## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to the Illinois Paperback</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to the Touchstone Paperback</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>xix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEXUAL POLITICS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instances of Sexual Politics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of Sexual Politics</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HISTORICAL BACKGROUND</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THREE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sexual Revolution, First Phase: 1830-1930</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polemical</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SEXUAL POLITICS

against. In no time it turns the rebellion into a suicidal carnival, an orgy of blood connected to the old phallic fantasy of "chose and be". In totem
is the ritual of sex which provides every army's beauty pageant since Troy. Once Chantal enters upon the mythical territory of a primitive standard and
pair over whom males will tear each other apart, the revolution passes irreversibly toward counterrevolution.

Throughout The Balcony Genesis explores the pathology of virility, the
chimera of sexual congress as a paradigm of power over other human be-
ing. He appears to be the only living male writer of first-class literary gifts
to have transcended the sexual myths of our era. His critique of the hetero-
sexual politics points the way toward a true sexual revolution, a path which
must be explored if any radical social change is to come about. In Genesis' analysis, it is fundamentally impossible to change society without changing
personality, and sexual personality as it has generally existed must undergo
the most drastic overhaul.

If we are to be free at last, Genesis proposes in the last scene of the play,
we must first break those chains of our own making through our blind
acceptance of common ideas. The three great cages in which we are im-
mured must be dismantled. The first is the potential power of the "Great
Figures"—the cleric, the judge and the warrior—elements of myth which
have enslaved consciousness in a cell of self-imposed absurdity. The second
is the omnipotence of the police state, the only virtual power in a corrupt society, all other forms of coercion being largely psychological. The third, and
most insidious of all, is the cage of sex, the cage in which all others are enclosed: for it is not the totem of Police Chief George a six-foot rubber phal-
lus, a "pick of great stature"? And the old myth of sin and virtue, the myth
of guilt and innocence, the myth of heroism and cowards on which the
Great Figures depend, the old pillars of an old and decadent structure, are
also built on the sexual fallacy. (Or as one is tempted to pun, phallacy.) By
attempting to replace this corrupt and rotting edifice while preserving its
foundations, the revolution's own bid for social transformation inevitably
fails and turns into the counterevolution: where the Grand Balcony, a first-
class whorehouse, furnishes both costumes and actors for the new pseudo-
government.

Genesis' play ends as it had begun: Items turning out the lights informs us
we may go home, where all is darker than the theater's lime. The brothel will
open again tomorrow for an identical ritual. The sounds of revolution begin
again "offstage", but unless the Police Chief is permanently imprisoned in his
tomb and unless the new rebels have truly forewarned the customary tidiness of
the old sexual politics, there will be no revolution. Sex is deep at the heart
of our troubles, Genesis is urging, and unless we eliminate the most prelicious
of our systems of oppression, unless we go to the very center of the
sexual politics and its sick delusion of power and violence, all our efforts at
liberation will only land us again in the same primordial stews.

The three instances of sexual description we have examined so far were
remarkable for the large part which notions of ascendency and power played
within them. Coitus can scarcely be said to take place in a vacuum; although
of itself it appears a biological and physical activity, it is set so deeply within
the larger context of human affairs that it serves as a charged microcosm of
the variety of attitudes and values to which culture subscribes. Among
other things, it may serve as a model of sexual politics on an individual or
personal plane.

But of course the transition from such scenes of intimacy to a wider con-
text of political reference is a great step indeed. In introducing the term
"sexual politics," one must first answer the inevitable question "Can the rela-
ationship between the sexes be viewed in a political light at all?" The answer
depends on how one defines politics.1 This essay does not define the political
as that relatively narrow and exclusive world of meetings, chains, and
parties. The term "politics" shall refer to power-structured relationships, ar-
ing among whereby one group of persons is controlled by another. By way

1The American Heritage Dictionary's fourth definition, is fairly approximate:
"methods or tactics involved in managing a state or government." American Heritage
expand this to a set of systems designed to maintain a system. If one understands poli-
tics to be an institution perpetuated by such techniques of control, one has a working
definition of how politics is contained in this essay.
of parenthesis one might add that although an ideal politics might simply be conceived of as the arrangement of human life on agreeable and rational principles from whence the entire notion of power over others should be banished, one must confess that this is not what constitutes the political as we know it, and it is to this that we must address ourselves.

The following sketch, which might be described as "moving toward a theory of patriarchy," will attempt to prove that sex is a status category with political implications. Something of a pioneering effort, it must perforce be both tentative and imperfect. Because the intention is to provide an overall description, statements must be generalized, exceptions neglected, and subheadings overlapping and, to some degree, arbitrary as well.

The word "politics" is enlisted here when speaking of the sexes primarily because such a word is eminently useful in outlining the real nature of their relative status, historically and at the present. It is opportune, perhaps today even mandatory, that we develop a more relevant psychology and philosophy of power relationships beyond the simple conceptual framework provided by our traditional formal politics. Indeed, it may be imperative that we give some attention to defining a theory of politics which treats of power relationships on grounds less conventional than those to which we are accustomed. I have therefore found it pertinent to define them on grounds of personal contact and interaction between members of well-defined and coherent groups: races, castes, classes, and sexes. For it is precisely because certain groups have no representation in a number of recognized political structures that their position tends to be so stable, their oppression so continuous.

In America, recent events have forced us to acknowledge at last that the relationship between the races is indeed a political one which involves the general control of one collectivity, defined by color, over another collectivity, also defined by birth. Groups who rule by birthright are fast disappearing, yet these remain one ancient and universal scheme for the domination of one birth group by another—the scheme that prevails in the area of sex. The study of racism has convinced us that a truly political state of affairs operates between the races to perpetuate a series of oppressive circumstances. The subordinated group has inadequate redress through existing political institutions, and is deterred thereby from organizing into conventional political struggle and opposition.

Quite in the same manner, a disinterested examination of our system of sexual relationship must point out that the situation between the sexes now, and throughout history, is in a case of that phenomenon Max Weber defined as hekshaft, a relationship of dominance and subordination. What goes largely unexamined, often even unacknowledged (yet is institutionalized nonetheless) in our social order, is the birthright whereby males rule females. Through this system a most ingenious form of "interior colonialization" has been achieved. It is one which tends moreover to be studied than any form of segregation, and more rigorous than class stratification, more uniform, certainly more enduring. However must its present appearance may be, sexual dominion obtains nevertheless as perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power.

This is so because our society, like all other historical civilizations, is a patriarchy. The fact is evident at once if one recalls that the military, industry, technology, universities, science, (politics) office, and finance—in short, every avenue of power within the society, including the coercive force of the police, is entirely in male hands. As the essence of politics is power, such realization cannot fail to carry impact. What lingers of supernatural authority, the Divinity, "His" ministry, together with the ethics and values, the philosophy and art of our culture—its very civilization—as T. S. Eliot once observed, is of male manufacture.

If one takes patriarchal government to be the institution whereby that half of the populace which is female is controlled by that half which is male, the principles of patriarchy appear to be two-fold: male shall dominate female, elder male shall dominate younger. However, just as with any human institution, there is frequently a distance between the real and the ideal; contradictions and exceptions do exist within the system. While patriarchy as an institution is a social constant so deeply entrenched as to run through all other political, social, or economic forms, whether of caste or class, feudality or bureaucracy, just as it pervades all major religions, it also exhibits great variety in locale and locality. In democracies, for example, females have often held no office or do so (as now) in such miniscule numbers as to make her influence upon a political system negligible. In patriarchal systems, on the other hand, the role of females is fundamental to society, and hence is of great theoretical and practical importance.

* Dominations in the quite general sense of power, i.e., the possibility of imposing one's will upon the behavior of others, can emerge in the most diverse forms. In this central passage of Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft Weber is particularly interested in two such forms: control through social authority ("patriarchal, magisterial, or priestly") and control through economic force. In particular he is interested in forms of domination "that control over economic goods, i.e., economic power, is a frequent, often purposively willed, consequence of domination as well as one of its most important instruments." Quoted from Max Weber's and Edward Shils's translation of portions of Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft entitled Max Weber on Law in Economy and Society (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), pp. 333-34.

* No patriarchal societies are known to exist at present. Most societies, which may be, as some anthropologists have held, a residue or a transitional stage of monarchical domination do not constitute an exception to patriarchal rule, it simply channels the powers held by male through female descent—e.g., the Aztecs.

* Radical democracy would, of course, preclude patriarchy. One might find evidence of a general satisfaction with a less than perfect democracy in the fact that women have so rarely held power within modern "democracies."
the below even token representation. Aristocracy, on the other hand, with its emphasis upon the magic and dynastic properties of blood, may at times permit women to hold power. The principle of rule by older males is violated even more frequently. Rearing in mind the variation and degree in patriarchy—say between Saudi Arabia and Sweden, Indonesia and Red China—we also recognize our own form in the U.S. and Europe to be much attuned and attenuated by the reforms described in the next chapter.

I IDEOLOGICAL

Hannah Arendt5 has observed that government is upheld by power supported either through consent or imposed through violence. Conditioning to an ideology amounts to the former. Sexual politics obtains consent through the "socialization" of both sexes to basic patriarchal politics with regard to temperament, role, and status. As to status, a pervasive ascent to the prejudice of male superiority guarantees superior status in the male, inferior in the female. The first item, temperament, involves the formation of human personality along stereotyped lines of sex category ("masculine" and "feminine"), based on the needs and values of the dominant group and dictated by what its members cherish in themselves and find convenient in subordinates: aggression, intelligence, force, and efficacy in the male; passivity, ignorance, docility, "virtue," and ineffectuality in the female. This is complemented by a second factor, sex role, which decrees a consonant and highly elaborate code of conduct, gesture and attitude for each sex. In terms of activity, sex role assigns domestic service and attendance upon infants to the female, the rest of human achievement, interest, and ambition to the male. The limited role allotted the female tends to arrest her at the level of biological experience Therefore, nearly all that can be described is distinctively human in her, rather than animal activity (in her own way animals also give birth and care for their young) is largely reserved for the male. Of course, status again follows from such an assignment. Were one to analyze the three categories one might designate status as the political component, role as the sociological, and temperament as the psychological—but their interdependence is unquestionable and they form a chain. These assigned higher status tend to adopt roles of mastery, largely because they are first encouraged to develop temperaments of dominance. That this is true of caste and class as well is self-evident.

II BIOLOGICAL

Patriarchal religion, popular attitude, and to some degree, science as well6 assumes these psycho-social distinctions to rest upon biological difference.


6The social, rather than the physical sciences are referred to here. Traditionally, method science had often subscribed to such beliefs. This is no longer the case today.

THEORY OF SEXUAL POLITICS

ences between the sexes, so that where culture is acknowledged as shaping behavior, it is said to do no more than cooperate with nature. Yet the temperamental distinctions created in patriarchy ("masculine" and "feminine" personality traits) do not appear to originate in human nature, those of rule and status still less.

The heavier musculature of the male, a secondary sexual characteristic and common among mammals, is biological in origin but is also culturally encouraged through breeding, diet and exercise. Yet it is hardly an adequate category on which to base political relations within civilization.7 Male supremacy, like other political creeds, does not finally reside in physical strength but in the acceptance of a value system which is not biological. Superior physical strength is not a factor in political relations—vide those of race and class. Civilization has always been able to substitute other methods (technic, weaponry, knowledge) for those of physical strength, and contemporary civilization has no further need of it. As present, as in the past, physical exertion is very generally a class factor, those at the bottom performing the most strenuous tasks, whether they be strong or not.

It is often assumed that patriarchy is endemic in human social life, explicable or even inevitable on the grounds of human physiology. Such a theory grants patriarchy logical as well as historical origin. Yet if as some anthropologists believe, patriarchy is not of primeval origin, but was preceded by some other social form we shall call pre-patriarchal, then the argument of physical strength as a theory of patriarchal origins would hardly constitute a sufficient explanation—unless the male's superior physical strength was released in accomplishments with some change in orientation through new values or new knowledge. Consequence about origins is always frustrated by lack of certain evidence. Speculation about predynasty, which of necessity is what this must be, remains nothing but speculation. Were one to indulge in it, one might argue the likelihood of a hypothetical period preceding pre-patriarchal, when the best medical research points to the conclusion that sexual stereotypes have no basis in biology.

7The historian of Roman laws, having very justly remarked that neither birth nor affection was the foundation of the Roman family, have concluded that this foundation must be found in the power of the father or husband. They make a sort of prudential institution of this power, but they do not explain how this power was established, unless it was by the superiority of strength of the husband over the wife, and of the father over the children. Now, we deceive ourselves sadly when we thus place force as the origin of law. We shall see far better that the authority of the father or husband, far from being the first cause, was itself an effect: it was derived from religion, and was established by religion. Superior strength, therefore, was not the principle that established the family." Num. Deus Pasteur de Casulanos, The Ancient City (1864). English translation by Williard Frindell (1873), Doubleday Anchor Press, pp. 41-45. Unfortunately Pasteur de Casulanos neglects to mention how religion came to uphold patriarchal authority, since patriarchal religion is also an effect, rather than an original cause.
about the nature of sexual differences, but the most reasonable among them have deserted the ambition of any definite equation between temperament and biological nature. It appears that we are not about to be enlightened as to the existence of any significant inherent differences between male and female beyond the biogenetical ones we already know. Endocrinology and genetics afford no definite evidence of determining mental-emotional differences.

Not only is there insufficient evidence for the thesis that the present social distinctions of patriarchy (status, role, temperament) are physical in origin, but we are hardly in a position to assess the existing classifications, since distinctions which we know to be culturally induced at the present to outweigh them. Whatever the "real" differences between the sexes may be, we are not likely to know them until the sexes are treated differently, that is alike. And this is very far from being the case at present. Important new research not only suggests that the possibilities of innate temperament differences seem more remote than ever, but even raises questions as to the validity and permanence of psycho-sexual identity. In doing so it gives fairly concrete positive evidence of the overwhelmingly cultural character of gender, i.e. personal identity in terms of sexual category.

What Stoller and other experts define as "core gender identity" is now thought to be established in the young by the age of eighteen months. This is how Stoller differentiates between sex and gender:

Dictionaries state that the major connotation of sex is a biological one, as for example, in the phrases sexual relations or the male sex. In agreement with this, the word sex, in this work will refer to the male or female sex and the component biological parts that determine whether one is a male or female; the word sexual will have connotations of anatomy and physiology. This obviously leaves tremendous areas of behavior, feelings, thoughts and fantasies that are related to the sexes and yet do not have primarily biological connections. It is for some of these psychological phenomena that the term gender will be used: one can speak of the male sex or the female sex, but one can also talk about masculinity and femininity and not necessarily be implying anything about anatomy or physiology. Thus, while sex and gender seem to some inextricably bound together, one purpose of this study will be to confirm the fact that the two realms (sex and gender) are not necessarily bound in anything like a one-to-one relationship, but each may go its quite independent ways.
SEXUAL POLITICS

In cases of genital malformation and consequent erroneous gender assignment at birth, studied at the California Gender Identity Clinic, the discovery was made that it is easier to change the sex of an adolescent male, whose biological identity turns out to be contrary to his gender assignment and conditioning—through surgery—than to undo the educational consequences of years, which have succeeded in making the subject temperamentally feminine in gesture, sense of self, personality and interests. Studies done in California under Stoller's direction offer proof that gender identity (I am a girl, I am a boy) is the primary identity any human being holds—the first as well as the most permanent and far-reaching. Stoller later makes emphatic the distinction that sex is biological, gender psychological, and therefore cultural. "Gender is a term that has psychological or cultural rather than biological connotations. If the proper terms for sex are "male" and "female," the corresponding terms for gender are "masculine" and "feminine"; these latter may be quite independent of (biological) sex." Indeed, arbitrary is gender, that it may even be contrary to physiology: "... although the external genitalia (penis, testes, scrotum) contribute to the sense of maleness, no one of them is essential for it, not even all of them together. In the absence of complete evidence, I agree in general with Money, and the Hampsons who show in their large series of intersexed patients that gender role is determined by postnatal forces, regardless of the anatomy and physiology of the external genitalia."13

It is now believed9 that the human fetus is originally physically female until the operation of androgen at a certain stage of gestation causes those with chromosomes to develop into males. Psychosocially (e.g., in terms of masculine and feminine, and in the distinction of male and female) there is no differentiation between the sexes at birth. Psychosocial personality is therefore postnatal and learned.

... the condition existing at birth and for several months thereafter is one of psychosexual undifferentiation. Just as in the embryo, morphologic sexual differentiation passes from a passive stage to one of fixed immobility, so also does psychosexual differentiation between fixed and immutable—so much so, that mankind has traditionally assumed that the strong and fixed a feeling as personal sexual identity must stem from something innate, instinctive, and not subject to postnatal experience and learning. The view of this traditional assumption is that the power and permanence of something innate has been underestimated.

9 Ibid., p. 9.
10 Ibid., p. 43.

THEORY OF SEXUAL POLITICS

The experiments of animal ethologists in imprinting have now corrected this misconception.15

John Money who is quoted above, believes that "the acquisition of a native language is a human counterpart to imprinting," and gender first established "with the establishment of a native language." This would place the time of establishment at about eighteen months. Jerome Kagan's studies in how children of pre-speech age are handled and touched, tickled and spoken to in terms of their sexual identity ("Is it a boy or a girl?" "Hello, little fellow," "Isn't she pretty," etc.) put the most considerable emphasis on purely tactile learning which would have much to do with the child's sense of self, even before speech is attained.

Because of our social circumstances, male and female are really two cultures and their life experiences are utterly different—and this is crucial. Implicit in all the gender identity development which takes place through childhood is the raw, raw sex of the parent(s), the peer(s), and the culture's notions of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament, character, interests, status, worth, gesture, and expression. Every moment of the child's life is a clue to how he or she must think and behave to attain or satisfy the demands which gender places upon one. In adolescence, the merciless task of conformity grows to crisis proportions, generally cooling and settling in maturity.

Since patriarchy's biological foundations repeat to be so very insecure, one has some cause to admire the strength of a "socialization" which can continue a universal condition "on faith alone" as it were, or through an acquired value system exclusively. What does seem decisive in ensuring the maintenance of the temperamental differences between the sexes is the conditioning of early childhood. Conditioning now in a circle of self-perpetuation and self-fulfilling prophecy. To take a simple example: expectations the culture cherishes about his gender identity encourage the young male to develop aggressive impulses, and the female to thwart her own or turn them inward. The result is that the male tends to have aggression reinforced in his behavior, often with significant antisocial possibilities. The same phenomenon occurs in the female, manifesting itself as aggression against the male. Both males and females thus learn to become less left-handed and more violent than males. The same process of reinforcement is evident in producing the child's "feminine" or "masculine" version of passivity.

In contemporary terminology, the basic division of temperamental traits...
is marred along the line of "aggression is male" and "passivity is female." All other temperament traits are somehow—often with the most devious ingenuity—altered to correspond. If aggressiveness is the trait of the master class, docility must be the corresponding trait of a subject group. The usual hope of such line of reasoning is that "masculinity," by some invisible outside chance, might still be depended upon to rationalize the patriarchal system. An important consideration to be remembered here is that in patriarchy, the function of norm is unthinkingly delegated to the male—were it not, one might as plausibly speak of "feminine" behavior as active, and "masculine" behavior as hyperactive or hyperaggressive.

Here it must be added, by way of a coda, that data from physical sciences has recently been enlisted again to support sociological arguments, such as those of Lionel Tiger, who seeks a genetic justification of patriarchy by proposing a "bonding instinct" in males which assures their political and social control of human society. One sees the implication of such a theory by applying its premise to any ruling group. Tiger's thesis appears to be a misrepresentation of the work of Lorenz and other acients of animal behavior. Since his evidence of inherent trait is patriarchal history and organization, his pretensions to physical evidence are both specious and circular. One can only advance genetic evidence when one has genetic (rather than historical) evidence to advance. As many authorities dismiss the possibility of instincts (complex inherent behavioral patterns) in humans altogether, admitting only reflexes and drives (far simpler neural processes), the prospects of a "bonding instinct" appear particularly foolish.

Should one regard sex in humans as a drive, it is still necessary to point out that the enormous area of our lives, both in early "socialization" and in adult experience, labeled "sexual behavior," is almost entirely the product of learning. So much is this the case that even the act of coitus itself is the product of a long series of learned responses—responses to the patterns and antecedents, even as to the object of sexual choice, which are set up for us by our social environment.

The arbitrary character of patriarchal ascriptions of temperament and role has little effect upon their power over us. Nor do the mutually exclusive, contradictory, and polar qualities of the categories "masculine" and "feminine" inspire upon human personality give rise to sufficiently serious question among us. Under their sign each personality becomes little more, and often less than half, of its human potential. Politically, the fact that each group exhibits a circumscribed but complementary personality and range of activity in secondary importance to the fact that each represents a status or power division. In the matter of coequality patriarchy is a governing

III SOCIOCIAL

Patriarchy's chief institution is the family. It is both a mirror of and a connection with the larger society, a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole. Mediating between the individual and the social structure, the family affects control and conformity where political and other authorities are insufficient. As the fundamental instrument and the foundation unit of patriarchal society the family and its roles are prototypical. Serving as an agent of the larger society, the family not only encourages its own members to adjust and conform, but acts as a unit in the government of the patriarchal state which rules its citizens through its family heads. Even in patriarchal societies where they are granted legal citizenship, women tend to be ruled through the family alone and have little or no formal relation to the state. As co-operation between the family and the larger society is essential, the two would fall apart, the fate of three patriarchal institutions, the family, society, and the state are interrelated. In most forms of patriarchy this has generally led to the granting of religious support in statements such as the Catholic precept that "the father is head of the family," or Judaism's delegation of quasi-priestly authority to the male parent. Secular governments today also confirm this, as in census practices of designating the male as head of household, taxation, passports etc. Female heads of household tend to be regarded as undesirable; the phenomenon is a trait of poverty or misfortune. The Confucian prescription that the relationship between ruler and subject is parallel to that of father and children points to the essentially feudal character of the patriarchal family (and conversely, the familial character of feudalism) even in modern democracies. Traditionally, patriarchy granted the father nearly total ownership over wife or wives and children, including the powers of physical abuse and often those of murder and sale. Classically, as head of the family the father is both begetter and owner in a system in which kinship is property. Yet


24 Yet, in the matter of coequality patriarchy is a governing

25 Through instinct subhuman beings might undertake the activity of building a complex nest or hive; though reflex or drive a human being might simply blink, feel bozos, etc.
that marriage involves an exchange of the female's domestic service and (sexual) consortium in return for financial support. The chief contribution of the family in patriarchy is the socialization of the young (largely through the example and admiration of their parents) into patriarchal ideology's prescribed attitudes toward the categories of role, temperament, and status. Although slight differences in definition depend here upon the parents' grasp of cultural values, the general effect of uniformity is achieved, to be further reinforced through peers, schools, media, and other learning sources, formal and informal. While we may niggles over the balance of authority between the personalities of various households, one must remember that the entire culture supports masculine authority in all areas of life and outside of the home—permits the female's voice at all.

To ensure that its crucial functions of reproduction and socialization of the young take place only within its confines, the patriarchal family instills upon legitimacy. Bronislaw Malinowski describes this as "the principle of legitimacy" formulating it as an insistence that "no child should be brought into the world without a man—and one man at that—assuming the role of sociological father." By this apparently consistent and universal prohibition (whose penalties vary by class and in accord with the expected outcomes of the double standard) patriarchy decrees that the status of both child and mother is primarily or ultimately dependent upon the male. And since it is not only his social status, but even his economic power upon which his dependents generally rely, the position of the masculine figure within the family—as without—is materially, as well as ideologically, extremely strong. Although there is no biological reason why the two central functions of the family (socialization and reproduction) need be inseparable from or even take place within it, evolutionary or utopian efforts to remove these functions from the family have been so frustrated, so beset by difficulties, that most experiments so far have involved a gradual return to tradition. This is strong evidence of how basic a form patriarchy is within all societies, and of how pervasive its effects upon family members. It is perhaps also an admission that change undertaken without a thorough understanding of the sociopolitical institution to be changed is haphazardly productive. And yet radical social

32 Divorce is granted to a male for his wife's failure in domestic service and consortium; it is not granted him for his wife's failure to render him financial support. Divorce is granted to a woman if her husband fails to support her, but not for his failure in domestic service or consortium. But see Kazpakoski versus Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, 375 F. Supp. 156-175 (N.D. Illinois, 1975), where a provision was set and the common law that divorce a wife might not sue for loss of consortium, was upset.

SEXUAL POLITICS

cannot take place without having an effect upon patriarchy. And not simply because it is the political form which subordinates such a large percentage of the population (women and youth) but because it serves as a cited of property and traditional interests. Marriages are financial alliances, and such household operates as an economic entity much like a corporation. 

As one student of the family states it, "the family is the keystone of the stratification system, the social mechanism by which it is maintained." 38

IV. CLASS

It is in the area of class that the caste-like status of the female within patriarchy is most visible to conclusion, for sexual status often operates in a superficially confusing way within the variable of class. In a society where status is dependent upon the economic, social, and educational circumstances of class, it is possible for certain females to appear to stand higher than some males. Yet not when one looks more closely at the subject. This is perhaps easier to see by means of analogy: a black doctor or lawyer has higher social status than a poor white sharecropper. But race, itself a caste system which subordinates class, persuades the latter citizen that he belongs to a higher order of life, just as it suppresses the black professional in spirit, whatever his material success may be. In much the same manner, a truck driver or butcher has always his "mashhood" to fall back upon. Should this final vanity be offended, he may contemplate more violent methods. The literature of the past thirty years provides a staggering number of incidents in which the caste of virility triumphs over the social status of wealthy or even educated women. In literary contexts one has to deal here with wish-fulfillment. Incidents from life (bullying, obscene, or hostile remarks) are probably another sort of psychological gesture of ascendency. Both convey more hope than reality, for class divisions are generally quite impervious to the hostility of individuals. And yet while the existence of class division is not seriously threatened by such expressions of envy, the existence of sexual hierarchy has been reaffirmed and emphasized to "punish" the female quasi effectively.

The function of class or ethnic mores in patriarchy is largely a matter of how overtly displayed or how loudly enunciated the general ethic of masculine supremacy allows itself to become. Here one is confronted by what appears to be a paradox: while in the lower social strata, the male is more likely to claim authority on the strength of his sex alone, he is actually obliged more often to share power with the women of his class who are economically productive. whereas in the middle and upper classes, there is less tendency to assert a blunt patriarchal dominance, as men who enjoy such status have more power in any case. 39

It is generally accepted that Western patriarchy has been much softened by the concepts of courty and romantic love. While this is certainly true,

38. Good, op. cit., p. 96.

THEORY OF SEXUAL POLITICS

such influence has also been vastly overestimated. In comparison with the concept of "machismo" or oriental behavior, one realizes how much of a concession traditional chivalris behavior represents—a specious kind of repar- tion to allow the subordinate female certain means of saving face. While a palliative to the injustice of women's social position, chivalry is also a tech- nique for disguising it. One must acknowledge that the chivalric stance is a game the master group plays in elevating its subject to pedestalal level. Historians of courtly love stress the fact that the capture of the poets had no effect upon the legal or economic standing of women, and very little upon their social status. 40 As the sociologist Hugo Beiglat has observed, both the courtly and the romantic versions of love are "grants" which the male conces- ced out of his total power. 41 Both have had the effect of obscuring the patriarchal character of Western culture and in their general tendency to assign impossible virtues to women, have ended by confining them in a narrow and often remarkably constricting sphere of behavior. It was a Vic- torian habit, for example, to insist the female assume the function of serv- ing as the male's conscience and living the life of goodness he found tedious but felt somehow ought to be done anyway.

The concept of romantic love affords a means of emotional manipulation which the male is free to exploit, since love is the only circumstance in which the female is (ideologically) pardoned for sexual activity. And convictions of romantic love are convenient to both parties since this is often the only condition in which the female can overcome the far more powerful conditioning she has received toward sexual inhibition. Romantic love also obscures the realities of female status and the burden of economic depend- ency. As to "chivalry," such gallant gesture as still resides in the middle classes has degenerated to a tired ritualism, which scarcely serves to mask the status situation of the present.

Within patriarchy one must often deal with contradictions which are simply a matter of class style. David Riesman has noted that as the work- ing class has been assimilated into the middle class, to have its sexual mores and attitudes. The fairly blatant male chauvinism which was once a pro- vince of the lower class or immigrant male has been absorbed and taken on a certain glamour through a number of contemporary figures, who have made it, and a certain number of other working-class male attitudes, part of a new, and at the moment, fashionable life style. So influential in this working- class ideal of brutish virility (to more accurately, a literary and therefore

40. This is the gist of Valery's summary of the situation before the troubadours, acco- knowledging that courtly love is an axiom: "With regard to the social back- ground, all that can be said with confidence is that we know nothing of the objective relationships of men and women in the Middle Ages which might sensibly motivate the strain of love-poetry which the troubadours developed." Maurice Valéry, In Praise of Love (Macmillan, New York, 1953), p. 7.
middle-class version of it) become in our time that it may replace more discreet and "gentlemanly" attitudes of the past. One of the chief effects of class within patriarchy is to set one woman against another, in the past creating a lively antagonism between whose and matron, and in the present between career woman and housewife. One envies the other her "security" and prestige, while the envied yearns beyond the confines of acceptability for what she takes to be the other's freedom, adventure, and contact with the great world. Through the multiple advantages of the double standard, the male participates in both worlds, empowered by his superior social and economic resources to play the estranged women against each other as rivals. One might also recognize subsidiary status categories among women: not only is virile class, but beauty and age as well.

Perhaps, in the final analysis, it is possible to argue that women tend to transcend the usual class stratification in patriarchy, for whatever the class of her birth and education, the female has fewer permanent class associations than does the male. Economic dependency renders her affiliations with any class a tenuous, vicarious, and temporary matter. Aristotle observed that the only slave to whom a commoner might lay claim was his woman, and the service of an unpaid domestic still provides working-class males with a "cushion" against the buffets of the class system which incidentally provides them with some of the psychic luxuries of the leisure class. Thrown upon their own resources, few women rise above working class in personal prestige and economic power, and women as a group do not enjoy many of the interests and benefits any class may offer its male members. Women have therefore less of an investment in the class system. But it is important to understand that as with any group whose existence is parasitic to its ruler, women are a dependency class who live on surplus. And their marginal life frequently renders them conservative, for like all persons in their situation (saves are a classic example here) they identify their own survival with the prosperity of those who feed them. The hope of seeking liberating radical solutions of their own seems too remote for the majority to dare contemplate and remain so until consciousness on the subject is raised.

As race is emerging as one of the final variables in sexual politics, it is pertinent, especially in a discussion of modern literature, to devote a few words to it as well. Traditionally, the white male has been accustomed to conceive the female of his own race, in her capacity as "his woman" a higher

27 Miller and Miller occur to one in this connection, and Lawrence as well. One might trace Reajack's very existence as a fictional figure to the virility symbol of Jack London's Ernest Everhard or Tennessee Williams' Stanley Kowalski. That Reajack is also literate is nothing more than an ingent finish upon the furniture of his "manhood" solely based in the hard taken grant of his mastery over any and every "laced" he can better, bludgeon, or bugger.

28 status than that ascribed to the black male. Yet, as white racism ideology is exposed and begins to erode, sexism's older protective attitudes toward (white) women also begin to give way. And the priorities of maintaining male supremacy might outstrip even those of white supremacy; sexism may be more endemic in our own society than racism. For example, one notes in authors whose we would now term overtly racist, such as D. H. Lawrence - whose contempt for what he so often designates as inferior breeds is unshaken-instances where the lower-case male is brought on to master or humiliate the white man's own subordinate mate. Needless to say, the female of the non-white races does not figure in such tales save as an exemplum of "true" womanhood's servility, worthy of imitation by other less carefully instructed females. Contemporary white sociology often operates under a similar patriarchal bias as when its rhetoric inclines toward the assertion that the "matriarchal" (e.g. marital) aspect of black society and the "satisfaction" of the black male are the most desirable symptoms of black oppression in white racist society, with the implication that racial inequality is capable of solution by a restoration of masulin authority. Whatever the facts of the matter may be, it can also be suggested that analysis of the kind presupposes patriarchal values without questioning them, and tends to obscure both the true character and the responsibility for racist injustice toward black humanity of both sexes.

V. ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL

One of the most efficient branches of patriarchal government lies in the agency of its economic hold over its female subjects. In traditional patriarchy, women, as non-persons without legal standing, were permitted no actual economic existence as they could neither own nor earn in their own right. Since women have always worked in patriarchal societies, often at the most routine or women's tasks, what is at issue here is not labor but economic reward. In modern reformed patriarchal societies, women have certain economic rights, yet the "woman's work" in which some two-thirds of the female population in most developed countries are engaged is work that is

It would appear that the "true fuses of white womanhood" has at least been something of a disappointment to her bed as a fellow-race. The historic connection of the Abolitionist and the Woman's Movement is most evident of this, as well as the incidence of white female and black male marriages as compared with those of white male and black female. Figures on miscegenation are very difficult to obtain. Good (op. cit., p. 37) estimates the proportion of white women marrying black men to be between 3 to 10 times the proportion of white men marrying black women. Robert K. Martin "Intermarriage and the Social Structure" Psychiatry, Vol. 6, August 1949, p. 374, states that "most intermarriages-between races—arise between white men and Negro women." It is hardly necessary to emphasize that the more extensive sexual contacts between white males and black female have not only been extramarital, but (as the part of the white male) expressly exploitative. Under slavery it was simply a case of rape.
not paid for.20 In a money economy where autonomy and prestige depend upon currency, this is a fact of great importance. In general, the position of women in patriarchy is a continuous function of their economic dependence. Just as their social position is vicarious and achieved (often on a temporary or marginal basis) through males, their relation to the economy is also typically vicarious or tangential.

Of that 6-8 percent of women who are employed, their average wages represent only half of the average income enjoyed by men. These are the U. S. Department of Labor statistics for average year-round income: white male, $4100, non-white male $2977, white female, $3951, and non-white female $2815.40 The disparity is made somewhat more remarkable because the educational level of women is generally higher than that of men in comparable income brackets.41 Further, the kinds of employment open to women in modern patriarchies and, with few exceptions, menial, ill paid and without status.

In modern capitalist countries women also function as a reserve labor force, enlisted in times of war and expansion and discharged in times of peace and recession. In this role American women have replaced immigrant labor and now compete with the racial minorities. In socialist countries the female labor force is generally in the lower ranks as well, despite a high incidence of women in certain professions such as medicine. The status and rewards of such professions have declined as women enter them, and they are permitted to enter such areas under a rationale that society or the state (and socialist countries are also patriarchal) rather than woman is served by such activity.

Since women's independence in economic life is viewed with distrust, prescriptive agencies of all kinds (religion, psychology, advertising, etc.)

38 Sweden is an exception in considering housework a material service merited and calculable in diverse acts etc. Thirty-three to forty percent of the female population have market employment in Warner counties: this leaves up to two thirds out of the market labor force. In Sweden and the Soviet Union that figure is lower.


41 See The 1965 Handbook on Women Workers, United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau: "In every major occupational group the median wage or salary income of women was less than that of men. This is true at all levels of educational attainment." A comparison of the income received by women and men with equal amounts of schooling revealed that women who had completed four years of college received incomes which were only 47% of those paid to men with the same educational training; high school graduates earned only 58%, and grade school graduates only 45%.

42 For the distribution of women in lower income and lower status positions see Background Facts on Working Women (pamphlet) U. S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau.
SEXUAL POLITICS

building construction; the development of computers; the moon shot, occur as further examples. If knowledge is power, power is also knowledge, and a large factor in their subordinate position is the fairly systematic ignorance patriarchy imposes upon women.

Since education and economy are so closely related in the advanced nations, it is significant that the general level and style of higher education for women, particularly in their many remaining segregated institutions, is closer to that of Renaissance humanists than to the skills of mid-nineteenth-century scientific and technological society. Traditionally patriarchy permitted occasional minimal literacy to women while higher education was closed to them. While modern patriarchies have, fairly recently, opened all educational levels to women, the kind and quality of education is not the same for each sex. This difference is of course apparent in early socialization, but it persists and enters into higher education as well. Universities, once places of scholarship and the training of a few professionals, now also produce the personnel of a technocracy. This is not the case with regard to women. Their own colleges typically produce neither scholars nor professionals nor technocrats. Nor are they funded by government and corporations as are male colleges and those coeducational colleges and universities whose primary function is the education of males.

As patriarchy enforces a temperamental imbalance of personality traits between the sexes, its educational institutions, segregated or coeducational, accept a cultural programming toward the generally operative division between "masculine" and "feminine" subject matter, assigning the humanities and social sciences (at least in their lower or marginal branches) to the female—and science and technology, the professions, business and engineering to the male. Of course the balance of employment, prestige and reward at present lie with the latter. Control of these fields is very eminently a matter of political power. One might also point out how the exclusive dominance of males in the more prestigious fields directly serves the interests of patriarchal power in industry, government, and the military. And since patriarchy encourages an imbalance in human temperament along sex lines, both divisions of learning (science and the humanities) reflect this imbalance. The humanities, because not exclusively male, suffer in prestige.

We often forget how recent an event is higher education for women. In the U.S. it is barely one hundred years old; in many Western countries barely fifty. Oxford did not grant degrees to women on the same terms as to men until 1920. In Japan and a member of other countries universities have been open to women only in the period after World War II. If are still areas where higher education for women scarcely exists. Women do not have the same access to education as do men. The Princeton Report stated that "although at the high school level more girls than boys receive grades of "A," roughly 55% more boys than girls go to college." The Princeton Report on the Alma mater of Co-Education (1968), Princeton, N.J. 1968, p. 10. Most other authorities give the national ratio of college students as two males to one female. In a great many countries it is far lower.

THEORY OF SEXUAL POLITICS

the sciences, technology, and business, because they are nearly exclusively male reflect the deformation of the "masculine" personality, e.g., a certain predatory or aggressive character.

In keeping with the inferior sphere of culture to which women in patriarchy have always been restricted, the present encouragement of their "feminine" interests through study of the humanities is hardly more than an extension of the "accomplishments" they once cultivated in preparation for the marriage market. Achievement in the arts and humanities is reserved, now, as it has been historically, for males. Token representation, be it Susan Sontag's or Lady Musgrave's, does not vitiate this rule.

VI. Force

We are not accustomed to associate patriarchy with force. If perfect is its system of socialization, so complete the general as well as its local, and so universally it has prevailed in human society, that it scarcely seems to require violent implementation. Customarily, we view its brutality in the past as extinct or "primitive" custom. Those of the present are regarded as the product of individual deviance, confined to pathological or exceptional behavior, and without general import. And yet, just as under other total ideologies (fascism and colonialism are somewhat analogous in this respect) control in patriarchal society would be imperfect, even inapplicable, unless it had the rule of force to rely upon, both in emergencies and as an ever-present instrument of intimidation.

Historically, most patriarchies have institutionalized force through their legal systems. For example, strict patriarchies such as that of Islam, have implemented the prohibition against illegitimacy or sexual autonomy with a death sentence. In Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia the adulteress is still stoned to death with a nullah presiding at the execution. Execution by stoning was once common practice throughout the Near East. It is still condoned in Sicily. Needless to say this was and is the penalty imposed upon the male corespondent. Save in recent times or exceptional cases, adultery was not generally recognized in males except as an offense one male might commit against another's property interest. In Tokugawa Japan, for example, an elaborate set of legal distinctions were made according to class. A samurai was entitled, and in the face of public knowledge, even obliged, to execute an adulterous wife, whereas a chōnin (common citizen) or peasant might be released as he pleased. In cases of cross-class adultery, the lower-class male convicted of sexual intimacy with his employer's wife would, because he had violated sabos of class and property, be beheaded together with her. Upper class males had, of course, the same license to seduce lower-class women as we are familiar with in Western societies.

Indirectly, one form of "death penalty" still obtains even in America today. Patriarchal legal systems in depriving women of control over their own
bodies drive them to illegal abortion; it is estimated that between two and five thousand women die each year from this cause.\textsuperscript{48} Excepting a social license to physical abuse among certain class and ethnic groups, force is diffuse and generalized in most contemporary patriarchies. Significantly, force itself is restricted to the male who alone is psychologically and technically equipped to perpetrate physical violence.\textsuperscript{49} Where differences in physical strength have become immaterial through the use of arms, the female is rendered innocuous by her socialization. Before assault she is almost universally defenseless both by her physical and emotional training. Needless to say, this has the most far-reaching effects on the social and psychological behavior of both sexes.

Patriarchal force also persists in a form of violence particularly sexual in character and exploited most completely in the act of rape. The figures of rapes reported represent only a fraction of those which occur,\textsuperscript{50} as the "absent" of the event is sufficient to deter women from the notion of civil prosecution under the public circumstances of a trial. Traditionally rape has been viewed as an offense one male commits upon another—a matter of abusing "his woman." Vendetta, such as occurs in the American South, is carried out for masculine satisfaction, the exhilarations of race hatred, and the interests of property and vanity (honour). In rape, the emotions of aggression, hatred, contempt, and the desire to break or violate personality, take a form consummately appropriate to sexual politics. In the passages analyzed at the outset of this study, such emotions were present at a barely sublimated level and served as a key factor in explaining the attitude behind the author's use of language and tone.\textsuperscript{51}

Patriarchal societies typically link feelings of cruelty with sexuality, the latter often equated with evil and with power. This is apparent both in the sexual fantasy reported by psychoanalysis and that reported by pornography. The rule here associates seduction with the male ("the masculine role") and victimization with the female ("the feminine role.").\textsuperscript{52} Emotional response to violence against women in patriarchy is often curiously ambivalent:

\textsuperscript{47} Since abortion is extragalactic, figures are difficult to obtain. This figure is based on the estimate of abortions and referral services. Abortions in pregnancy are not officially reported elsewhere.

\textsuperscript{53} Vivid exceptions come to mind in the west of liberation combined by Vietnam, China, etc. But through most of history, women have been assumed and forbidden to exhibit any defense of their own.

\textsuperscript{54} They are still high. The number of rapes reported in the city of New York in 1967 was 15,293. Figure supplied by Police Department.

\textsuperscript{55} It is interesting that male victims of rape at the hands of other males often feel twice as much imposition upon them, although they have not only been subjected to forcible and painful intercourse, but further abused in being reduced to the status of a female. Much of this is evident in Canada and in the contemporary homosocial society reserved for its "positive" or "female" partners.

\textsuperscript{56} Masculine monochromism is regarded as exceptional and often explained as largely homosocial, or at a matter of the subject playing "the female role"—e.g., victim.
SEXUAL POLITICS
what was once forbidden expression outside of pornography or other "under-
ground" productions, such as those of De Sade. As one recalls both the
 euphemism and the idealism of descriptions of cultus in the Romantic poets
(Kant's Eve of St. Agnes), or the Victorian novelists (Hardy, for example)
and contrasts it with Miller or William Burroughs, one has an idea of how
contemporary literature has absorbed not only the truthful explicitness of
pornography, but its anti-social character as well. Since this tendency to hurt
or insult has been given free expression, it has become far easier to assess
sexual antagonisms in the male.

The history of patriarchy presents a variety of cruelties and barbarities:
the same execution in India, the crippling deformity of footbinding in
China, the lifelong ignominy of the veil in Islam, or the widespread persecu-
tion of sequestration, the gynacism, and purdah. Phenomenon such as
coercioventatomy, chronic incision, the sale and enslavement of women under
one guise or another, involuntary and child marriages, concubinage and
prostitution, still take place—the first in Africa, the latter in the Near and
Far East, the last generally. The rationale which accompanies that imposi-
tion of male authority euphemistically referred to as "the battle of the sexes"
bears a certain resemblance to the formulas of nations at war, where any
heinousness is justified on the grounds that the enemy is either an inferior
species or really not human at all. The patriarchal mentality has concocted
a whole series of rationalities about women which accomplish this purpose
solemnly well. And these traditional beliefs still invade our consciousness
and affect our thinking in an extent few of us would be willing to
admit.

VII ANTHROPOLOGICAL: MYTH AND RELIGION
Evidence from anthropology, religions and literary myth all attest to the
politically expedient character of patriarchal convictions about women. One
anthropologist refers to a consistent patriarchal strain of assumption that
"women's biological differences set her apart . . . she is essentially inferior,"
and since “human institutions grow from deep and primal anxiety and are
shaped by irrational psychological mechanisms . . . socially organized at-
titudes toward women arise from basic tensions expressed by the male.”

Under patriarchy the female did not herself develop the symbols by which
she is described. As both the primitive and the civilized worlds are male
worlds, the ideas which shaped culture in regard to the female were also of
male design. The image of women as we know it is an image created by
men and fashioned to suit their needs. Those needs spring from a fear of the
"otherness" of woman. Yet this notion itself presupposes that patriarchy has
already been established and the male has already set himself as the human
norm, the subject and referent to which the female is "other" or alien. What

4 H. K. Hay, The Dangerous Sex, the Myth of Feminine Evil (New York: Pantheon,
1941).

Much of my summary in this section is indebted to Hay's useful assessment of
cultural notions about the female.
SEXUAL POLITICS

group it is expected that the dominant male will eat first or eat better, and even where the sexes feed together, the male shall be served by the female.58

All patriarchies have hedged virginity and defloweration in elaborate rites and distributions. Among preliterates virginity presents an interesting problem in ambivalence. On the one hand, it is, as in every patriarchy, a mysteri-
ous good because a sign of property received intact. On the other hand, it represents an unknown evil associated with the status of blood and terrifyingly "other." So auspicious is the event of defloweration that in many tribes the owner-groom is willing to relinquish-breaking the seal of his new possession to a stronger or older personality who can neutralize the attendant danger.56

Fears of defloweration appear to originate in a few of the alien sexuality of the female. Although any physical suffering endured in defloweration must be on the part of the female (and most societies cause her-body and mentally-to suffer anguish), the social interest, institutionalized in patriarchal ritual and custom, is exclusively on the side of the male’s property interest, prestige, et al (among preliterates) desired.

Patriarchal myth typically posits a golden age before the arrival of women, while its social practices permit males to be relieved of female company. Sexual segregation is so prevalent in patriarchy that one encounters evidence of it everywhere. Nearly every powerful circle in contemporary patriarchy is a man’s group. But men form groups of their own on every level. Women’s groups are typically auxiliary in character, inimical of male efforts and methods on a generally trivial or ephemeral plane. They rarely operate without recourse to male authority, church or religious groups appealing to the superior authority of a cleric, political groups to male legislators, etc.

In sexually segregated situations the distinctive quality of culturally en-
forced temperaments becomes very vivid. This is particularly true of those ex-
cursively masculine organizations which anthropology generally refers to as men’s house institutions. The men’s house is a fortress of patriarchal as-
sociation and emotion. Men’s houses in preliterate society strengthen mas-
culine communal experience through dances, gossip, hospitality, recreation, and religious ceremony. They are also the arsenals of male weaponry.

David Riesman has pointed out that sports and some other activities pro-
vide males with a supportive solidarity which society does not trouble to provide for females.54 While hunting, politics, religion, and commerce may play a role, sport and warfare are consistently the chief cement of men’s

58 The luxury conditions of the "better" restaurants afford a quaint exception. There not only the cuisine but even the table service is conducted by men, an expense commensurate with such an occasion.

THEORY OF SEXUAL POLITICS

house contrary. Scholars of men’s house culture from Huston Webster and Heinrich Schultze to Lionel Tiger tend to be sexual patriots whose aim is to justify the apartheid the institution represents.58 Schultze believes an innate gregariousness and a drive toward fraternal pleasure among peers urges the male away from the inferior and constraining company of women. Nowondering his conviction that a mystical “bending instinct” exists in males, Tiger exalts the public, by organized effort, to preserve the men’s house tradition from its decline. The institution’s loss genial function as power center within a state of sexual antagonism is an aspect of the phe-

59 Heinrich Schultze, Allerklasse und Mannerbunde (Berlin, 1912), and Lionel Tiger, op. cit.
60 Hays, The Dangerous Sex, p. 56.
SEXUAL POLITICS

The term and ethos of men's house culture is sadistic, power-oriented, and latently homosexual, frequently narcissistic in its energy and motives. The men's house reflects that the penis is a weapon, end-lessly equaled with other weapons, is also a spear. The practice of castrating prisoners is itself a comment on the cultural confusion of anatomy and status with weaponry. Much of the glorification of masculine commodity in warfare originates in what one might designate as "the men's house sensibility." Its sadistic and brutalizing aspects are disguised in military glory and a particularly cloying species of masculist sentimentality. A great deal of our culture parades of this tradition, and one might locate its first statement in Western literature in the heroic intimacy of Patroclus and Achilles. Its development can be traced through the epic and the saga to the chansons de geste. The tradition still flowers in our novel and movie, not to mention the comic book.

Considerable sexual activity does take place in the men's house, all of it, needless to say, homosexual. But the taboo against homosexual behavior (at least among equals) is almost universally of far stronger force than the impulse and tends to effect a rechanneling of the libido into violence. This association of sexuality and violence is a particularly militaristic habit of mind. The negative and militaristic coloring of such men's house homosexuality as does exist, is, of course by no means the whole character of homo- sexual sensibility. Indeed, the warrior case of mind with its ultraviolet, is more incipiently homosexual, in its exclusively male orientation, than it is overtly homosexual. (The Nazi experience is an extreme case in point here.) And the heterosexual role-playing indulged in, and still more persuasively, the contempt in which the younger, softer, or more "feminine," male is held, is proof that the actual ethos is masochist, or perversely rather than positively heterosexual. The true inspiration of men's house associations therefore comes from the patriarchal situation rather than from any circumstances inherent in the homo-erotic relationship.

If a positive attitude toward heterosexual love is not quite, in Seigbod's famous dictum, the invention of the twelfth century, it can still claim to be a novelty. Most patriarchies go to great lengths to exclude love as a basis of mate selection. Modern patriarchies tend to do so through class, ethnic, and religious factors. Western classical thought was prone to see in heterosexual love either a fatal stroke of ill luck bound to end in tragedy, or a contempti-

THEORY OF SEXUAL POLITICS

the and brutalizing concomitant with infancy. Medieval opinion was firm in its conviction that love was sinful if sexual, and sex sinful if loving.

Primitive society practices its misogyny in terms of whom and mana which evolve into exploitative myth. In historical cultures, this is transformed into social, then literary, and in the modern period, scientific rationalizations for the sexual politics. Myth is, of course, a felicitous advance in the level of consciousness, since it is so often based on its arguments on ethics or theories of origins. The two leading myths of Western culture are the classical tale of Pandora's box and the Biblical story of the Fall. In both cases earlier mana concepts of feminine evil have passed through a final literary phase to become highly influential ethics of justification of things as they are.

Pandora appears to be a discredited version of a Mediterranean fertility goddess, for in Hesiod's Theogony she wears a wreath of flowers and a sculptured diadem in which are carved all the creatures of land and sea.38 Hesiod attributes her introduction of sexuality which puts an end to the golden age when "the races of men had been living on earth free from all evils, free from laborious work, and free from all wearing sickness."61 Pandora was the origin of "the damnable race of women—a plague which men must live with."62 The introduction of what are seen to be the evils of the male human condition came through the introduction of the female and what is said to be her unique product, sexuality. In Works and Days Hesiod elaborates on Pandora and what she represents—perpetual temptation with "the mind of a bitch and a thievish nature," full of "the cruelty of desire and longings that wear out the body," "lies and cunning words and deceitful soul," a snare sent by Zeus to be "the ruin of men."63 Parishes has God on its side. One of its most effective agents of control is the powerfully expedient character of its doctrines as to the nature and origin of the female and the attribution to her alone of the dangers and evils it imputes to sexuality. The Greek example is interesting here: when it wishes to exalt sexuality it celebrates fertility through the phallus; when it wishes to denigrate sexuality, it cites Pandora. Patriarchal religion and ethics tend to lump the female and sex together as if the whole burden of the evils and stigma it attaches to sex were the fault of the female alone. Thereby sex, which is known to be unclean, sinful, and debilitating, pertains to the fe-

---

39. Hesiod, Works and Days, translated by Richmond Lattimore (University of Michi-

---

---
SEXUAL POLITICS

male, and the male identity is preserved as a human, rather than a sexual one.

The Pandora myth is one of two important Western archetypes which condemn the female through her sexuality and explain her position as her well-deserved punishment for the primal sin under whose unfortunate consequences the race yet labors. Ethics have entered the scene, replacing the simplicities of ritual, taboo, and mana. The more sophisticated vehicle of myth also provides official explanations of sexual history. In Hesiod's tale, Zeus, a conscious and arbitrary father figure, in sending Epimetheus evil in the form of female genitalia, is actually chastising him for adult heterosexual knowledge and activity. In opening the vessel she brings (the vulva or hymen, Pandora's "box") the male satisfies his curiosity but sustains the discovery only by punishing himself at the hands of the father god with death and the associated calamities of postpartum life. The patriarchal trait of male rivalry across age or status line, particularly those of powerful father and rival son, is present as well as the ubiquitous malgiving of the female.

The myth of the Fall is a highly finished version of the same themes. As the central myth of the Judeo-Christian imagination and therefore of our immediate cultural heritage, it is well that we apprise and acknowledge the enormous power it still holds over us even in a rationalist era which has long ago given up literal belief in it while maintaining its emotional ascent intact. This myth of the female as the cause of human suffering, knowledge, and sin is still the foundation of sexual attitudes, for it represents the most crucial segment of the patriarchal tradition in the West.

The Israelites lived in a continual state of war with the fertility cults of their neighbors; these latter afforded sufficient attraction to be the source of constant defection, and the figure of Eve, like that of Pandora, has vestigial traces of a fertility goddess ever present. There is none, probably unconscious, evidence of this in the Biblical account which announces, even before the narration of the fall has begun—"Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living things." Due to the fact that the tale represents a compilation of different oral traditions, it provides two contradictory schemes for Eve's creation, one in which both sexes are created at the same time, and one in which Eve is fashioned later than Adam, an afterthought born from his rib, premonitory instance of the male's appropriation of the life force through a god who created the world without benefit of female assistance.

It is impossible to assess how deeply embedded in our consciousness is the Eden legend and how utterly its patterns are planted in our habits of thought. One comes across its tone and design in the most unlikely places, such as Anthony's film Blow-Up, to name but one of many striking examples. The action of the film takes place in an idyllic garden, loaded with primal overtones largely sexual, where, prompted by a tempter with a phallic gun, the female again becomes the male to death. The photographer who witnesses the scene races as if he were being conducted both to the deepest knowledge of the primal sense and original sin at the same time.

THEORY OF SEXUAL POLITICS

The tale of Adam and Eve is, among many other things, a narrative of how humanity invented sexual intercourse. Many such narratives exist in primitive myth and folk tale. Most of them strike us now as delightfully funny stories of primal innocents who require a good deal of helpful instruction to figure it out. There are other major themes in the story: the loss of primal simplicity, the arrival of death, and the first conscious experience of knowledge. All of them revolve about sex. Adam is forbidden to eat of the fruit of life or of the knowledge of good and evil, the warning states explicitly what should happen if he tastes of the latter: "in that day thou shalt surely die." He eats but fails to die (at least in the story), from which one might infer that the serpent told the truth.

But at the moment when the pair eat of the forbidden tree they awake to their nakedness and feel shame. Sexuality is clearly involved, though the fable invites it is only tangential to a higher prohibition against disobeying orders in the matter of another and less controversial appetite—one for food. Robinson points out that the Hebrew verb for "eat" can also mean cotoas. Everywhere in the Bible "knowing" is synonymous with sexuality, and clearly a product of contact with the phalus, here in the fable objectified as a snake. To blame the evils and sorrows of life—loss of Eden and the rest—on sexuality, would all too logically implicate the male, and such implication is hardly the purpose of the story, designed as it is expressly in order to blame all this world's discomfort on the female. Therefore it is the female who is tempted and "beguiled" by the penis, transformed into something else, a snake. Thus Adam has "beaten the rap" of sexual guilt, which appears to be why the sexual motive is so repressed in the Biblical account. Yet the very transparency of the serpent's universal phallic value shows how unsteady the mythic mind can be about its shifts. Accordingly, in her inferiority and vulnerability the woman takes and eats, simple cereal thing that she is, affected by Bajtery even in a reptile. Only after does the male fall, and with him, humanity—for the fable has made him the racial type, whereas Eve is a mere sexual type and, according to tradition, either expendable or replaceable. And as the myth records the original sexual adventure, Adam was seduced by women, who was seduced by a penis. "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the fruit and I did eat," is the first man's defense. Seduced by the phallic snake, Eve is convicted for Adam's participation in sex.

Adam's curse is to toil in the "sweat of his brow," namely the labor of the male associated with civilization. Eden was a fantasy world without either effort or activity, which the essence of the female, and with her sexuality, has destroyed. Eve's existence is far more political in nature and a brilliant "explanation" of her inferior status. "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children. And thy desire shall be to thy husband. And he shall rule over thee."

Again, as in the Pandora myth, a proprietary father figure is punishing his subjects for adult homosexuality. It is easy to agree with Robinson's comment on the negative attitude the myth adopts toward sexuality. "Sexual maturity
SEXYUAL POLITICS

is regarded as a misfortune, something that has robbed mankind of happiness... the explanation of how death came into the world.46

What requires further emphasis is the responsibility of the female, a marginal creature, in bringing on this plague, and the justice of her subordinated condition as dependent on her primary role in this original sin. The connection of woman, sex, and sin constitutes the fundamental pattern of western patriarchal thought thereafter.

VIII PSYCHOLOGICAL

The aspects of patriarchy already described have each an effect upon the psychology of both sexes. Their principal result is the internalization of patriarchal ideology. Status, temperament, and role are all value systems with endless psychological ramifications for each sex. Patriarchal marriage and the family with its ranks and division of labor play a large part in enforcing them. The male’s superior economic position, the female’s inferior one have also grave implications. The large quantity of guilt attached to sexuality in patriarchy is overwhelmingly placed upon the female, who is, culturally speaking, held to be the culpable or the more culpable party in nearly any sexual liaison, whatever the extenuating circumstances. A tendency toward the reification of the female makes her more often a sexual object than a person. This is particularly so when she is denied human rights through chaste status. Even where this has been partly ameliorated the cumulative effect of religion and custom is still very powerful and has enormous psychological consequences. Woman is still denied sexual freedom and the biological control over her body through the cult of virginity, the double standard, the proscriptions against abortion, and in many places because contraception is physically or psychically unavailable to her.

The continual surveillance in which she is held tends to perpetuate the infantilization of women even in situations such as those of higher education. The female is continually obliged to seek survival or advancement through the approval of males as those who hold power. She may do this either through appeasement or through the exchange of her sexuality for support and status. As the history of patriarchal culture and the representations of herself within all levels of its cultural media, past and present, have a devastating effect upon her self-image, she is customarily deprived of any but the more trivial sources of dignity or self-respect. In many patriarchies, language, as well as cultural tradition, reserve the human condition for the male. With the Indo-European languages this is a nearly inescapable habit of mind, for despite all the customary pieties that “man” and “humanity” are terms which apply equally to both sexes, the fact is hardly obscured.


THEORY OF SEXUAL POLITICS

that in practice, general application favors the male far more often than the female as referent, or even sole referent, for such designations.46

When in any group of persons, the ego is subjected to such invidious versions of itself through social beliefs, ideology, and tradition, the effect is bound to be pernicious. This coupled with the persistent though frequently cabal designation women encounter daily through personal contacts, the impressions gathered from the images and media about them, and the discrimination in matters of behavior, employment, and education which they endure, should make us no very special cause for surprise that women develop group characteristics common to those who suffer minority status and a marginal existence. A witty experiment by Philip Goldberg proves what everyone knows, that having interiorized the disreputes in which they are held, women despise both themselves and each other.44 This simple test consisted of asking women undergraduates to respond to the macho scholarship in an essay signed alternately by one John McKay and one Joan McKay. In making their assessments the students generally agreed that John was a remarkable thinker, Joan an unimpressive mind. Yet the articles were identical: the reaction was dependent on the sex of the supposed author.

As women in patriarchy are for the most part marginal citizens when they are citizens at all, their situation is like that of other minorities, here defined not as dependent upon numerical size of the group, but on its status. A minority group is any group of people who because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment.45 Only a handful of sociologists have ever addressed themselves in any meaningful way to the minority status of women. And psychology has yet to produce relevant studies on the

46 Languages outside the Indo-European group are instructive. Japanese, for example, has one word for man (otoko), another for woman (onna) and a third for human being (ningen). It would be as unthinklible to use the first to cover the third as it would be to use the second.

47 Philip Goldberg, "Are Women Prejudiced Against Women?" Transcripts, April 1968.

6 Louis Wirth, "Problems of Minority Groups," in The Science of Man in the World Crisis, ed. by Ralph Linton (New York, Appleton, 1945), p. 347. Wirth also stipulates that the group see it itself as discriminated against. It is interesting that many women do not recognize themselves as discriminated against; no better proof could be found of the totality of their conditioning.

6 The provocative funnel in question include the following:


Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma, Appendix 5 is a parallel of black minority status with women’s minority status.


subject of ego damage to the female which might bear comparison to the excellent work done on the effects of racism on the minds of blacks and coloreds. The remarkably small amount of modern research devoted to the psychological and social effects of masculine superiority on the female and on the culture in general attest to the widespread ignorance or unconcern of a conservative social science which takes patriarchy to be both the status quo and the state of nature.

What little literature the social sciences afford us in this context confirms the presence in women of the expected traits of minority status: group self-hatred and self-rejection, a contempt both for herself and for her fellows—the result of that continual, however subtle, reiteration of her inferiority which she eventually accepts as a fact. Another index of minority status is the formality with which all minority group members are judged. The double standard is applied not only in cases of sexual conduct but other contexts as well. In the relatively rare instances of female crime too: in many American states a woman convicted of crime is awarded a longer sentence. Generally an accused woman acquires a notoriety out of proportion to her acts and due to sensational publicity she may be tried largely for her “sex life.” But so effective is her conditioning toward passivity in patriarchy, woman is rarely extrovert enough in her maladjustment to enter upon criminality. Just as every minority member must either apologize for the excesses of a fellow or condemn him with a studied enthusiasm, women are characteristicPATH|ly bashful, muffled and frightened in their censure of aberrations among their numbers.

The growing suspicion which plagues any minority member, that the myths propagated about his inferiority might after all be true often reaches remarkable proportions in the personal insecurities of women. Some find their subordinate position so hard to bear that they express and deny its existence. But a large number will recognize and admit their circumstances when they are properly pleased. Of two studies which asked women if they would have preferred to be born male, one found that one fourth of the sample admitted as much, and in another sample, one half. When one inquires of children, who have not yet developed as serviceable techniques of evasion, what their choice might be, if they had one, the answers of female children in a large majority of cases clearly favor birth into the elite group.

My remarks on the minority status of women are summarized from all the articles listed, and I am personally indebted to an accomplished critique of them in an unpublished draft by Professor Marlene Dixon, formerly of the University of Chicago’s Department of Sociology and the Committee on Human Development, presently of McGill University.


See Helen Haver, op. cit., and Carolyn Bird, op. cit.

Theory of Sexual Politics

whereas boys overwhelmingly reject the option of being girls. The phenomenon of parent’s prenatal preference for male sex is too common to require much elaboration. In the light of the imminent possibility of parents actually choosing the sex of their child, such a tendency is becoming the cause of some concern in scientific circles. Comparisons such as Myrdal, Hacker, and Dixon draw between the ascribed attributes of blacks and women reveal that common opinion associates the same traits with both: inferior intelligence, an institutional or sexual gratification, an emotional nature both primitive and childlike, an imagined power in or affinity for sexuality, a contentment with their own lot which is in accord with a proof of its appropriateness, a willing habit of deceit, and concealment of feeling. Both groups are forced to the same accommodating tactics: an ingenuiting or supplicative women invented to please, a tendency to study those points at which the dominant group are subject to influence or corruption, and an assumed air of helplessness involving fraudulent appeals for direction and a show of ignorance. It is ironic how misogyny literature has for centuries concentrated on just these traits, directing its forensic oratory at feminine guile and corruption, and particularly that element of it which is sexual, or as such sources would have it, “wanton.”

As with other marginal groups a certain handful of women are accorded higher status than they may perform a species of cultural policing over the rest. Hughes speaks of marginality as a case of status dilemma experienced by women, blacks, or second-generation Americans who have “come up in the world but are often refused the rewards of their efforts on the grounds of their origins.” This is particularly the case with “new” or educated women. Such exceptions are generally obliged to make ritual, and often comic, statement of deference to justify their elevation. These characteristically take the form of pledges of “femininity,” namely a delight in docility and a large appetite for masculine dominance. Politically, the most useful persons for such a role are entertainers and public sex objects. It is a common trait of minority status that a small percentage of the fortunate are permitted to entertain their rulers. (That they may entertain their fellow subjects in the process is less to the point.) Women entertain, please, gratify, satisfy and flatter men with their sexuality. In most minority groups athletes or intellectuals are allowed to emerge as “stars,” identification with whom should content their less fortunate fellows. In the case of women both such eventualities are discouraged on the reasonable grounds that the most popular

“'One study of fourth grades showed ten times as many girls wishing they could have been boys, as boys who would have chosen to be girls.' Watson, op. cit., p. 477.


79 Hughes, op. cit.
explanations of the female's inferior status ascribe it to her physical weakness or intellectual inferiority. Logically, exhibitions of physical courage or agility are indecorous, just as any display of serious intelligence tends to be out of place.

Perhaps patriarchy's greatest psychological weapon is simply its universality and longevity. A referent scarcely exists with which it might be contrasted or by which it might be confuted. While the same might be said of class, patriarchy has a still more tenacious or powerful hold through its successful habit of passing itself off as nature. Religion is also universal in human society and slavery was once nearly so; advocates of each were fond of arguing in terms of necessity or irreversible human "instinct"—even "biological origins." When a system of power is thoroughly in command, it has scarcely need to speak itself about; when its workings are exposed and questioned, it becomes not only subject to discussion, but even to change. Such a period is the one near under discussion.