group need not bind itself to outmoded or ineffective rules or to those which obstruct individual development once they have been revealed as such. The group is responsive to its environment, particularly to women and their perspectives. In this way the group can provide both a reasonable amount of stability and security for its members and yet act as a vehicle for change.

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A reporter asked Madame Blavatsky if she was married. "Married?" she said. "No. I wouldn't be a slave to God himself, let alone man."

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*Dear God, What Do They Want?*

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## ISSUES: MANIFESTOES

### Sexual Politics: A Manifesto for Revolution

by KATE MILLET

Kate Millet is a professor at Barnard College and an important feminist theorist whose first book, *Sexual Politics*, is scheduled for publication by Doubleday in May, 1970. [Advance publication included chapters on Mailer, Miller, and Genet, in *The New American Review* #7 (Signet); "Sexual Politics," a movement pamphlet put out by New England Free Press (791 Tremont St., Boston, Massachusetts); and "Theory of Sexual Politics," revised, in Donald Barthelme's new literary-political review, *X* (Winter, 1970).] The following manifesto was written in the winter of 1968 in connection with the organization of the first Columbia University women's liberation group. *The Columbia Spectator*—and the Columbia radio station as well—took one look and refused to have anything more to do with it, despite the fact that it was written by a faculty member to whom they had promised the space and time. However, even without this publicity, seventy women showed up for the first meeting. Columbia-Barnard women's liberation is now one of the strongest in the city of New York. Among other activities they have prepared a detailed report on discrimination in the faculty of the university—hearings are now in process—and on Valentines Day, 1970, they held a successful feminist teach-in on campus, to which the public was invited.

When one group rules another, the relationship between the two is political. When such an arrangement is carried out over a long period of time it develops an ideology (feudalism, racism, etc.). All historical civilizations are patriarchies: their ideology is male supremacy.

Oppressed groups are denied education, economic independence, the power of office, representation, an image of dignity and self-respect, equality of status, and recognition as human beings. Throughout history women have been consistently denied all of these, and their denial today, while attenuated and partial, is nevertheless consistent. The education allowed them is deliberately designed to be inferior, and they are systematically programmed out of and excluded from the knowledge where power lies today—e.g., in science and technology. They are confined to conditions of economic dependence based on the sale of their sexuality in marriage, or a variety of prostitutions. Work on a basis of economic independence allows them only a subsistence level of life—often not even that. They do not hold office, are represented in no positions of power, and authority is forbidden them. The image of woman fostered by cultural

media, high and low, then and now, is a marginal and demeaning existence, and one outside the human condition—which is defined as the prerogative of man, the male.

Government is upheld by power, which is supported through consent (social opinion), or imposed by violence. Conditioning to an ideology amounts to the former. But there may be a resort to the latter at any moment when consent is withdrawn—rape, attack, sequestration, beatings, murder. Sexual politics obtains consent through the "socialization" of both sexes to patriarchal policies. They consist of the following:

- 1) the formation of human personality along stereotyped lines of sexual category, based on the needs and values of the master class and dictated by what he would cherish in himself and find convenient in an underclass: aggression, intellectuality, force and efficiency for the male; passivity, ignorance, docility, "virtue," and ineffectuality for the female.

- 2) the concept of sex role, which assigns domestic service and attendance upon infants to all females and the rest of human interest, achievement and ambition to the male; the charge of leader at all

times and places to the male, and the duty of follower, with equal uniformity, to the female.

3) the imposition of male rule through institutions: patriarchal religion, the proprietary family, marriage, "The Home," masculine oriented culture, and a pervasive doctrine of male superiority.

A Sexual Revolution would bring about the following conditions, desirable upon rational, moral and humanistic grounds:

1) the end of sexual repression—freedom of expression and of sexual mores (sexual freedom has been partially attained, but it is now being subverted beyond freedom into exploitative license for patriarchal and reactionary ends).

2) Unisex, or the end of separatist character-structure, temperament and behavior, so that each individual may develop an entire—rather than a partial, limited, and conformist—personality.

3) re-examination of traits categorized into "masculine" and "feminine," with a total reassessment as to their human usefulness and advisability in both sexes. Thus if "masculine" violence is undesirable, it is so for both sexes, "feminine" dumb-cow passivity likewise. If "masculine" intelligence or efficiency is valuable, it is so for both sexes equally,

and the same must be true for "feminine" tenderness or consideration.

4) the end of sex role and sex status, the patriarchy and the male supremacist ethic, attitude and ideology—in all areas of endeavor, experience, and behavior.

5) the end of the ancient oppression of the young under the patriarchal proprietary family, their chattel status, the attainment of the human rights presently denied them, the professionalization and therefore improvement of their care, and the guarantee that when they enter the world, they are desired, planned for, and provided with equal opportunities.

6) Bisex, or the end of enforced perverse heterosexuality, so that the sex act ceases to be arbitrarily polarized into male and female, to the exclusion of sexual expression between members of the same sex.

7) the end of sexuality in the forms in which it has existed historically—brutality, violence, capitalism, exploitation, and warfare—that it may cease to be hatred and become love.

8) the attainment of the female sex to freedom and full human status after millennia of deprivation and oppression, and of both sexes to a viable humanity.

## Redstockings Manifesto

I.

After centuries of individual and preliminary political struggle, women are uniting to achieve their final liberation from male supremacy. Redstockings is dedicated to building this unity and winning our freedom.

II.

Women are an oppressed class. Our oppression is total, affecting every facet of our lives. We are

exploited as sex objects, breeders, domestic servants, and cheap labor. We are considered inferior beings, whose only purpose is to enhance men's lives. Our humanity is denied. Our prescribed behavior is enforced by the threat of physical violence.

Because we have lived so intimately with our oppressors, in isolation from each other, we have been kept from seeing our personal suffering as a political condition. This creates the illusion that a woman's relationship with her man is a matter of interplay between two unique personalities, and can



be worked out individually. In reality, every such relationship is a *class* relationship, and the conflicts between individual men and women are *political* conflicts that can only be solved collectively.

### III.

We identify the agents of our oppression as men. Male supremacy is the oldest, most basic form of domination. All other forms of exploitation and oppression (racism, capitalism, imperialism, etc.) are extensions of male supremacy: men dominate women, a few men dominate the rest. All power structures throughout history have been male-dominated and male-oriented. Men have controlled all political, economic and cultural institutions and backed up this control with physical force. They have used their power to keep women in an inferior position. *All men* receive economic, sexual, and psychological benefits from male supremacy. *All men* have oppressed women.

### IV.

Attempts have been made to shift the burden of responsibility from men to institutions or to women themselves. We condemn these arguments as evasions. Institutions alone do not oppress; they are merely tools of the oppressor. To blame institutions implies that men and women are equally victimized, obscures the fact that men benefit from the subordination of women, and gives men the excuse that they are forced to be oppressors. On the contrary, any man is free to renounce his superior position provided that he is willing to be treated like a woman by other men.

We also reject the idea that women consent to or are to blame for their own oppression. Women's submission is not the result of brainwashing, stupidity, or mental illness but of continual, daily pressure from men. We do not need to change ourselves, but to change men.

The most slanderous evasion of all is that women can oppress men. The basis for this illusion is the isolation of individual relationships from their political context and the tendency of men to see any legitimate challenge to their privileges as persecution.

### V.

We regard our personal experience, and our feelings about that experience, as the basis for an

analysis of our common situation. We cannot rely on existing ideologies as they are all products of male supremacist culture. We question every generalization and accept none that are not confirmed by our experience.

Our chief task at present is to develop female class consciousness through sharing experience and publicly exposing the sexist foundation of all our institutions. Consciousness-raising is not "therapy," which implies the existence of individual solutions and falsely assumes that the male-female relationship is purely personal, but the only method by which we can ensure that our program for liberation is based on the concrete realities of our lives.

The first requirement for raising class consciousness is honesty, in private and in public, with ourselves and other women.

### VI.

We identify with all women. We define our best interest as that of the poorest, most brutally exploited woman.

We repudiate all economic, racial, educational or status privileges that divide us from other women. We are determined to recognize and eliminate any prejudices we may hold against other women.

We are committed to achieving internal democracy. We will do whatever is necessary to ensure that every woman in our movement has an equal chance to participate, assume responsibility, and develop her political potential.

### VII.

We call on all our sisters to unite with us in struggle.

We call on all men to give up their male privileges and support women's liberation in the interest of our humanity and their own.

In fighting for our liberation we will always take the side of women against their oppressors. We will not ask what is "revolutionary" or "reformist," only what is good for women.

The time for individual skirmishes has passed. This time we are going all the way.

July 7, 1969

REDSTOCKINGS  
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# The Feminists: A Political Organization to Annihilate Sex Roles

The following papers represent the thought of the group as of the dates attached. The statements within the categories below are not meant as a final position, but are now under revision and will continue to be revised periodically, to reflect the evolution of thinking within the group.

## History

On October 17, 1968, New York City, a group of feminists decided to begin a new kind of feminist movement: radical feminism. Most of us had been crossing organizational lines during the past year in the attempt to formulate an adequate solution to the persecution of women. But it had finally become evident that what we were groping for was not the sum of current ideas on women, but an approach altogether new not only to feminism but to political theory as well.

We decided to operate under the transitional name of the day of our beginning, *October 17th*, until we were prepared to outline our analysis of the class condition of women and its implications and to present our program for the elimination of that class condition. We are now ready to present our analysis and plan and, therefore, announce the formation of our organization: THE FEMINISTS.

June 13, 1969

## I. Conceptual Analysis

The class separation between men and women is a political division. It is in the interests of those individuals who assume the powerful role and against the interests of those assigned the powerless role. The role (or class) system must be destroyed.

The role system is neither necessary to nor in the interests of society. It distorts the humanity of the Oppressor and denies the humanity of the Oppressed. The members of the powerful class substitute the appropriation of others to extend the significance of their own existence as an alternative to individual self-creativity. The members of the powerless class are thereby prevented from individual self-creativity. The role system is an attempt to justify living for those who believe there is no possible justification for life in and of itself.

Women, or "females," were the first class to be separated out from humanity and thus denied their

humanity. While men performed this expulsion, it is the male role or the role of the Oppressor that must be annihilated—not necessarily those individuals who presently claim the role. Men, as the only possible embodiment of the male role and as the first embodiment of the Oppressor role, are the enemies and the Oppressors of women. The female role is the product of the male role: it is the female's self-defense against the external coercions imposed by the male role. But because the female role is the internal adjustment of the female to the male role, the female role stabilizes the role system. Both the male role and the female role must be annihilated.

It is clear that, in addition to the role system, all those institutions which reinforce these humanly restrictive definitions must be eliminated. But we are not sure yet how many forms in human culture are patterned on the role system. Certainly all those institutions which were designed on the assumption and for the reinforcement of the male and female role system such as the family (and its sub-institution, marriage), sex, and love must be destroyed. In order to annihilate these institutions, we must clearly understand the dynamics *within* them. Until we fully understand these dynamics, we cannot know everything that must be eliminated nor the desirable form of our alternative.

All political classes grew out of the male-female role system, were modeled on it, and are rationalized by it and its premises. Once a new class system is established on the basis of this initial one, the new class is then used to reinforce the male-female system. It is necessary for the members of all classes to understand and root out of our value system those principles and justifications for classifying any individual out of humanity.

The pathology of oppression can only be fully comprehended in its primary development: the male-female division. Because the male-female system is primary, the freedom of every oppressed individual depends upon the freeing of every indi-

vidual from every aspect of the male-female system. The sex roles themselves must be destroyed. If any part of these role definitions is left, the disease of oppression remains and will reassert itself again in new, or the same old, variations throughout society.

In addition, we must propose a moral alternative for the self-justification of life to our present system of the appropriation and denial of other individuals' humanity. We need a new premise for society: that the most basic right of every individual is to create the terms of its own definition.

July 15, 1969

## II. Organizational Principles and Structure

THE FEMINISTS is a group of radical feminists committed to intense study of the persecution of women and direct action to eradicate this persecution.

The group is open only to women who accept our principles as recorded in these FEMINISTS papers. Membership must be a primary commitment and responsibility; no other activity may supersede work for the group.

THE FEMINISTS is an action group. The theoretical work we do is aimed directly at studying the means by which women are oppressed so that we may effectively plan positions and actions to fight our oppression. Outside study, participation in discussions, completion of individual assignments and attendance at actions are all equally important and compulsory.

In order to achieve the goal of freeing women, the group must maintain discipline. Any member who consistently disrupts or interferes with our discussions or activities may be expelled. A single action which goes against the will of the group, constitutes an exploitation of the group, or seriously endangers its work or survival, is grounds for expulsion. Expulsion of a member requires a two-thirds majority decision of all members present at a meeting about which notification has been sent to all members at least ten days in advance.

Since infiltration of the group is not unlikely, if a member suspects another of being an infiltrator, that member should confront her before a meeting of the group. When the act of infiltration is established to the satisfaction of the group, the agent(s) will be expelled immediately.

THE FEMINISTS is an organization without officers which divides work according to the principle of participation by lot. Our goal is a just

society all of whose members are equal. Therefore, we aim to develop knowledge and skills in all members and prevent any one member or small group from hoarding information or abilities.

Traditionally official posts such as the chair of the meeting and the secretary are determined by lot and change with each meeting. The treasurer is chosen by lot to function for one month.

Assignments may be menial or beyond the experience of a member. To assign a member work she is not experienced in may involve an initial loss of efficiency but fosters equality and allows all members to acquire the skills necessary for revolutionary work. When a member draws a task beyond her experience she may call on the knowledge of other members, but her own input and development are of primary importance. The group has the responsibility to support a member's efforts, as long as the group believes that member to be working in good faith. A member has the duty to submit her work for the group—such as articles and speeches—to the group for correction and approval.

In order to make efficient use of all opportunities for writing and speaking, in order to develop members without experience in these areas, members who are experienced in them are urged to withdraw their names from a lot assigning those tasks. Also those members, experienced or inexperienced, who have once drawn a lot to write or speak must withdraw their names until all members have had a turn.

The system of the lot encourages growth by maximizing the sharing of tasks, but the responsibility for contributions rests ultimately with the individual. One's growth develops in proportion to one's contributions.

August 22, 1969

## III. Membership Requirements and Benefits

One of the characteristics that distinguishes THE FEMINISTS from other feminist groups is its concern for the human development of each individual in the group. Three assumptions underlie this concern of THE FEMINISTS: (1) that women are deprived of their individuality as human beings, and therefore are entitled to expect from a feminist group every aid in achieving this human right, (2) that groups with leaders are hierarchical, and hierarchy necessarily suppresses the initiative of at least the majority of the membership, and (3) furthermore, as leaderless groups are dependent upon the strength of each member, an equal share in responsi-

bility and creativity to oneself and to the group is necessary. With this concern in mind, the group has constructed the following mechanism for achieving the introduction and integration of new members to confident, creative, and responsible participation in the group.

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# There are three prerequisites for membership in THE FEMINISTS:

1. Basic agreement with THE FEMINISTS' policy statements.
2. A minimal familiarity with the issues of feminism. It is necessary for each member to develop a working knowledge of the concepts, the statistics, and the history of feminism, to feel at ease within and to contribute to the group.\*
3. Two special orientation meetings concerning THE FEMINISTS.† All new members have questions about the history or ideology of a group that should be answered but that would not be profitable for the group as a whole to review. For this reason we have two meetings: (a) for a discussion of personal experiences and issues relevant to feminism; (b) for the clarification of our policy statements.

While THE FEMINISTS requires a certain preparation for membership, it is very interested in what a feminist group can offer its members, both as initiates and as members.\* The self-development of each individual, relevant to the group, is considered in two of its aspects: self-perception and confidence. At least three concepts within the group were motivated by this concern for individual self-development:

1. Each member through the meetings should develop an awareness and constructive un-

derstanding of the particular ways in which feminist analyses are relevant to each member's personality and circumstances.

2. Each member can expect the encouragement of, and should give that encouragement to, the other members to develop each member's areas of special interest(s) relevant to feminism through some medium, e.g., writing, acting, design, radio.
3. Each member is guaranteed, and in return is responsible for, equal development on all levels by the lot system and is expected to participate in equal amounts, both as to tasks and hours, with all other members in all the activities of the group. The lot system adds dimension to the types of experience within each individual's repertoire, and the individual thus gains a sense of self-sufficiency and group spirit.

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1. (a) Because THE FEMINISTS considers each member to have equal responsibility to the group in accordance with the best of that member's abilities at all given times, and
- (b) Because consistent attendance at meetings is considered a minimal ability and responsibility of all members, and
- (c) Because consistent attendance is essential for knowledgeable, i.e., responsible, voting,

ANY MEMBER MISSING MORE THAN ONE-QUARTER OF THE MEETINGS IN ANY GIVEN MONTH FORFEITS VOTING PRIVILEGES UNTIL THE THIRD CONSECUTIVE MEETING OF THAT INDIVIDUAL'S RENEWED ATTENDANCE.

SHOULD THIS OCCUR THREE TIMES IN A THREE MONTH PERIOD WITHOUT A VALID EXCUSE (E.G., EMPLOYMENT OR ILLNESS), THE PERSON INVOLVED IS NO LONGER A MEMBER OF THE FEMINISTS. SHE CAN RE-APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP IF SHE WISHES.

2. (a) Because THE FEMINISTS considers the institution of marriage inherently inequitable, both in its formal (legal) and informal (social) aspects, and
- (b) Because we consider this institution a primary formalization of the persecution of women, and
- (c) Because we consider the rejection of this institution both in theory and in practice a primary mark of the radical feminist.

\*One method of quickly surveying this material might be to read such books as *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir; *The Century of Struggle*, Eleanor Flexner; the latest publications from the President's Citizens' Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1968.

†These meetings may be scheduled together.

\*Each week, the two individuals who chaired the meeting that week will be available to answer new members' questions outside of meeting time.

WE HAVE A MEMBERSHIP QUOTA: THAT NO MORE THAN ONE-THIRD OF OUR MEMBERSHIP CAN BE PARTICIPANTS IN EITHER A FORMAL (WITH LEGAL CONTRACT) OR INFORMAL (E.G., LIVING WITH A MAN) INSTANCE OF THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE.

August 8, 1969

#### IV. Programmatic Analysis

The political class of women consists of all those individuals assigned to the female role—all females. The male-female role system is political because the roles are defined by one group (men); men are the powerful class and women the powerless class; men exert their control by way of institutions—the tools of the male role—which, taken together, form the system which ossifies the female role. All male-female institutions stem from the male-female role system and all are oppressive because (1) they are not only the expressions of this role system but perpetuate this system as well; (2) they are rigid and destroy individuality; (3) they divide (cause competition between) and isolate the oppressed.

In the female role women are defined by their child-bearing capacity which is interpreted as their function. The maternal instinct—desire to bear and raise children—is attributed to women. The concept "maternal instinct"—meaning passivity, unconditional giving, sacrificing, suffering—is used to define woman's so-called "nature," thus it creates the context for her exploitation by men.

We seek the self-development of every individual woman. To accomplish this we must eliminate the institutions built on the myth of maternal instinct which prevent her self-development, i.e., those institutions which enforce the female role.

We must destroy love (an institution by definition), which is generally recognized as approval and acceptance. Love promotes vulnerability, dependence, possessiveness, susceptibility to pain, and prevents the full development of woman's human potential by directing all her energies outward in the interests of others. The family depends for its maintenance on the identification by the woman of her own desires and needs with the desires and needs of the others. Motherhood provides blind approval as a bribe in return for which the mother expects to live vicariously through the child. Between husband and wife love is a delusion in the female that she is both a giver and a receiver, i.e., she sacrifices to get

approval from the male. Love is a self-defense developed by the female to prevent her from seeing her powerless situation; it arises from fear when contact with reality provides no alternative to powerlessness. It is protection from the violence of violations by other men. Heterosexual love is a delusion in yet another sense: it is a means of escape from the role system by way of approval from and identification with the man, who has defined himself as humanity (beyond role)—she desires to be him. The identification of each woman's interests with those of a man prevents her from uniting with other women and seeing herself as a member of the class of women.

All contributions to society which do not add to the individual's unique development must be shared equally, e.g., all "wifely" and "motherly" duties. Child-rearing to the extent to which it is necessary is the responsibility of all; children are part of society but they should not be possessed by anyone. Extra-uterine means of reproduction should be developed because the elimination of pain is a humane goal. Marriage and the family must be eliminated.

Friendship between men and women, under the present conditions of inequality, is the pretense that equality and mutual respect exist. So long as the male role exists, men have the option of assuming it; therefore, the relationship is one of jeopardy to women. In actuality, friendship serves to reinforce the female role need for approval and support. True friendship between men and women necessarily presupposes the giving up of all male privileges and the active combatting on the part of the man of male supremacy. Only then can we extend to all a mode of appreciating and understanding each other as unique human beings. This mode must account for free choice, non-dependence, and non-appropriation of others.

We must destroy the institution of heterosexual sex which is a manifestation of the male-female role. Since physical pleasure can be achieved in both sexes by auto-erotic acts, sex as a social act is psychological in nature; at present its psychology is dominance-passivity. One of the ways the female is coerced into sexual relations with the male is by means of satisfying her supposed need to bear children. When reproduction had to be controlled, the myth of vaginal orgasm was created so that the female would remain sexually dependent on the male. The myth of vaginal orgasm stresses intercourse as a primary means of sexual gratification



and this emphasis on the genital area and the vagina in particular reinforces the definition of the female as child-bearer even when contraceptives are used to avoid pregnancy.

It is in the interest of the male in the sexual act to emphasize the organ of reproduction in the female because it is the institution of motherhood, in which the mother serves the child, which forms the pattern (submission of her will to the other) for her relationship to the male.

If sexual relations were not programmed to support political ends—that is, male oppression of the female—then the way would be clear for individuals to enter into physical relations not defined by roles, nor involving exploitation. Physical relations (heterosexual and homosexual) would be an extension of communication between individuals and would not necessarily have a genital emphasis.

Rape is the simplest and most blatant form of the male wantonly forcing his will on the female. Rape occurs whenever a woman unwillingly submits to the sexual advances of a man. In courtship and marriage, rape is legalized because sexual relations are part of the marriage contract.

Prostitution was created by men as the terrifying alternative to the institution of marriage. The other so-called "alternatives" devised by men are modeled on the principles of prostitution—the principles of debasement and deprivation. Thus, the essence of the female (by male definition) is seen to be that of a sexual object, and is the only means through which she can survive. No female is permitted to maintain existence outside her sex-object/motherhood definition. All work for women in the public area must involve only attitudes and skills applicable to her home functions.

Political institutions such as religion, because they are based on philosophies of hierarchical orders and reinforce male oppression of females, must be destroyed.

The elimination of these institutions requires a program understood in terms of stages. Each stage takes into account the interrelationship of all the institutions and therefore calls for simultaneous attacks on all of them. The strategy requires that all avenues of escape from our destruction of the male role and role system be closed. The web of institutions which must be dealt with are: marriage (and the family—child-bearing and child-rearing), the destruction of which requires the simultaneous destruction of prostitution (and "free" love) and exclusively heterosexual sex; the provision for a real alternative for the female (e.g., guaranteed equal annual income); and a program of reparations (e.g., preferential education and employment).

August 15, 1969

#### V. Alliances with Other Groups

THE FEMINISTS will not form alliances with other groups except on clearly feminist issues. In addition, the focus of the issues must be consistent with our program. The degree of our involvement (in terms of group time) will be in proportion to how essential it is to our program.

1. Support — If another group plans an action directly related to a feminist issue, we may give our group support.
2. Cooperation — We will join with another group(s) to plan and execute a single short- or long-term action.
3. Coalition — In this instance we may join with another group(s) in a long-term multifaceted association.

August 26, 1969

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How strong, egotistical, and ferocious a possession is Mother Love. I do not think it is very admirable. It would be infinitely more admirable to be able to love all children.

—Isadora Duncan, *My Life*

# Organizing Principles of the New York Radical Feminists

This is the original version, now being expanded.

As established by its founding cell, the Stanton-Anthony Brigade, on December 5, 1969, founding members have been instrumental in the formation of New York Radical Women (1967-1969), Feminists, Redstockings, and various other groups. We hereby set up New York Radical Feminists in answer to the largely unmet political and organizational needs set down below.

## Politics

Within the larger women's liberation movement, which encompasses all shades of opinion about the oppression of women and its relation to the social order, we have taken the position of radical feminism outlined in our manifesto. All fully active members (as defined below) must agree with the essentials of this position.

We are dedicated to a revival of knowledge about our forgotten feminist history, and to a furthering of the militant tradition of the old radical feminist movement. We define this roughly as: The whole American Woman's Rights Movement until 1869, the Stanton-Anthony group thereafter (National Woman's Suffrage Association) and much later the revived militant tradition associated with Harriet Stanton Blatch in the U.S. (the Congressional Union, later the Woman's Party) and with the Pankhursts in Great Britain (The Woman's Social and Political Union). We also include various feminist independents such as Simone de Beauvoir. To this end each cell group of New York Radical Feminists will be named after a different radical feminist (or, where possible, a team of radical feminists who worked closely together, such as the Grimké sisters, or the Pankhursts) and will put out as their first group project a booklet bibliography on their chosen name. The total number of these booklets will form a cheap, easy to distribute, radical feminist library researched by movement women a first step in erasing the bias and feminine fear of feminism created by the Fifty Year Ridicule. See the

manifesto for a clear statement of the contemporary radical feminist position which we have adopted.

## Organization: Goals

We are committed to the building of a mass-based radical feminist movement among contemporary women which will both help individual women combat the problems of their personal lives as well as effectively direct their energy to the obliteration of the structures which create those problems. We are committed to a flexible, non-dogmatic approach and the encouragement of the growth and expansion of members of the group as individuals as well as the growth and expansion of the group itself. To this end we have proposed a structure designed to promote the development of an organic group cohesion as opposed to a cohesion forced by external rules and regulations; a group in which people will become radicalized feminists of their own accord and at their own pace rather than being pressured into it by a group line imposed from above; a group which women will attend because they need to and want to, and not because they fear the consequences of missing a meeting; a group which will enrich its members personally and not just drain them for the sake of The Cause.

## Strategy

Our strategy must at all times reflect our goals. We term a strategy effective when it is the most direct means to accomplishing our ends, the one that gains the most with the least damage to ourselves. Whatever political techniques best advance our goals automatically become part of our armory. If, at the present time, our goal is to reach millions of women across the country in order to create a movement massive enough to destroy our oppression, then we will use whatever methods we must to get our message across most quickly and widely. This means we are not adverse to the (cautious) use of mass media, though we are not blind to its

corruptions. But at this point in our movement we believe that this corruption is best handled by a mastery of—insofar as is possible—the techniques and distorting effects of media. Ignorance based on purist aversion results most often, not in no coverage, but in an even sloppier one. Thus our strategy is keyed to our goals at the time, and is always designed for maximum effectiveness. We don't pass out leaflets where people won't read them; we don't present skits where no one is looking; we don't lecture to 125 if we have the chance to do it to thousands; we don't use old methods where new ones could work better: WE DO WHAT WORKS. We are as militant as our purposes demand; we don't have to be revolutionaries for the hell of it.

### Structure

Nuclear leaderless/structureless groups of no more than 15, together with some minimal coordination between them, have already, in the short history of contemporary feminism, proven to be the organizational method best suited to our needs and goals. The dynamics of the small group, where women over a period of time develop a personal intimacy, a common political awareness arrived at together, and a group experience, in short, where women seal up the gaps between them to arrive at about the same place, fosters—indeed, in our time, seems to be the preconditions for—a working internal democracy. Further, we have found that women within this cadre function best in units of two, occasionally three, of their own personal choice. Such a *Sister System* was common to the old feminist movement, and was a valuable aid in overcoming, by means of close mutual reinforcement and intersupplementation, the weakness and lack of confidence we have each acquired in different areas due to the constant battering from without.

### Structural Procedure

In the light of these principles we establish the following three stages of procedure as the required preliminary for any group which wishes to join New York Radical Feminists as a full Brigade:

#### Stage I. The Beginning Brigade

To be titled provisionally [area] Brigade  
 = , a core group of five to eight people or more (the group may close at five, or it may accept at its own discretion any further number up to fifteen

within the six-month formative period, preferably based on geography) may begin operation as a conditional brigade by completing the following steps:

1) A minimum of three months of "consciousness-raising" for the following purposes:

- a) to increase personal sensitivity to the various levels and forms that the oppression takes in our daily lives. We have all, in order to adjust to our condition, had to develop elaborate blinders. It is our purpose here to remove these blinders, and to uncork our anger and frustration in order to rechannel it in the right direction. Before we can remove the structures of oppression, we must remove our own accommodations to them.
- b) to build group intimacy and thus group unity, the foundations for true internal democracy
- c) to break down in our own heads the barrier between the "private" and the "public," the "personal" and the "political," in itself one of the deepest aspects of our oppression.

2) A minimum of three months of reading and discussion. Suggested breakdown:

- a) Six weeks of intensive reading and discussion of the growing body of current women's movement literature, both feminist and non-feminist, for the following purposes:
    1. to acquaint each person with the broad spectrum of politics already apparent in the women's liberation movement.
    2. to discuss the position of radical feminism within this spectrum and to compare it with other views.
  - b) Six weeks of intensive reading and discussion of feminist history and theory (preferably direct sources), for the following purposes:
    1. to acquaint each member of the group with her own history and to give her a sense of continuity with the feminist political tradition.
    2. to give the group a good foundation in basic theory on which to build their own later analysis.
    3. to give the group some basis on which to choose their name.
- Suggestion: Try to choose a name in character with your special aims. Thus an analysis-oriented group would not choose Pankhurst Brigade, nor would an action-oriented

group choose Gilman Brigade. If the group has a specialty, such as medicine, or law, or scholarship, try to find a name which reflects that.

Note: During this first stage, members are encouraged to take part in outside actions as *individuals*, particularly those initiated by the full brigades.

- a) Election of the first of the (rotating) delegates to New York Radical Feminists Coordinating Body.
- b) The research and production of a booklet biography of the feminist whose name they have chosen and her specific political contributions to the movement.



Photo: David Robison-Bethel

#### Stage II. Acceptance

When this minimum six-month formative period has been completed the group, if it has not already done so, must officially close ranks, having accepted until this point any number to the ceiling of fifteen. It may now choose to continue independently with whatever politics it has evolved, or to apply for membership to the larger body of New York Radical Feminists. Membership, through a simple majority vote, will be granted on the following basis:

- 1) Approval of the selected name.
- 2) The signature of each individual member to the radical feminist manifesto.
- 3) The expectation that the Brigade will begin its activity with the completion of the following projects:

- c) Initiation of an action from start to finish in which all the other Brigades—and perhaps selected outside groups—will be invited to participate. This includes doing all planning, preparatory work, etc., e.g. press releases, invitations, etc. required for successful completion of the action.

#### Stage III. The Brigade

From here on the group has full autonomy and independence to begin the serious work of an experienced brigade, attacking the problem of women's liberation in whatever aspect and by whatever method they shall decide, including effective (as opposed to self-indulgent) action, serious analysis, work with

the media, writing and publishing, films, lectures, etc.

New York Radical Feminists, the coordinating body of the various brigades, will be composed of its founding brigade, the Stanton-Anthony Brigade, and all other brigades which have completed the six-month orientation or its equivalent, and have fulfilled acceptance requirements. N.Y.R.F., composed of a rotating voting delegate from each full brigade, and non-voting representatives from the various beginning brigades, will meet as often as is necessary to set up proper inter-group communications, circulate information and literature, coordinate inter-brigade actions, and unite on basic policy, e.g. the media.\*

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\*We will work only with women reporters but will inform and penalize in an appropriate manner any reporter and medium that, for whatever reason, in tone or substance, presents distorted or partial information about our group. We will also seek to form a strong coalition with other women's rights groups in order to deal more effectively with the problems and potential of the media.

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N.Y. RADICAL FEMINISTS

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... All comparisons are idle which purport to show that woman is superior, inferior, or equal to man, for their situations are profoundly different. If we compare these situations rather than the people in them, we see clearly that man's is far preferable; that is to say, he has many more opportunities to exercise his freedom in the world. The inevitable result is that masculine accomplishment is far superior to that of women, who are practically forbidden to do anything. ... Simply from the fact that liberty in woman is still abstract and empty, she can exercise it only in revolt, which is the only road open to those who have no opportunity of doing anything constructive. They must reject the limitations of their situation and seek to open the road of the future. Resignation is only abdication and flight, there is no other way out for woman than to work for her liberation.

—Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*





Photo: David Robison-Bethel

# Politics of the Ego: A Manifesto For N.Y. Radical Feminists

Radical feminism recognizes the oppression of women as a fundamental political oppression wherein women are categorized as an inferior class based upon their sex. It is the aim of radical feminism to organize politically to destroy this sex class system.

As radical feminists we recognize that we are engaged in a power struggle with men, and that the agent of our oppression is man insofar as he identifies with and carries out the supremacy privileges of the male role. For while we realize that the liberation of women will ultimately mean the liberation of men from their destructive role as oppressor, we have no illusion that men will welcome this liberation without a struggle.

Radical feminism is political because it recognizes that a group of individuals (men) have organized together for power over women, and that they have set up institutions throughout society to maintain this power.

A political power institution is set up for a purpose. We believe that the purpose of male chauvinism is primarily to obtain psychological ego satisfaction, and that only secondarily does this manifest itself in economic relationships. For this reason we do not believe that capitalism, or any other economic system, is the cause of female oppression, nor do we believe that female oppression will disappear as a result of a purely economic revolution. The political oppression of women has its own class dynamic; and that dynamic must be understood in terms previously called "non-political"—namely the politics of the ego.\*

Thus the purpose of the male power group is to fulfill a need. That need is psychological, and derives from the supremacist assumptions of the male identity—namely that the male ego identity be sustained through its ability to have power over the female ego. Man establishes his "manhood" in direct

proportion to his ability to have his ego override woman's, and derives his strength and self-esteem through this process. This male need, though destructive, is in that sense impersonal. It is not out of a desire to hurt the woman that he dominates and destroys her; it is out of a need for a sense of power that he necessarily must destroy her ego and make it subservient to his. Hostility to women is a secondary effect; to the degree that he is not fulfilling his own assumptions of male power he hates women for not complying. Similarly, a man's failure to establish himself supreme among other males (as for example a poor white male) may make him channel his hostility into his relationship with women, since they are one of the few political groups available to him for reassertion.

As women we are living in a male power structure, and our roles become necessarily a function of men. The services we supply are services to the male ego. We are rewarded according to how well we perform these services. Our skill—our profession—is our ability to be feminine—that is, dainty, sweet, passive, helpless, ever-giving and sexy. In other words, everything to help reassure man that he is primary. If we perform successfully, our skills are rewarded. We "marry well"; we are treated with benevolent paternalism; we are deemed successful women, and may even make the "women's pages."

If we do not choose to perform these ego services, but instead assert ourselves as primary to ourselves, we are denied the necessary access to alternatives wherein we can manifest our self-assertion. Decision-making positions in the various job fields are closed to us; politics (left, right or liberal) are barred in other than auxiliary roles; our creative efforts are *a priori* judged not serious because we are females; our day-to-day lives are judged failures because we have not become "real women."

The rejection is economic in that women's work is underpaid. It is emotional in that we are cut off from human relationships because we choose to reject the submissive female role. We are trapped

\*ego: We are using the classical definition rather than the Freudian; that is, the sense of individual self as distinct from others.

in an alien system, just as the worker under capitalism is forced to sell his economic services in a system which is set up against his self-interest.

### Sexual Institutions

The oppression of women is manifested in particular institutions, constructed and maintained to keep women in their place. Among these are the institutions of marriage, motherhood, love, and sexual intercourse (the family unit is incorporated by the above). Through these institutions the woman is taught to confuse her biological sexual differences with her total human potential. Biology is destiny, she is told. Because she has childbearing capacity, she is told that motherhood and child rearing is her function, not her option. Because she has childbearing capacity she is told that it is her function to marry and have the man economically maintain her and make the decisions. Because she has the physical capacity for sexual intercourse, she is told that sexual intercourse too is her function, rather than just a voluntary act which she may engage in as an expression of her general humanity.

In each case her sexual difference is rationalized to trap her within it, while the male sexual difference is rationalized to imply an access to all areas of human activity.

Love, in the context of an oppressive male-female relationship, becomes an emotional cement to justify the dominant-submissive relationship. The man "loves" the woman who fulfills her submissive ego-boosting role. The woman "loves" the man she is submitting to—that is, after all, why she "lives for him." LOVE, magical and systematically unanalyzed, becomes the emotional rationale for the submission of one ego to the other. And it is deemed every woman's natural function to love.

Radical feminism believes that the popularized version of love has thus been used politically to cloud and justify an oppressive relationship between men and women, and that in reality there can be no genuine love until the need to control the growth of another is substituted by the love for the growth of another.

### Learning to Become Feminine

The process of training women for their female role begins as far back as birth, when a boy child is preferred over a girl child. In her early years, when the basic patterns of her identity are being established, it is reinforced in her that her female role is not a choice but a fact. Her future will be spent

performing the same basic functions as her mother and women before her. Her life is already determined. She is not given the choice of exploring activity toys. Her brothers play astronaut, doctor, scientist, race-car driver. She plays little homemaker, future mother (dolls), and nurse (doctor's helper). Her brothers are given activity toys; the world is their future. She is given service toys. Already she is learning that her future will be the maintenance of others. Her ego is repressed at all times to conform with this future submissiveness. She must dress prettily and be clean; speak politely; seek approval;



please. Her brothers are allowed to fight, get dirty, be aggressive and be self-assertive.

As she goes through school she learns that subjects which teach mastery and control over the world, such as science and math, are male subjects; while subjects which teach appearance, maintenance, or sentiment, such as home economics or literature, are female subjects. School counselors will recommend nursing for girls, while they will encourage boys to be doctors. Most of the best colleges will accept only a token sprinkling of women (quota system), regardless of academic abilities.

By the time she is of marrying age she has been prepared on two levels. One, she will realize that alternatives to the traditional female role are prohibitive; and two, she will herself have accepted on some levels the assumptions about her female role.

### Internalization

*It is not only through denying women human alternatives that men are able to maintain their positions of power. It is politically necessary for any oppressive group to convince the oppressed that they are in fact inferior, and therefore deserve their situation. For it is precisely through the destruction of women's egos that they are robbed of their ability to resist.*

For the sake of our own liberation, we must learn to overcome this damage to ourselves through internalization. We must begin to destroy the notion

that we are indeed only servants to the male ego, and must begin to reverse the systematic crushing of women's egos by constructing alternate selves that are healthy, independent and self-assertive. We must, in short, help each other to transfer the ultimate power of judgment about the value of our lives from men to ourselves.

It remains for us as women to fully develop a new dialectic of sex class—an analysis of the way in which sexual identity and institutions reinforce one another.

A.K., 12/69

### WOMEN ON HORSEBACK

"They'll find out how tough it is and they'll give up. The track won't have to worry about being flooded with women because a female cannot compete against a male doing anything . . . They might weigh the same as male jockeys, but they aren't as strong. And, as a group, I don't think their brains are as capable of making fast decisions. Women are also more likely to panic. It's their nature."

Bill Hartack, Jockey, in *Life*  
"Lady Jockeys? Who Needs 'Em?"

"They call out all kinds of things, and they always tell you to go home and wash the dishes. One guy used to tell me I'd better go home because my spaghetti was burning."

Diane Crump (*Turf*, March 1970)

"19-year-old Barbara Jo Rubin . . . won on February 22, 1969, at the half-mile Charles Town track in West Virginia. Then she set a phenomenal pace, winning seven of her first ten races, a record unequalled in racing history. The great Eddie Arcaro rode in 100 races before he even got one win."

"Girl Jockeys—One Year Later," by Don Valliere  
*Turf*, March 1970

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Photo: David Robison-Dethel



