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The Politics of Radical Feminism

The Political Values of Radical Feminism

A distinguishing feature of the radical feminist conception of human nature is its attention to human reproduction. Reflection on modes of organizing procreation generates radical feminist insights on the basic structure of society, prompts radical feminist ideas for changing that structure and even suggests new social values for radical feminism.

Because human beings reproduce sexually, and because babies are extremely immature at birth, radical feminism points out that one of the fundamental tasks of every society must be to organize sexual activity and the rearing of children. Almost universally, societies organize these activities by allocating them according to sex. Men impregnate women, of course, but women are then assigned to perform most of the work required to rear infants and young children. Radical feminists claim that the sexual division of labor established originally in procreation is extended into every area of life. Even when pregnancy is not desired, women are expected to provide sexual gratification to men and they are expected to tend men's daily physical and emotional needs, just as they tend the needs of their children. Even those radical feminists who regard the distinction between the sexes as being ultimately a social construct claim that, in contemporary society, as in all other known societies, an individual's sex is the single, most influential factor in determining her social position, her life experiences, her physical and psychological constitution, her interests and her values. The distinction between the sexes, a distinction defined originally by reference to procreative function, is used to structure every aspect of human nature and human social life.

According to radical feminists, the bifurcation between male and female experience means that every society in fact has two cultures—the visible, national, or male culture and the invisible, universal, female culture. “There is always a women's culture within every culture.”¹

Males define and control all the institutions of all "national" cultures—including every purportedly socialist nation that has ever existed.

Because the male culture is dominant and in control in every nation, the "national" culture becomes synonymous with, and in fact is, the male culture. The female culture exists "invisibly", in subjection to the male-defined "national" culture.

What appears as one national culture, due to male propaganda, is in reality the male culture setting itself up as *the* national culture through the subordination of the female. The male army, the male government, the male religion, the male-run economy, the male-defined institution of the family, along with the male culture in the "narrower" sense—i.e., the male arts, sciences, philosophy, and technology—are defined as *the* national culture when in fact they represent nothing but the male view and interests.²

In fact, however, a female culture exists. It is based on "the cooking, cleaning and child 'raising' chores of the society" (page 338).

Radical feminists believe that the dominant male culture or patriarchy promulgates a certain picture of social reality, a picture that is clearly colored by male values. In this picture, male culture is portrayed as the only culture of a given society. Different male cultures may emphasize different values but, in general, "Men are seen as 'day', positive, forceful, aggressive, dominant, objective, strong, intellectual, etc." (page 352). By contrast, "the concepts, habits, skills, art, and instruments of women in any period have been different from men's and have been ridiculed and/or suppressed by them" (page 336). Women's culture is denied and women are defined, in opposition to men, "as weak, 'night', passive, emotional, intuitive, mysterious, irresponsible, quarrelsome, childish, dependent, evil, submissive, etc." (page 352). Although these characteristics are considered undesirable for men, the patriarchy considers that at least some of them are appropriate for women. Passivity, vanity, subservience and self-sacrifice are not masculine virtues, but the male culture accepts and even values these qualities in women.

Feminists have usually accepted this male picture except for its evaluation of women. They have expressed dissatisfaction not with the picture itself, but rather with the world that it portrays. They have pointed out that this is a world of male dominance. Women may indeed be weak, emotional, vain, passive and subservient, but that is only because the male culture has made them that way. In fact, feminists typically claim, these characteristics are no more appropriate for women than they are for men; women and men should be judged by the same standards. Typically, then, feminists argue that women are capable of participating in male culture and of living up to male values. Liberal feminists claim that women are capable of autonomy and rationality; traditional/Marxists claim that women are capable of transcending narrow family preoccupations and of participating fully in public life. The usual feminist response to male culture, therefore, has been to accept the accuracy of its picture of the world and to seek to change the social reality that this picture portrays.

Radical feminists respond quite differently to the dominant male picture. They too wish to change social reality, but they claim that even the existing reality is distorted by the way men present it, which is to glorify whatever has been defined as masculine and to disparage whatever has been defined as

feminine. Thus, the male picture conceals the destructive values that underlie the male culture and obscures the positive contributions of the female culture.

Radical feminism acknowledges that there is considerable superficial variety in different male cultures. For instance, some male cultures value entrepreneurial talent, while others may value contemplation and withdrawal from practical life. Underlying the superficial differences, however, radical feminists believe that male cultures share a number of common but often unacknowledged values. These values include respect for formalism and abstraction, contempt for the routine tasks of bodily maintenance, disdain for infant care and, by association, for infants, a colonial attitude toward women's bodies, particularly women's sexuality, womanhatred and, according to Mary Daly, necrophilia or "love for those victimized into a state of living death."³

Even less accurate than its portrait of itself is the patriarchy's portrait of women. Radical feminists acknowledge that this portrait does capture certain aspects of women's culture:

Because of the child raising role and the emphasis on personal relationships, women have a more personal, subjective view of things. Because of our subjection, women have a more fatalistic, passive view of the world. We are more in touch with our emotions and often find it necessary to use emotions in manipulating men. Through the imposition of a servant status on women, the female culture has elaborated a whole servile ethic of "self-sacrifice".⁴

Other aspects of female culture, however, fail to appear in the patriarchal picture. If they do appear, they seem to emerge by accident rather than by intention and they are not valued and respected as they deserve. According to radical feminists, the patriarchy fails to appreciate that women's culture values life rather than death. Women's culture is grounded on the values that inform women's work as mothers, nurturers and healers. These values include emotional expressiveness, gentleness, sensitivity to the feelings of others, closeness to nature, flexibility rather than rigidity, a distrust of abstract principles, the acceptance of all bodily functions and an acknowledgement of their capacity to bring pleasure.

According to radical feminists, liberal and Marxist feminists have internalized the values of the male culture. They want women to live according to male standards. Radical feminists, by contrast, challenge the values of the male culture. They do not want women to be like men. Instead, they want to develop new values, based on women's traditional culture.

We are proud of the female culture of emotion, intuition, love, personal relationships, etc., as the most essential human characteristics. It is our male colonizers—it is the male culture—who have defined essential humanity out of their identity and who are "culturally deprived."

We are also proud as females of our heritage of known and unknown resisters to male colonial domination and values.

We are proud of the female principle and will not deny it to gain our freedom.⁵

The only aspects of female culture to be rejected are "all those that keep us subservient, such as passivity, self-sacrifice, etc."⁶

At first glance, radical feminism might appear to be advocating a straightforward inversion of male values. After all, it condemns male culture for many

of the same attributes on which that culture typically has prided itself. These attributes include military prowess, sexual aggression, analytical thinking, emotional "cool," adherence to principle and transcendence of everyday life. Moreover, radical feminism values many of those qualities that the male culture traditionally has despised. These qualities include an ability to nurture, a willingness to express emotion, a distrust of abstraction, a readiness to "take things personally," spontaneity, flexibility and an enjoyment of the routine details of everyday life. It is too simple, however, to interpret radical feminism as simply reordering patriarchal priorities. For one thing, radical feminists tend not to be concerned to order values hierarchically;⁷ for another, radical feminists seem to share certain values with the patriarchy. Both patriarchy and radical feminism, for instance, value power and strength, and neither admires passivity or subservience. It is perhaps closer to the truth to say that radical feminism rejects some of the values of the patriarchy outright but that it accepts others with reservations. The reservations depend on a feminist reinterpretation of traditionally accepted values. Joyce Trebilcot calls these reinterpretations "feminist reconceivings."

A feminist reconceiving may involve a shift in the descriptive meaning of a concept, in its evaluative meaning or in both. An example is the concept of strength. Trebilcot states that strength is valued both by feminists and by the male culture but argues that each culture makes different judgments about what counts as strength, particularly strength in women. Under patriarchy, Trebilcot believes that a woman is not viewed as strong unless she is unattached and unattractive to men, often because of age; if an actual or even a possible man is around to protect her, then the term "strong" is reserved for him. By contrast, the feminist view of a strong woman allows a young or conventionally beautiful woman to be strong and allows her strength to be expressed in struggles with men: "The feminist strong woman is likely to be noisy, even loud; she is inclined to protest, to complain, to call attention to her difficulty."⁸ Feminists also believe that strength is more likely to be indicated by flexibility than by rigidity.

The radical feminist concept of integrity, discussed briefly in Chapter 5, is another example of feminist reconceiving. So are the radical feminist reflections on power, to be discussed later in this chapter. A more surprising example, perhaps, is the radical feminist attention to wildness. Patriarchy views wildness as bad because it is rebellious and destructive. To radical feminists, however, wildness in women is a quality to be cherished. Susan Griffin associates women's wildness with the wildness of nature and of non-domestic animals. All these forms of wildness are victims of male taming and conquest.⁹ For Mary Daly, women's wildness expresses their resistance to male domination.

The call to wild-ize our Selves, to free and unfreeze our Selves is a wild and fantastic calling to transfer our energy and our Selves and to Sister Selves. . . .

Our call of the wild is a call to dis-possess our Selves of the shrouds, the winding sheets of words. . . . to dis-possess our selves of pseudo-bonding.¹⁰

Honor is another value which feminists are reconceiving. Adrienne Rich defines male honor as

having something to do with killing: *I could not love thee, Dear, so much/ Lov'd I not Honour more* ("To Lucasta, on Going to the Wars"). Male

honor as something needing to be avenged: hence, the duel. . . .

Men have been expected to tell the truth about facts, not about feelings. They have not been expected to talk about feelings at all.¹¹

Under patriarchy,

Women's honor, something altogether else: virginity, chastity, fidelity to a husband. Honesty in women has not been considered important. We have been depicted as generically whimsical, deceitful, subtle, vacillating. And we have been rewarded for lying.¹²

Rich wants to redefine honor as an ideal that applies primarily not to relations between men and men or even to relations between men and women, but to relations between women.

It isn't that to have an honorable relationship with you, I have to understand everything, or tell you everything at once, or that I can know, beforehand, everything I need to tell you.

It means that most of the time I am eager, longing for the possibility of telling you. That these possibilities may seem frightening, but not destructive to me. That I feel strong enough to hear your tentative and groping words. That we both know we are trying, all the time, to extend the possibilities of truth between us.

The possibility of life between us.¹³

A final example of feminist reconceiving is the value of nurturance. Nurturance is viewed with approval by the patriarchy as well as by the feminist community, but by patriarchy it is seen "as second-rate. Nurturing is a good thing for women to do, but not good enough for men."¹⁴ Under patriarchy, however, nurturance is associated with self-sacrifice—which is why it is relegated to women. By contrast, radical feminists emphasize that it is important for women to nurture themselves as well as others. Sally Gearhart even defines a lesbian as "a woman who seeks her own self-nurturance"¹⁵—in defiance of the patriarchal mandate to sacrifice herself to men.

What radical feminists seek, then, are new values around which to organize society. They are looking for a way of expressing their vision of wholeness, which will transcend the patriarchal dualisms of self and world, nature and spirit, reason and emotion.¹⁶ In part, radical feminist values are inspired by women's spiritual or mystical experiences of connectedness with non-human nature or with other women. In part, although their values are not identical with the values of the female culture under patriarchy, they have their roots in that traditional culture.

Sara Ketchum distinguishes between female culture, which is the subordinate or subdominate culture of women under patriarchy, and womanculture, which is a counterdominant or resisting culture consciously created by feminists. In creating the womanculture, feminists will draw on the best aspects of the female culture but will reject "the values and concepts [that] tend to favor dominant members of the dominant culture."¹⁷ Many of the values of the womanculture turn out to be values that have been traditionally relegated to the "private" domain of spirituality or of "personal relations," and they are expressed in concepts that sound foreign to political theory. For many radical feminists, however, it is precisely the absence of those values that is their main reason for rejecting "male" politics. In a review of Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology*, Susan Leigh Star writes:

In creating her web of language around the ideas of spinning, sparking and spooking, Mary uses words that have had profound meaning for me in my life, but which I have often felt embarrassed to talk about in a "political" environment: hope, innocence, courage, gentleness, compassion, *sacredness*. *Gyn/Ecology* frees up some of the coopted language and silences associated with these ideals, gives them new strength.¹⁸

Politics is concerned with the management or government of social groups. Political theory prescribes the acceptable or legitimate modes of government and criticizes modes of social organization that fail to meet its standards. Typically, political theory focuses on the structure of relations between the governors and the governed and ignores their experiential quality. It discusses liberty, equality and justice or citizenship, collectivity and freedom. These relations are conceived as "impersonal" ones. They hold between people who may or may not be acquainted with each other, who may love or hate each other, or have no emotional bond at all. By contrast with traditional political theorists, radical feminists emphasize the experiential quality of human relations—what are sometimes called "relationships." They are concerned about feelings and emotion and they advocate openness and trust, caring and affection, respect and non-manipulation.¹⁹ These values presuppose people relating to each other as unique individuals rather than as interchangeable fellow citizens or comrades. The radical feminist value of sisterhood, for instance, is not at all symmetrical with the patriarchal value of brotherhood or male comradeship.

Sisterhood, like female friendship, has at its core the affirmation of freedom. Thus sisterhood differs radically from male comradeship/brotherhood, which functions to perpetuate the State of War.

Since sisterhood is deeply like female friendship, rather than being its opposite (as in the case of male semantic counterparts) it is radically Self-affirming. In this respect it is totally different from male comradeship/brotherhood, in which individuals seek to lose their identity.²⁰

Radical feminists recognize, of course, that a superior experiential quality in relationships does not come about simply because it is wanted. Such a quality has structural preconditions. The basic precondition is the absence of institutionalized relations of power and domination. It is difficult to resist manipulation when that is one's only means of control; it is stupid to be open and trusting toward one who exploits you; and it is impossible to nurture adequately when one is not being nurtured oneself. Radical feminists recognize that there are many institutionalized relations of domination other than legal privilege or class prerogative. Naturally, radical feminists are particularly aware of gender domination and they perceive a gender hierarchy in every institution of daily life. To instantiate their values and to make possible the kinds of relationships they advocate, radical feminists believe that it is necessary to abolish gender as well as all other forms of hierarchy. As we shall see, much of the radical feminist critique of women's oppression focuses on gender domination in intimate relations and many of their proposals for social change concern the reorganization of the so-called private rather than the so-called public or political sphere.

To say this is misleading, however, for radical feminism does not recognize the legitimacy of a distinction between the private sphere of personal relations and a public sphere of impersonal politics. Although their values derive from women's experience in intimate relations, radical feminists believe that these

values are appropriate to regulate all of society. One group describes its vision as "a nurturant society of love and trust."²¹ This radical feminist approach constitutes a sharp break with the western tradition in political theory. Machiavelli argued forcefully that it was irresponsible and morally wrong to apply in politics the same moral standards that are appropriate in intimate relations. He thought that betrayal, deceit and violence were necessary and therefore justified in pursuit of public policy. Liberalism and Marxism are less forthright, but they preserve Machiavelli's distinction between a public and a private sphere with different standards of conduct appropriate in each. The liberal tradition distinguishes between public and private morality,²² and the Marxist tradition insists that people should be judged by their "politics" rather than by their "private" reputations.²³ Capitalist propaganda attributes exclusively to Marxism-Leninism the view that the end justifies the means, but liberal states, too, expect their officials to perform acts that would be unthinkable for a private citizen. Only the anarchist tradition has required that political life should be judged by "personal" standards of caring, spontaneity and playfulness, "strength, vitality and joy."²⁴ I shall argue later that there are strong similarities between contemporary radical feminism and some traditional forms of anarchism.

Radical feminism popularized the slogan "the personal is political." In Chapter 5, we saw that one meaning of this slogan is that sexual politics, the systematic male domination of women and women's resistance to this domination, occurs in the so-called private as much as in the so-called public sphere. For radical feminists, the slogan has an additional meaning: that women's experience in personal life can provide the inspiration and the basis for a new vision of politics. Paradoxically, this is a vision of the withering away of politics as we know them because, in the radical feminist vision, all institutionalized relations of domination have disappeared.

Male Control of Women's Bodies: The Radical Feminist Analysis of Women's Oppression

On the radical feminist view, contemporary society is a patriarchy. It is organized in such a way as to negate the values of radical feminism. Radical feminist values are practiced only occasionally, in relations between women and in relations between women and children. Relations between men, however, exemplify values precisely opposed to those of radical feminism, as do the relations between men and women. The radical feminist analysis of women's oppression exposes the destructive quality of women's relations with men and shows how that destructiveness is rooted in the systematic coercive power that men have over women.

Radical feminists conceive patriarchy as a total system of domination. Through imperialism, racism and class society, groups of men seek to dominate each other. Most of all, however, they seek to dominate women who suffer characteristic forms of oppression in every patriarchal society. To legitimate its domination, the dominant male culture invents ideologies that define subordinate groups as inferior for one reason or another: as lazy, shiftless, stupid, greedy, emotional, sly, childish, barbaric or uncultured. Under patriarchy, many of these attributes are applied to women as well as to subordinate groups not defined primarily by sex. In addition, however, patriarchal ideology defines women in a way specific to their sex, as beings whose special function is to gratify male sexual desires and to bear and raise children. This ideology limits what women may

do under patriarchy and delegitimizes whatever they in fact do that goes beyond the limits of the patriarchal definition.

The radical feminist analysis of women's oppression seeks to uncover the specific relations of domination that are concealed or legitimized by patriarchal ideology. While this ideology defines women as natural mothers or as sexual objects, the reality, according to radical feminism, is that women under patriarchy are forced mothers and sexual slaves.

1. FORCED MOTHERHOOD

The conventional wisdom of centuries has linked and sometimes identified women with motherhood. The earliest artistic representations of women stress their fertility and even in the 20th century the identity between women and mothers often goes unquestioned. For instance, when Helene Deutsch, the noted Freudian analyst, wrote a two-volume work on *The Psychology of Women* in the mid-1940s, the first volume was called *Girlhood*, the second, *Motherhood*.

Not only have women always given birth to children; in every culture, they have been assigned the primary responsibility for the routine care of young children. For this reason, human motherhood has been seen not only as a biological relationship, but also as a special kind of social relationship that invariably exists between mothers and their offspring. "Mothering," for example, means the characteristic relation of nurturance that mothers are thought to establish with their children, and frequently "mothering" is extended to any relationship in which one individual nurtures and cares for another.

Patriarchal ideology has explained and justified the connection between women and children in a variety of ways. Sometimes women have been thought to possess a maternal instinct or some innate capacity for nurturance that is supposed to make them especially well suited for childrearing. Often women have even been thought to resemble children. For the ancients, women, slaves and children were considered to be similarly deficient in rationality, and even in modern times women and children are thought to lack the ability to look after themselves. Consequently, women and children are accorded special protection: certain language is not supposed to be used before them and in wars and shipwrecks they are supposed to be the first to be evacuated. The conventional psychological stereotypes of women and children are similar and disparaging; both are conventionally characterized as willful, emotional, weak and dependent. Even the prevailing standard of physical beauty for women portrays them as resembling children with wide eyes, a small nose, and an almost hairless body.

A successful ideology is never straightforwardly false; it does not describe the world as totally other than it is. Instead, a successful ideology is a seductive blend of truth and misrepresentation that distorts and obscures the facts rather than denying them completely. According to radical feminism, the patriarchal ideology of motherhood does exactly this. It identifies more or less correctly many of the special qualities that women develop as mothers, but it obscures the fact that these qualities are developed in a situation of domination.

Radical feminists assert that women are forced to be mothers. Patriarchy has many means of compulsion. Contemporary patriarchy deprives young women of adequate contraceptive information, and the contraceptives it does make available are inconvenient, unreliable, expensive and dangerous. Patriarchy limits abortions and often seeks to deny them entirely, but at the same time

it subjects women to intense and unremitting pressure to engage in sexual relations. Usually the pressure is to engage in intercourse, a form of sexual interaction which does not give maximum sexual gratification to most women but which is the only form of sexual expression that results in pregnancy. Often women are simply raped: in the contemporary United States, a rape is said to occur every five minutes.

Patriarchal ideology and economics are additional forces compelling women to be mothers. According to patriarchal ideology, motherhood is the only way in which a woman can discover true fulfillment and genuine respect. Women who are unable to bear children are pitied; those who do not want to do so are described as "immature," "unfeminine," "unnatural" or "selfish." The poor conditions and low pay of most jobs available to women impel them into marriage, and having children is invariably the price a woman must pay in return for support from a man. Even when women engage in paid labor, radical feminists assert that they are often expected to perform for other adults the same kinds of nurturing tasks that mothers typically perform for their children.

Patriarchy not only forces women to become mothers; on the radical feminist view, it also determines the conditions of their motherhood. The male title "head of the household" is not merely honorific, even in contemporary industrial society. Individual men dominate within their homes: they are recognized as the ultimate source of discipline for children, and they evaluate their wives' childrearing performance by reference to their own criteria of how children should behave. Even if the individual father is absent, the system of patriarchy dictates the values to which women's childrearing should conform. According to radical feminism, these are the values of hierarchy and competition, abstract rationality and control, buying, fighting and winning. These patriarchal values are most clearly evident in capitalist society but radical feminists perceive them as modified only slightly under socialism. Given the predominance of these values, children must be reared to accept them. They must learn to submit to "superiors" and to dominate "inferiors"; they must learn to control their emotions and to take their places in existing institutions. Radical feminists view the apparent differences between patriarchal societies as merely superficial:

The mode of childrearing in patriarchy is to control and dominate the child's will. In capitalism the child's will is directed towards serving the interests of corporations; in socialism it is directed towards serving the state. In patriarchy to nurture oneself is actually a revolutionary act.

Therefore, although women are told that they are the nurturers of the world, women in patriarchy do not have the power to nurture—if by nurturance we mean supporting the unique will of the child to grow into its full potential as a self-regulating individual. Capitalism and socialism, the institutions of patriarchy—which control the mother and child—both conflict with nurturance.²⁵

Mothers under capitalist patriarchy are expected to absorb the impact of two opposing sets of values. In opposition to a society that values individualism, mothers are expected to embrace their servitude voluntarily, to sacrifice their own interests completely to those of others and even to deny that they could have interests that conflict with those of their children. In addition, mothers are expected to create a nest of emotional warmth and security that will give life to beings who must leave that nest to survive in a death-dealing culture. Mothers under patriarchy continuously confront a dilemma: should they rear their children according to the life-giving values of trust and nurturance that

their own experience as mothers allows them to realize, however incompletely? Should they encourage their children's desire "to live openly, creatively, trustfully and safely with others?"²⁶ Or should they foster instead the dominant patriarchal values that will enable their children to be accepted and to survive in male culture?

Under patriarchy, mothers are trapped between contradictory values. Inevitably, the experiential quality of their relationships is conflictual and ambivalent. Adrienne Rich has described some of those experiences. She speaks of the "tragic, unnecessary rivalry" she felt toward her own mother, and of her relationship with the father of her children: "I experienced my depressions, bursts of anger, sense of entrapment, as burdens my husband was forced to bear because he loved me; I felt grateful to be loved in spite of bringing him those burdens."²⁷ She speaks of the ambivalence that feminist mothers feel in rearing their sons:

What do we fear? That our sons will accuse us of making them into misfits and outsiders? That they will suffer as we have suffered from patriarchal reprisals? Do we fear they will somehow lose their male status and privilege, even as we are seeking to abolish that inequality? Must a woman see her child as "the enemy" in order to teach him that he need not imitate a "macho" style of maleness? How does even a mother genuinely love a son who has contempt for women—or is this that bondage, misnamed love, that so often exists between women and men?²⁸

Rich also speaks of the ambivalence that daughters have for their mothers:

"Matrophobia" as the poet Lynn Sukenick has termed it is the fear not of one's mother or of motherhood, but of *becoming one's mother*. Thousands of daughters see their mothers as having taught a compromise and self-hatred they are struggling to win free of, the one through whom the restrictions and degradations of a female existence were perforce transmitted. Easier by far to hate and reject a mother outright than to see beyond her to the forces acting upon her. But where a mother is hated to the point of matrophobia there may also be a deep underlying pull towards her, a dread that if one relaxes one's guard one will identify with her completely. An adolescent daughter may live at war with her mother yet borrow her clothes, her perfume.²⁹

The structure of mothering under patriarchy has consequences that stretch far beyond the individual family. It creates the masculine and feminine character types that, in the view of some radical feminists, are the main supports of patriarchy. Shulamith Firestone provides a revised Freudian account of how the emergence of femininity in girls and masculinity in boys is a response not to the difference in their parents' anatomy but rather to the difference in power between their mothers and their fathers in the context of a male-dominant culture.³⁰ According to Firestone, both girls and boys are attracted initially to their mothers because their mothers are their first caretakers. Soon, however, both sexes come to envy and admire their fathers' opportunities for what Firestone calls "travel and adventure." Both girls and boys try to win favor with their fathers but, whereas boys can do this by imitating masculine characteristics, girls can win male approval only by the feminine wiles of flirtation and seduction.

Firestone's politicized version of Freud is only one of several radical feminist accounts that demonstrate how the patriarchal institution of motherhood re-

produces the fathers and mothers of the future. Adrienne Rich writes:

Even if contraception were perfected to infallibility, so that no woman need ever again bear an unwanted child; even if laws and customs change—as long as women and women only are the nurturers of children, our sons will grow up looking only to women for compassion, resenting strength in women as “control”, clinging to women when we try to move into a new mode of relationship. As long as society itself is patriarchal—which means antimaternal—there can never be enough mothering for sons who have to grow up under the rule of the Fathers, in a public “male” world separate from the private “female” world of the affections.³¹

Dorothy Dinnerstein argues a similar thesis.

The deepest root of our acquiescence to the maiming and mutual imprisonment of men and women lies in a monolithic fact of human childhood: Under the arrangements that now prevail, a woman is the parental person who is every infant's first love, first witness, and first boss, the person who presides over the infant's first encounters with the natural surround and who exists for the infant as the first representative of the flesh. . . .

It is in the relation with [the mother] that the child experiences the earliest version of what will be a lifelong internal conflict: the conflict between our rootedness in the body's acute, narrow joys and vicissitudes and our commitment to larger-scale human concerns.³²

Dinnerstein's argument is complex but it consists at least partly in the assertion that cultural misogyny is rooted in infants' primitive rage toward their mothers, since mothers are the ones who, under traditional childrearing arrangements, must introduce children to their “irreparable” grief.

the loss of this infant illusion of omnipotence—the discovery that circumstance is incompletely controllable, and that there exist centers of subjectivity, of desire and will, opposed to or indifferent to one's own—is an original and basic human grief.³³

Dinnerstein believes that the motherrearing of children also explains the apparently universal identification of women with non-human nature: because “the early mother's boundaries are so indistinct,” we fail “to distinguish clearly between her and nature, we assign to each properties that belong to the other.”³⁴

Motherhood is central to many radical feminist analyses of women's situation. On the one hand, motherhood is seen as the source of women's special values and characteristics, the basis of female culture.

feminist culture is based on what is best and strongest in women, and as we begin to define ourselves as women, the qualities coming to the fore are the same ones a mother projects in the best kind of nurturing relationship to a child: empathy, intuitiveness, adaptability, awareness of growth as a process rather than as goal-ended, inventiveness, protective feeling toward others, and a capacity to respond emotionally as well as rationally.³⁵

On the other hand, motherhood, as it is institutionalized under patriarchy, is one of the bases of women's oppression. The point is not simply that rearing children is hard and demanding work: the patriarchal sentimentalization of

motherhood is challenged by authors as diverse as Betty Friedan and V. I. Lenin. Nor is the point even that the patriarchal definition of women as mothers excludes women from the public world outside the home, although that is certainly part of it. What radical feminists point out, and what no other feminists have stated so clearly, is that motherhood under patriarchy is forced labor. Men determine whether children are born, under what conditions they are reared and what counts as successful childrearing. Women have responsibility only for the daily details of a process whose totality is male-controlled. The structure of the patriarchal institution of motherhood corrupts and debases the quality of relationships between fathers, mothers, and children. Moreover, the patriarchal institution of motherhood is perhaps the fundamental process in reproducing male dominance. Male dominance is grounded in men's control of procreation, in the dominance of fathers over mothers. It is indeed rule by the fathers, and it is aptly called patriarchy.

2. SEXUAL SLAVERY

Women under patriarchy are not only mothers; according to radical feminism, women under patriarchy are also sexual slaves. These two aspects of women's condition are not independent of each other; most obviously, forced motherhood begins with sexual coercion. Patriarchal ideology, however, typically opposes women as sexual beings to women as mothers. The cult of the Virgin Mary is perhaps the most extreme example of this feature of patriarchal ideology, but the same phenomenon is also evident in the exaggerated respect given to mothers, as contrasted with the contempt and disgust shown toward women's sexuality. Of course, the patriarchal separation between motherhood and sexuality is largely an ideological illusion for, as we shall see, most mothers are still forced to exploit their sexuality, either for their husbands or in their paid work.

With the partial exception of mothers, the male culture defines women as sexual objects for male pleasure. For much of her life, every woman is evaluated continuously in those terms. Within the patriarchal culture of advanced capitalist nations even women's paid work is sexualized, and "sex appeal" is often an explicitly acknowledged qualification for "women's jobs." Not only do men evaluate women in terms of their sexual desirability; they also assume that women themselves are concerned primarily with being sexually desirable to men. When a man wears baggy clothing or refuses to shave or to curl or straighten his hair, he is assumed to be doing it for his own comfort. When a woman does the same thing, she is interpreted as "lazy" or as "punishing" men.³⁶ In the context of patriarchal culture, she is indeed defying men. If she is young, whatever she does is interpreted in sexual terms; she cannot avoid either reinforcing or challenging the patriarchal stereotype of women as sexual objects. Only when she is older and when male standards define her as no longer desirable does sexual interest in her fade. She then sinks into invisibility.³⁷

Having defined women as sexual objects, men seek possession of those objects. They use ideological, economic, legal and even physical coercion to gain sexual possession of women. Superficially, women's sexual experiences differ widely from each other: some women are prostitutes, some are virgins; some women are raped, while others are protected with obsessive care. Beneath the superficial variety, however, radical feminists assert the underlying fact that men control women's sexuality for their own purposes. Radical feminists believe that women, whether they recognize it or not, are the sexual slaves of men.

Consequently, women's sexual relation with men is typically that of rape.

The form of rape most commonly recognized is straightforward physical coercion. Rape may not have existed in every society, but it is a defining feature of patriarchy. Women are always raped in war and are considered by the winning side to be part of its legitimate booty.³⁸ In the United States, the F.B.I. lists forcible rape as one of the three most violent crimes (the other two are murder and aggravated assault); it is the most frequently committed violent crime and, according to statistics, it is committed with increasing frequency. F.B.I. statistics reveal that reported rapes doubled from 27,620 in 1967 to 56,730 in 1976.³⁹ Only one rape in ten is reported to the police, but feminist publicity may be encouraging a higher rate of reporting. For this reason, it is difficult to know how much of the statistical increase in rape is due to increased frequency of reporting. If present trends continue, however, it is estimated that one woman out of three in the United States will be forcibly raped in her lifetime.

Overtly, patriarchal ideology condemns rape; covertly, it legitimizes rape by viewing it as normal. Under patriarchy, not only are women defined as sexual objects but men are regarded as having a "drive" toward heterosexual intercourse that is almost overwhelming and kept in check only by fear of the law and by respect of women's "honor." Sometimes these constraints are inadequate. Law enforcement may be uncertain, as in time of war, at night, or in secluded places, or there may be an excuse to disregard a woman's "honor." In courts of law, accused rapists often use the defense that the victim "asked for it." As defined by the patriarchy, "asking for it" may include speaking to a man, dating him, allowing him into one's home, wearing "provocative" clothing or even going out alone at night. Because patriarchal culture defines women as sexually passive or receptive, it is thought reasonable to interpret a woman's uninterested behavior as expressive of sexual interest. Sometimes even outright refusal is interpreted as assent.⁴⁰ A woman is invariably considered to have assented to rape if she has previously engaged in sexual relations with anyone other than her husband. When a rape case comes to court, the investigations into the accuser's sexual history often make it seem as though the woman rather than the man is on trial. Although patriarchal ideology officially condemns rape, its asymmetrical definitions of male and female sexuality provide an implicit legitimization of rape.

According to patriarchal ideology, rape is wrong because it violates a woman's "honor." Her honor is defined either as her virginity or as her sexual fidelity to her husband. If a woman is unmarried, her "power to withhold or grant sexual access is an important bargaining weapon" in her search for a husband.⁴¹ Rape laws are justified by patriarchy as being necessary in part to defend a woman's power to bargain her virginity. Under patriarchy, however, a woman's virginity is intrinsically valuable not to the woman herself, but only to her future husband.

The consent standard in our society does more than protect a significant item of social currency for women; it fosters, and is in turn bolstered by, a masculine pride in the exclusive possession of a sexual object. The consent of a woman to sexual intercourse awards the man a privilege of bodily access, a personal prize whose value is enhanced by sole ownership . . . An additional reason for the man's condemnation of rape may be found in the threat to his status from a decrease in the "value" of his sexual "possession" which would result from forcible violation.⁴²

Radical feminists point to this kind of statement to demonstrate that rape law is designed in fact to protect the interests of men rather than of women. "The man responds to this undercutting of his status as possessor of the girl with hostility toward the rapist; no other restitution device is available. The law of rape provides an orderly outlet for his vengeance."⁴³ That rape laws exist to protect the rights of men over women's bodies rather than the rights of women over their own bodies is shown even more clearly, if possible, by the fact that almost nowhere can a man be convicted of raping his own wife. Under patriarchy, her body is assumed to belong to him.

Needless to say, the radical feminist condemnation of rape is based on quite different grounds from the patriarchal condemnation. Radical feminists see rape as a political act which is oppressive on many levels. Susan Griffin quotes a group of French feminists whose statement against rape, delivered at the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women, included the following words:

Legally, rape is recognized as a crime with physical aspects only; namely the penetration of the vagina by the penis against the will of the victim. In effect, however, the real crime is the annihilation by the man of the woman as a human being.⁴⁴

Griffin herself writes:

Rape is an act of aggression in which the victim is denied her self-determination. It is an act of violence, which, if not actually followed by beatings or murder, nevertheless always carries with it the threat of death. And finally, rape is a form of mass terrorism, for the victims of rape are chosen indiscriminately, but the propagandists for male supremacy broadcast that it is women who cause rape by being unchaste or in the wrong place at the wrong time—in essence by behaving as though they were free.⁴⁵

Continually, radical feminists emphasize that:

Rape is a punishment without crime or guilt—at least not subjective guilt. It is punishment, rather, for the *objective* crime of femaleness. That is why it is indiscriminate. It is primarily a lesson for the whole class of women—a strange lesson, in that it does not teach a form of behavior which will save women from it. *Rape teaches instead the objective, innate, and unchanging subordination of women relative to men.*⁴⁶

It may be objected that men as well as women are raped, particularly in total institutions such as military forces, boarding schools and prisons. The recognition of this may seem to weaken the radical feminist claim that rape is the archetypal act "by which *all men* keep *all women* in a state of fear."⁴⁷ Radical feminists acknowledge that the rape of men occurs, but they claim that the special humiliation of rape for men lies precisely in the fact that a raped man is treated as a woman. He is subordinated, humiliated, and even called by the names that refer to women. It is not impossible for a woman to rape another woman but, one feminist has argued that it is impossible for a woman to rape a man.⁴⁸ According to Louanna Aptheker, the reason why a woman cannot rape a man is that a sexual assault on a man by a woman has a different social meaning from a sexual assault by a man on a woman or on another man. A female victim of male rape is considered to have lost her honor and to have been degraded, and something similar is considered to have happened

to the male victim of male rape. But the male victim of a female "rapist" is either overtly envied by other men, if the rape is not painful, or else he is viewed as the victim of a perverted torturer. The divergent standards of masculine and feminine sexual "normality" under patriarchy result in very different interpretations being assigned to physically similar acts, depending on whether they are performed by males or by females. Whatever one thinks of this argument, the situations in which it could even arise are extremely atypical. The fact remains that, in contemporary society, it is extremely rare for there to be an event that even remotely resembles the rape of a man by a woman. Rape is typically an act performed by men and its social meaning is to degrade and "feminize" the victim.

Rape, then, is an effective political device. It is not an arbitrary act of violence by one individual on another; it is a political act of *oppression* (never rebellion) exercised by members of a powerful class on members of the powerless class. Rape is supported by a consensus in the male class. It is preached by male-controlled and all-pervasive media with only a minimum of disguise and restraint. It is communicated to the male population as an act of freedom and strength and a male right never to be denied.⁴⁹

To radical feminists, the rape carried out under the overt threat of physical force is only the tip of the iceberg. Another form of rape is prostitution. In *Female Sexual Slavery*, Kathleen Barry has documented the existence of a worldwide "traffic in women." Women are forced into prostitution through a variety of means, from deceptive promises of jobs or marriage, through the "invisible enslavement" of love and loyalty for a pimp, to physical kidnapping and imprisonment. Barry maintains that:

*Female sexual slavery is present in ALL situations where women or girls cannot change the immediate conditions of their existence; where regardless of how they got into those conditions they cannot get out; and where they are subject to sexual violence and exploitation.*⁵⁰

It is possible to enslave women only because patriarchal society has institutionalized the patriarchal definition of women as valuable primarily for their sexuality. Like rape, conventionally defined, prostitution is defined as a normal response to female sexual seductiveness and male sexual "drive." Even where prostitution is illegal, male law enforcement officials look away and the women themselves see no alternatives open to them. Barry writes:

because it is invisible to social perception and because of the clandestine nature of its practices, it is presently impossible to statistically measure the incidence of female sexual slavery. But considering the arrested sexual development that is understood to be normal in the male population and considering the numbers of men who are pimps, procurers, members of syndicate and free-lance slavery gangs, operators of brothels and massage parlors, connected with sexual exploitation entertainment, pornography purveyors, wife beaters, child molesters, incest perpetrators, johns (tricks) and rapists, one cannot help but be momentarily stunned by the enormous male population participating in female sexual slavery. The huge number of men engaged in these practices should be cause for a declaration of a national and international emergency, a crisis in sexual violence. But

what should be cause for alarm is instead accepted as normal social intercourse.⁵¹

Patriarchal ideology refuses to acknowledge that prostitutes are coerced by men. Instead, it identifies prostitutes as seducers and exploiters of men, as masochists or as nymphomaniacs. Prostitutes are viewed as "fallen" or dishonorable women—by contrast with those women who preserve their honor for their husbands. Thus patriarchy draws a sharp line between prostitutes and "respectable" women, the latter being wives and especially mothers.

In response to the stigmas of patriarchal ideology, liberal feminism has sought to rehabilitate the reputation of prostitutes by asserting that prostitution is a legitimate job option for women, provided that no coercion is involved. The liberal conception of coercion, however, is much narrower than radical feminist or even than the Marxist conceptions. Marxists see that people can be coerced by economic necessity, but radical feminists point out the total coerciveness of a social system in which the primary criterion for evaluating women, other than their fertility, is their sexual attractiveness to men. For this reason, radical feminists assert that even marriage, under patriarchy, is a form of prostitution or sexual slavery. As Karen Lindsey puts it, "We have long held that all women sell themselves: that the only available roles of a woman—wife, secretary, girlfriend—all demand the selling of herself to one or more men."⁵²

Women are coerced into marriage by the same forces that impel them into prostitution—with the exception that, at least in the advanced capitalist nations, there is less physical kidnapping of wives. Women marry not only because they are deceived by the patriarchal ideology that defines "love and marriage" as women's highest fulfilment, but because they have few other options open to them. Occupational segregation forces women into the lowest-paid job categories and often requires of them the same kinds of service and nurturing functions that are expected of wives. "Free marriage" under patriarchy is therefore as illusory as the "free contract" between employer and employee under capitalism.

Once married, the wife has even less freedom than the typical wage worker. An early radical feminist examination of the legal institution of marriage found it structurally similar to the institution of American slavery. Sheila Cronan notes:

Whereas the legal responsibilities of the wife include providing all necessary domestic services—that is, maintaining the home (cleaning, cooking, washing, purchasing food and other necessities, etc.), providing for her husband's personal needs and taking care of the children—the husband in return is obligated only to provide her with basic maintenance—that is, bed and board.⁵³

Cronan claims that the husband has the right to decide where the couple will live and that he can charge his wife with desertion if she refuses to move—even if such a move requires her to change her citizenship. Although the legal requirement that the wife must reside with her husband may have changed in some places since "The Feminists" did their research for Cronan's article, the fact remains that most wives are forced to live with their husbands, simply because the husband is the major breadwinner. In these circumstances, a legal requirement of residency is unnecessary. In addition, the marriage laws of most advanced capitalist countries require wives to engage in sexual relations with their husbands and rarely admit even the legal possibility of rape within

marriage. The inequality in the husband/wife relation allows radical feminists to argue that sexual relations occurring within marriage are in fact a form of rape.

From the radical feminist perspective, indeed, most heterosexual relations are indistinguishable from rape. The reality of the coercion involved is concealed, however, often even from the participants themselves, by the patriarchal mystification of romantic love. In consequence, Firestone says, "love, perhaps even more than childbearing, is the pivot of women's oppression today."⁵⁴

Not only do women need a husband for economic support but they are taught to develop an emotional need for a man's commitment. In trying to achieve such a commitment, "one of (their) most potent weapons is sex."⁵⁵ The emotions which accompany this transaction are called "love" by the patriarchy. They are in fact, for women, a clinging possessiveness and, for men, an unrealistic idealization of the woman concerned—in order to elevate her to the man's social level. Firestone writes: "when we talk about romantic love we mean love corrupted by its power context—the sex class system—into a diseased form of love that then in turn reinforces this sex class system."⁵⁶ Firestone shows how this corruption occurs through the concentration of almost all emotional needs into erotic heterosexual relationships, through the "sex privatization" of women which blinds women to the depersonalized nature of men's attraction to them as sexual objects, and through the promulgation of a "beauty ideal" which controls and stereotypes women.

The rape of women is often concealed by the patriarchal mystique of romance. Sometimes, however, the patriarchy romanticizes unmistakable rape. Kate Millett was one of the first to point out that the degradation and humiliation of women is considered erotic by the patriarchy. In the first chapter of her best-selling *Sexual Politics*, Millett analyzes descriptions of heterosexual encounters as they occur in three respected 20th-century male novelists, D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, and Norman Mailer.⁵⁷ In all these encounters, Millett shows how the man uses his sexuality as a way of controlling and degrading women. She examines in detail the attitudes toward women that are implicit in these authors' descriptions of heterosexual activity and concludes that, for each author, heterosexual activity is a way of subjugating women. For Lawrence and Miller, the penis is a kind of deity, while for Mailer it is a gun or an avenger. Sex is identified with excretion or with violence and so women are viewed as "sexual comfort stations" or as legitimate victims.

Millett's exposure of the sadistic and womanhating values inherent in contemporary literary conceptions of heterosexual activity has been followed by increasing radical feminist protest against pornography. Feminists have always been aware that "pornography is sexist propaganda, no more and no less" because of its portrayal of women as glamorous sex objects for male pleasure.⁵⁸ Radical feminists now point out that contemporary pornography not only portrays women as sexual beings, it also seeks to eroticize the pain, humiliation, torture, dismemberment and even murder of women. For this reason, Kathleen Barry defines pornography as "the ideology of cultural sadism."⁵⁹ Robin Morgan sees pornography as providing a rationale for the rape of women, which is the core of male culture.

Pornography is the theory, and rape the practice. And what a practice. The violation of an individual woman is *the* metaphor for man's forcing himself on whole nations (rape as the crux of war), on nonhuman creatures (rape as the lust behind hunting and related carnage), and on the planet

itself (reflected even in our language—carving up “virgin territory”, with strip-mining often referred to as “rape of the land”).⁶⁰

Women under patriarchy are raped or romanticized—often both simultaneously. Partly for this reason, radical feminists argue that, under patriarchy, heterosexuality itself is oppressive to women. They claim more than the obvious point that patriarchy institutionalizes heterosexuality as a cultural norm, sometimes called heterosexism, a norm that deprives lesbian women of their right to sexual self-determination and defines them as sick, abnormal, and even criminal. Nor is the radical feminist point simply that heterosexism forces women to turn away from primary relations with other women, often preventing them from even considering the lesbian alternative. Although radical feminists make both these points, they argue in addition that heterosexuality is oppressive even to non-lesbian women—although the coercive power of patriarchy makes it impossible to tell for certain whether any woman is indeed non-lesbian.

Apart from the pressure it puts on women to suppress the lesbian side of their sexuality, patriarchal norms of heterosexuality define masculine and feminine sexuality in such a way that the woman is an object for the man. Adrienne Rich writes: “all objectification is a prelude to and condition of slavery.”⁶¹ The social inequality between women and men is reflected inevitably in heterosexual relations, even if the man decides not to utilize his male privileges and so makes the most conscientious efforts to participate in an egalitarian relationship with a woman. One radical feminist puts it this way: “every fuck is a rape even if it feels nice because every man has power and privilege over women, whether he uses it blatantly or subtly.”⁶² Another radical feminist writes:

We do not doubt that there are straight relationships that derive their meaning and content from the people involved and not from the norm alone. But even in those relationships the male partner always has the option of falling back on “masculine” behavior in the sense of his conditioning, thereby forcing his partner to fall back on “feminine” acceptance in the sense of her conditioning. He has that option because the oppression of women by men has the status of a universal axiom: no one is surprised by “axiomatic” behavior, but this is precisely how everyone confirms it. That is why the important thing is not that there are men who do not exercise the option they have. The important thing is that the option exists whether or not it is exercised.⁶³

3. MALE CONTROL OF WOMEN'S BODIES

According to radical feminism, the oppression of women is rooted in male control of women's fertility and women's sexuality. The accepted shorthand way of referring to this situation is as the male control of women's bodies.

From a non-patriarchal perspective, it is obvious that women's bodies are not only capable of but actually perform far more than sexual and procreative functions. It is on these functions, however, that radical feminism usually focuses, at least the radical feminism of the advanced capitalist nations. Women, indeed, suffer systematic exploitation by men in non-sexual and non-procreative ways: in African peasant societies, women do much of the heavy farming work;⁶⁴ in the new industries of the so-called Third World, women are the new industrial proletariat.⁶⁵ But it has been unusual for radical feminists in the United States

to attempt to develop a feminist economic analysis, where "economics" is construed in the conventional sense of explaining the prevailing system of producing and distributing food, shelter, clothing, etc.⁶⁶ Even radical feminist discussions of women's work outside the home usually emphasize the sexualization of that work or its similarity to mothering.

Several explanations are possible for the radical feminist emphasis on sexuality and mothering. One might be a belief that the patriarchal definition of women as mothers and sex objects in fact reflects the reality of women's situation under patriarchy. Radical feminism flourishes mainly in the advanced capitalist nations; it may be that women's work is defined more in terms of sexuality and procreation under western capitalism than it is in other parts of the world where women are also primary food producers. Another reason for the radical feminist emphasis on sexuality and procreation might be a belief that male dominance in all its manifestations is grounded ultimately on men's control over women's sexual and procreative capacities. This belief would fit well with the tendency of many radical feminists to believe that biological differences are the cause of male dominance. Certainly it is true that patriarchal culture has virtually excluded procreation and sexuality from the domain of politics and in that way excluded them from systematic critical scrutiny. The radical feminist emphasis on fertility and sexuality may be a necessary counterbalance to patriarchal political theories.

The first radical feminists, writing at the end of the 1960s, modeled their writings on existing political theory, particularly, though not exclusively, on Marxist theory. The influence of traditional ways of theorizing can be seen in the work of Ti-Grace Atkinson, who wrote a conventionally outrageous article challenging "the institution of sexual intercourse," but whose definition of "institution" appealed to the work of the established, liberal, Harvard philosopher John Rawls.⁶⁷ Similarly, Shulamith Firestone imitated the language of Marxist theory in her attempts to identify the "material base of male dominance."⁶⁸ The radical feminist writers who emerged in the 1970s gradually abandoned the "linear" "male" style of traditional male political theory. Radical feminist writing has always been lively and colloquial, scattered with vivid and immediately jolting examples of women's oppression. In the 1970s, radical feminist authors continued their use of striking examples, but they tried less frequently to incorporate these into an explicit and comprehensive system. Instead, the most influential radical feminist writing became increasingly poetic, broadening its appeal but becoming more difficult to translate into traditional political terms. Susan Griffin, whose own feminist writing began with an analysis of rape that, in form at least, was fairly traditional but who moved rapidly into poetry, reports:

In a recent conversation with Kathy Barry, a feminist scholar, thinker, writer, friend, she told me that she no longer likes to use the word *theory* for our thought since that word implies a special kind of separation between thought, feeling and experience which has sprung from patriarchy.⁶⁹

What constitutes a theory, of course, is open to a number of interpretations. These interpretations depend in part on one's epistemology or theory of knowledge, in part on the phenomena that need a theoretical explanation. For instance, one might expect a theory of film criticism to take a different form from a theory of geological formation. When social phenomena have to be explained, it is common to think of a theory as postulating certain underlying mechanisms that will provide a causal explanation of observed patterns of

regularities in those phenomena. If one thinks of a theory in this way, it is evident that an adequate theoretical account of any social phenomena presupposes an adequate description of those phenomena: if the phenomena in question are misdescribed, if existing regularities are unrecognized or if regularities are asserted that are unimportant or even nonexistent, then the theoretical inquiry will be misdirected. For this reason, although it is possible to distinguish between theories and descriptions in terms of the levels of reality to which they refer, it is impossible to make a sharp separation between theory and description. Descriptions of reality are theory laden, at least in the sense that they are compatible or incompatible with certain theoretical accounts; similarly, although theories are supposed to explain rather than contradict observations or descriptions, they may imply that certain observations have been misinterpreted or that the supposed data should be redescribed.

When some radical feminists deny that they are building theories, their denial can be interpreted in several ways. On the one hand, they may mean to reject prevailing epistemological views about the ways in which systematic accounts of reality are created and validated. This interpretation will be discussed in Chapter 11. On the other hand, they may mean that they are doing something that is often thought of as preliminary to theory, namely, that they are engaged in description. Radical feminists claim that even existing descriptions of reality are male-biased and that patriarchal language itself distorts reality. In particular, patriarchal language conceals the way in which women are systematically oppressed and exploited. Consequently, radical feminists see their first task as being simply to redescribe reality and, in so doing, to reconstruct patriarchal language. Radical feminists in the United States often call this process "naming." Mary Daly writes, "women have had the power of naming stolen from us."⁷⁰ She believes that women must reclaim the right to name, that the "liberation of language is rooted in the liberation of ourselves."⁷¹

The truth behind the manifestations of the charism of "tongues" is the need to break out of the iron mask of language forms that are strangling us. Women's new hearing and naming is cosmic upheaval, in contrast to this charism which is a controllable and cooptable ripple of protest. Feminist naming is a deliberate confrontation with language structures of our heritage. It transcends the split between nonrational sounds of "tongues" and the merely rational semantic games of linguistic analysis, for it is a break out of the deafening noise of sexist language that has kept us from hearing our own word.⁷²

What radical feminism offers, then, is a fundamental challenge to conventional ways of describing reality. In this, it differs from liberal feminism, whose critical thrust consists in its making new value judgments about facts that are generally recognized. For instance, liberal feminism might argue that the lack of maternity leave or sex-segregated sports programs are unjust. The radical feminist analysis, however, challenges not only conventional value judgments about existing reality, but also conventional descriptions of that reality. It suggests that what has been called consent must be renamed coercion, that supposedly free women are in fact enslaved. The goal of radical feminist analysis is a "change in consciousness,"⁷³ a change that might be described as a paradigm shift. Radical feminist analysis aims to redescribe reality, to make us see old facts in new ways and to perceive regularities where we saw none before. The radical feminist use of poetry and metaphor is designed to facilitate this shift of paradigm.

The radical feminist paradigm is still emerging. As Griffin says, "The atrocities continue, and we have not yet even named them all."⁷⁴ Radical feminists differ somewhat in how they name reality. Mary Daly speaks of men as necrophiliacs and as "nothing-lovers."⁷⁵ Andrea Dworkin writes:

Men love death. In everything they make, they hollow out a central place for death, let its rancid smell contaminate every dimension of whatever still survives. Men especially love murder. In art they celebrate it, and in life they commit it. They embrace murder as if life without it would be devoid of passion, meaning and action, as if murder were solace, stilling their sobs as they mourn the emptiness and alienation of their lives.

Male history, romance, and adventure are stories of murder, literal or mythic. Men of the right justify murder as the instrument of establishing or maintaining order, and men of the left justify murder as the instrument of effecting insurrection, after which they justify it in the same terms as men on the right. In male culture, slow murder is the heart of eros, fast murder is the heart of action, and systematized murder is the heart of history.⁷⁶

Adrienne Rich disagrees. She insists that "slavery and death are in fact two different states" and believes that it is more accurate to understand patriarchy in terms of slavery.⁷⁷ Kathleen Barry uses the concept of "sex-colonization," showing it is a "cross-cultural network" or system

which includes wife-battery; incest; marital rape; the Muslim code of "honor" regarding female chastity; marriage through seclusion, arrangement, and bride-price; genital mutilation; and enforced prostitution, of which pornography is the ideology. She includes in this system . . . taboos on and punishment for lesbian behavior, including the vogue for pseudo-lesbian pornography . . . and the wipeout of actual lesbian history and expression.⁷⁸

At the end of this chapter and in Chapter 11, I shall discuss some of the ways in which radical feminist thinking both resembles and differs from traditional conceptions of theory. Whether or not it is theoretical in the traditional sense, however, radical feminist writing is clearly not neutral with respect to traditional political theory. It is developing an account of social reality which forms a sharp contrast with the account presented by male theory and language. Central to this account is the concept of male dominance expressed universally through male control of women's sexual and procreative capacities. Artemis March writes:

"feminist materialists" (Griffin, 1971; Dworkin, 1974, 1977; Brownmiller, 1975; Morgan, 1978; Firestone, 1971) believe that the primary object of patriarchal control is women's bodies/sexuality. They view the exploitation of women as direct, and as physically violent and coercive. Their work points to the patriarchal inseparability of violence and sexuality and most of these writers find that behavior to be motivated by fear/awe/envy/hatred of women. These writers (and I include myself) are more likely to turn to religious and medical institutions and sources as the primary agencies solidifying, enforcing and reproducing male control and misogyny.⁷⁹

Similarly, Catherine A. MacKinnon, writing in a more formal, academic mode than many of the most influential radical feminists, sums up in this way the contemporary feminist analysis of women's oppression:

Sexuality is to feminism what work is to Marxism: that which is most one's own, yet most taken away . . .

The molding, direction, and expression of sexuality organizes society into two sexes—women and men—which division underlies the totality of social relations . . . As the organized expropriation of the work of some for the benefit of others defines a class—workers—the organized expropriation of the sexuality of some for the use of others defines the sex, woman. Heterosexuality is its structure, gender and family its congealed forms, sex roles its qualities generalized to social persona, reproduction a consequence, and control its issue.⁸⁰

Radical feminists may vary in their naming, but they share a general agreement about the basic structure of social reality. It is a total system of male domination whose institutions form an almost impenetrable grid. This grid is a male construction that enables men to control women's bodies and that traps women as forced mothers and as sexual slaves.

Living the Revolution:

Radical Feminist Proposals for Social Change

"The way a question is asked limits and disposes the ways in which any answer to it is given." The way a problem is stated limits and disposes the ways in which its solution is conceived. The way that radical feminism formulates its analysis of women's oppression suggests a certain politics of women's liberation and rules out certain other political approaches.

Most urgently, the analysis of radical feminism points to the need for women to escape from the cages of forced motherhood and sexual slavery. The immediate goal of radical feminist politics must be for women to regain control over their own bodies. In the long run, radical feminism seeks to build a womanculture, a new society informed by the radical feminist values of wholeness, trust and nurturance, of sensuality, joy and wildness.

In order to create such a society, radical feminists need to prepare themselves. They need a womanspace, a space free from male intrusion. In this space, women can nurture each other and themselves. They can begin to practice their own values and become clearer about them by doing so. They can develop the skills and the strengths forbidden to women under patriarchy. They can begin to lay the foundations on which the womanculture will be built.

Feminism has always required a degree of separatism. Patriarchy, after all, has separated women from the rest of humanity, forcing them to inhabit a subordinate culture and providing images of women that tend to be "negative and derogatory. . . . Since most members of a given society think in terms of the concepts and assumptions of the dominant culture, this situation will foster a sense of inferiority in members of the oppressed group."⁸¹ To overcome this sense of inferiority and to develop their own solidarity as an oppressed group, feminists have always found it necessary to band together against their oppression. The groups they have formed have not always excluded men entirely, although men have always been a minority in them. Nor have such groups always provided a context in which women can live much of their lives. Most often,

feminist groups have been interest group organizations, organized along traditional political lines to further the interests of women as such. In the 1960s, women also separated from men for the purpose of "consciousness raising," to discuss their own experience and to reinterpret that experience in the light of an explicit recognition of male dominance. The contemporary radical feminist concept of womanspace or separatism is an extension of the kinds of separatism that have always been practiced by feminists, and by other oppressed groups. Instead of just separating themselves for brief periods, however, many radical feminists try to separate as much as possible of their lives from men, particularly the most intimate parts of their lives.

1. LESBIANISM

Given the radical feminist analysis of women's oppression, separatism in intimate relationships makes good sense. Unlike other feminists, radical feminists do not define women's oppression primarily in relation to the world outside the home. For radical feminists, women's oppression does not consist primarily in the lack of equal job opportunities or in exclusion from full participation in the public world. Instead, radical feminists see women as oppressed primarily in so-called intimate relations: in sexual and procreative relations, in the home, in the sphere of life that the male culture defines as personal rather than as political.

On the radical feminist analysis, marriage is one of the primary institutions oppressing women since it sanctions the most widespread forms of forced motherhood and sexual slavery. The first condition for escaping from forced motherhood and sexual slavery is escape from the patriarchal institution of marriage. Consequently, radical feminists urge women either not to marry or to leave their husbands. A few women who define themselves as radical feminists reject this tendency. Pat Mainardi complains that some of the arguments used against marriage are contradictory:

The line used by the Feminists: that married women had a class privilege over other women, that single women were more oppressed, that therefore married women must give up their class privilege of marriage and leave their husbands, was actually contradictory to their other line that married women were more oppressed.⁸²

Mainardi's voice is part of a tiny minority, however, and is quite out of harmony with the dominant radical feminist view that marriage is a way in which women are seduced into betraying their own deepest needs and into supporting the system of male dominance.

I realized that when I was married I had been bought off. I had accepted being subservient, sexually available, and keeper of his home in return for some degree of economic security and social acceptance. I had become a fat hen who gave up her freedom for regular corn.⁸³

Even more firmly entrenched than the institution of marriage is the institution of heterosexuality.

Heterosexuality keeps women separated from each other. Heterosexuality ties each woman to a man. Heterosexuality exhausts women because they

struggle with their man—to get him to stop oppressing them—leaving them with little energy for anything else.⁸⁴

The normative status of heterosexuality forces women to limit themselves sexually and emotionally to relationships with members of the caste that oppresses them, while denying them the possibility of establishing meaningful relationships with other women. Viewed in this light the straight norm is not really a sexual norm at all, but a powerful instrument in the perpetuation of the power relationship between the sexes.⁸⁵

Because heterosexuality buttresses patriarchy, genuine feminists must be lesbians. Charlotte Bunch writes:

Being a Lesbian means ending identification with, allegiance to, dependence on, and support of heterosexuality. It means ending your personal stake in the male world so that you join women, individually and collectively, in the struggle to end your oppression. Lesbianism is the key to liberation and only women who cut their ties to male privilege can be trusted to remain serious in the struggle against male dominance.⁸⁶

Ti-Grace Atkinson argues similarly:

(Can you imagine a Frenchman serving in the French army from 9 to 5, then trotting “home” to Germany for supper and overnight? That’s called game-playing, or collaboration, not political commitment.)

It is this commitment, by choice, full-time of one woman to others of her class that is called lesbianism. It is this full commitment, against any and all personal considerations if necessary, that constitutes the political significance of lesbianism.

There are women in the Movement who engage in sexual relations with other women, but who are married to men; these women are not lesbians in the political sense. These women claim the right to private lives; they are collaborators.

There are other women who have never had sexual relations with other women, but who have made and live a total commitment to this Movement; these women are lesbians in the political sense.⁸⁷

The definition of “lesbian” that Atkinson uses here is unusual because it does not define lesbianism primarily in terms of sexual interest. Elsewhere Atkinson argues that, while the primary emotional and political bonds of feminists should be with other women, it is better to refrain from sexual relations since those are too disruptive of the smooth functioning of feminist organizations.⁸⁸ Within radical feminism, there has been a tendency to define a lesbian “not by where she puts her hands but by where she puts her energy.” Adrienne Rich talks about the “lesbian continuum,” by which she means

a range—through each woman’s life and throughout history—of woman-identified experience; not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman. If we expand it to embrace many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support; if we can also hear in it such as associations as *marriage resistance* and the “haggard” behavior identified by Mary Daly . . . we begin to grasp breadths of female history and psychology which have lain out of

reach as a consequence of limited, mostly clinical, definitions of "lesbianism".⁸⁹

Some radical feminists, however, have rejected the tendency to broaden the term *lesbian* on grounds that this would understate the sexual component of women's relationships with each other and make *lesbian* mean little more than *feminist*. A purely "political" definition of lesbianism obscures the fact, deeply threatening to male dominant society, that women are often interested in each other in a sexual way. For many radical feminists, precisely the fact that lesbianism is sexual makes it political. Even lesbians who did not consciously choose lesbianism or who have not developed a sophisticated feminist consciousness defy the patriarchy directly, simply by being lesbian. Merely by virtue of their sexuality, they challenge the patriarchal definition of women.

Lesbianism is a threat to the ideological, political, personal, and economic basis of male supremacy. The Lesbian threatens the ideology of male supremacy by destroying the lie about female inferiority, weakness, passivity, and by denying women's "innate" need for men.⁹⁰

This is as true of lesbians of color as it is of white lesbians.⁹¹

Because lesbianism has deeply subversive political implications within a society where women are defined as sexual objects for men, radical feminism encourages women to become lesbians. A few self-defined radical feminist women have resisted this push, claiming that it denies women the freedom to determine their own form of sexual expression.⁹² To most radical feminists, however, this claim reasserts the liberal view that sexuality is a matter of personal choice or private morality, of no concern to anyone other than the individuals directly involved. Radical feminists reject this liberal conception of a private moral realm because it constitutes a denial that the personal is political.

As the question of homosexuality has become public, reformists define it as a private question of who you sleep with in order to sidetrack our understanding of the politics of sex. For the Lesbian-Feminist, it is not private; it is a political matter of oppression, domination, and power.⁹³

In a world devoid of male power and, therefore, sex roles, who you lived with, loved, slept with and were committed to would be irrelevant. All of us would be equal and have equal determination over the society and how it met our needs. Until this happens, how we use our sexuality and our bodies is just as relevant to our liberation as how we use our minds and our time.⁹⁴

Under patriarchy, radical feminists see lesbianism as inherently revolutionary. Women who refuse to come out as lesbian are "fat hens" who "primarily wanted the farmer to treat them a little better."⁹⁵ They are bought off with heterosexual privilege: "legitimacy (you are a real woman if you are with a man—a sexual definition again), prestige, money, social acceptance, and in some token cases political acceptance."⁹⁶ Those who are genuinely committed to the defeat of the patriarchy must come out as lesbians:

A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion.⁹⁷

We live in a male supremacist shitpile. At its most basic level this shitpile is upheld by fucking, marriage and breeding. Straight women serve this system by serving their men. Lesbians reject it by saying we won't fuck,

we won't marry, we won't breed and we'll damn well do as we please.⁹⁸

To be a Lesbian is to love oneself, woman, in a culture that denigrates and despises women. The Lesbian rejects male sexual/political domination; she defies his world, his social organization, his ideology, and his definition of her as inferior. Lesbianism puts women first while the society declares the male supreme. Lesbianism threatens male supremacy at its core. When politically conscious and organized, it is central to destroying our sexist, racist, capitalist, imperialist system.⁹⁹

In the early 1970s, the politics of intimate relations assumed great importance within the radical feminist community. Once heterosexuality had been left behind, new ways for women to live together would have to be developed. Rita Mae Brown wrote:

We must move out of our old living patterns and into new ones. Those of us who believe in this concept must begin to build collectives where women are committed to other women on all levels—emotional, physical, economic and political. Monogamy can be cast aside, no one will “belong” to another. Instead of being shut off from each other in overpriced cubicles we can be together, sharing the shitwork as well as the highs. Together we can go through the pain and liberation of curing the diseases we have all contracted in the world of male dominance, imperialism and death. Women-identified collectives are nothing less than the next step towards a Women's Revolution.¹⁰⁰

Lesbian collectives, however, experienced many of the same difficulties that were encountered by “mixed” collectives of the same period. One lesbian remembers with pain: “About a year ago I joined a lesbian collective that lived together one painful week and broke up, largely because several of us had not dealt with our class privilege.”¹⁰¹ Like heterosexual women, most lesbians are presently living alone or in couples, although they do not necessarily view this state of affairs as permanent. Yet radical feminists are now prepared to acknowledge that emotional changes come slowly and cannot be forced. The restructuring of intimate relations must occur in response to felt needs rather than for the sake of abstract political principles or what has come to be called, tongue in cheek, “political correctness.” Political correctness is seen as a typically male concept and Rita Mae Brown now advises women not to act only “on principle.”¹⁰²

In spite of their suspicion of abstract political correctness, radical feminists have not abandoned their central principle that the personal is political. One indication of the importance of this principle is the volume and intensity of the recent debate over the propriety of sado-masochistic forms of sexual expression within the lesbian community. For liberal feminism, the form in which one expresses one's sexuality is a private matter, so long as the participants are all consenting adults. Traditional Marxism has also excluded sexuality from the sphere of politics, with the exception of some recent reflections on how the oppression of homosexuals supports the capitalist family.¹⁰³ For radical feminism, however, lesbian sadomasochism is a matter of intense political concern.

The radical feminist controversy over sadomasochism is not a controversy over whether sadomasochistic practices should be tolerated or even outlawed. No radical feminist would call on the patriarchal state in order to ban any

voluntary lesbian practice. The debate is rather over the question whether sadomasochism can be accepted as a legitimate part of the womanculture. Some radical feminists attack sadomasochism as a coercive form of sexuality that is typically patriarchal; those who practice it are accused of violating the central values of feminism:

For women to degrade and hurt each other is to conform to and to confirm male myths that women are first and foremost sexual objects with all else peripheral, that we are so sex starved and orgasm focused that we will do whatever it takes to make us come—a myth that has steeped our psyches all too often in self loathing.

Lesbian-feminist s&m clearly models itself after straight and gay male cultures, cultures in which there is little room for women to discover and define sexuality beyond male constructs. We will, as women identified feminists, survive and flourish only to the extent that we can create positive, loving and life affirming relationships with each other, relationships that are the very pulse of our women's culture.¹⁰⁴

In reply, those who advocate sadomasochism argue that sadomasochism is concerned with fantasy rather than with reality, that the appearance of violence may be illusory. They point out that both participants agree to engage in a sadomasochistic encounter and that, contrary to appearances, the masochist is actually in control because she can halt the encounter at any time. Sadomasochists are engaging in radical sexual exploration but, by condemning sadomasochism, "The women's movement has become a moralistic force and it can contribute to the self-loathing and misery experienced by sexual minorities."¹⁰⁵

Even so, reply the critics, sadomasochism eroticizes violence and thus perpetuates the values of the male culture.

If we are unlikely to choose to give and take abuse, to humiliate and be humiliated, to exploit and be exploited in ordinary encounters, then to affirm this behavior in our sexual relationships is possible only when we separate our sexuality from the rest of our lives and objectify it. The separation between our sexual lives and everything else that we do is patriarchal through and through. So is objectified sexuality.

Sadomasochistic sexuality presupposes and advocates fragmented modes of being and doing. These modes are so fragmented that different, indeed contradictory, rules are employed to govern the different fragments. This kind of fragmentation stands in polar opposition to feminist visions. Feminism is about reintegration into an holistic mode of being and doing. We must reaffirm our commitment to the integrity of our bodies and our selves, a commitment which the vindication of sadomasochistic sexuality renders hopelessly compromised.¹⁰⁶

While the radical feminist discussion of sadomasochism cannot be recapitulated here in full, the discussion does illustrate the centrality of sexuality in the radical feminist conception of human nature and gender politics.

2. BUILDING A WOMANCULTURE

Although lesbianism is one step on the way to "a Women's Revolution," radical feminists are well aware that there are many other steps along the way. Lesbianism provides the basis for restructuring intimate relations so that they can instantiate

radical feminist values. To restructure other relations of daily life, it is necessary to create other institutions that will fulfill women's daily needs. These new institutions must be built by women only. Men's presence would bring the inevitable intrusion of male values; men's absence is necessary for women to heal their male-inflicted wounds, to strengthen their bonds with other women and to develop a distinctively female perspective on the world.

Radical feminist women are in the process of creating a wide variety of alternative institutions. A few of these are total communities, usually rural communities, where women seek to build new lives, as independently as possible of the patriarchy. Other radical feminist institutions focus on fulfilling particular needs, and the list is practically endless. It includes women's health centers which provide services ranging from abortion to feminist therapy, which stress disease prevention, and which teach women how to treat themselves through such techniques as herbal medicines and cervical self-examination. It includes women's educational projects that range from automobile maintenance to reading the tarot, from menstrual extraction to acupressure massage, from karate to feminist political theory. It includes the revival of a specifically women's spirituality, based on wicca or witchcraft, the ancient goddess religion driven underground by Judaeo-Christianity. It includes women's businesses, ranging from printing and publishing, through bookshops and restaurants, to carpentry and furniture removal. It includes services to women in crisis, such as telephone crisis lines, anti-rape squads and the provision of shelters to battered women. It includes the creation of a new world view, seen from women's perspective and expressed through journalism, radio, music, film, dance, poetry, painting, photography, sculpture and literature.

In spite of the variety of these radical feminist enterprises, they are all directed toward certain common purposes. Simultaneously, they are supposed to benefit those who build the new institutions, those who are their clients and feminism itself. In the radical feminist view, these purposes ultimately are inseparable from each other.

The most immediate aim of radical feminist enterprises is to fulfill women's needs since, in the radical feminist view, women's needs are not being met adequately by the patriarchy. Either women's needs are being ignored entirely or they are being exploited for male profit. For instance, until feminists opened shelters for battered women, there was simply nowhere for such women to go. Women's need to prevent pregnancy is not ignored by the patriarchy in the same way (perhaps because men have an interest in preventing pregnancy too), but the need is answered by the male medical profession with expensive and life-threatening contraceptives. Similarly, women's anger and despair are met with tranquilizers and incarceration. Radical feminist enterprises offer goods and services to women that are less expensive than those offered by patriarchy and that, in many cases, are simply not available through patriarchal institutions. They offer food that is nutritious in a non-sexist environment, sensitive and client-centered medical care, and spiritual experiences that foster women's values. In opposition to the patriarchal ideology that demeans women, their values and their experiences, radical feminist culture offers new political and aesthetic ideas and the vision of a woman-centered world.

For radical feminists, only the creation of a womanculture can fulfill women's true needs. Feminist enterprises demonstrate to women how far the patriarchy has perverted and manipulated their needs, training women to find satisfaction in fashionable clothes and male compliments rather than in genuine achievements and the pleasures of women's company. Feminist enterprises can help women

to discover their real needs and to begin to fulfill their potentialities, so long repressed by patriarchy. Not only clients, however, benefit from radical feminist enterprises. Such enterprises provide equal or even greater benefits to those who participate actively in building them.

Where radical feminist enterprises provide economic support for those who construct them, one benefit is immediately obvious. Such enterprises allow some women to survive economically within institutions that are not male-dominated. Women can do work whose value they believe in without being subjected to the daily insults and humiliations that come from working with men. This prospect is so attractive that many radical feminists devote their main energies to feminist enterprises, even when the enterprise is unable to pay or pays them very little. Within those enterprises, women experience the rewards of working with other women to realize a shared vision and the pleasure of developing new skills and capacities in areas hitherto reserved for men.

Unlike a male business, a radical feminist enterprise is not established for the sole benefit of its entrepreneurs; on the other hand, it is not simply a social service. The benefits received by the creators of a radical feminist enterprise are not viewed simply as by-products, incidental to the main purpose of the project. On the contrary, a radical feminist enterprise is typically organized in such a way as to maximize benefits to the workers as well as to the clients, to break down male assumptions about work and to instantiate radical feminist values. For radical feminists, the process by which a product is created is just as important as the product itself. Indeed, the product is inseparable from the process of its creation: the process is the product.

Radical feminists are very sensitive to hierarchy, to its destructive effects on people's character and on their relationships. Radical feminism associates hierarchy and domination with male culture and seeks to minimize or abolish these within the womanculture. Accordingly, it seeks to avoid traditional forms of the division of labor in which a small number of people supervise the rest and each worker performs, in a routine and monotonous manner, a small part of the work required to accomplish the overall project. This division of labor places some people in a position of authority over others and removes responsibility from the rest. Moreover, it deprives individuals of the opportunity to learn new skills and so perpetuates and reinforces the relative advantages and disadvantages with which each individual entered the enterprise. By contrast with traditional male enterprises, radical feminists try to equalize relations between project workers, to challenge patriarchal estimates of the value of different kinds of work and to rotate tasks so that each worker develops new capabilities. Jennifer Woodul summarizes her conception of how a radical feminist business should operate:

The nature of business will be changed by feminist operation of it. There should be structures for worker input, working toward meaningful worker control. Salaries should be set within a narrow range, with consideration of each woman's particular needs as well as her role in the company. Structures should be clear to all and determined on concrete bases. Decision-making methods should be set out, with the understanding that decision-making must presume responsibility. There must be a consciousness of accountability to the women's community. There must be a commitment to channel money back into the community or the movement. Finally, there must be a commitment to radical change—to the goals of economic and political power for women.¹⁰⁷

Coletta Reid provides further elaboration of the principles that should govern the internal organization of a radical feminist business:

Insofar as possible, the internal organization of women's businesses should be consistent with the goals of the future socialist economy they're working toward. All the workers need to be all the owners. Going to rich women or other corporations for investment/ownership is no solution . . .

All the people who work should have some say over what they do and participate in determining the direction of the business, the organization of the work, etc. . . . The most efficient production methods seem to be centralization of decisions, rigid hierarchies, extreme specialization and constant supervision; but these are not necessarily the conditions that we want to perpetuate in the future. . . .

Workers should be paid equally or nearly equally according to need. Special needs include children, health problems, etc. . . . The idea of equal pay is tied to the realization that all work that is necessary to the success of an enterprise is equally valuable. . . .

There should be no divisions between white-collar/blue-collar or working class/middle class jobs. . . . Everybody has a head and two hands and should learn how to use both. . . .

We all can and should share the maintenance tasks of our businesses, such as cleaning, but we cannot all equally share skilled jobs because none of us would get enough experience at any one thing to do it really well. . . .

Women should also try to develop businesses that are not closely related to the female role . . . Women need to learn to farm, to mine, to sell, to build buildings, be machinists, etc.

Every effort should be made not to farm out work to other businesses which are exploitative. . . .

A similar effort should be made to give as much work as possible to other women's businesses—even if they're more expensive and slower, which they probably will be. . . .

The business should be providing women with a good or a service that is important both to their needs and to their developing consciousness.¹⁰⁸

Radical feminist living communities are based on similar values:

THE SPIRAL WOMIN'S LAND COOPERATIVE is an expanding group of Lesbians co-founding/creating a rural Lesbian community in south-eastern Kentucky. We are committed to understanding cooperative process and consensus decision making. And to the decision to build and maintain ourselves and our community cooperatively . . .

We are working actively to create a strong womoon owned, built, governed and shared land space.¹⁰⁹

Not all radical feminist enterprises are living communities or businesses, even in the extended sense of "business" that radical feminists use. Even in their health clinics, crisis centers and battered women shelters, however, radical feminists try to minimize hierarchy, particularly the hierarchy that exists in the male culture between the (typically male) "professional" workers and their (typically female) clients. One way in which radical feminists do this is by trying to break down the actual distinction between worker and client. For instance,

In "Jane", an early underground Chicago-based abortion clinic, for example, women developed models of abortion care which included sharing all processes and procedures, discussion of feelings and the trading of mutual experiences among the women abortion-workers and the women seeking abortions.¹¹⁰

The Detroit Women's Clinic stated: "We do not examine women. We show women how to examine themselves . . . We neither sell nor give away self help . . . we share it."¹¹¹ A member of the Coalition on Battered Women which formed in Austin, Texas, described the vision of the founders in these words:

At the time, there seemed to be general agreement on issues such as the value of a feminist perspective in the shelter, the inclusion of lesbians as visible members of the collective, and the need for workers and residents in the shelter to share in decision-making and leadership.¹¹²

It is clear that radical feminist enterprises, even service projects, are not designed primarily to help women cope or even to "make it" within patriarchal society; instead, they are designed to bring about social change. This intention is stated most clearly by Laurie MacKenzie and Sue Kirk. "The most concise working definition of Radical Feminist Counseling employed by our component is as follows":

Problems women come with for counseling, however personal, are rooted in the social and political condition of our existence as people and as women; therefore, counseling takes the dual form of both personal and socio-political analysis of the problems, with an attempt to synthesize the two and arrive at, or work for, tenable creative solutions at both levels.

Accordingly, the core of Radical Feminist counseling practice is education. Our unique form of counseling, whether one-to-one or in groups, is fundamentally an active learning process, an opportunity for women to learn the truth about themselves and the world in an atmosphere of dignity, honesty, trust, and support.

The immediate aims of our various counseling processes . . . are: to foster self-determination and independence; to open up the great diversity of choices that can be struggled for in companionship with, and support of, other women; and to encourage the development of a collective feminist consciousness (without laying political trips) so that women need no longer be isolated and alienated from themselves and one another. Thus, Radical Feminist Counseling is a process of personal integration, growth, and change as well as of social and political transformation.¹¹³

By now it is obvious that radical feminist enterprises are quite different from liberal and Marxist projects, even those that they resemble superficially. Liberal feminists, for instance, both found women's businesses and establish service programs for women, but their goals are, respectively, to make profits for women or to help women cope with the system. Radical feminists explicitly eschew both of these goals. Marxists are less likely either to run businesses or to offer services, but occasionally may open a bookshop or provide some service such as legal aid; in these cases, their main goals are political education and agitation, with the possible side benefit of earning a little money for their group. Apart from not being directed specifically toward women's needs, traditional Marxist projects differ from radical feminist enterprises in that they focus more

exclusively on the end result to be achieved and place less emphasis on the process by which it is achieved.

A number of writers have pointed out that the radical feminist conception of a womanculture, emphasizing social change through the building of alternative institutions, is strikingly similar to traditional social anarchism. As Lynne Farrow puts it, "Feminism practises what Anarchism preaches."¹¹⁴ The trouble with this epigram is that "anarchism" preaches many things. Etymologically, the word "anarchy" comes from the Greek and means literally "without government." What anarchists all have in common, therefore, is a denial of the legitimacy of state institutions, and much anarchist writing has been directed toward working out in detail just how various state institutions, far from curing a variety of social ills, in fact constitute their ultimate cause. For instance, law is said to create crime and property to create (or even, as Proudhon said, to be) theft.¹¹⁵ From its original root, however, the meaning of "anarchism" (like the meanings of "socialism" and especially of "feminism") extends outward to cover a broad spectrum of ideas and practices. These range from individualistic anarchism, which preaches a return to what an unsympathetic outsider might characterize as a Hobbesian state of nature, to various varieties of social anarchism. Social or socialist or communist anarchism is what radical feminism most resembles. Social anarchists share a Marxist critique of capitalism, but they reject the Marxist belief that the way to establish a new society is through an extension of state power and a dictatorship of the proletariat. Far from withering away, anarchists believe that the violence inherent in state coercion will only breed more violence. One of their most basic beliefs is that means are inseparable from ends.

There can be no separation of the revolutionary process from the revolutionary goal.¹¹⁶

We have nothing but our freedom. We have nothing to give you but your own freedom. We have no law but the single principle of mutual aid between individuals. We have no government but the single principle of free association. You cannot buy the Revolution. You cannot make the Revolution. You can only be the Revolution. It is in your spirit or it is nowhere.¹¹⁷

Like radical feminists, anarchists value feeling, intuition, and spontaneity. An anarchist slogan proclaims: "All power to the imagination!" Social anarchism also values cooperation and mutual aid, the latter being the title of a classic anarchist work by Peter Kropotkin.¹¹⁸ Lizzie Borden has pointed out that many radical feminist institutions recall Proudhon's ideas of rebuilding society by creating a federation of communes and cooperatives organized on principles of mutual aid and on the exchange of skills and services.¹¹⁹ Like radical feminism, social anarchism focuses not on large abstractions but on the immediate transformation of daily life:

It is plain that the goal of revolution today must be the liberation of daily life. Any revolution that fails to achieve this goal is counter-revolution. Above all, it is *we* who have to be liberated, *our* daily lives, with all their moments, hours and days, and not universals like "History" and "Society."¹²⁰

Like radical feminists, social anarchists realize that the transformation of daily life both presupposes and results in the transformation of the self. The

hierarchy and power relations of traditional institutions produce people who are mutilated remnants of what they could have been. Traditional social anarchism does not analyze how gender has distorted human nature but, like radical feminism, it does emphasize a vision of human wholeness, balance and integrity. Like radical feminism, social anarchists believe that this vision can be realized only through the restructuring of the institutions of daily life.

The self must always be *identifiable* in the revolution, not overwhelmed by it. The self must always be *perceivable* in the revolutionary process, not submerged by it. There is no word that is more sinister in the "revolutionary" vocabulary than "masses." Revolutionary liberation must be a self-liberation that reaches social dimensions, not "mass liberation" or "class liberation" behind which lurks the rule of an elite, a hierarchy and a state. If a revolution fails to produce a new society by the self-activity and self-mobilization of revolutionaries, if it does not involve the forging of a self in the revolutionary process, the revolution will once again circumvent those whose lives are to be lived every day and leave daily life unaffected. . . .

If for this reason alone, the revolutionary movement is profoundly concerned with lifestyle. It must try to *live* the revolution in all its totality, not only participate in it. It must be deeply concerned with the way the revolutionist lives, his [sic] relations with the surrounding environment and his degree of self-emancipation. In seeking to change society, the revolutionist cannot avoid changes in himself that demand the reconquest of his own being.¹²¹

By building alternative institutions, radical feminists pursue what an anarchist would call the "hollowing out" of the patriarchal system. By withdrawing from patriarchal institutions, they weaken and delegitimize them. Peggy Kornegger perceives this withdrawal as hidden subversion. She writes: "As women, we are particularly well-suited for participation in this process. Underground for ages, we have learned to be covert, subtle, sly, silent, tenacious, acutely sensitive, and expert at communication skills."¹²² To radical feminists, however, the creation of feminist institutions constitutes a direct rather than an indirect challenge to the patriarchal system. They see the creators of these institutions as "living in the open", courageously allowing themselves to become visible to the patriarchy.

Radical feminist institutions differ from liberal feminist enterprises in being firmly anti-capitalist. Radical feminists hope to create a gradually developing network of communities and enterprises that will enable increasing numbers of women to become economically independent of patriarchy. Thus, their long-term vision is for a kind of socialism, but not the socialism of Marx and Engels.

feminism presupposes a socialist economy of some kind. Communism was not invented by Marx, as we know. It has been an integral part of matriarchal society, and, in one form or another, it is a continual guiding principle as feminists decide what things we want to keep in our world.¹²³

We are all socialists. We refuse to give up this pre-Marxist term which has been used as a synonym by many anarchist thinkers. Another synonym for anarchism is libertarian socialism, as opposed to Statist and authoritarian varieties. Anarchism . . . is the affirmation of human freedom

and dignity expressed in a negative, cautionary term signifying that no person should rule or dominate another person by force or threat of force. Anarchism indicates what people should not do to one another. Socialism, on the other hand, means all the groovy things people can do and build together, once they are able to combine efforts and resources on the basis of common interest, rationality and creativity.¹²⁴

Unlike traditional Marxists, who believe in the need for a powerful state, at least in the period immediately following the revolution, radical feminists, like social anarchists, seek ways of organizing social life that avoid all uses of coercive power. The masthead on the early radical feminist journal *It Ain't Me Babe* carried the slogan "End all hierarchies!" Mary Daly writes: "The development of sisterhood is a unique threat, for it is directed against the basic social and psychic and model of hierarchy and domination."¹²⁵ The radical feminist search for non-coercive models of social life is reflected in feminist science fiction and in feminist discussions of power.¹²⁶ Over and over, radical feminists condemn conceptions of power that define it in Hobbesian terms of conquest and domination over others, rather than in terms of the social development of human capacities. "*This revolution has got to go for broke: power to no one, and to every one: to each the power over his/her own life, and to no others.*"¹²⁷

One way in which anarchists have attempted to get rid of conventional power relations is by organizing society through small, intimate groups rather than through large, impersonal bureaucracies or parties. The anarchist Murray Bookchin writes:

They would try to foster a deep sense of community, a rounded human relationship that would transform the very subjectivity of the people involved. Groups would be small, in order to achieve the full participation of everyone involved. Personal relationships would be intimate, not merely issue-oriented. People would get to *know* each other, to *confront* each other; they would *explore* each other with a view toward achieving the most complete, unalienated relationships. . . .

From this intimacy there would grow, hopefully, a supportive system of kinship, mutual aid, sympathy and solidarity in daily life . . . This "extended family"—based on explored affinities and collective activities—would replace relationships mediated by "organizers", "chairmen", an "executive committee", *Robert's Rules of Order*, elites, and political manipulators.¹²⁸

Bookchin's vision is startlingly close to the radical feminist "reconceiving" of a cooperative model of power relations, beginning with "personal" relations.

Although women cannot help but be influenced by the competitive power model, women try in the groups we establish to create different forms. Women, in groups, seek to build the trust necessary to support each other, to cooperate, and to work together to reach both individual and group goals. In personal interactions, at both informal and formal group levels, women grope toward a cooperative, societal kind of power relationship. There is at least as much attention to *process* as to final goals, to devising ways to work through conflicts at the small group level. If such groups become models for power interactions in the larger society, the personal can be transformed into the political.¹²⁹

3. CONFRONTING PATRIARCHY

The creation of female culture is as pervasive a process as we can imagine, for it is participation in a VISION which is continually unfolding anew in everything from our talks with friends, to meat boycotts, to taking over storefronts for child care centers, to making love with a sister. It is revelatory, undefinable, except as a process of change. Women's culture is all of us exorcising, naming, creating toward the vision of harmony with ourselves, each other, and our sister earth. In the last ten years our having come faster and closer than ever before in the history of the patriarchy to overturning its power . . . is cause for exhilarant hope—wild, contagious, unconquerable, crazy HOPE! . . . The winning of life over death, despair and meaninglessness is everywhere I look now—like taliswomen of the faith in WOMANVISION.¹³⁰

In spite of the beauty of this vision, patriarchal culture impedes its realization. Radical feminism sees patriarchy as a total system, a male culture characterized by violence, domination and death. The male culture manifests itself in every aspect of life except those defended by women; as Mary Daly says, "Patriarchy appears to be 'everywhere'."¹³¹ Because it is so pervasive and familiar, patriarchy appears as the natural order of things. To shatter the appearance of naturalness, radical feminists sometimes engage in direct attacks on the more blatant manifestations of patriarchy, which they take as symbols of the entire system. The symbols vary, depending on the male culture in question; to rip the *chador* or veil, for instance, is a symbolic attack only on the male culture of Islam. In contemporary capitalist society, recent targets of attack have included beauty contests (symbols of the sexual objectification of women), bridal fairs (symbols of women's enslavement to men), pornography (a symbol of violence against women), the Pentagon (a symbol of male militarism and imperialism) and nuclear power stations (symbols of male greed, destructiveness and the rape of the environment).

Radical feminist attacks on the symbols of patriarchy typically are carried out in a dramatic manner that emphasizes the symbolic nature of these attacks. They are the activist equivalents of the poetic forms of verbal expression chosen increasingly by radical feminist authors. Like radical feminist poetry, radical feminist attacks on patriarchy aim to jolt our perceptual field, to bring it into a new focus, to interpret it in terms of a new paradigm. With this aim, radical feminists perform guerilla theater; they throw red meat onto the stage at beauty contests;¹³² they hex or cast spells on anything from Wall Street stockbrokers, to inflationary prices in supermarkets, to the Pentagon itself; they organize public confrontations with accused rapists or spray-paint "rapist" on their property;¹³³ they destroy pornography in bookshops and record shops;¹³⁴ they have even set fire to pornographic bookshops.¹³⁵

Washington, D.C., WITCH—after an action hexing the United Fruit Company's oppressive policy on the Third World *and* on secretaries in its offices at home . . . claimed that WITCH was "a total concept of revolutionary female identity" and was the striking arm of the Women's Liberation Movement, aiming mainly at financial and corporate America, at those institutions that have the power to control and define human life.¹³⁶

The radical feminist attacks on male culture, like their alternative institutions, most clearly resemble the methods of social anarchism. It is true that radical feminist actions are nonviolent to human beings whereas anarchists in the past have sometimes resorted to violence. In its symbolic character, however, the radical feminist apocryphal bra-burning is "propaganda by the deed," just like the symbolic anarchist assassinations of heads of state. Moreover, the radical feminist small group is very similar to the *grupo de afinidad* (affinity group) which was the basis of the Iberian Anarchist Federation in pre-Franco Spain. Murray Bookchin describes affinity groups in these words:

The affinity group could easily be regarded as a new type of extended family, in which kinship ties are replaced by deeply empathetic human relationships—relationships nourished by common revolutionary ideas and practice. Long before the word 'tribe' gained popularity in the American counterculture, the Spanish anarchists called their congresses *asambleas de las tribus*—assemblies of the tribes. Each affinity group is deliberately kept small to allow for the greatest degree of intimacy between those who compose it. Autonomous, communal and directly democratic, the group combines revolutionary theory with revolutionary lifestyle in its everyday behavior. It creates free space in which revolutionaries can remake themselves individually, and also as social beings.

Affinity groups are intended to function as catalysts within the popular movement, not as 'vanguards'; they provide initiative and consciousness, not a 'general staff' and a source of 'command.' The groups proliferate on a molecular level and they have their own 'Brownian movement.' Whether they link together or separate is determined by living situations, not by bureaucratic fiat from a distant center.¹³⁷

The direct attacks that radical feminists make on patriarchy are carried out typically by small groups of women. Even their names are chosen for dramatic impact. They include WITCH (acronym of many sources including Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell), BITCH, and SCUM (Society for Cutting Up Men). "A certain common style—insouciance, theatricality, humor and activism, unite the [WITCH] Covens—which are otherwise totally autonomous, and unhierarchical to the point of anarchy."¹³⁸

The pornographic bookshops in Leeds, England, were burned by a group called Angry Women, and feminist vandalism in California was carried out by the Preying Mantis Women's Brigade. In May 1981, U.S. Senate committee hearings on abortion were disrupted by the Women's Liberation Zap Action Brigade. The Women's Pentagon Action of November 1980, in which feminists attacked the Pentagon in a variety of symbolic ways, was unusually large for a radical feminist action, but it was not organized in a centralized and hierarchical manner. Instead, its mode of organization

reaffirmed the need for small scale initiative and autonomy. To keep from taking energy from individuals and local groups, we refrained from constructing much of an over-all co-ordinating framework opting instead for information sharing bulletins, an emergency phone tree and a date for our next general meeting April 25–26 in NYC. To quote one of our many sages, the WPA went forward with an unusually small amount of baggage. In times like these, it's best to travel light.¹³⁹

Some radical feminist groups are entirely structureless in their internal organization.

There is no "joining" WITCH. If you are a woman and dare to look within yourself, you are a Witch. You can make your own rules. You are free and beautiful. . . .

You are a Witch by saying aloud, "I am a Witch" three times, and *thinking about that*. You are a Witch by being female, untamed, angry, joyous, and immortal.¹⁴⁰

Other radical feminists are critical of what Joreen called "The Tyranny of Structurelessness."¹⁴¹ Joreen pointed out that if a group had no formal or explicit structure for decision making and leadership, then it would have an informal structure and some individuals would become *de facto* leaders. In order to ensure genuine internal democracy, some radical feminist groups invented very careful organizational structures. A good example is THE FEMINISTS: A Political Organization to Annihilate Sex Roles:

THE FEMINISTS is an organization without officers which divides work according to the principle of participation by lot. Our goal is a just society all of whose members are equal. Therefore, we aim to develop knowledge and skills in all members and prevent any one member or small group from hoarding information or abilities.

Traditionally official posts such as the chair of the meeting and the secretary are determined by lot and change with each meeting. The treasurer is chosen by lot to function for one month.

Assignments may be menial or beyond the experience of a member. To assign a member work she is not experienced in may involve an initial loss of efficiency but fosters equality and allows all members to acquire the skills necessary for revolutionary work. When a member draws a task beyond her own experience she may call on the knowledge of other members, but her own input and development are of primary importance. The group has the responsibility to support a member's efforts, as long as the group believes the member to be working in good faith. A member has the duty to submit her work for the group—such as articles and speeches—to the group for correction and approval.

In order to make efficient use of all opportunities for writing and speaking, in order to develop members without experience in these areas, members who are experienced in them are urged to withdraw their names from a lot assigning those tasks. Also those members, experienced or inexperienced, who have once drawn a lot to write or speak must withdraw their names until all members have had a turn.

The system of the lot encourages growth by maximizing the sharing of tasks, but the responsibility for contributions rests ultimately with the individual. One's growth develops in proportion to one's contributions.¹⁴²

Sometimes, radical feminists are not in a strong enough position to engage in open confrontation with patriarchy. In this case, they are encouraged to fight back in covert ways.

We in offices have our own ways of spittin' in Massuh's soup. We manage to break typewriters, steal supplies, forget to relay messages, use the day's mail to cover our heads on rainy days. These reactions to being dehumanized should be recognized for what they are, sabotage.¹⁴³

Radical feminist attacks on what they call patriarchy are clearly very different from liberal feminist and traditional Marxist struggles against male dominance.

Unlike liberal feminists, radical feminists do not direct their efforts toward legal reform:

We simply cannot look to the government to rid us of pornography; legally there are no "final solutions." The feminist movement against pornography must remain an anti-defamation movement involved in education, consciousness-raising, and the development of private strategies against the industry.¹⁴⁴

The Preying Mantis, who destroy pornography, state: "We do not want official censorship."¹⁴⁵ Although the Preying Mantises describe their actions as civil disobedience, they act in secret, unlike liberals who engage in civil disobedience, and they do not acknowledge the legitimacy of the state by accepting the legal penalty for their actions. Radical feminist resistance to patriarchy is also unlike the political struggles in which Marxists engage. Radical feminists deliberately eschew "mass actions" and disciplined, centralized, vanguard parties.

The spirit of the women is just too large to be guided and manipulated by a 'movement.' Small groups, acting on their own and deciding upon their own actions, are the logical expression of revolutionary women.¹⁴⁶

Feminism is a many-headed monster which cannot be destroyed by singular decapitation. We spread and grow in ways that are incomprehensible to a hierarchical mentality.¹⁴⁷

Radical feminist propaganda by the deed is not conceived as a direct, frontal onslaught on patriarchy, an assault which, if escalated sufficiently, would bring the patriarchy down. Instead, radical feminist actions are conceived as a type of consciousness raising—making visible the destructive power of patriarchy, a destructiveness that is invisible because it is so familiar as to appear natural and because it is disguised by the ideology of romance, fun, and national security. Radical feminist actions are supposed to disrupt the spectacle and to show it for what it is. Often their actions combine art with politics in a way that enlarges our conception of both.¹⁴⁸ How patriarchy will finally come to an end is a question radical feminists discuss only rarely. Often male supremacy seems so powerful that its end can be imagined only in the pages of science fiction. However, there seems to be a general belief that patriarchy will be undermined rather than overthrown. Perhaps it will even self-destruct, leaving the way open for women to build a new society founded on radical feminist values.

Problems with Radical Feminist Politics

Radical feminism has shattered the illusions of male culture. It has demonstrated the degradation and drudgery that underlie the dominant male ideology of motherhood, romance and equality. Through analysis, metaphor and poetry, through music, literature and art, radical feminism has revealed the pain beneath the lives of countless women whose view of themselves and their world will never again be the same.

Without the change in consciousness effected by radical feminism, no social revolution will truly liberate women. But does radical feminism itself show us the way to women's liberation? My own view is that radical feminist ideas

and practice are a necessary part of the revolutionary transformation of society but that, in themselves, they are insufficient to bring it about.

I. PRACTICE WITHOUT THEORY

Radical feminism is not like traditional political theory. It has different political values; it asks and seeks to answer different questions; it focuses on different areas; and it has developed a very different mode of expression. The first radical feminist writings most closely resembled those of traditional political theory: although lively and polemical, their authors seemed to be trying to produce political analyses of women's situation that were formally identical with traditional analyses. As the radical feminist movement mushroomed, however, its forms of expression became increasingly imaginative and "non-linear." Radical feminists created new music, new poetry, new drama, and new science fiction. Even the prose writing of radical feminism became more impassioned, metaphorical and epigrammatic. Every available linguistic resource was employed to jolt the audience out of its accustomed ways of perceiving the world and to reveal "a counter-reality, a mutually guaranteed support of female experience undistorted by male interpretation."¹⁴⁹

Radical feminism indeed has revealed different reality. It has shown us a world in which men control women's bodies and force women into motherhood or sexual slavery. Radical feminism has also described how much of this occurs; it has demonstrated an interlocking system of male-dominant institutions that trap women and leave them with few routes of escape; it has also explored the psychic mutilation of women imprisoned in these institutions. What radical feminism has not yet done is provide an account of the underlying causes of the patriarchal system. Why have men built these institutions and why do they maintain them?

To answer these questions would require a comprehensive theory of human nature and human society. Only such a theory can explain why men seek to enslave women, why men are what Daly calls necrophiliacs, why men, as Dworkin puts it, are lovers of murder and death. These are crucial questions, but radical feminism has not developed a theory capable of answering them. For most radical feminists, it is enough to show what men are like: to show that heroes rape, that bosses rape, that husbands rape, that fathers rape. To reveal these secret atrocities is indeed an achievement, but it is only the first part of ending them.

Early radical feminists, such as Firestone or the New York Radical Feminists, made some attempt, however unsatisfactory, to answer the question of what keeps patriarchy going. But the popularity of those early writers has now been eclipsed by more poetic and impassioned authors such as Daly, Rich and Griffin. These writers demonstrate vividly *how* men enslave women, but they do not provide a theoretical explanation of *why* men do so. As we have seen, indeed, some radical feminists explicitly reject the need for theory in the traditional sense. Griffin, for instance, writes:

We rejected the theory that capitalism had raped us. If they said patriarchy was just a form of capitalism, we said that capitalism was a form of patriarchy. But our departure from these old ways took place on a far deeper level than this dialogue. There were other leftist theories from which we departed, but our most serious difference was that theory has

ceased to impress us as much as it had. Experience had become more important.¹⁵⁰

A few pages later, Griffin suggests that radical feminists have not abandoned theory so much as tried to "reconceive it." Theory in the traditional sense, abstract and unemotional, is inadequate to express women's suffering. Theory must be guided by feeling.

We did move from theory; we moved quite simply, as I wrote before, to the sorest wounds, and in this sense, we were no longer "thinking" in the way that Western man thinks, in the realm where thought is divided from feeling, and objectivity is imagined to exist. We were discovering a different sense of clarity, one achieved through feeling, in which thought followed a direction determined by pain, and trauma, and compassion and outrage.¹⁵¹

The anarcha-feminist Lynne Farrow distrusts political theory on somewhat different grounds.

Feminists have always possessed an exuberant disregard for the "why?" questions, the theoretical mainstay of our menfolk. Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* for one was severely attacked by reviewers for spending all those pages *not* formulating a theory on why sexism existed. Our disinterest in theoretical speculation has been construed as a peculiar deficiency. Of course. Similarly our distrust for logic and that which has been unscrupulously passed off as the Known in the situation. We can't "argue rationally" we are told and it probably is true that we avoid this kind of verbal jiggling. But the fact is we haven't any real stake in the game. KNOWLEDGE and ARGUMENT as it relates to women is so conspicuously alien to our interests that female irreverence for the intellectual arts is rarely concealed. In fact, women seem to regard male faith in these processes as a form of superstition because there appears no apparent connection between these arts and the maintenance of life, the principal female concern.¹⁵²

Farrow thinks that political theory is used as a substitute for political action.

Feminism as situationism means that elaborate social analysis and first causes à la Marx would be superfluous because changes will be rooted in situations from which the problems stem: instead change will be idiosyncratic to the people, the time and the place . . . Discussing "male chauvinism" is as fruitless as discussing "capitalism" in that, safely reduced to an explanation, we have efficiently distanced ourselves from a problem and the necessity to immediately interact with it or respond to other people. *Such theoretical over-articulation gives one the illusion of responding to a critical situation without ever really coming to grips with one's own participation in it.*¹⁵³

"Theoreticism" is certainly a familiar phenomenon among so-called revolutionaries—especially among academics. It involves the elaboration of an abstract and jargonized mode of discourse that separates theoreticians from those about whom the theory is constructed, and makes these theoreticians the authoritative source of knowledge.¹⁵⁴ Obviously, women's liberation will never result from theory and analysis alone. Outrage is necessary to motivate people to political action. On the other hand, outrage is not necessarily the best guide

to the action that should be taken. Griffin and Farrow seem to suggest that feminists should focus directly on the immediate problems.

focusing on the source of the problem is not necessarily the problem . . . the energies of feminism will be problem-centered rather than people (or struggle) centered . . . Feminism has tried to find ad hoc solutions appropriate to needs at the time, i.e., centered around the family or community of friends.¹⁵⁵

Farrow ignores the possibility that women might exhaust their energies in tackling symptoms rather than underlying causes. Griffin suggests the creation of rape-protection centers. She acknowledges that "we do not yet have the end of rape. All we have is the feat of naming rape a crime against us."¹⁵⁶ This is indeed a feat; rape-protection centers have succored women and healed them. But it is also necessary to discover how to end rape completely, so that it no longer needs to be named and so that women no longer require succor and healing. Theory alone will not liberate women. But women's liberation seems equally unlikely to result from simple activism, not grounded in a systematic understanding of women's situation.

Activism is never pure activity. Even if people are responding to very immediate problems, their response rests on certain assumptions and implications are recognized explicitly. If the assumptions and implications are not reflected on consciously and systematically, that is to say, if they are not part of a theory, then they are likely to be problematic.

Radical feminist action is not entirely impulsive, of course. As we have seen, it is grounded on a systematic analysis of women's subordination. This analysis is theoretical insofar as it specifies a few concepts, such as rape and slavery, in such a way as to bring a variety of apparently disparate phenomena, such as marriage, prostitution, Indian *suttee*, Chinese foot-binding, African genital mutilation, European witchburning, and American gynecology, within a unified conceptual framework.¹⁵⁷ Thus, the radical feminist analysis goes beneath the conventional appearance of women's equality and even privilege to reveal an underlying pattern of subordination and degradation. Reality, however, has more than one level; to speak less metaphorically, it can be conceptualized in many different ways. The radical feminist analysis is theoretical in that it offers a reconceptualization of women's situation that makes it more intelligible in some ways—that helps us to understand, for instance, why so many women take anti-depressant or tranquilizing drugs. But the radical feminist analysis still leaves important questions unanswered. In particular, it does not explain the material reasons for men's subjugation of women. The existing radical feminist analysis needs to be supplemented by an account that embraces yet a deeper level of reality. Another way of putting this point is to say that the radical feminist analysis provides a redescription of women's reality, a redescription that is not theory-neutral but that is also not theoretically complete or adequate because it does not provide a causal explanation of the reality that it describes. It is static rather than dynamic; it presents a still rather than a motion picture.

As long as radical feminists do not attempt to identify the underlying causes of patriarchy, as long as they do not try to explain why men are rapists, slavers and murderers, women are likely to jump to one of two conclusions. The first is that rape, slavery and murder are so obviously enjoyable in themselves or offer such obvious benefits to their perpetrators that anyone would engage in these practices if the opportunity arose. It follows from this view that women

would be just as likely as men to rape, enslave and murder if only they had the chance. This conclusion is not one that many feminists are likely to adopt. Consequently, for lack of a better answer, many radical feminists assume that there is simply something wrong, biologically, with men that impels them to act in such cruel and wanton ways. Radical feminists often tend toward this view not because they are convinced of any specific biological determinist theory about the difference between the sexes; rather they drift into it because, given the prevailing dominance of biological reductionist forms of explanation, they see no other way to explain all the forms of male violence against women.

Biological determinism, as we saw in Chapter 5, is conceptually incoherent. It is also politically undesirable because it drastically narrows the options available for political action. Since feminists reject a fatalistic acceptance of the status quo, and since they are not in a position to practice biological engineering or systematic patricide, separatism becomes their only remaining option. As we have seen, it is the option that, in one form or another, radical feminists typically take. Separatist political strategies are also encouraged by the radical feminist reliance on feeling and by the radical feminist emphasis on healing or nurturing oneself. For many women, withdrawal from men is far more attractive than the grinding struggle to resist male dominance in its daily manifestations.

The reluctance of contemporary radical feminists to search for theoretical explanations of male dominance thus leads naturally to a political practice of separatism. In the rest of this chapter, I shall consider various aspects of separatism as a strategy for social transformation.

2. WOMEN'S CONTROL OF THEIR BODIES

A different source of at least one kind of separatist politics is the radical feminist emphasis on women's control of their bodies. This slogan is capable of many interpretations, but the radical feminist analysis of women's oppression as consisting in forced motherhood and sexual slavery encourages radical feminists to interpret women's control of their bodies in sexual and in procreative terms. Women are seen as controlling their bodies when they determine their own mode of sexual expression and when their decisions about whether or not to bear children are based on their own desires and needs. In other words, women are seen as controlling their bodies when they are free from forced motherhood and sexual slavery.

Given this understanding of the slogan, the only way in which women can take control of their bodies under patriarchy seems to be through lesbianism; that is, through separatism in intimate relations. Because of the social inequality between women and men, radical feminists argue that it is impossible for women to take control of their bodies as long as they remain in intimate relationships with men. Radical feminists consistently refer to heterosexual relations as rape, prostitution, "servicing men's needs" or "licking up to men." Of course radical feminists recognize that even lesbians do not have complete control over their bodies under patriarchy; for instance, radical feminists are aware that lesbians, like all women under patriarchy, are still vulnerable to rape. But radical feminists believe that lesbianism, or separatism in intimate relations, is not only a necessary condition for women's taking back control of their own bodies but, in most circumstances, goes a long way toward achieving that goal.

Given this conception of women's control over their bodies, and given this strategy for achieving such control, it seems almost possible for women to win back control of their bodies through individual action. Of course, collective action against rape is still required but, once a woman becomes a lesbian, she no longer needs contraception or abortion. "Political" campaigns to win a safe contraception or free abortion become irrelevant to her; they may even seem to be a way in which non-lesbian women seek to escape the consequences of engaging in sexual relations with men. One angry lesbian wrote:

Abortion is a reform measure. Its analysis is good when it says that women should seize control of their own bodies, but it patently ignores the contradiction that women will not have control of their own bodies if they keep on voluntarily giving them to men. Abortion, then, does not threaten male supremacy. It assumes that women are going to keep on fucking and breeding and makes it easier for some women to lick up to men.¹⁵⁸

This author is correct in pointing out that abortion alone does not give women full control over their bodies and that the abolition of compulsory heterosexuality is at least equally important. But other aspects of women's control over their bodies are overlooked by those who believe that this goal can be largely achieved by the individual decision to become a lesbian.

Exclusive lesbianism would indeed free women from forced motherhood and sexual slavery. By offering an alternative to these almost universal conditions, lesbianism presents a fundamental challenge to patriarchy. What is rarely recognized explicitly by radical feminists, however, is that lesbianism is not an alternative that is open to all women. Apart from existing heterosexual conditioning and affections, the radical feminists' own claims that many women are forced, either physically or economically, to become mothers and/or sexual slaves implies that many married women and many prostitutes who might prefer to be exclusively lesbian are unable to take that option. Exclusive lesbianism is a choice available primarily to young women without children and to women who have the marketable skills that allow them to survive in the patriarchy without direct dependence on marital or sexual relations with men. Consequently, lesbianism is an alternative that is far more available to white and to middle-class women, although of course there do exist many working-class lesbians and lesbians of color. The point is that there are economic preconditions for women to achieve the degree of control over their bodies that lesbianism offers. The choice of separatism, even in intimate relations, is not just a simple issue of political principle, unconnected with issues of class, race and occupational discrimination.

In seeing lesbianism as the way in which women can take immediate control over their bodies, radical feminism ignores another aspect of the issue. It fails to confront the facts that, for women to have full control over their own sexuality and fertility, they should be able to choose to have sexual relations with men as well as to refuse them and to choose to bear children as well as to refuse to bear them. Radical feminists consider the latter as a more legitimate issue than the former. As we have seen, radical feminists perceive the imbalance of power between men and women under patriarchy to be so great that they cannot conceive of circumstances in which a woman could be said to have made a free choice to engage in sexual relations with men. By contrast, radical feminists look much more favorably on motherhood; after all, many radical feminists believe that motherhood is the source of women's special power and

the inspiration for feminist values. In spite of their respect for motherhood, however, radical feminists do not emphasize that to become a mother is just as legitimate a choice for women as the refusal to do so. Of course, radical feminists are operating in a patriarchal society whose ideology and institutions all push women into motherhood. In this context, it is vital for feminists to emphasize a woman's right to say: No! On the other hand, a full understanding of what it would mean for women to control their own fertility must also include an acknowledgment of those social forces that prevent women from exercising their right to become mothers. Radical feminist struggles on behalf of the custody rights of lesbian mothers do indeed begin to acknowledge those forces. But radical feminists rarely mention the forced sterilization of poor women, especially women of color; they do not discuss the fact that poverty makes many women unable to afford the number of children they would like; and they do not point out how the lack of childcare facilities makes it impossible for many women both to engage in paid labor and to bear children. Their recognition that patriarchy forces many women into motherhood and into sexual slavery inspires radical feminists to assert a woman's right to control her body by refusing motherhood and by refusing heterosexuality. In focusing almost exclusively on these important claims, however, radical feminists often neglect to mention other features of contemporary society that restrict in an opposite but equal way women's right to control their own bodies.

The radical feminist conception of women's control of their own bodies is too narrow in still another respect. This is in its construal of women's bodies primarily in sexual and procreative terms. Once again, radical feminist emphasis on the political significance of male control of women's sexuality and fertility is important in the context of a political tradition that has relegated those aspects of human life to the private sphere and defined them as non-political. But the almost exclusive radical feminist focus on sexuality and on procreation ignores the fact that, under patriarchy, men control women's bodies in many other ways. Women are exposed not only to rape; they are also exposed to pollution and to industrial hazards. Women are imprisoned not only in the home; they are imprisoned as well in sweat shops, fields and factories.

Radical feminists do not deny this when it is pointed out to them, just as traditional Marxists do not deny that women are subjected to sexual harassment and rape. But radical feminist theory and practice have tended to ignore the non-sexual and non-procreative aspects of women's lives. It is true that some radical feminists have begun to concern themselves with issues of militarism and nuclear power, but they are only beginning to develop a distinctively feminist analysis of these issues. Most radical feminists continue to conceive of women's control of their bodies primarily in terms of the right to refuse motherhood and sexual slavery. Consequently, they continue to believe that lesbianism will give them a large measure of control over their own bodies.

To some degree they are right. In a patriarchal context, there is no doubt that lesbianism is a political choice. Lesbians do have more control than most women over their sexuality and their fertility. But not only is exclusive lesbianism an unavailable option for many women; even for lesbians themselves, it offers only a limited degree of control over their own bodies. For one thing, many women feel that lesbianism is the only choice that they can make, given the nature of patriarchal society, but the absence of alternatives hardly makes it a "choice" at all. A lesbian also pays a certain price for the "choice" she makes; she is better able than most women to refuse motherhood but, unless she is a mother already, it then becomes very difficult for her to bear children, the

possibility of parthenogenesis notwithstanding. Finally, it is obvious that no lesbian can insulate herself completely from the impact of patriarchal society. Most lesbians have to work for male bosses in economic situations that are male-defined; lesbians, like other women, are exposed to economic discrimination and industrial hazards; even the relatively few lesbians who support themselves in the womanculture are exposed to pollution, radiation, street violence and the threat of war. There is no individual solution to these problems. But for lesbians and other women to have full control over their bodies, they would have to be free from these dangers, not only from forced motherhood and sexual slavery.

The radical feminist conception of women's control over their own bodies is both revolutionary and reactive. It is revolutionary insofar as it asserts that women's bodies can no longer be viewed as territory to be colonized by male culture. In its emphasis on women's control of their sexuality and their fertility, however, radical feminism comes close to accepting the patriarchal definition of women as primarily procreative and sexual beings. Of course, radical feminism's point is precisely to deny that definition. But when it construes women's control over their bodies to mean control over their sexual and reproductive organs, radical feminism seems to forget that women's bodies have other parts as well. It seems to view women as vaginas and wombs on legs. Sexual activity and childbearing indeed involve women's bodies in very intimate ways, but those ways are no more intimate than the ways in which women's bodies are involved in tending dangerous machines, eating contaminated food or breathing polluted air.

The very formulation of the slogan "Women's control over their own bodies" seems to reify or objectify women's bodies in a way that radical feminists view as typically patriarchal. It suggests that women's bodies are objects, separate from women themselves, which men have colonized so far but which women will now liberate. In this way, the slogan suggests a dualistic conception of human nature, even though dualism is a patriarchal concept that radical feminists typically reject. Interpreted in the usual way, the slogan also suggests that sexual interaction and childbearing are physical processes that a woman passively undergoes rather than activities that she actively performs. Instead of control over their bodies, a more appropriate goal for radical feminism would be women's control over their lives.

Control over their own lives, of course, is what radical feminists really want. Those who reject individual solutions know that this control cannot be achieved through lesbianism alone, and that is why they try to build an alternative womanculture. In the next section, I shall discuss whether women can gain control over their lives through this more thoroughgoing form of separatism.

3. SEPARATISM

There is no doubt that women's liberation requires some kinds of separatism. Feminists have always known that women require separate political organizations in order to formulate their own demands and to ensure that those demands are taken seriously. Radical feminists provide additional and valid reasons why women need times and places in which to gather apart from men. Separatism is necessary for women to develop new ways of relating to each other without male disruption; it is necessary for women to learn new skills, to hear other women, to share experiences and to develop their own distinctive perspective

on the world. Separatism is necessary for women to create a womanculture that will challenge the values of patriarchy and prefigure an alternative future. But although some forms of separatism must always be available for women under patriarchy, separatism alone cannot transform society. Lynne Farrow writes: "feminism begins at home and it generally doesn't go a whole lot further than the community."¹⁵⁹ In her view, feminists should avoid grandiose plans for social transformation and should concentrate instead on solving immediate problems. The hope of those creating women's businesses and communities is that feminist enterprises will expand laterally to form an economic network that is increasingly adequate to meet women's needs and that will undermine the patriarchal economy. Carol Anne Douglas expresses doubt that such a non-violent strategy will work: "But won't forcing men to accept women's right to freedom take a certain amount of coercion? Won't it take coercion to stop rape and woman-beating? Won't it take coercion to take our share of the means of production and its fruits?"¹⁶⁰ Douglas raises difficult questions. Can force be stopped without force? Can non-violence really work? There are some historical examples where it has worked, where so many people refused to support the dominant system that the dominant group has been unable to impose its will.¹⁶¹ It is not inconceivable that the male culture would collapse if enough people withdrew from it and joined the alternative womanculture. Unfortunately, there are overwhelming reasons why a separatist women's movement will never grow large enough to constitute a serious threat to patriarchy.

One problem, which has been experienced already by many radical feminist enterprises, is that the economics of capitalism make it almost impossible for alternative businesses to survive. For instance, because women's publishing houses are so small, their overheads are much higher than those of the established houses. Consequently, their books are often more expensive—even though they are trying to reach a female readership whose average earnings are little more than half those of men. The same problem affects the women's music industry, perhaps the most successful branch of the womanculture. Feminist music still has a relatively small audience and it is not a wealthy one. But it is relatively more expensive to produce a small than a large run of records and feminist performers still have to live. For feminist enterprises to survive, women working in the womanculture usually suffer what Polly Laurelchild calls "reverse exploitation" but what is in fact little different from conventional exploitation, except that the exploited women choose to accept their situation for feminist political reasons.¹⁶²

Many feminist enterprises have not survived, and those which have survived have been forced to revise their business practices. A recent article on women's music announced the abandonment of collective structure by most of the remaining producers of feminist music.¹⁶³ This collective process is too slow and, by capitalist standards, inefficient. Kay Gardner, a well-known feminist musician states:

You cannot have high political ideals and run a business. Let's put it this way: most of the political ideals are anti-capitalist, whether they are Marxist or whatever you want to name them. It's very hard to have a high anti-capitalist ideal and be running a business in a capitalist manner.¹⁶⁴

Many radical feminist enterprises are being forced economically to revert to the politics of liberal feminism. Trotskyists often assert that you cannot have socialism in one country. It is equally impossible to have radical feminism in one commune, one business or even a network of businesses. A few such

enterprises may survive, making compromises and gaining a partial independence. Nevertheless, they will always remain marginal to the patriarchal capitalist economy and never be able to constitute a real challenge to it.

Because of the economic difficulties facing feminist business enterprises, women's culture is forced to limit itself mainly to what Marxists would call superstructural forms, such as art and spirituality. As we have seen already, radical feminists view these forms of cultural expression as important political activities. Performance art dramatizes specific aspects of women's oppression; women's music celebrates women's love, humor, and courage; women's literature renames reality; the Goddess symbolizes "the newfound beauty, strength, and power of women."¹⁶⁵ The creation of an alternative culture is a vital part of any revolutionary movement, and the creation of a woman's culture is a vital part of feminist revolution. Women's culture changes women's consciousness and provides necessary havens of refuge from the psychological and sometimes physical assaults of patriarchal culture. By itself, however, a separate women's culture can never effect the changes in the material base of society that are required to bring down patriarchy. To believe that it can do so is a form of idealism. Patriarchy will not fall to words, spells or songs.

Apart from material limitations, there are also political limitations on the strength of the separatist movement. Early radical feminist authors claimed frequently that the domination of women was the deepest division in society. They saw it as historically the first form of oppression and as having given rise to later divisions of class (in the Marxist sense) and of race.¹⁶⁶ With the loss of interest in systematic political theories, this claim has not often been made explicit in the last few years. Nevertheless, many radical feminist authors, such as Griffin and Daly, have continued to speak about women in universal terms which suggest that all women share certain fundamental common experiences, regardless of differences of class or race.

Other feminists have attacked this assumption as classist and racist. They point out that it is an assumption that denies the special oppression of working-class women and women of color. In response to this criticism, radical feminists have recently made extra efforts to combat the special forms of oppression suffered by certain groups of women. These include not only working-class women and women of color, but other groups such as Jewish women and differently abled (or disabled) women. Almost a decade ago, Charlotte Bunch wrote: "Race, class and national oppressions come from men, serve ruling class white men's interests, and have no place in a woman-identified revolution."¹⁶⁷ Radical feminists now are trying not only to eliminate oppressive forms of behavior as individuals; they are making efforts to eradicate classism, racism, anti-Semitism and able-bodyism from the institutions of the womanculture. In their conferences and their publications, they are attempting to ensure that the voices of all groups of women are heard, and they try to make feminist events accessible even to those who are physically challenged.

These efforts to encourage more women to participate in the womanculture can only enrich and strengthen it. Nevertheless, the very concept of a womanculture suggests that, in spite of their different experiences under patriarchy, all women have a fundamental interest in joining together with other women. Similarly, the radical feminist characterization of contemporary society as patriarchy reveals a continuing assumption that the most significant division in our society is gender, just as the Marxist characterization of contemporary society as capitalism reveals a continuing assumption that its most significant division is class in the conventional sense. The politics of total separatism

presuppose that women's interests are in permanent opposition to those of men.

There is some truth in these assumptions. In spite of their differences, women seem to share certain aspects of oppression across the boundaries of class or race. For instance, "the black lesbian has had to survive also the psychic mutilation of heterosexual superiority."¹⁶⁸ Women of all class and ethnic backgrounds have suffered, although in different ways, from forced motherhood and sexual slavery. Given these common forms of oppression, all women do have some interests in common. What the politics of total separatism ignore, however, is that some groups of women also have interests in common with some groups of men. Working-class women have interests in common with working-class men; Jewish women have interests in common with Jewish men; differently abled women have interests in common with differently abled men; and women of color have interests in common with men of color. One black lesbian collective writes:

Although we are feminists and lesbians, we feel solidarity with progressive Black men and do not advocate the fractionalization that white women who are separatists demand. Our situation as Black people necessitates that we have solidarity around the fact of race, which white women of course do not need to have with white men, unless it is their negative solidarity as racial oppressors. We struggle together with Black men against racism, while we also struggle with Black men about sexism.¹⁶⁹

A limited separatism is healthy and necessary. But a politics of total separatism is necessarily classist and racist, no matter how far classism and racism are eradicated inside the womanculture. In part it is classist and racist because access to the womanculture is more difficult for poor women and women of color, just as it is more difficult for such women to be exclusively lesbian. On the most fundamental level, however, total separatism is classist and racist because it denies the importance of class and racial divisions. It assumes that these can be overcome without the full participation of the groups who suffer from them.

By definition, female separatism excludes the male half of the population. It also excludes women with any emotional attachment to or shared political interest with men. Since these are not only all non-lesbian women but also all working-class lesbians and lesbians of color, it excludes most of the population. For these reasons, a women's movement that calls for maximal as opposed to limited separatism and that views separatism as the major strategy for revolutionary change is doomed to remain a small minority. Consequently, it can never be effective in bringing about far-reaching social transformation. One American woman of color states clearly the limitations of separatist politics.

Black people alone cannot make a revolution in this country. Native American people alone cannot make a revolution in this country. Asians alone cannot make a revolution in this country. Chicanos alone cannot make a revolution in this country. White people alone cannot make revolution in this country. Women alone cannot make revolution in this country. Gay people alone cannot make revolution in this country. And anyone who tries it will not be successful.¹⁷⁰

Notes

1. Judith Moschkovich, "—But I Know You, American Woman," in Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press), p. 82.
2. Barbara Burris in agreement with Kathy Barry, Terry Moore, Joann DeLor, Joann Parreut, Cate Stadelman, "The Fourth World Manifesto," in Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anita Rapone, eds., *Radical Feminism* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1973), p. 342. The following references are all to this volume and will show only page numbers.
3. Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press), p. 59.
4. Burris et al., "The Fourth World Manifesto," p. 340.
5. Ibid., p. 355.
6. Ibid., p. 355.
7. Joyce Trebilcot, "Conceiving Women: Notes on the Logic of Feminism," *Sinister Wisdom*, Fall 1979, pp. 43-50.
8. Ibid., p. 46.
9. Susan Griffin, *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978). See especially the chapter entitled "HIS POWER (He Tames What Is Wild)."
10. Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, pp. 343 and 345.
11. Adrienne Rich, *Women and Honor: Some Notes on Lying* (Pittsburgh, Pa: Motherroot Publications), p. 1.
12. Ibid., p. 1.
13. Ibid., p. 9.
14. Trebilcot, "Conceiving Women", p. 46.
15. Sally Miller Gearhart, "The Spiritual Dimension: Death and Resurrection of a Hallelujah Dyke," in Ginny Vida, ed., *Our Right to Love* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1978), p. 187.
16. Carol P. Christ, *Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1980), p. 13. Thanks to Penny Smith for giving me this book.
17. Sara Ann Ketchum, "Female Culture, Womanculture, and Conceptual Change: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Studies," *Social Theory and Practice* 6, no. 2 (Summer, 1980):153.
18. Susan Leigh Star, "To Dwell Among Ourselves," *Sinister Wisdom* 8 (Winter 1979):95.
19. Barbara Love and Elizabeth Shanklin, "The Answer is Matriarchy," in Vida, ed., *Our Right to Love*, pp. 183-86.
20. Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, pp. 369-70.
21. *The Matriarchist*, vol. 2, is. 1, p. 4. *The Matriarchist* is published by The Foundation of Matriarchy, P.O. Box 271, Pratt Station, Brooklyn, N.Y., 11205.
22. For recent liberal discussions of this issue, see Stuart Hampshire, ed., *Public and Private Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).
23. Charles E. Ellison, "Marx and the Modern City: Public Life and the Problem of Personality," paper read to the Annual Meeting of the Mid-west Political Science Association, Cincinnati, Ohio, April 15-18, 1981, p. 30 of typescript.
24. Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (San Francisco: Ramparts Press, 1971), p. 77.
25. Love and Shanklin, "The Answer is Matriarchy," pp. 184-85.
26. Ibid., p. 184.
27. Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), p. 27.
28. Ibid., p. 205.
29. Ibid., p. 235.
30. Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), Chap. 3: "Freudianism: The Misguided Feminism."

31. Rich, *Of Woman Born*, pp. 211-12.
32. Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1977), pp. 28-29.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
35. Jane Alpert, "MotherRight: A New Feminist Theory," *Ms.*, August 1973, p. 92.
36. Sara Ann Ketchum and Christine Pierce, "Sex Objects, Sexual Partners, and Separatism" (unpublished ms.), p. 5. A later version of this paper was published as "Separatism and Sexual Relationships," but it omitted this point made in the earlier paper.
37. Doris Lessing's *The Summer Before the Dark* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973) provides a vivid account of this process.
38. Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Bantam Books, 1976), chap. 3: "War."
39. Susan Griffin, *Rape: The Power of Consciousness* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 88.
40. In the United Kingdom, three men were acquitted of raping a woman despite her screams and struggles, because they accepted the assurance of her husband that, in spite of her behavior, in fact she consented to sexual intercourse with them. *D.P.P. v. Morgan* (1975) 2 W.L.R. 913.
41. "Forcible and Statutory Rape: An Exploration of the Operation and Objectives of the Consent Standard," *Yale Law Journal* 62, no. 1 (December 1952):70. Cited by Jill Bley, "The History of Rape," *The Women Helping Women Manual* (Cincinnati, OH, 1978).
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
44. Griffin, *Rape*, p. 39.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
46. Barbara Mehrhof and Pamela Kearon, "Rape: An Act of Terror," *Notes from the Third Year: Women's Liberation* (New York: 1971), p. 80.
47. Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, p. 5.
48. Louanna Aptheker, "Can a Woman Rape a Man?" (unpublished).
49. Mehrhof and Kearon, "Rape: An Act of Terror," pp. 80-81.
50. Kathleen Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery* (Englewoods Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1979), p. 33 (*italics in original*).
51. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
52. Karen Lindsey, "Prostitution and the Law," *The Second Wave* 1, no. 4 (1972): p. 6.
53. Sheila Cronan, "Marriage," in Koedt, Levine and Rapone, eds., *Radical Feminism*, p. 217.
54. Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*, p. 126.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
57. Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Avon Books, 1971).
58. Robin Morgan, "Theory and Practice: Pornography and Rape," in Laura Lederer, ed., *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography* (New York: William Morrow, 1980), p. 139.
59. Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery*, chap. 9.
60. Morgan, "Theory and Practice," pp. 139-40.
61. Adrienne Rich, "Afterword" to Lederer, ed., *Take Back the Night*, p. 320.
62. Sharon Deevey, "Such a Nice Girl," in Nancy Myron and Charlotte Bunch, eds., *Lesbianism and the Women's Movement* (Baltimore: Diana Press, 1975), p. 24.
63. The Purple September Staff, "The Normative Status of Heterosexuality," in Myron and Bunch, eds., *Lesbianism and the Women's Movement*, p. 83.
64. Juliet Mitchell, *Women's Estate* (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 104, cites Rene Dumont, *L'Afrique Noire est Mal Partie*, 1962, p. 210.

65. Barbara Ehrenreich and Annette Fuentes, "Life on the Global Assembly Line," *Ms.*, January 1981.
66. Atypical is Kathy Parker and Lisa Leghorn's "Towards a Feminist Economics: A Global View," *The Second Wave* (Summer/Fall 1979):23-30. This article was the forerunner of their book, *Woman's Worth: Sexual Economics and the World of Women* (Boston and London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981). This pioneering and exciting book offers a new way of conceptualizing the economic realm that illuminates the international reach of the sexual division of labor, that makes visible much of women's hitherto invisible economic activity, and that demonstrates how this activity is organized for men's benefit.
67. Ti-Grace Atkinson, "The Institution of Sexual Intercourse," in *Women's Liberation: Notes from the Second Year* (New York, 1970), p. 42.
68. Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*, chap. 1.
69. Griffin, *Rape: The Power of Consciousness*, p. 26 fn (italics in original).
70. Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), p. 8.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
73. Griffin, *Rape: The Power of Consciousness*, p. 30.
74. *Ibid.*
75. Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, pp. 59 and 424.
76. Andrea Dworkin, "Why So-Called Radical Men Love and Need Pornography," in Lederer, ed., *Take Back the Night*, pp. 148-49.
77. Adrienne Rich, "Afterword" to Lederer, ed., *Take Back the Night*, p. 318 fn.
78. *Ibid.*, pp. 316-17.
79. Artemis March, "A Paradigm for Feminist Theory," paper delivered at the Second Sex Conference, NYC, September 1979.
80. Catherine A. MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7, no. 3 (Spring 1982):515-16.
81. Sara Ann Ketchum and Christine Pierce, "Separatism and Sexual Relationships," in Sharon Bishop and Marjorie Weinzwieg, *Philosophy and Women* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1979), p. 164. This article is a very clear and illuminating discussion of a highly emotional issue, and the argument of the rest of this paragraph is based on Ketchum and Pierce's discussion. In another excellent article, Marilyn Frye argues that separatism is a way of taking power and escaping male parasitism ("Some Reflections on Separatism and Power," *Sinister Wisdom* 6 [Fall, 1978]). Also published as a pamphlet by Tea Rose Press, PO Box 591, East Lansing, Michigan, 48823.
82. Patricia Mainardi, "The Marriage Question," in Redstockings, *Feminist Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1977(?), p. 121.
83. Coletta Reid, "Coming Out in the Women's Movement," in Myron and Bunch, eds., *Lesbianism and the Women's Movement*, p. 96.
84. Rita Mae Brown, "The Shape of Things to Come," in Myron and Bunch, eds., *Lesbianism and the Women's Movement*, p. 71.
85. The Purple September Staff, "The Normative Status of Heterosexuality," p. 83.
86. Charlotte Bunch, "Lesbians in Revolt," in Myron and Bunch, eds., *Lesbianism and the Women's Movement*, p. 36.
87. Ti-Grace Atkinson, "Lesbianism and Feminism," in Phyllis Birkby, Bertha Harris, Jill Johnston, Esther Newton, Jane O'Wyatt, eds., *Amazon Expedition: a lesbianfeminist anthology* (Washington, N.J.: Times Change Press, 1973), p. 12.
88. Ti-Grace Atkinson, *Amazon Odyssey* (New York: Links, 1974), pp. 13-23, 83-88.
89. Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5, no. 4 (Summer 1980):648-49.
90. Bunch, "Lesbians in Revolt," p. 33.
91. Cheryl Clarke, "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance," in Moraga and Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back*, pp. 128-37.
92. I am thinking of the Redstockings group who published the anthology *Feminist Revolution*, and also the journal *Meeting Ground*.

93. Charlotte Bunch, "Lesbians in Revolt," pp. 31-32.
94. Coletta Reid, "Coming Out in the Women's Movement," p. 103.
95. Ibid., p. 97.
96. Rita Mae Brown, "The Shape of Things to Come," p. 71.
97. Radicalesbians, "Woman-Identified Woman" in *Liberation Now: Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Dell Publishers, 1971), p. 287.
98. Barbara Solomon, "Taking the Bullshit by the Horns," in Myron and Bunch, eds., *Lesbianism and the Women's Movement*, p. 41.
99. Bunch, "Lesbians in Revolt," p. 29.
100. Rita Mae Brown, "Living with Other Women," in *Women: A Journal of Liberation* 2, no. 2, p. 34.
101. Sharon Deevey, "Such a Nice Girl," p. 25.
102. Rita Mae Brown, *Plain Brown Rapper* (Oakland, Calif: Diana Press, 1976), p. 213.
103. A typical example is Donald Milligan, *The Politics of Homosexuality* (London: Pluto Press, 1973).
104. Letter to the editors by Andrena Zawinski, *Off Our Backs* 9, no. 2 (February 1981):28.
105. Pat Califia, "Feminism and Sodomasochism," *Heresies* 3, no. 4 (Is. 12):30. It was Pat Califia's book of lesbian sexuality, *Sapphisty*, which brought this issue out of the closet and to the attention of the broader women's community.
106. Bat-Ami Bar On, "Feminism and Sodomasochism: Self-Critical Notes," in Robin Ruth Linden, Darlene R. Pagano, Diana E. W. Russell, and Susan Leigh Star, eds., *Against Sodomasochism: A Radical Feminist Analysis* (East Palo Alto, CA: Frog in the Well Press, 1982), p. 80. For more on this topic, see the various reports on Barnard College's ninth Scholar and the Feminist Conference: Towards a Politics of Sexuality, in *Off Our Backs* 12, no. 6 (June 1982).
107. Jennifer Woodul, "What's This about Feminist Businesses?" *Off Our Backs* 6, no. 4 (June 1976). Reprinted in Alison M. Jaggar and Paula M. Struhl, eds., *Feminist Frameworks: Alternative Theoretical Accounts of the Relations Between Women and Men* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978), pp. 197-98.
108. Coletta Reid, "Taking Care of Business," *Quest: A Feminist Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1974):18-21.
109. Advertisement in *Matrices: A Lesbian-Feminist Research Newsletter* 4, no. 3 (June 1981):10.
110. Ann Withorn, "Helping Ourselves: The Limits and Potential of Self Help," *Radical America* 14, no. 3 (May-June 1980):32.
111. Quoted in *ibid.*
112. Lois Ahrens, "Battered Women's Refuges: Feminist Cooperatives Vs. Social Service Institutions," in *Radical America* 14, no. 3 (May-June 1980):42.
113. Laurie MacKenzie and Sue Kirk, "What is Radical Feminist Counseling?" duplicated by the Center for Women's Studies and Services, 908 'F' St., San Diego, CA., 92101.
114. Lynne Farrow, "Feminism as Anarchism," Black Bear Pamphlet 2, c/o 76 Peckham Rd., London SE5, p. 1. This article first appeared in 1974 in *Aurora*, a New York feminist magazine.
115. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *What is Property? First Memoir—An Inquiry into the Principle of Right and of Government*, trans. by Benjamin R. Tucker (Princeton, Mass.: B.R. Tucker, 1876), p. 11. Proudhon (1809–1865) was a French socialist whose ideas formed the basis for the anarcho-syndicalist movement which flourished at the turn of the century.
116. Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, p. 45.
117. Ursula LeGuin, *The Dispossessed*, quoted by Lizzie Borden, "Women and Anarchy," *Heresies* 1, no. 2 (May 1977):73.
118. Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, London, 1902. In contrast to prevailing interpretations of Darwinian theory, which stressed individual competition as the sole motive force of biological evolution and social progress, Kropotkin (1842–1921)

argued that cooperation or mutual aid was also an important factor in biological and social evolution.

119. Borden, "Women and Anarchy," p. 72.
120. Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, p. 44.
121. Ibid., pp. 44-45.
122. Peggy Kornegger, "Anarchism: The Feminist Connection," *The Second Wave: a magazine of the new feminism* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1975):31.
123. Woodul, "What's This about Feminist Businesses?" p. 197. Barbara Love and Elizabeth Shanklin, authors of "The Answer is Matriarchy," write: "matriarchy implies a worldwide socialist economic base, but a liberation of reproduction from subordination to the socialist state" (p. 186).
124. Chicago Anarcho-Feminists, "Anarcho-Feminist Manifesto," *Siren: A Journal of Anarcho-Feminism* 1, no. 1 (1971). Reprinted as Black Bear Pamphlet 1, c/o 76 Peckham Rd., London SE5.
125. Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, p. 133.
126. Examples of feminist science fiction include the following: C.P. Gilman, *Herland: A Lost Feminist Utopian Novel* (New York: Pantheon, 1979); Dorothy Bryant, *The Kin of Ata are Waiting for You* (Berkeley, CA and New York: Moon Books and Random House, 1976); Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time* (New York: Fawcett, 1976); Sally Miller Gearhart, *The Wanderground: Stories of the Hill Women* (Watertown, Mass: Persephone Press, 1979); and many of the novels of Ursula LeGuin, perhaps especially *The Left Hand of Darkness*.
127. Women's Majority Union (Seattle, Washington), "Lilith's Manifesto—1969" in Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. 529 (italics in original).
128. Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, pp. 232-33.
129. Joan Rothchild, "Taking Our Future Seriously," *Quest: A Feminist Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (winter 1976):26. Thanks to Marilyn Myerson for drawing this article to my attention.
130. Laurel, "Toward a Woman Vision," *Amazon Quarterly* vol. 1, is. 2, p. 40. Quoted by Kornegger, "Anarchism: The Feminist Connection," p. 36.
131. Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, p. 1.
132. Loie Hayes, "Preying Mantis Urges Vandalism," *Off Our Backs* 11, no. 6 (June 1981):12.
133. *Time*, April 23, 1973. Quoted by Griffin, *Rape: The Power of Consciousness*, p. 78.
134. Hayes, "Preying Mantis."
135. Loie Hayes, "Feminist Arsonists in England," *Off Our Backs* 11, no.6 (June 1981):13.
136. WITCH leaflet reprinted in Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Powerful*, p. 538.
137. Bookchin, *Post Scarcity Anarchism*, pp. 221-2.
138. WITCH leaflet, p. 538. On p. 539 can be found other meanings of the acronym WITCH.
139. Loie Hayes, "Women's Pentagon Action: Herstory and Future," *Off Our Backs* 11, no. 4 (April 1981):9.
140. WITCH leaflet, p. 540.
141. Joreen, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," reprinted in Koedt, Levine, and Rapone, *Radical Feminism*, pp. 285-99.
142. "The Feminists: A Political Organization to Annihilate Sex Roles," Atkinson, ed., *Women's Liberation: in Notes from the Second Year*, New York, 1970. p. 115. This article was reprinted in Koedt, Levine, and Rapone, *Radical Feminism*.
143. Madeline Belkin, "Drowning in the Steno Pool," in *Liberation Now! Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Dell, 1971), p. 77.
144. Wendy Kaminer, "Pornography and the First Amendment: Prior Restraints and Private Action," in Lederer, ed., *Take Back the Night*, p. 247.
145. Hayes, "Preying Mantis Urges Vandalism."
146. Red Rosia and Black Maria, "Blood of the Flower," Black Bear Pamphlet, 1.

147. Kornegger, "Anarchism: The Feminist Connection," p. 33.
148. Among the best examples of this sort of combination is so-called performance art which developed in Los Angeles during the 1970s. A brief account of this art form, together with pictures of some of the most striking examples, is given by Suzanne Lacy, "Organizing: The Art of Protest," *Ms*, October 1982, pp. 64-67.
149. Mehrhof and Kearon, "Rape: An Act of Terror," p. 233.
150. Griffin, *Rape: The Power of Consciousness*, p. 31.
151. *Ibid.*
152. Farrow, "Feminism as Anarchism," p. 11.
153. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
154. Annette Kuhn and Ann Marie Wolpe, "Feminism and Materialism," in Kuhn and Ann Marie Wolpe, eds., *Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production* (London, Henley, and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 6.
155. Farrow, "Feminism as Anarchism," pp. 6, 7, and 8.
156. Griffin, *Rape: The Power of Consciousness*, p. 31.
157. Most of the items on this list come from Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology*. As we have seen earlier, however, radical feminists are not in complete agreement about the precise definition of their central concepts, and so not all would accept the appearance of all these items on a single list.
158. Solomon, "Taking the Bullshit by the Horns," p. 44.
159. Farrow, "Feminism as Anarchism," p. 10.
160. Carol Anne Douglas, "Review of *Reinventing Anarchy*," *Off Our Backs* 11, no. 4 (April 1981):21.
161. For some of these examples, see *Disregarded History: Case Studies of European Nonviolent Defense*, pamphlet available from the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Youth Action, Box 271, Nyack, NY, 10960.
162. Laurelchild's expression was quoted by Maida Tilchen, "Women's Music: Politics for Sale?" *Gay Community New Music Supplement*, June 1981. Thanks for Teresa Boykin for bringing this article to my attention.
163. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
164. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
165. Carol P. Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological and Political Reflections," in Charlene Spretnak, ed., *The Politics of Women's Spirituality: Essays on the Rise of Spiritual Power Within the Feminist Movement* (New York: Anchor Books, 1982):84.
166. Early radical feminists who made this claim include Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex*; "The Feminists: A Political Organization to Annihilate Sex Roles," in *Radical Feminism*, p. 370; and Charlotte Bunch, "Lesbians in Revolt," p. 32.
167. Bunch, "Lesbians in Revolt," p. 33.
168. Clarke, "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance," p. 130.
169. Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," in Zillah R. Eisenstein, ed., *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), pp. 365-66.
170. Pat Parker, "Revolution: It's Not Neat or Pretty or Quick," in *This Bridge Called My Back*, p. 241.

*FEMINIST
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AND HUMAN
NATURE*

Alison M. Jaggar

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To those who developed these ideas through their activity on behalf of women; the many generous and perceptive friends who have helped me to articulate them; my family who have always supported my work; Karuna, Sumita and their generation who will carry forward the ideas in this book.

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