

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

When Women Take No Prisoners of Love



How fitting. On this Valentine's Day, so soon after the trials of "Bobbitt," we recall that St. Valentine, the patron saint of love, suffered a cut most profound, too. But he lost only his head. Freud, who saw symbolic parallels between physical experiences above the waist and below the waist, would appreciate the irony.

Lorena Bobbitt attacked that part of the male anatomy women are supposed to envy as the symbol of patriarchal power. If lovers armed with the history of St. Valentine's decapitation were presumed to lose their heads over love, the newest victim in the battle of the sexes is the poor man with a different vulnerability, one requiring undercover warfare. This is the real cold war, chills without thrills. The rules of civilized warfare as set out in the Geneva Con-

vention do not apply. Women take no prisoners of love. Instead, they round up those wounded by cupid's arrow to be re-educated and reprogrammed with genderspeak. The Ministry of Correct Politics reduces the magic of the love act to a bureaucratic procedure inflicted by the oppressor on the oppressed.

One of the most articulate spokespersons of genderspeak is Andrea Dworkin, who, in her book "Intercourse," describes the sex act under "patriarchy" as the colonization of women, a "political invasion and occupation."

Another seminal document is "Never Called It Rape," the Ms. magazine Report on Recognizing, Fighting and Surviving Date and Acquaintance Rape, in which 75 percent of the rape "victims" so identified did not consider themselves rape victims. (What do they know?) More than 40 percent had intercourse again with their "rapist." In the world of Andrea Dworkin they would be collaborators, or even traitors.

In "Women respond to the Men's Movement," a collection of feminist essays, the "good" male is a "soft male," a New Age version of the Kinder and Gentler Man calling for the downfall of the patriarchal order.

But many men have begun to fight back aggressively. Michael Crichton is on the cutting edge of retaliation in his novel "Disclosure," which critics are calling "Harassment Park" for its depiction of a demon woman who harasses a male employee with malevolent cunning worthy of Sister Satan. Crichton's thesis: Women can be just as venal and vicious as men when they have the power seat.

Warren Farrell, author of "The Myth of Male Power," deconstructs the female "victim" mentality with male documentation: Men die seven years earlier than women; their suicide rate is up to six times higher; twice as many men are victims of violent crimes; they're three times more likely to be victims of murder; men die of

prostate cancer at a similar rate to women dying of breast cancer, but breast cancer receives more than six times more research money.

The author finds women (and the excessively sensitive in the media) so eager to portray men as rapists that they ignore the men who are protectors of life. When the jury in the Mike Tyson rape trial was sequestered in a hotel where a fire broke out, two firefighters were killed trying to put it out. Who remembers them?

Some men and women are seeking ways to rediscover their attraction for each other in the nihilistic '90s. Courting may even be back, described in one rather infelicitous phrase called "outercourse."

Outercourse demonstrates a craving for love in the Age of AIDS that demands a slower pace, the eroticism of mutual discovery.

That may have certain drawbacks, but it beats losing one's head — or anything else.

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