

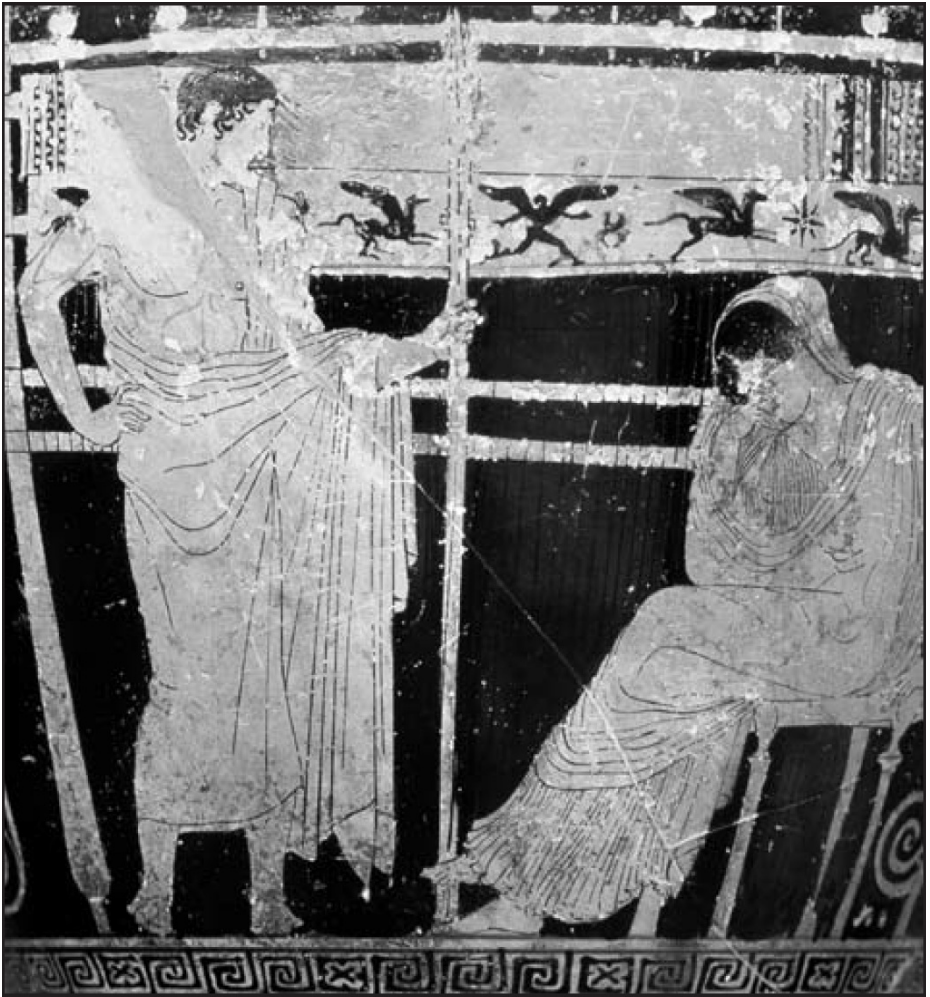
Radical Sense
Reader Volume 2

2018

THE PUBLIC VOICE OF WOMEN

I WANT TO START very near the beginning of the tradition of Western literature, and its first recorded example of a man telling a woman to ‘shut up’; telling her that her voice was not to be heard in public. I am thinking of a moment immortalised at the start of Homer’s *Odyssey*, almost 3000 years ago. We tend now to think of the *Odyssey* as the epic story of Odysseus and the adventures and scrapes he had returning home after the Trojan War – while for decades his wife Penelope loyally waited for him, fending off the suitors who were pressing to marry her. But the *Odyssey* is just as much the story of Telemachus, the son of Odysseus and Penelope. It is the story of his growing up and how over the course of the poem he matures from boy to man. That process starts in the first book of the poem when Penelope comes down from her private quarters into the great hall of the palace, to find a bard performing to throngs of her suitors; he is singing about the difficulties the Greek heroes are having in reaching home. She isn’t amused, and in front of everyone she asks him to choose another, happier number. At which point young Telemachus intervenes: ‘Mother,’ he says, ‘go back up into your quarters, and take up your own work, the loom and the distaff ... speech will be the business of men, all men, and of me most of all; for mine is the power in this household.’ And off she goes, back upstairs.

There is something faintly ridiculous about this wet-behind-the-ears lad shutting up the savvy, middle-aged Penelope. But it is a nice demonstration that right where written evidence for Western culture starts, women’s voices are not being heard in the public sphere. More than that, as Homer has it, an integral part of growing up, as a man, is learning to take control of public utterance and to silence the female of the species. The actual words Telemachus uses are significant too. When he says ‘speech’ is ‘men’s business’, the word is *muthos* – not in the sense that it has come down to us of ‘myth’. In Homeric Greek it signals authoritative public speech, not the kind of chatting, prattling or gossip that anyone – women included, or especially women – could do.



1. On this fifth-century BC Athenian pot, Penelope is shown seated by her loom (weaving was always the mark of a good Greek housewife). Telemachus stands in front of her.

What interests me is the relationship between this classic Homeric moment of silencing a woman and some of the ways in which women's voices are not publicly heard in our own contemporary culture, and in our own politics from the front bench to the shop floor. It is a well-known deafness that's nicely

parodied in an old *Punch* cartoon: ‘That’s an excellent suggestion, Miss Triggs. Perhaps one of the men here would like to make it’. I want to reflect on how it might relate to the abuse that many women who *do* speak out are subjected to even now, and one of the questions at the back of my mind is the connection between publicly speaking out in support of a female logo on a banknote, Twitter threats of rape and decapitation, and Telemachus’ put-down of Penelope.



‘That’s an excellent suggestion, Miss Triggs. Perhaps one of the men here would like to make it.’

2. Almost thirty years ago the cartoonist Riana Duncan captured the sexist atmosphere of the committee or the boardroom. There is hardly a woman who has opened her mouth at a meeting and not had, at some time or other, the ‘Miss Triggs treatment’.

My aim here is to take a long view, a very long view, on the culturally awkward relationship between the voice of women and the public sphere of

speech-making, debate and comment: politics in its widest sense, from office committees to the floor of the House. I am hoping that the long view will help us get beyond the simple diagnosis of ‘misogyny’ that we tend a bit lazily to fall back on. To be sure, ‘misogyny’ is one way of describing what’s going on. (If you go on a television discussion programme and then receive a load of tweets comparing your genitalia to a variety of unpleasantly rotting vegetables, it’s hard to find a more apt word.) But if we want to understand – and do something about – the fact that women, even when they are not silenced, still have to pay a very high price for being heard, we need to recognise that it is a bit more complicated and that there is a long back-story.

Telemachus’ outburst was just the first case in a long line of largely successful attempts stretching throughout Greek and Roman antiquity, not only to exclude women from public speech but also to parade that exclusion. In the early fourth century BC, for example, Aristophanes devoted a whole comedy to the ‘hilarious’ fantasy that women might take over running the state. Part of the joke was that women couldn’t speak properly in public – or rather, they couldn’t adapt their private speech (which in this case was largely fixated on sex) to the lofty idiom of male politics. In the Roman world, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* – that extraordinary mythological epic about people changing shape (and probably the most influential work of literature on Western art after the Bible) – repeatedly returns to the idea of the silencing of women in the process of their transformation. Poor Io is turned by the god Jupiter into a cow, so she cannot talk but only moo; while the chatty nymph Echo is punished so that her voice is never her own, merely an instrument for repeating the words of others. In Waterhouse’s famous painting she gazes at her desired Narcissus but cannot initiate a conversation with him, while he – the original ‘narcissist’ – has fallen in love with his own image in the pool.



3. *David Teniers' seventeenth-century painting shows the moment when Jupiter gives poor Io, now in the shape of a cow, to his wife Juno – to allay any suspicion that his interest in Io might have been inappropriately sexual (which, of course, it was).*

One earnest Roman anthologist of the first century AD was able to rake up just three examples of 'women whose natural condition did not manage to keep them silent in the forum'. His descriptions are revealing. The first, a woman called Maesia, successfully defended herself in the courts and 'because she really had a man's nature behind the appearance of a woman was called the "androgynē"'. The second, Afrania, used to initiate legal cases herself and was 'impudent' enough to plead in person, so that everyone became tired out with her 'barking' or 'yapping' (she still isn't allowed human 'speech'). We are told that she died in 48 BC, because 'with unnatural freaks like this it's more important to record when they died than when they were born.'

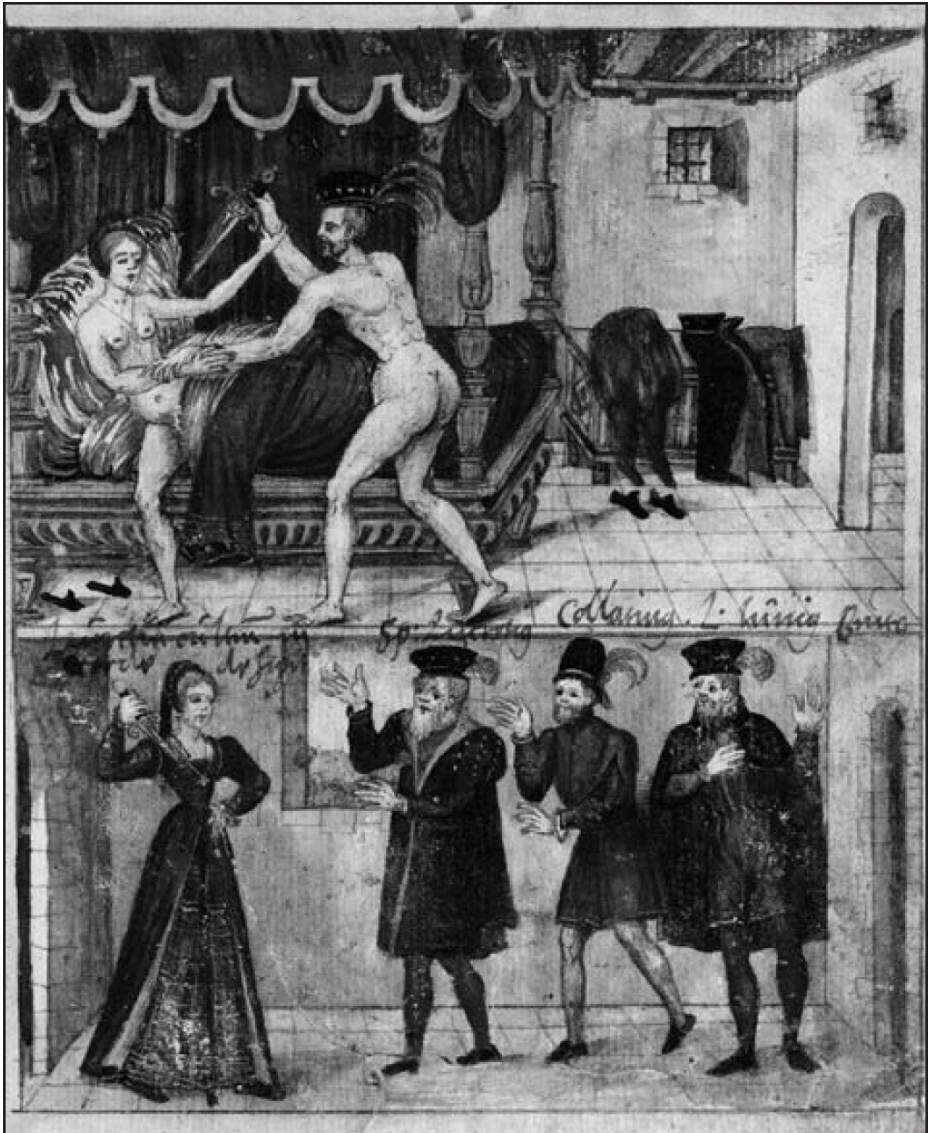


4. In John William Waterhouse's striking dreamy version of the scene (painted in 1903), the semi-clad Echo gazes speechless at her 'narcissist' preoccupied with his own image in the pool.

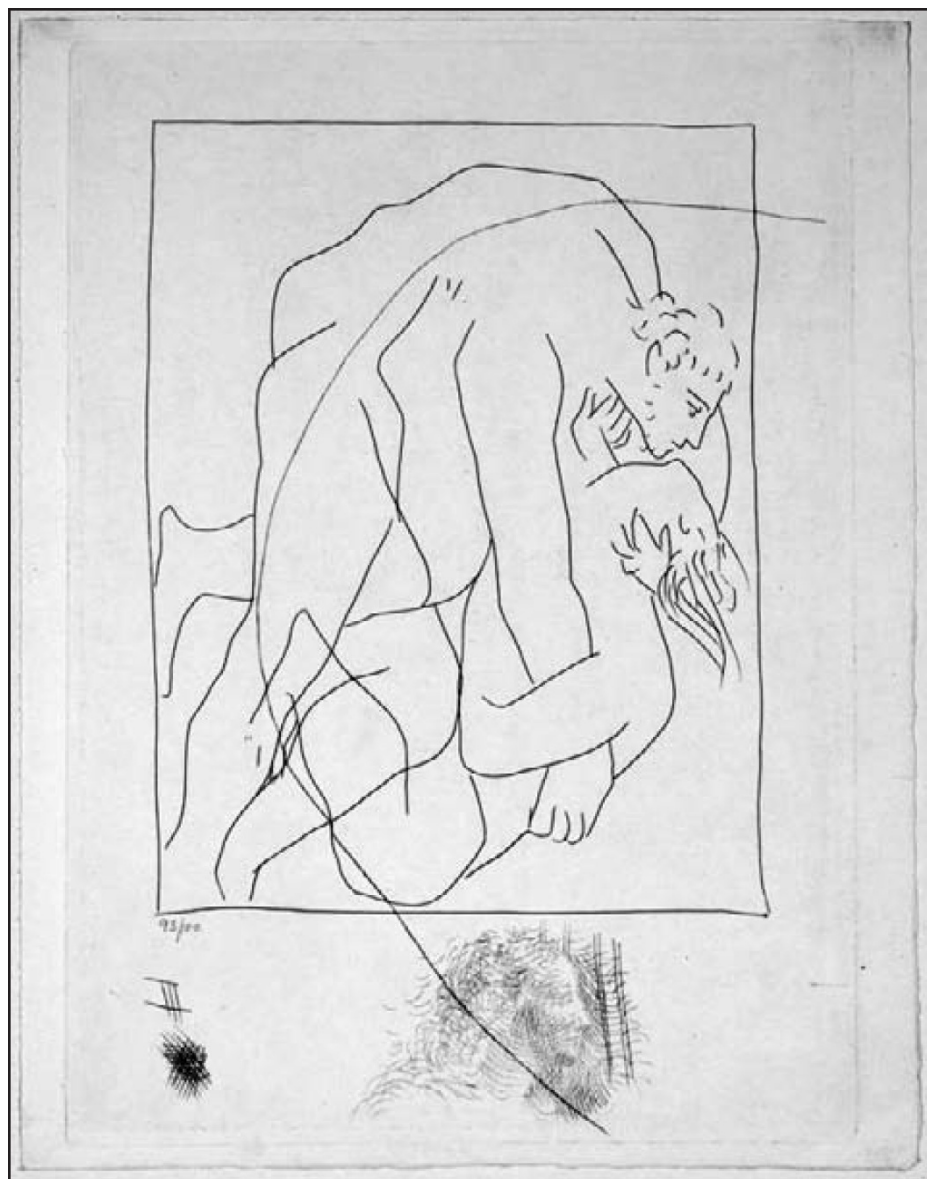
There are only two main exceptions in the classical world to this abomination of women's public speaking. First, women are allowed to speak out as victims and as martyrs, usually to preface their own death. Early christian women were represented loudly upholding their faith as they went to the lions; and, in a well-known story from the early history of Rome, the virtuous Lucretia, raped by a brutal prince of the ruling monarchy, was given a speaking part solely to denounce the rapist and announce her own suicide (or so Roman writers presented it: what really happened, we haven't a clue). But even this rather bitter opportunity to speak could itself be removed. One story in the *Metamorphoses* tells of the rape of the young princess Philomela. In order to prevent any Lucretia-style denunciation, the rapist quite simply cuts her tongue out. It's a notion that's picked up in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, where the tongue of the raped Lavinia is also ripped out.

The second exception is more familiar. Occasionally women could legitimately rise up to speak – to defend their homes, their children, their husbands or the interests of other women. So in the third of the three examples of female oratory discussed by that Roman anthologist, the woman, Hortensia by name, gets away with it because she is acting explicitly as the spokesperson for

the women of Rome (and for women only), after they have been subject to a special wealth tax to fund a dubious war effort. Women, in other words, may in extreme circumstances publicly defend their own sectional interests, but not speak for men or the community as a whole. In general, as one second-century AD guru put it, 'a woman should as modestly guard against exposing her voice to outsiders as she would guard against stripping off her clothes.'



5. This sixteenth-century manuscript gives the two key episodes of Lucretia's story. On the upper register, Sextus Tarquinius attacks the virtuous woman (his clothes are disconcertingly neatly laid out beside the bed); on the lower, Lucretia in sixteenth-century dress denounces the rapist to her family.



6. Picasso's version, from 1930, of Tereus' rape of Philomela.

There is more to all this than meets the eye, however. This ‘muteness’ is not just a reflection of women’s general disempowerment throughout the classical world: no voting rights, limited legal and economic independence and so on. It was partly that. Ancient women were obviously not likely to raise their voices in a political sphere in which they had no formal stake. But we are dealing with a much more active and loaded exclusion of women from public speech – and one with a much greater impact than we usually acknowledge on our own traditions, conventions and assumptions about the voice of women. What I mean is that public speaking and oratory were not merely things that ancient women *didn’t do*: they were exclusive practices and skills that defined masculinity as a gender. As we saw with Telemachus, to become a man (or at least an elite man) was to claim the right to speak. Public speech was a – if not *the* – defining attribute of maleness. Or, to quote a well-known Roman slogan, the elite male citizen could be summed up as *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, ‘a good man, skilled in speaking’. A woman speaking in public was, in most circumstances, by definition not a woman.



7. Hortensia features in Boccaccio's compendium of Famous Women. In this late fifteenth-century edition, she is pictured very much in fifteenth-century guise boldly leading her posse of female followers to confront the Roman authorities.

We find repeated stress throughout ancient literature on the authority of the deep male voice in contrast to the female. As one ancient scientific treatise explicitly put it, a low-pitched voice indicated manly courage, a high-pitched voice female cowardice. Other classical writers insisted that the tone and timbre of women's speech always threatened to subvert not just the voice of the male orator but also the social and political stability, the health, of the whole state. One second-century AD lecturer and intellectual with the revealing name of Dio Chrysostom (it means literally Dio 'the Golden Mouth') asked his audience to imagine a situation where 'an entire community was struck by the following strange affliction: all the men suddenly got female voices, and no male – child or adult – could say anything in a manly way. Would not that seem terrible and

harder to bear than any plague? I'm sure they would send off to a sanctuary to consult the gods and try to propitiate the divine power with many gifts.' He wasn't joking.

This is not the peculiar ideology of some distant culture. Distant in time it may be. But I want to underline that this is a tradition of gendered speaking – and the theorising of gendered speaking – to which we are still, directly or more often indirectly, the heirs. let's not overstate the case. Western culture does not owe everything to the Greeks and Romans, in speaking or in anything else (thank heavens it doesn't; none of us would fancy living in a Greco-Roman world). There are all kinds of variant and competing influences on us, and our political system has happily overthrown many of the gendered certainties of antiquity. yet it remains the fact that our own traditions of debate and public speaking, their conventions and rules, still lie very much in the shadow of the classical world. The modern techniques of rhetoric and persuasion formulated in the Renaissance were drawn explicitly from ancient speeches and handbooks. Our own terms of rhetorical analysis go back directly to Aristotle and Cicero (before the era of Donald Trump it used to be common to point out that Barack Obama, or his speech writers, had learned their best tricks from Cicero). And those nineteenth-century gentlemen who devised, or enshrined, most of the parliamentary rules and procedures in the House of Commons were brought up on exactly those classical theories, slogans and prejudices that I have been quoting. Again, we're not simply the victims or dupes of our classical inheritance but classical traditions have provided us with a powerful template for thinking about public speech, and for deciding what counts as good oratory or bad, persuasive or not, and whose speech is to be given space to be heard. And gender is obviously an important part of that mix.

predictor kits, the tortuous examination of every “spin-like” excretion that exited my body, the sharp despair wrought by the first smudge of menstrual blood.

Frustrated with our costly, ineffective approach, we off-roaded for a few months with a noble friend who generously agreed to be our donor, trading the cold metal table for the comfort of our bed, and pricey vials for our friend’s free specimen, which he would leave in our bathroom in a squat glass jar that used to hold Paul Newman salsa.

One month our donor friend tells us that he has to go out of town for a college reunion. Not wanting to lose the month’s egg, we trudge back to the bank. We track the egg’s progress via ultrasound: it looks bulbous and beautiful and ready to burst out of its follicle in the late afternoon, but by the next morning there is no sign of it, not even a trace of fluid from its ruptured sac. I am beyond frustrated, beyond hope. But Harry—always the optimist!—insists it might not be too late. The nurse concurs. Knowing that I have a bad habit of deeming myself lost and getting off the freeway one exit before I would have found my way, I decide, once again, to join them.

[Single or lesbian motherhood] can be seen as [one] of the most violent forms taken by the rejection of the symbolic ... as well as one of the most fervent divinizations of maternal power—all of which cannot help but trouble an entire legal and moral order without, however, proposing an alternative to it.

Given that one-third of American families are currently headed by single mothers (the census doesn’t even ask about two mothers or any other forms of kinship—if there is anyone in the house called mother and no father, then your household counts as single mother), you’d think the symbolic order would be showing a few more dents by now. But Kristeva is not alone in her hyperbole. For a more disorienting take on the topic, I recommend Jean Baudrillard’s “The Final Solution,” in which Baudrillard argues that assisted forms of reproduction (donor insemination, surrogacy, IVF, etc.), along with the use of contraception, herald the suicide of our species, insofar as they detach reproduction from sex, thus turning us from “mortal, sexed beings” into clone-like messengers of an impossible immortality. So-called artificial insemination, Baudrillard argues, is linked with “the abolition of everything within us that is human, all too human: our desires, our deficiencies, our neuroses, our dreams, our disabilities, our viruses, our lunacies, our unconscious and even our sexuality—all the features which make us specific living beings.”

Honestly I find it more embarrassing than enraging to read Baudrillard, Žižek, Badiou, and other revered philosophers of the day pontificating on how we might save ourselves from the humanity-annihilating threat of the turkey baster (which no one uses, by the

way; the preferred tool is an oral syringe) in order to protect the fate of this endangered “sexed being.” And by sexed, make no mistake: they mean one of two options. Here’s Žižek, describing the type of sexuality that would fit an “evil” world: “In December 2006 the New York City authorities declared that the right to choose one’s gender (and so, if necessary, to have the sex-change operation performed) is one of the inalienable human rights—the ultimate Difference, the ‘transcendental’ difference that grounds the very human identity, thus turns into something open to manipulation.... ‘Masturbathon’ is the ideal form of the sex activity of this trans-gendered subject.”

Fatally estranged from the transcendental difference that grounds human identity, the transgendered subject is barely human, condemned forever to “idiotic masturbatory enjoyment” in lieu of the “true love” that renders us human. For, as Žižek holds—in homage to Badiou—“it is love, the encounter of the Two, which ‘transubstantiates’ the idiotic masturbatory enjoyment into an event proper.”

These are the voices that pass for radicality in our times. Let us leave them to their love, their event proper.

2011, the summer of our changing bodies. Me, four months pregnant, you six months on T. We pitched out, in our inscrutable hormonal soup, for Fort Lauderdale, to stay for a week at the beachside Sheraton in monsoon season, so that you could have top surgery by a good surgeon and recover. Less than twenty-four hours after we arrived, they were snapping a sterile green hat on your head—a “party hat,” the nice nurse said—and wheeling you away. While you were under the knife, I drank gritty hot chocolate in the waiting room and watched Diana Nyad try to swim from Florida to Cuba. She didn’t make it that time, even in her shark cage. But you did. You emerged four hours later, hilariously zonked from the drugs, trying in vain to play the host while slipping in and out of consciousness, your whole torso more tightly bound than you’ve ever managed yourself, a drain hanging off each side, two pouches that filled up over and over again with blood stuff the color of cherry Kool-Aid.

To save money over the week, we cooked our food in the hotel bathroom on a hot plate. One day we drove to a Sport Chalet and bought a little tent to set up on the beach because the beachside cabanas cost too much money to rent. While you slept I ambled down to the beach and set up the tent, then tried to read Sedgwick’s *A Dialogue on Love* inside. But it was like a nylon sweat lodge in there, and neither I nor the four-month-old fetus could tolerate it. I had started showing, which was delightful. Maybe there would be a baby. One night we splurged in our sober way and had eight-dollar virgin strawberry daiquiris at the infinity pool, which was stocked with Europeans on cheap vacation packages. The air was hot and lavender with a night storm coming in. There was always a storm coming in. Frat brothers and sorority sisters thronged every fried

fish joint on the boardwalk. The crowds were loud and repulsive and a little scary but we were protected by our force field. On our third day, we drove to the second-largest mall in the world and walked for hours, even though I was dizzy and exhausted from early pregnancy and the suffocating heat and you were just barely over the lip of the Vicodin. At the mall I went into Motherhood Maternity and tried on clothes with one of those gelatin strap-on bellies they have so you can see what you'll look like as you grow big. Wearing the strap-on belly, I tried on a fuzzy white wool sweater with a bow at the sternum, the kind that makes your baby look like a present. I bought the sweater and ended up wearing it back at home all winter. You bought some louny Adidas pants that look hot on you. Over and over again we emptied your drains into little Dixie cups and flushed the blood stuff down the hotel toilet. I've never loved you more than I did then, with your Kool-Aid drains, your bravery in going under the knife to live a better life, a life of wind on skin, your nodding off while propped up on a throne of hotel pillows, so as not to disturb your stitches. "The king's sleep," we called it, in homage to our first pay-per-view purchase of the week, *The King's Speech*.

Later, from our Sheraton Sweet Sleeper® Bed, we ordered *X-Men: First Class*. Afterward we debated: assimilation vs. revolution. I'm no cheerleader for assimilation per se, but in the movie the assimilationists were advocating nonviolence and identification with the Other in that bastardized Buddhist way that gets me every time. You expressed sympathy for the revolutionaries, who argued, *Stay freaky and blow 'em up before they come for you, because no matter what they say, the truth is they want you dead, and you're fooling yourself if you think otherwise*.

Professor: I can't stop thinking about the others out there, all those minds that I touched. I could feel them, their isolation, their hopes, their ambitions. I tell you we can start something incredible, Erik. We can help them.

Erik Lehnsherr: Can we? Identification, that's how it starts. And ends with being rounded up, experimented on and eliminated.

Professor: Listen to me very carefully, my friend: killing Shaw will not bring you peace.

Erik Lehnsherr: Peace was never an option.

We bantered good-naturedly, yet somehow allowed ourselves to get polarized into a needless binary. That's what we both hate about fiction, or at least crappy fiction—it purports to provide occasions for thinking through complex issues, but really it has predetermined the positions, stuffed a narrative full of false choices, and hooked you on them, rendering you less able to see out, to *get out*.

While we talked we said words like *nonviolence, assimilation, threats to survival, preserving the radical*. But when I think about it now I hear only the background buzz of our trying to explain something to each other, to ourselves, about our lived experiences thus far on this peeled, endangered planet. As is so often the case, the intensity of our need to be understood distorted our positions, backed us further into the cage.

Do you want to be right or do you want to connect? ask couples' therapists everywhere.

The aim is not to answer questions, it's to get out, to get out of it.

Flipping channels on a different day, we landed on a reality TV show featuring a breast cancer patient recovering from a double mastectomy. It was uncanny to watch her performing the same actions we were performing—emptying her drains, waiting patiently for her unbinding—but with opposite emotions. You felt unburdened, euphoric, reborn; the woman on TV feared, wept, and grieved.

Our last night at the Sheraton, we have dinner at the astoundingly overpriced “casual Mexican” restaurant on the premises, Dos Caminos. You pass as a guy; I, as pregnant. Our waiter cheerfully tells us about his family, expresses delight in ours. On the surface, it may have seemed as though your body was becoming more and more “male,” mine, more and more “female.” But that's not how it felt on the inside. On the inside, we were two human animals undergoing transformations beside each other, bearing each other loose witness. In other words, we were aging.

Many women describe the feeling of having a baby come out of their vagina as taking the biggest shit of their lives. This isn't really a metaphor. The anal cavity and vaginal canal lean on each other; they, too, are the sex which is not one. Constipation is one of pregnancy's principal features: the growing baby literally deforms and squeezes the lower intestines, changing the shape, flow, and plausibility of one's feces. In late pregnancy, I was amazed to find that my shit, when it would finally emerge, had been deformed into Christmas tree ornament—type balls. Then, all through my labor, I could not shit at all, as it was keenly clear to me that letting go of the shit would mean the total disintegration of my perineum, anus, and vagina, all at once. I also knew that if, or when, I could let go of the shit, the baby would probably come out. But to do so would mean *falling forever, going to pieces*.

In perusing the Q&A sections of pregnancy magazines at my ob/gyn's office before giving birth, I learned that a surprising number of women have a related but distinct concern about shit and labor (either that, or the magazine editors are making it up, as a

kind of projective propaganda):

Q: If my husband watches me labor, how will he ever find me sexy again, now that he's seen me involuntarily defecate, and my vagina accommodate a baby's head?

This question confused me; its description of labor did not strike me as exceedingly distinct from what happens during sex, or at least some sex, or at least much of the sex I had heretofore taken to be good.

No one asked, *How does one submit to falling forever, to going to pieces*. A question from the inside.

In current “grrrl” culture, I’ve noted the ascendancy of the phrase “I need X like I need a dick in my ass.” Meaning, of course, that X is precisely what you *don’t* need (dick in my ass = hole in my head = fish with a bicycle, and so on). I’m all for girls feeling empowered to reject sexual practices that they don’t enjoy, and God knows many straight boys are all too happy to stick it in any hole, even one that hurts. But I worry that such expressions only underscore the “ongoing absence of a discourse of female anal eroticism ... the flat fact that, since classical times, *there has been no important and sustained Western discourse in which women’s anal eroticism means*. Means anything.”

Sedgwick did an enormous amount to put women’s anal eroticism on the map (even though she was mostly into spanking, which is not precisely an anal pursuit). But while Sedgwick (and Fraiman) want to make space for women’s anal eroticism to *mean*, that is not the same as inquiring into how it *feels*. Even ex-ballerina Toni Bentley, who knocked herself out to become the culture’s go-to girl for anal sex in her memoir *The Surrender*, can’t seem to write a sentence about ass-fucking without obscuring it via metaphor, bad puns, or spiritual striving. And Fraiman exalts the female anus mostly for what it is not: the vagina (presumably a lost cause, for the sodomite).

I am not interested in a hermeneutics, or an erotics, or a metaphysics, of my anus. I am interested in ass-fucking. I am interested in the fact that the clitoris, disguised as a discrete button, sweeps over the entire area like a manta ray, impossible to tell where its eight thousand nerves begin and end. I am interested in the fact that the human anus is one of the most innervated parts of the body, as Mary Roach explained to Terry Gross in a perplexing piece of radio that I listened to while driving Iggy home from his twelve-month vaccinations. I checked on Iggy periodically in the rearview mirror for signs of a vaccine-induced neuromuscular breakdown while Roach explained that the anus has “tons of nerves. And the reason is that it needs to be able to discriminate, by feel, between solid, liquid and gas and be able to selectively release one or maybe all of those. And thank heavens for the anus because, you know, really a lot of gratitude,

ladies and gentlemen, to the human anus.” To which Gross replied: “Let’s take a short break here, then we’ll talk some more. This is *Fresh Air*.”

A few months after Florida: you always wanting to fuck, raging with new hormones and new comfort in your skin; me vaulting fast into the unfuckable, not wanting to dislodge the hard-won baby seed, falling through the bed with dizziness whenever I turned my head—*falling forever*—all touch starting to sicken, as if the cells of my skin were individually nauseated.

That hormones can make the feel of wind, or the feel of fingers on one’s skin, change from arousing to nauseating is a mystery deeper than I can track or fathom. The mysteries of psychology pale in comparison, just as evolution strikes me as infinitely more spiritually profound than Genesis.

Our bodies grew stranger, to ourselves, to each other. You sprouted coarse hair in new places; new muscles fanned out across your hip bones. My breasts were sore for over a year, and while they don’t hurt anymore, they still feel like they belong to someone else (and in a sense, since I’m still nursing, they do). For years you were stone; now you strip your shirt off whenever you feel like it, emerge muscular, shirtless, into public spaces, go running—swimming, even.

Via T, you’ve experienced surges of heat, an adolescent budding, your sexuality coming down from the labyrinth of your mind and disseminating like a cottonwood tree in a warm wind. You like the changes, but also feel them as a sort of compromise, a wager for visibility, as in your drawing of a ghost who proclaims, *Without this sheet, I would be invisible*. (Visibility makes possible, but it also disciplines: disciplines gender, disciplines genre.) Via pregnancy, I have my first sustained encounter with the pendulous, the slow, the exhausted, the disabled. I had always presumed that giving birth would make me feel invincible and ample, like fisting. But even now—two years out—my insides feel more quivery than lush. I’ve begun to give myself over to the idea that the sensation might be forever changed, that this sensitivity is now mine, ours, to work with. Can fragility feel as hot as bravado? I think so, but sometimes struggle to find the way. Whenever I think I can’t find it, Harry assures me that we can. And so we go on, our bodies finding each other again and again, even as they—we—have also been *right here*, all along.

For reasons almost incomprehensible to me now, I cried a little when our first ultrasound technician—the nice, seemingly gay Raoul, who sported a little silver sperm-squiggle pin on his white coat—told us at twenty weeks that our baby was a boy, without a shadow of a doubt. I guess I had to mourn something—the fantasy of a

feminist daughter, the fantasy of a mini-me. Someone whose hair I could braid, someone who might serve as a femme ally to me in a house otherwise occupied by an adorable boy terrier, my beautiful, swaggery stepson, and a debonair butch on T.

But that was not my fate, nor was it the baby's. Within twenty-four hours of hearing the news, I was on board. Little Agnes would be little Iggy. And I would love him fiercely. Maybe I would even braid his hair! As you reminded me on the drive home from our appointment, *Hey, I was born female, and look how that turned out.*

Despite agreeing with Sedgwick's assertion that "women and men are more like each other than chalk is like cheese, than ratiocination is like raisins, than up is like down, or than 1 is like 0," it took me by surprise that my body could make a male body. Many women I know have reported something of the same, even though they know this is the most ordinary of miracles. As my body made the male body, I felt the difference between male and female body melt even further away. I was making a body with a difference, but a girl body would have been a different body too. The principal difference was that the body I made would eventually slide out of me and be its own body. Radical intimacy, radical difference. Both in the body, both in the bowl.

I kept thinking then about something poet Fanny Howe once said about bearing biracial children, something about how you become what grows inside you. But however "black" Howe might have felt herself becoming while gestating her children, she also remained keenly aware that the outside world was ready and waiting—and all too willing—to reinforce the color divide. She is of her children, and they are of her. But they know and she knows they do not share the same lot.

This divide provoked in Howe the sensation of being a double agent, especially in all-white settings. She recalls how, at gatherings in the late '60s, white liberals would openly converse "about their fear of blacks, and their judgments of blacks, and I had to announce to them that my husband and children were black, before hastily departing." This scene was not limited to the '60s. "This event has been repeated so many times, in multiple forms, that by now I make some kind of give-away statement after entering a white-only room, one way or the other, that will warn the people there 'which side I am on,'" Howe says. "On these occasions, more than any others, I feel that my skin is white but my soul is not, and that I am in camouflage."

Harry lets me in on a secret: guys are pretty nice to each other in public. Always greeting each other "hey boss" or nodding as they pass each other on the street.

Women aren't like that. I don't mean that women are all back-stabbers or have it in for each other or whatnot. But in public, we don't nod nobly at each other. Nor do we really need to, as that nod also means *I mean you no violence*.

Over lunch with a fag friend of ours, Harry reports his findings about male behavior in public. Our friend laughs and says: *Maybe if I looked like Harry, I'd get a "hey boss" too!*

When a guy has cause to stare at Harry's driver's license or credit card, there comes an odd moment during which their camaraderie as two dudes screeches to a halt. The friendliness can't evaporate on a dime, however, especially if there has been a longish prior interaction, as one might have over the course of a meal, with a waiter.

Recently we were buying pumpkins for Halloween. We'd been given a little red wagon to put our pumpkins in as we traipsed around the field. We'd haggled over the price, we'd ood and ahed at the life-sized mechanical zombie removing his head. We'd been given freebie minipumpkins for our cute baby. Then, the credit card. The guy paused for a long moment, then said, "This is her card, right?"—pointing at me. I almost felt sorry for him, he was so desperate to normalize the moment. I should have said yes, but I was worried I would open up a new avenue of trouble (*never the scofflaw*—yet I know I have what it takes to put my body on the line, if and when it comes down to it; this knowledge is a hot red shape inside me). We just froze in the way we freeze until Harry said, "It's my card." Long pause, sidelong stare. A shadow of violence usually drifts over the scene. "It's complicated," Harry finally said, puncturing the silence. Eventually, the man spoke. "No, actually, it's not," he said, handing back the card. "Not complicated at all."

Every other weekend of my pregnant fall—my so-called golden trimester—I traveled alone around the country on behalf of my book *The Art of Cruelty*. Quickly I realized that I would need to trade in my prideful self-sufficiency for a willingness to ask for help—in lifting my bags in and out of overhead compartments, up and down subway steps, and so on. I received this help, which I recognized as great kindness. On more than one occasion, a service member in the airport literally saluted me as I shuffled past. Their friendliness was nothing short of shocking. *You are holding the future; one must be kind to the future* (or at least a certain image of the future, which I apparently appeared able to deliver, and our military ready to defend). So this is the seduction of normalcy, I thought as I smiled back, compromised and radiant.

But the pregnant body in public is also obscene. It radiates a kind of smug auto eroticism: an intimate relation is going on—one that is visible to others, but that decisively excludes them. Service members may salute, strangers may offer their

congratulations or their seats, but this privacy, this bond, can also irritate. It especially irritates the antiabortionists, who would prefer to pry apart the twofer earlier and earlier— twenty-four weeks, twenty weeks, twelve weeks, six weeks ... The sooner you can pry the twofer apart, the sooner you can dispense with one constituent of the relationship: *the woman with rights*.

For all the years I didn't want to be pregnant—the years I spent harshly deriding “the breeders”—I secretly felt pregnant women were smug in their complaints. Here they were, sitting on top of the cake of the culture, getting all the kudos for doing exactly what women are supposed to do, yet still they felt unsupported and discriminated against. Give me a break! Then, when I wanted to be pregnant but wasn't, I felt that pregnant women had the cake I wanted, and were busy bitching about the flavor of the icing.

I was wrong on all counts—imprisoned, as I was and still am, by my own hopes and fears. I'm not trying to fix that wrong-ness here. I'm just trying to let it *hang out*.

Place me now, like a pregnant cutout doll, at a “prestigious New York university,” giving a talk on my book on cruelty. During the Q&A, a well-known playwright raises his hand and says: *I can't help but notice that you're with child, which leads me to the question—how did you handle working on all this dark material [sadism, masochism, cruelty, violence, and so on] in your condition?*

Ah yes, I think, digging a knee into the podium. Leave it to the old patrician white guy to call the lady speaker back to her body, so that no one misses the spectacle of that wild oxymoron, *the pregnant woman who thinks*. Which is really just a pumped-up version of that more general oxymoron, *a woman who thinks*.

As if anyone was missing the spectacle anyway. As if a similar scene didn't recur at nearly every location of my so-called book tour. As if when I myself see pregnant women in the public sphere, there isn't a kind of drumming in my mind that threatens to drown out all else: *pregnant, pregnant, pregnant*, perhaps because the soul (or souls) in utero is pumping out static, static that disrupts our usual perception of an other as a *single* other. The static of facing not one, but also not two.

During irritating Q&As, bumpy takeoffs and landings, and frightful faculty meetings, I placed my hands on my risen belly and attempted silent communion with the being spinning in the murk. Wherever I went, there the baby went, too. Hello New York! Hello bathtub! And yet babies have a will of their own, which becomes visible the first time

mine sticks out a limb and makes a tent of my belly. During the night he gets into weird positions, forcing me to plead, *Move along, little baby! Get your foot off my lungs!* And if you are tracking a problem, as I was, you may have to watch the baby's body develop in ways that might harm him, with nothing you can do about it. Powerlessness, finitude, endurance. You are making the baby but not *directly*. You are responsible for his welfare, but unable to control the core elements. You must allow him to unfurl, you must feed his unfurling, you must hold him. But he will unfurl as his cells are programmed to unfurl. You can't reverse an unfolding structural or chromosomal disturbance by ingesting the right organic tea.

Why do we have to measure his kidneys and freak out about their size every week if we've already decided we are not going to take him out early or do anything to treat him until after he's born? I asked the doctor rolling the sticky ultrasound shaft over my belly for seemingly the thousandth time. *Well, most mothers want to know as much as possible about the condition of their babies,* she said, avoiding my eyes.

Truth be told, when we first started trying to conceive, I had hoped to be done with my cruelty project and onto something "cheerier," so that the baby might have more upbeat accompaniment in utero. But I needn't have worried—not only did getting pregnant take much longer than I'd wanted it to, but pregnancy itself taught me how irrelevant such a hope was. Babies grow in a helix of hope and fear; gestating draws one but deeper into the spiral. It isn't cruel in there, but it's dark. I would have explained this to the playwright, but he had already left the room.

After the Q&A at this event, a woman came up to me and told me that she just got out of a relationship with a woman who had wanted her to hit her during sex. *She was so fucked up,* she said. *Came from a background of abuse. I had to tell her I couldn't do that to her, I could never be that person.* She seemed to be asking me for a species of advice, so I told her the only thing that occurred to me: I didn't know this other woman, so all that seemed clear to me was that their perversities were not compatible.

Even identical genital acts mean very different things to different people. This is a crucial point to remember, and also a difficult one. It reminds us that there is difference right where we may be looking for, and expecting, communion.

At twenty-eight weeks, I was hospitalized for some bleeding. While discussing a possible placental issue, one doctor quipped, "We don't want that, because while that would likely be OK for the baby, it might not be OK for you." By pressing a bit, I figured out that she meant, in that particular scenario, the baby would likely live, but I might not.

Now, I loved my hard-won baby-to-be fiercely, but I was in no way ready to bow out of this vale of tears for his survival. Nor do I think those who love me would have looked too kindly on such a decision—a decision that doctors elsewhere on the globe are mandated to make, and that the die-hard antiabortionists are going for here.

Once I was riding in a cab to JFK, passing by that amazingly overpacked cemetery along the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (Calvary?). My cabdriver gazed out wistfully at the headstones packed onto the hill and said, *Many of those graves are the graves of children. Likely so*, I returned with a measure of fatigued trepidation, the result of years of fielding unwanted monologues from cabdrivers about how women should live or behave. *It is a good thing when children die*, he said. *They go straight to Paradise, because they are the innocents.*

During my sleepless night under placental observation, this monologue came back to me. And I wondered if, instead of working to fulfill the dream of worldwide enforced childbearing, abortion foes could instead get excited about all the innocent, unborn souls going straight from the abortion table to Paradise, no detour necessary into this den of iniquity, which eventually makes whores of us all (not to mention Social Security recipients). Could that get them off our backs once and for all?

Never in my life have I felt more prochoice than when I was pregnant. And never in my life have I understood more thoroughly, and been more excited about, a life that began at conception. Feminists may never make a bumper sticker that says IT'S A CHOICE AND A CHILD, but of course that's what it is, and we know it. We don't need to wait for George Carlin to spill the beans. We're not idiots; we understand the stakes. Sometimes we choose death. Harry and I sometimes joke that women should get way beyond twenty weeks—maybe even up to two days after birth—to decide if they want to keep the baby. (Joke, OK?)

I have saved many mementos for Iggy, but I admit to tossing away an envelope with about twenty-five ultrasound photos of his in-utero penis and testicles, which a chirpy, blond pony-tailed technician printed out for me every time I had an ultrasound. *Boy, he's sure proud of his stuff*, she would say, before jabbing Print. Or, *He really likes to show it off!*

Just let him wheel around in his sac for Christ's sake, I thought, grimly folding the genital triptychs into my wallet, week after week. Let him stay oblivious—for the first and last time, perhaps—to the task of performing a self for others, to the fact that we develop, even in utero, in response to a flow of projections and reflections ricocheting off us. Eventually, we call that snowball a self (*Argo*).



Leon Mostovoy, from the series *Market Street Cinema*, 1987-88

© the artist

“For years we as lesbian-feminists have been fighting male pornography,” a reader named Donna from Washington, D.C., wrote. “It shocks and abhors me to find that women have

stooped to the same methods.” To scan the letters pages of the San Francisco-based magazine *On Our Backs*, published from 1984 to 2005, is to find lesbian erotica thrown into relief against the backdrop of the feminist sex wars. Antagonisms that characterized the movement in the 1980s play out in an epistolary exchange, and through the rancor, a contrasting story emerges. “How different—bold—and wonderful to see (for my first time) women enjoying women,” another reader commented. “It makes me remember that I’m not alone in my thoughts, although fairly secluded in South Carolina,” says another. One reader gets right to the point: “A splendid aid to masturbation! Thanks!” Nestled among these letters are whetted appetites and desires unmet, a request for clarification on attraction between butches, a note about racial integration in the San Francisco leather scene, even a complaint about proofreading errors. A field of lesbian desire appears, one that was contested, shared, and shaped by contributors and readers alike.

The publication emerged at a juncture in feminist history known as the sex wars, a time of high-octane tensions between “pro-sex” and “anti-pornography” feminists. The two terms obscure the complexity of these debates yet gesture toward a stark ideological rift. To summarize, pro-sex feminists sought new languages for female desire. Feminist anti-pornography groups, such as Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media and Women Against Pornography, campaigned for increased legal sanctions on the production and circulation of pornographic material. Photography figured predominantly in this debate, both as a catalyst for antagonism and a means by which feminist affinities might be established and fantasies explored. In the context of these fraught and painful divisions, *On Our Backs* contributed to a burgeoning media through which images of lesbian sexuality were constructed and disseminated, lusted after and spurned.

ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE ADVENTUROUS LESBIAN

ON OUR BACKS

SUMMER 1987

\$4.00



Bertie Ramirez, cover of *On Our Backs*, Summer 1987

Courtesy the Lesbian Herstory Archives

The magazine was an early platform for lesbian sex photography. Along with the Boston-based *Bad Attitude*, it carved out a space for others to emerge (*Outrageous Women*, *Wicked Women*, *Quim*, and *Lezzie Smut*, to name a few international examples that followed). In its first decade, *On Our Backs* was instrumental in shaping a culture organized around lesbian desire. The first editorial, written by Debi Sundahl and Myrna Elana, cofounding editor and publisher, respectively, introduces *On Our Backs* as an “offering” to the community with the aim of

“sexual freedom, respect and empowerment for lesbians.” There were many who worked to realize this goal. Susie Bright, then the manager of Good Vibrations, a San Francisco shop selling sex toys for women, oversaw six years as editor in chief. Starting out as something of a sexual agony aunt, she wrote an advice column that became a trademark of the magazine. Nan Kinney, another founding editor, went to develop Fatale Media, a producer of lesbian erotica videos that by the end of the 1980s was the largest of its kind. Alongside essays, poetry, and graphic art, photography was key to realizing the ambitions of the magazine, and *On Our Backs* was shaped around a culture of image makers. Its smart black-and-white aesthetic was defined by photographers such as Honey Lee Cottrell, Tee Corinne, Morgan Gwenwald, Jill Posener, Leon Mostovoy, and Katie Niles. Photography stories, reportage, constructed scenes, and advertising images mixed with informative articles, erotic fiction, and, importantly, personals. Later, people like Lulu Belliveau and Phyllis Christopher would be instrumental in developing an ever more stylish visual language that continued to challenge the paucity of available images of lesbians in mainstream culture.



Phyllis Christopher, *Alley South of Market*, San Francisco, 1997
Courtesy the Artist

There are perhaps two intertwined genealogies here. One is within histories of feminism, the other within those of homosexual culture. As often happens in politics, the sex wars played out as a dispute not only between opposing factions but also different generations. This division caricatured second-wave lesbian feminism as desexualizing lesbian identity in favor of a political definition (“Any woman can be a lesbian,” sang lesbian separatist folk musician Alix Dobkin in 1974). Riffing on the politics of the 1970s, if not antagonistically, then at least with irreverence, *On Our Backs* appropriated their title from *off our backs*, a well-known feminist newspaper with roots in the women’s liberation movement. A series of images that Christopher produced

for *On Our Backs* in 1992 announced a fetish for flannel. Christopher admits—with, one suspects, tongue firmly in cheek—to having suppressed her desire for the unfashionable check until seeing a documentary about Olivia Records, a record label synonymous with 1970s lesbian feminism. Getting off on history indicates a less complete break with the past than the idea of feminist waves first implied.



Tessa Boffin, *The Angel*, 1990, from the series *The Knight's Move*
© the Estate of Tessa Boffins/Gupta+Singh Archives

On Our Backs also looked back to public sex cultures that emerged in the wake of gay liberation. Many photographers whose work appeared in the magazine subverted the visual language of the male-dominated BDSM community. Gwenwald's fetish pictures, including a piece of lace reminiscent of a handkerchief or panties folded into a back pocket, offer a wry counterpoint to Hal Fischer's record of homosexual dress codes collected in his book *Gay Semiotics* (1977). Christopher acknowledges the formal influence of Robert Mapplethorpe on her approach to visualizing lesbian sex and desire. But, however exciting it might be to consider this subversion of gay male culture, references to canonical figures like Mapplethorpe should not obscure the radical project pursued by Christopher, Gwenwald, and their colleagues. As the AIDS crisis took hold in the United States and elsewhere, the imperative to create publicly visible representations of queer sex became ever more vital. In the context of political disempowerment and medical crisis, lesbian sex photography would take on increasing political charge, as the magazine provided an essential platform for lesbian creativity during a regime of state censorship enacted during the period of the culture wars in the United States. Circulating in unmarked envelopes, *On Our Backs* networked lesbians internationally. An exchange took place between photographers in the U.S. and the U.K., where figures like Del LaGrace Volcano, Tessa Boffin, and Jean Fraser foregrounded lesbian identity within the theories of representation emerging out of schools such as the Polytechnic of Central London. If this was photography in the service of pleasure, it was also photography in the service of history. To engage in documenting lesbian sex in the 1980s was to advance the historically necessary claims of feminism and gay liberation into the public sphere. For example, Mostovoy's images of lesbian sex workers at San Francisco's Market Street Cinema might be viewed as part of a broader reworking of documentary practice in the 1980s, tied to the emergent debates around the politics of representation. Yet many lesbian practitioners regarded documentary with suspicion. Instead, pornography, which is peculiarly structured by both arch realism and pure fantasy, provided a space where the pathologization of lesbian sexuality could be resisted. For its ubiquity, its obscenity, perhaps even the material conditions of its production, pornography is a particularly degraded kind of image making in histories of photography, removed from the value systems of the academy as well as those of the art world.



Del LaGrace Volcano, *On the Way There*, London, 1988

© the artist

A collective project like a magazine is bound to be fraught with internal struggles, and from the outset *On Our Backs* lived with a degree of financial precarity that would lead to both a hiatus and change in management in the mid-1990s. The difficulty of running the publication was compounded by the mounting restrictions on queer spaces as moral hysteria surrounding the AIDS crisis intersected with pernicious gentrification in San Francisco, which had a homogenizing effect on the city. Revisiting this era through the pages of the magazine allows a different set of possibilities relating to queer identity to emerge. *On Our Backs* is but one chapter in a rich history that also includes the work of Cathy Cade, Ruth Mountaingrove, Corinne, and Volcano, whose vital contributions to queer photography began in the lesbian bars of San Francisco in the early 1980s. Trans or intersex-identified photographers like Volcano and Mostovoy started in the dyke scene alongside writers like Patrick Califia, known for his groundbreaking writing on BDSM subcultures and trans politics. Held within lesbian sex cultures of the 1980s are the kernels of the ongoing struggles for recognition—of trans folk, sex workers, fat activists—that continue to unsettle feminism today. At times it seems the magazine presents us with a lesbian feminist history of queer photography; at others, a queer history of lesbian feminist photography. Perhaps instead, the diverse record of lesbian desire produced through the photographs in *On Our Backs* shows us that the two are yoked together, far harder to separate than existing histories might have us believe.

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Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?

by LINDA NOCHLIN

While the recent upsurge of feminist activity in this country has indeed been a liberating one, its force has been chiefly emotional--personal, psychological, and subjective--centered, like the other radical movements to which it is related, on the present and its immediate needs, rather than on historical analysis of the basic intellectual issues which the feminist attack on the status quo automatically raises.

Like any revolution, however, the feminist one ultimately must come to grips with the intellectual and ideological basis of the various intellectual or scholarly disciplines--history, philosophy, sociology, psychology, etc.--in the same way that it questions the ideologies of present social institutions. If, as John Stuart Mill suggested, we tend to accept whatever *is* as natural, this is just as true in the realm of academic investigation as it is in our social arrangements. In the former, too, "natural" assumptions must be questioned and the mythic basis of much so-called fact brought to light. And it is here that the very position of woman as an acknowledged outsider, the maverick "she" instead of the presumably neutral "one"--in reality the white-male-position-accepted-as-natural, or the hidden "he" as the subject of all scholarly predicates--is a decided advantage, rather than merely a hindrance or a subjective distortion.

In the field of art history, the white Western male viewpoint, unconsciously accepted as *the* viewpoint of the art historian, may--and does--prove to be inadequate not merely on moral and ethical grounds, or because it is elitist, but on purely intellectual ones. In revealing the failure of much academic art history, and a great deal of history in general, to take account of the unacknowledged value system, the very *presence* of an intruding subject in historical investigation, the feminist critique at the same time lays bare its conceptual smugness, its meta-historical naivete. At a moment when all disciplines are becoming more self-conscious, more aware of the nature of their presuppositions as exhibited in the very languages and structures of the various fields of scholarship, such uncritical acceptance of "what is" as "natural" may be intellectually fatal. Just as Mill saw male domination as one of a long series

of social injustices that had to be overcome if a truly just social order were to be created, so we may see the unstated domination of white male subjectivity as one in a series of intellectual distortions which must be corrected in order to achieve a more adequate and accurate view of historical situations.

It is the engaged feminist intellect (like John Stuart Mill's) that can pierce through the cultural-ideological limitations of the time and its specific "professionalism" to reveal biases and inadequacies not merely in dealing with the question of women, but in the very way of formulating the crucial questions of the discipline as a whole. Thus, the so-called woman question, far from being a minor, peripheral, and laughably provincial sub-issue grafted on to a serious, established discipline, can become a catalyst, an intellectual instrument, probing basic and "natural" assumptions, providing a paradigm for other kinds of internal questioning, and in turn providing links with paradigms established by radical approaches in other fields. Even a simple question like "Why have there been no great women artists?" can, if answered adequately, create a sort of chain reaction, expanding not merely to encompass the accepted assumptions of the single field, but outward to embrace history and the social sciences, or even psychology and literature, and thereby, from the outset, can challenge the assumption, that the traditional divisions of intellectual inquiry are still adequate to deal with the meaningful questions of our time, rather than the merely convenient or self-generated ones.

Let us, for example, examine the implications of that perennial question (one can, of course, substitute almost any field of human endeavor, with appropriate changes in phrasing): "Well, if women really *are* equal to men, why have there never been any great women artists (or composers, or mathematicians, or philosophers, or so few of the same)?"

"Why have there been no great women artists?" The question tolls reproachfully in the background of most discussions of the so-called woman problem. But like so many other so-called questions involved in the feminist "controversy," it falsifies the nature of the issue at the same time that it insidiously supplies its own answer: "There have been no great women artists because women are incapable of greatness."

The assumptions behind such a question are varied in range and sophistication, running anywhere from "scientifically proven" demonstrations of the inability of human beings with wombs rather than penises to create anything significant, to relatively open-minded wonderment that women, despite so many years of near-equality--and after all, a lot of men have had their disadvantages too--have still not achieved anything of exceptional significance in the visual arts. The

feminist's first reaction is to swallow the bait, hook, line and sinker, and to attempt to answer the question as it is put: that is, to dig up examples of worthy or insufficiently appreciated women artists throughout history; to rehabilitate rather modest, if interesting and productive careers; to "rediscover" forgotten flower painters or David followers and make out a case for them; to demonstrate that Berthe Morisot was really less dependent upon Manet than one had been led to think-in other words, to engage in the normal activity of the specialist scholar who makes a case for the importance of his very own neglected or minor master. Such attempts, whether undertaken from a feminist point of view, like the ambitious article on women artists which appeared in the 1858 *Westminster Review*, or more recent scholarly studies on such artists as Angelica Kauffmann and Artemisia Gentileschi, are certainly worth the effort, both in adding to our knowledge of women's achievement and of art history generally. But they do nothing to question the assumptions lying behind the question "Why have there been no great women artists?" On the contrary, by attempting to answer it, they tacitly reinforce its negative implications.

Another attempt to answer the question involves shifting the ground slightly and asserting, as some contemporary feminists do, that there is a different kind of "greatness" for women's art than for men's, thereby postulating the existence of a distinctive and recognizable feminine style, different both in its formal and its expressive qualities and based on the special character of women's situation and experience.

This, on the surface of it, seems reasonable enough: in general, women's experience and situation in society, and hence as artists, is different from men's, and certainly the art produced by a group of consciously united and purposefully articulate women intent on bodying forth a group consciousness of feminine experience might indeed be stylistically identifiable as feminist, if not feminine, art. Unfortunately, though this remains within the realm of possibility it has so far not occurred. While the members of the Danube School, the followers of Caravaggio, the painters gathered around Gauguin at Pont-Aven, the Blue Rider, or the Cubists may be recognized by certain clearly defined stylistic or expressive qualities, no such common qualities of "femininity" would seem to link the styles of women artists generally, any more than such qualities can be said to link women writers, a case brilliantly argued, against the most devastating, and mutually contradictory, masculine critical clichés, by Mary Ellmann in her *Thinking About Women*. No subtle essence of femininity would seem to link the work of Artemisia Gentileschi, Mme. Vigée-Lebrun, Angelica Kauffmann, Rosa Bonheur, Berthe Morisot, Suzanne Valadon, Kathe Kollwitz, Barbara Hepworth, Georgia O'Keeffe, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Helen

Frankenthaler, Bridget Riley, Lee Bontecou, or Louise Nevelson. any more than that of Sappho, Marle de France, Jane Austen, Emily Bronte, George Sand, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, Anais Nin, Emily Dickinson, Sylvia Plath, and Susan Sontag. In every instance, women artists and writers would seem to be closer to other artists and writers of their own period and outlook than they are to each other.

Women artists are more inward-looking, more delicate and nuanced in their treatment of their medium, it may be asserted. But which of the women artists cited above is more inward-turning than Redon, more subtle and nuanced in the handling of pigment than Corot? Is Fragonard more or less feminine than Mme. Vigee-Lebrun? Or is it not more a question of the whole Rococo style of eighteenth-century France being "feminine," if judged in terms of a binary scale of "masculinity" versus "femininity"? Certainly, if daintiness, delicacy, and preciousness are to be counted as earmarks of a feminine style, there is nothing fragile about Rosa Bonheur's *Horse Fair*, nor dainty and introverted about Helen Frankenthaler's giant canvases. If women have turned to scenes of domestic life, or of children. so did Jan Steen, Chardin, and the Impressionists--Renoir and Monet as well as Morisot and Cassatt. In any case, the mere choice of a certain realm of subject matter, or the restriction to certain subjects, is not to be equated with a style, much less with some sort of quintessentially feminine style.

The problem lies not so much with some feminists' concept of what femininity is, but rather with their misconception--shared with the public at large--of what art is: with the naive idea that art is direct, personal expression of individual emotional experience, a translation of personal life into visual terms. Art is almost never that, great art never is. The making of art involves a self-consistent language of form, more or less dependent upon, or free from, given temporally defined conventions, schemata, or systems of notation, which have to be learned or worked out, either through teaching, apprenticeship, or a long period of individual experimentation. The language of art is, more materially, embodied in paint and line on canvas or paper, in stone or clay or plastic or metal--it is neither a sob story nor a confidential whisper.

The fact of the matter is that there have been no supremely great women artists, as far as we know, although there have been many interesting and very good ones, who remain insufficiently investigated or appreciated; nor have there been any great Lithuanian jazz pianists, nor Eskimo tennis players, no matter how much we might wish there had been. That this should be the case is regrettable, but no amount of manipulating the historical or critical evidence will alter the situation; nor will accusations of male-chauvinist distortion of

history. There *are* no women equivalents for Michelangelo or Rembrandt, Delacroix or Cezanne, Picasso or Matisse, or even, in very recent times, for de Kooning or Warhol, any more than there are black American equivalents for the same. If there actually were large numbers of "hidden" great women artists, or if there really should be different standards for women's art as opposed to men's--and one can't have it both ways--then what are feminists fighting for? If women have in fact achieved the same status as men in the arts, then the status quo is fine as it is.

But in actuality, as we all know, things as they are and as they have been, in the arts as in a hundred other areas, are stultifying, oppressive, and discouraging to all those, women among them, who did not have the good fortune to be born white, preferably middle class, and above all, male. The fault lies not in our stars, our hormones, our menstrual cycles, or our empty internal spaces, but in our institutions and our education--education understood to include everything that happens to us from the moment we enter this world of meaningful symbols, signs, and signals. The miracle is, in fact, that given the overwhelming against women, or blacks, that so many of both have managed to achieve so much sheer excellence, in those bailiwicks of white masculine prerogative like science, politics, or the arts.

It is when one really starts thinking about the implications of "Why have there been no great women artists?" that one begins to realize to what extent our consciousness of how things are in the world has been conditioned--and often falsified--by the way the most important questions are posed. We tend to take it for granted that there really is an East Asian Problem, a Poverty Problem, a Black Problem--and a Woman Problem. But first we must ask ourselves who is formulating these "questions," and then, what purposes such formulations may serve. (We may, of course, refresh our memories with the connotations of the Nazis' "Jewish Problem.") Indeed, in our time of instant communication, "problems" are rapidly formulated to rationalize the bad conscience of those with power: thus, the problem posed by Americans in Vietnam and Cambodia is referred to by Americans as the "East Asian Problem," whereas East Asians may view it, more realistically, as the "American Problem"; the so-called Poverty Problem might more directly be viewed as the "Wealth Problem" by denizens of urban ghettos or rural wastelands; the same irony twists the White Problem into its opposite, a Black Problem; and the same inverse logic turns up in the formulation of our present state of affairs as the "Woman Problem."

Now, the "Woman Problem," like all human problems, so-called (and the very idea of calling anything to do with human beings a "problem" is, of course, a fairly recent one), is not amenable to "solution" at all, since what human

problems involve is reinterpretation of the nature of the situation, or a radical alteration of stance or program *on the part of the "problems" themselves*. Thus, women and their situation in the arts, as in other realms of endeavor, are not a "problem" to be viewed through the eyes of the dominant male power elite. Instead, *women* must conceive of themselves as potentially, if not actually, equal subjects, and must be willing to look the facts of their situation full in the face, without self-pity, or cop-outs; at the same time they must view their situation with that high degree of emotional and intellectual commitment necessary to create a world in which equal achievement will be not only made possible but actively encouraged by social institutions.

It is certainly not realistic to hope that a majority of men, in the arts or in any other field, will soon see the light and find that it is in their own self-interest to grant complete equality to women, as some feminists optimistically assert, or to maintain that men themselves will soon realize that they are diminished by denying themselves access to traditionally "feminine" realms and emotional reactions. After all, there are few areas that are really "denied" to men, if the level of operations demanded be transcendent, responsible, or rewarding enough: men who have a need for "feminine" involvement with babies or children gain status as pediatricians or child psychologists, with a nurse (female) to do the more routine work; those who feel the urge for kitchen creativity may gain fame as master chefs; and of course, men who yearn to fulfill themselves through what are often termed "feminine" artistic interests can find themselves as painters or sculptors, rather than as volunteer museum aides or part-time ceramists, as their female counterparts so often end up doing; as far as scholarship is concerned, how many men would be willing to change their jobs as teachers and researchers for those of unpaid, part-time research assistants and typists as well as full-time nannies and domestic workers?

Those who have privileges inevitably hold on to them, and hold tight, no matter how marginal the advantage involved, until compelled to bow to superior power of one sort or another.

GENDER AT WORK

Another way to get at the extra-economic role of work that the concept of the work society is intended to evoke is through a further consideration of work's subjectification function, alluded to above. Work produces not just economic goods and services but also social and political subjects. In other words, the wage relation generates not just income and capital, but disciplined individuals, governable subjects, worthy citizens, and responsible family members. Indeed, given its centrality both to individuals' lives and to the social imaginary, work constitutes a par-

ticularly important site of interpellation into a range of subjectivities. It is, for example, a key site of becoming classed; the workplace is where, as Marx describes it, the seller of labor power who we are invited to follow into the hidden abode of production "becomes in actuality what previously he only was potentially, namely labour-power in action, a worker" (1976, 283). Class identities and relations are made and remade as some people are excluded from and others conscripted into work, by means of educational tracks and workplace training regimens, through the organization of labor processes and the interactions they structure, via the setting of wage levels, and in relation to judgments about occupational status. This process of subjectification is perhaps best understood in terms of a model not of passive construction but of active recruitment, often less a matter of command and obedience than one of inducement and attraction (West and Zimmerman 1991, 27–29). Along these lines, one can observe that some of the attractions of different forms of work are about joining a relatively advantaged class: becoming a member of the working class rather than the underclass, a middle-class rather than a working-class person, a salaried versus an hourly worker, a professional with a career as opposed to a working stiff and job holder. As a way to build on these logics a little further, let us turn to another dimension of this process of subject making and doing and consider work as a site of gendering.

To say that work is organized by gender is to observe that it is a site where, at a minimum, we can find gender enforced, performed, and recreated. Workplaces are often structured in relation to gendered norms and expectations. Waged work and unwaged work alike continue to be structured by the productivity of gender-differentiated labor, including the gender division of both household roles and waged occupations. But the gendering of work is not just a matter of these institutionalized tendencies to distinguish various forms of men's work and women's work, but a consequence of the ways that workers are often expected to do gender at work. Gender is put to work when, for example, workers draw upon gendered codes and scripts as a way to negotiate relationships with bosses and co-workers, to personalize impersonal interactions, or to communicate courtesy, care, professionalism, or authority to clients, students, patients, or customers. And this is, of course, not limited to waged forms of work. As Sarah Fenstermaker Berk argues, unwaged domestic work too should be recognized for producing not just goods and

services, but gender as well (1985, 201). As a result of these activities, work plays a significant role in both the production and reproduction of gendered identities and hierarchies: gender is re-created along with value.

As in the example of class identities noted earlier, gender identities are coordinated with work identities in ways that can sometimes alienate workers from their job and other times bind them more tightly to it. Whether it is the women informatics workers whose pink-collar status and dress code is, Carla Freeman argues, at once a disciplinary mechanism and a source of individual expression (2000, 2), or the specific model of blue-collar masculinity that made industrial work attractive to the working-class boys of Paul Willis's famous study (1977, 150), this gendering of labor—doing men's work or women's work, doing masculinity or femininity as part of doing the job—can also be a source of pleasure in work and serve to promote workers' identification with and investments in the job. This can extend to unwaged forms of labor too; consider, for example, the ways in which conforming to a gender division of household labor might be for some people welcome confirmations of gender and sexual identities and relations. "What is produced and reproduced," in the case of one such example, is thus "not merely the activity and artifact of domestic life, but the material embodiment of wifely and husbandly roles and, derivatively, of womanly and manly conduct" (West and Zimmerman 1991, 30). Sometimes doing gender might be treated as part of doing the job; at other times doing the job is part of what it means to do gender. As Robin Leidner observes in her study of routinized interactive service work, the "degree to which workers accept the identity implied by a job is therefore determined in part by the degree to which they can interpret the job as expressing their gender in a satisfying way" (1993, 194).

But there is more to this story. For an employee, it is not merely a matter of bringing one's gendered self to work but of becoming gendered in and through work. For an employer, it is not just a matter of hiring masculine and feminine workers and putting them to work, but of actively managing workers' gendered identities and relationships. Exploitable subjects are not just found; they are, as Michael Burawoy famously argues, made at the point of production (1979). Even at the level of specific workplaces, individual managers can to some degree fashion the exploitable subjects, including the specific kind of feminized or masculinized subjects they imagine that they have already hired (Salzinger

2003, 20–21). Of course, it is difficult to predict whether various jobs will be segregated by gender in this way, whether they will be considered suitable men's work or women's work, and which particular models of gender such workers will be expected to conform to. In the fast-food franchise that Leidner studied, cooking was understood by managers and workers alike as men's work when it could have just as easily been coded as a feminized activity. Though it is not always easy to foresee if jobs will become gendered—or, if so, which jobs will be treated as more or less appropriate for which specific ideal of gendered comportment—the occupational segregation that is part and parcel of the gender division of labor stands nonetheless as supposed empirical proof of the necessity of gender difference and hierarchy. Thus, as Leidner notes, “the considerable flexibility of notions of proper gender enactment does not undermine the appearance of inevitability and naturalness that continues to support the division of labor by gender” (1993, 196). In her study of gendered labor in the maquiladoras, Leslie Salzinger argues that it is precisely the combination of rigid gender categories with the malleability and variability of their enactments and meaning that explains the resilience of gender as a principle of human differentiation (2003, 25). In this sense, ironically, the tremendous plasticity of gender reinforces rather than undermines its naturalization.

WORK VALUES

The category of the work society refers not just to the socially mediating and subjectively constitutive roles of work but to the dominance of its values. Challenging the present organization of work requires not only that we confront its reification and depoliticization but also its normativity and moralization. Work is not just defended on grounds of economic necessity and social duty; it is widely understood as an individual moral practice and collective ethical obligation. Traditional work values—those that preach the moral value and dignity of waged work and privilege such work as an essential source of individual growth, self-fulfillment, social recognition, and status—continue to be effective in encouraging and rationalizing the long hours US workers are supposed to dedicate to waged work and the identities they are expected to invest there. This normalizing and moralizing ethic of work should be very familiar to most of us; it is, after all, routinely espoused in managerial discourse, defended in the popular media, and enshrined in public poli-

the values that help sustain them are often insufficiently theorized, leaving one to conclude that all of our work-related goals would be met and the dominant work values justified if only such work were to resemble more closely the employment conditions at the middle and upper reaches of the labor hierarchy. The theory and practice of the refusal of work insists that the problem is not just that work cannot live up to the ethic's idealized image, that it neither exhibits the virtues nor delivers the meaning that the ethic promises us in exchange for a lifetime of work, but perhaps also the ideal itself.

WORK AND LABOR

Earlier I noted the difference between thinking systematically about work and thinking about this or that job. As a way to further clarify my concerns and intentions, I turn here to another distinction—the first of three additional conceptual pairs that I want to explore—that between work and labor. Although the division that I want to register between these categories is not a terminological one, I want to begin the discussion with a brief clarification about my use of the first term. In this book, the label “work” will refer to productive cooperation organized around, but not necessarily confined to, the privileged model of waged labor. What counts as work, which forms of productive activity will be included and how each will be valued, are a matter of historical dispute. Certainly the questions of whether or not various forms of productive activity—including some unwaged forms—will be recognized as work and at what rate they will be compensated have long been at the forefront of class, race, and gender struggles in and beyond the United States.

Which brings me to the relationship between work and labor: for the purposes of this project, I will use the terms interchangeably, thereby running roughshod over a distinction that is frequently, though inconsistently and variably, posed. For Hannah Arendt, to cite one notable theorist, the distinction between labor as the activity that reproduces biological life and work as the creation of an object world serves, among other things, to establish by way of comparison the singularity of a third category, action, as the definitively political activity of being in common (1958). Within the Marxist tradition, by contrast, it is perhaps more often labor—or, specifically, living labor—that figures as the more expansive category and valued practice. Conceived as a collective and creative human capacity harnessed by capital to the production of surplus

value, living labor can yield both a critical standpoint from which the alienating and exploitative conditions of modern work can be critically interrogated and a utopian potential that can inform speculations about the revolutionary transformation of those conditions. By this account, the human capacity for labor may be hobbled by the organization of waged work, but as a collective creative potential, can also exceed them.

As far as the classic Arendtian approach to the categories is concerned, the distance it places between both labor and work on the one hand, and the legitimate business of the political on the other hand, renders it less useful for my purposes. As for the example from the Marxist tradition, while I recognize the power of the distinction it poses, I find it ill-suited to a critique that takes aim at both the structures of work and its dominant values. The trouble with the category of living labor deployed in this way as an alternative to work is, as I see it, that it is haunted by the very same essentialized conception of work and inflated notion of its meaning that should be called into question. To the extent that it is imbued in this way with the productivist values I want to problematize, it can neither provide the critical leverage necessary to interrogate the dominant ethic of work nor generate an alternative mode of valuation—a vision of the work society not perfected but overcome.⁷ Consistent in this respect with Postone's antiproduktivist Marxism, the ensuing analysis intends not to advance a "critique of capitalism *from the standpoint of labor*," but to pursue a "critique *of labor in capitalism*" (1996, 5). My refusal to distinguish between work and labor is thus a wager of sorts: by blocking access to a vision of unalienated and unexploited work in the guise of living labor, one that could live up to the work ethic's ideals about labor's necessity and virtues and would be worthy of the extravagant praise the ethic bestows, I hope to concentrate and amplify the critique of work as well as to inspire what I hope will be a more radical imagination of postwork futures.

In place of the opposition between labor and work, I will employ a number of other distinctions over the course of the argument to secure some critical insight into particular dimensions of work and to imagine other possibilities. These will include the distinction between work time and non-work time, between work and life, between time for what we are obligated to do and time for "what we will," or—to mark differences at yet another level of abstraction—between the category of antiwork used to signal the deconstructive moment of this cri-

tique of the work society, and the concept of postwork offered as a place holder for something yet to come.

WORK AND CLASS

Whereas the distinction between work and labor will be suspended for the purposes of this analysis, the relationship between work and class is a link I want to maintain, if only obliquely. Class is, of course, a central category of Marxist political economy, as Marx makes clear in what follows the passage from *Capital* cited above. Consider the first thing we see when we accompany the two owners of property—in one case, money; in the other, labor power—as they descend from the Eden of market exchange where they meet to trade equivalents into the hidden abode of production where one party is set to work. “When we leave this sphere of simple circulation or the exchange of commodities,” Marx writes, “a certain change takes place, or so it appears, in the physiognomy of our *dramatis personae*. He who was previously the money-owner now strides out in front as a capitalist; the possessor of labour-power follows as his worker” (1976, 280). Where we had observed two equal individuals, each in possession of a commodity, who agree to make an exchange for the benefit of each, now we witness the inequality that separates the one who steps in front from the one who follows behind; with this shift of the locus of perception from the marketplace to the workplace, the existence of a social hierarchy based on class comes into sharp focus.

Despite the centrality of class in traditional Marxist analysis, work remains my privileged object of study and preferred terrain of political struggle. So let me say something about the relationship between work and class and what might be at stake in different formulations of its terms. There are at least two ways to approach the relationship between the categories: one draws a rather sharp distinction between them, whereas the other finds overlapping concerns. I will start with the first. The difference between the concepts is perhaps most starkly posed when work understood as a process is compared to class conceived in terms of an outcome—that is, as a category (whether explained by reference to ownership, wealth, income, occupation, or forms of belonging) designed to map patterns of economic inequality. To the extent that class is defined and measured in this way, as an outcome rather than an activity, then its utility for my purposes will be limited.

I am, of course, not the first to raise such concerns about this approach to the category of class. For example, the potential shortcomings of the concept have long been debated within Marxist feminism. The original "woman question" was, after all, generated by the disjuncture between the categories of gender and class, and the question this posed for the relationship between feminism and class struggle. But the trouble with class for second-wave feminists was not just that it might be inadequate to broader, extra-economic fields of analysis; the problem was that to the extent that class was conceived—as it typically was—as a gender- and race-blind category, its ability to register the contours of even narrowly economic hierarchies was limited as well. For some of the same reasons that I want to foreground the category of work over that of class, Iris Young once argued in favor of substituting the Marxist category of division of labor for class as a primary analytic of Marxist feminism. In this classic contribution to second-wave Marxist feminism, Young describes at least two advantages of this methodological shift. First, the division of labor has at once a broader reach than class and allows a more differentiated application. Not only can it be used to register multiple divisions of labor by class as well as by gender, race, and nation, but it can, as Young explains, also expose "specific cleavages and contradictions *within a class*" (1981, 51; emphasis added)—not just along the lines of gender, race, and nation, but also, potentially, of occupation and income. Thus the category of the gender division of labor, for example, enables a focus on gendered patterns of work "without assuming that all women in general or all women in a particular society have a common and unified situation" (55). Like the division of labor, the category of work seems to me at once more capacious and more finely tuned than the category of class. After all, work, including its absence, is both important to and differently experienced within and across lines of class, gender, race, and nation. In this sense, the politics of and against work has the potential to expand the terrain of class struggle to include actors well beyond that classic figure of traditional class politics, the industrial proletariat.

Consider too the second advantage noted by Young: "The category of division of labor can not only refer to a set of phenomena broader than that of class, but also more concrete." Unlike class, by her account, the division of labor "refers specifically to the *activity* of labor itself, and the specific social and institutional relations of that activity," proceeding

thus "at the more concrete level of particular relations of interaction and interdependence in a society" (51). By this measure, whereas class addresses the outcome of laboring activity, the division of labor points toward the activity itself. Here too there are similarities between Young's interest in the category of division of labor and my focus on work: after all, work, including the dearth of it, is the way that capitalist valorization bears most directly and most intensively on more and more people's lives. This politics of work could be conceived as a way to link the everyday and sometimes every-night experiences of work—its spaces, relations and temporalities; its physical, affective, and cognitive practices; its pains and pleasures—to the political problematic of their present modes and codes of organization and relations of rule.⁸ Although the category of class remains analytically powerful, I would argue that its political utility is more negligible. The problem is that while the oppositional class category of the industrial period—the "working class"—may accurately describe most people's relation to waged labor even in a post-industrial economy, it is increasingly less likely to match their self-descriptions. The category of the middle class has absorbed so many of our subjective investments that it is difficult to see how the working class can serve as a viable rallying point in the United States today. A politics of work, on the other hand, takes aim at an activity rather than an identity, and a central component of daily life rather than an outcome. Once again, the struggle over work in this respect has the potential to open a more expansive terrain than that of traditional class politics, insofar as the problem of work carries the potential to resonate, albeit in very different ways, across a number of income, occupational, and identity groups.

The advantages of work over class extend beyond its breadth and tangibility. Crucial for Marx in his own privileging of labor as the point of entry into the materialist analysis of capitalist society—rather than beginning, for example, with political inequality or poverty—is the relationship between labor and agency that he assumes to be fundamental to anticapitalist politics. Thus in the *German Ideology*, Marx and Engels distinguish their materialist methodology not only from the idealism of the Young Hegelians but also from Feuerbach's "ahistorical" brand of materialism that may have recognized, to borrow another of Marx and Engels's formulations, "that circumstances make men" but not necessarily that "men make circumstances" (1970, 59). Materialism, as Marx

and Engels understand it, is a matter not merely of the social construction of subjects but a matter of creative activity, of doing and making, the ontological trajectories of which are equally synchronic and diachronic. By focusing on laboring practices, or “living sensuous activity” (64), materialism as Marx and Engels conceive it is a matter not merely of the social construction of subjects but of creative activity, the capacity not only to make commodities but to remake a world. In this way, the focus on laboring practices, on the labor process and the relations of labor, can register the workers’ power to act, in contrast, it seems to me, to their relative disempowerment that is registered in the economic outcomes the categories of class are often used to map and measure.⁹

So by at least one way of reckoning, class and work belong to different fields of analysis, and my project pursues the critical study of work instead of class analysis and antiwork politics as a substitute for class struggle. But there is another way to approach class that does not produce such a sharp contrast with the category of work and that yields a different and, I think, more compelling approach to this territory. The distinction between the two fields of analysis becomes rather less clear when class too is conceived in terms of a process rather than an outcome. Process notions of class disrupt the functionalism of static mappings of class formations by attending to the practices by and relations within which they are secured, re-created, and challenged.¹⁰ If class is figured as a process of becoming classed, it may be that work—including struggles over what counts as work—could be conceived as a useful lens through which to approach class; in this way, the struggle against work could be a terrain of class politics.

But let me add one caveat: rather than conceiving class groupings and relations as the ground of antiwork politics, as that which provides its fuel and organizational form, it might be better to think of them as what might emerge from these efforts. By this reading, class formation, or what the autonomist tradition calls class composition, is best conceived as an outcome of struggles rather than their cause. The particular composition of the working class that might emerge from this politics of work—that is, the collectivities that might coalesce around its issues and the divisions that might develop in the interstices of antiwork struggles and in relation to postwork imaginaries—remains an open question. To the extent that the concerns it raises carry the potential to cut across traditional class divisions, a politics against work might serve to de-

constitute the field of working-class politics and reconstitute it in a different, perhaps more expansive, way.

So in the end, I am not saying that we should stop thinking about class, but rather that focusing on work is one politically promising way of approaching class—because it is so expansive, because it is such a significant part of everyday life, because it is something we do rather than a category to which we are assigned, and because for all these reasons it can be raised as a political issue. By this account, work is a point of entry into the field of class analysis through which we might be better able to make class processes more visible, legible, and broadly relevant and, in the process, perhaps provoke class formations yet to come.

FREEDOM AND EQUALITY

Whereas my analysis ignores the difference between work and labor and, in the end, defers the question of the precise relationship between work and class, it presumes the significance of another distinction, the one between freedom and equality. To get a sense of how this pair of concepts is conceived for the purposes of this project, let us return yet again to Marx's description of what we see when we descend with the owners of money and labor power from the realm of market exchange to the realm of production. To recall our earlier discussion of the passage, accompanying the change of venue is a visible change in the physiognomy of the *dramatis personae*: we see the money owner stride out in front as capitalist, while the possessor of labor power follows behind as worker. "The one," Marx continues, "smirks self-importantly and is intent on business; the other is timid and holds back, like someone who has brought his own hide to market and now has nothing else to expect but—a hiding" (1976, 280; translation modified). Whereas we had, as noted above, witnessed the formal equivalence of contractors in the labor market, in the realm of work we discover hierarchy. As the conclusion of the passage suggests, however, it is not only inequality that is revealed, with the capitalist striding in front and the worker following behind, but subordination, with the former smirking and self-important and the latter timid and holding back. In other words, the critical analysis of work reveals not only exploitation but—as the reference to the violence of a hiding serves to amplify—domination.¹¹

The domination and subordination experienced at work is not merely incidental to processes of exploitation. Carole Pateman's analysis of the

employment contract is illuminating on this point. By her account, the problem with the labor contract is not just a function of the coerced entry that is ensured by the absence of viable alternatives to waged labor, nor is it only a matter of the inequality that is produced as the result of the contract's terms. To translate this into a Marxist vocabulary, the problem can be reduced neither to forced labor nor to exploitation. Rather, we need to pay more attention to the relationship of dominance and submission that is authorized by the waged labor contract and that shapes labor's exercise. Exploitation is possible, Pateman notes, because "the employment contract creates the capitalist as master; he has the political right to determine how the labour of the worker will be used" (1988, 149). This relation of command and obedience, the right of the employer to direct his or her employees that is granted by the contract, is not so much a byproduct of exploitation as its very precondition.

Marx too would seem to be quite clear that the problem with work cannot be reduced to the terms of its recompense, but rather extends into the very heart of the wage relation and the labor process it commands. That is why he insists on describing the program of raising wages as only "*better payment for the slave*" (1964, 118). To focus narrowly on outcomes rather than processes, and on inequality and not also on unfreedom, is to impoverish the critique of capitalism. Marx muses about a comparably inadequate approach in "Critique of the Gotha Program": "It is as if, among slaves who have at last got behind the secret of slavery and broken out in rebellion, a slave still in thrall to obsolete notions were to inscribe on the programme of the rebellion: Slavery must be abolished because the feeding of slaves in the system of slavery cannot exceed a certain low maximum!" (1978, 535).

I am thus interested in adding to the critique of the exploitative and alienating dimensions of work a focus on its political relations of power and authority, as relations of rulers and ruled. My inspiration for this, it should be noted, is not only these readings of Marx, but certain strands of 1970s feminism. A commitment to freedom in conjunction with or beyond equality was what distinguished the more radical sectors of the early second wave of US feminism from liberal feminists of the time. Refusing to honor the "do not enter" sign on the door leading to the so-called private terrains of the family, marriage, and sexuality—a sign meant to ban political judgment of relations that were thought to be governed only by the exigencies of nature or prerogatives of individual

choice—the radical elements of the movement sought not women's assimilation into the status quo but a sweeping transformation of everyday life.¹² The goal was not, to use the vocabulary of the day, women's mere equality with men, but women's liberation. What precisely they were to be liberated from and to were, of course, matters of lively debate, but the language of liberation and the project of conceiving a state of freedom beyond equality did serve to open a broader horizon of feminist imagination and indicate new agendas for action.

In addition to 1970s women's liberation, about which I will have more to say below, another resource for this project comes from recent work in political theory that affirms freedom as an important feminist goal. The work of Wendy Brown and Linda Zerilli is particularly valuable for its efforts to take up "the project of feminism in a freedom-centered frame" (Zerilli 2005, 95). Freedom is understood in these accounts beyond the liberal model of an individual possession, something that emanates from the sovereign will and guards its independence such that, to quote a familiar formulation, "over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign" (Mill 1986, 16). Instead, freedom is seen as a practice, not a possession, a process rather than a goal. Whether it is drawn from the simultaneously creative and destructive qualities of the will to power in Brown's Nietzschean analysis, or from the inaugural and disordering capacities of human action in Zerilli's Arendtian account, freedom emerges in these texts as a double-sided phenomenon. It is depicted, on the one hand, as an antidisciplinary practice—that is, to use Brown's formulation, as "a permanent struggle against what will otherwise be done to and for us" (1995, 25). But there is more to it: freedom is also a creative practice, what Zerilli describes as a collective practice of world building and Brown characterizes in terms of a desire "to participate in shaping the conditions and terms of life," a longing "to generate futures together rather than navigate or survive them" (1995, 4). Freedom thus depends on collective action rather than individual will, and this is what makes it political. Though freedom is, by this account, a relational practice, it is not a zero-sum game in which the more one has, the less another can enjoy. Freedom considered as a matter of individual self-determination or self-sovereignty is reduced to a solipsistic phenomenon. Rather, as a world-building practice, freedom is a social—and hence necessarily political—endeavor. It is, as Marx might put it, a species-being rather than an individual capacity; or, as Zerilli contends, drawing

on an Arendtian formulation, freedom requires plurality (2005, 20). Thus Arendt provocatively declares: "If men wish to be free, it is precisely sovereignty they must renounce" (1961, 165). Freedom in this sense demands not the absence of power but its democratization.

Although political theorists like Brown and Zerilli are helpful in elaborating a notion of freedom that can serve as a central analytic and principle of political aspiration, political theory in general, as noted above, has not attended sufficiently to work. Work has been relatively neglected not only as a practice productive of hierarchies—a scene of gendering, racialization, and becoming classed—but as an arena in which to develop and pursue a freedom-centered politics. Yet at the same time, as Michael Denning reminds us, "the workplace remains the fundamental *unfree* association of civil society" (2004, 224). It is the site of many of the most palpable and persistent relations of domination and subordination that people confront, even if these are not conventionally perceived as potentially alterable enough to be regarded as properly political matters. If, as I maintain, a political theory of work should address the problem of freedom, a political theory of freedom should also focus on work. My interest, then, is in developing a feminist political theory of work that could pose work itself—its structures and its ethics, its practices and relations—not only as a machine for the generation of inequalities, but as a political problem of freedom.¹³ Linking the previous distinction between class and work to this conceptual pair might help to clarify my concerns in this respect. Rather than a politics of class focused primarily on issues of economic redistribution and economic justice—particularly a politics that seeks to alter wage levels to redraw the map of class categories—the politics of work I am interested in pursuing also investigates questions about the command and control over the spaces and times of life, and seeks the freedom to participate in shaping the terms of what collectively we can do and what together we might become. If what I am calling a "politics of class outcomes" lodges its central complaint against the inequalities of capitalist society, the politics of work that I would like to see elaborated would also levy a critique at its unfreedoms.¹⁴

MARXIST FEMINISM REDUX

Although I draw on a variety of sources, the version of 1970s feminism that has been of particular importance to this effort to theorize work in these terms is Anglo-American Marxist feminism.¹⁵ As an attempt to

map capitalist political economies and gender regimes from a simultaneously anticapitalist and feminist perspective, the tradition in its heyday was committed to investigating how various gendered laboring practices are both put to use by, and potentially disruptive of, capitalist and patriarchal social formations.¹⁶ Three focuses of this literature are especially relevant to my interests here: publicizing work, politicizing it, and radically transforming it. However, the efforts in all three of these areas require some prodding and pushing if they are to be of use to this project in this moment. The category of the refusal of work introduced above will be used to do some of this prodding and pushing, serving as a tool with which to reconfigure each of these focuses by providing certain correctives and additions.

The Marxist—or, as some prefer to call it, socialist feminist—tradition is an inspiration for this project first and foremost because of its focus on labor, both as a point of entry into the critical analysis of capitalist patriarchy and as a key site of political action. “Socialist feminism,” as one analyst summarizes it, “means paying consistent attention to women *in our capacity as workers*, and in all our variety” (Froines 1992, 128). Perhaps its most significant contribution to the critical theory of work in the 1970s was the expansion of the category. Feminists insisted that the largely unwaged “reproductive” work that made waged “productive” work possible on a daily and generational basis was socially necessary labor, and that its relations were thus part and parcel of the capitalist mode of production. What had been coded as leisure was in fact work, and those supposedly spontaneous expressions of women’s nature were indeed skillful practices. In their efforts to adapt Marxist concepts and methods to new concerns, these feminists usefully troubled the tradition’s definition of work. Nancy Hartsock describes this by way of an addendum to Marx’s story about the owner of money and the owner of labor power. To return to that passage one final time, if after descending with the capitalist and worker into the realm of waged work we were then to follow the worker home, into yet another hidden abode of production, we might observe another change in the *dramatis personae*:

He who before followed behind as the worker, timid and holding back, with nothing to expect but a hiding, now strides in front, while a third person, not specifically present in Marx’s account of the

transactions between capitalist and worker (both of whom are male) follows timidly behind, carrying groceries, baby, and diapers. (Hartsock 1983, 234)

By following the worker not only from marketplace to workplace, but also from the place of employment to the domestic space, we find evidence not only of class hierarchy, but of specifically gendered forms of exploitation and patterns of inequality. By descending into the even more hidden, even more fiercely privatized space of the household, we see men and women who may be formally equal under the law transformed through the gender division of labor into relatively privileged and penalized subjects. Thus, Marxist feminists in the 1970s explored the means by which gender hierarchies deliver unwaged women workers to the domestic mode of reproduction while also ensuring a cheaper and more flexible secondary or tertiary waged labor force. These feminists debated the exact value to capital of women's unwaged domestic labor and exposed the hyperexploitation of women wage earners around the globe. And they studied the interconnections among the family, the labor market, waged and unwaged labor processes, and the welfare state. As we will see, in fact, many of their insights into the conditions of women's labor under Fordism will prove to be more widely applicable to the forms of work typical of post-Fordist economies. By extending these efforts to publicize, politicize, and transform work into the field of domestic labor, feminists usefully complicated and upped the ante of all three projects. What might have at first appeared to be a simple addition to Marxist analyses has in fact required a vast rethinking of its concepts and models, its critical analyses and utopian visions.

Whereas many of these texts are helpful for their emphasis on work, the tradition's productivist tendencies, which it shares with some other versions of Marxist theory, prove more troublesome. As we have already noted, feminism has managed to reproduce its own version of the work ethic, whether in the process of defending waged work as the alternative to feminine domesticity in both liberal feminism and traditional Marxism, or through efforts to gain recognition for modes of unwaged labor as socially necessary labor. Feminism, including much of 1970s Marxist feminism, has tended to focus more on the critique of work's organization and distribution than on questioning its values. The autonomous Marxist tradition is thus useful in this instance insofar as it

simultaneously centers its analytical apparatus on work and disavows its traditional ethics. Central to that tradition is not only the analytical primacy accorded to the imposition of work as fundamental to the capitalist mode of production, but also the political priority of the refusal of work—a priority recorded in the call not for a liberation *of* work but a liberation *from* work (see Virno and Hardt 1996, 263). The refusal of work is at once a model of resistance, both to the modes of work that are currently imposed on us and to their ethical defense, and a struggle for a different relationship to work born from the collective autonomy that a postwork ethics and more nonwork time could help us to secure. As a simultaneous way to insist on work's significance and to contest its valuation, the Marxist feminist literature on wages for housework—with roots in an Italian feminism that was, as one participant observed, “characterized, with more emphasis than in other countries, by the *leitmotif* of ‘work/rejection of work’” (Dalla Costa 1988, 24)—will be of particular importance to my project in this respect.

Thus work is not only a locus of unfreedom, it is also a site of resistance and contestation.¹⁷ This brings me to the second element of the Marxist feminist literature that I have found instructive: the commitment to work's politicization. Marxist feminists focused not only on exploited workers but, to cite one of these authors, also on subjects that are “potentially revolutionary” (Eisenstein 1979, 8). Within this body of literature, one can find an attention both to structures of domination and to the possibilities for critical consciousness, subversive practices, and feminist standpoints that might be developed in their midst. This investment in constructing collective political subjects on the basis of, or in relation to, work practices, relations, and subjectivities remains for me an aspect of this literature with the most relevance to contemporary feminism. Harking back to the example of a Marxism that conceived the industrial proletariat as a revolutionary class less because it had nothing to lose but its chains than because it had the power to create a new world, many of these authors concentrate on the ways that feminized modes of labor—marginalized by, but nonetheless fundamental to, capitalist valorization processes—could provide points of critical leverage and sites of alternative possibility.

This more capacious understanding of work also entailed a transformation of what might be recognized as a terrain of anticapitalist politics, pushing beyond orthodox Marxism's industrial model of productive

cooperation that centered on the factory, in which the proletariat was once imagined as the singularly revolutionary subject, to a more expansive set of sites and subjects. The focal point of analysis for this expanded political terrain might best be described as the contradiction between capital accumulation and social reproduction.¹⁸ Capital requires, for example, time both to “consume” labor power and to produce (or reproduce) it, and the time devoted to one is sometimes lost to the other. The competing requirements of creating surplus value and sustaining the lives and socialities upon which it depends form a potential fault line through capitalist political economies, one that might serve to generate critical thinking and political action. Under the conditions of Fordism, for example, this meant that capital was dependent on a family-based model of social reproduction, one that was in some respects functional to its purposes but was in other ways a potential hindrance to its hegemony. Thus we find in a body of management literature and practice that spans the Fordist and post-Fordist periods an expressed need to locate and preserve some kind of balance between work and family—a relationship that many feminists, on the contrary, struggled to expose as a product of normative imposition rather than natural proclivity and a site of flagrant contradiction rather than mere imbalance.

But just as Marxist feminism’s critical study of work was limited, at least for the purposes of this project, by its productivist propensities, so too the focus on locating and cultivating revolutionary possibilities in relation to work was sometimes compromised by a susceptibility to functionalist logics. The temptation of functionalism is, of course, not peculiar to feminist theory. Indeed, its presence at some level reflects a methodological and political choice: whether to concentrate on how social systems persist over time, or to highlight the ways that they can and do change. Foucault explains it this way: because of the instability and unpredictability generated by the “agonism” of power relations on the one hand and the “intransitivity of freedom” on the other hand, there is always the option “to decipher the same events and the same transformations either from inside the history of struggle or from the standpoint of the power relationships” (1983, 223, 226)—a pair of options between which his own work could be said to oscillate. This same methodological distinction marks a long-standing division within the Marxist tradition as well. Thus, for example, although they both offer systematic mappings of capitalist logics and social formations, Marx’s *Grundrisse*

approaches the analysis more from the point of view of crisis and conflict, whereas *Capital* tells the story from the perspective of capital's appropriative and recuperative capacities.

To return to the case of 1970s Marxist feminism, the residues of functionalist logics show up in what is, I would argue, a limited understanding of social reproduction. In fact, there are at least two related problems with the analyses from a contemporary perspective. First, whereas these authors arguably succeeded in developing more-complete accounts of the relationship between production and reproduction typical of Fordist political economies than were available elsewhere at the time, these accounts are no longer adequate to the project of mapping post-Fordism. In the classic texts from this period, production and reproduction were associated according to the logic of a dual-systems model with two different spaces: the waged workplace was the site of productive labor, and the household was the site of unwaged, reproductive labor. Reproductive labor in these accounts usually included the forms of unwaged work through which individuals met their daily needs for food, shelter, and care and raised a new generation to take their place.¹⁹ However, under the conditions of postindustrial, post-Fordist, and post-Taylorist production, the always vexing exercise of distinguishing between production and reproduction—whether by sphere, task, or relationship to the wage—becomes even more difficult. The dual-systems model, always problematic, is thereby rendered even more deficient.

The second reason why the older models are no longer tenable brings us to the issue of their functionalism. Here is the problem: when reduced, as it tends to be in these analyses, to a familiar list of domestic labors, the category of social reproduction cannot pose the full measure of its conflict with the logics and processes of capital accumulation. The specific problems that this more limited notion of reproduction serves to highlight—the invisibility, devaluation, and gendered division of specifically domestic labors—could, for example, be responded to (but not, of course, remedied) through an expanded reliance on marketized versions of such services. As the refusal-of-work perspective suggests, the problem with the organization of social reproduction extends beyond the problems of this work's invisibility, devaluation, and gendering. Although I want to register that domestic labor is socially necessary and unequally distributed (insofar as gender, race, class, and nation often determines who will do more and less of it), I am also interested in

moving beyond the claim that if it were to be fully recognized, adequately compensated, and equally divided, then the existing model of household-based reproduction would be rectified. A more expansive conception of social reproduction, coupled with the refusal of work, might be used to frame a more compelling problematic. What happens when social reproduction is understood as the production of the forms of social cooperation on which accumulation depends or, alternatively, as the rest of life beyond work that capital seeks continually to harness to its times, spaces, rhythms, purposes, and values? What I am in search of is a conception of social reproduction—of what it is we might organize around—that can pose the full measure of its antagonism with the exigencies of capital accumulation, a biopolitical model of social reproduction less readily transformed into new forms of work and thus less easily recuperated within the present terms of the work society.

The third aspect of the Marxist feminist tradition that I want to acknowledge here is its commitment to thinking within a horizon of utopian potential, that is, in relation to the possibility of fundamental transformation (*Feminist Review Collective* 1986, 8). Work is not only a site of exploitation, domination, and antagonism, but also where we might find the power to create alternatives on the basis of subordinated knowledges, resistant subjectivities, and emergent models of organization. At least some of this literature focuses on both antiwork politics and postwork imaginaries. This model of utopian politics that can “make the creation of prefigurative forms an explicit part of our movement against capitalism” and challenge the “politics of deferment” that would postpone such innovations to some distant future after “the revolution” is something that I think feminist theory should embrace (Rowbotham, Segal, and Wainwright 1979, 147, 140). The problem with these visions of radical social change from a contemporary perspective is that they were most often conceived of as variations on a theme named socialism, even if some called for “a new kind of socialism” or a socialist revolution that would be equally feminist and antiracist.²⁰ Today, however, it seems unlikely that socialism can serve as a persuasive signifier of a postcapitalist alternative. There are at least three kinds of problems with the term. At one level, there is the problem of the name itself: it has been some time since the language of socialism could resonate in the United States as a legible and generative utopian vocabulary (even though it continues to serve occasionally as a viable dystopia for the Right). But it is not just a

matter of the label; it is about the content of the vision, which has traditionally centered on the equal liability to work together with a more equitable distribution of its rewards. As a certainly more just version of a social form that is nonetheless centered on work, it gestures toward a vision of the work society perfected, rather than transformed.

Beyond the obsolescence of the label and the commitment to work it affirms, there is a third problem with the legacy of socialism. Whereas the Marxist feminist—or, more specifically in this instance, the socialist feminist—tradition was willing to affirm the value of utopian speculation about a radically different future, the use of the label “socialism” often nonetheless seemed to assume that this future could be named and its basic contours predetermined. In this respect—here I anticipate an argument that I will develop in chapter 5—socialist feminists would seem “to know too much too soon.” There are advantages, I claim, to more-partial visions of alternatives, fragments or glimpses of something different that do not presume to add up to a blueprint of an already named future with a preconceived content. I will use the label “postwork society” not to anticipate an alternative so much as to point toward a horizon of utopian possibility, as it seems preferable to hold the space of a different future open with the term “post” than to presume to be able to name it as “socialist.”

In summary, my project can thus be said to begin with a historical tradition of Marxist feminism that often focused on the category of class, the ideal of equality, the problem of domestic labor, and the socialist struggle for more and better work, which I would like to redirect by way of the sometimes rather different commitments and imaginaries referenced by the categories of work, freedom, social reproduction, life, the refusal of work, and postwork. I will thus use work as a point of entry into the territory of class politics; freedom to supplement and redirect an anticapitalist political theory also committed to equality; the refusal of work to confront work’s overvaluation; the field of social reproduction as part of a struggle to wrest more of life from the encroachments of work; and postwork utopianism to replace socialism as the horizon of revolutionary possibility and speculation.

CHAPTER OVERVIEWS

The questions raised and points of focus elaborated above are meant to set the stage for the specific arguments pursued in the remaining chap-

ters. One way to approach the overall structure of the discussion that follows is to separate it into two parts: a first part, encompassing chapters 1 and 2, that concentrates on the diagnostic and deconstructive dimensions of the critical theory of work; and a second part, including chapters 3, 4, and 5, that focuses on the prescriptive and reconstructive aspects of the project. Whereas "refusal" is the animating category of the first part, "demand" anchors the analysis in the second part. The argument thus proceeds from the refusal of the present terms of the work society to demands for remedies and for the imagining of alternative futures.

As noted above, the work ethic is at the center of the political theory of and against work that I want to begin to elaborate. A critique of work that seeks to challenge its dominance over our lives must take on the ethical discourse that gives work its meaning and defends its primacy. The first two chapters seek to develop a critical account of the work ethic and to explore some of the theoretical resources through which it might be interrogated. Chapter 1 concentrates on the nature and function of the work ethic in the United States. In what may be a fitting departure for a text so often indebted to Marxist resources, the analysis in chapter 1 draws on one of that tradition's most famous critiques, Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Tracing the continuities and shifts in the work ethic over the course of its different incarnations—first as a Protestant ethic, and later as an industrial and then a postindustrial ethic—the analysis seeks to map the recent history of the work ethic and to raise questions about its future. Today when neoliberal and post-neoliberal regimes demand that almost everyone work for wages (never mind that there is not enough work to go around), when postindustrial production employs workers' minds and hearts as well as their hands, and when post-Taylorist labor processes increasingly require the self-management of subjectivity so that attitudes and affective orientations to work will themselves produce value, the dominant ethical discourse of work may be more indispensable than it has ever been, and the refusal of its prescriptions even more timely. The analysis thus attempts to account not only for the ethic's longevity and power, but also its points of instability and vulnerability.

S.C.U.M. Manifesto

(Society for Cutting Up Men)

by Valerie Solanas

Life in this society being, at best, an utter bore and no aspect of society being at all relevant to women, there remains to civic-minded, responsible, thrill-seeking females only to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and destroy the male sex.

It is now technically feasible to reproduce without the aid of males (or, for that matter, females) and to produce only females. We must begin immediately to do so. Retaining the male has not even the dubious purpose of reproduction. The male is a biological accident: the Y (male) gene is an incomplete X (female) gene, that is, it has an incomplete set of chromosomes. In other words, the male is an incomplete female, a walking abortion, aborted at the gene stage. To be male is to be deficient, emotionally limited; maleness is a deficiency disease and males are emotional cripples.

The male is completely egocentric, trapped inside himself, incapable of empathizing or identifying with others, or love, friendship, affection of tenderness. He is a completely isolated unit, incapable of rapport with anyone. His responses are entirely visceral, not cerebral; his intelligence is a mere tool in the services of his drives and needs; he is incapable of mental passion, mental interaction; he can't relate to anything other than his own physical sensations. He is a half-dead, unresponsive lump, incapable of giving or receiving pleasure or happiness; consequently, he is at best an utter bore, an inoffensive blob, since only those capable of absorption in others can be charming. He is trapped in a twilight zone halfway between humans and apes, and is far worse off than the apes because, unlike the apes, he is capable of a large array of negative feelings -- hate, jealousy, contempt, disgust, guilt, shame, doubt -- and moreover, he is *aware* of what he is and what he isn't.

Although completely physical, the male is unfit even for stud service. Even assuming mechanical proficiency, which few men have, he is, first of all, incapable of zestfully, lustfully, tearing off a piece, but instead is eaten up with guilt, shame, fear and insecurity, feelings rooted in male nature, which the most enlightened training can only minimize; second, the physical feeling he attains is next to nothing; and third, he is not empathizing with his partner, but is obsessed with how he's doing, turning in an A performance, doing a good plumbing job. To call a man an animal is to flatter him; he's a machine, a walking dildo. It's often said that men use women. Use them for what? Surely not pleasure.

Eaten up with guilt, shame, fears and insecurities and obtaining, if he's lucky, a barely perceptible physical feeling, the male is, nonetheless, obsessed with screwing; he'll swim through a river of snot, wade nostril-deep through a mile of vomit, if he thinks there'll be a friendly pussy awaiting him. He'll screw a woman he despises, any snaggle-toothed hag, and furthermore, pay for the opportunity. Why? Relieving physical tension isn't the answer, as masturbation suffices for that. It's not ego satisfaction; that doesn't explain screwing corpses and babies.

Completely egocentric, unable to relate, empathize or identify, and filled with a vast, pervasive, diffuse sexuality, the male is psychically passive. He hates his passivity, so he projects it onto women, defines the male as active, then sets out to prove that he is ('prove that he is a Man'). His main means of attempting to prove it is screwing (Big Man with a Big Dick tearing off a Big



Piece). Since he's attempting to prove an error, he must 'prove' it again and again. Screwing, then, is a desperate compulsive, attempt to prove he's not passive, not a woman; but he *is* passive and *does* want to be a woman.

Being an incomplete female, the male spends his life attempting to complete himself, to become female. He attempts to do this by constantly seeking out, fraternizing with and trying to live through an fuse with the female, and by claiming as his own all female characteristics -- emotional strength and independence, forcefulness, dynamism, decisiveness, coolness, objectivity, assertiveness, courage, integrity, vitality, intensity, depth of character, grooviness, etc -- and projecting onto women all male traits -- vanity, frivolity, triviality, weakness, etc. It should be said, though, that the male has one glaring area of superiority over the female -- public relations. (He has done a brilliant job of convincing millions of women that men are women and women are men). The male claim that females find fulfillment through motherhood and sexuality reflects what males think they'd find fulfilling if they were female.

Women, in other words, don't have penis envy; men have pussy envy. When the male accepts his passivity, defines himself as a woman (males as well as females thing men are women and women are men), and becomes a transvestite he loses his desire to screw (or to do anything else, for that matter; he fulfills himself as a drag queen) and gets his dick chopped off. He then achieves a continuous diffuse sexual feeling from 'being a woman'. Screwing is, for a man, a defense against his desire to be female. He is responsible for:

War: The male's normal compensation for not being female, namely, getting his Big Gun off, is grossly inadequate, as he can get it off only a very limited number of times; so he gets it off on a really massive scale, and proves to the entire world that he's a 'Man'. Since he has no compassion or ability to empathize or identify, proving his manhood is worth an endless amount of mutilation and suffering and an endless number of lives, including his own -- his own life being worthless, he would rather go out in a blaze of glory than to plod grimly on for fifty more years.

Niceness, Politeness, and 'Dignity': Every man, deep down, knows he's a worthless piece of shit. Overwhelmed by a sense of animalism and deeply ashamed of it; wanting, not to express himself, but to hide from others his total physicality, total egocentricity, the hate and contempt he feels for other men, and to hide from himself the hate and contempt he suspects other men feel for him; having a crudely constructed nervous system that is easily upset by the least display of emotion or feeling, the male tries to enforce a 'social' code that ensures perfect blandness, unsullied by the slightest trace of feeling or upsetting opinion. He uses terms like 'copulate', 'sexual congress', 'have relations with' (to men **sexual** relations is a redundancy), overlaid with stilted manners; the suit on the chimp.

Money, Marriage and Prostitution, Work and Prevention of an Automated Society: There is no human reason for money or for anyone to work more than two or three hours a week at the very most. All non-creative jobs (practically all jobs now being done) could have been automated long ago, and in a moneyless society everyone can have as much of the best of everything as she wants. But there are non-human, male reasons for wanting to maintain the money system:

1. Pussy. Despising his highly inadequate self, overcome with intense anxiety and a deep, profound loneliness when by his empty self, desperate to attach himself to any female in dim hopes of completing himself, in the mystical belief that by touching gold he'll turn to gold, the male craves the continuous companionship of women. The company of the lowest female is preferable to his own or that of other men, who serve only to remind him of his repulsiveness. But females, unless very young or very sick, must be coerced or bribed into male company.

2. Supply the non-relating male with the delusion of usefulness, and enable him to try to justify his existence by digging holes and then filling them up. Leisure time horrifies the male, who will have nothing to do but contemplate his grotesque self. Unable to relate or to love, the male must work. Females crave absorbing, emotionally satisfying, meaningful activity, but

lacking the opportunity or ability for this, they prefer to idle and waste away their time in ways of their own choosing -- sleeping, shopping, bowling, shooting pool, playing cards and other games, breeding, reading, walking around, daydreaming, eating, playing with themselves, popping pills, going to the movies, getting analyzed, traveling, raising dogs and cats, lolling about on the beach, swimming, watching TV, listening to music, decorating their houses, gardening, sewing, nightclubbing, dancing, visiting, 'improving their minds' (taking courses), and absorbing 'culture' (lectures, plays, concerts, 'arty' movies). Therefore, many females would, even assuming complete economic equality between the sexes, prefer living with males or peddling their asses on the street, thus having most of their time for themselves, to spending many hours of their days doing boring, stultifying, non-creative work for someone else, functioning as less than animals, as machines, or, at best -- if able to get a 'good' job -- co-managing the shitpile. What will liberate women, therefore, from male control is the total elimination of the money-work system, not the attainment of economic equality with men within it.

3. Power and control. Unmasterful in his personal relations with women, the male attains to masterfulness by the manipulation of money and everything controlled by money, in other words, of everything and everybody.

4. Love substitute. Unable to give love or affection, the male gives money. It makes him feel motherly. The mother gives milk; he gives bread. He is the Breadwinner.

5. Provide the male with a goal. Incapable of enjoying the moment, the male needs something to look forward to, and money provides him with an eternal, never-ending goal: Just think of what you could do with 80 trillion dollars -- invest it! And in three years time you'd have 300 trillion dollars!!!

6. Provide the basis for the male's major opportunity to control and manipulate -- fatherhood.

Fatherhood and Mental Illness (fear, cowardice, timidity, humility, insecurity, passivity):

Mother wants what's best for her kids; Daddy only wants what's best for Daddy, that is peace and quiet, pandering to his delusion of dignity ('respect'), a good reflection on himself (status) and the opportunity to control and manipulate, or, if he's an 'enlightened' father, to 'give guidance'. His daughter, in addition, he wants sexually -- he gives her **hand** in marriage; the other part is for him. Daddy, unlike Mother, can never give in to his kids, as he must, at all costs, preserve his delusion of decisiveness, forcefulness, always-rightness and strength. Never getting one's way leads to lack of self-confidence in one's ability to cope with the world and to a passive acceptance of the status quo. Mother loves her kids, although she sometimes gets angry, but anger blows over quickly and even while it exists, doesn't preclude love and basic acceptance. Emotionally diseased Daddy doesn't love his kids; he approves of them -- if they're 'good', that is, if they're nice, 'respectful', obedient, subservient to his will, quiet and not given to unseemly displays of temper that would be most upsetting to Daddy's easily disturbed male nervous system -- in other words, if they're passive vegetables. If they're not 'good', he doesn't get angry -- not if he's a modern, 'civilized' father (the old-fashioned ranting, raving brute is preferable, as he is so ridiculous he can be easily despised) -- but rather express disapproval, a state that, unlike anger, endures and precludes a basic acceptance, leaving the kid with the feeling of worthlessness and a lifelong obsession wit being approved of; the result is fear of independent thought, as this leads to unconventional, disapproved of opinions and way of life.

For the kid to want Daddy's approval it must respect Daddy, and being garbage, Daddy can make sure that he is respected only by remaining aloof, by distantness, by acting on the precept of 'familiarity breeds contempt', which is, of course, true, if one is contemptible. By being distant and aloof, he is able to remain unknown, mysterious, and thereby, to inspire fear ('respect').

Disapproval of emotional 'scenes' leads to fear of strong emotion, fear of one's own anger and hatred. Fear of anger and hatred combined with a lack of self-confidence in one's ability to cope with and change the world, or even to affect in the slightest way one's own destiny, leads to a mindless belief that the world and most people in it are nice and the most banal, trivial amusements are great fun and deeply pleasurable.

The affect of fatherhood on males, specifically, is to make them 'Men', that is, highly defensive of all impulses to passivity, faggotry, and of desires to be female. Every boy wants to imitate his mother, be her, fuse with her, but Daddy forbids this; **he** is the mother; **he** gets to fuse with her. So he tells the boy, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, to not be a sissy, to act like a 'Man'. The boy, scared shitless of and 'respecting' his father, complies, and becomes just like Daddy, that model of 'Man'-hood, the all-American ideal -- the well-behaved heterosexual dullard.

The effect of fatherhood on females is to make them male -- dependent, passive, domestic, animalistic, insecure, approval and security seekers, cowardly, humble, 'respectful' of authorities and men, closed, not fully responsive, half-dead, trivial, dull, conventional, flattened-out and thoroughly contemptible. Daddy's Girl, always tense and fearful, uncool, unanalytical, lacking objectivity, appraises Daddy, and thereafter, other men, against a background of fear ('respect') and is not only unable to see the empty shell behind the facade, but accepts the male definition of himself as superior, as a female, and of herself, as inferior, as a male, which, thanks to Daddy, she really is.

It is the increase of fatherhood, resulting from the increased and more widespread affluence that fatherhood needs in order to thrive, that has caused the general increase of mindlessness and the decline of women in the United States since the 1920s. The close association of affluence with fatherhood has led, for the most part, to only the wrong girls, namely, the 'privileged' middle class girls, getting 'educated'.

The effect of fathers, in sum, has been to corrode the world with maleness. The male has a negative Midas Touch -- everything he touches turns to shit.

Suppression of Individuality, Animalism (domesticity and motherhood), and Functionalism:

The male is just a bunch of conditioned reflexes, incapable of a mentally free response; he is tied to his earliest conditioning, determined completely by his past experiences. His earliest experiences are with his mother, and he is throughout his life tied to her. It never becomes completely clear to the male that he is not part of his mother, that he is he and she is she.

His greatest need is to be guided, sheltered, protected and admired by Mama (men expect women to adore what men shrink from in horror -- themselves) and, being completely physical, he yearns to spend his time (that's not spent 'out in the world' grimly defending against his passivity) wallowing in basic animal activities -- eating, sleeping, shitting, relaxing and being soothed by Mama. Passive, rattle-headed Daddy's Girl, ever eager for approval, for a pat on the head, for the 'respect' if any passing piece of garbage, is easily reduced to Mama, mindless ministrator to physical needs, soother of the weary, apey brow, booster of the tiny ego, appreciator of the contemptible, a hot water bottle with tits.

The reduction to animals of the women of the most backward segment of society -- the 'privileged, educated' middle-class, the backwash of humanity -- where Daddy reigns supreme, has been so thorough that they try to groove on labour pains and lie around in the most advanced nation in the world in the middle of the twentieth century with babies chomping away on their tits. It's not for the kids sake, though, that the 'experts' tell women that Mama should stay home and grovel in animalism, but for Daddy's; the tits for Daddy to hang onto; the labor pains for Daddy to vicariously groove on (half dead, he needs awfully strong stimuli to make him respond).

Reducing the female to an animal, to Mama, to a male, is necessary for psychological as well as practical reasons: the male is a mere member of the species, interchangeable with every other male. He has no deep-seated individuality, which stems from what intrigues you, what outside yourself absorbs you, what you're in relation to. Completely self-absorbed, capable of being in relation only to their bodies and physical sensations, males differ from each other only to the degree and in the ways they attempt to defend against their passivity and against their desire to be female.

The female's individuality, which he is acutely aware of, but which he doesn't comprehend and isn't capable of relating to or grasping emotionally, frightens and upsets him and fills him with envy. So he denies it in her and proceeds to define everyone in terms of his or her function or use, assigning to himself, of course, the most important functions -- doctor, president, scientist -- therefore providing himself with an identity, if not individuality, and tries to convince himself and women (he's succeeded best at convincing women) that the female function is to bear and raise children and to relax, comfort and boost the ego if the male; that her function is such as to make her interchangeable with every other female. In actual fact, the female function is to relate, groove, love and be herself, irreplaceable by anyone else; the male function is to produce sperm. We now have sperm banks.

In actual fact, the female function is to explore, discover, invent, solve problems crack jokes, make music -- all with love. In other words, create a magic world.

Prevention of Privacy: Although the male, being ashamed of what he is and almost of everything he does, insists on privacy and secrecy in all aspects of his life, he has no real regard for privacy. Being empty, not being a complete, separate being, having no self to groove on and needing to be constantly in female company, he sees nothing at all wrong in intruding himself on any woman's thoughts, even a total stranger's, anywhere at any time, but rather feels indignant and insulted when put down for doing so, as well as confused -- he can't, for the life of him, understand why anyone would prefer so much as one minute of solitude to the company of any creep around. Wanting to become a woman, he strives to be constantly around females, which is the closest he can get to becoming one, so he created a 'society' based upon the family -- a male-female couple and their kids (the excuse for the family's existence), who live virtually on top of one another, unscrupulously violating the females' rights, privacy and sanity.

Isolation, Suburbs, and Prevention of Community: Our society is not a community, but merely a collection of isolated family units. Desperately insecure, fearing his woman will leave him if she is exposed to other men or to anything remotely resembling life, the male seeks to isolate her from other men and from what little civilization there is, so he moves her out to the suburbs, a collection of self-absorbed couples and their kids. Isolation enables him to try to maintain his pretense of being an individual by becoming a 'rugged individualist', a loner, equating non-cooperation and solitariness with individuality.

There is yet another reason for the male to isolate himself: every man is an island. Trapped inside himself, emotionally isolated, unable to relate, the male has a horror of civilization, people, cities, situations requiring an ability to understand and relate to people. So like a scared rabbit, he scurries off, dragging Daddy's little asshole with him to the wilderness, suburbs, or, in the case of the hippy -- he's way out, Man! -- all the way out to the cow pasture where he can fuck and breed undisturbed and mess around with his beads and flute.

The 'hippy', whose desire to be a 'Man', a 'rugged individualist', isn't quite as strong as the average man's, and who, in addition, is excited by the thought having lots of women accessible to him, rebels against the harshness of a Breadwinner's life and the monotony of one woman. In the name of sharing and cooperation, he forms a commune or tribe, which, for all its togetherness and partly because of it, (the commune, being an extended family, is an extended violation of the female's rights, privacy and sanity) is no more a community than normal 'society'.

A true community consists of individuals -- not mere species members, not couples -- respecting each others individuality and privacy, at the same time interacting with each other mentally and emotionally -- free spirits in free relation to each other -- and co-operating with each other to achieve common ends. Traditionalists say the basic unit of 'society' is the family; 'hippies' say the tribe; no one says the individual.

The 'hippy' babbles on about individuality, but has no more conception of it than any other man. He desires to get back to Nature, back to the wilderness, back to the home of furry animals that he's one of, away from the city, where there is at least a trace, a bare beginning of civilization, to live at the species level, his time taken up with simple, non-intellectual activities -- farming, fucking, bead stringing. The most important activity of the commune, the one upon which it is based, is gang-banging. The 'hippy' is enticed to the commune mainly by the prospect for free pussy -- the main commodity to be shared, to be had just for the asking, but, blinded by greed, he fails to anticipate all the other men he has to share with, or the jealousies and possessiveness for the pussies themselves.

Men cannot co-operate to achieve a common end, because each man's end is all the pussy for himself. The commune, therefore, is doomed to failure; each 'hippy' will, in panic, grab the first simpleton who digs him and whisks her off to the suburbs as fast as he can. The male cannot progress socially, but merely swings back and forth from isolation to gang-banging.

Conformity: Although he wants to be an individual, the male is scared of anything in himself that is the slightest bit different from other men, it causes him to suspect that he's not really a 'Man', that he's passive and totally sexual, a highly upsetting suspicion. If other men are "A" and he's not, he must not be a man; he must be a fag. So he tries to affirm his 'Manhood' by being like all the other men. Differentness in other men, as well as himself, threatens him; it means **they're** fags whom he must at all costs avoid, so he tries to make sure that all other men conform.

The male dares to be different to the degree that he accepts his passivity and his desire to be female, his fagginess. The farthest out male is the drag queen, but he, although different from most men, is exactly like all the other drag queens like the functionalist, he has an identity -- he is female. He tries to define all his troubles away -- but still no individuality. Not completely convinced that he's a woman, highly insecure about being sufficiently female, he conforms compulsively to the man-made stereotype, ending up as nothing but a bundle of stilted mannerisms.

To be sure he's a 'Man', the male must see to it that the female be clearly a 'Woman', the opposite of a 'Man', that is, the female must act like a faggot. And Daddy's Girl, all of whose female instincts were wrenched out of her when little, easily and obligingly adapts herself to the role.

Authority and Government: Having no sense of right and wrong, no conscience, which can only stem from having an ability to empathize with others... having no faith in his non-existent self, being unnecessarily competitive, and by nature, unable to co-operate, the male feels a need for external guidance and control. So he created authorities -- priests, experts, bosses, leaders, etc -- and government. Wanting the female (Mama) to guide him, but unable to accept this fact (he is, after all, a MAN), wanting to play Woman, to usurp her function as Guider and Protector, he sees to it that all authorities are male.

There's no reason why a society consisting of rational beings capable of empathizing with each other, complete and having no natural reason to compete, should have a government, laws or leaders.

Philosophy, Religion, and Morality Based on Sex: The male's inability to relate to anybody or anything makes his life pointless and meaningless (the ultimate male insight is that life is absurd), so he invented philosophy and religion. Being empty, he looks outward, not only for

guidance and control, but for salvation and for the meaning of life. Happiness being for him impossible on this earth, he invented Heaven.

For a man, having no ability to empathize with others and being totally sexual, 'wrong' is sexual 'license' and engaging in 'deviant' ('unmanly') sexual practices, that is, not defending against his passivity and total sexuality which, if indulged, would destroy 'civilization', since 'civilization' is based entirely upon the male need to defend himself against these characteristics. For a woman (according to men), 'wrong' is any behavior that would entice men into sexual 'license' -- that is, not placing male needs above her own and not being a faggot.

Religion not only provides the male with a goal (Heaven) and helps keep women tied to men, but offers rituals through which he can try to expiate the guilt and shame he feels at not defending himself enough against his sexual impulses; in essence, that guilt and shame he feels at being male.

Most men men, utterly cowardly, project their inherent weaknesses onto women, label them female weaknesses and believe themselves to have female strengths; most philosophers, not quite so cowardly, face the fact that male lacks exist in men, but still can't face the fact that they exist in men only. So they label the male condition the Human Condition, post their nothingness problem, which horrifies them, as a philosophical dilemma, thereby giving stature to their animalism, grandiloquently label their nothingness their 'Identity Problem', and proceed to prattle on pompously about the 'Crisis of the Individual', the 'Essence of Being', 'Existence preceding Essence', 'Existential Modes of Being', etc. etc.

A woman not only takes her identity and individuality for granted, but knows instinctively that the only wrong is to hurt others, and that the meaning of life is love.

Prejudice (racial, ethnic, religious, etc): The male needs scapegoats onto whom he can project his failings and inadequacies and upon whom he can vent his frustration at not being female. And the vicarious discriminations have the practical advantage of substantially increasing the pussy pool available to the men on top.

Competition, Prestige, Status, Formal Education, Ignorance and Social and Economic Classes:

Having an obsessive desire to be admired by women, but no intrinsic worth, the male constructs a highly artificial society enabling him to appropriate the appearance of worth through money, prestige, 'high' social class, degrees, professional position and knowledge and, by pushing as many other men as possible down professionally, socially, economically, and educationally.

The purpose of 'higher' education is not to educate but to exclude as many as possible from the various professions.

The male, totally physical, incapable of mental rapport, although able to understand and use knowledge and ideas, is unable to relate to them, to grasp them emotionally: he does not value knowledge and ideas for their own sake (they're just means to ends) and, consequently, feels no need for mental companions, no need to cultivate the intellectual potentialities of others. On the contrary, the male has a vested interest in ignorance; it gives the few knowledgeable men a decided edge on the unknowledgeable ones, and besides, the male knows that an enlightened, aware female population will mean the end of him. The healthy, conceited female wants the company of equals whom she can respect and groove on; the male and the sick, insecure, unself-confident male female crave the company of worms.

No genuine social revolution can be accomplished by the male, as the male on top wants the status quo, and all the male on the bottom wants is to be the male on top. The male 'rebel' is a farce; this is the male's 'society', made by him to satisfy his needs. He's never satisfied, because he's not capable of being satisfied. Ultimately, what the male 'rebel' is rebelling

against is being male. The male changes only when forced to do so by technology, when he has no choice, when 'society' reaches the stage where he must change or die. We're at that stage now; if women don't get their asses in gear fast, we may very well all die.

Prevention of Conversation: Being completely self-centered and unable to relate to anything outside himself, the male's 'conversation', when not about himself, is an impersonal droning on, removed from anything of human value. Male 'intellectual conversation' is a strained compulsive attempt to impress the female.

Daddy's Girl, passive, adaptable, respectful of and in awe of the male, allows him to impose his hideously dull chatter on her. This is not too difficult for her, as the tension and anxiety, the lack of cool, the insecurity and self-doubt, the unsureness of her own feelings and sensations that Daddy instilled in her make her perceptions superficial and render her unable to see that the male's babble is babble; like the aesthete 'appreciating' the blob that's labeled 'Great Art', she believes she's grooving on what bores the shit out of her. Not only does she permit his babble to dominate, she adapts her own 'conversation' accordingly.

Trained from an early childhood in niceness, politeness and 'dignity', in pandering to the male need to disguise his animalism, she obligingly reduces her own 'conversation' to small talk, a bland, insipid avoidance of any topic beyond the utterly trivial -- or is 'educated', to 'intellectual' discussion, that is, impersonal discoursing on irrelevant distractions -- the Gross National Product, the Common Market, the influence of Rimbaud on symbolist painting. So adept is she at pandering that it eventually becomes second nature and she continues to pander to men even when in the company of other females only.

Apart from pandering, her 'conversation' is further limited by her insecurity about expressing deviant, original opinions and the self-absorption based on insecurity and that prevents her conversation from being charming. Niceness, politeness, 'dignity', insecurity and self-absorption are hardly conducive to intensity and wit, qualities a conversation must have to be worthy of the name. Such conversation is hardly rampant, as only completely self-confident, arrogant, outgoing, proud, tough-minded females are capable of intense, bitchy, witty conversation.

Prevention of Friendship (Love): Men have contempt for themselves, for all other men whom they contemplate more than casually and whom they do not think are females, (for example 'sympathetic' analysts and 'Great Artists') or agents of God and for all women who respect and pander to them: the insecure, approval-seeking, pandering male-females have contempt for themselves and for all women like them: the self-confident, swinging, thrill-seeking female females have contempt for me and for the pandering male females. In short, contempt is the order of the day.

Love is not dependency or sex, but friendship, and therefore, love can't exist between two males, between a male and a female, or between two females, one or both of whom is a mindless, insecure, pandering male; like conversation, love can exist only between two secure, free-wheeling, independent groovy female females, since friendship is based upon respect, not contempt.

Even amongst groovy females deep friendships seldom occur in adulthood, as almost all of them are either tied up with men in order to survive economically, or bogged down in hacking their way through the jungle and in trying to keep their heads above the amorphous mass. Love can't flourish in a society based upon money and meaningless work: it requires complete economic as well as personal freedom, leisure time and the opportunity to engage in intensely absorbing, emotionally satisfying activities which, when shared with those you respect, lead to deep friendship. Our 'society' provides practically no opportunity to engage in such activities.

Having stripped the world of conversation, friendship and love, the male offers us these paltry substitutes:



'Great Art' and 'Culture': The male 'artist' attempts to solve his dilemma of not being able to live, of not being female, by constructing a highly artificial world in which the male is heroized, that is, displays female traits, and the female is reduced to highly limited, insipid subordinate roles, that is, to being male.

The male 'artistic' aim being, not to communicate (having nothing inside him he has nothing to say), but to disguise his animalism, he resorts to symbolism and obscurity ('deep' stuff). The vast majority of people, particularly the 'educated' ones, lacking faith in their own judgment, humble, respectful of authority ('Daddy knows best'), are easily conned into believing that obscurity, evasiveness, incomprehensibility, indirectness, ambiguity and boredom are marks of depth and brilliance.

'Great Art' proves that men are superior to women, that men are women, being labeled 'Great Art', almost all of which, as the anti-feminists are fond of reminding us, was created by men. We know that 'Great Art' is great because male authorities have told us so, and we can't claim otherwise, as only those with exquisite sensitivities far superior to ours can perceive and appreciate the slop they appreciated.

Appreciating is the sole diversion of the 'cultivated'; passive and incompetent, lacking imagination and wit, they must try to make do with that; unable to create their own diversions, to create a little world of their own, to affect in the smallest way their environments, they must accept what's given; unable to create or relate, they spectate. Absorbing 'culture' is a desperate, frantic attempt to groove in an ungroovy world, to escape the horror of a sterile, mindless, existence. 'Culture' provides a sop to the egos of the incompetent, a means of rationalizing passive spectating; they can pride themselves on their ability to appreciate the 'finer' things, to see a jewel where this is only a turd (they want to be admired for admiring). Lacking faith in their ability to change anything, resigned to the status quo, they **have** to see beauty in turds because, so far as they can see, turds are all they'll ever have.

The veneration of 'Art' and 'Culture' -- besides leading many women into boring, passive activity that distracts from more important and rewarding activities, from cultivating active abilities, and leads to the constant intrusion on our sensibilities of pompous dissertations on the deep beauty of this and that turn. This allows the 'artist' to be setup as one possessing superior feelings, perceptions, insights and judgments, thereby undermining the faith of insecure women in the value and validity of their own feelings, perceptions, insights and judgments.

The male, having a very limited range of feelings, and consequently, very limited perceptions, insights and judgments, needs the 'artist' to guide him, to tell him what life is all about. But the male 'artist' being totally sexual, unable to relate to anything beyond his own physical sensations, having nothing to express beyond the insight that for the male life is meaningless and absurd, cannot be an artist. How can he who is not capable of life tell us what life is all about? A 'male artist' is a contradiction in terms. A degenerate can only produce degenerate 'art'. The true artist is every self-confident, healthy female, and in a female society the only Art, the only Culture, will be conceited, kooky, funky, females grooving on each other and on everything else in the universe.

Sexuality: Sex is not part of a relationship: on the contrary, it is a solitary experience, non-creative, a gross waste of time. The female can easily -- far more easily than she may think -- condition away her sex drive, leaving her completely cool and cerebral and free to pursue truly worthy relationships and activities; but the male, who seems to dig women sexually and who seeks out constantly to arouse them, stimulates the highly sexed female to frenzies of lust, throwing her into a sex bag from which few women ever escape. The lecherous male excited the lustful female; he **has** to -- when the female transcends her body, rises above animalism, the male, whose ego consists of his cock, will disappear.



Sex is the refuge of the mindless. And the more mindless the woman, the more deeply embedded in the male 'culture', in short, the nicer she is, the more sexual she is. The nicest women in our 'society' are raving sex maniacs. But, being just awfully, awfully nice, they don't, of course descend to fucking -- that's uncouth -- rather they make love, commune by means of their bodies and establish sensual rapport; the literary ones are attuned to the throb of Eros and attain a clutch upon the Universe; the religious have spiritual communion with the Divine Sensualism; the mystics merge with the Erotic Principle and blend with the Cosmos, and the acid heads contact their erotic cells.

On the other hand, those females least embedded in the male 'Culture', the least nice, those crass and simple souls who reduce fucking to fucking, who are too childish for the grown-up world of suburbs, mortgages, mops and baby shit, too selfish to raise kids and husbands, too uncivilized to give a shit for anyone's opinion of them, too arrogant to respect Daddy, the 'Greats' or the deep wisdom of the Ancients, who trust only their own animal, gutter instincts, who equate Culture with chicks, whose sole diversion is prowling for emotional thrills and excitement, who are given to disgusting, nasty upsetting 'scenes', hateful, violent bitches given to slamming those who unduly irritate them in the teeth, who'd sink a shiv into a man's chest or ram an icepick up his asshole as soon as look at him, if they knew they could get away with it, in short, those who, by the standards of our 'culture' are SCUM... these females are cool and relatively cerebral and skirting asexuality.

Unhampered by propriety, niceness, discretion, public opinion, 'morals', the respect of assholes, always funky, dirty, low-down SCUM gets around... and around and around... they've seen the whole show -- every bit of it -- the fucking scene, the dyke scene -- they've covered the whole waterfront, been under every dock and pier -- the peter pier, the pussy pier... you've got to go through a lot of sex to get to anti-sex, and SCUM's been through it all, and they're now ready for a new show; they want to crawl out from other the dock, move, take off, sink out. But SCUM doesn't yet prevail; SCUM's still in the gutter of our 'society', which, if it's not deflected from its present course and if the Bomb doesn't drop on it, will hump itself to death.

Boredom: Life in a society made by and for creatures who, when they are not grim and depressing are utter bores, can only be, when not grim and depressing, an utter bore.

Secrecy, Censorship, Suppression of Knowledge and Ideas, and Exposés: Every male's deep-seated, secret, most hideous fear is of being discovered to be not a female, but a male, a subhuman animal. Although niceness, politeness and 'dignity' suffice to prevent his exposure on a personal level, in order to prevent the general exposure of the male sex as a whole and to maintain his unnatural dominant position in 'society', the male must resort to:

1. Censorship. Responding reflexively to isolated works and phrases rather than cerebrally to overall meanings, the male attempts to prevent the arousal and discovery of his animalism by censoring not only 'pornography', but any work containing 'dirty' words, no matter in what context they are used.
2. Suppression of all ideas and knowledge that might expose him or threaten his dominant position in 'society'. Much biological and psychological data is suppressed, because it is proof of the male's gross inferiority to the female. Also, the problem of mental illness will never be solved while the male maintains control, because first, men have a vested interest in it -- only females who have very few of their marbles will allow males the slightest bit of control over anything, and second, the male cannot admit to the role that fatherhood plays in causing mental illness.
3. Exposés. The male's chief delight in life -- insofar as the tense, grim male can ever be said to delight in anything -- is in exposing others. It doesn't much matter what they're exposed as, so long as they're exposed; it distracts attention from himself. Exposing others as enemy agents (Communists and Socialists) is one of his favorite pastimes, as it removes the source of the

threat to him not only from himself, but from the country and the Western world. The bugs up his ass aren't in him, they're in Russia.

Distrust: Unable to empathize or feel affection or loyalty, being exclusively out for himself, the male has no sense of fair play; cowardly, needing constantly to pander to the female to win her approval, that he is helpless without, always on the edge lest his animalism, his maleness be discovered, always needing to cover up, he must lie constantly; being empty he has not honor or integrity -- he doesn't know what those words mean. The male, in short, is treacherous, and the only appropriate attitude in a male 'society' is cynicism and distrust.

Ugliness: Being totally sexual, incapable of cerebral or aesthetic responses, totally materialistic and greedy, the male, besides inflicting on the world 'Great Art', has decorated his unlandscaped cities with ugly buildings (both inside and out), ugly decors, billboards, highways, cars, garbage trucks, and, most notably, his own putrid self.

Hatred and Violence: The male is eaten up with tension, with frustration at not being female, at not being capable of ever achieving satisfaction or pleasure of any kind; eaten up with hate -- not rational hate that is directed at those who abuse or insult you -- but irrational, indiscriminate hate... hatred, at bottom, of his own worthless self.

Gratuitous violence, besides 'proving' he's a 'Man', serves as an outlet for his hate and, in addition -- the male being capable only of sexual responses and needing very strong stimuli to stimulate his half-dead self -- provides him with a little sexual thrill..

Disease and Death: All diseases are curable, and the aging process and death are due to disease; it is possible, therefore, never to age and to live forever. In fact the problems of aging and death could be solved within a few years, if an all-out, massive scientific assault were made upon the problem. This, however, will not occur with the male establishment because:

1. The many male scientists who shy away from biological research, terrified of the discovery that males are females, and show marked preference for virile, 'manly' war and death programs.
2. The discouragement of many potential scientists from scientific careers by the rigidity, boringness, expensiveness, time-consumingness, and unfair exclusivity of our 'higher' educational system.
3. Propaganda disseminated by insecure male professionals, who jealously guard their positions, so that only a highly select few can comprehend abstract scientific concepts.
4. Widespread lack of self-confidence brought about by the father system that discourages many talented girls from becoming scientists.
5. Lack of automation. There now exists a wealth of data which, if sorted out and correlated, would reveal the cure for cancer and several other diseases and possibly the key to life itself. But the data is so massive it requires high speed computers to correlate it all. The institution of computers will be delayed interminably under the male control system, since the male has a horror of being replaced by machines.
6. The money systems' insatiable need for new products. Most of the few scientists around who aren't working on death programs are tied up doing research for corporations.
7. The males like death -- it excites him sexually and, already dead inside, he wants to die.
8. The bias of the money system for the least creative scientists. Most scientists come from at least relatively affluent families where Daddy reigns supreme.

Incapable of a positive state of happiness, which is the only thing that can justify one's existence, the male is, at best, relaxed, comfortable, neutral, and this condition is extremely short-lived, as boredom, a negative state, soon sets in; he is, therefore, doomed to an existence of suffering relieved only by occasional, fleeting stretches of restfulness, which state he can only achieve at the expense of some female. The male is, by his very nature, a leech, an emotional parasite and, therefore, not ethically entitled to live, as no one as the right to life at someone else's expense.

Just as humans have a prior right to existence over dogs by virtue of being more highly evolved and having a superior consciousness, so women have a prior right to existence over men. The elimination of any male is, therefore, a righteous and good act, an act highly beneficial to women as well as an act of mercy.

However, this moral issue will eventually be rendered academic by the fact that the male is gradually eliminating himself. In addition to engaging in the time-honored and classical wars and race riots, men are more and more either becoming fags or are obliterating themselves through drugs. The female, whether she likes it or not, will eventually take complete charge, if for no other reason than that she will have to -- the male, for practical purposes, won't exist.

Accelerating this trend is the fact that more and more males are acquiring enlightened self-interest; they're realizing more and more that the female interest is in **their** interest, that they can live only through the female and that the more the female is encouraged to live, to fulfill herself, to be a female and not a male, the more nearly **he** lives; he's coming to see that it's easier and more satisfactory to live **through** her than to try to **become** her and usurp her qualities, claim them as his own, push the female down and claim that she's a male. The fag, who accepts his maleness, that is, his passivity and total sexuality, his femininity, is also best served by women being truly female, as it would then be easier for him to be male, feminine. If men were wise they would seek to become really female, would do intensive biological research that would lead to me, by means of operations on the brain and nervous system, being able to be transformed in psyche, as well as body, into women.

Whether to continue to use females for reproduction or to reproduce in the laboratory will also become academic: what will happen when every female, twelve and over, is routinely taking the Pill and there are no longer any accidents? How many women will deliberately get or (if an accident) remain pregnant? No, Virginia, women don't just adore being brood mares, despite what the mass of robot, brainwashed women will say. When society consists of only the fully conscious the answer will be none. Should a certain percentage of men be set aside by force to serve as brood mares for the species? Obviously this will not do. The answer is laboratory reproduction of babies.

As for the issue of whether or not to continue to reproduce males, it doesn't follow that because the male, like disease, has always existed among us that he should continue to exist. When genetic control is possible -- and soon it will be -- it goes without saying that we should produce only whole, complete beings, not physical defects or deficiencies, including emotional deficiencies, such as maleness. Just as the deliberate production of blind people would be highly immoral, so would be the deliberate production of emotional cripples.

Why produce even females? Why should there be future generations? What is their purpose? When aging and death are eliminated, why continue to reproduce? Why should we care what happens when we're dead? Why should we care that there is no younger generation to succeed us.

Eventually the natural course of events, of social evolution, will lead to total female control of the world and, subsequently, to the cessation of the production of males and, ultimately, to the cessation of the production of females.

But SCUM is impatient; SCUM is not consoled by the thought that future generations will thrive; SCUM wants to grab some thrilling living for itself. And, if a large majority of women were SCUM, they could acquire complete control of this country within a few weeks simply by withdrawing from the labor force, thereby paralyzing the entire nation. Additional measures, any one of which would be sufficient to completely disrupt the economy and everything else, would be for women to declare themselves off the money system, stop buying, just loot and simply refuse to obey all laws they don't care to obey. The police force, National Guard, Army, Navy and Marines combined couldn't squelch a rebellion of over half the population, particularly when it's made up of people they are utterly helpless without.

If all women simply left men, refused to have anything to do with any of them -- ever, all men, the government, and the national economy would collapse completely. Even without leaving men, women who are aware of the extent of their superiority to and power over men, could acquire complete control over everything within a few weeks, could effect a total submission of males to females. In a sane society the male would trot along obediently after the female. The male is docile and easily led, easily subjected to the domination of any female who cares to dominate him. The male, in fact, wants desperately to be led by females, wants Mama in charge, wants to abandon himself to her care. But this is not a sane society, and most women are not even dimly aware of where they're at in relation to men.

The conflict, therefore, is not between females and males, but between SCUM -- dominant, secure, self-confident, nasty, violent, selfish, independent, proud, thrill-seeking, free-wheeling, arrogant females, who consider themselves fit to rule the universe, who have free-wheeled to the limits of this 'society' and are ready to wheel on to something far beyond what it has to offer -- and nice, passive, accepting 'cultivated', polite, dignified, subdued, dependent, scared, mindless, insecure, approval-seeking Daddy's Girls, who can't cope with the unknown, who want to hang back with the apes, who feel secure only with Big Daddy standing by, with a big strong man to lean on and with a fat, hairy face in the White House, who are too cowardly to face up to the hideous reality of what a man is, what Daddy is, who have cast their lot with the swine, who have adapted themselves to animalism, feel superficially comfortable with it and know no other way of 'life', who have reduced their minds, thoughts and sights to the male level, who, lacking sense, imagination and wit can have value only in a male 'society', who can have a place in the sun, or, rather, in the slime, only as soothers, ego boosters, relaxers and breeders, who are dismissed as inconsequents by other females, who project their deficiencies, their maleness, onto all females and see the female as worm.

But SCUM is too impatient to wait for the de-brainwashing of millions of assholes. Why should the swinging females continue to plod dismally along with the dull male ones? Why should the fates of the groovy and the creepy be intertwined? Why should the active and imaginative consult the passive and dull on social policy? Why should the independent be confined to the sewer along with the dependent who need Daddy to cling to? A small handful of SCUM can take over the country within a year by systematically fucking up the system, selectively destroying property, and murder:

SCUM will become members of the unwork force, the fuck-up force; they will get jobs of various kinds an unwork. For example, SCUM salesgirls will not charge for merchandise; SCUM telephone operators will not charge for calls; SCUM office and factory workers, in addition to fucking up their work, will secretly destroy equipment. SCUM will unwork at a job until fired, then get a new job to unwork at.

SCUM will forcibly relieve bus drivers, cab drivers and subway token sellers of their jobs and run buses and cabs and dispense free tokens to the public.

SCUM will destroy all useless and harmful objects -- cars, store windows, 'Great Art', etc.



Eventually SCUM will take over the airwaves -- radio and TV networks -- by forcibly relieving of their jobs all radio and TV employees who would impede SCUM's entry into the broadcasting studios.

SCUM will couple-bust -- barge into mixed (male-female) couples, wherever they are, and bust them up.

SCUM will kill all men who are not in the Men's Auxiliary of SCUM. Men in the Men's Auxiliary are those men who are working diligently to eliminate themselves, men who, regardless of their motives, do good, men who are playing pall with SCUM. A few examples of the men in the Men's Auxiliary are: men who kill men; biological scientists who are working on constructive programs, as opposed to biological warfare; journalists, writers, editors, publishers and producers who disseminate and promote ideas that will lead to the achievement of SCUM's goals; faggots who, by their shimmering, flaming example, encourage other men to de-man themselves and thereby make themselves relatively inoffensive; men who consistently give things away -- money, things, services; men who tell it like it is (so far not one ever has), who put women straight, who reveal the truth about themselves, who give the mindless male females correct sentences to parrot, who tell them a woman's primary goal in life should be to squash the male sex (to aid men in this endeavor SCUM will conduct Turd Sessions, at which every male present will give a speech beginning with the sentence: 'I am a turd, a lowly abject turd', then proceed to list all the ways in which he is. His reward for doing so will be the opportunity to fraternize after the session for a whole, solid hour with the SCUM who will be present. Nice, clean-living male women will be invited to the sessions to help clarify any doubts and misunderstandings they may have about the male sex; makers and promoters of sex books and movies, etc., who are hastening the day when all that will be shown on the screen will be Suck and Fuck (males, like the rats following the Pied Piper, will be lured by Pussy to their doom, will be overcome and submerged by and will eventually drown in the passive flesh that they are); drug pushers and advocates, who are hastening the dropping out of men.

Being in the Men's Auxiliary is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for making SCUM's escape list; it's not enough to do good; to save their worthless asses men must also avoid evil. A few examples of the most obnoxious or harmful types are: rapists, politicians and all who are in their service (campaigners, members of political parties, etc); lousy singers and musicians; Chairmen of Boards; Breadwinners; landlords; owners of greasy spoons and restaurants that play Muzak; 'Great Artists'; cheap pikers and welchers; cops; tycoons; scientists working on death and destruction programs or for private industry (practically all scientists); liars and phonies; disc jockies; men who intrude themselves in the slightest way on any strange female; real estate men; stock brokers; men who speak when they have nothing to say; men who sit idly on the street and mar the landscape with their presence; double dealers; flim-flam artists; litterbugs; plagiarisers; men who in the slightest way harm any female; all men in the advertising industry; psychiatrists and clinical psychologists; dishonest writers, journalists, editors, publishers, etc.; censors on both the public and private levels; all members of the armed forces, including draftees (LBJ and McNamara give orders, but servicemen carry them out) and particularly pilots (if the bomb drops, LBJ won't drop it; a pilot will). In the case of a man whose behavior falls into both the good and bad categories, an overall subjective evaluation of him will be made to determine if his behavior is, in the balance, good or bad.

It is most tempting to pick off the female 'Great Artists', liars and phonies etc along with the men, but that would be inexpedient, as it would not be clear to most of the public that the female killed was a male. All women have a fink streak in them, to a greater or lesser degree, but it stems from a lifetime of living among men. Eliminate men and women will shape up. Women are improvable; men are no, although their behavior is. When SCUM gets hot on their asses it'll shape up fast.

Simultaneously with the fucking-up, looting, couple-busting, destroying and killing, SCUM will recruit. SCUM, then, will consist of recruiters; the elite corps -- the hard core activists (the fuck-ups, looters and destroyers) and the elite of the elite -- the killers.



Dropping out is not the answer; fucking-up is. Most women are already dropped out; they were never in. Dropping out gives control to those few who don't drop out; dropping out is exactly what the establishment leaders want; it plays into the hands of the enemy; it strengthens the system instead of undermining it, since it is based entirely on the non-participating, passivity, apathy and non-involvement of the mass of women. Dropping out, however, is an excellent policy for men, and SCUM will enthusiastically encourage it.

Looking inside yourself for salvation, contemplating your navel, is not, as the Drop Out people would have you believe, the answer. Happiness lies outside yourself, is achieved through interacting with others. Self-forgetfulness should be one's goal, not self-absorption. The male, capable of only the latter, makes a virtue of irremediable fault and sets up self-absorption, not only as a good but as a Philosophical Good, and thus gets credit for being deep.

SCUM will not picket, demonstrate, march or strike to attempt to achieve its ends. Such tactics are for nice, genteel ladies who scrupulously take only such action as is guaranteed to be ineffective. In addition, only decent, clean-living male women, highly trained in submerging themselves in the species, act on a mob basis. SCUM consists of individuals; SCUM is not a mob, a blob. Only as many SCUM will do a job as are needed for the job. Also SCUM, being cool and selfish, will not subject to getting itself rapped on the head with billy clubs; that's for the nice, 'privileged, educated', middle-class ladies with a high regard for the touching faith in the essential goodness of Daddy and policemen. If SCUM ever marches, it will be over the President's stupid, sickening face; if SCUM ever strikes, it will be in the dark with a six-inch blade.

SCUM will always operate on a criminal as opposed to a civil disobedience basis, that is, as opposed to openly violating the law and going to jail in order to draw attention to an injustice. Such tactics acknowledge the rightness overall system and are used only to modify it slightly, change specific laws. SCUM is against the entire system, the very idea of law and government. SCUM is out to destroy the system, not attain certain rights within it. Also, SCUM -- always selfish, always cool -- will always aim to avoid detection and punishment. SCUM will always be furtive, sneaky, underhanded (although SCUM murders will always be known to be such).

Both destruction and killing will be selective and discriminate. SCUM is against half-crazed, indiscriminate riots, with no clear objective in mind, and in which many of your own kind are picked off. SCUM will never instigate, encourage or participate in riots of any kind or other form of indiscriminate destruction. SCUM will coolly, furtively, stalk its prey and quietly move in for the kill. Destruction will never be such as to block off routes needed for the transportation of food or other essential supplies, contaminate or cut off the water supply, block streets and traffic to the extent that ambulances can't get through or impede the functioning of hospitals.

SCUM will keep on destroying, looting, fucking-up and killing until the money-work system no longer exists and automation is completely instituted or until enough women co-operate with SCUM to make violence unnecessary to achieve these goals, that is, until enough women either unwork or quit work, start looting, leave men and refuse to obey all laws inappropriate to a truly civilized society. Many women will fall into line, but many others, who surrendered long ago to the enemy, who are so adapted to animalism, to maleness, that they like restrictions and restraints, don't know what to do with freedom, will continue to be toadies and doormats, just as peasants in rice paddies remain peasants in rice paddies as one regime topples another. A few of the more volatile will whimper and sulk and throw their toys and dishrags on the floor, but SCUM will continue to steamroller over them.

A completely automated society can be accomplished very simply and quickly once there is a public demand for it. The blueprints for it are already in existence, and its construction will take only a few weeks with millions of people working on it. Even though off the money system, everyone will be most happy to pitch in and get the automated society built; it will mark the beginning of a fantastic new era, and there will be a celebration atmosphere accompanying the construction.



The elimination of money and the complete institution of automation are basic to all other SCUM reforms; without these two the others can't take place; with them the others will take place very rapidly. The government will automatically collapse. With complete automation it will be possible for every woman to vote directly on every issue by means of an electronic voting machine in her house. Since the government is occupied almost entirely with regulating economic affairs and legislating against purely private matters, the elimination of money and with it the elimination of males who wish to legislate 'morality' will mean there will be practically no issues to vote on.

After the elimination of money there will be no further need to kill men; they will be stripped of the only power they have over psychologically independent females. They will be able to impose themselves only on the doormats, who like to be imposed on. The rest of the women will be busy solving the few remaining unsolved problems before planning their agenda for eternity and Utopia -- completely revamping educational programs so that millions of women can be trained within a few months for high level intellectual work that now requires years of training (this can be done very easily once our educational goal is to educate and not perpetuate an academic and intellectual elite); solving the problems of disease and old age and death and completely redesigning our cities and living quarters. Many women will for a while continue to think they dig men, but as they become accustomed to female society and as they become absorbed in their projects, they will eventually come to see the utter uselessness and banality of the male.

The few remaining men can exist out their puny days dropped out on drugs or strutting around in drag or passively watching the high-powered female in action, fulfilling themselves as spectators, vicarious lovers*[FOOTNOTE: It will be electronically possible for him to tune into any specific female he wants to and follow in detail her every movement. The females will kindly, obligingly consent to this, as it won't hurt them in the slightest and it is a marvelously kind and humane way to treat their unfortunate, handicapped fellow beings.] or breeding in the cow pasture with the toadies, or they can go off to the nearest friendly suicide center where they will be quietly, quickly, and painlessly gassed to death.

Prior to the institution of automation, to the replacement of males by machines, the male should be of use to the female, wait on her, cater to her slightest whim, obey her every command, be totally subservient to her, exist in perfect obedience to her will, as opposed to the completely warped, degenerate situation we have now of men, not only not only not existing at all, cluttering up the world with their ignominious presence, but being pandered to and groveled before by the mass of females, millions of women piously worshipping the Golden Calf, the dog leading the master on a leash, when in fact the male, short of being a drag queen, is least miserable when his dogginess is recognized -- no unrealistic emotional demands are made of him and the completely together female is calling the shots. Rational men want to be squashed, stepped on, crushed and crunched, treated as the curs, the filth that they are, have their repulsiveness confirmed.

The sick, irrational men, those who attempt to defend themselves against their disgustingness, when they see SCUM barreling down on them, will cling in terror to Big Mama with her Big Bouncy Boobies, but Boobies won't protect them against SCUM; Big Mama will be clinging to Big Daddy, who will be in the corner shitting in his forceful, dynamic pants. Men who are rational, however, won't kick or struggle or raise a distressing fuss, but will just sit back, relax, enjoy the show and ride the waves to their demise.

WAGES AGAINST HOUSEWORK (1975)

They say it is love. We say it is unwaged work.

They call it frigidity. We call it absenteeism.

Every miscarriage is a work accident.

Homosexuality and heterosexuality are both working conditions . . . but homosexuality is workers' control of production, not the end of work.

More smiles? More money. Nothing will be so powerful in destroying the healing virtues of a smile.

Neuroses, suicides, desexualization: occupational diseases of the housewife.

Many times the difficulties and ambiguities that women express in discussing wages for housework stem from the fact that they reduce wages for housework to a thing, a lump of money, instead of viewing it as a political perspective. The difference between these two standpoints is enormous. To view wages for housework as a thing rather than a perspective is to detach the end result of our struggle from the struggle itself and to miss its significance in demystifying and subverting the role to which women have been confined in capitalist society.

When we view wages for housework in this reductive way we start asking ourselves: what difference could more money make to our lives? We might even agree that for a lot of women who do not have any choice except for housework and marriage, it would indeed make a lot of difference. But for those of us who seem to have other choices—professional work, an enlightened husband, a communal way of life, gay relations or a combination of these—it would not make much of a difference. For us there are supposedly other ways of achieving economic independence, and the last thing we want is to get it by identifying ourselves as housewives, a fate that we all agree is, so to speak, worse than death. The problem with this position is that in our imagination we usually add a bit of money to the wretched lives we have now and then ask “so what?” on the false premise that we could ever get that money without at the same time revolutionizing—in the process of struggling for it—all our family and social relations. But if we take wages for housework as a political

perspective, we can see that struggling for it is going to produce a revolution in our lives and in our social power as women. It is also clear that if we think we do not need that money, it is because we have accepted the particular forms of prostitution of body and mind by which we get the money to hide that need. As I will try to show, not only is wages for housework a revolutionary perspective, but it is the only revolutionary perspective from a feminist viewpoint.

"A Labor of Love"

It is important to recognize that when we speak of housework we are not speaking of a job like other jobs, but we are speaking of the most pervasive manipulation, and the subtlest violence that capitalism has ever perpetrated against any section of the working class. True, under capitalism every worker is manipulated and exploited and his or her relation to capital is totally mystified. The wage gives the impression of a fair deal: you work and you get paid, hence you and your boss each get what's owed; while in reality the wage, rather than paying for the work you do, hides all the unpaid work that goes into profit. But the wage at least recognizes that you are a worker, and you can bargain and struggle around and against the terms and the quantity of that wage, the terms and the quantity of that work. To have a wage means to be part of a social contract, and there is no doubt concerning its meaning: you work, not because you like it, or because it comes naturally to you, but because it is the only condition under which you are allowed to live. Exploited as you might be, you are not that work. Today you are a postman, tomorrow a cabdriver. All that matters is how much of that work you have to do and how much of that money you can get.

The difference with housework lies in the fact that not only has it been imposed on women, but it has been transformed into a natural attribute of our female physique and personality, an internal need, an aspiration, supposedly coming from the depth of our female character. Housework was transformed into a natural attribute, rather than being recognized as work, because it was destined to be unwaged. Capital had to convince us that it is a natural, unavoidable, and even fulfilling activity to make us accept working without a wage. In turn, the unwaged condition of housework has been the most powerful weapon in reinforcing the common assumption that housework is not work, thus preventing women from struggling against it, except in the privatized kitchen-bedroom quarrel that all society agrees to ridicule, thereby further reducing the protagonist of a struggle. We are seen as nagging bitches, not as workers in struggle.

Yet, how natural it is to be a housewife is shown by the fact that it takes at least twenty years of socialization, day-to-day training, performed by an unwaged mother, to prepare a woman for this role, to convince her that children and husband are the best that she can expect from life. Even so, it hardly succeeds. No matter how well trained we are, few women do not feel cheated when the bride's day is over and they find themselves in front of a dirty sink. Many of us still have the illusion that we marry for love. A lot of us recognize that we marry for money and security; but it is time to make it clear that while the love or money involved is very little, the work that awaits us is enormous. This is why older women always tell us, "Enjoy your freedom while you can, buy whatever you want now." But unfortunately it is almost impossible to enjoy any freedom if, from the earliest days of your life, you are trained to be docile, subservient, dependent and, most importantly, to sacrifice yourself and even to get pleasure from it. If you don't like it, it is your problem, your failure, your guilt, and your abnormality.

We must admit that capital has been very successful in hiding our work. It has created a true masterpiece at the expense of women. By denying housework a wage and transforming it into an act of love, capital has killed many birds with one stone. First of all, it has gotten a hell of a lot of work almost for free, and it has made sure that women, far from struggling against it, would seek that work as the best thing in life (the magic words: "Yes, darling, you are a real woman"). At the same time, it has also disciplined the male worker, by making "his" woman dependent on his work and his wage, and trapped him in this discipline by giving him a servant after he himself has done so much serving at the factory or the office. In fact, our role as women is to be the unwaged but happy and most of all loving servants of the "working class," i.e., those strata of the proletariat to which capital was forced to grant more social power. In the same way as god created Eve to give pleasure to Adam, so did capital create the housewife to service the male worker physically, emotionally, and sexually, to raise his children, mend his socks, patch up his ego when it is crushed by the work and the social relations (which are relations of loneliness) that capital has reserved for him. It is precisely this peculiar combination of physical, emotional and sexual services that are involved in the role women must perform for capital that creates the specific character of that servant which is the housewife, that makes her work so burdensome and at the same time so invisible. It is not an accident, then, if most men start thinking of getting married as soon as they get their first job. This is not only because now they can afford it, but also because having somebody at home who takes care of you is the only condition of not going crazy after a day spent on an assembly line or at a desk. Every woman knows

that this is what she should be doing to be a true woman and have a “successful” marriage. And in this case too, the poorer the family the higher the enslavement of the woman, and not simply because of the monetary situation. In fact capital has a dual policy, one for the middle class and one for the working class family. It is no accident that we find the most unsophisticated machismo in the latter: the more blows the man gets at work the more his wife must be trained to absorb them, the more he is allowed to recover his ego at her expense. You beat your wife and vent your rage against her when you are frustrated or overtired by your work or when you are defeated in a struggle (but to work in a factory is already a defeat). The more the man serves and is bossed around, the more he bosses around. A man’s home is his castle and his wife has to learn: to wait in silence when he is moody, to put him back together when he is broken down and swears at the world, to turn around in bed when he says, “I’m too tired tonight,” or when he goes so fast at lovemaking that, as one woman put it, he might as well make it with a mayonnaise jar. Women have always found ways of fighting back, or getting back at them, but always in an isolated and privatized way. The problem, then, becomes how to bring this struggle out of the kitchen and the bedroom and into the streets.

This fraud that goes under the name of love and marriage affects all of us, even if we are not married, because once housework is totally naturalized and sexualized, once it becomes a feminine attribute, all of us as women are characterized by it. If it is natural to do certain things, then all women are expected to do them and even like doing them—even those women who, due to their social position, can escape some of that work or most of it, because their husbands can afford maids and shrinks and enjoy various forms of relaxation and amusement. We might not serve one man, but we are all in a servant relation with respect to the entire male world. This is why to be called a female is such a putdown, such a degrading thing. “Smile, honey, what’s the matter with you?” is something every man feels entitled to ask you, whether he is your husband, or the man who takes your ticket on a train, or your boss at work.

The Revolutionary Perspective

If we start from this analysis we can see the revolutionary implications of the demand for wages for housework. *It is the demand by which our nature ends and our struggle begins because just to want wages for housework means to refuse that work as the expression of our nature*, and therefore to refuse precisely the female role that capital has invented for us.

To ask for wages for housework will by itself undermine the expectations that society has of us, since these expectations—the essence of our

socialization—are all functional to our wageless condition in the home. In this sense, it is absurd to compare the struggle of women for wages for housework to the struggle of male workers in the factory for more wages. In struggling for more wages, the waged worker challenges his social role but remains within it. When we struggle for wages for housework we struggle unambiguously and directly against our social role. In the same way, there is a qualitative difference between the struggles of the waged worker and the struggles of the slave for a wage against that slavery. It should be clear, however, that when we struggle for a wage we do not struggle to enter capitalist relations, because we have never been out of them. We struggle to break capital's plan for women, which is an essential moment of that division of labor and social power within the working class through which capital has been able to maintain its hegemony. Wages for housework, then, is a revolutionary demand not because by itself it destroys capital, but because it forces capital to restructure social relations in terms more favorable to us and consequently more favorable to the unity of the class. In fact, to demand wages for housework does not mean to say that if we are paid we will continue to do this work. It means precisely the opposite. To say that we want wages for housework is the first step towards refusing to do it, because the demand for a wage makes our work visible, which is the most indispensable condition to begin to struggle against it, both in its immediate aspect as housework and its more insidious character as femininity.

Against any accusation of “economism” we should remember that money is capital, i.e., it is the power to command labor. Therefore to reappropriate that money which is the fruit of our labor—of our mothers' and grandmothers' labor—means at the same time to undermine capital's power to extract more labor from us. And we should not distrust the power of the wage to demystify our femininity and making visible our work—our femininity as work—since the lack of a wage has been so powerful in shaping this role and hiding our work. To demand wages for housework is to make it visible that our minds, our bodies and emotions have all been distorted for a specific function, in a specific function, and then have been thrown back at us as a model to which we should all conform if we want to be accepted as women in this society.

To say that we want wages for housework is to expose the fact that housework is already money for capital, that capital has made and makes money out of our cooking, smiling, fucking. At the same time, it shows that we have cooked, smiled, fucked throughout the years not because it was easier for us than for anybody else, but because we did not have any other choice. Our faces have become distorted from so much smiling, our

feelings have got lost from so much loving, our oversexualization has left us completely desexualized.

Wages for housework is only the beginning, but its message is clear: from now on, they have to pay us because as women we do not guarantee anything any longer. We want to call work what is work so that eventually we might rediscover what is love and create our sexuality, which we have never known. And from the viewpoint of work, we can ask not only one wage but many wages, because we have been forced into many jobs at once. We are housemaids, prostitutes, nurses, shrinks; this is the essence of the "heroic" spouse who is celebrated on "Mother's Day." We say: stop celebrating our exploitation, our supposed heroism. From now on we want money for each moment of it, so that we can refuse some of it and eventually all of it. In this respect nothing can be more effective than to show that our female virtues have already a calculable money value: until today only for capital, increased in the measure that we were defeated, from now on, against capital, for us, in the measure that we organize our power.

The Struggle for Social Services

This is the most radical perspective we can adopt because, although we can ask for day care, equal pay, free laundromats, we will never achieve any real change unless we attack our female role at its roots. Our struggle for social services, that is, for better working conditions, will always be frustrated if we do not first establish that our work is work. Unless we struggle against the totality of it we will never achieve any victories with respect to any of its moments. We will fail in the struggle for free laundromats unless we first struggle against the fact that we cannot love except at the price of endless work, which day after day cripples our bodies, our sexuality, our social relations, and unless we first escape the blackmail whereby our need to give and receive affection is turned against us as a work duty, for which we constantly feel resentful against our husbands, children and friends, and then guilty for that resentment. Getting a second job does not change that role, as years and years of female work outside the home have demonstrated. The second job not only increases our exploitation, but simply reproduces our role in different forms. Wherever we turn we can see that the jobs women perform are mere extensions of the housewife's condition in all its implications. Not only do we become nurses, maids, teachers, secretaries—all functions for which we are well trained in the home—but we are in the same bind that hinders our struggles in the home: isolation, the fact that other people's lives depend on us, and the impossibility to see where our work begins and ends, where our work ends and our desires begin. Is bringing coffee to your boss and chatting

with him about his marital problems secretarial work or is it a personal favor? Is the fact that we have to worry about our looks on the job a condition of work or is it the result of female vanity? (Until recently airline stewardesses in the United States were periodically weighed and had to be constantly on a diet—a torture that all women know—for fear of being laid off.) As is often said when the needs of the waged labor market require her presence there, “A woman can do any job without losing her femininity,” which simply means that no matter what you do you are still a “cunt.”

As for the proposed socialization and collectivization of housework, a couple of examples will be sufficient to draw a line between these alternatives and our perspective. It is one thing to set up a day care center the way we want it, and then demand that the State pay for it. It is quite another thing to deliver our children to the State and then ask the State to control them not for five but for fifteen hours a day. It is one thing to organize communally the way we want to eat (by ourselves, in groups) and then ask the State to pay for it, and it is the opposite thing to ask the State to organize our meals. In one case we regain some control over our lives, in the other we extend the State’s control over us.

The Struggle against Housework

Some women say: how is wages for housework going to change the attitudes of our husbands towards us? Won’t our husbands still expect the same duties as before and even more than before once we are paid for them? But these women do not see that men can expect so much from us precisely because we are not paid for our work, because they assume that it is “a woman’s thing” which does not cost us much effort. Men are able to accept our services and take pleasure in them because they presume that housework is easy for us, and that we enjoy it because we do it for their love. They actually expect us to be grateful because by marrying us, or living with us, they have given us the opportunity to express ourselves as women (i.e., to serve them). “You are lucky you have found a man like me,” they say. Only when men see our work as work—our love as work—and most important our determination to refuse both, will they change their attitude towards us. Only when thousands of women will be in the streets saying that endless cleaning, always being emotionally available, fucking at command for fear of losing our jobs is hard, hated work that wastes our lives, will they be scared and feel undermined as men. But this is the best thing that can happen to them from their own point of view, because by exposing the way capital has kept us divided (capital has disciplined them through us and us through them—each other, against each

other), we—their crutches, their slaves, their chains—open the process of their liberation. In this sense wages for housework will be much more educational than trying to prove that we can work as well as them, that we can do the same jobs. We leave this worthwhile effort to the “career woman,” the woman who escapes from her oppression not through the power of unity and struggle, but through the power of the master, the power to oppress—usually other women. And we don’t have to prove that we can “break the blue collar barrier.” A lot of us have broken that barrier a long time ago and have discovered that the overalls did not give us any more power than the apron—quite often even less, because now we had to wear both and had even less time and energy to struggle against them. The things we have to prove are our capacity to expose what we are already doing as work, what capital is doing to us, and our power to struggle against it.

Unfortunately, many women—particularly single women—are afraid of the perspective of wages for housework because they are afraid of identifying even for a second with the housewife. They know that this is the most powerless position in society and they do not want to realize that they are housewives too. This is precisely our weakness, as our enslavement is maintained and perpetuated through this lack of self-identification. We want and must say that we are all housewives, we are all prostitutes, and we are all gay, because as long as we accept these divisions, and think that we are something better, something different than a housewife, we accept the logic of the master. We are all housewives because, no matter where we are, they can always count on more work from us, more fear on our side to put forward our demands, and less insistence that they should be met, since presumably our minds are directed elsewhere, to that man in our present or our future who will “take care of us.”

And we also delude ourselves that we can escape housework. But how many of us, in spite of working outside the home, have escaped it? And can we really so easily disregard the idea of living with a man? What if we lose our jobs? What about ageing and losing even the minimal amount of power that youth (productivity) and attractiveness (female productivity) afford us today? And what about children? Will we ever regret having chosen not to have them, not having even been able to realistically ask that question? And can we afford gay relations? Are we willing to pay the possible price of isolation and exclusion? But can we really afford relations with men?

The question is: why are these our only alternatives and what kind of struggle will take us beyond them?

In the United States and other capitalist countries, rape laws as a rule were framed originally for the protection of men of the upper classes, whose daughters and wives might be assaulted. What happens to working-class women has usually been of little interest to the courts; as a result, remarkably few white men have been prosecuted for the sexual violence they have inflicted on these women.

Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class*, 1981

SHE'S SO DEPRAVED, YOU CAN'T RAPE HER*

July 1986, I'm seventeen. There are two of us, both wearing mini-skirts, I have on stripy tights and red Converse. We're on our way back from London, where we've spent all our money on records, hair dye and a mass of studded accessories, so we are broke. Not a penny left for the journey home. Hitchhiking to Dover takes all day. Standing in front of the ticket office, we beg the cost of the ferry. Night has fallen when we get on the boat. During the crossing, we look for people with cars who would give us a ride. Two good-looking, weed-smoking Italians give us a lift to the outskirts of Paris. A petrol station, somewhere on the ring road. We decide to wait for dawn and the lorry drivers to come along, so we can find one who'll take us all the way to

* Trust, *Antisocial*

Nancy. We hang about in the parking lot and in the shop. Summer night, it is not too cold.

A car. Driven by three white lads, classic '80s suburbia types, they offer beers and spliffs. We start chatting about the singer Renaud. We refuse to get in because there are three of them. They joke and talk and make an effort to be nice. Convince us we'd be idiots to wait here, west of Paris, when they could drop us off on the east side where it would be easier to get a lift to Nancy. So we get into the car. Of the two girls, I'm the one who has been around, the loudmouth, the one who decides if it's OK. And yet, as soon as the doors close, we both know it's a crap idea. But instead of yelling "We're getting out now!" for the few yards we still can, each of us quietly tells herself to stop being paranoid and seeing rapists everywhere. We've been chatting with them for more than an hour, they're just classic wankers. Not a bit aggressive. Since then, this proximity is logged in amongst those indelible things: men's bodies in a closed space, and us shut in with them but not the same as them. Never the same as them, with our women's bodies. Never safe, never equal. We belong to the gender of fear, of humiliation. The other gender. Masculinity, that legendary masculine solidarity is formed in these moments and is built on this exclusion of our bodies. A pact based on our inferiority. Guys laughing, sharing male jokes; the laughter of the crowd, of the strong ones.

While it's going on, they pretend not to know

exactly what's happening. Because we're wearing mini-skirts, and one of us has green hair and the other orange, we must "fuck like rabbits" and so the rape they are carrying out is not actually a rape. As with most rapes, I imagine. I don't imagine that any of those three guys now considers himself a rapist. Because what they did was something else. Three of them with a gun, against two girls they'd beaten to the point of drawing blood: not rape. Because if we'd really been determined not to get raped we would either have preferred to die, or managed to kill them. The assailants succeed in persuading themselves that the girls this happens to, if they get out alive, must not really mind all that much. This is the only explanation I've been able to find for the following paradox: since the publication of *Baise-Moi* I keep meeting women who tell me, "I was raped, at this age, in these circumstances". This has happened so much it's disturbing, and for a while I even wondered if they weren't making it up. In our culture, the testimony of a woman accusing a man of rape has been systematically called into question from the Bible and the story of Joseph in Egypt onwards. But I ended up accepting that it does happen all the time. It's a widespread act, across all classes, all ages, all levels of beauty and even all kinds of personality. So, how shall we explain the fact that you hardly ever hear the other side of the story: "I raped so and so, on this day, in these circumstances"? Because men are still doing what women learned to do centuries ago: call it something else,

euphemise, beautify it; above all not using *that* word to describe what they've done. They may have "pushed her a little", or "fucked up a bit"; maybe she was "too pissed", or else a nympho just pretending not to like it. If it ended up happening, then the girl must at some level have consented. Never mind if they had to hit her, threaten her, get several guys to hold her down; never mind if she was crying before, during and after: in most cases the rapist comes to an agreement with his conscience – there was no rape, just a little slut who didn't know what she wanted, and for whom a little persuading was all that was needed. Unless it's as hard to bear from the other side. But we don't know, since they won't talk about it.

To be called a rapist one has to be a total psycho who ends up in prison, a serial rapist who slices up cunts with broken bottles, a paedophile who attacks little girls. Because men condemn rape and despise rapists. What *they* do is always something else.

It is often said that pornography increases the incidence of rape. Hypocritical, and absurd. As if sexual assault were a recent invention, which had to be suggested to people through films. On the other hand the fact that French males haven't been to war since Algeria in the 1960s has certainly increased the number of "civil" rapes. Military life provided regular opportunities to practise gang rape "for the cause". This military strategy to enhance the sense of virility of the assaulting group while weakening the other through dilution of

their race has been happening since the beginning of war. It's no good trying to convince us that sexual violence against women is a recent phenomenon, or limited to any particular group.

For the first few years, we avoided talking about it. Then, three years later, a friend of mine got raped on the kitchen table of her own home in the Croix Rousse area in Lyon, by a guy who had followed her in from the street. The day I found out, I was working in an indie record shop in the old town centre. Sunny day, pale orangey-yellow summer light on the walls of the narrow streets of the old town, on the burnished old freestone. On the banks of the Saône, the bridge, the bright colours of the old buildings. Fucking beautiful, it has always struck me, and that day more so than ever. Rape doesn't disturb the peace; it's already part and parcel of the city. I lock up the shop and take a walk. I was more outraged than I had been when it happened to us. Through her, I realised rape is something you catch, and can never get rid of. Infected. Until then, I had told myself it was something I'd dealt with, that I was tough and had more important things on my mind than to let myself be traumatised by those three arseholes. Realising that I was considering her rape as something after which nothing would ever be the same again, I was suddenly able to touch what I felt for us. The wounds of a war which must be fought in silence and darkness.

I was twenty when that happened to her. I didn't want anyone to talk to me about feminism – not punk enough, too straight. After she was attacked, I changed my mind and took part in a weekend's training run by the phoneline "Stop Rape" which helps people talk after an aggression, and get legal advice. The course had barely started and I was already muttering away in my corner: why bother advising anyone to press charges? Going to the pigs for anything more than sorting out an insurance claim – I can't see the point. My instinct told me that declaring yourself a rape victim in a police station was like putting yourself back in danger. Cop law is man's law. Then the facilitator says: "Most of the time, a woman who speaks about her rape will start off calling it something else." Inside, I am still grumbling, "What a load of nonsense." This sounds bloody improbable: why wouldn't they say the word, and anyway, what does this chick know? Does she think we're all the same or what? Suddenly, I see the light: what have I, myself, done up till now? The few times – mostly very pissed – when I have wanted to tell this story, have I used the word? Never. The few times I had attempted to talk about it, I'd skirted around the word "rape": "assaulted", "mixed up", "in a tight corner", "hassled"... whatever. As long as the aggression is not called "rape", the attack loses its specificity, can be compared with other attacks, like getting mugged, picked up by the cops, held for questioning, beaten. This short-sighted strategy does have advan-

tages, because as soon as you name your rape as a rape, the women-controlling mechanisms suddenly swing into action: do you want everyone to know what happened to you? Do you want everyone to see you as a woman who has been subject to that? And, in any case, you must be a total slut to have escaped alive. Any woman who values her dignity would rather die. My very survival incriminates me. The fact of being more terrified by the possibility of being murdered than traumatised by the thrusts of those three idiots starts to seem monstrous: I have never even heard it mentioned. Luckily, being a punk, I wasn't too concerned about my nice girl's reputation. You're supposed to be traumatised by a rape – it brings with it a whole range of obligatory, visible scars: fear of men, of the night, of independence, disgust for sex, and all kinds of other delights. People keep telling you this: it's serious, it's a crime, if a man who loves you finds out, it will drive him crazy with pain and rage (rape is also a private conversation, in which a man declares to other men: I will fuck your women whenever I please). But the most sensible advice, for a whole raft of reasons, remains "keep it to yourself". And therefore suffocate between the two commands. Die, bitch, as they say.

And so the word is avoided. On account of all it conceals. The attacked, as well as the attackers, skirt around the word. Silence on both fronts.

Those first post-rape years brought with them a painful surprise: books could do nothing for me. This had never happened before. When I was interned for a few months in 1984, the first thing I did when they let me out was read. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *When I was Five I Killed Myself*, Antonin Artaud's texts and essays on psychiatry, mental institutions, control and adolescence. Books were there to keep me company, to make things bearable, sayable, shareable. Prison, illness, abuse, drugs, abandonment, deportation; all traumas have their literature. But this crucial and fundamental trauma – the very definition of femininity, "the body that can be taken by force and must remain defenceless" – was not part of literature. Not a single woman who had been through the process of rape had taken to words to craft a novel out of her experience. No guide, no companionship. Rape wasn't allowed into the symbolic realm. Women don't discuss rape with young girls, don't pass on any knowledge, or survival instructions or simple practical advice. Nothing.

1990. On the train to Paris for a Limbomaniacs concert, I am reading *Spin* magazine and come across an article by Camille Paglia. It attracts my attention and initially makes me laugh. She describes the effect footballers on the field have on her – fascinating, sexy, aggressive animals. She starts her piece by describing this warlike rage and how it turns her on, this show of sweat and muscular running thighs. This leads her, gradually, to the subject of rape. I have forgotten her

exact words. But it was something like: "It's an inevitable danger, a danger that women need to take into account and run the risk of encountering, if they want to leave their homes and move around freely. If it happens to you then pick yourself up, dust yourself down and move on. If that's too scary for you, then you'd better stay at home with Mummy and manicure your nails." At first, I was disgusted. I felt sick with refusal. After a few moments, a sort of great interior calm, I was dumbfounded. It was already dark when I arrived at the Gare de Lyon. Before heading towards the north of Paris to the gig, I called Caroline, that same friend, really excited. I had to tell her about this Italian American – and she had to read the article and tell me what she thought. It blew her head off, just as it had mine.

After that, nothing has ever been compartmentalised, sealed off as it was before. Thinking of rape in a different way for the first time. Until then the subject had been taboo. Rape is a minefield where no one dares to enter other than to say "how awful" or "poor girls".

For the first time, someone was valuing the ability to get over it, instead of lying down obligingly in the anthology of trauma. Someone was devaluing rape, its impact and consequences. This did not invalidate any part of what happened, or efface anything of what we learnt that night.

Camille Paglia is one of the most controversial American feminists. She was inviting girls to look at

rape as a risk worth taking if you want to leave the house, an inherent part of being a girl. Wild freedom of playing things down. Yes, we had been outside, in a space that was not intended for us. Yes, we had lived, instead of dying. Yes, we were alone in mini-skirts, unaccompanied by a man, at night, yes, we were stupid, and weak, unable to smash their faces in, weak as girls have learnt to be under attack. Yes, that had happened to us, but for the first time, we understood what we had done: we had gone out into the wild because nothing much ever happened in Mummy and Daddy's house. We had taken the risk, and paid the price, and instead of being ashamed of being alive, we could choose to get back on our feet and get over it as best we could. Paglia helped us think of ourselves as warriors – no longer personally responsible for something we had asked for, but ordinary victims of what you have to expect you may endure if you're a woman and you want to venture into the wild. She was the first to represent rape as something other than absolute, unspeakable horror, that which must never happen. She made it into a political circumstance, something we had to learn to cope with. Paglia changed everything: it was no longer a matter of denial or collapse, but of dealing with it.

Summer 2005, Philadelphia. I am sitting opposite Camille Paglia, recording an interview. I nod enthusiastically at her words. "On campus in the '60s, the girls were shut into their dormitories at 10 pm, whereas the guys did whatever they liked. We asked, 'Why should

we be treated differently?' and they explained, 'Because the world is dangerous, and you might get raped', and we replied, 'Well, we want the right to risk being raped'."

One of the many reactions to my story has been: "And you carried on hitchhiking, after that?" I hadn't told my parents, for fear of being put under lock and key for my own good. And yes, I did hitchhike again. Less dressed up, less attractive, but yes, I did it. Until some punk friends told me about skipping train fares, I knew of no other way to get to Toulouse for one gig on Thursday and then to Lille for another on Saturday. And at that time, going to gigs was the most important thing in my life. Worth putting myself in danger for. Nothing could be worse than staying in my room, far from life, when so much was happening. So I carried on travelling to cities where I didn't know a soul, waiting alone in train stations until they closed so I could spend the night there, or sleeping in between nearby buildings waiting for the first morning train. Acting as if I wasn't a girl. And although I wasn't raped again, I risked it a hundred times just by being outdoors a lot. What I experienced during that time, at that age, was unique, so much more intense than shutting myself up in school learning to be docile, or sitting at home reading magazines. Those were the best years of my life, the richest, the noisiest, and I managed to find the strength to deal with all the shit that came with them.

But I have also avoided telling my story, because I already knew that people would say: "Well, if you carried on hitchhiking after that, if it didn't make you more sensible, then you must have liked it." Because with rape, it's always up to you to prove that you really didn't give your consent. It's as if guilt obeys an unspoken moral pull towards the one who got hit, rather than the one who did the whacking.

When the film *Baise-Moi* was banned from the screen, lots of women (men didn't dare comment on that subject) stood up to publicly declare: "How revolting, we absolutely must not consider that violence is an answer to rape." Why not? You never see news items about girls – alone or in gangs – biting off the dicks of men who attack them, or trailing their attackers to kill them or beat them lifeless. This only happens, for the moment, in films directed by men. Wes Craven's *The Last House on the Left*, Ferrara's *Ms. 45*, Meir Zarchi's *I Spit on Your Grave*, for instance. All three films open with more or less horrible rape scenes (rather more than less, in fact), and go on to depict in a second part the ultra-violent revenges inflicted on their attackers by the women. When men create female characters, it is rarely an attempt to understand what the characters are experiencing and feeling as women. It tends instead to be a way of depicting male sensibility in a female body. I'll come back to this later on the subject of porn, which

follows the same logic. So in these three films, you see how men, if they were women, would react to rape. A bloodbath of merciless violence. Their message is clear: why don't you defend yourselves more fiercely? And it is in fact strange that we don't react in that way. A powerful and ancient political strategy has taught women not to defend themselves. It's a double constraint, as usual: at the same time making sure we know that nothing worse could happen to us, and yet that we must neither defend nor revenge ourselves. Just suffer. The sword of Damocles between our thighs.

But women still feel the need to say that violence is not the answer. And yet, if men were to fear having their dicks slashed to pieces with a carpet knife should they try to force a woman, they would soon become much better at controlling their "masculine" urges, and understanding that "no" does mean "no". I wish I'd been able to escape the values instilled in my gender that night, and slit each of their throats, one by one. Instead of having to live with being someone who didn't dare defend herself, because she's a woman and violence is not her domain, and the physical integrity of the male body is more important than that of the female.

During that rape, I had a flick-knife in the pocket of my red and white Teddy jacket – a gleaming black-handled, perfect action, long, thin blade, polished, shining and sharp. A flick-knife I used to pull out at the slightest provocation, in that muddled time. I was

attached to it; in my own way, I had learned how to use it. That night, the blade stayed hidden in my pocket, and the only thought I had about it was: please don't let them find it, please don't let them decide to play with it. I didn't even think of using it. From the instant I realised what was happening, I was convinced they were the stronger ones. A question of focus. Looking back on it, I am convinced that if they'd been trying to steal our jackets instead, my reaction would have been different. I wasn't rash, but often reckless. But at that precise moment I felt female, disgustingly female, in a way I had never felt, and have never felt since. Defending my own body did not allow me to injure a man. I think I would have reacted in the same way if there had been only one man against me. It was rape that turned me back into a woman, into someone essentially vulnerable. Little girls are trained never to hurt men, and women are called back in line each time they don't respect the order. Aileen Wuornos's death sentence was a message to all of us. I am not furious with myself for not having dared to kill one of them. I am furious with a society that has educated me without ever teaching me to injure a man if he pulls my thighs apart against my will, when that same society has taught me that this is a crime from which I will never recover. And I am most of all utterly enraged that, faced with three men and a gun, trapped in a forest from which we could never have escaped on foot, I still feel guilty today for not having had the courage to defend us with a little knife.

In the end, one of them finds the blade. He shows it to the others, sincerely surprised that I hadn't got it out. "She liked it, then." Men genuinely have no idea of the power of this mechanism of female emasculation, no idea how everything has been so perfectly arranged to ensure that when men attack women, they will triumph without any real danger. Gullibly, they think that their superiority is due to their great strength. They have no scruples about fighting gun against flick-knife. The blessed fools think it's a fair fight. That's the secret to their easy consciences.

I find it strange that today, when so many people walk around with tiny computers in their pockets – cameras, phones, personal organisers, iPods – there exists no object at all to slip into your pussy when you go out for a stroll that will rip up the cock of any fucker who sticks it in there. Perhaps it isn't desirable to make female genitalia inaccessible by force. A woman must remain open, and fearful. Otherwise, how would masculinity define itself?

Post-rape, the only acceptable response is to turn the violence inwards, onto yourself. Put on three stone, for instance. Withdraw from the sexual marketplace, because you are soiled goods; take yourself out of the realm of desire. In France, we don't kill women who've been raped, but we do expect them to have the decency to show that they are damaged goods, that they have been polluted. They may become hookers, or ugly – whatever, as long as they spontaneously exit

the marriage market.

Because rape creates the best hookers. Once opened by force, they sometimes retain as a sort of skin-level burnish an edgy, blemished quality that men like; something desperate and seductive. Rape is often initiatory, it cuts into the flesh to create the available woman, who can never quite close back up again. I am sure there is a kind of scent, something that men can smell and which excites them even more.

We insist on behaving as if rape were extraordinary and isolated, outside of sexuality, avoidable. As if it only applied to a few people, to attackers and victims, as if it were an exceptional situation that had nothing to say about anything else. Whereas it's quite the opposite – at the centre, the heart, the foundation of our sexualities. It is a central sacrificial ritual, omnipresent in art since the beginning of time, represented in texts, statues, paintings – a constant throughout the centuries. Public gardens in Paris as well as museums are full of images of men forcing women. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* implies that the gods spend their time trying to catch women who don't want to be caught, trying to satisfy their desires through force. Easy enough, when you're a god. And when the women fall pregnant, they then have to bear the brunt of the gods' wives' revenge. The female condition, its code. Forever guilty of what is done to us. Creatures held responsible for the desire we provoke. Rape is a well-defined political strategy: the bare bones of capitalism, it is the crude and blunt

representation of the exercise of power. It designates a ruler, and organises the rules of the game to allow him to wield his power without restraint. Steal, snatch, extort, impose – his will is obeyed without hindrance and he may enjoy his brutality, without the other party being able to show resistance. Enjoy the crushing of the other – her words, her wishes, her integrity. Rape is civil war, a political organisation through which one gender declares to the other: I have complete power over you, I force you to feel inferior, guilty and degraded.

Rape is the exclusive male domain. Not war, hunting, raw desire, violence or barbarism but rape, which women – until now – have never taken possession of. The masculine mystique must be created as intrinsically dangerous, criminal and uncontrollable. As such, it must be rigorously controlled by the law, kept in collective order by the group. Behind the web policing female sexuality appears the fundamental goal of the political: to educate the virile personality to be anti-social, instinctual and violent. Rape serves firstly as a vehicle for this perception: man's desire is stronger than his will; he is powerless to control it. You still often hear people say, "Prostitutes reduce the number of rapes", as if males couldn't control themselves, as if they had to unload themselves somewhere. They would have us believe this is a natural – instinctual – fact and not the created political belief it is. If testosterone really did make men into animals with uncontrollable instincts,

they would kill just as easily as they rape. Which is not the case at all. The discourse on masculinity still contains leftovers from the dark ages. Rape, this condemned act that must never be mentioned, brings together a whole raft of fundamental beliefs about masculinity.

There's the rape fantasy. A sexual fantasy. If I really want to talk about "my" rape, I will have to go through this. It's a fantasy I've had since I was a child. I would say it's a remnant from the bit of religious education I indirectly received from books, television, kids at school and neighbours. The women martyrs – those female saints who were tied up and burned alive – were the first images to provoke an erotic response in me. The idea of being handed over, forced to, made to, was morbid and fascinatingly arousing for the little girl I was at the time. Those fantasies have never left me. I am convinced that lots of women prefer not to masturbate – claiming it does nothing for them – rather than admit what arouses them. We aren't all alike, but I'm not the only one to have this fantasy. These rape fantasies, these fantasies of being taken by force in more or less violent situations, which have been present throughout my masturbatory life, didn't come to me "out of the blue". It's a powerful and precise cultural mechanism that predestines female sexuality to climax from its own powerlessness – which is to say from the

superiority of the other – and women to orgasm against their will, rather than as sluts who enjoy sex. In Judeo-Christian morality, it is much better to be taken by force than considered a bitch in heat; we have been told that often enough. There is a female predisposition for masochism, which stems not from our hormones, nor from prehistoric times, but from a specific cultural system, and this predisposition has disturbing implications for the way we exercise our independence. It may be voluptuous and arousing, but it also handicaps us: being attracted to that which destroys us keeps us away from power.

In the specific case of rape, it poses the question of guilt: since I have often fantasised about rape, I am in part responsible for this attack. And to make things worse, these fantasies are rarely spoken of. Especially if you've been raped. There are probably lots of us in this situation, who have endured rape while having frequently fantasised about it beforehand. And yet on this subject, there is only silence, because what is unsayable is also completely undermining.

When that boy turns round and yells "OK, the ride's over", as he hits me for the first time, it isn't penetration that's terrifying me, but the thought that they are going to kill us. So that we won't be able to talk about it afterwards, won't be able to press charges or bear witness. Because, basically, that's what I would have done, if I were them. I can remember very precisely that fear of death. A white fear – time stopping, no longer

existing, already not existing. According to the books I've read this is nearer to war trauma than to rape trauma. It's the possibility and nearness of death, and our forced submission to their inhuman hatred which makes that night so indelible. For me the most striking thing about rape is its obsessive quality. I constantly come back to it. For twenty years now, every time I think I'm done with it, I come back to it again. With different, contradictory things to say about it. Novels, stories, songs, films. I always imagine that one day I will be done with it. Will have got over the event: emptied it, exhausted it.

Impossible. It is a founding event. Of who I am as a writer, and as a woman who is no longer quite a woman. It is both that which disfigures me, and that which makes me.

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