

# IN AND OUT OF HARM'S WAY: ARROGANCE AND LOVE\*

## INTRODUCTION

Most of this essay is devoted to constructing an account of some of the mechanisms of the exploitation and enslavement of women by men in phallographic culture. Understanding such things is obviously important in a general way to feminist theory and strategies: it is essential, as they say, to know your enemy. But there is a more specific need of feminist theorists and activists which these analyses also address, at another level. This is the need to locate a point of purchase for a radical feminist vision.

The accounts here of the mechanisms of exploitation and enslavement yield up a vivid picture of a kind of harm characteristically done the victims of these operations. Seeing these things as *harmful* is fundamental to my belief that women's being subjected to such machinations is an evil. This is a

\* In working out the materials in this essay, I benefited from discussion with C. Shafer in many ways and to a degree which cannot be reflected in particular footnotes to particular points.

place where a feminist politics can begin; but it cannot end here. When we see the effects of these machinations as harm, we implicitly invoke a contrast between the victims and the female human animal unharmed (unharmed, at least, by these particular processes). Although such an animal may be unknown in contemporary human experience, we are committed at least to an abstract conception of her. More than an abstract conception is needed if we are not simply to condemn but to resist effectively or escape. For that we need a revolutionary vision, which in turn requires that we have rich images of such an animal.

Feminist imaginings of women not harmed by men's exploitation and enslavement, like the similar imaginings of other revolutionary visionaries, have often been malnourished on sentimentality and contempt. We soar on the evidence of women's achievements and dreams of Amazon perfection and sink in the evidence of our mediocrity and the morass of our own internalized woman-hating. If it is important to imagine women untouched by phallographic machinations, then we must take care to discover what we can know here and now on which that imagining can be fed.

The analyses in the body of this essay tell us some of what we need to know. They suggest general correctives to poor vision. They enhance our understanding of the harm done women by the processes of subordination and enslavement, and so facilitate our understanding of the creature who is harmed. The harm lies in what these processes do to women; the analyses make clearer what these processes produce, as product. Understanding something of the stages and goals of the processing, one can see what shapes and qualities it imposes. This, in turn, suggests something of the nature of the being which is processed: one can reason that this being would not have had those shapes and those qualities if left unmolested. This sort of thinking back through phallographic process turns out to provide valuable clues for the feminist visionary.

## COERCION

To coerce is to make or force someone to do something. This seems pretty straightforward, but some of the uses of this concept are not, and one might get confused. The law in some states and general opinion in most places would have it, for instance, that an act is not rape unless the woman's engagement in sexual intercourse is coerced, and will not count the act as coerced unless the alleged victim of the alleged crime is literally physically overcome to the point where the rapist (or rapists) literally physically controls the movements of the victim's limbs and the location and position of her body. In any other case she is seen as choosing intercourse over other alternatives and thus as not being coerced. The curious thing about this interpretation of coercion is that it has the consequence that there is no such thing as a person being coerced into *doing* something. For if the movements of one's limbs and the location and position of one's body are not physically under one's control, one surely cannot be said to have *done* anything, except perhaps at the level of flexing one's muscles in resistance to the force. Given this way of thinking, one could reason that if one did anything (beyond the level of flexing muscles), then it would follow that one was not coerced, and in the sense of 'free' that only means *not coerced*, all actions and all choices would be free.

Sartre took this economical route to freedom and embraced the absurd conclusion as profundity:

If I am mobilized in a war, this war is *my* war; it is in my image and I deserve it. I deserve it first because I could always get out of it by suicide or by desertion. . . . For lack of getting out of it, I have *chosen* it. This can be due to inertia, to cowardice in the face of public opinion, or because I prefer certain other values to the value of the refusal to join the war. . . . Any way you look at it, it is a matter of choice. . . . Therefore we must agree with the statement by J. Romain, "In war there are no innocent victims." If therefore I have pre-

ferred war to death or to dishonor, everything takes place as if I bore the entire responsibility for this war. . . . There was no compulsion here.<sup>1</sup>

It should not be surprising that the same small mind, embracing a foolish consistency, cannot recognize rape when he sees it and employs a magical theory of "bad faith" to account for its evidence. (In the face of the woman denying forthrightly that she experiences pleasure in coitus with her husband, the psychiatrist's observation that she "dreads" the experience, and the woman's report that she deliberately averts her attention from the act and the sensations, Sartre insists that what she dreads and tries to distract herself from is "pleasure" and that the woman is self-deceived.)<sup>2</sup> The "frigid" woman does, after all, choose intercourse over suicide; this is sufficient to convince Sartre that she cannot be a victim and there can be no compulsion here.

It is by this kind of reasoning that we are convinced that women's choices to enter and remain within the institutions of heterosexuality, marriage and motherhood are free choices, that prostitution is a freely chosen life, and that all slaves who have not risen up and killed their masters or committed suicide have freely chosen their lots as slaves.

But choice and action obviously can take place under coercion. The paradigm of coercion is *not* the direct and overpowering application of force to move or arrange someone's body and limbs. The situation of coercion must be one in which choice and action do take place and in which the victim's body and limbs are moved under the victim's own steam, their motions determined by the victim's own perception and judgment. Hence, in the standard case, the force involved in coercion is applied at some distance, and the will of the coerced agent must somehow be engaged in the determination of the bodily movements.

The general strategy involved in all coercion is exemplified in the simple case of armed robbery. You point a gun at someone and demand that she hand over her money. A moment before this she had no desire to unburden herself of her

money, no interest in transferring her money from her possession to that of another; but the situation has changed, and now, of all the options before her, handing over her money seems relatively attractive. Under her own steam, moving her own limbs, she removes her money from her pocket and hands it to you. Her situation did not just change, of course. *You changed it.*

What you did (and I think this is the heart of coercion) was to arrange things so that of the options available, the one that was the least unattractive or the most attractive was the very act you wanted the victim to perform. *Given* those options, and the victim's judgments and priorities, she chooses and acts. Nobody else controls her limbs or makes that judgment for her. The elements of coercion lie not in her person, mind or body, but in the manipulation of the circumstances and manipulation of the options.\*

It will be noted by the clever would-be robber that it does not matter in such a situation whether the gun is loaded or not, or whether or not the robber really would or could pull the trigger. It has only to be credible *to the victim* that the gun is loaded and that the person holding it will fire; and dying has to be perceived *by that victim* at that moment as more undesirable than handing over her money. If she thinks the person wouldn't shoot, or if she is feeling cheerfully suicidal, this will not work. If it works, she has been coerced.

The structure of coercion, then, is this: to coerce someone into doing something, one has to manipulate the situation so that the world as perceived by the victim presents the victim with a range of options the least unattractive of which (or the most attractive of which) in the judgment of the victim is the

\* What the coercer does is deliberately to create just the sort of situation Aristotle agonizes over in *Nicomachean Ethics*, III.1., wherein "the initiative in moving the parts of the body which act as instruments rests with the agent himself," but the agent does something which "nobody would choose to do. . . for its own sake." (*Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Martin Ostwald (The Library of Liberal Arts, 1962.) Thanks to Claudia Card for reminding me of this passage.)

act one wants the victim to do. Given the centrality of the victim's perception and judgment, the plotting coercer might manipulate the physical environment but usually would proceed, at least in part, by manipulating the intended victim's perception and judgment through various kinds of influence and deception.

I assume that free and healthy humans would do much that would cohere with and contribute to the satisfaction of each other's interests and the enhancement of each other's capacities for pursuit of those interests. But for many reasons and by many causes, many people want more and different contributions and on very different terms than is consistent with the health and the will of those they want them from, however amiable, benevolent and naturally cooperative the latter may be. Hence, there is coercion. In the case of simple robbery, the coercer approaches with relatively limited goals. The structure imposed need be neither durable nor adaptable; neither the gun nor the lie need hold up to much scrutiny. But if you want another to perform for you frequently or regularly, your operation must be more complex. People don't like being coerced, and setting up a situation which is reliably and adaptably coercive requires doing something more about resistance and attempts to escape the imposed dilemma than a simple robber has to do. Hence coercion is extended, ramified and laminated as systems of oppression and exploitation.

## EXPLOITATION AND OPPRESSION

Conjure for yourself an image of someone felling a tree with an ax. The ax is a tool; the tree a resource. The ax, properly used, will last for many years. The tree, properly felled, ceases to be; a log comes into being. A tool is by nature or manufacture so constituted and shaped that it is suited to a user's interest in bringing about a certain sort of effect,

and so its being put to use does not require its alteration. The case is otherwise with resources or materials; their uses or exploitations typically transform them. Trees become wood which becomes pulp which becomes paper. At each stage the relations of the parts, the composition, and the condition of the thing used are significantly altered in or by the use. The parts and properties of the thing or stuff were not initially organized with reference to a certain purpose or *telos*; they are altered and rearranged so that they *are* organized with reference to that *telos*. A transforming manipulation is characteristic of this kind of using, of the exploitation of resources or materials.

Analogues of this occur in the exploitation of animate beings. In the case of nonhuman animals, their shapes, the relations of their parts, their constitutions and conditions, and the ways these change or move in the absence of human intervention generally suit them and their behavior to human interests in few and undependable ways. To make much use of such animals, one generally has to do some manipulation and alteration of them. Perhaps the simplest of these is just killing them—the direct analogue of felling the tree. To get nonhuman animals (draft animals, for instance) to work for them, human animals breed certain species to configurations, tempers and capacities to respond to training, and they train individuals of those species from a very young age to tolerate various bindings and harnesses and the bearing of various weights. These are practices which shape the developing nervous systems of the young animals, suppressing certain tendencies to twitch, shy, buck, stamp or flee. And the humans use stimulus-response conditioning to habituate the animals to certain responses to certain human actions and noises. Finally, the animals' movements are significantly shaped and restricted by harnesses, braces, shafts and various other paraphernalia that connect them to the various tools and machines their movements are to drive, push or pull. In the end, by its "second" nature, acquired through processes appropriately called "breaking" and "training" and by the

physical restraints placed on it, such a beast can do very little which does *not* serve some human purpose.<sup>3</sup>

Some analogue of this "breaking" must be developed if a person is to exploit another person or group of persons. I have characterized oppression as a systematic network of forces and barriers which tend to the reduction, immobilization and molding of the oppressed.<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere I have emphasized the aspects of reduction and immobilization. Looking at oppression in its relation to exploitation brings the other aspect into sharper focus: molding, shaping. If you would harness someone else to your wagon, the other must be remodelled. Like any animal, the other is not in the nature of things ready-made to suit anyone's interests but its own. But unlike nonhuman animals, this one matches the exploiter in intelligence and fineness of physical abilities, and this one is capable of self-respect, righteousness and resentment. The human exploiter may not so easily win or outwit the human victim.

Exploitation and oppression are in tension with each other, as one would expect of things which harmonize. Efficient exploitation requires that those exploited be relatively mobile, self-animating and self-maintaining—the more so as the work in question requires greater intelligence, attention or ingenuity. But it also requires that they not be free enough, strong enough or willful enough to resist, escape or significantly misfit the situation of exploitation. While oppressive structures provide for the latter, those which consist mainly of variations on bondage and confinement are inefficient. A system which relies heavily on physical restriction both presupposes and generates resistance and attempts to escape. These in turn exacerbate the need for bondage and containment. This cycle leads to a situation in which the exploited are subjected to maximal limitation and maximal damage, including the passivity of a broken spirit.

For some exploiters, the combination of the work they want done and the milieu of power in which they operate permits them the inefficiencies wrought by the disabling and an-

nihilative effects of oppression; they may have an endless supply of humans to convert to workers, and the work may be such as can be done by someone in shackles and/or totally dispirited. But in many cases a relative shortage of workers, the expense of training them, the need for employment of workers' talents and intelligence, and sometimes (perversely enough) the exploiter's personal attachment to the exploited, make such inefficiency unsatisfactory. Efficient exploitation of "human resources" requires that the structures that refer the others' actions to the exploiter's ends must extend beneath the victim's skin. The exploiter has to bring about the partial disintegration and re(mis)integration of the others' matter, parts and properties so that as organized systems the exploited are oriented to some degree by habits, skills, schedules, values and tastes to the exploiter's ends rather than, as they would otherwise be, to ends of their own. In particular, the manipulations which adapt the exploited to a niche in another's economy must accomplish a great reduction of the victim's intolerance of coercion.

The best solutions to the problem are those which dissolve it. What the exploiter needs is that the will and intelligence of the victim be disengaged from the projects of resistance and escape but that they not be simply broken or destroyed. Ideally, the dis-integration and mis-integration of the victim should accomplish the detachment of the victim's will and intelligence from the victim's own interests and their attachment to the interests of the exploiter. This will effect a displacement or dissolution of self-respect and will undermine the victim's intolerance of coercion. With that, the situation transcends the initial paradigmatic form or structure of coercion; for if people don't mind doing what you want them to do, then, in a sense, you can't really be *making* them do it. In the limiting case, the victim's will and intelligence are wholly transferred to a full engagement in the pursuit of the dominating person's interests. The "problem" had been that there were two parties with divergent interests; this sort of solution (which is very elegant, as that word is used in logic)

is to erase the conflict by reducing the number of interested parties to one.\* This radical solution can properly be called "enslavement."

## ENSLAVEMENT

The mechanisms of enslavement, in cases where it is deliberately and self-consciously carried out, have been studied and documented in, among other cases, European colonization of Africa and the enslavement of Blacks and indigenous peoples in the "New World." Kathleen Barry has documented them in her book, *Female Sexual Slavery*,<sup>5</sup> in the case of what has been called by the misnomer "white slavery"—the enslavement of women and girls for service as prostitutes, wives, concubines and in the production of pornography. I want to draw on this latter work here because this is the category of slavery that is specific to the system of oppression which subordinates women to men.

Many feminists have found it illuminating to compare the situations of women in general to enslavement, or have seen the situations of women as forms of enslavement. For people in the United States, the use of the concept of slavery can usually be heard only as a reference to the experience and institutions of enslavement of Blacks by whites in the United States. For many reasons, such a comparison between women generally and Blacks in pre-Civil War enslavement is misleading and politically suspect.<sup>6</sup> But the literal enslavement of women for sexual service (frequently for both sexual and domestic service) is a venerated, vigorous, current and universal institution of male-dominated cultures which

\* The foregoing discussion may seem to present a picture of exploiters which exaggerates their inhumanity. I recommend one read or re-read such texts as Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Orwell's *1984* and *The Report From Iron Mountain on the Possibility and Desirability of Peace* (Dell, New York, 1967), to recover a suitable sense of proportion.

routinely victimizes girls and women of all racial, economic and ethnic affiliations all over the world. It is this institution that is the appropriate object of reference when one explores the ways in which women's situations are like, or are forms of, slavery.

According to Barry, the strategy for converting a half-grown willful girl or a reasonably independent and competent woman to a servile prostitute or a passive concubine has three stages: Abduction, Seasoning and Criminalization.

Under the heading of Abduction come kidnapping and seduction, or any other act by which the abductor can remove the girl or woman from a setting which is familiar to her to a setting which is totally unfamiliar to her, where she has no allies and no knowledge of what resources are potentially available. Usually he drugs her. When she comes to consciousness of her predicament, she is temporally disoriented and ignorant of where she is (what city, what floor of the building, etc.). The victim has very little information about her surroundings, dulled wits for assimilating what information she does have, and no reliable "other" to criticize or validate her perceptions or judgments. In other words, the abductor has stripped her of the most ordinary powers and resources which even the most socially powerless people usually retain.\* She is frightened and oriented to escape, but he has imposed on her by force a condition in which she can do almost nothing in her own behalf.

The next stage is Seasoning.

While he holds her in captivity and isolation, he brutalizes the victim in as many ways as there are to brutalize. Rape. Beatings. Verbal and physical degradation. Deprivation. Intense and enduring discomfort. Credible threats of murder.

The abductor's brutality functions in several ways. By placing the victim in a life-threatening and absolutely aversive situation, he maximizes the urgency of the victim's taking action in her own behalf while making it utterly impossible for

\* Except, in many cases, those in "mental institutions" or prisons.

her to do so. This puts maximum force into the processes of alienating her from herself through total helplessness. The result is radical loss of self-esteem, self-respect and any sense of capacity or agency.\* The brutality also establishes intimacy, both by being invasive and by the intensity of the one-on-one contact. At a certain point, the abductor shifts from unabating brutality to intermittent and varying brutality. This creates occasions for positive feeling on the part of the victim. She is now in a world of distorted moral proportion where not being beaten, not being under threat of imminent death, being permitted to urinate when she needs to, etc., have become occasions for gratitude. Gratitude is a positive and a binding affect. The intimacy is intensified. From now on, any time the man is not torturing her she feels herself to be relatively well treated. The process of reconstructing the elements of the person into the shape of a slave has begun.

The shift to less constant abuse is also a perverse kind of empowerment of the victim. After having been in a situation where her presence as agent has been reduced to nothing, she now has the opportunity to try to act in support of her physical survival. She can try to discover what pleases and what displeases the man, and try to please him and avoid displeasing him, thereby avoiding or postponing beatings and degradation, or being killed. She had been annihilated as an agent; when she is restored to agency, it is kept at a remove from her own interests and self-preservation. She can act indirectly and negatively in the interest of her physical survival and freedom from pain by trying to behave in ways which will forestall or avoid the man's abuse, but any direct presence of herself to herself, any directly self-preserving or self-serving behavior, will displease him and thus be counterproductive.

\* It is interesting to note that in *Story of O*, a classic of sado-masochistic pornography, O is forbidden at this point in her "training" and ever after to touch her own genitals or breasts, which she is inclined to do to comfort herself. She is instructed that they belong to the men. (*Story of O*, by Pauline Reage [Grove Press, New York, 1965.] )

If he is any good at this, the man will make it a point to be arbitrary and capricious in his pleasures and displeasures and to be very brutal when he is brutal. This will make the victim's task of anticipating his will extremely difficult and keep the stakes high. All of this draws her closer to him: her attention will be on him constantly and exclusively; her every resource of intelligence, will and sensitivity will be drawn into the most intense engagement with and focus upon him. She is likely to become "clinging" and "possessive"—not wanting to let him out of her sight. All of the will and resources she would draw upon to survive are thus channeled to the service of his interests.

The final stage, Criminalization, is necessary in order for the abductor to return the woman and his relationship with her to a more public sphere where he can turn the newly-wrought relationship to his economic benefit. He forces the woman or girl to engage in or be an accomplice to some criminal act or acts—larceny, drug traffic, murder, prostitution, kidnapping. By this she becomes and knows she becomes a criminal, part of the "underworld." Now she cannot return to family or friends, or turn to the police. As a female and a criminal she has nowhere to escape to and a great deal to be protected from. Her procurer and his associates become her protectors from the violence and scorn of the straight society. She now depends on him for protection from fates worse than he: he who is familiar, in whose domain she probably can survive by being and doing whatever he wants, and in whose world she will find the only acceptance, economic viability or social interaction and emotional life now available to her.

She is now his.

Let us review the metaphysics of this process. Brutality and radical helplessness create a fissure: the animal intelligence has no vehicle; the animal body misjudges and is inappropriately grateful. The intelligent body ceases to be: in-

telligence and bodiliness are sundered, unable to ground or defend each other or themselves. Mind and body, thus made separate, are then reconnected, but only indirectly: their interactions and communications now mediated by the man's will and interest. Mind and body can preserve themselves only by subordinating each other to him. The woman or girl now serves herself only by serving him, and can interpret herself only by reference to him. He has rent her in two and grafted the raw ends to himself so she can act, but only in his interest. She has been annexed and is his appendage.

In the limiting case, the slave is a robot: its behavior determined by the interests of another, its will by the will of another, its body functioning as a vehicle of another. But the condition of the slave, as I see it, is not exactly that which Mary Daly called "robotitude" and de Beauvoir called "only not dying."<sup>7</sup> The slave's substance is assimilated to the master—a transference Ti-Grace Atkinson called "metaphysical cann-

"By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law; that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs everything." Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, London, 1813 (I, p. 444).

In a liberal college town in the United States in the late 70s, a woman went to get a library card at the local public library. She was told she could not get it without her husband's signature; a firm policy; no, she would need no one else's signature if she were single. This is true.

balism."<sup>8</sup> Although the slave is not engaged in "surpassing herself," she is engaged in surpassing: she is engaged in the master's "surpassing" *himself*. Her substance is organized toward his "transcendence."

## THE ARROGANT EYE

The idea of there being more than one body's worth of substance, will and wit lined up behind one's projects has its appeal. As one woman said, after going through the reasons, "My God, who *wouldn't* want a wife?"<sup>9</sup> Ti-Grace Atkinson pointed out in her analysis of the roots of oppression that there is an enormous gap between what one can do and what one can imagine doing. Humans have what she referred to as a "constructive imagination" which, though obviously a blessing in some ways, also is a source of great frustration. For it provides a constant tease of imagined accomplishments and imagined threats—to neither of which are we physically equal.<sup>1</sup>

equal.<sup>10</sup> The majority of people do not deal with this problem and temptation by enslaving others overtly and by force (though the processes which capture the batterer's wife and attach her to him are, as Barry pointed out, very like the processes of the procurer). But many, many people, most of them male, are in a cultural and material position to accomplish, to a great degree, the same end by other means and under other descriptions, means and descriptions which obscure to them and to their victims the fact that their end is the same. The end: acquisition of the service of others. The means: variations on the same theme of dis-integrating an integrated human organism and grafting its substance to oneself.

The Bible says that all of nature (including woman) exists for man. Man is invited to subdue the earth and have domin-

ion over every living thing on it, all of which is said to exist "to you" "for meat."<sup>11</sup> Woman is created to be man's helper. This captures in myth Western Civilization's primary answer to the philosophical question of man's place in nature: everything that is is resource for man's exploitation. With this world view, men see with arrogant eyes which organize everything seen with reference to themselves and their own interests. The arrogating perceiver is a teleologist, a believer that everything exists and happens for some purpose, and he tends to animate things, imagining attitudes toward himself as the animating motives. Everything is either "for me" or "against me." This is the kind of vision that interprets the rock one trips on as hostile, the bolt one cannot loosen as stubborn, the woman who made meatloaf when he wanted spaghetti as "bad" (though he didn't say what he wanted). The arrogant perceiver does not countenance the possibility that the Other is independent, indifferent. The feminist separatist can only be a man-hater; Nature is called "Mother."

The arrogant perceiver falsifies—the Nature who makes both green beans and *Bacillus botulinus* doesn't give a passing damn whether humans live or die<sup>12</sup>—but he also coerces the objects of his perception into satisfying the conditions his perception imposes. He tries to accomplish in a glance what the slave masters and batterers accomplish by extended use of physical force, and to a great extent he succeeds. He manipulates the environment, perception and judgment of her whom he perceives so that her recognized options are limited, and the course she chooses will be such as coheres with his purposes. The seer himself is an element of her environment. The structures of his perception are as solid a fact in her situation as are the structures of a chair which seats her too low or of gestures which threaten.

How one sees another and how one expects the other to behave are in tight interdependence, and how one expects another to behave is a large factor in determining how the other does behave. Naomi Weisstein, in "Psychology Con-



structs the Female," reviewed experiments which show dramatically that this is true.

For instance, in one experiment subjects were to assign numbers to pictures of men's faces, with high numbers representing the subject's judgment that the man in the picture was a successful person, and low numbers representing the subject's judgment that the man in the picture was an unsuccessful person. One group of experimenters was told that the subjects tended to rate the faces high; another group of experimenters was told that the subjects tended to rate the faces low. Each group of experimenters was instructed to follow precisely the same procedure: they were required to read to subjects a set of instructions and to *say nothing else*. For the 375 subjects run, the results shows clearly that those subjects who performed the task with experimenters who expected high ratings gave high ratings, and those subjects who performed the task with experimenters who expected low ratings gave low ratings.<sup>13</sup>

When experimenters think the rats they are working with were bred for high intelligence, the rats they are working with learn faster; when the experimenters think their rats were bred for low intelligence, the rats learn less well. And children believed by their teachers to have high IQs show dramatic increases in their IQs. Weisstein concludes: "The concreteness of the changed conditions produced by expectations is a fact, a reality. . . . In some extremely important ways, people are what you expect them to be, or at least they behave as you expect them to behave."<sup>14</sup>

The experiments only boldly outline something we all know from experience. Women experience the coerciveness of this kind of "influence" when men perversely impose sexual meanings on our every movement. We know the palpable pressure of a man's reduction of our objection to an occasion for our instruction. Women do not so often experience ourselves imposing expectations on situations and making them stick, but some of the most awesome stories of women's suc-

cessful resistance to male violence involve a woman's expecting the male assailant into the position of a little boy in the power of his mother.\* The power of expectations is enormous; it should be engaged and responded to attentively and with care. The arrogant perceiver engages it with the same unconsciousness with which he engages his muscles when he writes his name.

The arrogant perceiver's expectation creates in the space about him a sort of vacuum mold into which the other is sucked and held. But the other is not sucked into his structure always, nor always without resistance. In the absence of his manipulation, the other *is* not organized primarily with reference to his interests. To the extent that she is not shaped to his will, does not fit the conformation he imposes, there is friction, anomaly or incoherence in his world. To the extent that he notices this incongruity, he can experience it in no other way than as something wrong with her. His perception is arrogating; his senses tell him that the world and everything in it (with the occasional exception of other men) is in the nature of things there *for* him, that she is by her constitution and *telos* his servant. He believes his senses. If woman does not serve man, it can only be because he is not a sufficiently skilled master or because there is something wrong with the woman. He may try to manage things better, but when that fails he can only conclude that she is defective: unnatural, flawed, broken, abnormal, damaged, sick. His norms of virtue and health are set according to the degree of congruence of the object of perception with the seer's interests. This is exactly wrong.

Though anyone might wish, for any of many reasons, to contribute to another's pursuit of her or his interests, the health and integrity of an organism is a matter of its being or-

\* I refer here to some experience of my own, and to such stories as the Success Stories included in "Do It Yourself-Self-Defense," by Pat James, in *Fight Back: Feminist Resistance to Male Violence*, edited by Frederique Delacoste & Felice Newman (Cleis Press, 1981), p. 205.

ganized largely toward its own interests and welfare. The arrogant perceiver knows this in his own case, but he *arrogates* everything to himself and thus perceives as healthy or "right" everything that relates to him as his own substance does when he is healthy. But what's sauce for the gander is sauce for the goose. *She* is healthy and "working right" when *her* substance is organized primarily on principles which align it to *her* interests and welfare. Cooperation is essential, of course, but it will not do that I arrange everything so that you get enough exercise: for me to be healthy, *I* must get enough exercise. My being adequately exercised is logically independent of your being so.

The arrogant perceiver's perception of the other's normalcy or defectiveness is not only dead wrong, it is coercive. It manipulates the other's perception and judgment at the root by mislabeling the unwholesome as healthy, and what is wrong as right. One judges and chooses within a framework of values—*notions* as to what 'good' and 'good for you' pertain to. The elementary robber-coercer leaves that framework alone and manipulates only the situation. The commercial advertiser may misrepresent particular items or options as being good or good for you. But what we have in the case of the arrogant perceiver is the mis-defining of 'good' and 'healthy'. If one has the cultural and institutional power to make the misdefinition stick, one can turn the whole other person right around to oneself by this one simple trick. This is the sort of thing that makes the "reversals" Mary Daly talks about in *Gyn/Ecology* so evil and so dangerous.<sup>15</sup> If one does not get the concepts *right* and *wrong*, *healthy* and *unhealthy* right, and in particular, if one gets them wrong in the specific way determined by the arrogant eye, one *cannot* take care of oneself. This is the most fundamental kind of harm. It is, in effect, *mayhem*: a maiming which impairs a person's ability to defend herself.<sup>16</sup> Mayhem is very close kin both morally and logically to murder.

The procurer-enslaver, working with overt force, constructs a situation in which the victim's pursuit of her own survival

Western philosophy and science have for the most part been built on the presumption of the Intelligibility of the Universe. This is the doctrine that everything in the universe and the universe itself can, at least in principle, be understood and comprehended by human intelligence, reason and understanding.

Western philosophy and science have for the most part been committed to the Simplicity Theory of Truth: the simplest theory that accounts for the data is the true theory. (Theories are simplest which postulate the fewest entities, require the fewest hypotheses, generate predictions by the fewest calculations, etc.)

The connection seems clear: only if the truth is simple can the universe be intelligible.

But why believe either of these principles?

If someone believes that the world is made for him to have dominion over and he is made to exploit it, he must believe that he and the world are so made that he *can*, at least in principle, achieve and maintain dominion over everything. But you can't put things to use if you don't know how they work. So he must believe that he can, at least in principle, understand everything. If the world exists for man, it must be useably intelligible, which means it must be simple enough for him to understand. A usable universe is an intelligible universe is a simple universe.

If something seems to be unintelligible, you can decide it is unnatural or unreal. Or you can decide it is what is *really* real and then declare that you have discovered the Problem of Knowledge. Or, having declared what seems unintelligible to be the *really* real, you can claim it is, after all, intelligible, but only to the extraordinary few (who, in spite of being so few somehow can be normative of what Man really is).

. . . and so it goes with the philosophy and the science of The Arrogant Eye.

or health and her attempt to be good always require, as a matter of practical fact in that situation, actions which serve him. In the world constructed by the arrogant eye, this same connection is established not by terror but by definition.\*

The official story about men who batter women is that they do so in large part because they suffer "low self-esteem." What this suggests to me is that they suffer a lack of arrogance and cannot fully believe in themselves as centers about which all else (but some other men) revolves and to which all else refers. Because of this they cannot effectively exercise the power of that expectation. But as men they "know" they are supposed to be centers of universes, so they are reduced to trying to create by force what more successful men, men who can carry off masculinity better, create by arrogant perception. This is, perhaps, one reason why some of the men who do not batter have contempt for men who do.

## THE LOVING EYE

The attachment of the well-broken slave to the master has been confused with love. Under the name of Love, a willing and unconditional servitude has been promoted as something ecstatic, noble, fulfilling and even redemptive. All praise is

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\* Neither the arrogant perceiver nor the procurer works in a vacuum, of course. They are supported by a culture which in many ways "softens up" their victims for them, an economy which systematically places women in positions of economic dependence on men, and a community of men which threatens women with rape at every turn. Also, the existence of the procurers supports the arrogant perceiver by making him seem benign by comparison. The arrogant perceiver, in addition, has the support of a community of arrogant perceivers, among whom are all or most of the most powerful members of the community at large. I do want to claim that the power of perception, even exercised without "community support," is great; but as we normally experience it, it is augmented enormously by its being an instance of the "normal" perceiving among those who control the material media of culture and most other economic resources.

sung for the devoted wife who loves the husband and children she is willing to live for, and of the brave man who loves the god he is willing to kill for, the country he is willing to die for.

We can be taken in by this equation of servitude with love because we make two mistakes at once: we think, of both servitude and love, that they are selfless or unselfish. We tend to think of them as attachments in which the person is not engaged because of self-interest and does not pursue self-interest. The wife who married for money did not marry for love, we think; the mercenary soldier is despised by the loyal patriot. And the slave, we think, is selfless because she *can* do nothing but serve the interests of another. But this is wrong. Neither is the slave selfless, nor is the lover.

It is one mark of a voluntary association that the one person can survive displeasing the other, defying the other, dissociating from the other. The slave, the battered wife, the not-so-battered wife, is constantly in jeopardy. She is in a situation where she cannot, or reasonably believes she cannot, survive without the other's provision and protection, and where experience has made it credible to her that the other may kill her or abandon her if and when she displeases him. But she survives, at least for a while. She may, like Patricia Hearst, retain her own will to her own survival, in which case, what she does "for the other" is ultimately done "for herself" more consistently and more profoundly than could ever be the case in voluntary association.\* In her situation of utter dependence and peril, every detail of the other's action, interests and wishes are ineluctably and directly, as a matter of empirical fact, connected to her interest in survival. She does not see the other as, or expect the other to be, organ-

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\* "Thinking it all over, I realized I would have to remain on guard at all times to avoid angering any of them. I promised myself I would never again disagree with anything any of them told me, ever. I wanted to get out alive and to see them all sent to jail for a long, long time for what they were doing to me." *Every Secret Thing*, Patricia Campbell Hearst with Alvin Moscow (Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1982), p. 57.

ized to the service of her interests (quite the contrary), but she cannot fail to interpret the other always with an eye to what will keep her from being killed or abandoned. Her eye is not arrogating, but it is the furthest thing from disinterested; she does not have the option of setting her interests aside, of not calculating them. On the other hand, the victim may survive, as *Story of O* presents her or as she is pictured in the old Geritol commercials, solely because the other wishes it. In *Story of O*, the master would be most displeased to find that O was interested in her survival for any reason other than that he wanted her to survive; that would be a last vestige of "willfulness," a telltale sign of the imperfection of her "love" for him.<sup>17</sup> In the Geritol commercial, the woman "takes care of herself" because her family needs her; her husband will "keep her" because she serves so devotedly. In this latter case, if it ever really is the case (as I am pessimistic enough to think it is), the slave/wife really is not motivated by self-interest, but her behavior toward and perception of the other is still not disinterested. She has assumed *his* interest. She now sees with *his* eye, his arrogant eye.

In a case like that of Patricia Hearst, in which one might say the enslavement is not perfect, the victim's self-interest is present and central—it is the fulcrum of the coercion. In the second, the victim's self-interest is simply replaced by the master's interest. In neither case is the victim disinterested or selfless in her action toward or perception of the master. She acts from her interest and for her self, or from his interest and for his self.

One who loves is not selfless either. If the loving eye is in any sense disinterested, it is not that the seer has lost herself, has no interests, or ignores or denies her interests. Any of these would seriously incapacitate her as a perceiver. What *is* the case, surely, is that unlike the slave or the master, the loving perceiver can see without the presupposition that the other poses a constant threat or that the other exists for the seer's service; nor does she see with the other's eye instead of her own. Her interest does not blend the seer and the seen,

either empirically by terror or *a priori* by conceptual links forged by the arrogant eye. One who sees with a loving eye is separate from the other whom she sees. There are boundaries between them; she and the other are two; their interests are not identical; they are not blended in vital parasitic or symbiotic relations, nor does she believe they are or try to pretend they are.

The loving eye is a contrary of the arrogant eye.

The loving eye knows the independence of the other. It is the eye of a seer who knows that nature is indifferent. It is the eye of one who knows that to know the seen, one must consult something other than one's own will and interests and fears and imagination. One must look at the thing. One must look and listen and check and question.

The loving eye is one that pays a certain sort of attention. This attention can require a discipline but *not* a self-denial. The discipline is one of self-knowledge, knowledge of the scope and boundary of the self. What is required is that one know what are one's interests, desires and loathings, one's projects, hungers, fears and wishes, and that one know what is and what is not determined by these. In particular, it is a matter of being able to tell one's own interests from those of others and of knowing where one's self leaves off and another begins. Perhaps in another world this would be easy and not a matter of discipline, but here we are brought up among metaphysical cannibals and their robots. Some of us are taught we can have everything, some are taught we can have nothing. Either way we will acquire a great wanting. The wanting doesn't care about truth: it simplifies, where the truth is complex; it invents, when it should be investigating; it expects, when it should be waiting to find out; it would turn everything to its satisfaction; and what it finally thinks it cannot thus maneuver it hates. But the necessary discipline is not a denial of the wanting. On the contrary, it is a discipline of knowing and owning the wanting: identifying it, claiming it, knowing its scope, and through all this, knowing its distance from the truth.

The loving eye does not make the object of perception into something edible, does not try to assimilate it, does not reduce it to the size of the seer's desire, fear and imagination, and hence does not have to simplify. It knows the complexity of the other as something which will forever present new things to be known. The science of the loving eye would favor The Complexity Theory of Truth and presuppose The Endless Interestingness of the Universe.

The loving eye seems generous to its object, though it means neither to give nor to take, for not-being-invaded, not-being-coerced, not-being-annexed must be felt in a world such as ours as a great gift.

## THE BELOVED

We who would love women, and well, who would change ourselves and change the world so that it is possible to love women well, we need to imagine the possibilities for what women might be if we lived lives free of the material and perceptual forces which subordinate women to men. The point is not to imagine a female human animal unaffected by the other humans around it, uninfluenced by its own and others' perceptions of others' interests, unaffected by culture. The point is only to imagine women not enslaved, to imagine these intelligent, willful and female bodies not subordinated in service to males, individually or via institutions (or to anybody, in any way); not pressed into a shape that suits an arrogant eye.

The forces which we want to imagine ourselves free of are a guide to what we might be when free of them. They mark the shape they mold us to, but they also suggest by implication the shapes we might have been without that molding. One can guess something of the magnitude and direction of the tendencies the thing would exhibit when free by attend-

ing to the magnitudes and directions of the forces required to confine and shape it. For instance, much pressure is applied at the point of our verbal behavior, enforcing silence or limiting our speech.<sup>18</sup> One can reason that without that force we might show ourselves to be loquacious and perhaps prone to oratory, not to mention prone to saying things unpleasant to male ears. The threat of rape is a force of great magnitude which is, among other things, applied against our movement about the cities, towns and countryside. The implication is that without it a great many women might prove to be very prone to nomadic lives of exploration and adventure—why else should so much force be required to keep us at home?

But to speak most generally: the forces of men's material and perceptual violence mold Woman to dependence upon Man, in every meaning of 'dependence': contingent upon; conditional upon; necessitated by; defined in terms of; incomplete or unreal without; requiring the support or assistance of; being a subordinate part of; being an appurtenance to.

Dependence is forced upon us. It is not rash to speculate that without this force, much, most or all of what most or all of us are and do would not be contingent upon, conditional upon, necessitated by, or subordinate to any man or what belongs to or pertains to a man, men or masculinity. What we are and how we are, or what we would be and how we would be if not molded by the arrogating eye, is: *not molded to man, not dependent*.

I do not speak here of a specious absolute independence that would mean never responding to another's need and never needing another's response. I conceive here simply of a being whose needs and responses are not *bound* by concepts or by terror in a dependence upon those of another. The loving eye makes the correct assumption: the object of the seeing is *another* being whose existence and character are logically independent of the seer and who may be practically or empirically independent in any particular respect at any particular time.

It is not an easy thing to grasp the meaning or the truth of this "independence," nor is a clear or secure belief in it at all common, even among those who identify themselves as feminists. The inability to think it is one of the things that locks men in eternal infantilism; it is one of the things that makes women endlessly susceptible to deep uncertainty in our political and epistemological claims, and to nearly fatal indecisiveness in our actions.

When we try to think ourselves independent, to think ourselves women not mediated by men or Man, what we attempt is both prodigious and terrifying, since by our own wills we would be led to that fringe of the world where language and meaning let go their hold on our lives. So, understandably, we suffer failures of imagination and failures of courage.

We have to a great extent learned the arrogant boychild's vocabulary, and to identify with him and see with his eye; we have learned to think of agency and power very much as he does. What we may do when we try to imagine ourselves independent is just slip ourselves slyly into his shoes and imagine *ourselves* the center of the universe, the darlings of Mother Nature and the cherished sisters of all other women.

Much of the radical feminist art and theory which has nurtured my imagination has been characterized by occasional streaks of this kind of romanticism. Some of it is much influenced by such ideas of a "built in" perfect harmony among women and between women and Nature. Something of this sort is part of the romantic element in Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology*; it is in Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature*; it is very prevalent (I do not say universal) in the literature and art of women's spirituality.<sup>19</sup> *The Wanderground*, a fantasy novel which has been very successful in feminist circles, develops such a romanticism quite explicitly.<sup>20</sup> This tendency of thought is markedly absent from two other feminist fantasy novels, *Walk To The End Of The World* and *Motherlines*,<sup>21</sup> and these have been, for that very reason, disliked and criticized by some feminists for not presenting a feminist vision. The same failure of imagination which has seduced some rad-

ical feminist thinking into a rose-colored vision of ourselves and Nature has much more fundamentally shaped the "civil rights" wing of feminist thought. The woman who wants "equality" in many cases simply wants to be in there *too*, as one of the men for whom men's God made everything "for meat."

It has been suggested to me that we fail in these efforts of imagination partly because we insist on reinventing the wheel. We might give womankind some credit: we might suppose that not all women lead and have lead male-mediated lives, and that the lives of the more independent women could provide material for the stimulation and correction of our imaginations. Women of exceptional gifts and creative achievements there are, and women whose lives do not follow the beaten path. But also, when one looks closely at the lives of the women presented by history or in one's own experience as exceptional, one often sees both some not-so-exceptional causal factors like the patronage of exceptional men (for which one must assume the women pay in some coin or other), and signs of peculiar fears and strange lapses of imagination.

Why did so powerful and individual a woman as Gertrude Stein speak only in code and hardly at all in public of her passionate relationship with Alice B. Toklas? Why did brilliant suffragists, white women, fail politically under the pressure of racism? Why did Simone Weil hate Jews, and why did she think suffering would make her good? Why did Simone de Beauvoir adhere to the misogynist Jean Paul Sartre? I know gifted lesbian feminist scholars who identify themselves as lesbian separatists and are passionately committed to making "the boys" in their fields recognize their work, talent and intelligence; this makes no sense. And I have heard women whose accomplishments and spirit show them capable of material and intellectual independence talking about their husbands in ways that make it inexplicable that they remain married to these men. Feminist writing, especially autobiographical writing, is full of examples of the most disappointing of

all the exceptional women to whom we would turn, to whom we have turned—the mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters and cousins who have in our own real lives been our examples of strength, power, independence and solidarity with other women, and of whom we say, almost grieving, “She really was/is a feminist/dyke, though she would rather die than be called by that name.”

The answers to the puzzles all these women present are of course very complex and individual. But I think there is at least one common thread: there is in the fabric of our lives, not always visible but always affecting its texture and strength, a mortal dread of being outside the field of vision of the arrogant eye. That eye gives all things meaning by connecting all things to each other by way of their references to one point—Man. We fear that if we are not in that web of meaning there will be no meaning: our work will be meaningless, our lives of no value, our accomplishments empty, our identities illusory. The reason, for this dread, I suggest, is that for most of us, including the exceptional, a woman existing outside the field of vision of man’s arrogant eye is really inconceivable.

This is a terrible disability. If we have no intuition of ourselves as independent, unmediated beings in the world, then we cannot conceive ourselves surviving our liberation; for what our liberation will do is dissolve the structures and dismantle the mechanisms by which Woman is mediated by Man. If we cannot imagine ourselves surviving this, we certainly will not make it happen.

There probably is really no distinction, in the end, between imagination and courage. We can’t imagine what we can’t face, and we can’t face what we can’t imagine. To break out of the structures of the arrogant eye we have to dare to rely on ourselves to make meaning and we have to imagine ourselves beings capable of that: capable of weaving the web of meaning which will hold us in some kind of intelligibility. We do manage this, to some extent; but we also wobble and threaten to fall, like a beginner on a bicycle who does not get up enough momentum, partly for lack of nerve.

We have correctly intuited that the making of meaning is social and requires a certain community of perception. We also are individually timid and want “support.” So it is only against a background of an imagined community of ultimate harmony and perfect agreement that we dare to think it possible to make meaning. This brings us into an arrogance of our own, for we make it a prerequisite for our construction of meaning that other women be what we need them to be to constitute the harmonious community of agreement we require. Some women refuse to participate at all in this meaning construction “because feminists are divided and can’t agree among themselves.” Some who do participate threaten to return to the father’s fold or to write others out of the movement if unanimity cannot be achieved. In other words, we threaten to fail in imagination and courage like all the other exceptional and ordinary women, if our sisters do not or will not harmonize and agree with us.

Meaning is indeed something that arises among two or more individuals and requires some degree of agreement in perception and values. (It also tends to generate the required community and the necessary degree of agreement.) The community required for meaning, however, is precisely *not* a homogenous herd, for without difference there is no meaning. Meaning is a system of connections and distinctions among different and distinguishable things. The hypothetical homogeneous community which we imagine we need *could* not be the community in which we can make ourselves intelligible, im-mediately, to and for ourselves.

The liberated woman cannot be presumed to “suit” us, and such presumption will simply keep us from actually imagining her *free*; for in our own effort of imagination, we impose upon her. If we feed our vision on images filtered through what we suppose to be our own necessities, we will be disappointed and resentful and will end up doing violence.

We need to know women as independent: subjectively in our own beings, and in our appreciations of others. If we are to know it in ourselves, I think we may have to be under the

gaze of a loving eye, the eye which presupposes our independence. The loving eye does not prohibit a woman's experiencing the world directly, does not force her to experience it by way of the interested interpretations of the seer in whose visual field she moves. In this situation, she *can* experience directly in her bones the contingent character of her relations to all others and to Nature. If we are to know women's independence in the being of others, I think we may have to cast a loving eye toward them. . .and wait, and see.

## NOTES

1. *Being and Nothingness*, translated by Hazel E. Barnes (Philosophical Library, New York, 1956), p. 553.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
3. I am indebted to Carolyn Shafer both for information about the breeding and training of domestic animals and for political interpretation of it. See also, *Woman And Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*, by Susan Griffin (Harper and Row, New York, 1978).
4. See the first and second essays in this collection.
5. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1979.
6. Cf., *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, by Bell Hooks (South End Press, Boston, 1981), p. 143 and all of Chapter IV, "Racism and Feminism."
7. *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, by Mary Daly (Beacon Press, Boston, 1978), p. 55, and Daly's reference there to de Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity*.
8. *Amazon Odyssey*, by Ti-Grace Atkinson (Links Books, New York, 1974), "Metaphysical Cannibalism," pp. 56 ff.
9. "Why I Want A Wife," by Judy Syfers, *Radical Feminism*, edited by Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine and Anita Rapone (Quadrangle, New York, 1973), pp. 60-62.
10. Atkinson, *op. cit.*
11. Genesis 1:29.
12. Due to Catherine Madsen, from her review of *Wanderground*, by Sally Gearhart (Persephone Press, Watertown, Massachusetts, 1979), in *Conditions No. 7*, p. 138.
13. "Psychology Constructs the Female," by Naomi Weisstein, in *Woman In Sexist Society*, edited by Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (Basic Books, Inc., New York, 1971), pp. 138-139.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Daly, *op. cit.*, pp. 2, 30 and elsewhere throughout the book.
16. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* and *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*.
17. *Story of O*, by Pauline Reage (Grove Press, New York, 1965). See also *Woman Hating*, by Andrea Dworkin (E.P. Dutton, New York, 1974), Chapter 3, "Woman as Victim: *Story of O*."
18. Cf., *Man-Made Language*, by Dale Spender (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1980), pp. 43-50.
19. Cf., the magazine *Womanspirit*.
20. Sally Gearhart (Persephone Press, Watertown, Massachusetts, 1979).
21. *Walk To The End Of The World*, by Suzy McKee Charnas (Berkley Publishing Company, New York, 1974) and *Motherlines*, by Suzy McKee Charnas (Berkley Publishing Company, New York, 1979).