

SEX AS POWER: STORIES AND MEMORIES

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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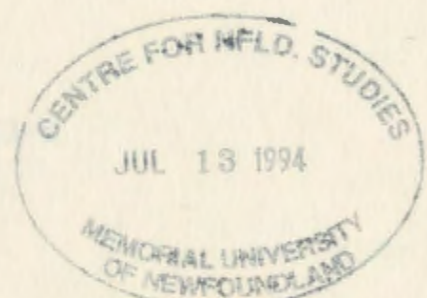
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SEX AS POWER: STORIES AND MEMORIES

by
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Master of Arts

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St. John's

Newfoundland

"... talk of sexuality is only rhetoric if it doesn't originate and flow from an examination of the specific ... of how we actually live out our sexuality ..."

Dorothy Allison in
Pleasure and Danger

"There is no freedom in the journal. It is an accurate record of the prisoner."

Jane Rule in
Desert of the Heart

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Abstract

The following thesis, entitled Sex As Power: Stories and Memories, is a journal consisting of essays, stories and letters. A response to male terms of reference, it is an exploration of heterosexuality as an institution of power and an examination of the social construction of masculinity, femininity, and sexual discourse. It is based on the premise that sexuality is constructed and maintained by and for a male-dominated social structure and that it is through sexuality that men retain their power. Experiences of sex as power are described and discussed by women, from their own individual points of view as well as from the perspective of radical feminism. It represents an attempt to address the phallocracy; to record women's words and experiences; to employ a feminist methodology; to place the subjective in the realm of the political and authoritative; and, to work towards defining women's sexuality by questioning the one that has always taken precedence - men's sexuality, heterosexuality.

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I INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Entry 1: Writing as a Woman

This is not a journal on women. It is a journal for women, for feminism. It represents a space for myself and some others to describe in our own "uncensored" words the reality of what it is to be a woman - to be the product of an oppressive relation between two groups. To write on women, or about women, would have entailed objectifying myself and my own experiences, as well as those of the others. How could I possibly have written in the third person, which is necessary when one is writing about something, as if I somehow stood outside of it all? I have to write as a member of this oppressed group called women.

But why a journal? Journals are usually private, not meant for anyone other than the writer - usually a way to keep an account of one's life honestly, sometimes the only means to vent one's hidden thoughts without hurting others, without getting oneself in trouble. They are read usually only by the writer and secretly, underhandedly, by someone who fears that they may be the subject of these private written thoughts. Well, I have decided to allow the subject to hear the other side. Pun intended. Irigaray asks:

How can [women] free themselves from their expropriation within patriarchal culture? What questions should they address to its discourse? ... How can they "put" these questions so that they will not be once more "repressed", "censored"? But also how can

they speak (as) women? By going back through the dominant discourse. By interrogating men's "mastery". By speaking to women. And among women. Can this speaking (as women) be written? How? ... Why not leave some of them [the questions and answers] in their own words? In their immediate expression? In their own language?¹

How else could I have put some of my self in this work without being asked to repress it, censor it, edit it, polish it, and refine it, without leaving a space - through the journal - to speak as myself, as a woman, in my own language. This language could include streams of consciousness, anger, cynicism, sarcasm, humor, sorrow - none of which belongs to the traditional sociological thesis which is, above all, object(ive).

Entry 2: Fears and Stumbling Blocks

For the past two years I have been afraid to write. I could research the "topic", read about it, live it, remember it, and recognize it when it was being lived by others. But write about it? No. There were various reasons for this. This work was a process which involved my own life, the lives of women around me and of women I did not know but with whom I identified. In other words, the process of my work shifted in accordance with the process of my life. It was a process which kept growing more and more complicated. As I read, certain works clicked with me - triggering memories, realizations, and many affirmatives - yes, I'd think, you are writing

about me and all the generations of women that I know. So, I'd read some more - as if I had to keep validating what I already knew to be true. Because everything that I chose to read systematically destroyed the supposed truths that everyone usually takes for granted and accepts as inevitable, as the nature of things.² This created the fear that anything that I would write would not be taken seriously and that in order for it to be taken seriously, it would have to be perfect - so much so that it would be indisputable. This is a very real fear for women, for members of an oppressed group, for those "unfit for the seriousness of symbolic rules."³ When has women's discourse ever been taken seriously? For example, during the summer, a professor for whom I was working noticed that I was reading Dworkin's Intercourse. He picked it up, briefly scanned it, and laughed - commenting that recent feminist theory and research is purposeless and self-serving. My reaction was three-fold. Firstly, what right did he have, as a man, to make such a comment; secondly, how could anyone snicker at Andrea Dworkin; and, thirdly, isn't a feminism that serves the self a positive development? After all, how much has been written that has actually been for women? For our/selves? That serves our/ selves? Of course, this is what he saw as wrong with Dworkin - that she served her/self rather than the patriarch (*like a good girl should*).

I also feared the criticism that comes with not being taken seriously - of it being said that this is nothing but

feminist rhetoric, devoid of analysis and unapplicable to real life where there is more than sex to complain about. Or that there is no methodology, no adequate sample base and that because of this nothing can be said or has been said. I tried doing it the other way. I had constructed a questionnaire and would have had some "hard" data if I had distributed it to the right number of women, randomly selected. But instead I stopped working. This confused me. How could I do this type of research without objectifying women? A questionnaire inevitably turns any "subject" into a faceless object with anonymous experiences that mean nothing until they are coded and counted. One woman's word has no validity. Is this feminist research? - *circle the answer that most resembles how you feel.*

Also, I wanted to put myself - as a woman - into the text and thus into the analysis. How could I separate myself from the women who shared their lives with me? How could I analyze their lives and not my own? But, more importantly, how could I include myself? This was (and is) probably the greatest stumbling block - in order to write this thesis I have had to look inward. I have always translated - paraphrased the works of others in a logical order, developed an argument, and called it my own. But for this thesis I wanted to do more than translate. I wanted to include my own voice, and the voices of the women with whom I talked - in their original form, untranslated.⁴ Something that would not have been possible in quantitative research.

Entry 3: The Process of Deciding What to Write

Two years ago, I was assigned to read Donna Lee Davis' Blood and Nerves for a graduate course on family conflict. Each student was to read a Newfoundland ethnography in order to see if any of the variables which are linked to family violence were evident in these depictions of family life in Newfoundland. Stating that "people [in Grey Rock Harbour] seem to have a robust, healthy enjoyment of sex, although it is considered a private affair between husband and wife",⁵ Davis, paradoxically, went on to describe techniques that women use to sexually avoid their husbands. So that they would not become pregnant, women would "sleep with the baby on the bed, not go to bed with [their] husband (fishermen retire early, as they get up at 2:00 to 4:00 a.m.), [or] claim sickness."⁶ To make matters worse in terms of my own confusion, later in the book Davis suggests that marital relationships in Grey Rock Harbour are based not only on economics, but on affection, romantic love, honesty, and a commitment to living together and raising a family. The issue of employing such covert methods of birth control in such an honest, romantic marriage led me, at the time, to ask such questions as: Do the women of Grey Rock Harbour fear saying "no" to their husbands? Are they in the position to refuse their husband's sexual advances? If not, what happens when techniques to avoid their husbands fail? Do their husbands

wait for their consent? And if they do consent, is it an act of mutual desire or one of wifely duty? To put it mildly, Davis' innocuous insights began to obsess me. After being warned that I'd probably come up empty-handed in my search for literature on marital rape, I managed to write a brief literature review. The material, however, was well hidden - there was no subject heading for marital rape either in the card catalogues or on microfiche and it wasn't even sub-headed under the general categories of rape, domestic violence, or violence against women. Is the rape of women in their relationships with men a non-issue or is it so normal it doesn't warrant a "heading"? After reading Davis and some other ethnographies, it occurred to me that if one viewed marital rape as a private source of control and power for men, then it might be a means through which Newfoundland husbands can be "men" in an oppressive economy and in a culture which values, on the one hand, self-control, stoicism and equalitarianism, and on the other, male dominance.

The studies on marital rape that I reviewed contained vivid depictions of very violent rapes - rapes that were accompanied by severe battering that appeared to be committed by very demented men. As in a successful rape trial, the survivors of this violence had bruises, scars, and lengthy hospital records that "proved" that they had indeed been violated and victimized. Hard evidence equals hard data. Their rapes could be defined, described, and categorized -

they were rapes that could be empirically determined.

When I suggested that I might do a study of marital rape as a thesis, I was indirectly advised against it. The issue of how I would define marital rape was considered problematic. In License to Rape, Finklehor and Yllo describe varying degrees of coercion. They define social or normative coercion as the pressure wives feel to submit to sex with their husbands out of a sense of duty rather than desire. To illustrate what they meant by social/normative coercion they quoted one of the women from their study as follows: "With my husband I sometimes feel obligated because I'm his wife and, after all, he does pay for everything."⁷ When I included this in my literature review, the following comment was written in the margin of my paper: "With this definition of 'rape', levels would be very high. Isn't this an imposed definition?" *(It could be said that this thesis was written to deal with the question of why such a comment was written.)* However, appearing in the margin next to Finklehor's and Yllo's observation that it is difficult to tell what constitutes rape when coercion other than physical is involved -their reasoning for researching only those women who were raped under threatened or physical coercion - was a huge "yes" and several exclamation marks. Approval. My interpretation of this was as follows: if one researched the rapes that were considered normal or sociably acceptable and defined them as rape, then it might turn out

that every woman in a heterosexual relationship has been or will be raped *and we can't say that ...*

Now here comes the aforementioned angry stream of consciousness. *Isn't it fucking incredible that there would even exist a definition of coercion which is "normative" or "social" and that this definition describes a "type" of rape which occurs in women's relationships with men? Why is it difficult to tell what constitutes rape when coercion other than physical is involved? Why not just talk to women? We might not all call it rape but I'm sure that women who are having sex out of a sense of obligation or duty do not like it, believe it is wrong, and are probably fed up. Is it important that we all do not call it rape? - there's something very wrong going on.* To hell with definition and with what is not easily empirically determined. Violent rape doesn't happen in a void - it isn't an extraordinary, isolated act. There appears to be a continuum of coercive sexual acts. Sex arising from a sense of obligation and sex arising from violence both indicate a power imbalance. But the former occurs at a socially acceptable level of coercion while the latter does not. Maybe violent rape is merely an extreme, exaggerated version of normal heterosexual sex. Maybe the violent rapist is not demented at all - maybe he is just a man whose masculinity is a little too normal, a little too intact. Maybe all heterosexual sex is coercive since it always occurs between unequals. Maybe this is why researchers systematically omit the rapes which society accepts under the pretense of difficulty with empirical definition - *because it has to remain hidden.*

Needing insight into the above issues, I read as much feminist literature on female sexuality - specifically heterosexuality - as I could grasp. When I wrote a paper on the patriarchal construction of female sexuality for a feminist theory course, I was searching for the context in which marital rape could take place - the context in which only its extreme forms are recognized. Out of all of the theory, radical feminism was the most appealing. It made sense. Feminists such as Andrea Dworkin, Catherine MacKinnon, Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous managed to reach me. I could identify with their writings both on a personal and academic level. I became introspective and took another hard look at my own past heterosexual experiences. I started to observe and listen more carefully to what women around me were saying. I remembered the words and stories of women from my past. I concluded that women, in this society, are defined as sexual and that we are primarily oppressed through a sexuality defined by men.

Does one woman exist who has not experienced sexual coercion at some level? What if rape were defined as follows: "any time sexual intercourse occurs when it has not been initiated by the woman, out of her own genuine affection and desire?"⁸ Then, as my professor stated two years ago, "rape levels would be very high." Yes. Every woman could claim that she was raped, coerced, had sex for a reason other than for her own pleasure. If this definition were accepted, what

chaos it would cause! Picture the following statement appearing in a sociological journal: When asked if they had ever been raped, 100% of the women surveyed stated yes. Sex with men might very well be considered dangerous - as if it isn't already - and 100% of all women, realizing that they are not alone in their experiences, might decide to remove themselves from the heterosexual market place.

As it stands now only those rapes that are horribly, spectacularly violent receive attention, publicity, and possibly - but not probably - a guilty verdict. Who would take seriously the insidious rapes, that unstated coercive element - the power of one over an other - that turns no into yes? He entered me when I was asleep; I had sex with him to avoid an argument; he takes me, he doesn't make love to me; he makes me feel obligated to have sex. Is this focus on the violent and the horrible a tactic, a cover-up? Let's make women feel lucky that they're not raped like this. How many times have I heard a woman, including myself, say that it could be worse?

II THEORIZING SEX

THEORIZING SEX

Entry 4: The Patriarchal Construction of Female Sexuality

Essentially, this entry describes a theoretical perspective with which I, as a woman, can identify - I see it as representing the "why" of my truth, reality, and life as an other. Itself a description, it outlines a social system which is phallocratic; it describes a sexuality which is constructed according to phallocratic principles, and; it depicts a relationship between sexuality and power that is so intense that the two are synonymous - within the phallocratic context, sexuality and power are inseparable.

Politicizing Foucault

For years now, radical lesbian feminists have identified sexuality as the primary site of our oppression. Then there was Michel Foucault and discursive analysis and the sex-as-power claim suddenly didn't appear quite so rhetorical. Although Foucault applies no feminist analysis, he is useful in that like radical feminists, he identifies sexuality as the object of his analysis. (Note that I am applying Foucault to radical feminism and not vice versa. I believe he adds some interesting insight to an already extensive body of theory. He doesn't replace it.) And, because he is a member of the privileged sex, he adds some clout to what we have lived and

recognized - that is, that sexuality is constructed and deployed as an instrument of control. This, essentially, is what the following theoretical discussion will address - our relation to phallocratic power through sexuality. For Foucault, however, phallocracy is not an issue. Actually, he is very vague when it comes to power - it is here, there, everywhere. "It remains a mystery who has constructed the sexual order"⁹ and whose interests it serves. A mystery which radical feminism can solve.

Sexual Discourse As Power

In the History of Sexuality, Vol. I, Foucault explores "the way sex is put into discourse"¹⁰ and locates the form that power takes over pleasure. According to Foucault, sex was transformed into discourse and deployed as an instrument of control by institutions capable of exercising power. In the Foucaultian context, the term "discourse" refers to a system of language, objects, and practices. "It implies a practice both of speech and action; who it asks, speaks on a particular object or event and when, where, and how?"¹¹ For Foucault then, sexuality is not a stable entity. It exists only within discourse and changes in accordance with social conditions.

Beginning with the Catholic rituals of confession in the 17th century and proceeding to public concern in the 19th

century with population, birth control, legitimacy and marriage, to the advent of centers producing actual discourse on sex such as medicine, psychiatry and criminal justice, sexual discourse has been made to proliferate. Institutions of and in power have duped the Western population into loving sex, desiring more knowledge about it, and believing that knowledge about the truth of sex is both privileged and desirable. According to Foucault, this encourages individuals to confess and talk endlessly about their sex lives which, in turn, creates a need for experts to whom people can talk and confess. These experts, who are really potent puppets of the powerful, can then inform the powerful of what the powerless are up to, thus enabling the powerful to survey and control its subjects - through their sex lives.¹² Hence, sexual discourse as control.

So what does all of this have to do with our oppression? If one examines the institutions to which Foucault constantly refers as the centers which produce discourse on sex - the Church, psychiatry, medicines, and the criminal justice system - one is struck by the fact that "those in the position to judge, compel, extract, question, punish, forgive, decipher, interpret, treat, and care have always been men" and that the majority "of those judged, compelled, questioned, punished, forgiven, interpreted, and treated have been women."¹³ Therefore, what has actually been incorporated into women's sexuality has been filtered through the perspective of the

male-in-power. According to Blier:

Between the power of the confessional (in the form of male authority) and the hegemonic control of the church over heresy (the sin of which witches were accused for their sexuality, intelligence, independence, or healing skills) women have been the class under surveillance and control for hundreds of years and always under penalty of death.¹⁴

Foucault claims that the proliferation of sexual discourse in the 18th and 19th centuries was directly related to imperialist expansionism, industrialization, and its consequence of urban overcrowding. "... one of the great techniques of power ... was the emergence of 'population' as an economic and political problem: population as wealth, population as manpower or labor capacity, population balanced between its own growth and the resources it commanded."¹⁵ Sexuality had to be transformed - through discourse - into politically and economically correct behavior. The emergence of a new social order, capitalism, called for the emergence of a "new" set of social imperatives. The future and fortune of the patriarchal capitalist state depended upon the extent to which it could control and make use of women's sexual conduct. "Bio - power" - the access of power to the body - was an essential element in the development of this state. It involved the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the population to economic processes. Making sex a political issue, it gave rise to surveillances, controls, orderings of space, and medical or psychological examinations and assessments.¹⁶

In the 18th century, four strategies emerged, the issues of which were to produce a sexuality that was both economically useful and politically conservative. Firstly, the dangerous sexual potential of children was "realized". By alerting parents and teachers of this "fact", and by making them fear that they themselves were at fault, "the entire media-sexual regime took hold of the family milieu."¹⁷ Secondly, procreative behavior became socialized, firstly politically, to be responsible to the social order and secondly, medically, with the advent of birth control. Thirdly, Foucault describes the "hysterization of women's bodies", a strategy which involved the production of a knowledge which analyzed the female body as "saturated with sexuality" and inherently pathological, for the purpose of discipline and control of families. This discourse produced such female sexualities as the "hysteric", the "nervous woman", the "frigid wife" and the "nymphomaniac". Although these behaviors may have existed prior to this period, it was the first time these behaviors were given sexual definitions. Types of women were created which, incidently, became the objects of scientific scrutiny.¹⁸ Women's bodies became subject to medical control - the most illustrative example of which would be pregnancy - a condition "assumed" to be pathological. Pregnancy, however, was removed from the domain of women's sexualities and "relegated to the family in which [pregnant women existed] solely for their forthcoming or

existing children."¹⁹ According to Ruth Blier, patriarchal culture named woman untamed nature and deployed sex as its method of socially controlling her. "... [and] the 'truth' that has been ritually extracted ... by those qualified to do so ... has remained insidiously the same: [women] have been deviant (from the patriarchal mode) and immature (unwilling to nurture without complaint)."²⁰

The fourth strategy of power Foucault describes, the "psychiatrization of perverse pleasures", is probably the most significant in terms of my own interests - heterosexuality as politically constructed and obligatory. Psychoanalysis intervened in the 19th century restructuring of the population by aligning sexually compatible individuals with the family system. As determined by clinical analysis, the sexual instinct was isolated as a separate biological instinct which could be affected. It was assigned a "normal" role and corrective technology could be sought to cure abnormalities, ie. sex became dangerous. Psychoanalysis defined the family, specifically the parent-child relationship, as the root of all sexuality thus anchoring and providing sexuality with a permanent support. It also ensured both the production and deployment of sexuality as family, parents and relatives become chief deployment agents. As the family became the cause of all perversities, it confessed and sought assistance. As "experts" intervened, the family was rendered surveyable and controllable.²¹

It became the responsibility of the individual to be "normal" as defined by the dominant discourses, ie. relations with the opposite sex inside of marriage. As marriage become the norm, it was the responsibility of "deviant" individuals - those individuals whose sexualities did not support the now predominant family structure - to speak out and confess. Foucault describes this 19th century phenomena as a "growth of perversions" - a discursive strategy securing and legitimating the parameters of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. A social hierarchy was thus formed with heterosexual monogamy becoming synonymous with morality and nature and sexual activity outside of this norm becoming direct offenses against it.²² New medical, educational and psychological norms created a growth of new sexual identities - the lesbian, the homosexual, the masturbating child, the hysterical woman, etc. According to Sandra Harding,

The creation of types of humans from a subset of their behaviors was a theoretical and political feat of conjoined science and politics, a successful attempt simultaneously to raise the status of science and to develop threat modes of social control for those who did not find congenial the modes of behavior and forms of personal expression desired by an emerging industrial capitalism.²³

Categories of the natural and normal and the unnatural and abnormal were produced discursively and functioned as mutually determining oppositions to normalize and to discipline: "Constantly defining and expanding categories of perversion and pleasure become the means by which the body and its

activities were increasingly harnessed to social objectives through the connection between sexual pleasure, identity and their discursive definition."²⁴

The deployment of sexuality is a network comprised of "... the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledge, the strengthening of controls and resistances"²⁵ Functioning through the regulation of sexuality, it marks out sites on which it may and may not appear. The discursive explosion of the 18th and 19th centuries created a centrifugal movement with respect to heterosexual monogamy as the nuclear family became privileged as a solution to the restructuring of the population. Obligatory heterosexual monogamy, not having to be spoken about because of its universality, became an internal standard against which individuals measured themselves. It became such a given, that any deviance which occurred within marriage was ignored so long as it took place within the institution. "The legitimate couple with its regular sexuality, had a right to more discretion."²⁶ According to Ros Coward, for example, "sexual satisfaction between the married partners would be positively encouraged, so much so that all sorts of violence against women might be condoned so long as the husband was seen to be receiving sexual satisfaction."²⁷ On the basis of their capacity to reproduce, women became subject to a social power relation in which they were subordinate. Women were controlled by the patriarchal state via the individual men to

whom they were married.

The created ideology which accompanied the "legitimate" couple was one of heterosexual dependency and one that "... acknowledged, permitted, and required men's unquestioning access to, ownership of, and authority over women's bodies in the service of the bodies and the minds of men."²⁸ Coward argues that heterosexual dependency as well as its associated sexual identities, secures the consistent subordination of women and fosters male power. Using the example of social policies which appear to be power-neutral or indifferent but which in fact "prefer certain forms of living", Coward contends that the social unit of "the heterosexually committed couple who are assumed to have children" has been constructed and maintained by state intervention and social policy since the 19th century. Far from being natural, people appear to voluntarily enter into the institution of heterosexuality, its structure and ideologies, because the sexual identities of women and men are discursively constructed as leading logically to it.²⁹ It appears to be the "natural" extension of our "natural" sexual emotional needs and activities when, in fact, the natural is constructed, rigidly maintained, and stringently enforced.

Women's subordination is secured because identity is constructed as sexual identity, and sexual identity is the mechanism by which men and women combine in a unit which subordinates women ... Because our culture privileges sexual identity as the truest part of our beings, we are secured voluntarily into [this] social unit ..."³⁰

Kaja Silverman employs Foucaultian discursive analysis³¹ in her discussion of The Story of O. According to Silverman, although human bodies exist prior to discourse, it is only through discourse that they become male or female - ie. that they acquire sexual identities. What is understood by the female subject as an "internal condition or essence" is really the meaning that her body has been given by external relationships. Woman is maintained solely by the discourses of the dominant symbolic order from which she is excluded. Silverman states that man, by virtue of his gender, has an active or speaking association with discourses. While woman is spoken subject - a nonparticipant in the "production of meaning which organizes her outside and inside" - man is both speaking and spoken subject. Automatically a candidate for any discursive fellowship, he is capable of both knowing and defining himself according to any particular discourse. According to Silverman, pornography makes obvious this distinction between the speaking male subject and the spoken female subject - one is always subordinate to the other. She argues that women are defined in terms of phallic meaning. The history of the female subject is: "... the territorialization and inscription of a body whose involuntary internalization of a corresponding set of desires facilitates its complex exploitation."³²

According to Frigga Haug et al., the sexual itself is the process that produces the insertion of women into and their

subordination within the dominant symbolic order. It is in the sexual domain that women are produced and in which they produce themselves in "slavegirlish subordination."³³ Although individuals are located within pre-given social structures, they voluntarily submit to their own subordination. Defined as subjectification, this is the process by which individuals work themselves into social structures they themselves do not consciously determine, but to which they subordinate themselves.³⁴ Under patriarchy women are attributed no desire of their own and are mere objects of male desire. However, the role of object is not a passive one - women constantly readjust their posture, appearance, and movement to conform and reinforce the status quo. This female participation in the reinforcement of women's subordinate status Haug defines as "slavegirlish behavior."³⁵

Haug contends that the body is the medium through which we are inserted into the prevailing social order and insecurity about our bodies secures submission to subjugation and to normality. Women's mode of socialization centers in the female body and female socialization takes place through women's insertion into the ordering of the sexual. For example, for women the biological meaning of being "fully developed" becomes "being adult" while for men, the development of sexual characteristics is only one step in the process of reaching adulthood and "becoming somebody". Haug argues that women participate in slavegirl behavior - regulating

their appearance to the desires of the masculine - because the competence that is demanded of women in the observance of rules is so elaborate that the effort and pleasure involved in attaining it conceal the subordinating character of the process. Women's proficiency in handling the rules allows them the security of acceptability and gives power and strength to individual women. However, it is these feelings of "success" through which sexual ordering, and the oppression within it, are reproduced.³⁶ In other words, the patriarchy allows women the pleasure of knowledge and acceptability but only in order to conceal that the knowledge from which they receive pleasure is that which makes them better sex objects.

According to Haug, the discourse of femininity is a discourse of exclusion.

The beauty norms we adapt places us in opposition to working women, old women, sick women, poor women, and to our own pleasures.³⁷

A socialization that proceeds via the body leads inevitably to isolation. Each and every woman confronts the reflection of her failings and abnormalities alone.³⁸

Patriarchal discourse on femininity is therefore a discourse that is very durable. By dividing women from women and by alienating women from themselves, it binds women to men and thus excludes them from power and the empowerment that often occurs when the goods get together.

Contrary to Foucault and Silverman, Haug argues that human beings are active subjects and not mere effects of the

dominant symbolic order. She suggests instead that the deployment of sexuality is an external ordering located within social relations and thus capable of transformation. To view women as effects or objects of the dominant order implies that there can never be resistance. And there often is. Accurately criticizing Foucault for portraying the deployment of sexuality as a necessary mode of socialization while foreclosing human self-determination as a potential form, Haug suggests instead that sexuality should be viewed as an ideology "through which individuals socialize themselves from top to bottom." If sexuality is in fact an ideology, then mobilization against the existing coercive socialization process is possible.³⁹

To summarize, sexuality is discursively constructed by institutions of and in power and deployed as an instrument of control through a number of strategies that assure both its production, in its present form, and its power. Although Foucault is reluctant to theorize as to who has constructed the social order and in whose interest it serves, it has been demonstrated (and will continue to be demonstrated) that it serves the interests of the patriarchal state. It is this state which defines and produces the dominant discourse on sex. If, as Silverman states, man is speaking subject in the production of discourse, then sexuality as defined by the dominant discourse is male. Sexuality can thus be said to be phallic - it is defined by and according to the presence or

absence of the phallus. And if, as Haug contends, the sexual itself is the process that produces the insertion of women into and their subordination within the dominant symbolic order, then this order can be defined as a phallocracy: an order that is upheld and maintained by phallic sexuality - a sexuality created by men, for men. Phallocracy is sustained through the institution of heterosexuality - an institution that ensures women's subordination and fosters male power. Heterosexual ideology ensures that people voluntarily enter into its structure by discursively constructing male and female sexual identities as naturally and logically leading to it. To have a sexual identity under phallocracy is to be socialized coercively and to socialize oneself unconsciously, in order to adhere to an ideology which ensures women's subordination.

... sex is the method of the individual and social control of women within patriarchal cultures ... the institutions and ideologies of heterosexuality are the primary force in the maintenance of patriarchal rule and the social, economic, and political subordination of women.⁴⁰

Defining/Describing the Phallic Order Via French Feminism

In attempting to reassert a matriarchal tradition and a woman-centered value system, the new French Feminists and their politics of "là difference" have provided an unprecedented critique of psychoanalytic theory and its chief Fathers

- Freud and Lacan. In the process of revealing the phallocentricity of male discourse on sexuality, they have provided invaluable insights into the character of the phallic order itself and have explored what it means to be woman under the reigning phallus.

According to Luce Irigaray, within the dominant symbolic order - the phallic order - woman's sex is not a sex. Sexuality is never defined with respect to any sex but the masculine. The clitoris is a "little penis" and the pleasure which is derived from it is immature and results in castration anxiety. The vagina, more valuable because of the "home it offers the male penis" cannot compare to the only sex organ of worth - the phallic organ. Rather, it is a "nonsex organ"; "a masculine sex organ turned inside out in order to caress itself"; "a hole, an envelope which surrounds and rubs the penis."⁴¹ Under phallocracy, sexuality is characterized by an absolute indifference to female sexuality⁴² - it is based on an economy of sameness. Within the masculine order, woman is what man is not - she is the negation, the inverse, the opposite, or the imitation (if she's a lesbian) of man. She lacks possession of the phallus and is defined through this lack. (Which is why the motivating factor behind the development of a normal woman is penis envy). But "... one sex and its lack, its atrophy, its negative, still does not add up to two."⁴³ Woman, therefore, does not have a sex (of her own). She must accept how the phallic order defines and appropriates

her sexual difference.⁴⁴ "That difference - masculine/feminine - has always operated "within" systems that are representative, self-representative, of the (masculine) subject." Therefore, any apparent existing differences between the masculine and feminine are male-defined and are over-articulated and stressed by the phallic order in order to compensate for, and perhaps conceal, its true operative sexual indifference.⁴⁵

Irigaray demonstrates the phallocentricity of the economy of sameness in her critique of psychoanalysis - the discourse of truth. According to Irigaray, because Freud describes reality as he sees it, his account of female sexuality is accurate.⁴⁶ The problem with Freud, however, is that he accepts this reality as a norm - he uses the masculine model as a standard without questioning the ideology that makes the masculine "The Standard". Psychoanalysis, therefore, perpetuates the monopoly the masculine sex has on value. It manifests "the presupposition of the scene of representation: the sexual indifference that subtends it assures its coherence and closure."⁴⁷ Irigaray contends that within the phallic order, the feminine is defined as both a "complement to the operation of male sexuality and ... as a negative image that provides male sexuality with an unfailingly phallic self-representation."⁴⁸ The feminine, therefore, has no specificity of its own and merely serves as a prop for and (flattering) mirror of the masculine. Thus, for example, in the

following Freudian-type statements, "woman herself is never at issue":

... the desire to love a child, for a woman, signifies the desire to possess at least the equivalent of the penis; the relationship among women is governed either by rivalry for the possession of the "male organ" or, in homosexuality, by identification with the man; the interest that women may take in the affairs of society is dictated of course only by her longing to have powers equal to those of the male sex, and so on.⁴⁹

Psychoanalysis is both illustrative and typical of how phallocracy constructs sexuality as its own, for its own. Male sexual discourse controls women's sexuality and transforms it into use value for man. "The use, consumption, and circulation of [women's] sexualized bodies underwrite the organization and the reproduction of the social order, in which they have never taken place as 'subjects'."⁵⁰ Both Freud and Lacan ask of woman: "What does she want?" It is asked because:

There is so little done in [phallocentric] society for [woman's] desire that she ends up by dint of not knowing what to do with it, no longer knowing where to put it, or if she has any, conceals the most immediate and the most urgent question: "How do I experience sexual pleasure?"⁵¹

According to Irigaray, the factor which regulates and makes possible the continued existence of the phallic order is male homosexuality. Not recognizable through immediate practice, it operates under a semblance of heterosexuality, which effectively conceals the actual workings of men's relations with himself and of relations among men. Governed

by a homosexual monopoly, our society is characterized by the "exclusive valorization of men's needs/desires, of exchanges among men" and based upon a system of exchange which takes place exclusively among men. The work force is therefore assumed to be masculine and its products objects to be used by men and traded between men.⁵² Thus, under the institution of the reign of homosexuality, "... the only sex, the only sexes, are those needed to keep relationships among men running smoothly."⁵³

Irigaray defines heterosexuality not only as an alibi to male homosexuality but also as the assignment of roles in the phallic economy. While man is assigned the role of producing and exchanging subject, woman is assigned the role of productive worth and goods.⁵⁴ Irigaray contends that the exchange of women is the foundation of present patriarchal culture.⁵⁵ Excluding women from participation in commerce, men make commerce of women - this accompanies and stimulates the exchange of other wealth among groups of men.⁵⁶ Women produce associations between men and bind them together to form patriarchal, communicative communities. Women, as goods or commodities, are marked phallically by men (fathers, husbands, procurers) and this stamp determines her value. Considered unfit for the seriousness of symbolic rules, it is up to women to take care of men's pleasure. For, "if the penis was a means of pleasure among men ... men would have to renounce their function as goods ..." The phallic sexual

commercial system thus functions to assure the "genealogy of patriarchal power, its laws, discourse, and sociality."⁵⁷

The phallic order thus operates according to a "socio-cultural endogamy" which requires that "... women lend themselves to alienation in consumption, and to exchanges in which they do not participate, and that men be exempt from being used and circulated like commodities."⁵⁸ It presupposes men's appropriation of nature, its transformation according to male defined criteria, and its submission to labor and technology. In such a social order, women have a natural value and a social value - their development lies in their transformation from one to the other.⁵⁹ Like nature, she is appropriated, transformed, and submitted. On the patriarchal market of sexual exchange, her social value depends upon the maintenance and preservation of her femininity - as it is imposed by male systems of representation - as well as her maternal role. Femininity is thus merely a role, an image, and a value - a masquerade requiring work for which women are compensated only by "being chosen as objects of consumption."⁶⁰ As an object of consumption, she is exploited in all sexual, economic, social, and cultural exchange operations. As a product used and exchanged by men, her value - and thus her identity - is determined by what men need and desire. She is included in the laws of exchange only as a commodity.⁶¹

According to Irigaray the characteristics that Marx outlines as that of the status of a commodity is also that

which is required of a normal female sexuality under the phallic order. For example, to become a commodity, nature has to be subjected to man. Similarly, the development of a normal woman depends on its subordination to forms and laws of masculine activity. Just as a commodity's natural utility is overridden by its exchange function, "the properties of a woman's body have to be suppressed and subordinated to the exigencies of its transformation into an object of circulation among men."⁶² And, like a commodity, women cannot make exchanges among themselves without the intervention of a subject that measures them against a standard. As they pass from the state of nature to the status of social object, women are "distinguished, divided, separated, classified as like or unlike, according to whether they have been judged exchangeable" according to the phallic standards of sexual commerce.⁶³

Irigaray contends that there are three primary social roles imposed upon women-as-commodities from which the characteristics of female sexuality are derived: mother, virgin, and prostitute. The mother's natural capability to reproduce cannot be totally socialized or transformed without threatening the existence of the social order. Therefore, rather than progressing from having natural value to social value, she has both -as men's social existence, in this case, is tied to the work of (her) nature. In order for this dependence on (re)productive nature to remain a non-issue so that the prevailing, important relationships are those among

men, mothers are excluded from exchange, forbidden to circulate, and are transformed into private property. Productive nature, in this way, does not enter into exchanges among men. Mothers, under the phallic order, thus become "reproductive instruments marked with the name of the father and enclosed in his house." The virgin, on the other hand, represents pure exchange value. She is the possibility, the place, and the sign of relations among men. When "deflowered", however, she is removed from exchange among men, relegated to use value, and entrapped in private property - she becomes a mother, a passage "accomplished by the violation of an envelope." Unlike the mother, representing use value, or the virgin, representing exchange value, the prostitute represents use value that is exchanged. Unlike the virgin whose usage is potential, her's is realized. The natural qualities of her body are useful but are only valuable because they have been totally appropriated (used, phallically socialized) by a man and because "they serve as the laws of relations - hidden ones - between men." Women, therefore, as phallically imposed mothers, virgins, and prostitutes, represent use value for men and exchange value among men. Their status equals that of merchandise, the value of which is determined by men's needs and by the standard of their work (as mothers, virgins, and prostitutes).⁶⁴

The difference that the phallogentric economy of sameness imposes upon women in order to justify and conceal its

exploitation and social indifference to women is that of biology. Women are the only biologically determined group. While women are women according to their particular physical constitution (lack of the phallus), men are men according to their possession of a quality - virility (which should accompany the possession of the phallus).⁶⁵ Cixous defines this as a voyeur's theory of female sexuality - a theory which attributes sexual difference to anatomy and which places importance on exteriority.⁶⁶ According to Cixous, men's sexuality is regionalized - it is centered around the penis and the dictatorship of its parts. She predicts that man's destiny is "of being reduced to a single idol with clay balls."⁶⁷ Men fear becoming women - or womanly, as it is male-defined - because they fear losing their virility. It is on the basis of this virility and other phallic virtues that men retain their power. According to Annie Leclerc, men retain their power not by right of what they are but by right of these abstract virtues. The phallic virtues which she describes are depictive of an order based on anti-love and rape. The masculine hero, for example, retains the virtues of conqueror and possessor. He is a master - one who commands but who must win the obedience of those who might seek to act and speak for themselves. He is forceful and is therefore respected by men - his force is also the object of his self-respect. The mission of his male courage is to subdue, oppress, and repress all living things. In making this

persona heroic, men worship virility. It is obligatory that they invade and colonize because virile force is essential to their identity as men and as oppressors. According to Cixous, man treats woman as a "dark continent" which he must invade, colonize, penetrate and pacify. He often confuses himself with his penis and tries to take woman for his own.⁶⁸

Phallogentric thought operates through hierarchized oppositions. Cixous contends that it is a two-term system related to the couple man/woman. Each couple of opposition is set up to produce a meaning through a movement by which the couple is destroyed or by which one concept/member of the couple is subordinated to the other. According to Cixous, it is the opposition between activity and passivity that sustains male privilege - the subordination of the feminine to the masculine order. Sexuality, therefore, is set up as a power relation.⁶⁹ Within this power relation, woman is valued only in so far as she fulfills man's needs. For this man cannot forgive her - his masculine pride or identity doesn't permit dependence (in the opposing couple of dependence/independence the latter is a male virtue). In penetrating her, he also feels resentment - the resentment of being taken in and absorbed by a woman.⁷⁰ To sustain his masculine pride, he humiliates, degrades, and denigrates the female. Sex becomes a desire for the dirty and degrading⁷¹ - which is woman - and sexuality a domain of the unspeakable which women can enter only as objects. According to Parturier, men love only women

who are inaccessible - they love their invention of woman but hate the presence of real women who don't live up to masculine ideas, morals, and social laws.⁷²

To conclude, as more civil rights are gained and more women enter the circuits of production, and as birth control and abortion become widespread, women have less natural value and more social value. Outside of her reproductive function there are only two possible contradictory roles for women. One is that she can be a potential man with equal social, economic, and political rights. However, in order for her to remain in circulation on the market of sexual exchange - to have social value - she has to maintain and preserve her femininity as it is discursively designed by men. In other words, regardless of her status on the labor market, she will always be exploited as a commodity on the sexual exchange market. This is why her manhood is only potential - one cannot be a man and a commodity.⁷³ According to Irigaray, women have to remain an unrecognized infrastructure in our patriarchal society and culture. They are in a position external to the laws of exchange but included in them as commodities. Women are excluded internally in the order of male discourse - "to the objection that this discourse is not all there is, the response will be that it is women who are not - all."⁷⁴ Irigaray contends that it is this situation of specific oppression - women's status as simultaneous insiders and outsiders of the phallic order - that can allow women to

develop a critique of the political economy. If women want to effectively escape exploitation, however, and thus "challenge the very foundation of our [patriarchally organized] social and cultural order",⁷⁵ they must join together among themselves.⁷⁶

"Women - as the stakes of private property, of appropriation by and for discourse - have always been put in a position of mutual rivalry."⁷⁷ In order to fill their own virile needs, men have led women to hate women. Women's strength has thus been mobilized against themselves rather than their oppressors. Effective. As a result, it is not often realized by women how much of their own personal history "blends together with the history of all women."⁷⁸ In fact, all women undergo the "same oppression, the same exploitation of the body, [and] the same denial of desire."⁷⁹ Cixous suggests that in order to fight men's logic of anti-love and to liberate the new woman from the old, women should get to know one another and love one another for surviving and getting by in an order which sets out to destroy her. Would phallocracy be maintainable if women were for women, if women didn't make of each other what men make of us? Men, after all, have set it up so that women are their own worst enemies. Women must give the best of themselves to women in order to love themselves, their bodies, and each other.⁸⁰ Irigaray states that if women joined together among themselves, they could escape the spaces, roles, and gestures that they have

been assigned and taught by a society of men.⁸¹ In fact, in order for women's mutual experiences to be politicized, women need a place for individual and collective consciousness raising about their specific oppression, a place where the desire of women by and for each other could be recognized, and a place for women to regroup. "... women could do without men while they are elaborating their own society."⁸²

Insert: Letter to a Sceptic

Thursday, December 7, 1989

Dear Sceptic:

Believing they were feminists, a man chose 14 women to kill yesterday. They were seated in the classroom of a Montreal university when he casually walked in and divided the class according to sex. At his instructions, yet thinking it was a joke, the male students and professor left the room. Then he proceeded to systematically shoot and kill all who were female.

But it wasn't because they were female that they were murdered. Rather, it was because they were inappropriately female - future engineers, women being trained to step on phallic turf. Under phallocracy, women who defy or step outside of their male-defined female role are in danger. We risk being raped, beaten, tortured, or murdered every time we intentionally or inadvertently go against the reality men have created for us. And it is individual men, like the one above, who interpret our actions and put us in our (phallic) place accordingly. The phallocracy doesn't take feminism lightly. We threaten the very foundation of patriarchal society and culture, and to keep their version of reality intact, men will reinforce our object status through rape, lower our self-esteem through systematic verbal and physical abuse, and if all else fails, they will kill us. And if you think I'm being paranoid, why else would women who enter nontraditional, higher paying jobs run a significantly higher risk of being killed?⁸³

Please mourn the mass murder of these 14 women. Please also mourn for those hundreds of women who are raped, beaten

or murdered daily but whose degradation or death does not seem quite so significant because it was "only" one man against one woman.

Radical Feminism: Heterosexuality As a Political Institution

Using Foucault's analysis, I argued that sexuality is discursively constructed and deployed as an instrument of power by institutions of and in power. Through Blier, Coward, Haug and Silverman, I solved the mystery of Foucault's analysis - the mystery of who constructed the sexual order and whose interests it serves. It was argued that the sexual order, a phallic one, is constructed by men for men. Through French feminism, the prevailing characteristics of the phallic sexual order were explored as well as the meaning of being a woman with a male constructed sexuality. The basic premise of radical feminist theory is that sexuality is the primary social sphere of male power and that heterosexuality is the structure which maintains it. My discussion will thus now continue with the radical feminist critique of heterosexuality as a political institution - how power is revealed in our sexual behavior, sexual relationships, and in our sexual roles.

According to Catherine MacKinnon, the social process of sexuality creates gender.⁸⁴ Blier, as well, states that "an integral part of society's or an individual's own definition

of gender is who one has sex with and how."⁸⁵ In a society where only males have the power to define, sex equals heterosexual intercourse which, in turn, equals something men do to women. "Sexuality is gendered as gender is sexualized."⁸⁶ MacKinnon identifies each element of the female gender stereotype as sexual. Vulnerability, passivity, and softness are synonymous with sexually accessible, receptive and "pregnatable". Regardless of sex, the gender of one who is acted upon is feminine and the actor correspondingly masculinized. Maintaining that gender is the social outcome of heterosexuality, she defines heterosexuality as the erotization of gender differences - the "erotization of [male] dominance and [female] submission."⁸⁷ Gender, therefore, is a hierarchal division of power which is expressed and acted out sexually through the dominant/submissive dynamic.

What is sexual in a given society is whatever is considered erotic. In our society, gender differences are eroticized. Therefore, what is sexy, what is erotic, is actually inequality. According to Morgan, we are socialized not only to be attracted to the socially appropriate sex but also to emphasize and exhibit the differences that we have been taught distinguish males and females in order to attract.⁸⁸ What becomes eroticized, therefore, are sex role qualities. She argues that the qualities which are accentuated and emphasized are those that "work conveniently to support a system of male sexual dominance."⁸⁹ The sexes learn

erotic patterns which foster the dominance of one over the other. For example:

We have been taught to think of sex as male territory in terms of direct action and in terms of the body, and of male attractiveness as connected with various sorts of dominance. Boys seem to have been taught to mix a protectiveness and chivalry which are very close to contempt with their feelings for girls, to seek sexual gratification without emotional involvement, to assume an initiatory and dominant role in sexual relations, and to view intercourse as a mode of conquest.⁹⁰

This relationship between the erotization of gender differences and male dominance can be demonstrated by exploring societal ideas of the male and female body. The current female body ideal is "muscled, firm, and hairless"⁹¹ - an ideal which is reachable for the young adolescent but a less realistic goal for the adult woman. Women thus punish themselves for growing up. This is an ideal which embraces powerlessness - a sexual yet immature body - a body that lacks control over its own sexuality yet invites control through its powerlessness. Powerlessness as erotic. The image conveyed is of "a highly sexualized female whose sexuality is still one of response to the active sexuality of a man."⁹² In their analysis of sports, MacKinnon and Connell demonstrate that dominance and submission are qualities instilled in male and female bodies. For instance, while women convey a physical image of attractiveness, men have a physical presence which embodies power. According to Connell, one of the most important ways in which men come to embody power so that it

is embedded in their masculinity and sexuality is through their relationship with sports. Through years of informal and formal athletic training, men learn the use of force and skill, which, once accomplished, is experienced as sensual. Force, "the irresistible occupation of space", and skill, "the ability to operate on space or the objects in it (including other bodies)" combine to form power - "the capacity to achieve ends even if opposed by others."⁹³ MacKinnon contends that athletics are designed "to maximize attributes that are identical with what the male sex role values in men."⁹⁴ For a man, physicality involves forcefulness, coerciveness, and "the ability to subdue and subject the natural world."⁹⁵ Sports also give the athlete a physical presence and physical self-respect - "it is our bodies as acting rather than as acted upon."⁹⁶ According to MacKinnon, athletics is antithetical to male-constructed femininity because it gives women a sense of our bodies as our own rather than a body that primarily exists to communicate sexual availability to men. She argues that "takeability" and "rapeability" is what defines the gender woman and that the strength and self-possession that sports allow contradicts the image and reality of female sexuality as equated with and defined as availability to being taken by a man - submission to dominance. When women do participate in sports, particularly those that require a lot of strength and endurance, her heterosexual identity is often questioned and she is called unfeminine or

lesbian. In other words, the minute that we have control over our own bodies and claim our bodies as our own, we are no longer (socially/phallically appropriate) women. MacKinnon contends that this reveals a lot about the relation between sexuality and physicality and about the content of heterosexuality.

It's threatening to one's takeability, one's rapeability, one's femininity, to be strong and physically self-possessed. To be able to resist rape, not to communicate rapeability with one's body, to hold one's body for uses and meanings other than that can transform what being a woman means.⁹⁷

The most salient feature of any male-dominated society is its strict control over women's sexuality. Coercion, however, is frequently hidden behind patriarchal ideology concerning women's sexuality and is therefore insidious.⁹⁸ One such ideology is the enigmatization of women's sexuality - it hides the fact that it is really "men's bodies and men's sexuality which is the true 'dark continent.'"⁹⁹ According to Ros Coward, our society "has been saturated with images of women's bodies and representations of women's sexuality."¹⁰⁰ Women's bodies have been subject to overexposure, scrutiny, definition and control while "men's bodies have quietly absented themselves."¹⁰¹ Men's bodies are different, curious, strange and not altogether aesthetically pleasing. They are physical strangers because "sexual and social meanings are imposed on women's bodies, not men's."¹⁰² A condition of male dominance is men's ability to scrutinize, to define - to

assess, judge, and make advances on the basis of their visual impressions. According to Coward, the look confers power and women's inability to return such a critical, aggressive look confers their subordination.¹⁰³ "The aesthetic appeal of women disguises a preference for looking at women's bodies, for keeping women separate, at a distance, and the ability to do this."¹⁰⁴ Because men control the look, they are the ones doing the desiring, judging and controlling. They are the active sex, the seeking sex - never the object of scrutiny, their appearance is unimportant. Somehow they know that "a body defined is a body controlled"¹⁰⁵ and fear the powerlessness that arises "in the light of someone's active and powerful desire."¹⁰⁶

The primary process of the subjection of women, therefore, is their sexual objectification by those who have the power to create the world from their own point of view.¹⁰⁷ Man, as actor, is subject, while woman, as acted upon, is object. Through male eyes, woman is sex object: "... a being who identifies and is identified as one whose sexuality exists for someone else, who is socially male."¹⁰⁸ Through gender role socialization or heterosexuality, women internalize a male image of their sexuality as their identity as women. Characterized by an absence of choice, the institution of heterosexuality upholds and compliments the dominant male ethos on sex. Male sexual discourse on the meaning of sex becomes women's language. Heterosexuality, as the norm,

offers women no human alternative but to conform in body type, behavior, and values to be objects of male sexual desire.¹⁰⁹

According to Dworkin:

The brilliance of objectification as a strategy of dominance is that it gets the woman to take initiative in her own degradation (having less freedom is degrading) ... she polices her own body; she internalizes the demands of the dominant class, and in order to be fucked, she constructs her life around meeting those demands.¹¹⁰

It is through this "initiative in her own degradation" that women become desirable. Perceiving woman as attaining power through her desirability, man sees woman as controlling sex by provoking his sensuality. Women, however, are most desirable when they are most feminine - when they are most apt at behaving according to male definitions of female desirability; when they "accede the definition of [their] sexuality to male terms."¹¹¹ What is desirable to man is woman's vulnerability. Thus, this power in desirability is worthless - we have it "only so long as we remain powerless."¹¹²

Sexuality is thus deployed as an instrument of male supremacy. Heterosexuality, in creating unequal social conceptions of masculinity and femininity, requires, maintains, and perpetuates male supremacy and female subordination. Inequality is thus built into heterosexuality and when sex occurs, it occurs between unequals - women have sexual intercourse normally with someone who overpowers them discursively, physically, and economically.¹¹³ Dworkin maintains that sexual intercourse occurs in the context of a power

relation which requires the objectification of the female partner. She has to be what he wants her to be for him to want to have intercourse.¹¹⁴ Male power over sexual discourse constructs the meaning and practice of intercourse, which, Dworkin maintains, is a manly act of invasion and ownership.¹¹⁵ For a man's dominance to be legitimate, his masculinity has to be authentic. Authenticity of masculinity is achieved through intercourse - it is articulated and affirmed through the act of fucking. During intercourse, both the man and the women are experiencing the man being male. While he is experiencing the affirmation of his masculinity (his selfhood), she is experiencing the loss of her individuality - she has been acted upon, entered and occupied.¹¹⁶ Dworkin contends that penetration is a violation; that being entered offers women no real privacy of the body. Whereas men eroticize ownership, power, and courage, women learn to eroticize possession, powerlessness, and fear - all of which, Dworkin argues, is represented by entry. That which diminishes masculinity and manhood, is supposed to enhance femininity and womanhood.¹¹⁷

If privacy is defined as a sphere of freedom that is immune from regulation by the state, then intercourse has never occurred in private. The institution of heterosexuality is upheld by state laws that heighten gender polarity by forbidding sex that breaks down gender barriers. "In each act of intercourse, a society is formed; and the distribution

of power in that society is the state interest at stake ... gender is what the state seeks to control."¹¹⁸ By creating gender itself, state laws and societal rules on heterosexual behavior promote male supremacy and keep women sexually subjugated and accessible to men. In order to illustrate this argument, Dworkin cites several examples of laws that "step in where nature fails": gender specific dress, gender specific virginity, vagina specific fucking. Sodomy laws maintain men's superior sexual status by protecting men, as a class, from the violation of penetration.¹¹⁹ Since being masculine depends upon being as differentiated as possible from women, these laws also serve to punish men who step outside their gender roles - male homosexuals. Women's bodies, however, are breachable - they are the property of the men who fuck them. Rape laws, therefore, exist not to protect women from penetration but to moderate male to male conflict over access to what might potentially be a man's property.¹²⁰ If there were no laws to regulate gender or the pursuit of pleasure, men and women would be subject to equal sexual violation. Male power could not sustain itself in this climate.¹²¹

The laws that say who to fuck, when, how, and anatomically where keep the man differentiated in a way that seems absolute. Having power, one can break the law for pleasure; but the law itself is the mechanism for creating and maintaining power ... The purpose of laws on intercourse in a world of male dominance is to promote the power of men over women and to keep women sexually subjugated (accessible) to men. These laws work ... by creating

gender itself ... These same laws regulate ... the kind of lust produced by male dominance, by having sexual rights over inferiors. They keep men from destroying through self-indulgence a sophisticated system of power that has lasted too long and ruined those who have rebelled against it.¹²²

Intercourse is the expression of a created hierarchy. It can be either a legal or illegal act and it creates the legal and illegal woman. The "legal fuck", the utility of sex for power, is the right of a man to use his wife (his exclusive property) any way he wants - thus keeping her used, controlled, and preferably in the home. The "illegal fuck", the utility of sex for pleasure, is particularly eroticized because it occurs outside of the law. It is the right of a man to use a woman who is no man's exclusive property - "prostitutes in sexual subservience."¹²³ According to Clark and Lewis, women are viewed as private property whose value is determined by their sexuality. As commodities, women have no rights of ownership over their sexuality. "Prior to marriage, a woman's sexuality is a commodity to be held in trust for its rightful owner. Making 'free' use of one's own sexuality is like making 'free' use of someone else's money."¹²⁴ The duty, therefore, of a respectable, 'legal' woman is to preserve her sexuality for the future use of its owner and to avoid taking risks (freedom of movement or dress would be considered unnecessary risks as they are both associated with why men say they rape). The legal woman, therefore, is one who agrees to live by men's rules, who

regards herself as a wife and mother, who accepts her status as private property, and who relinquishes ownership rights of her own sexuality. The illegal woman is one who gives up that which makes her desirable as the object of an exclusive sexual relationship. (Even if she does this against her will it indicates that she took unnecessary risks). She is common property.¹²⁵ "The legal and illegal fuck create the legal and illegal woman ... they create conditions of inferiority ... and keep women divided from one another."¹²⁶

"Heterosexuality needs to be recognized and studied as a political institution."¹²⁷ If, under phallocracy, males control and construct sexual discourse, and if sexuality is deployed as power and control while heterosexuality maintains and perpetuates this power and control, can intercourse be an expression of sexual inequality? If male power constructs the meaning of intercourse, how can the act of intercourse be separate from male power?¹²⁸ As Dworkin states, "intercourse exists and is experienced under conditions of force, fear, or inequality ... women know fear of men and of forced sex."¹²⁹ Sexual intercourse normally occurs between sexual, economic, physical and social unequals. It has been argued that intercourse itself is a form of power. "The measure of women's oppression is that we don't take intercourse - entry, penetration, occupation and ask or say what it means."¹³⁰

In fact, what intercourse means is power. And because of its meaning there is a fine line between it and rape.

According to MacKinnon, the focus on rape as violence separates rape from the mainstream of daily life and removes it from the realm of the sexual.

... taking rape from the realm of the "sexual", placing it in the realm of the "violent", allows one to be against it without raising any questions about the extent to which the institution of heterosexuality has defined force as a normal part of "the preliminaries" ... Never is it asked whether, under conditions of male supremacy, the notion of "consent" has any meaning.¹³¹

She asks, what about rape in normal circumstances, in everyday life, in ordinary relationships, by men as men? If aggression is integral to the masculine gender role and coercion integral to male sexuality, "rape may be sexual to the degree that, and because, it is violent." Defining rape as "violence not sex" or "violence against women" affirms sex (heterosexuality) while rejecting violence (rape).¹³² Under conditions of male supremacy, however, it is difficult to distinguish rape from "normal" intercourse. For example, in counselling rape victims, I found that all experienced flashbacks of the rapes while having consensual intercourse. Did the act of intercourse merely remind them of the rape experience or was the act itself so similar to the rape that they were actually re-experiencing it? Women's sexuality is controlled by men and defined by the dominance/submission dynamic.

When sex is violent, women may have lost control over what is done to us, but absence of force does not ensure the presence of that control. Nor, under male dominance, does the presence of force make an interaction nonsexual.¹³³

The reality of consensual heterosexual intercourse is that consent occurs under conditions of inequality. Consent, under male supremacy, may therefore operate in the following manner: the male initiates sex, the female chooses, and the male perceives her desires - hopefully, correctly. He is the one through his perceptions of her desire, who deems whether or not she has been violated.¹³⁴ Since, under male supremacy, a violation of her sexuality must be extremely out of the ordinary before it is even recognized as a violation, the woman herself even finds it difficult defining the terms of her own consent.¹³⁵ In confronting a rapist in a counselling session with his victim's report that he tried to strangle her, he laughed. He perceived this not as a violation - an attempt to kill her - but simply as a struggle to prevent her from screaming.

If heterosexuality is the erotization of gender differences and gender is a division which allocates power in the interest of men to the detriment of women, then sexism - the subjugation of women - is a "political inequality that is sexually enjoyed, if unequally so."¹³⁶

Sexuality ... is the interactive dynamic of gender as an inequality. Stopped as an attribute of a person, sex inequality takes the form of gender; moving as a relation between people, it takes the form of sexuality. Gender emerges as the congealed form of the sexualization of inequality between men and women.¹³⁷

Sex is what is felt as sexual. Rapists are sexually aroused by violent sex. Rape is sex for them. The point is: under

male supremacy, dominance and submission, including acts of violence, cannot be separated from sex as long as its experienced as sexual.¹³⁸ And it is. Inequality is built into social conceptions of male and female sexuality, of masculinity and femininity, of sexiness and heterosexual attractiveness¹³⁹ - so much so, in fact, that heterosexuality can be defined as the erotization of this inequality. Why, under male supremacy, does "every sexual reference, every sexual joke, every sexual image serve to remind a woman of her invaded centre and a man of his power?"¹⁴⁰ Because it is through heterosexuality, a political institution, that women's oppression is perpetuated and maintained. Every time an act of sexual intercourse takes place, the oppressor is actually invading and colonizing the interior of the body of one who is oppressed.

Entry 5: I Can't Tell the Difference. Can You?

Among the books that I read in preparing to write this thesis were Friday's Men in Love, The Hite Report on Male Sexuality and Benek's Men On Rape. These three volumes contain hundreds of quotes from hundreds of real, ordinary men describing their sexual fantasies and experiences. What struck me as both incredible and significant was the similarity between many of their descriptions of rape and of consensual intercourse. I thought it might be interesting to

juxtapose some of these descriptions in order to illustrate the extent to which inequality and coerciveness are part of heterosexuality as it is socially constructed by the phallocracy.

Fantasy

The following is one of my favorite fantasies: a very horny cunt is alone with me and 3 or 4 other men. We gather around her as she sits on the floor or a low stool ... The girls turns herself on the stool until she sucks one cock for about 30 seconds and turns to get the next one ... We come almost simultaneously, filling her mouth and covering her face with 5 copious loads of semen ...¹⁴¹

... I am dominant ... I take a woman (submissive) to the movies. Before we go I supervise her dressing ... she wears a choker around her neck as a symbol of submission ... she is ordered to caress herself ... I produce a large dildo and tell her to stick it up her cunt ... When we get to my place ... I go and get my dog, a large German shepherd and tell her to play with its cock ... Then she is forced to her knees on all fours while the dog mounts and fucks her.¹⁴²

Reality (Consensual Intercourse)

... I grabbed Carol by the shirt and ripped it open, literally. She started to put up a struggle but I could tell it was just a mock effort. I kissed her hand, on the lips, and forced her to kneel on the floor before me. I told her to take my cock and "kiss it" ... till I come in her mouth. The sight of her fulfilling an old-time fantasy of mine, along with the view I had of my hard-on going in and out of Carol's beautiful face, quickened my orgasm. Carol couldn't keep my come in her mouth ... I kept shooting on her cheeks.¹⁴³

I like intercourse because of the good feeling I get from it. I feel more of a man than at other times. A woman's body is always a challenge; you never know how it will respond, nor to what nor when. It's like a good game of tennis; you hit a hell of a good shot, and whammo, it comes back twice as hard. A woman's body is a mountain to be scaled, a house to be inhabited.¹⁴⁴

Big Point: Some/most women do not realize that men get aroused over little things very easily. And this arousal is, in a sense, not controllable. It controls us. That's why men are like they are, and we really can't help it. It's not an excuse, it's a reason. It's built in physically ...¹⁴⁵

Men are simple. Men want pussy. Women have it. Women are devious. Thus the accommodations and the costs and the trade-offs.¹⁴⁶

Real Rapes

... It was like a wrestling match and she fought me every inch of the way, growling like an animal. She bit, kicked, scratched, and punched me. I just wrestled her down, slapped her into submission, fucked her in the cunt and then the ass, and for a finale made her suck me clean. She told me later it was one of the best fucks she'd ever had.¹⁴⁷

Not in the criminal sense of raping a woman who honestly doesn't want to have sex, but in the sense of forcing a women who is denying her own sexuality to have sex, and thereby awakening to her own potential for enjoyment, yes. I think this is a kind of romantic rape, and is very different from actual forcible rape.¹⁴⁸

Another boy and I were close friends with a few girls in the grade school and we all played together. At one point the boy, Frank, and I decided we were going to pull down the girl's panties. We planned for it and at a certain prearranged signal during the last recess of the day, we grabbed her and put her down and pulled down her panties ... We were curious about her body and aroused at the idea of seeing it ... that day we had all been playing

together and she was inadvertently showing her underwear; we had self-righteously told each other that she was asking for it.¹⁴⁹

These quotes were not randomly selected. I chose them because they effectively illustrate the argument I'm building (if you want to call it that - I think I'm illustrating reality.) But they are not the worst. Actually, they are rather middle-of-the-road compared to some of the things "men-in-love" fantasize about. But the point is, they are real - honest words said by living men. Men who have mothers, sisters, daughters, wives. Men who interact with women - real women - and who bring into their interactions with women their fantasies, experiences, desires and dislikes. Frightening.

Entry 6: Men Being Honest

Jack Litewka's failure to get it up with three different women, on three separate occasions, led him to reconsider and evaluate the socialization of his sexual response - his penis. He concluded that because he knew these women as whole human beings whom he liked, he was unable to fuck them. For men to fuck, a process must occur, a process which Litewka identifies as objectification/fixation/and conquest. To identify a woman as a whole, individual being is antithetical to this process, and thus to erection.

According to Litewka, men are taught to objectify females at a very young age. Objectification entails the generaliza-

tion of women to the extent that no one woman is a unique individual but rather a "concept, a lump sum, a thing, an object ... the female [as] always 'other'."¹⁵⁰ Through objectification, women become instruments to fulfill men's needs rather than individuals with needs and rights of their own. Following objectification is fixation - that part of the process I have always associated with men and called "parts-oriented sex". It involves the depersonalization of the objectified image into a composition of physical parts. The parts fetishized are usually those prohibited from sight. Fixation occurs with the part(s) of a man's preference and erection usually follows:

... since it is pleasurable, [and] since it gives us assurance that we are male, we create erections out of our imagination, by merely objectifying a female of our choice, fixating on the parts of her body that excite, and usually manipulating that body.¹⁵¹

This "manipulation of the body" is what constitutes conquest, the conclusion of the process. In our society, maleness is measured in terms of it.

In sexual matters, the male conquers when he succeeds in reducing the female from a being into a thing and achieves some level or form of sexual gratification ... I mean, after all, what the hell's the sense of objectifying and fixating, if you're not going to get off your ass and do a little conquering? ... Male sexual response has little (or nothing) to do with the specific female we are with at any given moment. Any number of lips or breasts or vaginas would do - as long as we can objectify, fixate and conquer, an erection and (provided there is some form of penile friction) ejaculation will occur.¹⁵²

Litewka contends that men also objectify, fixate and conquer their penises so that the penis also becomes "other", but with a mind of its own. Men are thus exempt from taking responsibility for their penises' actions. However, since being a man often depends on the actions of the penis, "anything that causes erections (with the resulting pleasure and power and self-identification) is to be used."¹⁵³

Male heterosexuality operates according to objectification/fixation/conquest. The pleasure of objectification/fixation/conquest is the pleasure of exercising power. It represents men's appropriation of women's bodies and sexuality. It represents - it is - the way men have sex: the expression of masculine desire involves "wielding masculine power in order to dominate"¹⁵⁴ such that domination and sexual desire become synonymous. Since genital sexuality is the primary mode of masculine sexual expression, "the penis is ... an instrument of desire and domination at one and the same time."¹⁵⁵ According to Buchbinder, the implications of this for heterosexual relationships is that once a man recognizes a woman as an equal person, objectification cannot occur and the man's sexual desire diminishes. Developing a close, long-term relationship with a women places a constraint on male sexuality because objectification/fixation/and conquest is absent. Men may thus seek relationships outside of their primary one in order to objectify, fixate, and conquer.¹⁵⁶

Men, therefore, require that a power disparity exists

between themselves and whomever they choose to fuck - in order to fuck. They differ only in the form of that power disparity. "Some men rape, some men marry, and so forth."¹⁵⁷ If there is no real or imagined power disparity in the erotic encounter, he can't get it up. "He can't accomplish the program - the sexual program for expressing his cultural attributes - his attributes obtained by belonging to a gender class which has defined itself as supreme."¹⁵⁸

And how does this gender class define itself as supreme? According to Connell, patriarchal power requires the construction of a hypermasculinity. The natural similarity between biological males and females is negated by social practices that create sex solidarity.¹⁵⁹ One such social practice is the insertion of force and skill in men's bodies. This gives them a seemingly natural superiority that coincides with the social definition of men as holders of power. To be masculine within the social power structure of patriarchy means "to embody force, to embody competence"¹⁶⁰ - violence is implicit in its physical construction. Hegemonic masculinity is socially sustained by the collective practices of men which define woman as different, inferior, and thus worthy of objectification and contempt.

The intimidation of women in public by groups of men, and the aggressive occupation of streets at night by groups of teenage boys, which can make even outer suburbs places where women are afraid to walk, are familiar examples.¹⁶¹

Power relations between men and women are exercised through

gender, of which, the global dominance of men over women is the essential basis for differentiation.¹⁶² Gender practices are organized such that masculinity is hegemonic and femininity is emphasized. Emphasized femininity is defined around compliance to subordination and is oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men.¹⁶³ The structure which sustains and organizes gender/power relations is heterosexuality. It socially patterns by defining desirable as that which is different - it dichotomizes the sexes by exaggerating gender differences and emphasizing sexual difference as pleasurable. Not based on common experience or situation, the solidarity of the heterosexual couple is an erotic reciprocity based on unequal exchange in which women are sexualized as objects.¹⁶⁴ Heterosexuality, as an institution of power, is thus central in maintaining women's subordination.

III

WOMEN AMONG THEMSELVES

WOMEN AMONG THEMSELVES

Entry 7: Method(ology)?

Methodology. This word makes me intensely uncomfortable. It conjures up images of wise old men, logic (*masculine*), reasoning, order, regularity, and science (*from and by which women are alienated*). *Methodology*. Applying some previously approved system of inquiry on people in order to discover something that is presupposed. Its meaning implies that if, according to the standards of your discipline, you use proper methods, suitable logic, order and consistency, then the results of your inquiry will be probable or significant. If you don't, then they won't. This implies that people's responses, people's words have no validity outside of "good" methodology. This, naturally, makes me nervous. Because if my (our) method (ology)? is questioned, then the words of women among ourselves will be considered invalid, insignificant, or improbable. (But, then again, our words may be disregarded anyway - not because of methodology but because of numbers - *lack of them*).

So, I divide the word and question it. Because I'm not sure I want the word in its entirety to apply (*if indeed it can*) to what we did in the summer of 1989 - or to what I'm still doing (*flashbacking*). Method is okay - if method can be defined as a process, a way of doing, a means of discovering and unravel-

ling. It's the "-ology" with its scientific overtones that causes unease. Is our method on -ology? Is our process scientific (enough)?

Entry 8: On Behalf of the Subjective

When you dismiss the subjective, you dismiss women. A standard against which social research is traditionally measured is the extent to which the researcher succeeds in eliminating subjectivity - "bias" - from her methodology. Objectivity is the desired goal. What is defined as objective, however, amounts to no more than the subjective decisions of those in control of a particular discourse - those with defining power (*and who are they?*). Of course, I am not the only woman to have realized this. Simone de Beauvoir, Dorothy Smith, Ann Oakley, Frigga Haug, and others all speak on behalf of the subjective - and I draw support from all of them by including their words in this entry.

Women have been excluded from sociological discourse. In fact, women and subjectivity were boycotted together - unworthy. Masculine/feminine, objectivity/subjectivity, public/private: these are not unrelated dichotomies. According to Beauvoir, "... Man represents the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of man to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without

reciprocity."¹⁶⁵

Men - because they are men - can speak from a general position with the authority of being objective, impersonal, neutral and detached. When women speak, they are seen as speaking not from a general or neutral position but from a specific one - as women - and therefore limited, restricted, subordinate, and especially subjective. According to Dorothy Smith, "Her subjectivity does not draw upon the implicit authority of the generalizing impersonal mode. His does."¹⁶⁶ As other, her experience is not the general one so she is subjective. Her words, her experiences cannot be verified by looking to the general (*public*) because she lies outside of it (*in that private place*). "In relation to men ... women's consciousness [does] not appear as an autonomous source of knowledge, experience, relevance, and imagination. Women's experience does not appear as the source of an authoritative general expression of the world ..."¹⁶⁷ Outside of and subservient to the dominant symbolic order which, it has been argued, is phallic, women's experience cannot be objective, general, or neutral. Her experience is subjective because it cannot be verified by, or validated according to, male terms of reference. (Could this be the reason behind the dismissal of the subjective, and thus women's experience, by social science? If enough women subjectively described their experiences then they might carry the authority of the general rather than the

particular - the subjective experience of one woman might be a common one to all. But, under patriarchy, women must not have authority over anything, especially themselves). Women are strangers to male discourse. This strangeness - and thus this subjectivity - "is an integral part of the socially organized practices which constitute it ... What [women] have in common is that organization of social relations which has accomplished our exclusion."¹⁶⁸

In dismissing the subjective, social science has dismissed the everyday experience of individuals. It has been assumed "that individuals' accounts of themselves and their analysis of the world are not to be trusted; they are colored by subjectivity."¹⁶⁹ *But everything is colored.* Women's subjective experiences - my experiences - are colored by the social structure that predominates: patriarchy. And if you observe or listen to women's experiences you can see exactly how they are colored; you can see how the patriarchy operates by observing the results of its operations (covert and overt). What I am doing, and what the others did, by remembering, is tracing the actual practice of sexuality in our everyday lives in order to explore its organization, its meaning - its politics. According to Dorothy Smith, "... characteristically for women ... the organization of their daily experiences, their work routines, and indeed their lives is determined and ordered externally to them ... she is holding the parts of someone else's action."¹⁷⁰ In her method of institutional

ethnography, Smith begins by looking at experiences in order to explore their basis in social and political processes. Comparable to consciousness raising, it starts by looking at seemingly private (subjective) experiences of oppression in order to find their objective correlates. "The immediately experienced, and the activities in which the immediately experienced arises as such, are organized and given shape by social relations" ¹⁷¹

Frigga Haug et al. also use the subjective as a starting point in their study of female sexualization. They collectively recorded, analyzed, and problematized their own personal memories in order to determine how women become sex objects, how women's bodies become sexualized. By defining memory work as a social scientific method, they challenged the separation between social science and everyday experience. The first premise of memory work is internal authority - "the subject and the object of research are one." ¹⁷² Contending that human history is not just a process of socialization but also one of individualization, they investigated "the processes through which they formed themselves as personalities", focusing their attention "on the way individuals continuously reproduce society as a whole: the way they enter into pre-given structures, within which they produce themselves, and the categories of society." ¹⁷³ According to Haug, the individual appropriation and processing of the social world is a compromise between dominant cultured values and oppositional

attempts to derive meaning and pleasure from them.¹⁷⁴ Not just bearers of roles, individual attempts to find self-fulfillment within a predetermined social space contain "an element of resistance, a germ of oppositional activity."¹⁷⁵ This element of resistance most often appears in the form of hope. However, because of the constraints of the dominant culture, hope does not usually lead to change. Thus, as feminists, Haug et al. made it their goal to "rupture the unity of hope and constraint ... to find ways of articulating the personal sphere in political terms."

... such an articulation is particularly important for women, since women have no immediate access to the conceptual building blocks that would help them to come to terms with their everyday lives; thus women tend generally to control no more than half their lives. Story-writing [(memory work)] ... allows the author to arrive at a perception of self capable of understanding lived femininity without appearing inadequate ... Instead of stuttering shamefacedly over the inadequacy of our lives, we are able, through story-writing, to give an account of the things we have actually done. We no longer have to judge ourselves by the criteria of an alien culture.¹⁷⁶

They thus view their research as an intervention into existing relations. None of the collective were left unchanged by the memory work and it was as a collective they could combine what had previously been individual strands of hope into resistance.

Politicizing the private - the subjective - is, in fact, feminism. In doing so, the feminist turns the objective, factual features of her social reality into contradictions -

contradictions she perceives as unstable. It is only through feminist consciousness - through the politicization of the subjective - that the conditions that guide her subjective reality can be revealed as what they are. Feminist consciousness is the actual experiencing of certain specific contradictions in the social order, apprehending them as intolerable, and recognizing a need and possibility for change.¹⁷⁷ According to Bartkey, it is divided. Firstly, the feminist is conscious of victimization - that she has been victimized as one woman among many by an oppressive social system designed by and for men. Consciousness of victimization "allows us to discover what social reality really is."¹⁷⁸ Secondly, she is conscious of the power, energy and strength that has been suppressed as a result of this victimization. This divided consciousness of victim on the one hand, and strength, with the realized possibility of growth, on the other, "leads to the search both for ways of overcoming these weaknesses in ourselves which support the system and for direct forms of struggle against the system itself."¹⁷⁹ Thus, the feminist alters her subjective behavior in accordance with what should be and apprehends her experiences, "ordinary" social situations, and human encounters as occasions for struggle - as opportunities to make change happen.¹⁸⁰ According to Bartkey,

This experience, the acquiring of a "raised" consciousness, is an immeasurable advance over the false consciousness which it replaces ... We are no

longer required to struggle against unreal enemies, to put other interests ahead of our own, or to hate ourselves ... Understanding things makes it possible to change them. Coming to see things differently, we are able to make out possibilities for liberating collection action as well as unprecedented personal growth - possibilities that a deceptive sexist social reality has heretofore concealed. No longer do we have to practise upon ourselves that mutilation of intellect and personality required of individuals, caught up in an irrational and destructive system, who are nevertheless not permitted to respond it as anything but sane, progressive and normal.¹⁸¹

It is by looking at the "normal", subjective, everyday occurrences of our lives that we can begin to see how the patriarchy has duped us into believing that our oppression is normal and "everyday".

Entry 9: The "How" of Women Among Themselves

It is certain that with women-among-themselves (and this is one of the stakes of liberation movements, when they are not organized along the lines of masculine power ...), in these places of women-among-themselves, something of a speaking (as) woman is heard.¹⁸²

In Entry 2 I described the incompatibility of quantitative research methods with what I was trying to do in terms of feminist research. I won't reiterate. Suffice it to say that I almost fell into the trap of objectifying myself and the others in order to achieve acceptability through survey analysis resulting in numbers (that count). Now out of the numbers game, what I have left to describe is our deceptively simple method (ology)? which could be summed up as women-

talking-among-themselves. *(I've dreaded the writing up of the actual doing, the how. Reducing the process - which was torturous because of the surfaced memories that felt better in the recesses - to something called the tape-recorded interview, a mere method. And what do I call my role in this. I'm in here remembering. Is remembering a method?)*

To start at one of the beginnings, the literature that I reviewed in "Theorizing Sex" had all been read prior to talking with women, prior to what I'll reluctantly refer to as the interviews. (This reluctance will be explained shortly). During the reading, I experienced what I call "flashbacks" - the kind of identification or click that occurs in, for example, consciousness-raising groups when a woman can relate some theoretical discussion or point to an event in her personal life. The theory that I was reading - particularly Dworkin, MacKinnon, and Irigaray - was making me remember things (things I had previously thought were worth forgetting). So, every time I experienced a flashback, I'd write it down on an index card labelled "memories". Although my theoretical focus was "sex as power", what turned up in my memory, and thus on the index cards, was "power in sex". The theory was saying that under male supremacy, sexuality is constructed by men, for men and that sex is deployed as power - and I could actually see this in my own life. I'd remember something, anything, and write it down - an episode, devoid of analysis *-and it would speak for itself.* It had sex as power written

all over it, so to speak. Some of the memories were of rape - one of which was the easily empirically determined kind (maybe), most of which weren't. Just normal coercive-type heterosexuality. The point is, however, that the memories triggered by the reading reiterated what the theory was telling me - that as a woman, as a member of an oppressed class, I was controlled, kept in my (second) place, by sex, through sex, *because* of sex. And I wanted to find out - or affirm - if other women's memories of sex were just as revealing as my own. I wanted to present the theoretical problem - power in sex/sex as power - to the context of women's lives, as I had been doing with, and including, my own.

Emerging from the theory and my own memories were the following questions - issues that I wanted to explore by talking to women and by tracing the actual practice of our sexuality through remembering:

What is the political meaning of intercourse? Is intercourse an expression of sexual inequality? Is the act of intercourse separate from male power? Can heterosexual intercourse be considered a symbol of dominance and power for men and submission and powerlessness for women? Is sex itself a form of control - a means of domination that is effective because of its subversiveness (ie. it occurs in a relationship, in the private sphere, thus appearing to be apolitical - separate from the scrutiny of the state)?

Is heterosexuality a coercive sexuality? Is all heterosexual sex accompanied by a power imbalance? If yes, can heterosexuality be defined in terms of this power imbalance - is it, in fact, a compulsory sexuality by those in power, for those in power? How do heterosexual acts become acts of power? Can heterosexual acts ever be non-coercive?

How is heterosexuality a male sexuality? Is the way men have sex coercive? Under male supremacy, can violence, aggression, and dominance be separated from sex?

How do women experience intercourse? How are women objectified through their sexual relationships with men and dominated through them? How much of heterosexual sex is actually enjoyed and desired by women? Are women performing or participating in heterosexual acts with which they feel uncomfortable - which they feel compelled to do? If so, what are they and what is their political implication? Why do they feel uncomfortable with them? At what level are women being sexually coerced - financial, emotional, social, or physical?

Interviewing?

... we are talking about an interview, not a conversation. You are gathering, and the informant providing, information to be processed and stored, and while you should certainly work to keep things relaxed and friendly, you are not simply "having a nice chat".¹⁸³

Once the above questions were formulated, I had to

determine a way of exploring them in real life. I had already dismissed the possibility of using quantitative methods because of the ways in which they alienate women from their experiences by discounting the personal and by accepting only that which is interpreted as objective and thus devoid of feeling. Then I realized that qualitative methods - at least those that are outlined in my undergraduate and graduate textbooks - are just as alienating and objectifying. The type of "interview" I had imagined in no way resembled what was recommended as proper procedure. What I wanted was a conversation, not an interview; for information to be equally exchanged; an awareness that exchanged information would be "stored"; and for things to be "relaxed and friendly" if that's how we were feeling - not an instrumental relaxation or friendliness designed to seduce someone to talk. I wanted to recreate what sometimes happens at my house (all women) when we get together late at night around the kitchen table to remember, tell stories and jokes, laugh, cry, get mad, reveal and share. What Luce Irigaray refers to as women-among-themselves. I wanted the only differences to be the presence of the tape-recorder, the specificity of the topic, and the possibility that we might never have met before. These expectations may have been naive and unrealistic but I wanted to at least try to fulfill them.

If I was "just a researcher", the interview as defined and described by traditional sociological paradigms might not

appear problematic. But as a *feminist* researcher, every element of the traditional interview represented a contradiction - how could I as a woman, as a feminist, do this to other women? I would be doing to women what men have done to us - using us, defining our entire existence according to this usage, describing our realities from their point of view, and discounting or denying that part of our reality which isn't instrumental to the maintenance of their reality. In order to demonstrate how I tried to circumvent what I, as a feminist, perceived as problematic, I will discuss the features of the social science interview and explain why they are problematic in terms of feminist research.

According to traditional sociological paradigms, the status of the interview is that of a mechanical instrument of data - collection. Its purpose is to extract information and to ensure that this extracted information is as unbiased and generalizable as possible. I see several problems with this. Firstly, the interview-as-data-collection-instrument implies that the interviewee is nothing more than a data source - an object of study to be manipulated and controlled so that the interviewer can "extract" what she can. I could not do this. One of the reasons I felt uncomfortable as a counsellor was the power I had to probe into peoples' lives without them knowing anything about me - *and not allowed to know*. Although I later made it a personal policy to self-disclose, this was a

choice available only to me as one in a position of power. This brings me to a second problem: interviewees are not allowed to know what the interviewer knows. The interviewer is supposed to pretend not to have any opinions and frequently, even the true motivation behind the interview is hidden. This is said to prevent bias - an opinion on the part of the interviewer might influence what is said by the interviewee. Also, if opinions are given and withheld inconsistently then there will be differences in the way the data is produced, thus making results invalid. The role of the interviewer, therefore, is one of all-knowing information extractor while the interviewee is not to seek or demand any knowledge, just give it. A third related problem is the design of the interview-as-data-collection-instrument. Its prohibition of "bias", and thus its prohibition of reciprocity between interviewer and interviewee, exposes its prohibition of subjectivity. By claiming it to be a "tool", an "instrument", sociology refuses to acknowledge what the interview really is - an unequally structured social interaction between two particular people, a situation which is far from objective. Its claim as an objective tool (providing proper procedure is followed) is necessary, however, to its purpose - to gather objective, rational, generalizable data. Coinciding with the traditional values of male culture, the paradigm of the sociological interview focuses on and pedestallizes the objective and measurable features of social life while

denigrating the subjective, the emotional, and the particular. It fails to acknowledge the macropolitical implications of microinteractions. The very idea of interviewing several people - "triangulation" - is a method of "handling" subjectivity. You count only that which the subjects have in common; what is valid is only that which is general. The role of the researcher, therefore, is to "sort out the 'testimony' and decide what should be discounted and what should be accepted as valid ... Frequently it doesn't matter what 'really' happened" ¹⁸⁴ *(Doesn't this sound like the orchestration of a rape? Randomly select any female body and rape it; when she says no, discount it because what females need in general is a good fuck; and, when its over, it doesn't matter what really happened because its his perception of reality that counts, not her's).*

The paradigm of the traditional sociological interview thus emphasizes, according to Oakley:

(a) its status as a mechanical instrument of data-collection; (b) its function as a specialized form of conversation in which one person asks the questions and another gives the answers; (c) its characterization of interviewees as essentially passive individuals, and (d) its reduction of interviewers to a question-asking and rapport-promoting role. ¹⁸⁵

The "paradigm" that I constructed in order to align the research process with my goals as a feminist was as antithetical to the one above as femininity is to masculinity. Firstly, rather than utilizing the interview as a data-collection instrument, I recognized it as a possible "instrument for promoting a sociology for women - that is, as a tool for making possible the articulated and recorded commentary

of women on the very personal business of being female in a patriarchal capitalist society."¹⁸⁶ I saw the interview as a means to give women a space in which their subjective experiences could be validated and given visibility. I wanted to document women's own account of how they have lived sexuality, how they have experienced sex. The role of the tape-recorder was thus an important one - it enabled me to document their accounts in their own words. In Entry 1, I quoted Irigaray in order to explain why I chose to write this thesis as a journal. This same quote also serves to explain the importance of documenting or writing women's own words, and thus the significance of the tape-recorder and literal transcriptions.

How, for women, can the question of their sexual exploitation be articulated ...? ... How can they free themselves from their expropriation within patriarchal culture? What questions should they address to its discourse? ... How can they "put" these questions so that they will not be once more "repressed", "censured"? But also how can they already speak (as) women? ... By speaking to women. And among women. Can this speaking (as) woman be written? How? ... Why not leave [the questions] in their own words? In their immediate expression? In their oral language?¹⁸⁷

I was also determined that if "interviews" were going to happen, they would have to be as instrumental to the women being "interviewed" as they were to me as a researcher - I wanted any "usage" that occurred to be reciprocal, if at all possible. And in most of the conversations this was the case. For example, after asking me what I intended to write my thesis on, one woman asked to participate because she wanted

the chance "to tell her story." Another woman telephoned me upon seeing my notice in the St. John's Status of Women Councils' newsletter¹⁸⁸ telling me she wanted to talk "in order to dispel the myths about women's sexuality." Another wanted to participate because she felt that talking was therapeutic - in her words, "it does me good to talk about my past." The point is, most of the women with whom I talked had their own individual reasons for volunteering apart from the obvious one of helping me "collect data". By asking them, I found out what their needs were and tried to meet them. I also assured them that what would appear in this thesis would be their own oral account of their lives, not a translation. So, their accounts are, in effect, public statements about their own personal lives - made possible through anonymity.

With regard to the tape-recorder, I could conceive of no other way to accurately "store" their accounts. But it wasn't obligatory. Before we would actually meet to talk sex, we'd discuss the options - note-taking during or notes taken immediately afterwards, etc. However, nobody objected to being taped. I'm not sure whether this was because they recognized the inconvenience of doing it any other way, and were thus doing me a favour, or if it was because they knew they wouldn't be self-disclosing on tape alone. They knew that I too was a subject of my research as I had conveyed to each of them that their memories would probably trigger my own. Another factor which may account for the ease with which

the tape-recorder was accepted was the promise that after the tapes were transcribed, they could either have them or they would be immediately erased. Everyone opted for the latter.

Because I chose to utilize the interview as a means to provide us with a space in which our subjective experiences could be validated, the question of how to "analyze" the subjective experiences of the others, without making invalid their own interpretations and viewpoints, is one I have yet to solve. Like it or not, as the researcher and writer, I have the power to interpret and thus define their realities - yet this contradicts what I want to do. Up to this point, I haven't quite figured out how to work through this blatant contradiction. I'm hoping that when I begin to include our words and memories in the journal a previously unthought of solution will present itself. As of now, there are no solutions and few choices. (At the moment, the best I can do is try to clarify what I'm confused about in order to make things easier later on).¹⁸⁹ Firstly, I could refuse to analyze or interpret any personal account except my own. This would allow for and validate differing viewpoints. For example, not all of the women identified themselves as feminists and those that did interpreted feminism in different ways. (*But they all knew what I meant by power in sex. And what about the fact that most of us were merely remembering during the conversations, not interpreting?*). Secondly, I could interpret their accounts on terms other than theirs in order

to create or validate theory or to further sociological or feminist goals. (*The use of women for women?*). Thirdly, I could justify interpreting their realities on the grounds that, as a woman, my experiences are very similar and I can thus relate to them. I have participated in what I have heard. Because I have experienced much the same thing as a member of this oppressed class called women, it is acceptable for me to interpret their experiences. (*And maybe I'm kidding myself*). Maybe I should look at it from the perspective that as long as there is someone doing research, it is inevitable that there will be a dichotomy between researcher and researched (unless one works within a collective¹⁹⁰ or makes the subject of one's research herself only¹⁹¹). The best I may be able to do is acknowledge the power that I do have, minimize it as much as I can, and realize that it cannot be eliminated completely because I am the one who is doing the writing and thus the one in control. (*But at least it's me - one of women - in control. An insider rather than an outsider*). Maybe there is something that I have already done to minimize my power. All of the women with whom I talked were aware of my theoretical perspective - I made it quite clear at the onset, before the "interview". There was no hidden agenda. Not all of the women shared my perspective, or wanted to make it their own, but they saw its relevance and actually placed their stories in the context of this perspective as we were talking. (*This could mean either that they gave me*

permission to be "interpreter" or that my perspective prevailed because I was the one in power during the interviews. If its the latter, then what I am going to try to prevent from happening, has already happened). Is it fair for me to claim that I am providing a space for some women to tell their side of the story and then turn around and interpret these stories as I see them? *But that's what sociology does* - it provides an account of what people do alongside of a structural analysis. *And that's what feminism does* - it interprets our private realities as political and places them in the context of an oppressive social structure - patriarchy - in order to improve our future realities.

I'd like to now end this discussion of my confusion and continue discussing how my "interviews" differed from the traditional. Before I proceed, however, I want to include the following quotes from Nzingha in Alice Walker's The Temple of My Familiar. They illustrate my feminist methodological dilemma¹⁹² perfectly:

Perhaps this is simply the way it is with writers. It is when they don't see you that you matter. Because then you belong to them in a way that permits them complete possession. You are determined by them. You are controlled. You are, generally speaking, exaggerated.¹⁹³

"Writers", she mused. "Does anyone else cause as much trouble, in the long run? ... Writers don't cause as much as they describe it. Once it is described, trouble takes on a life visible to all, whereas until it is described, and made visible, only a few are able to see it. Still, there is something about writers ... I think it is a kind of curlicue they have in their brain. They come into the world with a certain perspective, and the drive

to share it."¹⁹⁴

(Is wanting to share a feminist perspective, a feminist analysis, so bad?) .

It is probably obvious from the above discussion that I dismissed the other three features of the traditional interview as well. Instead of a strict division between interviewer as inquisitor and interviewee as passive respondent, we had real, not pseudo, conversations in which asking and answering roles were constantly exchanged. It didn't make sense to me to purposely create a "me versus them" type of encounter - researcher first, woman second - in which I would pretend to know nothing about being a woman and expect lengthy personal disclosures while I revealed nothing. *No.* If I was going to ask women to risk speaking about that which is usually unspeakable, I felt that I should at least take the same risk - especially since I too was a subject. Why limit my "subject status" to memories on index cards? Actually, I asked women if they wanted to do some one-on-one consciousness-raising, not if they wanted to be "interviewed". This term was later used solely as a matter of convenience. It really doesn't adequately describe what happened. There was just too much reciprocity, too much mutual self-exposing and questioning to be called an interview - we shared information and experiences. Their memories promoted my own, my opinions elicited their opinions - and we'd speak them. If we could, and providing they weren't too painful, we'd also answer

direct questions.

The conversations did vary, however, in how much self-disclosing and questioning was actually mutual. As I mentioned previously, each woman had her own individual reasons for entering the research process. It was in the context of the conversations that I attempted to fulfill the needs they wanted met. For example, with a few women, I really didn't have the chance to do much self-disclosing. The tape-recorder would be turned on and an uninterrupted monologue of experiences, memories, thoughts and opinions would begin, with a comment at the end about relief. At first, that really bothered me - it contradicted my standards of complete equality and mutuality. Then I realized these were *my* standards. What about theirs? How often does it happen in a man's world when a woman can speak about being a woman? These were the women who participated in order to talk - "to get stuff off their chest." It would have been rude, inappropriate, and selfish of me to interrupt and start talking about myself. The most I could do was offer to self-disclose after they were finished and answer any direct questions that they might ask. Other times, if they were discussing something that was particularly painful, I could not impose upon their pain by demanding that they be listeners. It was my place to listen - if my reasons of "I know where you're coming from" was met with a "how", that was my cue to talk. In striving for mutuality, I almost forgot about the extent to which women

in this society are characterized as listeners - as sympathetic ears to the problems of men and children. Why should they be "ears" for me when the only reason they volunteered their time was to talk? There was also the issue of differences in personality - some women were talkers who needed no prompting, others were not used to the luxury of talking about themselves and needed encouragement. As in conversations outside of a research context, there will sometimes be differences in who does the most talking and who does the most listening.

I entered the conversations with a tentative list of issues rather than a definitive list of questions. In other words, the theoretical issues I wanted to address defined the general topic of conversation while specific questions arose out of what was being said rather than what I had read. Thus the questions that were asked varied from conversation to conversation. The discussion, therefore, followed no particular format and each conversation was and was not unique. (Each conversation was unique because the stories told were those of unique, individual women. After all of the tapes were transcribed, however, I could recognize that when put together the stories also revealed common, collective experiences of sexual oppression as well as similar ways of coping with it.) Our conversations consisted of the uncovering and unravelling of our sexual pasts and presents, and our feelings towards them. I didn't play the part of the detached psycho-

analyst - I didn't keep my feelings, opinions, or my advice to myself. Nor did they. Frequently, we helped one another resolve issues that had always bothered us and validated thoughts or feelings we had previously believed were ridiculous. For example, I had been telling Joyce about how extremely angry I'd become when my ex-husband would always choose to come on to me when I was either making the bed, doing the dishes, or vacuuming. I could explain neither his behavior nor my continued "unreasonable" anger. She told me he was sexually aroused by subservient behavior - like Elvis Presley. Joyce had read Pricilla's account of her marriage to Elvis. One of the things that apparently had turned him on was having his wife dress and act out subservient roles - his secretary, his nurse, his chambermaid, etc. There wasn't much that I could have done either with my hands in the sink. *Click.* Thank you Joyce. Although this is a rather light example compared to some of the disturbing experiences that were disclosed, it illustrates how reciprocity rather than detachment can turn the interview into a helpful interaction rather than just an information-seeking one.

Since it is a part of the "how" of women-among-themselves, I will now conclude this entry with a general discussion of where I found women with whom to talk. (Specific introductions will be made in the next entry.) When I wrote my thesis proposal in the spring of 1989, I had some terribly specific ideas about what kinds of women I wanted to talk with

and where I was going to find them - I find that writing this down is more embarrassing than some of my more personal self-disclosures. I had planned to "interview" women who identified themselves as having a "normal" heterosexual relationship, lesbians who had had heterosexual relationships prior to coming out, and women who identified themselves as having experienced unwanted sex in their heterosexual relationships. At that time, I thought that by talking to women with these specific types of experiences, I'd be able to compare "normal" heterosexual sex with "violent" heterosexual sex and to obtain insights from lesbians about heterosexuality as women who stand outside of its structure. Thankfully, it didn't take me long to realize that this approach was essentially wrong. I did not need to target specific groups - all women experience the effects of heterosexuality as a political institution and of masculinity and femininity as eroticized ideologies - in other words, all women experience sexual dominance, including lesbian women who have never had sex with men. As the only sexuality defined as normal, everyone embraces heterosexuality at some level - or are embraced by it. To explore how sexual dominance occurs, I could talk to any woman. I realized this when Marilyn, my thesis advisor, suggested that I talk to women I already knew. I went ahead, however, with seeking participants in the manner I had outlined in my proposal. I placed a notice in the summer '89 issue of the St. John's Status of Women Council newsletter,

at the Women's Centre, Kirby House, Patrick House, Planned Parenthood, and the Provincial Advisory Council for the Status of Women. The notices read as follows:

I am doing a study on women's sexuality as part of my M.A. degree. I am seeking women who would be willing to talk with me intensively and extensively about our past, present, or ongoing heterosexuality.

I will meet with you alone, anywhere that you would feel comfortable, and respect - totally - your right to confidentiality. If you are interested in participating, or you know a friend who might be, or you require more information, please contact me at [home phone number].

After I had posted the notices, I began contacting friends and acquaintances. I explained that in talking with me, we would be examining heterosexuality as we live it and experience its effects, as well as our perceptions of how we are dominated through sexuality. I also suggested that through our descriptions of how we live out our sexuality, we might be able to disclose or at least shed some light on its organization; that I expected - not suggested - its organization was instrumental to women's oppression because I had experienced it this way and wondered if they did as well. After these discussions, I asked them to consider what had been talked about and to get back to me - but only if they felt absolutely comfortable with the idea.

The results of the notices and my conversations with friends and acquaintances were as follows: Five women telephoned me upon reading the notices. Two were strangers, Dale and Christine, with whom I met. And three other women

whom I have never met who cancelled due to conflicting schedules. The remaining six women were friends of mine who volunteered after considering what the project was all about.

Before I conclude this entry, I'd like to make one more point about my method - women among themselves. As I mentioned previously, I am reluctant to call my conversations interviews because what actually happened was more like consciousness-raising, except on a one-to-one basis rather than as a group. I realize that trust and friendship must be established over a period of time before personal disclosures are made and knowledge is gained in CR groups. But I already knew six out of the eight women with whom I talked - trust was already established. Giving one another private accounts of how we have lived sex was like taking our friendship one step further. With Dale and Christine, trust was quickly established when they realized I was taking equal risks (actually more risk in that I don't have the equal advantage of remaining anonymous on paper.) With regards to time, each conversation averaged 5 to 6 hours - when women are among themselves with a specific topic to address, a lot can be said and discovered in this time span. (Each transcript was between 50 and 60 pages long.)

According to Catherine MacKinnon, consciousness-raising is the method of feminism. If I ever write another thesis, I will use it again, although collectively rather than individually. I just wish I could have utilized my time

better so that I could have done it this time round. Consciousness-raising as method is the "critical reconstitution of the meaning of women's social experience, as women live through it ... [it] unmask[s] maleness as a form of power that is both omnipotent and nonexistent, an unreal thing with very real consequences."¹⁹⁵ In other words, consciousness-raising makes visible the chains of oppression, recognizes these chains as "unnatural" and enforced, and in recognizing them as such embraces hope and activates change. That's what we did. We examined our sex lives for evidence of power and found it. We recognized the ways we were controlled through sex. As soon as we recognized this - and recognized this as a constructed and unnatural state of affairs - we were visualizing ways it could be different. If not, we at least realized that we now had the knowledge to try not to let the past repeat itself. Maybe the most important thing that could be said about this thesis is the unanimous conviction of all who were involved that change is needed - which is necessary if change is ever going to occur.

Entry 10: Introductions

These are the women with whom I talked. At the beginning of each conversation, we would exchange biographical sketches or cocktail party type details in order to get comfortable

with the presence of the tape-recorder. I could not include these as literal transcriptions because they had to be disguised. Although we all know who we are, the reader obviously doesn't. The purpose of including these introductions is to help the reader to attach a "face" to the women as they tell their stories. They consist of the type of information people generally exchange when initially getting to know one another. Also included are details about the mood or setting of the "interviews".

All of the names have been changed - some pseudonyms were chosen by myself and others by the women themselves. Many biographical details have either been omitted, changed or obscured in order to ensure anonymity. Because of the possibility that mutual friends might recognize each other, our interrelationships have also, at times, been obscured.

Alain

Alain is one of the friends I contacted who expressed interest in participating. Our conversation took place at my house, in the evening, where we sprawled on the couch and drank lots of tea and coffee. She had just gotten off work and was more tired than she anticipated. She was thus irritable and at times abrupt - her words sometimes reflect her frame of mind. She was determined, however, to talk as

we had planned because of the limitations on her time due to her hectic work schedule. Neither shy nor nervous, she was unconcerned about the presence of the tape-recorder.

Alain is in her late 20s. She has always lived in St. John's. Her parents divorced and she and her four sisters were raised by her father. According to Alain, they were not well off growing up, although her father did own his own home. A staunch Roman Catholic, Alain's father raised his children according to what he perceived to be the ways of the church.

Alain holds a university degree in the social sciences and is currently employed in the human services field. She is a self-identified lesbian who is currently involved in a monogamous relationship.

Chris

Chris and I had not really known each other that well prior to our conversation. The research process was thus instrumental in speeding up our friendship. For two consecutive mornings, we met at my house. Chris was initially very uncomfortable with the tape-recorder and her unease never dissipated entirely - this was reflected more so in the tone of her voice than in the content of what she had to say. My strong coffee probably didn't help.

Chris is in her early 20s. She grew up in a town outside

of St. John's but currently lives in the city where she is a student. She and her two sisters were raised by both her mother and father. Her parents both work outside of the home. Chris is a self-identified lesbian who is currently involved in a monogamous relationship.

Dawn

Dawn and I are friends. She offered to participate because she believed it would help her to talk about her experiences. We had our conversation at my home in the afternoon. We were both in a good mood although I was feeling tired. This tiredness, however, may have been inspired by Dawn's stories - the anger I felt over what had been done to her left me without any energy. Dawn did not feel uncomfortable with the tape-recorder although her voice was more formal than what I was used to. Nor was she shy.

Dawn is in her late 30s. She was born in a small Newfoundland community, and before settling down in St. John's, her family moved three times - relocating according to the demands of her father's job which involved frequent travelling. Her mother worked inside of the home, raising four boys and three girls mostly on her own. Dawn is currently employed in the city and has a "non-traditional" job. She is a self-identified lesbian who lives with her

lover in a monogamous relationship.

Roseanne

Roseanne and I have known each other for a long time. She offered to participate because she said she had a lot to say on the matter. We met at my home, in the evening, where we got comfortable on the couch with coffee and brandy. (Most of the women came to my home because of the privacy it offered - no lovers, husbands, or children.) She came very prepared to talk and the tape-recorder was an absolute non-issue.

Roseanne is in her late 30s. She was born in a small Newfoundland town which she left upon completing high school. She then moved to St. John's in order to accomplish a trade. She was raised by both of her parents as the youngest daughter in a very large family. She is married, with one child. Before settling permanently in St. John's, her husband's job required that they frequently move. Roseanne has always worked outside of the home and is currently employed.

Joyce

Joyce and I are more acquaintances than friends. She overheard me discussing my thesis one afternoon and asked if

I would like to interview her. She wanted the chance to tell her story. We met at my house early in the afternoon and talked until evening. Joyce and I had one of my favorite conversations - it was unpredictable and possibly the most natural. The tape-recorder in this case was a nuisance - there were so few silences to take advantage of that we'd have to force ourselves to stop talking in order to change tapes.

Joyce is in her late 40s. She grew up in an older part of St. John's in a family of four sisters and four brothers. While her mother worked in the home, her father was employed as a taxi-driver. According to Joyce, her parents were very strict Anglicans. Joyce is divorced and has four adult children. She is currently employed full-time as a cook and does domestic work in her spare time.

Christine

Christine telephoned me upon reading my notice in the SJWC newsletter. She was enthusiastic to "dispel the myths about women's sexuality." This was how she perceived the project. We met at her home in the evening and talked in her office. She was totally unconcerned with the tape-recorder and very relaxed. Offering me tea, etc., she made me as comfortable as possible. Her questions, however, were often so direct, she also made me uncomfortable. At the end of our

conversation, I felt myself getting angry when she told me I fell short of a particular stereotype.

Christine is in her early 30s. She was born in the older part of St. John's and grew up in the suburbs. Her father was a salesman and her mother worked in the home. Christine is one of a twin. After completing high school, Christine did some travelling, and then returned to St. John's to accomplish a trade. She lived for awhile on the mainland before permanently settling in Newfoundland as an artist. Christine is a self-defined heterosexual.

Dale

Dale read one of my notices and contacted me through a mutual friend. She wanted to participate because she finds that talking about her experiences has helped her. We have met only once and that was the evening we talked. Our mutual friend keeps us informed as to how the other is doing. Dale and I talked at my home. It was a hot evening so we found ourselves drinking beer in order to cool down. Needless to say, we were very relaxed. She was used to the tape-recorder because she had done a workshop on job interviews in which they were used as a method of improving communication skills. Because Dale needed to talk, I said very little.

Dale is in her late 40s. She grew up in a small New-

foundland community in a family of nine children. Her father was a fisherman and her mother worked at home. Being the eldest daughter, Dale had a lot of household responsibilities. After completing grade nine, Dale moved to another community where she was employed in a fish plant. Dale was married when she was 17 and eventually had nine children. She continued to work as a fish plant worker throughout most of her marriage. Dale is currently divorced, living in St. John's, and, unfortunately, only periodically employed.

Monica

Monica expressed interest in participating immediately upon receiving my phone call. We have known one another for about 10 years. Our conversation occurred at my home in the evening. As we were both very relaxed, the tape-recorder was not an imposition - and Monica was a fascinating, uninhibited story-teller.

Monica is in her late 40s. She grew up in central and western Newfoundland and was raised by both parents. Moving to St. John's after high school, she attended nursing school and married shortly after graduation. From her first marriage, she had two children. She later obtained a divorce and re-married in her early 40s. Monica currently works as a business woman.

Lori

I am the writer. When I started this journal I was 26 - now I'm 27. I grew up in St. John's. My parents divorced when I was 17 and I thereafter lived with my younger sister and my mother - who became a university student about the same time that I did. In my second year of university I got married and not long after I began my M.A., I got divorced. I currently live in an apartment in my mother's home. I have worked as a salesclerk, a waitress, a teaching assistant, a researcher, and a counsellor. Three years ago, I came out as a lesbian.

Entry 11:**Living Under a Heterosexual Regime - Our Stories**

This entry consists of sexual storytelling. As it would have been impractical to include the transcripts of our conversations in their entirety, I have placed the stories - segments of lives - into an arrangement. Stories with common themes appear together while stories with uncommon themes appear alone. It is an arrangement that doesn't lack fluidity - stories and themes frequently overlap. There are nine lives

in here and I own only one of them. I have therefore, for the most part, disentangled my voice and my stories from the other eight lives. To have included it would have meant repetition - I shared with eight women my one life. My voice and my stories now appear in the letters at the end of each thematic grouping. Addressed to those women who shared a story in each "section", the letters are my way of dealing with the problematic issues that I discussed in Entry 9. Even if they never respond to what I've written, the letters imply that a response has been invited; that I do not want to have the definitive say; that although I offer insight, it is their choice to reject or accept it; that they are the real experts on their own lives. This isn't a structural trick or escape mechanism - it is a sincere attempt to do feminism.

Sexual Experiences of Childhood

Monica

"We were advised at a very young age to stay away from men. I had several run ins as a child. I guess I was sexually molested as a child - I don't remember. I really don't remember being molested but I think I must have been. I remember running away from a man, I remember being afraid, but I was very young and I can't say why. I remember one time being trapped in a community centre and trying to get away from a man. And I was so tiny I ran between his two legs.

I don't think he caught me. I don't remember being caught ...

My one encounter with a woman as a child that I've always remembered - its funny I remember this and not the other encounters - was with this particular neighbour. She had a son my age and we were both friends. We buddied around a lot together and I spent a lot of time at his house, sleeping over. Because he was an only child this was a real treat for me. My being one of seven, nobody knows you're in the world for the most part. You just come in, someone feeds you and you go to bed. So this was a real treat to have all that attention. This woman, his mother, was a very loving person - a very kind and considerate person, so I thought. When I stayed over night with him we always slept together. And its funny because I visited there when I was 13 and we still slept together. When I think about it, its odd. But there was no sexual connotations in our relationship whatsoever. I didn't see him sexually and I'm sure he didn't see me sexually. But she would get in bed with us. And he would fondle her all the time - her breasts - and it used to puzzle me because we would never be naked at our house. I mean super modest - mother would never show her body no matter what. She was super, super modest. We grew up like that. That's the way she was and she taught us to be like it really. But this woman would get in bed and half the time be naked which used to puzzle me to no end because this wasn't like my mother. Isn't it weird? But anyway, we'd get in bed and she'd have him on one side of

her and me on the other side. And I would be so baffled. He was fondling her. She didn't ask me to do anything. I would cuddle into her and that's all. She never ever did say I want you to do this or do that. Nor to him. He just did it. He did it as if he'd always done it. And I don't know - he'd suck on her breasts as if he were a baby. I kept it a secret. I knew I shouldn't talk about it. I knew if I did I wouldn't be allowed to go back there. I didn't feel threatened. I didn't feel afraid of her or anything, at any time. She didn't do anything to make me feel threatened. Nor did she ask me to do anything to her. It was really something. And that's a sexual experience I remember. She was a really nice woman. She wanted my folks to leave me with her when we moved. I was 13. So she said that I should stay with her, live with her and little Robert. That was the end of that. But I did come back and spend a summer with them. And its funny, again we slept together. And his two cousins were also there visiting. One of them was a guy about 16 and the girl was my age and the four of us slept together. But there was never anything sexual between us kids. I know I'd remember. But I remember sleeping together - putting the bed clothes up to make tents ..."

Alain

"I was sexually abused when I was nine. I'm not going to tell you everything bit by bit what happened, not every

detail. I don't like talking about it and you already know about it anyway ... I went upstairs at my grandfather's house and they were too handicapped to walk up over two or three flights of stairs up on the third floor. I went upstairs and my uncle called me up to look at something. It was a big storage room, something like that - it could have been his bedroom, I don't know. But it was a big, big room with two tables and chairs, and there was a lot of things on top of the tables and that. It was a very cluttered room. So he called me up and I went up. And I was looking at different things, like cartoons and stuff. And then he started showing me these fucking pictures of naked people - cartoon style. I just looked and threw them at him. I said what do you want me looking at that for - I knew what he was getting at. And then he closed the door and I was just sitting there, looking at him, you know. There was no such thing as taking his time, right, about something like this. I guess he figured I caught on too easy and he didn't have time to fool around, sort of, waste time. If I got up, the door was so far away too, there was no other entrances, there was a small window. If I got up to run I think he would have grabbed me, probably would have raped me. He would have gagged me. That's number one what I was thinking about. So I sat there very calmly. He sat in a chair. He started, you know, getting on with his horseshit. I'll probably go out and knife him tonight, talking about this. *But he doesn't live here.* I don't care, I'll get

a plane. Anyway, I don't know the first thing he asked me to do. He asked me to touch him. *He asked to touch you?* He wanted to. I told him he was nuts. I just looked at him. See, I was a different kind of kid. I was very very brazen when I wanted to be. I was like street grown, full-fledged. Very very keen on people. Very perceptive. I'd see things before they'd happen half the time. And I knew people and their con jobs too. But I knew what he was getting at. I talked my way out of a lot. But usually I'd use a lot of eye contact and look him straight in the face. I think my eye contact stopped him from a lot of things because he knew if he had to press things I would have blew the whistle on him. I would have nailed him. And I would have! He bribed me - or blackmailed me I should say. I was smoking a cigarette. I never smoked before - I smoked then. He said you tell your father what happened today and I'll tell him ... I'd do certain things to him. Then I got out of there and I went downstairs. My grandparents were there. I had to run home and take a bath and get off my clothes, I was full of --. Then the next day he phoned the house and asked Dad if he could take me out. Dad thought he was being nice and I said no, I'm not going out with that man. He said you're going out with that man, he's your uncle, and he's trying to be nice to you. Probably he thought they were feeling sorry for us because mom had left us. I said no, I'm not going. So Dad pushed the issue and I had to go out again - in the car with him. This time we

didn't go into the house or anything. We just stayed in the car driving around. He used to take his penis out and sit in the car. I'd look at him like he was retarded. I told him he was sick in the head. Even then I knew - I said you're sick in the head you know, you should go get some help. That's what I said. So, anyway, he laid off after a while because he knew he was pressing the wrong buttons. This went on for three or four hours, twice a week for about two months. Then he started on my sister - she was five or six. He started on her then. She told me he did something up on [name of street]. He hauled out his penis and wanted her to engage in whatever. She said she got out of the car. She walked home at five years old. I think he asked me to, you know, have oral sex. I still told him he was nuts. Like I knew there was something terribly wrong with him and why he was doing this. The vibes I was getting weren't nice. They were sort of like a coercive atmosphere. I think all men are coercive. That wasn't my first hint ...

We used to get chased by man walking home from school. [Alain went to school in a notoriously "hard" part of town.] We couldn't even walk through the paths cause men - and I mean older men - would chase us. We used to run. We knew if we stopped we'd get raped or killed or something. I always used to get chased.

In school, the guys used to haul your uniform up. Right up till grade seven. Grabbing you. I used to kick them right

between the two legs - they wouldn't do nothing to me then - they couldn't walk. See, I never used to wear just my socks and bare legs. I used to wear slacks underneath my dress. You were allowed to if they matched. A lot of girls did that. For other reasons too - you didn't want to trip and fall in the corridor with your dress up around yours ears ...

Men. When they're younger, they're more aggressive too. And they get away with it a lot more. Pushing, shoving - all this physical garbage. I think they did it to intimidate - to prove they were stronger, better. They used to beat women too out in the school yard. I got smacked up a few times by a couple of them. I got a few smacks or punches in the face, for no reason. But they wouldn't go pick on the next guy. We were picked on because we were girls - we were a lot weaker physically and we couldn't fight back as good as another guy could. I often said, look, why don't you pick on that big guy over there. Pick on someone your own size. But they knew they'd get flattened. So they'd come over and flatten us instead. A bunch of cowards, that's what they were. They thought they were manly by beating the shit out of women and girls. But really we could see they weren't manly at all. Only cowards. I begged Dad to let me go to another school but he wouldn't hear tell of it. He said it was a good Catholic school and it was next door to our church ...

I used to play doctor but we never touched. We'd look sometimes. With girls, not guys. I knew I was attracted to

girls at age six or seven. I knew I was attracted to women more so than guys. I knew it. I used to like my teachers for God sake. I compared them to guys - anything was better. I thought girls were a lot smarter. More or less, they thought about things like what they were going to do. They thought things out more carefully than boys. Boys thought they were very impulsive and didn't give a shit."

Chris

"For the last two years I get visions of a hand touching me. First I could barely see the hand, now I can see the hand and part of the arm. I know I am a child and I know it was a red and black woodsman type shirt and a big hand. Sort of like a mechanics hand, that type of dirty hand. I don't know if I just dreamt that because being raped or molested is one of my worse fears. So I don't know if I'm dreaming that up because I'm so afraid of it. Or if it did happen and I blocked it out."

First Letter

Dear Monica, Alain and Chris:

I can't remember being very sexual as a child. My most vivid memory is of staying at my aunt's house when I was about nine years old and sharing a bed with my younger cousin. It was late at night, we had removed our pajamas, and her and I took turns touching one another. It had felt so good that we

had been quite impatient waiting for our respective turn to be touched. When my aunt walked into the room, I was the one caught in the act of touching - her daughter. She brought us out into the kitchen, after we had dressed, and told us about the chances of a fire occurring and how we should therefore wear our pajamas - just in case we had to suddenly leave the house. I don't recall feeling any guilt or shame because we had been of the same sex. But I do remember knowing that the nakedness and touching was taboo. I think this is probably the only directly sexual experience I had.

What strikes me as the most significant aspect of the three of your stories is that common fear of men. I grew up with it too. I cannot adequately explain here where this fear initiated because of the fact that I'm not using a pseudonym and I do not want to inadvertently identify anyone else. But other things I can mention: rocks in snowballs aimed only at girls; a surprise punch in the stomach from a strange boy as I was walking to the corner store; a body-shaking fear of the principal of my elementary school who didn't hesitate to publicly humiliate a child or to use his strap. Although none of these things appear to be sexual, they have everything to do with sex as gender. It is from such experiences that I learned about the power that boys have - the power that they exercised through their overt acts of aggression. And it is from such experiences that I learned to be powerless - I ran from the snowballs, took detours when I expected there were

boys with snowballs on a certain block, cried and ran home when punched, stopped going to the corner store alone, and practically failed math when the principal taught it because of my debilitating fear of him. If it is as children we learn our "proper" gender roles, then the role that I learned as being female was one of submission. Why didn't I fight back? Throw snowballs, throw a punch, pass math rather than let the principal get to me? And if, as I stated in Entry 4 of the journal, heterosexuality is the erotization of gender differences, then our childhood fears of males takes on an even greater significance. Is this what heterosexuality, as an institution, creates: cruel, aggressive boys; frightened, submissive girls; adult men who get off on power because sex is power?

Contrast what Monica and I experienced sexually with females, with what Alain describes and Chris speculates about. My experience with my cousin was purely sensual - the innocent enjoyment of physical sensations we knew nothing about and therefore didn't identify as sexual. And Monica, even though you describe your experience with your friend's mother as being "weird", you remember her as an affectionate, loving woman. You were not afraid of her - you were afraid of the relationship ending if others found out. Is this because her pleasure, too, was innocent - innocent in that she used neither fear, aggression, blackmail, nor coercion to receive it, to require your participation? But, then again, if it had

been your friend's father rather than his mother, I'd probably be saying that he used his power as an adult to orchestrate a scenario in which he could receive sexual pleasure. Her son was sucking her breasts. An unresolved Oedipal complex? An extended version of the sexuality that exists between mother and infant? Physical closeness that hadn't been curtailed - neither mother nor child withdrew?

This reminds me of a movie I saw last year - "The Good Mother". It was about a mother who raised her daughter very liberally - letting her know that nakedness was okay, sex was natural, etc. One day the mother's boyfriend stepped out of the shower and the child asked to see his penis because she had never seen one before. Knowing the mother's philosophy regarding sex, he showed her. Charges of sexual abuse were filed by the child's father upon hearing about the incident. I guess there's a fine line. Maybe what constitutes sexual abuse is whatever a child is uncomfortable or uneasy with. You were neither.

I admit, however, that I am uncomfortable with the concept of a female child molester. I counselled a woman who had been convicted of sexually assaulting her two daughters. She used to insert objects into their vaginas when they were bathing. This woman had been raped almost daily since she was four years old - first by her father, then by her husband. Initially, I was lost for words - I had always known what to say to male sex offenders. Then it struck me that she, as

powerless, was exercising power in the only way she knew how - sexually. And against the only people she had power over - her children.

But back to fear, your fear was of men, not of women. And by the sounds of it, this fear was justified. Monica, maybe your mother was on to something when she told you to stay away from them. Maybe she knew that their danger was of a sexual nature - that what pleases them is to be sexually coercive. Particularly over someone with little power - a little girl. Maybe this is why she was so insistent on modesty - that if you hid your sexual self, it wouldn't be invaded. She was trying to protect you. Monica and Chris, I don't know if either of you were sexually assaulted as children. But your memories or dreams, even if they are not of actual events, are significant in that they indicate a realization and a knowledge in both of you that the possibility of it happening, or having happened, is a very real one. Little girls live with this knowledge. Women live with this knowledge. If we haven't actually experienced rape, we know someone who has, or we have nightmares about it that prevent us from sleeping. I don't believe that they are common memories or dreams for men. I doubt that fears or dreams of rape keep many men awake at night.

Alain, I know you and I know how your childhood experiences with sexual violence have angered and hurt you. I can't help but wonder if your realization as a child that "all men

are coercive" was a factor in your later total rejection of men. I view heterosexuality in adulthood as being the denial of women's desire. If this is so, then childhood must prepare us for that. Your desires sure as hell were denied. Your uncle was highly manipulative. Taking advantage of the fact that his sister, your mother, was no longer your caretaker, he presented himself as the concerned, empathetic uncle in front of your father. And your father refused to listen to you - why aren't women and children ever heard? As an adult, as a male, as an uncle, he had all the power - and obviously he got off on that. Sex as power as pleasurable. Domination as a turn on. Maybe your rejection was not of men, per se, but of heterosexuality - the erotization of male dominance and female submission. You chose not to be a part of that. When your uncle demanded that you participate in certain sexual acts, at the age of nine, you managed to somehow save yourself from total degradation. When men chased you after school, you out ran them. When boys attempted to expose your body, you fought back and eventually you outsmarted them by dressing their way. You left your body not only free from exposure but free to defend itself, to escape effectively. When in the school yard, boys beat on girls, you recognized it for what it was - displays of masculinity and manhood designed to intimidate, "to prove they were stronger, better". You didn't internalize it as so many of us do - as I did. You didn't let them win. As they created their masculinity, you struggled

against their creation of your femininity. And I think I know how you were able to do this - I will discuss it in a future letter. But the point is you survived. You saw in girls what you knew you'd never receive from boys - a something other than indifference. It seems to me that to your uncle, to the school yard bullies, you were nothing but a prop against which they measured their virility. You recognized their indifference towards you, your role as prop. I wish I had recognized it that early - had learned to throw snowballs, to throw a punch, to aim and kick. You know, I failed math in grade 11. I was moved back and forth from "average" math to honors math depending on the sex of the teacher. It just so happened that in my final year, the teacher was male and that debilitated me - I feared him and was thus unable to perform. You, on the other hand, performed despite of fear - in spite of fear. You refused to be a prop.

Earlier in this journal, I asked whether violence, aggression, and dominance could be separated from sex under male supremacy. When I think of my experiences with "maleness" as a child, of your's Alain, and your memories Monica and Chris, I wonder. I mean, really, what did we see of boys and men - cruel, aggressive behavior. In my case, that was what made them popular, particularly in elementary and junior high school. The more they acted in an "appropriately" masculine way, the more attention they received - from us girls and teachers. Generally, they were rewarded for their

behavior. We knew we were liked, chosen as a "pretty" one the more they treated as like shit. There was one guy, older because he had failed a grade, who punched me in the arm so hard one day that he left a bruise. This punch signalled that he desired me. What did I do? - rolled up my sleeve to show off the bruise and lost my best friend in the process. She desired him. That was grade seven. We haven't spoken since. And the play wedding I attended on the lawn in front of the school in grade one. I was the maid of honor, the bride was my friend, and the groom was a boy who had pelted us with snowballs and pulled our hair. Just for that day, we were, both sexes, united - illicitly, however. Our school yard was divided into a boy's side and a girl's side. We had the parking lot, they the soccer field - presumably because they needed more room to be boys even though we outnumbered them. We avoided their side because of a fear of the unknown - "what's the boy's side like, I wonder?" They avoided our side because of the strap. But they occasionally infiltrated - the reward of our delighted screams outweighed the threat of corporal punishment. Power is a wonderful thing, isn't it? The power to be rewarded for aggression, the power to be granted more space in order to be aggressive. Cultivating masculinity must have been the school's specialty. We were punished for stepping into each other's worlds. Still are.

Sexual Knowledge (Or Lack Of It)

... men create the world from their own point of view, which then becomes the truth to be described. (Catherine A. MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: An Agenda for Theory")

... the organization and distribution of sexual knowledge ... serves to define sexuality in masculine terms and has denied women and girls access to vital information concerning their sexuality ... We do not enter heterosexual relationships on equal terms with our partners. Men's definition of what sex entails are the conventional and accepted ones, so if we attempt to restructure the sequence of events in a sexual encounter, to give precedence to acts other than intercourse, we are challenging not just ideas of how sex ought to be, but how it is. (Steve Jackson, "Femininity, Masculinity and Sexuality" in The Problem With Men)

Dawn

"I learned about sex when I was 14 ... My older sister told me about the time I was to start my period. She told me about periods and how children were born - of course Mom didn't tell us any of that. I think she was too ashamed or embarrassed or something like that. She never talked about sex. My sister told me everything. She got books out and showed me pictures. She did the same thing with my younger sister. Anne was the mother-type. She took over. Anne knew everything ... she told me about the clitoris and what orgasms were. Anne wanted to be a nurse since she was 11. She read all kinds of books. She had books on everything. Still does ...

The topic of sex was taboo around the house. It still is I think. Mom never talked about it. You'd never see Mom or Dad do anything sexual or anything like that. If you did it would be kind of weird. I would take it kind of weird. You never seen anything like that ...

I learned nothing in school. Only what you talked about among friends. In high school girls started going out ... I was going out with Don at the time. I went out with him for three years. Nothing went on - course I didn't want it to go on of course. Then we'd just sit down and talk about what did you do, where did you go, how did you do it. We actually made up things that didn't happen. Just being in with the group I suppose ...

When Anne told me about intercourse, I thought - yuck!"

Roseanne

"When I was growing up the word pregnant was never used. When I learned what the word pregnant was, I used to hear my mother and her friends talking. They would refer to someone pregnant as Mrs. So-and-So is sick - when will she be better? Well, whenever the baby is due. So pregnancy was when you're sick and you get better after you have the baby. Sex was never discussed.

I remember first that I wanted to have my period so bad because I was a year younger than most people in my class - I went to school a year earlier. And everybody else had their

period and I didn't. I used to strain myself to have a period ... It was really something to be proud of - you were a woman then ... To me a period meant that you can now have babies. That was probably from all the school mates. Because there were many pregnancies in this little community - so-and-so got pregnant and they were still in school. And they'd be getting married and all this sort of thing. So I knew that you had a period, you got pregnant, then you'd be married ...

I remember when I first learned about sex between a man and a woman. I was over by [a pond] with [a friend] and she said, "Do you know where babies come from?" And of course I wanted to be a woman of the world and said, "Yeah." She said "No you don't." And I said "Yeah, men and women sleep with each other and they have babies." But I didn't really know. So she took a stick - this is ridiculous - from the beach and she drew this hole on the beach. She said, "The man takes his dicky bird and puts it down the woman's hole." And she said, "That's how they have babies." And that's how I learned about sex - I thought it was gross. Mom and Dad do that! I remember thinking for weeks and weeks that I couldn't believe this is what they did. I couldn't believe it. I remember staring at them. I was really astonished that Mom and her friends did that sort of thing. And I couldn't believe that my mother would do this with my father - like my mother was so nice. This was something dirty. I also thought that the men did it for pleasure and the women did it to have babies.

And they didn't always want babies but that's what happened. Because all I knew about women and sex was that when women had sex, they had babies. But men never had nothing. All they had was sex - the pleasure part of it. It was probably true too, at the time ...

Why do you think nobody mentions to girls how they can experience sexual pleasure? Because Lori, in my humble opinion, I think its because the majority of women didn't know. Because I remember being married and reading books, and thinking clitoris - where in the hell is the clitoris? - and looking for it. And masturbating and thinking it can't be the right spot because I'm not feeling anything. But I mean you've got to be in a certain frame of mind and I was acting mostly on curiosity. And not feeling anything because probably it wasn't the right spot. And I would see these diagrams and think maybe I haven't got one ... and then I spent 10 years thinking I must be frigid. And even asking doctors about it. I remember being married for maybe two years, going to a doctor in Toronto, and I know I was very embarrassed about asking him because I thought I was a woman of the world by now. I said, "Can you tell me why it hurts sometimes to have sex?" And he said, "Well, more than likely its because you're not ready, you're probably dry." And I thought, what the hell does he mean? And I went home thinking, I'm not ready, I'm dry, this is why it hurts. Now how am I going to get wet - you know,

wet versus dry? ...

When my child was two, he was put into the hospital ... under the care of a child psychologist who handled hyperactive children and their parents. And I remember going to this psychiatrist, who was very handsome, and when I think about it now, was probably very very biased. He asked me all kinds of questions about my sexual life - when I think about it now, it had nothing to do with the reason we were there in the first place. I was 22 at the time - naive. And I remember talking to him about sex and saying maybe there was something wrong with me because I liked to initiate it but I didn't always like the outcome ... and I remember saying to him how I never had an orgasm but I can't remember him offering any words of advice or anything. Just him telling me there's nothing wrong with you wanting to have sex before your husband does ...

I learned how to have an orgasm probably from reading books. But I never experienced it until probably 15 years later. I've been married almost 20 years now. But I can honestly say I never had an orgasm with my husband. No way. I might have got turned on a little later in life to him fondling my breasts or sucking my nipples - I used to really enjoy that. But never had an orgasm. I remember being really pissed off because he used to always have one and I wouldn't - oh shit, never had one again! But I'm the type of person who takes an hour or more to have an orgasm."

Joyce

"One day, when I was 11, I had a period - I didn't even know what it was. And I sat down and told my sister-in-law - we were close. So she sat down and told me everything - about periods, not about having a child ... Believe it or not, when I did get pregnant, Dave [Joyce's now ex-husband] told me how a child was born ... I didn't know about sexual intercourse until I was 18 years old ... you weren't allowed to talk about sex years ago. I mean it was a dirty thing, you know. Like mine, I always teach mine the difference. When my daughter got of age, I taught her that sex was to be enjoyed, it's a nice experience. And the way we were taught it, sex was dirty. If you get pregnant, you go in the home - that was the threat with us ... Guys tried things but I was scared to death. With Mom ... she used to say "get pregnant and I'll kill you" or "I'll put you in the home" or "I'll give you up." So there was a lot of fear ... we were always taught the only man who would have anything to do with you is your husband and that's the only way you'd ever have sex ... Today I learned it's all different ...

I tell you now at the age of 15 ... I didn't know how I could get pregnant ... Cause see, no one ever told actually - nothing about intercourse was ever discussed. All we knew that if any boy - if you let anyone touch you or if you kissed him or anything, you'd get pregnant. So that's how green I was - and there was a lot of us green like that. I mean I

wasn't the only one. I mean we would sit around and we would even wonder - but we never ever learned how, until we all actually got married ... We knew nothing and our husbands knew everything. That gives them the power then. And like you take it, I honestly believe that if we knew about intercourse and how you could get pregnant and everything else, I don't think there'd be as many people married. What's going on today is people that were married when they were 17, 18 or 19, are getting divorced. They've had a family and now they're reared up. And then we say the hell with it. There's more to life. I always said, I'd probably never be married if I hadn't been so scared of my mother. Cause if I had to be pregnant, I was to be put into a home. The rules of the house were that you had to be in at 7:30 or 8:00 - like I was working and I still had to be in at 10:00. And all their power you wanted to get rid of. You wanted to start your own power. But still when you got married, you never had it. Cause then you had a man that was telling you what to do. So, the way I was brought up, men were the rulers and you listened to them and you done by them. Like if they said to you, shit, then you shit. That was it, they were the rulers. More or less, what I done, and a good many more of us, we let them try to be the parents. That's what it comes down to. Like I left home to be my own person but I never did become my own person. And I don't think I became my own person until I gave up my marriage. Cause, in marriage, you still got that power there,

right. Like he says to you, "you do this and you do that" - so you just think, well, you know if you don't you'll get a punch in the head or there's a big fight on the go ...

That first time was a terrible experience. Because like, if you're never told - it's like having a baby. Someone asks, what's it like having a baby. And they say its pain that you can't explain. You say, forget the pain, just tell me what it is to have a child. Tell me how a child is brought into the world. Like I used to ask, "what's it like to have a child" and I'd get, "don't you worry, you'll know." And it's all fear that builds up, Lori ...

Dave taught me about sex. My sister-in-law told me about the menstruation part and Dave told me about sex. Cause when I was carrying my first child, I thought they'd cut up my stomach, to get this baby. So he sat me down one night and told me all about it. About climaxes. He told me about the little thing you work inside. I said, "is that right?" Man in the boat he called it. He knew - he was around the streets a lot. He grew up fast. Then he went in the army. The first thing they teach you in there is sex - even today. They force condoms on you ... Dave said wearing them was like going to bed with your socks on.

I'm interested about this "man in the boat" thing. Well, that's it. that's all I heard tell of it. What do you call it? The clitoris. You never heard that word before? Never heard tell of it ...

I tell you what I like about sex - I don't like coming before the man. I like the two of us to come together. *How does that happen?* Well, I don't like a man to go before me or me to go before the man. I like him - for the two of us - to eject together. You know? *So, you can come through intercourse?* Yeah. Why, is there any other way? *Most women don't.* Don't what? *Don't have an orgasm through intercourse alone. Usually it takes some sort of manual or oral stimulation.* Really? *Okay, the "man in the boat" as you say.* Yeah. *That has to be stimulated for a woman to have an orgasm - either directly or indirectly. Just say if a man is on top of you, fucking you, then the clitoris is not usually getting enough stimulation in that position for you to be able to have an orgasm.* Normally he gets on top. *And you can have an orgasm that way?* Oh, most definitely Lori ... And like I say, I like both of us to come together - I don't like him to come before me or me to come before him. Two together - I think if he's coming with you, it's the greatest experience. *Are you sure you're having an orgasm?* Yeah. Unless it's something else ... I always thought that with a woman and a man - I always thought, you know, that there's more to sex than I know about. Jesus! I never knew this! I never knew a man and a woman don't usually come together ... I guess I'll have to check with the girls and see about theirs!"

Monica

"I lived in an armed forces town. It was a town of men

... There didn't seem to be a lot of civilians ... And that was my first encounter with men as a child. We were advised at a very young age to stay away from men but not knowing why ... being taught to be afraid of men. But to fear what I don't know. I think I was taught to fear all men, not just the men in the barracks. My mother taught me this. Stay away from the barracks, stay away from men, if a man tries to pick you up stay away. And I mean that wasn't very common in Newfoundland back then but you have to keep in mind that you're dealing with a different kind of community. It was an armed forces town back then and these were all strangers. It's not like living in a small community where everyone knows one another ...

When I was 13 I didn't know anything at all about sex ... There's a point in time when my sister and I are the same age. We were both 13 ... We started at a new school. And I remember the teacher asking her how old she was and she said I'm 13. And the teacher said, "How old are you Monica" and I said I'm 13 too. And we were both in the same class. She said, "How can you both be 13?" ... Instead of me saying my sister is nine months older than me, I said well, she's three months older than I am. So that's how little I knew about babies. And the whole class went up. They thought it was really funny. And I didn't know what they were laughing at. I didn't know it took nine months to make a baby so I was pretty naive at 13. And it was my first year there that I got

my first kiss - a real boy and girl kiss ...

I think I learned about sex when I went into nursing. I think I knew about sex when I was 13 but this is why I say I was terrified of it and I don't know why. From 13 onward - I was 21 and still a virgin. I knew about it but I don't know why I knew. I didn't know about periods. I didn't know about the things I should have known. But I knew about sex - why I don't know. But I remember when my sister started her period and my folks were away at the time. We were all frantic because she was bleeding and none of us knew. We had to get a neighbour. That was my first knowledge of periods and I was about to have one.

I had four brothers - they never bothered me ever. There was never any sexual overtures whatsoever between the boys and the girls in our family. Never. They were very protective of us. And as we got into our teens they were always on our backs - now what are you going out with this guy for, one of these days he's going to rape you. But no one sat down and told us about sex. I didn't really know how you have sex when I went into nursing. I was 18. I still didn't know a lot ... But I knew ... I knew what intercourse was. I think I knew. Well, I was afraid - so why was I afraid? I was afraid at 13. I remember being afraid of sex right through my teen years. But I don't know if my fear was that I would get pregnant. Or if I was afraid of sex. I don't know if my fear of pregnancy was so great - because I remember that was the one

thing my mother always said: you're getting grown up now, you have to be careful. She never came out and said how - she just said you have to be careful because the next thing you know you'll get pregnant. Now whatever that all meant, that was drummed into us as teens ...

And you know you didn't talk about sex. Not even among friends. You just didn't talk about it period. When we were 13 or 14 , just starting to develop, I remember comparing breast sizes - not mine. Cause I didn't have any. But I remember comparing breast sizes in the girl's bathroom. I can't remember ever talking to a friend about sex ever as a teenager. So I don't know when I would have learned it ...

And I had no sexual feeling - I suppressed all of my sexual feelings. They just didn't surface. I didn't think about sex, I didn't masturbate, I didn't know what I was all about. I didn't know about my own body. I didn't touch myself ...

It was so bad in my house, that my brother came home and said one of the girls was pregnant. And that was a big word. That was a no-no word to use in the house - you just didn't say it. And my mother said what do you mean she's pregnant. As if he shouldn't know ... I remember hearing "french safe" when I was about 16. Guys knew how gullible I was because I remember one guy said to me one night something about a french safe - what do you think it is? And I literally said maybe it's a safe where French people keep their money. How stupid

was I! When I went in nursing, that's when I learned about sex. When I learned about my body, where babies came from, how they were delivered ...

I can remember the first orgasm I ever had and I must have been married as long as six or seven years. I didn't have an orgasm for years - I had a baby, you know. I didn't need to have an orgasm! I honestly believe it was an accident ... Whenever I had sex it was the act of sex. It wasn't love, it wasn't loving. It wasn't two people making love - it was a sexual act. It's as if some guy grabs you, throws you on the bed, puts his penis in you, and comes. And that's it ...

When you say "act of sex" what do you mean? The act of sex to me is intercourse. That's the basic barest fact - it's just intercourse. The penis in the vagina. *So what about people who don't have intercourse, do they have sex?* No. Not to me they don't. *What do they have?* Well, it depends on what they do - I mean if they just cuddle up and love somebody. *What do two women have? - they can't have intercourse.* No, they don't have intercourse - they can't very well unless they have twin dildoes. But that is sex too isn't it? *Isn't it interesting how you equate the word sex with intercourse automatically?* It is interesting. *Everyone does.* Yeah. Of course they do. But what is sex? I don't know. But I think there's two different things that are happening. I think that goes from stroking somebody's hand, to someone's foot, to whatever you want to do. And of course, what is sex? You're quite

right. I mean anything involving your sexual organs I suppose. *Anything that you experience sexually.* Yeah. Anything that you experience sexually is sex I expect. It's funny. Like you say, I never ever thought about it. You think about intercourse, but that's not all there is."

Christine

"I didn't learn about sex from my parents because my mother and father, more my mother, were very, very straight. And my mother had a real strict methodist upbringing in Fogo Island. I remember when I was growing up, any mention of sex on T.V., she'd just flick the T.V. off and say get that dirt off the T.V.. She was really uptight about the body and sexuality. It's a wonder we're not all screwed up. We knew enough so that we'd all look at each other and roll our eyes. It didn't affect us because we knew enough to say she's got a problem. After all, I grew up in the liberal 60s and 70s and talk of sex was everywhere. It was normal to have it on T.V. Here I was home from the university at the age of 25 and my mother storming in and turning off the T.V., screaming "I'm not having that dirt on, talking about babies, pregnancy." Just really strange. Even the other day, I brought home a picture of Venus and there were angels around and she was lactating. I framed it for her. She said, "I'm not putting up that filth, that pornography" ...

Just at the end of my 17th year ... I hitchhiked to

California with a girlfriend. While I was in California I got involved with an older man - so I learned a lot from him. So at 18, I thought I was fully sexually experienced - thought I was ...

When I first had intercourse I didn't know what an orgasm was or what a clitoris was. We didn't learn about any of this in school. We had films on the reproductive cycle but not on women's sexuality. Like your genitalia or what it's for. You just kind of learned as you went along. The first time I had an orgasm, I was with this guy and again it was on Topsail Beach. I was about 18 and it was pretty exciting. This guy was pretty experienced although he was only a year older than me. He knew how to stimulate a woman. I remember thinking "wow, this is really something!" Even today - we're good friends - we say he was the first to give me an orgasm. There are men you run across now who don't know how to get a woman excited ...

Growing up with my mother and knowing how uptight she is about her body, women's bodies, and everything, it doesn't surprise me that there are still women who don't know what a clitoris is. Everything was pretty much in the dark and when I grew up, sex wasn't talked about. You learned on your own. And I didn't assert myself sexually. I was still the submissive one when I was in my teens. Sex was always in the missionary position. Basically, it was the man over the woman, boy over the girl, the power over the girl. Even when

I was having an orgasm, those first times, I felt it was something the man gave the woman, the woman didn't give to the man. I thought that was all it was - my satisfaction. You learn as you get older, it's a very mutual thing. You definitely learn about power. You learn about an equal kind of sense of power, equal roles, in sex - it definitely changes."

Alain

"I got little hints about sex when I was very young - out on the street, you know. Playing sports and carrying on. Like words, vulgar words. Pimp, screw, and stuff. I thought they were talking about something dirty because I didn't hear the words before. I asked my father what a pimp meant. He wouldn't tell me. He told me that if I mentioned that word again he'd ground me. I looked it up in the dictionary. It did explain but I still didn't understand it. I used to go around calling everyone a pimp - men, women, dogs, kids. I thought it meant pimple or something. I heard about sex on the street. I used to make out I knew stuff when I didn't know nothing. And I'd look and observe other people and listen to what they were talking about. I just learned from other people. My father didn't tell me a thing ... People talked about blow jobs. People talked about going to bed with one another and what they did. And intercourse - I was about 10 when I found out about that. I thought it was disgusting.

They were pretty smart kids - they knew everything practically ...

I think that just giving yourself to somebody, like for no reason, like you just want erotic pleasure from it, I think it's a waste of time. I thought it was a waste of time when I was younger too. There's no meaning there. At 10, I thought sex was disgusting. It was disgusting - the thought of it disgusted me ...

There were girls who'd hang out in the field and four or five guys would have a go at her. I thought that was pretty disgusting. I thought they were pigs, everyone of them. Pigs. Like animals. All of them. The guys used to come and tell me what they did to her - I used to tell them I didn't want to hear it cause they were disgusting too. They'd say she was easy, he laid her. I said yeah, you're just as easy too. You're disgusting, you're rotten, you're filthy pigs - don't ever come near me. Don't put your hands on me - don't try it. They were 13 or 14 and I was 11 or 12. The girl in the field was about 14 or 15. But they never paid her or anything. It wasn't like that at all. They didn't pay her. She just liked it I suppose, I don't know. She used to go out every night and hang out with them, and they used to end up in the field. I thought it was pretty disgusting for anybody that involved themselves with it. It gave me a very bad impression of sex. At that age, I was still a very young child. I knew sex was somehow - I knew there was meaning to

something, to what everybody does. I always believed in that, even when I was small - there's something else there. If not, why do we do things when there's no meaning? There's meaning for everything. There's reasons. I knew that those reasons and those ways - they weren't mine. They weren't a part of me. And I didn't feel good about it. I didn't feel good about what they were doing and I didn't want to do that. Cause it was disgusting. Dirty. Filthy. The way they went about doing things. Five people to one. Four or five people on one. Jesus! It was wrong because there was no meaning ... I think they were all using each other if you ask me. It was all consented. They all knew what they were doing. She could have said no. He could have said no ...

I didn't find out what orgasms were until I was about 19. I knew what they were but I didn't have one. I knew what a clitoris was - we used to read it in biology at school. They used to teach us a lot about the female reproductive system, after all it was a female populated school. They used to try to get us educated about that ..."

Chris

"I first learned about sex from my sister. I must have been about 9. I was poking in Mom's room and found pads. I asked my sister what they were and she gave me this big talk which was half true and half not knowing herself. She just told me you have your period and then you have sex with a boy.

And she told me what that was. And how you get pregnant. It was no big thing to me ...

I found out I had a vagina probably about the same time. Me and a cousin - a girl - were fooling around. Plus I was doing the same thing with a guy who was supposed to be my boyfriend. I was really young. It was more or less just looking. We were playing doctor. It was always me, this guy I was supposed to be going out with, and my cousin. I got caught by my aunt - she walked in cause she was bringing the news that my grandfather died. So nothing was really said that day. I got off the hook because of that. She caught me being the patient and Noreen, my cousin, was being the doctor - no Noreen was the nurse and Brad was the doctor ...

I guess the first time I even got in it for sex I was 14. With a girl. She was my best friend. I'm not sure how it happened but it did. I was sleeping over to her house and we were both in bed. She was really close to my neck and I was half awake, half asleep. It felt like she was kissing my neck, and I moved in closer and then she was kissing my neck. For the first few weeks nothing much happened - the two of us denied it the next day and then it would happen again ... I was with her for a year and a half and I'd say it was probably months later before we found out how to have an orgasm. I didn't know there was any such thing as a clitoris. I found that out from her. She was the one who told me. She didn't know what it was called or anything but she just knew. I

don't know how."

Dale

"I learned about sex through a friend of mine. She told me about when you comes on your period, there's a time to get pregnant. When she told me about sex I thought for to look at it - oh God! Even when I come on my period I thought, oh God, that's the dirtiest thing I've ever seen! When I'd be at supper my mother and father used to say, there's nothing can be so clean as to please you. When I see a dirty fork or something I used to blame it on my brother or sister - probably they used to put it there to torment me. When I had sex the first time I did it with him [ex-husband]. I was so ashamed I didn't know what to do ...

I never heard much talk about sex around home. If we ever spoke up about sex at home Dad would pop up and give us the back of his hand across the mouth. I often wondered, although I never heard nothing. How did Mom and Dad ever do it ...

When having sex, did you ever come or have an orgasm? What do you mean? *Did you ever climax?* Oh yeah. He thought [ex-husband] - that was the reason he thought I was fooling around. What used to make me mad, he used to say to me, "you're the only woman I've ever seen having so many climaxes towards sex." I used to say "how many women have you been with to know

that?" *How did you have a climax?* Well, you know when you get to like it more and more and all such things as that and then you start. I don't know. He used to tell me to tell him. When I go to come myself. We'd be having intercourse, and he's say yes I can tell cause you're so wet. Then he used to say, "my God, you're the only woman I've ever seen who had so many climaxes in my life." In sex and that. I said "how do you know?" He said, "I used to hear other men talk about it on the boat." I said "go on, I know now other men is going to sit back and talk about their wives." I said, "they got more respect than that for them." *Do you know what a clitoris is?* What? No. *This part up here that's really sensitive. Did he ever touch you there?* No ...

When I first got married, I hardly knew anything at all about sex ... He told me just how to satisfy a man - to get on top of him, all this stuff. Certain ways. Like back on - like you see an animal - like an animal does it."

Second Letter

Dear Dawn, Roseanne, Joyce, Monica, Christine, Alain, Chris and Dale:

The way we learn about something - what is taught to us and how - can be quite revealing in identifying power structures and power relations. What any given social group knows - is allowed to know - is determined by the social group in

power. Under male supremacy, the facts that we are allowed to know about sex are few. Our knowledge of sex is often limited, in fact, to this: heterosexuality is the natural attraction of men to women/women to men and sex equals intercourse. Allowable knowledge also includes menstrual cycles, how to and how not to get pregnant, and where to put the penis. What we learn about sex, therefore, is how to please men, how to reproduce, and how to do both within the proper institution - for good girls, it is marriage. Sexual discourse, under male supremacy, is totally indifferent to women. It is defined solely on masculine terms and in ways it will benefit men. It is defined in such a way that it is something men do to us but for which we are responsible. Coercion and inequality exist in its definition - something men do to women - and in the organization and distribution of sexual knowledge. Reproductive, heterosexual sex is the only allowable sexuality under male supremacy. As such, it is the only sexuality that anyone bothers to tell us about. Isn't it ironic that it is also the sexuality that is least likely to bring us pleasure?

When I learned about sex (sex as intercourse), I was shocked - pain was all I could imagine. Not even aware that I had a vagina, I was especially shocked to discover I had an entrance to my body that a man entered - and that this was what all my friends whispered about, what the great mystery was, what everyone wanted to know about and do, what dates,

kissing and marriage led up to. My mother told me about it during a late show that became sexually explicit. When she turned off the T.V. and answered my question as to what was going on, I ran to the bathroom - furious and disgusted. I had wished that she hadn't answered - sort of like the time I demanded to know the truth about Santa Claus. Why didn't you lie, Mom? I'm not blaming her for telling me - I wouldn't have believed it otherwise. And I don't blame her for what she told me about - intercourse and reproduction - because I doubt that many mothers include in their "facts of life" talks with their children how to have an orgasm. Even if they knew, why encourage an activity bound "to get a girl in trouble"? But, of course, I don't think concern is the primary motive for keeping girls and women ignorant about their own sexuality - knowledge of the clitoris, if it took precedence over knowledge of the vagina, would render men and their penises irrelevant.

Dawn, you were very lucky to have a sister interested in the human body and ambitious enough to start studying it before she went to nursing school. You were equipped at the age of 14 with more knowledge than any of us had as adolescents - and more than some of us had as adults. You knew how to please yourself. You knew that you had an independent sexuality - one that didn't require entry to be established. You began love-making with girls at about the same age - and with ease. I wonder if your knowledge of how women really

experience pleasure was a determining factor. You knew enough to realize that intercourse was unnecessary and irrelevant - and so were men. You also stuck with your first instinct that intercourse was repulsive. I wish that I had. I say that you were fortunate to have a sister who was a reliable source of knowledge because neither your parents, your school, nor your friends could have been. As a girl, your parents protected you from sexual knowledge - your mother because she was probably refusing to acknowledge that her daughter, too, would become a sex object and your father, as your owner, had to keep your virginity intact until the time came for him "to give you away". Your friends, not wanting to appear odd or different, would only have repeated what was standard issue and, in fact, even invented "normal" incidents so that they'd fit in. And schools generally only teach their students what they need to know in order to fit in or to succeed in society - and under patriarchy, that doesn't include the affirmation of women's desire.

The first time that I had an inkling that there may be a way for me to experience sexual pleasure was at the age of 13. I was seeing a boy who was 18 and supposedly very sexually experienced. Informing me that I had a "magic button" that when touched would "make me come", he took me to an isolated meadow where he could privately "give me" this experience. He touched me but must have missed my "magic button" entirely because my arousal stemmed not from the

touching but from the kissing. It was probably a year later when I discovered it myself - never to be rediscovered by any man, effectively. From my moment of discovery onwards, I was unable (unwilling) to experience orgasm with any man. I faked it - and well. For me, experiencing orgasm was very private, it was a momentary loss of control. As such, it was an experience that I could never allow to occur with a man. Faking orgasm allowed me to control and to determine the outcome of every sexual encounter. It gave me the last laugh - you think you're good but you're not. It was a way for me to keep a very essential, private part of myself off limits - you think you have me, but you don't; you think you're in control of me, but you're not; you think you're making me lose control, but I am really very aware. It wasn't until, at the age of 25, I began a serious relationship with a woman that I experienced orgasm with anyone other than myself. I was incredibly surprised that it happened without my having planned it. Thinking back, it may have been all about trusting. I trusted her enough to lose control. But how could I have allowed myself to lose control with someone - a man - who overpowered me in almost every facet of my existence? How could I trust someone with that much power?

Roseanne, I stated earlier in this journal that women's adult status is determined biologically while men's is measured in terms of accomplishments. This is why I found it so interesting that you were anxious to start your period

because you were anxious to be a woman - and that womanhood to you meant the ability to get pregnant, and thus get married. When your friend drew the circle on the beach and explained who penetrated whom, you learned that your sexuality consisted of being a passive receptacle that men enter and babies exit. Men got pleasure, women got "sick". And they did get sick - as you know, your mother spent all of her youth and all of her healthy years pregnant as the result of intercourse, and was debilitated. As were her friends. Giving birth to 13 children has to have some effect on the body. (Another issue, however, is that the categorization of pregnancy as a disease rendered it controllable by male institutions - particularly medicine and the family). The medical profession sure as hell did nothing for you in helping you establish an independent sexuality. You consulted two doctors about your "frigidity" and one said that you were dry and the other okayed your initiation of intercourse. But neither told you how to please yourself or how to receive pleasure. Indifference.

Joyce, I think you were denied access to almost all sexual knowledge as a safety measure - your virginity had to remain intact for its rightful owner - your future husband. You were allowed to believe that any physical contact with a male could result in pregnancy so that you would allow no physical contact to occur. Your mother instilled fear in you as an added measure of protection - the only status available

to women outside of virgin/wife/mother is prostitute/whore/slut. She knew that you were better off being used by one man rather than many - and that if this man knew he was the only one to have ever used you, he'd hopefully use you with more respect. Mothers know only too well their daughter's fate. Before I became a wife, I was a slut. Now I am neither. I'm on the fringe. And it's on the fringe where my mother finally knows I'm safe. You are right, however - this lack of knowledge did impair you in terms of power. You left the all-knowing authority of your parents for the all-knowing authority of your husband. And like parents frequently do to their children as a protective measure, he taught you only what he wanted you to know. And Joyce, I'm still not sure if what you have been experiencing is orgasm - and I don't think you were too sure either, at the end of it. If I caused you to feel unsure of yourself, I'm sorry. I hope you're still going to talk to your friends about it.

Monica, your sexual knowledge was characterized by fear - a fear of men and a fear of sex. But, then again, except for Dawn and Christine, all of us mentioned being scared and frightened when faced with the truth about heterosexuality. Your fear, however, was different because you couldn't explain its origins. You knew about intercourse before you knew about periods and pregnancy but you don't know how. Before going to nursing school, therefore, your only sexual knowledge was that for reasons unknown, men and intercourse were to be

feared. And like I said before, I believe these fears were justified - intercourse brings us rape, unwanted pregnancies, object status, and rarely pleasure. And masculine characteristics *are* fearful. It's just too bad that fear often leads to submission - and that it is eroticized. (In preparing this journal, I read an article that stated in adolescence, girls are left with no choice but to eroticize masculine sex role characteristics because, unlike women's bodies, men's bodies are absented - they are not sexualized and are therefore not seen as desirable. Girls become aroused, therefore, not by the male body, but by male behavior and this includes seeing the male as predator.)¹⁹⁶ It's no wonder then that your sexual knowledge was organized in such a way that fear, intercourse and men were all associated. I understood perfectly when I heard your description of the sexuality that existed between you and your ex-husband. "It's as if some guy grabs you, throws you on the bed, puts his penis in you and comes." That sounds like rape. But then again, so much inequality is built into intercourse it's hard to differentiate between what is and isn't consensual. Remember how, in our conversation, you equated sex with intercourse and then realized that this equation was a lie - that there's more to sex than intercourse. You were unable to define what that "other" was - you were reluctant to call it sex. Maybe what *isn't* defined, what isn't intercourse - and thus what *isn't* sex - is what is women's

sexuality, yet to be defined - because we lack defining power.

Christine, you'll probably think when you read this letter that I'm on some kind of campaign in defense of mothers. You see, I disagree with your comment that your mother had a problem regarding sex and that it is her kind of "uptightness" that renders women ignorant about their sexuality - particularly knowledge of the clitoris. From what you've said, your mother appeared to be more angry about sex than uptight about it. I realize that you know her and I don't, but just consider what she was faced with. Two daughters reaching adolescence during a time when it was "uncool" to say no - during a "revolution" that made women's sexual availability trendy. Isn't it possible that this is what angered her - the fact that the media was okaying, actually pedestallizing, the unlimited use of women. The use of *her* daughters? Isn't it possible that she was angry because she knew that in the wake of such a "revolution", her efforts to protect you would be hopeless? And about your observation that there are still women who don't know what a clitoris is and that this is related to women's uptightness about sex and their bodies - do you really believe that it is women keeping women from this knowledge? Don't you think that women's uptightness about their bodies might stem from the fact that their bodies are plastered up everywhere as objects to be admired, criticized, sold, penetrated, used - that their bodies are deemed the only worthy item they have to offer, and then only when it's in

accordance with the latest body trend? I realize I'm coming on kind of strong, but it wasn't your mother's fault -it wasn't women's fault - that you didn't know what an orgasm was the first time you had intercourse. Under patriarchy, sex is *man's* orgasm and since he likes to achieve it through intercourse, sex *is* intercourse. You learned about sex from men - they are the ones endowed with sexual knowledge because *they* do the defining. If we're lucky enough to have sex with a man who is willing to share *all* of his knowledge, we may be granted an orgasm of our own without having to ask - and then we feel grateful. As far as I'm concerned, under male supremacy, this is the only kind of "equality" or "mutuality" achievable in hetero-sex.

Alain, the anger in your story of sexual knowledge was immense! You too learned about sex from men but differently than Christine - what you learned was blatant, raw, and uncamouflaged by romantic propaganda - which is probably another factor in your rejection of it. The words you were familiar with as a child - pimp, screw, blow job. Just think about their implications for women. Pimp - a man who owns a woman and sells her body for his profit. Screw - to be screwed - it can either mean to be conned or to be fucked, or are they the same thing? Blow job - the word "job" implies that it is a service or chore performed *for* someone in a position of higher authority. Maybe the only difference

between learning about sex from a book, teacher or parent and learning about it on the street, is that when you learn about it from the latter, you learn about male defined heterosexuality as it really is. Minus the claims of love, it is merely the sexual exchange of women as commodities for men. To use one of your words - disgusting. What you saw as disgusting, what you knew you didn't want to be a part of, was *use*. That was what you identified as "lack of meaning". You saw sex as it exists as *using*. But do you really think that that girl in the field was *using* those four or five boys? To say that she was also using them implies that she received pleasure from them having fucked her, one right after the other. That hurts me. Because I could have been her. I was one of those girls, at the ages of 14 and 15, who people called "promiscuous" or, less generously, an "old bag". But it wasn't because I consented and it wasn't because I enjoyed being fucked. I do admit to having enjoyed kissing, and having another body pressed against my own - contact. But that was it. Anything that happened to follow that, I viewed at the time as inevitable. *I submitted to the inevitable.* Looking back, I see now that following my first experience of intercourse, I must have somehow concluded and internalized that that was what I was for - that it was inevitable that I would be used for the fuck and that there was no point in pretending otherwise. I don't ever recall saying back then, please fuck me, I want it.

Because from the waist down, I didn't feel anything. It was as if that part of my body didn't belong to me. As such, it was out of my and into someone else's control. Except for my private orgasms. Maybe this is why I could never accept the labels of "promiscuous", "easy", or "old bag" - I really didn't see them as describing *me*. They were really only applicable to a part of my body. But did those words *hurt*. My (male) guidance counsellor in junior high school told me once that I was "too easy" - I left the school and hitchhiked 300 miles before I was found. It hurt that I was blamed for what men penetrated.

Chris, I think you may have been the only one of us who reacted to the news of sex so nonchalantly - I almost expected you to have said that you told your sister "So what? Big deal." However, you probably learned more about hetero-sex from playing than you did from your sister's announcement. Even as children we had "boyfriends" assigned to us. The acquisition of heterosexual roles - just look at who played doctor and who played patient and tell me who in real life has the more power. I wonder how your sexuality came to differ from the one that was obviously in its preparatory stages in childhood? I remember, as a child, my friends and I playing with Barbie dolls - the Barbies would be the strippers, the Kens the audience. The best stripper would leave "the bar" with a Ken, while the rest resolved to enhance their stripping

skills so that they too would eventually get a Ken. In the meantime, the Barbie that won a Ken was unpopular and not well liked by the other Barbies. Whoever played this role was divided - it was both wanted and unwanted. Where did we learn this stuff? Did our fathers attend strip joints? Where did we ever get the idea that stripping was a glamorous and desirable occupation for women, that our bodies were our tickets to success, that success was measured in terms of the acquisition of a man? How did we know this at seven, eight or nine years old? What did we do with this knowledge later in life? It's as if we were preparing, through play acting, for the eventual relinquishment of our bodies.

With myself, you, Alain and Dawn, when we had our first lesbian sexual experience, it was with someone who was already very close to us in other ways - they were our best friends. The sexual element was like an extension of a caring, already communicative relationship. When I developed a sexual relationship with my best friend in grade 10, it felt very *right* - so much so that it didn't feel like sex. It was too sensual to be sex as I had known sex. I didn't think of it as sex. And it wasn't - there didn't/doesn't exist a discourse that describes it. The closest I can come to describing it is to say that I've had sex with men but with a woman I experience myself and her ... together but differently, sexually, sensually, physically, and emotionally. With men or boys, we would differentiate between those who were

dateable and those who were friends - we would not date a male friend for fear of ruining a friendship. Our relationship with boys were therefore sexually based. I'm not saying that a lesbian relationship *cannot* be sexually based but rather that this wasn't the case with our *first* lesbian experiences. Our initial experiences - your initial experience - was closer to what sex manuals criticize or stereotype women for wanting out of sex - a combination of the physical and the emotional. You therefore realized very early that it was through women that both your physical and emotional needs could be met. A realization that I think was very significant. You were aware of a choice - something with which the institution of heterosexuality generally doesn't provide us.

Dale, like most of us, you too were equipped only with enough knowledge to survive (for men). Your friend taught you what you needed to know about reproduction (reproductive sexuality = intercourse = men's sexuality), and your father prevented you from acquiring more knowledge by killing your curiosity through the use of violence. Of course, this in itself allowed you to know - to know what was your position. He was preparing you for submission - to know your place. You learned nothing from your ex-husband about your pleasure and everything about his. As I said to Joyce - and I don't like saying this - I don't think you've ever experienced orgasm. Contrary to what your ex-husband told you, there's more to

"climaxing" than "getting wet" - whenever you're aroused "wetness" will happen but not necessarily orgasm. His knowledge of sex was characterized by an absolute indifference to you and consisted only of different ways he could watch himself penetrate you. Getting on top and on your knees was what that was all about. I know because my ex-husband would want to do the same. He's ask me to either position myself on top of him or to get on my hands and knees and then he'd position us so that we were in line with a mirror. He was therefore not looking at me but at my reflected image. My *real* self and my *entire* reflected image would then become irrelevant as he proceeded to watch himself (subject/action) enter a *part* of me (object/passive, partial image/receptacle). I did not watch. I couldn't. I felt acutely ashamed, embarrassed - and he knew this because I'd voice my reluctance to participate. He was unconcerned with me in my entirety and totally concerned with witnessing my colonialization, my humiliation (real and/or imagined), his occupation of me. We both felt his maleness - he alone witnessed it. Strengthening and inspiring him, it weakened me. He must have been especially aroused by managing to do this to a feminist. Maybe this was the why of his source of arousal. He tried to usurp *my* source of strength. Eventually, I stopped having sex with him, my strength returned, and I left the institution of marriage (like you) and the institution of heterosexuality.

Sexual Experiences of Adolescence: The Incorporation
or Rejection of Heterosexual Doctrines

"Readying the body for the fuck instead of for freedom." (Andrea Dworkin, Intercourse)

Joyce

"Boys always tried but I would say no. There was this guy I went out with for a year and I tell you, he tried every night. I just said no, as simple as that. Like, oh, at the age of 15 there was an attempted rape made on me. I had advertised that I wanted to babysit and this guy picked me up but he started in the wrong direction. I says where are we going and he said my favourite lovers place. And I mean you take it. I was 15 and now I'm in my 40s - that's a long time - and I can still repeat every word he said to me. Anyway, he tore off my blouse, I had been on my period. I had to do oral sex with him. I took his license plate number. I'm a very cool person. I can hold my head at certain times. I took his license plate number and it came to me just like that. I tell you now - at the age of 15, I didn't know how I could get pregnant. So I thought I was pregnant from that. To me - oral sex, even to this very day, turns me off completely. It was disgusting. Cause he actually did - like he actually came in my mouth. Like he had a handkerchief and he said to me, spit into it. Which at the time I had no idea

what was actually going on. He never said all that much to me. Like he was more or less enjoying what he was doing to me. He took my two arms and held them over my head, pulled my arms together and tore off my blouse. [Describes how the man was later found out to be from a prominent, middle-class local family]. He drowned nine years ago. I was glad. I always said he'd get what he deserved. He only got nine months. And at the time, you're talking a lot of years ago, that was a long time to do, nine months ... I went home. Mom and them knew I was missing. And when I went in, I just fell in. I was exhausted. He let me out close to home and I took his license plate number and I ran home. And when I went in my brother-in-law met me at the door and I was crying and I told him what had happened. He told my sister. He give the Mounties the license plate number and they went after him. I had to go down to the police station. I had to go to court. Five minutes before I had to go into court - I was standing outside the courtroom waiting, he confessed. It was attempted rape, the charge. Because he didn't have intercourse. Because at the time, see, I was on my period. I said to him, I'm on my period. And I figured then when he started with the oral, well then he said we'll enjoy it another way. Then when he started with the oral sex, I figured well for sure I'm pregnant. So I told them everything. After he got out, he still used to follow me. He used to watch me go to school, watch me again after school. I was rollerskating one night

and I was going out with a guy and he came along. My boyfriend said "what's wrong, you look like you've just seen a ghost?" And I said well I did. I said he's over there. And Bill went to get a couple of guys to get him and he was gone. It was like something you actually see in the movies. He was there and then he was gone."

Dawn

"I had my first sexual experience when I was 14. It was with my cousin. She was in for two weeks. My bedroom was downstairs. We started kissing and that. One thing led to another and we had sex. I even had an orgasm. ... That went on with Ellen for about two weeks. The strange thing is we never ever spoke about it since. Weird. We found it really funny at first. Then she used to talk about how she never used to talk about boys either. What I find strange is that when it was all over, like I've been out to her place back and forth for years, and never ever - I think we must have thought it was wrong or something then. Because it's so strange that neither one of us brought up the topic after those two weeks. I don't think that should have happened - I guess that's what we were thinking. We'd never ever speak about it the next day either - we just went on as if nothing happened. Of course, she's married now with four youngsters ...

It happened to me again too. I went out to St. Mary's one summer. A friend, I used to go around with her, and we

were up in the woods one day and Paula came over and kissed me. I kissed her back. That's all that happened then for a couple of weeks. And then we were up in the hayloft one day and she tried it again. Paula talked about it more. She was going out with a guy but she just wanted to see what it was like with a girl. It was different she said - more sensitive; they're not rough. It was nothing really - just touching and that ...

With Ellen, I initiated it. I was asleep - two of us were asleep. We were in a single bed. And I moved over and she didn't move away. So then I started touching her and she still didn't move away. She turned over and started kissing me.

After Paula, I went out with Don for three years. He was my first boyfriend. It was convenient. We'd meet at the school bus and go to school. Go out in the night time. Down in the park for awhile. I thought I wanted it. I'd be lying not to say that. I liked him an awful lot. I guess we were friends in the beginning. We went on like that for a year. Strange thing is, Don never ever forced himself on me or anything. It was more just kissing and petting or whatever. But he never ever forced himself. But I did like him an awful lot ...

Don and I would break up probably for a couple of months and I'd go out with Steve for awhile. He'd try to have sex but he didn't get very far. I'd just simply sit down and talk

to him. Tell him that this is just not what I wanted right now. If you want to be friends, we'll see what happens or whatever. But if you want something like that you can go get somebody else. He accepted that for awhile. Until he figured that he couldn't handle it. When he tried it again I broke up with him. Then I went out with Bob. I couldn't handle him. You couldn't say no to Bob - you wouldn't get very far. I think it was more religion why we broke up. We couldn't get along - any subject that was brought up we just couldn't get along. I couldn't handle him. He was just persuasive. He had that way about him. I didn't really like him. I went out with him because of my sister ... she was always trying to match me up with a guy. At the time I thought she was trying to match me up cause I wasn't going out much. But then, later on when I think she knew the difference, I think she was just doing it to see if I'd change ..."

Dale

"When I grew up I used to go out with a lot of fellas - but I didn't get into them - I didn't get into them at all. Like, I didn't want to. They pressured me a lot but I didn't want to cause I was scared. Afraid that - I seen so many young girls going around pregnant I didn't want to be like it. And so I went to St. Brides when I was only 16 years old and that's when I met him. *Your ex-husband?* Yeah. I started working then in a fish plant. So I met him then - and I was going out

with him a week before I had sex with him. And so we were there for six months and the plant closed down and so I came on home. He came up three days after. And then in October, that's when I got pregnant. So I told Mom about it and Mom and Pop got together and said I didn't have to get married. They weren't forcing me. But he did - he wanted me to marry him. And I said to him I was too young. I was only going on 17 years old and he was 21. And he said well if you don't marry me I'll come after the baby anyway. So I said give me time to think about it. So I talked it over with Mom and Dad and she said he can't touch the child - you got to bring that child into the world and he can't touch it. But he badgered me and badgered me. And I married him. The first time I knew what my life was going to be like - cause his mother told me about him. She warned me against him. She told me he'd only use me and fling me to one side after. So I had the baby and I lost it ...

Growing up I knew it was a man's world. Cause in them times the men had to have the say in the house ... When I was going out with fellas I wouldn't let them get handy to me. They used to try and try. And I used to say no, for God's sake, if I ever get pregnant and go home and tell my father, he'd come out and shoot you. You wouldn't catch me wearing a dress in the night time. I used to haul on a pair of slacks. I was afraid. Like I used to go out with this guy, I used to say you can touch me outside but don't go under.

I used to have to push his hands away from certain parts. I used to wear slacks - not very often you'd see me in a dress, probably on a Sunday afternoon. My father used to say "you're not changing again going out." See, I was scared at the time. I used to see so many young girls going around pregnant. I didn't want to be like that. I didn't want to bring shame on to the family by saying to my father I'm pregnant."

Alain

"I had a sexual experience when I was 14 or 15 with a girl. She was the same age. We were out around the bay. We went out to her cabin for a week. We were best friends. We were really close, we cared a lot about each other. We cared for each other in a lot of ways, more than just sexual. We cared so much about each other at that time it just developed into a sexual thing. We kissed each other and touched each other and held each other. It was nice. She initiated it, I didn't. Actually, I was asleep when she did turn over to me. I liked it. We didn't know anything - it could have been experimentation. We were just going with the flow. I like the caring part - we really cared for one another. A lot. We hung around with each other most of our adolescent years. We just cared an awful lot about each other.

I went out with boys too. Most of them used to try stuff. They used to try, you know, to feel my leg, or put their arm around me. I wouldn't even let them feel my leg,

I just didn't want it. When I say no, I mean it. Sometimes it pissed them off. They couldn't understand. Other guys, they just didn't do anything. I went out with guys that took no for an answer. Guys that didn't - they got pissed off and I told them to go to hell. One guy tried to force it one night. I was 14 or 15. He was trying to get my jeans off. I hit him. We weren't kissing. I was sitting down next to him and he just grabbed hold of me. He tried to get my jeans off and I went right nuts and started smacking him in the head and face. He said Jesus, what's wrong with you? I said listen, don't touch my body without a yes. I don't like anybody touching me even now unless I say yes. I own my body - it's mine ... But I just didn't want anybody putting their hands on me when I didn't want them on me. It's ignorant ...

I knew what a lesbian was and what gay meant. We kept quiet about it. If it got out we probably would have been sent to see psychiatrists. I was 14 when I knew I didn't want anything to do with men. It just didn't interest me. I never used to get excited like most girls when they go out on a date. I used to say big deal. I used to go out just because it was something to do. Every boyfriend I went out with I broke up with. I didn't even want to go out with them. I don't even know why I did that. Surely to God, not to please them! I used to think they were funny - a laugh. I used to hang around with them, we were more friends than anything. Cause we never did anything. We'd kiss each other the odd

time, sure. But nothing, nothing else occurred. That's why I could probably handle it. The affection part too I didn't want - that was showing signs of affection. I'd rather they sit down and have a few beers with me and a few laughs. Or even go for a walk - anything, but don't show me affection cause I don't want it. They could sense it, they didn't question it ... I felt it was abnormal for me to kiss guys. It felt very abnormal. It felt ugly. I'd almost throw up. I shouldn't have been kissing guys, I should have been kissing girls. *What turned you off about guys?* Everything! They didn't have a clue ...

My relationship with my friend went on all through high school. I didn't really have lovers after that. I had girlfriends. Bit by bit."

Chris

"I guess the first time I ever got in it for sex I was 14 ... she was my best friend ... The first time it was mentioned, I brought it up. We had a big fight because - I don't know why I did it - I accused her of being gay, and coming on to me. But I knew myself I was responding too. Probably after a couple of weeks of not even speaking, we met up again at a school dance and ended up walking home and talking about what was going on. Neither one of us asked why and there was no guilt or anything. Like later on, in experiences with women, I felt really guilty. Neither one of

us questioned why, it was just how we were going to go about hiding it. That was the main concern because we knew we couldn't tell anyone. We wondered how to hide it, not how to stop it. (I never told her she was gay - I told her she was a lizzie).

We continued for a year and a half and then she went straight or whatever. Throughout the relationship, people began to wonder about us and stories began to go around. So what we'd do, if we went to a party or whatever, we might spend an hour and go out with a guy and then we'd go home together. We'd pick out someone. She'd usually say, now you go out with this one. Just as a cover up. So we went to this party and it was one where there was a lot of talk, particularly about her, so she would go out with someone ...

The night it was finally over with her was at a school dance. I was there with her and we were dancing all the dances together. This waltz came on and this guy she had told me was a cover came over and asked her to dance. Without even asking me, she waltzed with him, and while he was waltzing with her, every time her back was turned, he'd give me a hard look. So when he came in off the dance floor, he walked her over and he said something to me. He went over and sat down and I beat him up. I didn't really beat him up, I just pulled the chair out from under him ...

A few times there were rumours. People saying they had been up in the trees outside our house and had seen us. But

we knew that had been bull. There was a few people that gave us a hard time. There was a few guys - they were the ones who probably would get up in the trees outside the house. And once I had my bike parked outside her house and they filled up the gas tank with sand. If we were out around they'd give us a hard time. They'd call us names but still there was always one among them that was dying to get out with us. They never called us dykes - I never heard dyke till I moved to St. John's. Just lizzies. I don't think any of them really knew we were gay, none of them could prove it. I think they were attracted to me because - and I know from guys I dated up through - were attracted to me because I never ever came on to them. The best looking guys, I wouldn't fall over them like the other girls. I was more a friend to them, not a close friend, but carrying on ...

The next woman I started going out with was the one from [a nearby community]. The one that was dead set against being gay. She thought it was alright for me but for anyone else it was gross. In school, we'd write letters back and forth. When I finished my letters I'd tear them up and throw them in the garbage but she was keeping mine. During that summer, she went away for six months - she had the letters well hidden, behind pictures, but when she was gone the whole room was cleaned and they found them ... Her mother called her in Montreal and she threatened not to come home. Me and Lisa had gotten to the point when at the end of a letter it wouldn't

be just signed - it would be I love you. Up to that point there was nothing sexual between us but because of these letters they wouldn't believe us ... There was never a lot sexually between us but that was what I consider to be my first real love ... We were fooling around and everything but we never really had sex. We were together for a year. It was really different. I knew I was in love. I guess where we were even older we talked about deeper things. With my first girlfriend we were growing up, but with Lisa we were interested in the same things. She loved sports and I loved sports and a lot of things like that ...

After they found the letters, I stopped going to her house and that. Then I started going back. Me and her brother were getting along fairly good and me and her mother were getting along. Everything was going fine and then her brother found a very explicit letter that I had wrote to Lisa with her reply - we wrote it in school. He didn't say anything to his mother this time, he went straight to Lisa and threatened her - get away from her or I'll go to Mom ... Lisa said that it had to be over between us and that we couldn't have any connections. So I freaked out, went home and took an overdose ... I didn't really mean to do it - I had a splitting headache when I stopped crying so I kept taking aspirins. Like I can't remember doing it, I did it unconsciously ... Lisa knew I had left school so she came to the house and I was in bed. She said she was sorry and whatever

they thought didn't matter and to hell with all of them. After we made up, I told her what I did. She got me into the bathroom and made me throw up. They brought me to the hospital. When I was in the hospital she came in to see me and she told me how her family knew, her father was the vice-principal, so he knew, and the principal. When I got back to school I had to see the guidance counsellor. They wanted me to see a shrink but he only came to our home town once a month and they thought if I did see him people would know. So I was seeing him and so was Lisa. After a month of seeing him me and Lisa were supposed to have no contact. He and the families said no contact. But we would, behind their backs. He said some pretty suggestive things and it was obvious what he wanted to do with Lisa. We finally stopped seeing him when I was driving to [a nearby town]. As I was driving one way, Lisa was driving the other way on a pedal bike. Just after she passed me I went up to turn around and I noticed he was following her. When I came back down, he had hauled in. I asked Lisa what was going on and Lisa said right openly he asked me to go for a drive or a coffee. It had been building up, him saying certain things to her, how attractive she was. We knew what he meant by going for a drive with him. So she put the bike in the back of the truck and we left. We never did report him, we just stopped going to him. And he couldn't really say anything ... We weren't supposed to talk about what he said to each of us with each other. But we did a bit

and had a laugh over some of the stuff he said. I remember him telling me that it's not accepted. that's mainly what he talked about ...

While I was seeing the guidance counsellor, I was also seeing the English teacher ... She knew what was going on. She said she knew about me and Lisa long before it all came out because she said she had gone to college, her roommate was gay, and she had seen the looks between me and Lisa. While I was seeing Lisa, I was going to the library to see her after class. She'd ask me what classes I had and if it was phys. ed., she'd say take that period off and come talk to me. We'd go up talking and it ended up one day when she was playing with my feet! That was the end of that when Lisa found out about that. All the while I was talking with her, she'd have her ashtray hid behind the curtain and she had this little booth inside the library. We'd open the window and have a cigarette out the window. None of the staff members knew she smoked because her parents didn't even know ...

While I was seeing Lisa, I was also seeing Alex. With Lisa, for so many months we weren't allowed to have contact ... Then weekends she'd be in St. John's so I started hanging around with other people. And started going out with Alex ... He was my first relationship. With him first, we couldn't stand each other. Girls were always falling over him - he'd go through two or three girls a week and I couldn't stand him because of that. Behind my back he was secretly finding out

all this information about me. He asked me one Sunday to talk to him and I always said if he ever put the moves on me I'd slap him in the face. So we went in his truck and we parked and talked and he started saying all this stuff he knew about me. Then he leaned over and kissed me and I slapped him in the face. Just like I wanted to - then I said bring me home. After that, for a couple of weeks, he was always calling me and he wanted to go out with me. I heard he wasn't seeing any girls and all he talked about was me. So I got talking to him and he was nice. We got to be good friends. There was nothing really romantic there - just drinking buddies. I did tell him I was gay. He was driving my car when I told him and I shouldn't have because it was slippery and he went off the road. It was like a bit of a shock. I think he suspected it and when he asked me and I told him, it was a bit of a shock. Then all he said was "okay - I want to be with you, I don't care if you see women" - cause I was still seeing women - "as long as you be with me and don't see any other guys" ...

We were always fooling around. I can't say always - but we did. It would get to a certain point and we'd stop. I would stop it. Actually, it would be when he tried to put it in me and it would hurt and I'd stop it. But he never pushed it any further. He'd stop. As time went on and on, I got more repulsed from it ...

He never put down people who were gay, like the other guys. They'd get on this big trip about faggots and he would

- well, sometimes in front of them - but to me he would put it down. I guess cause he knew I was.

I was also seeing Cathy - mostly on week nights. We were good friends and every now and then we might fool around - kissing and stuff. Well actually, I went a bit further with Cathy than it went with Lisa. But I didn't feel it for Cathy. Cathy was - Lisa was my love, Alex was my cover-up, and Cathy was sexual ... I couldn't do it to Lisa. Whenever I would be out with Lisa, like if the two of us were alone and we were kissing, after it was over I felt really, really guilty. And the farther I went the more guilty I felt. It was like I couldn't do it. I just didn't think that was for Lisa. With the other girls, fine, you want to experiment, I'll experiment. Because I liked them but I didn't love them, it didn't hurt me what I may be doing to them. But with Lisa it was different because I didn't want to push her too far. I just didn't feel it was for Lisa. Like I figured how far it was going was as far as it will ever go ... I figured if I went that far it might be the final straw. With Cathy, although we were friends and everything, when we went to bed it was more sexual. There was no cuddling up and stuff ...

With guys I went out with, I was always the one to be in control. Like with Alex, beforehand, he had two or three girls a night, and he always had his way with them. But when I was seeing him - for seven months - like the girls were totally astounded. If Alex got up and started making an ass

of himself, I'd say sit down and he'd sit down. I really had control over him. So, if I said stop, he'd stop ...

On one of those cover-up dates when I was going out with Debbie, my first girlfriend, one guy really tried to force me. It was after a softball tournament party and this guy offered to walk me home. He ended up trying to do things when I didn't want to. He tried to do it twice. It ended up where I had to really get mad and hit him. He was trying to get me to touch him and he took my hand ...

With Alex, first it got that I wouldn't go to bed with him. then on the end of it, I wouldn't even kiss him or anything. It just grossed me out. I don't like men - their bodies. That's the biggest thing ... With Alex, I played hard to get for months and then when he thought he had me I was still - he never really had me ... If all he was out for was sex, he wouldn't have stuck around. He didn't have to."

Roseanne

"I don't think I really went out with boys. Other than somebody walking you home from a dance. I can't remember anybody saying can I meet you tomorrow night and we'll have a date. We'd hold hands, that's the most of it. Thought that was great. And kissing. I just remembered something else that was the real ultimate growing up! And again - the same group of girls I hung around with. It was really something else Monday morning if you went to school with a hickey on

your neck. And I remember thinking I wish I could get a hickey. But at the same time being afraid to get a hickey cause if your mother saw it, she'd kill you. It was acceptable to show a little bit. Probably when I was about 15 or 16, maybe grade 11, I remember guys coming up from down the shore. What they would do, up around the snack bars, they'd put the window down in the car and they'd talk to you. And you'd be really glad they talked to you and you'd talk to them. The ultimate was them asking you to sit in their car and go for a drive. And I remember going for a drive with this fella once and I got my hickey. I was some glad. Went home and then I was mortified when I looked in the mirror. But at the same time thinking this is Friday night, I hope it's still there on Monday. He probably knew more about sex than I did. Like I can't remember feeling any passion from it. Being so wrapped up in passion that someone would give you a hickey, as part of the passion. I can't remember it being like that. *No. Hickeys were done on purpose.* Yes! It was! ...

And these guys too, they would feel your breasts. But I still remember not feeling anything. But that was expected. I'd let them touch me probably outside the blouse. I used to say don't do that, don't do that. And you know what I was so afraid of - not enjoying it or getting pleasure from it. I was afraid of getting pregnant. I didn't connect it - that you needed the penis to get pregnant. All I used to think about was the male, by touching my breasts, would get so

excited that I wouldn't be able to control him, and he would put his penis in me and I'd get pregnant. Not that I'd get any pleasure out of it. I used to think the male was uncontrollable. I thought, okay, as long as you can keep stopping him - above the waist - as long as you can do that you're in control. If they touched you below the waist, they'd freak out all together then. Then you'd know you had to get out of the car or get out of it. Whatever the situation was ..."

Monica

"I got my first kiss when I was 14 - a real boy and girl kiss. I met this boy and we would play the game Truth or Consequences. If you didn't tell the truth you had to kiss the boy nearest to you. And this girl that was there said, "jeez, close your eyes, don't you know how to kiss?" That was a pretty sexy guy and in fact my first true love. He was exceptional, so I thought. Could he ever kiss! I was really wild about him. I went out with him for probably three years - till I was about 16. But not constantly. He was a hard case - always telling lies, always in trouble. He was about three years older. I would go out with him between his being in trouble for one reason or another. He would go out with other girls. He wasn't someone you could depend on. When I was about 16, he wanted to have sex. And I was too scared. I really was. I was one of these kids who was just scared - this is why I think something happened in my past. I was very

frightened of the idea of sex. It wasn't that I wasn't sexually aroused by him, I was. But I was too frightened, and I was so frightened, I couldn't be persuaded to have sex. Just couldn't do it - it was impossible. We were in the car, parking, and he came on pretty strong and he was really mad, and pretty soon he was virtually raping me. He had me pinned on the seat. He told me that I had teased him long enough. But I managed to get free and I got him you know where. And God - it really broke my heart and I think it broke his. But anyway, he let go of me and he took me home. And he started dating this other girl and she got pregnant. And she was a pretty hard case. And I don't mean just sexually active or anything, but I mean she was a tough character. He was tough, so was she ... After that night, it struck me that I had allowed the kisses to go on too long. Like we had parked. I wasn't in the habit of parking at all. And that particular night, to me he was out of control. I think I blamed myself for things going too far. I should not have. But in the meantime, when I look back on it, I don't think I did very much. It was just that I think he was determined at that point - now look, I've pissed around with you long enough. It's time for you to come across. And you're a big girl now, you're not 13 any more and it's time. I think that's what he saw. I think he was determined to get me that night and that's it...

He wasn't steady ... I'd say I went out with just about

every guy in my class ... There was kissing but I didn't get into petting. Petting to me was as bad - petting left me with the same frozen fear as the idea of sex. I just didn't get into it. And they didn't ask. If they tried I'd just push their hands away and that was it. I really didn't go out with just one person long enough to become that familiar with them. I just couldn't allow myself. I couldn't allow anyone to get that close. I'd go out with a guy, give him a kiss goodnight, and if he got more amorous than that, I'd push him away. And I'd just leave the scene. I didn't tease guys. This particular guy that I talked about was the only guy that aroused me back in those days."

Christine

"When I was in high school in the early 70s, we were getting out of that petting stage - well, you can only touch me on top. The sexual revolution was on. Teenagers were having sex in high school. I didn't really have that many sexual experiences in high school. Because I always felt I could say no. Through one reason or another - one was getting pregnant and I wasn't on any birth control. You just knew where to draw the line with the guy. It was never to the point where I couldn't say no. I remember when I was younger, 15 or 16, that you'd go babysitting with your boyfriend but he could only touch you up there and not down there. That was only a few times. Actually it's kind of fun, this expectancy.

You learn about foreplay before having intercourse. You did a lot of petting and fondling and kissing. So I'd say it wasn't a bad thing. I think I really learned how you can kiss somebody for two hours in the back of a car and really sustain that. When I have sex now, we're not kissing for an hour - that's sort of lost. There was that anticipation - you can't have intercourse. It's more fun in a way. You build yourself up. You get to know your partner's other means of expression - heavy petting and kissing - everything but."

Third Letter

Dear Joyce, Dawn, Dale, Alain, Chris, Roseanne, Monica and Christine:

The sexual experiences of my adolescence were extensive and horrific. A child in the body of an adult woman, I left elementary school as a sexually unpopular, over-developed girl and entered junior high school as a hit - thanks or no thanks to my breasts. The first day of grade 7, a boy of 18 asked not only for my phone number but also to a dance. I remember that day well - it was the day this little girl went to market. I was suddenly on it - the market of sexual exchange and commerce. For the rest of that school year, however, I remained a product-in-waiting (a virgin, with exchange value). It was not until I first experienced intercourse that things went haywire - that my value decreased from that of exchange to use. As I indicated in my previous letter, I must have

recognized and internalized the position of one who is neither virgin nor wife and allowed my body (never my mind) to be fucked/fucked over - what it was for. The "boys" who chose to use my body were those whose masculinity was over-developed - they had no sensitivity, no compassion, and would not have hesitated to beat animals, women and children, or to rape. I was disdained by those boys whose masculinity took a more subtle approach - I was probably an offence to their egos as someone more sexually active than themselves. My first experiences of intercourse opened up my body, my second split it apart. It was then that I was decapitated - my feelings, my selfhood, my *me* were on my face and in my head but they were obviously invisible. Because nobody considered them. What was considered, exchanged, used, judged, important, felt, grabbed, bruised, undressed, fucked, invaded, occupied, and condemned was what existed from my neck down. This body that carried myself from place to place. Maybe I hated it and allowed it to be used because it superseded what was me? He wouldn't even kiss me. Yet he fucked me. You see?

To tell you all of what occurred would entail writing a letter that resembles a book. There is one memory that haunts me - I will share it because it is unresolved. I am afraid to expose all of myself - all of my memories - because I doubt that others who may read this letter will be as understanding as the eight of you have been. I still fear judgement - I fear that the name-calling will re-occur.

I had just turned 14. I had become a habitual runaway. When the use of my body became too painful for my head to handle, I'd run or try to kill my body. (A psychiatrist tried to tell me that I was a sociopath because of this. Couldn't he see that it was the presence and not the absence of a conscience that was making me do this?) One evening, I ran. I accidentally met up with the "boy" who had fucked me the second time. He apologized for hitting me (another story) and for not acknowledging the existence of my head. He led me to a shed in the back of someone's yard - which was okay with me because I was AWOL. I was unaware that he had something set up. Hating him, I again submitted to intercourse. As he was fucking me, five(?) of his friends appeared. As they entered the shed, one of them uttered the only words that I have ever remembered being spoken that night: she is just like something out of Playboy magazine. Then they were all around me and over me and I think they all fucked me. But I don't know because I absented myself. I remember seeing myself lying there - as if I was an onlooker - so naked and so white, not speaking, while they discussed and fucked me among themselves. I wasn't there. I recall only two faces and those nine words.

Until recently, I never considered that I was raped. I never said no and I never fought. Actually, I never did anything. I was so passive, unresponsive and unmoving, I could have been mistaken for dead and they could have been necrophiliacs. (Tell me, former professor, was I raped? Or

would that be a self-imposed definition? Can this "type of rape" be empirically determined? Where was the coercion? I did have bruises but they were put there not by fists but by lips and teeth - do they count?) I submitted to the inevitable. Would my "no" have made a difference?

The evening is not over. An easily empirically determined rape occurs about 4 a.m. Back up. After they had all expended themselves of sperm and had established themselves as men among each other, the "boy" who initiated the man-making event accompanied me to a nearby stadium. I was still a "runaway" and wanted to but had no intention of going home. What if I was asked to speak? I was scared. When we got to the stadium, the manager offered to let me sleep in a dressing room which he would lock and then re-open in the morning. He guaranteed that I would be safely locked inside. Before I "retired" to this room, the "boy" introduced me to one of the stadium employees - opening my long winter coat and pointing to various features of my body. I then proceeded to settle down in the dressing room, the door to which the manager locked before he went home. I was asleep on the carpeted floor in the fetal position when the ceiling opened up. A bucket of water was thrown over me and a man weighing at least 200 pounds came crashing to the floor. The manager had failed to take into account removable ceiling tiles. I had failed to take into account that the employee would want access to the bodily features the "boy" had so vividly advertised.

Something snapped. I was submitted out. I screamed, I said no, I fought - we reached a compromise. I would masturbate him and he would leave me alone. It was a trick - he fucked me anyway. He left through the hole in the ceiling and another man came down - he too had a bucket of water. This time I cried and begged. It worked. He said that if he had known my age, he would not have tried. Yeah.

Morning arrived, the door was opened and two little boys brought me french fries and took me to a hiding place - a large rusty storage tank. They failed to keep quiet about it, however, and two of the "boys" from the previous evening showed up for more. They couldn't get it up, however, and left me sawing my wrist against a dull steel girder which did nothing but scratch me. Someone peered in and called the police. As I climbed out of the tank, and into the police car, all of those who had participated in the use of my body looked on. I told the police that I had been raped by a stadium employee - I knew I had been because I had fought. But they asked me about the events leading up to that rape - my honesty led them to the conclusion I was a liar. The end.

How to get a hard on: dominate and degrade. Sex as power as pleasure.

I can't believe that that happened to me. I was 14 years old! How in the hell does a *child* survive something like that? How did I cope with the fact that no one was punished? How did I cope with the rumours that circulated afterwards - the ones that said there were 20 guys in the shed and that I kept

asking them for more? How? I remember secretly planning to become rich some day and hiring a professional to slowly torture and kill them - and to let them know who was behind their suffering. Maybe it was this dream that sustained me - plus the fact that they never gained access to my mind. There was some satisfaction gained when, over the years, I'd see their names in the paper - headed to a federal prison (except for the stadium employee - a married man with children). I hope they were raped.

In a way they did me a favor. I was endowed with a special knowledge about men and masculinity that I might not have had otherwise. They were blatant, unsubtle. They allowed me to experience first hand what men are capable of doing to women. And it was that unromanticised, uncamouflaged, raw knowledge that led me to embrace feminism - and to write this journal.

They all raped me. Yes, they did. I know that now.

I was the only one of us to experience rape this way. But I wasn't the only one of us to experience sexual coercion as a teenager. Most teenage girls do - I think it's part of the heterosexual initiation process. Dawn, your friend Paula told you that girls, as lovers, are "more sensitive, not as rough" - was she implying that the boys she had been with sexually were insensitive and rough? Is the way men have sex coercive, even when its consensual? Is this one of the things we must accept when we are embraced by heterosexuality, by

men? That great, desired tradition of dating consists of nothing more than warding off sexual advances. Boys are supposedly uncontrollable and we are saddled with the responsibility of keeping them in control of themselves. This entails knowing exactly how much to give so that it doesn't appear that we're asking for it and knowing how much to withhold so that we're not cockteasers. Tricky situation to be in - no wonder I submitted to the inevitable. I *was* easy - I took the easy way out. If "easy" means not struggling, then easy girls must be hated because they screw up men's chances to exercise force or skill - they ruin the sport, the challenge. Dating is a sport, a struggle - and when there's any kind of struggle, mental or physical, one is persuading another, one is coercing another. And sometimes techniques of persuasion get rough - Alain, your date's attempt to remove your jeans; Monica, your boyfriend's attempt to rape you; Chris, your date's forcefulness on the way home. Just look at some of the precautions we'd take: Dale, you wouldn't even risk wearing a dress at night; Roseanne, you'd allow your dates touching privileges only above the waist in hopes of keeping them in control. And Dawn, did you ever think that the reason you liked your old boyfriend Don so much was because you didn't have to struggle with him? You said, "strange thing is, Don never ever forced himself on me or anything." Why is this strange? Is force so typical that it's a rare event when we meet a man who doesn't employ it?

Do we mistake our gratitude for love?

Yes, Christine, the "sexual revolution" happened. But have things really changed? We are still the ones who respond - it is the teenage girls who decide based on their boy-friends' action plans whether to say yes or no, and hope that it's interpreted correctly. You said no primarily because of lack of birth control. But many girls don't - they don't say no and they don't use birth control. Despite the "sexual revolution", which made it harder for girls to refuse to have intercourse, it is still "wrong" for girls to say yes. Words like whore, slut, and old bag still exist and they're still aimed at girls that do. So taking birth control, for a girl, is like planning to become a whore, slut or old bag. If she's not on birth control, she can at least tell herself that when sex happens, it's an accident, a moment gone too far, something she'll try not to let happen again.

Joyce, I didn't include you in this discussion of dating because what happened to you was set up by a stranger. I'm sorry you had to go through something so terrifying. However, there's just one thing I want to mention - you were raped. There was nothing "attempted" about it. Discovering that you were on your period, he chose an alternative means to penetrate you, to invade you, to get off. This illustrates, again, the extent to which sex is defined as intercourse. When intercourse doesn't occur, neither does anything else. The laws that existed at the time reflected this.

As I said in my previous letter, heterosexuality is a coercive sexuality because it gives one little choice but to conform - to become heterosexual. During adolescence, this becomes particularly obvious. How many times was I stood up by a best friend when the sex more important than my own appeared on the scene - how many times did I do the same? When a popular boy asked her out, my best friend - who was also my lover - dropped me. A girl's desirability depends upon *boys* asking her out. Roseanne, you even wanted a hickey so that it could be *proven* that you had been desired. When you don't participate in heterosexual rituals, you're an undesirable, an outcast. And it must be because there's something wrong with you (you're ugly, fat, skinny, frigid or a lizzie) not because there might be something wrong with heterosexuality. To paraphrase Dworkin, adolescence prepares the body for the fuck - and only the fuck. Freedom is an illusion.

Chris, Alain, Dawn, you know where I'm coming from on this point. How did it feel Dawn, to have a sexually satisfying relationship with Ellen and know that to talk about it with her, to discuss it, might jeopardize it - that to share it with your friends, as they shared their sexual experiences with you, would be dangerous? How did it feel when your sister set you up with boys "you couldn't handle" under the pretence of improving your social life - realizing later that she was trying to redirect your attention to the proper sex?

How did it feel to be forced to pretend for the sake of convenience - the alternative being no friends, no family? How does it feel to see Ellen married when you recall that she too had not desired boys - do you think she ever learned to like men?

And Alain, you were very sure of your lesbianism - you knew that there was absolutely no way you could desire men. Yet you also knew that to admit this, to acknowledge what was happening between you and your girlfriend, would have entailed your parents sending the two of you to psychiatrists. (Psychiatry - a patriarchal institution designed to propagate and enforce male values. A woman who chooses to be sexually unavailable to men obviously needs it). So what did you do? - you played their game, you offered a pretence, you participated in their rituals so that you could get through adolescence as painlessly and unobtrusively as possible. What options did you have? I doubt that being forced to participate in kissing that made you nauseous was painless. Institutional rape. Without your consent, without your *want*, you were pressured, forced to abide by rules that were not your own. You were coerced into abnormality which for you was heterosexuality.

Chris, the pressure that you experienced was incredible. Caring for and wanting to be with someone but having to invent a semblance of correctly aimed desire each time you went out socially. And then having that "semblance" eventually channel

your first love down the heterosexual path. How did it feel to be harassed and blackmailed by the community, by the family to the point that your relationship with Lisa had to end? It seems that your's and Lisa's guidance counsellor had been willing to try anything to promote heterosexual activity - Lisa could have learned from him directly what fucking was all about. You mentioned that boys desired you, that their suspicions of your lesbianism didn't deter their desire. I suspect that your lesbianism was what induced their desire - there's nothing like a reluctant "virgin" for a good challenge. I would even go as far as to speculate that that's why Alex stuck around - the man to convert you would be held in high respect among his peers. Also, didn't it strike you as odd that Alex allowed you to continue seeing women but not other men? To me, that implies that he didn't view women as serious competitors. Is this because women don't have penises with which to penetrate, invade, occupy and colonize? Does the fuck grant ownership to the one doing the fucking? Did he hope to be the only one to fuck you so that he would be the only one to own you? Maybe he realized that commodities don't have purchasing power.

If I only knew then what I know now ... The word "lesbian" wasn't a part of my vocabulary until a close friend came out to me when I was about 20 years old. It was then that I realized that heterosexuality wasn't the only sexuality - that I had somehow been forced to believe this. Imposed

tunnel vision. Even when my friend and I made love at 17, even when in university there were lesbian women and gay men everywhere, it didn't occur to me that there was anything else. Lesbianism was a secret very well guarded - is the institution of heterosexuality in such a precarious position that it has to defend itself so rigorously?

First Experiences of Intercourse: Being Broken In/
Being Made Women/Being Screwed/Laying the Ground Rules
of Hetero-Sex

In the male frame, virginity is a passive waiting or vulnerability; it precedes and is antithetical to wholeness, to a woman existing in any way that counts; she counts when the man, through sex, brings her to life. (Andrea Dworkin, Intercourse).

Every woman knows that a fucked woman is a woman under the control of men, whose body is open to men, a woman who is tamed and broken in. (Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group, Love Your Enemy?)

Dale

"When I had sex the first time I did it with my ex-husband. I was 17. I was so ashamed I didn't know what to do ... I liked the way he used to embrace me. The way he used to touch my hands. We did have a lot of good times together. But after all he put me through it just went out of my mind.

It took about a half hour. At first I didn't want to give into him. I was still a virgin. But he talked me into

it. I said I was scared I probably might get pregnant. He said if you get pregnant I'll marry you anyway. You know.

His mother was gone. I was staying over to his house - he wanted me to stay over there. So I was there on the chesterfield alone. So, he came over and started kissing me and that and he used to do this with his thumb on the palm of my hand. Then he used to poke his tongue in around my ears and that. Then he started to undress me gently. Now I didn't want that. And he said don't worry, I wouldn't hurt you, I'll be gentle with you. And he was gentle with me but after it was over I started to cry. I said if I'm pregnant, what am I going to do? I can't write home to Mom and say I'm pregnant. Mom would say she got caught too the first time she went to St. Brides."

Dawn

"I was 23. I had an apartment with Judy. Judy was out of town [on business]. Dad buzzed to come up. I didn't think anything of it. When he came up, he was drunk. That's still no excuse. He was talking weird ... about his father and him and how they used to born calves and that, and if the calf got stuck, how his father had to put his hand up through. All this weird stuff. It made no sense for me to be hearing it. Next thing he said to me, "You know, you look a lot like Mom." I said, "Do I now." I said to myself, Jesus, this is getting hot and heavy here. He was talking about Mom having the

hysterectomy done and him and Mom haven't had sex in a long time. I said, "Dad, I think you better go." ... He said, "I'm not going to do nothing." I said no but I was getting a really, really funny feeling. So the next thing I knew he had me pinned by the bathroom and he was tearing at my pants and everything and I could not control him. Anyhow, when he left, he had the shirt tore off me. I had a pair of brown cords on - I'll never forget it ... The next day I called in sick at work and when Judy got back, she came up. She knew something was wrong with me. She looked at the brown cords and everything and she was going to go out and tell Mom.

Dad spent three days trying to apologize. I said Dad, it's a bit late for that now. So I warned him then - don't ever, ever attempt it. But it's not the same. I don't feel comfortable with him. I try to show him I'm not afraid of him but deep down you are afraid - but you don't show it. He was really weird. And I had one of the girls in too - hoping she'd stay there when Dad was talking - we were just talking generally and I thought well, she's going to stay and I was chatting it off with her. It finally got to after 12 and we had to be to work the next day. I kept saying to Dad, "We've got to be to work" and he's said, "Yeah, I'm going now." I was trying to get her to stay. What I should have done - see it was crazy - I should have left. How could you go on and just leave your apartment? Then I figured, well, he's not going to do nothing anyhow.

He was just acting too weird. I'd never ever saw him like it. But then again, I said to myself, I'm getting paranoid now. Because of the fact - I guess I always got kind of like that because of when I was almost raped when I first went to work at [company's name] ...

I think I was in too much shock to feel any pain. I did go to a doctor after that - it bothered me for three or four years. So I decided to go see someone about it ... Like it bothered me, like every time I got near him, I couldn't handle it. Like I had real bad nightmares about it and that. So I went to see a psychiatrist ... but I didn't really feel comfortable talking to him ... This guy, the only thing he wanted to do was put me on tranquilizers or something else ... I took some time off work cause I lost a lot of weight and that. I took my holidays. I wasn't dealing with it very good. We did a lot of talking - the man did a lot of talking to me. But he wanted to give me two kinds of pills. I don't know what they were. I never got them. I went to him four times and I haven't seen him since ... He told me that it had to be there a long time ago. He asked me if Dad ever tried anything when I was younger or anything like that. I said no. He asked me if he had tried it with any of my sisters. I said no, not that I knew of. But he said it had to be there.

When I told my sister about it, she recommended I see this doctor that she knew ... And he said to me - he knows I'm gay - "Dawn" he said. "When you go into the mall, what

do you look at?" "I don't know what you're talking about" I said. "Well" he said. "Okay, if a group of people walked by, who would you look at?" I said, "Are you talking male or female, is that what you're talking about?" And he said, "Well, if I went into the mall and an attractive woman walked by, I'd have to look." "And yeah" I said, "so would I." He said, "Wouldn't you look if it was a man?" I said no. And he's a psychiatrist! He asked me how long I was gay and all that and he asked me if I ever tried it besides, you know, being raped, or whatever way you want to put it. I said no. And he said, "How do you know that you wouldn't like it?" I said, "I should know now what I prefer and what I don't." And he said, "How can you know what you prefer and what you don't prefer if you've never tried it?" This was his big thing, going to the mall, what do you look at? "Well" he said. "I go and I look at an attractive girl - I do look." "Yeah" I said, "So do I." He said, "But if men walked by and you saw someone that looked half decent, wouldn't you stare?" I said no - and he asked me how many relationships I had. I told him. He told me he couldn't see it. "Now" he said. "I probably sound biased here, but I really can't see it - it's such a wonderful experience that a man and woman have ... when this feeling comes between two people, it's such a - you obviously haven't met the right man." ... It was kind of crazy. I went to him twice and I said, "I don't see any point in going back to you."

And this was all the counselling he had to offer you after you told him you were raped by your father? Yeah. Has your father even mentioned it since it happened?

For four days he tried to get me but I wouldn't answer the phone. I went to work ... and he showed up. I went out to speak to him. He apologized and said he didn't know how it happened, that it had to be the liquor. I said, "Dad, it had to be in your head before the liquor." All he said to me, recently I would say, probably a year or two later, would be "you should find a man for yourself." He is always saying that to me. He'd like me to be married."

Monica

"I first had sex on my wedding night. It was frightening. I tried not to get involved. I tried to keep away from that. I didn't want to do it. Even then I wasn't ready for sex. I knew all about it. I had lots of sexual urges but I suppressed it. He wasn't a warm and gentle lover. He was patient enough I suppose. I mean he didn't force himself on me. I didn't think it was a terrific experience or anything. I couldn't figure out at the time what could have been so great about it. It was uncomfortable. There wasn't a lot of foreplay and I wasn't aroused ... I knew what a clitoris was but I don't think he did - not at that stage in his life he didn't. In fact, the last thing he knew was how to satisfy a woman. He only knew how to satisfy himself - in fact, that's all he ever did really. I think he eventually did

learn about the clitoris, I think he eventually learned that a woman could be satisfied but I don't think he learned from me and I don't think he cared to practise on me ... That first time. It was just a function. But I don't think it had to do with taking my virginity - I think it was satisfaction for him. I think that it was his climax that mattered ... The first time you're just not comfortable. Once you get broken in, you no longer have that discomfort. Or at least not the same."

Roseanne

"I remember going out with this guy who was Pentecostal. I was really impressed with him because he came from such a good family ... The added attraction of this guy was that he just got back from Toronto. And he was interested in me ... On our first date he asked me to go to a wedding ... And I thought, look, he has brought me to his church, he's letting people see me with him ... The only other events he took me to was wrestling ... I used to sit there bored silly but knowing that he wanted me to have a good time, so I'd pretend it was okay. No matter when I went out with him, he'd take me to park up on Signal Hill. He used to always want to have sex. I kept saying no. He kept saying, "You know, you're really old fashioned. I just got back from Toronto and you must be the only virgin left in the world." ... I kept thinking I'm going to lose him if I don't have sex with him

... He'd use his hands and try to get me turned on. I never did get turned on by him. Probably pretend I was ... To keep him interested. Shit! - I'd strangle him now if I was near him. I remember one night I almost had sex with him - I thought, Jesus - I almost did it! Just to give in to him, to shut him up. But I didn't. Something at the last minute made me stop. So then he must have known he was getting close. So he made arrangements for us to go out to this cabin somewhere. I thought that was okay because Gloria was going to be there with a friend of hers ... When we went out there, Gloria and the other guy were really drunk and I got scared ... When we got in there it was really dark and there was no electricity so he had to light a lamp. So that was kind of eerie. And he got me in this bedroom on the bed and we must have been there about 15 minutes when I knew he was going to penetrate. And I knew I was going to let him do it. But I was still petrified. And all I remember was when he penetrated me it hurt so much - because obviously I was not ready to have sex. He probably thought he was arousing me but I wasn't. He used his hands - putting his hands on my vagina. I don't know if he got inside my pants or not - I can't remember. I remember him hauling my pants down and him trying to penetrate and couldn't. And me starting to panic because it was hurting so much. Then he did it and it hurt so much I started to scream. And he said, "Jesus, shut up, I'll stop, I'll stop." He took me home. He was really pissed off with

me - really pissed off. And when I went home and I wiped myself, there was blood on the toilet paper - so obviously he had broke my hymen. I never spoke to him on the way home and I never heard from him after. I guess he figured I wasn't worth the trouble, and I wasn't."

Christine

"In the summer - I grew up in a time where there were hundreds of - babyboomers - of teenagers. In the parks in the summer time we'd group together at night and I remember the first time I ever kissed a boy - in the summer and down by Rennies Mill River. After that, I think it was necking in dark corners of mixed parties. Then finally, when I was only 17, I went to trade school. I lost my virginity at Topsail Beach at a barbecue. We went up in the field in the woods ... I had a couple of beers I remember. It was pretty disappointing. The first few times it's like you sort of think, is this it? Is this what everybody's talking about? What it is, is simply some guy getting on top of you and penetrating you - and big deal! You don't even get an orgasm or anything - not that I knew what an orgasm was. It's pretty disappointing."

Joyce

"It didn't happen the way I wanted it to ... We were with each other the whole day - and that night. It happened

in his mother's bedroom. Jesus! They were gone out and we were looking after the young ones. And we just sat there and talked. We had planned it actually. He said to me, "You go out with me tomorrow night and I want you to make love to me." And I said yes. And when I commit myself! ... It was something I wanted to do but I was scared to death to do it. Like he said to me, "If you get pregnant, I'll marry you." So, to me at that point I had nothing to lose anyway. And years ago, when someone was in the army, you looked up to him anyway ... It was nice but it's not what I thought it would be ... I was discouraged. I was scared to death because I didn't know what to expect ... He never did anything to arouse me. We just went in the bedroom and we necked for awhile and that was it. It was like the old story - wam, bam, thank-you ma'am. There was no nice setting there - there was nothing ... I think it was a power trip for him because I was a virgin ... all he wanted to do was to get over me from being a virgin. So, you know, he just wanted to have sex ... Men would sooner have a new one than someone who knows what they're doing ... I don't think we ever would have been married if I hadn't gotten pregnant then ...

Like we went in the bedroom and we laid on the bed first. He didn't remove all my clothes. He started at the top - my bra didn't come off. And like when he started making love, all he just done - we just necked - and he just removed the pants and that was it ... The first time you ever make love

puts an outlook on what you want. And like I didn't enjoy it ... that guy that raped me took off more of my clothes than what Dave actually did. Because Dave never removed my top. See my sexual abuse was from the top up. So when Dave didn't remove it, it didn't bother me. Like I wanted to experience sex too. And I just let him get over my time ...

He got on top of me ... That first time I felt three things. Thank God it's over. He got what he wanted. And how much respect is he going to lose for me - I had gone to bed with him before I got married. It goes right back to your parents and what you were told ...

I was happy it was all over ... It hurt very much and I didn't enjoy it. I was scared to death. Everybody is scared - because they don't know. I was scared, moreover, when it was all over. I said, "Jesus! If Mom finds out I'll be killed." You know. Like people lose their minds on different things - but all that was on my mind was my mother ...

I felt dirty. I felt dirty! I felt like everybody knew and I was going to become this slut. You know, this whore. And even though Dave and I got married ... we never had sex any more until three months. I didn't even miss it. Like I never got aroused - wanting sex."

Fourth Letter

Dear Dale, Dawn, Monica, Roseanne, Christine and Joyce:

Our memories often fail us but I doubt if there is a woman alive who doesn't remember her first experience of intercourse. I consider it memorable because I had possession of this thing - virginity - that was endowed with importance. Some wanted it gone, others wanted it saved. It was said that its loss was dangerous - you could lose men's respect and gain a pregnancy. This membrane seemed to have tremendous significance. It was also purported that the act of ridding yourself of this membrane was the most beautiful, pleasurable, and unforgettable experience a woman could ever have - that it was the act that made you a woman. Then this thing called virginity was "taken". And then disillusionment set in.

First experiences of intercourse are remembered for the hype that precedes them and the disappointment that follows them. As sexual initiation to heterosexuality, I can't help but wonder if first experiences of intercourse are all about preparing women for the denial of their desires. If you take the pre-intercourse hype seriously, you can justify the "poor quality" of the first act by attributing it to inexperience, poor location, a reluctant hymen, or whatever - the hype implies that if it's not good the first time, it will get better once these extraneous problems are eliminated. It is never said that intercourse itself may be the problem - that intercourse is about men's orgasms, not women's. We *learn* to

like intercourse - heterosexual advertising tells us we'd be crazy not to. And if we *don't* learn to like it, willing to help are a variety of heterosexual support agencies - medicine, sexology, psychiatry, the church.

First experiences of intercourse have serious implications for women. For instance, once that hymen is gone, so are our reasons for saying no. We're fair game - open and accessible. If the man who penetrated us is not our owner/husband, then we're in the risky position of being on the open market with a rapidly depreciated value. If we're raped, then the fact that we're unmarried with a lost hymen is going to work against us if we should decide to press charges. The phallogentric logic of heirarchized opposition requires that there is always a winner and a loser and intercourse is no exception to this rule. While intercourse enhances men's value, it decreases women's. When he conquers a virgin, he achieves status - she loses it. She is now a being whose sexuality exists for someone else. Once invaded and occupied by one man, she is accessible territory to all of his allies.

My sister came home from university yesterday telling me that her Classics professor (male) stated in class that womanhood is contingent upon the loss of virginity. I suggested to her that he was from the phallogentric school of thought and that from t(his) point of view, he was correct. As defined by male discourse, woman is one who exists *for* man,

to be fucked - he defines her as useful, penetratable. Intercourse, therefore, is necessary for her to be his, to be woman. She must be invaded before she can be occupied. Once occupied, she is no longer a girl (free, unpossessed).

I lost my virginity and my sexual independence to the boy who told me about the mysterious "magic button" and the difficulty of locating it. We were supposed to have been in love and spent our summer kissing and dreaming of living a lazy life in Mexico - that is, when he wasn't nagging me about my hymen. My hymen was the only evidence he'd accept as an indication of my love, so I decided to let him have it. At the end of August on another hot day in yet another meadow, he fucked me. It was my first lesson in female heterosexual passivity. He instructed me to remove my pants, to lie flat on the blanket, and to close my eyes - this was in order to prevent me from getting frightened at the sight of his nakedness. (There's power in looking - he even denied me that). He kissed me once and entered me. I screamed silently. Then it was over. Looking at his penis, he complained about the lack of blood and asked if I were sure of my virginity. Since he continued to look suspicious, I think he took his penis' word over mine - although I'm considerably more honest. Then he offered me some advice. (*Theory now becomes reality*). He said that now that I was "broken in" (*tamed, ready to be ridden for a lifetime*), my potential to become a "whore"

was greater; that he had also "broken in" his previous girlfriend and that this was, unfortunately, the path that she had "chosen". (He actually *knew* that in fucking me he was readying me for the occupation of his allies - yet he went ahead and did it anyway. *Love?*). A week later, he terminated our relationship. I now realize why - he didn't want to put any more investment in a property that had depreciated. He profited and ran.

Dale, when I had intercourse for the first time, I noticed that everything that I had so much enjoyed - the kissing, the embracing, the gentle touching and exploring - halted once I had acquiesced to his desire. My pleasure mattered only when it was instrumental in ensuring that he would get his - once he gained total access to me, he stopped trying to please me. Arousing me had been a mere technique of persuasion - outside of that my arousal was of no significance. The little gentleness that your ex-husband displayed prior to your first time was for the sole purpose of seduction. In our entire conversation, it was the only gentle behavior that you attributed to him. His gentleness was confined to 30 minutes of gratuitous foreplay and very risky intercourse. He knew that the risks the intercourse entailed were yours, not his; that the few minutes of fucking - his orgasm - had the potential to make you, a 17 year old girl, pregnant; that it entailed the potential loss of your freedom.

It was easy for him to promise marriage if the intercourse resulted in pregnancy - he had nothing to lose. Marriage frees men and enslaves women. He would gain a 24 hour sexually accessible, 17 year old cook, cleaner, launderer, and child-bearer. Ignoring your fears, your desires, the potential consequences, he abused his power to conquer you. Neither initiating it nor desiring it, you were coerced to have intercourse.

Monica, do you realize that there are many parallels between your first experience of intercourse and rape? Although you were frightened, uninvolved, unaroused, uncomfortable, and unwilling, your new husband fucked you anyway. You describe him as having been patient - was he really? Did he wait for your fears to dissipate, for you to become aroused in order to ease your discomfort, for you to also want it? Or did he *want* you unwilling because only whores, not wives, like it? You also remarked that he didn't force himself on you - is this true? He fucked you knowing that it wasn't what you wanted - you submitted. When submission occurs it is a yielding, a surrendering to another's action, control, or power - is this not coercion? You submitted to men's requirement of what wives are and for - marked with his name, you were now his property. As his property, he fucks you. The fucks seals the marriage contract - making possession real, it *must* happen, consensually or not, or you are not really his.

Marriages - sexual property contracts - have been annulled for the fuck not occurring. Your description of your first experience of intercourse as a function was an accurate one. It functioned to make you his, to make him come, and to make his manhood authentic. Your climax "didn't matter" because it was irrelevant to the fulfilment of these goals.

If violence can be characterized either as an act that results in damage or injury or one that deprives someone of their rights through the use of power, then both yours and Dale's first experiences of intercourse can be considered violent. Dale's "first time" resulted in numerous injuries -two of which were an unwanted pregnancy and an unwanted, brutal marriage at the age of 17. Your "first time" was the result of his having used his power, his "rights" as a husband to deprive you of your right not to be penetrated. Or did you have this right as a wife? Tell me, is it possible to separate normal intercourse from rape when we take into account these types of violence? Is intercourse under male supremacy always rape because coercion is present all of the time?

Roseanne, in describing the events leading up to the "main" one, you were really embarrassed. In retrospect, you could see the power that he had and you lacked. Recognizing your own passivity and his absolute control over every situation was painful. Embarrassment, however, is unnecessary - we are all subject to male control in one form or another.

Once we are aware that it *is* control, it diminishes - awareness and knowledge create strength. Besides, you were set up - elaborately and effectively. Under male supremacy, our socialization centers around our bodies - our confidence is supposed to derive from our proficiency in regulating them to masculine desires. You perceived yourself as having failed in this regard - you perceived yourself as fat. You were left with no choice but to see this as your most salient feature. You were therefore grateful when he "let you be seen with him" on your first date. Thereafter, everything that you did together and everywhere you went was determined by him and for him. Bored and frustrated, you accompanied him to wrestling and allowed him to touch you because you were led to believe that your desirability, your self-worth was obtainable only through male attention. His constant nagging and fighting for access to your virginity weakened you. Maybe you said to yourself: sex is something men do and want, sex is why women are wanted and what they are for, so in order to end this struggle, in order to "keep him interested", I'll allow him to penetrate me. His strategy was objectification and he was honest about it. He let you know, in no uncertain terms, what exactly made you desirable, what made you significant. What was expected of you. Heterosexuality - men's sexuality - required that you adjust your body, your behavior, your values, and your desires in order to be an object of *his* desire. The pressures from both him and the

patriarchy being enormous, you did. When he finally penetrated your dry and bleeding vagina, you screamed so long and hard he was forced to discontinue. You refused to suffer silently; you refused to pretend that you enjoyed being conquered. The seed of resistance was present even then.

Joyce, I have felt humiliated naked. Even now, with my lover, I do not enjoy being looked at. When we make love, I like it when she closes her eyes - when she doesn't, I scurry under the sheets. I expect a look - one that makes me aware of my nakedness. Although she has never given me this look, after so many years of receiving it from men, I still expect it. It's a look that's difficult to describe - it's a cross between a smile and a sneer; the eyes are glassy but focused. I imagine a hunter would look at his prey this way prior to killing it. One of the most memorable of these looks was one I received from my husband, shortly before I left him. I had been out until 4:00 a.m. and when I arrived home, the apartment was empty. I thus felt at ease standing at the bathroom counter, naked, with the door partially open. Then I felt a presence - I looked in the mirror and saw my husband's reflection. He had arrived home without my having heard him. He was standing in the doorway sneering at me as his eyes moved down my body. I screamed. He continued to smile/sneer and to look and said "let's fuck". I refused and feeling my heart beat against my chest as if I were about to explode, I took a valium. Within 30 minutes I had passed out cold - the

brandy that I had had prior to coming home increased the potency of the tranquillizer. I had a dream that he had fucked me while I was sleeping - to this day I don't know if that dream was a reality.

The look is bad. It doesn't take in all of you - it gives you the uneasy feeling that you're a composition of serviceable parts - a disconnected collage. It exposes you for what you are under phallocracy - a penetratable body with no real privacy. At times, I find the look worse when I'm dressed - just when I'm feeling safely covered and unexposed they fuck me with their eyes. You probably wonder why I'm talking about this now, when the "topic" is first experiences of intercourse. Well, the fact that he removed only your pants somehow reminded me of that look. During my "first time", my pants as well were the only clothing he removed. It gave me that same feeling of irrelevancy that the look does - as if all of me doesn't matter. As if my entire existence orbits around that hole - that I am nothing but a gaping hole. The only part of me they want is that part of me without nerve endings - they receive pleasure through that part of me that is dead. What we feel is pressure, only a part of which stems from the expansion of the vaginal walls. I want to shout out that I can feel, that I am whole, not a hole. What about my eyes, my lips, my forehead, my shoulders, my palms, my wrists, the backs of my knees, my ankles, my breasts, my hair, my clitoris? - It is everywhere else that I'm alive.

Wam, bam - did your army man remember to thank you, ma'am? No, he married you instead.

Dawn, I left you till last. For a long time I debated as to where to place your story. It probably deserved to stand alone, with its own distinct title or theme. But I didn't want *you* to be alone, to feel alone - unused. Everyone of us has been raped. You may have been the only woman *among us* to have been raped by her father but I have met many girls and women whose fathers were also their "firsts". I also wanted to avoid a specific "special" section for rape. What constitutes rape has been determined by men - women often feel raped and used in ways that differ and contradict men's definitions. To draw such a definitive line between intercourse and rape would be to ignore the coercion that exists each time an act of intercourse occurs under male supremacy.

So, here is your story told among those of use who have experienced intercourse. I'm not a psychologist, a psychiatrist, or a specialist on incest. The most I can offer you is a possible political explanation, a feminist analysis, my own perspective. You know how I feel about your father, about you, and about the pain you've experienced. I despise him, I care a lot about you, and I'd like to be able to erase your pain and fears, forever.

Rape does not appear out of a bottle of booze. Nor is your father sick. His discussion, prior to raping you, of

birthing calves *did* sound rather demented but my guess would be that this was something that had inadvertently aroused him as a boy - and therefore something that he's always associated with sex. Just a guess. However, his discussion of your mother's hysterectomy indicates that he was probably providing a justification for what he was about to do - the excuse he obviously decided upon was lack of sex plus booze. Why do I think he raped you at that time of your life and never as a child? Because of your lesbianism.

Under the present sexual commercial system - phallocracy - fathers of daughters are endowed with very specific responsibilities, the most salient of which is guardian of their daughter's sexuality. When he was home, your father performed this role well by setting up strict regulations for you and your sisters during adolescence. That your brothers were exempt from his rules illustrates exactly what your father was trying to prevent - the unlawful theft of your virginity. Traditionally, a daughter belongs to her father until he approves of marriage. Thereafter, she is the property of her husband and her father is thus relieved of his responsibilities. Thus, the wedding ritual of the father "giving away" the bride. In your case, however, the normal heterosexual game plan got screwed up. Your father had not taken into consideration the fact that you would never be interested in men - that he would thus eternally own you. That you were a

lesbian started to become obvious. That you fit into none of the prescribed categories also became obvious - you would be neither wife, mother, nor whore. At least if you were a whore, your ownership would be shared by many; at least you would still be a woman - penetratable, sexually accessible to men, normal; at least your father would be assured that even if he hadn't succeeded in keeping your hymen intact for a husband, he raised you so that you wouldn't be wasted. Have you ever heard that comment? Upon becoming aware that I was a lesbian, a man said, "what a waste". When something is wasted, it means either that it isn't being used in the way it was meant to be used or it isn't being used at all. I guess that does apply to us. As lesbians, we are women who are not being used the way we are supposed to be used - objects for men's desire.

Taking all of this into consideration, I can think of only two possible motives for his attack of you. Firstly, as an embarrassment - a failure as a woman, a lesbian - you were a daily reminder of his having fallen short of his patriarchal responsibilities as guardian and benefactor of your sexuality. His taking of your virginity - which in fact was still his, yet to be removed by an approved man - was a way out for him. It ended his job. Once removed, there was nothing left for him to protect. Secondly, what do all lesbians need? - a good fuck. As a teenager, you were guided by him towards the proper institution in which to have hetero-sex - marriage. Yet, you opted out of the institution of heterosexuality

altogether. He was unprepared for this. Thus, there was only one thing left for him to do - forcibly introduce you to it. This way he could say to himself that he *did* his job - that he had covered every option. He also ensured that you weren't wasted - you were used by at least one man, thus making you a woman. He completed his job by making you a woman. Encouraging marriage, he still, however, hopes for the use of you by a man other than himself. Then he could really claim success.

I know that this differs drastically from that which was offered to you by the two psychiatrists - but what did they offer? One insisted on numbing your pain through tranquilizers and trying to impose a history of incest upon you so that you could fit neatly into his analytical paradigms. The other chose to ignore your experience altogether so that he could concentrate on convincing you of the supposed "beauty" of intercourse. What would he say if confronted with the 9 of us? Out of a combined 318 years of experiences, only 2 of us, Monica and Christine, mentioned hetero-sex as ever having been beautiful and then only with 2 very unique men. Would he then "get it"? After our first experiences of intercourse, do you think we really would have continued fucking if we had been aware of an alternate, accepted sexuality - our own? But there was no such accepted sexuality.

Good Women vs. Bad Women/Butch Women vs. Femme Women/
Virgins vs. Whores/Lesbians vs. Straights

Men have led women to hate women ... to mobilize their strength against themselves and fill their virile needs ... this is the logic of anti love. (Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa").

Christine

"Growing up I was really fortunate in that I had a friend. This boy across the street - his name was Randy. Randy was my age, a year younger, but extremely creative. I think I found in him a real kindred spirit, a real soul mate. Randy and I were constantly together. Just the best of buddies. We were together all the time. I didn't play with girls. I just found girls to be really boring. I just wasn't in to the girl scene at all. I found him really fascinating. He had a really creative mind and personality which I didn't find in the girls around the street ... I found them very limited. They were more sexual. I didn't have this sort of sexual awakening until I was around 15. Physically I didn't mature. I was very adolescent looking even at 14. Boys didn't think I was very attractive. All the other girls my age were much more developed and they were interested in boys. And also, I found girls, even earlier, I found them sort of catty, just - they weren't interested in the same kinds of things I was interested in. When I was growing up, I was

interested in building and making things and creating sculptures and paintings and theatre and club houses and cooking. Just everything ... So I spent a lot of time with Randy ... because he was very creative. Not so much with the girls because of what they were into - I found them lethargic. They just wanted to hang around in groups, and just do nothing. So I spent most of my growing up years with Randy until I was about 14 or 15. Then I started to become interested in boys and interested in hanging around with girls. Then I really moved into the peer group and then the creativity stopped. The painting, the drawing - it stopped for about five years. But in a way it was healthy because I started to develop social skills which I wasn't too concerned with growing up - it was just Randy. From 14 to 18, I started to hang around with a group of girls and we used to go out with the guys and smoke dope and drink. I was just like any other teenager. Actually in high school we felt we were kind of it. We were the girls of the school and we used to hang out at the university and basically just go to all the dances. That's when the creativity got definitely on the back burner. That was very healthy because you do discover your own sexuality and sexual skills. Then you have your base for relating to and dating guys ...

Women are fantastic. Growing up it was so different. Other girls were a threat. Other girls were trying to take the guys away. You were never aware of a woman's power. You

were never told that. That was something that was very foreign. You didn't really have it. You were always so subverted into the role of someone's girlfriend or somebody's wife or whatever ...

I think lesbians are the most forward thinking in the women's rights movement. I know quite a few lesbians and they're tremendously strong women. They do think differently than heterosexual women. They have much more self-preservation and they're much more demanding for women's rights. They don't have to worry about displeasing a man. Women's consciousness is in part due to lesbian women. They just don't have that subservience that heterosexual women have drilled into them or that's endemic. They're just not as coy and coquettish. They're more straightforward - less timid. They get things done. They do it. They're just not dependent on a man. You're pretty feminine for a lesbian. I would never have guessed that you were gay. You look more feminine than I do. You've got the pointy shoes and the dress, the earrings, and the hair. Look, I'm dressed more like a man than you are! You even shave your legs! ... My perception of gay women, and I think there's a fine line, I think there's more bisexual people out there - as I say myself, I have no qualms. If I'm bisexual, so be it. But I don't think I am. It's come to the point where I've been in situations where I've been very physical with women and it just didn't go anywhere ... I'm heterosexual but I'm probably more tomboyish

than some gay women. Although I perceive gay women as pretty tomboyish. The ones that I know are - they can go to the extent of really looking like a man - walking - very kind of masculine. Most gay women have short hair for some reason ... Just because you're gay maybe you have more male hormones than I do. Your feminine side though is very much there. From a heterosexual point of view, you'd be feminine but you'd also look really very strong, like you could do anything - but in the heterosexual realm ...

I live in a house full of women. Living with women can get on your nerves - because everybody's going through different phases of the month and contrary and irritable. And I wonder what it would be like being in a relationship with another woman - oh god, she's on the rag! ...

I could meet women who I can say I've fallen in love with but hormonally I, sexually, totally without bias, I'm just not oriented towards having sex. Not to say its a hang up. If I wanted to have sex with a woman, so be it. But I've never really been physically oriented towards that. That's why I think it comes down to hormones. With my women friends, I mean I can just adore women. We're constantly kissing and holding and touching each other but its never come to a full sexual act. We just don't get turned on. Why is it you get turned on with an opposite sex and why not get turned on? That's why I say when all the prejudices are gone, all the biases down, then you don't get turned on, then it falls flat

- that's when I think its biochemical. I've never gotten to the stage when I've fallen in love with a woman. Maybe over time you could develop, you could become aroused by her, you could become attracted to her physically. From my experiences, it's never gone that far. Sex is also your feelings towards the other person. My feelings towards another woman have never escalated to the point of initiating a sexual act."

Roseanne

"I remember having a cobby.¹⁹⁷ To me it was an ideal home. There was no conflict up there, there was no brothers, and so on. Usually there'd be two girls playing up there. The two girls would take on separate roles. One would be the mother and one could be the father ... We'd pretend to have supper then we'd lie down and kiss. Never felt a thing. Just a kiss. We must have been really good actresses. Playing a role ... and then my brother would probably climb up on the roof and interrupt. Then you'd be a little stressed out because you thought he'd go off and say he saw us kissing. Cause you really weren't supposed to be kissing. It was instilled in you. I don't know how. But we were only playing a role - one was the father and one was the mother.

We did that a lot later too. Sandra and I were friends right throughout high school. When I was about 12 or 13, her sister was married and living in [nearby community] and Sandra used to go over there every summer and she used to ask me over

... When we'd go to bed we'd kiss each other and pretend we were girlfriend and boyfriend ... But nothing sexual. No pleasure out of it, other than fantasizing ...

I remember going to dances on a Friday night, which would be a lot of fun, and you'd dance with everyone. And the main theme of the evening was to get somebody to walk you home ... and Bruce used to walk me home and we'd stand there in the cellar doorway and kiss. Now I remember that as being pleasurable. Being nice ... But I remember that as being pleasurable - really nice that he walked you home, really nice that he kissed you. You'd hope that he'd pay attention to you the next day. So everybody could see that you had somebody just like somebody else had somebody ...

Jesus, the pain we went through getting ready to go out! You'd go up and stick 500 rollers in your hair and then you'd take the rollers out ... you'd back comb that till the tears came out your eyes ... Lipstick. Eyebrow pencil ... You had to almost cheapen yourself to look good ... The boundaries weren't with the hair styles or makeup - it was with the clothes. Like at the time, probably like it is now, any girls that were considered loose would wear really tight clothes - really tight. Like you probably couldn't sit down in them. If you were somewhat conservative, you wouldn't. I remember somebody saying one time, Lucy was coming into the snackbar, and someone saying you can sure tell she's not a virgin ... all you got to do is look at her legs, look at the way she

walks ... I thought maybe her legs were more open than somebody else's. I didn't know. And so from then on, for a period, I was looking at all the girls to see how they walked, to see who was a virgin and who wasn't. There was a real stigma. If you were a virgin you were a good girl but if you weren't you were a slut ... So I thought, my God, I better keep my virginity cause they're going to know. But at the same time, I envied these girls because they always used to have the male attention - probably for a good reason! So if you were a conservative sort of individual you were the one who sat down in your chair and didn't get all the dances, unless some nice boy came along and asked you to dance. But if you were like some of the other girls, who in my mind were loose, they used to get all the dances. So you compare being a wallflower and somebody being really popular and getting all the dances and being sure of having somebody to walk them home, there was a stigma. You suffered socially ... But I thought I was grotesque. I'd say I was 15 to 20 pounds overweight. Normally I ranged about 135 pounds ... I used to think I was so overweight that's why I couldn't get a boyfriend. That I wished I had a nice skinny figure like those other girls - they can dress with their tight pants on and everything else so they can get boys. But naturally you're not going to wear tight pants if you feel like you're really fat. So you'd try to camouflage it in some way ...

Bonfire night - another night that if you didn't have

anybody you were really left out. So you'd always try to get somebody. I remember I had Will one night, nobody another time. And there's always be a certain group that would always go up in the backwoods. We would go with our girlfriends but more often than you you'd think you weren't normal if you didnt' have somebody. So everybody else was bad but we were good. You blamed it on the girls being easy. That's how they got the guys. I remember going skating and we would have a lot of fun on the pond. You'd think it was great if they'd put your skates on and tie them up for you - be half frozen to death and he'd be there tying up your skates. You'd think it was great if he skated you up and down the pond ...

When I got out of trades school, I worked for three years [in an office downtown, St. John's]. It seemed like for every 2 guys there were 10 girls. And again you had this feeling about yourself that you weren't quite up to par as the other girls. And my goal was to meet somebody who I really liked and who liked me. Who would help me in not being so bored. And there never seemed to be anybody around. *Were all social activities centered around men?* Yeah, the important ones ...

There's this one woman I work with now whose husband doesn't want her to go anywhere and she astonishes me. The way she dresses for work is the way a prostitute dresses to go downtown to pick up somebody. A white jacket, a checkered black and white mini-skirt, black panty hose with gold designs

around the ankle, high heeled spiked shoes with silver trim. Something you wear to a night club and she thinks that's wonderful. Her husband likes it. I'd like to be close enough to her to say, it's what's expected in an office - that when men come up over those stairs and they see her, they look at her for one thing only. She's got a good body and she's dressed to show it off - in their eyes. But if she had on a business suit, and not those flashy hose and shoes, she would be treated differently. In fact, she would probably be treated with a little bit more respect. *But don't you think that men look at women primarily as sexual beings anyway?* Yes, I think they look at her a little more closely - they see more leg, more flashy clothes. *But I've sat in bars, not wearing flashy clothes, and not wanting to attract attention and men have still treated me with disrespect.* If you were fat and ugly and sitting there aloof and didn't want anybody to bother you, I don't think you'd be bothered. But you're sitting there aloof and you're attractive - nice body, nice face, nice hair - then you're a challenge."

Chris

"Elementary grades I grew up with boys instead of girls. I didn't play with dolls and stuff like the girls, I played ball and that with the boys ... Where I think I was the third girl, Dad may have been wanting a boy. Talking to my sisters, like Dad never took them trouting or stuff when they were

young. But when I was growing up, all of my memories of Dad were playing ball, trouting, he tried to get me interested in trucks and driving. I could get along with the girls at school but just out of our own group. I never had any contact with the other girls. I grew up with the boys and a couple of cousins that were girls. They weren't really into dolls and stuff either. High school I hung around with girls and everything but to guys I was more or less their friend - even if I was going out with a guy we were more drinking buddies and stuff than boyfriend and girlfriend ...

I think in my eyes, maybe not in everyone else's eyes, but every woman I've ever gone out with has been the pick of the crop. To me, they're all beautiful. But, like I say, some of my best friends are fat, but I wouldn't be able to go out with a fat person ... They got to be - I won't say brainy, but fairly intelligent. I'm aquarius so they got to be pretty deep - think deeply. Usually they all had a fairly good sense of humor - strong, I don't mean physically, but all of them had been. I like femme. I don't like women who try to take on and look like men, of course knowing a few of them, the more they start to look like men, the more they start to act like men. I like them to be good-looking but not be petite. Like I'm fairly shy and all the girls I've gone out with have not been shy - except Jennifer. She's an exception.

What's butch? I look at butch as, they're trying to look like, you know - Kodiaks and GWGs, and they don't really take

care of themselves. A lot of them got beer guts but I'm not attracted to that style. I'm attracted to the type who looks after themselves. *I imagine the butch woman as someone fanatic about staying in shape, strength wise - like through sports.* I don't call people like that butch. There's sporty femmes and sporty butches. I'd call Alain a sporty femme. She's into sports and loves sports - she could do other things to stay in shape. She can dress up and look clean. And she don't carry knives - she might think herself tough but she doesn't go around beating people up to prove she's a tough butch ... Like I view Jennifer as a femme but somebody else mightn't ... I like femmes or sporty femmes. Jennifer can be a sporty femme too - it depends on what she's doing. Like if she's sitting down putting on her makeup, she's femme. If we're out trouting, she's a sporty femme. She can go either way. *Do you think these categories are dangerous?* They probably can be to some people. Like I might be calling Tina's girlfriend this big butch but in reality she may be the quietest, sweetest, little person ...

Do you think "butch" women take their butch role to bed? The ones I've slept with I think they do. I think that once they get in bed they want to be in control of the whole thing. It's not equal any more. I never tried to make love back because I got a bit repulsed from it. And then I wouldn't even try ... [In my home town] I slept with four or five women. All of these women that I slept with - I guess I knew they were

straight and I knew they were going to bed just for a sexual experience - then I would try to take on the male role. I'd sleep with them and I wouldn't even have my pants off. Like I'd go to bed with them, make love to them, and I'd still have my pants on ... I found that I couldn't have an orgasm. No matter how attracted I was to them I just couldn't. I'd try and everything but I couldn't. That went on when I first came to St. John's and started seeing the first girl here for those 2 weeks. Like I was all ready to go to bed with her but she had a job to get the pants off me cause I wasn't used to it. And even when she did it was no use ... That became very confusing ... All that time I was used to me being in control in bed and when I got in bed with these women who were butch, I put it off just as we were getting in bed because I knew what was happening - I couldn't control. That was really scary.

Now, in order for someone to make love to me first, I got to be very aroused. Or it just won't work. I'll only end up being so confused. It's just very confusing. I guess it's because of all the years - that's how I got aroused - by making love to someone else. I find now it's much easier for me if I make love to someone first. But sometimes that's all I need - I like that too. Sometimes that's thoroughly pleasing to me - like I don't have to have an orgasm. If I make love to someone and they're tired, then fine, go to sleep ...

I think that the more some women get butch, not only dressing and walking and holding themselves like a man, they begin to shut themselves off. They don't show their feelings, they'll carry on like a man, they'll make the same jokes as a man, they'll act the same way. It's like the butch gets inside of them. They just start cutting off feelings, stop showing feelings, and they won't cry. They just start getting more and more like a man. So if you get them in bed they want to make love to you like a man. And they're ashamed to take their clothes off because they're not a man. Cause once they take their clothes off, they're a woman. In my case, where I knew they were straight, if I took my clothes off and if they touched me I thought they might be repulsed because I'm not a man. If I knew they were gay, then - they'd been through this before. With Lucy I was more relaxed because I knew about her past and I knew she's been gay for years. So there was no way for me to repulse her. The first time I slept with Jennifer I kept my pants on. I wasn't really sure if she was gay. It was a bit odd with her because I was nervous. It was her first time but it wasn't mine. I had slept with many women but it was like it was my first time because I was so nervous. Too nervous to take my pants off.

Alain

"Everybody used to call me a tomboy. Guys looked at me as more of a buddy than someone they'd like to date. You

know, when you first start off in adolescent years, they saw me as one of the boys, they wouldn't see me as a girl. When I hung around with guys, they looked at me as one of them. One of the guys across the street taught me about sports. He was the one who put a hockey stick in my hand when I was 5. Dad encouraged me sometimes - he thought it was cute - real cute at first. He sort of looked at me as a son ... The girls were boring - they played with dolls. It just didn't intrigue me - dolls can't talk back, they can't run after a puck. They were boring when it came to sports - they didn't know how to play, not the way I knew how to play. All they wanted to do was play with those stupid, stupid skinny Barbie dolls. I knew they were boring but there was things I liked about them too - their patience, they cared a little more. See, when I hung around with these guys, we didn't show affection or anything like that. It was just buddies ...

Masculine characteristics in a woman turn me off. Women walking like men, looking like men, acting like men, dressing like men, a lot of the time - it just turns my stomach. I was abused physically and verbally by a woman - it was a shock. *Would you call this woman "butch"?* Yes. Butch women act like men. They just act like them ... Most of them want to be men. I'm sure of it ... They're very insensitive - not just sexually. They're very aggressive, try to be domineering. Sexually they like to perform very well and they fuck up by being so aggressive - they're very rough and have a non-caring atti-

tude. When you're very very aggressive and display that type of behavior, you lose attributes that you don't even realize. You lose the caring aspect. Basically, if you're with your lover and you want to show your lover that you really love her, you want to make love to her. By displaying those types of things - this aggressive, domineering - you're not showing her love, she gets this other feeling. Like, is this a show, what is this, is this person trying to prove they're better than me, do they think they can control me, or is it that they love me? No, it can't be because they love me. But if they do love me why not just be themselves? Be yourself. Butch women are like men. They get on like men when they come on to you, they don't take no for an answer. They stare - which I hate. And they stare even if you don't want them to stare. You give them vibes, buzz off, I'm not interested. And they still stare. And its a blow to the head when you say no. I was caged in the house for a year by one of these women - just enough time to get to school and get to the library ...

So do heterosexual roles carry over into lesbian roles? For sure! You get a lot of role playing. Someone will say, oh she's the butch one and the other one, she's a real fluffy, she's a femme. Maybe they're acting according to the heterosexual world. They need some sort of structure to sort of explain what they're doing. Instead of just being yourself. Saying look, I'm not butch, I'm not femme, I'm me - please don't label me. I'm me. I did not want to be socialized into the

heterosexual world. My socialization patterns didn't follow the recipe."

Joyce

"When we were teenagers, me and my best friend Roberta, we'd always try - I don't know, some kind of power thing - to see if we could get each other's boyfriend. We played that game. I ended up on the shitty end of the stick with that one. I had bet Roberta that I could take Dave from her. So I did. *What did that do to your friendship?* Nothing really. Because she started going out with another guy anyway ...

Do you find yourselves competing with one another now? No. Cause we all got our little downfalls about each other. Like ourselves. Roberta thinks she's too short and too fat. She won't find anybody. Susan thinks she's too big. I'm always dwelling on my looks. Like lots of times I look at guys and if they're really really nice looking and they make a play for me, I say, yeah, they only want me for the fucking bed. Cause it's not for what they see in me - they don't see - I'm no gorgeous creature - I'm ugly anyway. So what do they see? Why is he making a play for me? ...

I don't trust anybody. I don't trust any of my friends. And they know this. If I meet somebody I definitely don't trust them. They know it. Because my best friend who helped me move out when I left Dave - she ended up living with Dave

and engaged to Dave. They say to me, well we wouldn't do that. I says, Jesus Christ! - she told me the same thing. I don't trust any woman.

But maybe Dave did that - maybe that's how he could get to you most - by taking away your best friend. Maybe. I don't know. I haven't worked that one out yet. But I know it's very hard when you're betrayed by your best friend. I took that harder than my divorce. Karen is not the type of person who goes to bars. She bowls and she lives for her children. That's all I could see. And then I found out she was shagging around with three other men besides Dave. And me and her were like that right? And here was this person right here and I never seen what was outside. All I could see was what was inside. Dave is probably treating her the same way he treated you. You're probably right but I never seen nothing. You know. Like my friends say to me, you've got to learn to trust us. I says, it takes a while. It's going to take a long while for me to trust anybody. So, your friendship is gone for good. Oh yeah, cause I'll never speak to her. She may have been looking for security through him - supposedly it's only men who can provide it. When I got married I let all my female friendships go to the wayside. I never had time for anything else but him, the apartment, his meals, and all this shit. I think what happens to a lot of women, they become so absorbed by a man, they forget everything else that makes their life - like friendship. Yeah, you always got to have a friend. Like this person was so close - like she was closer than a sister is. And then all of a sudden the betrayal is there -

so, you know, it takes a long time. Like if I meet a guy downtown, and we're sitting down, I'm thinking, do Mavis want him? And I'll turn around and I'll ask her. Do you want him or what? And if she says no, I'll keep my defense up then, I'll keep watching - you know, to see what kind of moves she's making. It's terrible ...

If I go out to meet someone and walk out of a club - especially if you walk out of a bar and you go to a regular bar. Like the bar I go to for instance - the whole year and half that place has been open, those girls have only seen me walk out with two guys. I walked in with them and I walked out with them. If I go down there and meet a guy, I won't leave that bar with him. Because you'll get a name after a while - of being a real slut. From the people who work there - the girls themselves, the workers. They see everything that goes on. It's like the old saying, the bartender knows everything. And if they see you leaving the bar with this one and that one every night, a different one every night! Society will never change. Men will never change. Women will never change. Women keep trying everyday - they got more of a struggle than a man does. Cause a man can leave a bar with a woman - a different woman every night - and they never get a bad name. Like Ed said to me, yes you do, you get the name of a whoremaster. And I said no ..."

Dawn

"I was working, out on the road. I was rooming with this girl - she was much older than I was. Much older. And we got fooled up - we were supposed to have two single beds in a room and myself and Judy, we had one double bed ... It never connected with me cause Judy and I were good friends. I never thought anything of it. Cause at that point - the last time was with Marie and I was 17. So I didn't think nothing of it. I wasn't sexually attracted to her even. But she was a good friend. About 2 or 3 in the morning Judy turned over - and I don't know if I was dreaming or what - I must have responded, which I did because I woke up. Actually, I didn't now how to handle that situation. I really didn't. I let everything go and went on with it because I was aroused. But in the morning I couldn't face her. And I didn't know how to bring it up. I didn't know what to say to her. So I let it go because she was my boss ... Anyhow, she apologized and I said, well, there's no point in apologizing cause I must have enjoyed it cause I certainly didn't stop you. So that was fine. We decided not to talk about it, nothing happened. When we got back home ..., she told me that she loved me. She lived with this woman for 20 years. But that was a long time ago. Anyhow, we decided we'd just let things ride. She had her own apartment. Nothing happened for about 4 or 5 weeks. I went over and stayed for the weekend and then it happened again ... It was an escape for me. I took it as an escape.

It was a chance - Judy was moving into another apartment and asked me to move with her. And I wanted to be out of the house cause I had to be in at certain times, which I couldn't handle. I never ever cared about her which I felt bad about. I had to really explain that to her. The hardest part about that was she cared an awful lot and I didn't realize it. Like I didn't sleep with her. I had my own room and everything. But of course every now and then we'd get together. But she didn't take it too well. The girls at work used to say Judy treated me like a mother - and that's the way it looked. It went well that way I guess and that's the way I took it. Until the point came when I decided that I'd tell her I was leaving. That didn't go over well. It was almost a year. In the meantime I had met someone else. I had said to her two or three times that I was thinking about getting my own place and she used to say "what do you want to get your own place for, you got your own freedom here." Deep down you didn't. So I'd go off for a weekend and she'd call all over the place looking for me -everywhere. So I was out on the road and I got poisoned - I told her I was leaving. I left the room and went on downstairs ... When I came back she had been out - she was well on. When I walked in the room, I never knew nothing till - bang! She hit me and landed me right on the floor. I said, "Judy, what's the matter with you?" And she kept saying, "You're not leaving me, you're not leaving me." I said "Judy calm down, I'm not going anywhere, just calm

down." Anyhow, she hit me again and got on top of me. The only way I could get her off me was to bite her arm ... The next morning I was full of bruises ..."

Dale

"Sometimes he'd want me to suck him off. I said, "no way - go ask some old bag out on the street to do that for you if you want - they'd simply come up and tell you how much." I wouldn't do it ...

I found out he was seeing someone else ... I was under a \$500.00 peace bond because I attacked her at a bar downtown ... and I told the judge before I got off that stand, I said, "Now judge, what are you going to do with me?" I said "I can't be crossed any longer." I said during my marriage I was quiet - he could walk all over me, he could dress up and go when he liked. He would say to hell with you, you stay home and rear up the youngsters." I said if he crosses me again, I'm liable to go after her again ..."

Fifth Letter

Dear Christine, Roseanne, Chris, Alain, Joyce, Dawn and Dale:

Women against women. I wish this section had not been one in which we all belonged. An effective strategy of the phallocracy, it not only diminishes our potential collective strength, it also serves as a decoy - if we believe that our enemies are other women, we will fail to recognize or attempt

to defeat the true perpetrators of our oppression. It is a preferred and proven technique. It works. Rather than loving and supporting one another for what we have managed to survive, we have been conned into war. Divide and conquer.

Hatred and envy directed at women - what a waste of emotional energy. From grades 4 to 7, one of my best friends was also my worst competitor. Adelle. She had a French name and a perpetual tan. She excelled in gym class and wore dresses well. And Robert, the main source of our competition, could never seem to make up his mind which one of us he desired - he wavered from grade to grade. Our friendship ended when a boy she had desired expressed interest in me. My devastation quickly turned to contempt when she evened the score with cruel jokes about my breasts and adolescent acne. We had always envied one another for the physical features we didn't share - she was dark, I was light; she was a brunette, I was a blond; she had small breasts, I didn't. Why did we allow the differences in our bodies to take precedence over all we had had in common - our love for animals, our passion for drawing. Black Beauty? Are our bodies all we have to offer under phallocracy? Our friendship ended because both of our bodies were equally marketable. On the heterosexual market place, competition is stiff so you're therefore better off establishing friendships with women whose bodies are either less marketable than your own, or whose bodies complement rather than supersede your own. This, of course, puts

limits on your core support network.

In elementary school, during the winter months, we had always had skating once a week. At a leisurely pace, the girls would skate in two's or three's, holding hands, while the boys would race one another. Towards grades 5 and 6, things changed. Sex loyalties switched. Particular girls began skating with particular boys. What had just been between me and Adelle was now happening on a large scale - it was now the girls who were still loyal to their sex versus the girls who weren't. Each group despised the other. We figured they were crazy for holding hands with guys while they figured we were immature and not yet able to handle what they could handle. Both groups were right. As junior high school approached, the pressure to be heterosexual increased. Girls no longer skated with each other and enjoyed it - if you didn't have a boy on your arm there was something wrong. The last time I held hands with a girl, publicly, a group of teenage boys called us lizzies - we were 11 years old. We didn't know what the word meant but we knew enough to stop holding hands.

In junior high school, competition between girls became intense. The choice of who would belong in your friendship network was a narrow and difficult one. What constituted us and them became very complicated. Class emerged to accompany sexual properties as another source of competition. There were the studious versus the smart girls. Basically, the

smart girls were also studious but they were smart enough to hide their intelligence behind "cute" exteriors. The studious girls - those whose academic concerns superseded even their looks - were the butt of jokes by both sexes. Ignoring that which makes women really important, they were an oddity, an amusement. There were also the whores versus the girls that don't (or if they do, only with their boyfriends). As class was also an issue, this division was more complex than it appeared. If you were a whore whose parents had money, you were far more accepted by the "good girls" than if you were a poor whore. Poor whores tended to be more obvious about their status - not only were their clothes of poorer quality but because they couldn't afford to go to Montreal for abortions, they tended to stay pregnant and drop out of school. Middle-class whores, however, were despised by the poor whores for lacking the street sense that is supposed to accompany promiscuity. The whores of both classes were equally disliked by the girls who had yet to be used because they served to remind them that they eventually would be. They were unequally accepted because one group was a more obvious reminder than the other. As there were endless divisions, hatred virtually became an art form, perfected and therefore more subtle by the time we reached high school. I'm not sure how I participated in this adolescent war. I know I never considered any girl a whore. Because I was living it, I recognized the hypocrisy of the double standard. I also

knew that sometimes the only difference between a good girl and a whore is that word has yet to get around about the former having been fucked. But, most importantly, I knew how bloody awful it felt to be labelled and defined according to what men do with their penises. The girls I most disliked were those who openly judged me - they were not aware that my promiscuity also extended to them as I passively ignored their condemnations in order to achieve at least a semblance of acceptance.

These divisions were specific to our sex. Although boys were also divided into those that did and didn't have sex, the former group was far more respected than the latter. It seemed that as long as they managed to get laid, they had respect on their side and they could be which ever way they wanted to be. Differences in class, appearance, intelligence, and athletic ability were virtually erased by their common use of women.

Christine, during the conversations, it had not yet occurred to me that I would be writing a section on women divided by heterosexuality. It was only after the tapes had been transcribed that I realized it had been an issue for all of us. As we were talking, it hadn't been an issue - you had merely been describing how you became sexual. In reading our conversations, I realized that part of becoming (hetero) sexual, for women, includes being loyal to a sex other than our own and developing a perception that women are the enemy,

and frequently, that men are somehow superior. Heirachized oppositions - heterosexuality revolves around them. Whenever a "couple" exists, they are inverses, opposites - one is always subordinated to the other; one is positive, the other negative. Why sex must be aligned with physics, I don't know. But it seems that in order to be attracted to men, women must be repelled to one another.

As a pre-adolescent, your best friend was Randy. Can you see that in describing your friendship with Randy you explained it not only by referring to those things you and he had in common but by depicting all girls as inferior to this one boy? In order to describe what attracted you, you describe what repelled you. The phallogentric logic of anti-love - in order to love we must hate. Of course, what repelled you was the female gender role - you didn't believe that girls, as girls are stereotypically described and defined, were capable of doing that which you and Randy enjoyed. To be female under phallogcracy is to be restricted -as a child you temporarily avoided these restrictions by playing only with Randy, whose freedom was not controlled by gender. Describing girls as "boring", "limited", "catty", and "lethargic", you had internalized the phallogentric belief that females are inferior. When I was 17 or 18, I remember actually saying that men were better conversationalists than women because women were concerned only with husbands, babies, and recipes. What has always amazed me about this, is that

when we believe, for example, that girls are "limited" or that women are poor conversationalists, we are forgetting who we are - we are one of those we so readily put down. It's as if for the moment we are sexless. I guess it's easier to identify with men - a non-oppressed group. Then we can fool ourselves into believing that we, as individuals, are exempt from oppression - that it's other women oppression happens to. Another strategy.

Admittedly, you were also divided from girls because of differences in your bodies. Girls your age were "more developed" than you and you thus perceived them as more sexual. You describe this "development" as an "awakening" - something you didn't experience until you were also physically mature. I don't know of I'd call it an awakening - although, maybe the word is appropriate if you think of it in terms of a sudden realization. I remember my breasts unexpectantly appearing when I was 11. I didn't feel primarily sexual although I realized I was now perceived as primarily sexual. My breasts seemed to be the sudden focus of attention - I was the only girl in class who had any. As my breasts increased in size, sexual jokes increased in frequency, so I'd wrap myself in loose sweaters. The development of secondary sex characteristics had changed my status - and I was painfully "awakened" to this. Unwillingly, I had become one who is sexual - woman - and under phallocracy this means one who is object, one who is marketable. The girls you rejected as

sexual were probably no more sexual than I was - they just received more sexual attention. Unlike you, they had been entered into the heterosexual market of exchange. When your body finally caught up with theirs, you were united by the common pursuit of boys. Then other divisions developed - your bodies became competitive products ("other girls were trying to take the guys away"); value was determined by who did and didn't have boyfriends and friendship networks were based on this factor.

I found it interesting how you described the loss of your creativity upon becoming sexual. Is this because, under phallocracy, women's sexual development must take precedence over everything else - because women are defined as sexual? You also described this process as "healthy", as giving you the "base for relating to and dating guys". Is part of relating to and dating guys learning to dismiss that which is important to ourselves - is this part of heterosexuality? Is adapting to self-sacrifice a prerequisite to becoming a woman - to becoming sexually accessible, what women are *for*? You believe that sexuality is bio-chemical or hormonally induced. If this is the case, why is it necessary *to learn* how to relate to men, to learn sexual skills? You also described sex as a way of feeling about a person. Is it possible that your "feelings towards another woman have never escalated to the point of initiating a sexual act" because we have learned to

hate, judge, and condemn our own bodies and to view other women's bodies critically as sources of competition - that it's because our feelings towards women have been guided towards hate? Women have never been allowed to love one another - the odds are arranged so that it happens either rarely or with difficulty.

Due in part to my past, my mother, and women's studies, early in my marriage I became an active feminist - attending social functions, participating in protests, etc. As a woman new to the feminist and lesbian community, I perceived it as a utopia - I was oblivious to any divisions. To all appearances, sisterhood seemed alive and well, particularly among the lesbian women, whom I wanted to emulate. Because I had always identified with radical feminist theory, my politics and my personal life clashed - I felt that I was a contradiction. Looking in on the lesbian community, I saw women loving and supporting one another - I perceived them as having not only their sexuality but also their feminism in common. I wanted that. I'm not saying that I chose to become a lesbian in order to align my reality with my beliefs - as the letters probably reveal, it wasn't as simple as that. It was, however, an influence and a desired consequence.

Three years ago, I came out - meaning that I decided that I would no longer perform for men, or anyone else. As I started to become an insider, I realized how naive I had been as an outsider. Firstly, I discovered that not all lesbians

were feminists. Secondly, I realized that heterosexuality, as an ideology, was very much present in the lesbian community. When I read Catherine MacKinnon's observation that gender - masculinity (actor) and femininity (acted upon) - does not necessarily have to correspond with sex, I wished that I had known her so that she could have helped me make sense out of what I was experiencing. It's so confusing. I'm not even sure if I can adequately convey to you where I'm coming from. I was having problems with how I was perceived - and this has yet to change. Christine, you were one of the few women I've met to openly vocalize this perception - it's something I just usually sense. Although I was initially upset, I was later appreciative of you having provided me with a spoken first hand perception about which I could write. You see me as feminine. To those who know me as a lesbian (but who also don't know me), I am femme. When we met, what you saw were large earrings, pointy shoes, bleached blond hair, and a dress. What you didn't see was one large earring, flat pointy shoes, hair that had been shaven so short that it couldn't be combed, and bermuda shorts that were so baggy, they could be mistaken for a skirt. It perturbed me that you didn't recognize the rebellious aspects of my femininity. When I opted out of my marriage, I gave away all of my heterosexual costumes - dresses, heels, pantyhose. Anything that was uncomfortable and that men liked I got rid of. Then I gradually adopted a new style - one that made me feel good

about myself, strong. This strength, however, was recognized by hardly anyone other than myself. Ways of seeing. Whereas you saw me as feminine and yourself as "tomboyish", I saw myself as less feminine than you (but not tomboyish). Under phallocracy, what does it mean to be "feminine"? Why would being perceived as "feminine" upset me? Why is the feminine denigrated, the masculine exalted?

Men have defined woman - the feminine. She is weak. She is hysteric. She is pliable. This definition of the feminine as incapable of little action justifies men's needs to act and to control. The feminine is good or positive only when the act of being feminine fulfils men's needs. We are good when we are serviceable, when we complement. When I am perceived as feminine, is this how I am understood? Am I perceived through male definitions of what constitutes the feminine? But three years ago I chose to stop submitting to men - using male discourse, isn't this the most unfeminine act a woman could commit? This disdain for the feminine by women - is it misogyny? Do we hate ourselves and if so, is it because we have not defined ourselves? Is the disregard for the feminine, a disregard not for women but for male definitions? Are we struggling to create new, less restrictive definitions and thus disrespect women we perceive as not involved in the same struggle? Or is this yet another example of the pervasive phallocentric logic of heirarchized oppositions - masculine as positive, feminine as negative?

Must I adopt, after 27 years of surviving womanhood as a woman, masculine behavior in order to be respected and not condescended - to be perceived as strong and capable? Must it be the masculine? Isn't there anything else, something less destructive? Maybe the answer lies in whatever women have been doing all these years to survive oppression, to retain the ability to love and to hope - maybe that is what is *her*. A suppressed third gender - one that exists outside of the opposing couple. A strength hidden, undefined because it doesn't fit phallogentric two-term logic, because feminine strength is a contradiction in terms, because men can't eroticize anything other than powerlessness. As lesbians do we eroticize masculinity ("butchness") because as women we have learned to eroticize power? Sex as power as pleasure? Or do we eroticize the masculine - the butch woman - because she has dared to appropriate that which gives men freedom? How do you imagine I felt, as a "new" lesbian, when I discovered that heterosexual gender roles divide women-who-love-women into butch and femme, or that masculinity and femininity are eroticized to the extreme through sado-masochism and that this, in turn, would divide feminists? I was scared. I had never before realized the pervasiveness of heterosexual ideology - that it could actually disrupt a movement and divide a community of very powerful, rebellious women.

Upon coming out, I found myself strongly attracted to

butch women. At the time, I concluded that I was sexually aroused by what I had learned to eroticize - masculinity - and that once I became confident of my sexuality, my desire for the masculine would diminish. I soon discovered, however, that my attraction was based on their style - their way of dressing, their demeanor - and that if this "masculine" style went beyond appearances, I was turned off and not on. Actually, it may not even have been masculinity that aroused me - it may have been the bold, daring statement of "dykeness" or lesbianism that butch women convey. They *look* like they've removed themselves from the heterosexual market place - it was their obvious rejection of men and of the patriarchy, their rebellion, that I found so compellingly attractive. Only to find out later that it wasn't, exactly, a rejection.

Chris, as you know, I found your discussion of butch/femme fascinating. You have categorized all lesbian activity into masculine and feminine - sporty femmes, sporty butches, femme behavior, and butch behavior. According to your paradigm, femmes are those women whose appearances connote attractiveness - if they engage only in those activities traditionally defined as feminine, they are only femme, whereas if they participate in activities outside of the feminine realm, they are sporty femmes. Thus, there are attractive, passive women versus attractive, active women. Butches, on the other hand, are those who "don't take care of themselves" and who try to prove their "butchness" through

implied or direct violence. Butches, unlike femmes, do not care about their bodies or how they look. I'm not sure if I agree that this is in fact the case. I think they do care and work very hard to appear as if they don't. The butch style is one which is cultivated. To remove one's body from the scrutiny, assessment, and judgement that usually accompanies it if it is female is hard work. You probably describe this behavior as butch - meaning masculine - because it has only been men who have successfully absented their bodies from "the look". I have a friend who carefully chooses nondescript, uniform clothing - jeans that aren't "women's", sweatshirts of the same style in different colors, particular kinds of running shoes and boots, and to be seen holding her mother's purse constitutes one of her most embarrassing moments. She says that when she goes to the club, her goal is to blend in, to not be noticed or to stand out in any way. She hates to receive compliments and is more comfortable as pursuer than as one who is pursued. Why? Is it because it has been women's bodies as attractive bodies - bodies to be assessed and accessed - that we have been kept separate, powerless? As long as women are the attractive sex, they are the ones who are sought - they do not seek. Those women whom you call butch, and my friend - are they deflecting the look away from themselves so that they can do the looking, the desiring, the judging, and thus the controlling? Do they find this preferable to being looked at, desired, judged, and thus controlled?

Is this what you meant, Alain, when you said that butch women stare and that they continue to stare even when they know their gaze is unwelcome? It's too bad that we have to borrow from men ways in which to escape objectification - men's means of attaining power always require that someone else loses their's. How can we make a stand against objectification without objectifying? As women who live outside of the norm, do we seek to demonstrate our "normality" by emulating or trying to fit into those structures or ideologies deemed "normal" and "natural" by those more powerful than ourselves?

In our conversation, Chris, I asked you if you thought your categorization of activities into masculine and feminine was dangerous. As one who is frequently perceived as femme, I tend to think it is. The act of being a woman has always been multi-faceted, multi-dimensional. Yet man have defined womanhood/femininity so narrowly that many aspects of our existence are either ignored or overlooked because they are not in accordance with their preconceived notion of what women are, what women do, or what women are for. When our actions are too obvious to be ignored or overlooked, they are deemed unusual, rare. Such is the fate of a femme - it is assumed that we either wouldn't want to or wouldn't be capable of engaging in certain types of activities - those activities deemed masculine. And those activities deemed masculine are generally those that are fun, challenging, or rewarding - they are also often those that require a group, such as sports.

You objected to my statement that femmes are excluded by stating that butch women are also excluded - but from feminine activities. Asking you for an example, you jokingly referred to knitting and needlepoint. Do you think it's a coincidence that those activities deemed typically, appropriately feminine are those that isolate us - what would happen to the balance of power if the goods got together?

Chris, you have observed that "butchness" goes beyond a style of dress to actually become a way of having sex, that this way of having sex is rough and controlling, and that it is associated with maleness. Under heterosexuality, gender and sex are inextricably bound - it is the erotization of gender roles that constitute heterosexuality. If, as I stated in the second last paragraph, embracing masculinity is one means by which women can gain control over their bodies, then it's inevitable, in choosing this means, that they will control - the masculine means of self-possession requires an objectified other as indication of one's subject status. To act, to be in control, to have power is also part of being the gender male - and in sex, that's how men get off. They invade and conquer. This is virility - the quality to which you probably refer when you say "the butch gets inside of them". If women are going to choose the masculine route to self-possession, virility is a quality they must adopt - it is through the worship of virility that men retain their status as possessors. The presence of virility divides the possess-

ors from those they possess. The fact that they own others proves that they own themselves - consumers rather than products. Virile women. They have to cut themselves off from their feelings because to feel would be to acknowledge. (Throughout this paragraph, I have called the masculine route to self-possession a choice that some women make - the word "choice" was used only for the sake of convenience. As the only accepted discourse, heterosexuality offers little choice - possessor versus one who is possessed. So far, there has only been one proven, successful formula to becoming the former and not the latter - and that is the strategy perfected by the phallocracy. If you were a women who knows this, and you were also a woman whose energy and strength has been dissipated because of oppression, wouldn't you too be tempted to adopt this strategy? Wouldn't you too be wary of taking creative risks to achieve self-possession?)

Like you, I find this entire issue - in talking and in experience - very confusing. How many times have I heard it said by lesbians, "if I wanted a man, I'd go out with one" - and then I look at their "butch" lovers! Do they fail to recognize the virility present in their own lovers - do I? Maybe I'm searching for consistency where there is none. When there's borrowing from one institution to another - and they don't mirror one another - inconsistency is probably all you'll find. I wonder if being butch or being femme is a search for consistency, for normality (normality is reputed

to be consistent). For example, if you desire and seek women, then you are active. According to phallogentric logic, if you are active, you are not woman. Believing women are passive, the active woman "becomes" butch and controls. She's therefore merely being consistent with the logic that's available to her. Do butch women give their lovers what they have learned from heterosexuality that women want? If only activity rather than passivity could be equated with womanhood - then this turning to the masculine to find solutions for self-possession and strength might not be considered. You had grown accustomed to passivity and when faced with an active woman you could not become aroused. You have since learned that you had been associating sex with power and you're still in the process of disassociating - what about women who know only that sex and power are inextricably linked because they take the word of male discourse as the only truth? Because it is ... until we create new ones.

Alain and Dawn, I feel I have exhausted the butch/femme discussion,¹⁹⁸ although I do have a few remaining comments. Dawn, you were beaten by Judy as a last resort. It seems to be characteristic of one who adopts masculinity to resort to overt forms of coercion when covert forms have failed to secure complete possession. Alain, you too experienced this - your lover attempted to own you, firstly by curtailing your freedom of movement, and lastly by undermining your self-confidence through verbal and physical assaults. Both of you

described your past lovers as butch because they employed masculine methods - proven-to-be-effective methods - of securing their relationships. From your description of your experiences with butch women, Alain, it appears that in adopting masculinity as a source of strength, they lose what has been positively attributed to women to gain what has been negatively associated with men - more evidence of the polarity and oppositional structure of phallogentric logic. Trading sensitivity for insensitivity, passivism for aggression, tenderness for roughness - where are the in-betweens?

Chris and Alain, both of you felt the restrictions of the feminine role as children. Your father and male friends introduced you to activities that were foreign to your female friends. (Alain, in playing with dolls that don't "talk back", girls are probably supposed to learn to do the same). For you Alain, the activity that you were introduced and attracted to was sports. Throughout our conversation, and our friendship, I have always noticed the strong relationship you have with your body. I realize that this isn't relevant to this section but because sports is an issue for you in this story, this may be the only chance I have to mention it. Despite the sexual abuse, the various attempts by boys and men to gain access to your body, and heterosexual ideology, you never internalized what you were supposed to have internalized - that as a woman, your sexuality, your body, was for someone other than yourself. And I think your early exposure to

sports and your continuing athletic endeavors actually gave - and give - you ownership of your body. Referring to my discussion in Entry 4, through sports men learn force and skill which combined form power - the power to achieve when opposed. All were opposed to your demands to own your own body, to have an independent sexuality - yet you won. Even now, you rate sports as one of your top priorities - probably because it's through sports that you possess yourself, that you let the patriarchy know your strength and your refusal to be one who is taken, accessible. Actually, this is relevant to this section - in a sense you are divided from other women. Most of us learn very early that our bodies are not our own and this is difficult for you to understand - you find it difficult to grasp when women are "accessible" in ways that you never would be. Remember the girl in the field?

Women versus women. Dale, don't you find it rather contradictory that when your ex-husband "crosses" you that you cross his girlfriend? Knowing his history of violence towards women, why wouldn't you empathize with rather than condemn his girlfriend? Because things aren't set up that way. We have been taught to blame other women - the competition - for our men's bad behavior - it takes the heat off them. It also prevents us from becoming a collective and from recognizing men's "wrongs" and our oppression as collective rather than individual aberrations. Joyce, you are very much aware of women's status - "they want me for the

fucking bed." Yet, because you are single and desire a relationship - on the open market - it is necessary that you behave as a commodity should. This necessitates being inventive with packaging and keeping an eye on how the other products are presenting themselves. I'm referring here to the insecurity that you and your friends share about your bodies - you recognize that your bodies are your most marketable features and that it is the differences between your bodies that will determine who gets chosen, consumed. When you described the scene in the bar where you watched your friend to determine whether or not she wanted your man, I commented that that must have made him feel very good. What power to have such a choice, to differentiate between the packaging and select whom he could temporarily or permanently possess. And what a gap he could potentially place between you and your friend - similar to one your ex-husband created between you and your ex-best friend. It's hard for goods to get together when they go to market.

Roseanne, I included your stories in this section rather than in those about childhood and adolescence because, more than anything else, I noticed your inadvertent description of the gradual depreciation of the value of close female friendships. As girls in your cobby, and later as teenagers, you and your best friend would kiss. But rather than experience the sensuality of kissing or appreciate the intimacy of the moment, you felt "no pleasure out of it at all". Why not? -

even play acting can be sensuous. Was it because you know that as a forbidden gesture, as anti-hetero-sex, it wouldn't last, it could never continue? Did you deny or prevent feeling because you knew that it wasn't the "real thing"? Or was it a matter of receiving attention deemed irrelevant and insignificant because it was provided by the sex that doesn't count? As I mentioned previously, our self-worth as women is often determined by whether or not we receive attention from men. Thus, when Bruce kissed you, it was pleasurable primarily because "everybody could see that you had somebody". Under the existing structure, "somebody's" can only be men - evident also in your statement that "we would go with our girlfriends but more often than not you'd think you weren't normal if you didn't have somebody." Again, you were with your friends but because they were of the wrong sex, you couldn't appreciate the pleasure of being with them. Important social activities required the presence of the important sex. When the important sex failed to be attentive, it wasn't because they may have been jerks for wanting only to have sex with you, but because certain girls were "loose" and it was natural, "for a good reason" that their bad company was preferred over your good company. You also blamed your weight for boy's lack of attention but never did you condemn them for not seeing beyond appearances, for not seeing beyond your status as sex object.

Women versus women. Divide and conquer.

When Gender Disappears?

"How easy it is to invent a humanity for anyone at all." (Margaret Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale)

Monica

"I didn't think I could ever say this, but I believe it's true. There are some men who are very sensitive lovers. they're not male - you don't think of them as male. They're just very very sensual - they're great lovers and it has nothing to do with their gender. You don't get the sensation that this is a man and this is what a man is doing to me. You're just two people. And I don't care if its a male or a female, I don't care what it is. That's what you're feeling. It's different ... Most women don't know -they've never experienced this - and they probably never will. Maleness disappears. That's what happens. And it's very seldom that you'll find it. I think if you're ever really being loved by somebody, male or female, that's where that stops ... Intercourse itself is masculine. But intercourse itself is very very sensual. I mean if you're into a really really intense sexual encounter with somebody the act of intercourse only heightens that sensation. It's not the act of being plunged by a penis. You are being literally, sexually plunged, if you want to call it that, but not the same as somebody slam bam thank-you ma'am kind of thing, whereby you

feel as if somebody is just lying there pumping his thing back and forth into you until he comes and that's it. This is different. The intercourse stuff is not - it just isn't the same. It's different. I don't know if I could ever explain to you. But I don't think I would call it sex. I think what I'd call the other relationship - it's not just the sexual act. It's more than that ..."

Christine

"I had a relationship with this man. He considers himself a feminist. I was really struck - we just had sex twice - by how I was as much in charge as he was. And actually, both times, it never came to intercourse - because I think both of us after a couple of hours were pretty exhausted cause we both had reached orgasm. It was so equal. There wasn't that sort of he dominated me, he was over me, he entered me. It was like both of us were sort of androgynous. I was very much female and he was very much male but there was no role playing. It was mostly - I would dominate and then he would dominate. *Do you think the experience was equal because it was without intercourse?* Not necessarily. You can have intercourse with a man where you can be in power. You can be on top of the man and he may still be inside of you but you're doing the motion and you're in power. Or you can have - the Eastern religion, one of their favourite positions is the woman and

the man facing each other but sitting - and that's a very equal position. The man and woman sort of see-saw and the woman has to do just as much work as the man and vice versa. And it's also very tender -there's eye contact - it's completely equal. Now, sometimes it fun to be the dominator or the one being dominated. Sometimes it's fun for someone to just take you. We all have that animal in us - that animal instinct. With this man, I could feel the animal coming out of him and it was great because he was releasing that. He was dominant just in his movement and gestures and then the animal came out in me. We were both sort of built up and I in turn sort of rolled over and rolled him over. I was on top, feeling like a lioness, like someone in power - just this tremendous primitive strength. And it was a real rush. It's like when you're in danger and you can run faster or something. Adrenalin. If it's construed as aggressive, that's too bad, because I think it's a great release. It's not negative. Men and women have it. And it's not violent. It's a feeling of power and a sense of just being taken. Someone is absorbing your energy into theirs. And that's really nice. To let go and release. And you know you can have your turn. Sex really changes when you understand all of those innate powers that we have - that have nothing to do with men or women. It's primordial. I didn't understand that when I was a teenager or even in my 20's.

I think more and more I became the aggressor. More and

more I'm the seducer and I find that men just love it. The last few years my partners have been very open minded, very interesting men. I'm not just getting the boys down on George Street. A lot of them are people with a broad range of experience and self-expression and movement and dance - some form of creativity or outlet. They're pretty open minded, advanced thinking males. They've taught me a lot. There's so many levels of experience that you can go through ... Now I love to be the one to caress, to just ravish somebody's body. I just love that - that sense of the foreplay. Foreplay before was so gratuitous. Okay, you get 15 minutes of foreplay and then we'll have sex. Now it's the other way around. I think it's growing up and maturing. Penetration is just one very small part of sex ..."

Sixth Letter

Dear Monica and Christine:

Androgyny - the merging of the masculine and the feminine, a balance of the best of both. Possible I suppose, even probable. But as long as male supremacy exists, what difference will androgyny make? It might mean more pleasurable sex - if sensitivity is among the "feminine" characteristics that the androgynous male has incorporated. But in terms of power - who does and doesn't have it on the heterosexual market of exchange and commerce - it will still be the biological, albeit androgynous, male. Intercourse will still

occur among unequals and will still constitute the entry of one less powerful by one more powerful. Intercourse will still be colonialization. Unless, of course, the concepts of gender and of "opposite" sexes disappear altogether and the world isn't divided into masculine and feminine winners and losers. Phallogentric logic has to be undermined and the balance of power equalized before androgyny can exist at any meaningful level. Otherwise, it's as you describe it - a rarity. As a rarity, however, it may have allowed you to catch a glimpse of what the quality of sex might be like - although I don't believe you experienced powerless sex. It is interesting, though, that when good hetero-sex occurred, you assumed that along with the usual poor quality, power disparities and gender differences also disappeared. You therefore must have recognized, at some level, that when sex was less than what you described here, power and gender had something to do with it. Monica, you described the disappearance of maleness when sex of this quality occurred. Are men men when they're bad and sexless when they're good? You were even reluctant to call the good sex you had sex because it differed so much from the "slam bam thank-you ma'am" variety. It makes you wonder how sex is defined when, as it becomes good for the woman, it's no longer sex.

Christine, how can you be the one in power during intercourse when you are being entered by someone who overpowers you physically, discursively, and socially; when you

are the only one of two who is being entered, who is accessible in this very specific way, with its very specific connotations of occupation and possession? You say there are "equal positions" - aren't they merely a semblance, an illusion of power? Equal motions and eye contact - men have never hesitated to look women in the eyes as they've denigrated her "equal" contribution. Of course, I've grown wary of sexual positions anyway - 1001 Penetration Ideas. Unlike you, I didn't feel any primitive strength from being on top - it only allowed him to relax, to look at me more, and if I remained upright, as he liked, to watch penetration. In other words, no matter where I was, it was still all about him. I may have been the one doing the enveloping but I was still perceived as the envelope - what was inside of me was what counted. I have this theory - whether or not its valid I don't know - that since the Master's and Johnson's "discovery" of the female orgasm, men have grown increasingly "lazy" and insensitive when it comes to "doing" sex. It's as if now that it's been confirmed that women are orgasmic, they expect us to perform tricks - one of which includes the trick of coming through intercourse. So we purchase The Joy of Sex, The Kama Sutra, or Female Sexual Response and we learn different ways to be penetrated and we hope that one of these positions will vicariously create enough friction, on an area outside of the vagina, to enable us to come as well. What a lot of work! Before experiencing lesbian sex, I thought that men's orgasms

were easy to achieve, while women experienced difficulty. But in actuality, women's orgasms are only hard to achieve when the sex we're having is only about somebody else's pleasure. Intercourse. And now there's this statement I keep hearing - that nobody can give you an orgasm, you're responsible for your own. What does this mean? Does it mean that women who have sex with men must masturbate while having intercourse? Why bother to fuck at all? I remember this man who would take my hand and place it between my legs before he entered me. Why didn't I say that I'd rather be touched by him, that I could wait to do this after he had left, more effectively? Can you imagine doing that to a man? Or positioning a man in 1001 ways so that you could stimulate your clitoris at different angles? Now that's amusing. When you said that you have become the seducer and that "men just love it", all I kept thinking was yes, of course - with you they have to do absolutely nothing. They become passively active - active in that it is still their sexuality that's happening - intercourse - and passive in that you're doing all the work. You create your own orgasm and you create their's - that's what women are for. We're fooled into believing that we are becoming more sexually aggressive and demanding when in actuality our sexuality is once again being bypassed for the new, improved fuck. We no longer get to relax and count ceiling tiles - we have to participate in this semblance of equality by doing the fucking, "just like men". In sexuality,

equality can't be achieved by doing what men do because our sexuality is not just like men's. At least when they get to "just lie there", they actually get to feel something in the process. What power to know that your sexuality, and thus your pleasure, is guaranteed to take precedence - that your orgasm will occur whether you're passive or active. Even when men are on bottom, they're on top. Do you really think your "advanced thinking males" have taught you a lot?

Christine, just look at some of the concepts in your story that you associated with sex - domination, power, strength, absorption. And you were describing liberated sex - free of role playing? Doesn't this remind you of sex as power as pleasure - except that with this new, "liberated" sexuality, women must also be active participants in the doing of male sexuality, in the playing of power? You take turns dominating - except that his power is real, your's isn't. He knows this - he wants you to believe that it's your power, your sexuality that's happening. That way he doesn't have to participate. He can remain indifferent. It's as if men are saying, go ahead, prove you're not passive, prove that women like sex too - we'll allow you to act out this fantasy. Notice how you described your feelings of being on top - "like a lioness", "like someone in power". The key word here is "like" - you actually weren't. It was a simulation. If you think you're already "in power", you're obviously not going to rock the boat any further. Male sexuality - heterosexu-

ality - therefore remains intact as you try to hold on to what you think you've achieved. Gender hasn't disappeared here - it's just been rearranged for the bedroom. Now for the fuck to occur, they're requiring that women act "masculine" - are men finally shedding their heterosexual semblance? Are they revealing their true homosexuality? Is this how they're reacting to women's defiance of male discourse - through over-worship of the masculine? They're now getting off on watching themselves - their behavior being mirrored, mimicked - knowing it's safe because they know it's an act. They know where the real power lies. They know that if the acting/playing got out of hand, they could reveal their *upperhand* through rape - this is just one of the cards that they hold. You say that you enjoy the "sense of being taken" and that one of the reasons it's enjoyable is because you know that your turn "to take" will arrive. Christine, men can't be *taken* by women -at least not in the same manner that a woman can be taken by a man. It is her body, not his, that has no boundaries, no privacy - she is the one defined by that specific entrance to her body as the accessible, penetrateable one.

Marital Discourse and Intercourse

"Anyone whose legal status is that she exists to be touched, intimately, inside the boundaries of her own body, is controlled, made use of; a captive inside a legally constructed cage." (Andrea Dworkin, Intercourse)

Dale

"I had my second child. And it looked a lot like my crowd. He sworn he never owned the baby and now he's 22 ... He said I wasn't faithful to him - he thought it was another man's child. So, he never did like Mike, he never did. He was accusing me of going out with this one and that one ... He said if you're frigging around on me I'll kill you right off the bat. This happened right after the baby was born ... I started to cry to Mom about it. And Mom said "forget it, where the hell do you get pregnant, at a grocery store?" She said "you never goes no further than a grocery store"... He used to go out on the boats and he'd come home and he'd take up the children and ask them did I have anyone in the house - if I had any men. All he wanted me was pregnant and inside. He wanted me pregnant so he could keep me in the house and not go nowhere. I wasn't allowed to dress up, to wear makeup. If I was home, I was out to the clothesline, he was watching every move I made. If he stayed home, I stayed home. But he could dress up and go on wherever he liked ...

We were separated ... He kept all the time phoning and phoning - I used to hang up on him. And so this day he watched for Mom to go out in the taxi and he was loaded drunk. I was always going around with the housecoat on till I'd get the bed made up and all that. So I put the baby down and put the dishes in the sink and I was there cleaning up the house when he came in. I always used to lock the door behind Mike

but I told Mike to lock the door on his way out but Mike forgot. And I was in the bedroom - then making up the bed - and I looked up and I seen him in the door. He was loaded and I said get out of here. When I passed him he shoved me on the bed. I had on one of those blue plush housecoats. He tried to get it off and I fought him all the way. Then he tried to get his zipper down - he was trying to do it all the one time. And so he grabbed me - when he did he just took the whole thing right off. And I said get out of here - if you wakes up that baby I'm screaming. And I got my leg under him and gave him a push off the bed. He grabbed my leg and hauled me back on the bed again. And he hit me - the side of my head - knocking me a little bit senseless. And when I started coming to, I started shaking my head and I seen him there - I drew off and gave it to him in the face and I took my fingers and tried to get his eyes but he held me down. When I got him off me the housecoat was all tore up in bits and I went out and got the knife. I said get out of here - and I was shivering like this - I was shivering. All my clothes were tore up. I said get out of here ... And he went on. And I was there for 2 hours with the clothes hanging off me and I was crying and I had the knife in my hand. So I hauled on a pair of jogging pants and a top when my son came through the door and I was still going around with the knife in my hand. I was in a daze. And Mike says "Mom, what's the matter?" I said nothing ... And he went in to throw something in the garbage

and he said, "My God, what's this?" - the housecoat. I said your father did it. And he asked me if I was going to report it. And I said Mike - what would I say up on that stand, he'll lie his way out of it - he'll get his lawyers. I'm to blame.

The doctor gave me nerve pills - I was that far gone he had to give me nerve pills. Just valium. I was neglecting the children, I wasn't doing my work right, I wasn't coping right. I was getting like an old woman. My hair was turning gray ... And he came in one day and he said "I'll get her locked away." I'll never forget those words. He said "I'll get her in the Waterford Hospital and I'll get them to throw the goddamn key away." So I got somebody to come in the next day and said I wasn't going to no Waterford Hospital. I called a child welfare worker and she took the children. That was the worst thing that ever happened to me. Two years - that's how long they've been gone. I had to go into the hospital ...

Every child he made, he made drunk. Every child ... I was a good wife in every way. I reared up 9 children. I had 10 but the first one died ...

When I used to have my babies, I had a lot of infections ... And the doctor said it must be from your husband. That's where all the disease was coming from. It was coming from him. He was giving me V.D.. He brought it home from the boat one time. I looked in his pocket when I was washing out his

pants and hauled this hospital slip out. He had V.D. - he had to get 2 needles. After me having intercourse with him that night! Another time I was there scratching and I thought my God, what's the matter with me. And I went in the bathroom and I saw blood. So I started looking through myself and I picked this off - it made me sick. So I got the medical book out - it was a crab lice ... He blamed it on another guy who's married to his sister ... I was scared to have sex with him after that ...

We fought a lot. What started it. I was working in the fish plant. He was jealous over my supervisor. My supervisor was only 21 years old and I had a 21 year old son! He said to me, "What are you frigging around with him for, he's a queer." I said, "I only talks to him about work and schedules." I said "I'm counted as the best down there. I used to make \$14 a day in bonuses" ...

When I came home from work one evening I put the 2 girls in the bathtub. And he'd been off drinking all day long. So I took them out and just wrapped their hair in a towel and just put their nightgowns on. And I said, "I'll go get you a pair of panties now." He took her up and rubbed his hand up between her legs and said "You've got a big cunt on you just like your mother." I said "You're sick." My daughter was 6 years old. I told that later to the social worker and he said no it wasn't true - I was crazy at the time. I said if I was crazy they wouldn't have me down in the fish plant

working ...

One time, I was working in the plant all week and had the weekend off ... He took off 9:00 in the morning and still wasn't back at 11:00 that night. So Mike said, "Mom, why don't you go out somewhere?" So I called up my girlfriend and we went to the club. And he came home 11:30 looking for me ... So when I came home, he said, "So you just got home did you slut?" And he came over and banged me across the face. And I was never out with a man at all - I was there talking to my friends ... Even if I had company at the house he didn't want it. He just wanted it his own way. If I wore a little bit of makeup - oh my God how much makeup do you have on your face. He used to go right off his head. He called me - he said you looks like an old bag on the street ...

He used to want sex 4 or 5 times a week. It didn't matter to him what kind of mood I was in. Even when he was with other women he used to come home and want sex. He'd ask me and if I said no, he'd jump up and grab me and just take it ...

He used to bring dirty magazines home off the boats. But I wouldn't keep them in the house on account of the children. He showed me one and wanted me to get up on my knees and stuff - different positions. That's when I took the magazine and threw it across the floor ...

I was raped twice by him. The first time was when I had my housecoat on and the last time was just after the divorce.

He said he wanted to talk about the children - I'd go to any lengths to talk about the children ... He said there's no place to talk, we'll go to my apartment ... And when I got up to the apartment ... I said "Now what do you want to talk about?" He said "Nothing much, I just wanted to see if you wanted to make love." ... So when he grabbed me I was sat down on the chair and I had on a pair of jeans and a jean shirt and he hauled me down across this big bed he had ... He was trying to get my jeans down and I was trying to get them up. But he did rape me - he did have sex with me. And I tried to push him off me but he was so heavy I couldn't do nothing with him. So after it was over, he said "Did you enjoy that?" ... I was there crying. He said "Wipe your eyes or the same thing that happened to you before will happen - you ended up in the mental." He said "You were all the time crying." ... He had taken my 2 legs and he had put them up around his neck and I was screaming in pain. I said "My hips hurt." And he said "Oh your hips and back will be alright when I'm through with you." He wanted me to put it in my mouth but I just wouldn't do it. Even when the doctors put up my legs for the pap smear the pain went right up through my back ...

I always heard him say, I can do what I like with you, I paid for you ... He paid the priest at the altar. He always slapped that up in my face. It was \$15 at the time. He figured he could do whatever he wanted. He really believed

that. Cause he often said - even the week before we broke up - if your mother could have any more children, we'd still have more. I said what do you think I am - an animal? I said my body was worn out from having children ... There was almost 2 years apart between each child. I'm [in my early 40s]. I worked some hard. Even after a child was born, he wanted it right away. There was no waiting period. When I was still on - when you have a baby it's like you're on your period - I told him "You can wait until I get better." But he didn't. Once I slept on the chesterfield downstairs. He would have been at me if I hadn't slept on the chesterfield ...

Some nights I'd be so tired. But he used to say "Well you just had a bath, you must have washed the tiredness out of you, you can't be that tired." He knew that I was on my feet all day - say till 11:00 that night. Even if I was in the middle of a room piled up with dirt, trying to get it cleaned up, he expected me to go to bed in the middle of that. Even when I was doing the dishes. If I leaned over to get a sack of potatoes, it would turn him on. I could be getting supper. I'd say "The children might walk in through the door." He'd say "It will only be a few seconds and then it will be over." Sometimes he'd just get on me and get off me then go pick up the youngsters at school. That night then he wouldn't bother ...

We tried anal sex one or twice. It did hurt - I told him it hurt. I'd say I didn't want to but he said he did.

He just did it anyway. I think he learned it from books or something. I seen a lot of that in those magazines. They was pretty hard core ...

When I had intercourse with my husband first, I thought I was loved by him and that I was cared for. But when everything started going upside down I knew he didn't care. When I got out in the world it wasn't overnight that I went and did it. It was sometime after. I would have felt that I was a hole again ...

I don't know why he raped me - if it's for his own pleasure or if it's to put - like he did to me - for to put me back. Cause he saw I was getting ahead more and more. I was doing something with my life. I don't know if he did it to hit me back, to make me miserable, I don't know. I trust he knows himself."

Joyce

"And like, there's a lot that goes on, in marriages even - I don't know what you'd call it. They don't call it rape. You take when I had my first child, I wasn't home a week - and you were supposed to wait six. And by the time I got back to have my checkup, I was pregnant again. And again, he had the power see cause I was scared to say no. I mean, if I did say, I'd say I was too tired or, you know, I wasn't in the mood to have anything to do with him, there'd be the biggest kind of racket. I wouldn't sleep for days. Like lots of times I used

to say Dave, I feel like a real whore. How he used to come home and attack me ... We never did make love the way that I wanted to. Only the way he wanted to, all the time ... To me, like if you want a man, for two people to make love, it's got to be in the right environment, at the right time - not hop in, wam bam thank-you ma'am ...

I could have gotten pregnant the night of my marriage - there wasn't even time enough to see if I was right. As soon as I didn't have a period I wrote to him right away and told him. He hitchhiked home ... So it was all one big rush job. It could have been possible that I was pregnant. You got to get married - those were the first words my mother said to me. You know Lori, it was a shame - it was something you brought on your family. You know, everyone was ashamed of it. It was a disgrace. Nobody blamed the men. It was all the women. And if you sit and listen to people today, it's all the women's fault. If she gets pregnant, it's her fault. You know, why didn't she take something ...

When I did get pregnant, it was never planned. You know, if he'd come home drunk or he'd go to a party or to a dance and he was drunk, and if I didn't, there was a racket. There was one time we came home and I didn't want to have anything to do with him. And there was such a racket, his mother came up. And she said, "What's going on?" And I had been sitting on the bed crying. And I said "I don't want to have any sex with him tonight and this is what I'm getting." And now when

I sit and think about it today, that was actually attempted rape. Nobody would call it that. Not even if - say if you were married and you went and said your husband raped you, the law wouldn't listen to you ... When you get married you say, well, that's what a woman got married for. Like, that's what your position was - you got married to have a family ...

After Brenda was born I had no choice but to go on the pill cause after her I wasn't supposed to have any children. The boys I delivered but the girls I couldn't - it was just something had changed. Like they had said from over the years of having children it was just tearing the insides out of me. And the afterbirth came first. I had to get a section for my 2 girls. Brenda's was bad - blood transfusions and everything. Then a doctor changed my pills and I got pregnant while I was taking the pill. And I lost it of course. Then I decided it was time to get off the pill - it was 5 years - and then I had the coil. Carried the coil and my baby for a full 9 months - full term ...

Dave grew up in his life span faster than me - he had to. They were on welfare so he had to go out and work. He had to be the breadwinner of the family so he grew up. Years ago, the guys anyway experienced it more so than the girls - nothing could happen to them. Same way in this lifetime too. As far as the guys were concerned, they've got nothing to lose. How can you tell if a man is a virgin ... That's what they go for. Like even in this day and age, if a man knew

that you were a virgin he'd be after you like you were a piece of gold. He got what he wanted and that was it ...

Dave got a lot of pride. Like he would never give anyone to say, well I didn't marry her ... His parents hated me. Because he was Roman Catholic and I was Anglican. That was a killer right there. When we first got married we had no privacy cause we lived with my sister. I never owned a spoon - talk about not owning anything. And then we moved out of my sister's and into his parents. Like we built on a kitchen and a bedroom and that's all we had. That's when everything started going downhill ...

Dave was abused as a child. The father - he used to beat them. It would be nothing for him to grab hold of their heads to throw them across the kitchen. I think that's why Dave abused me. If I had had something on the go years ago, you could go and talk to somebody, they could see exactly where it all came from. Why is he abusing me? Because it was nothing for him to go and give me a smack. A lot of times with regards to sex I would give it to him anyway so I wouldn't get a smack ...

To me, I want somebody to want me. Not for just sex. But to want me as a person. That's love. Like I used to say to Dave, all I want you to do is to come home and put your arms around me and say gee I missed you today or I love you. Or to me love is 2 people who have a lot in common, who go do things together - they don't even have to have it in common -

they can blend.

My husband treated me for his uses. Men. What they think of a woman is that she's a part of the furniture - she's there. She's there for their use. Like a chesterfield is there for them to lie down on. So is a woman. This is how I felt ...

A typical day in my marriage was: get up; get his breakfast; get him off to work; do the housework; come home; have his supper ready; he'd lie down. Then you'd go to bed, whatever time we went to bed. Then 11:00 or 12:00 at night, well if he was in the mood you got it, and if he wasn't you didn't ...

I only initiated sex once. There was one night I really really got in the mood. That I really wanted it. So what I done that night, I got the children their supper and got them off to bed. Then I put on a special supper for him and I went and got a bath. I really got in the mood so I went and bought this negligee. And I waited and I waited for him to come home - I'll never forgive him for that, and he came home at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning, loaded out of his mind. Looked at me and said what in the fuck is going on here? And the next morning then, he'd say I wants a piece now. *He'd actually say that!* Yeah, I want a piece today. *So what did you say?* I said to him that morning, listen, I'm fed up with you coming home and treating me like a whore. You hop on and hop off. Dave never

did make love to me. He hopped on, got his rocks off, and that was it. There was a good many times I never - never had any arousal whatsoever. Same way if we went on conventions. First convention I ever went on I had this fantasy of being in a beautiful hotel room and we were going to make love and it was really going to be nice. He was in real estate and we went to Toronto on our first convention. And I had all these plans. This was going to be marvellous. But same thing as at home. Get drunk, come home, jump on me, and wam bam thank-you ma'am. So it was no different. To me I never experienced - pleasure ...

He went and found another woman. After I had my hysterectomy. We couldn't have a family after that. That's the only time I ever thought about his religion. When he couldn't have any more kids from me. So he said what the hell and went and found somebody else. Men thinks you're only half a woman then ...

I was raped many times in my marriage. When I sit and think about it. At the time it didn't enter my mind. All I used to say to Dave was I feel like a whore. You know. Lots of times I used to think there's got to be more to this than what there actually is. There's got to be more to sex. Like I would watch a stag movie. Dave always had stag movies. And that would turn me on, faster, than Dave and I going to bed. Then I would be aroused. And if he wanted it I would give it to him anyway because I was aroused. I used to do a lot of

fantasies, especially when he used to come and want to get into me and get his off. I used to fantasize it was Elvis Presley. Oh Jesus Christ! I told my doctor. Cause I always wondered what it would be like to go to bed with Elvis. And I went to my doctor and asked him if I was gone mad or what. You know - am I foolish? he told me "you're not experiencing a good relationship with Dave." ... In order to arouse me, I'd have to think. I didn't want this man that was there. I'd have to think he was somebody else ... My doctor told me to talk to Dave about it. How can you talk to a man you're married to and tell him you're not enjoying sex unless you fantasize? Can you imagine what this would do to his, you know, manhood? I said "I can't do it." *What if you had told him what you wanted?* I don't know. One time I tried to tell him. I told him lots of times. He'd say "go away for jesus sake" ...

Dave was horny 24 hours a day. He had a good sex drive for himself. He'd go to bed with you 24 hours a day but only when Dave wanted it. Nothing romantic about it. Nothing but wam bam thank-you ma'am. Every night. Dave told me his doctor said he should have sex at least 3 times a week - that he had to have it. And told him there was something wrong with me cause I didn't want it as much ...

With my ex-husband, if I initiated sex, he was tired or reading. But I could be doing the dishes - and I hate doing dishes - I'd have my old robe on and I hadn't had a

shower. And that's when he'd get turned on - and I'd be furious. Because it seemed to me that he'd only want me when there was absolutely no way I'd be in the mood. Maybe it was so he could play the game of getting me in the mood. Like having the power to turn me from a household drudge into this passionate woman. It used to drive me nuts. Did you ever read Elvis Presley's story - his fantasies? What he used to make Priscilla do? No, never. He would get Priscilla to be the maid, to be the secretary - all those people that he wanted to make love to. All subservient women. He would never go for a manager. He wanted to control everything. That's what happened in her marriage. Did you ever relate to Priscilla? No, never. I don't compare myself to other women ..."

Monica

"I was surprised at the age of 21 that I had this tremendous sex drive which I hadn't known about. And once I was awakened to the idea of sex, to the feelings of sex, it was really something. I thought it was probably the greatest feeling in the world. But then I was only married about a week when my ex tells me I'm a nymphomaniac. But in the meantime, I don't think I behaved like a nymphomaniac. It was just that my feelings about sex were so strong! I think that I would really enjoy sex and he couldn't. Maybe because you enjoyed it, it turned him off. No. I really believe that he saw me as an old fashioned girl because I wouldn't have sex with him before we were married. That's what I mean. Yeah. You're quite

right. And then when I did enjoy it, it turned him off because I think he's typical of a lot of men who see their wives as a mother figure. Because as soon as my first child was born and even before that, our sex lives were dreadful. Inside of a month our sex lives become very stilted and very cautious. And mainly because he turned me off. He turned me on, then he turned me off. By telling me I was oversexed, that there was something wrong with me. That finished whatever drives I had suppressed. That was the end of our sex life. It was then I think he started seeing other women ...

He'd have his concubines. But I didn't know it at the time and right from the time Emily was born he did, apparently. I didn't know until after the divorce. So I think once again sex became - well let's say I suppressed all of my sexual urges. I was capable of doing it as a child and I was capable of doing it as an adult. I turned my attention to childraising and work. I was nursing. And of course that's pretty hectic - at work 5 or 6 days a week and raising a child and doing housework. He was thrilled with this arrangement. Because he was a typical male and believed that a woman's work is a woman's and a man's work is a man's. He thought it was great I was working. He benefitted from my salary. He thought it was fine that I was a nurse because it was a respectable female role model for the girls. So I was a nurse and a mother and a cook and a dishwasher. But these were all female roles. *You were a dream woman.* I was. Exactly. I had

typical female roles and he thought it was terrific. I got a cheque every week ...

After the first born - when I say I was a mother - our sex was very rare. It was a rare occurrence - it wasn't something that happened once a month. Because, see, he had other women and I just didn't know it. So life goes on. I mean I stayed home, and I worked, and I took care of my child. And the marriage was very, very bad ...

He started drinking as soon as we got married and I didn't realize when he became a drunk. He'd drink and I didn't know. He wouldn't tell me but I could smell it off him ... He was drinking constantly ...

When Emily was 5, I was on the verge of getting a divorce. I wish now I could go back and redo it, but I can't. I wish I could. Because I stayed with the marriage for another 7 years ...

I could reach a climax, but I could probably count the number of times that he made me feel anything - on one hand. I probably only actually reached a climax once or twice. So, I think what would happen, as things got bad between us, I would threaten to leave and he would become more amorous. When people get more passionate - like there were a couple of times when we separated from one another and he'd come back full of passion. It wouldn't last. That would be for a night and then the next week he'd be back on the booze. It was a piss poor relationship altogether. We had little to do with

each other the last 4 years of our marriage, after the birth of Nicky. After she was born, there was nothing. Except that the drinking got worse on the end of it and there were a couple of times when I can virtually say that I was raped by him. We would come home and we'd probably have words. I would sleep with the kids. I remember one night he came home and said come into this bed. I wasn't there and he'd want to have sex. He said I wasn't being a wife to him. And there were a couple of occasions where he literally raped - he forced himself on me. And of course, by then, Emily was getting older, I couldn't kick up war I suppose - I was capable of doing that but because I just didn't want her to hear what was going on. *It's one thing to hear a fight, but to hear a rape.* That's right. So I let him have his way. Now he wouldn't beat me up or anything - just more or less, well here you go, get in the bed. It would be wam, bam, thank-you ma'am and sometimes he'd have so many drinks in he couldn't even do it. So, that wasn't so great ... There were times when, even when I wasn't really being forced, I was being forced. Now that sounds pretty contradictory. But there were times, you know, when I'd just submit. I can't say he was forcing me but I would submit - just to get it over with, just because he expected it. I felt forced ... That happened more than once but that wasn't being raped, that was just being tolerant of a situation that you're in, you know? It's pretty dreadful actually ...

Toward the end of my marriage he was changing dramatically. He was beginning to take on a personality that I didn't know. At all. We had no relationship whatsoever. I worked, he worked. I'd come home and sleep with one of the kids and he'd go to bed. And he would be up and gone in the morning sometimes before me. Cause usually I worked in the evenings and I'd have someone come and stay with the kids. And he would stay out till 4 or 5 a.m. Now, at this point I knew there were other women - I couldn't prove it but I just knew. And so there were strong feelings about that. So, the couple of times that he literally raped me, were times that he came home really really pissed, angry, different than I had known him throughout the years. And he didn't beat me then. It was just, well, throw you on the bed kind of thing - he was much stronger than I was, believe me. Like I say, I think I probably could have fought him off - and I probably would have tried to - if the kids hadn't been across the hall. Emily by now was about 10 or 11 years old. And I think just to keep the peace I would leave him alone, that's all. But he still wasn't like my father - I had no fear of him any time ...

You said in the beginning he called you a nymphomaniac and then later he called you an iceberg. Didn't you feel confused - first you're put down for wanting it, then you're put down for not wanting it? No. Because there's too many years between those occurrences. First off, it was the first week we were married and I don't think he knew what loving meant - and maybe I didn't. Don't get me wrong - I think it takes two

people and we lacked communication totally. I didn't know how to talk to him, I didn't know how to tell him what was important to me. And I think that if we went to bed and I cuddled in to him, he took that to mean I wanted sex. He couldn't take my being affectionate toward him, as anything other than a sexual need. He didn't see - cause when he said you're a nymphomaniac, he didn't mean that I couldn't be satisfied, that I was going crazy, that I kept him up all night. That wasn't the kind of nymphomaniac he was talking about. He was talking about the fact that if I touched him, if I put my arm around him the night, that I was making sexual overtures, that I wanted to have sex. This was the problem for him - he took everything that I did to mean that this is not satisfying me, you have to do more. He just couldn't relate to me as a person - ever. And that was the problem then. And eventually, when the relationship became so bad and our sex lives were down to once every 6 months or whatever, he couldn't relate to that either. You just can't leave someone out in the cold for 6 months and then expect him to warm up to you. You can't. And this is when I would find myself becoming totally detached from myself. I'd say okay, have it, you've got the body, have it. But you're not getting me. So then I wouldn't respond and we would just slam bam thank-you ma'am. And he'd feel angry because I didn't respond. But there was no response there, there was nothing. So you can't give what you haven't got. So this is where he

would get angry on the other hand, you see. By now, you're talking 3 or 4 years between ..."

Roseanne

"I remember necking with Gerry and saying to myself, I will get to like this man. I will get to like what we're doing. *So, why did you get married to him?* Stupidity, immaturity. Thinking finally you got somebody. I was 20. The wedding was attractive. I thought it would be nice - poor little Roseanne, to have a really nice wedding. And poor little Roseanne did have a nice big wedding - and she paid for every cent of it herself. My family never had that kind of money. I remember having 250 people and it was \$5.00 a plate. And passing over the hotel a check for \$1,200 ... And the wedding night. Going into the room, feeling a little embarrassed, and sitting on the bed for an hour counting how much money we got for wedding gifts. And finally I thought I guess we have to go to bed. I remember going to bed, having sex, and thinking oh shit, I guess I better get used to this. But pretending it was all lovey dovey. Just keep on kissing, hugging and touching. But not saying a lot. You wouldn't say oh that was good, or that's not nice, or don't do that, do this. You wouldn't say any of that. Of course, neither would he. Being very inexperienced, immature, I'd say I was probably his first, other than prostitutes. He was over in Europe - I'm sure most of these guys went to prostitutes. I'd say his

experience was limited to just the sexual act itself - having sex, having an orgasm, then it was finished. I doubt with prostitutes if you fool around with foreplay very much ... I refused to think about it. I just felt that this is something I have to do now cause I'm a wife. And that men want to have sex more than women do so you've got to be good to them. Men have needs, women don't.

Then I didn't know the difference. Because then, if I had been a little more enlightened as to the sexual act itself, I should have been feeling more of it - more pleasure, more a part of it, or this unity - this unity between men and women. And I didn't feel that. I used to feel - it hurts, and it used to hurt because I'd be dry. I wouldn't be ready. Or it's not pleasurable again because I was dry and it seemed like it would take the man forever to have a climax. Then I used to feel it as an invasion ...

We had sex a lot. But I had no sexual knowledge - or sexual pleasure ... I used to fake having an orgasm - I used to say hurry up, I'm going to have an orgasm. So that he'd hurry up and finish. Cause that would get him really excited, thinking I was going to have an orgasm. And I can remember thinking, well, according to what I've read an orgasm is supposed to be - the muscles tense, contractions -so you'd fake these contractions or whatever. That was easy to fake. But never having one ... I remember looking at the ceiling and thinking hurry up, get it over with, this is really

boring, I'm not getting anything out of it. And as soon as the act was over, he'd be sound asleep, and snoring within 10 minutes. And I'd be laying there fuming. I thought I wish - I remember thinking its like being a prostitute. Here I am for you to service your own needs. Sometimes I didn't fake it. I used to make him stop. I'd say stop, it's really getting on my nerves. It's taking you forever, stop it. And it must have been really difficult for him. I'm not saying a few times - that happened a lot. Then I'd just make him stop because I couldn't stand it any more. That, to me, was invasion. That's when I felt I was being invaded. Like stop, I can't stand it, this is the same as rape. You're having sex with me, I don't want it, I don't feel anything, but you're continuing because you want to have an orgasm. I used to really feel that. He didn't necessarily initiate it. Like I used to love my breasts being fondled. It was my greatest - if there was an erogenous zone, that was it. I would get a lot of pleasure from that - to the point where I would want penetration. But as soon as I got the penetration where the breasts were ignored, and everything else was ignored except for that need for him to have a climax. Intercourse is selfish unless he's a contortionist ...

Within the last 10 years, I'd be thinking, oh oh, we haven't had sex in over a month, I guess I'd better have it sometime soon. So he wouldn't be able to slap it up to me - you wouldn't have sex with me. He slapped it up to me in

other ways, probably not straight out - you don't even have sex with me - it would be other ways, he'd get very contrary. But then that didn't work after a while. Because sometimes having sex, he'd still get contrary and then I'd feel really invaded again. I'd think now look what I did for you last night and you're still contrary. So what the fuck is the use of this, I'm having sex with you and I don't want to, and you're still contrary and you're saying nasty things to me. Even though I've given you this part of my body for you ... Back to the wifely duties again. This is what is expected of you by your marriage partner ...

I can say having sex in my married life, there were times when I considered it rape. Because there were times when I wanted him to stop and he wouldn't. To me that's rape. And I remember feeling, boy, I really do feel like a prostitute now because I just let myself be raped. Really hating it. And trying to push him away until finally he'd stop but he didn't have an orgasm and him being really bitter. What's wrong? It hurt, I had to get you to stop. And of course it hurt because the feeling wasn't mutual ...

I remember when we were first married. I used to love when Gerry used to come home, and I got Danny settled away for the night. I used to love for him to sit next to me on the chesterfield so badly to be intimate and cuddly. And he never used to want to. And when he would do it, probably to please me, and I would get turned on, then he would say well,

Roseanne, can't you wait till we go to bed? And I used to think, yeah, wait to go to bed till you want it ...

It's funny how your subconscious handles this act that you don't want to be a part of any more because it's just not pleasurable. Because I remember being married first, and say the first 10 years, the man would always be on the top - sometimes you'd turn over and you'd be on the top. But you didn't like that because that was too much effort. Then say the next 5 years, I would never let him get on top - never. So it would always be sideways. Because being on top meant you were being intimate and I didn't feel that intimacy. Sideways you don't have to touch his face or lips ... The only touching that you had was the penis inside of you. I didn't want him to kiss me ... Because I felt so much resentment ... You've got to really feel something for somebody to let them kiss you and put their tongue inside your mouth and feel really with them in what they're doing. You've got to really feel something for somebody. I don't think you can pretend with your mouth.

Seventh Letter

Dear Roseanne, Joyce, Monica and Dale:

As you know, I was married once. When I went to City Hall to apply for the marriage license, a male civil servant noticed the discrepancy in our ages - I was 20 and my future husband was 32. He told me that I was wise to marry an older

man because they were more stable, more mature, and thus more able to teach me about being a wife. I never realized the full implication of his words until later - the older they are the more knowledgeable and secure they are about their power. To this day, I don't know why I married. It was an institution I had always sworn I'd stay away from. I had seen my parents' marriage fail and the others that I witnessed seemed oppressive, unhappy, and incredibly boring. I also knew that I didn't have any respect for men, for the masculine, and that sex with men could never be pleasurable - that it could never work. Maybe I was again submitting to the inevitable - this time, to the inevitable end of heterosexuality - my legal, total ownership. Maybe I wanted my status to change from illegal woman to legal, good, monogamous woman. Maybe I thought that marriage would free me from my primary ties and from life on the open market. Maybe I thought that being possessed by one was better than being possessed by all. Maybe I had yet to realize my own value and relied on its confirmation through marriage. Maybe I was grateful for his seemingly less abusive, less domineering behavior and mistook my gratitude for love - he didn't dispose of me after he had used me, he wanted to use me forever. Who knows why? - maybe it was for all these reasons and more besides. I do know that I had become slowly sexually subservient without realizing it, that I had been fooled into pretending that my marriage was one of the enlightened ones when it wasn't. Something as

simple as freedom of movement was based on whomever had possession of money and a penis - because I was a female student, I had neither. I must have known that I was involved in maintaining a facade, that my attempt at marriage was just that - an attempt. When people would remark about my being married so young, I would reply - half jokingly - that it was an experiment I would eventually terminate. Did I need to experience hetero-sex within the proper institution before I could reject it? Did I need to try every option before I could definitely conclude that heterosexuality had nothing to do with women?

In this letter, I want to explore with you how sex, in marriage, is power - how it serves to remind us of what we are and what we are for as wives of the phallocratic order.

My marriage wasn't bad in the way that marriages are usually defined as bad - there was no adultery, as far as I know, and there were no arguments resulting in physical violence. It was bad in other ways, however. He was only sporadically employed and didn't seem to care. With the little money that we did have, he would disappear "partying" for days. He had a wider friendship network than I - I had ignored my own friends and his had nothing in common with me apart from him. I was thus dependent on him in ways that he wasn't dependent on me. He also resented my status as a student. Although he purported to be proud that his wife was attending university, he ignored my requests to read my work

and tended to drink when I was writing exams or papers. In retrospect, I realize that he also resented me for a number of other reasons: the university education that I, and not he, was achieving; the feminist philosophy that I held and that he only claimed to agree with; the lesbian friends that I had and lost due to his rudeness; and the middle-class upbringing that I had had and that he lacked. I think marriage must be all about power because ours had been all about rectifying power disparities. Whereas my remedy or power source was feminism and education, his was sex.

As you know, I was not orgasmic with men. Unwilling and unable, I faked orgasm, the reasons for which I discussed in a previous letter. However, since writing to Christine and Monica about their experiences with androgynous sex, I've gained some new insight into my faking behavior and the sex that I had had with my ex-husband. My performance had a lot to do with what I called, in the previous letter, the new improved fuck. When our orgasmic potentiality was "discovered" and made public, it finally allowed us to state with conviction that, like men, we have sexual needs and desires of our own. The problem, however, is that these words were spoken, these demands were made within the context of male sexuality - heterosexuality. What happened therefore, at least with me, was that we adopted masculine forms of pleasure seeking - different positions, etc. - in order to say and to prove that see, we are just like you - we like sex and we have

sexual needs. But, as I previously stated, this doesn't work because we are not just like men and the sex that we like and need isn't their's - but it's the only sex that's made accessible to most of us. Not knowing this - or knowing it but being unaware of any alternative - we continue to energetically and creatively fuck. We don't want our needs to end up on the back burner again. Nor do we want to be passive. We want to prove that women can be *active*, good lovers. Thus, a new, defensive eroticism. We've complained about their monopoly on sexual activeness, they've acknowledged, finally, that we do have an active sexuality - if we complain any further, they may revoke their acknowledgement. At least now, good women as well as whores are known to perform well in bed. I can't help but wonder, therefore, if the female orgasm was permitted into male sexual discourse so that "good" women could actively, rather than passively, serve men's sexual needs.

For my ex-husband, I performed. According to the criteria of the new eroticism, I was active, energetic, creative - a good lover. I was very aware, however, of what was actually happening - that as I entered the arousal stage, he was resolutioning, that my activity *and* his activity were about his orgasm. But caring for neither the frigid nor passive labels, I continued my performances. As if I were outside of myself, I would watch my performances through the

eyes of an imaginary camera. I become other to myself. The camera would stop rolling at his orgasm, the act would be over, and I'd feel used and isolated. Since I was the fraudulent one, these feelings confused me. Now I wonder who was the better fraud. Because when he'd roll over either to sleep or to read, I'd create my own orgasm, myself. He knew this. Did he know why? Did he see through my performance? If so, this would imply that he chose to ignore my needs, my fulfillment; that *in knowing*, he was actually the one in control of the entire act - a director. By performing, by detaching, I mistakenly believed that I was in control - other to myself, I controlled me. But I was also other to him. It took until now for me to realize this. Divisions. Opposition. I had divided myself into mind versus body - that which I owned versus that which I didn't, that which was accessible versus that which wasn't. Because my body and my mind were not in fact opposites, divide and rule didn't work - if one was abused or controlled, the other felt it. My division had not even been apparent to him, for whom I was only body. My performances were sufficient to confirm his masculinity, his power - he didn't need my orgasms, he had the knowledge of my conscious self-sacrifices. The feelings of isolation and of being used that I had experienced - I think now that they were my body and my mind, together, trying to tell me that he knew the difference and didn't care. *Indifference*. They were informing

me of indifference.

Dale, we've been wives of and for the phallocracy. My ex-husband would refer to me not as his wife but as his partner - as if people were unaware as to who was the stockholder and who was the stock. Not bothering with metaphors or with claims of romantic love, your ex-husband behaved strictly in accordance with the patriarchal definition of marriage: husband = owner, wife = property, marriage = sexual property contract. His gentleness prior to your marriage was merely a part of his takeover plan. Once he had fucked and fertilized you, he obtained legal title to your body by paying "the father" fifteen dollars. Once having purchased you, he proceeded to control you through sex and to use you for sex - you were his to do with as he pleased. Turning your reproductive power against you, he employed pregnancy as a chief strategy of control - it made you less marketable and more dependent. By accusing you of adultery and denying paternity, he avoided his own patriarchal responsibilities to his heirs (sons) and other holdings (daughters) while undermining your value as a mother and wife. He wanted to make you worthless to anyone other than himself so that he could have total, unthreatened control. The use of your children as informants was an attempt to divert your loyalties and a successful means of controlling you while he was absent. It was also an effective method of demoralization as it forced you to behave - to be rendered powerless - with those even less powerless

than you. His definition of you was so sexually focused that he could not see beyond it - you were of no other use. Not believing that you could be employed in any other capacity than the one for which he purchased you, he attributed your success at the plant to an affair between you and your supervisor. Nor did he want you experiencing the self-worth or inner strength that you might have gained from being recognized as one other than sexual. He knew the blatancy of his exploitation; he knew that it was uncamouflaged by romantic love. He thus knew that you desired freedom. So, systematically, he destroyed every avenue of independence that was available to you - including and especially your self-esteem. You see, he couldn't risk losing you. Due partly to his precarious employment offshore, he was of a low rank on the patriarchal heiracy - you were his main property holding, the source of his masculinity, the one sure thing over which he had power. And he needed to demonstrate and to reinforce this daily - primarily through fucking you, through fucking you over, through the sexual.

Forbidding you to participate in the masquerade of femininity, to participate in the work that makes you consumable, he kept his property private. He thus forbade you to wear makeup, to go out, and reminded you constantly of the status that would await you if you did - old bag, whore. To him, you were his private hole, his exclusive man-making instrument - and, if left to his own devices, he would have

incorporated your daughter into this role as well: "big cunt", just like mom. As only cunt, he fucked you wherever, whenever, and frequently - taking you when you didn't submit gracefully and using pornography when he required more effective methods of degradation as pleasure. You say you were raped by him only twice. Is this because when he forced sex on your daily, he was living with you, married to you and a husband cannot steal what he already owns? I ask this because you defined, as rape, his way of having sex only when it occurred under the circumstances of separation or divorce - when his ownership of you was on shaky ground. As men define rape, this doesn't surprise me. You weren't a virgin, he wasn't a stranger, and since you weren't beaten to the point of near death, it could be said that you asked for it.

Totally wrapped up with his defensive masculinity, he objectified and conquered not only you but other women as well - that's what women are for. He violently raped you after you had kicked him out because this was an obvious indication that he had not succeeded in totally depleting all of your pride and strength. The medical profession aided him in his struggle to render you powerless by prescribing valium - it furthered your despondency so that you could obtain pride from neither mother work nor paid work. You were hospitalized - committed - after your children had been removed from your care. He had finally (temporarily) won - he had left you nothing with which you could justify your oppression.

When you had finally regained some of your self-esteem and self-worth during your residency at a women's shelter, he raped you again. He got off on demeaning you, on seeing you powerless. He didn't know that you had discovered feminism as a power source, that you knew you weren't the only woman to whom this had happened, that you would refuse to accept the blame or guilt for his actions, that there were women who'd help you to pick up the pieces, again. He lost.

No, Joyce, they don't call it rape. Living under a phallocracy, what rights do we have to determine if and when we're penetrated - especially since we're defined as penetratable? I remember being asleep and awakening with his penis inside of me. I didn't call it rape - even though I was accustomed to someone else defining the terms of my consent - just as I had adopted to someone else defining the terms of my sexuality. As did you. As did Dale. The different faces of coercion. You'd have sex to avoid an argument, to avoid getting hit, or to be "what a woman got married for" - rarely because you wanted to and never when you initiated it. Fulfilling his needs while never considering yours, he made you feel "like a whore". If this is what constitutes being a whore - existing for men's usage - then all women must be whores under phallocracy. And marriage is legalized prostitution. Women are defined according to their sexual accessibility - if they're not sexually accessible, they're not heterosexual.

Pregnancy. So fearful and jealous of our reproductive capacity, men treat it like they've treated the rest of nature - as something for them to control, to possess, and to treat with either disregard and disrespect once they've conquered it. Dale's husband used her reproductive powers as a weapon against her. Your's simply didn't consider them - he placed them in the realm of the irrelevant and unimportant. This was merely a semblance, however. He must have viewed your reproductive capacity as more significant then he had revealed because he turned you in for a newer, less faulty product after you had had a hysterectomy.

Remember when I said earlier that we are always being blamed for what men penetrate, for the consequences of their penises' actions? Men objectify their penises to the point that they think they have minds of their own - as if they can't be held responsible for what their penises do. Never considering the consequences of sex, their minds are on pleasure while ours' are on pregnancy. We are blamed when we get pregnant because we are supposed to know how to keep their penises under control. They've reduced our reproductive powers to engaging in a war with a sex organ - a war they always win because they've fixed the odds against us. Sometimes I think we're being punished for our life-giving powers. They've restricted our choices to the following: single parenthood, probable poverty, and possible ostracism - "it's a shame"; pregnancy, marriage, and to paraphrase

Irigaray, marked with the name of the father and caged in his house; or, to be fucked and practice pregnancy avoidance through lethal technology. Joyce, you were advised against having any more children because of the risk to your life yet the choice of engaging in a sexual activity other than intercourse wasn't even considered an option - even though the results of intercourse could have killed you. There is no method of birth control that's 100% effective or free of side effects - he therefore put your life on the line twice: by fucking you and by leaving you no option but to take the pill and later the IUD. How could anyone argue that intercourse isn't compulsory or coercive in this society? Phallocracy has enforced a sexual censorship which allows only *male* sexual discourse to proliferate - a discourse which places other sexualities in the realm of the abnormal and forbidden while actually negating some. The available, acceptable sexuality for women is dangerous. The Pill caused me to develop Crohn's Disease - a chronic, incurable disorder which requires drugs to be kept under control - drugs that will eventually, over time, soften my bones. All so I could fuck and be free - a contradiction in terms, an impossibility. Forgetting that men do not want to take responsibility for either women's freedom or the actions of their penises, I asked him to be liable for birth control after I had discontinued taking the Pill. His penis, not liking the way intercourse felt with a condom, entered me - condomless - as I was sleeping. It got

what it wanted. He got what he wanted. Because he owned me, he had me like he wanted to have me. Confirming his manhood and his ownership through the fuck, he had nothing to lose and everything to gain. He had no consequences to suffer, whereas I had to preserve my freedom.

Joyce, your discussion of having lived with your ex-husband's parents initially in your marriage is typical for a lot of Newfoundland women. Patrilocality - moving away from the vicinity of your family and friendship network and into his. It defines the balance of power early in a marriage, enacting and enforcing a wife's dependence upon her husband as she tries to come to terms with her isolation. My mother moved from her home town of Whitbourne to St. John's when her and my father married. They lived in a tiny apartment above his parents. My mother's 5 brothers all married women from outside of their community while her 5 sisters are scattered from Gander to San Francisco, not one remaining close to those who knew them as "Miss". I wonder what it's like to try to achieve acceptance and intimacy in a town or city of strangers, in a place where your acceptance is contingent upon how well they perceive you as treating your husband - the one they've known since childhood. How you must have felt having every move and facet of your personality monitored. And how tempting it would be to become subservient - to literally bend over backward to please him and them - in order to have a friendship, to be included as a part of the family. Blood is

thicker than water. And patrilocality is a strategy of control.

And yes, Joyce, he probably did hit you because his father had hit him as a child. This is how fathers teach their sons methods of coercion and control - through application. Dave's father probably hit his wife as well. Methods of control and coercion are passed down from patriarch to patriarch. Where some learn physical violence as a means of keeping their property - their women and children - in line, others learn to control through more subtle, socially acceptable coercive means. What else can one expect from a society that has among its values virility and virile force? Doesn't the very concept of the masculine, of virility imply coerciveness, violence, and force? Isn't coercion built into the meanings of these concepts - built into what is valued and worshipped in this society?

Love. You define it as the act of someone wanting you for you. To yourself, you're more than sexual but under phallocracy you are defined by sex. Sex - do we define ourselves according to its presence or absence? I recently became loverless - my confidence is low and I have a nonexistent sense of security. I feel undesirable. I am preoccupied with wondering how long I'm going to be alone - and "alone" must mean without sex because I have family, some friends. I am afraid. Is my fear stemming from a loss of self because it's currently existing undefined? To exist peacefully, do

I need to be desired in this very specific, sexual way? Is this what phallocracy has done to me - by defining me as sex, as the desired, sought after sex, I cannot *be* without it? I am just not *being* these days. Friends, family, work - they're not enough now. I can be desired in a multitude of ways but if one of them isn't sexual, I do not feel complete. I don't like this - I want it to change. How can I go about redefining myself, as woman? (Your ex-husband needed sex too - but not to feel desirable. It didn't seem to matter to him if he was desired or not - as the sex that seeks, as predator, he just took what he needed to define himself, to be man. This option of taking - not that I want it - is not available to me. Even if it were, it would not give me the sense of desirability that I seem so desperately to need).

Monica, I believe you were on to something when you said that your ex-husband could not come to terms with your desires because he had seen you as an "old-fashioned girl". As an old fashioned girl, you were not supposed to like or desire sex - the old school of fucking reserves pleasure (supposedly) and activity (as in actively meeting men's needs) to illegal women, whores. Reluctance to participate and total passivity are more characteristic of legal women - virgins, wives, and mothers. Yours was a marriage consummated before the new, improved fuck. You were supposed to merely exist, to be there for his needs - sex was supposed to have been for him, not

you. If you had demonstrated passivity and reluctance, he probably would have had sex with you more frequently - taking as a turn on. I think the pattern was supposed to have been one in which he conquered you and then you eventually got to like being conquered. Instead, you went from "nymphomaniac" to "iceberg". You contradicted the scheme of things by being takeable and thus making him feel less manly and virile. Then you denied him the man-making process of getting you to enjoy being taken - it's great for the masculine identity to transform an unpossessed female into one who learns to erotisize possession. A variation of this game was also played with me - despite the new, improved fuck, men still enjoy the take. Sex, in my marriage, had usually happened when I felt least sexual. Wanting to be held, kissed, and touched, I'd sometimes initiate sexual activity prior to going to sleep - despite the fact that he could give me none of these without fucking me, I needed the affection, the contact. My advances denied, I'd go on to sleep, only to be awakened an hour or two later by him fucking me - minus the holding, kissing, and touching. Denial of our desires, heterosexuality.

I'd say your ex-husband was confused. He was confronted with the masculine invention of "woman" with its corresponding ideas, morals, and laws, and with you - a woman. Inaccessible versus accessible. Straightforward versus contradictory. Because you were real, you did not fit perfectly into the

logic of phallocentricity - woman as opposite of man, virgin/mother as opposite of whore, passive as opposite of active, etc. He was faced with the fact that the mother of "his" child - this Madonna - wanted sex, wanted to participate in the dirty and degrading. He did not want to fuck you, the Madonna - representing his mother and his Gods - but he knew you were also a wife and that that was what you were for - "you're not being a wife", you're not accessible. Your roles were not all at one end of the oppositional pole, they overlapped.

You mentioned also that he could not relate to you as a person. Could this be because to relate to you as a person would have entailed the discontinuation of intercourse? One who is recognized as a person cannot be fucked, cannot be possessed, cannot be a wife. You were a competent professional outside of the home - could he have recognized you as a person, as one other than sexual and thus had to minimize his sexual activity with you while maximizing it with other women who were non-persons? Remember the discussion in Entry 6 of objectification/fixation/and conquest as the way men have sex? Maybe your work in and outside of the home interrupted the power disparity which must exist for men to fuck - thus limiting intercourse to those occasions when he needed to remind himself he was a landlord. Is it possible that he used rape as a solution to the problem of your personhood because, through rape, he could totally objectify you for as long as

it took for him to verify his masculinity? And Monica, if you felt forced you were forced. "Being tolerant" does not constitute consent, nor does it characterize consensual sex - but, then again, maybe it does characterize hetero-sex, for women. How can hetero-sex be consensual if it's the erotization of inequality?

Roseanne, your motive for marrying was similar to one of mine - to prove your desirability, worth, goodness, and loyalty. To prove you were consumable. Once consumed in and by the proper institution of marriage, you too were disillusioned and disappointed. Like Joyce, hetero-sex made you feel "like a whore". You attributed the initial bad quality of the act to the women whom he had probably used prior to you - "I doubt with prostitutes if you fool around with foreplay very much". But once experience was supposedly acquired, "foreplay" - women's sexuality (?) - was again neglected and superseded by intercourse - men's sexuality (!). Yes, intercourse is selfish - I think it's meant to be. You continued to feel like a prostitute when he'd fall asleep after you had "serviced his needs" and again when you'd "let [yourself] be raped". As I suggested previously, you felt like a prostitute because you were one. As a wife of the phallocracy, you are defined as one who exists to service men's needs and if you say "no" or "stop" it's of no meaning - he has title to your body, if not legally then as one who is guaranteed superior status and whose rights and words thus

take precedence. You said that life would be difficult if you did not occasionally perform your wifely, sexual duties. This is coercion - probably not empirically determinable or prosecutable - but coercion nevertheless. Would we *voluntarily, wantingly*, participate in a sexuality that degrades us, that doesn't please us, that is indifferent to us?

Roseanne, I found it interesting that you could "allow" him to penetrate your vagina with his penis but not your mouth with his tongue. As the habitually violated, we have some unusual defense mechanisms to prevent us from feeling totally powerless. Did you too divide your body into sections - those that you owned and those that he owned? Did you disallow him your mouth because unlike your vagina it was not defined as specifically, solely penetratable? Was this a protest - you cannot penetrate, enter, own all of me?

Incidentally, I was just looking through Roget's Thesaurus to find a synonym for the verb "to use". I found "husbandry". This closes my commentary on marriage.

Out of Body Experiences

The rejection, the exclusion of a female imaginary certainly puts woman in the position of experiencing herself only fragmentarily, in the little - structured margins of a dominant ideology ... (Luce Irigaray, The Sex Which Is Not One)

Monica

"With Harry [her ex-husband] ... there were times when I'd just submit ... I felt forced - like I took on a kind of numbness. It was as if I could go outside my self. And what was actually happening to my body, wasn't happening to me. I would actually be outside of me ... You literally shut - it's a pretty strange feeling actually. But I would feel nothing - I mean he could move and I would have no feeling. And there were times he would say to me, you're a goddamn ice cube. And that's exactly how I felt ... Because I wasn't there. That was my body but that was not me ...

I remember a couple of occasions when I was with somebody - like that night I got raped. I remember saying to myself it's not important, that I really don't care, that this is not important to me. I remember trying to convince myself that, okay, he's having his way with my body but this is not important to me. I convinced myself after it happened and I was angry and I had all those hurt feelings -but I convinced myself I didn't. I convinced myself it just wasn't important ..."

Dale

"When I had intercourse with my husband, I used to lose myself. Like I used to drift off - so much I didn't know I was in the world. Like he was the only one there and you wasn't there at all."

Christine

"I was travelling around Italy 2 years ago and I stayed with this man who I met in a cafe. He seemed like a nice guy. He was a doctor. We were talking and he said where are you going to stay and I said I'm looking for a hostel. It sounds like the classic "pick up the girl" but I'm a pretty well-seasoned traveller and pretty wary of that and felt that this was a cool situation. I've been in a lot of situations and was quite surprised that I got myself into this one. We got home and this guy is not cool. He's not being aggressive but you could definitely tell he was kind of putting the make on me. And I was thinking, oh shit, how am I going to get out of this? And I thought, well, I'll leave - I'll leave tomorrow. He kept hanging around. I went to bed and he sat on the side of my bed, talking. I could tell - oh jesus, this guy wants to go to bed with me. The next day, we were just in the apartment and he more or less - he sort of took me and he kind of kissed me. I guess you could say I submitted. Not entirely wanting. I felt like I couldn't get out of the situation. I thought, what the hell, we'll have - just to get rid of the guy. But I'd never been in that situation before, where, in my life, that I'd ever felt, I'm having sex against my will. But I was. Afterwards I felt really violated and really angry. And I left. I realized I gratuitously had sex with him. And it was horrible sex. I absolutely did nothing. He just basically got on top of me and masturbated. I should

know better. I was in a situation where I had very little money, I was in a city in the middle of Italy where I didn't know where the hell I was. I felt in a way that I was somewhat very vulnerable and somewhat helpless. Like we were in the middle of this apartment building - way out in the suburbs. I just sort of gave in cause it was more convenient than trying to pack up, leave, figure out where I'm going to, find a train, get the hell out of that city. It was just like self-preserving. I knew what I was doing, I knew why I let this guy have his own way. And in a sense, because of knowing why I felt like, well, I can empower myself to know why. I'm doing this because I'm really sort of stuck right now. Not because I'm weak, I'm a woman. I have to because I'd lose him, or anything like that. It was a very practical thing. I just wanted to get him off my back. And if that's what it took, then. In the end I felt like I was sort of victorious cause he wanted me to stay. I was really kind of cold to him and I just basically said I wouldn't stay. I felt sorry for him, I felt like I knew why I submitted to the sexual act but I felt like he would never understand why he wanted to dominate me. I felt, he's still back there in this aggressive, manipulative way of life - I'm sure he is, he's had a lot of trouble with women. I felt that I separated myself from my body but that it was a very practical way out of what could have been a sticky situation. But I also felt strong enough that I could do that. I thought if I did that I knew

that I could come back to my body, understand why I did it, and not have all these guilt feelings. I did feel angry, I did feel violated, but I don't feel that he had power over me. I separated myself and sort of felt sorry for him. He didn't get all of me.

Eighth Letter

Dear Monica, Dale and Christine:

I read somewhere that when we look at ourselves in a mirror, we sometimes do so through another mirror - in other words, we observe the reflection of our reflection. I have done this and have barely recognized myself - it's like walking down a street and suddenly being confronted with an image of yourself in a window. You see yourself not as you are self-perceived but as you are perceived by onlookers. I wonder if we are taken off guard because we see in the reflected reflection, men's invention of us - cast into the role of "one who sees" rather than "one who is seen", we temporarily see through their eyes. Maybe. But the fact remains that as others, we sometimes become other to ourselves - in the case of the mirrors, to see how we are "objectively" perceived as others; in the case of "out of body experiences", to prevent ourselves from becoming entirely other to ourselves.

So, why the phrase "out of body experiences" to describe what's happening in these stories? Because that's how I have

experienced what you've described. While using this defense mechanism, this guard against total otherness, I felt it is my self temporarily leaving my body, as making my self inaccessible. As I described in the previous letter about marriage, I would literally visualize my sexual performances through the lens of an imaginary camera - I'd be hovering somewhere over the bed watching while my body performed. In discussing this with Roseanne, she laughed and made a joke about my fantasizing being a porn star - but it wasn't like that. I didn't enjoy what I was seeing - I thought it was rather sad. And it wasn't a fantasy. It was very much a reality. My body was having sex. My "soul" wasn't. The real me - what I know as the real me - wasn't participating. What I know as me wasn't there - I was somewhere else, thus "out of my body". It was like looking through that second mirror - I was an onlooker, other to myself.

What's strange is that I found it more difficult to leave my body the more this defense mechanism was needed. I would leave it but I would hear it, feel it - these were the times when the use of it was blatant. I wanted to hold it, sooth it, mother it - it was a part of me and it wanted me to protect it, love it. But the only way that I could protect it - since it was being taken from me - was to make it submit (maybe then they'd be more gentle). And then I had to leave so that all of me wouldn't be stolen.

Lately I've needed holding and soothing - as well as that

aforementioned feeling of desirability. A woman offered to give me this. I think through women I am learning to love my body - it stays with me to the point that it's no longer "it" but me. As we touched, held, and soothed, I could see myself reflected in her eyes - and it was as I perceived myself. We were neither other to each other nor to ourselves. Because we were each feeling what the other was feeling - or could at least imagine it - we were careful, full of care, respectful. Even though it was temporary. Amazing. I hope that I never lose my amazement, my pleasure in discovering that this is possible. Yesterday, I had thought that because it was temporary - never to occur again between us - it was sex without "love" - but was it? Weren't we loving each other through ourselves by uncritically embracing and appreciating our *self-perceived* reflections? You are beautiful. You are beautiful.

In writing the last paragraph, it occurred to me that what we've experienced might be something other than a defense mechanism. Monica, you said that you would feel nothing because, in your words, "I wasn't there. That was my body but that was not me." Dale, you said that it was "like he was the only one there and you wasn't there at all." Christine, you also felt that you had separated yourself from your body, that "he didn't get all of [you]." It never occurred to me until now that maybe we weren't really there and that this absence wasn't a choice or chosen defense mechanism. Maybe we didn't

belong there as ourselves because we weren't wanted as ourselves. Could these have been experiences against which we couldn't defend ourselves - they made us so totally other that we were other to ourselves? Is it possible that these were male homosexual experiences without the usual semblance of acknowledgement - thus preventing us from recognizing ourselves as present because we were mere reflections of the men whom we were with? We felt absent because our presence, *our difference* was not acknowledged. We were there not as self-representations but as representatives of the masculine - thus we didn't recognize ourselves (?). Our presence was required for its absence. We were there as lack - we lacked what they had (the phallus) and they needed to confirm this. The confirmation of masculinity. While they experienced maleness, we experienced loss of self through over-representation of the masculine (overkill). The following quote from Irigaray's "When Our Lips Speak Together", describes how I've felt "out of my body" and you may find that you can also identify with it.

And the strange way they divide up their couples, with the other as the image of the one. Only an image. So any move towards the other means turning back to the attraction of one's own mirage. A (scarcely) living mirror, she/it is frozen, mute ... The ebb and flow of our lives spent in the exhausting labor of copying, miming. Dedicated to reproducing - that sameness in which we have remained for centuries, as the other.¹⁹⁹

The woman who recently and inadvertently reminded me of

of my self, also inadvertently reminded me of Irigaray's essay and of the first time I experienced difference. I was with one of my own sex when I first experienced difference. And I'll never forget how it felt - "I love you: body shared, undivided. Neither you nor I severed."²⁰⁰ I had kept saying to her - we are the same and we are different - and all the while I was repeating this, I kept laughing. It was like a revelation. I had not known why I had experienced such pleasure, such absolute joy from this event until I read Irigaray. Within the masculine order, we have no specificity of our own - men use and define our "difference" and perceive it as lack. Thus our detachment, our "out of body experiences". With a woman, however, I can realize, appreciate the fullness, the multiplicity of my body, my sexuality. I lack nothing.

Just listen to Irigaray's words - I'm in love with her language.

So they think we're indifferent. Doesn't that make you laugh? At least for a moment, here and now? We are indifferent? ... Not different; that's right. Still ... No, that could be too easy. And that "not" still keeps us separate so we can be compared. Disconnected that way, no more "us"? Are we alike? If you like. It's a little abstract. I don't quite understand "alike". Do you? Alike in whose eyes? in what terms? by what standard? with reference to what third? I'm touching you, that's quite enough to let me know that you are my body ...

I/you touch you/me, that's quite enough for me to feel alive.²⁰¹

Yes, I felt alive. Maybe it's been life I've been in need of lately, not desirability.

When A Commodity Competes: Dawn

Dawn

"My brother Eric was very bitter when he left his wife. His wife, Melissa, and his kids lived up the street from me. The youngsters used to come up and see me all the time - and Melissa of course. He came in a couple of times and I knew he was mad about it. So I said to him, "Eric, I don't know what to be doing. The youngsters come in, I'm only 2 seconds away." He said he didn't mind the youngsters coming up but he did mind Melissa coming up ... Eric never ever knew about me but I guess he figured. There was always talk. I mean I never went out with anyone only girls. But he never came out and said anything and he always accepted whoever I was going with ... But see when Eric started going out with Melissa there was talk of Melissa and this girl. Melissa's mother told Eric. It was always in the back of his mind for some reason. Whenever he wanted to get his anger out he'd bring it on that way ... New Years day I was downstairs cleaning up and the doorbell rings, the door opens, and in walks Melissa and the two kids. I said you're getting me at a bad time, I'm just getting ready to go out. The doorbell rang again and in walks Eric. Here I am in a robe, my hair in a

mess - all he seen was Melissa, he didn't see the youngsters. I said to myself, oh jesus, this is not going over big. He stormed out of the house and went on ... So I went on out. I got home 10:30. Dropped my girlfriend off to her house and she said "Why don't you stay here tonight, I got a really funny feeling about tonight." I said "No, it's 10:30 now - by the time I get home and I get the dog in the house and that." I said, "Give me a call about 8:00 tomorrow morning." She said, "No, I've got this funny feeling, why don't you stay down." I said "No, I'll be fine." Got home 10:50, locked the door and everything, and I called my sister [on the west coast] and the next thing I know a bang came on the door. I said "I'm not answering that." All the lights were off and everything. She said "What's going on?" And I said "I don't know. Someone's at the door, I'm not letting them in now." The next thing I knew, the door was beat in and this was Eric. He kicked the door in ... My sister asked me if I was in trouble and I said "Yeah, I think I am." When I looked at him - oh - he had this look in his eyes. She said "Do you want me to phone home for you?" and I said yeah ... Before I had a chance to speak to her he hauled the phone out of the wall and we were disconnected. I said "Eric, calm down. If you want to talk about something, talk about it." And frig, I didn't know nothing. He took my Christmas tree and let that go across the room, my lamps, my coffee table - I had a real big heavy coffee table with heavy legs. He said "I want to

know why Melissa was here." I said "The youngsters were here too Eric." He said "I want to know why Melissa was here." I said, "You'll have to go ask your ex-wife, I can't answer why she was here, I was getting ready to go out." My chesterfield was a big one - it had wooden legs on it and next thing I knew, I didn't know anything. He broke my lamp and he had hit me and I went flying across the chesterfield. And I said "Calm down will you." And with that he started banging my head off the wooden arm. I was really upset by this time cause I knew I couldn't control the man. He was gone out of control. He was just - everything went. He beat up everything. And he had me by the throat. He was choking me and he let go and he broke a glass. And he tried to get me to step on the glass. And I was just gone by this time, really. I tried to keep talking to him but whatever it was - I swear he was stoned or something. I don't know. Finally, he just flipped altogether and I don't know what he said to me - something. Anyhow, he had me on the chesterfield and his leg across my stomach and he was shaking me. I could just feel myself going cause I could not breathe - with that my brother came in. My brother could not get him off me and he had to take the leg off the coffee table and hit him to get him off me. I was just about passed out then because the air was just about gone. Stewart tried to talk to him and he took a swing at Stewart. Stewart went to the man next door and got him to call the police. By the time Stewart got back, he was choking

me again. The man came out from next door and helped Stewart hold Eric down and the police were there in 2 minutes. And as soon as the police stepped in, just like that he snapped out of it and went on with them. He just snapped, just like that and said "I'm ready." *Which tells me he wasn't stoned at all.* Everything was destroyed - everything. I never got back to work for three weeks after that. I had to go to the hospital and get x-rays done on my head and my ribs. They thought my ribs were broken because of the beating he gave me. So I had him bonded for a year and he had to pay me \$2,000. Which didn't even cover my furniture - but that's the price they put on furniture ... So whatever furniture I had I stored and I went to live with a friend for a couple of months until I got things straightened away ... Then I moved home - I didn't get another apartment after. Eric and I, we don't talk much any more ... But apparently, with Melissa now, Eric and Melissa were divorced for 3 or 4 years and, what it was, Melissa was in love with me - that was the problem. That was the whole problem. An infatuation or whatever you call it. But that's why she visited so much. And I discovered that from Melissa's best friend ...

Just recently when I was in the hospital, Melissa came up with the 2 kids and the next day Eric came up to the hospital. When he walked in - I can usually tell with him, his eyes - his eyes get really strange. He said "How are you feeling?" I said, "Not too bad." He said "You've got lots

of visitors." I said yeah. "Yes" he said, "You had Melissa up here - I better get out of here before I say something or do something." I said "Yeah, I think you'd better ..."

Ninth Letter

Dear Dawn:

About a year after I had left my husband, I met a woman with whom I had had a sexual relationship. As he and I were still communicating, I shared this good news with him. His response was that he would have been better able to handle it if I had told him I was seeing a man - "How" he said, "do I compete with a woman?" "Compete for what?" I thought. "I am not an object for which to compete." But, of course, I was, in his world. A product exchanged for men - and may the best man win (own). Also implied in his statement was a disregard, a contempt for women - and thus for me. As if, as commodities, we are not only unlikely but also unworthy competitors. Commodities only compete among themselves. We therefore did not engage in any competition - except to tell me that he now knew what I needed because he had been to bed with a lesbian (?). Although this was probably a lie, it was an inadvertent admission that he had known all along that he had been granting my sexuality secondary - no, nonexistent - status. He admitted this only when faced with the total, irretrievable loss of his property and when he realized that my sexuality was being given precedence by an other. Assuming that he was

referring to oral sex when he claimed knowledge of what I needed, did he honestly believe that I would change my mind because of a mere semblance of acknowledgement on his part? It should not have shocked me that he perceived my sexuality as singularly and genitally focused as his own - he could only think through male terms of reference. His entire world orbits around the phallus and because I was a lesbian he probably thought that I was his poor imitation pretending to have that which I lacked. Defining my sexuality as lack, he believed I lacked that which only he (a he) could give. How could I have made him understand that I was tired of being absorbed by maleness?

We haven't spoken since the above conversation. We've seen each other once - at a red light. Through his car window into mine entered the look - the one I described in an earlier letter - the one your brother probably gave you prior to almost killing you.

Dawn, what an incredibly horrific experience - to be beaten almost to death by your own brother because of your sexuality. Two statements came to mind: one, "I don't mind Blacks as long as my daughter doesn't marry one," and two, "I don't mind homosexuals as long as they're adults and they keep it to themselves." How do people react when they are touched by events or people outside of *their* norm? How do men react when personally confronted with a sexuality other than their own? Is violence the ultimate institutional safeguard of

heterosexuality? - if it eroticizes male violence, it would only be phallically logical that it would employ it as a means of protecting itself, as a means of punishing sexual disobedience.

There was violence in my ex-husband's eyes and in your brother's eyes. What prevented my ex-husband from beating me or my lover and inspired your brother to beat you? How did the violence progress from his eyes to his fists? Could it have had something to do with the fact that your brother engaged in a competition of which my ex-husband wanted no part? Your brother lowered himself to competing with a woman for his wife's affection - a woman whom he had known as his inferior all of his life - firstly as his younger sister, secondly as a woman, and thirdly as a non-woman, a cheap imitation. How he must have hated you for "making him" hate himself, for "forcing" him to compete with you - one whom he despised. Did his hatred progress beyond that which my ex-husband felt because you shared the same blood? - as his sister, you would be a lifelong reminder of his having lost his property, his power source, his self-confirming other, to a commodity. How emasculating! And at each family dinner, holiday, birth, or death he would be reminded of his emasculation by your presence. Unlike my ex-husband, he could not just walk out of your life and be inadvertently reminded of you at red lights. So, in order to regain some of what he had lost - his masculinity, not Melissa - he beat you. He needed

to beat you in order to confirm his power, his maleness. While you were being beaten, you were his other. He wasn't stoned or drunk - there's violence in his eyes each and every time he sees you. He'd like to do it again. When commodities compete with those other than themselves, they are violating the laws of the heterosexual market place - they are thus dealt with coercively, violently.

"Queer-bashing" is a method of punishing those who defy penetration laws. Lesbians are "penetratable" women who refuse to be penetrated by the phallus; gays are "unpenetratable, unbreachable" men who *are* penetrated by the phallus. Thus, they must be "encouraged" to penetrate, or to be penetrated, by the appropriate sex in order to maintain the heterosexual power balance. Who penetrates whom determines who is the property of whom, who has the power over whom.

Comments on Masculinity or Masculine Men

Men are diminished by fear ... But women are supposed to treasure the little grain of fear - rub up against it - eroticize it, want it, get excited by it; and the fear could and does keep millions quiet; millions of women; being fucked and silent; upright and silent; waiting and silent; rolled over on and silent. The silence is taken to be appropriate. The fear is not perceived as compromising or destroying freedom. The dictators do flourish: fuck and flourish. (Andrea Dworkin, Intercourse)

Roseanne

"Mom probably had sex with Dad for the same reason I had

sex with Gerry. Wifely duties again. That's the way the man gets - he gets horny and he wants to have sex. *So, are you saying that men's sexual desires are uncontrollable?* Yeah. Most of them are still the same way - I think. Except now you're a little bit more exposed to it. *Do you think this is a natural, biological thing?* Yes I do. But by the same token it should be for the woman too - because it is. But we're not brought up to think that way. Like if we were brought up - it's impossible I suppose - to think that sex is not a dirty thing, it was a human emotion, it was a need, you know it's not gross, it's not filthy, a woman can feel just as horny as a man can feel."

Monica

"You know, I think men are very capable of violence. It's the kind of feeling that you get that they're capable of anything. Now my father - maybe this is where some of it rubs off from childhood - but my father when he was drinking was not ever physically violent, never was. But he was violent - verbally violent. There was something in his voice that was violent. But it wasn't just the fact that he swore. Cause I don't think swearing alone makes violence. I think it's something you hear. I think it's something deeper than that. And I was always frightened of my father. Very frightened. Not frightened of him sexually ... He wasn't affectionate. I can't remember him ever holding me or

touching me or kissing me ... He wasn't a warm or affectionate person at all ... He wasn't important in my life - he fed us, clothed us and when he died I didn't shed any tears. Because I didn't see him as a warm wonderful person. I didn't love him - ever ... I was always frightened of him as a child growing up. There was something in his voice that frightened me. He wasn't a tough guy at all. And he wasn't physically violent at all. I mean I didn't see him beating anybody at any time. So whatever it was, was in the voice. It was in the way he acted. He didn't have to yell or scream. He was the type of person who would say, for example, if there was something going on, "you're not going out tonight." And you just knew that you didn't question it. Now, if mother said "you're not going out tonight" we knew we could get over her time. We could always get around her. But not with him. If he said you're not going out tonight, you knew, that's what he meant. That's pretty strong. I knew it all my life ...

But I tell you one thing that I personally feel - I think a man has control over his sexual urges - I really do. And I think he's capable of stopping at any time, he's not out of control. I think he's got a hard on and that's it ...

There was a time when I used to think men would take anybody. That's not true. I didn't think men would pass up sex no matter what. But I've learned over the years it's not true - it's not really like that. That there are men in this world who do not cheat on their wives - not even because they

have great sex lives themselves but just simply won't. Because of their own sense of right and wrong, their own ethics. For years I didn't really believe men had much in the way of morals. I thought that men, if you opened your legs or pulled up your skirts, watch out lady you're going to get it. But that's not so. There's been a few experiences that changed my mind. I remember this particular guy who was here in town visiting. And a good looking guy. He was married, his wife wasn't with him, and the opportunities were there, and he didn't - he didn't fool around. I think there are exceptions. But I think there are some genuinely good people - well just for example, my brother. I've talked to him, we've talked about all sorts of things, and I was very surprised to find out how strong he felt about things like that. Now I have 3 other brothers and I wouldn't put anything past them, so I'm not saying - maybe it is an exception, maybe it's not the rule after all, because the 3 others I wouldn't put anything past them ...

I've been strongly attracted to females. I think I've loved females. I think it's okay for females to love one another. I really believe that's true ... I think women are more sensitive - I think that's what you miss in men - sensitivity. I don't think men have that. I say all their feelings are in their penis. But there are men who are very sensitive. Very sensual. They do exist - they're just not your everyday guys. They're usually older too - 30's or 40's

- they've lived. They've been around for while - they're not your 18 or 19 year olds. And I think this is what I was talking about when I said that it's surprising - I think maybe this is the kind of relationship I would expect to have with a female. Like slower - the only way I can explain it is loving vs. sex. Two people loving each other and not just sex ... I'm talking about erotic, true passion. Sensitive caring. Passionate. Really, truly reaching unbelievable heights sexually. Not just - it's different in the sense that you feel loved. It's not sex."

Dawn

"With men - like Dad. He was always travelling and gone most of the time. I don't think it's anything for men to go to bed with another woman. Like this movie I watched last night called "Invasion". She was pregnant and he really needed her sexually. So she went away for 2 weeks and he went with her best friend. It's whenever, it doesn't make any difference to them. You've got to be there for them and that's it ... I think whenever they get in the mood, which could be any time, someone has got to be there for them ...

We only seen Dad on weekends. One thing I could not tolerate was Sunday dinner. It still turns me off to this day. Sunday at noon, he'd go in the bedrooms, and bring out everybody's pajamas. I was 17 and Anne was 18 - we had a date. Dad would come out and lay everybody's pajamas by the

fridge. Because if you didn't eat your carrot and turnip you had to go to bed. This went on a lifetime - I hated Sundays. Dad wouldn't get back till late Friday night and you'd see him Saturday probably out doing a few things, and when he'd speak, you'd jump. He was strict that way - you do this, you do that. But he never hit anybody. But you knew by his voice. Then Sundays, you'd sit down. Mom would have dinner ready. No one liked carrot and turnip. I don't know a youngster who really likes it. If you don't eat your carrot and turnip or whatever, just take your pajamas and go to bed ... And Mom never ever said nothing ... We were punished for coming in late. You were always punished by going to your room. Especially when you first started dating. But only with the girls. Dad would be at the door like a salvage and tell you off in front of your boyfriend. He'd take you by the shoulder and tell you off. The boys could go on - he never said anything to the boys ...

I wouldn't want a man in bed with me but I'm not afraid of them. I figure all I've got to do is give them a good kick and they'd go on. I'm still afraid of my brother when he gets that way. And I wouldn't want to be caught alone with one ... After rape, the fear is always with you. I don't think that ever leaves you. I haven't since been caught to be alone with a man that I don't want to be with. I don't know how I'd handle that ...

Alain

"I didn't like my father. The majority of the time I didn't. *Did your father represent what men were like?* Somewhat. Well, men - they're all alike. Most of them think they know it all. Even when they're wrong they won't admit it, half the time. We had an opinion but our opinion didn't hold even if we were right. We disagreed on everything. As I got older it was more conflicting. He even used to get pissed off cause I thought I was good in sports. He used to try to get to me, to undermine me - he used to say these girls are just as good as you are and don't forget it. Don't go out thinking you're great, cause you're not. And religion, we conflicted on that a lot. He used to force me to go to church. I always used to go to church free-willing but when he started putting this forcing, coercive element into it, I said no, I'm not doing it, I'm not going. It was something I used to like, cause I felt safe - those people helped me, they were my friends ...

He'd hit me - in the face, mostly in the back of the head, the head area mostly. He never used to hit my lower parts. In the face if I back-answered. If he didn't like an answer I gave him, he thought I was being smart ... He'd absolutely refuse to give me anything that I really wanted ...

The only thing I agree on with men is when we talk about sports. They talk to be back because I know about sports ... That's the only thing I can identify with them about. And I

can't have conversations with them about anything else."

Chris

"You know women more. I went out with a guy for 7 months and at the end we were good friends but I didn't know him. At the end of an 8 month relationship with a woman, I feel like I know her and sometimes I can tell what she's thinking just by looking at her. I never thought I really knew what was going through a man's mind. And I find men's eyes really distant. Like you can be talking to them, even after knowing them, their eyes are really distant. But with a woman sometimes you can almost have a conversation with your eyes. And you can say nothing in a certain situation and she knows exactly what you're thinking just by looking at her ...

I can remember Dad taking me trouting or whatever when I was young. Or playing ball. But when I remember getting comfort from anyone, it would be from Mom. Not from Dad. Like when I got to the age where things were bothering me or whatever, that's when Dad was doing his drinking and stuff ... I can't ever remember going to a man for support or anything like that ...

I've always, always said I'd never get married, even before I knew I was gay. I was gay for years before I fully realized what was going on, when I realized it wasn't a phase. Lisa's mother and father said we were going through a phase. Being a lesbian to me opens up more doors than if I was

heterosexual. If you're in a good relationship with a woman, you don't have to dress up for her, you don't have to put on any false airs whatsoever. They accept you for what you are. You can do whatever you want. A woman with a husband and children, who's into sports or whatever, she's more tied down. Even if you're monogamous you can still have more friends ...

I think women are a lot more sensitive than men. And I don't think that's bad. I think women have a more open mind than men, they're a lot more open-minded. A woman who accepts someone being gay, accepts them for who they are. Men accept them for being gay because they wouldn't mind - they might get a chance, a challenge.

I think men try to keep up a macho, in-control image. I guess heterosexual men are a bit stuck too cause if they're not macho and they're very sensitive, they're called wimps. A woman can be sensitive and she's being a woman. Or she can be powerful and she's still a woman. But if a man is powerful and macho, that's fine. If he's not, then he's probably considered gay ...

I don't think there are any men who are truly monogamous. I guess there's some difference in morals. I think woman to woman relationships are more 50-50 than heterosexual relationships. Because when it is two women you can understand what the other one is feeling. You can understand what they're going through - even such things as their period - you know she's got PMS. A man might not really understand it. If he

does understand it he's probably too macho to try to help her through it ...

At work, there was a guy - my boss - not the overall boss but my boss. I consider he harassed me. Things like blowing smoke in my face and saying do you know what that means? According to him, if someone blows smoke in your face it means they want to go to bed with you. I would just tell him to fuck off but it was partly harassment. Just saying things to me that really shouldn't have been said. If it was pretty bad out he'd give me a ride home and this one time he said you and I should go parking. It made me really nervous because I didn't like him and I thought this is just his type. We were talking about rape, something came on the radio about a woman being raped and he snickered. So I bitched into him. And he said how he walks down George Street on a nice sunny afternoon and the women are going around with little shorts and little halters. He said what do you expect a man to do. And I said no one deserves to be raped just because of what they got on. It may be hot, she may be the kind of woman who wants to attract attention but I'm sure she doesn't want to be raped. So like I knew his way of thinking - when he said something to me that was very suggestive, I felt I was harassed because he scared me. That was my last ride home with him. I walked through storms after that. He was a real macho type guy - I think he was typical of a lot."

Christine

"I think I've felt oppressed about my sex, my being a woman. Definitely. Sexually, I felt oppressed. Being harassed by men travelling or whatever and feeling threatened and then feeling angry because I'm a woman and I can't travel alone because these jerks are always coming around me trying to get laid. I feel oppressed that way about sex. But I've been very assertive in my expectations and my demands. If I don't want to have sex, I don't and I never feel I'm coerced into it and I never am. I just say no if I don't want to go to bed with somebody. I respect my body. I also want to preserve this body. I just don't let it out for anyone.

You can realize that you can be really exploited. If you're single like I am and basically, men are available just like that, snap your finger. You can find a partner every night of the week if you want to. You realize that it's very easy to separate your body from your spirit. Men seem to do that. To me, it escapes me.

I have a fear of men for their potential in society for their oppressed sexual nature - especially around children - and in general. I shouldn't say fear - I'm wary of men. I think they've got a long way to go and I don't think they really understand their sexuality and a lot of the times they can't control it. But I'm not afraid of men.

Probably it is that separation of the body and spirit, that men can go out and just physically want sex all the time.

There are times when I'll go out but that's balanced with times that I need more of a relationship with my partner. Most of the time I'm not interested in just having sex - in a physical, raw sexual experience. Sometimes I am but most of the time sex is better when you know your partner and there's a real good sense of togetherness, where you feel for each other, a sense of understanding is there. Men can separate themselves and I find that pretty frightening. They can separate themselves too much. I think men can go out 7 days a week and have sex with strange women and prostitutes - it just doesn't seem to phase them. Even with their partners and wives there's some men who never reach a degree of intimacy during the sexual act. The sexual act then is not an intimate act - it's more of a physical act like going to the bathroom. Having an orgasm to release this bundle of sperm that you carry around for a couple of days and you're so-called uncomfortable with it. Women have been conned into that for so long. Oh my God, he's got a hard on - you've got to jerk him off tonight or he'll have to walk home with a hard on and he's going to be in agony. "You can't leave me like this!" That's a lot of crock! Men think of women as repositories for their pent up sexual frustrations.

Really, men have so much to learn. It's just appalling how far men have to go with sexuality. It's up to women to demand that and educate men. That's a long way down the line. But just imagine what a turnaround that would be on everything

from politics, social and environmental issues, the military - the whole way our society works. Which is very much the male, the power. *Well, everything is penetratable to men.* Exactly. The power in the assertion. If that was taken away from them and undermined then you'd see a big change. You wouldn't see phallic industries and aggressive bombs - an aggressive mentality. It's up to women now. Women's consciousness has to come to the fore and the harmonious, equal kind of idea - nurturing, nonaggressive attitudes toward each other and the planet and the resources. It's what's going to save us. Men have really botched up this planet. It's male dominance that's doing it. It's the same in the bedroom. Submission, power, penetration, asserting the will over everything."

Dale

"I think that's the only way they can prove they're a man - by doing what they like with a woman."

Tenth Letter

Dear Roseanne, Monica, Dawn, Alain, Chris, Christine and Dale:

Men. Masculinity. For a while now, I've been debating with myself about which I despise. Isn't that a cold thing to say? You see, I'm angry - with men. Not only have most of my bad experiences been because of men but they continue to feed rather than defuse my anger. Always. They do a lot of little things with big implications. Two weeks ago, I went

to the bar alone. Although this is a gay bar, two men approached me. The first gave me a standard line of "you look lonely" to which I replied "leave me alone." The second asked me if I was there for the same reason that he was. When I told him that I didn't know, he suggested we were both there for "a good, hard screw". Then he draped his arm around my shoulders - I pushed it off. I hate that. It seems they always have to be touching you, infringing upon your space. There's never room enough to walk at that bar whether or not it's crowded. The men take up space and they're not willing to share - they step on my feet, they put their hands on my back or bottom as they pass by, at the counter they lean over me to get their drinks despite the availability of empty space. Gay or straight, they seem to act like this everywhere - as if they are entitled to all space - theirs and yours - because they own the world. And I suppose they do. They don't share - they want their cake *and* ours (*especially ours because getting ours is what masculinity is all about*). They're so invasive - they penetrate everything, if not with their penises then with their bodies, words, and logic.

But do I hate my father? No. I love him, despite. I want to know him, to get close to him but I don't know how to get beyond our present relationship. He doesn't know me. For example, he'll never read this thesis - he doesn't want to because he knows it's feminist and I don't want him to

because I fear the loss of the little contact we have. Right now our relationship is as it's always been - he is provider and I am needy child. He provides and I accept - if I stopped accepting, what would be the basis of our relationship? I'm proud of him, of what he has achieved. He's becoming proud of me. He wants to see me succeed professionally and I appreciate that and the fact that he never mentions the absence of "boyfriends". But, our relationship is frozen. Why doesn't he ever *need* me? Or does he? Maybe I'll never know because it's heterosexuality that divides us - the division of masculinity and femininity -oppositional opposites - roles. Our relationship is based on the playing of respective roles. He might never reveal his needs to me because it would entail a deviation - he is father, man; I am daughter, perpetual girl. We are close when there is a crisis - during a crisis, deviation is normal.

So, maybe it's masculinity, masculine behavior that I despise and those who adhere rigidly to its principles whom I disrespect. When a friend's father died a few months ago, I felt for her because she loved him. So, I started to think that she must have loved him for some reason - there must have been goodness in him. Are "goodness" and masculinity antithetical? Does masculinity obscure "goodness" or obliterate it? Is the presence of "goodness" contingent upon lesser degrees of masculinity? Are there good, kind, empathetic, sensitive, peaceful men - and if so, are they feminine

(perceived as feminine)? Can a man be "good" and still choose intercourse - with its implications of colonialization, possession, and power - as his way of having sex? Since, under phallocracy, power is held by those who have possession of the phallus, a biological male who incorporates femininity into his gender role is "choosing" as one in power to give up (some) power. He is still a man. If he is denigrated it is because he is not making use of what he *has*. We, on the other hand, are defined by what we don't have - and under phallocracy we have nothing of our own.

Men make me angry.

Roseanne, do you really think sex is inspired by instincts or biology any more? It - nature - has been so socialized, spoken about, written about, appropriated, and controlled, how can it be? What constitutes nature and the natural has been defined and decided by men. If sex is a biological need, then what makes us need it - what turns us on - isn't. Was it natural or instinctual for a man to lock my arms behind my head so that he could achieve orgasm? What aroused him was not my "natural" body, scent, or sex but my "unnatural" pose - an appearance of helplessness and submissiveness that he purposely created. Was he fantasizing about rape as he fucked me? - *sex as power as pleasure*. You say that men's sexual needs are uncontrollable - that once they want sex, they have to have it. Why don't they just masturbate? It

would be a hell of a lot easier than all this persuading, manipulating, taking, and conquering - but, then again, it's all of this that they want (not easily achieved by masturbation). They need to possess, sexually and this is an uncontrollable need only in so far as they *have* to do this to exist, as men-in-power. Virility is at stake. So, "naturally" they become panicky when they didn't get it - thus appearing to be out of control. To have one's sexuality labelled "uncontrollable" is also a convenient excuse and justification for taking, owning, possessing, and raping the unwilling. We are brought up to believe that men, as uncontrollable, must be satisfied, so that we will do our "wifely duties" and submit for the sake of mankind. And yes, "a woman can feel just as horny as a man can feel." But how often does this "horniness" become fully resolved by her male partner(s) - and for reasons other than confirmation of his power, his manhood? She cannot "take" what she *needs* from a sexuality that isn't her own, that isn't even about her.

Monica, maybe "men are capable of doing anything" because anything is permitted by the phallocracy in the defense and maintenance of its power. What you sensed in your father's voice was authority and the "anything goes" - including violence - stance that accompanies it. When you promptly acquiesced to your father's rule but evaded your mother's by not taking it seriously, it was in preparation for your role

under a heterosexual regime. Hard, unpenetratable men; soft, pliable women. You were learning how not to take your own power and influence too seriously and how to take men's very seriously, or else.

Referring to your discussion of "good" men - the man who turned down opportunities to cheat on his wife (the choice of one in power not to fully extend his power) and your monogamous brother - you say that they do exist but that "they're just not your everyday guy." When I was married, I used to do this and a lot of women I know continue to do it - that is, provide examples of men who are exceptions to the rule. When we speak of women, we tend to generalize - probably to avoid recognizing that awful particular of their everyday lives which we share and don't want to share. So, when we look for the exception to the rule among women, we look inward rather than outward in order to avoid seeing the commonness and pervasiveness of our oppression. Oppression is hard to look at. And so are men. If we admitted to ourselves that it's *our* men - as husbands, lovers, fathers, brothers, sons, doctors, priests, or friends - who do the raping, killing, possessing, or oppressing, how could we justify living or working with them - how could we consider them allies? I had an argument about this with a female acquaintance one evening downtown. She had inquired about my thesis. When I explained to her what I was writing about, she started discussing the equally unfair treatment of men. Citing examples from among

her male friends, she told me of one who was sexually harassed at work, another who was molested as a child, and then reminded me of the men who are raped in prisons. Asking her who had sexually harassed her male friend, she replied that it had been his male boss. A priest had molested her other friend. And prisons are sex-segregated. Men *will* prey on those less virile than themselves - those who don't properly utilize what they have. The point is, however, she chose to concentrate on the relative rarity of the sexual harassment and rape of men when women are being raped *by men* about every 10 minutes. It's understandable why she'd choose to overlook this general fact by focusing on the particular one of men's sexual abuse - that, for men, sex as pleasure is power is a difficult fact to face.

Monica, in this story as well you differentiate between sex and loving. You define loving as sensitivity, passion, caring and true eroticism and as that which you'd expect from a sexual relationship with a woman. Sex, on the other hand, is only that which you'd expect in a relationship with a man - "loving" rarely occurs in relationships between men and women. In almost every story, you attempt to define what you want, what could be, what is possible. Keep doing this, please. You are articulating the possibility of a women's sexual discourse.

Yes, Dawn, women have to be there for them because that's

what they've defined women as being for. That movie you watched was appropriately titled: "Invasion" - the act of invading makes men, men. You say that you wouldn't want to be caught alone with a man, that the fear that was invoked by the rape and your brother's assault has never left you. No, they don't have to be physically present any more to invoke fear - that's how much power they have, how much authority. Once they've made you aware of what they're capable of, of what cards they hold, their job is completed. (Sex as power may be pleasurable for men but for women it's merely instructive). Your father was present for maybe two days out of every week and managed to exert only his authority. His wrath was directed primarily at you and your sisters because it was your sexuality that he owned and was thus responsible for - was this responsibility too much for him?

This week I've been grading essays entitled "Is There Hope For This Planet?" Describing the present dying state of our earth, students use such phrases as the "rape of the land," "the penetration of the atmosphere," and "man's control of nature". Not once, however, do they refer to the phallogentricity of their language or to the social construction of masculinity as that which rapes, penetrates, conquers and controls. It is masculine men who are in power - who control, for example, the World Bank, the Brazilian government, the U.S.A.. How could a topic such as the conquest and subsequent death of nature be addressed without reference to the phallo-

centric power structure that values and thus perpetuates colonialization, possession, conquest, and rape - anti-love and death? But, I suppose, they would not receive their grades if they spewed out anything other than the masculine discourse and logic they had been taught.

Alain, your father speaks from a point of view known as truth. He thought he "knew it all" because the place from which he speaks tells him that he is One, the general voice, the authority. This place also tells him that you are other. As other, your words, opinions, and actions don't count - you do not speak from the position of one in authority. Your father could not respect or validate your opinions or experiences because he had access to only male terms of reference. He had access only to the discourse that counts - his. If you attempted to contradict his discourse, he would use violence to keep you in line, to put you in your phallically appropriate, subordinate place. Committing the offence of "being smart", of "answering back", you, as other and subordinate, had to be punished. Under phallocracy, women are forbidden intelligence and answers (of their own) - "back-answering" women contradict the balance of power, maintained through sex roles. He had to teach you your role - for the patriarchy. The sports that he had considered "cute" when you participated in them as a child, he considered dangerous as you matured. He thus tried to undermine your confidence and ability - qualities which are essential to an athlete. He must have

suspected that you were gaining possession and control over your body - a state antithetical to heterosexual womanhood. He attempted to prepare you for heterosexual womanhood also by denying you that which you desired. By incorporating coercion into that which you had always done willingly, he denied you pleasure - or was he preparing you for the coerced/coercive pleasure that is hetero-sex?

I have back-answered the phallocracy by writing this journal. I wonder, how will they punish me? - by denying me a livelihood?

Yes, Chris, you do know women more. Apart from superficialities, I always wondered what a woman could have in common with a man - they experience life differently than we do. Men's eyes have the distant, detached look of those who have power and who refuse to see and acknowledge the effects, the results of their power. Maybe their conscience forbids them to see what they've done - forbids them to recognize that their position is maintained by oppressing. And we see this detachment in their eyes. You mention that with a woman you don't always need words to know what she's thinking. It's the same thing that sometimes occurs when you look into a strange woman's eyes and know that she's a lesbian. I suspect that this awareness and sensitivity is the intuition of the oppressed - knowledge that's been suppressed and therefore kept within, an unspoken wariness, the knowledge of one not allowed to know, not allowed to speak what she does know. She

comes from a place that only we, as women, know about - a place inside and outside of the phallic order. You have that in common with her. She knows this. What would happen if our knowledge was unleashed?

And yes, you were justified in being fearful of your boss. He believed that his sexuality was uncontrollable and provoked by women's desirability - that they therefore should be punished. "What do you expect a man to do?" He conveniently forgot that it was his sex that writes the terms of our desirability - that what turns him on is to deny her what she wants and to take from her what he wants. Rape.

Christine, you say that men separate their bodies from their spirits and that this is what enables them to have frequent sex with women who are strangers. Are you sure? Is it their own selves they-'re separating or is it ours? Objectification, fixation, and conquest - isn't that the way they have sex? They objectify us and their penises, not themselves - they are action personified. We are the ones - the others -they render "thing" or "image", the ones they perceive as a composition of serviceable parts, the ones whose bodies they manipulate in order to measure their maleness. No, intercourse is not an intimate act - it is a state-controlled, public declaration of manhood.

And why do you say that it's now our role to educate men? Shouldn't we make ourselves the priority in learning and knowing? Men have denied us anything of our own, anything

that they've suspected we've wanted. Shouldn't we devote our energy to ourselves, to other women - other Others? We are, after all, still divided from one another. Their power - the phallocracy - can be overturned only if women are for women. And as yet, there are still women who are unaware of their own strength and power - shouldn't we reach them first? And don't you think that men already know what they've done, what they're doing? Only the willing can be educated. Do you think they're willingly going to let go of that which makes them men?

Sexual Commentaries

Christine

"Sometimes you're with a man, you can sense that his main interest is penetration. You feel it's your turn to take things over and slow it down. That's where you can take things over. Through education - if you're with someone and he really doesn't have a clue, he thinks sex is only coitus, then it's up to you to teach him. Show them the way. That's what women have to do. Women have to understand that they are just as much responsible for and a part of the sexual act as the man. And if they're not getting that they have to demand it - but not demand it in a "go down on me" kind of way. Communication, showing ... It's been awhile since I've been in a relationship, so the sexual experiences I've had are one,

two or three nights so I haven't really had a chance to develop a relationship where you can talk about your needs ...

I think the worst thing that ever happened to women was the pill. Women have become too available to men. They've become sex objects. They've become this living protoplasm that men can penetrate at any time, at their will. Whereas when you're not on the pill and you're not on birth control and you're living with a man, if you're following the rhythm method, there's 10 days out of the month when you shouldn't have intercourse. Then you can have sex the other times. You're ovulating and pretty physical and horny, so he's going to have to learn how to satisfy each other and yourself by other means. Through experimentation and talking. You have to talk to your partner and say we can't have sex tonight, let's try something else. He learns about your body, he's aware of when you're ovulating and when you're menstruating - the man really learns about how the woman's body functions. When she's on the pill, she doesn't even know, everything's suppressed. The man has to comply to that and you have to work together. It creates unity, togetherness and communication. *But that could only happen in a relationship where there's a perfect power balance.* It has to happen. The power then is with the woman. It could come down to very simple terms - the man has to understand the woman doesn't want to get pregnant, and he doesn't want her to get pregnant. So what are you going to

do - you've got to get down to practical terms. You don't have intercourse during ovulation so you have to do other things. The woman is craving physical contact, it's either oral sex or just fondling - every other form of the sexual act other than penetration. That's when the woman can feel equal to the man and understand then her empowerment and can come to terms with it and can discover it. When she's on the pill the man is the one who is penetrating her. She's probably allowing that because it justifies why she's on the pill ...

I don't think women - it depends on what your sexual orientation is - that because of all this, women should say all is lost, men are hopeless, the sexual act is for the empowerment of men, and for women to be equal we may as well not have intercourse only for procreation or not have relationships with men. I don't believe that. If you're oriented towards men, if your hormones - that's what it basically comes down to - your sexuality is oriented towards men, there's hope. I think we can find ways and means to have a very satisfying - spiritually, mentally, and physically - relationship with a man. I think some men are willing to learn. It's up to women - men aren't going to be the ones to change. It's up to women to talk about it. Men don't know about nurturing, this complicity with another human being, they don't have it with other men. It's almost like they have to learn it. In bed, men have to be taught ...

For me, being a heterosexual woman means educating a lot

of men. You're up against quite a bit. It's a struggle. I've been quite disillusioned with a lot of the men I've met and that's why I haven't had a relationship in a while. And also because I haven't really wanted to. You do feel that men are very limited in many ways. You got to kind of train them. It's a battle."

Alain

"Heterosexuality. It's almost like a recipe and all the ingredients go into one thing and you have to do this, this and this in order for it to taste good. If you leave one thing out, discard it - it's no good. When we grow from birth onwards, we're socialized to think, feel, and act in a certain way. We're socialized to think that we have to go with boys, have sex with them, and when we reach a certain age, we have to get married, we have to stay home to take care of the kids. It's what they decided women are born to do. *Did your Dad tell you that's what you'd do?* Sure - and I told him he was nuts. I did. I said I'm going to be someone very very successful when I get older. I'm going to live my life for me. I don't want no husband. If I want a child, sure, I'll have one. Or I'll adopt one. That's what I said. I'll be a foster parent. But no - don't tell me that at the age of 18. Because I can take care of myself. And I knew how to take care of myself. I don't need someone to take care of me. I was looking for ways

to better improve the taking care of my own self ...

Some people call intercourse lovemaking. But to me, if I had my own way, it would be for reproductive purposes only. If I were a ruler up there somewhere, it would only be to have children ...

What does being a man and being a woman entail under heterosexuality? Both people owning up to their side of socialization - the bargain, the pattern. A woman's got to act - you know, get married, have kids. A woman is secondary to males. The man always initiates things. He even asks the woman, will you marry me? Women won't even ask a man. Will he marry me? They feel men should do that because they don't have a mouth. They're too closed in ...

Straight women - I think they're less comfortable when they have sex. I think they're less comfortable than gay women and they're not as conscious - I guess two women together, they know what their bodies are all about. They're not afraid or ashamed or conscious of their body. It's not as rough. I don't think women are as rough with each other as a woman and a man are. It seems like two women are on the same scale as one another - they don't try to out do one another, some do but the majority don't. It's probably more of a performance for straight women, they think they got to act that way. They got to act a certain way or they'll be looked on as nuts or abnormal, in a way ... Gay women know their own bodies. They know what they don't like, what's

rough and what's not rough. With a man - I don't think he knows, he's not aware, fully aware - maybe he is aware and he just doesn't want to. I'm sure he knows what hurts him and what doesn't ...

When I make love to my girlfriend, I want to please. I kiss her and I care and I want to hold her. It's all a lot of - it's proximity, it's closeness, it's caring, it's love, it's everything and it's formed into one physical sexual expression. There's a lot involved - kissing, holding, touching ..."

Dale

"If I could change things, I would not let the men have their say. I think they've had their say long enough. They've stood their ground, they've done whatever they wanted. It's not right ...

Sex would be more romantic. You touch. You make her aroused before you go further and further. You make her more lovable - show her more that you wanted her. In that kind of way."

Joyce

"Sex and love. Well, sex to me is just hopping in the bed, wham bam thank-you ma'am, that's just sex. To make love, a man and a woman will start with each other and like he wants to start from the top and work his way down. The same way

with a woman. But to me that's the way love is. That's making love. Sex is when a man takes you home and like a guy said to me, are you ready to hop in the bed - that's only sex. He just wanted me to get off. He didn't want me because of me. You can tell when they want you for you by the way they talk to you. And like, if he goes out with you, he don't make no moves. He'd probably say to you, now, I'd really like to take you to bed but that's not what I want you for tonight. And he's looking at you and he's thinking I can have it any way I want to go - but he's not looking at you for that purpose. *So you're not a sex object.* That's right. How can you be when he's there ready to wait?"

Chris

"I think with women - with a man foreplay is touching one another, touching him. But with a woman, foreplay can start before you even get in bed. I think women with women there's a lot more touching than with a man. With a woman it's like touching with feeling."

Eleventh Letter

Dear Christine, Alain, Dale, Joyce and Chris:

Sexual commentaries. You've heard enough of mine, I'm sure. Well, we'll soon be reaching the end - or should I say the beginning? Sometimes I think I continue to write in order to keep me sane - to give my life meaning. This journal has

been written under the painful circumstances of a relationship deteriorating and ending. Did you sense my mood in the letters?

Christine, you speak of educating men who think "sex is only coitus" and that this is what "women have to do" - "show them the way". What is the way? Has it even been defined? Monica calls it "loving", not sex; Alain describes it as "proximity," "closeness," "caring," and "love"; Chris, "touching with feeling". Can men touch women with loving, caring feeling and still accomplish the fuck? Isn't recognizing a woman as a whole, equal person antithetical to intercourse? Can men fuck their equals? Don't they have to make us other? How can loving respect for women's desires happen if they have to make us other in order to get it up? If, as you say, sex is not only about the empowerment of men, why couldn't you communicate to your male sexual partners exactly what you wanted, needed? You say that it was because they were only "one, two or three night" relationships - but didn't they take exactly what they wanted and needed from you? Was it even necessary for them to ask, show, or demand? My guess is that the fulfillment of their needs just happened - automatically. We all know what men need: sex = intercourse = men's orgasms. Under phallocracy, male sexuality is the only sexuality. And you know this. When you consciously speak about it, you do not admit to this knowledge - it's probably too painful. But you have it. Just look closely at

your words: "... there's 10 days out of the month when you shouldn't have intercourse. Then you can have sex the other times ... you have to talk to your partner and say we can't have sex tonight, let's try something else." When intercourse doesn't happen, neither does sex - "something else" happens. Now, why is male sexuality, sex and female sexuality, "something else" - other? Why? Christine, you know.

Christine, don't you think that a woman who is on the pill is taking it because she knows that as long as she's having sex, she's going to be penetrated? She risks its dangerous side effects in order to preserve some of her freedom - he appreciates it because he can fuck minus the patriarchal responsibilities. She hasn't become a sex object since the pill - she has been that for as long as men have been "supreme". That is, after all, how they have maintained their hegemony. With regards to your suggestion of the rhythm method as the solution to women's sexual empowerment, wouldn't she still be monitoring, readying her body for the fuck - for male sexuality? Also, since men define their sexuality as uncontrollable and provoked, do you really think a man would always, willingly wait for "the right time of the month"? And must her feelings of equality and empowerment be restricted to those 10 days when they supposedly don't fuck - don't we deserve more than that?

And, once again, if sexuality is hormonally induced, why "in bed" do "men have to be taught"? If they were truly

"oriented" *towards* women, why wouldn't *women* take sexual precedence? Men's sexuality is oriented only towards men - it is through sex that they create/maintain difference and distance from those they oppress. Sex brings men closer together, not women and men.

Joyce, are you sure that because he waits "to make his move" he doesn't define you as sex object? Isn't he just postponing the inevitable, adding suspense to his game? You said yourself that he can have it any way he wants to go. What does that tell you? Don't you see the power that he has? "He's ready to wait" - but you only wait when you expect something to happen. He knows he will fuck you - that's what he believes you are for - and he will fuck you when *he's* ready, on *his* time. Please don't let them deceive you.

Dale, it seems that what you want sexually coincides with what Chris and Alain describe - except you want it to happen with a man. Is that possible? You didn't mention intercourse yet you must know that sex with men necessitates it. Maybe in imagining what could be, we could imagine a life without restrictions. Do you think you could love a woman?

Alain, what can I say or add? I agree with everything you've said. I can especially identify, on a personal level, with your discussion of lesbian and hetero sex. If only we could *all* experience that proximity and closeness to which you refer. If only we could all remove ourselves from the

heterosexual marketplace - if for no other reason than to think, to elaborate, to imagine. Women among themselves.

Lesbian Self-Analysis:

Chris, Alain and Dawn With a P.S. by Roseanne

Chris

"I think I'm a lesbian because - one part of it would be Mom and Dad, their relationship. I don't know how many years I thought Mom was unhappy in the relationship and I didn't think she was as into it sexually. Like I used to hear her run into the bathroom and throw up at night - probably after having sex with Dad. Later on, I seen my sister not really happy in her relationship with a man. Experiences I had with men, I wasn't pleased with. I guess also because I did get the opportunity to experience it. I think a lot more women would be lesbians if they had the chance to be. Whether they want the chance and look for it, I'm not saying that. But even if they didn't know they even thought like that and they had the chance, then they wouldn't turn back. If society didn't look at it badly, there'd be a lot more again. A lot more women need to feel they're accepted.

Two years this September I first went to the gay bar. I knew that I was gay before that. I didn't really know in the first relationship or even the second - I didn't really understand it. But after that last relationship with a guy,

I finally said this is it, I can't be doing this to myself. I knew what I had to do. I call that coming out - when I said to myself, no more guys. When I finally said that.

All the years out in [my hometown], for years I felt I was the only woman in the world who was gay. The women I'd seen out there weren't really gay, they were experimenting with it. I knew it was just an experiment and they'd go back to guys, after. Or they were already seeing guys. But the first time the bar filled up I was really impressed."

Alain

"I think where I didn't have a female figure in my life. I think where I didn't have my mother. I think it goes back to the female role, you want your mother's love and attention. I'm not looking for the mother role in my relationships but I'm looking for the love and attention. Cause I never got it from a male role, even when I was in a family situation with my father - I wasn't going to look for it."

Dawn

"I can't give you a reason why I'm a lesbian but I just know that women turn me on, especially [my present lover]. No one ever had that effect on me, no one ...

I was calling myself a lesbian after Judy. Cause I left Judy and went with this other woman. I was sure then. With the other woman, she was already with someone. So the three

of us always went around together. Three friends. I shouldn't even say I was with Caroline. I was in bed with her but it was a weird situation. It was like three of us. But she turned me off - I couldn't do nothing. It was like she put herself in the role of a man and I couldn't do anything. It was just blank. I couldn't ... But Caroline's girlfriend, Sandra, and I became good friends ... And Caroline would try something when Sandra would be working and there'd be no point in her trying - I could not do anything and she could never accept it ... When you'd get in bed, it was her who had to make the first move. She had to do this. Something like that if it happens, it happens automatically. You don't say when to turn on and turn off feelings. But with her, she could turn on and turn off feelings whenever she wanted.

Were you attracted to women as a teenager too? Yeah ... Like I can remember a teacher in grade 8. I had a real bad crush on her. I'll never forget that. That's when I really started to wonder. Because of her. But then I kind of blocked it. I said this is crazy. Like you'd hear tell of it but I thought this is crazy. *Where did you hear about it?* Oh, the girls in school. Like we had this one girl in our class. She was gay. I can remember coming down the aisle and when she touched off one of the girls, the girls would go, oh God, you know. I really felt bad for her. As a matter of fact I became friends with

her. It was a sin the way the girls treated her so bad. Apparently they knew - they'd seen her or whatever. But they did know. She kept to herself - it was a sin. You'd swear she was a man ..."

Twelfth Letter

Dear Chris, Alain and Dawn:

In our conversations, we were talking about the issue of why we were lesbians. In retrospect, I wish we had framed the discussion more around the question of what gave us the courage to be lesbians. How did we manage to take ourselves off the heterosexual market place, to affirm rather than deny our desires? Even if we do incorporate heterosexual roles and morality into our lesbian existence, it is still a very radical existence. As lesbians, we deny the phallocracy access to our bodies for man-making, masculinity-confirming, male-mirroring purposes. But this is not why we are who we are - we are not lesbians because we hate men or we want to deny men our bodies. We just simply love women. We put women first. We have not accomplished that division - the one necessary to be heterosexual - that divides and alienates us from ourselves, completely. How did we do this? Alain, was it sports that gave you ownership of your body - an ownership you could not thereafter relinquish in order to become heterosexual? Dawn, was it your sexual knowledge accompanied by your adolescent lesbian experiences that allowed you an

alternate view - a view usually obscured, obliterated by heterosexual dominance? Chris, was it your experience of pleasure - the fulfillment of desire with women - and your realization that heterosexuality would deny you pleasure? I don't know - nothing is that simple. When I discovered that a woman close to me was living a lesbian existence, I realized how "logical" and "natural" this was - why hadn't I thought of this before, this possibility? It makes sense. Much more sense than the phallocentric obsession with magnates. I believe what you say, Chris, that "a lot more women would be lesbians if they had the chance to be". If heterosexuality wasn't so damned coercive. If gender roles and their erotization weren't absolutely necessary to the maintenance of phallocracy. If our pleasure wasn't the best kept secret. If our lives weren't forced into secrecy. //

I mean, really, who did we love as children? Our mothers, our aunts, our teachers (in elementary grades they were women). Remember the pain, the jealousy, the devastation when our "best friend" found another? Remember the intensity of those childhood *female* friendships? Until recently, I had almost forgotten the severity of the hurt upon losing one of those friendships. Women *know*, relate to one another so absolutely intensely - when the connection ends, it hurts unlike anything else. Shouldn't it be a "natural" wish to want to extend that connection, that love, that intensity to

one another's bodies? As a child, with women, I remember experiencing real pleasure, bodily pleasure. Pleasure that I'd now consider sexual, as a lesbian. These feelings, however, were overridden and undermined by heterosexuality - by the compulsory jigsaw puzzle of the penis that fits into the vagina. Back then, I did not consider these feelings sexual - they were pleasurable sensations that I had been able to demand, to ask for - prior to adolescence. I'd ask the girl who sat behind me in the class to play with my hair. The feelings she created were so pleasurable that I wouldn't move for fear of distracting her hands. Goose bumps, shivers up my spine. Or the game we'd play of drawing letters with our fingers on each other's backs. Although we were supposed to be guessing what the letters were, the real purpose of the game was purely sensual. It was how my best friend and I became lovers - letters on the back. Or asking my mother to scratch my back before I'd go to sleep. Later a friend and I would take turns doing this when our first bras made us unbearably uncomfortable. Those ways of touching seem so trivial, so asexual - yet they were so incredibly sensual. And I rediscovered this lost, buried sensuality through women, again. You know, we have sex organs everywhere, all over our bodies - yet we have been forced to recognize only one because the only sex organ of worth fits in there. Exit/entrance. Our sexual multiplicity has been hidden, denied, concealed, by a dictatorship of parts.

Alain, do you really think it was the lack of a female figure - your mother's absence - that inspired your sexuality? Or was it the knowledge that any love, affection, or pleasure you had ever received was given to you by women?

Chris, maybe the girls with whom you had had sexual experiences were not any less "gay" than you but had instead a different type or level of knowledge. For example, as a child and teenager, you had been exposed, like Alain, to activities which required confidence, skill, and ownership of your body. You therefore had knowledge of both an independent sexuality and an independent body. Maybe the girls that "went straight" had the knowledge of how their desires could be affirmed but lacked the knowledge which would have allowed them to love and possess their own bodies - knowledge that was denied, forbidden through heterosexual socialization. Maybe lesbianism is all about knowing - finding out things that we're not supposed to know as well as discovering the key to holding on to that knowledge. Survival methods. I had lost the knowledge for awhile but regained it through exhaustion. Exhausted from being unhappily, unsensuously, unpleasurably, oppressively heterosexual, I took a rest from heterosexuality and allowed myself to think without the presence of men. I thus rediscovered what I had known but had not been allowed to know - that there's a lot more to me, my body than what meets the masculine eye. Woman by herself or women among themselves have the potential to (re)discover knowledge that

would render the phallocracy impotent. After all, it is only through men's creation and monopoly of sexual discourse that they remain so virile.

I've decided to slightly upset the usual order by placing a story from Roseanne at the end of this letter. Read it. Do you think she is "straight"? Is any woman, really? Roseanne, you and Gerry were husband and wife yet real communication happened only when you'd go next door to be with your friend, whom you probably loved. One evening, your shared kindness, goodness, and communication extended to sensuous, sexual caresses. And then your friendship ended. Why? Was it done willingly? I doubt it. The mental block you describe - the division - couldn't it have been the knowledge of a coercive heterosexuality? What would your friend's husband have done if he had discovered you in each other's arms? - he beat her, would he have beat you? What about your husband? Would you have lost custody of your child? Would you have been able to support yourself and your child on your own if you had been discovered? Wasn't the mental block, in fact, your way of surviving because you lacked the knowledge which might have possibly allowed you to survive as a lesbian?

Roseanne

"When I was in Ottawa I had this really good friend. I was probably married for 6 or 7 years and feeling all this

neglect about myself - I hadn't even had an orgasm yet. We developed a really good relationship where we told each other everything. She was a lot older than I was and very kind and good to me. I was good to her too cause her husband used to beat her up a lot ... I used to like to go up there at night when Danny was put to bed, maybe Gerry would stay home and watch TV. That was my escape. We'd go up and sit in her backyard. I remember being with her one night and really getting turned on to her and I couldn't really understand it. But I talked to her about it. But I didn't talk to her about me - I tried to get her opinion on lesbians, homosexuality. She was very open-minded - probably more than I was cause I wasn't understanding these feelings going through me. We were out in the yard till about 11:00 that night and we went into the kitchen and she made me a drink. She came along and I was sitting on the chair - she was very attractive and a nurse. And she said let me give you a massage. And I felt the most wonderful feelings going through me - I didn't know how to handle it and I kept thinking, I wonder is she feeling this too. Now I would know she was - because she was being really delicate with her touch and very sensual. We ended up going in on the couch and I remember being very very cautious. I felt what is happening here and her husband is upstairs asleep. She started to feel my clitoris and I was really uptight about it but excited. And saying we really should stop and we stopped. I think she knew I was turned on but

didn't know how to handle it. It was probably a year and a half later and I went over there one night ... We had a couple of drinks and we went down in the basement. We ended up sitting on the floor on the carpet and she started kissing me and started feeling my breasts - my erogenous zone. I really got turned on, really excited, and I wanted it to continue - maybe the drinks helped. I didn't have an orgasm but I fondled her and she did ... But when that was over a barrier did come between us. The barrier is there to this day. I think it's just one of those mental blocks you put up between each other ..."

Experiences of Hetero-Sex on the Open Market

Ain't I rough enough? Ain't I tough enough? Ain't I rich enough? (Mick Jaggar, "Beast of Burden")

Dawn

"What I did, I figured I only had one experience [of intercourse], so I was going to find out for myself. Which I did. I couldn't handle it at all. I figured I had myself all psyched up for it and everything. This was going to change me. I'd find out now what this psychiatrist is talking about and everybody. I got sick, I threw up. I went out with this guy who was really nice. When the time was getting closer, when I was going back to the apartment, I was saying I can't do this. Then, in the back of my head, I've got to

do it. Because I was thinking I had to find out for myself. So, anyhow, we were sitting down with a glass of wine - it was all right romantic and all this. He started undressing me and I was thinking, oh no, I've got to get out of here, how am I going to get out of here, I don't want to do this. At that point, I did not want to do it. Then I had to do it, I had to see. Well sweet honorable God! Sure it was nothing! Like you're there for 5 minutes and he got what he wanted and that was it. And here I am getting stomach sick. Did it ever hurt! Oh God. I'll never forget it. It was about 2 years ago. It did nothing for me - it seemed like 5 minutes to me. I just couldn't wait for him to get it over with. I got sick. *What repulsed you about it?* He turned me off. Physically. He wasn't gentle - but I suppose I was never with a man. I was always with a woman and they're all so gentle. And then I couldn't handle this, this was turning me off. And then everything was so rough. And then bang - my breasts, he was squeezing them too hard. He was really rough kissing me. And of course, me, I didn't communicate at all, I didn't move at all. He must have been pissed off with me. Is this what all of it's about? I mean to me it was nothing ... *How did it compare to your first sexual experience with a woman?* Oh God. Completely different. It's such a different feeling. You get this really nice sensation. With him, all I was saying to myself was I hope I don't get sick in the bed. I was really getting sick. Jumped out of

the bed, got stomach sick, and got dressed. He said "where are you going?" I said I'm getting out of here, don't call me no more. I made a bloody fool of myself. Got home, I must have got 6 baths. I said, holy God, this is all this is about! ... I never thought about birth control. See, I never had it planned for that night. Then I had myself so worked up I never had a period for two weeks. Then I said, now, I listened to a goddamn doctor and this is what I'm getting out of it. I didn't set a time for things to happen. I figured I'd go out with him for awhile and then - something just triggered in my head that I might as well do this and get it over with because he's getting boring. I just took a chance. With Dad it could have happened too. I got really worried. So I went over to my sister's and Anne said, "You did what?" I thought she was going to faint. I said, "Anne, I got sick to my stomach." She said, "You didn't like it at all did you?" I said no. She said "If you're pregnant, there's only one thing we can do." She said, "I'll go to Montreal with you." I said "Anne, how could the doctor tell me it was such a wonderful feeling?" I was expecting all these big explosions and this wonderful feeling. She said "It is if you're that way inclined or if you're with the right person that you want to be with, it could be that way." I said "Anne, there's nothing to it. All they want - they don't care what you want - when he's ready that's it." She said "That's only because you didn't want it, you were just trying

this out for your own sake to see ..."
But even if you were straight, it still would have been the same act - how would that make any difference to your enjoyment of it? Yeah. He was so rough about it. Jesus - I thought he was going to bite my nipple off. I couldn't get over how sick I was. He must have thought I was nuts. I never seen him no more. I don't want to see him ..."

Monica

"And then there was the night I was raped - literally raped. What you might call a date rape. And that was after I was divorced. I let this guy take me home and he wanted to come in for a drink. And he got pretty amorous and I felt threatened by him. He didn't have a knife, didn't have anything. But I felt threatened by him. I felt that. I was afraid of him. I don't know why. He was a guy I met at work. God I was stupid! There was nobody there - the kids were gone. He just literally forced me on the bed and started to, you know, pull up my dress - it was literally rape ... He had his way. And I never spoke to him again. I saw him several times but I never spoke to him. *What about pressing charges?* No way. Because, this is the strange thing. I had invited him in. I gave him a drink. My kids weren't home. I let myself - I mean I was wide open. I left myself wide open. How could I prove that he raped me? Tell me. How could I prove it? See, in this case, there were no marks - he didn't bruise me,

he didn't beat me, he didn't slap me. He didn't even threaten me. The fear I felt was there and I can't explain it - it's an unspoken fear - I mean it's an unspoken threat. It's there. You know it's there. He knows it's there. You just know. *What was he like?* He wasn't super masculine. He was very quiet spoken. You know, actually there was one other occasion in my life where I went out with a guy - I can't say I was actually raped. I would have been raped if he had been capable of raping me. But he lost his ability to rape me. He was gung ho to go and then all of a sudden he just couldn't function. And once again, there was a certain fear. I was alone in his house that time. This was a pretty nasty experience too. It was somebody I knew, had gone out with before. But like I say, it would have been - it started out and would have been rape except that he lost his erection. He wasn't capable of raping anybody. He was embarrassed actually. He was embarrassed and wanted me out. So he kicked me out of his house. But that once again was a date. That happened back around the same time. That wasn't traumatic really. Except that I realized this was something I wouldn't want to get into again. I never went out with him again. He did call me. In fact, he called me right up until after I was married [second marriage] and even then called me and thought that I still might go out with him ...

You might say, jeez, there's so much trauma involved in rape, and I think there probably is if you're grabbed on the

side of the street and carted off and a knife put to your throat and you're raped. I think that's one type of rape. But I think if you go out on a date and it's somebody you know - well, if you think you're being raped, of course you're being raped. But the fact of the matter is it's rape by consent. Which it was with me. Now that's funny to say, but by consent I mean I didn't really try to stop him. I felt threatened by him. I did say no and he didn't react to that. He ignored it, he didn't talk to me about it, he ignored it - as if "no" what lady? What are you talking about? It's rape but it's a different kind of thing then what would happen to a person who gets raped violently by knife point or whatever. I think it's different because I think that, number one, I blamed myself. I said, okay, I brought him home. I gave him a couple of drinks, we were alone, and I didn't ask for it, but I really left myself wide open for it - I really did. *You did what you should be able to do.* Yes, right. I should have been able to do it ... But on the other hand, if you go out with somebody and they're drinking and you're drinking, and you're partying, and you're cozying up - I mean you just can't play the game two ways. I don't think you can. If you don't want to get involved then for Christ's sake don't put yourself in the position - in other words, I brought him home to an empty house, I fed him booze, and I necked with him. Okay. Now. I really was encouraging him at that point. I wasn't encour-

aging him to have sexual intercourse with me - that wasn't in my mind. Okay? I wasn't thinking that we're going to have sexual intercourse. But I really and truly believe that in my case, anyway, that I was responsible to a large degree. *You're not responsible for his hard on or his desire to have intercourse. This is what's so damaging about date rape.* That's right, it is damaging. *Because it's a date you automatically take responsibility for the other person's actions and you take on the blame and you do what you're doing now - you look at it in retrospect, well I shouldn't have had him in the house, I shouldn't have kissed him -* That's right, I shouldn't have. I drank with him, I necked with him, and then all of a sudden I said no. *But that's okay. Another human being should -* Yes, I agree, it should be. *Why should you blame yourself for his inability to abide by what you want? I mean, you said no - it's your body.* Yes, that's right. But let's put it into a court of law and see. *Yeah. I mean what I'm saying is ideal - that when the word "no" is said, that's it. That anything that goes on after "no" is rape.* Well, yeah, sure. I mean to this day I feel that I was raped. Because I didn't want to have sex and I felt there was an unspoken threat. But the thing is he really - maybe I could have pushed him and said "Look, stop this." Maybe I could have really forced him to stop. But I felt threatened and so I didn't. This is why, when it's all over, I'm able to convince myself it's not important ...

Another time in my life, first when I split up with Harry, I was so determined to go out and have sex with another man. I thought that I could get back at him. It's as if,

boy, you think you can do this, well I can do this too. I tell you. It's just unreal what we do to ourselves in this life. But this guy I knew well. He was as horny as they come. That's all he could think about. And I got myself in the middle of this sexual act and it didn't do a thing for me, and I didn't want it. I wanted to stop. But there was no stopping him. And this was a point in time when I could detach myself. But I knew - I mean what point do you expect him to stop. But I never felt I was raped then. I felt I had gone out looking for sex and I had found it. But it wasn't what I wanted. It did nothing for me. I wanted to have sex because I wanted to prove something. But all I was doing was hurting myself and I really didn't want it. But by now I was into the middle of the sexual act and like I said, at what point do you expect a guy to stop? That was a terrible experience - that probably was worse then the second experience where I was almost raped. Because that stayed with me. For months and months and months, I kept seeing myself lying there. Literally being screwed to death. And with a stranger - somebody I hardly knew. And it kept coming back and coming back and coming back. I could see myself for months. Even now when I think about it I get kind of nauseous. It was such a terrible experience. It really was ... As soon as it started I thought, oh God, this is awful, this is awful, what have I done, this is stupid, what am I doing. But you know, sex causes so many difficulties, so many problems. I mean sex

is so tormenting which ever way you turn. It creates so many complex problems and ambivalence ...

One guy wanted to go out with me because he thought I was so virtuous. Because I wouldn't go to bed with him. He said girls you take out these days the first thing they want to do is go to bed. He couldn't believe it. And he wanted to marry me because he thought I was so virtuous. *Why did he treasure virtue so much?* Well, because he thought women were too easy. And in fact, I would have even considered marrying this guy - he was nice, I liked him. We could have had a working relationship. I would have gone to bed with him first. He knew that. But in the meantime, he wanted to have children and I didn't. I was 35 by now ..."

Dawn

"I was raped when I first went to work with [company's name]. I was out in Grand Falls. That was stupid, really stupid. We left Grand Falls - I went to Badger with Judy. That's where Judy is from. Judy's sister, Judy and I were getting a ride back to Grand Falls with Judy's sister's friend. Coming down in the car, the three of them were talking away and talking away. Just before we got out by the light he started to speed up really fast. And Judy yelled at him. And he said "I was only trying to frighten Dawn." I said "You don't have to frighten me, that's quite alright,

just drive as you should." When he got to the hotel, Judy thanked him and that and we were just getting out of the car when Judy and her sister were out and he took off in the car with me. Of course, Judy jumped in the van, cause her sister told her then - too late. She said "Oh Jesus, he's after raping 2 or 3 women in the last two years." And Judy got really upset then. She'd heard tell of it she said. But no one could - he was never brought to court. He drove a school bus. Anyhow, he went on. I was there screaming and everything and the next thing I knew he told me to shut up. He hauled in and he said "You didn't think all of you were getting a ride down here for nothing tonight." I said "Sure we would have paid you money for gas." I didn't understand. He said "I don't want gas, I want sex." I said "You're not getting sex here." And so, he was there trying to haul off my clothes and everything and I was trying to get out of the car. And I was getting sick by this time cause you know - oh I was really getting scared. And he started slapping me around. I was up on the hood of the car and I was trying to get away. I got out of the car when I kicked him. Then he chased me and got me down on the ground and I pushed him off - and like, I scraped up my arm trying to get out and everything. Anyhow, he hauled out a knife and told me to take my clothes off. I said I'm not taking no clothes off. Then he just cut my shirt open and that. And then - I would say that he really would have raped me - a noise, a car seemed like it

was coming and he just left me there. And it was Judy. Judy found me ..."

Roseanne

"I remember walking back from work and there was a fella who lived on the same street I did who had this big black car and I got to know him. We started going out together - when I think about it now I could vomit! My God. He'd never take you anywhere - probably drive you up and down the street. Then he'd go to Quidi Vidi and park. He would fool around with you, put a safe on until he had a climax and that would be it. He would just fool around with you - not do anything cause I wouldn't do it. He'd kiss a lot, feel my breasts. But he's always put a safe on, have his climax, throw it out the window, and take you home. I didn't like him that way but I thought if this is what I've got to put up with to get a ride in a car so I won't be bored to death, I'll put up with this ...

Later I went out with Mark. And I really liked him. In fact, I suppose it was close as anything as being in love with somebody. I remember the first night I went out with him. I met him at [a bar] and he drove me home and we parked. And I remember it being very pleasurable - like hugging a teddy bear. That kind of feeling - that kind of warm feeling. And I could tell that he too felt the same way. But he never made any advances or anything towards me which made me respect him.

I thought, Jesus he's different ... And going home, the next morning he wanted to meet with me again which made me feel good. He wants to see me again and we didn't even have sex! ... He too, after a while, used to say "Roseanne, I'm only human" and all this kind of stuff. And I remember thinking oh I love him so much I'm going to have sex with him - I don't care if I get pregnant. But I did care. I can't remember the first time we had sex but I remember not having a lot of pleasure out of it. That it was over and done with and I thought, "Oh, is that it?" Obviously it seemed to be very good for him because he seemed quite satisfied. Knowing what I know now and thinking back to then, I'd say there was very little foreplay. It was mostly kissing, feeling you - nothing like putting his hand inside of you and getting you aroused, making sure you were ready for penetration - none of that. There was some, but not to the point where I just had to have sex with him. The decision was I will have sex with him cause that's what he wants. Not because I am so aroused. The pattern eventually became - we'd go out and have sex. I was always worried about getting pregnant. I remember talking to him about it one night up on Signal Hill - I'm so afraid of getting pregnant. I remember him saying to me - probably used a little force saying it - "Are you telling me you don't enjoy this?" And then he started really advancing toward me. And for about two minutes, I felt really excited. That was the only time ... Knowing again what I know now, if I could go

back 20 years, I'd say look, I'm not ready, hang on, wait a minute ...

When I finished trade school and I was working, a friend of my brother's picked me up one night and we went for a drive. We parked down by the river and he started necking with me which I really didn't like cause I wasn't feeling anything. But he literally almost raped me - tried to haul my clothes off. I had to beat him with my fists. He eventually stopped but he - I really thought I was going to be raped. He drove me home. I never told anyone. I remember forcing him away - pushing him with my fists, probably using my knee to get him off me. He put his hand right up in me and everything else - down in my clothes. I froze because I thought oh my God, what's he doing, we just got here? And I couldn't believe that this friend of my brother's was such a little shit. He was really gross. I wouldn't tell my brother - he probably would have blamed me. What were you doing with him in the first place, he's a lot older than you? ... I was really frightened for myself. I thought I'm going to get raped, he's just not going to stop. And I didn't think he would ..."

Christine

"I started to live with Wayne at 19. We lived together for 7 years and were like an old married couple. We parted ways. I broke up with him when I was 26 - I suppose because

I wanted to sow my wild oats. I mean here we were married - not legally but it was just like it. I was only 19 and at 22 I was settled down, had a house full of furniture and all I did was dishes and cook for him and labored over him for 7 years. So I had enough of that ...

I had a relationship with this guy for a summer and it was fabulous. Sexually it was just fantastic. He went away and then I got involved with this guy down the shore, which was quite something, and then I had a one year long relationship with another guy and then short ones. But you just kind of get tired of that and I haven't been seeing anyone for the last year. Except sporadic stints ... Naturally you have feelings. But it's no fun waking up in the morning to some stranger and him saying, "That was great, see you later" and then you're back where you are. You feel in a way you were used. And that's something I've been grappling with. I wish I could come to terms with it and say well, why do I feel like I was used because, after all, I used him as much as he used me. Sure, maybe our night together was a form of mutual masturbation but I do think deep inside a woman's psyche there's that feeling you'd like to have more of a connection. Like sex should come hand-in-hand with a little more communication and compassion and a feeling of togetherness. But then I can be so much to physical seductress, to only want sex and the man starts coming around again and I'm not interested in him. I was really just interested in satisfying my own sexual

desires, needs. Sometimes it's physical and that's okay. But other times you do sort of feel vulnerable ...

I think I'm ready for a relationship. It would be nice - it does feel empty not to have someone to share your everyday thing ... Living with somebody is very different than being single. When you're single you're very available to everybody, you're open and less secluded. That's great, that's what I wanted. But now I'd like to move to the country with somebody and just have a quiet existence. More of a unit than this kind of existence where you have lots of friends, many lovers, and you spread yourself around in a million directions. Sometimes you can burn out that way - a lot of demands. Sometimes it can all feel very superficial ... One grievance I have with some feminists is that they think not having a man is a sign of strength. I was interviewed a few years ago and I was applauded for wanting to be single. I was made to feel like it was a sign of weakness, wanting a relationship. That's untrue. In a way it's a sign of strength - that you feel whole and strong enough that you're ready to share it and give it to somebody. It's not dependence ...

At this point in my life, I feel I've learned what I've wanted to learn from a multitude of partners and from being on my own for 10 years. I think there's a lot more you can learn about human beings from being in a relationship. When you're on your own you don't struggle with someone, you don't

go through the ups and downs, you have superficial relationships with people. You don't learn about the human mind or the human way by having these one night stands. I know most of society doesn't live like me - floating through life with no responsibilities. I live like a man!"

Thirteenth Letter

Dear Dawn, Monica, Roseanne and Christine:

This is the last letter I'll be writing you. Over the past few months, I've been corresponding, communicating, revealing, analyzing, and agonizing, every morning, with eight women. And I feel differently about each of you. I'm going to miss this. And this letter is going to be hard to write. There's so much I still want to tell you, to ask you but I'm not sure I am capable of saying any more. I'm too preoccupied with conclusions and new beginnings. So, if this letter feels different than the rest, if it is more abrupt, that is why.

Earlier in the journal, I stated that when I looked at my own experiences of heterosexuality, I saw power in sex, sex as power; that I had wanted to see if other women as well had experienced this - if others, like myself, had experienced compulsory heterosexuality coercively. To be honest, I expected that any woman with whom I talked could tell me stories similar in meaning to my own. But I never expected to find *so much* coerciveness - *so much* sex as power as pleasure. I mean, we're all ordinary women. There's nothing about us

that's special - we weren't drawn to one another because we had coercive sex in common; nor is there anything about us that specifically attracts coerciveness or brutality. A methodology expert would argue with me but in terms of the ways in which we experience oppression through sex, because of sex, I think we represent any woman who lives under phallocracy. The same power structure has touched all of our lives - unequally and differently, yes, but with the same goal. Depending on what resources we had available to us to resist, to fight back, to know, and to realize, the intentions and power of the phallocracy had different effects and consequences for all of us. But it tried.

These stories I found particularly disturbing. You were not teenagers yet these stories of power and usury remind me of adolescence - when we were initially defined as objects for sexual consumption, commodities. Dating then represented our initiation to heterosexuality (our roles) and to hetero-sex (being broken in) and it was meant to prepare us for our ownership by one or by all. The further we are away from virgin, once our exchange value definitively, eternally becomes use value, our treatment by men seems to worsen. The focus of "dating" seems to become narrower, more sexually focused - it's as if since there's nothing left for us to be initiated into, to learn, or to be prepared for, we must merely, *only* be what we are for - to screw. There's no other games, teaching, or rehearsals left for them to play, do, or

enact. All that's left is bare, blatant sex as power as pleasure. Or is the usury and power so vividly described in these stories the means that men have chosen to combat the knowledge and forms of resistance we may have otherwise acquired through age and experience - through life on and off the open market?

Dawn, you followed the good doctor's advice and decided to experience the "beauty" of hetero-sex. He was rough. He was indifferent. What if you had never had sex with a woman, had never known what it was like to experience pleasure, fulfillment, orgasm? Would you have thought that you'd have to learn to like this, that it would get better once you were used to it because this was it - this was sex? Probably. But luckily, you knew the difference. Your sister said that it was bad because you really didn't want it or him - does any woman *want* her needs ignored, her breasts painfully squeezed, her nipples roughly bitten, even by the "right" man?

Monica, please don't allow men to define the terms of your consent - especially in retrospect. I realize that you were just being realistic, that you were talking as they would talk - but you were not responsible for their actions. In another story, you said that you didn't believe male sexuality was uncontrollable, that it was a facade, an excuse. It is. He could have stopped despite the drink, the kiss, the hug. He didn't stop because for him sex as power is pleasurable. Force-taking was how he got off, how he has sex. You asked,

"When do you expect a guy to stop?" - I answer any time, before or during. But I suppose that would entail our being recognized as something other than sex object - a possibility if we keep imagining and re-defining sexuality in terms of our own wants, needs, and desires. (Incidentally, the guy who wanted to marry you must have perceived you as still having some exchange value because you didn't immediately do what you were for).

Dawn, I'm sorry. Men must hate women to be able to beat us, hurt us and still get an erection - but, then again, it is through different degrees of coercion that they obtain pleasure. He didn't even try another approach with you - he wanted to rape you, hurt you, degrade you - he wanted the already existing power disparity between you to be even larger so that he *could* fuck you.

Roseanne, what more can I say other than the fact that these experiences are just more evidence of heterosexual indifference to women. Your desires were matter-of-factly, systematically denied - as usual. Heterosexuality is a male sexuality, only.

Christine, you expressed confusion about why you feel used when you "consensually" have sex. Could your feelings stem from the fact that under phallocracy we are always prey, they are always predator? We cannot "take" or "use" in the same way that they can. We are other. We are seen. We are sought after. We are conquered, invaded, colonized. No

matter how much we tell ourselves when we have intercourse that it is "good", "different" or "mutual", we cannot ignore or escape what intercourse means under phallocracy, what it symbolizes -men's ownership, men's power, men's action, men's virility. What would happen to men if we stopped fucking?

IV CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Dear Marilyn

This has been difficult - and it's not getting any easier. I asked you how to conclude. You suggested that I address the concluding letter to you and the two readers - Gary and Madga. But I can't - it has only been you who has realized how hard it is for me to give this up, to stop. This is not only the end of a thesis - this is the end of a period in my life. And in order for me to release this journal to graduate studies - to conclude - I have to pretend, at least while I'm writing "the end", that you are the only one who is going to read it. Remember when I gave you the first 80 pages to read? I was terrified - I felt like I was handing over my life, my feelings to be graded. There's more than just words on these pages - after all, I lived while I was writing. Each page reminds me of what had presently been going on in my life as well as my past. And then there's the issue of self-exposure. I'm genuinely scared that this will be read by someone who will not think - who will separate my experiences from my analysis of them, from the why's - who will therefore forget the why's, will forget the power structure in which, under which, and outside of which my experiences occurred. And of course, that was the whole point of my self-exposure - to expose the power of the phallocracy. And since, under phallocracy, sex as power is pleasure, the possibility of some

reader interpreting these stores as "sexy" is a real one. I want the power, the mechanisms of resistance, the hints of what we want, and our multi-faceted existence as women to be remembered - not "scandalous" details. But of course the only reason that they'd be regarded as "scandalous" in the first place, is that we've been silenced - every woman could probably describe what we've described. That is the reality of being a woman under phallocracy. And, of course, that was the other point of my self-exposure - to expose this reality as "everyday" rather than as a "scandalous" abberation. I therefore regard my self-exposure as painful but necessary. I could not have written this journal without speaking/writing honestly as a woman.

However, there are some aspects of this project with which I'm unsatisfied. Firstly, there's a lot left to be said but I've run out of energy. Secondly, I am concerned that I did not diffuse enough of my power as writer and researcher. I did provide a space for some women to tell their stories and I did balance things out somewhat by making myself, as well, the subject of my research. But, I always have the last word - and at times my word, as you say, *is* downright "school-teacherish". I've been re-reading some of the original transcripts and the arguments in the letters that you described as "heavy" had already been spoken during the conversations. For example, Alain and I argued over her condemnation of the "girl in the field". Also, as the letters reveal,

Christine and I disagreed about practically everything - and she knew this. We had several heated discussions about the issues of sexuality being hormonally determined, the possibility of "equal" intercourse, and the butch/femme distinction. We *all* verbalized what we disagreed about. Their positions on issues were stated in their stories whereas mine appeared in the letters. However, the problem with this is that it is the letters that will be remembered - placed at the end of each section, they represent the last word on each issue. Are their points of view therefore entirely discredited, invalidated? *But*, I chose to write letters - to question - so that I could respond from my perspective while simultaneously acknowledging that they might be speaking from a point of view, a place other than my own. Whenever possible, I *asked* them if their stories/experiences could be explained or perceived from the "radical feminist" point of view. In other words, I tried to structure my entire "analysis" as a question while saying that my "analysis", my point of view effectively explained my own experiences. More or less, I was saying: "See, my experiences make sense to me when they are seen in this light - do yours?"

Sometimes, they would *ask* me to try to make sense out of something for them - like Dawn's experiences with her father and brother. Most of the time, we did not disagree - we all had experienced sex as power and knew what it was - we just

didn't always know why. Every one of us were aware that our sexuality had been superceded by men's and we all tried to articulate what we would want if ours was to take precedence. You mentioned that I commented freely and endlessly on their experiences while they rarely commented on mine - that they didn't have the opportunity to comment. Most of the experiences that I revealed in the letters were spoken when I was given the chance to speak them. But as I said in Entry 9, these women utilized this project to tell *their* stories, not to listen or comment on mine. And I think that's okay.

Marilyn, this is an imperfect effort. I had wanted to make it perfect and indisputable so that it could not be said that "women are unfit for the seriousness of symbolic rules" - so that I would be taken seriously. So if, at times, my stance was argumentative and definitive, this is why. I wanted to be heard.

Women among themselves. In the context of writing a thesis that has to have an ending, it could not have been perfect anyway. We had just begun to talk, to imagine, to articulate, to relate, to question - without men - when our conversations had to conclude. This journal, therefore, represents only a moment, a segment of what women among themselves might say or do if there was no end.

The end? I doubt it.

Sincerely,

Lori

Endnotes

¹Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One (Cornell University Press, New York, 1985), p. 119.

²What I mean in these statements is that feminism is a far more honest perspective than traditional male discourses, including the discourse of sociology. I felt that I had to keep reading in order to defend the feminist perspective because I saw myself as radically going against what is supposed to be "truth". I had always felt that feminism was my truth, women's truth, but because I was seeking acceptance into a field that has "fathers" - because I wanted an M.A. - I was afraid that if I didn't know enough "feminism", if I didn't perfect my knowledge, I would not get past the gatekeepers. I wanted to be able to convince them of the real truth. I feared being undermined by Marxists, Weberians, and Durkheimians - of not being taken seriously.

³Luce Irigaray, "When the goods get together", New French Feminisms. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Eds.) (The Harvester Press Ltd., Sussex, 1981), p. 108.

⁴For precedents for this type of "subjective" research see: Frigga Haug et al., Female Sexualization (Verso, London, 1987) and Takayo Mukai, "A Call For Our Language: Anorexia From Within", Women's Studies Int. Forum, 1989, Vo. 12, No. 6, pp. 613-638.

⁵Dona Lee Davis, Blood and Nerves (ISER, St. John's, 1983), pp. 66-67.

⁶Ibid.

⁷David Finklehor and Kersti Yilo, Licence to Rape (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1985), p. 86.

⁸Robin Morgan, "Theory and Practice: Pornography and Rape", Going Too Far (Random House, New York, 1977), p. 165.

⁹Frigga Haug et al., Female Sexualization (Verso, London, 1987), p. 196.

¹⁰Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Vol. I (Vintage Books, New York, 1980), p. 11.

¹¹Frigga Haug et al., Female Sexualization, p. 191.

¹²Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Vol. I, pp. 17-27.

¹³Ruth Blier, Science and Gender (Pergaman Press, New York, 1984), p. 178.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 178-180. Whereas Foucault claims that sexuality was deployed as power in the 18th century, Blier argues "hundreds of years". Blier is right. Foucault is not referring specifically to the control of women through sexuality whereas Blier is. It was as women witches were burned. Women with too much power.

¹⁵Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Vol. I, p. 25.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 145-146.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 104.

¹⁹Peter Bradbury, "Desire and Pregnancy", The Sexuality of Men. Andy Metcalf and Martin Humphries (Eds.) (London, Pluto Press, 1985), p. 138.

²⁰Ruth Blier, Science and Gender, p. 180.

²¹Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Vol. I, pp. 105-106.

²²Ibid., pp. 36-38.

²³Sandra Harding, The Science Question in Feminism, (Cornell University Press, London, 1986), p. 129.

²⁴Rosalind Coward, Patriarchal Precedents (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1983), p. 284.

²⁵Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Vol. I, p. 17.

²⁶Ibid., p. 38.

²⁷Rosalind Coward, Patriarchal Precedents, p. 283.

²⁸Ruth Blier, Science and Gender, p. 184.

²⁹Rosalind Coward, Patriarchal Precedents, pp. 284-285.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 285-286.

³¹More feminists are employing discursive analysis. For example, see Chris Weedon, Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory, (Basil Blackwell, Ltd., New York, 1987).

³²Kaja Silverman, "Histoire d'O: The Construction of a Female Subject", Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality. Carol S. Vance (Ed.) (Routledge and Kegan Paul, Boston, 1984), pp. 320-349.

³³Frigga Haug et al., Female Sexualization, pp. 39-43.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 59-61.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 79-83.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 203-207.

³⁷Ibid., p. 161.

³⁸Ibid., p. 277.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 206-207.

⁴⁰Ruth Blier, Science and Gender, pp. 181-182.

⁴¹Luce Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One" New French Feminisms, pp. 99-110.

⁴²Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One, p. 220.

⁴³Ibid., p. 159.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 220.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 159.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 70.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 72.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 70.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 69-70.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 84.

⁵¹Helen Cixous, "Sorties", New French Feminisms, pp. 90-98.

⁵²Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One, p. 171.

⁵³Ibid., p. 192.

⁵⁴Luce Irigaray, "When the goods get together", New French Feminisms, pp. 107-110.

⁵⁵Levi-Strauss also said this - but he didn't have Irigaray's way with words or with feminism.

⁵⁶Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One, p. 171.

⁵⁷Luce Irigaray, "When the goods get together", New French Feminisms, pp. 107-110.

⁵⁸Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One, p. 172.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 184.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 84.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 172.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 187-188.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 186-187.

⁶⁴The Editorial Collective, "Variations On Common Themes", New French Feminisms, pp. 212-230.

⁶⁵Helene Cixous, "Sorties", New French Feminisms, pp. 90-98.

⁶⁶Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa", New French Feminisms, pp. 245-264.

⁶⁷Annie Leclerc, "Woman's Word", New French Feminisms, pp. 79-86.

⁶⁸Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa", New French Feminisms, pp. 245-264.

⁶⁹Helene Cixous, "Sorties", New French Feminisms, pp. 90-98.

⁷⁰Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa", New French Feminisms, pp. 245-264.

⁷¹Benoite Groult, "Night Porters", New French Feminisms, pp. 68-75.

⁷²Françoise Parturier, "An Open Letter to Men", New French Feminisms, pp. 59-63.

⁷³One cannot be a man and a commodity on the heterosexual market of exchange.

⁷⁴Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One, p. 83.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 165.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 84-85.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 161.

⁷⁸Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa", New French Feminisms, pp. 245-264.

⁷⁹Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One, p. 164.

⁸⁰Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa", New French Feminisms, pp. 245-264.

⁸¹Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One, p. 164.

⁸²Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One, pp. 161-162.

⁸³Rosemary Gartner in Brian Bergman, "Sisterhood of Fear and Fury", Maclean's, December 18, 1989, Vol. 102, No. 51, p. 19.

⁸⁴Catherine A. MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: An Agenda for Theory", Signs, 1982, Vol. 7, No. 31, p. 516.

⁸⁵Ruth Blier, Science and Gender, p. 175.

⁸⁶Catherine A. MacKinnon, Feminism Unmodified (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1987), p. 50.

⁸⁷Catherine A. MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: Toward Feminist Jurisprudence", Signs, 1983, Vol. 8, No. 4, p. 651.

⁸⁸Ellen E. Morgan, "The Erotization of Male Dominance/Female Submission", University of Michigan Papers in Women's Studies, September, 1975, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 122-123.

⁸⁹Ibid., pp. 123.

⁹⁰Ibid., pp. 126-127.

⁹¹Rosalind Coward, Female Desire (Paladin Books, London, 1984), pp. 40-46.

⁹²Ibid., pp. 40-46.

⁹³R.W. Connell, Which Way Is Up? Essays On Sex, Class, and Culture (George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1983), pp. 17-18.

⁹⁴Catherine A. MacKinnon, "Women, Self-Possession, and Sport", Feminism Unmodified, p. 120.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 121.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 121.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 122.

⁹⁸Rosalind Coward, Female Desire, p. 78.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 227.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 227.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 227.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 229.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 76.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 229.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 229.

¹⁰⁷Catherine A. MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory", Signs, 1982, Vol. 7, No. 31, p. 537.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 533.

¹⁰⁹Andrea Dworkin, Intercourse (The Free Press, New York, 1987), pp. 138-140.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 142.

¹¹¹Catherine A. MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: Towards Feminist Jurisprudence", Signs, 1983, Vol. 8, No. 4, p. 655.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 655.

¹¹³Catherine A. MacKinnon, Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination (Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1979), p. 220.

¹¹⁴Andrea Dworkin, Intercourse, p. 125.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 63.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 64.

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 140.

¹¹⁸Ibid., pp. 147-148.

¹¹⁹Ibid., pp. 155-157.

¹²⁰Why didn't I use Susan Brownmiller in this discussion? Brownmiller isolates rape as an act of violence thus removing rape from the sexual realm - the realm of everyday heterosexuality. To have used her work would have entailed ignoring the power and coercion that exists when so-called "consensual" hetero-sex occurs. See Susan Brownmiller, Against Our Will, (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1975).

¹²¹Ibid., pp. 160-161.

¹²²Ibid., pp. 150-151.

¹²³Ibid., pp. 165-167.

¹²⁴Lorenne M.G. Clark and Debra J. Lewis, Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality (The Women's Press, Toronto, 1977), p. 122.

¹²⁵Ibid., pp. 121-123.

¹²⁶Andrea Dworkin, Intercourse, p. 167.

¹²⁷Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence", Powers of Desire. Ann Snitow, Christine Stonsell and Sharon Thompson (Eds.) (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1987), p. 126.

¹²⁸Andrea Dworkin, Intercourse, p. 126.

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 143.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 133.

¹³¹Catherine A. MacKinnon, Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination, p. 298.

¹³²Catherine A. MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: Towards Feminist Jurisprudence", Signs, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1983, p. 646.

¹³³Ibid., p. 650.

¹³⁴Ibid., p. 652.

¹³⁵Catherine A. MacKinnon, Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination, p. 220.

¹³⁶Catherine A. MacKinnon, Feminism Unmodified, p. 7.

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 6.

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 6.

¹³⁹Catherine A. MacKinnon, Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination, p. 219.

¹⁴⁰Leeds Revolutionary Feminists, Love Your Enemy? (Only Women Press, London, 1981), p. 5.

¹⁴¹Nancy Friday, Men In Love (Delacorte Press, New York, 1980), p. 117.

¹⁴²Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁴⁴Shere Hite, The Hite Report on Male Sexuality (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1981), p. 334.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 332.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 332.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 721.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 722.

¹⁴⁹Timothy Beneke, Men On Rape (St. Martin's Press, New York, 1982), p. 40.

¹⁵⁰Jack Litewka, "The Socialized Penis", For Men Against Sexism. Jon Snodgrass (Ed.) (Times Change Press, Albion, Ca., 1977), p. 23.

¹⁵¹Ibid., pp. 23-24.

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁵³Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁵⁴Howard Buchbinder, "The Socialized Penis Revisited", Who's On Top? The Politics of Heterosexuality. Buchbinder et al. (Garamond Press, Toronto, 1987), p. 70.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 68-69.

¹⁵⁷John Stoltenberg, "Toward Gender Justice", For Men Against Sexism, p. 76.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., p. 76.

¹⁵⁹R.W. Connell, Gender and Power (Polity Press, Cambridge Press, 1987), p. 81.

¹⁶⁰R.W. Connell, Which Way Is Up?, p. 27.

¹⁶¹Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁶²R.W. Connell, Gender and Power, p. 183.

¹⁶³Ibid., pp. 183-184.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., p. 113.

¹⁶⁵Simone de Beavoir, The Second Sex (Vintage Books, New York, 1974), p. xviii.

¹⁶⁶Dorothy E. Smith, "A Sociology for Women", The Prism of Sex, J.A. Sharman and E.T. Beck (Eds.) (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1979), p. 139.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., p. 137.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., p. 138.

¹⁶⁹Frigga Haug et al., Female Sexualization, p. 40.

¹⁷⁰Dorothy E. Smith, "Some Implications of a Sociology for Women", Woman in a Man-Made World, Nona Glazer and Helen Y. Wachrer (Eds.), (Rand McNally, Chicago, 1976), p. 19.

¹⁷¹Dorothy E. Smith, "Women's Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology", Sociological Inquiry, 1974, Vol. 4, No. 4, p. 12.

¹⁷²Frigga Haug et al., Female Sexualization, p. 35.

¹⁷³Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 42-43.

¹⁷⁷Sandra Lee Bartky, "Toward a Phenomenology of Feminist Consciousness", Feminism and Philosophy. Mary Vetterling-Braggin, Frederick A. Elliston, and Jane English (Eds.) (Rowman and Allanheld, Totowa, New Jersey, 1977), p. 25-26.

¹⁷⁸Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁸¹Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁸²Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One, p. 135.

¹⁸³Edward D. Ives, The Tape-Recorded Interview (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1974), p. 50.

¹⁸⁴Stephen Cole, The Sociological Method (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980), p. 101.

¹⁸⁵Ann Oakley, "Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms". Doing Feminist Research. Helen Roberts (Ed.) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 36-37.

¹⁸⁶Ibid., pp. 48-49.

¹⁸⁷Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One, p. 119.

¹⁸⁸This notice, as well as an explanation of how women came to be involved in this project will be discussed later in this entry.

¹⁸⁹The frequent use of parenthesis in this paragraph is indicative of my confusion on this matter and my reluctance to state anything definitively. What is in parenthesis are thoughts that "appear" as I'm writing. This paragraph is confusion as its happening.

¹⁹⁰See Frigga Haug et al., Female Sexualization.

¹⁹¹See Anne-Louise Brooks, Feminist Pedagogy: A Subject Formation (PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 1989).

¹⁹²For further discussion see: Anne-Louise Brooks, Feminist Pedagogy: A Subject Formation. Ann Oakley, "Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms"; Jane Ribbens, "Interviewing - An 'Unnatural Situation'?" Women's Studies Int. Forum, Vol. 12, No. 6, 1989, pp. 579-592.

¹⁹³Alice Walker, The Temple of My Familiar (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Publishers, 1989), p. 258.

¹⁹⁴Ibid., p. 259.

¹⁹⁵Catherine A. MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: An Agenda for Theory." Signs, Vol. 7, No. 31, 1982, pp. 542-543.

¹⁹⁶Ellen E. Morgan, "The Erotization of Male Dominance/Female Submission", p. 130.

¹⁹⁷A "cobby" - according to my mother who had played in one - is a Newfoundland term used to describe an "imaginary house", a play area. Spaces in the woods are marked off by rocks or sticks to designate different rooms. Discarded dishes and furniture from the real home are used to furnish the cobby. I had played in a cobby once when I visited a friend in Markland.

¹⁹⁸My advisor suggested that I add the fact that I hate the butch/femme distinction. It is a distinction I see constantly being made, however, among lesbians in the St. John's community. It's not so much a style of dress as it was in the 1950s - it's a perception, a state of mind. It's illustrative of the ways in which heterosexual ideologies influence ways of seeing as well as how they infiltrate lesbian relationships. For example, I met a lesbian acquaintance at the supermarket. She was embarrassed that I had seen her there and explained that she was substituting for her lover, who, she added, was better suited to the role of grocery shopper because she had previously been married and had children.

¹⁹⁹Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One, p. 207.

²⁰⁰Ibid., p. 206.

²⁰¹Ibid., pp. 208-209.

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