



HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES

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Does sexist language matter?

by Margaret Curtis

When a non-sexist Biblical lectionary was published not long ago, many male newspaper columnists from all parts of the nation suffered apoplectic fits. Sputtering, fuming and smoking with the fire of protest, they complained that feminists had really gone too far this time.

Observing their furor from a cool distance, I realized for the first time why non-sexist language in religion is truly necessary. "Those men have confused themselves with God!" I thought. "They are behaving as though they had been personally threatened with castration."

Until that time, I had been telling myself that the use of imagery simply helps explain our relationship to God and that imagery is not who God is. Of course, we all know that God is not a human-like, male person. After all, the Bible also uses feminine imagery in describing God, and anybody who knows about Biblical translation knows that the original Hebrew words for God were non-sexist. It was male translators who later changed those words to words denoting maleness only. Obviously, feminists who want to return scripture to its original meaning are not springing something new upon the world; they are simply trying to resolve something very old.

Even so, what difference does it make? How can sexist language hurt us, anyhow? I knew something about hurting because of my volunteer work with battered women. Once, in a film interview with battering men, I observed a man slam his fist into his palm and declare, "I have a *right* to discipline my wife; she is my property!"

I also knew that psychologists who counsel violent men had learned from the men themselves that the root of their violence toward women was the cultural

message that a man isn't really a man unless he can dominate women.

What, I wondered, is in our culture that conveys the message that women are rightfully the property of men and subject to their domination? Messages are conveyed in many different ways, but nothing is more basic to the message than words, because words "stand in" or substitute for that which we perceive as real. Just as the word chair substitutes for something we can see, touch and feel, the word God is a spoken or written symbol for that spirit of life and love which we cannot see, touch or feel, but which, nevertheless, is perceived and even worshipped as a reality.

Because God is a male word, how can we possibly escape perceiving God as male? If God is male, then maleness becomes Godliness. If we worship God, are we unconsciously worshipping maleness? We have reason to wonder, because we know that in most countries, male infants are preferred to female offspring, especially when the child is to be the first born or only child. Psychologists also report that both men and women rank men higher in esteem than women.

In linking Godliness to maleness, do we unconsciously expect men to be like God, all wise, good and powerful? If so, men will be a great disappointment to women as well as to themselves.

If men are to be like God, then who are women to be like? Why, like men, of course! We are congratulated when we "think like a man," receive more pay when we do work traditionally done by men, and if we are to dress for success, then we must wear tailored clothing, closely cropped hair and scarves or bows at the neckline that will substitute nicely for neckties.

Could this adaption to maleness be influenced by the fact that women are included or absorbed into the generic term of

man? (How many men would tolerate being "included" in the generic term of woman?) Worse, if women are absorbed into the generic term of man, is there a subtle implication that men properly own or dominate women?

If women are the property of men, then it is inevitable that men will use women for the sake of their own gratification. They may not treat a woman like a person but like an object, perhaps a sex object, an office machine or even just another attachment to the vacuum cleaner. If females are objects designed to serve or gratify men, then it is also inevitable that females will become the victims of child molestation, incest, rape, wife abuse, pornography, prostitution and poverty.

Are we influenced to see women as the property of men when, at marriage, we allow men to attach their own names to their wives very much as we label luggage with our names to denote ownership? Although we maintain property, we do not reward it for simply fulfilling its function, which may explain why so few states allow wives equal rights to marital assets.

In assuming their husband's names, do women lose a sense of their own identity, and do they assume that they are now important only in relationship to their husbands? In relinquishing their right to their family name, do women also lose a sense of having any rights at all? (Until recently, Georgia law merged a woman's legal and civil rights with those of her husband, and anti-ERA groups opposed the feminists who were working to have that law abolished.)

In keeping only half her name, does a woman assume she is only half as important as a man? After all, men keep all of their names. Does that implication connect to the fact that women are paid about half what men are paid for work?

If women are believed to be less than equal to men, then true love between men

and women is not possible. How can a woman love a person who holds her in subjection to him, and how can a man love a person he regards as his inferior?

As long as it was permissible to regard blacks and Jews as inferior, it was also permissible to victimize them, and as long as women are less than equal, inferior, then that is how long women will continue to be the victims of discrimination, exploitation and violence.

Clearly, inequity begets violence, and if we are ever to know love and peace on earth, then we must have equality first, beginning in the very language we use.

Margaret Curtis has been involved in People of Faith for the ERA and the Evangelical Women's Caucus.

SOUTHERN FEMINIST/6

Spain: a kiss is just a kiss

MADRID--Hundreds of lesbians demonstrated on January 23 to protest the harassment of lesbians and gays in Spain.

Earlier that week, two women who had kissed in public in Madrid's Puerta del Sol were approached by a policeman who asked for their identification. They argued and fought with him.

He arrested them for contempt, resisting arrest and public outrage. The women were held in a high-security cell for 48 hours before they were released. They said they had been mistreated and ridiculed by the police.

Hundreds of lesbians held a peaceful protest on the site of the arrest. While police watched, the demonstrators chanted slogans against the repression of lesbians and gays and invited passerbys to kiss them.

Many participants kissed each other as a challenge to the police and to show that it is a normal thing to do.

--info from new york native

Off Our Backs

lesbian mother's custody upheld

KNOXVILLE--After six years of litigation, a Tennessee judge dismissed a challenge to a lesbian mother's right to custody of her child. The win is particularly significant in Tennessee, a state with a sodomy law carrying a penalty of five to fifteen years.

The suit was brought by the child's grandparents, who had been harassing the mother, Royce Parrish, since 1982 by seeking custody and increased visitation rights. The harassment continued, despite the State of Tennessee's bringing criminal charges against them for alleged sexual abuse of the child. According to the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, the jury acquitted the grandparents because they were prejudiced by Parrish's lesbianism.

The grandparents may try to appeal or file a new proceeding, but for now the case is over.
by mj foley

info from Lambda Update (winter'87)
off our backs

"YES, BUT CAN SHE COOK?": Ortho Pharmaceutical, a subsidiary of Johnson and Johnson, is the possible object of a suit by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission because of their discriminatory hiring practices. The company's policy, as stated in a July 1980 letter to divisional managers, is that women have "inferiority complexes" and should not be hired if they have "executive potential" or are "attractive." Some excerpts from the letter: "On understanding Women--Women are more sensitive than men. They shame easier. They cry more often. Women have more social problems that create business problems. Profile of a Female Worker -- She's not 'pretty,' she's not sexy, she should be neat, clean and without frills. She should have the look of someone who might clean her bathroom or kitchen on her hands and knees. She went to a state college, not a private university, and not recently." (In These Times)

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR WOMEN --

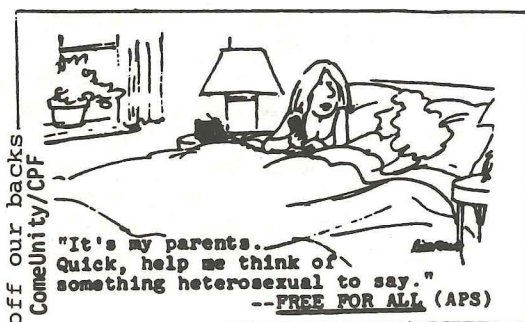
BREAK IN AT SAN FRANCISCO WOMEN'S BUILDING: A peculiar burglary at the S.F. Women's Building has added one more organization to the growing list of victims of information thievery and harassment.

In the early hours of March 11, the Women's Building was broken into. Valuables, other than a \$20 check and \$19 in cash, were ignored. A computer disk containing sensitive information, contact names, phone numbers and lease information on organizations housed in the Building was taken. File cabinets of women's, Central American, lesbian/gay and other organizations which have used the Building over the past four years were rifled.

The Women's Building, located in the heart of San Francisco's Mission District, is a community center that provides support for women's projects and other social change endeavors. Primarily focused on the needs and interests of working class women, women of color and lesbians, the Building is a hub of constant activity ranging from its own support groups and bilingual information and referral services, to aerobics classes, to community meetings and forums presented by a cross-section of women's, lesbian/gay, anti-intervention and other progressive organizations.

At a press conference Carmen Vazquez, President of the Board of Directors of the Women's Building, told reporters, "With all due respect for the professionalism of the San Francisco Police Department, we take exception to their categorization of this incident as a burglary. Common thieves don't go rifling through the files of Central America activists and take computer disks home with them. We call on local authorities to take seriously these violations directed at progressive individuals and organizations in the Bay Area. The Women's Building has no intention of stopping its work!"

New Directions for Women



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Dear friends

I know how hard many of you have been hit in these uncertain economic times. Knowing this, I still must appeal to you, those who benefit from the existence of Herland. We are now in a severe struggle. Our finances are extremely low and our spirits are not much higher. Burnout has taken many of us from the active roster, and those of us who are left need your help.

I ask you to reflect on the time when there was no Herland, no newsletter, no efforts to get you records and books, no workshops, no spring and fall retreats, no listings in national guides, such as Places of Interest to Women, Gaia's Guide, and Gayellow Pages for a women's center such as ours in Oklahoma City, and no Herland library. If you find the time before to be no different than the time now, then this appeal is not for you and you need not read on. **BUT**, if you are aware of our efforts and find them worthy, please help us with our growth.

Our shelves are bare and we are not individually capable of handling the total financial load of operating Herland. Herland is a non-profit organization and we volunteer because we believe in the cause.

So I ask you. Do you want us to continue, and will you help? I know many of you have donated willingly of your time as well as your money. For this we thank you. Yet there are over 600 persons receiving the newsletter. If everyone on the mailing list would donate \$12, which is only \$1 per month, we would be able to stock shelves, try new things, plan concerts, sponsor workshops, and move to a place that is warm in the winter and cool in the summer, and we could have a place that we all would be truly proud of. Think of it. All we need to do to raise \$7200 if for 600 people to donate \$12. Please take us seriously and send a check or money order today, or drop by on a Saturday or Sunday with your donation, when we are open.

Sincerely,

BC/Herland Collective

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WEAVING WOMEN'S COLORS

Counseling Our Own: The Lesbian/Gay Subculture Meets the Mental Health System by Chara Klein looks at the establishing and development of gay mental health institutions -- particularly the Seattle Counseling Service -- and their history, organization, philosophy, staff, clients, and relationships with the lesbian/gay communities and the established mental health system. It chronicles lesbian/gay history and the struggle for positive mental health services. 40% for 3+ books. No distributors. Consultant Services Northwest, 839 NE 96th St., Seattle WA 98115.

Lesbian Health Matters is back in print and back at Bookpeople! \$6.00 paper. Published by the Santa Cruz Women's Health Collective it explains gynecological exams, health and sexuality, alternative methods of fertilization (900 lesbian babies born in the bay area alone in 1986, I'm told), menopause, alcoholism, feminist therapy and more.

In Different Daughters: A Book by Mothers of Lesbians, ed. by Louise Rafkin, twenty-five mothers of lesbians trace the growth of their relationships with their daughters, examine the essential questions mothers of lesbians confront, and their struggles to accept and share their daughters' lives. Finally, a lesbian focused, women's movement assuming book for moms! Just in time for Mother's Day! \$8.95pb, \$21.95cl. March. Cleis Press, PO Box 8933, Pittsburgh PA 15221 or PO Box 14684, San Francisco CA 94114. BP, IN, Bookslinger, The Distributors, New Leaf, B&T, Airlift & Benton Ross.

Getting Pregnant Your Own Way, by Lisa Saffron, is the new British guide to alternative insemination. Published by The Women's Health Information Centre, it's written primarily for lesbian couples and single women (lesbian, heterosexual or celibate) who wish to have children. It considers issues from finding a donor, using clinics, the specifics of how-to-do-it, health issues (includes screening for AIDS, though the focus here is on gay men & doesn't include IV drug uses...), telling your family and friends, etc. Factual sections are followed by women's personal experiences. Very readable. Hopefully it will soon be available from BP & Inland. Meantime, order from WHIC, 52 Featherstone Street, London EC1, England. L2.95.

The Feminist Bookstore News

WAITING FOR THE MOON

Waiting for the Moon is the name of a new movie about Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein, played by Linda Bassett & the marvelous Linda Hunt. It is a made-up story but includes some real aspects of how they lived together. Ask for it in local theatres.

up & coming

"Weaving Women's Colors: A Decade of Empowerment," a conference on the intersection of race and gender, will be held in Atlanta, GA, June 24-28. This 9th annual conference of the National Women's Studies Association will be held at Spelman College, Agnes Scott College & Emory University.

Featured speakers include Angela Davis, Byllye Avery, Margaret Randall, & Ada Deer; conference participants include Toni Cade Bambara, Sonia Sanchez, Minnie Bruce Pratt, & Bernice Reagon. Four plenary sessions will focus on a feminist agenda for the political empowerment of African-American women, voices of poor & working class women, the women's movement, & women & the US Constitution.

This is an outstanding event from many perspectives, and it is hoped many Arkansas women will participate. Write NWSA '87, Emory University, P.O. Box 21223, Atlanta, GA 30322, or call (404) 727-7845 or contact 521-6925 locally.

up & coming

wild strings

Baby let me meet ya! Baby let me treat ya to a whole lot of me! I strongly suggest that you take JASMINE up on their offer. Rush to Herland and get your copy of JASMINE'S HOT HOT new release "Wild Strings". The album is full of original material from Carol Schmidt, Michele Isam, and Lydia Ruffin. It also includes their version of Harriet Tubman, not to mention Aretha Franklin's "Whole Lot of Me". Don't miss this one it gets a 5 star rating.

OUR RIGHT TO LOVE: A Lesbian Resource Book

edited by Ginny Vida with the National Gay Task Force

The first authoritative, comprehensive resource guide on lesbianism ever written, and still a treasure trove. "From this magnificent educational feast one draws hope that the (lesbian experience) will be regarded as a variation of the treasured, another affirmation of the human spirit." *San Francisco Bay Guardian*

Paperback \$11.95

IN SEARCH OF OUR MOTHER'S GARDENS: Womanist Prose

This first collection of Walker's nonfiction represents the views of a remarkable writer over a period of years and ranges over a wide variety of topics including nuclear madness, motherhood, and feminism.

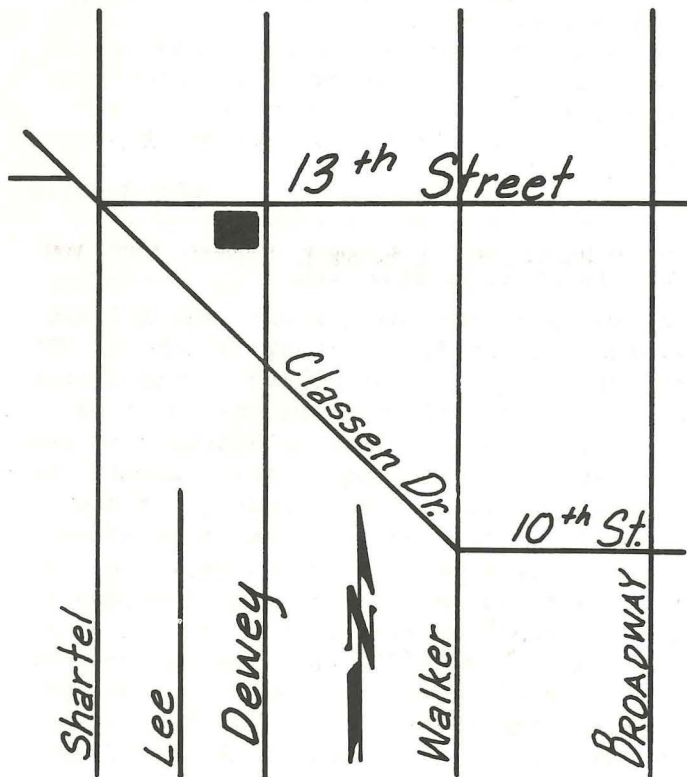
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WOMEN'S DANCE

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UA WINS SEX DISCRIMINATION SUIT

Less than a month after the Gay and Lesbian Student Assoc. lawsuit against it, the University of Arkansas was back in federal court. Ms. Adella Gray sued the school's athletic department for sex discrimination, alleging that Razorback football coach Ken Hatfield fired her from her position as academic co-ordinator for the department because he wanted a man in the job.

After Gray's firing Hatfield immediately hired an old football buddy in her place, at 50% higher salary; he claimed he never saw the applications of two others seeking the job. Testimony during the trial revealed that Hatfield had never read the UA's affirmative action policy and had given Gray neither a job description nor a written evaluation during her 3 years in the job.

Hatfield said he fired Gray because he wanted a "stronger disciplinarian" in the job. While former students and professors testified for Gray, Hatfield and others branded her "pushy" & criticized her for such things as going on vacation instead of waiting to see whether a key football player was going to pass his summer school courses.

Judge H. Franklin Waters said he was initially troubled by the "seeming lack of depth" of Hatfield's reasons for Gray's termination, but he also doubted Gray's credibility and concluded that the lack of periodic employee evaluations, while not "strictly" in compliance with the university's affirmative action policy, had "absolutely nothing" to do with Gray's termination. He also said that while Hatfield's reasons may not have been "very good," they were not given to hide other reasons, such as that Gray was female.

In his April 21 decision Judge Waters ruled that Gray was dismissed because Hatfield wanted to have a person in the job with whom he would feel more comfortable. "Mrs. Gray's sex played no part in such decision," he said, and ruled against her.

--info Ark. Gazette
up & coming

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write: HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES, INC.
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national news

March for rights

Over five-hundred activists from around the country met last November in New York to call for the October 11th National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. March organizers are planning an ambitious series of events in conjunction with the march. The weekend will begin on Friday, October 9th with a March Against Death. Hundreds of people will march quietly past the White House holding signs with the names of gays and lesbians who have died from anti-gay violence, suicide or from AIDS. On Saturday at 2:00 p.m. hundreds of couples will recite vows in an outdoor celebration which will reinforce the demand for recognition of gay and lesbian relationships. The fourteen Lesbian and Gay Bands of America will gather in Washington's famous 3,500 seat Constitution Hall Saturday evening at 8:00 p.m. for a concert benefitting seven national organizations including the march committee. On the day of the march gay veterans are planning a memorial service in Arlington National Cemetery in memory of gay and lesbian people who have given their lives in service to their country. A meeting to found a gay and lesbian congress will be held on Monday, which also happens to be Columbus Day. The last two events are planned for Tuesday, October 13th, when elected officials and government employees return from a holiday weekend. Many people will visit their representatives to lobby for the Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights Bill while a massive act of non-violent civil disobedience directed at the Supreme Court will take place in protest of last summer's sodomy ruling. The demands of the march are:

1. Legal Recognition of lesbian and gay relationships;
2. The repeal of all laws that make sodomy between consenting adults a crime;
3. A Presidential order be issued banning anti-gay discrimination by the Federal Government;
4. Passage of the Congressional Lesbian and Gay Rights Bill;
5. An end to discrimination against People With AIDS or those perceived to have AIDS
6. A massive increase in funding for AIDS education, treatment, research, and patient care;

7. The right to reproductive freedom and an end to sexism; the right to practice our sexuality freely;
8. An end to racism in the U.S. and apartheid in South Africa.

For more information or to contribute urgently needed operating funds, write to the National March on Washington, P.O. Box 7781, Washington, D.C. 20044 or call (202)783-1828.

Delta pays up

Apparently deluged with complaints by Gays, Delta Airlines has developed a response to people protesting its treatment of a Gay man's family in settling a wrongful death suit.

Lawyers for Delta's insurance carrier threatened to reveal Scott Ageloff's homosexuality unless the family settled for an amount which was less than that offered for non-gay lives lost in a 1985 plane crash. Delta's insurance company's lawyers argued that because Ageloff was gay and therefore in a risk group for AIDS, his life expectancy was less than others. Ageloff's parents sued. The court rejected testimony about Ageloff's homosexuality and awarded the family \$1 million in damages.

Delta Airline's president R.W. Allen now says that it was the insurance company's attorneys who threatened the Ageloff family, and he now "Assures you that Delta does not believe that a person's life may be valued on the basis of his or her lifestyle."

TOHR Reporter

Women's pro league

A new, six-team women's volleyball league has been organized, according to a March NPR broadcast. The male organizer of the league stated that in volleyball women can do as well as men, unlike in other sports, and the games can be as exciting as men's games. He also has introduced the innovation of having the entire league owned by one corporation, which will eliminate "bidding wars." All of the players, which include many Olympians & amateur champions, have agreed initially to a base salary of \$5000/year plus bonuses for wins. ESPN will broadcast weekly games and the tournament in May. Most of the fans interviewed at a recent game of the San Jose "Golddiggers" (unfortunate name) said they were there to watch their idols play.

Up & Coming

Sisterfire!

Sisterfire! is a two-day, open-air festival in celebration of women artists to be held outside Washington, D.C. on June 27 & 28. Alice Walker, Asian American Dance Theatre, Holly Near, Odetta, Alix Dobkin, Women's Chamber Music Society, Casselberry-Dupree, Spiderwoman Theatre, & much, much more! For info write Roadwork, Dept. SF, 1475 Harvard St. N.W., D.C. 20009 or call 202-483-1010.

Up & Coming

call for submissions...

Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press is seeking submissions from American Indian women writers for possible autumn, 1987 or spring, 1988 publication. The Press is particularly interested in receiving works of fiction, either novels or collections of short stories, but will also consider work in other genres, including poetry and non-fiction. Submissions should be typed and double-spaced. Please do not send complete manuscripts, but a representative excerpt of no more than 30 pages. A cover letter, which includes a summary of the whole work from which the excerpt is taken, should accompany each submission. Address correspondence to: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, PO Box 908, Latham, NY 12110.

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SING HEAVENLY MUSE! Women's Poetry and Prose, has announced a poetry competition with three awards of \$500 each and publication in a special issue. Those sending manuscripts must have published at least five poems in two or more publications and may not have published a book of poetry. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to SING HEAVENLY MUSE!, PO Box 13299, Minneapolis, MN 55414 for complete guidelines. (Entries must be postmarked before July 25, 1987).

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Consuelo Concepcion, an Afro-Puerto Rican radical feminist would like to hear from radical lesbian-feminist separatists of color. Please send essays, correspondence, etc. to C.M. Concepcion, 514 Northwestern Drive, Grand Forks, ND 58201.

oob

Third Woman are publishing a special issue focussed on "The Sexuality of Latinas". Manuscripts may address how family contexts, religious ideologies, community norms and political values interact in the formation of sexual experience. The themes may be explored in narrative, theater, creative essays, journal entries, letters, criticism, and visual arts pieces. Manuscripts (25 pp max., 3 copies with SASE) should be sent to: Third Woman, c/o Chicano Studies, 3404 Dwinell Hall, University of California-Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720.

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LESBIANS!
Call for Contributions

to
Lesbian Limericks
a new HerBooks title

KALLIOPE, a journal of women's art, is planning a special issue on "Women Portray Men". They are interested in artistic renderings of men by women writers, visual artists, photographers and others for a special issue of KALLIOPE. Work may concern any aspect of the male gender. The deadline is June 30, 1987. Send work to: KALLIOPE, 3939 Roosevelt Blvd., Jacksonville, FL 32205.

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and now a word from our sponsors...

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