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## SEPARATING FROM HETEROSEXUALISM

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In writing about Lesbian Ethics, I am concerned with moral change. And given that lesbians are oppressed within the existing social framework, I am concerned with questioning the values of such a framework as well as with considering different values around which we can weave a new framework. In other words, I am interested in moral revolution. Significantly, however, within traditional ethics the only type

of moral change we tend to acknowledge is moral reform.

Moral reform is the attempt to bring human action into greater conformity with existing ethical principles and thereby alleviate any injustice which results from the breach of those principles. In addressing the question of moral change, Kathryn Pyne Addelson argues:

The main body of tradition in ethics has occupied itself with the notions of obligation, moral principle, justification of acts under principle, justification of principle by argument. When moral change was considered at all, it was seen as change to bring our activities into conformity with our principles, as change to dispel injustice, as change to alleviate suffering.<sup>1</sup>

She goes on to suggest:

But moral reform is not the only type of moral change. There is also moral revolution. Moral revolution has not to do with making our principles consistent, not to do with greater application of what we *now* conceive as justice. That is the task of moral reform, because its aim is the ~~preservation~~ of values. But the aim of moral revolution is the creation of values.<sup>2</sup>

In recognizing only moral reform, traditional ethics discourages us from radically examining the values around which existing principles revolve, or the context in which we are to act on those principles (such as oppression), or the structure which gives life to just those values.

Traditional ethics concerns itself almost exclusively with questions of obligation, justification, and principle, and does not leave room for us to examine underlying value or create new value. As a result, Kathryn Pyne Addelson argues, "the narrow focus of traditional ethics makes it impossible to account for the behavior of the moral revolutionary as moral behavior."<sup>3</sup>

For example, someone engaged in moral reform might question the use of the concept of 'evil': she might question the concept of 'woman' as evil (the myth of eve) or the concept of 'jew' as evil (the jewish blood libel<sup>a</sup>), or she might question the concepts of 'black' and 'darkness' as sinister and evil, suggesting that these are all inappropriate applications of 'evil'. Nevertheless, she would not question the concept of 'evil' itself; her concern would be with its application.

On the other hand, someone engaged in moral revolution might question the concept of 'evil', arguing that 'evil' is a necessary foil for 'good'—that there must be something designated as evil to function as a scapegoat for the shortcomings

or failures of that which is designated as good. She might point out that 'good' requires 'evil' and therefore that evil can never be eradicated if good is to prevail. She might suggest that we could create a moral value in which we had no need of the concepts of 'good' or 'evil'.

I want a moral revolution. I don't want greater or better conformity to existing values. I want change in value. Our attempts to reform existing institutions merely result in reinforcing the existing social order.

For example, a woman may elect to teach a women's studies course using writings on women's rights. She may present classic arguments in favor of women's rights: exposing the contradiction of denying women's rights while affirming democratic ideals, or exposing the hypocrisy in recruiting women during times of need and yet espousing an ideology, which negates women's competence. And she could include absurd anti-feminist documents, such as material by a woman doctor denying that women should be professional, or a piece which argues that a woman should stand by her man—no matter what—for the "good" of "society." To give the illusion of objectivity, she might even invite speakers to present arguments against equal rights for women, thereby airing "both sides" of the issue.

However, in addressing and defending women's rights, she is implicitly acknowledging that women's rights are debatable. She is, by that very act, affirming that there is a legitimate question concerning women's rights, even if she is quite clear about the answer she espouses. And she is agreeing that society has a "right" to determine women's place.

Significantly, however, she cannot broach or even formulate a question about men's rights or men's competence without appearing radical beyond reason. That is, men's rights are not debatable.<sup>b</sup> Thus, in agreeing to defend women's

<sup>a</sup> This is the myth that jews slaughter christian children on easter and use their blood during passover, for example, in baking matzoh. It is the myth which justified the christian slaughter of jews during easter which dates back to the middle ages. Similar muslim persecutions of jews date back to the fifteenth century, and there are references to use of the libel by muslims as late as the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>b</sup> Of course, men do engage in questions about other men's rights. But there is no general idea that perhaps men as a group ought to be written out of the u.s. constitution.

rights, she is solidifying status quo values which make women's but not men's rights debatable in a democracy.

A feminist challenging sexist values by defending women's rights is actually coerced into agreeing with the sexist structure of society at a more basic level. And insofar as her challenge appeals to ethical questions of justice, it is subject to consideration of whether such rights are consistent with the existing social order.

I want a moral revolution.

## HETEROSEXUALISM

In her 1949 ground-breaking work *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir asked, "Why is it that women do not dispute male sovereignty?"<sup>5</sup> Her question presupposes a particular philosophical theory about human nature and interaction developed by (Hegel). This theory is that each consciousness (person) holds a fundamental hostility toward every other consciousness and that each subject (person) sets himself up as essential by opposing himself to all others. That is, human relations are fundamentally antagonistic, and the hostility is reciprocal. One who does not succeed in opposing another finds himself having to accept the other's values and so becomes submissive to him.<sup>6</sup> Now, in asking why women do not dispute male sovereignty, Simone de Beauvoir is asking why women have not antagonistically opposed men as men have opposed women and each other. In asking this question, she is suggesting (1) that women have never opposed men and so are submissive, not from having lost to men, but from having accepted a position of subordination, and (2) that to achieve the status of subject, to resist male domination, among other things, women must oppose men as men have opposed women and other men.<sup>c</sup>

In discussing women's subordination, Simone de Beauvoir argues that "the couple is a funda-

mental unity with its two halves riveted together." The basic trait of woman is to be fundamentally the other. Thus, women have gained only what men have been willing to grant, and have taken nothing.<sup>9</sup>

Simone de Beauvoir suggests several reasons for this: women lack the concrete means of organizing; women have no past or history of their own; women have lived dispersed among men; and women feel solidarity with the men of their class and race. She points out, for example, that white women hold allegiance to white men, not to black women.<sup>10</sup> She adds that to renounce the status of other is to renounce the privileges conferred through alliance with a superior caste.<sup>11</sup> She concludes:

Thus woman may fail to lay claim to the status of subject because she lacks definite resources, she feels the necessary bond that ties her to man regardless of reciprocity, and because she is often very well pleased with her role as *Other*.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, according to Simone de Beauvoir, yet another reason women have not disputed male sovereignty and laid claim to their own existence is that women are not fully displeased with being defined as other.

Simone de Beauvoir then discusses how all this came to be, because, as she announces:

One is not born, but rather becomes a woman.<sup>13</sup>

One is not born a woman because 'woman' is a constructed category. And it is intimately connected to the category 'man'.

While I disagree that women always have been under men and also I disagree that to resist male sovereignty women must become like men, nevertheless a basic relationship of dominance and subordination appears to exist between men and women, and it is not clear, with a few

<sup>c</sup> Indeed, Simone de Beauvoir argues that in giving life, women are merely ensuring repetition and are no different

than other animals. However man, in risking his life (by becoming a warrior and attempting to take life), is transcending it and is thereby creating value.<sup>7</sup> As Nancy Hartsock notes, "Thus, it is woman's failure to engage in combat that defines her static and repetitive existence, her maternity that condemns her to give life without risking her life."<sup>8</sup>

notable exceptions since the onset of patriarchy, that women have resisted that relationship.<sup>d</sup> In my opinion, to fully evaluate the relationship of dominance and subordination we need concern ourselves not only with addressing sexism, or even homophobia or heterosexism, but more substantially, with the actual relationship of heterosexuality.

Understanding sexism involves analyzing how institutional power is in the hands of men, how men discriminate against women, how society classifies men as the norm and women as passive and inferior, how male institutions objectify women, how society excludes women from participation as full human beings, and how what has been perceived as normal male behavior is also violence against women. In other words, to analyze sexism is to understand primarily how women are victims of institutional and ordinary male behavior.

Understanding heterosexism, as well as homophobia,<sup>e</sup> involves analyzing, not just women's victimization, but also how women are defined in terms of men or not at all, how lesbians and gay men are treated—indeed scapegoated—as deviants, how choices of intimate partners for both women and men are restricted or denied through taboos to maintain a certain social order. (For example, if sexual relations between men were openly allowed, then men could do to men what men do to women<sup>16</sup> and, further, (some) men could become what women are. This is verboten. In addition, if love between women were openly explored, women might simply walk away from men, becoming 'not-women'. This, too, is verboten.) Focusing on heterosexism challenges heterosexuality as an institution, but it can also

lead lesbians to regard as a political goal our acceptance, even assimilation, into heterosexual society: we try to assure heterosexuals we are normal people (that is, just like them), that they are being unjust in stigmatizing us, that ours is a mere sexual preference.

Understanding heterosexuality involves analyzing the relationship between men and women in which both men and women have a part. Heterosexuality is men dominating and de-skilling women in any of a number of forms, from outright attack to paternalistic care, and women devaluing (of necessity) female bonding as well as finding inherent conflicts between commitment and autonomy and consequently valuing an ethics of dependence. Heterosexuality is a way of living (which actual practitioners exhibit to a greater or lesser degree) that normalizes the dominance of one person in a relationship and the subordination of another. As a result, it undermines female agency.

What I am calling 'heterosexuality' is not simply a matter of males having procreative sex with females.<sup>17</sup> It is an entire way of living which involves a delicate, though at times indelicate, balance between masculine predation upon and masculine protection of a feminine object of masculine attention.<sup>f</sup> Heterosexuality is a particular economic, political, and emotional relationship between men and women: men must dominate women and women must subordinate themselves to men in any of a number of ways.<sup>g</sup> As a result,

<sup>f</sup> I think the main model for personal interaction for women and lesbians has been heterosexual. However, for men in the anglo-european tradition there has also been a model of male homosexual interaction—a form of male bonding, even though sex between men has come to be persecuted. And while it is not my intention here to analyze the model, I will suggest that it revolves around an axis of dominance and submission, and that heterosexuality is basically a refined male homosexual model.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>g</sup> Julien S. Murphy writes: "Heterosexuality is better termed heteroeconomics, for it pertains to the language of barter, exchange, bargain, auction, buy and sell. . . . Heterosexuality is the economics of exchange in which a gender-based power structure continually reinstates itself through the appropriation of the devalued party in a duo-gendered system. Such reinstatement happens through each instance of 'striking a deal' in the market of sex."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>d</sup> Two notable recent exceptions are the european beguines and the chinese marriage resisters.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>e</sup> Sheila Kitzinger suggests we stop using 'homophobia' altogether. She argues that the term did not emerge from within the women's liberation movement but rather from the academic discipline of psychology. She questions characterizing heteropatriarchal fear of lesbians as irrational, she challenges the psychological (rather than political) orientation of 'phobia', and she notes that within psychology, the only alternative to 'homophobia' is liberal humanism.<sup>15</sup>

men presume access to women while women remain riveted on men and are unable to sustain a community of women.

In the u.s., women cannot appear publicly without some men advancing on them, presuming access to them. In fact, many women will think something is wrong if this doesn't happen. A woman simply is someone toward whom such behavior is appropriate. When a woman is accompanied by a man, however, she is usually no longer considered fair game. As a result, men close to individual women—fathers, boyfriends, husbands, brothers, escorts, colleagues—become protectors (theoretically), staving off advances from other men.

The value of special protection for women is prevalent in this society. Protectors interact with women in ways that promote the image of women as helpless: men open doors, pull out chairs, expect women to dress in ways that interfere with their own self-protection.<sup>20</sup> And women accept this as attentive, complimentary behavior and perceive themselves as persons who need special attention and protection.<sup>21</sup>

What a woman faces in a man is either a protector or a predator, and men gain identity through one or another of these roles.<sup>21</sup> This has at least five consequences. First, there can be no protectors unless there is a danger. A man cannot identify himself in the role of protector unless there is something which needs protection. So it is in the interest of protectors that there be predators. Secondly, to be protected, women must be in danger. In portraying

women as helpless and defenseless, men portray women as victims . . . and therefore as targets.

Thirdly, a woman (or girl) is viewed as the object of male passion and thereby its cause. This is most obvious in the case of rape: she must have done something to tempt him—helpless hormonal bundle that he is. Thus if women are beings who by nature are endangered, then, obviously, they are thereby beings who by nature are seductive—they actively attract predators. Fourthly, to be protected, women must agree to act as men say women should: to appear feminine, prove they are not threatening, stay at home, remain only with the protector, devalue their connections with other women, and so on.

Finally, when women step out of the feminine rôle, thereby becoming active and "guilty," it is a mere matter of logic that men will depict women as evil and step up overt physical violence against them in order to reaffirm women's victim status. For example, as the demand for women's rights in the u.s. became publicly perceptible, the depiction of lone women as "sluts" inviting attack also became prevalent. A lone female hitchhiker was perceived, not as someone to protect, but as someone who had given up her right to protection and thus as someone who was a target for attack. The rampant increase in pornography—entertainment by and for men about women—is men's general response to the u.s. women's liberation movement's demand of integrity, autonomy, and dignity for women.

What radical feminists have exposed through all the work on incest (daughter rape) and wife-beating is that protectors are also predators. Of course, not all men are wife- or girlfriend-beaters, but over half who live with women are. And a significant number of u.s. family homes shelter an "incestuous" male.<sup>23</sup>

Although men may exhibit concern over womanabuse, they have a different relationship to it

<sup>21</sup> In questioning the value of special protection for women, I am not saying that women should never ask for help. That's just foolish. I am talking about the ideal of women as needing sheltering. The concept of children needing special protection is prevalent and I challenge that concept when it is used to abrogate their integrity "for their own good." But at least protection for children theoretically involves ensuring that (male) children can grow up and learn to take care of themselves. That is, (male) children are protected until they have grown and developed skills and abilities they need to get on in this world. No such expectation is included in the ideal of special protection for women: the ideal of special protection of women does not include the expectation that women will ever be in a position to take care of themselves (grow up).

<sup>1</sup> In her analysis of fairy tales, Andrea Dworkin points out that an active woman is portrayed as evil (the stepmother) and a good woman is generally asleep or dead (snow white, sleeping beauty).<sup>22</sup>

than women; their concerns are not women's concerns. For example, very often men become irate at the fact that a woman has been raped or beaten by another man. But this is either a man warming to his role of protector—it rarely, if ever, occurs to him to teach her self-defense—or a man deeply affected by damage done to his “property” by another man. And while some men feel contempt for men who batter or rape, Marilyn Frye suggests it is quite possible their contempt arises, not from the fact that woman abuse is happening, but from the fact that the batterer or rapist must accomplish by force what they themselves can accomplish more subtly by arrogance.<sup>24</sup>

The current willingness of men in power to pass laws restricting pornography is a matter of men trying to reestablish the asexual, virginal image of (some) women whom they can then protect in their homes. And they are using as their excuse right-wing women as well as feminists who appear to be asking for protection, like proper women, rather than demanding liberation. Men use violence when women don't pay attention to them. Then, when women ask for protection, men can find meaning by turning on the predators—particularly ones of a different race or class.

In other words, the logic of protection is essentially the same as the logic of predation. Through predation, men do things to women and against women all of which violate women and undermine women's integrity. Yet protection objectifies just as much as predation. To protect women, men do things to women and against women; acting “for a woman's own good,” they violate her integrity and undermine her agency.

Protection and predation emerge from the same ideology of male dominance, and it is a matter of indifference to the successful maintenance of male domination which of the two conditions women accept. Thus Sonia Johnson writes:

Our conviction that if we stop studying and monitoring men and their latest craziness, that if we abandon our terrified clawing and kicking inter-

persed with sniveling and clutching—our whole sick sadomasochistic relationship with the masters—they will go berserk and kill us, is the purest superstition. With our eyes fully upon them they kill us daily; with our eyes riveted upon them they have gone berserk.<sup>25</sup>

Early radical feminists claimed that women are colonized.<sup>26</sup> It is worth reconsidering this claim. Those who wish to dominate a group, and who are successful, gain control through violence. This show of force, however, requires tremendous effort and resources; so colonizers introduce values portraying the relationship of dominant colonizer to subordinate colonized as natural and normal.

One of the first acts of colonizers after conquest is to control the language, work often accomplished by christian missionaries. Their mission is to give the language written form and then set up schools where it is taught to those native to the land. Here new values are introduced: for example, concepts of ‘light’ and ‘dark’ as connoting good and evil respectively. Words for superiors and deities then begin to carry a ‘light’ connotation as well as appear in the masculine gender. Further, values are embedded which support colonial appropriation of natural resources, and which disavow the colonized's ancestral ways and economic independence. As the colonized are forced to use the colonizers' language and conceptual schema, they can begin to internalize these values. This is “salvation,” and colonizers pursue what they have called manifest destiny or “the white man's burden.”

The theory of manifest destiny implies that colonizers are bringing civilization (the secular version of salvation) to “barbarians” (“heathens”). Colonizers depict the colonized as passive, as wanting and needing protection (domination), as being taken care of “for their own good.” Anyone who resists domination will be sorted out as abnormal and attacked as a danger to society (“civilization”) or called insane and put away in the name of protection (their own or society's).

Thus colonizers move from predation—attack and conquest—to benevolent protection. Those who have been colonized are portrayed as helpless, childlike, passive, and feminine; and the colonizers become benevolent rulers, accepting the burden of the civilized management of resources (exploitation).

After the social order has been established, should the colonized begin to resist protection and benevolence, insisting that they would rather do it themselves regardless of immediate consequences, the colonizers will once again turn predators, stepping up violence to convince the colonized that they need protection and that they cannot survive without the colonizers. One of the lines attributed to Mahatma Gandhi in the movie *Gandhi* is significant to this point: "To maintain the benevolence and dominate us, you must humiliate us." When all else fails, men will engage in war to affirm their "manhood": their "right" to conquer and protect women and other "feminine" beings (i.e., anyone else they can dominate).

The purpose of colonization is to appropriate foreign resources. It functions by de-skilling a people and rendering them economically dependent. In his book on colonialism, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Walter Rodney argues that african societies would not have become capitalist without white colonialism.<sup>27</sup> His thesis is that africa was proceeding economically in a manner distinct from precapitalist development until europeans arrived to colonize africa and underdevelop it. Aborting the african economy and making it over to meet their own needs, europeans robbed africans of their land and resources. Further, europeans robbed africans of their autonomous economic skills, primarily by means of transforming the education system and teaching african peoples to disavow the knowledge of their ancestors. This de-skilling of conquered peoples is crucial to domination because it means that the colonized become dependent on the colonizers for survival. Actually, however, it is the colonizers

who cannot survive—as colonizers—without the colonized.

Bette S. Tallen suggests that, in like fashion, women have been de-skilled under heterosexualism, becoming economically dependent on men, while men appropriate women's resources.<sup>28</sup> As Sonia Johnson notes:

According to United Nations statistics, though women do two-thirds of the world's work, we make only one-tenth of the world's money and own only one-hundredth of the world's property.<sup>29</sup>

The de-skilling of women differs depending on specific historical and material conditions. For example, in her analysis of pre-industrial, seventeenth-century britain, Ann Oakley notes that women engaged in many trades separate from their husbands, or as widows. The industrial revolution changed all that and deprived many women of their skills.<sup>30</sup> Prior to this, during the burning times, european men appropriated women's healing skills, birthing skills, and teaching skills, and attempted to destroy women's psychic skills.<sup>31</sup> As Alice Molloy writes, "the so-called history of witchcraft is simply the process by which women were separated from each other and from their potential to synthesize information."<sup>32</sup> In general, many women no longer have their own programs, they've lost access to their own tools. As a result, they are coerced into embracing an ideology of dependence on men.

Heterosexualism has certain similarities to colonialism, particularly in its maintenance through force when paternalism is rejected (that is, the stepping up of male predation when women reject male protection) and in its portrayal of domination as natural (men are to dominate women as naturally as colonizers are to dominate the colonized, and without any sense of themselves as oppressing those they dominate except during

<sup>31</sup> Currently, men are attempting to control woman's procreative abilities altogether by controlling female generative organs and processes.<sup>31</sup>

times of overt aggression) and in the de-skilling of women. And just as it is colonizers who cannot survive as colonizers without the colonized, so it is men who cannot survive as men (protectors or predators) without women.

I want a moral revolution.

The primary concept used to interpret and evaluate individual women's choices and actions is 'femininity'. 'Femininity' normalizes male domination and paints a portrait of women as subordinate and naively content with being controlled. Thus patrihistorians claim that women have remained content with their lot, accepting male domination throughout time, with the exception of a few suffragists and now a few aberrant feminists.

Yet if we stop to reflect, it becomes clear that within the confines of the feminine stereotype no behavior counts as resistance to male domination. And if nothing we can point to or even imagine counts as proof against the claim that all (normal) women are feminine and accept male domination, then we are working within a closed, coercive conceptual system.

For example, some acts which men claim support the feminine stereotype of white middle-class women indicate, instead, resistance. Alix Kates Shulman in *Memoirs of an Ex-Prom Queen* portrays a "fluffy-headed" housewife who regularly burns the dinner when her husband brings his boss home unexpectedly, and who periodically packs raw eggs in his lunch box.<sup>33</sup> Such acts are used by those in power as proof that women have lesser rational ability, but actually they indicate resistance—sabotage. Such acts may or may not be openly called sabotage by the saboteurs, but women engage in them as an affirmation of existence in a society which denies a woman recognition independently of a man.

Donna Deitch's documentary *Woman to Woman* offers a classic example of what I am calling sabotage.<sup>34</sup> Four females—two housewives, a daughter, and the interviewer—sit around a kitchen table. One housewife protests that she is not a housewife, she is not married to the house. The inter-

viewer asks her to describe what she does all day. The woman relates something like the following: she gets up, feeds her husband, feeds her children, drives them to the school bus, drives her husband to work, returns to do the dishes, makes the beds, goes out to do the shopping, returns to do a wash. The woman continues listing her activities, then stops, shocked, and says: "Wait a minute, I am married to the house." She complains of difficulty in getting her husband to give her enough money for the household, of frustration because he nevertheless holds her responsible for running the house, and of degradation because she must go to him, apologetically, at the end of each budget period to ask for extra money to cover expenses when he could have provided her with sufficient funds from the beginning.

Suddenly she gets a gleam in her eye, lowers her voice, and leans forward, saying: "Have you ever bought something you don't need?" She explains that she buys cans of beans and hoards them. Then she says: "You have to know you're alive; you have to make sure you exist."<sup>35</sup> She has separated herself from her husband's perceptions of her: she is not simply an extension of his will, she is reclaiming (some) agency—sabotage. Yet under the feminine stereotype, we are unable to perceive her as in any way resisting her husband's domination.<sup>k</sup>

Significantly, 'femininity' is a concept used to characterize any group which men in power wish to portray as requiring domination. Kate Millett points out that 'femininity' characterizes traits those in power cherish in subordinates.<sup>38</sup> And Naomi Weisstein notes that feminine characteristics add up to characteristics stereotypically attributed to minority groups.<sup>39</sup> The literature indicates that nazis characterized jews as feminine, using the ideology in justification of their massacre.

<sup>k</sup> There have been many unacknowledged forms of resistance to male domination, for example, the use of purity to control male sexual aggressions<sup>36</sup> as well as the use of piety to challenge a husband's authority. Further, many women entered convents to avoid marriage.<sup>37</sup> Typically, patrihistorians describe such strategies in ways that make it impossible to perceive them as resistance.



Men accused at the salem witch trials were characterized as feminine.<sup>40</sup> Mary Daly notes that the iroquois were "cast into a feminine role by the Jesuits."<sup>41</sup> An investigation of anthropological literature from the first part of this century reveals that white british anthropologists described the physiological characteristics of black africans—men and women—in a bestially feminine manner. And as Kate Millett points out, Jean Genet's definition of 'femininity' in male homosexuality is "submission to the imperious male."<sup>42</sup>

The concept of 'femininity' provides a basic model for oppression in anglo-european thinking.<sup>1</sup> A feminine being is by nature passive and dependent. It follows that those to whom the label is applied must by their very nature seek protection (domination) and should be subjected to authority "for their own good." 'Femininity' portrays those not in power as needing and wanting to be controlled. It is a matter of logic, then, that those who refuse to be controlled are abnormal.

Consider the fact that white history depicts black slaves (though not white indentured servants) as lazy, docile, and clumsy on grounds such as that slaves frequently broke tools. Yet a rational woman under slavery, comprehending that her situation is less than human, that she functions as an extension of the will of the master, will not run to pick up tools. She acts instead to differentiate herself from the will of her master: she breaks tools, carries on subversive activities—sabotage.

<sup>1</sup> In pointing out how the concept of 'femininity' applies to various oppressed peoples, I do not mean to suggest that the *experience* of oppression is the same. The experience of black men or the *experience* of jewish men has not been the same as that of poor white gentile women or black women or jewish women or wives of southern plantation owners. Black male slaves were depicted as strong, virile beasts. If wives of southern plantation owners were also perceived as animals (pets), still there were crucial differences. And black slave women were treated as the opposite of the white southern belle. As Angela Davis points out, black women slaves were treated essentially as beasts of burden. Most worked in the fields, and some worked as coalminers or lumberjacks or ditchdiggers. And while white masters raped them in a show of economic and sexual mastery, black women were compelled to work while pregnant and nursing, and their children were treated like the offspring of animals—to be sold off.<sup>38</sup>

Her master, in turn, perceiving her as subhuman and subrational, names her "clumsy," "childlike," "foolish" perhaps, but not a saboteur. Some sabotage was detected and punished, for example, when slave women poisoned masters or committed arson. However records of such events were often buried,<sup>44</sup> and the stereotype of slaves as incompetent persists. Perhaps most powerful was the use of spirituals to keep present the idea of escape, songs such as "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" or songs about Moses and the promised land. They also announced particular escape plans such as the departure of Harriet Tubman on yet another trip to the north. Whites perceived the happy song of simple-minded folk.<sup>45</sup>

If officially slaves are subhuman and content with their lot and masters are acting in slaves' best interests, then it follows that any resistance to the system is an abnormality or an indication of madness. Indeed, in recollecting the stories of her grandmother's slave days, Annie Mae Hunt tells us that "if you run off, you was considered sick."<sup>46</sup> That is to say, slaves existed in a conceptual framework where running away from slavery was generally perceived by masters and even at times by slaves as an indication, not of (healthy) resistance, but of mental imbalance.

Such was the extent of the coercion of the masters' framework. However, creating a different value framework, we can understand the behaviors of slaves, out of which the masters constructed and fed the slave stereotypes, as providing ample evidence of resistance and sabotage.<sup>47</sup>

During the holocaust and, more significantly, after it, in the telling of the stories, patrihistorians have depicted jews under nazi domination as cooperative and willing (feminine) victims. This stereotype—as is true of the slave stereotype—is still alive today. Yet again, we can ask: What would *count* as resistance? For example, jews at auschwitz who committed suicide by hurling themselves against an electric fence have been depicted as willing victims. But the nazis did not leave their bodies for all to see, they quickly took them away. In determining the time of their own deaths, those

who committed suicide were resisting nazi domination by exercising choice, interrupting the plans of the masters, and thus differentiating their selves from the will of their masters.

Many, many types of resistance occurred. From Simone Wallace, Ellen Ledley, and Paula Tobin:

Each act of staying alive when the enemy has decided you must die is an act of resistance. The fight against a helplessness and apathy which aids the enemy is resistance. [Other acts include]: sabotage in the factories, encouraging others to live who are ready to give in and die, smuggling food and messages, breaking prison rules whenever possible, simply keeping themselves alive. Other forms of resistance, even more readily recognizable as such, took place from the killing of guards, bombing of factories, stealing guns, Warsaw uprisings, etc.<sup>48</sup>

Literature about the holocaust is full of jewish resistance, of sabotage; yet for the most part, short of armed uprisings such as happened in the warsaw ghetto, that resistance is not recognized or not acknowledged, and the stereotype of the willing (feminine) victim persists.

If we operate in a conceptual framework which depicts humans as inherently dominant or subordinate, then we will not perceive resistance or include it in our descriptions of the world unless those who resist overthrow those who dominate and begin to dominate them (i.e., when there is essentially no revolution in value). For example, the strategies of the women at greenham common, in resisting the deployment of u.s. cruise missiles, involve innovative means of thwarting the dominant/subordinate relationship—the women simply don't play by the rules and instead do the unexpected. Their strategies are characterized by spontaneity, flexibility, decentralization, and they work creatively with the situations that present themselves.<sup>49</sup> When we recognize as resistance only those acts which overthrow the dominators, we miss a great deal of information.

Consider the white upper-class victorian lady. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman portrays conditions faced by such women

in the 1880s.<sup>50</sup> These conditions included a prescription of total female passivity by mind gynecologists such as S. Weir Mitchell,<sup>51</sup> prescriptions resulting from male scientists' sudden interest in women as the first wave of feminism attracted their attention, prescriptions enforced by those in control. The heroine is taken by her husband to a summer home for rest. He locks her in a nursery with bars on the windows, a bed bolted to the floor, and hideous wallpaper, shredded in spots. He rebuts her despair with the rhetoric of protection, refusing to indulge her "whims" when she protests the room's atrocity. He also stifles all her attempts at creativity, flying into a rage when he discovers that she has been writing in her diary. In the end she manages to crawl behind the wallpaper, escaping into "madness." Charlotte Perkins Gilman shows us a woman with every avenue of creativity and integrity patronizingly and paternalistically cut off "for her own good"; and we watch her slowly construct her resistance. Not surprisingly, male scientists and doctors of the day perceived nothing more in the story than a testament of feminine insanity.<sup>52</sup>

Resistance, in other words, may even take the form of insanity when someone is isolated within the confines of domination and all means of maintaining integrity have been systematically cut off. Mary's journey into oblivion with morphine in *Long Day's Journey into Night* is another example of resistance to domination, to the fatuous demands of loved ones, of husband and adult male children.<sup>53</sup> But the framework of "femininity" dictates that such behavior be perceived as part of the "mysterious" nature of woman rather than recognized as resistance.

Significantly, one and the same word names 'insanity' and 'anger': 'mad'. As Phyllis Chesler documents, gynecologists call women "mad" whose behavior they can no longer understand as functioning in relation to men.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, 'madness' in relation to 'anger' is defined as "ungovernable rage or fury."<sup>55</sup> We can ask, ungovernable by whom? Madness in anger and madness

in insanity indicate that men have lost control.<sup>56</sup>

When women are labeled "mad," they have become useless to men, a threat to male supremacy.

Thus, to maintain the feminine stereotype, men will characterize overt, clear-cut, obvious forms of resistance as insanity when women engage in them.<sup>57</sup> Just as slaves who ran away from masters were perceived as insane, so are women who fight back against battering husbands. Women who kill long-term battering husbands are, for the most part, forced to use the plea of insanity rather than the plea of self-defense: lawyers advise clients to plead insanity, and juries convict those who instead plead self-defense. As a result, the judicial system promotes the idea that the woman who effectively resists aggressive acts of male domination is insane. Insanity, thus, becomes part of women's nature, and resistance to domination becomes institutionally nonexistent.

However, institutionally characterizing women who fight back as insane is still not enough for men in power. Perceiving the plea of insanity as a license to kill, even though it means incarceration for an unspecified amount of time, media men began a campaign against women who fought back against husbands and boyfriends who beat them—depicting these women as "getting away with" murder.<sup>57</sup> Our governing fathers have reduced or,

in some places, completely withdrawn funding of shelters for women, especially if there is lesbian presence, on the grounds that these shelters break up the family. And agencies on "domestic violence" work to keep the family intact, burying the conditions of oppression women face within the nuclear and extended family by obliterating the distinction between aggressor and victim.<sup>58</sup> The concept of 'femininity' not only blocks social perception of female resistance. When female resistance threatens to break through the stereotype and become socially perceptible, the conceptual framework comes full circle: authorities deny that the "problem" is the result of male domination.

Finally, many social scientists regard female competence itself in women as threatening to men, as subversive to the nuclear or extended family, and as going against the grain of civilization, hence as socially undesirable. For example, the moynihan report yielded a resurgence of white as well as black men espousing the theory of the black matriarch who "castrates" black men—implying that for black men to claim their manhood, or masculinity, black women must step behind and become subordinate to them.<sup>59</sup>

'Femininity' functions as a standard of heterosexualism. Standards or measures determine fact and are used to create (and later discover) fact; they themselves, however, are not discovered. An inch, for example, was not discovered. It was created and is used to determine boundaries. No amount of investigation into surfaces will ever confirm or disprove that inches exist or that inches accurately reflect the world. A standard is a way of measuring the world, of categorizing it, of determining its boundaries so men can act upon it. 'Femininity' is such a standard: it is a way of categorizing the world so that men can act upon it, and women can respond.

'Femininity' is a label whereby one group of people are defined in relation to another in such a way that the values of dominance and subordination are embedded in perceptual judgment of reality as if they were the essence of those involved. Under the feminine characterization, women

<sup>56</sup> When reading between the lines and reclaiming women from the past, we can examine the alternatives available to them and in that context understand their behavior. Thus, insanity itself can be a form of resistance, as can suicide. On the other hand, behavior that is not insanity may nevertheless be depicted as insane. As a result, there is a fine line, which can fade at times, between insanity as resistance and the behavior of the resistor who has not gone insane—who has maintained the confidence of her perceptions.

<sup>57</sup> In 1916, a play by Susan Glaspell was first performed about a Nebraska woman who strangled her husband in his sleep. The (male) authorities arrive on the scene all officious and yet cannot discover the motive—without which they cannot convict her. Their wives, having come along to get some clothes for the woman in jail, discover a number of things, including the body of a canary whose neck had been wrung. Joking about women's work, the men ignore the women, thinking them dealing with "trifles." Comprehending what had happened, the women hide the evidence; the woman who killed her husband is found innocent by a "jury of her peers."<sup>58</sup>

self-defeating

appear naively content with being controlled to such an extent that resistance to domination ceases to exist—that is, goes undetected. Female resistance is rendered imperceptible or perceived as abnormal, mad, or of no significance by both women and men.

Now, some might object that (some of) the choices I've described as resistance or sabotage are self-defeating. For example, the housewife who spends money on items she does not need is limiting her ability to obtain things she does need. Thus, through this act of defiance she is really hurting herself. Or, the woman who burns dinners when her husband brings his boss home unexpectedly is still dependent on her husband having a job and would benefit from any promotion he might receive. If she fails to present herself as a competent hostess, the boss may decide against promoting her husband, noting that her husband does not have the trappings necessary for the social atmosphere within which business deals are made—namely, a charming wife and competent hostess. Thus, in sabotaging her husband's plans when he is inconsiderate, she appears to be acting against her own best interests.

Or, again, the slave who breaks her master's tools could find herself in even more dire circumstances. Although she is slowing the master's work, she will likely be punished for it. And should she appear too incompetent (unruly), she could be sold to someone perhaps more physically brutal, separated from those who know and care about her. Her sabotage seems to do more damage to herself than to anyone else. Someone might object that a woman making these choices may be resisting, but ultimately she is "cutting off her nose to spite her face." The woman who becomes an addict or an alcoholic or the woman who chooses suicide... surely their acts are self-defeating, for the women lose themselves.

In a certain respect such acts of sabotage are self-defeating, but in other respects this is inaccurate. I have suggested that in situations in which a woman makes such choices, often she acts to differentiate herself from the will of the one who

dominates. The one who dominates may be able to severely restrict the range of her choices, he may physically threaten her, he may have legal power of life and death over her. But it is yet another matter for him to totally control her, to make her believe she is nothing but an extension of his will.

My thesis is that when someone is in danger of losing any sense that she has a self about whom she can make decisions, she will in some way resist. When a man regards a woman as a being whose will should effectively be merged with his such that she is a mere extension of it, she will act in basic ways to block that merger and separate herself from his will. In such circumstances sabotage cannot logically be self-defeating because, simply, the situation allows for no self to begin with.

Acts of sabotage can function to establish that self, to affirm a woman's separateness in her own mind. It may be more important to the woman who burns dinners to remind her self (and maybe her husband) that he cannot take her for granted than it is for her to rise socially and economically if that means that in doing so she will be taken for granted to an even greater extent. And it may be more important to the slave that she affirm her existence by thwarting the master's plan in some way than it is to try to secure safety in a situation in which believing she is safe is dangerously foolish. Even when a woman withdraws herself through alcohol or takes herself out still further through suicide, she may be establishing, rather than defeating, the self as a separate and distinct entity.<sup>9</sup> If a woman establishes her self as separate (at least in her own awareness) from the will of him who dominates by making certain decisions and carrying them out, then those choices are not self-defeating, since without them there would be no self to defeat.

In other respects, however, such actions are self-defeating. In the first place, to be successful, acts of sabotage cannot be detected as sabotage in a system where there is no hope of redress. While they

<sup>9</sup> Thus alcoholism among lesbians has been a way of pursuing lesbian choices while rejecting the coercion of heterosexuality and the concept of 'woman'.

may function to differentiate one's self from those who dominate, they do not challenge the feminine stereotype, rather they presuppose it. Even when engaged in by a majority of women, isolated and individual acts of sabotage do not change the conceptual or material conditions which lead a woman to engage in such acts. Instead, those in power will use such actions to bolster the idea that dominated beings require domination (protection) "for their own good." In this respect, then, acts of sabotage could be said to be self-defeating. But then the same could be said of any act a woman engages in. This is the trap of oppression,<sup>60</sup> the double bind of heterosexualism.

More significantly, acts of sabotage become self-defeating if the one who engages in them begins to internalize the feminine stereotype. For example, the woman who hoards beans may be resisting her husband's tyranny over the family budget, resisting his perception of her as merely existing to carry out his plans. But if he regards control of her budget as part of his god-given right—no, duty—as a man, then any resistance from her will have to be nipped in the bud, and if it recurs, severely dealt with. Now, in wasting household money, she may be affirming her self while not wishing to openly challenge his perceptions and bring his wrath upon her. But if she must attend too closely to his perceptions and encourage them, she may cross over and come to believe she is incompetent. And at this point her acts become self-defeating.

Or, the woman who "accidentally" burns dinners when her husband's boss comes in unexpectedly may be resisting her husband's vacuous perception of her. If his taking her for granted is a result of his sense of order in the universe such that she is simply not the sort of being who could have any say in things, then trying to prove otherwise may be fruitless. Instead, her goal may be to resist his psychological coercion by playing with his mind, acting the fluffy-headed housewife in order to thwart his expectations of her.

In this case the woman is using the traditional feminine stereotype to her (momentary) advan-

tage. But in so doing, she may undermine her sense of self (unless she has an extremely strong capacity to maintain the sense of what she is doing in direct opposition to the entire set of values within which she must function). The stakes involved here are high—just as when a woman uses stereotypic feminine behaviors to get what she wants and make herself feel superior to the men she manipulates. She is in serious danger of internalizing the social perception of her self as 'feminine'. And should she internalize that value, her acts do become self-defeating.

A woman acting in isolation to maintain a sense of self under heterosexualism faces significant obstacles, for her choices have repercussions beyond an individual level. Again, while such acts of sabotage may be resistance, they don't effect change. For resistance to effect change, there must be a movement afoot, a conspiracy, a breathing together. And this brings up a third way acts of sabotage can be self-defeating. Since successful acts of sabotage cannot be detected as sabotage by those who dominate, then when there is a movement afoot, the choice to commit acts of sabotage becomes no different than the choice to participate in the dominance/subordination relationship of heterosexualism by embracing and developing feminine wiles.

That is, during times when a movement is afoot, when there is a conspiracy of voices, those women who choose to remain isolated from other women and yet engage in acts of sabotage when necessary may well be engaging in truly self-defeating behavior. They are bypassing a chance for more effective resistance and are in even greater danger of internalizing the values of heterosexualism. In this way, isolated acts of resistance can be self-defeating.

'Femininity' is a concept which goes a long way in the social construction of heterosexual reality. A movement of women could withdraw from that framework and begin to revalue that reality and women's choices within it. A movement of women can challenge the feminine stereotype, discover women's resistance, and provide a base

for more effective resistance. A movement of women can challenge the consensus that made the individual act of sabotage plausible.

Yet if that movement does not challenge the concept of 'femininity', ultimately it will not challenge the consensus, it will not challenge the dominance and subordination of heterosexuality. For example, radical feminists and revolutionary feminists in England criticize the women's work at Greenham Common for appealing too much to traditional feminine stereotypes, including woman as nurturer and peacemaker as well as sacrificer for her children. As a result, they argue, the peace movement coopts feminism.<sup>61</sup>

Further, feminism itself is in danger of perpetuating the value of 'femininity' in interpreting and evaluating individual women's choices. Feminists continue to note how women are victims of institutional and ordinary behavior, but many have ceased to challenge the concept of 'woman' and the role men and male institutions play as "protectors" of women. And feminism is susceptible to what Kathleen Barry calls 'victimism', which in effect portrays women as helpless and in need of protection.<sup>62</sup>

## BLAMING THE VICTIM

So much of our moral and political judgment involves either blaming the victim<sup>63</sup> or victimism. Victimism is the perception of victims of acknowledged social injustice, not as real persons making choices, but instead as passive objects of injustice. Kathleen Barry explains that in order to call attention to male violence and to prove that women are harmed by rape, feminists have portrayed women who have been raped by men as victims pure and simple—an understandable development. The problem is that

the status of "victim" creates a mind set eliciting pity and sorrow. Victimism denies the woman the integrity of her humanity through the whole experience, and it creates a framework for others to know her not as a person but as a victim, someone to whom violence was done. . . . Victimism is an

objectification which establishes new standards for defining experience; those standards dismiss any question of will, and deny that the woman even while enduring sexual violence is a living, changing, growing, interactive person.<sup>64</sup>

For my purposes, blaming the victim involves holding a person accountable not only for her choice in a situation but for the situation itself, as if she agreed to it. Thus in masculinist thought, a woman will be judged responsible for her own rape. Victimism, on the other hand, completely ignores a woman's choices. In other words, victimism denies a woman's moral agency. Under victimism, women are still passive, helpless, and in need of special protection—still feminine.

A movement which challenges the dominant valuation of women will focus on women as agents in a relationship rather than as a type. A woman is not a passive being to whom things unfortunately or intentionally happen. She is a breathing, judging being, acting in coerced and oppressive circumstances. Her judgments and choices may be ineffective on any given occasion, or wrong, but they are decisions nevertheless. She is an agent and she is making choices. More than a victim, Kathleen Barry suggests, a woman caught in female sexual slavery is a survivor, making crucial decisions about what to do in order to survive. She is a moral agent who makes judgments within a context of oppression in consideration of her own needs and abilities.

By perceiving women's behavior, not through the value of 'femininity', but rather as actions of moral agents making judgments about their own needs and abilities in coerced and oppressive circumstances, we can begin to conceive of ourselves and each other as agents of our actions (though not creators of the circumstances we face under oppression). And this is a step toward realizing an ethical existence under oppression, one not caught up with the values of dominance and subordination.

Further, we can also begin to understand women's choices which actually embrace the feminine stereotype. Some women embrace

'femininity' outright, man-made though it is, or embrace particular aspects of it which involve some form of ritual or actual subordination to men, in the pursuit of what these women judge to be their own best interests. Some women embrace 'femininity' in a desperate attempt to find safety and to give some meaning to their existence.

In the first chapter of *Right-Wing Women*, Andrea Dworkin analyzes the choices of some white christian women, arguing that "from father's house to husband's house to a grave that still might not be her own, a woman acquiesces to male authority in order to gain some protection from male violence."<sup>65</sup> She argues that such acquiescence results from the treatment girls and women receive as part of their socialization:

Rebellion can rarely survive the aversion therapy that passes for being brought up female. Male violence acts directly on the girl through her father or brother or uncle or any number of male professionals or strangers, as it did and does on her mother, and she too is forced to learn to conform in order to survive. A girl may, as she enters adulthood, repudiate the particular set of males with whom her mother is allied, run with a different pack as it were, but she will replicate her mother's patterns in acquiescing to male authority within her own chosen set. Using both force and threat, men in all camps demand that women accept abuse in silence and shame, tie themselves to hearth and home with rope made of self-blame, unspoken rage, grief, and resentment.<sup>66</sup>

Andrea Dworkin also argues that some women continue to submit to male authority because they finally believe it is the only way they can make sense of and give meaning to their otherwise apparently meaningless existence as women.<sup>67</sup> They find meaning through being bound to their protectors and having a common enemy. Their anger is thus given form and a safety valve, and is thereby deflected from its logical target. They become antisemites, queer-haters, and racists, and so create purpose in their existence.

Andrea Dworkin's analysis highlights two points of interest here. First, these women have

the same information that radical feminists have (they know what men do), yet they are making different choices. Secondly, their choices stem from judgments they make about their own best interests. That is, they are choosing what they consider their best option from among those available. These are survival choices made in circumstances with restricted options.

Another group of women embrace 'femininity' from a different direction. In discussing why more black women are not involved in activist women's groups, instead considering themselves "Black first, female second" and embracing a version of the feminine ideal, Brunetta R. Wolfman presents a number of factors. She points to the traditionally greater independence black women enjoy from black men in the united states, since the legal end of slavery, than white women have enjoyed from white men. And she points to the commitment of women to the black church, in terms of time and loyalty, whereby a "scrub woman or maid could aspire to be the head of the usher board and a valuable, respected member of the congregation."<sup>68</sup>

However, she notes that the pattern in the black church here as well as in civil rights groups such as the n.a.a.c.p. or the urban league, has been one of women assuming secondary roles in deference to male leadership. She also points to the romantic sense of nobility, purity, and race pride personified in the stereotype of 'the black woman' and promulgated by nationalistic ideologies such as that of Marcus Garvey or the black muslims:

The Muslims have taken the idealized Euro-American image of the middle-class wife and mother and made it the norm for the sect so that the women members must reject the traditional independence of black women, adopting another style in the name of a separatist religious ideology. In return, Muslim men must respect and protect their women, a necessary complement to demands placed on females.<sup>69</sup>

This point is reiterated by Jacquelyn Grant as she argues:

It is often said that women are the "backbone" of the church. . . . It has become apparent to me that most of the ministers who use this term are referring to location rather than function. What they really mean is that women are in the background and should be kept there: they are merely support workers.<sup>70</sup>

Brunetta R. Wolfman goes on to discuss demands placed on black women by the black community as well as community expectation of a subordinate position for women. For example, she points out that women in the movement '60s were expected to keep black men from involving themselves with white women. She argues that this "duty is in keeping with a traditional feminine role, that of modifying or being responsible for the behavior of the group in general and the males in particular."<sup>71</sup> Further, she points out how feminist values such as control of one's own body were undermined as black (and white) men told black women there was no choice but to bear children in order to counterattack the white racist plan of black genocide being carried out through birth control programs.

While noting that the women's liberation movement included many demands that would help the social and economic position of black women, Brunetta R. Wolfman suggests that (many) black women have not responded to it, instead becoming a conservative force in the black community, partly because they have a strong sense of self as contributor to the survival of the black community and partly because they have been identified by american society as the polar opposite of the feminine ideal.<sup>72</sup> That is, since they have been excluded from the feminine ideal, they now embrace it.<sup>9</sup>

The jeopardy of racial genocide stemming from an external enemy and used to justify the ideology of male domination is real for u.s. black and other women of color in a way that it is not for u.s. right-wing christian white women. Nevertheless, the choice of embracing 'femininity' and male authority is similar in both cases, as is the threat members of each group face from men.

Further, such choices are not qualitatively different from choices made by feminists to defer to men and men's agendas and to soothe male egos in the pursuit of women's rights. (And such choices do not preclude acts of sabotage of the sort I've discussed when male domination encroaches too far upon a woman's sense of self.) They are survival choices. And what we can consider from outside the feminine valuation is whether such choices in the long run are self-enhancing or self-defeating.

The answers are varied and complex. But insofar as they lean toward the idea that embracing 'femininity' is not self-defeating, they also perpetuate what it means to be a 'woman': to be a 'woman' is to be subject to male domination and hence to be someone who enacts her agency through manipulation—exercising (some modicum of) control from a position of subordination. Should she act in any other way, she is, under heterosexuality, not only unnatural but also unethical.

Thus, while promoting an ethic for females, heterosexuality is a set of values which undermines female agency outside the master/slave values. Women hang on to those values out of fear, out of a choice to focus on men while taking women for granted, and out of a lack of perception of any other choices. As a result, although many women individually have resisted male domination—in particular, men's attempts to make women mere extensions of men's will—it is less clear that (with a few notable exceptions), as Simone de Beauvoir suggested, women as a group dispute male sovereignty. However, in claiming this, I am not suggesting that disputing male sovereignty means attempting to oppose

<sup>9</sup> Other women have not involved themselves in the women's movement or have withdrawn from it because of racism among white women. My focus here is on women who embrace an ideal of feminine behavior in lieu of resistance to male domination.



men as men have opposed women.<sup>3</sup> Rather, I am suggesting that it seems, for the most part, that women, whether as saboteurs or acceptors of male domination, have not disputed the entire dominance/subordination game of heterosexualism.

I want a moral revolution.

## CONCLUSION

Through all of this, I am not trying to argue that heterosexualism is the "cause" of oppression. I do mean to suggest, however, that any revolution which does not challenge it will be incomplete and will eventually revert to the values of oppression. Heterosexualism is the form of social organization through which other forms of oppression, at times more vicious forms, become credible, palatable, even desirable. Heterosexualism—that is, the balance between masculine predation upon and masculine protection of a feminine object of masculine attention—de-skills a woman, makes her emotionally, socially, and economically dependent, and allows another to dominate her "for her own good" all in the name of "love." In no other situation<sup>4</sup> are people expected to love, identify with, and become other to those who dominate them to the extent that women are supposed to love, identify with, and become other to men.

It is heterosexualism which makes us feel that it is possible to dominate another for her

own good, that one who resists such domination is abnormal or doesn't understand what is good for her, and that one who refuses to participate in dominant/subordinate relationships doesn't exist. And once we accept all this, imperialism, colonialism, and ethnocentrism, for example, while existing all along, become more socially tolerable in liberal thought. They become less a matter of exercising overt force and more a matter of the natural function of (a) social order.

Heterosexualism is a conceptual framework within which the concept of 'moral agency' independent of the master/slave virtues cannot find fertile ground. And it combines with ethical judgments to create a value whose primary function is not the moral development of individuals but rather the preservation of a patriarchal social control. Thus I want to challenge our acceptance and use of that ethics.

In discussing what I call Lesbian Ethics, I do not claim that lesbians haven't made many of the choices (heterosexual) women have made or that lesbians haven't participated in the consensus of straight thinking or that lesbians have withdrawn from the value of dominance and subordination and the security of established meaning we can find therein. I am not claiming that lesbians have lived under different conceptual or material conditions. I am claiming, however, that lesbian choice holds certain possibilities. It is a matter of further choice whether we go on to develop these possibilities or whether instead we try to fit into the existing heterosexual framework in any one of a number of ways.

Thus I am claiming that the conceptual category 'lesbian'—unlike the category 'woman'—is not irretrievably tied up with dominance and subordination as norms of behavior. And I am claiming that by attending each other, we may find the possibility of ethical values appropriate to lesbian existence, values we can choose as moral agents to give meaning to our lives as lesbians. In calling for withdrawal from the existing heterosexual value system, I am calling for a moral revolution, a revolution of lesbianism.

<sup>3</sup> Even what the amazons from between the black and caspian seas are reputed to have done was not a matter of opposing men as men have opposed women. At various times, some worry that women or lesbians or separatists want to do to men what men have done to women. Yet nowhere have I found any indication of women or lesbians wanting to subject men the way men have subjected women: have men de-skilled and dependent on women, have men find their identity through their relationships with women, have men isolated in women's houses waiting to care-take women, and so on. Mostly, I suspect, women and lesbians don't want the burden. Women's resistance to male domination has taken many forms. But in my understanding, it has never, even in fantasy, been a reversal of men's efforts.

<sup>4</sup> The situation of the mammy is similar. Racism and the politics of property intervened, however, to keep her from being quite so close to the master or mistress as woman is to man. Nevertheless, this did not make her situation any more palatable, and in many respects, it was worse.

## NOTES

1. Kathryn Pyne Parsons [Addelson], "Nietzsche and Moral Change," in *Woman in Western Thought*, ed. Martha Lee Osborne (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 235.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Note David K. Shipler, *Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land* (New York: Random House/Times Books, 1986). Bette S. Tallen brought this to my attention.
5. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), p. xvii.
6. Ibid., pp. xvii–xviii.
7. Ibid., pp. 58–9.
8. Nancy C.M. Hartsock, *Money, Sex, and Power* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1985), p. 288.
9. Simone de Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, p. xix.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. xx.
12. Ibid., p. xxi.
13. Ibid., p. 249.
14. Janice G. Raymond, *A Passion for Friends: Toward a Philosophy of Female Affection* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), chapters 2 and 3, pp. 71–147; note also Marjorie Topky, "Marriage Resistance in Rural Kwangtung," in *Women in Chinese Society*, ed. Margery Wolf and Roxane Witke (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 67–88.
15. Sheila Kitzinger, "Heteropatriarchal Language: the Case Against 'Homophobia,'" *Gossip* 5, pp. 15–20.
16. Conversation, Marilyn Frye. Note Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1979), p. 61.
17. Conversation, Ariane Brunet.
18. Note, e.g., Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography*, pp. 61–2.
19. Julien S. Murphy, "Silence and Speech in Lesbian Space," paper presented at Mountain Moving Coffeehouse, Chicago, Ill., 1984.
20. For further development of this point, note Marilyn Frye, "Oppression," in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Trumansburg, N. Y.: The Crossing Press, 1983, now in Freedom, Calif.), pp. 5–6.
21. Note Susan Griffin, "Rape: The All-American Crime," in *Feminism and Philosophy*, ed. Mary Vetterling-Bruggin, Frederick A. Elliston, & Jane English (Totowa, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1977), especially p. 320.
22. Andrea Dworkin, *Woman Hating* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1974), pp. 29–49.
23. Sonia Johnson, presidential campaign speech, Chicago, Ill., 1984; conversation, Pauline Bart. The figure on wife-beating comes from the "Uniform Crime Reports of 1982," federal reports on incidences of domestic crime. According to a fact sheet from the Illinois Coalition on Domestic Violence, "National Domestic Violence Statistics, 1/84," ten to twenty percent of American children are abused. Another fact sheet, "Verified Domestic Statistics," researched and compiled by the Western Center on Domestic Violence (San Francisco, Calif.), cites estimates of Maria Roy, *The Abusive Partner* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1982) as indicating that violence against wives will occur at least once in two-thirds of all marriages. Another fact sheet, "Wife Abuse: The Facts" (Center for Woman Policy Studies, 2000 P. Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036), cites Murray Straus, Richard Gelles and Suzanne Steinmetz, *Beyond Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1980) as saying that twenty-five percent of wives are severely beaten during their marriage. There are many more statistics . . . you get the idea. Bette S. Tallen was extremely helpful in obtaining some of this information. Note also Del Martin, *Battered Wives*, revised and updated (Volcano Press, Inc., 330 Ellis St., #518, Dept. B, San Francisco, CA 94102, 1976, 1981); Leonore Walker, *The Battered Woman* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), Florence Rush, *The Best Kept Secret: The Sexual Abuse of Children* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980); Diana E. H. Russell, *Sexual Exploitation: Rape, Child Sexual Abuse, and Workplace Harassment* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1984); and Elizabeth A. Stanko *Intimate Intrusions: Women's Experience of*

- Male Violence* (Boston, Mass.: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985) among others.
24. Marilyn Frye, "In and Out of Harm's Way: Arrogance and Love," *Politics of Reality*, p. 72.
  25. Sonia Johnson, "Excerpts from the last chapter of *Going Out Of Our Minds and Other Revolutionary Acts of the Spirit*," *Mama Bears News & Notes* 3, no. 2 (April/May 1986): 15; also in *Going Out of Our Minds: The Metaphysics of Liberation* (Freedom, Calif.: The Crossing Press, 1987), p. 336.
  26. Note, for example, Barbara Burris, "The Fourth World Manifesto," *Notes from the Third Year*, 1971, revised and reprinted in *Radical Feminism*, ed. Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anita Rapone (New York: New York Times Book Co., 1973), pp. 322–57; Margaret Small, "Lesbians and the Class Position of Women," in *Lesbianism and the Women's Movement*, ed. Nancy Myron and Charlotte Bunch (Baltimore: Diana Press, 1975), pp. 49–61; Robin Morgan, "On Women as a Colonized People," in *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicle of a Feminist* (New York: Random House, 1977); Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonization of Women in Australia* (Ringwood, Victoria, Australia: Penguin, 1975); and Kathleen Barry, "Sex Colonization," in *Female Sexual Slavery* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1979), pp. 163–204.
  27. Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1982).
  28. Conversation; Bette S. Tallen.
  29. Sonia Johnson, "Telling the Truth," *Trivia* 9 (Fall 1986): 21; also in *Going Out of Our Minds*, p. 249.
  30. Ann Oakley, *Women's Work: The Housewife, Past and Present* (New York: Vintage Books/Random House, 1974), p. 19.
  31. Gena Corea, *The Mother Machine: Reproductive Technologies from Artificial Insemination to Artificial Wombs* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 303.
  32. Alice Molloy, *In Other Words: Notes on the Politics and Morale of Survival* (Oakland, Calif.: Women's Press Collective, n.d., write Alice Molloy, Mama Bears, 6536 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, CA 94609).
  33. Alix Kates Shulman, *Memoirs of an Ex-Protes Queen* (New York: Bantam Books, 1973).
  34. Information on this film can be obtained from the American Film & Video Network, 1723 Howard, Evanston, Ill.
  35. This monologue is based on my memory and possibly inaccurate in detail. I believe, however, that I have invoked the general idea the woman was expressing.
  36. Sheila Jeffries, *The Spinster and Her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1880–1930* (Boston: Pandora Press, 1985); Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography*.
  37. This is one of the themes in *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking the Silence* (Tallahassee, Fla.: The Naiad Press, 1985).
  38. Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), p. 26.
  39. Naomi Weisstein, *Psychology Constructs the Female, or: The Fantasy Life of the Male Psychologist*, reprint (Boston: New England Free Press, 1968); reprinted in *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement*, ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 205–20; and in *Women in Sexist Society*, ed. Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (New York: Signet, 1971), pp. 207–24; also in *Radical Feminism*, ed. Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anita Rapone, pp. 178–97.
  40. Research of Betty Carpenter, personal communication.
  41. Mary Daly, *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p. 38.
  42. Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*, p. 347.
  43. Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Vintage Books/Random House, 1983), chapter 1, pp. 3–29.
  44. Angela Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," in *Contemporary Black Thought: Best From The Black Scholar*, ed. Robert Chrisman and Nathan Hare (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), p. 148; note also Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1970) (1st. ed., 1943), as cited by Angela Davis.
  45. Note, for example, Earl Conrad, *Harriet Tubman* (New York: Paul S. Eriksson, Inc., 1969).

46. Ruthe Winegarten, "I Am Annie Mae: The Personal Story of a Black Texas Woman," *Chrysalis* 10 (Spring 1980): 15; later published: *I Am Annie Mae: An Extraordinary Woman in Her Own Words: The Personal Story of a Black Texas Woman*, ed. Ruthe Winegarten (Austin, Tex.: Rosegarden Press, 1983).
47. After formulating this thesis, I came across documented evidence of it. Note Gilbert Osofsky, ed., *Puttin' On Ole Massa* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969); Aran Bontemps, ed., *Great Slave Narratives* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969); and Willie Lee Rose, ed., *A Documentary History of Slavery in North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976). Unfortunately, these collections almost exclusively address the lives of men. For a ground-breaking work on women slaves, note Erlene Stetson, "Studying Slavery: Some Literary and Pedagogical Considerations on the Black Female Slave," in *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, ed. Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith (Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1982), pp. 61–84; note also, Angela Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves."
48. Simone Wallace, Ellen Ledley, Paula Tobin, letter to *off our backs*, December 1979, p. 28.
49. Note, for example, Barbara Harford and Sarah Hopkins, eds., *Greenham Common: Women at the Wire* (London: Women's Press, 1984); also Alice Cook & Gwyn Kirk, *Greenham Women Everywhere: Dreams, Ideas and Actions From the Women's Peace Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1984).
50. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1973).
51. For information on S. Weir Mitchell, note G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Horrors of the Half-Known Life: Male Attitudes Toward Women and Sexuality in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).
52. Elaine R. Hedges, "Afterword," in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman.
53. Eugene O'Neill, *Long Day's Journey into Night* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1955).
54. Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972).
55. *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, 1971.
56. Susan Glaspell, "Trifles: A Play in One Act," in *Plays* (Boston: Small Maynard & Co., 1920, an authorized facsimile of the original book was produced by Xerox University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1976). Blanche Hersh brought this play to my attention.
57. Ann Jones, *Women Who Kill* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1980), p. 291.
58. Kathleen Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery*, pp. 142–4.
59. For some discussion of this, note Jean Carey Bond and Pat Peery, "Is the Black Male Castrated?" in *Black Woman*, ed. Toni Cade, pp. 113–9; Patricia Bell Scott, "Debunking Sapphire: Toward a Non-Racist and Non-Sexist Social Science," in *But Some of Us Are Brave*, pp. 85–92; Bonnie Thornton Dill, "The Dialectics of Black Womanhood," in *Feminism & Methodology*, ed. Sandra Harding (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 98–9; and Angela Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves"; note also Erlene Stetson, "Studying Slavery."
60. Note Marilyn Frye, "Oppression," in *The Politics of Reality*, pp. 1–16.
61. Note, for example, *Breaching the Peace: A Collection of Radical Feminist Papers* (London: Onlywomen Press, 1983).
62. Kathleen Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery*, pp. 43–6.
63. William Ryan, *Blaming the Victim* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976).
64. Kathleen Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. 45.
65. Andrea Dworkin, *Right-Wing Women* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons/Perigee, 1983), p. 14.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
67. *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 21.
68. Brunetta R. Wolfman, "Black First, Female Second," in *Black Separatism and Social Reality: Rhetoric and Reason*, ed. Raymond L. Hall (New York: Pergamon Press, 1977), p. 228.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
70. Jacquelyn Grant, "Black Women and the Black Church," in *But Some of Us Are Brave*, p. 141.
71. Brunetta R. Wolfman, "Black First, Female Second," p. 230.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 231.