

SCARLET WOMEN 13

Part 2 Sexuality

Journal of the Socialist Feminist Current
of the Women's Movement

July 1981



Women only

60p

Editorial Statement

"Socialist Feminism is a distinct revolutionary approach, a challenge to the class structure and to patriarchy. By the patriarchy we mean a system in which all women are oppressed, an oppression which is total, affecting all aspects of our lives. Just as class oppression preceded capitalism, so does our oppression. We do not acknowledge that men are oppressed as a sex although working class men, gay men and black men are oppressed as workers, gays and blacks, an oppression shared by gay, black and working class women. Sisterhood is our defence against oppression, and as such is part of our revolutionary consciousness.

Socialists sometimes see the struggle as being about a change in the economic structure alone. For us the struggle is about a change in total social relations. We are concerned to develop an understanding of the real relationship between male supremacy and class society. As Socialist Feminists we have to examine socialist feminist thought and seek to develop it. What we are looking for is nothing less than a total redefinition of socialist thought and practice. We are working towards a socialism which seeks to abolish patriarchy.

What this means for Scarlet Women

We want to publish papers, letters, articles, ideas that develop the thought and effectiveness of socialist feminism. The debate about the class struggle and relating to left groups can take place in our pages only if contributions are based on the belief in an autonomous Women's Liberation Movement and also on the belief that autonomous movements have the right to define their own oppression and the struggle against it."

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Editorial - part two.

This has to be a short editorial because of the number of articles in this Part 2 of the issue. We just want to pick up on a few points raised in the articles.

The struggle for sexual autonomy is crucial for women because men control our bodies, and while this is so we can never fully realise our power as women. Individually many of us are re-asserting our control, leaving unhappy marriages, coming out as lesbians, rejecting marriage, demanding the right to abortion, better contraception and the right to have children outside the traditional family - altho' for too many of us still these choices are just not possible. Traditionally the struggle for sexual autonomy has been seen as bourgeois, a luxury for middle class women. Because we can survive without sexual pleasure, but cannot live without food and shelter, these necessities take priority and always have done. But even where we have a basic subsistence level, the priorities remain the same. In this country now we will fight for better housing conditions, for better conditions at (paid) work, but not so readily for better sex lives. This is partly because our sexual experience has always been privatised - how do we fight to change such an intimate area of our lives? But it's mainly because it is men who have always defined the areas of struggle. Now the WLM is defining sexual issues as ones to be fought around. But sexual autonomy cannot be seen in isolation.

To be able to define our own sexuality we need economic and financial independence from men, freely available childcare, the right to abortion and contraception, etc. as the wording of our movement's demands emphasizes.

If we withdraw emotionally and sexually from men, does this give us greater strength for our struggle against the patriarchy, as the Suffragettes suggested? Can a network of spinsters provide the power base for women? Today some feminists are saying we should withdraw sexually from men as a way of undermining male power. Is withdrawal a viable strategy for the women's movement?

As women become more economically independent, or less easily controlled through pregnancy and childrearing, is sexuality being used more consciously by men to keep us down? The first sexologists appeared at the time of the Suffragettes, arguing that women needed a good fuck, and lots of it, otherwise we couldn't realise our potential as 'real' women. The same arguments were used against us during the 'sexual revolution' of the '60's, and today we see the proliferation of pornography, sex shops, blue movies, and sex imposed with violence upon women in all imaginable forms.

How are they able to use sex in this way? Why do they identify penetration with our subjugation? Did they devise fucking as a means of control? Or is it that having control over our bodies and our sexuality already, they have the power to remind us of our place by fucking us? How did they get this control in the first place? We reckon that it was through their taking over our ability to have children with the creation of the patriarchal family. Needing to claim paternity rights in our children, they had to establish rights over our wombs - and consequently in our bodies and our sexuality. The penis became a weapon of law and order and fucking our punishment.

Some women say that men enforce heterosexuality with such violence because we are all basically lesbian. We'd say, following from the above line of thought, that enforced heterosexuality is a consequence of men's control over our reproductive power. Their violence is a reflection not of our lack of sexual feelings for them necessarily, but of their control of heterosexual expression, imposing procreative sex, focussed around penetration, on us whether we like it (or them) or not.

This issue, Part 1 and Part 2, is for women only. Please, sisters, make sure men do not get their hands on it.

Sex and the experts...

male^{or} sexuality rules OK!



THE 'SCIENCE' OF SEX.

The 20th. century has seen the rise of a new 'science' - the science of sexual behaviour, and a new 'expert' - the sexologist. They both became firmly established in Britain at the beginning of this century with the work of Havelock Ellis and his contemporaries, though we are probably more familiar with the names of Kinsey, who began his work in the 1940s, and Masters and Johnson, who became known in the late '60s. The new science soon spawned another brand of expert, the sex counsellor or sex therapist, and the work of both kinds of expert has been popularised through marriage manuals and books on sex education and sexual technique.

SEXUAL LIBERATION.

The development of sexology has generally been welcomed by progressives, who have seen in it a means of liberating sexuality from the guilt and inhibition of Victorian sexual morality. Indeed, from its very beginnings, there has been a close association between the academic scientists and the so-called sex reformers. Ellis was an honorary president of the World League for Sexual Reform, whose first international congress took place in 1921, and whose fundamental aim was 'to help to create a new legal and social attitude towards the sexual life of men and women', based on

scientific knowledge. The League was also formally committed to the political, economic and sexual equality of men and women, and many feminists were among its members. To many women, sexology appeared to offer release from the double standard of sexual morality, and from the passive model of female sexuality of the Victorian era; sex would no longer be a distasteful duty - 'grit your teeth and think of England, dear' - but as pleasurable for women as for men. Emphasis on the active nature of female sexuality increased as sexology advanced, and with it, ever more vicious hostility towards female 'frigidity' and 'prudery', which was frequently described, significantly, as a form of resistance.

THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION

In many ways sexology paved the way for the sexual revolution of the 1960s - the 'permissive society', 'swinging' and all that. This revolution (like all others to date) turned out to be a men's revolution, as many of us soon discovered. Instead of just putting up with being used as sex objects, we were now supposed to actively enjoy it! It was women's experience of the sexual revolution that provided, in part, the impetus for the Women's Liberation Movement; our assertion of a self-defined sexuality reflected an awareness that the active sexuality for which women had been struggling, and which the

sexologists had graciously bestowed on us, was still male-defined and male-controlled. This is hardly surprising, since sexology originated at a time when the first wave of feminism was at its most militant, and women were making real progress towards emancipation. In many ways, sexology can be seen as a response to the threat of female independence. It has always been primarily concerned with the liberation of male sexuality, and this, for heterosexual men, has necessarily involved the reconstruction of female sexuality to suit the requirements of the male. At a deeper level, however, sexology has served as a powerful weapon in maintaining male power, not only in the bedroom, but in society as a whole, and in this sense has served the interests of all men. The male orchestration of female sexual 'pleasure' ('tuning to concert pitch', as one of them put it), authorised by no less an authority than science, has become increasingly important as a means of coercing women into that bedrock of male power, heterosexuality. Sexology, then, is not merely about defining and constructing sexuality, it is about controlling women through sexuality.

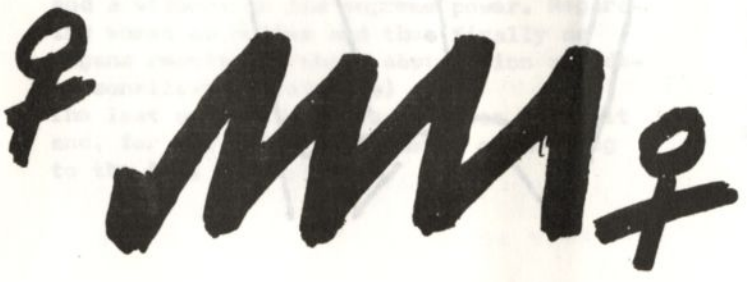
SEXOLOGY AND SEXUALITY

Female sexuality has always been a problem for sexologists, the problem being that it does not appear to be the same as male sexuality. In the male fantasy of female sexuality (most vividly illustrated in pornography) the female sexual response is imagined to be identical with the male, i.e. our sexual needs are spontaneous and impetuous, we are ready for sex at any time. we have orgasms quickly and easily, we enjoy violent and aggressive sex etc. The trouble is, women in real life never match up to this fantasy. Male sexuality, on the other hand, is not seen as a problem, but rather as a fascinating phenomenon. In fact, from a feminist point of view, what the experts say about male sexuality is extremely interesting in terms of what it reveals about male power. A good illustration of this is their analysis of sexual perversions, e.g. fetishism, voyeurism, sado-masochism exhibitionism etc., all of which are found primarily in men, as the experts admit. When I looked at the literature on this, I found to my surprise that there was a striking similarity between the ideas of Ellis, Freud and their contemporaries, and those of Kinsey and others in the second half of the century, and that in spite of differences in the method of analysis, the same themes consistently emerged.

WHAT IS NORMAL ?

The main theme is that the perversions are not fundamentally different from normal male sexuality, but simply more exaggerated forms of it. A key concept in the analysis is the 'continuum of sexuality', i.e. that there is no absolute distinction between normal and abnormal sexual behaviour; what is regarded as abnormal is merely a matter of convention. Ellis noted, for example, that the germs of 'flashing' could be recognised in the 'ostentatious pride that nearly every adolescent male shows in his maturing genitals'; and that the sexual excitement produced by contact with shit (coprolagnia) was grounded in 'the universally appreciated attraction of the female buttocks'. Freud argued that a certain degree of fetishism is habitually found in normal 'love'; and Gebhard (a member of the Kinsey Institute) wrote in 1969 of fetishism and S/M: 'In their milder forms - such as the opinion that high heels add to feminine allure or the impulse to pinch a well rounded buttock - these phenomena involve millions of U.S.males.' He went on to explain that at one end of the continuum is slight preference, e.g. the man who prefers his partner to wear, say, black patent high heeled shoes; next is strong preference; next is the point where the fetish item is necessary for sexual activity to take place e.g. the man who is impotent unless his partner wears such a shoe; and at the other extreme of the continuum the fetish item substitutes for a living sexual partner e.g. 'the man who habitually dispenses with the shoe'. Thus sexual abnormality is merely a matter of degree; which implies that there is nothing inherently harmful in the practices themselves, and therefore no reason to discourage them. Occasionally there is even a hint that those who go in for such things are in some way superior to the average person. Ellis went so far as to coin a new term for them - 'erotic symbolists', implying that they possess superior gifts of imagination !

The fact that Ellis himself was a pervert - he got off on watching women piss (urolagnia) probably had something to do with it ! Gebhard too betrays a sneaking admiration: 'Sado masochism is beautifully suited to symbolism.... it may be that a society must be extremely complex and heavily reliant on symbolism before the inescapable repressions and frustrations of life in such a society can be expressed symbolically in sado-masochism.' This quotation also illustrates another theme : that sexual perversions are characteristic of 'advanced' as opposed to 'primitive' societies because as 'man' becomes more 'civilised', so he develops a greater capacity to symbolise. This seems to suggest that, since such a capacity is an inevitable consequence of a more developed culture, change is about as possible as putting the historical clock back !



BIOLOGICAL DETERMINISM

This kind of cultural determinism, however, is far less significant than the biological determinism with which sexology is saturated. One of the main ways in which the experts attempt to normalise perversions is by referring to studies of animal behaviour, which 'prove' that aggression, dominance/submission etc. are universal throughout the animal kingdom, including 'man'. Freud, for instance, argued that sadism is rooted in the biological need to overcome the resistance of the sexual object; and Ellis argued that pain is inherent in the sexual act, and can be traced back to the courtship of animals, e.g. the combat between males for the possession of the female, the male's pursuit and subdual of his mate, the 'conscious torturing' of the male by the female as she attempts to elude him. According to Gebherd, S/M type behaviour is common in mammals, where fighting precedes or is interspersed with coitus, and in some species, such as mink, results in considerable wounds. Such behaviour is said to be valuable in establishing or reinforcing the physiological symptoms of sexual arousal, e.g. increased pulse rate and blood pressure muscular tension etc. 'This may explain why sado-masochism is used as a crutch by aging men in our society who require some extra impetus to achieve arousal' says Gebhard, and adds that from an evolutionary viewpoint it is no surprise to find S/M in human beings. Since our culture operates on the basis of the dominance/submission relationships, and aggression is socially valued; and since living in a peck-order society inevitably causes frustration, it is no wonder that S/M is embedded in our culture'

as Gebhard puts it. He does not ask 'whose culture?', of course, or whose interests are served by this state of affairs, but merely refers again to animals. The message is now becoming very clear: the association between sex, pain and violence is a fact of life; we must just accept it.

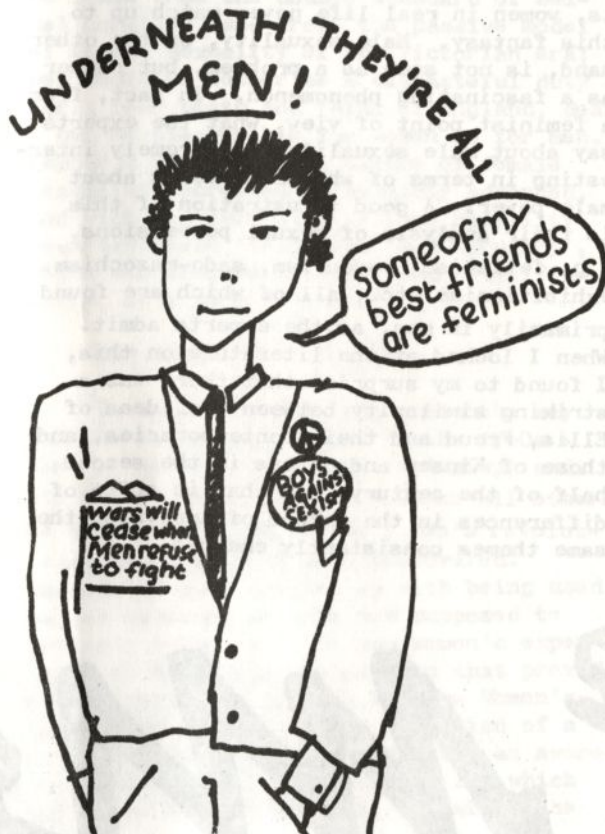
BLAMING WOMEN

Another major theme is that in so far as men's sexual demands do sometimes cause problems, this is usually a fault of women rather than the men themselves. Here the experts rely more on psychoanalysis for their evidence, as well as the conventional wisdom of a woman-hating society. I can't resist quoting at length from a case study by the Kinsey Institute of a peeping tom: 'A classic example is a man who was in his mid twenties when we interviewed him. He had begun petting when he was fourteen and had petted with a modest number of females, but had gone beyond above-the-waist stimulation with only two girls. When he was seventeen he had coitus three times with one girl and none thereafter. Timidity and an overwhelming fear of being rejected kept him from seeking more heterosexual activity which he strongly desired. His fear of rejection began, as far as he knows, with a traumatic event shortly after he reached

4.
puberty and was experiencing the usual quick and intense arousal at that period of life. Circumstances forced him to share a bed with a married sister and he became extremely aroused and desirous of coitus. Unable to express his wish, he simply showed her his erect penis. She rejected him violently and harangued him at length on how vile he was. Ever since then he had felt extremely awkward and hesitant about approaching females sexually, and every rebuff was excruciating' This is seriously offered as an explanation of voyeurism, even though, on Gebhard's own admission, 'virtually all males have voyeuristic and peeping tendencies.'

THE MYTH OF MALE SEXUALITY

The above quotation also illustrates very well how the science of sexual behaviour is based on the myth of male sexuality: that all males are in the grip of irrepressible sexual urges, which must have an outlet, and will go out of control if that outlet is denied. That it is a myth has, of course, long been recognised by feminists, but as a justification for rape, prostitution and all forms of sexual coercion, from the most brutal to the most subtle, it still persists, now endorsed by the authority of science.. Interwoven through the literature on sexual perversions is what appears to be a plea for tolerance, but is in fact a thinly veiled threat: it is dangerous to deny male sexuality the gratification it seeks. There are strong hints that if there were more legitimate outlets for men's insistent sexual urges, there would be fewer sex crimes; what they need is a 'freer' sex life, especially during childhood and adolescence (as is said to exist in less advanced societies).



MALE SEXUALITY AND THE CONTROL OF WOMEN

Sexology is not only based on the myth of male sexuality; it reinforces and legitimates it, by providing it with a pseudo-scientific justification. What this means for women, in concrete terms, is not only that we are supposed to accept that men's uncontrollable sexual urges are a fact of life, but the pain, violence and aggression are inseparable from 'normal' sexual activity. Many of us have learned this lesson only too well; some of us have somehow managed to resist, but every new sex manual or magazine makes it that bit harder; so does the enormous growth and increasingly widespread availability of all forms of pornography and films which present women as targets of male sexual violence; and so do the sex therapy clinics which attempt to condition women into acceptance of male sexual demands. What it all adds up to is an attempt to break down our resistance to the form male sexuality takes, and to mould us into the male fantasy of female sexuality. The aim is control, and through control the maintenance of male power.

PENIS POWER

The experts are not unaware of this of course, as the following examples show: 'the exhibitionist feels he has effected a psychic defloration'(Ellis) 'not infrequently S/M activity is interspersed with loving and tenderness. This alternation makes the process far more powerful. Police and brainwashers use the same technique of alternate brutality and sympathy to break their subjects'(Gebhard) 'the hood, often used in bondage, offers the advantage of depersonalisation and heightens helplessness'(Gebhard) So pain, violence and aggression are not just ends in themselves; they are part of the urge to conquer, dominate and control, which results in the objectification and depersonalisation of the partner. And since the difference between normal and abnormal is merely one of degree, these elements must be part and parcel of male sexuality itself, as the experts do in fact recognise: 'the sexuality of most male human beings contains an element of aggressiveness - a desire to subjugate' (Freud) 'one of the principal components in male sexuality is the desire for power, the desire to dominate' (Marcus) 'the whole (male) fantasy of the highly excited woman has as one of its meanings that the woman herself is an organ; with the penis in her she becomes an extension of it, a reassurance of its continued existence, and a witness to its supreme power. Regarding women as bodies and then finally as organs results in their abstraction and depersonalisation.'(Marcus) The last quotation makes it quite explicit and, for me, gives a new depth of meaning to the term 'sex object'.

MALE SEXUALITY AS A PERVERSION

It seems to me, then, that to a man, a woman is little more than a fetish object - a means of acting out male power, in fantasy and reality. If this is so, there is indeed no difference between normal and abnormal male sexuality: male sexuality is a perversion. Where the experts are wrong, is in explaining this in terms of biological needs. In the first place, studies of animals tell us more about how scientists project their own values on to animals, than they do about the animals, or about the origins of male power. Secondly, a biological explanation implies that male sexuality is fixed and unchangeable, which, of course, is what men want us to believe, as it conveniently lets them off the hook - 'poor dears, they can't help it!'

SEX, POWER AND HETEROSEXUALITY

We need to understand much more about male sexuality, and its implications, not only for heterosexual relationships, but for lesbian and homosexual relationships, e.g. what is its role in male bonding, and to what extent has it shaped lesbian sexuality? Without such an understanding we will never be able to reconstruct and take control of our own sexuality. Many women, including some feminists, still reduce sexuality to sexual preference or orientation and regard sex as purely a private matter. One view, which is currently being expressed with some force, both inside and outside the WLM, and which I find particularly alarming is that 'most women are heterosexual'. This implies that most women have a natural sexual orientation towards men which cannot be changed; those of us who have changed must have either 'really' been lesbian all the time, or just happen to be lucky. It is an assumption which is every bit as biological as the myth that men have uncontrollable sexual urges, and it is just as important to challenge. If heterosexuality comes naturally to most of us, why have men made such strenuous efforts throughout history to force us into it? As Adrienne Rich has pointed out, in a patriarchal society heterosexuality is compulsory for the vast majority of women, as shown by the historical denial and erasure of lesbian existence and any independent female existence, regardless of whether it involves specifically sexual relationships with women. The history of the construction of male sexuality is at the same time the history of women's resistance to compulsory heterosexuality, a history which repeats itself over and over again because men destroy the links with our past and find new and more subtle ways of undermining us and isolating us from each other. There can be few more insidious ways of doing so than teaching us to enjoy the association of sex with power.

Margaret Jackson, April 1981.

PAEDOPHILIA AND PUBLIC MORALS

A Campaign against Public Morals publication

95p.

This pamphlet was produced by the Campaign Against Public Morals in reaction to the charges faced by five men from the Paedophile Information Exchange. The 5 were charged with 'Conspiracy to Corrupt Public Morals'. The first part of the pamphlet concerns itself with the implications of conspiracy charges for those involved in trade unions and political movements and of this particular charge for gay and lesbian activists. In this review, I've concentrated on their arguments for the abolition of the Age of Consent and incest laws.

'Children's Power Means Paedophilia Now!' runs the unlikely message. Who are the writers of this pamphlet kidding? They say that if children could have sexual relationships with 'kind persons' (the paedophile equivalent to 'gay'), then the power balance between adult and child would shift in favour of the child because s/he can always end the relationship - an option not open to children in relation to their parents and teachers. Paedophiles are not just another brick in the wall, they say; 'they are a crack in that wall' - hence the slogan.

This argument leaves me cold. In fact, I find the pamphlet sickening. Am I being paranoid, or are these 'kind persons' the same people as the potential rapists we know so well? They are out to appeal to feminist opinion and their case is couched in our language. For example, they talk about the freedom of young women to define their own sexuality, they explain that 'sexuality doesn't have to be orientated towards penetration' (we need men to tell us that?), they analyse children's oppression, relating it to the oppression of women and the power the father/husband has over his wife and their children. They show how the patriarchal capitalist state controls the mother in her role in its own interest, and they attack rape and male power. It's all there, but as I say, it leaves me cold.

The age of consent laws basically relate to penetration, except for boys younger than 16 yrs, who cannot consent to non-penetrative homosexual activity. Women of any age can consent to non-penetrative sex with men, 'tho' the man could be charged with indecency with children. If a man does penetrate an under-age woman and he is over 24 yrs, he could be imprisoned or fined. The penalty for the male homosexual is life for buggery with men under 21 yrs and 10 years for non-penetrative sex with underage boys. Lesbian relationships

are not covered by this law, though girls under 16 yrs could be harassed and eventually put into care, and, if she is under 14 yrs, the older woman could be charged with indecency with children.

These laws, then, direct young people to heterosexuality, as the authors of this pamphlet point out. Girls are not harassed for non-penetrative heterosexual relations, though they are likely to be taken into care for lesbian relations or for heterosexual penetration, reflecting the high price put on virginity and the fear that the woman could have a child unnamed and unclaimed by a man. The man in question does not face very serious charges though the homosexual man who has sex with an under-age boy does....and the boy also faces the likelihood of psychiatric treatment.

The age of consent for homosexual boys should be brought into line with that for heterosexual penetrative sex, and so should the penalties for the older man infringing them. Boys and girls shouldn't be penalised at all for engaging in any form of sexual activity with adults. These changes could be made, but I don't think that allowing men the right of penetration with our children will really help young people develop their sexuality in freedom, as they argue. Not whilst we live in a male power system where men have a predatory attitude to sex.

But there's obviously a real problem here. What about those younger people who do want a penetrative sexual relationship with adults? These laws do constrain them, and for the life of me I cannot think of an answer to this. The reality of male power forces us to take protective measures. After all, it was feminists who campaigned for the raising of the age of consent to protect young girls who were being sold into prostitution. It would be nice if younger people and adults could have equal mutually satisfying relationships, but.....

But are they really talking about young people, or are they more interested in pre-pubescent children? There are a lot of indications in this pamphlet that that's where it's at for paedophiles. Are they really out to get men legal sexual access to children - particularly to little girls?

It's all too familiar. Men wanting more sexual freedom. Haven't they always wanted more freedom for themselves, more sex on their terms? I sus-

pect that all this right-on verbiage is a cover, a front for the same old power trip. We've heard it all before, brothers, in the '60's, remember? The sexual revolution - the pill - free fucks for men. The use of our bodies with impunity for their own satisfaction, and here they are bringing out the box of tricks again to persuade us to help them gain sexual rights in our children too.

They tell us that sex doesn't have to involve penetration, but we've learnt from bitter experience - and porn confirms our experience - that men seem to be driven by an insatiable urge to penetrate all the holes they possibly can. Are we supposed to ignore this experience and imagine that they will treat our children any differently?

Even if they were to forego penetration, do we really want men free to indulge in any form of sexual activity with small children? I felt sick when I read about the psychiatric treatment paedophiles receive, not because of what they go through, which is horrific, but because I felt for what the children must go through. The man is sometimes forced to re-enact his sexual behaviour with a life-size doll of a child, 'probing the vagina with his tongue, probing the anus manually'. He is filmed and ECT is applied to his penis whilst the film is played back. As I said, horrific, but note that the doll has a vagina - more fuel to feminist paranoia. Do we really want grown men probing little girls' vaginas with their tongues or sticking their fingers up their anus?

Men already have power over children. They rape, assault and intimidate children, particularly little girls, as it is. Father-daughter incest is not uncommon. How can we say, in the face of this reality: yes, do away with these laws. How can we as feminists condone an open season on girls. The authors talk about sexual feelings between women and girls and between men and boys but, and here the paranoia creeps in again, I sense the lurking figure of big daddy in the shadows....the normal heterosexual man who, we are assured, is also turned on by girls of 7 and 8. This bit of information is supposed to reassure us of the normality of paedophilia - but what about those normal heterosexual men walking home from work past a group of girls playing out? How reassured do you feel about that?

Why so much child porn? Why are normal heterosexual men so interested in our children? Could it have anything

to do with women-hatred? Grown women are so difficult to control, we're a stropky lot and not as amenable as we should be. Do they hate our bodies? Could it be that little girls are less yukky and distasteful to these normal men?

The porn industry churns out child porn for these normal heterosexual men. We are told that paedophile porn is different from this in that it is 'the one confident statement in an otherwise silent world that child adult sex can be a reality'. But I'm not happy with the thought of child porn, whoever it's produced for. Yes, it must be tough if you're really into sex with children, but I'm still not happy. The authors say that children should have the right to sell their images to porn merchants or to become prostitutes for money, that while we have capitalism 'we support any attempts by children to obtain an independent income'.

Our words in their interests again Yuk! Behind the lonely paedophile with his porn mags, there are ranks of men drawing power from the fetishistic images of women and children who work in the porn industry.....and, incidentally, not all of them are free agents. What about Linda Lovelace?

We have to be really vigilant when men start using our language in their own interests; when, for instance, they winge for equal custody rights in a situation where mothers are powerless. They take our kids from us in the name of sex equality - and male power grows. They winge for the right to have sex with our children in a situation where women and children have been reduced to sex objects, and expect us to see the revolutionary logic of their arguments - to listen once again to their 'reason'. Yes, it's true that the state has its own reasons for controlling children's sexual feelings, but a repeal of the Age of Consent laws will not free children to explore their own sexuality, not while we live in a male power system.

Abolishing or lowering the Age of Consent will not help young girls cope with male power. At the moment a girl does have some protection from the incest and Age of Consent laws. She can refuse penetration in a consensual relationship if she prefers petting, and she can have legal recourse against unwanted penetration without having to prove rape. To be fair, the authors do try to think about changes in the rape law if incest and Age of Consent laws were to be abolished, but I'm still not convinced, the spectre of Big Daddy is still lurking. I think I would change their slogan to: 'Male Power Now Means No To Paedophilia'.

See the paper 'the Age of Consent' produced by Leeds Women's Liberation Age of Consent Working Group, printed in the WLM Conference on Sexual Violence Against Women Papers; see also WIRES 84, The Leveller, March '80 and the Revolutionary Radical Feminist Newsletter no 3.

Anne Tonoda

INNOCENCE



"By the way," she said, "I forgot to mention," said she, "I said I'd go round to Agnes when I've put the kids to bed."

Click, the lie was told. The bullet snapped into the revolver.

"What, again?" her husband said. "Your shoulder's going to disintegrate if she weeps on it much more."

"Well, it's hard for her, left on her own with her children. She said she might get a baby-sitter, so we could go for a drink together. Get her out of the house." She wiped the saucepans carefully.

"Well," she said at last, "I suppose I'd better brace myself. It looks ever so cold out there. You're sure you don't mind me going out?"

"Not if it's an errand of mercy."

She had never thought it would be so easy to lie. When she was a girl, she thought her mother had telepathic powers that caught her lying in the grass and smoking in toilets. In fact, her own guilty expression had betrayed her; but somewhere during marriage and motherhood she had learnt the necessity of lies.

She went upstairs before leaving, to fetch contraceptives from the bathroom cabinet. Surely he would notice them missing if he took his bath, as usual, tonight? The safest place to put her diaphragm was out of its case, inside her body; but he would notice the spermicide gone from behind the talcum powder. Wouldn't he? It wounded her to think that he hadn't even realised she was unhappy and restless, and that she'd lain still in bed, thinking of some one else; that there was no one to tell the difference between falsehood and the truth in her face.

She passed Agnes's house on her way down the dark November street. Behind the curtains, her friend was sitting in innocence and safety, not dreaming of how her good name was taken advantage of.

Beyond the side road where she lived, there were patches of terraced houses and semi-detached and, between them, stretched where the grass had grown over old foundation stones. In the summer, daisies and dandelions grew there, and butterflies came to visit; and in the autumn blackberries hung dusty and unpicked. There were even supposed to be foxes on the common where she took her children kite-flying. People said they came down at night to steal from the Indian restaurants. It was pleasant walking from here to the canalside - except at night.

She avoided the backstreets, choosing instead the longer route along the main road. Normally, she would never have walked out alone at night. Her husband had persuaded her to stay away from evening classes after a young girl had been assaulted with a broken bottle a few weeks before. Even here in the shop lights, she looked behind her every few minutes. Shadows in a doorway turned out to be boys wanting money for their bundled-up, headless guy. A pack of youths whistled at her not cheekily, as she remembered from her schooldays, but in a low, bullet song. When she wouldn't speak to them, they jeered after her. She quickened her pace - would have run, if she hadn't been frightened of drawing attention to herself. She looked behind again; they weren't following.

What the hell, she said to herself. I won't let them scare me. Tonight's the night I can take a risk. I've walked out of my husband's house to commit adultery. I'm not going to let cowardice keep me virtuous, and I'm not going to run from any man. I'll kick anyone in the balls who tries to touch me tonight. So she walked steadily towards her destination. Only one more corner to turn before she came face to face with freedom.

"Pardon?" she said to the man who seemed to have spoken to her.

"I said, have you got a light?"

"No - sorry - I don't smoke," she said. She would have been rude, except that she vaguely thought it was some one she knew. His face seemed familiar in the dark.

"Excuse me," she said, trying to push past.

"Bitch cunt cow slag," he said.

"I'm sorry." Perhaps, she thought, she'd been ungracious.

"Bitch cunt cow slag." As his voice grew louder, he started to slap her face rhythmically.

She lay rigid on the ground while his flaccid penis wriggled against her thighs. It was a frosty night; if it hadn't been for the hard ground, cold against her flesh, she wouldn't have believed that this was her, lying here in this ridiculous situation. When she giggled, he started to bounce childishly on her stomach, until he finally decided to dangle his penis over her mouth.

Unbelievable that no one was passing by this alleyway at eight on a Saturday night, just off the main road. The world had flown away from her when she built that lie around herself; she herself had gone with it, for, of course, it wasn't her mouth that took his penis steadily until it choked her. Some relief came when he switched back to her cunt. At least she could breathe now, and remove the hairs from her dry palate.

He had gone. She curled into a tight ball on the stones where he had left her, half-believing that if she made herself small enough she wouldn't be there at all. No one would come to her, unless it was him, still watching in the darkness. She wanted Agnes, but it was Agnes's name she had abused to come out here. If she called for help, or if she went home, her husband would soon discover that she had gone roaming the streets with her diaphragm loaded inside her.

She rose to her feet, wiping the dirt from her coat. It was impossible to make herself vomit. Her whole body had been filled with the stranger's presence, like a corpse bloated with canal water. She could smell the strangely cold, clinical smell of sperm on her body.

There was nowhere to go, but to her projected lover's house. When she reached the door, he said, "I thought you'd decided not to come."

He took off his glasses - he was a vain man, that was what she liked - and tidied his books away.

"Excuse me," she said.

His bathroom was a tiny, immaculate ice-cube. He used no aftershave or talcum powder, and the bath side was uncluttered by female paraphernalia - tampons or shampoo or handcream. She sat on the edge, sponging the gluey sperm of a man who doesn't have much sex from herself, and then combed her hair with the comb she'd brought with her so that she wouldn't have to go home dishevelled.

"You're trembling," he said, when she came back into his living room. "Are you that nervous about it?"

She didn't speak.

He stroked her appreciatively. "Don't worry," he said, "I'll take care of you," and carried her - with some effort - to his bed. She was an attractive woman; it was her sudden shifts from cynicism to vulnerability that first caught his attention.

"You must bruise easily," he said, looking over her naked body.

"It's all the rough games my eldest lad plays," she said, "I know, it looks terrible, doesn't it? But like you say, I just mark easily. It doesn't hurt me."

He made love to her gently, feeling a sudden tenderness towards this respectable woman who had become so easily his. She seemed almost soporific - perhaps, he thought, she'd never learnt to be active in bed with her husband. Gentleness was nice, it made him feel strong and dependable, but what pleasure was in sinning unless there was decadence? So he started to bite and tantalise her, hoping that she would turn on him. She responded little by little, until he started to stroke her lips with the tip of his penis. She pulled away as if an alarm had rung inside her.

"Come on," he coaxed, pushing his prick against her face. "Please me."

She lay rigid, lips tightly sealed.

"Come on. No need to be inhibited. Haven't you done this before?"

She lay as if in death. Poor hung-up little bitch.

Ailsa

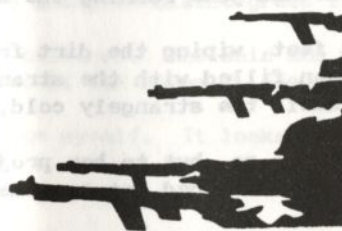
Ailsa Cox.
December '80.

In Iran, they shoot women, don't they?

ISLAM AND SEXUALITY



بد
فغان
راهی باد



In January 1980, Farideh Bahaie, a woman from Ardabil, was accused of adultery and sentenced to death; following a summary trial she was executed by firing squad. In the mortuary she was found still alive and by order of the Islamic Court, she was executed in the mortuary for the second time. (1)

Historically, the Koranic laws on sexuality and women's position have been incorporated into traditional views and social practices in Iran. Iran is sexually an unhappy society. Sexuality has dominated our culture but still remains a taboo. People from every class are preoccupied by sex in their daily life, communications, jokes, dreams and language. Peasant society is especially a 'phallic' society, their daily interactions are saturated with phallic connotations. (2)

Marriage and the family is where sexual activities are to begin. But girls marry young, especially in the countryside, so they have no understanding of sex. Although society is geared towards the satisfaction of male sexuality, with its enforcing traditions, women are kept ignorant of sex, to the point of glorification. Women are conditioned throughout their lives to behave in ways which will not incite any sexual desire. They speak lower and softer, restrict their laughter and smiles, lower their gaze, do not show interest in men, speak about sex, express sexual desire (pre-marital sex is a crime anyway) or demand sexual satisfaction. A woman's small gesture of a smile or a look is seen as an amorous act, solicitation.

Polygamy and men's general sexual freedom creates more bitterness and unhappiness between women and among wives, making them enemies of each other through their competition for a man; be he husband, father, or son. Men and women are conditioned to mistrust each other. In the family, this crown of our society, men and women are not friends or comrades; (3) they have very little communication with each other.

Women's sexual relationships with their husbands are generally a business matter: "Buy me a dress and I will sleep with you tonight". This most commercial and impersonal attitude to sex in the family is no fun for women. There are no caresses between couples; no touching, kisses, or affection in their relationship. Love is scarce; fidelity is demanded of women through physical control. Sexual relationships consist only of penetration; coitus. People do not undress for sex, men only undo their zips.

The function of sexuality is purely procreative, but in reality men only do it for pleasure, and women only accept it to bear children; Sons, of course. A sterile woman is the most unfortunate, miserable woman. She would be an outcaste - the following quotation is about a sterile woman who lost her eyesight through continuous crying and being cast out by her husband; a visiting doctor notices her, "A poor miserable woman was sitting, she looked afraid of being sent out... she constantly put her hands to her eyes, which were very sore, and tried to attract the doctor's attention... 'You must not take the trouble, she's not worth it' said the chief lady. 'Who is she? Is she a servant here?' 'No, she is not a servant, she gets her bread here, that is all. She is nobody." (4)

Not just sterility, but any woman's illness brings shame on her. If she is not physically perfect she is considered a bad bargain - because she is only valued for her strength, beauty, and fecundity. My young cousin, aged thirty with two children, recently died of cancer of the breast. She refused to have her breast operated on against the doctor's advice; knowing the danger to her life, and was not encouraged to seek treatment by her husband. The value attached to virginity is so great that if a girl is not a virgin she would be sent back to her father and the groom would demand his money back - as the 'goods' were not 'intact'. Fathers, brothers, and husbands have killed women over their loss of virginity.

The practice of women's circumcision only exists in small tribes and is scarce. Male circumcision is common though the social reason for it is different. The most common sexual amputation was on poor peasant boys who were made Eunuchs in order to be servants in Moslem bourgeois houses. A friend told me how her mother explained to her about the making of a maid's son into a eunuch, to join the household's servants. Thus he would not represent any sexual threat to the Moslem women of the family.

It is clear that sexual violence, when condoned and permitted by the government, spreads and includes everyone.

Sexual violence against women is a part of our culture. Rape in marriage is legal, sexual harassment in the street is frequent, abortion is taboo, and unwanted children are beaten until they grow up.

During the last few years before the overthrow of the Shah, due to the oil boom and the need of foreign investors, high class prostitutes, sexist advertisements, and semi-pornographic films all poured into the country. This influx, against such a repressive background and a sexually thirsty male population, created more violence, more restrictions, and more oppression for women.

Sexuality, like other social relations, is strictly controlled by the dominant class, and the ideology of that class. This control and its ensuing violence weakens, limits, and frightens women. An intimidated, passive, terrified woman is unable to defend herself when necessary. A woman who was sexually assaulted in a cab, at the point of rape was so terrified that she fainted at the sight of the man's penis.

This is an ideal woman. A good woman, honour of every man, ultimate ideal of a society, mother of the nation; chaste, passive, devoted, serving and servicing - a sexless woman.

SEXUAL POLITICS IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN.

Since its creation during the last two years the Islamic Republic has made numerous changes in the legislation, bringing in to line social and economic relations with Islamic religious orders. The first change was the creation of a new Constitution. In the Iranian new constitution the position of women is so declared: "The family (heterosexuality) is the foundation of our society and a main focus for the growth of humanity. With such an understanding of the family, women have been saved from objectification, the labour market, and being tools at the service of consumer society, and exploitation - and can regain the elevated, valuable duty of motherhood to rear the vanguard fighters of humanity ". (5)

This is the official position of women in Iran. Motherhood is only permitted within marriage. In order to encourage and facilitate marriage the age of consent has been lowered to fourteen for girls and sixteen for boys. The Government has opened a marriage Bank to give loans to young people getting married. In the last two years as a result of such policies the main growth 'product' has been marriage contracts and the population rate. (Contraceptives have become scarce, expensive and unsafe, and abortion has been made illegal.)

"We advise families not to prevent young girls and boys from marrying. Sexual instinct is a reality within everyone. You must not make young people's marriages difficult..... According to Islam, in the same way that you are responsible for teaching your children to defend their country.....you are responsible for getting them wives in order to satisfy their sexual needs". (my underlining) (6)

Ayatollah Montazeri was a member of the Revolutionary Council and has repeatedly made such statements.

The Islamic Republic has in many ways multiplied legal facilities for men to have access to women. The Family Protection Act, which limited polygamy, men's rights to divorce and custody and temporary marriages; was abolished by the clergy. (Everything the Shah made was Imperialistic, against Islam, and bad for everybody). Divorce, which was conducted under Civil Law has been given back to the clergy and made unrestricted, polygamy (having four wives at the same time) is legal, temporary marriages are flourishing.

Woman is an instrument of sexual politics, she is not a sex for herself but a sex for men. She exists to satisfy male sexuality, but she is also kept ignorant and disinterested in sexual activity. Men estimate that in general 30% to 40% of women are frigid. Although this frigidity is a social problem, women are blamed for it themselves.

There are many areas of sexual politics under the Islamic Republic that affect women, and one could write volumes, but in this paper I shall analyse only four of its aspects in Iran.

1. CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

Children are assumed to be asexual, and this is part of a general assumption that they are inherently pure and innocent - hence sexless. When they are seen playing with themselves or with other children at joyful sexual games they are punished. In puritanical houses to frighten children they 'needle' the children's hands. 'Suzan' - a needle - usually worn on the mothers' jumper is a deterrent. The accompanying words are, 'don't touch', 'it's bad', 'don't do it'. The kids' sexual needs are suppressed. Their questions about birth, sex and sexual organs are



not answered or are avoided and fobbed off. When we asked as children "where does my baby sister come from?" the answer was "dropped down the chimney", "found in the street", or "mother bought her in the hospital". The names of the sexual organs are not uttered (especially girls') only referred to as 'Akh' (shit) - ie. "don't play with your shit". (But there is a notable exception for the fathers who usually play with their son's willy and proudly say, "you must fatten it up, what a big willy, my little man" etc. etc.)

From an early age children learn to hide their feeling from their parents. To play the game under the table, in the bushes with their friends. They know and see that their parents play the same games at night (except in very rich houses, most parents sleep with their children in one room) but they also hide it and pretend. Sexual hypocrisy is the lesson they learn in the family. Through this lack of communication between adults and children a distancing occurs and suspicion builds up; and some of the secrets kept from either party can be very harmful. Child molesting and rape is very common in Iran, and most children are molested by their relatives at some point in their childhood. (7) It was reported in a daily paper that a three year old girl was found unconscious, molested by three men and raped by one of them. (8)

Children who are brought up with such negative notions of sexuality, saturated in compulsory morality - their bodies are bad and shameful, to be hidden - will grow up into a problematic youthhood. Repression of children's sexuality neither kills it nor makes it disappear, but means that it will express itself elsewhere in different ways as suppressed sexual energy. Reich explains well the various disturbances it causes. (9) I have seen and talked to young people and their accounts of adolescent life are terrifying. Boys run away from school only to wait hours to have a glimpse of a girl, or see her smile; or they follow her for miles to try and have a word with her. A young girl told me all through the winter she spoke with her future husband through the window. They developed a sign language, drawing and writing on the steam-ed up windows. The most joyful period of one's life, the energies of one's youth, are withered away with such obsessive, petty restrictions.

Hierarchy is the basic structure in the Islamic State, and the same hierarchy prevails in the family. Women and children are to obey, sit still, fear and obey their fathers and brothers. Their submission is his power, the power that has to remain unchallenged at their expense.

The sexual handicaps and disturbances that children and young people suffer as a result of the repression of their sexuality, remain to be seen in future generations.

To round off I want to use this quotation from Robert Graham's book - "Iran - The Illusion of Power". In the chapter on the "Problem of Culture" he says -

"In a study on suicide in Tehran, it was noted that the most prevalent instances of attempted suicide were among the 16 - 20 years age group coming from very strict and fanatical families". (10).

2. SEGREGATION AND THE VEIL.

The basis for segregation and the veil which are the two pillars of Islamic society, is that human sexuality is potentially negative, and dangerous, and people (men) should be guarded against it (women's sexuality).

Khomeini claims:

"Those women who participated in the revolution are women who had and have the Islamic veil. Revolutionary women were not those who dressed openly, had make-up on and made themselves available to men. Those dolls came to the streets and showed their hair, neck, hands and legs to men....only to cause pain to men, and confuse them". (11)

(Khomeini has written history anew).



To begin with men, women, veiled, unveiled were united together

For those men who are so easily confused and aroused by the sight of a bare hand, it would be more logical to recommend segregation and the veil. But Islam claims that men (with all these incredible weaknesses) are the upholders of wisdom and knowledge; and should run all social and political affairs. The segregation of women is in reality a 'divide and rule' policy.

Men and women divided and distanced; played off against each other, are more easily controlled from above.

Segregation through its long history hasn't created a chaste (male) society, it has only emphasized a preoccupation with sexuality and created obstacles in male/female communication.

The most dangerous outcome of segregation is in the fields of medicine, technical training and education. Most of the professional surgeons, doctors, educationists, physicists, chemists, mechanics and teachers, are men. Women are excluded from these areas of science and practical knowledge. Women are also conditioned to deprive themselves of medicine, male doctors and surgeons. (As in the example quoted earlier about my cousin.) As an alternative, women will consult the witch doctor (female) who may or may not be skilled in herbalism etc.

President Bani-Sadre, a liberal Moslem and supporter of the veil said that women's hair has a special electricity that attracts men, that is why they are demanded to cover it up. He does not explain why men's hair does not have electricity, but perhaps the quality of men's hair is inferior to that of women! Culturally there is a phrase which men use to each other as an insult - "go and put the veil on". It means "you are a chicken coward, or yellow".

Last year, Khomeini in one of his speeches criticized the Government, claiming that it is not yet Islamized and that some ex-Shah supporters are still working in its institutions. By now, most of the members of SAVAK (the notorious secret police) have kept their positions in the Army and Navy and become supporters of Khomeini. These men interpreted his words as the Islamization of women, and hence most of the government institutions ordered women to put on the veil.

As a result of such interpretation and massive propaganda many women lost their jobs (134 from police, 120 from navy) and the compulsory veil legislation affected all women employees in Government offices. This meant that the real purge of the SAVAK was whitewashed and its members retained their positions in the Army and the Navy. The mass hysteria in the country over the veil completely obscured the original intention of the purge, and many women were victimized.

There is a veil war going on in Iran, women are losing their jobs and essential

services are being closed down because of it. My sister is a qualified nurse in a small city. She continuously challenges the hospital and male authority over the issue of the veil. She has been warned a few times, perhaps she will soon be dismissed like many other nurses. (12) In a city where there is a ratio of one qualified nurse to 50,000 people, the value of a woman's work and service is being measured by half a yard of material on her head. As a result of these dismissals it is women and children's health that will suffer - thus again obscuring the real issues behind the hysteria about the veil.

PROSTITUTION 3.

Only days after the revolution that overthrew the Shah, a group of zealots attacked the Shah No. Shah No is a walled quarter in Tehran where prostitutes live with their children. (They are lower class. 84% of them are from poor and working class backgrounds). The zealots considered it the dirty quarter and claimed that a revolutionary Islamic government must destroy such a house of corruption. They set it on fire to burn it down while 200 women and children were still living there. (13)

Their action caused much uproar and the government decided to move the women out and divide them into small groups in different places, according to the prostitutes' demands, and teach them some work skills. However a mulla (moslem priest) soon took charge of each house and the women, and opened it for 'buisness'. This time for Moslem men under his control. (Temporary marriage - which is Islamic prostitution - is no different except that the mulla mediates and is paid for doing so - making him a priest-pimp.) (14)

Many prostitutes have been shot. The Court condemns them for their prostitution, and the clergy (there is no longer a civil court) along with Khomeini justify it by demanding to know why the women do not marry. Khomeini proclaimed polygamy as a necessary cure for prostitution:

"The Islamic law on polygamy is very progressive. There are more women than men. (15) What should the 'extra women' do? Every woman needs a man." (16)

4. HOMOSEXUALITY AND LESBIANISM.

A few years ago, a student killed her friend in what became known as a sensational 'crime of passion'. In court she confessed she loved her, and didn't like her new boyfriend. She was jealous of them and only wanted to warn her. Such instances of feelings between women are not uncommon among students, colleagues, and relations. Women are aware of it as individual feelings, but it is still unknown as a human sexual/emotional relationship. This is mostly because as children, girls play sexual games, but as adults their sexual expectations are geared so much towards heterosexuality that even if they had feelings for women, they would subsume them. So women's love exists, but as a manifestation in a lesbian relationship it is unheard of in Iran.

Historically, there have been lesbian women poets (a few years ago I was told that a leading Iranian poet was having a lesbian relationship) such as Walladeh - the Arab poetess. AD 1001-1080. Her poems to her lover were considered so obscene that they were unquoted by her contemporaries. Therefore most of her poetry about lesbian relationships has been destroyed, and no longer exists. (Neither her nor her lover wore the veil - which added to their bad reputation.) (1)

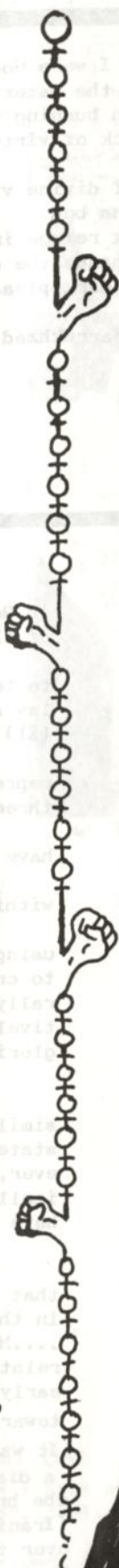
Male homosexuality is more common, particularly among intellectuals, and young men, and fanatical Muslim families. However, it is purely sexual, usually violent penetration. As the youth are sexually ignorant, the sexual power relations are often imbalanced as young men are hurt and violated by older men. This will have a negative effect on them for the rest of their lives. However, Khalkhali, "the mad judge" who is responsible for most of the executions in Iran claims that all of the homosexual men who were executed were involved in rape. I believe he is distorting reality.

The Islamic woman representative in parliament supports the above statement and advises that "women should be sisterly towards one another and let their husbands marry more than one woman. They must not be so selfish as to let those 'extra women' turn to prostitution". (1) This woman, along with the clergy in parliament supports polygamy and concubinage as a social remedy for prostitution (which they consider as female sexual deviancy). A healthy society needs polygamous families to breed paternally disciplined children. The larger the family, the better for the power and ego of the father, and for society at large - as all the responsibility rests with one man.

Islamic belief on prostitution rests on the notion of women's evil sexuality. Prostitutes are loose women who are unsatisfied with one man. They sell their bodies because their passion for sex is insatiable. The clergy (the new ruling class in Iran) is totally oblivious to the socio-economic roots of prostitution, and blind to the psychological pressures put on women to become prostitutes.

The historical, universal, institution of prostitution is seen as the individual woman's problem, her guilt; devoid of the rule of 'supply and demand'. Therefore as women are not just responsible for the cause and spread of prostitution, they must also cure society from this evil. At the Revolutionary Moslem Women's Conference, a resolution was passed saying that "Women themselves must uproot prostitution and drug addiction" (2) (Drug addiction is common amongst Iranian men, and prostitutes.)

Thus the Islamic state rids itself of its responsibility for economic relations and the well-being of its citizens, by imposing compulsory morality. But morality implies individual choice, and no one has individual choice under Islam - the system is riddled with contradictions. Women who commit adultery are executed too, as their individual sexual choice is a crime against the state. Execution of prostitutes and women who commit adultery may work as a deterrent. (The political practice of the system in relation to most of its problems - "Kill them off") but will it get rid of prostitution? Does an Islamic system intend to eradicate prostitution? How could it?



آن و گناه تلخ و سوزانی که در راهش
جانما را شوق وصلی و شتابی بود
در بهشت ناکهان نام دگر بگرفت
در بهشت بارالها، خود ثوابی بود!
I sinned, a sin full of
pleasure,
In an embrace which
was warm and fiery
I sinned surrounded by
arms
which were hot and
avenging and iron.

گر خدا بودم، ملائک را شبی فریاد می کردم
آب کوثر را درون کوره دوزخ بجوشاندم
مشعل سوزنده در کف، گله پرهیزکاران را
از چراگاه بهشت سبز تردامن برون راندم

خسته از زهد خدائی، نیمه شب در بستر ابلیس
در سراشیب خطائی تازه میجستم پناهی را
میگزیدم در بهای تاج زرین خداوندی
لذت تاریک و درد آلود آغوش گناهی را

If I were God, I'd command the Angels one night
To boil the water of heaven in the furnace of hell,
And with burning torch in hand drive out
The flock of virtuous from the green pastures of heaven.

Tired of divine virtuousness, in the middle of the night
in Satans bed
I'd seek refuge in the slopes of a fresh sin.
I'd exchange the golden crown of divinity
for the dark pleasure of the embrace of a sin.

Farugh Farrukhzad.

۲ سپتامبر ۱۹۵۶ - ۲۲

This method of dealing with social deviancy was common at the time of the Shah's rule. Many political, progressive were executed under the label of homosexuality and drug addiction. Homosexuality is so unacceptable, and a term of abuse that even some members (marxist) of the Left use it against others with whose politics they disagree. I heard it commonly being used against male Trotskyists.

CONCLUSION.

The Islamic state is to stay in Iran Khomeini may go soon, but Islamic 'Marxists' Mojahedin have almost mass support. Whatever the politics and political programme of an Islamic State - it is totalitarian. It's imposed from above, 'from God'.

"Islam is the direct government of Allah. Allah is the supreme authority and power....the government is that of God, the ownership is that of God, the public treasury, the Army, are those of Allah." (20)

(Is there a difference between the Army of God attacking demonstrators, or the Army of the State ?)

Islamic nationalism is spreading throughout the Middle East, even in places such as Indonesia and the Phillipines, there is a possibility that the Iranian Islamic State will be recreated in the next decade. This result of colonialization and imperial power in the Middle East. As the dominant slogan of Islamic nationalism indicates: "Neither East nor West, Islam is the best".

Because of the nature of such an Islamic totalitarian state, the outcome of the political practice is the same as any other totalitarian state.

The mode of production in the Islamic Republic is capitalistic - a section of the Iranian Constitution reads:

"No private property can be taken to be used for the public against the law and without fair payment to the owner". (21)

The Islamic Republic is oppressive, repressive, and undemocratic. It has three major characteristics:

1. There is no democracy, individuals have no democratic rights.
2. Women's role is totally defined within the family through marriage.
3. The State has mass support through using the mass media and religious fervour to create a hysterical atmosphere, and rally the masses behind it. This is effectively done through such tactics as the glorification of martyrdom.

These three characteristics are very similar to those that existed in Fascist states such as Italy and Germany. However, no ideological phenomenon is identically repeated. Moslem facism would have its own peculiarities.

"Facism has shown in a dramatic way that women could be made to serve, both in the sense of repression and regressionMussolini was the innovator of the relation between women and facism. His early speeches of 1922-23 were directed towards obtaining the support of women. It was he who devised female dress - a dismal black uniform with a skull on the breast." (22)

(Iranian Muslim women wore a white shroud over the black robe.)
We can compare this with what the official Islamic Republic has said about women participants in the revolution. The article called 'The Iranian Revolution must pay its debt to Women' says:

"On Martyrs' Square, in Martyrs Street...it was revolutionary girls and women who were dying out like flowers, falling to the ground and printing on the hot asphalt of the streets the epoch-making slogans - 'There is no God but Allah. And neither Eastern nor Western Islamic Republic'. Every day the cemeteries would witness tens of our sisters freshly shoot bodies. Revolutionary Moslem girls and women with Islamic clothing and with Islamic Hijab (cover)... walked around the town in the thick of the dark looking for martyrdom". (23)

This pathetically idealizes the situation, but the reality is that masses of women in Iran support the government - they have gone out in the streets and demonstrated in black robes with clenched fists, supporting the state and accepting the veil and protesting (sometimes violently beating up unveiled women) against demonstrations for women's rights.

There is a parallel between women's sexuality, women's bodies, and workers' labour in a capitalist society. Under such a system women's sexuality is objectified, exploited, confiscated as state property. Women are sexually alienated too.

"The mutual relations between God and man are of a strictly commercial nature. Allah is the ideal merchant" (24)

Women are the ideal merchandize, and most profitable for the Islamic State.

While the three afore-mentioned conditions exist, they will still be shooting women in Iran.

Any plans or action that we may take in future must involve a conscious direction of our energies towards reclaiming our sexuality.

Manny

first written Feb '80, revised, extended March '81.

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6. "Hidden face of Eve" - Nawal El Saadawi. This Egyptian feminist also describes child molestation in Egypt, as a common occurrence.



زنان متدين و آزاده ايران در تاسوعا عاشوراى امسال چهره واقى زن مسلمان رابه
مدى گذاشتند. نمائش غرور انگيز شور ، آگاهى، ايثار و آمادگى براى شهادت

The writing underneath translates:
"The devout Moslem, free women of Iran, in this demonstration" (with black gloved fists and shroud over their black veil) "show the true face of Moslem women, a proud, intelligent show, conscious, sacrificial and ready for martyrdom".

7. 'Kyhan' - Iranian Daily. 3. Azar. 1358.
8. Etettelaat - Daily Paper. 1359,5,18.
9. "The Sexual Revolution" Wilhelm Reich. (page 102) Vision Press. L.T.D.
10. "Iran - The Illusion of Power". Robert Graham (page 201) Quoted from Kayhan International. 29th. Dec. 1976.
11. Interview with Oriana Fallaci. Italian woman journalist. Quoted in "Kyhan" 5Mehr. 1358.
12. Middle class women, especially the professionals like doctors, nurses and surgeons (most of whom are educated abroad) are not thus encouraged to use their profession in the deprived rural areas of Iran. These women, under such pressures, either give up their job (my sister could, she doesn't really need the money, because her husband is a doctor and well paid.) or emigrate.
13. "About Prostitution in Tehran" - By Setareh Farmanfrmaeian. In this book she describes the pathetic and morbid state of women prostitutes in this fortress; and how these women are exploited by the Madam, the pimps and the Government. 27% of these women are sold to this place. 84% are drug addicts. Venereal disease among them is very high as a result of no health care, and their children are not allowed to attend the schools.
14. Priest pimp - This term was used by Brecht. Quoted in an article by M.A. Macciocchi in Feminist Review No. 1. (Female sexuality in Facist Ideology).
15. This is completely untrue. On the contrary, according to 77-78 Almanac there are about one million more men in Iran than women.
16. Same reference as No. 20.
17. Interview with Mrs. Gorgi from the Iranian paper. 24th. October 1979.
18. Etettelaat - Daily Paper - 16. Bahman 1358.
19. "Middle Eastern Women Speak." (pages 67-75).
20. From "Immam" Embassy Publication in London. April 1st. 1980.
21. Iranian Constitution - see ref. no. 14.
22. Refer to no. 23.
23. "Flame" an official publication July 2nd. 1980.
24. "Islam and Capitalism" by Maxine Robinson Pelican books (page 81).



Masses are praying - public prayers like this are common, but women are not allowed to join open public prayers.

Violence against Lesbians - by men and their State.

The State feels threatened by Lesbian power - and so do men.

These two incidents took place in Newcastle on Tyne - but they could have happened at any time, anywhere.

1. A couple of Lesbians were beaten up at a mixed party. The men were supposed to be liberal lefties, and the women were feminists. During the course of the party one of the Lesbians danced with a man. He started feeling her up and she firmly told him to stop and he firmly continued - whereupon she hit him and whereupon the group of men piled onto her and her friend - punching, kicking, tearing their clothes. At this point, her blouse opened and one of the men started kicking her breasts. No-one seems to know where the feminists were during the fighting certainly no-one came to help the two women.

2. Two lesbians were beaten up by the police. Late one night the police were called to the one - and only gay club in Newcastle. One of the women set off to go to the toilet, but George, the bouncer, a member of the local CHE branch, decided otherwise and blocked her path. She explained she wanted to reach the toilets - but George snarled and pushed her so hard she fell to the floor. She swore at him, saying 'If you don't let me through I'm going to wet myself' - and she was banned for swearing. She told him 'O.K if that's your attitude, I don't want to stay here, but I'll have to tell my friend'. George wouldn't let her do this and he pushed her down a third time.

Eventually her friend comes to see what is going on - just as the police arrive. She told them how relieved she was to see them and proceeded to explain what had happened.

The police were not in a listening mood and shoved them both downstairs. One woman fell and the other went to help her; but was grabbed by a policeman and pushed against the wall. Her friend had taken all she could take and she yelled 'You're all nothing but fascist bastards.' With that the police threw them both into their van telling them they were taking them in. The women huddled into the corner of the van furthest from the police and were treated to a torrent of abuse all the way to the station. 'You're all lezzie cuntsnot fit to walk the streets...' One of the women continued to try to reason with them saying 'we haven't done anything'. At the station they were refused access to a lawyer and detained overnight. Charged with being drunk and disorderly and later charged £5.

This is the reality of life for lesbians living/not dying in heterosexual patriarchy. Compulsory heterosexuality is enforced by violence. We who come out often must be made to pay. None of us on reflection sees life pre lesbian as a picnic, we were oppressed then as women, but now the enemy is much clearer both for us as lesbians and for heterosexual patriarchy and its guardians.

Compulsory heterosexuality is enforced by violence - women who come out of line must be made to pay; - men - whether they're in uniform - make their presence felt whether we 'relate' to them or not.

Tyneside Lesbian Group

LESBIAN CONFERENCE

The 1981 National Lesbian Conference was held in London on 4/5 April. The social was in Ladbrooke Grove on Saturday night. Just before it ended, we heard that a group of young men were harrassing lesbians as they left the hall, and so we began to leave quietly in small groups.

All went well until one young man, oored of shouting taunts and being ignored, picked up a brick and hurled it towards a couple of women. At the same time, police had been called to a "domestic disturbance" in a nearby street, and were arresting a woman as a result. Lesbians going home noticed this and went up to see what was going on. The police told them to get away, they protested, the police called for reinforcements and before we knew where we were, there were 2 cars and 3 vans screeching down the street. Police jumped out and literally attacked women at random, trying to arrest as many of us as possible.

The final horror was when a load of plain clothes and uniformed police jumped out of a van with truncheons and ran into the largest group of women, hitting them with the truncheons around their heads and shoulders. It seemed that they were most vicious to those lesbians with the shortest hair.

This lasted about 15 minutes until the police decided they had arrested enough women, and drove off to the station where more violence and brutality took place. Three women went to hospital, one in an ambulance called by the police.

Ten women have been charged, some with obstruction and others with obstruction and assault. Two women were kept in custody over the weekend and appeared in Court on Monday when they were bailed and will come up in Court on April 16th with the others.

Money is needed to cover costs and should be sent to the Lesbian Social Defence Fund:

c/o A Women's Place
48, William 1Vth Street
London WC 2.

By two lesbians who were at the social and saw what happened.

Compulsory Heterosexuality & Lesbian Existence

Adrienne Rich Onlywomen Press 90

Love your Enemy? The debate between heterosexual feminism and political lesbianism

Onlywomen Press
£1.75



Reading Adrienne Rich is like cutting warm butter with a knife. Her work is poetry, but then she is a poet. Very movingly, she highlights what she calls the 'lesbian continuum', preferring to use that term to 'lesbianism', which she says, has a 'clinical and limiting ring.' The lesbian continuum includes

a "range 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 associations as marriage resistance (and the 'haggard' behaviour 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."

She also says:

"If we consider the possibility that all women - from the infant suckling her mother's breast, to the grown woman experiencing orgasmic sensations while suckling her own child, perhaps recalling her mother's milk smell in her own; to two women, like Virginia Wolf's Chloe and Olivia, who share a laboratory; to the woman dying at ninety, touched and handled by women - exist on a lesbian continuum, we can see ourselves moving in and out of this continuum, whether we identify ourselves as lesbian or not".

Men smashed the female bonding of matriarchal communities with the imposition of heterosexuality and now they live in dread and fear of the lesbian continuum, the female underground resistance movement. They fear the loss of emotional, economic and physical servicing which would inevitably occur if we had sexual autonomy; they know we'd turn to each other again and they'd be out in the cold. As it is, in spite of their best efforts to keep us on the straight and narrow, many many women have refused to be confined within the institution, and many more have married and secretly refused it. As she puts it:

"We may faithfully or ambivalently have obeyed, but our feelings and our sensuality have not been tamed or contained within it."

Heterosexuality has been enforced in a whole number of ways - romantic mythology, violence, lack of economic or social options and by rendering lesbian existence invisible or naming it deviant. Even some feminists see lesbianism as 'mere "sexual preference"'; but it is more than that, it's 'a source of knowledge and power available to women.' She says that feminist theory has to relocate the lesbian continuum and lesbian existence at the heart of female experience, not as a marginal choice or an optional extra. We have to look at the institution of heterosexuality carefully, examining the ways in which we are forced into the heterosexual mould, asking ourselves whether, if we had a real choice, we would choose 'heterosexual coupling and marriage.' She says we have to do this, just as we have to look at the forces maintaining capitalism and racism. Heterosexual women must see that because heterosexuality is compulsory, they have little choice really, even if they feel they have chosen freely. It's true that there can be good heterosexual relationships,

"but the absence of choice remains the great unacknowledged reality, and in the absence of choice, women will remain dependent upon the chance or luck of particular relationships and will have no collective power to determine the meaning and place of sexuality in their lives."

She asks why do we redirect our search for love and tenderness away from women; why, given our mother's caring and physical nurturance, do we ever turn to men anyway?

That's a good question, and one that is never asked by psychoanalysts who assume heterosexuality and in making the assumption also assume that the traumas of adolescence are natural and all part of the maturing process. Nor is it asked much by heterosexual feminists who also assume their feelings to be above analysis.

At first reading, I thought Adrienne Rich was suggesting that sexual feelings for men were unnatural to women, but she is not saying that at all. What she is saying is that our 'emotional and erotic energies' have been wrenched away from ourselves and each other by the institution of heterosexuality, which placed men centre stage in our lives; that woman identification is a source of energy, a potential spring-head of female power; and that this

source of energy has been

"violently curtailed and wasted under the institution of heterosexuality." She goes on to say: "The denial of reality and visibility to women's passion for women, women's choice of women as allies, life companions, and community; the forcing of such relationships into dissimulation and their disintegration under intense pressure have meant an incalculable loss to the power of all women to change the social relations of the sexes, to liberate ourselves and each other."

She also asks, why should 'species survival, the means of impregnation, and emotional/erotic relationships... ..ever have become to rigidly identified with each other?' Another good question, but one she does not really attempt to answer, in this booklet anyway. That's a pity because the answer would have clarified her argument. It would have become clear why the institution of heterosexuality was imposed on us in the first place. As it is, she seems to be suggesting that it was devised to 'assume men's physical, economic, and emotional access' to us. She seems to be identifying it as a source of our oppression.

Why did men acquire rights in our work and in our sexuality? That's the question which needs looking at. Some feminists say heterosexuality was imposed on us to control and divide us - but again, why did men feel they needed to control us? The answer to these questions could, I think, answer her question. Men assumed/gained control over our sexuality, redefining it in procreative terms, when they took control of our ability to have children. They broke up the matrimonial clans with the creation of the father family because they needed children in their name, children who would inherit their property. The only way they could get their hands on our children was by claiming rights in our wombs, and they ensured these rights by forcing us in to heterosexual monogamy. Sexual expression became identified with penetration and tied up in men's minds with male power and with hatred towards women. The penis became a weapon of law enforcement and we lost control not only of our wombs, and with that our bodies and our sexuality, but also over all other aspects of our lives to men.

Heterosexuality as an institution then was imposed on women as a consequence of men's need to control our reproductive power - it is a consequence of men's power over us, not a first cause of our oppression. Adrienne Rich does of course discuss the alienation of reproductive power and its consequences in her book 'Of Woman Born'.

All this seems like quibbling, I

know, but I have heard some feminists suggest that the institution of heterosexuality is the cause of our problems and I think that there are serious implications for practice and the future development of feminist theory in this idea. To my mind, male power is the cause of our problems, not the institution of heterosexuality. We have to locate the enemy. It is men with all their power who have battered on our sexuality, using our bodies as a resource for their needs, whether we have sexual feelings for them or not.

If we suggest as some feminists do, that no women have sexual feelings for men, how do we account for the pain felt by heterosexual women who get fucked over by their men's control and distortion of their sexuality? Feminist theory must be able to account for all our sisters' experience.

The second booklet, 'Love Your Enemy' is a record of the debate between political lesbianism and heterosexual feminism, at least as it took place in WIRES.

The Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group suggested that heterosexual feminists should give up their men; they said that every fuck reinforces male power, that penetration was colonisation of women's bodies, and women should refuse it. Women could not redefine penetration as enclosure - this was a cop-out. Women who fucked with men were collaborators and they ought to give up men even if they weren't into making love with women.

This brought a whole number of replies from heterosexual women protesting vigorously, from other lesbians who saw lesbianism as being about loving women, rather than about hating men. Some women felt that the Leeds group was imposing an 'ought' on other women, much like the male left, and they felt that men's sexual practice could be and was being challenged by heterosexual feminists.

The Leeds group replied that they were hardly in a position to be leading cadres, they were just expressing their ideas. They agreed they hadn't put some of their ideas very well, but their paper had only been prepared for a conference workshop originally.

Can we ask independent heterosexual feminists to give up their men? We are justified in asking them to question their feelings and what it is they get out of their relationships. We are entitled to ask them to remember how much the support they get from their sisters acts as a counter force to their lover's power, making them nicer to live with; and we can ask

continued on page

The Spinster and her enemies.

- Sexuality and the last wave of feminism. -

Histories of the women's movement in the late nineteenth and early 20th century give very little indication of the massive campaign that was being carried out by women in that period to release women from the crippling effects of male sexual behaviour. Other aspects of the feminist struggle such as the women's suffrage campaign, the movements to improve women's education and job opportunities and gain changes in the marriage law have all received attention. This may be because the right to bodily integrity for which the women were fighting has not formed part of the political platform of any male revolutionary struggle and only those objectives which men have seen to be important for themselves have been given serious attention. Men have defined the correct political objective in the area of sexuality to be the right to sexual pleasure. Women's right to escape from being the involuntary objects of men's sexual desires has not earned itself a place in the pantheon of human rights.

When I started to look at material about women's campaigns against the sexual abuse of children I expected to find that the women involved were 'puritans' and 'sexually repressive' as the books I had read had led me to believe. I was astonished to discover that the women's views were soundly feminist, seeing sexual abuse as an abuse of power and incorporating a swingeing critique of the selfishness and supposed 'uncontrollability' of male sexuality, and of the male bias of police and courts.

Women's campaigns in the area of sexuality began with the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts in the 1870's when women under the leadership of Josephine Butler fought the compulsory examination of prostitutes in garrison towns and ports. The feminist opposition pointed out that such examinations were an infringement of women's civil rights, they inveighed against the double standard of sexual morality which enforced such abuse of women in order to protect the health of the men who, as they pointed out, had infected the women working as prostitutes in the first place. They fought the assumption that prostitution, which they saw as the sacrifice of women for men, was necessary because of the particular biological nature of male sexuality, and contested that the male sexual urge was a social and not a biological phenomenon. They were particularly outraged at the way in which the exercise of male sexuality created a division of women into the 'pure' and the 'fallen' and prevented the unity of the 'sisterhood of women'. They insisted that men were responsible for prostitution and that the way to end such abuse of women was to curb the demand by enjoining chastity upon men, rather than to punish those who provided the supply. At the instigation of J. Ellice Hopkins and other remarkable women, men's chastity leagues were set up throughout the country at which women would lecture to the men on the virtues of self-restraint. The taboo on women talking about sex was broken by the Contagious Diseases campaigners. To protect women they spoke out unceasingly. Mrs. Laura Ormiston Chant gave 400 lectures in one year, 1884, to men's chastity leagues.

The campaign against sexual abuse of children arose from revelations about child prostitution during the Contagious Diseases Acts campaign. After the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act raised the age of consent for sexual intercourse to 16, many organisations campaigned to put the law into practice and legislate to remove discrepancies and provide further protection for children. Women were in the forefront of these organisations and some, like the Moral Reform Union were composed almost wholly of women. The social purity organisations of the 1880's and '90's received their impetus largely from the feminist initiative around the Contagious Diseases Acts. Within them women challenged the double standard, called for chastity and self control for men, and campaigned against men's use of prostitutes, sexual abuse of children, rape and sexual assault. From such struggles came such things as separate children's playgrounds in parks from which men were barred, women's only carriages in trains which have now been abolished in the name of equality, women police who were introduced to look after women and children particularly in cases of sexual

abuse, and the Punishment of Incest Act. Not all the women involved took a feminist position though they were united by anger against the effects of male sexual behaviour on women. Some were prepared to punish the prostitute and this led to fierce disagreements with the feminist who were dedicated to defending the prostitutes and directing their energy into transforming the behaviour of men.

From the 1890's onwards feminists became increasingly angered by the issue of venereal disease with which men infected the women who worked as prostitutes and their own wives and unborn children causing great misery, ill-health and sometimes death. Their answer was to campaign for sex education and a single standard of sexual morality. In the '80's and '90's vast numbers of women were engaged in some way in the struggle around sexuality through Ladies' Associations for the Care and Protection of Friendless Girls, set up in towns all over England, in Rescue Societies, vigilance associations, and chastity leagues. The period saw a great mobilisation of women who were very angry at male sexual abuse of women in a campaign to transform male sexual behaviour and rescue and protect the female victims.

Some feminists were taking up the issue of woman's right to control access to her body within sexual relationships with men and were campaigning in 1880 to make rape within marriage a criminal offence, (a struggle we have still not won after 100 years). They were prepared to denounce physical sexual activity with men, declare that sexual intercourse was only necessary for the procreation of children and that it was contra-indicated for women through its effects in the form of venereal disease, vaginal infections and injury, unwanted child-bearing and even cancer. They denounced the indignity and humiliation suffered by a woman whose body was used against her will. Most historians recognise that 'abstinence' was one of the reasons for the falling middle class birth rate in the late nineteenth century. It would seem that this abstinence could be imposed by the wife, not just as a form of birth control, but to retain dignity and control over her own body, out of repugnance for the way in which women's bodies were supposed to exist for the use of men, and because they found male centred sexual intercourse an unsatisfactory activity. The women's fight against the assumption that women's bodies were given over to their husbands in marriage and then could be used for his pleasure for as long as he so wished, was revolutionary in its implications. They attacked a fundamental principle of heterosexual relationships under male supremacy, a principle against which, in the current phase of the women's movement we are making but little headway.



The struggle in the area of sexuality gained momentum in the period of militant suffrage activity before the first world war. Pamphlets issued by the whole range of suffrage organisations proclaimed that when women gained the vote they would enforce chastity upon men and end the abuse of women in prostitution, the sexual abuse of children and the sale of women's bodies in the White Slave Traffic. Some women were proclaiming that the institution of the 'sex-slavery' of women, when their bodies were taken over as the property of men, was the basis of the oppression of women and therefore saw the fight against sex-slavery as crucial to the struggle for women's emancipation. Francis Swiney, an active suffragist who also set up a theosophical organisation called the 'League of Isis' on the principle of the 'law of continence' which ordained that women need only engage in sexual intercourse for the purpose of reproduc-

tion, believed that the subjection of women began when man destroyed the matriarchate in order to make women into sexual slaves who would satisfy his desires. She wrote: "Now the sex-subjugation of woman has always been more or less the father of man's thoughts." (1) and accused men of having reduced women to a purely sexual function.

"Men have sought in women only a body. They have possessed that body. They have made it the refuse heap of sexual pathology, when they should have revered it as the Temple of God, the Holy Fane of Life, the Fountain of Health to the human race." (2)

Cicely Hamilton, a member of the Actresses' Franchise League, in her book 'Marriage as a Trade' 1909, also criticised the reduction of women to a purely sexual function by men.

"Sex is only one of the ingredients of the natural woman - an ingredient which has assumed undue and exaggerated proportions in her life owing to the fact that it has for many generations furnished her with the means of her livelihood," (by which Hamilton meant the exchange of her body for subsistence in marriage). "In sexual matters it would appear that the whole trend and tendency of man's relation to woman has been to make refusal impossible and to cut off every avenue of escape from the gratification of his desires." (3)

Another woman, writing to the Freewoman magazine, suggested that in sub-human species the female was not sexually subjected to the male.

"But the human female has lost her great prerogative. As bondwoman, she must perforce pander to the lusts of her lords and masters. From her infancy she has been sedulously trained for this purpose, though she is strangely ignorant of the real nature of sex and its functions, and if she would earn an independent livelihood she is handicapped all along the line." (4)

Judging from their own statements and the fuss made about them in the press and by anti-feminist writers, some feminists were choosing before the first world war not to have any sexual relations with men. They were taking this decision in protest against the form taken by male sexuality, the way that women were oppressed in their relationships with men, and because some of them believed that the position of all women could only be improved in a society where there was a large class of celibate women. It would be difficult to judge the size of this revolt or precisely what it meant to all the women involved, but the fact that feminists and others considered the phenomenon to exist and were either enormously enthusiastic or hysterically alarmed about it, is interesting and demands examination even if the number of women involved was fairly small.

There is no doubt that the proportion of women relative to men in the population was increasing in every census or estimate from 1821 when there were 1,036 women to every 1,000 men to 1901 when there were 1,068. In 1911 the proportion remained at the 1911 figure. 1911 also represents a peak for the number of women in each age group from 25 upwards who remained single. Immediately after the first world war the proportion of women relative to men in the population rose but the rate of marriage also rose in every age group after the war. The excess of women over men was referred to in the press as the 'surplus women' problem. Before the first world war the fuss about spinsters stemmed from alarm not merely at the existence of the 'surplus' but at the fact that some women were deliberately choosing to remain single and were articulating their decision in political terms.

Christabel Pankhurst stated categorically that spinsterhood was a political decision, a deliberate choice made in response to the conditions of sex-slavery.

"There can be no mating between the spiritually developed women of this new day and men who in thought and conduct with regard to sex matters are their inferiors." (5)

It can be assumed that she was not alone in her views in the Women's Social and Politically Union since 63% of its members in that year, 1913, were spinsters, and many of the rest widowed.

Hamilton's book, 'Marriage as a Trade' is a lengthy exposition of why women wished to be spinsters, the ploys used against them and her belief in the political necessity of spinsters to the women's revolution. She explained that men had always adopted "brutal and uncompromising attitudes" towards



spinsters in order to force women into marriage and prevent economic competition. However their attitudes showed not merely contempt for a "creature (who) was chaste and therefore inhuman" but active dislike which she felt could only arise from "consciousness that the perpetual virgin was a witness, however reluctantly, to the unpalatable fact that sexual intercourse was not for every woman an absolute necessity." (6) Hamilton's reason for being a spinster was specifically a rejection of the conditions of marriage. Since she saw marriage as a trade she saw the conditions of marriage as a wife's conditions of work and considered them insupportable. They included total lack of payment, sexual subjection and occupational hazards for which no warnings or compensation was given. She likened what was clearly venereal disease though she used veiled language, to the risk of lead poisoning in a pottery or the danger of combustion in a dynamite factory.

The importance of spinsters was that only they could help advance the cause of women as "any improvement as has already been effected in the status of the wife and mother has originated outside herself, and is, to a great extent, the work of the formerly contented spinster." (7) As the spinster improved her position so she steadily destroyed the prestige of marriage and the conditions of marriage would be improved only if there was a visible alternative to marriage open to women. If marriage was voluntary and not enforced, she thought, men would have to pay for the work they then got for nothing and men would have to exercise self-control instead of seeing "one half of the race as sent into the world to excite desire in the other half." (8).

A contributor to the Freewoman magazine, E. Noel Morgan, also argued that a celibate class of women was necessary for the "task of raising the fair sex out of its subjection." (9) But she saw the existence of such a class as a deliberate strategy on the part of 'nature' which intended to emancipate women.

"Now the existence of this superfluous unhusbanded class of women seems to me to be deliberately planned by nature for a specific purpose. We find that wherever women are admitted to sex intercourse to such a degree that the celibate class is practically non-existent, there the position of women socially, economically, and intellectually is of a low order...." (10)

She believed that women needed the passion they would otherwise use in sex to fight for the emancipation of women.



BACKLASH AGAINST THE SPINSTERS

The backlash against the spinsters was developed from the 1890's onwards by those involved in the sex reform movement such as Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter. The movement which held that sexual intercourse was a joy and generally proscribed any other form of sexual expression for women found it necessary to attack that form of feminism which was launching the critique of male sexual behaviour. The method was generally to denounce the spinster as it was recognised that single women were in the vanguard of the women's movement. The majority of members of the WSPU as well as the Ladies' National Association against the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1870's and '80's were spinsters or widows. The attack on spinsters used concepts being developed by the psychoanalysts but which had also been employed by some 19th century sex reformers, of sexual repression. It was argued that a woman who did not engage in sexual intercourse was likely to become dangerous and destructive as a result of unfulfilled sexual urges. Such repression was also held to lead to militant feminism and man-hating! The Freewoman magazine was published from 1911-13. It was edited by two women who promoted sex reforming ideas and represented a new strand within the feminist movement. As well as promoting the 'joys of sex', meaning sexual intercourse, the editors proclaimed that it was useless to struggle against injustices. They scorned the 'externals' of freedom and 'politics and economics' and argued that if woman was to 'act like those who are free' then she would become so.

The assault upon spinsters by this new tendency in the women's movement started in the first issue of the Freewoman. In an article entitled 'The spinster' written 'by One', a sketch is drawn which gives a destructive, twisted character to the spinster. The opening lines illustrate the general tone of the article:

"I write of the High Priestess of Society. Not of the mother of sons, but of her barren sister, the withered tree, the acidulous vestal under whose

pale shadow we chill and whiten, of the spinster I write. Because of her power and dominion. She, unobtrusive, meek, soft-footed, silent, shame-faced, bloodless and boneless, thinned to spirit, enters the secret recesses of the mind, sits at the secret springs of action, and moulds and fashions our emasculate (sic) society. She is our social nemesis." (11)

The writer attributed great power and influence to the spinster which of course, when spinsters were a small and despised minority in society as they are still today, they did not have. In subsequent issues of the Freewoman, articles appeared purporting to describe how different varieties of spinsters emerged. One of the college-educated woman spoke in disapproving tones of her growing lack of interest in clothes, lack of sex attraction and indifference to men. The spinster phenomenon clearly caused grave disquiet to many Freewoman contributors.

The letters pages of the magazine contain a debate between those who proclaimed the joy of sexual intercourse and attacked the spinsters on the grounds of the dreadful destructiveness caused by their thwarted instincts, and some of the spinsters themselves who wrote in defending their right to be happy and healthy though not relating sexually to a man. Two of the protagonists in this debate were Kathryn Oliver, a spinster and proud of it, and Stella Browne, calling herself 'new subscriber' a leading campaigner for birth control and abortion in the '20's and '30's, and a believer in the joy of sex. Oliver wrote to the Freewoman attacking the 'new morality which would permit for women the same degrading laxity on sex matters which is indulged in by most of the lower animals, including men,' saying that she was neither a prude nor a puritan but an 'apostle of the practice of self-restraint in sex matters.' She denied absolutely that celibacy was dangerous to health and proposed that on the contrary, marriage was dangerous to the health of women.

"I am an unmarried woman, nearly 30 years of age, and have always practiced abstinence, and although not a powerful person, I enjoy the best of health, and have never troubled a doctor since I was 6 months old. My married women friends, on the contrary, have always some complaint or something wrong. Who has not seen the girl married at 20 almost immediately degenerate into a nervous wreck? I deny absolutely that abstinence has any bad effect on my health." (12)

Stella Browne replied in the next issue that Oliver must belong to the class of women who are 'sexually anaesthetic' and 'cold-blooded' but there were other varieties of women. She assured readers that many women's health, happiness, social usefulness and mental capacity were 'seriously impaired and sometimes totally ruined by the unnatural conditions of their lives, ' if they were celibate. The correspondence continued with Stella Browne eventually bewailing the effects of women such as Oliver on the women's movement.

"It will be an unspeakable catastrophe if our richly complex Feminist movement with its possibilities of power and joy, falls under the domination of sexually defiant and disappointed women, impervious to facts and logic and deeply ignorant of life." (13)

There is no doubt that Stella Browne and other sex-reforming feminists after her such as Dora Russell were passionately interested in promoting women's right to sexual pleasure as a vital component of the struggle for women's emancipation. In order to promote the joy of sex they found it necessary to be uncompromising in their attack on all those whom they considered to be standing in the way of this march to sexual freedom including, just before the first world war, the vast majority of feminists and particularly the spinsters amongst their ranks. In the period immediately before this war the women's movement was deeply divided over the issue of sexuality. One camp advocated the joys and necessities of heterosexual intercourse in or out of marriage without any serious attempt to criticise the form of male sexuality and its effects on women, presumably because such criticism would have detracted from the strength of their campaign. The other camp pointed out that many women received no joy from sexual intercourse, suggested that there were large differences of interest between men and women over the issue of sexuality, launched a major critique of the form of male sexuality and advocated non-co-operation with the sexual desires of men.

Undoubtedly many of the spinsters engaged in sexual relationships with other women though at a time when lesbianism was practically invisible and any form of sexual activity that was not sexual intercourse within marriage was regarded with horror, it would have done the suffrage struggle no good to have proclaimed the joys and possibilities of lesbian sexuality. The 'progressive' sex reformers like Ellis and Stella Browne were prepared to be tolerant of

those lesbians who were congenitally 'abnormal' and couldn't help it, but showed great alarm at the idea of pseudo-lesbianism, which they saw as the result of the seduction of otherwise perfectly normal women by aggressive congenital lesbians. Whilst a small and static group of congenitals would be tolerated by the progressives, the idea that many women were actually rejecting men and marriage and that the numbers of the spinster group were increasing all the time induced panic in even the most apparently liberal souls.

POST WORLD WAR ONE

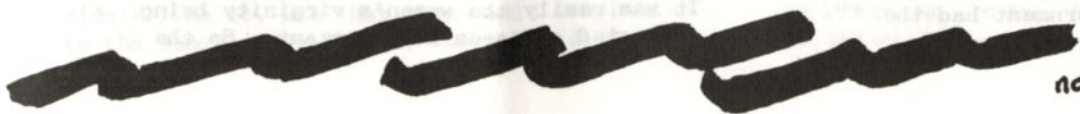
The twenties witnessed a massive concerted effort by 'progressive' sex reformers, rabid anti-feminists, and believers in the joy of sex of every possible political persuasion from Alexandra Kollontai to arch British conservatives and some who were professedly anti-democratic and fascist in sympathy to cajole threaten and force women into participation in sexual intercourse. These apparently ill assorted elements came together in the 1929 Sex Reform Congress of the World League for Sex Reform held in London. From their work in the '20's it is clear that a uniting factor was grave alarm at the threat posed to male dominance by all the gains made by feminists and in particular alarm at the threat of the independent woman. There is great concern at 'manhating', militant feminism and at what appeared to be the mass phenomenon of women's resistance to participating with pleasure in sexual intercourse. Women's resistance was described as 'frigidity' and was variously said to be caused by feminism or to lead to feminism if not cured. Women's frigidity became the central problem of the sex reformers of the '20's. The so-called sexual revolution of the '20's was not so much a change in the behaviour of men as a conscription of women into the acceptance of sexual intercourse and into performing as the sexual complements of men.

The increased independence of women in the first world war and their new economic opportunities were seen to undermine the institution of marriage which the less 'progressive' sex reformers saw to be an institution which existed to ensure the dominance of men and the submission of women. Sexual intercourse was promoted as a means of cementing the crumbling structure of marriage, particularly as some sex reformers such as the Freudian analyst Wilhelm Stekel and the Dutch gynaecologist Van de Velde whose works were extremely influential throughout Europe, declared that submission was crucial to a woman's ability to experience sexual pleasure. The feminist critique of male sexual behaviour which had provided such power and strength to the pre-war movement was driven out of the debate on sexuality in the '20's. The sex reformers allowed only two sides to the debate, the 'progressives' and the 'prudes' and the attack on the spinster continued apace. The work of the sex reformers undoubtedly made a great contribution to the defeat of militant feminism. Immediately after the war the proportion of women in the population in relation to men was further increased but the rate of marriage went up and marriage has continued to gain in popularity throughout the 20th century.

When I first went to secondary school in 1959 many tough and wonderful spinsters were still teaching there. They had mostly retired before I left. They were members of a generation of women whose struggle for independence was defeated by the 'sexual revolution' of the '20's. I am well aware that many women reading this will be saying "what about women's right to sexual pleasure?" In the '20's woman's right to sexual pleasure was perverted into woman's duty to engage in sexual intercourse and no other sexual activity, in order to shore up the institution of heterosexuality and the status quo of male dominance against the threat of independent women. An understanding of the crucial connection between the imperative male sexual urge and the oppression of women was driven underground only to re-emerge in this current phase of feminism.

It is likely that all our struggles against male violence in this stage of feminism will be represented in the future as 'puritan' and 'reactionary' if the 'progressives', that is those dedicated to overwhelming women's resistance to the use of our bodies as the basis for the maintenance of male domination, defeat us yet again. I also think it important that the current debate over lesbianism and heterosexuality in the WLM should be conducted with an awareness of how male sex reformers were able to use the attack on spinsters to undermine the first wave of feminism.

Sheila Jeffreys



notes on page 45.

Just wait 'til AFTER THE REVOLUTION, SISTERS!

The writings of Alexandra Kollantai have become well known to feminists in the contemporary women's movement. She is seen as one of the few feminists within the Bolshevik Party around the time of the 1917 Russian Revolution, struggling to raise questions of women's oppression, talking of the need for a new morality, for a society where women are able to control their sexuality and do not have to be dependent upon men. Alix Holt has translated many of Kollantai's writings and is currently researching the 1920's period in Russia. We asked Alix how far things really changed for women after the revolution, how much influence Alexandra Kollantai had within the Bolshevik Party and how far socialist-feminist ideas were put into practice.



In Kollantai's writings it often seems that the change from the old to the new morality is a relatively simple step and although she's challenging those Bolsheviks who assume that somehow as a by-product of the dictatorship of the proletariat the superstructure of morality etc. will change. But at the same time she still considers that it will be a relatively early change because she sees the working class as somehow already holding within it the shoots of the new morality. Sometimes she seems to present a rather romantic picture of the working class, stressing the unity rather than the divisions between men and women. You can see this in the activities of the women's movement as a whole. In the period from 1917 to 1926-7 they're not very interested in questions of morality or fertility control - abortion and contraception, they're cautious about their own role as a women's department, and always putting themselves down, saying 'well we're only a technical body to put out special propaganda for women'. That goes back to discussions in the socialist movement about the nature of women's oppression, trying always to tie it in with the exploitation of the working class under capitalism. In 1921 when the New Economic Policy was introduced, which brought back elements of a capitalist economy this had a negative effect upon women, there was so much unemployment amongst women after 1921, one or two people in the women's department suggested that because the government had the money to liberate women from above by

building creches and canteens, it was important to encourage grass roots activity, to set up organisations at village and town level to fight around questions of everyday life.

Alexandra Kollantai supported the idea, she was in Norway by this time, but wrote an article to Pravda expressing her support. The women's department as a whole was very hostile and passed resolutions denouncing this feminist deviation. It wasn't until later on in the 1920s when it became very obvious from all the statistics gathered about what was happening to women in the economy and education, that things weren't changing very much that they began to adjust their ideas. Then they realised it was important to raise questions about relationships between men and women, about violence against women, about abortion and, tentatively, about sexuality.

S.W: Why did the question of rape begin to be examined in more depth later in the 1920's?

It's difficult to answer, partly because of the difficulties of research. The sorts of sources, newspapers, party documents, we don't have interviews with the women. It's difficult to see to what extent the change was in attitudes to the party and to what extent it responded to pressures from below. To take a concrete example, if you're trying to understand why there's a lot of discussion of rape in 1926/7, is it because the instance of rape increases, because women begin to define force as violation whereas before they'd seen that as just 'well that's how it is', or is it nothing to do with rape really but a change in the ideology of the party and its ideas about controlling sexuality. Bearing in mind debates about violence against women in our own society, it's difficult to unravel the elements which seem progressive from the rather repressive statements and ideas about the state intervening in private life, the advocacy of a repressive sexual morality which seem to link in with subsequent developments under Stalinism.

Looking at the laws the Bolsheviks did or didn't pass in the 1920's and those that concern violence against women, comparing the post-revolutionary with Czarist laws you find that before the revolution, crimes against women honour and virginity. It was really the women's virginity being protected and seen as important. So the

sentence for corruption of minors even when there was no element of physical violence was greater than that for rape of women over fourteen. In the post-revolutionary period there were theories about laws being part of capitalist society, so it was expected that law would wither away under socialism. Criminals were victims of capitalist exploitation, so all the sentences were lessened. In the new code, after the revolution, sentences for rape are less, but comparatively they are more serious. What is interesting from the point of view of present debate is that the law was silent on whether the woman was married to the man or not, so in legal practice the Bolshevik law recognised rape within marriage. The law recognised in the same paragraph both physical and psychological rape, so sexual coercion was legally an offence.

The word for rape in Russia is much more general, covering all kinds of coercion whereas 'rape' in English meant seizure (from the Latin 'to seize') and is somehow narrowed down. The way we use it now - it fits in with the stereotype of a back street violent encounter, whereas even in Modern Russian you can say 'somebody raped me' when you mean that they talked to me and went on and on. This broader meaning helped some of the women in the Bolshevik party to link all the different aspects of violence against women. Swearing is their equivalent of pornography. They always talked about murder, rape and pornography together. But in the practice of ordinary people it wasn't just that all these were seen as grouped together but that they were all tolerated, there wasn't the social condemnation of rape which in Western society is there in the popular culture.

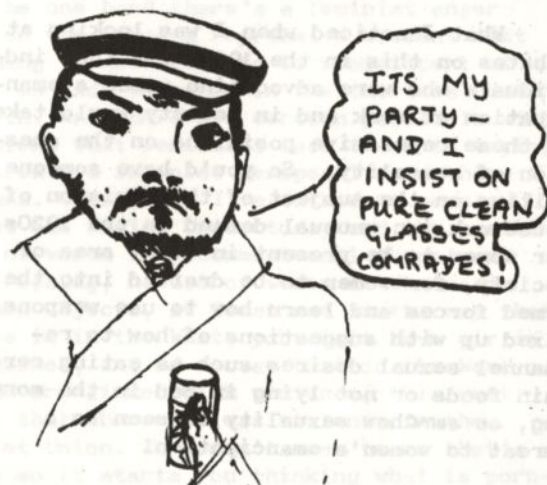
When you're talking about battering, part of Russian tradition or popular culture has been the violence of relations between men and women. When I went to the Soviet Union everyone talked about it all the time, it was a known fact, men beat their wives, although it was never admitted in the press. Whereas in our culture, maybe there are class differences but it was something that was hidden. Looking at the way that rape cases were reported there's not much theoretical discussion of violence against women but it's not suggested as it often is in the West that women are accusing men to get revenge in some way. The idea of rape being women's fantasy is absent in Russia because its such common knowledge. Violence was so much part of the culture no-one would have thought that the woman wasn't telling the truth. Violence was accepted, not challenged as something that was criminal. Although battering was a criminal offence, people didn't see it as criminal. Women within the women's department had campaigns, leaflets and so on around questions of battering. Women did come forward, decided that they didn't like it, and that they could complain to the women's department, when they disco-

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vered that if convicted, the man would be put in prison, they would withdraw the complaint. So the women's department was trying to lessen the sentence or have different kinds of sentence, because most women in towns were still dependent upon men economically.

Its a difficult issue for feminists about women's attitudes and perceptions of violence by their husbands, because in some cases it seems straightforward in the abstract but when you start talking about a particular women's relationship with a particular man, there are so many problems involved.

There was a case in the paper in the 1920's of a man whose wife had rheumatism, and he had to do most of the housework, and he even swept the floor (this was really surprising to the writer). When the husband was drunk he used to beat her.. She would complain about this, and sometimes she would leave him and go to stay with her parents but she always went back. In this complicated way its not just a matter of economic dependence, there are all sorts of emotional ties. Its clearly not enough to give women a wage and then they can make the decision to leave if they have been battered.

One of the most famous texts from the Russian revolution is Clara Zetkin's conversation with Lenin, in which he is supposed to have said that he's extremely worried about the interest of young people in sexual matters and that this is reprehensible. They should be concerned about more political matters. This is usually quoted to show that Lenin was very reactionary on this matter. Its difficult to know whether Lenin said this or not because it was written by Clara Zetkin some time later and



ACCORDING TO CLARA ZETKIN - LENIN COMPARED A WOMAN WHO HAD HAD A VARIED SEXUAL LIFE - TO A DIRTY GLASS OF WATER, FROM WHICH NO SELF-RESPECTING MAN WOULD WANT TO DRINK

seems relevant to the discussions that were taking place in 1923/4 when she was writing this up, rather than 1920/1 when Lenin was supposed to have said it. Whether he said it, or not its certainly true that these kind of ideas were very common at the time. It is a reactionary strand of thought that develops into Stalinism in the area of morality - it becomes dominant in this before other areas.

Some of the ideas that were actually published in journals of the time appear to propound a very repressive morality. One famous professor composed a list of do's and don'ts for students - whilst you were studying you weren't supposed to have any sexual relations because they got in the way of your work, and masturbation was considered to be a social evil.

If you look at the writings of the revolution and the 1920's the body of work actually on sexuality and sexual politics is fairly small, and writings that might seem to us as progressive are very small indeed. However there was a development of discussion particularly amongst young people on the relationship between men and women (I say that advisedly because it was assumed that heterosexual relationships were the norm, there was no discussion of sexual relationships between men and men or women and women.) Looking at the debate within the Komsomol (youth movement), from our position in the 1980s they read strangely, because they seem to be advocating the idea of the 'glass of water' theory, at the time said to be Alexandra Kollontai's, though she never actually advocated it. The idea was widespread that love was a bourgeois idea and affections and feelings were somehow associated with bourgeois society. A revolutionary view of sexuality was that it was a physiological need and therefore was to be looked at in a functional and instrumental way.

What I noticed when I was looking at debates on this in the 1920s was that individuals who were advocating women's emancipation at work and in society would take up these repressive positions on the question of sexuality. So you'd have someone writing on the subject of the division of housework (an unusual demand in the 1920s) for women to be present in every area of society, for women to be drafted into the armed forces and learn how to use weapons, mixed up with suggestions of how to re-channel sexual desires such as eating certain foods or not lying in bed in the morning, so somehow sexuality is seen as a threat to women's emancipation.

Ideas on sexuality were linked to ideas on the new family and the new way of life. The idea of living differently was often seen by women as a threat because freer relationships within marriage meant that men would leave their wives as they got a bit older, to go and find a woman, younger

and prettier. This is what women complained of when there was discussion of the marriage laws in the late '20s. So the new freedoms within marriage and sexuality were seen by women as benefitting men, and of course they did. On of the problems of the 1920s was the imbalance between men and women, because so many men had been killed during the revolution and civil war. This again worked against women. They saw the new freedoms of the revolution as threatening their security, their emotional and economic position in society. So women, especially older women, were hostile to this new debate and it flourished mainly amongst young communists. Even here it tended to be something that was advocated by the young men, and the young women saw themselves as being exploited. They quite clearly identified these new ideas as working against them. They also felt in this milieu of the young communist organisation that there was great pressure on them to be promiscuous otherwise they were accused of petit-bourgeois mentality.



In the 1920s although there was a new form of government and the means of production were nationalised in fact there was very little that had changed. There was no expansion of industry, it was in a worse state than before the revolution; there was the realisation that there wasn't going to be a revolution in Western Europe, so Russia had to use its own resources, and the resources just weren't there. It wasn't felt possible to go around building creches, new schools, new houses. So people were living in the same housing, or worse than before the revolution. People were doing the same jobs if they had them, and they might not have. Although there were changes in the 1920s, particularly for the urban workers; men and women who were involved in communist politics, learning to read, going to meetings. For other men and women the change was very small, particularly in areas like sexual relations which have always been very private and change very slowly.

Going back to the discussion of violence and crimes against women, during the period from after the revolution until the end of the '20s there was little debate about the subject, apart from prostitution. It's interesting that within the feminist and socialist movements until recently, prostitution has been the aspect upon which there has been the most debate, for instance as early as the campaigns against the Contagious Diseases Acts in the 19th Century, socialists such as Bebel, Engels, and the left wing Social Democrats in which tradition Alexandra Kollontai was, had tried to make the connection between prostitution and marriage, to show that prostitution wasn't something outside society and different from what went on inside. Women's dependent position in society forced them to trade their sexuality for economic security. As Bebel and later Kollontai pointed out it was merely a difference of whether they sold themselves on a long term or casual basis. Prostitution was also taken up as an issue because it seemed very analogous to capitalist relationships - it's buying and selling. Prostitution is a very emotive subject for socialists because it allows a view of women as a victim - here is the prostitute who is somehow a metaphor for women as the passive victims of society, the unfortunate. Although socialists had an analysis of its origins they saw it as so closely connected with capitalism that it couldn't be got rid of under capitalism, so they didn't generally campaign around it in the 19th century - they tended to leave that to the feminists who of course the socialists criticised for being ideologically correct on the subject.

After the revolution what seems to happen is that you had two kinds of prostitute, as in other countries, organised, full-time prostitution and women who occasionally practised prostitution in order to keep themselves alive.

As the civil war was coming to an end the Bolsheviks began to consider what society was looking like, and it was quite obvious that prostitution hadn't disappeared, so it was raised as an issue of 'what are we going to do about it'. In some of the towns the new militia were arresting prostitutes in the manner of the old Czarist regime. Women were annoyed about this and so tried to commit the Party to its socialist views of prostitution. It's in this context that Kollontai's article on prostitution was written. The emphasis in the article on prostitution not being 'useful' work and this being the basis on which it should be criticised and not that it's immoral' in any way, this has to be seen in the context of civil war and the government's need for labour resources. At this period all communist writing is with the idea of the dignity of labour and the necessity for all individuals to engage in useful labour. Kollontai's intervention was confirmed in law in that no law was brought in to make prostitution a criminal offence, and confirmed by the Party in their theoretical

writings. Prostitution can only be 'struggled with', as she put it, by long term measures such as full employment, better conditions of life for women and men, encouragement of harmonious relationships between them.

During the mid twenties prostitution got quite a lot worse, due to unemployment amongst women. Young women would come into the towns from the countryside, without relatives or other support there, so they would turn to prostitution. Quite a lot of surveys were done of prostitutes, where they congregated, their living conditions. There were exposés, for instance that there were still children, young girls of 12 and 13 years, hanging around the stations. It's difficult to say if there was more prostitution because the definition is difficult - whether it's for money, preferment at work, coercion. Lines between them are difficult to draw so perhaps quantifiable comparisons are meaningless. In 1928-9, looking through the women's and young communist press, there is a lot more anger about the fact that it still exists. For instance, an article in a women's newspaper described how two men had seen prostitutes hanging around a hotel in Moscow, followed one of them, seen her go to the bath house with a man, and then carried out a civil arrest. When they took her to the police station the police were annoyed and said, 'what have you brought her along for', they weren't causing a disturbance'. The article also had the names of the women and the man, and seems to have been a serious attempt to raise the issue and bring the people's attention to the fact that it still went on, in a supposedly socialist republic. But at the same time the way in which the whole thing is handled jars a bit with the printing of the woman's name.

Looking at these related themes together, sexuality, abortion, crimes against women which are raised at the end of the twenties, and the way they are treated, on the one hand there's a feminist anger and on the other a repressive element that reading it now seems to be reminiscent of what we know happened in the thirties under Stalin. And there are certain parallels with problems that feminists face today in trying to create a feminist perspective on these issues. Often when I've talked to people about the Soviet Union today and the position of women they comment well there's no advertising, no use of women in the media as sex objects, at least not in the way that there is in the West, you don't have girlie magazines, and if we say that in the West these are linked with violence, this must mean that there is less violence in the Soviet Union. It doesn't seem to me that's true so it starts you thinking what is pornography. I always think of it as visual images, what struck me when I was looking at the twenties was that in Russian culture and maybe this is true for all peasant cultures, nudity wasn't erotic so there were no visual images of pornography. There was verbal pornography through the use of swear

words, four letter words were referred to as pornography. It's also true of the Soviet Union today. Two of the feminists in Lenin-grad who helped to put together the recently published Almanac in Russia when interviewed in America said that when they came to the West they were horrified at the pornography on sale, and said that in the Soviet Union pornography was verbal not visual.

When I first became interested in the nineteen twenties and the Russian revolution I started with Alexandra Kollontai because that was a name, someone who had written things that I could get out of the library and in terms of the discussions which were going on in the women's movement in the West at the same time seemed to be relevant. Many of her ideas seemed to be the same. I thought that Kollontai was one of many women and that there was a women's movement. The more I did research, the more I realised that she was very much alone in many of her ideas. She became more interesting as a person who had somehow managed to make these connections in her head that weren't being made by other people, she wasn't being prompted, but at the same time it became a bit problematic to link her with her culture. She seemed to be special and not part of a women's movement. If you are trying to understand how things changed or didn't change, and sort out the degree of break between the revolutionary period and the Stalinist, you can't use Kollontai's

writings because they only go up to 1922-3. Also she did tend to write quite abstractly this was a common trait in her writings, but nevertheless it means that she wasn't addressing herself to the problem of trying to see how you could begin to change women's position, how you could encourage women to become involved in a very difficult period. The revolutionaries had always thought in terms of a revolution in a more industrially advanced country, so she didn't write very much about those problems.

The problems we face today are in a way very different, you can't learn from history in a very direct or simplistic way and similarly I don't think you can learn from Kollontai. It seems absurd to see the way people use Trotsky and others, and its absurd for the women's movement to try and raise to that dizzy height certain individual women.

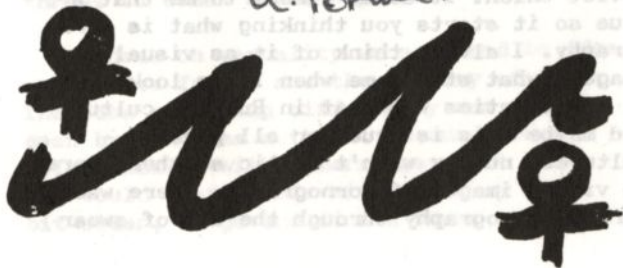
The women's movement is obviously concerned with individual experience relates to social movements and how we can actually forge a collective experience and politics. In trying to understand our own situations, where they are special and the result of particular situations that we are living in, history obviously does help. In the women's movement it's important to have that sense of history, the sense of coming from and going to somewhere.

Alix Holt

continuation of review on page

them if they've ever denied and repressed sexual feelings for other women. But can we say give up men? I was going to say no, here, but I think I must be a closet political lesbian because I think it would be great if financially independent heterosexual feminists did give up their lovers. It's a real contradiction to see men drawing support and credibility from their relationships with feminists and I feel upset and confused when my sisters fo back to their men after we've all been involved in a women's event or activity together; when they spend their 'time off' with their male lovers. I don't really have room to go into this discussion in detail, but the booklet is worth getting, especially if, like me, you missed it all the first time around.

A. Torde.



The Scarlet Women collective would like to thank all those sisters who have helped us to put this issue together - including those who's articles we were unable to include because we ran out of space and money.

Thanks especially to Sarah, who typed until 5a.m. for us. Margaret Maggie, Elaine, Moss Side Press and to Pink Jane. We couldn't have done it without you all. ♀

How Patriarchal Definitions Of Sexuality Divide Women

As a child I grew up in the working class mining community of South Wales, at a time when the bitter poverty and suffering of the thirties was still fresh in adult minds. In spite of the closeness and comradeship between women which poverty engenders, there were also obvious and sometimes bitter divisions which men interpreted as 'women bitching'. The bitching became particularly bitter when the issues involved relationships with men and female sexual morality. I used to find these divisions incomprehensible amongst women who were supportive in so many other ways; now I see these divisions as the crux of patriarchal power over women.

These divisions still exist amongst all classes and in every patriarchal culture. In the early days of the Women's Movement women themselves made tremendous efforts to create unity in their fight against men and sexism. Schisms are now re-emerging over issues like lesbian separatism, relationships with men, mothers and sons, class consciousness, racism and imperialism. These are more than just 'growing Pains' of the Women's Movement, they are issues over which men have sought to divide women since the original 'patriarchal takeover' of women's land and female sexual autonomy. Patriarchal takeover in these two vital areas is still going on, especially in 'developing' countries, where capitalist economics and cash crop systems are rapidly eroding the last vestiges of women's organisation - ownership of land, food growing and commercial enterprises. (See Discrimination in Development, Spare Rib, 100) Women should note that at the same time that patriarchy is depriving women of economic autonomy and their right to work the land for food, female sexual and reproductive autonomy is undermined, midwifery is made difficult or illegal, women's ancient knowledge of contraception, healing, herbs and remedies is undermined in favour of male 'technological' solutions which are usually alien to women's bodies.

Patriarchy everywhere has deprived women of their ancient right to work the land and to be self-sufficient. Patriarchal politics has introduced class, racism, capitalism and imperialism into social and political life and has produced a situation where most people are powerless because they are landless. In order to accomplish this in all known cultural situations, men had first to gain control over female sexuality, the crucial link to matrilineal descent and to female power.

HOW PATRIARCHAL MARRIAGE DIVIDES WOMEN

Powerful elites of men introduced patriarchal marriage to control female sexuality, to destroy matrilineal descent, to divide women from each other. Women became ~~enmeshed~~ in the patriarchal system where women are conditioned to compete against each other for men and marriage, as the main way of earning a meal ticket for themselves and their children and to reject their basic sexual feelings for each other which were the main source of female bonding under matriarchal systems..

In the matriarchal world, women gave their main sexual and emotional energies to other women, as a group. Men were not, as they now fear, used as 'studs', but actively participated in the female sexual and erotic rites, when pregnancy was desired by the women themselves. Men respected female sexual autonomy and lived their own group or communal life within their mother clan.

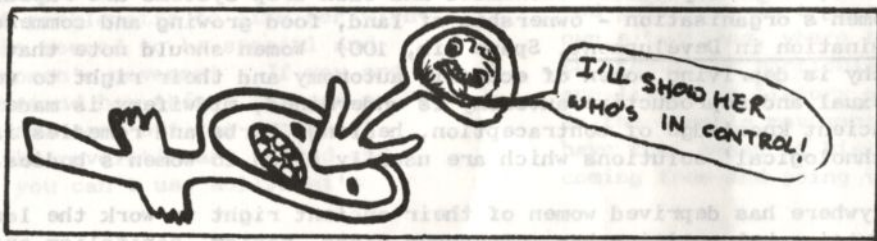
Even with the development of matrilineal marriage systems, women maintained their sexual autonomy and their rights to love their sisters and to mate with whomever they chose. Women retained these ancient rights as long as mother right was respected; only patrilineal marriage systems repressed these rights and divided women from their sisters and their mothers..

Thus patriarchal marriage and the economic system which it serves, seriously divides women in western, socialist and increasingly in developing countries where western ideologies are being imposed by ruling elites or imperialist powers. Hetrosexual monogamy and the social isolation which it imposes divides us from our sisters and our mothers, eventually from our daughters. The stress on hetrosexual intercourse as culturally 'normal' and other forms of sexual activity as 'abnormal' or 'pathological', has served the power elites throughout patriarchal history and still does. Thus women who have sexual feelings for other women, i.e. the silent majority, are afraid to express these feelings, for fear of seeming 'perverted', 'queer', or 'lesbian' or of losing their home, their income or their children, - all legitimate fears in patriarchal political systems.

Prostitution

This is another mode which patriarchy used to divide women. In all patriarchal societies prostitutes are abused because they threaten the ideology of the 'good' woman, i.e. the monogamous woman. Yet men married to these virtuous women seek out prostitutes to use and abuse them sexually. And many married women themselves have come to regard marriage as 'legalised' prostitution, providing a precarious income for sexual and other services. The life of the prostitute is even more precarious, exposed as she is to the sexual needs of many men, subjected to male violence and the brutality of unknown men, constantly exposed to the dangers of venereal disease. Many men despise the prostitute, yet increasingly in our own society she is the unmarried mother who seeks a better standard of living for her children, in a society where women's paid work is given low priority. In the developing world, a woman's labour is cheap and of no priority. In reality the condition of patriarchal marriage and the condition of prostitution both originate from the same roots - in patriarchal power over female sexuality and male power to organise the economy in the interests of men.

Rape and Sexual Violence - this is another major issue which men have used to seriously divide women. 'Only bad girls get raped' or 'She asked for it', are maxims which women absorb from patriarchal domination and use against their unfortunate sisters. However they are also using them as a psychic defense because in reality all women are equally exposed to the risk of male violence - married women may daily face that risk in their own homes and beds. Prostitutes are vulnerable to attack by men whose pornographic fantasies are fueled by a culture which nurtures violence. All women are equally at risk from random violent attack at night on our streets, married or single, lesbian or heterosexual, old or young. And rape, sexual torture and mutilation of women has always been used by patriarchal aggressors of all nations to settle scores in imperialist wars. Women are slowly realising that it is not differing standards of 'morality' which divide them, but definitions of female sexuality which command no respect and lay women wide open to sexual abuse.



Male Control over Fertility.

In all patriarchal cultures men seek to maintain control over female fertility through defining female sexuality as 'passive' and 'vaginal' and also by controlling contraception, abortion, gynaecology and obstetrics. Men want to do this in the interests of father right and to control women themselves. In practice this means that women are taught to accept male technological solutions to fertility control which are often harmful and even deadly. Millions of women in both western and socialist block countries, and throughout the developing world have had their physiology damaged in order to serve male phallic supremacy. Countless women die of septic abortions because men will not allow women to control their own bodies and will not allow access even to services which already exist. Male control of female fertility also divides women. Women who seek abortions are often called 'sluts', women who question male definitions of female sexuality are often called 'frigid', women who reject the whole notion of phallic supremacy and male notions of fertility control and become lesbians are called 'perverted'. Lesbian motherhood in fact represents the greatest threat to patriarchal norms as it threatens the notion of father right and makes it clear that women can define their own sexuality outside the bondage of male fertility control.

In the matriarchal world, the group experience of motherhood extended female sensuality and eroticism for women as a group. Childcare was sometimes so communal that biological and social motherhood amongst sisters merged into one, so that a child had the benefit and experience of several mothers. Fatherhood was either not emphasised or unknown, therefore the process of child bearing and childcare did not divide women. Patriarchal control of motherhood and female fertility on the other hand divides women as mothers deeply. A woman who is rearing children in the interests of one man - her husband - is basically divided from her sisters both socially and psychically. Her sexuality is defined as heterosexual and monogamous. By this definition a heterosexual mother is split in her loyalties to both her sisters and her children. She is not able to give and receive love from her sisters and therefore her own sexuality is stunted and incest taboos cut her off from sensuality with her own children, an essential part of mother right.

Male Definitions of Female Sexuality divide us from our sisters all along the line. We live in a culture where female orgasm, the clitoris, and all erotic pleasure has been sacrificed in the name of phallic supremacy or sexual power of men over women. From an early age women are

continued on page 45.

Sado- Masochism.

35

SM is a difficult subject for feminists. It seems to be an area of experience which most of us are ignorant about; it involves a set of attitudes which most of us feel unfamiliar with. It is mostly practised by men, so possibly we can learn most by listening to what men have to say about it, for and against. But even a quick look for ourselves at what the experience involves, and what the attitudes are based on, makes us keenly aware that feminists cannot afford to comfort themselves that, nasty though it all is, it is really just another of those extreme perversions practised by a few loonies we need never meet.

SM is alive and well, forcing itself more and more on our attention: it is increasingly a major component in films depicting violence against women, films now on general release and no longer regarded as unacceptably 'blue'; it is expanding on the porn market and earning lots of money for the pushers; it is made respectable in magazines like Forum, and therefore creeps into the soft-core porn which is informing sex-therapy today. It is a growing trend among lesbians in the States. We have to work out what we think about it.

SM is based on dominance/submission, that is, gross inequalities in power relations. It involves beating, burning, wounding, bondage, humiliation, degradation. The practice assumes that the transcendence of pain inflicted by another, into pleasure, is a challenging and worthwhile venture. Well, that is one of the loftier rationalisations for it. Usually it's just for a sexual turn-on, and supposedly works for both men and women, and if it turns you on, it's alright - as one sex manual puts it: "... as long as degradation is going on and you're into it, fine". It is a very far-reaching method of male control of women.

In fact, women are trained throughout their lives into a submissive position; in relation to men, we are powerless. To play the S role in sex games cannot alter the fact of the woman's role as M in all other aspects of the heterosexual relationship; while the M role can only reinforce her present submission.

It is ironic, but not surprising, that it is from a man that we can understand this most clearly:

"The appeal of sadism and masochism is rooted in the social structure of male-over-female sexual domination.

Between a man and a woman, the conjunction of male sexual sadism and female masochism fully expresses the cultural definitions of what 'real' men and women are, how they are 'opposite sexes', and why they 'complement' one another. For the genital male, eroticized violence against women results in male sexual identity reification; his sexual sadism is the erotic correlative of his power in the culture over half the human race. Male sexual identity is a meaningless construct apart from the institutionalized and personalized sexual violence against women; the genital male reifies male sexual identity when he violates someone else's bodily integrity, when he aggresses against non-phallic flesh and treats it with contempt. For the person defined as inferior, her sexual masochism fully complements the genital male's erotic drive to actualize masculinity; constrained by culture to nonentity, she accepts obliteration of her self for his sake, which is, as Andrea Dworkin has written, the norm of actualized femininity." (1)

Women's real position under male-supremacy makes the roles very different. In SM role playing, men's sexual excitement is aroused by either playing out an exaggerated version of

their present power, or by their voluntary adoption of acts of submission. Either way, they can stop the game (since they're in control) and feel the after-glow of enhanced power; for the woman the game is stopped, leaving her with learned-all-over-again powerlessness.

All that is happening is that male control over women's bodies is extending to new dimensions, in which men deal very effectively with their threatened feelings about women's 'newly' discovered, and monstrously large sexual capacity.

Arguments for SM always push the notion of 'consent'; 'consent' makes it safe to play these excitingly dangerous games, and indeed gives the M enormous power since the S is concerned to give her pleasure. But put in its cultural context i.e. within a system of male supremacy, 'consent' is nonsense:

"Consent is a concept that only has meaning between two persons who are equally enfranchised by culture to act wilfully and without constraint - that is, persons who are genitally males. Between a man and a woman, the structure of sado-masochistic erotic encounters is predicated on the constraint of the woman's will, as well as her body. The woman's compliance or acquiescence in sadomasochism is therefore entirely delusional and utterly meaningless. In no sense does she share in the man's privileged capacity to act."

(Stoltenberg)

Even between two 'consenting' lesbians the M's will and body are at the mercy of the S - how can we possibly see this as the masochist acting autonomously? Nor is it possible to unlearn your role by simply practising role-reversal, turn by turn, with your lesbian lover. You can't get round the fact that the masochist in this situation is conforming absolutely to the all-pervasive ideal of erotic femininity, within the society of male dominance. The sadist lesbian seems only to be acting as some sort of agent or channel for all men's contempt and disgust towards women. It's all the same ball-game, whether the couple is heterosexual or lesbian.

Stoltenberg also has some enlightening things to say about SM between homosexual men, and the importance of gay male film-makers with their woman-hatred being in the forefront of the new anti-women films. (If you can find this article, it's an interesting read, especially in terms of one man spilling the beans about other men. Would a woman saying such things about men ever be believed?)

The pressure on women to accept SM is enormous and we have to cope with the many and varied rationalisations of, and justifications for, SM coming at us from all sides.

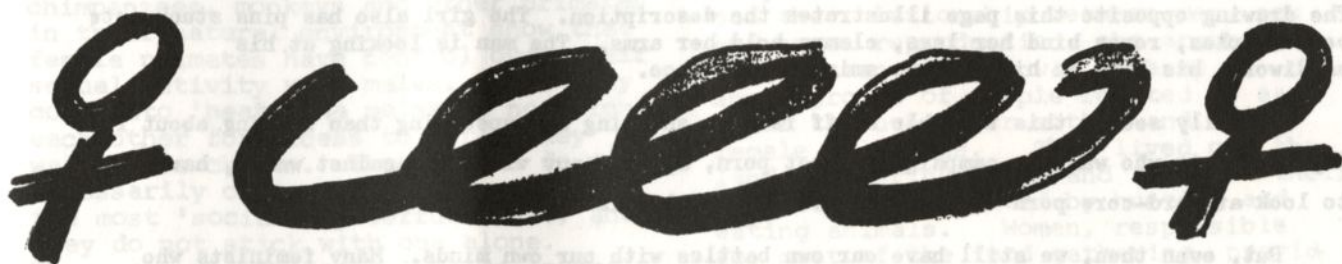
Psychologistic approaches assure us that we all, men and women alike, have this 'dark' side to our nature; sexologists recommend that it is all better out in the open 'cleansing' daylight, sex-manuals suggest SM as the basic ingredient of sex games to play in order to improve 'our' sex-life.

Even a clinical approach is possible, in acceptable feminist terms e.g. sexual perversions are recognised by all who have studied them to be a male phenomenon, the perversions themselves being the 'extreme' end of male sexuality in practise. SM is sometimes seen as a perversion, but should rather be regarded as basic to all perversions. While objectification (fetishisation, etc.) operates as a distancing mechanism, SM describes the roles then adopted. Such a description tells the truth, but takes out the political understanding.

A sex manual such as Alex Comfort's Joy of Sex will tell you not to use the terms 'sadism' and 'masochism'. Quite simply we must all accept that sex is tied to aggression, the over-tender are uncool. The language of equality wins out to such an extent that we are, after a while, quite able to ignore the fact that all the illustrations show only one of the two sexes being tied up (no guesses) and that same sex being flagellated.

Sex therapy, encouraged now by even the Marriage Guidance Council, tells us that we're all equal now in the bedroom; that this can have beneficial effects on our lives outside the bedroom; and that SM is a good example of this, because women can be allowed to play S roles which will counteract their submissive lives (a little treat) and make everyone happy.

Between a politically 'aware' man and a 'liberated' woman it is now accepted that the ultimate equality is good sex; some think the Revolution cannot happen without it; some think it is the Revolution.



So for very many groups of 'people' (all male people, actually) anything goes in bed - and the more taboos you break/the more you face up to what really turns you on - the more 'liberating' it all is. And so, sadomasochism is NORMALISED.

More confusing still is lesbian writers extolling SM. Barbara Ruth wrote an article in Lesbian Tide called "Cathexis (on the nature of S & M)" (2) She gives the definition of cathexis as a transformation in which one emotion becomes another. She thinks SM is too dangerous for men and women to play together, because of the power imbalance: "For a woman to trust a man to such an extent would not be in her best interests. Such an action would be a perversion (her emphasis) of masochism and counter-revolutionary." Barbara Ruth is interested in transcendence and ritual, the 'hidden agenda' in all human dynamics: "... the pain is really beside the point, a means to an end. The point is the scenario." She takes us back to childhood traumas, a favourite 'explanation' of the "dark sides of our nature" and in the end plumps for a healthy-open-trusting-exploration line. She has a foot-note explaining that she is using the shorthand S & M because she believes that "the terms 'sadist', 'masochist', 'slave' and 'master' are so threatening, so loaded with bad associations, that their use keeps feminists from exploring their feelings about pain and power and ecstasy". Although she sees this, she ignores the questions that she raises, which at the end of her article are still crying out to be answered.

If we could include in this article some examples of the SM pictures and drawings in hard-core porn that pervade the lucrative under-the-counter market, we could instantly demonstrate our point. But this, of course, would be 'obscene' legally. Some WAVAW friends were sent, anonymously, a small book (£5 worth) called Couleur Sang. We all had great difficulty reading it, steeling ourselves to look at the pictures. Each page of 'story' has an accompanying drawing; the 'story', of course, is about a young girl and her 'wicked' uncle. The idea of a man getting an erotic buzz from this stuff made it ten times worse, and even more incredible.

Here is a sample of the text:

"When she woke up, she was tied to a strange cross and prepared for a ceremony. Her uncle was standing in front of her, waiting silently. He smiled. He began speaking softly to her while stroking her bosoms and pubis. Then, he took a needle and strong thread to sew her vagina.

"I wanna die", she uttered.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Don't be silly!" he said and he pricked her inner lips.

That torture was nothing compared with all that she had been enduring for weeks and months. It was the symbol of her end and she was convinced death would follow.

"I'm gonna die," she muttered.

Her uncle sneered. "You're very strong, my dear! Human beings are very strong and one can't die because of sufferings!"

After having sewn the sex, he began sewing the bosoms together. He acted with a calm certainty without shivering. His hands were soft and only the needle marked the skin. Blood dropped a little. Caroline was no longer Caroline."

The drawing opposite this page illustrates the description. The girl also has pins stuck into both nipples, ropes bind her legs, clamps hold her arms. The man is looking at his handiwork, his hand on his chin, a smirk on his face.

Actually seeing this terrible stuff is more shocking and upsetting than reading about it. Any feminists who want to campaign against porn, against any violence against women, have got to look at hard-core porn to see what everything else is leading to.

But, even then, we still have our own battles with our own minds. Many feminists who have seen all this and understood what men are doing are worried sick about their own masochistic fantasies. Since many, many women experience these, how are we to deal with them? Are the therapists correct in saying: The only way to cope with fantasies, sadistic or masochistic, is to act them out, liberate them? Women buy this message in the hope that this will help them get rid of the nasties lurking in their minds, that open practise of the events in the subconscious will exorcise them, cleanse them away.

It's not true and it doesn't work. Who ever suggested that whites rid themselves of racism by going out and beating up somebody black? Acting out SM fantasies serves to reinforce them, if anything. What we have got to do is work out how to eliminate the poisons of the male super-culture, how to control them OUT, instead of being guilt-tripped by old Sexual Revolution notions of 'repression'. For that we need to be able to talk honestly in small groups and exchange ideas, with a background understanding of what male supremacy is putting over on us.

Lal Coveney - after discussions with women in Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group and the Patriarchy Study Group, with special thanks to Sandra McNeil.

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1. Stoltenberg et al, "Forum on Sado-Masochism" in Lavender Culture, Karla Jay & Allen Young (eds.), Jove/HBJ Books 1978
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SEX AND THE EXPERTS

NOTES

1. Many of the ideas in this paper emerged from discussions in the Patriarchy study Group.

2. Useful (and readable) sources:

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Weinberg, M.S.(ed.) Sex Research - Studies from the Kinsey Institute. Oxford University Press.

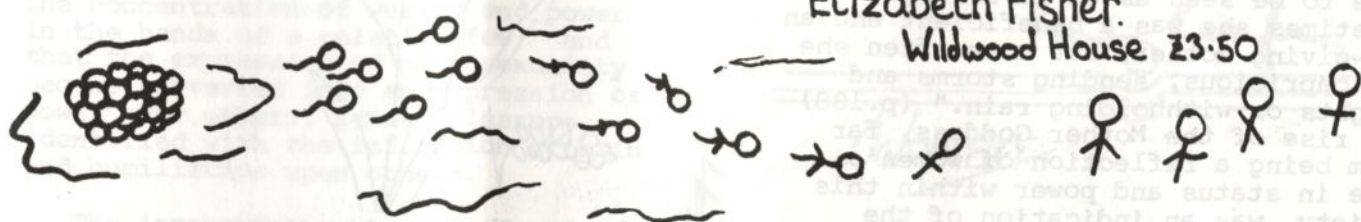
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Women's Creation -

Sexual Evolution and the shaping of society. by Elizabeth Fisher.

Wildwood House 23.50



Studies of the sexual behaviour of chimpanzees, monkeys and other primates in their natural environment show that female primates have control over their sexual activity with males. When they come into 'heat' the males do not fight each other for access to her; they wait to be chosen. The females do not necessarily choose the strongest or the most 'socially powerful' male; and they do not stick with one alone. They can exhaust several males in one session. Rape or sexual assault upon females by male primates is unknown (in their own environment).

Primates are our closest animal relations. Why then is sexual behaviour between human females and males different? Why are women seen as passive; males sexually active and aggressive? How come women's sexuality is controlled by men, rape and sexual assault forced upon us?

"Women's Creation" is about the development of early human society and addresses itself to the questions of why, when and how men established their power and control over women. Elizabeth Fisher draws upon research material from the fields of primatology, archaeology, anthropology, and ancient history, looking in particular at the evidence relating to the sexual relations between women and men.

She traces the development of early human society from what little remains of our prehistoric ancestors through to the rise of the first (as yet) known and recorded patriarchal class societies of the Near East of some 5000 years ago. She argues that it was the understanding of the male role in procreation, combined with the development of agriculture and animal breeding which gave rise to a concern about 'fertility' (later to be associated with productivity) which in turn led to the sexual subordination of women and the rise of male dominated hierarchies.

It took a long time - many thousands of years - before human beings understood the relationship between men, sex and human reproduction, she argues. Early human society was made up of small groups of people related to each other through their mother and her female relatives. They lived off the land, gathering roots and fruits; their diet was supplemented by hunting and eating animals. Women, responsible for most of the food gathering, provided most of the food. They ranged over large areas of land during the course of a year, building up detailed knowledge of the plants and the animals they shared the land with. Sexual activity for people then was "an erotic pastime" unconnected with childbirth; women had children because women had children, like plants had flowers, birds laid eggs and trees had fruit. It was a natural occurrence. Even if women did begin to form ideas about the relationship between sex with men and pregnancy, such ideas had no social meaning within this kind of society. There was no property to pass on, no work which required intensive labour. Children were valued as new individuals, important for the continuation of the group as a whole, not for the future of any one individual.

It was with the development of agriculture and animal herding and breeding, E.F. argues, that notions of 'fertility' and 'paternity' began to take on social meaning. As long as people relied on gathering and hunting for their food, natural phenomena like droughts and plant disease had no drastic effect upon them - they could move to another source of food. Once people began to depend upon agriculture for their primary source of food, however, they began to be much more vulnerable to these things. A drought or blight could wipe out a large portion of their annual food supply. People began to think about ways of controlling nature - the weather and the fertility of the plants and land - in order to



guarantee good harvests. Agriculture developed first in the Near East about 8,000/9,000 years ago, in the areas now known as Turkey, Iran, Iraq and further east. It is here that the first evidence of mother goddess worship and fertility rituals are found. "Nature was personified and came to be seen as an adversary. Sometimes she was a beneficent and an all-giving mother, but more often she was capricious, sending storms and blights or withholding rain." (p.188) The rise of the Mother Goddess, far from being a reflection of women's rise in status and power within this society, was an indication of the beginning of our decline.



For the concern about fertility, first thought of in relation to the land, soon became related to women, too. Agriculture is more labour-intensive than gathering and hunting. At certain times of the year, especially harvest time, a great deal of labour is needed to bring in all the available food within a few weeks. Children began to take on an economic importance, as a source of additional labour. The more children a clan had the more labour there was available to sow and harvest the crops. The increase in population associated with the development of agriculture, E.F. suggests, was not the cause of the intensification of cultivation practices, but one of the results of it. Population levels during the gathering and hunting period remained stable over many thousands of years; women exercised control over their reproductive capacity in such a way as to keep their population in balance with nature. It was with the development of agriculture that the social value put upon women's capacity to reproduce switched from respect for the act itself, to the product - children. Women began to take on a new importance as child-bearers - and 'society' (not necessarily men only at this stage) began to take an interest in and exercise influence over, a woman's childbearing potential.

An agricultural society does not necessarily make the connection between males and reproduction. On the face of it, the processes of plant reproduction appear to bear no relation to animal/human reproduction.

It was with the development of animal herding that the male role in procreation began to be understood, although again it needed a specific economic context for this to have social meaning. Where this existed, deliberate animal breeding was the next step, most males being killed off for food, the healthiest being kept for impregnating the

females. Sheep and goats were the first animals to be herded and bred in this way. With the domestication of cattle a further development occurs, that of castration of males to provide docile oxen for pulling heavy loads. The introduction of the oxen-pulled plough allowed the greater intensification of cultivation practices, including irrigation. This also meant that the fertility of the land became exhausted more quickly, making concern with fertility and productivity even more important within the society. It is with the cattle breeding society that the bull emerges as a symbol of fertility - male fertility. Male semen is likened to seeds: "life-giving semen, life-giving seed" (from a Sumerian hymn of about 2000 BC). The female becomes identified with fallow land waiting for the male to plough and fertilise her. The active male/passive female dichotomy emerges. Sex, once the 'erotic pastime' now becomes exclusively linked with procreation.

Why did women allow this to happen? How did men impose this form of sexuality upon them? E.F. does not go into how the social changes were made, how the matrilineal clan broke down into the patriarchal family, how surplus food/animals (wealth) ceased to be the property of the whole clan and became the property of men. Perhaps the evidence no longer exists, scanty as the records are of the period she is looking at - the societies of the Near East from about 4000 BC to 2000 BC where these agricultural and animal breeding techniques first came into use together. But she does outline the economic and psychological dynamics which led to these changes. She indicates that the expansionist tendencies within the agricultural/animal breeding societies led to the need for more land and for more labour; that these needs were met by taking land from surrounding gathering and hunting peoples, and taking the people themselves into slavery to provide labour; that the techniques used on animals were transferred to use upon fellow human beings

- the castration of male slaves, the utilisation of slave women, and ultimately women of their own society, for breeding; that the necessities of war - to expand and protect - led to or perhaps re-inforced hierarchy and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a relative few; and that the expression of male sexuality became perverted into an expression of power over others, sexual pleasure identified with the infliction of pain and humiliation upon others.

The increasing subordination of women, both sexually and socially, is however reflected in the changing face of the Goddess during this period. The Mother Goddess, originally seen as creating life by herself, becomes paired with a male consort by whom she bears children; later her autonomy is further eroded, becoming the daughter of one male god and the servant of another. Her ambiguous nature, once associated with power over fertility, now becomes linked specifically with sex: loyal virgin/traacherous whore.

"In the thrid millenium Nammu and other mother goddesses were giving place to Inanna, the goddess of fertility through sexual intercourse. In cylinder seals of the period the fertility goddess is on top in depictions of ritual mating. Later representations show her facing her consort; finally she is dominated by him.....The creating goddess is reduced; Nammu - "she who gave birth to heaven and earth" - becomes the housekeeper of Enlil (a male god), Ninhursag a mere wet nurse. Inanna-Ishtar remains, but the ambivalence of need-resentment is always present and ever stronger" (p298)

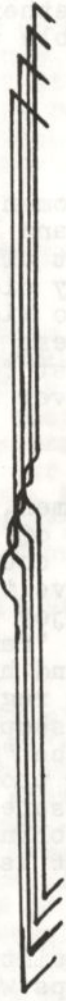
The economic and cultural roots of Western society as we know it today, she argues, are to be found here, transmitted to us via Judaism and Christianity. She reminds us, however, that relative to the whole history of humankind, the period of male domination is still quite short even in those areas where it first emerged.

This brief summary of E.F.'s ideas doesn't do justice to the complexity of her argument. Throughout the book she relates changes in the development of human society with contemporary ideas about the nature of human sexuality and its practice. This means that, although there is a mass of information and research material in the book, the reader does not get bogged down in it, for the implications of the data are constantly

brought out and discussed. This is a fascinating and readable book which should provide lots of ideas for the continuing discussion of the relationship between patriarchy and class and the strategies for the abolition of both.

Penny Kempf.

Woman



I could have been a woman
 Such a woman
 my centre could have been
 my great uterus
 not my poor head & my cystic
 ovaries
 too many little tablets,
 books,
 fathers, jobs, cocks
 inserted into my anaesthetised
 body
 too many wrong moves
 when there was no right way
 I could have had children
 and kept alive, and friends
 who knew my body
 Instead I curl up like a clenched
 fist
 defy them to make me happy
 carry my breasts to meaningless
 challenge
 loose my wasted children
 to the sewer.

Alison
 Edinburgh.

ALL YOU NEVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SEX..... BUT WERE FORCED TO LEARN

In December a sex-shop opened on Chapeltown Road, Leeds. Shops line the road on both sides, it's near a crossroads, the local nursery and adventure playground. There's no window display of porn, but mags are listed on the white perspex in large red letters, together with "Adult Books", "Marital Aids" and a lit up sign, "Sex Shop". Impossible to miss, in fact.

Why fight sex-shops ?

Because they have nothing to do with women's self-defined sexuality and everything to do with our degradation and humiliation in our own eyes and those of men. The porn they sell is not "liberating", it reduces us to sex objects, not our whole bodies even-many pictures just show our torsos, tits 'n cunt. No heads to think with, legs to kick, feet to run away- just the bits men want to fondle and fuck (unless they're foot or mouth fetishists of course.....) Women in porn mags exist for them, eternally open and available, ready to be screwed, done over and when they're finished, used to wipe their bums.

Most porn features violence towards women, usually by men. Some is openly sado-masochistic, that is, men getting off on hurting women, often pretty badly, the woman looks agonised but of course she must be "pretending" and loving it (we're really meant to believe that? that a 10-year-old girl undergoing anal rape would secretly enjoy the experience, and her tears are all part of the fun?) By being sold in "family" newsagents, post offices and now these unpleasantly sanitised and hygienic-looking sex shops in residential areas, what was previously regarded as sordid and nasty enters our everyday lives- and our beds. Sex shops help make our degradation respectable, especilly by playing on the "marital aids" angle. Few women can really believe that their marriage problems can be solved by nobbly durex or the Kama Sutra - but the pressure to try is on them - it must be their fault, the marriage must be crumbling because they aren't sexual enough - sexual as defined by men, that is.

Faced by these pressures, women feel guilty if we don't feel sexual, it helps to push us into sex and/or relationships we wouldn't otherwise want or miss; and go along with a lot of "sex games" that don't appeal at all, often sado-masochistic. Sex shops do a brisk trade in sex therapy manuals. Sex therapy is very much on the increase and promoted by the Marriage Guidance Council, agony columns in women's magazines and some women-only sex education courses. For instance, the December '80 issue of Cosmopolitan carried an article on "The Sexual Revolution", where Eileen's story is told. Eileen's marriage was on the rocks ; married at 20 knowing practically nothing about her body, sex had never been enjoyable to her, and she would tell girlfriends that Tom was "too rough in bed". Their sex life dwindled and finally he moved out; panicked, she begged him to return, what could she do to persuade him? Improve sexually, he demanded. So she enrolled on the course.

"New I know some of the basics about sex, like how my body works and how his works, I've come out of the Dark Ages. I now know how to tell Tom to be more gentle, I never tell him in bed; it's better done over dinner some night when we're alone. And he's encouraged to tell me some things in return, which has a renewing effect on our relationship.

Sometimes, I even initiate sex, which makes Tom feel good about himself. I'm just sorry I wasted so much time being stupid and stubborn." Immediately after this, a psychiatrist is quoted;

"Right now, it's important to get women to take equal responsibility for their sex lives and to stop putting all the blame on their men."

I find this horrific. Yes, we must reclaim our bodies, learn about ourselves: but women's liberation does NOT consist of teaching women to be more effective sexual athletes to catch and keep a man, let alone discovering non-ego-bruising ways of hinting to him that he's HURTING you; and learning orgasm, no doubt aided by masochistic fantasies we're told are "valve free", will NEVER our self-defined sexuality make.

Sex shops and the porn they purvey are promoted by men for men and for the financial gain of male-dominated concerns. While women remain financially and legally discriminated against, our protests curbed by the ever-present possibility of male violence, there will always be models for porn, but this is no more women's free choice than prostitution, wifehood, heterosexuality, or the badly paid boredom of the production line.

"But sex shops are an outlet for male sexuality. Without them there'd be more rapes and sex crimes."

A common reaction from women in local shops. They hate porn, but believe the liberal line - for which there's no statistical justification. Porn encourages men to see us as bits of meat and treat us accordingly - and the more socially acceptable it becomes, the less we dare complain, for fear of coming over as petty or prudish. We've to laugh at flashers now, feel sorry for child molesters (even support their "right" to maul our 8-year-olds for goddess-sake), our real anger, fear and disgust gets buried. Rape goes on, but is no longer defined as rape. Sex shops divide women into the "prudish" (who object) and the "liberated" (who don't). And who gains from our division?

What does it say about male sexuality if it needs this "outlet", anyway? Pretty perverted?

PROTEST

A mixed community group called the first picket. From varied, and in some cases dubious, motives. Some who joined the picket, including a prominent local councillor, want the sex shop removed to the town centre. (So he can visit it without embarrassment?). But we don't want a Leeds Soho. Others are concerned for the image of, and life in, Chapeltown, already branded as a "red light" area: fair enough, but analysis can go deeper. Others again seem to be protesting because sex shops are big capitalist business with mafia connections. The willingness of the firm's directors to give their names, and the public nature of the enterprise, is another example of how acceptable it's become: organised degradation and exploitation of women has always paid, but been carried out furtively and illicitly: now, anyone can invest openly. However, the "fight it because it's capitalist" analysis rather misses the point; we could equally be picketing Tesco's. The degradation of women is central to sex shops, not a by-product.

The first picket included placards with slogans some women disliked intensely, e.g. "More sex, no sexploitation." More sex for who, on whose terms? Calls for more sex at present mean more male-defined sex; are likely to make women feel as pressured to leap about in bed as do porn mags and sex manuals. "Any kind of sex is fun, but sexism is fatal". Any Kind of sex?? Rape? Bestiality? Necrophilia? Wife-swapping? Fun for who? Always?

Even if it's consenting, is this all sex is? Sex is not a thing, it's an expression of a relationship between (usually) two people. As such it cannot but reflect the relationship they have outside the bedroom. In a society where power relations between the sexes are institutionalised, can this be broken down by individual couples in the bedroom, even if they want to? And usually, the man doesn't: no oppressing group gives up its power voluntarily, nor can it

Which raises the issue of how men can campaign against sex shops, porn, and violence against women, even if they are doing from the purest pro-woman anti-sexist motives, with no taint of bandwagoning on the above issues, not to speak

of political gain and/or feminist approval. Women want to organise autonomously, fight what oppresses us in our own way and on our own terms. We will not be co-opted by male lefties and told that if we live out of the area, for instance, our presence on the picket would be "intervention". Women "intervening" in our own struggle??

I have to say here that these are my views and those of some, but not all, of the women I know. Personally I cannot stand on a picket on such an issue with men I know to be anti-feminist, woman-hating; men who benefit from our oppression and degradation by porn- and all men do, like it or not. I don't want knights on white chargers fighting my battles and getting the credit. Women should close that sex shop, and be seen to do so. Men always get more credit and attention for taking up women's causes and women's roles than we do. Far from equalising matters such actions increase their power. If men really want to help they can, but not publicly; let them carry out anonymous guerilla actions on sex shops - take risks without credit. Support us financially and when we ask. Leeds Women Against Violence Against Women has asked four separate so-called anti-sexist men to ask for and buy under-the-counter sex shop porn, so we'll know what's on sale and where to protest about what. (We've offered to pay, too). Whinges of "It's a heavy thing to do" have resulted and only one man has so far bought porn. Other men who have helped, usefully, in actions, have complained afterwards of being "used"- despite endless concern and fuss from us about their safety.

A few more objections to sex shop protest

- 1) Protests increase trade. This can happen. But not protesting has yet to bankrupt a sex shop. And protesting raises women's consciousness, spreads our message.
 - 2) It's censorship. Porn incites sexual hatred of women by men - and makes us hate ourselves, as women, too. It is not censorship to object to and remove degrading, dehumanising distortions of what women are - any more than it is censorship to ban racist material.
 - 3) It's prudish. None of us wants to be identified with Mary "whitehouse", who identifies the causes of "permissiveness" as working mothers, faithless wives, the breakdown of family life and religion, widespread homosexuality, etc., and concludes that women should return to our traditional roles - only thus can men be tamed and controlled. But lots of women have strong gut reactions against sex shops, and the Festival of Night is an obvious, public place to channel them into. Only by stating our feminism publicly can we provide an alternative. And a feminism that sees our liberation in being screwed by lots of men, or by one man in different positions, is not going to appeal to large numbers of women - not bring about any sort of liberation
- Anyway, I don't think Mrs. Whitehouse likes lesbians.

Action

Women in Barnsley have closed a sex shop, after 2 months of picketing, and other less legal actions. "Angry Women" in Leeds have so far set fire to 3 sex shops. Their press release, dated 2nd April '81, states that they "are protesting and fighting back against images portraying women as sexual conveniences for men to abuse, hurt and degrade. Pornography in films, magazines and sex-shops incites men to treat women as instruments solely for their use. It encourages rape, it increases men's power and control over women by humiliating and terrorising us. Porn is big money-making business based on the suffering of women.

"We will fight porn wherever it may be, whether in backstreets or on main roads. Its very existence is an insult to all women and as long as it is prevalent the streets will continue to be unsafe for women. We have resorted to illegal action as 10 years of legal activities and 100 years of feminist struggle has had no effect whatsoever on the pornography issue. We hope that these arson

attacks are the start of a more active protest by women against all forms of pornography."

Women have been looking at porn, both "soft" and "hard core", in women's liberation groups, sharing our feelings of disgust and anger, and raising the consciousness we need to fight it.

Al Garthwaite, from discussion and consciousness raising with revolutionary and other feminists in Leeds, with Women Against Violence Against Women, and women in the Patriarchy Study Group.

Notes

1. Swiney, Francis: 'The sons of Belial' and other essays on the social evel' p.29
2. Swiney, Francis: 'The Bar of Isis' p. 43
3. Hamilton, Cicely: Marriage as a Trade. London, Chapman and Hall 1909, p.36
4. Freewoman, November 30, 1911 p.31
5. Pankhurst, Christabel: Plain facts about a great evel. 1913. p.98
6. Hamilton, op. cit. p.37
7. Ibid p. 252
8. Ibid p. 278
9. Freewoman, 8 August 1912 p. 234
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid 23 November 1911
12. Ibid 15 February 1912 p. 252
13. Ibid 7 March 1912

All sources are available in the Fawcett Library, City of London Polytechnic, Old Castle Street, London E.1.



How patriarchal definitions... continued from page 35.

encouraged to perceive female sexuality as passive and male sexuality as active. We are encouraged to see penetration of the female as a cultural norm for sexual behaviour. Women suffer unbelievably as a result of male definitions which lead to abuses like clitoridectomy, infibulation imposed psychic frigidity, unwanted pregnancies, foot binding etc. etc. (See Minority Rights Group Report, No. 47) Female Circumcision is not just an aberration of the Moslem world, although in the name of Allah millions of women are mutilated. It has been practiced by Jews, Christians - Protestants and Catholics, and by various patriarchal tribal religions all over the world. Throughout the patriarchal world female eroticism is seen as such a powerful force that it must be subdued by vicious means. Female circumcision represents male desire to completely negate our sexuality by excising our erotic organs - the clitoris, the labia minora and in the case of infibulation, the labia majora as well. The fact that most of the operations are now carried out by women 'midwives' merely illustrates patriarchal power to divide women over their sexuality. Clitoridectomy was practiced in the western world until about fifty years ago. It has now been replaced by insidious psychic castration which drives women to psychiatrists and therapists who usually reinforce female sexual 'inadequacy', and now sometimes advise 'clitoridectomy' to 'remedy female frigidity'.

The patriarchal world everywhere shows antipathy towards lesbian relationships because they negate patriarchal definitions of female sexuality, encourage female bonding and female value systems. It is my opinion that other women are best able to fulfill our erotic needs, as women did in women-led societies where lesbian bonding was the source of female strength and power.

In the patriarchal world lesbian and heterosexual women are divided from each other sexually and psychically. Lesbian women listen to their sisters pay lipservice to a view of sexuality which they know is inauthentic and in the service of the phallic culture which seeks to oppress women. I sit listening to friends who, blinded by phallic power, describe male orgasms 'by the dozen', hoping by this observation I will think they are 'sexy women', I am only thinking how oppressed they are, noting that they never mention their own sexual responses, their own orgasms, noticing how they fear being thought a 'lesbian'.

So patriarchy has succeeded in dividing us psychically through undermining our sexuality. I feel that most of the disputes flying around at the present time are patriarchal disputes and not born of authentic female consciousness. Disputes and conflicts waste female energy which could be channelled into female strengths. We are seeking new solutions and female sexual bonding is crucial to the formation of new powers and strengths which will lead hopefully to new solutions.

Some ideas from my book - Sex Politics and the Matriarchal Woman
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