

THE WILL TO CHANGE

MEN, MASCULINITY, AND LOVE

bell hooks

1

Wanted: Men Who Love

Women and men alike in our culture spend very little time encouraging males to learn to love. Even the women who are pissed off at men, women most of whom are not and maybe never will be feminist, use their anger to avoid being truly committed to helping to create a world where males of all ages can know love. And there remains a small strain of feminist thinkers who feel strongly that they have given all they want to give to men; they are concerned solely with improving the collective welfare of women. Yet life has shown me that any time a single male dares to transgress patriarchal boundaries in order to love, the lives of women, men, and children are fundamentally changed for the better.

Only a revolution of values in our nation will end male violence, and that revolution will necessarily be based on a love ethic. To create loving men, we must love males. Loving maleness is different from praising and rewarding males for living up to sexist-defined notions of male identity.

! Performance is different from simply being. In patriarchal culture males are not allowed simply to be who they are and to glory in their unique identity. Their value is always determined by what they do. In an antipatriarchal culture males do not have to prove their value and worth. They know from birth that simply being gives them value, the right to be cherished and loved.

...And even when she began to see [her dad], to really see him, as he was and not as she had longed for him to be, she still taught us to admire him and be grateful for his presence, his material provision, his discipline.

She is not alone. All over the world women live with men in states of lovelessness. They live and they mourn.

! “Something missing within” was a self-description I heard from many men as I went around our nation talking about love. Again and again a man would tell me about early childhood feelings of emotional exuberance, of unrepressed joy, of feeling connected to life and to other people, and then a rupture happened, a disconnect, and that feeling of being loved, of being embraced, was gone. Somehow the test of manhood, men told me, was the willingness to accept this loss, to not speak it even in private grief. Sadly, tragically, these men in great numbers were remembering a primal moment of heartbreak and heartache: the moment that they were compelled to give up their right to feel, to love, in order to take their place as patriarchal men.

! Everyone who tries to create love with an emotionally unaware partner suffers. Self-help books galore tell us that we cannot change anyone but ourselves. Of course they never answer the question of what will motivate males in a patriarchal culture who have been taught that to love emasculates them to change, to choose love, when the choice means that they must stand against patriarchy, against the tyranny of the familiar. We cannot change men but we can encourage, implore, and affirm their will to change. We can respect the truth of their inner being, a truth that they may be unable to speak: that they long to connect, to love, to be loved.

2

Understanding Patriarchy

! Patriarchy is the single most life-threatening social disease assaulting the male body and spirit in our nation. Yet most men do not use the word “patriarchy” in everyday life. Most men never think about patriarchy—what it means, how it is created and sustained. Many men in our nation would not be able to spell the word or pronounce it correctly.

! Patriarchy is a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence.

! Both our parents believed in patriarchy; they had been taught patriarchal thinking through religion.

At church they had learned that God created man to rule the world and everything in it and that it was the work of women to help men perform these tasks, to obey, and to always assume a subordinate role in relation to a powerful man. They were taught that God was male. These teachings were reinforced in every institution they encountered—schools, courthouses, clubs, sports arenas, as well as churches. Embracing patriarchal thinking, like everyone else around them, they taught it to their children because it seemed like a “natural” way to organize life.

As their daughter I was taught that it was my role to serve, to be weak, to be free from the burden of thinking, to caretake and nurture others. My brother was taught that it was his role to be served; to provide; to be strong; to think, strategize, and plan; and to refuse to caretake or nurture others. I was taught that it was not proper for a female to be violent, that it was “unnatural.” My brother was taught that his value would be determined by his will to do violence (albeit in appropriate settings). He was taught that for a boy, enjoying violence was a good thing (albeit in appropriate settings). He was taught that a boy should not express feelings. I was taught that girls could and should express feelings, or at least some of them. When I responded with rage at being denied a toy, I was taught as a girl in a patriarchal household that rage was not an appropriate feminine feeling, that it should be not only not be expressed but be eradicated. When my brother responded with rage at being denied a toy, he was taught as a boy in a patriarchal household that his ability to express rage was good but that he had to learn the best setting to unleash his hostility. It was not good for him to use rage to oppose the wishes of his parents, but later, when he grew up, he was taught that rage was permitted and that allowing rage to provoke him to violence would help him protect home and nation.

! Listen to the voices of wounded grown children raised in patriarchal homes and you will hear different versions with the same underlying theme, the use of violence to reinforce our indoctrination and acceptance of patriarchy. In *How Can I Get Through To You?* family therapist Terrence Real tells how his sons were initiated into patriarchal thinking even as their parents worked to create a loving home in which antipatriarchal values prevailed. He tells of how his young son Alexander enjoyed dressing as Barbie until boys playing with his older brother witnessed his Barbie persona and let him know by their gaze and their shocked, disapproving silence that his behavior was unacceptable:

Without a shred of malevolence, the stare my son received transmitted a message. You are not to do this. And the medium that message was broadcast in was a potent emotion: shame. At three, Alexander was learning the rules. A ten-second wordless transaction was powerful enough to dissuade my son from that instant forward from what had been a favorite activity. I call such moments of induction the “normal traumatization” of boys.

Real uses the phrase “psychological patriarchy” to describe the patriarchal thinking common to females and males. Despite the contemporary visionary feminist thinking that makes clear that a patriarchal thinker need not be a male, most folks continue to see men as the problem of patriarchy. This is simply not the case. Women can be as wedded to patriarchal thinking and action as men.

Psychotherapist John Bradshaw’s clear-sighted definition of patriarchy in *Creating Love* is a useful one: “The dictionary defines ‘patriarchy’ as a ‘social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family in both domestic and religious functions....’ Patriarchy is characterized by male domination and power.” He states further that “patriarchal rules still govern most of the world’s religious, school systems, and family systems.” Describing the most damaging of these rules, Bradshaw lists “blind obedience—the foundation upon which patriarchy stands; the repression of all emotions except fear; the destruction of individual

willpower; and the repression of thinking whenever it departs from the authority figure's way of thinking." Patriarchal thinking shapes the values of our culture. We are socialized into this system, females as well as males. Most of us learned patriarchal attitudes in our family of origin, and they were usually taught to us by our mothers. These attitudes were reinforced in schools and religious institutions.

! Dismantling and changing patriarchal culture is work that men and women must do together.

! Keeping males and females from telling the truth about what happens to them in families is one way patriarchal culture is maintained. A great majority of individuals enforce an unspoken rule in the culture as a whole that demands we keep the secrets of patriarchy, thereby protecting the rule of the father. This rule of silence is upheld when the culture refuses everyone easy access even to the word "patriarchy." Most children do not learn what to call this system of institutionalized gender roles, so rarely do we name it in everyday speech. This silence promotes denial. And how can we organize to challenge and change a system that cannot be named?

! I emphasized that patriarchal ideology brainwashes men to believe that their domination of women is beneficial when it is not:

Often feminist activists affirm this logic when we should be constantly naming these acts as expressions of perverted power relations, general lack of control of one's actions, emotional powerlessness, extreme irrationality, and in many cases, outright insanity. Passive male absorption of sexist ideology enables men to falsely interpret this disturbed behavior positively. As long as men are brainwashed to equate violent domination and abuse of women with privilege, they will have no understanding of the damage done to themselves or to others, and no motivation to change.

! Patriarchy demands of men that they become and remain emotional cripples. Since it is a system that denies men full access to their freedom of will, it is difficult for any man of any class to rebel against patriarchy, to be disloyal to the patriarchal parent, be that parent female or male.

! Citizens in this nation fear challenging patriarchy even as they lack overt awareness that they are fearful, so deeply embedded in our collective unconscious are the rules of patriarchy. I often tell audiences that if we were to go door-to-door asking if we should end male violence against women, most people would give their unequivocal support. Then if you told them we can only stop male violence against women by ending male domination, by eradicating patriarchy, they would begin to hesitate, to change their position. Despite the many gains of contemporary feminist movement—greater equality for women in the workforce, more tolerance for the relinquishing of rigid gender roles—patriarchy as a system remains intact, and many people continue to believe that it is needed if humans are to survive as a species. This belief seems ironic, given that patriarchal methods of organizing nations, especially the insistence on violence as a means of social control, has actually led to the slaughter of millions of people on the planet.

! Until we can collectively acknowledge the damage patriarchy causes and the suffering it creates, we cannot address male pain. We cannot demand for men the right to be whole, to be givers and sustainers of life. Obviously some patriarchal men are reliable and even benevolent caretakers and providers, but still they are imprisoned by a system that undermines their mental health.

! Patriarchy promotes insanity. It is at the root of the psychological ills troubling men in our nation. Nevertheless there is no mass concern for the plight of men.

Patriarchy as a system has denied males access to full emotional well-being, which is not the same as feeling rewarded, successful, or powerful because of one's capacity to assert control over others. To truly address male pain and male crisis we must as a nation be willing to expose the harsh reality that patriarchy has damaged men in the past and continues to damage them in the present. If patriarchy were truly rewarding to men, the violence and addiction in family life that is so all-pervasive would not exist. This violence was not created by feminism.

! Psychological patriarchy is the dynamic between those qualities deemed "masculine" and "feminine" in which half of our human traits are exalted while the other half is devalued. Both men and women participate in this tortured value system. Psychological patriarchy is a "dance of contempt," a perverse form of connection that replaces true intimacy with complex, covert layers of dominance and submission, collusion and manipulation. It is the unacknowledged paradigm of relationships that has suffused Western civilization generation after generation, deforming both sexes, and destroying the passionate bond between them.

! To end patriarchy we must challenge both its psychological and its concrete manifestations in daily life. There are folks who are able to critique patriarchy but unable to act in an antipatriarchal manner.

! Terrence Real offers this valuable insight: "The reclamation of wholeness is a process even more fraught for men than it has been for women, more difficult and more profoundly threatening to the culture at large." If men are to reclaim the essential goodness of male being, if they are to regain the space of openheartedness and emotional expressiveness that is the foundation of well-being, we must envision alternatives to patriarchal masculinity. We must all change.

3 Being a Boy

! Boys are not seen as lovable in patriarchal culture. Even though sexism has always decreed that boy children have more status than girls, status and even the rewards of privilege

are not the same as being loved. Patriarchal assault on the emotional life of boys begins at the moment of their birth.

In recent years it has become clear to researchers working on promoting the emotional life of boys that patriarchal culture influences parents to devalue the emotional development of boys. Naturally this disregard affects boys' capacity to love and be loving.

! We must dare to face the way in which patriarchal thinking blinds everyone so that we cannot see that the emotional lives of boys cannot be fully honored as long as notions of patriarchal masculinity prevail. We can not teach boys that "real men" either do not feel or do not express feelings, then expect boys to feel comfortable getting in touch with their feelings.

One of the tremendous failings of feminist theory and practice has been the lack of a concentrated study of boyhood, one that offers guidelines and strategies for alternative masculinity and ways of thinking about maleness. Indeed the feminist rhetoric that insisted on identifying males as the enemy often closed down the space where boys could be considered, where they could be deemed as worthy of rescue from patriarchal exploitation and oppression as were their female counterparts.

For many enlightened, single-parent feminist mothers with limited economic resources, the effort to consistently map for their sons alternatives to patriarchal masculinity simply takes too much time.

Little boys are the only males in our culture who are allowed to be fully, wholly in touch with their feelings, allowed moments when they can express without shame their desire to love and be loved.

! Every day across the country boys consume mass media images that send them one message about how to deal with emotions, and that message is "Act out." Usually acting out means aggression directed outward. Kicking, screaming, and hitting get attention. Since patriarchal parenting does not teach boys to express their feelings in words, either boys act out or they implode. Very few boys are taught to express with words what they feel, when they feel it. And even when boys are able to express feelings in early childhood, they learn as they grow up that they are not supposed to feel and they shut down.

The confusion boys experience about their identity is heightened during adolescence. In many ways the fact that today's boy often has a wider range of emotional expression in early childhood but is forced to suppress emotional awareness later on makes adolescence all the more stressful for boys. Tragically, were it not for the extreme violence that has erupted among teenage boys throughout our nation, the emotional life of boys would still be ignored. Although therapists tell us that mass media images of male violence and dominance teach boys that violence is alluring and satisfying, when individual boys are violent, especially when they murder randomly, pundits tend to behave as though it were a mystery why boys are so violent.

! All over the world terrorist regimes use isolation to break people's spirit. This weapon of psychological terrorism is daily deployed in our nation against teenage boys. In isolation they lose the sense of their value and worth. No wonder then that when they reenter a community, they bring with them killing rage as their primary defense.

In *The Heart of the Soul* authors Gary Zukav and Linda Francis explore the ways anger barricades the feeling self:

Anger prevents love and isolates the one who is angry. It is an attempt, often successful, to push away what is most longed for—companionship and understanding. It is a denial of the humanness of others, as well as a denial of your own humanness. Anger is the agony of believing that you are not capable of being understood and that you are not worthy of being understood. It is a wall that separates you from others as effectively as if it were concrete, thick, and very high. There is no way through it, under it, or over it.

Certainly in almost all the situations where boys have killed, we discover narratives of rage that describe the emotional realities before they happen. Importantly, this anger is expressed cross a broad spectrum of class, race, and family circumstances. Violent boys from affluent homes often are as emotionally alienated as their ghetto counterparts.

! Most patriarchal fathers in our nation do not use physical violence to keep their sons in check; they use various techniques of psychological terrorism, the primary one being the practice of shaming. Patriarchal fathers cannot love their sons because the rules of patriarchy dictate that they stand in competition with their sons, ready to prove that they are the real man, the one in charge.

To the patriarchal dad, sons can only be regarded as recruits in training, hence they must constantly be subjected to sadomasochistic power struggles designed to toughen them up, to prepare them to maintain the patriarchal legacy. As sons they inhabit a world where fathers strive to keep them in the one-down position; as patriarchs in training they must learn how to assume a one-up role.

In Donald Dutton's study of abusive men, *The Batterer*, he observes that there are few male models for grieving, and he emphasizes that "men in particular seem incapable of grieving and mourning on an individual basis. Trapped by a world that tells them boys should not express feelings, teenage males have nowhere to go where grief is accepted." As much as grown-ups complain about adolescent male anger, most adults are more overwhelmed by sorrow and cannot stop weeping. Boys learn to cover up grief with anger; the more troubled the boy, the more intense the mask of indifference. Shutting down emotionally is the best defense when the longing for connection must be denied.

!! Teenagers are the most unloved group in our nation. Teenagers are often feared precisely because they are often exposing the hypocrisy of parents and the world around them. And no group of teenagers is more feared than a pack of teenage boys. Emotionally abandoned by parents and by society as a whole, many boys are angry, but no one really cares about their anger unless it leads to violent behavior. If boys take their rage and sit in front of a computer all

day, never speaking, never relating, no one cares. If boys take their rage to the mall, no one cares, as long as it is contained. In *Lost Boys* therapist James Garbarino testifies that when it comes to boys, “neglect is more common than abuse: more kids are emotionally abandoned than are directly attacked, physically or emotionally.” Emotional neglect lays the groundwork for the emotional numbing that helps boys feel better about being cut off. Eruptions of rage in boys are most often deemed normal, explained by the age-old justifications for adolescent patriarchal misbehavior, “Boys will be boys.” Patriarchy both creates the rage in boys and then contains it for later use, making it a resource to exploit later on as boys become men. As a national product, hatred, and oppression of women and men globally. This rage is needed if boys are to become men willing to travel around the world to fight wars without ever demanding that other ways of solving conflict be found.

! Much of the mass media directed at young male consumers is created by self-hating, emotionally shut-down adult men who have only the pornography of violence to share with younger men. To that end they create images that make killing alluring and the sexual exploitation of females the seductive reward. In the wake of feminist, antiracist, and postcolonial critiques of imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy, the backlash that aims to reinscribe patriarchy is fierce. While feminism may ignore boys and young males, capitalist patriarchal men do not.

4

Stopping Male Violence

As women have gained the right to be patriarchal men in drag, women are engaging in acts of violence similar to those of their male counterparts. This serves to remind us that the will to use violence is really not linked to biology but to a set of expectations about the nature of power in a dominator culture.

! This silence represents our collective cultural collusion with patriarchy. To be true to patriarchy we are all taught that we must keep men’s secrets. Real points out that the fundamental secret we share is that we will remain silent: “When girls are inducted into womanhood, what is it exactly that they have to say that must be silenced. What is the truth women carry that cannot be spoken. The answer is simple and chilling. Girls, women—and also young boys—all share this in common. None may speak the truth about men.” One of the truths that cannot be spoken is the daily violence enacted by men of all classes and races in our society—the violence of emotional abuse. In her groundbreaking work *Emotional Abuse* Marti Tamm Loring explains that emotional abuse is “an ongoing process in which one individual systematically diminishes and destroys the inner self of another. The essential ideas, feelings, perception, and personality characteristics of the victim are constantly belittled.... The most

salient identifying characteristic of emotional abuse is its patterned aspect... It is... the ongoing effort to demean and control, that constitutes emotional abuse.”

! No man who does not actively choose to work to change and challenge patriarchy escapes its impact.

! When researchers looking at date rape interviewed a range of college men and found that many of them saw nothing wrong with forcing a woman sexually, they were astounded. Their findings seemed to challenge the previously accepted notion that raping was aberrant male behavior. While it may be unlikely that any of the men in this study were or became rapists, it was evident that given what they conceived as the appropriate circumstance, they could see themselves being sexually violent. Unconsciously they engage in patriarchal thinking, which condones rape even though they may never enact it.

! Terrence Real calls this early indoctrination into patriarchal thinking the “normal traumatization” of boys:

When I first began looking at gender issues, I believed that violence was a by-product of boyhood socialization. But after listening more closely to men and their families, I have come to believe that violence *is* boyhood socialization. The way we “turn boys into men” is through injury: We sever them from their mothers, research tells us, far too early. We pull them away from their own expressiveness, from their feelings, from sensitivity to others. The very phrase “Be a man” means suck it up and keep going. Disconnection is not fallout from traditional masculinity. Disconnection *is* masculinity.

Contrary to popular myths, single mothers are often the most brutal when it comes to coercing their sons to conform to patriarchal standards.

Feminist idealization of motherhood made it extremely difficult to call attention to maternal sadism, to the violence women enact with children, especially with boys. And yet we know that whether it is a consequence of power dynamics in dominator culture or simply a reflection of rage, women are shockingly violent toward children. This fact should lead everyone to question any theory of gender differences that suggest that women are less violent than men.

Usually adult males who are unable to make emotional connections with the women they choose to be intimate with are frozen in time, unable to allow themselves to love for fear that the loved one will abandon them. If the first woman they passionately loved, the mother, was not true to her bond of love, then how can they trust that their partner will be true to love. Often in their adult relationships these men act out again and again to test their partner’s love. While the rejected adolescent boy imagines that he can no longer receive his mother’s love because he is not worthy, as a grown man he may act out in ways that are unworthy and yet demand of the woman in his life that she offers him unconditional love. This testing does not heal the wound of the past, it merely reenacts it, for ultimately the woman will become weary of being tested and end the relationship, thus reenacting the abandonment. This drama confirms for many men that

they cannot put their trust in love. They decide that it is better to put their faith in being powerful, in being dominant.

! Ever since I started writing about love, I have defined it in a way that blends M. Scott Peck's notion of love as the will to nurture one's own and another's spiritual and emotional growth, with Eric Fromm's insight that love is action and not solely feeling. Working with men who wanted to know love, I have advised them to think of it as a combination of care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust.

The fact that men often mix being caring and being violent has made it hard for everyone in our culture to face the extent to which male violence stands in the way of males' giving and receiving love.

!! The first act of violence that patriarchy demands of males is not violence toward women. Instead patriarchy demands of all males that they engage in acts of psychic self-mutilation, that they kill off the emotional parts of themselves. If an individual is not successful in emotionally crippling himself, he can count on patriarchal men to enact rituals of power that will assault his self-esteem. Feminist movement offered to men and women the information needed to challenge this psychic slaughter, but that challenge never became a widespread aspect of the struggle for gender equality. Women demanded of men that they give more emotionally, but most men really could not understand what was being asked of them. Having cut away the parts of themselves that could feel a wide range of emotional response, they were too disconnected. They simply could not give more emotionally or even grasp the problem without first reconnecting, reuniting the severed parts.

! Describing a couple in family therapy, Real recalls the qualities the wife wanted from her husband: "Sensitivity to others, the capacity to identify and share his feelings, a willingness to put his needs aside in the service of the family." These are the same qualities, Real points out, that "most boys, even in these enlightened times, have had stamped out of them." He concludes: "In our culture, boys and men are not, nor have they ever been, raised to be intimate."

! Teaching men to understand that women and children do not feel loved when they are being abused, is one of the primary goals of groups that work to end male violence.

[Women who worship at the throne of patriarchy] feel, as Hagan did initially, that to choose to be with a patriarchal man is automatically to sign up for some level of abuse, however relative. Every day women explain away male violence and cruelty by insisting on gender differences that normalize abuse. Heterosexual women who are single and want to be with men feel that they cannot escape being victimized at some point by emotional and/or physical abuse at the hands of male partners. Collective female acceptance of male violence in love relationships, even if the appearance of acceptance masks rage, fear, or outright terror, makes it difficult to challenge and change male violence.

In Donald Dutton's work with men who are violent, he identifies women's seeing behind the male mask as a catalyst for male violence:

He may apologize and feel shame immediately after, but he can't sustain that emotion; it's too painful, too reminiscent of hurts long buried. So he blames it on her. If it happens repeatedly with more than one woman, he goes from blaming her to blaming "them." His personal shortcomings become rationalized by an evolving misogyny.... At this point the abusiveness is hardwired into the system. The man is programmed for intimate violence. Often men who have been emotionally neglected and abused as children by dominating mothers bond with assertive women, only to have their childhood feelings of being engulfed surface. While they could not "smash their mommy" and still receive her love, they find that they can engage in intimate violence with partners who respond to their acting out by trying harder to connect with them emotionally, hoping that the love offered in the present will heal the wounds of the past.

When I wanted to leave my first longtime partner, who had been continuously emotionally abusive and occasionally physically abusive, it was other women (my mother, close friends, acquaintances) who cautioned me about needing the relationship, letting me know that the man I was with was better than most men, that I was lucky.

!! As it is for many men today, it was much easier for him to accept equal pay for equal work, sharing housework, and reproductive rights than it was for him to accept the need for shared emotional development. It is more difficult for men to do the work of emotional development because this work requires individuals to be emotionally aware—to feel. Patriarchy rewards men for being out of touch with their feelings. Whether engaged in acts of violence against women and children or weaker men, or in the socially sanctioned violence of war, men are better able to fulfill the demands of patriarchy if they do not feel. Men of feeling often find themselves isolated from other men. This fear of isolation often acts as the mechanism to prevent males from becoming more emotionally aware.

! Conservative mass media offer daily lessons in patriarchal pedagogy; they tell boys what they must do to be men. In those homes where enlightened fathers daily work to repudiate violence, television reaffirms its importance, making courting death glamorous and sexy. Poor and working-class male children and grown men often embody the worst strains of patriarchal masculinity, acting out violently because it is the easiest, cheapest way to declare one's "manhood." If you cannot prove you are "much of a man" by becoming president, or becoming rich, or becoming a public leader, or becoming a boss, then violence is your ticket to the patriarchal manhood contest, and your ability to do violence levels the playing field. On that field, the field of violence, any man can win.

! Men who win on patriarchal terms end up losing in terms of their substantive quality of life. They choose patriarchal manhood over loving connection, first foregoing self-love and then the love they could give and receive that would connect them to others.

! Male violence in general has intensified not because feminist gains offer women greater freedom but rather because men who endorse patriarchy discovered along the way that the patriarchal promise of power and dominion is not easy to fulfill, and in those rare cases where it

is fulfilled, men find themselves emotionally bereft. The patriarchal manhood that was supposed to satisfy does not. And by the time this awareness emerges, most patriarchal men are isolated and alienated; they cannot go back and reclaim a past happiness or joy, nor can they go forward. To go forward they would need to repudiate the patriarchal thinking that their identity has been based on. Rage is the easy way back to a realm of feeling. It can serve as the perfect cover, masking feelings of fear and failure.

! It is not easy for males, young or old, to reject the codes of patriarchal masculinity. Men who choose against violence are simultaneously choosing against patriarchy, whether they can articulate that choice or not. In his insightful essay "Gender Politics of Men," R. W. Connell calls attention to the fact that men who oppose patriarchy remain at odds with the world they are living in:

Men who try to develop a politics in support of feminism, whether gay or straight, are not in for an easy ride. They are likely to be met with derision from many other men, and from some women. It is almost a journalistic cliché that women despise Sensitive New Age Guys. They will not necessarily get warm support from feminist women.

Ultimately the men who choose against violence, against death, do so because they want to live fully and well, because they want to know love. These are men who are true heroes, the men whose lives we need to know about, honor, and remember.

5

Male Sexual Being

In actuality, men come to sex hoping that it will provide them with all the emotional satisfaction that would come from love. Most men think that sex will provide them with a sense of being alive, connected, that sex will offer closeness, intimacy, pleasure. And more often than not sex simply does not deliver the goods. This fact does not lead men to cease obsessing about sex; it intensifies their lust and their longing.

When I first began to write books on love, to talk to lone individuals and then large audiences about the subject, I realized that it was practically impossible to have a serious discussion about love—that discussions of love, especially public conversations, are taboo in our society. Yet everyone talks about sex. We see all manner of sexual scenes on our television and movie screens. Talking about sex is acceptable. Talk shows engage audiences daily with explicit discussion of sexuality. Discussions of sex are fundamentally easier to engage in because in patriarchal culture sex has been presented to us as a "natural" desire. Most folks believe we are hardwired biologically to long for sex but they do not believe we are hardwired to long for love. Almost everyone believes that we can have sex without love; most folks do not believe that a couple can have love in a relationship if there is no sex.

! No matter how many men in our nation are celibate or have only occasional sexual experiences, people still believe that sex is something men have to have. Underlying this assumption is the belief that if men are not sexually active, they will act out or go crazy.

Children today learn more about sex from mass media than from any other source. Whether watching daytime soap operas, a porn channel, or X-rated movies, children in our nation are more aware of the body and of sexuality than ever before. Yet much of what they are learning about sexuality conforms to outmoded patriarchal scripts about the sexual nature of men and women, of masculine and feminine. They learn that in the world of sexual relations there is always a dominant party and a submissive party. They learn that males should dominate females, that strong men should dominate weaker men. They learned that whether he is homosexual or heterosexual, a man deprived of sexual access will ultimately be sexual with any body. If deprived long enough, even if he is straight he will have sex with another man; if he's gay, deprivation will lead him to engage in desperate sexual acts with women. Again and again children hear the message from mass media that when it comes to sex, "he's gotta have it." Adults may know better, from their own experience, but children become true believers. They think that men will go mad if they cannot act sexually. This is the logic that produces what feminist thinkers call "a rape culture."

In the anthology *Victims No Longer: Men Recovering from Incest and Other Sexual Abuse*, men who have been victimized by stronger boys, brothers, and other male peers share how their logic of patriarchal thinking about the right of the strong to do so as they wish with those whom they deem weak was presented to them by their abusers. This same logic has usually shaped the thinking about sexuality embraced by adult abusers.

! Lying about sexuality is an accepted part of patriarchal masculinity. Sex is where many men act out because it is the only social arena where the patriarchal promise of dominion can be easily realized. Without these perks, masses of men might have rebelled against patriarchy long ago.

Little boys learn early in life that sexuality is the ultimate proving ground where their patriarchal masculinity will be tested. They learn that sexual desire should not be freely expressed and that females will try to control male sexuality. For boys this issue of control begins with the mother's response to his penis; usually she does not like it and she does not know what to do with it. Her discomfort with his penis communicates that there is something inherently wrong with it. She does not communicate to the boy child that his penis is wonderful, special, marvelous. This same fear of the boy's penis is commonly expressed by fathers who simply do not concern themselves with educating boys about their bodies. Sadly, unenlightened approaches to child abuse lead many parents to fear celebration of their child's body, especially the boy body, which may respond to playful physical closeness with an erection. In patriarchal culture everyone is encouraged to see the penis, even the penis of a small boy, as a potential weapon. This is the psychology of rape culture. Boys learn that they should identify with the penis and the potential pleasure erections will bring, while simultaneously learning to fear the penis as though it were a weapon that could backfire, rendering them powerless, destroying them. Hence the underlying

message boys receive about sexual acts is that they will be destroyed if they are not in control, exercising power.

Sexual repression fuels the lust of boys and men. Shedding light on the negative impact of this socialization in the essay "Fuel for Fantasy: The Ideological Construction of Male Lust," Michael S. Kimmel demonstrates that sexual repression creates the world in which males must engage constantly in sexual fantasy, eroticizing the nonsexual. Exploring the link between sexual repression and sexism, he explains:

Sexual pleasure is rarely the goal in a sexual encounter, something far more important than mere pleasure is on the line, our sense of ourselves as men. Men's sense of sexual scarcity and an almost compulsive need for sex to confirm manhood feed each other, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of sexual deprivation and despair. And it makes men furious at women for doing what women are taught to do in our society: saying no. Despair and rage are the feelings men bring to sex, whether with women or with other men.

! In *The Heart of the Soul* Gary Zukav and Linda Francis describe the characteristics of individuals addicted to sexual obsessions: "They cannot rest from thoughts of sex. They move from one encounter to the next. Each sexual experience brings only temporary relief from their craving, and it quickly returns. No amount of sexual activity can satisfy it." They explain that the "sexual craving is not for sex, but for something deeper." The fact that the craving always returns is the clue that addictive sexuality is not simply about getting sex. For the patriarchal male, be he straight or gay, addictive sexuality is fundamentally about the need to constantly affirm and reaffirm one's selfhood. If it is only through sex that he can experience selfhood, then sex has to be constantly foregrounded. Zukav and Francis explain: "The more intense the pain of fear, unworthiness, and feeling unlovable becomes, the more obsessive becomes the need to have a sexual interaction."

Sex, then, becomes for most men a way of self-solacing. It is not about connecting to someone else but rather about releasing their own pain. The addict is often an individual in acute pain. Patriarchal men have no outlet to express their pain, so they simply seek release.

! Kimmel contends that male consumption of pornography is fed by the sexual lust males are taught to feel all the time and their rage that this lust cannot be satisfied:

Pornography can sexualize that rage, and it can make sex look like revenge.... Everywhere, men are in power, controlling virtually all the economic, political, and social institutions of society. Yet individual men do not feel powerful—far from it. Most men feel powerless and are often angry at women, whom they perceive as having sexual power over them: the power to arouse them and to give or withhold sex. This fuels both sexual fantasies and the desire for revenge.

Many men are angry at women, but more profoundly, women are the targets for displaced male rage at the failure of patriarchy to make good on its promise of fulfillment, especially endless sexual fulfillment.

Men may be too terrified to confront the facts of their lives and tell the truth that possessing the right to engage in rituals of domination and subordination is not all that patriarchy promised it

would be. If, as Terrence Real says, patriarchy were a disease, it would be a disease of “disordered desire”; to cure this disease, then, we would all need to reconsider the way we see men and male desire. Rather than seeing the violence men do as an expression of power, we would need to call it by its true name—pathology. Patriarchal violence is a mental illness.

..

To take the inherent positive sexuality of males and turn it into violence is the patriarchal crime that is perpetuated against the male body, a crime that masses of men have yet to possess the strength to report. Men know what is happening. They simply have been taught not to speak the truth of their bodies, the truth of their sexualities.

Robert Jensen’s powerful and courageous essay “Patriarchal Sex” drives this message home. Defining patriarchal sex, he writes: “Sex is fucking. In patriarchy, there is an imperative to fuck—in rape and in ‘normal’ sex, with strangers and girlfriends and wives and estranged wives and children. What matters in patriarchal sex is the male need to fuck. When that need presents itself, sex occurs.” Boldly Jensen explains:

Attention to the meaning of the central male slang for sexual intercourse—“fuck”—is instructive. To fuck a woman is to have sex with her. To fuck someone in another context... means to hurt or cheat a person. And when hurled as a simple insult (“fuck you”) the intent is denigration and the remark is often a prelude to violence or the threat of violence. Sex in patriarchy is fucking. That we live in a world in which people continue to use the same word for sex and violence, and then resist the notion that sex is routinely violent and claim to be outraged when sex becomes overtly violent, is testament to the power of patriarchy.

! Patriarchal pornography, no longer isolated but ever-present in popular mass media, has become so widespread because males brainwashed by the patriarchal mind-set cannot find the courage to tell the truth. They cannot find the courage to say, “I can’t get no satisfaction.” Patriarchal pornography has become an inescapable part of everyday life because the need to create a pretend culture where male sexual desire is endlessly satisfied keeps males from exposing the patriarchal lie and seeking healthy sexual identities.

Concurrently, homophobia becomes amplified among heterosexual men because its overt expression is useful as a way to identify, among apparently similar macho men, who is gay and who is straight.

Socializing women to conform more to patriarchal male sexual norms is one way patriarchy hopes to address male rage.

! With keen insight Bearman in the essay “Why Are Men So Obsessed with Sex” reminds male sthat they have a choice:

Directly and indirectly, we are handed sexuality as the one vehicle through which it might still be possible to express and experience essential aspects of our humanness that have been slowly and systematically conditioned out of us. Sex was, and is, presented as the road to real intimacy, complete closeness, as the arena in which it is okay to openly love, to be tender and vulnerable and yet remain safe, to not feel so deeply alone. Sex is the one place sensuality

seems to be permissible, where we can be gentle with our own bodies and allow ourselves our overflowing passion. This is why men are so obsessed with sex.... But in no way can sex completely fulfill these needs. Such needs can only be fulfilled by healing from the effects of male conditioning and suffusing every area of our lives with relatedness and aliveness.

! Bearman reminds men that “no matter how much sex you encounter, it will not be enough to fill your enormous need to love and be close and express your passion and delight in your senses and feel life forces coursing through your muscles and skin.” If masses of men could recover this fundamental passion for their own bodies, that shift away from patriarchal sex might lead us toward a true sexual revolution. To recover the power and passion of male sexuality unsullied by patriarchal assault, males of all ages must be allowed to speak openly of their sexual longing. They must be able to be sexual beings in a space where patriarchal thinking can no longer make violation the only means of attaining sexual pleasure. This is a tough job. And until males learn how to do it, they will not be satisfied.

6

Work: What's Love Got to Do with It?

Before feminist movement boys were more likely to be taught, at home and at school, that they would find fulfillment in work. Today boys hear a slightly different message. They are told that money offers fulfillment and that work is a way to acquire money—not but the only way. Winning the lottery, finding a wealthy partner, or committing a crime for which you do not get caught are paths to fulfillment that are as acceptable as working. These attitudes about the nature of work in patriarchal society have changed as capitalism has changed the nature of work. Few men, either now or in the future, can expect a lifetime of full employment. Nowadays working men of all classes experience periods of unemployment. In order to keep the faith, patriarchal culture has had to offer men different criteria for judging their worth than work.

As a primary foundation of patriarchal self-esteem, work has not worked for masses of men for some time. Rather than throw out the whole outmoded patriarchal script so that the nature of work in our culture can be changed, men are offered addictions that make unsatisfying work more bearable. Patriarchal obsession with sex and the pornography it produces are promoted to soothe men subliminally while they perform jobs that are tedious, boring, and oftentimes dehumanizing, jobs where their health and well-being are at risk. Most male workers in our America, like their female counterparts, work in exploitative circumstances; the work they do and the way they are treated by superiors more often than not undermine self-esteem.

! In her massive journalistic treatise *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, Susan Faludi documents the reality that some males, especially older men, felt that changes in the

valuation and nature of work, as well as competition with women for jobs, robbed them of the pride in being providers, creating what she calls a “masculinity crisis.”

The Outer layer of the masculinity crisis, men’s loss of economic authority, was most-evident in the recessionary winds of the early nineties, as the devastation of male unemployment grew ever fiercer. The role of family breadwinner was plainly being undermined by economic forces that spat many men back into a treacherous job market during corporate “consolidations” and downsizings. Even the many men who were never laid off were often gripped with the fear that they could be next—that their footholds as providers were frighteningly unsteady.

Masses of men in our culture may believe that their ability to provide for themselves and families is a measure of their manhood, yet they often do not actually use their resources to provide for others.

Feminist theorists, myself included, have for some time now called attention to the fact that the behavior of men who make money yet refuse to pay alimony or child support, or their peers who head households yet squander their paycheck on individual pleasures, challenge the patriarchal insistence that men are eager to be caretakers and providers.

The conflict between finding time for work and finding time for love and loved ones is rarely talked about in our nation. It is simply assumed in patriarchal culture that men should be willing to sacrifice meaningful emotional connections to get the job done.

There is very little research that documents the extent to which depression about the nature of work leads men to act violently in their domestic lives. Contemporary patriarchy has offered disappointed male workers a trade-off: the perks of manhood that a depressed economy takes away can be redeemed in the realm of the sexual through domination of women. When that world of sexuality is not fulfilling, males rage. In actuality women are weary of male domination in the sexual sphere particularly, and rather than making for greater “domestic bliss,” men’s turning to sex for the satisfaction that they do not receive at work intensifies strife. The movement of masses of women into the workforce has not undermined male workers economically; they still receive the lion’s share of both jobs and wages.

! Domestic households certainly suffer when sexism decrees that all emotional care and love should come from women, in the face of the reality that working women, like their male counterparts, often come home too tired to deliver the emotional goods. Sexist men and women believe that the way to solve this dilemma is not to encourage men to share the work of emotional caretaking but rather to return to more sexist gender roles. They want more women, especially those with small children, to stay home.

Whether they regard themselves as pro- or antifeminist, most women want men to do more of the emotional work in relationships.

! Victor Seidler expresses his fear of having downtime in *Rediscovering Masculinity*, confessing, “I have learned how hard it is to give myself time, even an hour for myself a day.

There are always things I am supposed to be doing. A feeling of panic and anxiety emerges at the very thought of spending more time with myself.” He argues that most men have such a limited sense of self that they are uncertain that they possess “selves we could want to relate to.” He contends, “We only seem to learn that the ‘self’ is something we have to control tightly, since otherwise it might upset our plans.... We never really give ourselves much chance to know ourselves better or develop more contact with ourselves, since...all this threatens the ‘control’ we have been brought up to identify our masculinity with. We feel trapped, though we do not know how we are constantly remaking this trap for ourselves.” Competition with other men in the workplace can make it all the more difficult for men to express feelings or to take time alone. The male who seeks solitude in the workplace, especially during downtimes, is seen as suspect. Yet when men gather together at work, they rarely have meaningful conversations. They jeer, they grandstand, they joke, but they do not share feelings. They relate in a scripted, limited way, careful to remain within the emotional boundaries set by patriarchal thinking about masculinity. The rules of patriarchal manhood remind them that it is their duty as men to refuse relatedness.

! Even though male workers like Kenneth Blanchard, author of the *One Minute Manager* and coauthor of *The Power of Ethical Management*, share the wisdom that relational skills should be cultivated by men to improve the nature of work and work relations, most work settings remain places where emotional engagement between workers, especially a boss and a subordinate, is deemed bad for business. Were more men in touch with their relational skills and their emotional life, they might choose work that would at least sometimes enhance their well-being. Although women with class privilege such as Susan Faludi or Susan Bordo who write about men express surprise that most men do not see themselves as powerful, women who have been raised in poor and working-class homes have always been acutely aware of the emotional pain of the men in their lives and of their work dissatisfactions. Had Susan Faludi read the work of feminist women of color writing about the poor and working-class men whom we know most intimately, she would not have been “surprised” to find masses of men troubled and discontent. Women with class privilege have been the only group who have perpetuated the notion that men are all-powerful, because often the men in their families *were* powerful.

=O [American Beauty and Life as a House] seduce audiences with images of men in the process of growing up, but then they betray their characters and us by never letting these men live. They echo the patriarchal message that if a man stops work, he loses his reason for living.

Popular culture offers us few or no redemptive images of men who start out emotionally dead. Unlike Sleeping Beauty, they cannot be brought back to life. In actuality, individual men are engaged in the work of emotional recovery every day, but the work is not easy because they have no support systems within patriarchal culture, especially if they are poor and working-class.

! When patriarchy no longer rules the day, it will be possible for men to view themselves holistically, to see work as part of life, not their whole existence.

=O!! If the intention behind the work is to seek recognition and power—"hey, look at me, I'm special, I'm important, I'm worthy of your love and respect"—then you are setting yourself apart from others as a way of trying to feel connected to them. Setting yourself apart from others as a way to feel connected to them: It seems so clear why this is self-defeating, and yet it is often the norm in our culture....When my self-worth was defined by what I did, then I had to take every important opportunity that came along, even if relationships suffered.

Many men who have retired from jobs, particularly men over sixty in our culture, often feel that aging allows them to break free of the patriarchy. With time on their hands, they are often compelled by extreme loneliness, alienation, a crisis of meaning, or other circumstances, to develop emotional selves. They are the elders who can speak to younger generations of men, debunking the patriarchal myth of work; those voices need to be heard.

7

Feminist Manhood

Say that you are feminist to most men, and automatically you are seen as the enemy. You risk being seen as a man-hating woman. Most young women fear that if they call themselves feminist, they will lose male favor, they will not be loved by men. Popular opinion about the impact of feminist movement on men's lives is that feminism hurts men. Conservative antifeminist women and men insist that feminism is destroying family life. They argue that working women leave households bereft of homemakers and children without a mother's care. Yet they consistently ignore the degree to which consumer capitalist culture, not feminism, pushed women into the workforce and keeps them there.

When feminist women told the world that patriarchy promotes woman-hating, the response was that feminists were being too extreme, exaggerating the problem. Yet when men who knew nothing about feminism claimed that feminists were man-hating, there was no response from the nonfeminist world saying that they were being too extreme. No feminists have murdered and raped men. Feminists have not been jailed day after day for their violence against men.

! However, most men have not consciously chosen patriarchy as the ideology they want to govern their lives, their beliefs, and actions. Patriarchal culture is the system they were born within and socialized to accept, yet in all areas of their lives most men have rebelled in small ways against the patriarchy, have resisted absolute allegiance to patriarchal thinking and practice. Most men have clearly been willing to resist patriarchy when it interferes with individual desire, but they have not been willing to embrace feminism as a movement that would challenge, change, and ultimately end patriarchy.

It was difficult for women committed to feminist change to face the reality that the problem did not lie just with men. Facing that reality required more complex theorizing; it required

acknowledging the role women play in maintaining and perpetuating patriarchy and sexism. As more women moved away from destructive relationships with men, it was easier to see the whole picture. It was easier to see that even if individual men divested themselves of patriarchal privilege, the system of patriarchy, sexism, and male domination would still remain intact, and women would still be exploited and oppressed. Despite this change in feminist agenda...

To this day I hear individual feminist women express their concern for the plight of men within patriarchy, even as they share that they are unwilling to give their energy to help educate and change men. Feminist writer Minnie Bruce Pratt states the position clearly: "How are men going to change? The meeting between two people, where one opposes the other, is the point of change. But I don't want the personal contact. I don't want to do it.... When people talk about not giving men our energies, I agree with that.... They have to deliver themselves." These attitudes, coupled with the negative attitudes of most men toward feminist thinking, meant that there was never a collective, affirming call for boys and men to join feminist movement so that they would be liberated from patriarchy.

This lack of interest does not change the fact that only a feminist vision that embraces feminist masculinity, that loves boys and men and demands on their behalf every right that we desire for girls and women, can renew men in our society. Feminist thinking teaches us all, males especially, how to love justice and freedom in ways that foster and affirm life. Clearly we need new strategies, new theories, guides that will show us how to create a world where feminist masculinity thrives.

! Teachers of children see gender equality mostly in terms of ensuring that girls get to have the same privileges and rights as boys within the existing social structure; they do not see it in terms of granting boys the same rights as girls—for instance, the right to choose not to engage in aggressive or violent play, the right to play with dolls, to play dress up, to wear costumes of either gender, the right to choose.

! Just as it was misguided for reformist feminist thinkers to see freedom as simply women having the right to be like powerful patriarchal men (feminist women with class privilege never suggested that they wanted their lot to be like that of poor and working-class men), so was it simplistic to imagine that the liberated man would simply become a woman in drag. Yet this was the model of freedom offered men by mainstream feminist thought. Men were expected to hold on to the ideas about strength and providing for others that were a part of patriarchal thought, while dropping their investment in domination and adding an investment in emotional growth. This vision of feminist masculinity was so fraught with contradictions, it was impossible to realize. No wonder then that men who cared, who were open to change, often just gave up, falling back on the patriarchal masculinity they found so problematic. The individual men who did not take on the mantle of a feminist notion of male liberation did so only to find that few women respected this shift.

Undoubtedly, one of the first revolutionary acts of visionary feminism must be to restore maleness and masculinity as an ethical biological category divorced from the dominator model.

Rejecting this model for a feminist masculinity means that we must define maleness as a state of being rather than as performance.

And those of us committed to ending patriarchy can touch the hearts of real men where they live, not by demanding that they give up manhood or maleness, but by asking that they allow its meaning to be transformed, that they become disloyal to patriarchal masculinity in order to find a place for the masculine that does not make it synonymous with domination or the will to do violence.

Patriarchal culture continues to control the hearts of men precisely because it socializes males to believe that without their role as patriarchs they will have no reason for being.

In the dominator model the pursuit of external power, the ability to manipulate and control others, is what matters most. When culture is based on a dominator model, not only will it be violent but it will frame all relationships as power struggles.

! No matter how many modern-day seers assure us that power struggles are not an effective model for human relations, imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchal culture continues to insist that domination must be the organizing principle of today's civilizations. In *The Heart of The Soul* Gary Zukav and Linda Francis make it clear that while humans may have needed to create external powers to keep the species alive at one time, this is no longer the case: "With or without reverence, the pursuit of external power leads only to violence and destruction. It is an evolutionary modality that no longer works. It is the wrong medicine, and nothing can make it the right medicine again." Patriarchal masculinity teaches men that their selfhood has meaning only in relation to the pursuit of external power; such masculinity is a subtext of the dominator model.

! Feminist masculinity presupposes that it is enough for males to be to have value, that they don't have to "do," to "perform," to be affirmed and loved. Rather than defining strength as "power over," feminist masculinity defines strength as one's capacity to be responsible for self and others. This strength is a trait males and females need to possess. In *The Courage to Raise Good Men*, Olga Silverstein stresses the need to redefine male sex roles in ways that break with sexist norms. Currently, sexist definitions of male roles insist on defining maleness in relationship to winning, one-upmanship, domination: "Until we are willing to question many of the specifics of the male sex role, including most of the seven norms and stereotypes that psychologist Robert Levant names in a listing of its chief constituents—'avoiding femininity, restrictive emotionality, seeking achievement and status, self-reliance, aggression, homophobia, and nonrelational attitudes toward sexuality'—we are going to deny men their full humanity. Feminist masculinity would have as its chief constituents integrity, self-love, emotional awareness, assertiveness, and relational skill, including the capacity to be empathic, autonomous, and connected."

Silverstein:

Men aren't surviving very well! We send them to war to kill and be killed. They're laying down in the middle of highways to prove their manhood in imitation of a scene in a recent movie about college football. They're dying of heart attacks in early middle age, killing themselves with liver and lung disease via the manly pursuits of drinking and smoking, committing suicide at roughly four times the rate of women, becoming victims of homicide (generally at the hands of other men) three times as often as women, and therefore living about eight years less than women.

Hooks:

And I would add that many men striving to prove patriarchal masculinity through acts of brutal and unnecessary violence are imprisoned for life.

! A masai wise man, when asked by Terrence Real to name the traits of a good warrior, replied, "I refuse to tell you what makes a good morani [warrior]. But I will tell you what makes a great morani. When the moment calls for fierceness, a good morani is very ferocious. And when the moment calls for kindness, a good morani is utterly tender. Now, what makes a great morani is knowing which moment is which."

Patriarchal masculinity confines men to various stages of reaction and overreaction.

...

! The power of patriarchy has been to make maleness feared and to make men feel that it is better to be feared than to be loved. Whether they can confess this or not, men know that it just is not true.

This fear of maleness that they inspire estranges men from every female in their lives to greater or lesser degrees, and men feel the loss. Ultimately, one of the emotional costs of allegiance to patriarchy is to be seen as unworthy of trust. If women and girls in patriarchal culture are taught to see every male, including the males with whom we are intimate, as potential rapists and murderers, then we can not offer them our trust, and without trust there is no love.

Patriarchal masculinity insists that real men must prove their manhood by idealizing aloneness and disconnection. Feminist masculinity tells men that they become more real through the act of connecting with others, through building community. There is no society in the world made up of one lone man.

Older generations of men who have shifted from sexist thinking to feminist masculinity were often moved by the women in their lives to make changes in thought and action, but for many it was the experience of assuming an equal parenting role that really transformed their consciousness about their behavior. I have had many conversations with men who in parenting daughters suddenly find themselves enraged by patriarchal biases that they had been unaware of or cared nothing about until the moment when they saw sexism begin to threaten their daughters' action and being.

....

! Male domination does not allow mutual intimacy to emerge; it keeps fathers from touching the hearts of their children.

As long as men dominate women, we cannot have love between us. That love and domination can coexist is one of the most powerful lies patriarchy tells us all.

Love cannot exist in any relationship that is based on domination and coercion.

!! [John Stoltenberg in his essay "Healing from Manhood" shares that] "loving justice more than manhood, is not only a worthy pursuit, it is the future."

8

Popular Culture: Media Masculinity

Mass media do the work of continually indoctrinating boys and men, teaching them the rules of patriarchal thinking and practice. One of the primary reasons the feminist demand that we challenge and change patriarchy had so little impact on males was that the theory was primarily expressed in books. Most men were not buying or reading feminist books.

Gender equality in the workforce freed lots of men to speak their truth that they were not necessarily interested in the role of provider. Many men were happy with the idea that feminism was teaching women that they should pay their own way. Concurrently, as feminist movement and the so-called sexual revolution changed the notion that sexual actions and initiation were exclusively the province of males, another signifier of patriarchal masculinity lost meaning. Gender-based changes in the workforce and in sexual politics meant that sex roles were modified for a vast majority of people, especially females, yet even so, patriarchal notions did not have a reality base. Hence the crisis in masculinity.

Compelled to work in a public arena where men no longer asserted patriarchal control (job supervisors and higher-ranking bosses might be female), these men could fully enact rituals of patriarchal domination only in the private sphere. As a consequence, despite feminist changes in the area of work, incidences of male violence against women and children were escalating.

The hero of *The Incredible Hulk*, like the many television and movie heroes that have come in his wake, is the perfect candidate for inclusion in Barbara Ehrenreich's book *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*. He is a man always on the run, unable to develop lasting ties or intimacy. A scientist by training (the ultimate personification of rational man), when he experiences anger, he turns into a creature of color and commits violent acts. After committing violence, he changes back to his normal white-male rational self. He has no memory of his actions and therefore cannot assume responsibility for them. Since he is (like the hero of a popular adult drama, *The Fugitive*) unable to form sustained emotional bonds with friends or family, he cannot love. He thrives on disconnection and dissociation. Like the men of

the Beat generation, he is the symbol of the ultimate patriarchal man- alone, on the road, forever drifting, driven by the beast within.

The Incredible Hulk linked sexism and racism. The cool, level-headed, rational white-male scientist turned into a colored beast whenever his passions were aroused. Tormented by the knowledge of this transformation, he searches for a cure, a way to dissociate himself from the beast within. Writing about the connection between racism and the construction of masculinity in *White Hero, Black Beast*, Paul Hoch contends, "There is indeed a close interaction between the predominant Western conception of manhood and that of racial (and species) domination. The notion, originally from myth and fable, is that the summit of masculinity—the 'white hero'—achieves his manhood, first and foremost, by winning victory over the 'dark beast' or over the barbarian beasts of other—in some sense, 'darker'—races, nations and social castes." Recent movies like *Men in Black*, *Independence Day*, and *The Matrix* rely on these racialized narratives of dark versus light to valorize patriarchal white masculinity in the realm of fantasy.

! The popularization of gangsta rap, spearheaded by white male executives in the music industry, gave a public voice to patriarchy and woman-hating. However, by promoting the voices of young black males (in the beginning many of whom were coming from the underclass), ruling-class white males could both exploit their clients' longing for the trappings of patriarchal masculinity (money, power, sex) and simultaneously make their antifeminist messages the lessons that young white males would learn.

! One of the ways patriarchal white males used mass media to wage the war against feminism was to consistently portray the violent women-hating man as aberrant and abnormal. A perfect example of the lengths to which patriarchal white men will go to deny their patriarchal violence is offered in the PBS documentary about the Hillside Strangler. Viewers are able to watch psychiatrists talk with a white male serial killer, who murdered adult women and two girls. It is a tale told in parts, each part highly dramatic and suspenseful. Viewers learn that the accused is a handsome, all-American white boy (I used the word "boy" because the commentators refer again and again to his boyish qualities) with a lovely blond wife and a baby son. We are told that he does not have the appearance of a villain, a killer. We learn that he is hardworking, well liked, etc. All these qualities made detectives and police (all white and male) reluctant to arrest him. He seemed to them to be an "unlikely suspect." Even after his arrest, white-male mental health care professionals were brought on the case to at least provide documentation that if this all-American white male did indeed commit all these violent crimes against females, he did so because he was insane.

Finally a shrewd doctor uncovers that the accused has been pretending to be insane to escape punishment. It seems he studied psychology before he committed his crimes so that he would know how to appear crazy. When the doctor finally "unmasks" him, the Hillside Strangler states, "A woman is nothing to me. I can kill her in a minute." As the trial closes and the white male judge reads his final comments on the case, he tells viewers that the Hillside Strangler was a misogynist, a man who hated women. Yet the judge does not link this misogyny to patriarchy or sexism or male domination. Instead we are told that the man's mother whipped him to express her anger toward a violent, no-good gambler husband. In the final analysis a woman is blamed

for this man's violence against women—another case of “She made me do it.” Nothing is said of his rationally thought-out strategy of dissimulation or of the way he deceived many women and other people by pretending to be a nice guy, by impersonating the benevolent patriarch.

Contemporary books and movies offer clear portraits of the evils of patriarchy without offering any direction for change. Ultimately they send the message that male survival demands holding on to some vestige of patriarchy. In *Monster's Ball* the male who is really different, who is humanistic, feeling, antiracist, and longing to move past patriarchal pornographic objectification to genuine intimacy is a victim. He kills himself. Watching this film, no male will be inspired to truly challenge the system.

....

The vast majority of contemporary films send the message that males cannot escape the beast within.

! Until we can create a popular culture that affirms and celebrates masculinity without upholding patriarchy, we will never see a change in the way that masses of males think about the nature of their identity.

9

Healing Male Spirit

It is highly ironic that we are now living in a time when we are told to question whether mothers can raise sons, when so many patriarchal men have been taught the beliefs and values of patriarchy by mothers, firsthand. Many mothers in patriarchal culture express their rage at adult men by directing anger at their sons. In *The Power of Partnership* Riane Eisler explains: “Some women direct their suppressed anger against men they feel are weak or vulnerable—their sons for example. The psychologist David Winter found that women living in countries or periods of extreme male dominance tend to be very controlling of their sons, who are the only males it is safe for them to vent against. Women in these circumstances are often subtly, or not so subtly, abusive of their sons.”

! Rituals of domination help mediate the pain. They provide an illusory sense of self, an identity. Poet and farmer Wendell Berry in *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* suggests that “if we removed the status and compensation from the destructive exploits we classify as ‘manly,’ men would be found to be suffering as much as women. They would be found to be suffering for the same reason: they are in exile from the communion of men and women, which is the deepest connection with the communion of all creatures.” Many men in our society have no status, no privilege; they receive no freely given compensation, no perks with capitalist patriarchy. For these men domination of women and children may be the only opportunity to assert a patriarchal presence.

When feminist women insist that all men are powerful oppressors who victimize from the location of power, they obscure the reality that many victimize from the location of victimization. The violence they do to others is usually a mirroring of the violence enacted upon and within the self.

! A feminist future for men can enable transformation and healing. As advocates of feminism who seek to end sexism and end oppression, we must be willing to hear men speak their pain. Only when we courageously face male pain without turning away will we model for men the emotional awareness healing requires.

To heal, men must learn to feel again. They must learn to break the silence, to speak the pain. Often men, to speak the pain, first turn to the women in their lives and are refused a hearing. In many ways women have bought into the patriarchal masculine mystique. Asked to witness a male expressing feelings, to listen to those feelings and respond, they may simply turn away. There was a time when I would often ask the man in my life to tell me his feelings. And yet when he began to speak, I would either interrupt or silence him by crying, sending him the message that his feelings were too heavy for anyone to bear, so it was best if he kept them to himself.

! Talking with men, I have been stunned when individual males would confess to sharing intense feelings with a male buddy, only to have that buddy either interrupt to silence the sharing, offer no response, or distance himself. Men of all ages who want to talk about feelings usually learn not to go to other men.

! Being "vulnerable" is an emotional state many men seek to avoid. Some men spend a lifetime in a state of avoidance and therefore never experience intimacy. Sadly, we have all colluded with the patriarchy by faking it with men, pretending levels of intimacy and closeness we do not feel. We tell men we love them when we feel we have absolutely no clue as to who they really are. We tell fathers we love them when we are terrified to share our perceptions of them, our fear that if we disagree, we will be cast out, excommunicated. In this way we all collude with patriarchal culture to make men feel they can have it all, that they can embrace patriarchal manhood and still hold their loved ones dear.

[The early experience of patriarchal mothers exploiting the boy's emotional vulnerability to subjugate him] may explain why so many men in patriarchal culture seek intimacy with girls or women young enough to be their daughters.

There is little feminist discussion of maternal sadism in relation to boys because it has been difficult for feminist thinkers to find a language to name the power mothers wield over children in a patriarchal culture, where in the larger social context mothers are so powerless. Yet it may be that very powerlessness in relation to grown men in patriarchy that leads so many women to exert emotional power over boys in a damaging manner.

Women are not inherently more loving than men; women may give care and still be emotionally abusive. There has been such a strong tendency in patriarchal culture to simply assume that

women are loving and capable of being intimate, that female failure to acquire the relational skills that would make intimacy possible, often goes unnoticed. Most females are encouraged to learn relational skills, yet damaged self-esteem may prevent us from applying those skills in a healthy manner. If we are to begin to create a culture in which feminist masculinity can thrive, then women who mother will need to educate themselves for critical consciousness. In the near future we may hope to have more data to show us the ways boys fare better when they have loving parents, whether together or apart, who teach them how to be intimate. Meanwhile let us create the space where males who lack relational skills can learn them.

! As Zukav and Francis boldly state in *The Heart of the Soul*, “Intimacy and the pursuit of external power—the ability to manipulate and control—are incompatible.” Before most men can be intimate with others, they have to be intimate with themselves. They have to learn to feel and to be aware of their feelings. Men who mask feelings or suppress them simply do not want to feel the pain. Since emotional pain is the feeling that most males have covered up, numbed out, or closed off, the journey back to feeling is frequently through the portal of suffering. Much male rage covers up this place of suffering: this is the well-kept secret. Often when a female gets close to male pain, penetrating the male mask to see the emotional vulnerability beneath, she becomes a target for the rage.

Offering a broader, more meaningful definition of intimacy than the old notion of simply being close and vulnerable to someone, Gary Zukav and Linda Francis state that you “create intimacy when you shift from the pursuit of external power—the ability to manipulate and control—to the pursuit of authentic power—the alignment of your personality with your soul.”

[Thomas Moore’s *Care of the Soul* tells readers,] “Fulfilling work, rewarding relationships, personal power, and relief from symptoms are all gifts of the soul. They are particularly elusive in our time because we don’t believe in the soul and therefore give it no place in our hierarchy of values.... We live in a time of deep division, in which mind is separated from body and spirituality is at odds with materialism. But how do we get out of this split?”

! Men need to hear that their souls matter and that the care of their souls is the primary task of their being. Were all men seeking to uncover greater soulfulness in their lives rather than seeking power through a dominator model, then the world as we know it would be transformed for the better.

! In *Ethics for the New Millennium* the Dalai Lama calls for a spiritual revolution. He shares his belief that all humans desire happiness and that a principal characteristic of genuine happiness is inner peace, which he links to developing concern for others. His soulful message echoes that of feminist thinkers who are telling the world that men can heal their spirits by developing relational skills—the ability to experience empathy, to care for others. The existence of visionary male teachers who offer males and females spiritual guidance is a constant reminder to us that the hearts of men are transformed by love and compassion. Consistently, the Dalai Lama teaches us about the need to cultivate the practice of compassion. Whether males ever see themselves as working to end patriarchy, the fact remains that any

man who chooses the way of compassion heals the spirit and moves away from domination. The Dalai Lama offers this wisdom:

Compassion is one of the principal things that make our lives meaningful. It is the source of all lasting happiness and joy. And it is the foundation of a good heart. Through kindness, through affection, through honesty, through truth and justice toward all others we ensure our own benefit. This is not a matter for complicated theorizing. It is a matter of common sense.... There is no denying that our happiness is inextricably bound up with the happiness of others. There is no denying that if society suffers, we ourselves suffer.... Thus we can reject everything else: religion, ideology, all received wisdom. But we cannot escape the necessity of love and compassion.

Hence the work of spiritual restoration—of seeing the souls of men as sacred—is essential if we are to create a culture in which men can love.

! _____...as the Dalai Lama states, “there is no need for temple or church, for mosque or synagogue, no need for complicated philosophy, doctrine or dogma, for our own heart, our own mind, is the temple and the doctrine is compassion.”

This image of loving fatherhood embodies feminist masculinity in its most divine form. Healing the spirit, caring for the souls of boys and men, we must dare to proclaim our adoration, to bow down not to the male as dominator, but to the male as embodied divine spirit with whom we can unite in love, with no threat of separation, knowing a perfect love that is without fear.

10

Reclaiming Male Integrity

! Healing the crisis in the hearts of men requires of us all a willingness to face the fact that patriarchal culture has required of men that they be divided souls. We know that there are men who have not succumbed to this demand but that most men have surrendered their capacity to be whole.

Learning to wear a mask (that word already embedded in the term “masculinity”) is the first lesson in patriarchal masculinity that boys learn. He learns that his core feelings cannot be expressed if they do not conform to the acceptable behaviors sexism defines as male. Asked to give up the true self in order to realize the patriarchal ideal, boys learn self-betrayal early and are rewarded for these acts of soul murder.

! Sexist roles restrict the identity formation of male and female children, but the process is far more damaging to boys because not only are the roles required of them more rigid and

confining, but they are much more likely to receive severe punishment when they deviate from these roles.

Contemporary feminist movement created a socially sanctioned space where girls can create a sense of self that is distinct from sexist definitions; the same freedom has not been extended to boys. No wonder then that boys in patriarchal culture continue the tradition of creating a false self, of being split. That split in boys and men is often characterized by the capacity to compartmentalize.

! Anyone who has a false self must be dishonest. People who learn to lie to themselves and others cannot love because they are crippled in their capacity to tell the truth and therefore unable to trust. This is the heart of the psychological damage done to men in patriarchy. It is a form of abuse that this culture continues to deny. Boys socialized to become patriarchs are being abused. As victims of child abuse via socialization in the direction of the patriarchal ideal, boys learn that they are unlovable. According to Bradshaw they learn that “relationships are based on power, control, secrecy, fear, shame, isolation, and distance.” These are the traits often admired in the patriarchal adult man.

Emotionally wounding boys is socially acceptable and even demanded in patriarchal culture. Denying them their right to be whole, to have integrity, is not only encouraged, it is seen as the right way to do things.

By learning the arts of compartmentalization, dissimulation, and dissociation, men are able to see themselves as acting with integrity in cases where they are not. Their learned state of psychological denial is severe.

!! Peck argues that compartmentalization is a way to avoid feeling pain: “We’re all familiar with the man who goes to church on Sunday morning, believing that he loves God and God’s creation and his fellow human beings, but who, on Monday morning, has no trouble with his company’s policy of dumping toxic wastes in the local stream. He can do this because he has religion in one compartment and his business in another.” Since most men have been socialized to believe that compartmentalization is a positive practice, it feels right, it feels comfortable. To practice integrity, then, is difficult, it hurts. Peck makes the crucial point: “Integrity is painful. But without it there can be no wholeness.” To be whole men must practice integrity.

! All too often we are led to believe that men gain more power through lying and compartmentalization. It just simply is not so. The stress of guarding and protecting a false self is harmful to male emotional well-being; it erodes self-esteem. Much of the depression men suffer is directly related to their inability to be whole.

Workaholism is the most common addiction in men because it is usually rewarded and not taken seriously as detrimental to their emotional well-being.

Work is often the space where men detach from feelings. Zukav and Francis describe workaholism as a flight from emotions: “It is a drug that is as effective as the most powerful anesthetic.... Workaholism is a deep sleep. It is self-induced trance that temporarily keeps

painful emotions away from your awareness.” At the moment when addictions stop keeping the pain at bay, many men sink into depression. And as with so much male pain, it is only in recent years that men have been given societal permission to confront depression. Men suffer depression frequently because of their own unfulfilled expectations or their perfectionism (which can never be satisfied since to be human is to be imperfect).

For years patriarchal culture has taught men that their selfhood, their manhood, is affirmed by a lack of interest in personal growth; all of a sudden in the wake of feminist movement, women were bombarding men with new emotional expectations. Collectively men responded with a feeling of depression.

When a man’s emotional capacity to mourn is arrested, he is likely to be frozen in time and unable to complete the process of growing up. Men need to mourn the old self and create the space for a new self to be born if they are to change and be wholly transformed. If a man is not willing to break patriarchal rules that say that he should never change—especially to satisfy someone else, particularly a female—then he will choose being right over being loved. He will turn away from loved ones and choose his manhood over his personhood, isolation over connectedness. Therapist George Edmont Smith remembers learning early that men will respond with rage and rejection if they are perceived to be out of control or making a mistake:

I also recall early in life that when I asked my father a question to which he did not know the answer, he became angry, as if to say, “Look, I don’t know the answer to your question and because of that I should kick your ass!” Of course, I realized this almost immediately and I stopped looking to my father for answers. Perhaps if he had taken the time to say to me, “Son, I don’t know the answer to that, let’s look it up together and find out.”

Only a father capable of being whole can have the integrity to acknowledge ignorance to his son without feeling diminished.

! Men who are whole can speak their fear without shame. They do not need to wear the false mask of fearlessness. Fathers have been unable to share with their sons that they are afraid. They fear not measuring up to the expectations of sons. They fear that the son will see their jealousy and envy of the boy who has not yet severed his relation to feeling, who is not emotionally closed off.

Our myths and religious stories are full of narratives in which the son is depicted as the father’s enemy, ever poised to steal his power. The dysfunctional model suggests to men that separation can only be forged through violence and death. Only the man who chooses a healthy model—wherein the father figure, the adult man of integrity, the guide who shelters, protects, and nurtures the son—can gracefully attend the assertion of his own son’s healthy autonomy.

Nathaniel Brandon equates our capacities to be responsible with our capacity to experience joy, to be personally empowered:

! I am responsible for accepting or choosing the values by which I live. If I live by values I have accepted or adopted passively and unthinkingly, it is easy to imagine that they are just “my nature,” just “who I am,” and to avoid recognizing that choice is involved. If I am willing to

recognize that choices and decisions are crucial when values are adopted, then I can take a fresh look at my values, question them, and if necessary revise them. Again, it is taking responsibility that sets me free.

! The patriarchal model that tells men that they must be in control at all times is at odds with cultivating the capacity to be responsible, which requires knowing when to control and when to surrender and let go.

Responsible men are capable of self-criticism. If more men were doing the work of self-critique, then they would not be wounded, hurt, or chagrined when critiqued by others, especially women with whom they are intimate. Engaging in self-critique empowers responsible males to admit mistakes.

At the same time, constructive criticism works only when it is linked to a process or affirmation. Giving affirmation is an act of emotional care.

...

One of the negative aspects of antifemale feminist critiques of masculinity was the absence of any affirmation of that which is positive and potentially positive in male being. When individuals, including myself, wrote about the necessity of affirming men and identifying them as comrades in struggle, we were often labeled male-identified. The women who attacked us did not understand that it was possible to critique patriarchy without hating men. Indeed, recognizing all the ways that males have been victimized by patriarchy (even though they received rewards) was a way of including men in feminist movement, welcoming their presence and honoring their contribution.

! Critical analysis is useful when it promotes growth, but it is never enough. The work of affirmation is what brings us together.

...

! This is interbeing. As whole people they can experience joy. Unlike happiness, joy is a lasting state that can be sustained even when everything is not the way we want it to be. In the essay "Celebrating Life" Jesuit priest Henri Nouwen declares that "where there is joy there is life."

...

It is the ultimate fulfillment that comes when men dare to challenge and change patriarchy.

11

Loving Men

! To write about men and love, I must speak of war. Time and time again we have been told that civilization cannot survive men's loving, for if men love, they will not be able to kill on command. However, if men were natural-born killers, hardwired for biology and destiny to take life, then there would be no need for patriarchal socialization to turn them into killers. The

warrior's way wounds boys and men; it has been the arrow shot through the heart of their humanity. The warrior's way has led men in the direction of an impoverishment of spirit so profound that it threatens all life on planet Earth.

Calling attention to the fact that war has been not simply a male occupation but rather "an activity that has often served to define manhood itself," Ehrenreich argues that "warfare and aggressive masculinity" are mutually reinforcing. The gendered nature of war makes men predators and women prey. We cannot speak of men and love, of love between women and men, without speaking of the need to bring an end to war and all thinking that makes war possible.

! [Thich Nhat Hanh says:] And resistance, at root, I think must mean more than resistance against war. It is a resistance against all kinds of things that are like war. Because living in modern society, one feels that he cannot easily retain integrity, wholeness. One is robbed permanently of humanness, the capacity of being oneself.... So perhaps, first of all, resistance means opposition to being invaded, occupied, assaulted, and destroyed by the system. The purpose of resistance, here, is to seek the healing of yourself in order to be able to see clearly.... Communities of resistance should be places where people can return to themselves more easily, where the conditions are such that they can heal themselves and recover their wholeness.

In dominator culture most families are not safe places. Dysfunction, intimate terrorism, and violence make them breeding grounds for war. Since we have yet to end patriarchal culture, our struggles to end domination must begin where we live, in the communities we call home. It is there that we experience our power to create revolutions, to make life-transforming change.

If we are to create a culture in which all males can learn to love, we must first reimagine family in all its diverse forms as a place of resistance.

! To create the culture that will enable boys to love, we must see the family as having as its primary function the giving of love (providing food and shelter are loving acts).

In such a world boys may think of games that do not center around the causing of pain, the creation of death, but will indeed be forms of play that celebrate life and wholeness. And the individual differences that arise between boys, and between boys and girls, will not need to be interpreted as a cause for domination, for one to rule over the other, but will become occasions for exploration, for the sharing of knowledge and the invention of new ways of being. Loving parents already see that if rigid gender roles are not imposed on boys, they will make their decisions about selfhood in relation to their passions, their longings, their gifts. We cannot honor boys rightly, protecting their emotional lives, without ending patriarchy. To pretend otherwise is to collude with the ongoing soul murder that is enacted in the name of turning boys into men. Without a doubt there will always be boys who will choose activities that are rambunctious, that call for physical strength and require an element of risk. But there will also be boys who will

seek quieter pleasures, who will turn away from risk. There will be boys whose personalities will be somewhere in between these two paradigms. If boys are raised to be empathic and strong; autonomous and connected; responsible to self, to family and friends, and to society; able to make community rooted in a recognition of interbeing, then the solid foundation is present and they will be able to love.

To make this solid foundation, men must set the example by daring to heal, by daring to do the work of relational recovery. Irrespective of their sexual preferences, men in the process of self-recovery usually begin by returning to boyhood and evaluating what they learned about masculinity and how they learned it.

=(! After forty-nine years of marriage, my mother is angry with our dad. The perfect subordinated wife, now when they are both over seventy years in age, is upset that he is not more emotionally giving. Since she is not a feminist, she does not see that it is a contradiction to expect this old-time patriarch to suddenly give her love. Her anger surprises and enrages him. Mama's anger masks her fear that any day now she could die without ever feeling loved by the man she has devoted her entire life to pleasing. Like the men who feel that patriarchy's promise has not been fulfilled, Mama feels that she is left with broken promises, without the reward for performing the subordinate role she was told as a good woman should perform.

Women who are not feminist, women who support patriarchy, who do not have problems with sexism, share with their feminist, antisexist counterparts the wish that men would be more loving. Shere Hite documented this longing in her massive study *Women and Love: A Cultural Revolution In Progress*. Her chapter "Loving Men at This Time in History" begins with the observation that "strangely, hauntingly, most women in this study—whether married, single, or divorced, of all ages—say they have not yet found the love they are looking for." The love women are looking for in relationships with men is one based on mutuality in partnership.

Mutuality is different from equality.

Women once believed that men would give us more respect if we showed we were their equals.

...

! The root of the word "respect" means "to look at."

Women who want men to love know that that cannot really happen without a revolution of consciousness where men stop patriarchal thinking and action. Because sexist roles have always given women support for emotional development, it has been easier for women to find our way to love. We do not love better or more than men, but we do find it easier to get in touch with feelings because even patriarchal society supports this trait in us. Men will never receive support from patriarchal culture for their emotional development.

! As individual men have become more aware of the lovelessness in their lives, they have also recognized their longing for love. This recognition does not mean that men know what to do. Importantly, when men love, it changes the nature of their sexuality, both how they think about sex and how they perform sexually. Many men fear learning to love because they cannot imagine a sexuality beyond the patriarchal model. In a world where men love, a focus on eros and eroticism will naturally replace male obsession with sex. All men could have the opportunity

to enjoy sexual pleasure, and that includes sexual fantasy, for its own sake and not as a substitute for fantasies of domination or as a way to assert manhood in place of selfhood, where they taught a healthy eroticism.

! Ofte men use perverse sexual fantasy (particularly the consumption of patriarchal pornography) as a hiding place for depression and grief. Patriarchal pornography is teh place where men can pretend taht the promise of patriarchal power can always be fulfilled. Michael Kimmel explores this aspect of male lust in his essay "Fuel for Fantasy": "The pornographic utopia is a world of abundance, abandon, and autonomy—a world, in short, utterly unlike the one we inhabit....Most men don't feel especially good about themselves, living lives of 'quiet desperation'.... Pornographic fantasy is a revenge against the real world of men's lives. To transform those fantasies requires that we also transform that reality." Transforming the real world men inhabit requires our collective will to dream anew the male body and being as a site of beauty, pleasure, desire, and human possibility.

! Damaged in that openhearted place where they could imagine freely, men must undergo a healing restoration of the will to imagine before they can break with a model of sexuality that breeds addiction while denying them access to a sexuality that satisfies.

! Steve Bearman explains male compulsion for sex as interrupted eros in his essay "Why Men Are So Obsessed with Sex":

Directly and indirectly, we are handed sexuality as the one vehicle through which it might still be possible to express and experience essential aspects of our humanness that have been slowly and systematically conditioned out of us. Sex was, and is, presented as the road to real intimacy, complete closeness, as the arena in which it is okay to openly love, to be tender and vulnerable and yet remain safe, to not feel so deeply alone. Sex is the one place sensuality seems to be permissible, where we can be gentle with our own bodies and allow ourselves our overflowing passion. Pleasure and desire, vitality and excitement seemingly left behind somewhere we can't even remember, against become imaginable.

Poignant and powerfully evocative, this is the promise of sexuality within patriarchy, but it is a promise that ultimately can never be fulfilled. Men and boys who embrace it are doomed to be forever yearning, forever in a state of lack.

Bearman makes the point that after being taught to be obsessed with sex via patriarchal conditioning, males are "then subjected to continuous conditioning ot repress sensuality, numb feelings, ignore our bodies, and separate from our natural closeness with human beings." He continues, "All of these human needs are then promised to us by way of sex and sexuality.... But in no way can sex completely fulfill these needs. Such needs can only be fulfilled by healing from the effects of male conditioning and suffusing every area of our lives with relatedness and aliveness." Suggesting that men resist repression and choose pasion as they reclaim their feeling lives, Bearman identifies passion as the "greatest ally" men can choose in their efforts to liberate their complete humanity. The root meaning of the Latin word *patior* is "to suffer." To claim passion, men must embrace the pain, feel the suffering, moving through it to the world of pleasure that awaits. This is the heroic journey for men in our times. It is not a journey leading to conquest and domination, to disconnecting and cutting off life; it is a journey of reclamation where the bits and pieces of the self are found and put together again, made whole.

! As men work to be whole, sex assumes its rightful place as one pleasure among many pleasures. Unlike addictive patriarchal sex, passion rooted in a life-affirming erotic ethos deepens emotional connection. According to Zukav and Francis:

Loving sexual intimacy....expresses care and appreciation. It is mutual giving, not mutual taking. It is an arena in which individuals nurture each other rather than exploit each other. In loving sexual intimacy, sexual partners are not interchangeable. They are unique in their histories, aptitudes, struggles, and joys. They know each other and care for each other. They empathize. They are interested in each other. They use physical intimacy to deepen their emotional intimacy....They are committed to growing together.

!!! Bearman tells us:

My vision for myself and for all men is that we reclaim every piece of our humanity that has been denied us by our conditioning. Obsession with sex can be healed when we reclaim all the essential aspects of the human experience that we have learned to manage without: our affinity for one another, caring connections with people of all ages and backgrounds and genders, sensual enjoyment of our bodies, passionate self-expression, exhilarating desire, tender love for ourselves and for another, vulnerability, help with our difficulties, gentle rest, getting and staying close with many people in many kinds of relationships.

! No man who reclaims passion for his life fears the passion in another man. He is not homophobic, for to be so would be a rejection of the self-acceptance and acceptance of others that is essential to the formation and maintenance of self-esteem. If all men were in touch with primal positive passion, the categories of gay and straight would lose their charged significance. In *A Queer Geography* Frank Browning makes the useful distinction between gay identity politics, which often closes down connection, and a commitment to eros and eroticism that widens connections:

By erotic, I mean all the powerful attractions we might have: for mentoring and being mentored, for unrealizable flirtation, for intellectual tripping, for sweaty mateship at play or at work, for spiritual ecstasy, for being held in silent grief, for explosive rage at a company enemy, for the sublime love of friendship. All or none of these ways of loving might be connected to the fact that I usually have sex with men because all of these loves can and do happen with both men and women in my life.

! Patriarchy has sought to repress and tame erotic passion precisely because of its power to raw us into greater and greater communion with ourselves, with those we know most intimately and with the stranger.

! Seeking to heal the wounds inflicted by patriarchy, we have to go to the source. We have to look at males directly, eye to eye, and speak the truth that the time has come for males to have a revolution of values. We cannot turn our hearts away from boys and men, then ponder why the politics of war continues to shape our national policy and our intimate romantic lives.

As feminist thinking and practice loses visibility, many females look to patriarchy for their salvation. More than ever before in our nation's history, females are encouraged to assume the

patriarchal mask and bury their emotional selves as deeply as their male counterparts do. Females embrace this paradigm because they feel it is better to be a dominator than to be dominated. However, this is a perverse vision of gender equality that offers women equal access to the house of the dead. In that house there will be no love.

While it is evident that many men are not as willing to explore and follow the path that leads to self-recovery as are women, we cannot journey far if men are left behind. They wield too much power to be simply ignored or forgotten.

! For both men and women, Good Men can be somewhat disturbing to be around because they usually do not act in ways associated with typical men; they listen more than they talk; they self reflect on their behavior and motives, they actively educate themselves about women's reality by seeking out women's culture and listening to women.... They avoid using women for vicarious emotional expression....When they err—and they do err—they look to women for guidance, and receive criticism with gratitude. They practice enduring uncertainty while waiting for a new way of being to reveal previously unconsidered alternatives to controlling and abusive behavior. They intervene in other men's misogynist behavior, even when women are not present, and they work hard to recognize and challenge their own. Perhaps most amazingly, Good Men perceive the value of a feminist practice for themselves, and they advocate it not because it's politically correct, or because they want women to like them, or even because they want women to have equality, but because they understand that male privilege prevents them not only from becoming whole, authentic human beings but also from knowing the truth about the world.... They offer proof that men can change.

! Many of us have lived the truth that recognizing the ways we are wounded is often a simpler process than finding and sustaining a practice of healing. We live in a culture where it has been accepted and even encouraged that women wholeheartedly stand by men when they are doing the work of destruction. Yet we have yet to create a world that asks us to stand by a man when he is seeking healing, when he is seeking recovery, when he is working to be a creator.

! The work of male relational recovery, of reconnection, of forming intimacy and making community can never be done alone. In a world where boys and men are daily losing their way we must create guides, signposts, new paths. A culture of healing that empowers males to change is in the making. Healing does not take place in isolation. Men who love and men who long to love know this. We need to stand by them, with open hearts and open arms. We need to stand ready to hold them, offering a love that can shelter their wounded spirits as they seek to find their way home, as they exercise the will to change.