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Spring 1992

### Logos-Sophia

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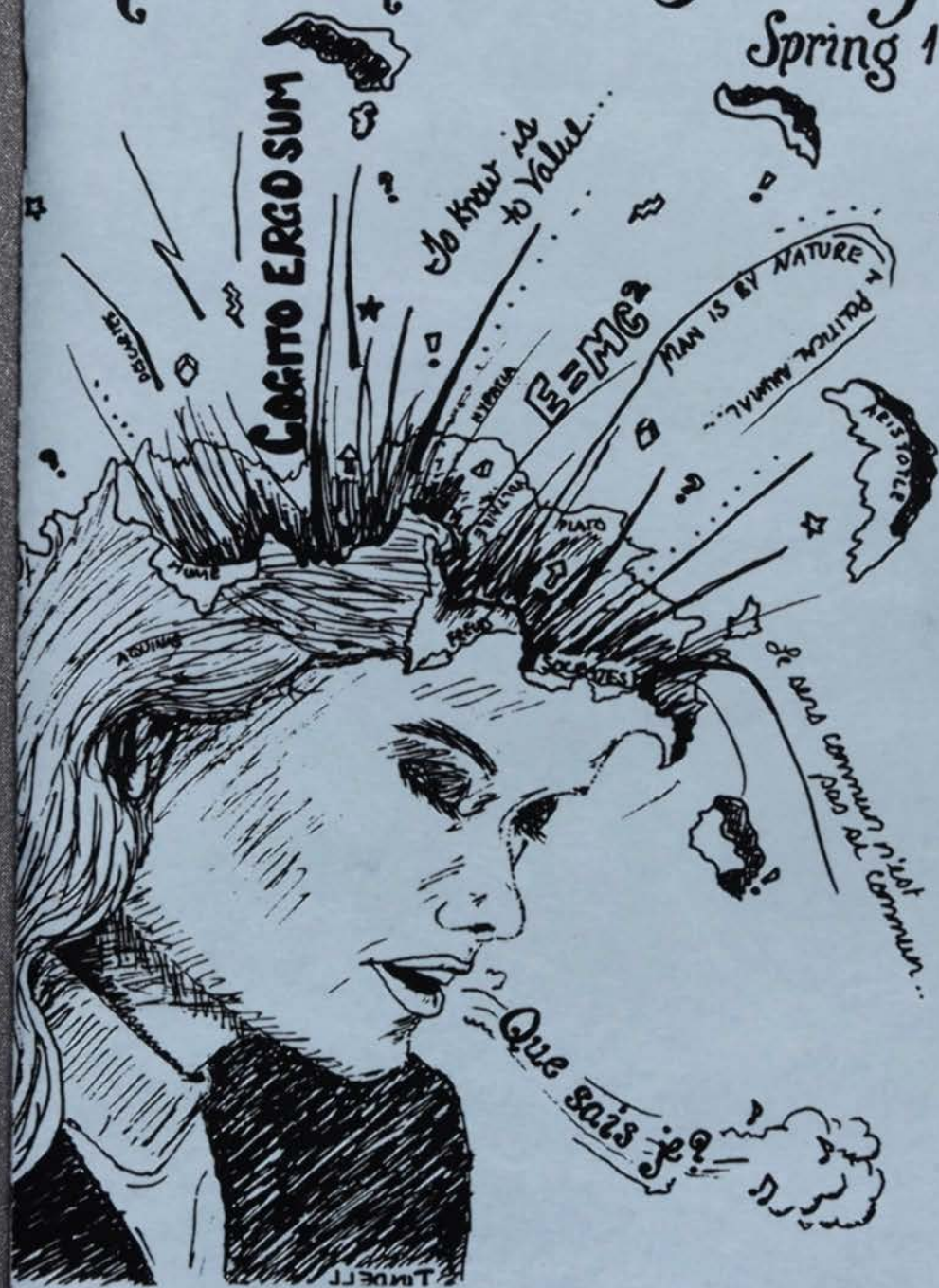
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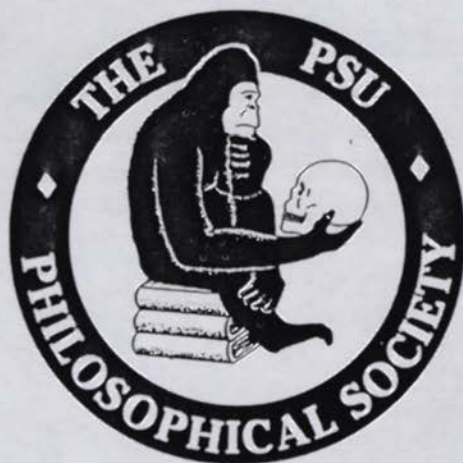
Philosophical Society

Spring 1992



# LOGOS-SOPHIA

THE JOURNAL OF THE  
PITTSBURGH STATE UNIVERSITY  
PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY



Volume IV, Spring 1992

## Board of Editors

Ellen Harrington  
Curtis Isom  
Donald Wayne Viney  
Faculty Advisor



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## INTRODUCTION

Donald Wayne Viney

The Pittsburg State University Philosophical Society presents the fourth volume of *Logos-Sophia*, its official journal. As in the past, *Logos-Sophia* features the winners of the Women's Studies Essay Contest. The winner of the undergraduate division was Dawn Davidson. The winner of the graduate division was Beth Stevenson.

The main activities of the Philosophical Society this past year included the sponsoring of philosophy week and a Coffee House. Philosophy week (April 1-5) featured four speakers and a panel discussion. Dr. Kathleen Nichols of the department of English spoke on "Language and Power: A Feminist Perspective." "America's Real Religion" was the title of Mr. Gene Garman's presentation. Dr. Surendra Gupta of the department of History discussed "The Crisis of Perestroika in the Soviet Union." Dr. Donald Viney, from the department of Social Science, gave a paper entitled "The Metaphysics of Time Travel." Mr. E.W. Hollenbeck, Mr. Curtis Isom, Dr. Paul Zagorski, and Dr. Timias Zaharopoulos served as panelists for a discussion of the Gulf Crisis and the War with Iraq.

On October 4th the Philosophical Society sponsored the second annual Coffee House. There was a dramatic reading by Curtis Isom and music by the PSU Jazz Choir (directed by Susan Laushman), Tom Leverett, Paul Shoemaker, and Don and Rebecca Viney. A good time was had by all.

Officers of PSUPS for 1991 were: James Holman, President; Richard McAfee, Vice-President and Sherri Strickland, Secretary. Special thanks are due to Ellen Harrington for her continued financial support of PSUPS. The cover of this issue of the journal was designed

by Susan Tindell, a talented student in the department of Music. The expressions exploding out of the head of the figure on the cover are from various philosophers and scientists. "Cogito ergo sum" (I think therefore I am) from Rene Descartes; "To know is to value" from Charles Hartshorne; " $E=mc^2$ " from Albert Einstein; "Man is by nature a political animal" from Aristotle; "Le sens commun n'est pas si commun" (Common sense is not so common) from Voltaire; and "Que sais je? (What do I know?) from Michel de Montaigne. To paraphrase Emily Dickinson, if you read it and it blows the top of your head off, you know it's philosophy.

PSUPS also thanks Denise Tippie and Mike Modaress for helping to prepare this issue for publication.

The PSUPS logo on the cover page was designed by J. Todd Gimlin.





# OBSCURE OBJECTIVITIES: A Discussion of Pertinent Issues Raised in *The Second Sex*

Kathleen Moyer

"...And I now pronounce you, Man and wife..." These words heard so often in movies, television, child's play and during the marriage ceremony are intended to signify the union of two beings in holy (or unholy) matrimony. What is also made clear is the idea that woman is chattel, announced in a legal and spiritual ritual that this object, woman, now belongs to this man. Firmly ensconced in traditional society as man's property, woman has only in recent years begun to make progress toward her ultimate release. Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex*, deals with the *subject* of woman as a female being, and discusses her role as the "other".

"Other" is defined by Webster as being the one (as of two or more) left; being the ones distinct from those first mentioned; and, second. Beauvoir states that "Otherness is a fundamental category of human thought". (SS p. xiv). As most school children learn in grade school, every sentence has a Subject (the most important part of the sentence), a verb (to describe what the Subject is doing) and generally, an object ( a recipient of the action taken by the Subject). This is quite fundamental. Applied to human relations, the subject/object relationship follows the same pattern. The subject is more important than the other, the object.

The subject/other duality is joined by other classic dualities: God/Satan, Good/evil, master/slave, essential/unessential, man/woman. Clearly, no one would choose for oneself the position of the "other" if choice were the only determining factor.

The reasons that woman accepts the role of the unessential object are many: she may lack particular means or methods of asserting herself as Subject; she may feel that to begin anew as an independent



person is too frightening, while the familiar path is easy and comfortable; or she simply may feel that she deserves her place.

Keeping woman in her place as the "other" has been a full time job manned by mega-volunteers and maintained by both men and women. The legends and myths of Adam and Eve (Eve was created from Adam's rib, and, ingrate that she was, got them both kicked out of the Garden of Eden), along with Pandora (so it was a woman, after all, who unleashed the dark emotions and vices upon man!), Delilah (some men still have difficulty going to a female barber), and myriad others (pun intended) all contribute to the idea that woman is a trouble-maker, temptress, and inessential (although functional) being.

Hand-in-hand with the creation of the myths that attempt to lock woman in place, man has also developed the universal rule, as viewed by Beauvoir, of seeing the world from his point of view, absolutely (SS p. 290). So when man perceives woman as a mystery, he means that she is a mystery in essence for him. Surely woman does not view herself as a mystery, except in the sense that every human wonders about him/herself. Yet, because man does not, and perhaps can not because of the rut he has worn in his thinking on the subject, understand the diverse qualities of woman, she is labeled an enigma. This development is self sustaining, for many of the very qualities that make man scratch and shake his head are both a direct and indirect response to the otherness fostered by him.

Similar to all oppressed peoples, woman has learned to hide her real sentiments and true feelings, substituting for them schemes, manipulations and wiles. Rather than an honest relationship, man has opted for a dominant position, not unlike that of the master (sometimes benevolent, sometimes not) who requires obedience, loyalty and cheerfulness. Woman's role as thespian may not win her the Oscar or Tony awards, not because she did not deserve them, but rather because it is in her best interest to keep her vocation to herself. Woman's emotional nature and ability to shed tears is seen by man as a weakness, rather than what it is in reality, and escape hatch for stress. Since this attribute is viewed as a much-to-be-avoided trait, men children are ridiculed for crying. Unfortunately, the inability to vent stress in this manner has been seen by medical experts as a major contributor to

heart attacks and their stress related illnesses for men. That woman can change her mind is seen of as keeping an open mind, but rather as being empty headed with no sense.

The mystery may be explained by its usefulness woman. It is interesting to note that the times in history when women were most accepted as equals by the ruling class, their masters, was when their help was needed the most. The women who helped to tame the frontiers, working side by side with man to keep the homestead going, were not very mysterious: they were too busy, as were the men. It was in times of leisure or when there was not much progress to be made by hard physical labor that men dreamed up the Feminine Mystique. This is tantamount to man not accepting responsibility for his lack of understanding, instead man labels what he does not understand as a mystery. This both excuses his laziness ( mental, for lack of empathy) and strokes his ego at the same time. "Oh, women! They don't make sense or have any logic about them, but God knows we love them anyway!" See how reasonable and benevolent they are?

The myth is continued as men, and some of them are thought to be very learned, developed the theory of penis envy. There may be some validity to this thought, but it must be truly understood for what it is. On a personal note, I have always been envious of the penile extremity because of its excellent design for voiding. The only shame I have ever felt in squatting or sitting to void had more to do with the fact that my accuracy is not always the best, rather than some unnamed source of shame. But there is no more to this envy than a desire to urinate more efficiently.

It seems only natural to me that one would be envious of a penis, when examining the evidence of what are the basic differences between men and women besides the power structure effected by man. Men and women have the same number of fingers, toes, eyes, nose, ears, teeth, ect. The only difference, besides fashion, appears to be genital related. Of course this was noted, although not discussed. A Neodesha couple with three female children had as their forth and last child, a boy. The girls were thrilled with him, he was a delight, truly a miracle. The treatment appeared to be different for this wonderful gift from God (whether this treatment stemmed from the fact that this



was the last child or the fact that it was a BOY!!! is unimportant, but notable). One of the children, the middle girl aged about seven years, noticed the difference in both the treatment and in the anatomy. She proceeded to attach a clothes pin to the crotch of her trousers and parade bout the house and neighborhood proclaiming *her* new-found importance.

It appears very egotistical that macho man must call attention to his good(?) fortune in the form of an extra appendage by declaring that the "other" must certainly be jealous of man's good luck/destiny.

Beauvoir explains that having a penis is "no doubt a privilege, but is one whose value naturally decreases when the child loses interest in its excretory functions and becomes socialized." (SS 315). The value of the penis is apparently the essence of manhood that is symbolizes. Little boys reinforce their masculinity by their concern for it and the fact that there is no opposition to their will to self realization. Girls on the other (!) hand are encouraged to please, be pleasant and selfless. "She is treated like a live doll and is refused liberty. Thus a vicious circle is formed; for the less she exercises her freedom to understand, to grasp and discover the world about her, the less resources will she find within herself, the less will she dare to affirm herself as subject." (SS 316).

The live doll treatment is a classic example of the role of the "traditional" Southern woman, a weak, frivolous but virtuous creature who can be placed on a pedestal, worshiped and kept. Despite the fact that the woman of today is thrown into a world that she may or may not be ready for, despite the necessity for survival that the single/divorced mother finds when she must make a living in a world geared for men, despite the crumbling pedestal-because of the men who put her there then force her to a second class stature by means of sub-standard wages and a general attack upon her character, despite ALL this, and maybe also because of it, woman is condemned for the fall from the pedestal. After all, woman fell once from the Garden of Eden and now she has the effrontery to topple off the damn pedestal! No wonder women have been accused of being dizzy—we've all got vertigo and fear of falling.

Man hoists woman upon the pedestal, and then is sorely disappointed when she cannot maintain the standards HE has set for HER. The

frustration for the male must be as great as for the female, even though it is of his own making.

"Oppression is to be explained by the tendency of the existent to flee from himself by means of identification with the other, whom he oppresses to that end. In each man the tendency exists today...he is seeking in her the myth of his virility, of his sovereignty, of his immediate reality." (SS 800) The male is very concerned with the need to appear manly, superior, and of importance. He is aggressive and hostile towards women because he fears the image with which he identifies. (SS 800).

Beauvoir and Sartre too, would describe the behavior of both the man and the woman described in this paper as being in "bad faith". Being in bad faith means taking an identity or a role that will give one's life meaning, and that will justify one's existence without any use of the freedom and responsibility that each human contains. The easy chair of bad faith captures both men and women. It is much less complicated in life to assume that things happen to one, rather than being in control of the decisions made regarding one's life. Our society reinforces bad faith (not surprising, since it is so male dominated, and men are in bad faith as shown above) because it makes for a much more orderly society, with everyone behaving according to their roles' dictates. When woman blindly accepts without question the role assigned to her, she is in bad faith, but, she is dependable. Kant would probably discount the bad faith, since he put so much emphasis upon duty, yes, woman would be fulfilling her duty to MANKIND, but not to herself would she be so true. The security of bad faith is attained at the dear price of loss of freedom and the loss of the beauty of taking ultimate responsibility for one's own life.

The easy chair of bad faith does lose some of its comfort when it ultimately leads to anxiety or angst, according to Heidegger. The "call of conscience" is an anxiety occurring over nothing that urges men and women to take control of their lives instead of allowing society to make their decisions. It is in this manner that Beauvoir encourages women to take the action necessary to remove themselves from the ranks of those in bad faith. Typical "female" behavior may also be rationalized from the point of view that something is recognized as being wrong



with her life, but she is unable to pull out of the rut of complacency to deal with the angst. For this woman, masochism or religion may be viable answers to the superficial problem.

Simone de Beauvoir has written a work of tremendous import for both men and women. It seems as if she is angry, but under control, in the book, and I can find no fault with this, because I, too, am angry. The intent of the book, it seems to me, is to make both men and women aware of the massive pretension that has been taking place for centuries. The time to stop this nonsense is upon us. Much energy is being wasted while we wait for nature to take its course. The energy that man squanders fearing, seducing, playing games with, and hating women could be spent upon liberating himself from his chains. Perhaps this is the reason he does not take the step, because he fears the liberation eminent in the liberation of women. Women, too, must not take the easy path to the end of their days. It only seems easy, it actually becomes harder with each step. The rewards of this behavior are shallow and false. Simone de Beauvoir is a champion of freedom and humankind.

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# Is Homosexuality Against the Will of God?

Richard McAfee

In the June 24, 1991 *Time* Magazine an article was featured entitled "What Does God Really Think About Sex?" It cites a battle over the question of sex, especially homosexuality, that is currently blazing among Christian and Jewish churches. "in essence, the church reports, three years in preparation, shattered 19 centuries of tradition and asked the church, for the first time, to bestow acceptance upon sex outside of marriage for homosexuals, for adult singles living together..." (Time 48). The question is: Should churches change their views on sex to more closely adhere to modern attitudes? It is easy to argue that homosexuality is against the will of God. Most churches will teach, and honestly believe, God condemned homosexuality. It is true that the Bible condemns homosexual acts, but can all scriptures be listed under the general heading of "the will of God"? The purpose of this essay will be to discuss the question, Is Homosexuality against the will of God?

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah is commonly accepted as an example of God's displeasure with homosexuals. People who use this example tend to ignore the fact that homosexuality was common in ancient Rome, Greece, and China as well as other ancient countries. In fact, only the Jewish religion had laws against homosexuality before the Christian era.

What made Sodom and Gomorrah so special? In the story a group of men from Sodom storm Lot's house demanding "Where are the men which came to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them" (Genesis 19:5). "As a punishment for the wickedness of its citizens, the Lord destroyed Sodom and all its inhabitants with a shower of brimstone and fire" (West 120). For these men to have sex

with Lot's guests was the law of the city and their right. This is where the story loses context with homosexual behavior since most homosexual acts are committed between consenting adults.

Most people would agree that it is wrong to force anyone to have sex that is against their sexual orientation, or their will. That would be a violation of personal rights in the most vile form. The gang of men were, in effect, trying to rape the guests of Lot. Unfortunately, people have interpreted the Bible to mean that all homosexuals are rapists. "Christians have always assumed, although the contrary has been argued...that the sins in question [in the destruction of Sodom] were homosexual. Biblical reference to 'sodomists', and their banishment by the kings of Israel (1 Kings 15,22), do not necessarily refer to uncomplicated [non-consenting] homosexuality" (West 120).

To confuse all homosexual acts with homosexual rape is the same as to confuse all heterosexual acts with heterosexual rape. Rape is rape. The intent of the rape is almost unheard of out side of prisons. It is then done almost exclusively by heterosexuals. They are not raping the gender of their choice but only the gender that is available.

"The Torah explicitly condemns male homosexuality and regards it as a crime punishable by death (Leviticus 18: 22 and 20: 13). Paul is also quite explicit. He says that homosexuality is unnatural and displeasing to God (Romans 1: 26-27) and that homosexuals are unrighteous and cannot inherit the kingdom of God, but they can be washed of their sins by Jesus (1 Corinthians 6: 9-11)...(Viney 1991). Most of us, when considering the question of homosexuality, do not consider the words of the Bible. Instead we ask, "Would I do that myself?". If we believe in the principal of democracy, "the right of the individual conscience must be protected" (Viney 1991).

So, the question remains whether homosexuality is against the will of God. "Most people would consider the teachings of the Bible as quotes from God, through the authors of the Bible. The only direct quote from God, I can think of, is the commandments written by the hand of God and handed down to Moses" (Hazen 1991). The Ten Commandments, of course, did not mention homosexuality. It is a



compelling fact that Christ did not mention the subject either. He did, after all, come to earth to educate the people of God. Yet, he chose to remain silent on this subject. We should not confuse silence with consent. "Arguments based on silence are notoriously bad. The fact that [Christ or God] did not say anything does not mean [they] did not have anything to say" (Viney 1991). However, Christ did condemn the Scribes and Pharisees for building up so many of their own laws that no one had a chance to enter the kingdom of God.

When asked about the commandments of God, Christ replied, "Thou shalt love thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as you love thyself" (Matthew 22: 37-39). If we do all things in love we cannot sin against the will of God or the good of our brothers and sisters.

Of course, it has been argued that homosexuality is against the will of God because it is not a way of reproducing. God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply. Even so, not all heterosexual couples have babies. Those that do have children do not necessarily think about reproduction when they are engaging in sexual intercourse.

If reproduction were the only motivation to have sex we would not have unwanted pregnancies or abortions. Homosexuals, and only homosexuals, are accountable within the Christian community for not reproducing. Psychologists tell us that sexual expression is emotionally healthy. It is needed to add to our sense of loving and belonging. Sexual depravation is unhealthy, and will often lead to horrible sex crimes. "If we're after more than babies when we have sex, we're also after more than carnal bliss...We're in quest of a oneness that can be achieved only in the fusion of our duality" (Steel 27).

In 1973 The American Psychiatric Association (APA) determined homosexuality to be a personality trait. In other words, homosexuals cannot be made well because they are not sick. In the *Time Magazine*, September ninth, issue there was an article entitled, "Are Gay Men Born That Way?". It reports that there is a structural difference between the brains of homosexual and heterosexual men. "In a study of 41 brains taken from people who died before age 60, Simon Le Vay, a biologist at San Diego's Salk Institute for Biological studies, found



that one tiny region in the brain of homosexual men was more like that in women than in heterosexual men...That specific part found at the front of the hypothalamus in an area of the brain that is known to help regulate male sexual behavior" (Time 60).

If this is true that there is an organic cause for homosexual behavior then it is unfair for God, or people, to blame them for being that way. There was a time when leaders of the church believed that some behaviors were due to demon possession. Of course they wanted to believe their prejudices were the will of God; it is always easier to condemn when God is on your side. The idea of demon possession was changed only after we became aware of psychological problems such as schizophrenia.

If one considers animals to be 'natural' one should note they, can also be gay. Kinsey reported: "In actuality, sexual contact between individuals of the same sex are known to occur in practically every species which has been extensively studied" (Churchill 63).

Not all men who engage in homosexual acts are gay. Even the first report on homosexual behavior [the Kinsey report, 1948], showed surprising results, "Kinsey includes figures for homosexual behavior are so important and relevant they will bear total male population has at least some overt homosexual experiences to the point of orgasm...Thirteen per cent [sic] of the population has more of the homosexual than heterosexual..." (West 12).

Kinsey reported on whites only, when the report was updated and included non-whites the results were even more surprising; six in ten men had, at one time in their lives, homosexual sex to the point of orgasm. Half of these did not choose to continue; I would assume this meant they were not gay. One in three men have made a common habit of homosexual acts. This would include both homosexuals and bisexuals. Ten to thirteen percent are exclusively homosexual. To be gay in America today is no more unusual than to be black, Jewish or a blue-eyed blond. Homosexuals are a minority of the same size as any of these. There is even some evidence to suggest that it has always been this way, in all countries and in all times. The only thing that ever changes is the way society accepts, or does not accept, homosexuals. Whatever it is, homosexuality is not unnatural to humankind. "Ho-

homosexual behavior seems to arise from deep-rooted natural urges which find different expression in different cultures" (Churchill 69).

"There are beliefs and laws of God that both Christians and Jews have abandoned or changed. For example, animal sacrifice, polygamy, and slavery are no longer practiced by Christians or Jews. Genocidal warfare, such as described in the book of Joshua, is no longer viewed as morally acceptable. A number of crimes that were punishable by death have been altered over the centuries. There are twenty one capital crimes mentioned in the Mosaic laws" (Viney 1991).

Considering these points, "it may be a mistake to use the scriptures as a rule book of morals, or the final word on the will of God. We have yet to accept the scriptures as written; we do not love our neighbors as ourselves, as Christ commanded. We do not 'Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like the ever flowing stream' (Amos 5: 24)" (Viney 1991).

We select the scriptures that we will follow, accuse, and condemn those who do not agree with us. "It would seem that whatever homosexuals do it can't be right. His 'hilarity' is cover-up for depression and if he reveals his depression he is 'whimpering'. If he obeys higher authorities, he is 'subservient', and if he exercises authority, he is 'merciless' and 'unscrupulous'" (Leiser 42). The principle of free will as taught by Christ would seem to say, in effect, it is the free choice of each of us to obey, or not obey, the will of God. But we would rather condemn others based on our own prejudices. "The Dutch philosopher Johann Hizinga insisted that our species was pompously wrong to call itself *Homo sapiens*, man-the-wise. Judged from our record, wisdom is not our defining characteristic" (Steel 28).

So, is homosexuality against the will of God? That question may not be as easy to answer as we would like. One could argue that it is, if one accepted all scriptures as the will of God. I would find exception with that argument based on the historical changes of the church, and the new evidence presented by science. Homosexuality cannot be against the will of God, not with the evidence we have today. Let us now ask, "Do we have the right to decide for others what they should do?"

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# Lady Anne Finch Conway

## Viscountess

James Holman

Throughout history the role and influence of women in science has been of great value and importance. Unfortunately, most of these women have been placed in the position of obscurity from which they are just now beginning to emerge. One such woman was the Lady Anne Finch Conway, Viscountess. Born in 1631 in Londons Kensington House she was to become one of the seventeenth centuries most remarkable rationalist philosophers.

Conway was self-taught in mathematics and astronomy. This was due largely to her older brother, John Finch, who provided her with books and a direction of study. At an early age she had mastered several languages which facilitated her knowledge of the sciences and philosophy. She married Edward, the Earl of Conway, at the age of nineteen and moved to Ragely Hall in Warwickshire. This is where her brother John first introduced her to the writings of Descartes via correspondence.

When John moved to Italy his teacher, Henry More, was advocating Descartes. She was so intrigued with Descartes' philosophy that she quickly contacted More for further information concerning the philosophy of Descartes. Eventually, More went to Ragley Hall where he visited several times. In the end he became a permanent guest and collaborator with Conway.

It should be noted here that Conway suffered from migraine headaches quite frequently. She had developed these headaches due to a high fever at the age of twelve. It was after More moved in that John wrote to her from Italy that he had met a physician, F.M. Van Helmont, whom he believed could cure her of the headaches. After meeting with Anne and More, F.M. Van Helmont spent the next ten



years working with them on the advancement of science.

Following the arrival of H. More, who translated Descartes for her, Conway began to challenge Cartesian philosophy. She would take Descartes to task on the many different aspects of Descartes' philosophy. She, being a monist, was in opposition to the dualist aspects of Descartes philosophy. Her ideas of God's existence emphasized unity whereas Descartes' emphasized properties. Where Descartes perceived a split between mind and matter, Conway perceived mind and matter as interchangeable and inseparable. She had formulated an idea of Christ as a metaphysical halfway point between man and God. This was in part due to the Kabbalistic idea of Adam Kadmon or Heavenly Adam that she had become aware of earlier.

Conway developed the theory of the monad which predated Leibniz. She believed that monads were the simple substance out of which everything else is made. They also had the ability to intermingle and penetrate which is very unLeibnizism F.M. Van Helmont had Leibniz read some of Conway's papers following her death. Therefore, many people believe that her philosophy is the foundation upon which Leibniz built his theory of monadology.

The nature of time, according to Conway, was integrated with her philosophy concerning God. According to Jane Duran, who quotes Lopstons' commentary concerning Conway;

"That which does not change is outside time. Change is evidently to be understood internally, and not relatively: when God creates a new substance, which from its appearance undergoes change, this involves change only in the creature, not in its creator. God in short is immutable and changeless, and therefore outside time...Conway's conclusion—that time is infinite and had always contained creative substances—will follow in any case from her view of the essence of God..." (pg. 68).

In my opinion, it appears that Conway had read, and agreed with, to some extent, Plato's divided line. According to Plato, reality is to appearance as things are to image as the intelligible world is to the visible world. Therefore, time is to created substances as the non-

physical reality is to the physical reality.

In conclusion, it is my opinion that Lady Anne Conway was obviously a very astute and incisive philosopher. Her hypothesis concerning the many aspects of life combined with her questioning nature gave rise to a myriad of ideas and philosophies formulated by those who were to succeed her. It is indeed unfortunate that it has taken hundreds of years for her ideas to receive the recognition they obviously deserve.

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# A Different Point of View

Curtis Isom

I find it very ironic that in the debate over abortion, the pro-choice and pro-life movements concentrate and fight over what happens after a pregnancy occurs, rather than working together trying to reduce or prevent unwanted pregnancies. Let's face it, is focusing upon the after fact instead of focusing on the cause an effective way of finding a solution to this problem, or any problem for that matter? Very doubtful. But when you start talking about preventing unwanted pregnancies, mainly through contraception, you'll likely run into more lip service than see any action taking place. Besides abortion, AIDS, other STD's and an overcrowded world population are excellent reasons for contraception to become more in the public spotlight than it is now.

Now some would say, "But contraception is becoming an important issue!" Is it, or are we hearing more lip service? In a report released in early 1990 by the National Academy of Sciences, some very interesting, and startling facts are found:

1. Today's contraception methods really don't meet the needs of those using them.
2. Until the 1980's, seventeen companies were doing research on contraception. Now there's only one!
3. 2 to 3 million accidental pregnancies are a result of contraception failing and one-half of all the 1.5 million abortions in the U.S. are a result of these failures. (1)

So let me ask it again, is something really being done or is it just more lip service? And even when contraception is discussed publicly, the negative response is sometimes unbelievable and sad.

Some say the contraception shouldn't be discussed in public



because of the impact it would have on the children who'd hear it! Is this logical when today we constantly hear about teenage pregnancies on the rise and sexual intercourse occurring at ages as early as ten? I think our children should be as informed as possible to handle the sexual world we live in. If television can advertise on all the personal hygiene for women for before and after sex, why can't they advertise condoms? Yes, there are some recent developments towards advertising condoms on television, but at the current rate of progress, can the human race afford the wait? Some may think I'm promoting promiscuity, but I'm really promoting responsibility for everyone. Think about which you would rather have, an uninformed person creating unwanted pregnancies and maybe spreading diseases, or an informed person hopefully making the right choices in protecting him/herself and others. Idealistic? Maybe, but really consider today's sexual attitude and where it's gotten us. Scary huh? Another interesting fact is that the National Right To Life Committee neither opposes nor supports using contraception. People who oppose abortion, but don't support one way of controlling it. Isn't that a kick? But then, you don't hear pro-choice movement pushing hard for contraception do you?

Now all this isn't to say that contraception isn't in use. The most popular method, of both men and women, is sterilization, which accounts for about 20 percent of contraceptive use. The pill follows next, then diaphragms, and condoms. (1) But as stated earlier, contraception research is greatly lacking. What research we hear about appears to be more towards what to do after pregnancy occurs, such as the French developed RU486 abortion pill, instead of updating and improving today's methods. Here again is the "dealing with the after fact of a problem instead of its cause" scenario. How long should unwanted pregnancies be left to increase before something significant is done towards their cause? And if to think I'm suggesting through contraception alone abortion will end wrong! Seriously wrong! I'm looking at the next best way, after abstinence, that will reduce abortion. Remember that 2 to 3 million accidental pregnancies (and consequently one-half of all U.S. abortions) are from failed contraception methods. If contraception was improved to where accidental pregnancies are almost non-existent, then that's 750,000 less abortions to fight over.



One-half of all U.S. abortions a year! Just think, with the controversy reduced by half, where would we be? And wouldn't the problem be significantly reduced?

Which brings up what to do. Education is a number one priority. Sex education should be taught more in schools, and taught in a way that kids learn all the information, good and bad. They need to properly equip themselves, mentally, to deal with our sexual world. Some oppose sex education because they feel sex is something secret to be dealt with only at home. But this attitude is somewhat dangerous because by withholding vital, maybe lifesaving, information from a learning child, more harm could be done to that child because they weren't fully prepared to deal with the sexual world. Again, the central focus is teaching responsibility for one's sexual actions.

As to the moral aspect of contraception, it's right back to responsibility. If two people are going to engage in sexual activity, they should take on the responsibility to protect each other from the possibilities of unwanted pregnancies or diseases. It's just plain good old common sense. The problem is that some people don't always possess the common sense it takes to make responsible decisions. (A common sense that through strong education a person is instilled with the want to make the right choice concerning sex.) But this would be hard to do in a world that morally views sex very loosely.

So in the end, contraception is something we can't ignore. Through improved research and education, problems like abortion could be greatly reduced. And to believe otherwise would be saying problems like abortion and AIDS don't exist. Just take a good long, hard look at the world around us. Then tell me, how far off the mark am I?

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## Woman As Christ

### An Evaluation of Chopin's *The Awakening*

Beth Stevenson

Great novels of the caliber of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* are rare. Chopin's simple style makes the novel accessible to all levels of readers; yet her depth and consistent imagery make this novel a delight to those wishing to delve into a virtual banquet of symbolism. Even though *The Awakening* was written at the turn of the century and exemplifies that genre of literature and was hidden in obscurity for over fifty years, this novel is still timely and will continue to be so until the world as we know it ceases to exist. Edna Pontellier is a woman for all women. She has sacrificed her life in order that the rest of woman kind may be free. Edna, then, is a modern Christ figure.

Why Christ? the reader may ask. Why not Aphrodite or just a great character as has been suggested by others before me. In a step-by-step approach, Edna will be revealed as nothing short of a Christ figure that displays all of the characteristics and more of Jesus Christ of the Christian faith.

From the very beginning of the novel, Edna is seen as different from the others that surround her. Edna is on a island that is filled mainly with women. Only one man has the potential of being her equal, and he has singled her out of a crowd of beauties. Robert Lebrun chooses Edna over the more beautiful Adele Raginolle to everyone's expectations. "Many had predicted that Robert would devote himself to Mrs. Pontellier when he arrived" (20). Robert, however, treats Edna in a different way than he had treated any of his previous liaisons. "He never assumed this serio-comic tone when alone with Mrs. Pontellier" (21). Edna is glad that he doesn't treat her as he had the others because "it would have been unacceptable and annoying" (21). Edna, therefore, is different not only in being the sole attention of Robert, but in the fact that their relationship is unlike any that either has experienced



before.

Edna finds herself in a different society from any that she had known before. This society aids in her awakening.

Mrs. Pontellier, though she had married a Creole, was not thoroughly at home in the society of Creoles; never before had she been thrown so intimately among them. There were only Creoles that summer at Lebrun's. They all knew each other, and felt like one large family, among whom existed the most amicable relations. A characteristic which distinguished them and which impressed Mrs. Pontellier most forcibly was their entire absence of prudery. Their freedom of expression was at first incomprehensible to her, though she had no difficulty in reconciling it with a lofty chastity which in the Creole woman seems to be inborn and unmistakable (18-19).

However unlikely it may seem, Edna is still a virgin in the ways of society yet she is able to reconcile their shocking discussions with their absolute adherence to chastity. The two don't seem to be compatible. Those who talk openly about sex usually are not so chaste, especially as a society. The fact that Edna is able to comprehend this dilemma makes her unusual in itself. Eventually, she "gave over being astonished, and concluded that wonders would never cease" (19). The Creoles are ahead of their time in their verbal if not sexual freedom as the rest of the society in the nineteenth century were very sexually repressed.

The sexual repression of the Victorian period caused problems for society in general, but for women in particular. A woman that enjoyed sex was said to be evil or not good. One never discussed or hinted at anything ribald or sexual in polite company. The lusty days of Chaucer and Shakespeare were well over. The fact that *The Awakening* "occasioned shocked and angry response from reviewers all over the country and was taken off the shelves of the St. Louis Mercantile Library and its author was barred from the Fine Arts Club" (introduction), only exemplifies the attitude of 1890 society.

Edna, like the society of her time, was shocked by the openness of



her summer companions. The knowledge of Adele and her friends becomes a part of Edna's awakening. Edna is able to see her friends openness as natural which helps her to go beyond them.

A certain light was beginning to dawn dimly within her, the light which, showing the way, forbids it.

At that early period it served but to bewilder her. It moved her to dreams, to thoughtfulness, to the shadowy anguish which had overcome her the midnight when she abandoned herself to tears.

In short, Mrs. Pontellier was beginning to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world within and about her. This may seem like a ponderous weight of wisdom to descend upon the soul of a young woman of twenty-eight, perhaps more wisdom than the Holy Ghost is usually pleased to vouchsafe to any woman (25).

Edna is not only chosen by Robert as special, but also by the Holy Ghost. Chopin lets us know that this event is unusual for all women which singles Edna out as very special. She is granted wisdom from God, the highest of all gifts. Wisdom, ironically, is called "she" in the Bible. Just as a woman, Athena (Minerva), was known for wisdom. Just as the Great Earth Mother of primal tribes was known for wisdom. It is only fitting that what is derived of woman should pass to a woman. Edna has been chosen as the benefactor of wisdom by Chopin.

Edna has a special relationship with Adele. Adele helps to awaken Edna to love. She had only loved shadowy figures before she is able to love Adele. No one has been able to enter Edna's inner sanctum until Adele and Edna have their talk on the beach.

That summer at Grand Isle she began to loosen a little the mantle of reserve that has always enveloped her. There may have been--there must have been influences--both subtle and apparent, working in their several ways to induce her to do this; but the most obvious was the influence of Adele. The excessive physical charm of the Creole had first attracted her, for Edna had a sensuous susceptibility to beauty. Then the candor of the woman's

whole existence, which every one might read, and which formed so striking a contrast to her own habitual reserve--this might have furnished a link. Who can tell what metals the gods use in forging the subtle bond which we call sympathy, which we might as well call love (26).

Edna opens up one of her most intense childhood memories. She, like most Victorian women, represses much of her inner life.

Madame Ragtinolle laid her hand over that of Mrs. Pontellier, which was near her. Seeing that the hand was not withdrawn, she clasped it firmly and warmly. She even stroked it a little, fondly, with the other hand, murmurings in a undertone, 'Pauvre chérie.'

The action was at first a little confusing to Edna but she soon lent herself readily to the Creole's gentle caress. She was not accustomed to an outward and spoken expression of affection, either in herself or in others... She had put her head down on Madame Ratignolle's shoulder. She was flushed and felt intoxicated with the sound of her own voice and the unaccustomed taste of condor. It muddled her like wine, or like a first breath of freedom (30-1, 33).

Adele is able to do what no other mortal had ever done for Edna--that is, she awakens Edna to the world of confidence and security, to the world or freedom of expression. Edna, through Adele, is able to throw off the shackles of Victorian repression.

Edna is also seen as exceptional by the genius of the island, Mademoiselle Reisz. This self-assertive, gifted, and independent old maid will play only for Edna. "You are the only one worth playing for" (45), claims the pianist. Edna and Reisz become friends due to the potency of the old woman's music which is like the gospel to Edna. She is not only awakened by music, but must return again to the ugly, cramped quarters of the pianist to hear her gospel.

Perhaps it was the first time she was ready, perhaps the first



time her being was tempered to take an impress of the abiding truth.

She waited for the material pictures which she thought would gather and blaze before her imagination. She waited in vain. She saw no pictures of solitude, of hope, of longing, or of despair. But the very passions themselves were aroused within her soul, swaying it, lashing it, as the waves daily [45] beat upon her splendid body (44-5).

Chopin chose the words "abiding truth" as it relates to the truth of God. Music, therefore, becomes for Edna a food for her soul and a carrier of the Truth. Edna is the only character able to carry the wisdom of music. Not only is Edna able to understand truth, but she is totally empathic just as Christ was. She is able to FEEL emotions.

Almost immediately after Edna hears the truth, she is baptized (Gilbert, 26; Wheeler, 124). Edna has been trying to learn to swim all summer. Yet, it isn't until she is granted the power of truth "under a mystic moon, at that mystic hour" (45) that she is able to be baptized.

...who of a sudden realizes [her] powers,... she lifted her body to the surface of the water.

A feeling of exultation overtook her, as if some power of significant import had been given her to control the working of her body and her soul...She wanted to swim far out, where no woman had swum before (47).

The truth has set Edna free. She now has the power of truth, a power beyond the ordinary woman. She is also able to "lift" her body just as Christ lifted his body to the surface of the waters. Edna, also like Christ, dares to go where no other woman in her circle has gone before in this instance and in future instances.

Immediately following Edna's baptism, she defies her husband, Leonce, for the first time. He is not able to understand her elation as Robert does. When Edna tells Robert, "I wonder if any night on earth will ever again be like this one," she is expressing ecstasy, the ecstasy of the power of truth. Leonce misunderstands to the point that the two



end up in a battle of wills. Edna is reclining on the hammock when he comes back from the beach. He tells Edna, "This is more than folly. I can't permit you to stay out there all night. You must come in the house instantly" (53). What Leonce doesn't understand is that he no longer has any power over Edna. Her power lies "in alien hands for direction, and [she has] freed her soul of responsibility" (55). Her soul is now in the hands of truth.

Edna's power source, her truth, is not the conventional truth of Christianity in that she is awakened sexually as well as spiritually. This is what makes Edna a modern Christ figure. She is a Saviour for her repressed time. This paradise is to be "a sacramental rather than a sacrilegious garden of earthly delights" (Gilbert, 18). Edna goes beyond her friends in seeking fulfillment in all areas, not just the conventional ones. This new Christ turns away from the conventional, patriarchal religion when "her one thought was to quit the stifling atmosphere of church and reach the open air" (60) or her new religion.

Edna's religion also calls for communion. After she leaves the old church, she goes to a house to sleep because she stayed up most of the night before. When she awakens, she breaks her fast with bread and wine. Wheeler explains this episode this way: "When she awakes, she conducts her own baptism and communion" (125). Only an exalted one is able to perform baptism. Not even Jesus baptized himself. After her cleansing, she is offered the body and blood of her God by one who is able to see the value of his priestess, Robert.

Next we see Robert's defection. He is not able to "see with [new and] different eyes" (67) as Edna is able to do. Since Robert has not experienced the new religion first hand, he clings to traditional paths. Edna doesn't even consider disguising her bewilderment (69) for as the bearer of truth, she is not able to be false. She suffers at this defection as she is now sensually as well as spiritually aroused. She wants total fulfillment of her new religion.

Edna goes through a series of changes upon her return to the city. This awakened Christ will no longer stand for inessential trivia. She refuses to adhere to the tradition of "reception day" (85) despite her husband's astonishment at her lack of sensitivity to appearances. Appearances no longer matter to Edna. In her anger, she "stamps her

heel upon [her wedding ring]" (87). It is impossible for the bearer of a new religion to be stifled in convention. Even the glimpse of domestic harmony of the Ratignolles' doesn't cause Edna envy or longing as "it was not a condition of life which fitted her" (93). She even felt sorry for Adele as "a pity for that colorless existence which never uplifted its possessor beyond the region of blind contentment" (93). Adele will never have a spiritual awakening as long as she clings to convention.

Edna defies convention in her art also. She is but a mediocre (96) artist, yet she turns the house upside down to accommodate one of her sources of satisfaction. Edna "symbolizes the wordless wail of every woman whose passion for self-fulfillment has been forbidden or forgotten" (Gilbert, 8). Since Edna is not a genius like Mademoiselle Reisz, she is considered mentally unbalanced for wanting to devote her time to her art. This is where Edna and Christ are united: Both stand for the common person. Edna is not some great genius artistically or mentally, yet she is chosen to lead the way for all women.

Another change that Edna feels necessary is her move to full independence. Through her art, though only capable, and an inheritance, she is able to move into her new chapel. It is simple and unostentatious just like the home of Jesus. This new Christ no more wants material luxury any more than the old one. At the same time, she begins a liaison with Alcee. Her full blown sexuality is finally released even if it is not with the one that she feels could meet her new self equally. Edna feels "neither shame nor remorse" (140). Edna "resolves never again to belong to another than herself" (133) and to "never take another step backward" (95). Edna, as the new Christ, will not claim any other power than truth.

Many images of strength and power are associated with Edna throughout the book. She calls together her disciples for a last supper. This was no ordinary dinner as can be evidenced by the golden splendor of the table (145). She serves a "rare" wine and bread that constitute communion. "...Edna's dinner party is in a sense a Last Supper, a final transformation of will and desire into bread and wine, flesh and blood, before the 'regal woman's' inevitable betrayal by a culture in which a regenerated [Christ] has no meaningful role" (Gilbert, 30). Edna has finally come into her own. "There was



something in her attitude, in her whole appearance when she leaned her head [back] and spread her arms, which suggested the regal woman, the one who rules, who looks on, who stands alone" (148). She is in the position of crucifixion during this dinner despite her unusual radiance and control. She must bear the cross for all women.

Robert, her follower, becomes her Judas as he is unable to let her ministrations to the stricken take precedence over his desire. He fails in his ability to succumb to the will of truth. This second and devastating defection gives Edna no other choice but to make the sacrifice of physical self to her religion. The fact that her body is not essential (80), but her spirit is what must not die is evident in her sacrifice. Sandra Gilbert planted the seed when she relates Edna to Aphrodite. Yet, Edna is no raving beauty. She is the common woman, with common looks, and with common talents. Her last swim in her birth-day suit signifies "a new-born creature" (189), not death. She is reborn in spirit so that all women may be free to follow her and her new religion.

Chopin uses many dark images to show the duality of modern life. This darkness is not internal as Wolff would have us think, nor is it a flaw as Tompkins would have us believe. The duality of life is the truth of modern life for women. Edna must deal with this duality in the only way possible for save the future from being the Victorian past, she must sacrifice her physical life. This new Christ has given every woman hope to go forth without guilt or the weight of sin to fulfill herself. Edna is the modern Christ in the form of woman.

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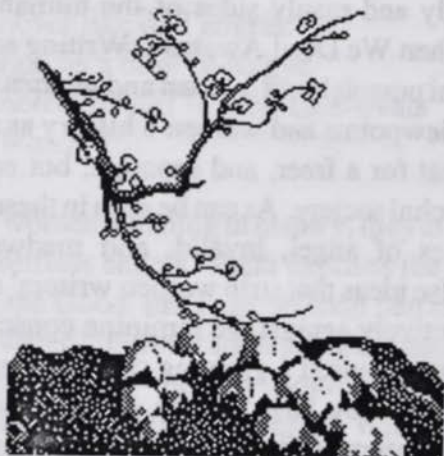
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## Angel, Invalid, and Madwoman: Creating the Female Tradition

Dawn Davidson

Twentieth century women writers have inherited the Victorian images of women as angel, invalid, and madwoman; images that imply women are "naturally" weak, fragile, and unstable. Sylvia Plath, through her poetry, demonstrates how destructive these traditional (male-created) images are on women and women writers. Virginia Woolf, novelist and essayist during the Modernist period, also condemns the conventionality of patriarchal society that restricts women's writing. Woolf calls for all writers to adopt the androgynous mode, employing both the womanly and manly sides of the human mind. Adrienne Rich's essay "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" calls for the intellectual pursuit by all women and women writers to "revise" (2045) literary viewpoints and women's history as a means of female survival and quest for a freer, and separate, but equal, definition of women in patriarchal society. As can be seen in these writers, the male-conceived images of angel, invalid, and madwoman need to be recognized as false ideas that strip women writers' creativity, dreams, and work destructively against the feminine consciousness.

As women have sensed a growing consciousness and a need for further enrichment, they have had to contend with what Virginia Woolf calls a "phantom" ("Professions", 1384), or the "Angel in the House" (1385). They have had to fight rigid male "conventionality" (1387) which, according to Woolf, "condemn[s] such freedom in women" with such an "extreme severity" (1387) that women must fight and kill the male-established demon in order to define themselves as women and search for their feminist consciousness (1386).

This demon, or Woolf's "Angel," has haunted women for centu-

ries. Woolf describes this "Angel" as being "immensely charming", "intensely sympathetic", and "so constituted that she never had [has] a mind or with of her own" (1385). This woman, although an "Angel" for men, is only a demon for women. Men created her and superimpose her on women. The "Angel" is for the man his lover, housekeeper, seamstress, caregiver, mother to his children, cook, and morale giver. Yet, all these roles are exhausting for the woman as she meets everyone else's needs while her own spiritual and emotional needs go unrecognized.

Sylvia Plath, in "All The Dead Dears," addresses the angel image of centuries-old domesticity taught as "mother, grandmother, great grandmother/Reach hag hands to haul" her "under the fishpond/surface" (*Colossus*, 29-30). Writing in free verse with the compressed imagery with which poetry abounds, Plath also relates women's history to her own, recognizing that the "antique museum, cased lady...here's no kin/of mine, yet kin she is." In "Magi," Plath reveals the effects of the angel image upon women in history as

The abstracts hover like dull angels:  
Nothing so vulgar as a nose or an eye  
Bossing the ethereal blanks of their face-ovals  
(*Crossing the Water*, 26).

By men not giving women meaning in history, they are seen as faceless and pure women, selfless angels. Plath exposes the male conception of the "real thing...the Good, the True: woman perceived as "salutary and pure as boiled water." Further addressing the male tradition, Plath accuses the "papery godfolk" of only looking for the "lamp-headed Plato" to "astound his heart with their merit." With such expectations, Plath asks, "What girl ever flourished in such company?"

One of the earliest poems by Adrienne Rich, written in the male tradition of iambic pentameter and rhyme, also echoes the oppression of male dominance in "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" (*Adrienne Rich Poetry*, 2). The formal weight of the poem relates to the "massive weight of Uncle's wedding band" that "sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand," tying together the literary and social oppression of male dominance-



over women. Resounding the angel image, Aunt Jennifer's "terrified hands...ringed with ordeals she was mastered by" reveal a woman not allowed to become a full and whole human being. Her small space is contrasted with the large space of the tigers that represent Jennifer's creativity and her "proud and unafraid" imagination that can "pace in sleek chivalric certainty" above "the men beneath the tree" and "prance."

Echoing again the formal male tradition in iambic tetrameter, another of Rich's early poems, "An Unsaid Word", recognizes female "power to call her man" from where he "forages alone" without her (*Adrienne Rich's Poetry*, 3). Keeping in pace with the oppression that a woman feels under the male tradition she has inherited, she "keeps her peace and leaves him free." Subject to his male dominance, she "stands where he left her, still his own," not allowed to be her own person, whole and free. Through "An Unsaid Word", Rich conveys the female repression and silence women learn under patriarchal control as "the hardest thing to learn."

Indeed, it becomes such a difficult task that women seek to break from the patriarchal hold over their lives to release their own voice. In "Elm", Plath seemingly pounds her fist, declaring:

I know the bottom, she says. I know it with my great tap root:  
It is what you fear.

I do not fear it: I have been there (*Ariel*, 15-16).

Responding to the male perception of the frustrated woman writer as invalid, Plath reveals she knows the "dissatisfactions...the voice of nothing...the madness" in wanting to be heard and taken seriously. Although women were not naturally invalids, male society perceived them as being "naturally" fragile and in need of male protection. Men argued that if a woman abandoned her role as "angel," she would commit an "unnatural" act that could harm her fragile person. Actually, as women tried to passively react to male conventionalism, male society perceived them as demonstrating their invalidism. Plath cries out against this false perception of women, writers, declaring that women are not invalids, but that the male reasoning against women is

in-valid. She recognizes the male "fear" of the feminine consciousness, but does "not fear it" herself; being a women writer, she has already "been there" (*Ariel*, 15-16). Declaring in an angry voice like "a wind of such violence" that "will tolerate no bystanding: I must shriek," Plath echoes the frustration of women writers trying to escape from male-established images and language to create images that represent a female tradition.

In her angriest poem against patriarchal society, Plath condemns the patriarch who perceives his words as from "a bag full of God," emanating pure truth ("Daddy", *Ariel*, 49-51). She asserts that it is the patriarchs who cause the "wars, wars, wars," and like the Nazi Germans, set themselves up as a select race. As the Germans in their "Aryan eye" perceive themselves as superior to women. Plath condemns such thinking, declaring "you stand at the blackboard, daddy...but no less a devil for that." She continues by comparing the torture "of the rack and screw" to marriage ("I do, I do"). Avowing to patriarchal society to sever their evil communication of lies, she reveals that the "black telephone's off at the root/The voice just can't worm through." Then, as if feeling more is needed, Plath takes the phallic imagery used traditionally by male writers and turns it against her patriarch, stating there is "a stake in your fat black heart...Daddy, daddy...I'm through."

However, women writers face more than just anger and frustration in their search for a female tradition. According to Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*, women must also overcome gendered traits, redefine the female writing process, and know their history as women. Woolf calls for women and men to form an androgynous writing style that creates a wholeness (*Room*, 100) of a writer's character, "marrying" both sides of the mind.

Discrediting the patriarchal opinion that books written by men contain objective facts, or truth, Woolf asserts that these books have been "written in the red light of emotion and not in the white light of truth" (33), revealing that when a male author insists "a little too emphatically upon the inferiority of women," he is "concerned not with their inferiority, but with his won superiority" (34). Woolf sarcastically discloses that women have for centuries served as "looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the



figure of man at twice its natural size" (35). It seems, therefore, that for this reason patriarchy oppose a female tradition where women are allowed to think and live equally with men, "for if she [a woman] begins to tell the truth, the figure in the looking-glass shrinks" (36).

Yet, the female tradition is being searched, voiced, and discovered by contemporary writers. Adrienne Rich in her essay, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision", addresses the issue of women's writing, recognizing that "this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity; it is a part of our refusal of the self-destructiveness of male dominated society" (2045-2046). Referring to the need for women to be aware of their history, Rich also focuses on the

need [for women] to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us" (2046).

Rich also does more than echo the fact that women writers face obstacles in their search for the female voice; she identifies that "male judgment, along with the misnaming and thwarting" of women's needs in a "culture controlled by males, has created problems for the woman writer; problems of contact with herself, problems of language and style, problems of energy and survival" (2047). However, one of the biggest problem facing women writers is that audience. For, although "no male writer has written primarily or even largely for women,...every woman writer has written for men even when ...she was supposed to be addressing women" (2048).

Breaking with formalism into free verse in "The Roofwalker", Rich identifies with past poets and searches for her own female voice. Sensing "the wave" of her feminine consciousness "about the break" open to reveal images "magnified, shadows/on a burning deck," she feels "exposed, larger than life" and wonders if it was "worth while to lay...All those blueprints" (*Adrienne Rich's Poetry*, 19-20). Echoing the difficulty of domestic and literary life coexisting, Rich laments that a "life I didn't choose/chose me; even/my tools are the wrong one/for what I have to do." Changing form the impersonal voice of third



person to the personal first person, Rich moves closer to the female voice. She continues that strategy in "The Trees". As "the trees inside" seem to represent women writers "moving out into the forest" of female tradition "that was empty all these days" (*Adrienne Rich's Poetry*, 25-26), Rich looks forward to a new age of feminist writing when "the forest that was empty all these nights/will be full of trees by morning." "All night" the writers "work/to disengage themselves" from the male tradition until the "moon" of traditional (male-conceived) feminism "is broken like a mirror" that will no longer over reflect man's image, but "flash now in the crown/of the tallest oak: of the woman writer.

However, male society dictated that if women persisted in abandoning their "natural" roles of selfless "angels" by pursuing intellectual interests, they could possibly turn into self destructive, incoherent, monstrous, "unnatural" madwomen. Yet, the "madwoman" image was actually generated by an active reaction on the woman's part against the "angel" image that caused her so much distress as she tried to fulfill her own intellectual and spiritual needs and was met with male oppression. For as Adrienne rich explains in "Writing as Re-Vision",

if the imagination is to transcend and transform experience it has to question, to challenge, to conceive of alternatives.... to be free to play around with the notion that day might be night, love might be hate, nothing can be too sacred for the imagination to turn into its opposite or call experimentally by another name. For writing is renaming (2052).

Rich transfers this transcended imagination into one of her most free poems that addresses the female experience. In "When We Dead Awaken", the poem, she calls to her "fellow-creature, sister" to help her "pick apart" traditional male images and language and "remake" them into female images that through language weave "this trailing knitted thing, this cloth of darkness," the female tradition. She comments that the woman writer begins to add her own "things" and begins "to write in...diaries/more honestly than ever." She calls for women's history to be told "over and over" until the words/get thick with unmeaning" so that women can get "closer to the truth/of the lies

we were living" and adhere to a "faithfulness" that like a "blue energy" will pierce "the massed atoms of bedrock disbelief" of patriarchal opinion (*Adrienne Rich's Poetry*, 59-60).

Rich continues the feminist legacy in "Origins and History of Consciousness" (*The Dream of a Common Language*, 7-9), revealing the "night-life" of women writers "living through some kind of crisis" with each poem. "No one lives in this room" of writing, Rich declares, "without contemplating last and late/the true nature of poetry. The drive/to connect. The dream of a common language" free from male tradition. She identifies that "conceived/ of each other," women writers affect one another and must move "beyond this secret circle of fire"—anger. As Rich reveals "the awakening of consciousness is not like the crossing of a frontier," but more like "the nature of the blues song: a cry of pain, of victimization, or a lyric of seduction." Women writers "need to go through" their anger, but they "will betray" their "own reality" if they try "for an objectivity, a detachment" (*Writing as Re-Vision*, 2055). For as Adrienne Rich continues to remind us,

both the victimization and the anger experienced by women are real, and have real sources, everywhere in the environment, built into society, language, the structures of thought" (*Re-Vision*, 2056).

Thus, in a patriarchal society, women must recognize the male conceived idea of the "angel" as being a demon that will plague and possibly destroy them. The male view of the woman as "invalid" is invalid, and is in reality the repressed woman, struggling to free her intellectual spirit; the woman who abandons her "angel" role is not a "madwoman," but a "liberated" woman who has re-visioned herself.

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# Fate

by Sushini Warnakulasuriya

I gazed in to the  
heavens above  
my roaming eyes  
lingering upon the faint glow  
of a lonely star,  
twinkling against the evening sky  
and wondered whether  
that tiny speck of light,  
from far beyond its realms  
could behold my fate.  
could it hold the key  
to my success in life  
or could be the cause  
of my failure sometimes  
Does hold the will  
of my freedom of choice?  
and decided upon the day I was born  
or the day I should die  
Somehow it seemed impossible  
that a solitary star could affect my life  
and hold the glory of my triumph  
and the misery of my failure  
within its mysterious power  
Yet, there flickers  
a tiny flame of doubt  
deep within my self  
For how could I be responsible  
for being born rich or poor  
how could I blame my self  
If I were born deformed

Why do I suffer  
with agonizing thoughts  
against my own will,  
Why am I Left with no choice sometimes,  
to struggle and stumble  
and to find my own way through.  
As I wonder,  
The way many a men before me did  
Through out the history of Greece and Rome,  
the tiny star glints on and off  
Its flickering light  
as if mocking my thoughts.



# To You My Child

by Curtis Isom

To you my child, what's a father to give?  
Shelter, food, clothes—these things I promise.  
But my greatest gift isn't bought or sold.  
Is never lost and lasts throughout eternity.  
It isn't fame and fortune or material wealth.  
My greatest gift to you is my love.  
A love that stays with you always,  
Through trials and tribulations, heartaches and pain.  
A love that's ever abundant,  
And passed from one to another  
Without losing it ourselves.  
This gift comes to you from my heart  
To someone special who can't be replaced.  
A part of my life I'll cherish forever.  
Yes, to you my child I give this gift,  
This wondrous gift called love.



