

MERLE HOFFMAN
ON SUSAN SMITH
& O.J. SIMPSON

ISSUES ON THE

THE PROGRESSIVE WOMAN'S QUARTERLY

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WHOSE GOD IS IT ANYWAY?

PLAYWRIGHT
CAROLYN GAGE
PORTRAYS
A SMART-MOUTHED
JOAN OF ARC

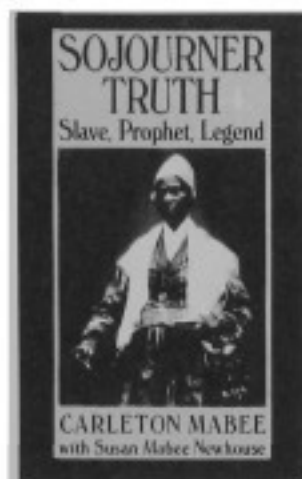
HAITIAN
WOMEN UP
AGAINST THE
MILITARY

DO
FEMINISTS
NEED TO
LIBERATE
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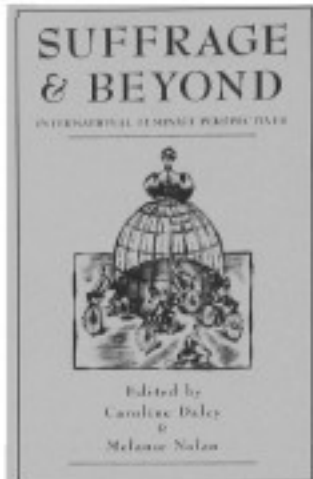
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ON THE ISSUES ♦ SPRING 1995 ♦ VOLUME IV NUMBER TWO



RONNI SANDROFF

Silver Lining Department

Positive thinking is my trademark, so quite a number of folks who haven't called in years rang up after the November elections hoping to hear a few encouraging words.

Could I put a positive spin on the Republican sweep of federal and state governments? Is there any hope for protecting (no less advancing) women's gains in a climate in which inflammatory anti-abortion rhetoric encourages and exonerates terrorist murders at women's health clinics?

In searching for something upbeat to say (if these colleagues wanted to be more depressed they would have called someone else), I found myself talking about "J Accusel", Laura Flanders' stirring piece on women in Haiti who had the courage to testify about political rape in the days following Aristide's return to power. The force of speaking truth against injustice should not be underestimated. (For more proof, read Phyllis Chesler's personal account, "Rape in High Places.")

I was also able to point to several other pieces in this issue that document the extraordinary influence feminist thinking continues to wield. It has reached and breached the fortress of mainstream religious institutions, which Lou Ann Matossian describes in "Re-Imagining God." It has gained a foothold in the justice system (see Elayne Rapping's "Raw Law: Watching Court TV"). And it is bubbling to the surface in Eastern Europe (read Peggy Simpson's "Poland's Morning After").

But there is no denying that today's conservatives and the religious right are highly effective in mobilizing a constituency and in both coopting and demonizing feminist ideas. We think it important to see what we can learn from their successes. John Stoltenberg analyzes the appeal of Promise Keepers, America's fastest-growing men's movement, in "Male Virgins, Blood Covenants, and Family Values." And, in "Phyllis Schlafly's Ancestors," historian Patricia Riley Dunlap looks at the anti-women's suffrage propaganda of the early 20th century: of interest because so many of the techniques (romanticization of woman's role; ridicule of feminists) are still used today, and inspiring because the well-financed conservatives did, finally, fail to stem the movement for female suffrage.

We hope our readers will find ON THE ISSUES a source of personal inspiration in these difficult times. I find that I feel most discouraged about the state of the nation when I let the mainstream media define my picture of what's going on. But when I read the views of like-minded souls, when I get out and meet with activists, I am always re-inspired by our collective spirit and hopefulness. This seems to be a good time to regroup, gather together, plan feminism's next moves, and knit ourselves some silver linings. ♦

ON THE ISSUES

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**MERLE HOFFMAN
ON THE ISSUES**

Tragedy,
American-Style

For in other ways, a woman

Is full of fear, defenseless, dreads the sight of cold
Steel; but, when once she is wronged in the matter
of love, No other soul can hold so many thoughts
of blood. —*Medea*, 431 B.C.



Medea Slaying Her Children, 1838, by Eugène Delacroix/Culver Pictures Susan Smith, AP/Wide World Photos

Our Medea has destroyed her children.

—William F. Buckley Jr., 1994

Television described it as a "great human drama," but in the end I found the surreal progression of the white Ford Bronco with O.J. Simpson in the passenger seat holding a gun to his head anticlimactic. I marveled at the citizens lined up along the roadside holding handwritten signs proclaiming "O.J. We Love You" and "Go, Juice, Go." But I found myself longing for the natural denouement of great tragedy, the catharsis, which, according to Aristotle, comes from a purification of the emotions of terror and pity that leads to an experience of rebirth. Unlike that roadside post-modern Greek chorus, I yearned for what I considered appropriate closure in this situation—a confession expressing guilt and profound remorse. In a way I wanted, indeed *needed*, to see O.J. Simpson blow his brains out, preferably at the gravesite of his murdered wife.

But Simpson would not deliver. Simpson is no Othello. Just as Susan Smith, whose own personal Greek chorus greeted her with "baby-killing bitch" and "hold your head up, you're a baby murderer" is no Medea. And therein lies a value shift worth contemplating.

I was 15 when I first read Euripides' *Medea* and remember being deeply moved by the story of this barbarian princess who falls in love with Jason, leader of the Argonauts, and murders both her own brother and Jason's uncle to help him. Exiled to Corinth with their two sons, Jason casts her aside to wed the daughter of the King of Corinth. While pretending to submit, Medea horribly murders father and daughter through the gift of a magically poisoned robe. Then, fearing for the safety of her sons and in an act of vengeful honor and radical insurrection, she slays them with her own hands and escapes with their bodies to safe exile in a chariot drawn by dragons. Queen, goddess, sorceress, and then mother, Medea denies Jason even the touch of his dead children's flesh.

I was struck by the force of her character, the strength of her will—and her conscious ownership of her appalling deed. →

I was in love with someone very much,
but he didn't love me and never would.
I had hurt him very much, and could
see why he could never love me.

—Susan Smith, 1994 A.D.

I shall kill my own children.
 My children, there is none who can
 give them safety....
 For it is not bearable to be mocked
 by enemies....
 For those children he had from me
 he will never
 See alive again, nor will he on his
 new bride
 Beget another child, for she is to be
 forced
 To die a most terrible death by
 these my poisons.
 Let no one think me a weak one,
 feeble-spirited,
 A stay-at-home, but rather just the
 opposite,
 One who can hurt my enemies and
 help my friends.

Medea's story and ultimate fall are truly tragic. Like Othello, blood honor is what moves her. And like him, she can claim she was one who loved "not wisely, but too well." Medea-the-queen naturally assumes the responsibility of moving with power in the world. Medea-the-woman lives within the laws of patriarchy and clearly understands that her political and social position are purely derivative of her husband's. Medea-the-mother loves her children, but knows that legally they belong to her husband. In murdering them she reclaims that power for herself. Although Medea processes her decision with the chorus over the space of the play, there is no ambivalence or attempt to distance herself from her crime. She does not seek to hide. Nor does Othello. "Nothing extenuate," he says just before he stabs himself and dies on the bed where he murdered Desdemona.

When I first heard about the disappearance of Susan Smith's children, and throughout the nine days of the search, I would imagine myself standing alone in the middle of a country road watching the back of my car receding as someone drove off with its precious cargo. I caught my breath at the edge of the horror, the magnitude of the loss, the rage, the impotence, the crushing anxiety, the struggle to believe the unbelievable. Then, slowly, a gnawing suspicion crept in, so that when at last her arrest was announced, I was not overcome with shock or rage, just an ineffable sadness.

As for many others, Medea was my first association. Did she say goodbye

to her children, I wondered? Did Susan Smith, like Medea, powerfully claim ownership of her actions as the car sank quietly into the dark waters? Was she conscious and determined, moving with the power of her own horrid logic, or was she in the end merely swept away in the sea of her own emotions?

In her confession to police on November 3, Susan Smith said that she "wanted to end my life so bad. I did go part way, but I stopped. I went again and stopped." After she allowed the car to roll into the water with her two children strapped into the back seat, she "took off running and screaming, 'Oh God. Oh, God. No!'" Smith seems to have experienced such a loss of self, such a dissolution of boundaries, that the murder of her children appears to be a case of "suicide by proxy." Wanting to kill herself, she kills her children.

Unlike Medea, who is not unhinged but acts out of strategic design and what she perceives as political necessity, Smith is psychologically unbalanced. "When I was at John D. Long Lake I had never felt so scared and unsure as I did then," she wrote. "I was an absolute mental case. I couldn't believe what I had done." While Smith sends Michael and Alex back into the hands of their "Heavenly Father," where she knows "they never will be hurt again," Medea keeps her children out of all male hands—even their bodies are denied to their father.

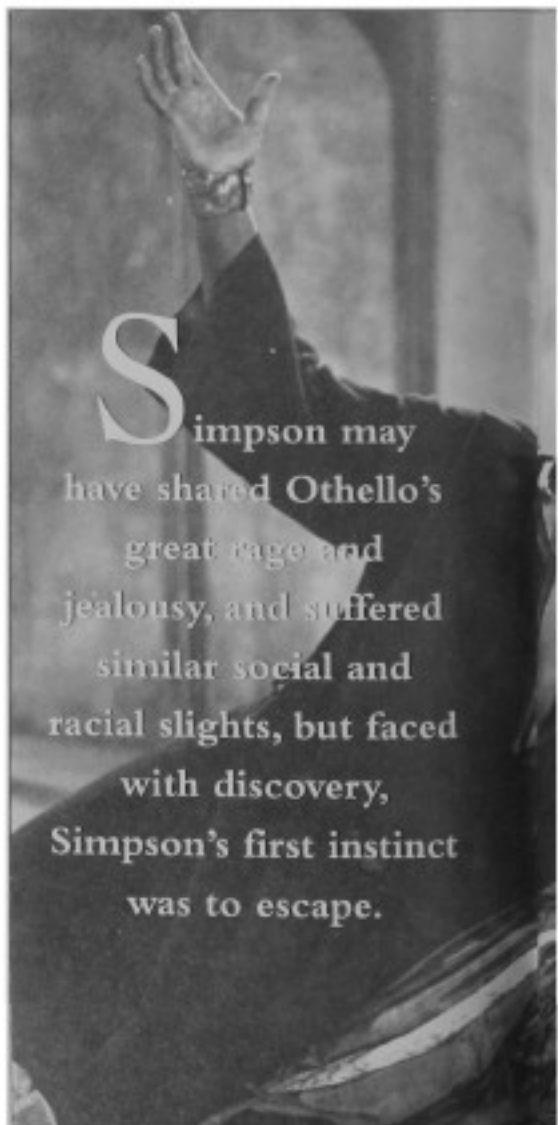
No, Susan Smith is no Medea. In fact, she was a classic good girl, the most traditional kind—self-limiting and self-minimizing. Voted the "friendliest senior of the class of 1989" at Union High School and considered the "kind of student you want in your class" by her school principal, this member of the National Honor Society chose not to go to college or leave her small town. Instead, she stayed close to home, and gained definition and affiliation through a man by becoming a mother and then a wife. She married David Smith when she was two months pregnant.

David Smith, however, is something of a Jason. His infidelities were public knowledge, and Susan was known to show up at the Winn-Dixie where he worked to check on his whereabouts. Her sense of self was so enmeshed in

David that she reportedly attempted suicide twice over him: once during high school when he broke off their relationship, and a second time because of difficulties in their marriage. If true, the two suicide attempts reflect Smith's enormous need for male connection and approval.

For Smith, the "good girl," there was always a man and always a problem. When she was seven years old, her father committed suicide. At 16, she told police, her stepfather had molested her, although she never pressed charges. By 19 she was married, by 22 she had taken a lover who rejected her, by 23 she had sent her two baby boys back to Daddy, back to their "Heavenly Father."

From published reports it appears that Smith was indeed distraught and suicidal over an unrequited love when she murdered her children. Tom Findlay, her lover and the boss' son in the office where she worked as a secretary and earned \$17,000 a year, had written her the now-infamous letter telling her



Simpson may have shared Othello's great rage and jealousy, and suffered similar social and racial slights, but faced with discovery, Simpson's first instinct was to escape.

he was not ready to be a father. And she had begun divorce proceedings against David because of his infidelities, which, according to her best friend Donna Greer, sent her into deep depressions. Like Medea, Smith may well have thought to herself...

**It was everything to me to think
well of one man,
And he, my own husband, has
turned out wholly vile....
A man, when he's tired of the com-
pany in his home,
Goes out of the house and puts an
end to his boredom...**

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, secretaries in the office called Findlay a "catch." Perhaps Smith saw him as her ticket out of what she experienced as the draining monotony of a lower-class existence. Without David and the hope of a new life with Findlay, she lost all sense of self.

Who, if not herself, was she killing? By all reports she had been a good

mother. There is no known pattern of Susan Smith ever abusing her children, not the situation in the majority of cases of female infanticide. Her crime seems to have appeared full-blown out of nowhere. "I guess she just wanted to be with Findlay," Rebecca Smith, sister of her estranged husband David, told the *Tribune*. "He had money and he didn't want to have kids around."

Had her two young sons come to represent all that was male, all that was powerful, all that stood in her way, all that she tried to please but never could? Were they symbols of male power, as Nicole Brown Simpson was of white power?

Smith's Greek chorus, unlike Simpson's, offered no comfort or pity. There were no handwritten signs of support or T-shirts or 400 fan letters a day. After she was arrested, one Houston man told the *Houston Post* that she should be driven into a lake and drowned like her children. And a woman from her town, a mother of two, was overheard to suggest Smith be taken off suicide watch so that nature could take its course. Maybe it's because Simpson is a celebrity who has fallen far from his role-model status and Smith is a small-town nobody who managed to manipulate a whole nation into aching for her and her plight. Maybe it's because Smith killed two innocent children and Simpson's target was his sensual ex-wife. Or maybe it's because, as Cheryl McCarthy wrote in *Newsday*, "At a time when marriage is crumbling, careers are being aborted in mid-life, and priests are revealed to be child molesters, the Mother Love Myth is all we have," and Smith has shattered it, just as Medea did. And that scares us. "Mothers don't like to admit it, but for many there have been times when they felt like killing their children," McCarthy noted. Or as Frank Rich postulated in the *New York Times*, "We feel the horror of Susan's crime not because it's unimaginable but precisely because we can imagine it."

But in the end, both Susan Smith and O.J. Simpson have much less to tell us about themselves than about the world in which we now live, a world more profoundly removed from that of Euripides and Shakespeare than mere technology can tell. Their stories speak of how very far we have gone from holding our heroes and anti-heroes accountable for their acts, and

of how individual responsibility has given way to theories of victimization and system error.

Tragedy requires its main characters to fall, but fall *consciously*—to take ultimate responsibility for their crimes and to come to some level of understanding about themselves and their motivations. Simpson and Smith fall far short. They are merely piteous, not tragic.

Simpson may have shared Othello's great rage and jealousy, suffered similar social and racial slights, and held his view of women as property—Nicole was a "trophy wife." But in his pathetic, but non-prophetic, suicide note, Simpson could only claim that "at times, I have felt like a battered husband or boyfriend, but I loved her," and add a plaintive, "I've always tried to be up and helpful. So why is this happening?" Simpson has no center, no moorings and no moral compass. He floats amorously in a sea of self-pity. "Please think of the real O.J. and not this lost soul."

This splitting off of Simpson the Good from Simpson the (alleged) vengeful murderer is symptomatic of a far deeper societal disassociation—the disconnection between cause and effect, the rupture of action from consequence. Whatever great passions may have driven the murders he is charged with is lost in a series of endless media manipulations and legal maneuvers. "Getting away with it" becomes the ultimate achievement, and melodrama replaces what should have been tragedy.

As for Susan Smith, whatever we learn and eventually come to understand about the motivations behind her horrible crime, she will always remain ultimately mysterious and ultimately alien. She, too, claims no conscious ownership of her deeds, although she admits to them. This is not to say that it would be better if Susan Smith had truly mirrored Medea and deliberately set out to kill her boys. However, Medea's crime does imply a distinct choice. Smith is merely one more voice in the chorus of "victim" criminals who fill our papers and our airwaves with their claims of being moved by forces beyond themselves. We are left once again with a rupture of action from consequence. There's no catharsis, merely a tragedy by proxy. ♦



lose some



Flowers in memory of Shannon Lowney fill the doorway of the Planned Parenthood clinic in Brookline, Mass.

Only hours after the Brookline murders on December 30, people began to leave flowers outside both the Planned Parenthood and Preterm clinics in memory of receptionists Shannon Lowney and Leanne Nichols. When I visited the sites one evening a few days later, the bright glow of dozens of candles illuminated scores of bouquets outside both locations. Handwritten messages expressed love and appreciation for the work of the murdered women and grief at having lost them. As I stood on the sidewalk in front of the entrance to Preterm, several cars pulled up and women got out to pay their respects and leave still more flowers. Whether friends of those killed and injured in the attacks or strangers, we shared a common sorrow and common desire to honor them.

The actress Kathleen Turner read a poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay at the memorial service for Shannon. Referring to those who die untimely deaths, the poem concludes: "I do not approve and I am not resigned." How appropriate, I thought. No, we must not be resigned to these murders or any future attacks against those who serve women's needs. We must work to turn our grief and anger into strength by rededicating ourselves to the struggle for women's reproductive freedom, and doing all we can, actively and militantly, to defend and protect our clinics.

—MARY LOU GREENBERG

A "Clinic Escort" t-shirt, a U.S. marshal's badge, and the white ribbon worn by many mourners were some of the items incorporated in *Choices: The Pensacola Mural* after input from local residents. The 5-by-20-foot mural created for the laboratory walls at the Ladies' Center in Pensacola, Florida, is meant to serve as both encouragement to those in the community who refuse to be intimidated and as a memorial for Dr. John Britton and clinic volunteer James Barrett, who were murdered at the Ladies' Center in July, and Dr. David Gunn, slain last March at another Pensacola women's health facility.

The mural, by artists Rochelle Shicoff and Janet Braun-Reinitz, features prominent portraits of the slain men and vivid geo-

metric blocks of traditional patterns created by the ancestors of populations served by the clinic: the Creek Nation, colonial Americans, African-Americans, and Southeast Asians. The creation of the mural was sponsored by the artists' nonprofit community mural organization Artmakers Inc., and the Clinician Initiative of Planned Parenthood of New York City.

"One of the most disturbing things we observed in Pensacola is how isolated people at the clinic feel," says Shicoff. "But after they saw all the names of the people who had given us money [painted on the bottom of the mural], they began to understand how much support they have; that people are interested and concerned."

—SUZANNE LEVINE





Elisabetta Sirani, 1663
National Museum of Women in the Arts

A Doctor from St. Paul

The American Medical Women's Association (AMWA) presented its annual National Reproductive Health Award to Jane Hodgson, MD, from St. Paul, Minnesota. In 1971, Dr. Hodgson became medical director of the Preterm Clinic in Washington, DC, one of the first and most influential abortion clinics in the U.S. She has since founded several abortion clinics in Minnesota and, at age 79, is still providing abortions to women.



And One of Our Own!

ON THE ISSUES was the winner of a 1994 Community

the conference's final document reflected the reality of women's lives. Bella is now "leading the charge" for the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing in September. Said Jacqui Ceballos at the medal of honor presentation: "Stir up Bella and she stirs up the world."

Action Network Media award for the OTI dialogue, "Get Tough on Rape," with former rape prosecutors Liz Holtzman and Alice Vachss (Summer 1994). The award cited the article for making the points "that it is necessary to deal with men's attitudes toward violence and manhood, that most rape victims are terrified that they will be victimized again by the court system, that victims of spousal abuse often feel (and are told) that it is their fault,

A Fighter from The Bronx

Bella Abzug, "the Bronx's gift to the nation, and now the world," was awarded the 1994 Veteran Feminists of America Medal of Honor. The former congresswoman, now 74, was the U.S. delegate to the recent Cairo population conference, where she helped organize the daily women's caucus to ensure



Bella Abzug (right) with OTI publisher Merle Hoffman (left) and Phyllis Chesler at the Veteran Feminists of America dinner.

and that the justice system needs tougher laws about rape and more sensitive prosecutors." Community Action Network, founded by advertising industry leaders, is a volunteer, nonprofit group dedicated to collecting and sharing practical solutions to community social problems. ON THE ISSUES was one of 66 winners from a field of over 2000 entries.

Female Mail

Italian Renaissance artist Elisabetta Sirani's *Virgin and Child* (1663) was chosen as the official 1994 Christmas stamp by the U.S. Postal Service—the first to feature the historical work of a woman artist. Though little known today, Sirani was extraordinarily well known during her lifetime.

By age 17, Sirani, a precocious talent, was professionally active and, after her father's illness, her family's main support. Although she lived only 27 years, she produced at least 150 works, developing a dark, rich palette and excelling in "mezzo figure," or half-length, portraits of religious and allegorical subjects. Streams of visitors journeyed to Bologna to watch the young artist at work on a public commission for the city's main cemetery. Sirani attracted royal patrons, including the Grand Duke Cosimo III de' Medici, and taught other women artists.

When Sirani died under mysterious circumstances in her native city of Bologna, her death was elaborately mourned with commissioned funerary music, oratory, and a commemorative catafalque featuring a life-size effigy of the artist. As a final gesture of esteem, she was buried next to Guido Reni, one of the most influential Bolognese painters of the 17th century.

Flicker of Hope in Former Yugoslavia

A women-led private voluntary organization has signed a three-year, \$2.2 million cooperative agreement with the U.S. Agency for International Development to aid women's peace initiatives in the Yugoslav successor states. STAR—Strategies, Training and Advocacy for Reconciliation—of Delphi International, will help encourage women leaders in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia who have emerged as new and courageous voices for peace and development in the area. The project grew out of a meeting early last year between women leaders in the former Yugoslav republics and the U.S.

Seen around after Josephine Baker's resignation: "I masturbate, and I love."

Feedback

Send letters to the editor to: **ON THE ISSUES, Choices Women's Medical Center, Inc., 97-77 Queens Boulevard, Flushing, NY 11374-3317**

DAVIDIANS DEFENDED

I was shocked by your short feature "How to Tell if Your Next-Door Neighbor Is the Next Waco Wacko" (Winter 1995). It attacked David Koresh solely on religious and lifestyle grounds, ignoring possible concerns to feminists. And it overlooked the awful reality.

On February 28, 1993, when Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) agents in National Guard helicopters zoomed in on the Branch Davidians' church and home, they did so with guns blazing, like Americans raiding a Vietnam village. Davidians claim such firing killed three unarmed people.

BATF—and FBI agents who took over for them—knew that Mount Carmel's roofs and walls contained evidence of the illegal helicopter attack. If it was left standing, the Davidians probably would be acquitted of murder of federal agents by a sympathetic jury—in fact, those who survived were acquitted of murder! Moreover, BATF agents could face prosecution and imprisonment for negligent or intentional homicide in the deaths of the unarmed Davidians. Therefore, it is likely that FBI agents in Waco deliberately sabotaged negotiations with the Davidians to prevent their exiting Mount Carmel.

Unfortunately, religious bigotry has prevented millions of people from recognizing that what we saw in Waco was the greatest massacre of civilians on American soil since the 1890 massacre of 200 native Americans at Wounded Knee. Of the 82 people massacred by the FBI, 61 were women and children. This is not something that femi-

nists should be joking about.

Carol Moore
Washington, DC

THE HILLARY THREAT

If the White middle-aged male is threatened by Hillary Rodham Clinton, so be it. If you are threatened by her, then shame on you.

Virginia B. McKinney
Bremerton, WA

There must have been some kind of electronic glitch in cyberspace! How did Rush Limbaugh "take over" Elayne Rapping's column in the Winter 1995 issue? I started out reading about Susan Cheever's *New York Times* review of the autobiography of Norma McCorvey. I thought Elayne Rapping's anger was directed at Susan Cheever. Suddenly, like a bad connection on a mobile phone, a lot of garbled stuff spewed forth about "hair," "womanizing," and "sordid financial and moral wheelings and dealings." I immediately recognized this as possible Limbaugh material. Then this bizarre transmission continued with "[Hillary] even could have chosen to take another independent position in Washington... and been in a position to really fight for something worthwhile; something that would help women and children...." Yeah! Like healthcare! Damn, just like that Hillary not to think of that!

Jan W. Evans
Cincinnati, OH

BEYOND ABORTION

I was not surprised to read "Busting Mr. Short Eyes," by Nikki Craft, "How to Tell if

Your Next Door Neighbor Is the Next Waco Wacko," by Carol Vinzant, or Ronni Sandroff's editorial on the FBI presence at Choices Women's Medical Center in the Winter 1995 issue. Having recently completed a 10-week training course to be a volunteer at the local women's shelter, I realize that the immediate reaction that most women have to the violence and terror that surrounds them is to "lock the abusive men up and throw away the key."

Relying on the legal system of the most brutal country in the world to protect us from male violence doesn't make sense. What makes anyone think that the government will support, protect, and defend the right of women to control their own bodies?

Although the fight for abortion rights is an essential one, while we are fighting for control of our reproductive systems, we are losing more control over our working conditions, over our children's futures, and over our too short lives. We must remember that no matter on what issue we choose to make our stand, we are ultimately fighting for freedom for all people.

Diana Balot Frank
Allentown, PA

RELAXED CHILDBIRTH

I found "Natural Childbirth: From Option to Orthodoxy" (Winter 1995) by Nicole Bokar to be a truly excellent, if long overdue, article. Over the past few years I've indeed had friends complain to me about pressure being exerted upon them to forgo anesthetics during labor and childbirth as "it's better for the baby."

Bokar writes, "every woman should be free to make her own choices about pregnancy and motherhood without being judged." How true, simple and straightforward, and refreshingly feminist this is.

Robin Skell
St. Paul, MN

ELDERS' RESIGNATION

The firing of Joycelyn Elders leaves me with a cold lump of fear in the pit of my stomach. It is one more indication that this administration is no different from the ones it purported to replace. Bill Clinton is selling out on women and children.

Elders spoke up for sex education in the schools and talked openly about masturbation as a healthy alternative to intercourse for teens and at-risk adults. The President himself may agree with this point of view, but his cowardly position dictates that he denounce this fine brave woman because "she is a flashpoint for conservative attack" against his administration.

I believe that without women in power our country has little chance of surviving very far into the twenty-first century, for the bastion of white male supremacist chauvinists will ultimately destroy us all.

Karin E. Weiss
Annandale, MN

CANCER-PREVENTING PILL

Your article on ovarian cancer (Fall 1994) overlooks one important issue. Oral contraceptive pills ("birth control pills") have been shown over and over again to protect against ovarian cancer. Women who use birth control pills for even a few years have a substantial reduction in ovarian (and also in endometrial) cancer, and women who use pills for over five years have less than half as much ovarian cancer as women who never use the pill at all.

Bruce Ferguson, MD
Albuquerque, NM

COLUMNIST



ELAYNE RAPPING

Raw Law: WATCHING COURT TV

"With liberty and justice for all," they told us in school. But oh boy, I've often thought, who do you have to pay off, or sleep with, to get some of it? As a woman, I've been denied services I had a right to; charged for things I didn't want or need, subjected

to "treatments" that could have killed me; kept out of places I deserved to get into; and pushed into places I had to fight my way out of. When I could afford to pay a lawyer for "justice," more often than not, I have been told there was nothing I could do. Haven't you? Haven't your friends? Haven't we all?

Although you'd never know it from the textbooks, news reports, movies, or TV dramas, American justice is not the lovely blindfolded lady who holds the scales of justice so fairly and objectively in her marbled white hands. As most women—and people of color and the poor—find out sooner or later, the legal system has a set of built-in biases which were put in place by the Founding Fathers, and mostly kept there by subsequent generations of legislators. And these biases tend to stack the deck so that some of us—most certainly women—are judged more harshly for our "sins"

Court TV fans know exactly why the jury awarded legal secretary Rena Weeks \$7 million in a sexual harassment case.

and "crimes," while some—you know who—get off scot-free through the hidden loopholes that the lawmakers, still mostly pale and male and rich, provide for their own.

It's hard to see this, though, through the mediated versions of justice most of us grow up on. In the past, the courts themselves were largely inaccessible to the public. And movies, TV dramas, and heavily edited and sound-bitten news reports, served only to bolster and glorify the myth of gender- (and race- and class-) neutral justice by making it seem that each individual woman's fate merely reflects her essentially "good" or "bad" nature and, therefore, must be "just" and "fair."

Just think about the images of gender justice we've been raised on. In the courtrooms where Perry Mason and Ben Matlock worked their miracles, women were mostly seen in one of two roles. There was the sweet young thing, falsely accused, who came quivering and desperate to the Great Man who alone among men could solve the unsolvable and finger—in the last dramatic moments—the real culprit, sleazy and shifty-eyed, sitting hunched in the back row of the courtroom. And there was the bitch-villainess, heartless and brilliantly manipulative, who finally crumbled into confession under the steely questioning of Our Hero.

Until recently, the movies mostly favored the second version—remember Marlene Dietrich in *Witness for the Prosecution*? But since feminism has sent so many of us into the legal profession as players, they've had to create a new stereotype. Glenn Close in *Jagged Edge* was the perfect prototype for future heroines of the courtroom drama genre. In that clever film she played a high-powered, successful legal eagle who fell in

love with her sociopathic wife-murdering client and nearly lost her case, her mind, and her life because of him. The theme of the "Girl Lawyer Not Quite Good Enough to Make It in the Man's World After All" has since been done to death, with a raft of classy actresses—most recently Cher, Barbara Hershey, and Rebecca De Mornay—in the lead role. In each case, of course, there is a proverbial Good Man (where was he when I was looking for legal help?) who sees what the love-blind heroine can't and saves her. Lately, with the debut of the TV series *Sweet Justice*, the model has been transferred, quite smoothly, to the small screen, with Melissa Gilbert playing the smart but vulnerable attorney who falls prey to one villain after another. "Well," say the media, "who told you girls to get into



this man's game anyway?"

And then there's the news industry, supposedly "factual" in its reporting of women and the law. But when you look closely, this "objective" information source is as filled with stereotypes and clichés as the entertainment forms. Most of the recent well-publicized trials involving women and/or family and gender issues—the Rachel Kingsley child divorce case, the Aileen Wuornos serial killer case, the William Kennedy Smith rape trial, the Menendez brothers patricide case, and the Amy Fisher attempted murder case—were so savagely edited, framed, sound-bitten and (mis)interpreted by the network producers and their legal "experts" that it was impossible to glean the hidden gender and family assumptions that worked, in every case, to render real justice nearly impossible.

How do I know this? Because I watch Court TV, a godsend for those who want to actually understand how the legal system works, and a friend to women and other misused and mistreated souls everywhere. My first encounter with this low-rent "narrow-cast" network was during the William Kennedy Smith trial, in which a young woman charged the Kennedy heir with date rape. I quickly gave up on the *New York Times* reports, which were unusually and overly nasty and sexist. The businesslike female prosecutor was described as stereotypically "shrill," "cold," and too sexually "naive" and inexperienced to understand seductresses like the plaintiff. The plaintiff herself, the designated "Bad Girl," was treated even more harshly. Among the many sins which, to the *Times*, cast doubt on her credibility, were her friendship with a bartender, her occasional attendance at late-night clubs and—gasp!—her habit of buying lingerie at Victoria's Secret. Then I tried CNN, which was no better. Their "expert" commentator, well-known attorney F. Lee Bailey, was an old white male whose own sexist biases were as bad as the *Times*'. Nor did the clips chosen for primetime emphasis on CNN—the passing around of the alleged victim's underwear and "size 10, \$100 Ann Taylor black shift" was typical—help my blood pressure or add to my legal knowledge.

But Court TV is different. First of all, the gavel-to-gavel coverage really is. Where CNN chooses only the most

sensational elements of a trial for full coverage, returning to regular programming when the drier, but usually more important and informative sessions take place. **Court TV just**

keeps chugging along, through dry and juicy days, carefully and patiently explaining it all to viewers—assumed to have brains as well as

emotions—so that things that may seem boring are seen, quite often, to make all the difference.

When Court TV chooses a case, it shows everything the law allows. And it offers a surprisingly diverse range of legal commentators who not only explain the law but also, indirectly and often explicitly, reveal its biases. In the Smith case, for example, we saw interviews with experts on date rape who were excluded from testifying and got to hear their outraged stories of how date rape victims are treated by the courts. We also got commentary from women lawyers about the rationale for such exclusions and the historic struggles—some won, some lost—by feminist attorneys to fight such bias.

Many other cases reported in highly biased terms by most media—the Rachel Kingsley "divorce" case and the Aileen Wuornos serial murder case, for example—were similarly presented on Court TV in ways which revealed hidden gender biases. Both women were poor, abused, desperate and—when allowed to speak for themselves, or through their attorneys—far from the degenerate, inbred miscreants the rest of the country met.

Most fascinating, perhaps, was the trial of the Menendez brothers, two wealthy young men who admittedly killed their parents after, they alleged, years of physical, sexual, and mental abuse by their powerful, successful father. Limited only to sound bites and commentaries from the traditional media, one could easily have been misled into thinking that the 24 members of the two hung juries, who could not agree to a guilty verdict in either case, were either feeble-minded or terminally manipulable, so demoralized were the defendants by the

smugly prejudiced press.

But what the jurors—and Court TV watchers—heard and saw was very different from what the rest of the media reported: an intelligent and impassioned argument, by two powerful female attorneys. Their arguments—which dramatically turned the proceedings around—were based on the feminist-inspired "harmed woman" defense that freed Francine Hughes, the long-abused wife who set her husband's bed on fire. Of course, lots of jurors and viewers and legal experts didn't buy it. This business of domestic violence as a crime, after all, is hotly contested territory, a frontal attack on the sanctity and stability of the patriarchal family and its power structure. But a lot of people did buy it, thanks to Court TV. And those who only watched *Nightline*, CNN and *Hard Copy*, and think we all must be crazy or stupid, only know their side of it.

But it's not just information and political context that Court TV offers. Quite often it presents dramatic and inspiring documentation of political cases in which women, gays, minorities, and children have been horribly victimized and, in seeking and sometimes even winning justice, empower us all. It has given detailed, graphic narratives of women like Rena Weeks, the legal secretary who sued her bigshot boss for sexual harassment and won \$7 million. Of men like John Doe, fired from his corporate law firm when he contracted the HIV virus, who also sued and won. Of women like Hedda Nussbaum, appearing whole and feisty after years of physical and emotional mutilation, to sue her ex-"lover," Joel Steinberg. Of women like Vernell Louder, poor, black, and undereducated, who was tragically misdiagnosed as HIV-positive by her medical clinic and also sued and won. To watch such trials play themselves out is quite often to witness heroic role models, in dignified, determined struggles against powerful white male opponents for the kind of justice we are all guaranteed, but few of us—for an endless list of reasons and causes which only Court TV ever manages to reveal—ever get.

Of course Court TV is not perfect. It is, after all, television, commercial television. Thus, its view of reality, while far more thorough and progressive than the rest of the media, is still mediated, still slanted (continued on page 52)

COLUMNIST



PHYLLIS CHESLER

Rape in High Places

Like most women, I've been sexually harassed by my professors, employers, boy-friends, and husbands—and by utter strangers on street corners too. Like others of my generation, I was bred to accept and enjoy it; above all, to keep quiet about it, forget it, and to blame myself if something about these peculiar arrangements bothered me. For years, in isolation, I did so, until movement in the late sixties allowed me to analyze my fate in feminist terms.

I think it's crucial for us to know what each of us has faced—simply because we're women; what's been done, routinely, to destroy our capacity to hope, and to resist.

Like most women, I've always had to fend off 'unwanted advances.' One pays a price for doing so. As every woman knows, hell hath no fury like a man spurned. Two examples, among thousands: In the late 1960s, after dinner, the head of a department at a prestigious medical school tried to rape me. I was a graduate student and we'd met, at his suggestion (I'm guilty, I confess, I went, I ate), to discuss how he could assist me in getting my research funded. In the decidedly non-amorous scuffle that ensued, I broke his ribs, and although I helped him to a nearby hospital (only women actually do things like this), this professor never did mentor my research.

In the early 1970s, another professor arrived to rate my college's curriculum for a national review board. I admit it, I did it again, I accepted his invitation to a dinner party with Very Famous White Male Intellectuals and their wives. (My equally ambitious heterosexual male counterparts also accepted dinner invitations, without having to face sexual harassment at the hands of their heterosexual mentors). However, I had the audacity not to be impressed by the company this professor kept, and to reject his every subsequent social and sexual advance. He retaliated. He arranged for a scathing review of *Women and Madness* to be published in *Partisan Review*. He got a woman to write it—a woman who, years later, apologized to me about it.

These two professors did not see me as their heir, as a future member of their team; nor were they overcome with love for me. They treated me as they did because I was a woman. It was

nothing personal. This is what makes it poignant, utterly heartbreaking—the inexorable lead-weight impersonality of prejudice.

These professors were not unusual. Back then (not now, heaven forbid, not now), most men viewed women as pussy: wife-pussy, girlfriend-pussy, whore-pussy. This harassment and lack of mentoring didn't stop me—here I am—but it certainly didn't help me. And, over a lifetime, it mounts up, it mounts up.

Sexual harassment and rape was so common, so pervasive, so accepted, that it was virtually invisible. The shame, the stench, stuck to the victim or to the whistle-blower. The victimizer never experienced the consequences of



Justice dawns—albeit slowly—at the United Nations. In December 1994 the world group settled a 1988 sexual harassment suit in favor of staff member Catherine Claxton, who sued Luis Maria Gomez, a high-ranking U.N. official from Argentina, for assaulting her in his office. Gomez resigned as a result of the charges.

his actions, he was never named, and when he was, all ranks closed to protect him and to destroy his accuser. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Great Men (and Token Women) of the Academy neither named nor studied sexual violence; ultimately, their contribution would be to characterize the 1970s grassroots feminist claims as exaggerated and unscientific, as proof of man-hating, unworthy of further discussion. Or funding.

In 1978, Lin Farley published the first full-length book on the subject: *Sexual Shakedown: The Sexual Harassment of Women on the Job*. Women launched lawsuits, and feminist media published their first stories on the subject. However, in my view, despite some noteworthy

exceptions, the most often quipped (white) feminists still had a hard time acknowledging their own powerlessness, their own complicity, in the face of male sexual violence, both on and off the job. Or in their own backyards.

In 1979-1980, I was hired by the United Nations to coordinate an international feminist conference that I'd "pitched" to them. Shortly after I signed my employment contract, my employer, Dr. Davidson Nicol, under-secretary-general of the United Nations and the executive director of the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), raped me. Yes (there I go again), I'd had dinner a few times with him too, to discuss my proposal, but that didn't mean I wanted to fuck him/have an affair/be raped.

I absolutely refused to quit. UNITAR was paying me a great deal of money to do something I passionately wanted to do; I was a single mother, and I needed the money desperately. ("Famous" women still have to work, fame doesn't equal wealth; this can't be said too often). I wanted to shepherd this first-of-its-kind conference, and my idea, into being. I'd be damned if I'd let a rapist force me off the field of battle, interfere with my feminist dreams.

No, I didn't "cry rape," at least, not out loud. I immediately told some trusted friends and my UN assistants what Nicol had done—and why I was staying on anyway. My friends were outraged, and compassionate. Neither they nor I could "do" anything about it. As a diplomat from Sierra Leone, and a UN official, Nicol had immunity—and I had a conference to create.

After Nicol raped me, I made sure I was never alone with him again. Of course, Nicol kept harassing me, but I paid one of my female assistants out of my own pocket to accompany me at all times. I evaded Nicol's every advance. He retaliated, packed my steering committee with every anti-feminist, anti-western, anti-white, anti-American, anti-Jewish, anti-Zionist, UN female employee he could find, and there were many to choose from. I endured. My conference endured too.

What was happening to me was not unique. In the mid-1970s, I was having dinner with an Australian-born diplomat when, suddenly, she began to weep. She told me she'd been raped by an Iranian diplomat in Teheran. She

had been hired by the Shah's sister, Princess Ashraf, as one of her chief advisors on a Women's Institute: "I had no money, I couldn't get them to give me a salary check, I was actually starving. And then, this. I was so ashamed!" At the time this woman was the highest ranking international feminist civil servant, at least whom I knew. "They've raped our Foreign Minister," I said, "and we have no army to avenge you!"

What was unique, at least to me, was the way in which my own feminist comrades behaved when I tried to confront my rapist. In July 1980, in Oslo, Norway, Nicol, who was intoxicated most of the time, began sexually harassing women at the conference, myself included. "Phyllis, come be with me. You've made me wait long enough. You've got your conference. I need you. I want you. I will have you."

I called a midnight meeting, revealed that Nicol had just sexually harassed three women at the conference, and me, and that he'd sexually harassed me before, in New York, where he'd raped me too.

I cried "rape" as soon as I could, when I thought I'd be heard and get some kind of justice.

"Maybe I was wrong not to quit right away," I admitted. "This conference has my blood all over it. I'm ready to confront him. Are you? A private confrontation is the only justice I'll ever get. Nicol has diplomatic immunity. I don't think I'll get anywhere trying to sue him through the UN, or through the D.A.'s office in New York, or in his home country, where he tells me he's a prince of his tribe." At least ten women were listening intently.

One Nicol-harassed feminist said she couldn't afford to jeopardize her connection to the UN. "Anyway, that's how men are. I guess I feel flattered that men still find me attractive, even at my age." Another of Nicol's victims was terrified, but willing to confront him. "This has brought back memories of my rape when I was four years old. I don't know if I have the strength to do this. I'll try though," she bravely said.

"I'm ready, let's go," said the third and youngest woman Nicol had harassed.

A Portuguese diplomat was at the meeting, counting her rosary beads rather frantically. "I always knew something like this could happen."

"The man's disgusting," said a woman from South Africa. "Let's go talk to him."

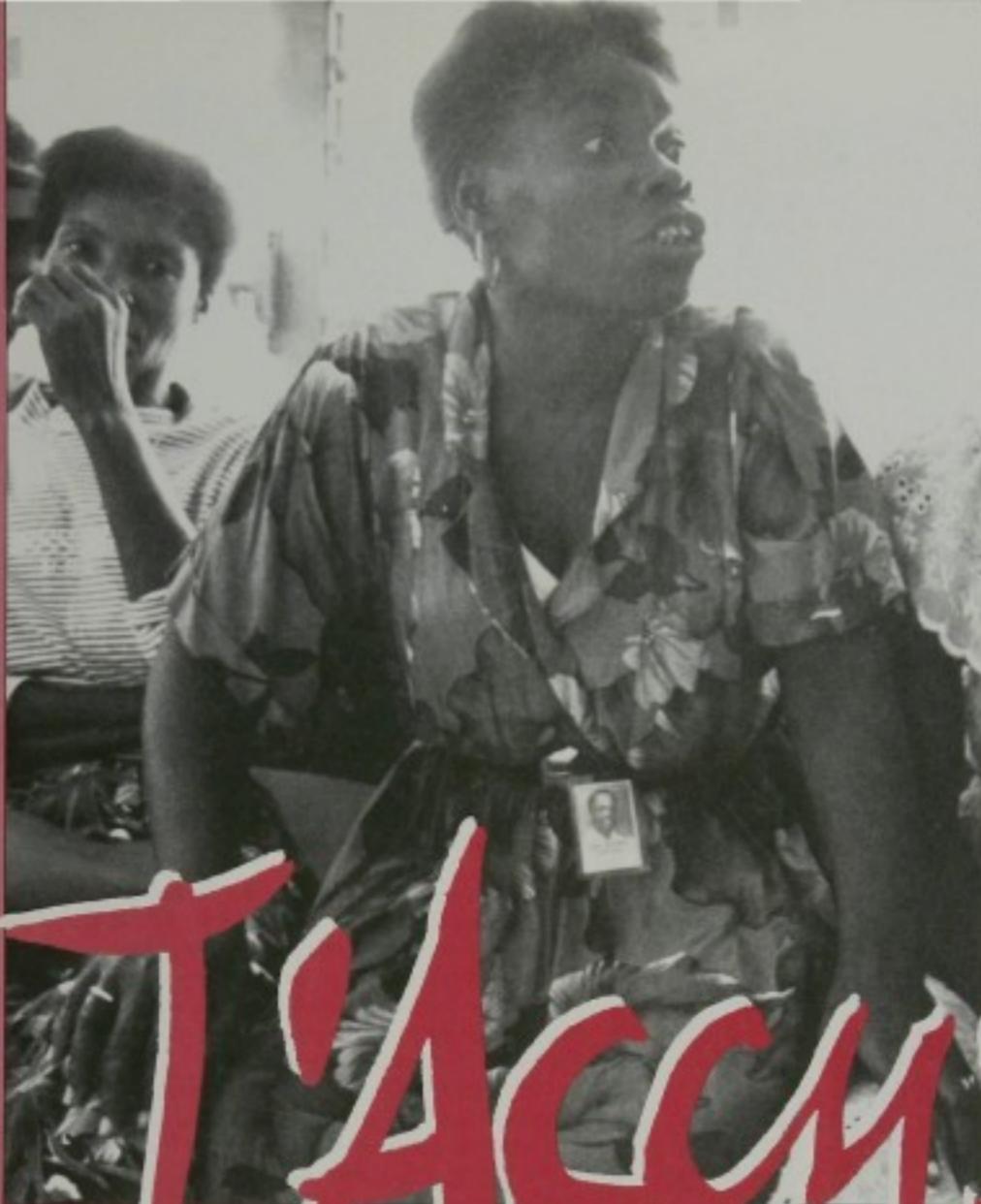
"Okay," said a woman from Zambia. "But it's so upsetting."

Two of the white radical (and lesbian) feminists whom I'd invited took the following approach: With passion, and in tears, A. begged me/us not to confront Nicol. "If (white) feminists were to accuse a black man of rape, it would expose our movement as a racist movement." White feminists were racists; A.'s concern was, perhaps, with public exposure. The black African women were ready to confront Nicol. (Nicol, by the way, blocked my every move to subsidize and/or invite more than one African-American woman to Oslo; he wanted white blondes, he paid for them, and he got them.)

B., the second white feminist, and an internationally well-known feminist too, was equally persuasive; she smoothly managed to delay our confronting Nicol. "Let's handle this back in New York, let's not destroy this conference, the rape happened on American soil, maybe Phyllis can pursue it better there."

Back in New York, to my amazement, B. ended up collaborating with Nicol. B. wrote the foreword to the conference proceedings in my place, and the UN published it as a book in 1983, without a single line from me. Yes, I had been asked to write the foreword; I said I would. Nicol wrote, and called, several times, to say that the book was "once more a little delayed, no hurry with that foreword of yours." My feminist "sister," B., also went on to solicit many of the women I'd found, and invited to Oslo, as contributors to her own international feminist (?) anthology.

When I first saw B.'s foreword, I said I'd sue both B., Nicol, and the UN. Ironically, B. had been sued in the early 1970s by another feminist, allegedly for plagiarism; too late, B. had asked me (?) to intercede on her behalf. This time, in pain, in rage, I was confronting my formerly beloved comrade. I did not understand why she'd done this and I wanted to. I pro- (continued on page 57)



EYEWITNESS
REPORT

One week after Aristide's return to Haiti, ON THE ISSUES sent journalist Laura Flanders to Port-au-Prince to hear Haitian women testify against military rapists. Her special report is moving, inspiring, and, surprisingly, full of joy.

THE WOMAN IN THE TIGHT, red kerchief opens her eyes wide and spreads her palms across the kneecaps of the women sitting by her side. "Since the Thursday before the arrival, I didn't sleep," she says. In the days after the restoration of ousted president Jean Bertrand Aristide, Haitians talk of "the arrival" like the Second Coming; no need to clarify who has arrived. "I didn't expect to eat better or be healthier suddenly, but he'd be back," the kerchiefed woman explains. "It's like my dead brother, or my dead father or a whole dead generation returning." Another woman describes the arrival of president Aristide as a birthing: "As I watched TV and waited, I put a belt around my stomach to stop my insides coming out. It felt like labor."

The women are speaking with U.S. visitors in a bright yellow-tiled room in northern Port-au-Prince. Brought together by one of Haiti's largest women's groups, Solidarite Fanm Ayisyèn (SOFA), they are talking

BY LAURA
FLANDERS

Wearing a photo of Jean Bertrand Aristide around her neck, a Haitian woman gives testimony to U.S. women from MADRE.

My heart
stopped
and I was
afraid
that
something
would
happen to
my chil
dren and
I prayed



Murals like the one above appeared on the walls in Port-au-Prince, in triumphant rebuttal of a coup official's comment that Aristide could no more return to Haiti than a laid egg could be put back inside a chicken.



about the future for women in wake of the arrival. Their visitors, myself included, are here with MADRE, a 20,000-strong U.S. women's group that has been sending aid to SOFA for the past 12 months. MADRE's mis-

but you can't scare me because my husband is coming."

The impossible has happened in Haiti: President Aristide has come home. And like the tiny, wrinkled photos of the ousted president that people here have somehow perilously preserved, the dream of justice that successive military regimes have tried to eradicate is back and, miraculously, alive.

"Our first goal is to bring the men who attacked us to trial," said one of the raped women. "The next is to make sure it never happens again."

SOFA was founded eight years ago. At their last public meeting, they estimate that 3,000 women from all over Haiti were represented. Since the coup, they've had to work more discreetly, but they've worked. SOFA members in Port-au-Prince help market vendors establish credit collectives. In the countryside, the group tries to offer health care and literacy and political education sessions in the privacy of people's houses, out of sight. For MADRE, the stories of women working in repressive circumstances are familiar. For eleven years, MADRE has been sharing skills and expertise, as well as aid, with women in Nicaragua and El Salvador and throughout Central America, the Middle East, the former Yugoslavia, and the Caribbean.

MADRE's Vivian Stromberg never believed the U.S. media's message that popular organizations, especially the women's organizations, in Haiti had been destroyed. "We've found sister organizations in every country that we've been in, and Haiti is no exception," she says. "Part of our work is to correct the message that there's nothing that U.S. people can do."

Among the gifts the MADRE women brought were 2,000 long-embargoed latex condoms. To everyone's relaxed amusement, several of the SOFA women and Vicki Alexander, M.D. (the health director of New

sion is to gather information for their continued collaboration. Together for the first time since the end of military rule, they talk about human rights, the U.S. intervention, poverty, politics, and rape.

The Haitians are old and young, from fifteen years of age to over sixty; political activists and friends of activists, market traders, domestic workers, peasants, professionals, daughters, wives; they are fifty of the hundreds of women who were raped by anti-Aristide terrorists in the last months of their country's most recent military regime. It wouldn't be unreasonable to measure the success of the U.S. intervention by the extent to which these women's abusers are brought to justice. But right now, the woman in the kerchief and her friends are celebrating.

A young market trader in a blue-check dress describes taunting an anti-Aristide thug who lives in her neighborhood on the day of the president's return. She dug out of hiding all the photographs of Aristide never found by the Macoutes [a generic term for the agents of the dictators]. "I was surprised I was still alive," she said. "But now I told him: You can kill me

duty...
He pulled
out his
gun and
shot it
up... One
of them
said,
"I'm not
leaving
here, I
cry,
with this

ON THE ISSUES

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York's Community Family Planning Council and a MADRE board member), demonstrated how to roll a condom onto a phallic plantain. Then Alexander noted sobriety. "The death squads are deadly; AIDS is just as deadly." The women from MADRE offered medical examinations, taught group massage and shared messages of encouragement from women's groups in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Palestine.

"Obviously the perfect thing would be for there to be peace in Haiti without a foreign army on its soil," says Stromberg, who was last in Haiti in April 1994. "Equally obvious, there's more peace in Haiti now than there was before. The question is, what happens next?"

Yes, there is more peace. The last time I was in Haiti was in early 1993. Then, the streets were hushed and awfully empty. From my bed, I could hear shooting. Twice in a week the morning revealed dead bodies in the hotel drive.

On this trip, things are different. Just one week to the day after Aristide flew into Port-au-Prince, the streets of the capital are teeming with recent returnees. Beneath almost every tree, skinny street vendors hawk fruit, fish, shoe leather, or sugar cane. Exiles from the city are gradually reappearing, and after dark, where recently there were only gunshots and their results, now there are young people laughing and bent-over women walking slowly hand in hand.

There's a sense of the extraordinary having happened, a sort of suspension of disbelief. But as the days pass, reality re-emerges. In a reference to a coup official's comment that the ousted president could no more return to Haiti than a laid egg could be put back inside a chicken, the city walls have paintings of large eggs being inserted into chickens; sometimes the hand doing the inserting is covered with stars and stripes. It's not an image many women would have come up with, but it's a statement about the restoration. Everyone knows the egg can't go back into the chicken, but people are clear there's been a miracle.

In his first public address, delivered from behind a three-inch-thick bullet-proof shield on the steps of the presidential palace, Aristide called the women of Haiti "real women," and "queens." "Given all the tribulations of life," said Aristide, "the women of Haiti are always there." The crowd—those crushed against the palace gates to hear, and those watching on TVs dragged into dusty neighborhood streets—sent up a cheer. One of those cheering was a powerful, dark-skinned woman in a brilliant blue shiny dress who attended our meeting. In her enthusiasm, she says, she picked up a neighbor and twirled her in the air. "When I heard Aristide talk about the Haitian women, I felt huge inside. I said to myself, yes, we are the Haitian women. We are beautiful and we are strong."

The woman in blue, we'll call her Geraldine, also knows about tribulation. Early in the morning of February 4, 1994, when she was sleeping with her husband, seven men knocked on the door. Two of the raiders appeared to be civilians, but three were dressed in army uniform, and two more wore the blue outfits of the Haitian police. In front of her husband and four of her kids, the soldiers raped her and then raped her daughters. "They put guns to their ears and forced them to lie down..." Among the weapons the men were carrying, she remembers an Israeli Uzi, several U.S. AK47 rifles and some 45's. "My tongue was filling up my mouth. I was spitting blood, mute."

Geraldine is not mute now. She talks about her 31-year-

old niece, a guest, who scrambled out a window when the gang arrived. The young woman's body turned up three weeks later in a common dumping ground. Geraldine's husband has been disabled ever since that night. The beating he received caused permanent damage to his kidneys. But Geraldine is talking about the need for justice. So is the woman in the red kerchief, and the woman in the blue-check dress. Along with the other women of SOFA, the women in the rape group are clear that individual empowerment needs to be followed by social change.

"We feel better, but we're not actually better off," one woman said. "Aristide is a leader and an inspiration," says another. "But he cannot be everywhere. We need to be our own Aristides."

Achieving Justice

One of the priorities for the women in the room is bringing their abusers to trial. Another is changing Haitian law. At present, explained Evelyn, a third-year law school student and one of SOFA's coordinators, "We have no structure for justice for rape." By current law, the punishment for rape is compensation: Offenders are usually required to pay a fine. An alternative is an offer of marriage to their victims. "Rape is still treated as an honor crime," said Evelyn.

In the wake of recent history, it was hoped that Haitian offenders could be tried under an international code. A few years ago the world's attention was drawn to Bosnia, where horrific tales of systematic rape inspired some women (including MADRE) to call for war crimes tribunals. At that time, the commander of the Bosnian Serbs, Radovan Karadzic, was charged with international offenses including mass rape because, it was argued, the crimes were committed under his authority and with his implicit consent. More recently, Korean so-called comfort women won compensation from the Japanese government, whom they charged with responsibility for the mass rape and forced prostitution of Korean women during World War II.

Nancy Kelly, part of the MADRE delegation, is a lawyer with the Immigration and Refugee program at Harvard Law School. "If we can get an international body to recognize rape as an act of torture, that could change things for women all over the world." So far, there has been no action in the Bosnian case. In the case of Haiti, a new initiative has been launched.

In May 1994 MADRE held a high-level press conference in Washington, D.C. to draw attention to the campaign of violence being waged against Haitian women. Susan Taylor of *Essence* magazine, Bianca Jagger, Marie Sr. Cyr, the director of New York's Iris House, Ninaj Raoul of the Brooklyn-based Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees, and others spoke out forcefully about the needs of Haitian women.

On September 26, a formal "Country Conditions Complaint" about Haiti was presented to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States (OAS) by MADRE, the International Women's Human Rights Law Clinic at the City University of New York Law School, the Haitian Women's Advocacy Network, the Center for Constitutional Rights, and the Immigration and Refugee Program at Harvard Law School, among others.

"What we found, compiling the research of very many

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groups," said Nancy Kelly, "is a consistent pattern of abuse by members of the Haitian military, the police and armed auxiliaries." Women of all sorts were targeted "because they were politically involved themselves, or because members of their family were, or because they were working with women, sustaining civilian life. Others were attacked simply because they were women."

Between February and July of 1994, UN-OAS human rights monitors reported 77 cases of rape, 55 of which involved female activists or close relatives of male activists. Some women's organizations in Haiti reported counting as many as 18 rapes in a single day. The OAS complaint contains the testimony of over 100 women, some of whom were forced to witness the rape or murder of their children before being raped themselves. In one case, a fifteen-year-old boy was forced to rape his mother.

A favorable decision at the OAS regarding rape in the case of Haiti could have tremendous repercussions in the legal world. Unfortunately for the women of Haiti, it seems unlikely the OAS will consider the case anytime soon.

But there are, as we go to press, approximately 20,000 U.S. troops in Haiti. It wasn't totally unrealistic for some women to expect that the armed forces would be used to apprehend abusers. After all, President Clinton did emphasize rape when he addressed the public in a televised speech intended to convince Americans of the need for U.S. military action, after months in which his administration downplayed human rights reports.

"Haiti's dictators, led by General Raoul Cédras, control the most violent regime in our hemisphere," declared the president. "International observers discovered a terrifying pattern of soldiers and policemen raping the wives and daughters of suspected political dissidents."

The "New" Old Police

But a month after U.S. troops descended on Haiti, the women of SOFA see no evidence that the young GIs are intent on bringing murderers and rapists to trial.

When the troops first arrived, "the people were very brave and the Macoutes were running scared," explained Anne Marie Coriolon, one of SOFA's directors.

"Gradually though, there's been a change. People are beginning to realize that the Macoutes still have arms and they're not about to be disbanded."

"The people turn criminals over to the U.S. troops, and then we see them back on the streets in three days or less," said another woman. "We were told the U.S. troops were here to disarm the criminals, but that's not what's going on."

Spokespeople for the U.S. armed forces acknowledge holding only between 30 and 40 men in detention during the period immediately following the Aristide restoration. "It's not our responsibility to judge who's guilty," one young GI from California

explained. "We're just here to keep the peace, not to get involved. Unless we see someone committing a crime in front of us, or doing something to threaten U.S. security, we've been told to leave them alone."

When women from MADRE and SOFA were lunching in a restaurant in Petionville, the wealthy district of Port-au-Prince, we witnessed a crowd growing in front of a nearby police station. An American military police lieutenant, sitting patiently in the cab of a dusty armored transport vehicle, explained that his unit was choosing policemen who were considered eligible for retraining. Under the U.S. plan, the current Haitian army, which includes the police, is to be replaced by an armed force of about 1,500 and a police corps of 7,000 to 10,000. But many men will be the same. A new academy has been established for retraining the "old" police, "professionalizing" them through the U.S. International Criminal Investigations Training Assistance Program (a project funded by the FBI). The "new" police will then be returned to their old neighborhoods.

How many of the Petionville police had been selected for retraining? "Them all," according to the lieutenant. "It will be easy enough to re-integrate the rest," he said. "I've seen them walking in their neighborhoods, smiling and shaking hands with people. I don't think there'll be any trouble."

The SOFA women were not as surprised by this as their friends from MADRE. On the day of Aristide's return, a young boy spotted the thug who had forced him to rape his mother and, with the help of a crowd, turned the accused man over to U.S. troops. SOFA's Anne Marie Coriolon remembered. There is no guarantee that man will be held. "If he's released, then what?" asks Coriolon. "That little boy's life is in danger." So far, none of the women in the rape support group coordinated by SOFA has dared come forward to identify their assailants to the U.S. troops.

Another option is to hold the leaders of the anti-Aristide regime accountable for the actions of their men. According to the women who met with MADRE, most of the assailants came masked, but the thugs usually wore recognizable uniforms, or they announced they were with the Front for Haitian Progress and Advancement (FRAPH), a right-wing paramilitary group. "They wanted us to know who they were," one woman explained. "That was part of the point."

But the likelihood of any of the paramilitary leaders being brought to trial in connection with the rapes is slim. On October 5, the U.S. forces organized a press conference for FRAPH's leader, Emmanuel Constant. "They gave him the sound system, brought him in a U.S. vehicle, protected him while he spoke and drove him away at the end," said Coriolon. A reporter from *Haiti Info*, a Port-au-Prince-based newsletter, asked U.S. embassy spokesman Stanley Schrager how he (and Clinton) could call FRAPH "terrorist" and "anti-democratic" one day and protect their leader the next? "Life's bizarre...things change all the time," said Schrager, explaining that the U.S. now considers FRAPH a legitimate political party. The October 24



Among those who spoke out: a 15-year-old girl (right), accompanied by her mother. Lawyer Nancy Kelly (above, with ponytail), recorded testimony for the MADRE delegation.

issue of *The Nation* was more enlightening: It revealed that the CIA had been instrumental in setting up the paramilitary group and that Constant was on their payroll at the time of the coup.

Business As Usual?

As the news crews started leaving Haiti, businessmen began arriving. At the airport on October 21, an English engineer was heard explaining to a customs official that his company had plans for him to stay six months. "Haiti's open for business," announced the *Miami Herald* less than a month after October 15. Haitian commerce minister Louis Dejoie assured U.S. executives that "Haiti is going to roll out the red carpet," at a conference in Miami.

To the women of SOFA, the revival of business as usual in Haiti means a return for women (the majority of industrial workers) to the sub-poverty Haitian wage (\$.14/hr.). Plans from Aristide's first term in office to double the minimum wage have been abandoned. According to the *Multinational Monitor*, Aristide's administration gave in to pressure from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund on that issue before August of 1994. Now an estimated \$800 million in multilateral (mostly U.S.) aid has been promised to Haiti, and local people suspect there are some strings attached. To Jane Regan of *Haiti Info*, the massive influx of money slated for "elections assistance" and "stability" is tantamount to an "invisible invasion." "The intent of many of these pro-



grams," writes Regan, "is to counter the democratic and popular movement's demands for radical economic change and social justice."

"It's our responsibility," says Vivian Stromberg, "to not let the U.S. presence redirect Haitian democracy. If we're serious about meeting the needs of people, we have to be serious about supporting the organizations they themselves have set up to respond to those needs. We have to listen to the Haitians."

Listening Up

The day before the MADRE group returned to New York, they listened. At the appointed site for testimony collection, a kindergarten in a popular neighborhood called Martissant, MADRE workers were greeted by (continued on page 55)

Do Feminists Need to Liberate Animals, Too?



Over the years, ON THE ISSUES has been committed to expanding the vision and definition of progressive politics. Acting on her concern for the exploitation and suffering of animals and her interest in exploring the role of compassion in progressive politics, publisher Merle Hoffman interviewed Carol J. Adams about the relationship between animal rights and feminism. In this interview, they discuss the reasons why people—feminists, in particular—should care about how we treat animals. Hoffman and Adams are both on the advisory board of *Feminists for Animal Rights*. Carol Adams is the author of *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (which won the first Continuum Women's Studies Award in 1989) and *Neither Man nor Beast: Feminism and the Defense of Animals*. She has also co-edited, with Josephine Donovan, two books on feminism and animal rights that will be released later this year. In the 1970s, Adams started a hotline for battered women. She has since served on national commissions on domestic violence and has been involved in combatting racism in housing practices.

MERLE HOFFMAN: Carol, do you think animal rights activism has a natural home in progressive politics?

CAROL ADAMS: Not a natural home, but a logical one. When you look back at the nineteenth century, there were instances of unification among suffragists, workers, and antivivisectionists in protests against vivisection. But liberal politics is not generous about animal rights because liberal philosophy is premised on a separation of humans from animals. Progressive politics is about changing consciousness, changing the structures of oppression. Because there's a basic sense that animals don't have consciousness, structures of oppression are not seen as something animals can experience. I'm not sure animal rights per se—the strictly philosophical concept of animal rights—has a home in progressive politics. But animal advocacy does. Until we recognize how people who have no power—whether it's women or people of color or the working class—are positioned as being closer to animals, the human/animal barrier will retain its power and influence.

Carol Adams sees feminism as a visionary philosophy that includes stewardship of the earth.

MH: Historically, women have been in the leadership of the animal rights movement, but feminists haven't. Why do you think feminists have not embraced the animal rights issue with the same political and philosophical fervor as they have antiracism and anticlassism?

CA: Several reasons. Over the years, many feminists have perceived that the equation of women with animals was a way to dehumanize women. Their response was to

say, "We are a part of the human species too. We are rational, thinking beings just like men." Also, in terms of the kind of antiracist progressive feminism we all aspire to, there is a worry that we lessen human victims if we argue for animals. While we have the notion that the personal is political, what we eat or wear is seen as private. The response is, "I want my eating of animals to be a private decision."

MH: But eating is an extremely public action.

CA: Right, but there's a drive to keep it privatized. Though it's completely anomalous within feminist theory, many say, "this is a part of my life I don't want to scrutinize."

MH: Perhaps they don't want to be enlightened because that would necessitate a change in behavior. Feminists always rail against being treated like pieces of meat and yet they say this as they eat a hamburger or steak.

CA: We all have to come to an awareness on our own. But because of the cultural pressure of meat-eating, as well as the denial that meat actually comes from animals, there's a linguistic dance done around butchered flesh. We don't say a lamb's leg, we say leg of lamb. We take away the possessive relationship between a lamb and his or her leg. Animals are not mass terms. Water is a mass term. You can add or take away water, but you can't change what water is. We falsely perpetuate the idea that meat is a



**A cherished relationship.
Carol Adams
with her
companion,
Holly.**

mass term, that it never adds up to a living animal.

MH: You've written that you became a vegetarian in 1974. I became one in 1986 after reading Hans Rausch's *Slaughter of the Innocents*. That was a very powerful epiphany for me. After that, I couldn't continue to eat meat because I knew what I was eating. Do you think all feminists should strive to become vegetarians?

CA: Yes, but consciousness-raising is a very painful thing. When anyone raises these issues, we hear a lot of defenses that are very similar to defenses of sexism from the early 1970s. If you were a "bra-burner" then, now people think, "You're one of those animal rights people making me worry about how I treat animals." But the basic insight of the feminist animal advocate is that animals are not ours to exploit, animals are beings that exist in community with us. Our goals are to not have them on our backs or on our plates.

MH: But you're dealing with a paradigm structure that's religious, philosophical, and political. Let's look at classical philosophy. In a sense, it's been the enemy of both animal rights consciousness and feminism. Particularly the philosophy of Descartes, the idea of a mind/body dualism. So how do you create a new philosophical framework?

CA: Feminist philosophy would say we've got a big problem with Western culture because it emphasizes rationality and has disowned the body philosophically. Since the body has not been valued, and since

women and people of color and animals have been equated with the body, they have been seen as "less than." So the question is, how do we reverse that? Do we say that rationality is important and we are rational beings and then join the other side and disown the body too? Or do we say our bodies are a source of knowledge? Can we then say animals are only bodies, they are never rational, so we're only going to extend the insights of feminist philosophy about the body so far?

MH: How do you get people who "love" animals, who sometimes treat their pets a lot better than other human beings, to expand this monocular love to a more expansive vision?

CA: Generally, people are loving to specific animals with whom they have specific relationships. It's a very privatized notion of love, so we have to start by having them acknowledge that the relationship they cherish need not be limited just to the cat or dog they are fond of. We have to

understand how it can be a model for other kinds of relationships, how love must work in partnership with justice.

MH: *So love is a political act in this sense.*

CA: That's right. Love involves an ethical stance, as my friend Marie Fortune says in her forthcoming book. Does love cause harm? Does love benefit from harm to others?

MH: *But the reality we live in has been reinforced through the ages by traditional religion, where humans are seen as the "stewards" of the earth. So you don't only have a collective, assumptive reality—you have one that has the bona fide Divine Word.*

CA: Well, we always know that the minute God is brought into something it's because somebody is trying to express some power over something else. One of the problems with Christianity is that it has a kind of male/female, human/animal hierarchy. God and the heavens are above us, humans are above animals, man is above woman, and God is seen as a human male.

MH: *So should animal rights activists be atheists?*

CA: Maybe pantheists. There's a tendency in feminist theology to be more immanent. To see God as revealed through us rather than transcending us.

MH: *In your book Neither Man nor Beast, you wrote that the antiracist defense of animals is not sentimental but is filled with sentiment. Could you explain that?*

CA: For white people, there's a lot of guilt around the issue of racism. Identification with disempowered people is often described or experienced as sentimental. We see this notion at work when the "voiceless" are spoken for in the anti-abortion movement. I'm saying that an antiracist defense of animals begins with the recognition that we must act in solidarity with the oppressed. We cannot just speak "for" them. We're not saving or protecting or bestowing something on animals, but recognizing who has privilege and power over them and challenging that.

MH: *Peter Singer and Tom Regan are the movement's main theorists. They have postulated a theory of animal "rights" and animal "liberation." Are there philosophical problems with these theories?*

CA: I don't think we can speak about animal "liberation." Liberation movements are all movements that arise from within repressed groups. I also don't like to use the word "rights" when we're talking about animal advocacy. Rights language is a legacy of the Enlightenment—the very Enlightenment that created a problematic philosophy of rational being.

MH: *But it is also the language of abortion rights, women's rights, civil rights. And when you speak about rights, you have the*



**Carol
Adams
with
her
collection
of
vegetarian
cookbooks.**



counter-issue of responsibility, so then people say how can you talk of animal rights because that implies responsibility.

CA: Feminism completely changes the dialogue. I am not looking to take basic animal rights philosophy and fit women in. I am trying to take feminism, which I think inherently extends to animals, and start in a different place. I look and say many of the basic insights of feminism—about how patriarchy works—shed light on how we see animals. Patriarchy is a gender system that is implicit in human/animal relationships.

MH: *Women have traditionally been intimidated by men's potential for anger, or actual anger. This anger has functioned as a limiting factor in women's political activism. What is your response to critics who say that, for women, becoming a vegetarian is a relatively low-risk way to protest?*

CA: I don't think anything is a low-risk way to protest for women. I think that there are very few places in the world where women are safe. And any act of self-actualization can be very threatening to others in her life. Vegetarianism is not a simple decision. I have had many women over the past twenty years tell me, "I would be a vegetarian if it wasn't for my husband." By believing they must feed their husbands meat, they perpetuate the whole

sexual politics of meat that says men need meat to be strong. They also fear that men's reaction to the absence of meat is greater than their ability to actualize their desire to be vegetarians.

MH: *What is it about the construction of manhood that seems to require the oppression of animals?*

CA: Being a man is tied in to identities—what “real men” do and don’t do. “Real men” don’t eat quiche, “real men” hunt. It’s interesting how many homophobic insults are thrown by hunters towards anti-hunting activist males. It’s not only an issue of privilege but an issue of symbolism. Manhood is constructed in our culture in part by access to meat-eating and control of other bodies, whether it’s women or animals. “Man,” which usually in our Euro-American culture is read as “white man,” can exist as a concept and as a sexual identity only through negation. Not women—not beast—not colored—that is, not “other.” Also, male biologists have often defended male supremacy by appealing to the laws of nature. This such-and-such animal dominates his female because that’s what nature intended. Men reinforce this by saying you bring out the animal in me, but they themselves resent being labeled animals.

MH: *How would you say that the defense of animals intersects with theories of ecofeminism?*

CA: Ecofeminism basically states that an environmental perspective without feminism is inadequate, and that a feminist theory that fails to analyze the way the environment has suffered because of patriarchal attitudes is also inadequate. Clearly, animals are on the nature side of the nature/culture dualism, but they often disappear in the environmental discourse. They’re what I call the “absent referent.” Many ecofeminists are comfortable with them remaining absent referents. They’re concerned with species rather than individual animals. And so the defense of animals locates itself within an ecofeminist politics, and says we cannot look at the whole without looking at the individual. We cannot work for justice and challenge the oppression of nature without understanding that the most frequent way we interact with nature is by eating animals.

MH: *Women have traditionally cared more about other victims than about themselves and about what happens to women collectively as a result of their simply being women. What do you say to feminist critics who charge that animal activism really serves to distract women from the women’s movement itself?*

CA: Well, I think that they are partially right. Women, who constitute at least 80 percent of the animal rights movement, may not deal with or recognize the issue of oppression in their own lives. Some women do recognize it or are the survivors of sexual violence. They realize that while there are feminists advocating positions on battering, rape, and other forms of institutional violence against women, there are not many feminists advocating on behalf of animals. So these women gravitate to the place where they feel they have the most to offer. But I do think the male hierarchy within the animal rights movement makes this a problem. We do not necessarily recognize it as a place for enhancing one’s own consciousness as a woman in a patriarchal world.

MH: *Do you find it more difficult to raise consciousness about feminism among animal rights activists or animal rights issues among feminists?*

CA: One is not easier than the other.

MH: *Which is a more natural progression?*

CA: For feminists to recognize animals. That’s my own progression. My goal is not to take animal rights, add women, and stop. I’m taking the basic concepts and ideas of second-wave feminism—concepts about structures of oppression—and saying that species is one of those structures. We cannot just stop at the human/animal barrier, because that barrier is part of the construction of patriarchy.

MH: *When we were together at a recent Feminists for Animal Rights conference, you told me that you came to understand the anti-pornography position far more deeply by being involved in animal issues than in feminist politics. Can you explain that?*

CA: Well, I always knew that I felt pornography was wrong. It was part of my feminism from the 1970s on. Later, I realized that this applies to animals too. Catharine MacKinnon talks about how epistemology constructs ontology. For instance, we look at a cow and say why else does that cow exist except to be our dinner? It’s a forced identity that reveals more about us. Distancing ourselves from animals enforces the subject/object relationship and creates a false construction of animals as meat. Once I recognized that, I also recognized how pornography constructs a forced identity.

MH: *You write that feminists “traffic in animals.” I find this a provocative statement. Does it refer to trafficking in women and pornography?*

CA: I think that we traffic in animals literally whenever we purchase products that derive from animals. I built on the concept that feminists have developed of trafficking in women because I wanted to politicize the use of animals’ bodies as commodities that objectifies them and denies them any individuality.

MH: *Pornography is a \$10-billion-a-year business. In the case of animal trafficking, it infuses every part of our lives.*

CA: Both of them infuse every part of our lives. When the religious right keeps sex education out of schools, teenagers learn about sex from pornography. So they de facto endorse a sort of pornographic hierarchy of men and women even though they explicitly condemn pornography.

MH: *I think they would debate that vigorously. Many on the Right excoriate the Left for creating a pornographic culture where women have sexual liberty and freedom through birth control and abortion. They see that as making women far more accessible to men’s sexual needs. I believe you can make an argument that the Left has also objectified women and has created a pornographic culture. Let’s talk about the Hill/Thomas hearings. When Anita Hill gave her testimony that Clarence Thomas had talked to her about pornography that showed women having sex with animals, what do you think was really going on there?*

CA: Several things were going on at the same time. First of all, it reminds us that women’s sexual violation and exploitation are often linked with that. (continued on page 34)

“Good women won’t vote; bad women will.” It was the conservative battle cry against the movement to win suffrage for women. But the same position was also embraced by many “progressive” women. Noted slavery abolitionist Catharine Beecher was determined to help shield women from the “burden of the ballot.” In 1871 she said, “A

large majority of American women would regard the gift of the ballot, not as a privilege conferred but as an act of oppression.” Even before Beecher spoke out, thousands of women were organizing state and local campaigns designed to halt the suffrage movement before it could do irrevocable harm to womanhood, the nation, and humanity.

The first anti-suffrage periodical, *The True Woman*, began publication in 1887. Among its regular contributors was Beecher’s sister, Harriet Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. By the turn of the 20th century anti-suffragists, or “antis,” as they came to be known, were a highly organized, richly funded force to be reckoned with.

While doing research on women’s history at the Library of Congress, I uncovered a store of five anti-suffrage periodicals, all written and published by women during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They featured seething editorials, essay contests, female-oriented ads, and articles defining the threat of female sovereignty and the ignorance, depravity, and masculinity of women who supported it. The arguments and tactics used to rebut the feminist demand for suffrage—romantic elevation of women, ridicule of feminists, false claims of being the “majority,” and predictions of the end of family life and civilization—are strikingly similar to those of today’s female anti-feminists.

The 1920 adoption of woman suffrage in the United States and its eventual acceptance have long since silenced the voices of opposition, but the anguish lives on in their writings. Their arguments had little to do with the rights of citizenship so ardently demanded by their suffragist sisters. The concerns of the antis were more social than political. They saw woman as a spiritual creature who stood above the crass concerns of government and business, and desperately wanted to preserve their idealized identity as cultural overseer of virtue.

Two of the most popular anti-suffrage publications were the *Woman’s Protest* and *The Reply*. *Woman’s Protest*, published in New York City from 1912 to 1918 by the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, was temporarily retitled the *Woman Patriot* during World War I. *The Reply* was published in New Canaan, Connecticut, from 1913 to 1915 under the editorship of Helen S. Harman. Each sold for ten cents a copy and offered annual subscriptions for one dollar.

The Reply, the smaller, more compact publication of the two, whose funding was less stable than that of the association-backed *Woman’s Protest*, lasted only two years. Helen Kendrick Johnson was a frequent contributor of articles and funds. Her book, *Woman and the Republic*, was constantly promoted.

Despite subtle differences, the two magazines are strikingly similar in content. They subscribed to the precepts and

power of a nationwide, religious-like conviction that historian Barbara Welter christened “The Cult of True Womanhood” in a 1966 *American Quarterly* article. Historians have been using the term ever since to describe this cultural creed.

The romanticization of women during this period grew out of the new alienation of the genders. As men left the family farms and home-based businesses, where they had worked alongside their wives, for factory jobs, women lost their economic positions and became secluded at home. With time, men and women came to believe they had little in common. Americans saw man as a combative creature driven by carnal passions and territorial rivalry to compete for status and power—a fitting description for the businessman. Woman’s “God-given” purpose was to serve as guardian of all that was good and beautiful: child rearing, religion, morality, and gentility.

Remembering their mothers’ and grandmothers’ farm and frontier drudgery, many middle- and upper-class women embraced this new identity. But almost immediately, some women, dubbed “feminists” by the press, understood what had been lost as well as what had never been gained. The Seneca Falls convention met in 1848, and precipitated the women’s movement and the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). Elizabeth Cady Stanton demanded that women be granted “immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.” The journal of the NWSA was aptly titled *Revolution*. Its female publishers and supporters of both sexes meant to foment nothing less. As the 19th century waned, feminists abandoned Stanton’s equal rights agenda to focus on winning the vote. The narrower spotlight electrified the opposition and its nucleus, the antis.

The “Cult of True Womanhood” fueled anti-suffragist propaganda.

Ridicule as a Weapon

If pro-suffrage women could fight so bravely for the vote, anti-suffrage women would show they could fight just as bravely against it. Anti-suffragette magazines emerged as the political arm of the Cult of True Womanhood, and the editors proved to be clever and even underhanded in support of their cause. *The Reply* printed a caustic article in 1913, entitled “Bills To Be Presented Before The First Woman’s Legislature”:

The “Sarah” Bill—Making it a misdemeanor for a man to sit in a street car...while any woman stands.

The “Susan Jane” Bill—Making it illegal for any married man to employ a stenographer or female clerk...who has not first been interviewed by [his] wife.

The “Bridget” Bill [an Irish name used at a time when many American servants were just that]—Provides that all cooks, housemaids, laundresses, and other female help, shall have every afternoon and evening off, shall be provided with hot and cold baths, electric light, manicure, shampoo, and massage; shall have a dance once a week in a ball-room exclusively their own...Violations...are made punishable by death.

Mocking poetry graced each issue of the *The Reply*. The 1913 "A Dream of Fair Women" begins:

One more unfortunate man of some note,
Rashly objected to let women vote.
So, lovely woman, this man did annoy,
Using a horse whip, nice, feminine toy.

Then a fair damsel with infinite grace,
Hurled both her shoes at the Magistrate's face;
For she was held on a charge very small,
Taking explosives into lecture hall.

Antis weren't shy about attacking their suffragist sisters using Cult ammunition. They argued that suffrage would create masculine women and that the "new" woman would bring about the end of civilization. "Let us read and reflect on the history of every country where women joined the shouting and the tumult. It meant always blood-shed and anarchy and a rapid degeneration of the nation. The women go farther because they are more extreme by nature and more impressionable," cautioned the August 1912 *Woman's Protest*.

In the May 1913 issue of *The Reply*, Helen Kendrick Johnson contemplated woman's specialness in "The World's Need of Women."

Woman's life and work, then was to be that of the world's nourisher, its food bringer, the world's beautifier, the world's teacher of righteousness. What a marvelous [sic] and glorious picture! The ideal set forth in the "History of Woman Suffrage" [a six-volume work written in part by Elizabeth Cady Stanton] is the opposite of all this....

Changes in the role of women were viewed as threats to the health and survival of the state and even the species.

In the September 1912 *Woman's Protest*, an article by Max G. Schlapp argued, frighteningly:

There are more criminals and imbeciles to each 1,000 of population than ever before.... When overwrought women have disturbed within themselves the process of nature, they impart a disturbance to their offspring, and, instead of the development of a normal human being, there is one distorted in body or mind or in both.

Motherhood recast as sacred duty is a unique means of exploitation. If convinced that her relevance lies solely in her ability to give birth and nurture, a woman can lose her innate sense of self. It is an old and continuing distortion that has transformed millions of women into walking fertility

icons. Whether her fruitfulness is for the greater cause of State, religion, or racial supremacy, she becomes unable to satisfy even her smallest personal need without being consumed by guilt.

Moral Majority?

Woman suffrage was repeatedly linked to the detestable. "Suffrage and the Liquor Traffic" and "Suffragism and Socialism" appeared in the May 1912 and May 1913 issues of *Woman's Protest*. The unnamed editor who sought to align liquor with the ballot summoned up the argument so often heard from American men that women voters would close every saloon in the land.

Articles smearing woman suffragists were common. A

1917 issue of *Woman's Protest* includes articles entitled "Disloyal Even to Their Sex" and "The Real Foes of Democracy," accusing suffragists of ignoring the war effort in favor of

Phyllis Schlafly's Ancestors

By Patricia Riley Dunlap



"The Age of Brass. Or the triumph of Womans rights," was the caption on this 1869 Currier & Ives satire of women suffragists. *Currier Pictures*



This 1907 drawing pokes fun at antis. The senator holds a paper that reads: "Petition from the anti-woman's suffrage committee."

Charles H. Brown

ing to submit to the democratic principle of the will of the majority they would be less menacing to our institutions, but the methods they employ to override the will of the people, the efforts they make to coerce the world into an acceptance of their ideas is pernicious, undemocratic and un-American.

Do As I Say, Not As I Do

Ironically, the editors and writers of the anti publications worked hard to protect women from the dangers of doing exactly what they themselves were doing—thinking, competing, organizing, and finding meaning in non-domestic ventures. Anti-suffrage women were busy founding, promoting, and sustaining organizations in at least 28 states.

Ida Tarbell, the muckraking journalist who exposed the ruthlessness of Standard Oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller, was an outspoken anti-suffragist. But Tarbell's life approximated the suffragists' ideal. Never married, she became a nationally celebrated journalist and historian. A dogged researcher whose detailed biographies included little-known facts about her famous subjects, she authored well-received biographies of Napoleon Bonaparte and Abraham Lincoln. Yet, Tarbell saw women as frivolous, emotional creatures,

and was convinced that if the suffragists succeeded, they would force women to support themselves and destroy the family as an institution. Tarbell urged suffragists to consider the long-term implications of their demands. According to her biographer, Kathleen Brady, "The specter of a revolution in women's role unsettled her." She was not alone.

Former first ladies Mrs. Benjamin Harrison and Mrs. Grover Cleveland, as well as Theodore Roosevelt's sister Anna, were among the wealthy who supported the anti and their written word. While the New York and Massachusetts groups were the most consistently active, the Illinois Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, under the leadership of wealthy Chicago matron Caroline F. Corbin, was one of the most outspoken.

Echoes from the anti-suffrage past ring through American society today. Voting as an issue has been supplanted by women's right to work outside the home for equal pay and without harassment, and to obtain safe, legal abortions, but the debate is strangely familiar, and the guilt lingers.

As before, the battlefield is a changing economy. However, unlike the steel and railroad economy of the Industrial Revolution, the Communication Age requires mental, not physical strength. Birth control and modern appliances give most families homes that no longer need constant attention. All the signs point to woman's final liberation, yet the appeal and guilt of the Cult of True Womanhood, (continued on page 56)

"O save us, senators, from ourselves!"

"un-American" demonstrations.

A favorite argument of the anti was that women's votes would merely mimic those of their husbands, doubling the work of tallies with no resulting change in the outcome. But from time to time, the argument went on to worry that political disagreements between husbands and wives would increase the divorce rate. This extension disturbed some anti, as it assumed wives to be capable of something other than obedience.

Celebrating Suffrage

1995 marks the 75th anniversary of women winning the vote. A massive parade down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. is planned for August 26, the day the 19th Amendment was certified as part of the U.S. Constitution. Other celebrations are planned across the country. For information and organizing kits, contact the National Women's History Project, 7738 Bell Road, Windsor, CA 95492, (707) 838-6000.

The anti also used a favorite tactic of proponents of minority positions: denying that the opposition holds a majority. Consider today's anti-abortion movement's attempts to cast itself as the voice of the "Moral Majority." In pre-public opinion poll days, pseudo-majorities were even easier to come by. The July-August 1917 *Woman's Protest* suggested:

If suffragists were will-

WHOSE
GOD
IS IT
ANYWAY?

Heresy raises hell—like when Copernicus said, “The sun does not revolve around the earth.” So imagine the heat when feminists declare, “Men are not superior to women.” The babel has begun and even God Him/Herself is up for grabs. Join OTI as we “Eve”-drop on a conference of fired-up fundamentalist men, the still-hot Saint Joan, and some insurgent Christian feminists (cooling their heels).

Man-to-man huddles in the bleachers: Promise Keepers at Texas Stadium.



Chris Hagan/Promise Keepers

Male Virgins, Blood Covenants & Family Values



“Stand up and slap high-five with 16 guys and say, ‘Thank God you’re a male!’”

The man shouting is seasoned revivalist Dr. Ed Cole. He is revving up a crowd of 45,000 men, who do as he bids. They are gathered in Texas Stadium near Dallas on a beatific morning one Saturday last October to participate in a phenomenon called Promise Keepers, a major new men’s movement that has burst upon the U.S. scene, born of Christian fundamentalism.

Across the land, men by the tens of thousands are flocking to such arenas, where they listen to sermons for hours, confess their sins with all their hearts, sing hymns with all their lungs, and shed tears of salvation and joy with no women around. They renew their vows to their wives if they are married, to their virginity if they are not, and to “secondary virginity” (a quaintly restorative notion) if they need to. Above all, they reiterate their submission to a divine Father and Son and reconnect to true godhead and true manhood in one fell swoon.

A hushed fervor fills the Texas Stadium stands, becoming an audience reaction like none other: men weeping openly, raising their arms in an ecstasy of praise and supplication. As birds fly blithely in the sunny blue sky, soaring above the blue-tarp-covered playing field that the Dallas Cowboys call home, these men appear to be collectively experiencing a profound personal catharsis.

Watching from the press box at about the 50-yard line, I ask

*Inside America’s fastest
growing men’s movement*

BY JOHN
STOLTENBERG

Bill Pemberton, a fund-raiser for Promise Keepers, why he thinks these men feel safe to feel so deeply among so many other men who are complete strangers. "I think it's location," he says. A sports arena is "one of the few places that men can ever be emotional about anything and be OK without being softies."

"I think it's also mass validation," Pemberton continues. "A man could not accept a woman telling him he needed to be this sort of man. But when men get out here with 50,000 men, and see the consensus, it gives them the stamp of approval from their peers, and from people they respect in the sense of 'Well, he's a man, he knows.' I think God in His sovereign grace put men in an environment where they naturally could relate to each other and be more open to releasing emotion."

This burgeoning religious men's movement is an unprecedented mass abreaction to modern feminism. It's as if within the church generic (what Christians call the body of Christ), smart new antibodies, bioengineered by men, had emerged to forestall a viral invasion of sexual equality.

The premise of Promise Keepers is "a Christ-centered ministry dedicated to uniting men through vital relationships to be godly influences in their world." The original Promise Keepers gathering in 1991 (see bar graph) was called by founder Bill McCartney, head football coach at the University of Colorado. By 1994 Promise Keepers held gatherings at seven separate sites, totaling 278,600 men.

But those numbers will soon pale, because Promise Keepers plans to amass a million men in Washington, D.C., in the fall of 1996. "We're going to our nation's capital," president Randy Phillips tells a press conference at Texas Stadium, "for the explicit purpose of"—and here he pauses, choosing his words carefully—"a time of prayer and renewal, from a personal standpoint." The elections are "not the reason why we're going," he explains earnestly, "but that will probably be before the elections."

As pollsters noted after the mid-term 1994 Democratic debacle, 62 percent of white men voted for conservative and Republican candidates, and 33 percent of the electorate were Evangelical Christians. This sect-and-gender trend piques speculation as to what electoral impact Promise Keepers might have.

"We have a general policy that we're not endorsing political candidates," treasurer Sid Overton tells me. "That's not what we're about." A business lawyer, Overton helped set up Promise Keepers as a non-profit tax-exempt Colorado corporation. Its revenues come from registration fees (\$55 to \$65 each), merchandize (books, recordings, caps, shirts, mugs), and offerings and pledges. "We're not about lobbying," he says. "We're not about political party supporting."

The Promise Keepers organization employs a staff of 120 at its Denver headquarters and 30 at various state offices. It is led by both clergy and laity, and Promise Keepers explicitly reaches out to all Christian men across racial and denomina-

No-penalty kick: Worshipping in a sports arena, men are moved to prayerful repentance and the power of forgiveness, thanks to God, their Coach.

tional lines. Dr. E. Glenn Wagner, vice president of national ministries, tells the crowd in Texas that Promise Keepers expects to identify a "Point Man" volunteer in each of the 400,000 churches in the United States, plus 40,000 "Ambassadors" who will network with 10 to 12 ministers in their communities. By the year 2000, according to Phillips, Promise Keepers is shooting to fill 50 stadiums, in each of the 50 states, connected by simulcasting.

Based on my observations and interviews at the Irving, Texas, conference, I see no ceiling in sight as to how far this "ministry to men" can go. Promise Keepers is a groundswell new cult of masculinity. It reveals in microcosm—as if under laboratory conditions—exactly how patriarchy operates through *male bonding*, which simultaneously propels men's public policies and impacts on men's private relations with women.

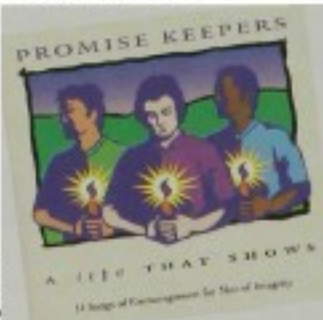
Liberals and progressives often caricature Christian fundamentalism and dismiss it as "antiabortion, antigay, antisemit," but this simplistic underestimation may be a political blunder. As the Promise Keepers phenomenon demonstrates, religious conservatives have actually been paying quite close attention to radical feminism, and learning a lot.

The Sins of the Fathers and Sons

It is 6:30 P.M., Friday night. The conference will start soon. I'm driving to Irving from the Dallas/Fort Worth airport on highway 183E—passing motels, car lots, churches, and fast-food steak houses flying Texas flags—and abruptly the car slows to a crawl for a good half hour. It dawns on me that this traffic is backed up all the way to the stadium exit.

Finally parked at a roadside restaurant, I follow long lines of men of all ages and sizes dressed in sneakers and colorful windbreakers and jogging suits. Teens and twentysomethings wear hip, printed T-shirts: A REAL MAN IS A GODLY MAN and FEAR NOT KNOW GOD and HIS PAIN IS OUR GAIN (illustrated with a heavy metal spike through the palm of a hand). Many are carrying Bibles. The worn binding of at least one is held together with gaffer tape. And one man's red hero jacket is embroidered FISHERS OF MEN CHRISTIAN MOTORCYCLIST ASSOCIATION.

Outside the stadium, a bunch of angry men are pamphleteering and protesting. The official position of Promise Keepers is that "homosexuality violates God's creative design for a husband and a wife" and "it is a sin"; yet Promise Keepers supports homosexuals "being included and welcomed in all our events." The protesters, citing their own scriptural authorities, are outraged by the laxness of this policy; thus they scream: "There are queers and homos in there!" This more-fundamentalist-than-thou demo is politely ignored.



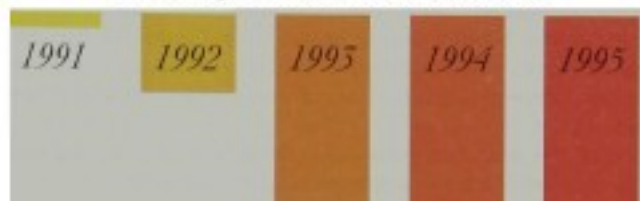
Tunes for the team on CD



Greg Hays/Photo Bank

AMAZING GROWTH

*Attendance at men-only
Promise Keepers gatherings:
Should feminists be worried?*



1991: 4,200 men meet in Boulder at the University of Colorado Events Center (a basketball arena).

1992: 22,000 men meet at the university's Folsom Stadium.

1993: 50,000 men fill Folsom Stadium to capacity.

1994: 278,600 men attend conferences at seven sites: Anaheim Stadium (52,800), Hawks Memorial Stadium in Boise (5,500), Hoosier Dome in Indianapolis (62,800), Civic Stadium in Portland (27,500), University of North Texas Fouts Field in Denton (33,000), Folsom Stadium again (52,000), and Texas Stadium in Irving (45,000).

1995: 600,000 men expected to register at 13 scheduled conference sites nationwide.

It's nearly 8:00 P.M. and the stadium interior is still filling. Erected near one end zone is a TV-studio stage. There's a platform for cameras, and jumbo-tron screens hang from the rafters. The video feed to these screens includes shots from the stage, hand-held candids of men in the crowd, and hymn lyrics.

From the top tiers on down, the crowd sings with gusto: "Rise up O men of God! / The church for you doth wait / Her strength unequal to the task." The church is *she* and all the guys here are *he*. Their voices resounding, high tenor to deep bass, they renounce en masse any taint of feminization that their religiosity might imply.

As the event begins, men are exhorted to approach the front of the stage in an altar call, a public act of spiritual commitment that is a commonplace of Christian revivals. I am reminded of a Billy Graham Crusade I attended as a teenager in a baseball stadium near Minneapolis around 1960. Not much is different, I note, except here the repentants are exclusively male. The worship leader elaborates on the meaning of sin and confession. His line "I have sinned!" brings forth astonishing applause—and the words, echoed by thousands of fathers and sons, suggest what feminists have been saying for decades: There are many, many transgressions that are particular to the lives of men.

The audience sings softly: "Forgive me, O Lord, forgive me / And I will be clean." There is evidence of great grief followed by unspeakable relief. A close-up of a man's face, his eyes welling with tears, fills the huge stadium video screens as hundreds advance toward the stage. Soulful, mournful music plays under plaints of "Thank you, Jesus!" Finally a folk-rock group sings a buoyant ballad, and the newly celebratory crowd—its built-up guilt expunged—returns to its seats and sings and claps along.

"No more games...no more double life!" says Pastor Greg Laurie (Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside, Califor-

nia) as he takes the crowd from remorse and redemption to moral resolve. Like all subsequent speakers, he wears a sporty purple polo embroidered with the PK logo (MEN OF INTEGRITY). Decrying "the spiraling rate of crime," Laurie identifies "abortion" as part of it; and he issues the first of several entreaties for "sexual purity," urging his hearers to "get God back in our lives...and in our culture."

Next, explaining "how to let God mentor us," Pastor A. Louis Patterson Jr. (lecturer, National Sunday School and B.T.U. Congress, National Baptist Convention) takes as his biblical text a relatively obscure story from the book of Numbers. "Caleb let Moses send him," Patterson intones, in orotund, black-church cadences. "Caleb had an attitude of submission without it being a threat to his masculinity." Slowly and surely, Patterson's down-home homily explicates the gender-specific subtext of Promise Keepers' message: "Every man has a Coach.... Submit to God's divine plan for your life.... Total dependence on God does not compromise masculinity.... The prerequisite for being a leader in my

home is to have followed leadership in my Father's house." Then Patterson leads the mostly white crowd in a rousing call-and-response: "Somebody oughta say amen!"

"Amen!"

Not only does the jock-friendly venue reduce these men's gender anxiety; so does Promise Keepers' cock-friendly theology, a familiar theory of gender identity through patriarchal prerogative: God commands man, and man submits—but lo and behold, man is not thereby feminized, because man in turn commands wife. This "role definition" channels a guy's divinely ordained masculinity, which trickles down from God.

But the next two preachers take this gender legend to a visceral level that I've never heard plumbed before.

The Roots of Carnal Knowledge

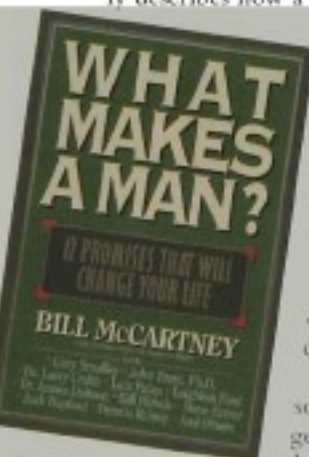
Saturday morning, Pastor Jack Hayford (Church On The Way, Van Nuys, California) explains how the Old Testament God entered into a "covenant" with Abraham through circumcision, because "the cutting of the flesh of that organ of Abraham's body was God's way of saying, 'Sir, I want to cut to the core of your identity as a man. I want to cut to the core of your creativity.' There is nothing more dynamic or incredible," Hayford jubilates, than the fact that he and his hearers "have the capacity to literally—in partnership with our spouse—create a human being by the gift power of God in our bodies."

Then Dr. Ed Cole (founder and president, Christian Men's Network) propounds his own paean to procreation: "God gave us creatures power in our loins.... When a man and woman who are married engage in an intimate physical relationship, they are actually celebrating the covenant of marriage.... Why does God want a man and a woman to be virgins at the time of marriage?"

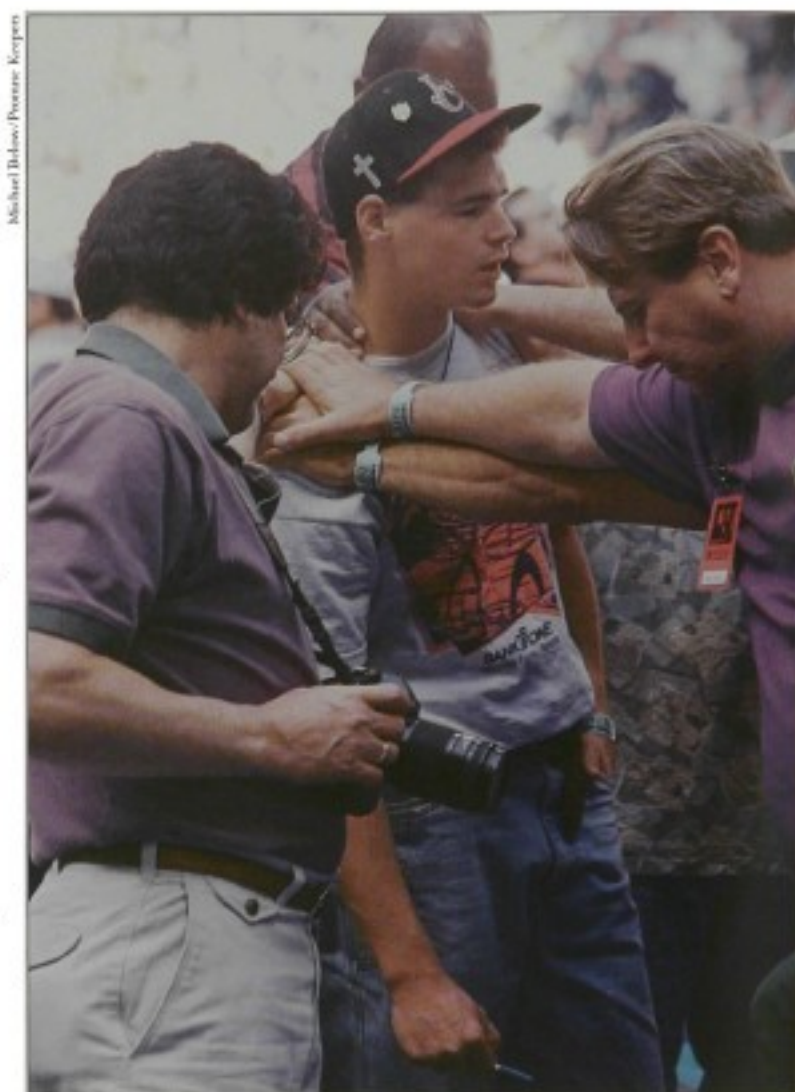
The crowd hangs on Cole's every syllable as he graphically describes how a virginal young man and woman "consummate their marriage with sexual intimacy, and in that act, when she is a virgin, when her hymen is broken, and it causes the shedding of blood, when that blood flows over the man's part, in that act of intercourse, when that blood flows over the man's part, to God that is a sign that they have entered into the sacred covenant...."

The heady mix of patriarchal social contract and carnality rarely gets more pulse-pounding than this mental gang-bang: a sixtyish man of the cloth inviting 45,000 other men to picture the coital puncturing of a woman's hymen in their mind's eye simultaneously.

Evidently feeling flush, Cole goes on to his big finish: "Marriage was meant to be a blood covenant! We're not trying to put young people in *bondage* by teaching them virginity; we're trying to keep them from *killing* themselves!" Explaining the diameter of pores in latex vis-à-vis the size of spermatozoa versus deadly HIV, Cole gets another round of



A bible on balls (above) and music of the spheres (right).



applause: "There is no such thing as safe sex with a condom!"

Drama is palpable in this topless silver dome as the balding Cole begins exhorting teenage men to stand and vow virginity. "What a thing for a man on his wedding night!—to take his wife in his arms, standing in that hotel room, she in her white satin nightgown, he in his blue silk pajamas...and say, 'Darlin', I love you, you're God's gift to me; tonight I want to give you something no other woman in the whole world will have. Tonight I want to give you the gift of my manhood. Tonight I want to give you the sign of the covenant relationship so that until death do us part you will know that I love

you and you alone. Tonight I give you the glory of my virginity.' What a way to start a marriage!" The crowd goes wild with cheering and whistling, not so much at a hearts-and-flowers evocation of romance as at a spectacular reassurance of gender hierarchy.

"Surely in this building, there's gotta be one young single man, one young teenager, that'll say, 'I want to be a part of a new generation to bring back what



**In a shrine
to machismo,
Promise
Keepers creates
safe public
space for
males to feel
like real men.**

Block that tickle: Men vow to pursue "vital relationships with a few other men" and to practice "sexual purity."

guy, "We think you're a man's man if you wait till you're married," that may be the first time that kid's heard that, and since he's been 12 he's been under all this pressure to get a girl pregnant or to show that he's a stud."

During a lunch break I talk in the stands to a 13-year-old who traveled here from a small town in Texas with a church group that includes his father. "He's been to Promise Keepers more than I have," says the youth, a gangly fawn among stags. "He was thinking of not bringing me this time, but I kept on begging him and begging him to bring me." Then he says, in a quavering voice with tears in his eyes: "Here you see kids your age. You don't have to act like you're all macho and everything. You can act like yourself, 'cause you have your brothers here with you."

Promise Keepers has created safe public space for males to feel like real men within a veritable shrine to machismo—but stripped of incessant comparisons to other men's judgment on their sexual performance, orientation, and identity. Promise Keepers has fundamentally transformed genderizing peer pressure—away from the relativistic world's to that of an absolutist religion (or, as they might put it, away from "Sodom and Gomorrah" to "Bible-based Christian values"). This predictably safe social cohesion is based on each man's promise (to his God and to his brethren) to be strictly non-sexual with one another and to have sex solely with his own wife in private.

These guys have discovered that conservative "sexual purity" is a better basis for male bonding than the "sexual revolution" could ever be (what with liberals fronting for pornographers and extolling hot sex with virtually anything that moves). And these guys have discovered that unless males are reliably in league as men, male supremacy can no longer claim credible authority over females one-on-one.

another generation threw away.' Can I find even one single man in this building that will say, 'Brother Cole, I heard what you said, and I want to stand up and be one of those men.' Let me see them today!" There are peals of applause and cheers as hundreds of young men rise from their seats and stand and see how many hundreds of other young men have done the same.

And therein lies a high-voltage power line in Promise Keepers' electromagnetic appeal: no threat of other men's sexual prowess. Here there are no comparisons to be made, no goading standards of sexual conquest that a man might not measure up to.

"Peer affirmation from Joe Camel on down has been 'Real men do it and do it a lot.' And if not then you're probably a wimp," fund-raiser Pemberton tells me. "If 50,000 guys tell you as a 15-year-old

The Blessings of the Wives

"We have literally thousands of letters, boxes and boxes, from men, from their wives, from their children, from their parents, describing profound life changes," president Phillips tells reporters mid-day. "We're seeing that men are making profound decisions and are following through with them."

One such letter, quoted in a promotional brochure, is from Judy in Iowa: "I knew that all of the spiritual benefits my husband received at Promise Keepers would overflow to me. How could they not? Is not his honor my honor? His integrity my integrity? Are not his blessings my blessings?"

When Promise Keepers leaders claim that what they are doing is "for women" not "against women," they say so with reasonable accuracy, because from the point of view of any married woman in their social universe, neither men's talk nor men's walk ever gets much better than this: Keep your promises to your wife and kids, be a man of your word.

The entire stock of *Strategies for a Successful Marriage*, a handbook by Dr. E. Glenn Wagner, sells out in the PROMISE KEEPERS PRODUCT tent by mid-afternoon. Another motivational tome, *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*, published by Focus on the Family, has sold over 200,000 copies at previous Promise Keepers gatherings. It contains, among other precepts, practical strategies for avoiding the temptation of pornography while traveling alone, as on in-room TV. The passage is not anti-smut; it's pro-loyalty: It calls men's pornography use "emotional adultery."

A woman's trade-off for this modicum of respect is to accept her husband's unilateral authority, just as he submits to God's. Dr. Tony Evans spells this out in *Seven Promises* under the rubric "Reclaiming Your Manhood":

I'm not suggesting that you ask [your wife] for your role back, I'm urging you to take it back. If you simply ask for it, your wife is likely to say, "Look, for the last ten years, I've had to raise these kids, look after the house, and pay the bills. I've had to get a job and still keep up my duties in the home. I've had to do my job and yours. You think I'm just going to turn everything back over to you?"

Your wife's concerns may be justified. Unfortunately, however, there can be no compromise here. If you're going to lead, you must lead. Be sensitive. Listen. Treat the lady gently and lovingly. But lead!

I interview at random about two dozen attenders, and few can describe the personal meaning of this event without slightly choking up, tears visibly brimming. When I ask the men who are married what their wives think of Promise Keepers, or what their wives told them as they left home to attend, I hear only testimonials and stories of well-wishing. Two twentyish women employees of Promise Keepers tell me that they themselves would sure like to meet and marry a man of Promise Keepers caliber someday.

There are in fact many women at this gathering—several hundred young female volunteers, not in the stadium proper but staffing cash registers in the merchandize tents, serving soft drinks to press, and so forth. Also present are the wives of dozens of donors, board members, presenters, and officers—in restricted VIP areas where they are not visible to ordinary male registrants.

In the press room I ask president Randy (continued on page 51)

"A WOMAN WHO HEARS VOICES IS A LOT MORE DANGEROUS THAN A WOMAN WITH AN ARMY. KEEP THAT IN MIND."

WHOSE
GOD
IS IT
ANYWAY?

"THE TRUTH IS, THERE IS NO MAN ON EARTH WHO CAN

STAND IN THE WAY OF A WOMAN WHO IS UTTERLY CONVINCED OF THE RIGHTNESS OF HER ACTIONS."

She's "the cross-dressing
butch with the smart mouth"
in an irreverent
re-visioning by playwright
Carolyn Gage

THE SECOND COMING OF JOAN_{of}-ARC

My voices weren't all that special. Everybody hears voices. Everybody's got somebody leaning over their shoulder, whispering in their ear what they should do and what they shouldn't do. You know, "Get the hair out of your face! Put your knees together!" That's what civilization's all about, isn't it, listening to the voices of those who lived before you did? That's what keeps the whole machinery going. No, the real problem for civilization comes when a woman

Adapted from *The Second Coming of Joan of Arc and Other Plays* by Carolyn Gage. Copyright © 1993 by Carolyn Gage. All rights reserved.

Photograph by
Linda J. Russell

"SAINT" IS JUST ANOTHER WORD FOR A WOMAN WHO GOT BURNED."

decides to invent her own voices and then believe in them. See, that's almost like thinking for yourself.

Puberty. The beginning of periods, which means you can have babies. The beginning of breasts, which means you can nurse babies. The beginning of feeling self-conscious around boys, because you have this opening between your legs they all want to stick themselves into.

Puberty is about loss of privacy. It's about living in a body which has become public property. It's about foreign invasion, about occupied territory. One by one, my girlfriends surrendered themselves. I watched them go off with boys and turn themselves into foreigners.

The year I was seventeen, my whole family turned against me and the town where I had lived all my life was burned to the ground. But these were just brush fires compared to the real catastrophe. That same year—Hauviette, my best friend—she got engaged. That did it. France's hour of glory had struck. I ran away from home.

Hauviette and I had been very, very close. We had grown up together, which was a very special thing. See, it was a custom in my village for the girls who shared their first communion to sleep with each other. She would come over to my house, or I would go over to hers. We would sleep in the same bed together.

Sometimes we would pretend we were on a very small boat in the ocean, and I had rescued her. I would hold her in my arms, and my heart would be so full of tenderness,

"I hear a lot of talk about women forgiving men. I don't believe it. I have experienced almost every form of cruelty men can inflict on women, and I am here to tell you that no woman can forgive it or ignore it, and furthermore, no woman should ever try."

The author, shown in performance at left, revisits the 500-year-old biographical record and speaks Joan's modern mind.



New York Public Library Picture Collection

it would make me feel light-headed. Or sometimes we would pretend that she had found me wounded in the forest and had taken me to her cottage, where she would bandage my wounds and cover me with kisses.

Hauviette and I were more than best friends. We were one soul. We knew this, and we had always planned to live together after we grew up. But, like I said, there was this terrible thing, puberty.

The other hard part of running away was leaving my mother. It was like in battle, when the soldier next to you gets his legs blown off by a cannon. You don't want to leave him, but there's nothing you can do for him, and if you stay behind, they'll just get you too. So you leave. Like I left my mother. But it tore my heart out.

Okay. Here it is. It's the inside of the cathedral at Reims, Coronation Day. It's a beautiful July day, and the sun is streaming through the stained glass windows, and

the bells are all chiming, and the air is sweet with the smell of incense. And the pews are all full of soldiers, and officers, and counts, and dukes, and knights—and their women, all dressed in satins, and lace, and velvet.

And here are the priests, and the abbots, and the bishops. And the Archbishop of Reims is here, wearing this beautiful robe made out of gold cloth. And here's Charles, standing in the front of the church, dressed like a king, waiting to be crowned according to the ancient traditions handed down by generation after generation of French kings. And here, standing next to him, in the place of highest honor, is a seventeen-year-old peasant girl in full armor.... Now, can you tell me what's wrong with this picture?

See, what everyone else knew and I didn't, was that I had broken all the rules. Here I was: a peasant, strike one. A child, strike two. And a female, strike three big time. Actually any one of those is an automatic out, but I was

all three at the same time. And if that wasn't bad enough, I was also illiterate, outspoken, and dressed like a man! I mean, we're talking about somebody so far out in left field, they're beyond the bleachers! But, all the same, there I was, right up there next to the king.

Let me tell you something about men. They can't stand to lose face. It's difficult for us women to understand how very, very important this is to men, because we have never been allowed to have enough face to lose. We tend to be more concerned with things like the justice of an issue, or finding a peaceful solution. It's difficult for us to understand how the most important thing, even in the case of war, is to find some way for all the men involved to save face. It would almost be funny how childish they are, except that these children are running the world—and they have almost ruined it. And these rules of face-saving are hard on women. When a woman challenges a man, it's not enough for him to prove she's wrong. To save face, he has to annihilate her.

The fear of rape, as men have known for years, is just as effective as the real thing. The woman is scared to live alone, scared to go places by herself, scared of the dark, always looking over her shoulder, waking up at the least sound in the middle of the night. She is perpetually distracted, self-conscious, subverted, terrorized. She might just as well have been raped, which of course is the whole point.

In my little cell in Rouen, surrounded by my five

guards, the atmosphere of rape was suffocating. And it had nothing to do with sex. It had to do with degradation. They wanted to make me despise myself. I chose to despise them instead.

Let me tell you about my trial. I had two judges, two officers of the court, three notaries, and an usher to escort me back and forth from my cell...and thirty-two doctors of theology, sixteen bachelors of theology, four doctors of civil rights, seven men with special licenses, five doctors of canon law, fifteen men with licenses in canon law, seven medical doctors, seven masters of arts, sixteen assistants and expert witnesses, twenty-three priests, five bishops, three abbots—and a cardinal, in a pear tree. After all, you can't be too careful with these teenage girls.

While they were reading my sentence, I broke down and confessed. I renounced my voices and promised to wear a dress. What happens to women

when we finally do break—which is usually after almost superhuman suffering! Do we get a reprieve! Are we released, forgiven! Does the torture stop, the pressure let up! I have seen all kinds of women give in in all kinds of ways: to harassment, to guilt, to sex, to drugs, to alcohol, to mental illness. And in every single instance—listen to me!—the abuse increases. There is no mercy for women, because our crime is our gender. We have to fight.

So I confessed. And, like most women, I expected some reward for surrendering myself, for betraying my voices, for denying my purpose, for selling out every single scrap of my integrity. I expected to be moved to a church prison where there would be other women prisoners and women attendants. But that didn't happen. They took me back to my old cell, back to my five guards. Only now I had to wear a dress.

Tied to that stake, watching the fire come closer and closer, I realized that God the Father was a lie. He's an invention of the good old boys to cover their tracks and their asses. I realized that the closest I had ever come to any real sense of spirituality was alone with my voices, or in the company of other women.

I realized what a fool I had been to waste my time crowning some man king, as if he had some divine right to rule. I realized what a fool I had been for trusting a church run by men who only



Spotlight on the Playwright

"This Joan of Arc is a far cry from the eroticized and idealized Joan of Anouilh or Shaw," writes Carolyn Gage in an introduction to her award-winning play. "This Joan, like the historical one, is a teenager, a runaway from an alcoholic home with an incestuous father, a girl with severe eating disorders, and a lesbian." Replacing "the myth of a feminine, simple-minded peasant girl," Gage portrays Joan as "the cross-dressing butch with the smart mouth"—"a character conspicuous in her absence from heteropatriarchal theatre: the angry young woman."

Gage is a radical lesbian-feminist playwright and director and the recipient of numerous literary fellowships, most notably the Oregon Book Awards, the state's most prestigious. From 1989 to 1991 she was artistic director of No To Men, a radical lesbian theater company in Ashland, Oregon. In two years it produced 19 plays, including ten one-acts, two musicals, and a one-woman show—all by Gage. In addition to running the theater, Gage performed *The Second Coming of Joan of Arc* on national tour.

In person, the 42-year-old Gage dashes off rough drafts of thoughts that sometimes whiz past brains not as quick as hers. Like other writers who tweak heteropatriarchal culture through theater—such as Tony Kushner (*Angels in America*) and Caryl Churchill (*Top Girls*)—Gage often throws historical and invented characters together into a politically charged face-off. Her theatrics are as daring and her characters as richly imagined (if not more so), but her unsentimental radical feminism sets her apart.

It takes a 25-page catalog to summarize the stunning range of scripts that Gage, a Dramatists Guild member, has written over the past 12 years. A new collection, *The Second Coming of Joan of Arc and Other Plays* (\$11.50), and an audiocassette of Gage as Joan (\$10) are available from HerBooks, PO Box 7467, Santa Cruz, CA 95061.

worshiped themselves and each other. I realized what a fool I had been to lead one army of men out against another, as if it could make any possible difference which side won. And I realized what a fool I had been to believe I would be saved from the actions of men by a god they had created in their own image.

God the Father was a lie then and is a lie now, and all

the hierarchies modeled after him—the governments, the armies, the churches, the corporations, the families!—are illegitimate. We will not convert them. They will martyr us. We will not convert them. We must fight for our own causes, women's causes. We must clothe ourselves in self-respect, arm ourselves with our finely tempered rage, and obey only those voices that we women alone can hear. ♦



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WHOSE
GOD
IS IT
ANYWAY?

RE-IMAGINING GOD

*Are
we made
in Her
image?*

"We do not believe the patriarchal model is the only way to do church. We believe that the Christian church contains within its history and possibilities the threads of inclusion and reconciliation, wholeness and mutuality."

—The Re-Imagining Steering Committee,
memorandum, 1994

WE APPROACH THE DOORWAY one by one, drawn by the slow, steady beat of a drum and the tidal *whoosh* of a rainstick. I enter, passing between two lines of women and men, their hands uplifted in benediction, their voices raised in song:

*Bless Sophia/Dream the vision/
Share the wisdom/dwelling deep within*

Sophia, or Wisdom, is one of many names for the divine, echoing down the centuries from Hellenistic sources to the Bible. "Artisan, artificer, master builder," the book of Proverbs calls her, "ever at play everywhere in the world" (8:30-31). Said to have been present when the world was made, Sophia also animates the Re-Imagining Community, an independent, ecumenical organization of Christian feminists whose stated mission is "to seek justice, honor creation, and call the Church into solidarity with all people of God."

What's at stake in Re-Imagining goes deeper than the ordination of women and the use of nonsexist language in church services (although many a congregation is still struggling with those very issues). Cracking the stained glass ceiling is arduous enough, just as in other institutions run by men and served

by women (government, business, and academia come to mind). But Re-Imagining stands for more than token inclusion in existing hierarchies—and far more than a patriarchal God in drag.

Emphatically a grassroots movement, Re-Imagining fosters emerging Christian theologies—call them feminist, womanist, or *mujerista*—grounded in lived experience as well as innovative readings of traditional sources such as the Bible. Fundamentally, Re-Imagining insists on the equal authority of men and women—many kinds of women—to shape and interpret religious symbols and texts in a spirit of liberation.

This creative process, the making of theologies, is not merely an esoteric exercise, as antifeminist Christians are well aware. The imagery and rituals, social organization, and political agenda of the institutional church depend, at least in part, on foundational beliefs that all too often relegate women to second-class status. At issue, on a visceral level, are the hierarchy of gender, the implicit masculinity of God, and the normative status of masculinity itself.

The immediate origins of this insurgent movement go back at least to 1985, when feminists from around the world met in Nairobi to celebrate the United Nations Decade for Women. Continuing the unfinished work of that conference, the World Council of Churches initiated its own "Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity with Women" (1988-98) to eliminate discriminatory teachings and practices. At the halfway point, in November 1993, the first Re-Imagining conference brought to Minneapolis about 2,200 participants, members of 32 Christian denominations, from 49 states and 27 countries.



*"No comparable
heresy has
appeared in the
church in the last
fifteen centuries."*

—RETIRED BISHOP EARL HUNT,
referring to "Sophia," United
Methodist Congress on Evangelism,
January 1994



by

Lou Ann
Matossian

According to Rev. Sally L. Hill, the conference coordinator, more than 65,000 brochures were distributed worldwide—three fourths of them upon request—as news of the gathering spread by word of mouth.

TODAY, AS I DID a year ago, I find myself inside a large conference room at the Minneapolis Convention Center, a sleek, low-lying complex on the southern edge of downtown. At the center of our sanctuary is a raised circular dais, accessible by ramp; there is no altar, no cross, no pictures on the bare, neutral walls. The mood is warm and lively as the participants—mostly white women over thirty—greet one another. We find our way to the round banquet tables, choosing women-only, mixed-gender, artists', or fragrance-free. There are no bad seats in this house. At once like the Michigan music festival and a Minnesota church basement, it feels like familiar territory: women's space.

A few opening chords on the piano and we begin with a familiar African-American spiritual:

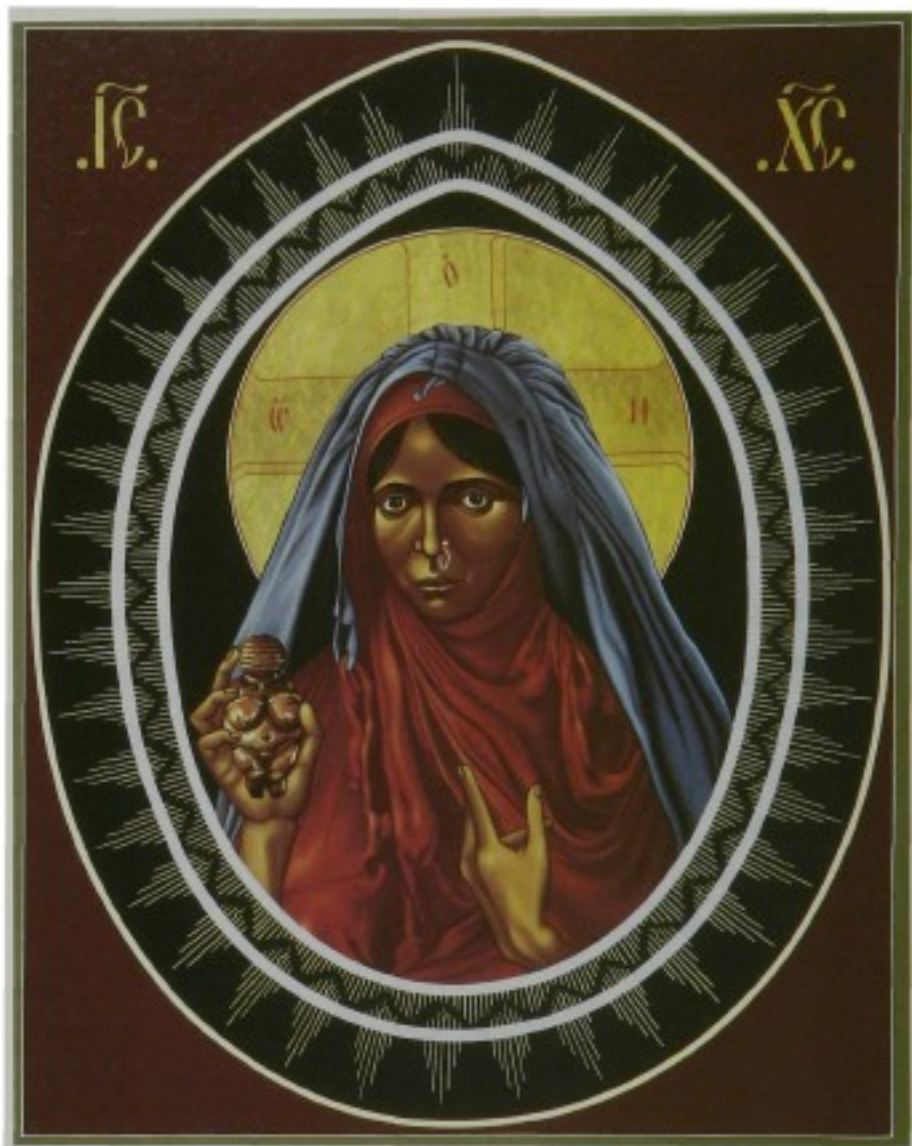
Like a tree planted by the water

We shall not be moved

How many times and places have I sung these strengthening words, as a union organizer, at prochoice rallies, at Take Back the Night. I reach back down the years to my grandmother, a blacklisted Christian socialist and feminist, who first told me about the civil rights movement and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. And I remember, as a child in Washington, D.C., singing hymns next to my mother at St. Stephen and the Incarnation, a politically progressive Episcopal church that stood for black civil rights and peace in Vietnam.

On this Saturday morning, October 29, pride and more than a hint of defiance stay with me as co-chairs Mary Kay Sauter and Rev. Kathi Austin Mahle welcome the 470 participants to this anniversary event, the first regional conference sponsored by the Minneapolis-based Re-Imagining Community. "We believe the Spirit is with us today," Rev. Mahle announces, "and that God has no problem with our re-imagining." Laughter and applause ripple through the room.

Considering the severity of antifeminist backlash against the Re-Imagining movement, it is something of a miracle to be here at all. During the past year, amid debate characterized as "murderous" by the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*, conservative Christians in politically moderate denominations have attacked their own clergywomen and leaders who supported the original, international Re-Imagining conference in 1993.



One casualty of the witch-hunt was Mary Ann Lundy, the former U.S. co-chair of the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Decade and, until last year, the associate director of the Presbyterian General Assembly. Lundy was forced out of that post because she had served as director of the Presbyterian Women's Unit when it recommended that funds be granted to launch Re-Imagining (which subsequently received more than \$70,000 from Presbyterian church sources).

Lesbians openly took part in Re-Imagining, in keeping with the organizers' wish "to create a safe space where [all] people...could engage freely in dialogue." Predictably, the presence of lesbians was used as a divide-and-conquer political strategy. The women of Re-Imagining were also charged with "goddess worship" and "destroying the Church." Incensed, *The Presbyterian Layman* railed in its January/February 1994 issue:

Declaring their allegiance to the goddess "Sophia," participants catapulted their rhetoric well beyond commonplace themes of women's equality. Instead, they heralded a more radical agenda.... Destroying tradi-

tional Christian faith, adopting pagan beliefs, rejecting Jesus' divinity and his atonement on the cross, creating a god(dess) in their own image, and affirming lesbian love-making were recurring conference themes.

In the United Methodist Church, meanwhile, Joyce D. Sohl, deputy general secretary of the Women's Division, was targeted by a postcard campaign because members of the Women's Division had received financial aid to attend Re-Imagining in 1993. Distributed by *Good News*, a conservative Methodist publication, the preprinted postcards addressed to Sohl called on the Women's Division to "repudiate the conference's radical teachings, make a public apology to the church, and promise no further involvement in similar womanist/feminist/lesbian gatherings."

ACCORDING TO Hamline University religion professor Rita Nakashima Brock, author of *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* (Crossroad, 1988), attacks on feminist theologians are nothing new. In recent years, "one scholar had her car firebombed, and others have had threats on their lives," she told the *Star Tribune*. After Brock appeared on ABC-TV's *Nightline* to discuss Re-Imagining, telephone harassment against her was so severe that the university began screening her calls.

Today, from the central dais, Brock lectures on God and gender, pivoting slowly so as to address all corners of the room. She tells of a minister's wife, a feminist, who was disturbed by the phrase "God the Mother." Would a divine mother have allowed her child to be crucified? the woman wondered. And what did that suggest about fatherhood?

In blocking women's ordination, Brock argues, it is church authorities, not feminists, who have made Jesus' masculinity "a symbol of power and exclusion." Candidates for the priesthood need not share any other of Jesus' characteristics—his race, his language, even his religion (Judaism), Brock points out dryly. "It's sort of like my friend Maureen used to say: 'You don't have to be like Jesus; you just have to *per* like Jesus to get ordained.'" The audience roars.

Christology—beliefs about Jesus—is at the center of today's program, beginning with Jesus' own question "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15, Mark 8:29, Luke 9:20). Inflecting the question with emphasis on *you*, participants suggest their own answers in small-group discussions, called "talking circles," at each table. Personal reflection is encouraged, but agreement is not expected.

The ten women in my table group include a Presbyterian minister, a Christian member of the Society of Friends (Quakers), and two Methodist fundamentalists who drove clear across the state to "observe" the conference. I introduce myself as a Unitarian-Universalist, a sometime practitioner of goddess spiri-

tuality, a lesbian-feminist—"the devil incarnate," I sum up with a self-conscious laugh.

On this day, as a year ago, we don't just talk at Re-Imagining. Circle-dancing around the tables feels good after intense conversation. At the artists' table, drawings take shape. Breaking bread together, we honor the women whose daily labor feeds the world. Between presentations we sing:

*From my mother's womb and grandmother's tongue
I have heard my name, been given my song
With their blood and their beauty I have grown strong
With the fire of love and rage I will sing on*

These words bring tears to my eyes. When I look up again, there to my surprise is one of the fundamentalist women, offering comfort. We talk for a while about homophobia and families. I tell her I'm impressed by her determination to find out about Re-Imagining for herself.

She responds with a sidelong grin. At home, she says, both her Methodist pastor and the bishop, a woman, had tried to curb discussion about the 1993 conference, though both were in sympathy with its aims. Loose talk about Re-Imagining by people who weren't there would cause dissension, they told her. But why *not* talk about it? she wonders. "We weren't at the Sermon on the Mount either!" she points out, and how many times had they talked about that?

I ask her what she thinks of feminism. "To me, feminism means women are important, and issues related to women are important," she replies. "I'm not anti-male."

When the last presentation has ended, and tired participants are filing out in twos and threes, Lucille Goodwyne, 55, a national Presbyterian advocate of lesbian and gay ordination, puts the conference in perspective. Like the fundamentalist woman, Goodwyne sees Re-Imagining as an opportunity to affirm "that women are good," while asking "forbidden questions" about Christianity and its relevance to women's lives.

"This is political activism in the Church," she explains. "Some people don't think of the Church as political. It's as political as anything else."

For the future, organizers say, the work of Re-Imagining will continue in locally based study and support groups connected by a newsletter, bringing together women of diverse views to explore common questions. Modest as these grassroots efforts may appear, they are no less significant than the public Re-Imagining gathering that provoked such outrage and condemnation. They may well be the spiritual kin of the consciousness-raising groups through which, a generation ago, U.S. feminism was born again. ♦

Low Ann Matossian is a poet, freelance writer, and editor whose work has appeared most recently in off our backs. She lives in Minneapolis.



*"We are
women in your
image: With the
hot blood of our
wombs we give
form to new life.
... With nectar
between our thighs
we invite a lover.
... With our warm
body fluids we
remind the world
of its pleasures
and sensations."*

—A PRAYER TO SOPHIA,
from the 1993 Re-Imagining
Conference, text by Hilda Kuestler

At left, "Christ Sophia" by Robert Lentz
Artwork provided by Bridge Building
Issues, Burlington, Vermont

Activist Wanda Nowicka worries
Poland's new constitution will
require "protection for the unborn."



Poland's Morning After

Feminists fight to
regain reproductive rights

by PEGGY SIMPSON

The scaffolding covering the Chopin Palace in Warsaw didn't hide the electricity inside, as reproductive rights activist Wanda Nowicka was nominated as Poland's Woman of Europe, contending for a Brussels-based European Community prize. The moderator, Krystyna Kofta, a novelist and magazine writer, professed amazement: "You have a husband and three sons and yet you call yourself a feminist.... Isn't this inconsistent?"

Nowicka, cofounder and executive director of the three-year-old Federation for Women and Family Planning, brought cheers from the standing-room crowd when she said, "I hope this stereotype about feminism is not the only one that is shattered by my selection. I'm a living example of that stereotype not being true."

In honoring Nowicka, the jurors—who come from academia, the media, and political parties—validated Poland's besieged and marginalized women's rights activists as credible political players. That's a sea change.

It has been a wipeout four years for women, at least on reproductive rights issues, since shortly after communism fell in Poland in 1989. The church has won everything it wanted, from regaining property to putting religion back in school to moving against legal abortion and raising political and professional risks for doctors who perform them. Its current crusade is to get "life begins at conception" language into the new constitution, as proposed by the Solidarity Union. Solidarity, meantime, has worked closely with the church; in 1990, the union muzzled members who defied

the union's crusade to make abortion illegal.

Nowicka, a former language teacher, is a leader of the grassroots movement to fight back. Until last summer's UN Population and Development Conference in Cairo, when she made news in Poland and abroad by warning delegates not to expect the Vatican to compromise on reproductive issues such as contraception and abortion, she was known mostly to insiders. Deputy Barbara Labuda, head of the Parliamentary Caucus on Women's Issues and the nation's most visible abortion-rights defender, says she "fought like a tiger" for Nowicka to get the award.

One juror who was persuaded was Ryszard Holzer, a top editor at a Warsaw daily newspaper, *Super Express*: "Family planning and abortion are crucial issues in Poland. The polls show that the majority of people oppose the anti-abortion law. What we did was show the public this person who is fighting that law. This is not an anti-church or pro-church position. We didn't talk about the church. We said this is a good woman."

Consciousness-Raising Can't Begin at the Top

The struggles women in Poland are having are a lesson in the dangers of top-down equal rights. In the past, "equality" was an official policy of the Communist party, although many now say it was more rhetoric than reality and never gave women real power. Women emerged from communism with minimal political clout in either the Communist parties or the Solidarity parties, where women had played a pivotal part in keeping underground Solidarity afloat. Women also emerged saddled with the same formidable work/family burdens they'd wrestled with before—and with no conversations among themselves (let alone with their husbands or as public debates) about burden-sharing.

In 1990 and 1991, few Polish women wanted anything to do with anything connected with the "women's movement." Like women in many parts of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, they associated it with communist manipulation of the people, and they knew it didn't bring equality.

It was an awful time for a learning curve. But there was no way to jump-start a grassroots women's movement from the top. Nor could it be done by outsiders, although their help can be valuable. It has to be done by insiders who know what is viable and when. That foundation is being laid today, brick by brick.

"What we have been going through is the necessary process of getting consciousness about women's issues in general," Nowicka says. Western feminists fought for their equality, but "we took it for granted," Nowicka explains. "If you forget about communism—and forget how limiting it was—the fact that we got so much, so easily, had a paralyzing effect: that there is no need to fight for anything more, that we are equal." She grew up in the late 1970s, never doubting that she was equal to her brother. "There were so many appearances of equality, like the possibility of work, access to the university, being a professional. Many women around me made careers. It was only very recently that I realized very few women could get far in terms of their career."

The wake-up call for Polish women, she says, was the colli-

sion on reproductive rights (see *The Handmaid's Tale*, Polish-Style, p. 39): More women now realize that "what was easily given can be easily taken away, so now is the time to struggle, to strengthen ourselves, to mobilize. I truly believe that eventually we will win. But I'm afraid it may take years."

An Unlikely Revolutionary

Nowicka doesn't look the part of a revolutionary. She has a radiant smile and dresses with simple elegance. She overcame shyness to become a strong public speaker, but still ducks her head when praised. Originally she was studying to be a Greek and Latin scholar when, at 22, to her parents' dismay, she married philosopher Swiatoslaw Nowicki. She became a Latin teacher instead and spent most of the 1980s rearing three sons, not as a Solidarity activist risking jail or worse in the tumultuous confrontation with the Communists.

Nowicka dates her first political action to poll-watching in the 1984 elections that Solidarity boycotted to make sure voter turnout figures weren't inflated. Taking her son Florian in a stroller, she watched a mostly deserted election center for hours—then bolted when a Party official began to ask why she was there and to demand her ID.

When the Solidarity government took over in mid-1989, Nowicka was focused on parents' moves to improve education. She wasn't political in the larger sense. That changed when the first Solidarity government announced in August 1990, when most people were on vacation, that religion classes would be put back into public schools weeks later. At the time, she had just begun three years of teaching English in a parent-controlled high school.

Nowicka helped start Neutrum, a group advocating separation of church and state, which monitored complaints both from parents whose children were ostracized if they weren't in religion school, and from those who were manipulated if their children were. For example, the Friday before the first free parliamentary elections in 1991, some priests sent home names of approved candidates and told first-graders they wouldn't get First Communion if their parents didn't back the church ticket. Earlier that year Neutrum had expanded its agenda when anti-abortion laws were proposed. That's when Nowicka met women from the Polish Feminist Association (PFA). It was a turning point for her.

The PFA proposed her, rather than one of their own, for a summer 1991 political training workshop in Washington, D.C., sponsored by Catholics for a Free Choice. Nowicka, who had been baptized as a Catholic, wanted to act on her anger—and wasn't as exhausted as the PFA veterans, recalls ex-PFA activist Barbara Pomorska, now New Zealand's honorary counsel and trade representative in Warsaw.

She came back energized, and in late 1991 Neutrum helped found the nine-group Federation for Women and Family Planning. Nowicka became its president in 1992. The next year, she left teaching to work part-time at the Federation. In 1994, she resigned from its board to take the newly created job of executive director.

Unlike many Polish women, Nowicka has had her family strongly behind her growing involvement. Her husband works out of their home, translating the German philoso-

pher Hegel into Polish, and does much of the shopping and cooking. "My husband is not a traditional Polish man with these patriarchal expectations. He understands because I'm outside doing this sort of job and he works at home, that somebody must do this work. He's really very supportive, now that he realizes I'm really busy and tired, and he takes on more than he used to," she says. All three sons—Florian, now 14, Michal, 12, and Timoteusz, 10—cook, with specialties such as soups or baking. "And we cook together. We're also not fussy about this," says Nowicka. Her husband and sons have given her a secure emotional base from which to tackle the extraordinarily difficult job of tying together Poland's polarized and fragmented women's community.

Building Coalitions out of Mistrust

Finding common ground after decades of political polarization and distrust is a problem many grassroots groups in the former Soviet bloc must tackle. The Federation is one of the few organizations that has succeeded in getting old and new political groups to work in tandem. Members besides Neutrum include the Solidarity-based PFA; Pro Femina, a grassroots feminist group of women once linked to the Communist party; the Polish Women's League (the former official Communist party association); the YWCA; and the existing affiliate of International Planned Parenthood Federation, called TRR.

Nowicka gets much of the credit for brokering this arrangement. Nowicka's "personal skills...and diplomacy" were assets in the Federation's success in linking Solidarity groups "and old groups like the Women's League, which, because of its communist past, was not really 'accepted,'" says lawyer Urszula Nowakowska, who is starting an office to monitor policies affecting women, modeled after the two-way linkages she saw in the U.S. Congress on a 1993-94 fellowship sponsored by the Women's Research and Educational Institute.

Nowicka's apolitical profile also helped, points out Malgorzata Halaba, a former Russian-Polish translator now working on a master's in business administration. "First of all, she didn't have any political past. She was not a controversial person. She also is not a person who evokes conflict, but somebody who rather solves conflicts."

"Wanda is a person who can pick up what is most important to everybody and put it together. She doesn't take sides. She's able to see the global picture," says Halaba, who is Neutrum's person on the board. "What makes her effective is that she's not emotional but she knows what she wants. She doesn't make a lot of fuss about it, she just does it. She's also a brave person. She's not afraid to tell what she thinks: It's one thing to say something among your friends and quite another to say this at an international conference like in Cairo."

Making decisions and making them stick, without one group or another having second thoughts a week later, has been a serious problem. This was rooted partly in the isolation from what outsiders might think are routine "Robert's rules" processes of running a meeting. But not making decisions was characteristic of the past system. There was an intrinsic assumption that "information is power, so hoard it,"

rather than the operative premise for grassroots organizing: that "information is power, so share it."

Nowicka has shown that sharing information can strengthen an organization. One early Federation activity that has paid off is a hotline set up in 1992 to get and give information. That helps the network monitor on-the-ground realities of every aspect of legal and illegal abortions. New services include sex education programs in two dozen or so schools outside of Warsaw, begun late this summer, and training programs for their teachers.

Early support—both financial and in workshops where experts from Ireland or the United States were brought in as political-training resources—came from Catholics for a Free Choice and IPPF. The Federation also cosponsored a working conference with Norway's Equal Status Council on shaping laws and enforcement mechanisms to guarantee women's rights, and a subsequent one with Norwegian experts and Polish nurses who teach sex-ed classes. And fellowships to study outside Poland have also helped both Nowicka and attorney Nowakowska gain the perspective that let them create change. But it's also important to note that the generosity of outraged feminists in the rest of the world can be a mixed blessing for groups like the Federation. Unsolicited gifts included tens of cartons of condoms or oral contraceptives with no way to distribute them to users, and roomfuls of comic books on sex for Polish teenagers, which got high marks for candor and humor but still were hard to get to teens.

The Future

There is a far more sophisticated grassroots women's movement here than even a year ago. Some are Polish affiliates of international groups, such as the Association of University Women and the Association of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (which has 200 women in seven clubs). An association of rural women entrepreneurs, directed by Elzbieta Dec, is Women's World Banking's first central-European affiliate. Maria Anna Knothe's Center for the Advancement of Women is a major resource for training and women's economic initiatives. Key funders and nurturers for the movement are Dagnara Baraniewska, a senior executive of the Batory Foundation, and Joanna Regulski, director of Russian, Central and East European Studies at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, a Polish emigré who commutes between the United States and Poland and is a key link for grants and programs abroad.

And conflict has spurred consciousness-raising among academics. Three veteran professors are in the second semester of a groundbreaking gender-studies course at Warsaw University: law professors Eleonora Zielinska and Monika Platek and sociology of law professor Malgorzata Fuszara, who also heads a research unit on women and work issues.

Meantime, Nowicka's visibility has soared. After being nominated for the Woman of Europe award, she was interviewed on the radio and in newspapers. Her views became well known, for the first time, to many people. The reproductive rights center also was publicized through the focus on Wanda. And the criticism she had levelled at the Vatican during the Cairo conference got second-round exposure.

The limelight has its hazards, however. At a two-day conference on "women and family life" sponsored by the Parliamentary Caucus on Women's Issues, held in Parliament on Nov. 12-13, the more than 200 delegates were leafletted with a petition protesting Nowicka's nomination that was signed by 18 women, some of them well-known public figures such as sociologist Jadwiga Staniszkis. Nowicka's criticism of the Vatican and of Polish-born Pope John Paul II at the Cairo population conference was "shocking and disgraceful," they said.

Nowicka's own inclination was to defend what she had said (which sounded much harsher in translation from English to Polish) and to make sure that the context was clear: She was criticizing the Vatican, and the pope, on its stand on population issues such as contraception and abortion. She was not criticizing the pope in general, especially as a former Solidarity-era dissident who knew full well that the resistance probably could not have succeeded if it had not been for the protection of the church. She never made the clarification, having been persuaded by her peers that all it would do was make her appear on the defensive.

And that's not all that happened. Within a week of Nowicka's being honored as Poland's Woman of Europe, the reproductive rights office began getting threatening telephone calls. On Friday, November 25—Nowicka's 38th birthday—they escalated into more serious trouble. "A man calling himself Mr. Markowski said he had a telephone appointment with me. I didn't remember that, but when I came to the phone he started yelling at me, 'You bitch, you Jew,'" she recalls. "Of course I put the receiver down, but

he called again and again. Finally, our hotline people talked to him. We recorded the calls. We wanted to call the police at that time, but we didn't."

They probably should have. Later that night or early on Saturday, the reproductive rights office was broken into and totally cleaned out—of two computers and printers, a VCR and television, payroll money due to be paid to hotline workers (about \$3,000), and three telephones. "They didn't just unplug the phones and take them—they cut the wires, as if they would disconnect us from the world. An ordinary robber would have just unplugged them," says Nowicka. Not the least of the impact was the fact that a newly computerized list containing names of more than 800 activists was taken, along with hundreds of other files. Some of that can be replaced, but for a while "we're really out of business," says Nowicka.

Given that two Polish women had previously won the Woman of Europe competition, no one was surprised that Nowicka did not win this year. Receiving the national prize had done its job of making both her and the cause for which she is fighting better known across Poland. The hate mail and threatening phone calls—and the burglary—are testimony to that. "What we wanted to do was to be known," she said. "And these are partly the costs of that. I hope the last ones." ♦

Peggy Simpson has been in Poland covering the economic psychology of the political changes for the past three years. She teaches about U.S. news media at Warsaw University, and has reported on national economics and political news for the Associated Press for 30 years.

"The Handmaid's Tale," Polish-Style

HOW POLISH WOMEN ARE LOSING THEIR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

OPINION POLLS show 70 percent or more of Poles want abortion kept legal and clerics to stay out of politics. The opposite has happened. Restrictions began almost as soon as power changed hands in 1989.

SUMMER 1990

- New health ministry rules require signoff from three physicians and mandatory counseling before getting an abortion.
- With minimal notice, a law strips all local courts of jurisdiction over divorce, relegating it to the equivalent of appeals courts.
- The newly formed Polish Medical Society enacts an ethical code obligating physicians to defend all life, beginning at conception.

1991

- State subsidies for contraceptives end.
- Medical Society code of ethics expands to bar physicians from doing abortions except when pregnancy resulted from a criminal act or threatens the life or health of the woman. Violators can lose their license, though official 1956 law still permits abortion for other reasons, such as "societal hardship."

JANUARY 1993

- Parliament enacts law restricting abortions to those where the life or health of the mother is proved in danger; where tests show the fetus has serious deformities; or where a prosecutor agrees pregnancy resulted from criminal rape or

incest. "Societal hardship" is out.

- Private-clinic abortions are also banned. Penalty: two years in prison. (In summer 1994, these laws bear tragic fruit: A gynecologist from Czeszowa commits suicide before her probable arrest for an illegal abortion at her private clinic. Something went wrong and she rushed her patient to a hospital—saving the patient, but sealing her own fate.)
- Women's rights forces do defeat a move to jail women who self-induce abortion, and win mandates for government to distribute contraceptives, have sex-ed classes.

SUMMER 1993

- Prime Minister Hanna Suchocka signs a then-secret

concordat with the Vatican. If passed by Parliament, it would give priests responsibility for registering church marriages with civil courts, threatening an implicit ban on legal divorce for Catholics. Debate over concordat helps (with abortion) to beat Solidarity parties in September elections.

SPRING 1994

- New Parliament votes for abortion-law changes, to add back in "societal" reasons. Vote misses a two-thirds veto-proof margin. President Lech Walesa vetoes changes, saying he'll resign if overridden.
- Bishops threaten 1995 presidential-race opposition to parties that override Walesa. The strict '93 law is still in effect in 1995.

hair daze: To Shave or Not to Shave?

"IN MY DAY, IT ALL STARTED when you were fourteen...at Easter time," she says, pulling her long cotton skirt up to her thighs and scratching her upper leg above where it's socially acceptable to scratch. "You got high heels, pantyhose...it was a custom. I don't know how it was handed down." Dr. Ann Dreher leans back in her office chair and tosses her bare legs up on the desk. She's a theater professor at the University of South Carolina (USC) in Columbia. When she wears ankle socks with pumps and exposes her hairy legs, is she just being dramatic?

Maybe. But she's not the only one on campus. Sure, the majority of college women, of all American women, shave their legs and underarms. And most American men shave their faces and keep their hair short. But what about those who don't? Hairy-legged women and bearded, hairy men. Why would anyone want to step that far out of the status quo? And why do so many of us want to stay in?

Dreher's students offered her up to me as an interesting subject for this piece. "She doesn't shave...she's crazy," one 21-year-old male told me, "But don't tell her I sent you." Some students find her hairiness disgusting. White men are usually "grossed out" by it, says Dreher, who is white. "Students have told me, 'When I saw you didn't shave, I knew you were a heavy feminist.'"

Well, Dreher does have a bumper sticker on her office door that says "War is Menstruation Envy," but she's not the only one who's not shaving. Sociology junior Amy Potthast, at Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh, quit shaving her freshman year. Other students have questioned her decision, but she won't go changing. "Why is it a preference thing for men to shave their faces, yet unheard of for men to shave under their arms or on their legs and just as unheard of for women not to shave in those places?" she asks. "I don't understand these arbitrary social patterns, and once I started trying to make sense of them, I stopped shaving."

Dr. Soyini Madison, communication studies professor, University of North Carolina (UNC), Chapel Hill, quit shaving when she started thinking about double standards. "I don't see any purpose in shaving other than to comply with false standards of what women should do," she says. "Men don't shave. And it's certainly not a matter of hygiene."

The cultural norm is no secret. It's proclaimed in every magazine, on every model. Liz Claiborne tells us in the ads that "legs have a language of their own." Hers are smooth

and silky. *Teen* magazine tells its adolescent readers what guys like. "Girls should always shave their legs and under their arms," one teen-age boy wrote in last August; "I'm not into the au naturel look."

Yet women have never let men's tastes determine their hairstyles, writes Wendy Cooper in *Hair: Sex, Society, Symbolism*. For centuries, men have pleaded for long and loose hair, yet for centuries women have lifted it, curled it, tied it back. Body hair "seems to be the one case in which women are prepared to please men, yielding to masculine whims and demands, even when, in the past, this has meant depilation by quite painful methods," writes Cooper.

King Solomon is reputed to have demanded that the queen of Sheba remove "nature's veil" before he would sleep with her. The Crusaders brought the Arabic idea of depilation to European women, which lasted until Catherine de Medici ended the fashion. During the Italian Renaissance, it was only practiced when doctors shaved hysterical women, to make the "suffocating humors of the brain" flow out more easily. A report from a Frenchman in 1525 states that it was considered elegant for women to be completely shaven. But by 1545, Cooper writes, French women applied a special pomade to their private parts to make the hair grow abnormally long, so that it could be curled up like a mustache and decorated with colored bows.

Decorative pubic bows? Shaving to cure hysteria? Hold on to your hairdos, that's just the women. Men have been hairier from the beginning. And while codes for women's hair have remained largely unwritten, men's beards and the hair on their heads have been subject to legislation.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT ordered his whole army to be shaven, so that the enemy didn't grab their hair prior to cutting off their heads, wrote Charles MacKay in *Memoires of Extraordinary Popular Delusions* in 1841. At the end of the 11th century, the pope decreed that people with "long hair should be excommunicated while living and not prayed for when dead." When the bishop of Worcester passed men with long hair in the street, he would reach out with his knife and slice off a bit of the hair. Then, holding it in their faces, he would tell them to cut off the rest or go to hell. In 1705 Peter the Great of Russia decided that his kingdom would be free of beards. Those who wouldn't shave were forced to pay a tax of 100 rubles or be thrown into prison.

B Y O L I V I A J A M E S

These men were shaved and shorn at the command of church and state. Today, the enforcement is more subtle. Not only do we fail to understand the reasons for the styles we follow, we sometimes fail to see that we are following anything. The average teenager will never ask "Why shave?", only "When?"

Black women may not feel as much pressure from men to shave as white women do. "It's not an aesthetic either way that we as black men are attracted to," says Dr. Jon Michael Spencer, Afro-American studies professor at UNC.

But women of all colors who do have second thoughts about shaving often conclude it is easier to stick with the social norm. "If I were to grow my hair out, people would talk," says NC State senior Laura Pottmyer. "They'd label me a feminazi or a lesbian. I'm just not that secure about my womanhood."

Her friend Rhonda Mann, coordinator of the Women's Center at NC State, says shaving is right for her. But she admires her women friends who don't shave. "It must be liberating to do something that isn't 'appropriate' like this. It's a way of saying you can't define me as a woman. I'm defining myself."

Perhaps hair is such a volatile issue for us because the hair that sprouts on our bodies at puberty brings new evidence that the differences between boys and girls are not just rumors. We do like to mark our differences: Men have short head hair and full body hair; women have the opposite.

Though we all have varying amounts of hair in varying places, we've deemed these particular traits "normal." And we desperately want to be normal. We do what we can with our head and body hair, try to wear it as others do, and when we spot growth in a strange place—like me and my big toe (women don't have hair there, do they God?)—we pray to the god of hair, please let me look normal.

Dr. Glenn Chappell, of Meredith Women's College in Raleigh, North Carolina, instructs women in the reputable side of normalcy: professionalism. As advisor for two business organizations, his rule of thumb is: not too far out. The idea of women not shaving throws him off balance. "A lot of people running around unshaven would be quite startling," he says. "A female accountant who didn't shave would create quite a stir. If you're selling granola bars, I don't know..."



The material is rock-hard, the surfaces sprouting, in Rachel Rosenthal's clay sculpture, Gerrha, 1973.

After a swindle that sheared her of her savings, Rachel Rosenthal underwent a ritual haircut in her performance art piece, Leave Her in Naxos, 1981.



AH, IMAGE......object of our obsession. We waste lifetimes wondering how things will look. For American women, the mantra of hairlessness includes shaving pubic regions. Most bathing suits are cut so that pubic hair must be removed or exposed. And if it is exposed, it seems unhygienic.

Theater professor Dreher preaches to her students a sermon against this trend of depilating the body entire. "You own your own body," she warns. "Why are you putting depilatory on the most tender part of the body?" For her, a bathing suit that exposes her body hair is a message that the manufacturer wants to see the hair, and she wears the suit accordingly.

How does one respond to such hairiness?

Potthast, who goes unshaven in Pittsburgh, is a friend. I didn't know how to talk to her about her hairiness. "Your leg," I mention eventually (after she brings up the subject), "it looks just like a man's leg." Is the difference between the sexes only who shaves? I am 22 and I don't know my own leg—as a real leg. I know it well, chiseled and moisturized, with the muscle defined, femininity defined.

But without the use of razors, depilatories, and moisturizers...I have never seen my adult leg. I am a stranger in my own body. And a stranger to my own sex, unable to recognize the leg of a natural woman.

MOST WOMEN, young and old, who subscribe to this culture's definition of "woman," feel bad about having body hair. They secretly fear exposure; they glance at themselves in private and whisper as they pluck, "surely I'm the only one with unsightly hair."

It's hair-pressure on a national scale. Yet, when we encounter the hairy ones, we stand silently wondering. Perhaps Salvador Dali had the answer. He didn't try to be normal. Just free. He was known for his "unsightly" hair. Dali had a mustache which, when curled, could rise upward to the level of his eyebrows. He said he used it to receive messages from outer space. ♦

Writer Olivia James is struggling with the big issues in Carboro, North Carolina.

Overworked? Overwhelmed?

These artists
understand
by Arlene Raven



Two New York exhibitions take up highly contentious themes about women and work. "The Office: History, Fantasy, and Irregular Protocols" focuses on clerical, administrative, and executive jobs. "Division of Labor: 'Women's Work' in Contemporary Art," at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, explores the more familiar theme of domestic toil.

The Office," housed at the Riverbank and Principal Mutual Life Insurance Company in New York City's financial district, employs a commercial building as a structure in which artists can explore the pink-collar work environment. This remaking of an existing form has a feminist precedent in the 1971 "Womanhouse," which was created in an abandoned house in downtown Los Angeles to exemplify and parody just such a home. Some pieces of the original Womanhouse are recreated in the Bronx Museum exhibit.

"The Office" is the effort of twelve artists—writers, performers, filmmakers, and visual artists—who began to meet more than two years ago to discuss their work. They dis-

covered that they had all worked in offices and decided to seek a business space as the most appropriate exhibit area for their subject. They found a vacant floor in a high rise in the Wall Street district.

The marble and brass lobby belies the fact that the Deco-era building, fully occupied a decade ago, is now all but deserted. Its 28th floor is dim and dingy. The reception area is empty save for a stained carpet and a few random chairs around a small television monitor. Along three surrounding walls, ten cubicles still separate the ghosts of workers from the visitors.

"The Corner Office" boasts window power. The installation by Brenda Nielson is in an actual corner cubicle—one of twelve site works that take up the entire floor. The placement and light of

this room reflect Nielson's two-year corporate rise from a low-level clerical worker to director of finance during the late 1980s. The glare, streaming in between billowy curtains that suggest a breeze, falls harshly onto the unoccupied desk. There, an open magazine, a half-eaten raisin Danish, and a spilled cup of coffee are frozen stiff with a preservative yellow-brown plastic coating. *The Managerial Woman* and *Winning at Work* still line the walls. But in 1991, Nielson left.

Theodora Skipitares' space is darkened to black. Three small animated figures are illuminated by the light bulbs attached to their busy hands moving above typewriters. The three demonstrate a favorite technique of Taylorists, followers of Frederick Winslow Taylor, the early

20th-century founder of "scientific management": charting the motion of repetitive tasks through time-lapse photography. This tedious process was designed to eliminate wasted gestures at work and find the single best way to do any job.

Skipitares' stenos are automated examples of post-industrial philosophies that liken people to machines. "Scientific" housework, aided by more and more home appliances, became a profession at the turn of the 20th century and is still identified exclusively with women. Meanwhile, professional office workers served as wives—playing mother, child, and mistress—away from home. "Girl Fridays," however, can be left at the end of the day and fired at the end of the week.

What of today's "average"

1. Theodora Skipitares, *Why Is She All Lit Up?*
2. Judite dos Santos, *Accessibility/Inaccessibility*
3. Mira Schor, *Personal Writing Software*
4. Freya Hansell, *A Proper Burial*
5. Nancy Barton, *The Power of a Singular Vision*
6. Gwenn Thomas, *Night Workers in the Global City: The Invisible Partners of the Corporate Economy*

Photographs courtesy of
Lower Manhattan Cultural Council.

woman with home, family, and a job? The dream of the 1980s—"having it all"—may have lost its luster. Yet many women are still "doing it all." And the result is overwhelming.

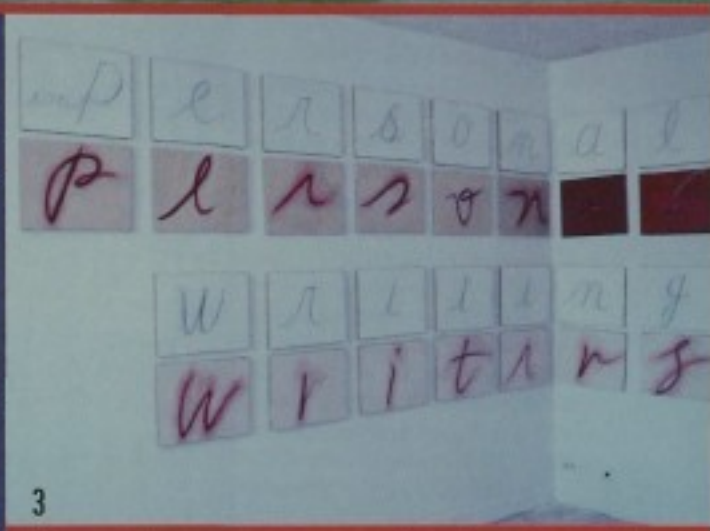
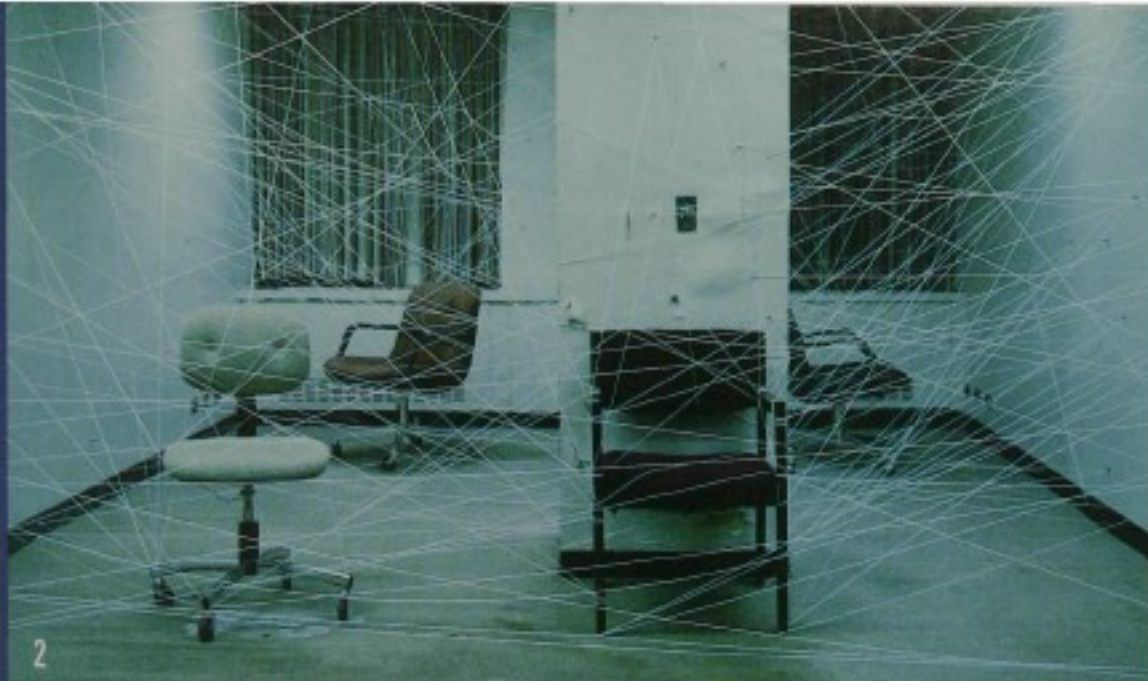
The centerpiece of Freya Hansell's "A Proper Burial" is a stack of paper that rises from her desk to the ceiling. Six trash cans and a dozen file boxes overflow with bills and receipts. These personal documents are the unfired, out-of-control residue of 20 years. Women's work is, indeed, never done.

On the Home Front

In the "Division of Labor" exhibit, "division" is not a neutral boundary. "Division" denotes the wound that splits work according to gender and trivializes female effort.

A retrospective of home industry, the exhibit includes a variety of hallmark works from the 1970s, '80s, and '90s.

Ann Hamilton's "Still Life" (1988) consists of a table, chair, and 800 white men's shirts that are folded, starched, and gilded. There is no figure in Hamilton's installation. Yet the ghostly smile of the "happy housewife" presides. The material nature of women's work in this home is



reflected in the means and resources chosen for artworks that portray the craft and the drudgery of carrying out these labor-intensive tasks.

Tile and wallpaper are employed by Joyce Kozloff in her public installations. Emma Amos borders her paintings with batik and weaving. Curtain rods and fringe are camouflage materials in Marisa Hernandez' displays. Gay Outlaw's tall sculptural pillar is made of skillets. The feet by Joyce Scott, that bravely walk difficult paths, are beaded. Faith Ringgold paints, dyes, and pieces fabrics that tell a story about African-Americans in 1973 that couldn't, then, be read in most books.

The phantom underside of the happy-face homemaker is the unstated, yet startling, subject of Mimi Smith's 1968 "Knit Baby Kit." You can make a baby according to your worst nightmares. Encephalitic swollen head. No eyes, nose, mouth, or ears. A cross-stitched message on the infant's garment: "The Baby Is Dead."

Four pieces from Womanhouse are reconstructed here—Judy Chicago's "Menstruation Bathroom," Beth Bachenheimer's "Shoe Closet," Miriam Schapiro and Sherry Brody's "The Dollhouse," and Faith Wilding's "Womb Room." These works occupied rooms in an original site that transformed an abandoned residence at 553 Mariposa Street in downtown Los Angeles into a vision of the world of a hypothetical housewife. Created in only six weeks, Womanhouse was open to the public between January 30 and February 28, 1972. Audiences were possibly the largest ever drawn to a mostly student project outside of a gallery or museum. The first self-defined collaborative feminist art, Womanhouse was to have far-reaching visibility and national impact.

"Women's work" as the

1. Leora Barish, *Receptionist Wanted*
2. Brenda Nielson, *The Corner Office*
3. Kay Hines, *The Museum of Office Culture*

Photographs courtesy of Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art.



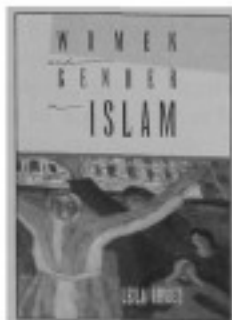
subject matter of Womanhouse means housework. But the preparation of the environment challenged gender-defined stereotypes and definitions of labor. From plumbing to painting, repairing and restoring the house as an independent exhibition space as well as a work of art was a vital component in a course of study designed to build students' skills.

We can better sense the irony of "Menstruation Bathroom" when we know its means of construction, as a three-dimensional collage of sanitary products in a pristine white surround, as well as its deconstruction of its subject.

The "unknowable mystery" of woman—she who bleeds but does not die—is seen as the unseeable, behind filmy, sterile gauze.

A lasting legacy of the collaboration that created Womanhouse is the model of community it inspired. Miriam Schapiro continues her dialog with other artists of the present and past by including their images within her own oeuvre. Her invention of "femmage" (a feminine inflection of collage) as a working method and structure evokes (continued on page 55)

Choice Books



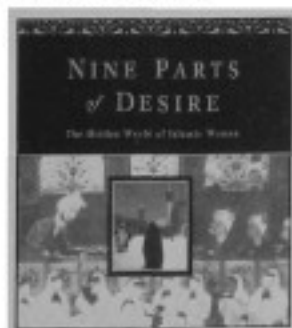
**WOMEN & GENDER IN ISLAM:
HISTORICAL ROOTS OF A MODERN
DEBATE**

by Leila Ahmed (Yale University Press, New Haven, \$15.00 paperback)



**PRICE OF HONOR:
MUSLIM WOMEN LIFT THE VEIL OF
SILENCE ON THE ISLAMIC WORLD**

by Jan Goodwin (Little, Brown & Co., Boston, \$22.95 hardcover)



**NINE PARTS OF DESIRE: THE HIDDEN
WORLD OF ISLAMIC WOMEN**

by Geraldine Brooks (Doubleday & Co., New York, \$22.95 hardcover)

BY MARTHA SHELLEY

"We're lucky we were born here!" is the smug response I get when I say I'm reading about women in the Islamic world. Yet during most of the last century, an American woman's wages belonged to her husband, while a Muslim wife had the right to control her own earnings. In general, American women had fewer guaranteed rights than their Muslim counterparts. What happened to change the balance?

Moreover, in the global village, *there* is rapidly becoming *here*. Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world and in the United States, the latter due to both conversions and the fertility patterns of immigrants from Islamic countries. Last August, the Vatican joined Muslim fundamentalists in opposing women's reproductive rights at the U.N. Population and Development Conference in Cairo. U.S. soldiers, male and female, are back in the Persian Gulf defending a Kuwaiti regime that still denies women the right to vote.

Anyone concerned about the future of feminism needs to understand the Islamic religious revival. Fortunately, some excellent books are available. The best starting point is Leila Ahmed's *Women and Gender in Islam*. Extensively researched, brilliantly and elegantly written, it offers a brief history of women in the Middle East from Neolithic times to the present, and provides indispensable background for other works on the subject.

Ahmed begins with evidence that ancient Middle Eastern women held favored, even privileged positions in society and that the dominant pre-Islamic religions involved worship of a mother goddess. The long, slow decline in women's status paralleled the rise of urban states and warrior cultures. Women's reproductive capacity became

an asset that enabled communities to increase their population and augment the labor force. As a result, competing tribes often "stole" women from each other. Ahmed then advances to the rise of Islam in the seventh century. Many Muslims and non-Muslims credit early Islam with improving the status of women, singling out the Prophet Muhammad's abolition of female infanticide. Yet women in some Middle Eastern cultures, Ahmed asserts, had been considerably better off before Islam. Unlike their sisters in adjacent empires, Arab women could occupy a variety of roles. Muhammad's first wife was a wealthy merchant who spent her money to support his contemplative life; women participated in battle; priestesses served the pagan deities of Arabia; free women married and divorced at will, sometimes polyandrously.

Muhammad outlawed polyandry and prescribed a patriarchal marriage form that allowed men up to four wives and as many concubines as they could acquire. Men were granted the right to beat their wives for rebelliousness. Children belonged to their father's clan. This arrangement gave men practical control of women's sexuality—an important shift, since a man's honor was increasingly seen as dependent on the chastity of his womenfolk; women's unrestrained sexuality, meanwhile, was seen as leading to *fitna*, or social chaos. Muhammad further prescribed religious warfare as a duty for men, and obedience to husbands as the main religious duty for women. Less than 200 years after his death, in 632 C.E., Islamic wars of conquest had flooded the slave markets with so many female captives that a young man receiving his inheritance went out to buy "a house, furniture, concubines, and other objects."

Ahmed devotes considerable space to the veil—a garment which has now assumed the significance of a national banner. Nineteenth-century colonizers seized on it as the visible embodiment of women's oppression and a sign of the backwardness of Middle Eastern societies. Infected with the same ideology, Western feminists assumed that Muslim women could liberate themselves only by abandoning their own culture and clothing, and adopting ours. The indigenous battle for women's rights was thus tainted by its early association with colonialism. Yet the veil, as Ahmed observes, also en-

abled women to hold jobs and converse with men outside their families without compromising their reputations. In short, rather than declaring women's place to be at home, it legitimized their presence in the public sphere. (The veil, it should be noted, was primarily an issue for middle-class and upper-middle-class women since peasants and others who had to help support their families financially never had the luxury of modesty.)

Ahmed acknowledges the misogynist brutality of modern fundamentalist regimes (e.g., Iran, Afghanistan), but instead of scrapping Islam, she demands that it be reinterpreted. She points out that the patriarchal fundamentalist position is not the only legitimate one, any more than it is for Christianity, and discerns two voices in Islam's religious texts. Islam's popular appeal, she argues, lies in the ethical and spiritual message expressed in many Koranic verses: "Lo! Men who surrender unto Allah, and women who surrender, and men who believe and women who believe...and men who guard their modesty and women who guard their mod-

esty...Allah hath prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward." This egalitarian voice is heard by people who look to their religious tradition for social justice. But there's another voice—a patriarchal, legalistic one: "Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women)... As for those from whom ye fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and scourge them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them." Ahmed calls for a grassroots, native Islamic feminism that acknowledges and accepts the influence of Western ideas—in particular, the genies of democracy and human rights that can't, at any rate, be easily squeezed back into the bottle.

Yet despite her formidable scholarship, Ahmed never attempts to answer the question she brings up at regular intervals: Why has Islam consistently embraced misogynist customs in every society it encountered? The answer may be that even the most progressive interpretation of the Koran leaves the

essentials of male domination intact. What Muhammad did in the seventh century was transform a pluralistic and nomadic society—dubbed "The Age of Ignorance" by his followers—into a patriarchal empire. Though he exhorted men to treat *their* women with kindness, he established a code of wifely obedience, paternal right to child custody, one-sided divorce and inheritance laws, etc. He left it to individual men to protect *their* women rather than for society to protect the rights of *its* women. Since Islam may not be able to shed its sexist nature without a complete overhaul, I wish Ahmed could have dared reclaim some of the traditions from the goddess-worshipping cultures of the "Age of Ignorance." But then again, we have to remember that Muhammad also prescribed the death penalty for apostasy.

Jan Goodwin's *Price of Honor* begins where Ahmed leaves off. Her main task is to depict Islamic fundamentalism and explore the economic and political soil in which it flourishes. A woman of considerable courage, she served as a front-line war correspondent in Afghanistan in the 1980s and subsequently traveled throughout the Middle East to research this book.

Goodwin considers the postwar Islamic revival a response to both the failure of corrupt governments to bring prosperity and political freedom to their people and, with the fall of the Soviet Union, the loss of faith in a socialist-inspired international movement. Fundamentalists counter despair with the catchall slogan, "Islam is the solution." They rally people around strictly defined native traditions and lambast the desecration of their culture by what is seen as a godless Western consumerism. Borrowing from the missionary rule book, they begin with charity, helping the homeless after an Egyptian earthquake, providing medicine and education during the postwar Jordanian economic crisis. Like other successful missionary movements, they're backed by a massive propaganda machine, arms, and military training. But since none of this comes cheap, Goodwin traces the oil-money-arms connection: Royal families in the gulf states bankroll the fundamentalist movement to protect themselves against assassination and, in some cases, because of ideological sympathy. The United States supports

NOTES OF A WHITE BLACK WOMAN

Race, Color, Community

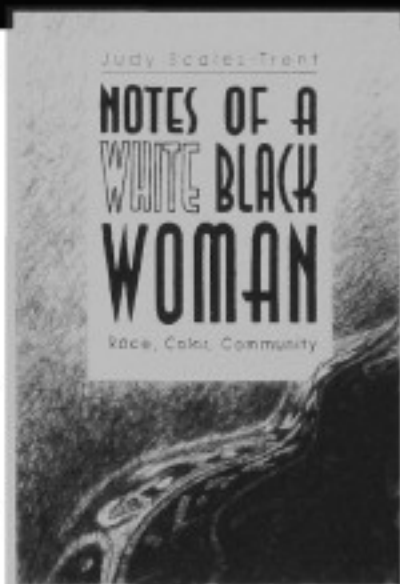
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"It is popular in many circles today to treat 'race' as a determinant of intelligence; it is popular in other circles to treat 'race' as an invented trait that can easily be reinvented. Judy Scales-Trent explodes both views as she explores the experiences of people who are black but look white. . . . At turns gentle and angry, awed and critical, this is must reading for anyone interested in identity, race relations, civil rights, and the avenues for personal fulfillment."

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gulf royalty since, despite halfhearted conservation measures, we are increasingly dependent on their oil. (In 1973, we imported 36 percent of our petroleum; we now import half, and by the year 2000 will import 60 percent.) To pay for the oil, we have become the world's largest arms producer, with three-quarters of our weapons sales going to the Middle East.

Ultimately, Goodwin argues, billions of petrodollars are channeled into an international movement that has as its moral agenda the complete enslavement of women. She documents the results, both in countries where the extremists are in power, and where their presence is strong enough to extract concessions from existing regimes. In Pakistan, for instance, a man can't be convicted of rape without the testimony of four adult males who witnessed penetration. Lacking

such corroboration, a woman who files charges is considered to be confessing to *zina*, or sexual immorality. (In 1994, 75 percent of the women in Pakistani jails had been convicted of *zina*.) In Afghanistan, a recent *fatwa* (religious decree) prohibited women from, among other things, "going out without their husband's permission... walking with pride, or walking in the middle of the sidewalk." In Iran, a man may legally kill his wife for infidelity. An Iraqi can kill a female relative suspected of "misbehaving." And Egyptian law requires a wife to be obedient, and requires the police to return a fugitive wife to an abusive husband.

Muslims who criticize the fundamentalist version of Islam are often targeted for assassination or forced into exile. Taslima Nasrin, a Bangladeshi feminist writer who criticized Islam and marriage and argued that "women must live outside the religion and Islamic law," escaped to Sweden the same week the Vatican reportedly cut a deal with Islamic fundamentalists. Even Egypt's chief justice, Sa'id al-Ashmawy, is not immune. He has lived as a virtual recluse, surrounded by armed guards, since zealots called for his death for stating that the *sharia* (religious law) is man-made and "was added in the cen-

turies after the Prophet's death by self-serving rulers who wanted to bestow sacredness on themselves under cover of religion." Yet one problem with Goodwin's passion to document injustice is that it could lead readers to think most Muslim women's lives are unremitting horror stories. In fact, their daily struggles are quite ordinary, their marriages predominantly monogamous. The major issue for most women in the Middle East is still poverty. Tehran women, for instance, are concerned that

fundamentalists will force them out of paid employment and into the kitchen and *chador* (a veil covering the body and most of the face).

Geraldine Brooks, another journalist who lived in the Muslim world, offers us a less tidy, sometimes optimistic view in *Nine Parts of Desire*. She lacks the historical depth of Ahmed and the economic overview of

Goodwin, but presents a series of memorable individual portraits. She shares with us the joys of Iranian girl athletes and of Kurdish women lined up to vote for the first time. We meet a happy bride whose husband takes seriously the Koranic injunction to give his wife pleasure, as well as a woman forced to choose between abandoning her children and sharing her husband with a younger co-wife. She introduces us to Eritrean women soldiers who obtained new legal rights as a result of their valor in battle; later, she reminds us of the Algerian and Afghan women who risked torture and death in their national struggles, and who were subsequently stripped of their rights by the governments they helped establish.

Since *Nine Parts of Desire* was published a year after *Proof of Honor*, we can follow up some of the stories Goodwin had to leave unfinished. Toujan Faisal, a Jordanian journalist who dared run for parliament, had been hounded by fundamentalists screaming for her blood. She lost the first election in 1989, but subsequently became the first woman elected to the Jordanian parliament. Dr. Nawal el-Saadawi, the Egyptian feminist and author who received death threats, fled into exile and is now

teaching at Duke University.

Unfortunately, Brooks' desire to chronicle women's successes occasionally leads her to journalistic misjudgments. Her somewhat rosy view of Iran is strongly biased by interviews with the daughters of Ayatollah Khomeini and President Rafsanjani. These women have in fact supported women's sports and the creation of some segregated positions in the workforce. However, the average Iranian girl will become neither an athlete nor a camerawoman covering the all-female Islamic games. Her life is much more likely to be circumscribed simply by the ideas and expectations of the man she marries.

Brooks is most effective in her focus on human rights violations such as "honor" killings and clitoridectomy (one in five Muslim women has reportedly suffered genital mutilation). She points out that progressive Muslims dismiss Western criticism by saying that these practices are not religiously sanctioned, but then fail to speak out against the abuses themselves. She then goes on to insist that Islam be judged like any other religion or political system—not for the reforms it offered women in the seventh century or for its promise of an ideal state, but "for the kind of life it offers the people in the lands where it predominates."

Finally, Brooks exhorts Western nations to make it illegal for immigrants to mutilate their daughters' genitals or to take them out of the country for such surgery. We can also refuse to recognize the marriages of underage girls, just as we refuse to recognize polygamy. And we can offer asylum to women fleeing gender persecution.

Taken together, these books help us understand some of the problems Muslim women face. But they also, unintentionally, remind us that the advantages Western women enjoy today have only recently been won, and that they came about as a result of large-scale industrialization and the struggles of a rising middle class to establish its political rights. We now need to reach out to Muslim women—without delusions about our own freedoms but with the urgent awareness that fundamentalists on both sides are looking to forge alliances which will become our chains. ♦

Martina Shelley is a writer and radio journalist. She lives in Oakland, California.

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sexuality was
seen as
leading to *fitna*,
or social chaos.**

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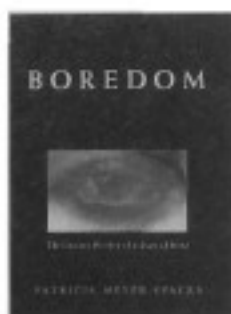
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BOREDOM: THE LITERARY HISTORY OF A STATE OF MIND

by Patricia Meyer Spacks (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, \$24.95 hardcover)

BY AMY ZALMAN

Is *Boredom: The Literary History of a State of Mind* a necessarily tiresome read? Does it make sense to discuss the book outside its own terms? Just for the record, Patricia Meyer Spacks' extended argument about how boredom structures the way we interpret experience—both as we live and when we read—is far from a chore.

Indeed, "the inability to desire or to have desire fulfilled," as Spacks defines her subject, has rarely been made as interesting as it is in this analysis of the writings of men and women from the eighteenth century to the present. The history of English literature can be read as a virtual compendium of overt and covert assertions of boredom, of definitions and interpretations, and of noble attempts to ally and deny the affliction. Though boredom might seem an inherently solipsistic condition, this book accounts for its social history; the chapters on women's writings, in particular, explain how boredom can be not simply an existential predicament but the result of social forces and conventions as well.

Spacks, whose previous book offered a cultural history of gossip, presents her new book in a historical and intellectual framework. For millennia, people had days when they just didn't know what to do with themselves; for just as long, they used reading and writing to counteract the dreariness of daily routine. But boredom has often had different meanings. To the medieval monk, for instance, occasional feelings of dullness were tests of his spiritual state since it was his responsibility to be engaged in a world that was the work of a Divine—and thus eternally interesting—Author. Spacks charts the transformation of the

idea of boredom from its earliest use as a means of internal "ethical interrogation" to its present one as an "all-purpose index of alienation." We no longer hold ourselves responsible, either as moral or social creatures, for being interested or interesting. Instead, we expect to be entertained, a hope encouraged by the prevalence of never-ending television soap operas and nighttime dramas. They keep us on our toes, always desiring more.

Boredom is in large part about the need for a narrative continuity to give our lives interest and meaning, as if we were ourselves characters in novels or soap operas. By articulating several possible histories for a condition that is "deeply assumed in our culture," Spacks provides the opportunity to construct our own narrative for our own particular form of boredom. Yet she does point out some trends. Those who see boredom as a universal, existential condition, for instance, have historically been male: It is a luxury in which those who may escape it can indulge. But boredom can also be created by external forces. Spacks argues that an important element in whether we see our lives as interesting is the degree to which we have the autonomy to choose what will interest us and what will bore us.

The chapters devoted to women's writings are the most assertive in establishing a connection between the freedom to choose occupations we find appealing and our perception of boredom. Whereas all but an aristocratic class of women in pre-industrial England played decisive roles in their own and their families' survival, by the mid-1700s, the burgeoning wealth of the nation left many with nothing deemed important to do. A new female leisure class turned to social calls, piano playing, and incessant needlework to fill its time. Contemporary conduct books such as the popular *Sermons to Young Women* instructed women to be content with domestic activities, or else risk their virtuous reputations.

Women in particular, then, had a special relationship to both reading and writing as ways to fill and transform the time on their hands. But the literary life was considered dangerous, for it could incite in women "a contempt for ordinary realities." Women who wrote knew this well, since they faced the challenge of creating something of lasting interest from the monotony of their

daily experience. In many eighteenth-century novels by and about women, Spacks suggests, "the represented lives of young women oscillate between boredom and far more dramatic forms of anguish." The tacit recognition of the dullness of women's lives forms the foundation of such plots; there was no middle road between boredom and tragedy. Female boredom reflected obedience to social norms: If marriage was the only happy solution to either anguished romance or listless adolescence, it also guaranteed a life of needlework and piano playing.

In her vivid analysis of nineteenth-century novels by women, Spacks depicts boredom as both a denial of female desire and an indication of female desire, erotic and intellectual. In and out of fiction, women became bored because of limited options for fulfilling their desires. Eventually, men saw them as boring, and thus trivial.

Jane Austen's *Emma*, famous for her neighborly meddling and certain that "a mind lively and at ease, can do with seeing nothing," creates fictions about the people around her that engage her interest more than the people themselves. By the mid-twentieth century, Gertrude Stein could self-consciously employ the idea of boredom as a source of fiction-making. Stein's flat and repetitive prose—"sometimes something did happen, she knew to whom she had been married but that was not anything happening, she knew about clothes and resting but that was not anything happening"—did imitate the repetitious nature of life, but Stein turned that repetition into narrative and insisted on its possibilities as fiction. In her singular use of language, as Spacks makes clear, Stein "implicitly reproaches those who find eventless lives (in particular the eventless lives of women) devoid of interest." She also foreshadowed the present moment, in which boredom is a condition not inherent in us or our individual situations, but is all around us.

Given the inevitability of boredom, Spacks' book is an ingenious reply. Her own chutzpah in postulating a theory of writing and boredom and then penning a vigorous, lively book about it invites us to examine our own experiences of boredom in an engaging and decidedly novel way. ♦

Amy Zalman is a lecturer in the Department of English at Cornell University.

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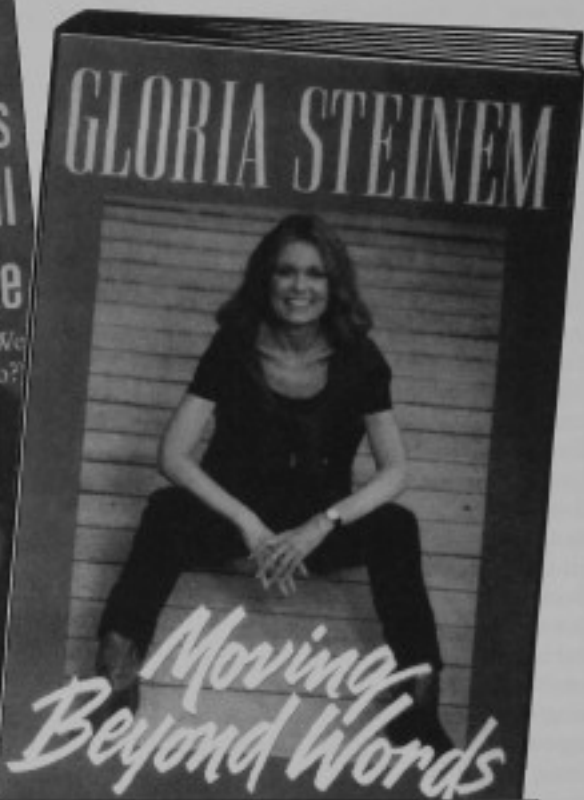
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Phillips: "What happens here that couldn't happen if women were present?" Evidently tired from the responsibilities of this day, Phillips nevertheless gives me a lengthy and courteous answer. He mentions "issues concerning a man's sexuality" and how dealing "with issues concerning the act of sex and such, it would make you very uncomfortable to have other women around [italics mine]." I am perplexed by his odd locution—why other women, not simply women?—until someone who has been overhearing accosts me. She is extremely enthusiastic and animated as she extemporizes on Phillips's point that Promise Keepers should be viewed not as "a threat to women" but as "a great benefit to women." Then she introduces herself. She is Holly Phillips. His wife. And she makes a formidable spin nurse—especially when she asks me forthrightly, "Do I look like a doormat kind of woman?"

No, I allow, she does not.

Throughout the day and a half, I detect no overtly misogynist slurs—neither from the Promise Keepers stage

nor in the milling corridors. Rarely does a presenter even use the word *woman*, much less pronounce a loopy opinion about women's ostensible nature. There is no tit-for-tat accusing of women; nor is there any pop-psych defense of the double standard, as in the secular mega-seller *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*. The Promise Keepers message is simpler: Men are from God. This obviates the sorts of gender-defender dramas that would-be real men are prone to—contests and put-downs to prove who's got "manhood" and whose is "greater." God's manhood is greater—"nuff said. That tenet—combined with the physical exclusion of women from the premises—seems to put these men on equal footing (all benched sinners, all accountable to the same Coach). This in turn reduces peer-pressured urgency for put-downs of women in order to mark off "who are the real men here and am I among them?"

But the button is always there to be pushed. Once, for instance, Gary Smalley (president, Today's Family) cracks an earthy joke about purported differentials in sexual arousal: Men are

"microwaves," he quips, and women are "crockpots." The crowd is amused.

Men generally—whether dressing left or right—may indeed be incapable of making common cause without at least subtly deriding females. Men's sense of public gender definition cannot feel real unless some third party to a male bond is treated inferiorly (a dynamic I've elaborated on in my book *The End of Manhood*). Conveniently, religious fundamentalism reminds each would-be-godly man of a common gender enemy outside the tribe, so that a brotherhood of male supremacists can thrive in contradistinction to it. And the *bête noire* that bonds Promise Keepers is code-named *Canaanites*: abortion- and homosexual-rights activists especially, but the lot of atheists and non-Christians as well.

When Tony Evans (chaplain to the Dallas Mavericks basketball team) declares Saturday evening, "It's been too long that three percent of homosexuals control our moral majority," the crowd breaks into loud approval.

"Gentlemen, we are going into battle," says Dr. Charles Swindoll (president, Dallas Theological Seminary)

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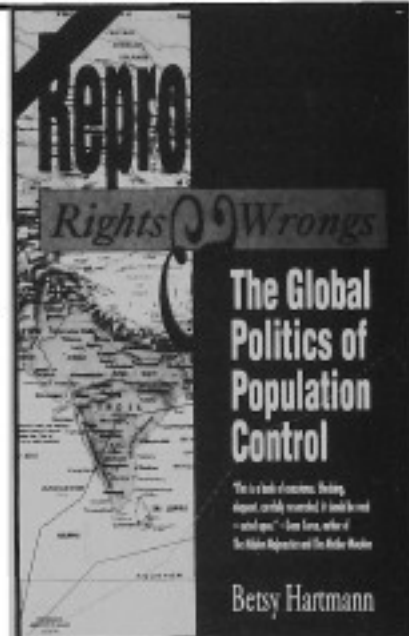
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later that night: "there is a war on."

"Men, you've been in a war, but you have not been at war," shouts football coach and founder McCartney on a take-home motivational audiotape. "We do fight, we do have weapons, but they're not the world's weapons. We have divine power."

Revelations

All day long I hear reverberations of the seismic shocks of feminists' critique of men's interpersonal behavior as if even on the religious Right, women's resentment about men's epic fecklessness has reached critical mass. Within earshot of his wife Holly, for instance, Randy Phillips notes elliptically that "a lot of pain that exists in this country [is] by men who've misused their power, whether it's physically, sexually, emotionally—there's been a misuse."

Ed Cole, a "spiritual forebear" of Promise Keepers, issues an eloquently coded warning that unless patriarchs clean up their act, their wives will dump them: "When a man marries a woman and she takes his name in marriage, she takes the character that goes along with that name. [But if] he does-

n't give her a character that she can be compatible with or pleased with or desire to identify with, then she no longer wants to bear the name. In our world today, many times divorce occurs simply because the man promises, promises, promises, promises, but unlike God—who watches over His Word to perform it—never performs it. Never performing his word teaches his wife not to trust him."

Promise Keepers' inspired solution is not on let men off the hook (that's too big a job for anyone but the Redeemer) but rather—within what is essentially an ethical-rehab movement for conservative Christians—to model only the most respectful and trustworthy standards of interpersonal behavior: not cockfighting among men, not sexual exploitation of women. There is not a drop of alcohol for sale here either. In the parking lot I ask an Irving cop whether he has seen anyone sneaking in. "No," he tells me. "People don't bring beer to church."

Through its emphasis on worship and forgiveness, Promise Keepers has created a shimmering, airy sanctuary where a man, as if hovering in free-fall, can expose his human soul without a care or corruption—because he knows that he is always working with a net of social gender. The possibility of being perceived as a real man and at the same time not feeling so damned ashamed for what he has done to become one—that's the real high in this inner sanctuary; that's the promise that's a keeper. Fixed social gender remains the ground of their being, but release from its intrinsic sin is their emotional anti-gravity. Even their recreation is light-some: During a break Saturday afternoon, they toss paper airplanes, foam gliders, and Nerf balls.

"What they began to sense here is the Spirit of God's unconditional love in Jesus Christ, which is diametrically opposite to the sports analogy," fundraiser Pemberton tells me. "Sports is all conditional, but here you're OK if you're oh-and-ten. Performance is a nonissue in terms of God's love."

"What we're trying to tell men is

Even on the religious Right, women's resentment of male behavior has reached critical mass.

that masculinity, and manhood, is not defined by how many people you've slept with. And men are finally saying, 'Oh, thank God!'" vice president Wagner tells me after his closed leadership meeting adjourns in the Tejas Room. "We're not opposed to sex; we're all for it. God basically says that any man and woman married can have all the sex they can physically stand, and that's holy in His sight.... And we want everyone to be able to experience the love and forgiveness of Christ that we believe enhances an

understanding of masculinity rather than detracting from it."

The political genius of Promise Keepers is that it communicates at a gut level to men who—feeling adrift on a sea of gender relativism now riding from a radical feminist tidal wave—need to find firm pilings and dissuade their wives from setting sail. Without a patriarch in every home port, after all, there can't be much of a religious Right. And these days there can't be much of a patriarch without a wife who devoutly docks him.

Yet these are men who acknowledge that they do have promises to keep. To a man, they seem more polite, pleasant, and personable than I have ever encountered among large numbers of other men in public space. Their shared sense of common decency in everyday ethics is not to be sneered at (I know of no secular equivalent any better, no movement of "men of conscience" anywhere leftward politically.) They dash my preconceptions that they might be robotic zealots in a twilight zone all their own. They seem sincerely desirous of getting back on track as men who don't betray their commitments, not to mention the people they love. And they are supremely oblivious to the possibility that God's gender may have been created in the image of men, not the other way around. ♦

Executive editor John Stoltenberg (M.Div., Union Theological Seminary) is author of *Refusing to Be a Man: Essays on Sex and Justice* (Meridian) and *The End of Manhood: A Book for Men of Conscience* (Plume).

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OVERWORKED? (continued from page 44)

the ties that she wishes to call up in her painted fabric "Connection" of 1976, exhibited at the Bronx Museum among many works of kin. The origins of much of the art generated by feminists of the 1970s, '80s, and '90s, as seen in "Division of Labor," rest neither in female biology nor in the social constructions of femininity alone, but in the common-blood community evoked through its labor.

Beginning as "Division," this exhibition actually achieves a thematic synthesis based on connection and cooperation that can inspire a re-seeing of its contents and of the genre of gender-driven art in 1995. Mierle Laderman Ukeles washing the floor, Xenobia Bailey making a ritual doll, Soo-Ja Kim piecing an arch as a portrait, or Oliver Herring beading a coat on a mattress, are all independent acts once intrinsically attached to housework. But together, transformed into self- and social criticism, these actions and artifacts become public, cultural symbols.

The activist imperative of the women's art movement of the 1970s

infuses many of these examples from three decades of "Women's Work in Contemporary Art." The feminist movement in art was inspired by highly theoretical texts. Thinkers like Mary Daly, Shulamith Firestone, and Kate Millett (to name only a few) critically grounded ethical and political theses with aesthetic concerns. Feminist work in the 1990s is in general more self-aware of its theoretical bases and further underscores the activist nature of feminist thought. Hiram Rodriguez-Mora's "Book of Ecology (The Earth)," 1994, represents earth as the most basic of elements and equally as our endangered world. The practitioners here who make ordinary yet emotionally infused objects are fugitives of the secret menstruation room and need a red-blooded restoration of direct, generative entry to imaging and an embrace of authentic action. ♦

Art historian Arlene Raven, Ph.D., has published six books on contemporary art. She writes criticism for the Village Voice and a variety of art magazines and academic journals. Raven was a founder of the Los Angeles Woman's Building, the Feminist Studio Workshop, and Chrysalis magazine.

J'ACCUSE! (continued from page 17)

dozens of small children in blue-bib uniforms. As they walked into the whitewashed building, Nancy Kelly said she was expecting to see a handful of women, perhaps five or six, inside. But behind the classroom door, on tiny kiddie-chairs, their knees bent almost to their ears, 23 women sat waiting.

Kelly reminded the Haitians, again, there was no insurance that adding their testimonies to the OAS complaint would have any direct result. "It's especially unlikely that any damages or compensation would ever come your way.... But the Haitian women have a lot to teach. Women have played a key role here and could play a key role internationally if your cases convince the OAS to recognize the severity of rape."

Despite the risks, the women testified in detail, describing their attackers, streets, dates, times of day. Some had been raped in front of their children, some alone; some in their own homes, some in abandoned shacks. Some had been forced to submit in order to pro-

tect their kids. Geraldine told her story, angry but confident that change was on its way. The woman in the kerchief told hers: she hadn't been political, she said, but everyone knew she supported Aristide, "because I talked about him all the time." The last testimony came from a fifteen-year-old with the family name of "Darling"—a tiny, stick-boned child clutching a piece of chalk in her right hand. Her mother, big eyes welling in a smooth, walnut-colored face, leaned towards her, hands reaching out for her daughter's. By the end, both mother and daughter, and also translator, reporter, and all the women from MADRE were in tears. The tragedy of the tale was one thing; more moving even than the stories was the women's courage to talk. ♦

Laura Flanders is the coordinator of the Women's Desk at FAIR (Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting) and executive producer and host of CounterSpin, FAIR's nationally syndicated radio program of media analysis. Readers can contact MADRE at 121 W. 27th St., NYC 10001; 212-627-0444.

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CAROL ADAMS (continued from page 21)

of animals, because for pornographers to picture women with animals, the animals have to be coerced into those situations. It also creates what I call a "bestializing discourse" which always saw African-Americans as closer to beasts than animals. In the nineteenth century, black women were objectified by the white male gaze on black women's bodies. Patricia Hill Collins has argued in *Black Feminist Thought* that this led to the pornographing of white women. Ostensibly, black women could not be violated because they were seen as sexually voracious. Therefore, picturing black women with animals is a representation that excuses as well as invites the sexual exploitation of black women.

MH: Which is a point missed by all the media, and probably by many of the people who were watching.

CA: I'm not sure the feminist movement has looked closely at how often the presence of animals is a vehicle for announcing our own oppression. Battered women are often terrorized, traumatized, and kept hostage by their batterers by the mistreatment of their animals and children. Children who are sexually abused are kept hostage by threats to animals. There is a continual ratification of male control through acts of violence against animals.

MH: Let's talk about PETA, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. PETA has been described in a recent piece in New York magazine as a sort of "Act-Up for Animals." They have outrageous media campaigns and "in your face" tactics, very much like WAC, and a bevy of celebrity spokespeople. Just a month ago, Ricki Lake was arrested for doing an antifur protest at Karl Lagerfeld's office, but was caught eating a bologna sandwich when she was sent to jail overnight. PETA also has an "I'd rather go naked than wear fur" campaign in which models pose nude with animals. Is this just another example of the prime directive of capitalism, where women's bodies are used to sell everything from toothpaste to cars? Or are women being coopted as pornographic signifiers for a radical cause? One "absent referent" posing for another? If, by posing nude, models can make a dent in the fur industry which causes so much suffering and death for animals, isn't it worth it?

CA: No, definitely not. The end does

not justify the means. This is not theory, it's practice. That means how I live, how I interact with people, has importance in itself. I don't raise my kids by doing X and think they are going to become Y. I don't liberate animals over the bodies of women.

MH: If, tomorrow, fifteen thousand women standing up in Grand Central station posing naked could stop all animal oppression, wouldn't you support that?

CA: If I were going to have fifteen thousand dressed, clothed people who could stop anything, I would stop meat-eating because that is the most serious form of oppression of animals in the United States. To focus on fur is to play into a misogynist view about women. The antifur campaign gives lots of animal rights activists another way to harass women. I question why the fur campaign gets all the energy it does. Why? Because it is one of the few areas of animal oppression where women are seen as culprits, the takers of life. I think this feeds right into the antiabortion viewpoint, and also gives some credence to antiabortion in-your-face activities.

MH: You mean their strategies are like those of Operation Rescue?

CA: That's right, so that's my first objection. My second objection is that the "I'd rather go naked than wear fur" campaign really just accepts the cultural construction of women's bodies as commodities. And thirdly, I think that subliminally what this campaign says is you can still have objects in your life, they just can't be animals. You can still have women objects. It's a very big setback to conversations between feminists and animal rights activists because it is so clearly a form of participation in the dominant patriarchal construction of the male gaze on women's bodies.

MH: And it is easier just not to wear a fur coat to certain events anyway than to change your entire structure of eating.

CA: Right. Then I think the further insult was the celebration of PETA's alliance with Playboy by having a jointly sponsored event last summer, at which Patti Davis was featured. I'm glad she gave some of her money to PETA. But like Catharine MacKinnon, I'm not sure reparations money is the way we go about changing the status of women. I abhor the alliance of any animal advocacy with pornography.



**"My sons
got my
husband's
name and
my diet,"
says
Adams,
with Ben
(on floor)
and Doug
Buchanan.**

MH: *It's interesting because this was a debate in the prochoice community a few years back. The Playboy Foundation was giving money to prochoice causes. I was personally involved with a couple of national prochoice organizations when the question of whether or not to accept funds came up. I was very opposed to it for the same reasons.*

CA: I think that what it shows is the kind of "add women and stir" attitude that's going to survive as long as the animal rights movement is controlled by men or has a patriarchal theory governing it. I've talked to a lot of antipornography workers around the country, and they're one group of feminists who I can predict have read *The Sexual Politics of Meat*. Many liberal feminists have decided that this is a form of feminist theory they don't have to deal with, probably because they don't want to change their diet. But the antipornography activists always understood what's going on with the objectification of animals.

MH: *It's very interesting how the themes of the prochoice movement are coopted. The profur campaign focused on women having a choice, even an "informed" choice. It's subtly saying you can do what you want with other creatures' bodies.*

CA: Having access to other bodies is exactly what we're challenging in terms of male privilege over women, and that kind of privilege is suddenly constructed as "choice"—whether it's dietary choice or fashion choice.

MH: *What specific tactics or strategies do you think the animal rights movement shares with Operation Rescue? Can we look forward to a vivisectionist being gunned down in the back like an abortion doctor?*

CA: No, I don't think so. We have to look at the extreme right wing's religious language. They invoke God and suddenly see themselves as having a divine right to kill to save life. The kind of Paul Hill "justifiable homicide" defense. I'm concerned with any animal rights activity that gives credence to the activities of Operation Rescue. For instance, I've always opposed picketing at vivisectionists' homes. Last year our home was picketed by Operation Rescue and I thought, what's the effect on the kids in the home? What kids of vivisectionists are ever going to be able to come to animal rights without drawing on the traumatic experience of being picketed? We need a generational commitment to not inflict pain on children. Secondly, I object to any

tactic that invokes the "voice for the voiceless" argument and the kind of dangerous sentimentality that says "I've got to protect you." Rather than talk about privilege, we've got to examine the language about privilege—because ultimately there is a lot that the abortion rights and reproductive freedom movement have in common with animal advocacy.

MH: *Why don't you expand on that.*

CA: I think both animal advocacy and being proabortion are about being against forced motherhood. I'm against forced motherhood for women and cows and rabbits and pigs, etc. I've looked very closely at some of the language that's used to justify both meat-eating and the antiabortion stance, and one of the things I found was how they both argued from the state of nonbeing. Isn't it better for the cow to have been brought into life and then killed humanely than never to have existed? Lots of people say the same thing about abortion: "What if I had been aborted?" But the fact is, if you'd been aborted, you wouldn't be stand-

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ing these arguing, "What if I had been?" Feminists need to recognize that what we're doing in terms of oppressing animals is morally and politically heinous. That it is deeply anthropocentric. The antiabortion movement is really just pro-fetal life for only the human species.

MH: In my opinion, I've always heard the question, "If you believe so much in animal rights and you don't eat meat or wear fur, how can you oversee the killing of thousands of babies?"

CA: I think women can be morally responsible to know when a child should be born and when a child should not be. I trust women. I don't think the antiabortion movement trusts women. For the antiabortionist, the absent referent is the woman. It's clear when you look at the pictures of fetuses—they're floating in the air as if they are coming down from the clouds.

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MH: Well, yes, but the argument can be made that we construct the fetus to be "blood and tissue" when we don't want the pregnancy, and talk of it as a "baby" when we do.

CA: I think this shows the social nature of growing into a community, into a relationship. Certainly when I was pregnant and did not want to be, I had a different relationship to what was happening to my body than I did when I was pregnant and wanted to be. But that just shows that all of life is a process—and that we have a right to take part in deciding what potential life will come into life. There is no reason to think that carrying every human fetus to term is natural.

MH: One of the questions we haven't touched on is the use of animals in medical research. It has been said that if chimps hadn't been used in AIDS research, we wouldn't be anywhere near finding a cure. Is the answer no cages, or better cages?

CA: I don't think we should experiment on animals. But I want to enter the debate by saying let's look at what feminist philosophy has already said about male science. Male science is not

objective. No science can be objective. If animals are close enough to us to be legitimate sources for knowledge, they're too close for us to experiment on them. And if they're not close enough, why are we doing it?

MH: Some people seem to feel that they have limited resources for compassion.

CA: Well, I'm not sure they think that there are limited resources, though we always hear of compassion fatigue. The fact is that there is no feminist justification for the slaughter of animals. We are benefitting from the object status of other creatures in our world. Once we recognize that, it doesn't take any more energy to grab a veggieburger on your way to a prochoice rally. To buy nonleather shoes rather than leather shoes. Once one makes this an inherent part of one's life there is nothing that stops one from continuing to be the kind of feminist/activist and antiracist activist that she's always been. In fact, because vegetarianism is actually healthier for you, a feminist vegetarian hopefully adds years to her life and can accomplish more with her activism. ♦

ANCESTORS (continued from page 24)

exposed and restricted as it may be, remains.

Marilyn Quayle, a lawyer herself, evoked The Cult of True Womanhood in a speech at the 1992 Republican Convention when she stated, "Most women do not wish to be liberated from their essential natures as women."

Phyllis Schlafly, the "Sweetheart of the Silent Majority" whose determination helped defeat the Equal Rights Amendment in 1982, is a throwback to her anti-suffrage predecessors. Schlafly, who now heads the Eagle Forum, which promotes school prayer and anti-abortion and anti-homosexual legislation, insists that "women would rather be loved than liberated." Since the early 1970s she has headed up an organized attempt to deny other women the right to the type of fulfillment she herself has enjoyed as a lobbyist, radio commentator, fund-raiser, and syndicated columnist.

What makes these women tick? Sociologist Jean Howard recognized anti-suffragists as privileged wives unable to "identify with women

beyond their own class." Without empathy, privilege generates emotional isolation. Anti-suffragists were more interested in protecting their comfort than in helping the less fortunate. They considered women who were poor, foreign-born, or black ignorant savages unworthy of the attention of ladies.

Marilyn Quayle exposed her own isolation in a 1992 interview for *Woman's Day* when she assured readers that she was merely a "homemaker" who, though she never cooks, "plans menus and works with the house staff to ferret out burglars...." Schlafly's isolation comes packaged in anti-feminist guilt since, in her words, sexual harassment is no problem for the "virtuous woman except in the rarest of cases." Paraphrasing the anti-suffragists, Schlafly believes: good women won't be harassed; bad women will. ♦

Pamela Riley Dunlap is a Virginia historian who teaches American and women's history at Northern Virginia Community College and Germanna Community College. She has written a book on American frontier women.

posed a feminist court, a Bet Din (a religious court), a war crimes tribunal.

It was not hard to line up some leading feminists to participate in this feminist Bet Din, but once we got together no one wanted to Take Sides, i.e. to take a stand on the issues. Most wanted to keep their political friendships with both B. and me intact—without getting into the “messy stuff.”

At the meeting, B. was sullen, silent, and made no eye contact with me; from time to time, she said things like, “I don’t remember a lot about that year”; “You’re the one who stopped talking to me”; “I wrote the foreword because Nicol told me you’d refused to do it.”

“But why didn’t you just call me and ask if this was true?” I asked, to which B. said, “Well, I thought you weren’t talking to me.”

C., one of the women I’d invited, said that B. had been systematically “disappearing” her and every other North American feminist’s contribution to global feminism, shutting them out of the information loop. C. wondered whether B. “had also been competing with Phyllis’ plans for an international anthology, but isn’t there room for more than one such anthology anywhere?”

I wanted feminist justice, not public scandal or lawsuits. Behind closed doors, **I wanted B. to acknowledge that she’d behaved the way women in incestuous families do;**

I wanted to know why. We’d been friendly, loving, towards each other. What went wrong? What didn’t I understand? Mainly, I wanted B. and our closest feminist comrades to confront Nicol with me. “That rapist should not go to his grave thinking he could divide the likes of us,” I said.

My sisters—and ideologically, they were and still are my sisters—finally agreed to do this, but they never did, and now Nicol is dead. He died late in 1994, 15 years after he raped me, and I can publish his name, but we can never confront him, alive, together. This failure of nerve, this craven feminist collaboration with a rapist, stands; it’s part

of the historical record.

Sadly, these same well-known white feminists finally “got it” (at least they publicly said they did) when Anita Hill accused and exposed Clarence Thomas—but that took place eleven years after Nicol raped me.

B. and I never spoke again and from time to time I miss her still. I have no idea what B. ever told our many mutual friends after our Bet Din, or what she now thinks. I only know that for fifteen years I waited for feminists—whom I still cherish—to make good on their promise to confront my rapist with me.

“This can’t have happened to you!” is the response I often get, when I share any of this information. My point: Being a feminist doesn’t change or “protect” a woman from the female condition. If it’s something that happens to women, it happens to feminists too. If it happens to any woman, anywhere, then it can happen to any woman anywhere.

For example, my friend D., who’s also a feminist, turned out to be a severely battered wife. For years, her second husband had been breaking her bones, and her spirit. She didn’t try to escape. She didn’t “tell.” One day, unexpectedly, she asked me to testify for her in court as her expert witness, and she told me everything, more than I could bear to hear, all the grisly, sickening details. How it haunted me, shamed me, that our ideology could not “protect” her—and us—from patriarchal violence.

Perhaps the white feminists who either collaborated with or failed to confront my rapist with me, as I’d asked them to do, as they finally promised to do, were as horrified, as disheartened, as frightened, by our collective vulnerability, as I later was by D.’s Tales of a Battered Wife. How could this happen to one of us! (Ah, did we think our ideology functioned like Wonder Woman’s magic bracelets?)

But, as I always say, “If the Patriarchs don’t get you, the Feminists will.”

Over the years I, and everyone else, have observed some feminists “trash” any feminist who does something—and, at the same time, refuse to confront those heterosexual and lesbian feminists who verbally abuse, bad-mouth, even physically batter other women, or who exploit and have sex with their patients, students, employ-



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ees, junior colleagues, groupies. Auselma dell'Olio wrote about "teaching" in 1971 and I quoted her in *Women and Mothers* in 1972; Jo Freeman/Joreen also started writing about this early on. However, naming it didn't stop it from happening.

I have seen feminists shamelessly submit themselves to, even create cults around, feminists who have money or access to the media, or who are mentally ill. Yes, mentally ill. Codependent madness, slave habits, who knows, but you can't fashion movement, only stars, out of such craven behavior.

I have observed feminists ostracize the woman who dares cry "foul," as they themselves do double-entry moral bookkeeping, and refuse to expose, even privately, those feminists who have seething behind the scenes contempt for other women, who prefer isolation, deeply.

Well, I'm biased, I'm a feminist who always does something; and I cry "foul" a lot too. Over the years, as you can imagine, this has gotten me into a great deal of trouble.

Feminists are as misogynistic as

everyone else. Sisterhood is an ideal, it's not yet a reality.

Once, long ago, another well-known white feminist demanded that I not write my book on *Woman's Inhumanity to Woman*, because "some of her best friends were women." "Are you going to name names?" she asked. "Name names? I might as well publish the phone book, annually," I said. Not naming names didn't get us anywhere, did it? Maybe naming names, as a way of demanding some accountability, is as good a way to begin as any other.

I struggled over whether to "name names" here and decided to name my rapist, but not his collaborators, the kapers, those who couldn't deny themselves the slightest career or friendship opportunities—not even for the sake of their own principles. Their names are legion, they're feminists and they're anti-feminists too. Every woman's got her own list.

It's a real mind-fuck, though, when a woman publicly preaches one thing, and then, hypocritically, unconsciously, behaves the same way her so-called

opponents do. If you say you're a feminist, try to practice what you preach; but since that's hard to do, when you fail, why not say so, name it, acknowledge it, apologize profoundly, try again. H's crime was not merely the collaboration, or her opportunism; it was her refusal to make amends politically, her refusal to name what she did, her "amnesia," her 15-year silence. This is what women do to women in patriarchy all the time.

Feminists should learn how not to lie to themselves, to each other. Some say there are many conflicting "truths." But what happened to me and to every other woman who's ever been sexually harassed and raped was not Rashomon: there are no alternative, competing realities here.

How we, as a movement, relate to the truth of male sexual violence toward women matters. As a movement, **we**

must reckon with the ways in which women, feminists included, collude with patriarchy.

But girls: the bullshit and the cover-ups have got to go.

The conclusion I draw from these facts is not that "doing feminism" is too hard, or hopeless. My conclusion is that no feminist should think that what's happened to her is unique, that if only she'd done something differently she'd have been spared, that Somewhere, Over the Rainbow, there are cannier, cleverer, luckier feminists who can do no wrong and can cope with anything.

I don't know what kind of life I would have lived had there been no modern feminist movement. A lesser life, a more miserable one, I'm sure. I'll never forget how life gained its fourth dimension, in 1967, when suddenly, the world was bursting with brave, bold, beautiful, adventurous creatures, most of them women. And feminists. How interesting!

Sure, we second-wave feminists had more "fun" in the late 1960s and early 1970s. We were young and felt invincible. We had no idea that this struggle would take all we had; it's a lifetime struggle, and it's much harder than anyone thought. Holding one's own against patriarchy, just holding one's own, is not easy. Resisting it—building




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a resistance movement—takes all we have. And more.

What keeps me going? Feminist honor in action inspires me, mothers me, into doing my best. I get real maternal, I'm at my best, when I can join, support, encourage, witness, feminist thoughts and deeds that are courageous, radical, talented, risky, generous.

No, we haven't "lost"; feminism is not "on the run." The party's over, the velvet gloves are off, on both sides; we're in the trenches now, fighting for the soul of the world, for its ruling consciousness. I think we're putting up a hell of a struggle. May we endure, may we live to battle another day, may we acquit ourselves with honor. ♦

Editor-at-large Phyllis Chesler, Ph.D. is the author of seven books, including Women and Madness, Mothers on Trial, and the recently published Patriarchy: Notes of an Expert Witness.

RAPPING (continued from page 10)

and framed and edited to fit the ideological and economic interests of sponsors and managers. In its choice of cases, of commentators, of guests, of rules and rituals and conventions of its own, Court TV works to control and frame and regulate what we know and see of the court system in its own ways. Most glaringly, it allows no actual political discussions. No representatives of strictly political movements or agendas are invited to appear, unless they are attorneys who will stick to a narrowly legalistic framework.

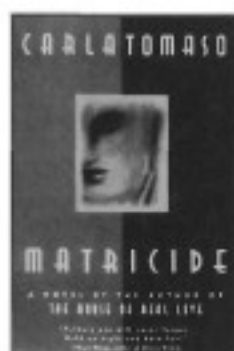
Nor, it goes without saying, can one ever raise questions about the legitimacy of the system itself. The network's official line, subtle but apparent nonetheless, is that the system works and Court TV proves it. For those who don't quite believe that, Court TV can be as frustratingly rigid as any other American institution. But for feminists trying to figure out how the system works to thwart us, and what we will need to do to change that, it is as useful a tool as we're likely to find in these dark days of rightward drift. ♦

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CUTTING SOME SLACK
ELLEN SNORTLAND

Bitch, Bitch, Bitch

I've spent way too much of my life attempting to prove that I'm not a bitch. I have been nice when a saint would have lost it. I have been unduly proud when people said that I'm not a bitch but another woman was. I have called other women bitches in a disempowering way. I'm truly sorry for the way I've abused the word.

I would like to see the word "bitch" elevated to its proper place in the English language, transformed from sexist epithet to word of adoration and awe.

Bitch is actually a wonderful word and state of being. Just as a stud is a fertile and valuable male, bitch is the ripe female equivalent in the dog kingdom, er, queendom. As we all know, its human use is usually derogatory because it's a word exclusively used in reference to strong women.

Now strength is a relative term. A man called me a bitch once when I very politely declined to let him cut in front of me in a grocery line. I suddenly understood the absurdity of trying to maintain a non-bitch stance in the world. No matter what, someone will think I am one, so, what the hell, I might as well enjoy the perks of being an actual bitch.

"Bitch" is used as a verbal weapon, a way to keep "uppity" women in line or to keep women who are thinking about being uppity from opening their mouths. "You wouldn't want anyone to think that you're a bitch, now would you? Better not say anything..." is how some of the logic goes.

OOOOOOHHHH, how scary to be called a bitch. Isn't it amazing that so many of us have given the word so much power?

I'll never forget the "Rhymes with Rich" headline about Leona Helmsley. That's acceptable journalism? Of course, the word they were asking us to supply was "bitch." I dare say, it would not occur to publishers and editors to have Charles Keating on a cover with a headline that says, "Rhymes with Sick." The mass media seem to

reserve gender-related put-downs for women.

To call someone a bitch as a put-down is to pretend and presume that there are bitches in the world and there are "non-bitches;" that the proper way to be a female human being is to be a non-bitch.

What is a non-bitch? She is like the Unicorn, a myth, a dream that men have dreamed, the ultimate in compliant beauty, who never gives a fella any trouble. She is always nice and understanding, never angry, doesn't argue, doesn't protect herself, her property or her children. She is always complimentary, remembers every detail about everything, never hurts feelings intentionally or unintentionally, always serves others first, always smiles and does what everyone asks of her, all the time, with no complaint. I'm sure I've left something out but since I'm a bitch, I'm allowed to make mistakes.

The old-fashioned usage of bitch is like a girdle; it holds women back and in—in a most uncomfortable and unhealthy way. No one really wants to be stuffed or squeezed into anything, whether it's an undergarment or an archaic form of so-called feminine behavior. Everyone despised girdles, but it wasn't until a few courageous women started refusing to wear them that the rest of us could wiggle out of them forever. (It's amazing to me that bra-burning would become the tired symbol of women's liberation; it should have been girdle-burning.)

I hereby declare my bitchiness and invite others to do the same. Join me. Everyone in the world has bitchiness in them, women and men, girls and boys. Why would we collude in the absurd idea of aspiring to not be something that we all are? There are things to complain about, there are things to be angry about, there are problems to take action on that require the bitch in all of us.

The more who proclaim, nay, celebrate their bitchiness, the less bitchy we'll all seem and the bitchier we can all become. If you don't like that idea, take a hike because I don't care, I have better things to worry about. Ahh, that felt good...just like taking off a girdle after a long day. Try it.

Old habits die hard. I admit that I still flinch if someone calls me a bitch. But I must remember to be proud that I am no longer invisible and, therefore, pleasing to everyone and anyone. And I think of my favorite real-life bitch, my dog and companion. Now there's a role model.

She's faithful, loving, valuable, warm, nurturing, intelligent, affectionate, and capable of ripping someone who attacks me or my loved ones to ribbons. She's a bitch and, except for the way she drools and sheds, I want to be just like her. ♦

Southern California columnist Ellen Snortland has a regular column in the Pasadena Weekly. Her book, Beauty Bites Beast, about the socio-political aspects of full-contact self-defense for women, will be published by Trilogy Books in 1996.

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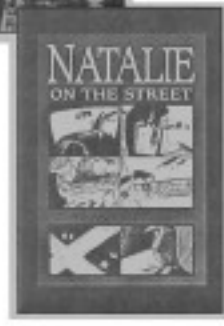
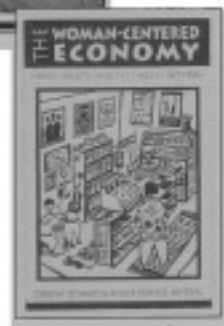
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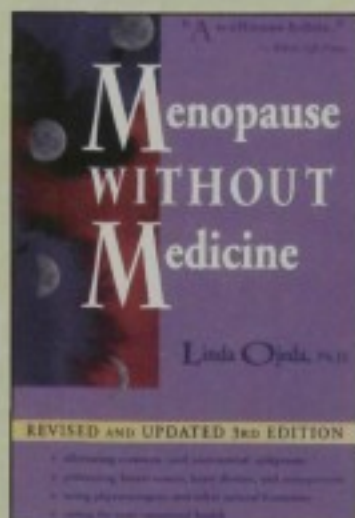
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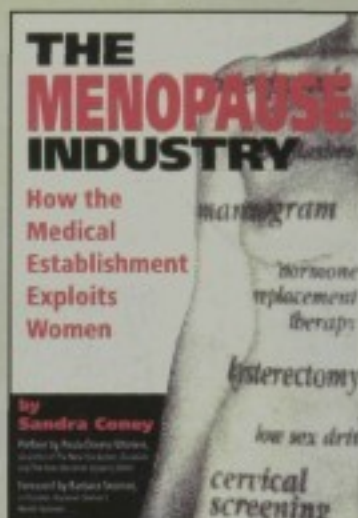


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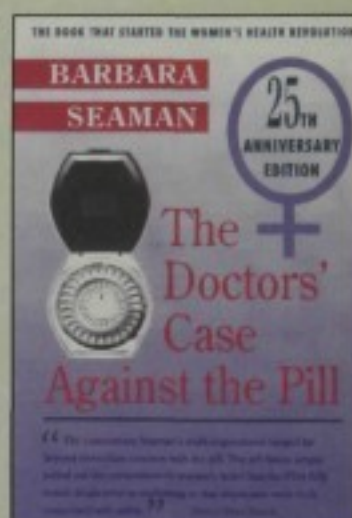
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