

## Part One: Women's Oppression

### MALE SEXUALITY

#### Section Introduction

Patriarchy divides males and females into dominant and subordinate castes on the basis of gender and polarizes human sexuality and personality into masculine and feminine dimensions. This division eroticizes power and aggression in men. As a result, male sexual func-

tioning operates as the *instrument* of women's oppression under male rule. The anthology begins with studies of male sexuality because of its importance to women's oppression.

In the first article, Jack Litewka focuses on the process which conditions male sexuality. The connection between sexual feelings in their genitals and the separation of men from emotionality, expressed in the title, "The Separation of the Essential Aspects of Masculinity." Litewka's article is one of the most sensitive responses by a man to the women's movement. In contrast with the vast majority of men, Litewka's essay is more advanced and more honest. He acknowledges that men are the oppressors of women. Most men link male socialization with "male oppression." Litewka connects male socialization with male supremacy, and argues that men and women are not equally affected by sex role stereotypes. He sees masculine socialization as the process of male for dominance. Atypically then, his analysis of the women's movement by appreciating the prime cause of women's subordination.

Originally writing in 1971, Litewka attempted to explore some theoretical ideas concerning the origin of male sexuality, concentrating on his own psycho-sexual history. This was a direct result of encounters with women in the women's movement. Litewka reveals that on three separate occasions, over a period of a year and a half, he was unable to obtain an erection during intercourse. Searching for an explanation, he recalled his initiation into sex by describing the male role in "male supremacy." In his description he infers a principle about the pattern of male sexual stimulus and response: "three elements reappear constantly in every step of the process of conquest." The focus on the psychological connection between male sexuality and its connection to male supremacy is the central aspect of his article. Litewka reasoned further that he could not obtain an erection because he was unable to conquer the women in question. He had no caring for the women. This explanation, which depicts his impotence as a barrier to his liberation, is one in which he recognizes that the women are pretty good. Looking pretty damn egalitarian."

A woman friend challenged this interpretation. She claimed that his lack of an erection meant he could not conquer women as sexual equals. In this view, his impotence is a barrier to his liberation.

tioning operates as the *instrument* of women's oppression and enforces male rule. The anthology begins with studies of men's sexuality because of its importance to women's oppression.

In the first article, Jack Litewka focuses on the socialization process which conditions male sexuality. The concentration of men's sexual feelings in their genitals and the separation of men's sexuality from emotionality, expressed in the title, "The Socialized Penis," are essential aspects of masculinity. Litewka's article was one of the first and most sensitive responses by a man to the women's liberation movement. In contrast with the vast majority of male reactions, Litewka's essay is more advanced and more rare, because it acknowledges that men are the oppressors of women. Most male reactions have linked male socialization with "male oppression." Litewka, however, connects male socialization with male *supremacy*, and recognizes that men and women are not equally affected by sex role assignments and stereotypes. He sees masculine socialization as the preparation of the male for dominance. Atypically then, his analysis tends to support the women's movement by appreciating the prime source of women's subordination.

Originally writing in 1971, Litewka attempted to communicate some theoretical ideas concerning the origin of male supremacy by concentrating on his own psycho-sexual history. This self-examination was a direct result of encounters with women and the women's movement. Litewka reveals that on three separate occasions over a period of a year and a half, he was unable to obtain an erection during intercourse. Searching for an explanation, he recollects his adolescent initiation into sex by describing the male role in "making out." From the description he infers a principle about the pattern of male socialization: "three elements reappear constantly in every step of the development of male sexual stimulus and response: objectification, fixation, and conquest." The focus on the psychological content of politicized male sexuality and its connection to male supremacy is perhaps the strongest aspect of his article. Litewka reasoned further than he was able to obtain an erection because he was unable to objectify, fixate, and conquer the women in question. He had caring feelings for all three women. This explanation, which depicts his impotence as a function of the liberation, is one in which he recognizes that "I come off looking pretty good. Looking pretty damn egalitarian."

A woman friend challenged this interpretation, however, and pointed out that his lack of an erection meant he could not accept the women as sexual equals. In this view, his impotence was a form of

punishment to the women for their sexual assertiveness. Criticized for being sexist, and sensing the validity of the accusation, he raises a series of excellent questions about men and women, which because of the early date of publication and his complete isolation from changing men, he is unable to adequately answer. Litewka's experience reveals the continued re-emergence of misogyny which accompanies men's development of higher levels of consciousness. This persistence initially contributes to pessimism about the ability to change. Litewka suggests that men may change by undergoing "re-socialization," but he does not actually envisage this process. He concludes with a criticism and clarification of his essay:

Litewka has asked that readers of his essay be aware that, "I am sensitive about what I had to say six years ago being frozen into print today as if it represented my present process, feelings and thoughts. When I wrote my essay, not much had been written by men about their own experiences. Consequently, oversights or omissions or superficialities which seem unforgivable today did not seem that way to me then. I was, and still am, concerned that my essay did not deal with homosexuality in a substantive way. This was partly deliberate, partly out of ignorance, and mostly because it was not within my realm of experience. I was aware that my brief allusion to homosexuality was written without the benefit of many other people's sensitive explorations into homosexuality, bisexuality and androgyny that have surfaced in the past five years . . . especially the contributions of gays and feminists."

In "Refusing To Be a Man," the next article in this section, John Stoltenberg does not mention the process by which he began to question and then reject his masculinity. Although he is critical of the classification of human sexuality into heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual modes, because these terms objectify sexuality and are themselves the linguistic product of a male-dominated culture, he discloses that he has lived both as a "married man" and as a "gay man." Thus, unlike Litewka, who concentrates almost exclusively on the sexuality of heterosexual males, Stoltenberg has the advantage of his own experience in discussing homosexuality and heterosexuality. He stresses that male sexuality is essentially identical, dependent upon objectification and domination, regardless of sexual preference. Both homosexual and heterosexual males have been treated as males in a male supremacist society and have received a masculine sexual training. Therefore, gay men do not escape the impact of patriarchy in the formation of their sexuality and identity.

Stoltenberg continues by describing two aspects of his own sexuality, the capacity to enjoy multiple orgasms and the ability to

appreciate sexual arousal without erection. Both emerged as he began to question what he believed about the nature of male orgasms and erections. In function in the interest of male rule. Appreciation between the distortion of his sexuality and the oppression by patriarchy, Stoltenberg concludes by renouncing repudiating masculinity, he dedicates himself to the supremacy.

"Making Love with Myself," the third article by Bevson, an activist in the Portland Men's Resource Center, how learning to appreciate masturbation provided a struggle against his oppressive rape fantasies, a belief was acquired through patriarchal socialization himself to the pleasure of his own body releasing a psychological need to objectify and dominate through in his imagination—as a means of erotic stimulation.

In "How Pornography Shackles Men and Women," Michael Betzold hypothesizes that the pornography industry has done more to harm the women's liberation movement. He wonders how men have not been more aware of, and active against, the damage. He explains that pornography reinforces male supremacy through the objectification and domination of women by men. He describes the negative effects of pornography on men's sexuality and describes areas of cities set aside for prostitution and sale of women. The goal of anti-sexist men, he argues, is to abolish these areas and practices.

In the final article, "Learning From Women's Rape," he describes the lessons he learned from women's resistance to patriarchy. In terms of male sexuality, an important lesson concerned rape. Rape reveals in the basic relationship of men to women in a male-dominated society. Male sexuality, eroticized by dominance, is epitomized by violent sexual subservience. ". . . Rape is one of the most accurate metaphors for patriarchy," he writes, "and yet most accurate metaphors for women's resistance to patriarchy." Thus, rape is the behavioral expression of women's resistance to patriarchy. Lamm was also educated in his resistance to feminist theory and to women's autonomy. He concludes by emphasizing the importance of women in order to change themselves and the world against sexism.

For appreciate sexual arousal without erection. Both of these capabilities he ies he en, the p- n- at ot ad emerged as he began to question what he believes are patriarchal lies about the nature of male orgasms and erections. In effect, these myths function in the interest of male rule. Appreciating the connection between the distortion of his sexuality and the oppression of women by patriarchy, Stoltenberg concludes by renouncing manhood. In repudiating masculinity, he dedicates himself to the overthrow of male supremacy.

“Making Love with Myself,” the third article, is written by Jamie Bevson, an activist in the Portland Men’s Resource Center. He describes how learning to appreciate masturbation provided him with a way to struggle against his oppressive rape fantasies, a perversion that he believes was acquired through patriarchal socialization. Subjecting himself to the pleasure of his own body released him from the psychological need to objectify and dominate the bodies of others—in his imagination—as a means of erotic stimulation.

In “How Pornography Shackles Men and Oppresses Women,” Michael Betzold hypothesizes that the pornography boom is a backlash to the women’s liberation movement. He wonders why anti-sexist men have not been more aware of, and active against, this form of misogyny. He explains that pornography reinforces male supremacy by portraying the objectification and domination of women by men. He also discusses the negative effects of pornography on men’s emotionality and sexuality and describes areas of cities set aside for the display, torture, and sale of women. The goal of anti-sexist men, he concludes, should be to abolish these areas and practices.

In the final article, “Learning From Women,” Bob Lamm describes the lessons he learned from women who took his college classes on men and masculinity. In terms of male sexuality, the most important lesson concerned rape. Rape reveals in miniature, he asserts, the basic relationship of men to women in a male supremacist system. Male sexuality, eroticized by dominance, is epitomized in the act of violent sexual subservience. “. . . Rape is one of the most savage,” he writes, “and yet most accurate metaphors for how men relate to women . . .” Thus, rape is the behavioral expression of male sexuality under patriarchy. Lamm was also educated in his classes about his own resistance to feminist theory and to women’s autonomous organization. He concludes by emphasizing the importance of men learning from women in order to change themselves and develop the struggle against sexism.

## The Socialized Penis

Jack Litewka

This is, to a certain degree, a personal story. I felt the need to make it public because I have sensed for a long time, and now see more clearly every day, the disaster of sexuality in its present forms. Some women have been struggling with this reality. They have attempted to expose the male/female myth in the hope of creating a healthier reality. But most men have been (at best) silent or (at worst) dishonest—and often ignorant and defensive. This essay is an attempt to help men begin talking among themselves and hopefully with women.

The people who should have initiated the dialogue are psychoanalysts and psychiatrists: the psycho-healers. But they have failed us. And themselves. By and large, they have concentrated their energies on helping people adapt to the realities of the existing social system rather than examining the foundations of that system. But, like the rest of us, these people are damaged. And being damaged, they are incapable of dealing with their own experience. Have you seen much written or spoken about masturbation? I haven't. The psycho-healers, most of whom are men, always talk about the phenomenon of masturbation as if it was "other," "out there." Have you ever heard a psycho-healer say, "When I masturbate(d) . . ."? Of course not. They are incapable or terrified of dealing with their own experience. So I am attempting to deal with mine, with those of men I know, in an effort to help us begin to deal more honestly with one aspect of male socialization.

Like the psycho-healers, like everyone, I am also damaged. I may be incapable of asking the right questions. I know I'm not able now to supply the "answers" that are needed. Desperately needed. But I'm going to try, and I hope that other men will also begin trying. Through persistence and honesty and perhaps by accident, we'll end up asking the right questions and be better able to answer them.

I'm very grateful to a few close friends, male and female, who are involved in this struggle and who have given me support and encourage-

ment and criticism and chunks of their own lives in the essay. I'm also very happy that the Women's Movement and many women are committed to undoing the damage done. I am not going to re-discuss what women writers have said. The sexual socialization of men in this century is what I'm dealing with. More specifically, socialized sexual response. Socialized, really, the socialized penis. My penis, not just those of men there.

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I was raised in America and learned—as did most men of my childhood and men I know now—to perform sexual acts on request. This performance I think can be considered a social ability that most males wanted to develop or maintain. If I didn't conform to this norm usually felt incomplete, I was socially manly. And this insufficiency often resulted in self-doubt and anxiety, while other "healthy" males who automatically conformed to the norm just cruised along, dropping anchor at port when entertainment's hunger urged.

I think I am typical of most American males who, after getting aroused, getting an erection, was not a major problem in adolescence. If there was a major problem, it was in not knowing what to do, or not being allowed to do anything, with an erection. I had to learn how to hide it or deal with the embarrassment of discovery.

I don't know when I began to be annoyed with my erection and men relate. Like most men, I think, I only dealt with it when I had experienced enough and was troubled enough with it at a previous relationship. But by the time one seriously examines male/female relationships, it is usually too late. Most men are already been thoroughly socialized. So instead of dealing with female relationships, one is incapable of examining them, or represses what one knows, or represses them intellectually and laughs at the absurdity. Or tragedy.

In the last year and a half, something happened on several separate occasions that made me decide to seriously examine what I had been sexually socialized. I now understand the reasons that occurred because I was already grappling with the socialized sexuality.

Incident 1. A woman I liked (and who liked me)

ment and criticism and chunks of their own lives in the writing of this essay. I'm also very happy that the Women's Movement exists and that many women are committed to undoing the damage done to all of us. I am not going to re-discuss what women writers have already explored. The sexual socialization of men in this century is what I want to deal with. More specifically, socialized sexual response. Still more specifically, the socialized penis. My penis, not just those of other men out there.

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I was raised in America and learned—as did many other boys in my childhood and men I know now—to perform sexually on desire or request. This performance I think can be considered the norm, an ability that most males wanted to develop or maintain. The males who didn't conform to this norm usually felt incomplete, unskilled, or unmanly. And this insufficiency often resulted in self-damning fear and anxiety, while other “healthy” males who automatically or easily conformed to the norm just cruised along, dropping anchor in this or that port when entertainment's hunger urged.

I think I am typical of most American males when I say that getting aroused, getting an erection, was not a major problem in adolescence. If there was a major problem, it was in not knowing what to do, or not being allowed to do anything, with an erection. So you had to learn how to hide it or deal with the embarrassment of its discovery.

I don't know when I began to be annoyed with the way women and men relate. Like most men, I think, I only dealt with a relationship when I had experienced enough and was troubled enough to look back at a previous relationship. But by the time one seriously begins to examine male/female relationships, it is usually too late. Because one has already been thoroughly socialized. So instead of dealing with male/female relationships, one is incapable of examining them, or refuses to examine them, or represses what one knows, or stands under it intellectually and laughs at the absurdity. Or tragedy.

In the last year and a half, something happened to me on three separate occasions that made me decide to seriously analyze the way I had been sexually socialized. I now understand that the incidents occurred because I was already grappling with the origins of my sexuality.

Incident 1. A woman I liked (and who liked me—“love” may be

a mythic word so it is not being used, especially since it has nothing to do with erection) and I were in bed together for the first time. We talked and hugged and played. To my surprise and dismay, I didn't get an erection. At least not at the propitious moment (I did have erections now and then throughout the night). And I didn't know why. Maybe I was just too tired or had been fucking and masturbating too much (though that had never been a problem before). But it didn't disturb me too much because the woman was supportive and we both knew there would be other nights. So we rolled together, smelled each other, and had a lovely night despite absence of coitus.

In the following year, I had a few relationships and my penis was its old arrogant self, so that one night seemed an unexplained oddity and was pretty much forgotten. My sexual life had the same sexual dynamics as my previous sexual history, so things were back to normal. But then came round two.

Incident 2. Similar in all respects to Incident 1. No erection at the right time. Again, I did have erections now and then throughout the night. Again, I didn't know why. But I knew it wasn't from being too tired or fucking or masturbating too much, since I hadn't slept with a woman in about a month and since I had spent the past week on vacation just reading, resting, doing odd jobs—not masturbating—and enjoying the absence of tension. Again, it wasn't a hassle because the woman knew me and I knew her and we both knew people the other had slept with, so it was chalked off as a freak with neither of us to blame. We touched along the whole length of our bodies and discussed basketball, politics, and our social/sexual histories. She fell asleep. I couldn't, my brain gnawing at me, having scary thoughts about a present (temporary) or impending impotency, and resolving to do something—but not knowing what.

Stipulistically, I made an assumption: it had to be me or the woman I was with. But since it had happened with two different women, I figured it was me (though there might have been similarities between the women and the situations). But since I had performed sexually in a normal way many times in the year between these incidents, I assumed that it had to be something about these particular women in combination with me.

My immediate concern was my own fright. The "no erection at the right time" syndrome had happened to me twice. I was scared, very scared. Images of impotence hung in the air and wouldn't disappear. So I got in touch with an old love whom I still spend a loving night or two with every five or six months and with whom I had always

had good sexual chemistry. We got together two nights in a row. The same story prevailed: my penis had its timing back and I performed. I was a stud I was always meant to be. Which was a tremendous relief.

But I still had no answer to my question: why no erection at the right time on two different occasions with two different women I wanted to be with and who wanted to be with me? Was there was mutual attraction and social/political/intellectual compatibility? I had a few clues, a few hunches, a few theories. They were very partial answers. So I started to do a lot of research. I isolated myself from old loves and potential new ones. I read a lot of 19th-century porno literature, hoping that I could find repeated patterns (and there were) of male/female sexual behavior. I could learn something from. (I realize now that this was a refusal or inability to look at myself, my own sexual behavior, and that to look at "other" sexuality, to learn from second-hand experience, was a safer path and one of less resistance. And for that reason, I may actually have been the only way I could start to understand. I also read a lot of feminist writings, and continued to have long talks with a few close friends, all of whom are interested in the liberation of people. I learned much during this process, which I already knew but couldn't make cohere), not all of it, but enough to get myself to this essay. But it all fed into an increasing puzzle.

Incident 3. This occasion was similar in almost all respects to Incidents 1 and 2, occurring about 18 months after the first and six months after the second. Between the second and third incidents, my sexual life had again been normal (for me).

This time I wasn't as frightened because I had already figured out what the fuck was going on and had the reason. The problem was determined enough to maybe, maybe just, see it through. Again, the woman was supportive and someone who had been through many things with over the years: this was just another thing that we would have to deal with. Also, I was hopeful because perceptions were beginning to clump together.

It became increasingly clear to me that in order to get answers to my emerging questions, I would have to go back to the beginning steps that were parts of my sexual history. Simultaneously, I was thinking that if my socialized sexuality was in any way different from that of other men, then my formulations wouldn't be idiotic. I had the experience. And as clues found me, I remembered my young male friends and checked them against recent t

had good sexual chemistry. We got together two nights later and history prevailed: my penis had its timing back and I performed like the stud I was always meant to be. Which was a tremendous relief.

But I still had no answer to my question: why didn't I get an erection at the right time on two different occasions when I was with women I wanted to be with and who wanted to be with me, when there was mutual attraction and social/political/intellectual compatibility? I had a few clues, a few hunches, a few theories. But at best they were very partial answers. So I started to do a lot of thinking and isolated myself from old loves and potential new ones. I decided to read a lot of 19th-century porno literature, hoping that there might be repeated patterns (and there were) of male/female sexual activities that I could learn something from. (I realize now that this was a cop-out, a refusal or inability to look at myself, my own sexual experience; and that to look at "other" sexuality, to learn from second-hand experience, was a safer path and one of less resistance. And for that reason, too, it may actually have been the only way I could start the examination.) I also read a lot of feminist writings, and continued to have many and long talks with a few close friends, all of whom are intensely involved with the liberation of people. I learned much during this time (a lot of which I already knew but couldn't make cohere), not all of which lends itself to this essay. But it all fed into an increasingly less diffuse puzzle.

Incident 3. This occasion was similar in almost all respects to Incidents 1 and 2, occurring about 18 months after the first incident and six months after the second. Between the second and third incidents, my sexual life had again been normal (for me).

This time I wasn't as frightened because I had already begun to figure out what the fuck was going on and had the reassurance that I was determined enough to maybe, maybe just, see it through to solution. Again, the woman was supportive and someone whom I had gone through many things with over the years: this was just going to be another thing that we would have to deal with. Also, there was some hope because perceptions were beginning to clump together.

It became increasingly clear to me that in order to find answers to my emerging questions, I would have to go back and retrace the steps that were parts of my sexual history. Simultaneously, I was thinking that if my socialized sexuality was in any way similar to that of other men, then my formulations wouldn't be idiosyncratic to my experience. And as clues found me, I remembered old talks with young male friends and checked them against recent talks with adult



male friends. It seemed that we had all gone through a basically similar process (with countless variations). Even those males who had not conformed to the norm, who didn't perform sexually according to the book, were affected by the norm process (sometimes resulting in a devastating social and sexual isolation). So I thought it would be worth the effort to construct a norm, however flawed, to determine what shape that image took. And to see if that image could teach.

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The Initiation of a Young Male: In looking back on my sexual experiences and those of male friends, a very definite and sequential pattern was evident. I'm talking about actual (overt) sexual events, not subliminal or imagined or representational sexual experiences. I'm thinking of adolescent times in adolescent terms when males begin to experiment and develop their knowledge and expertise. I'm thinking about things you did sequentially as you got older. With a few total exceptions and an odd irregularity or two (like fucking a "whore" before you'd kissed a "girl") among the many men I have known and talked with, the sequence runs roughly as follows.

You kiss a girl. You kiss a girl a number of times. You kiss a girl continuously (make-out). You kiss a girl continuously and get your tongue into the act. All through this process you learn to use your hands to round out the orchestration, at first with simple clumsy chords and later with complex harmonies (with the woman, of course, being the instrument made to respond to the musician). You, as a young male, are told (or figure out) what sensitive spots you should seek, and learn more as the young female (hopefully) responds to your hands. First you just hug and grasp. Then you make little circles on her shoulders with your fingers. Then you go for the back of the neck, and run your fingers through her hair (music, please), and then over her face and throat. Then the outer ear (lobes especially). And middle ear. Then lower back (at which point your tongue might cover the ear as a stand-in for the absent hand). Then the tender sides of the waist above the (maybe-not-yet) hip bones. Then the belly. And after, the upper belly and the rib cage. Here let us take a deep breath before the great leap upward to the breast, which is a bold act broken into a number of ritualistic steps. First the hand over one breast, with blouse and bra between your hand and the female's flesh. This is a move that took special courage (balls?) and was very exciting for it seemed a new level of sensuality (which it was for the female, but for the male? no, only a

new level of expectation). Then came a kind of figure-eight across the chest from one breast to the other (if your position was not many right-handed lovers out there?). Then a sneaking touch (later unbuttoned) so your hand is on the breast without separating you from flesh. (Or if this procedure was too obvious or visible to others in the dusky room or impossible because of a button sweater, you worked underneath the garment, with your hand on the belly right up to the bra). Then, by means of gradual and delicate finger dexterity, you begin to attack the flesh of the breast, sliding down from the top of the bra into the cup. And if you didn't pick up any signs of female complicity in your previous behavior, it was often clear here. If she sat and breathed normally, she didn't stand a chance (bras were worn very tightly in high school so that nipples were always pointing up at you). If she wanted to be helpful, she would deeply exhale and move her chest forward so there was space between the bra and the breast. Her cooperation during all these events is an interesting thing that should be written about by a woman.) And here came the first gold—the assault on the nipple. While a kiss was exciting and breast-breath-taking, the conquest of the nipple was a new level. Partly because it was the only part of a female's anatomy that was dealt with so far that isn't normally seen or even touched, partly because you knew that when this was achieved, the girl would be yours, and that getting the bra unhooked and off would be a goal. Maybe as soon as next week. When older, the same night you sensed that you were getting closer to the core of sexual pleasure (a geographically mixed metaphor). Then began the assault on the hip, in steps similar to those of the battle of the breast. You worked around to her ass, pulled her close to you (if she hadn't already been discovered) the existence of your hand on some pleasurable friction (and provide the girls with a new level of later? if you were erect). Then you worked down to the front of her thigh. Then with a deep breath, you worked down to the steps, you slowly progressed toward the vaginal entrance (if you had imagined the entrance four inches higher than it was, be?). Now here there are many variables: was it a swimmer who had on the bottom part of a two-piece suit, or was she wearing a skirt? did she have a skirt on? Whatever the case, you usually worked down to her crotch through cloth and then worked down to her crotch, getting your hand (as one variation goes) into her pants. Then you sort of played around a

new level of expectation). Then came a kind of figure-eight roving over the chest from one breast to the other (if your position allowed—how many right-handed lovers out there?). Then a sneaking between buttons (later unbuttoned) so your hand is on the breast with only the bra separating you from flesh. (Or if this procedure was too uncouth or too visible to others in the dusky room or impossible because of a no-button sweater, you worked underneath the garment from a fleshy belly right up to the bra). Then, by means of gradually developed finger dexterity, you begin to attack the flesh of the breast itself, working down from the top of the bra into the cup. And if you hadn't yet picked up any signs of female complicity in your previous experience, it was often clear here. If she sat and breathed normally, your fingers didn't stand a chance (bras were worn very tightly in my junior high school so that nipples were always pointing up at your eyes). If she wanted to be helpful, she would deeply exhale and move her shoulder forward so there was space between the bra and the breast. (Women's cooperation during all these events is an interesting topic and really should be written about by a woman.) And here came the rainbow's gold—the assault on the nipple. While a kiss was exciting, and cupping a breast breath-taking, the conquest of the nipple was transcendent. Partly because it was the only part of a female's anatomy that we have dealt with so far that isn't normally seen or even partly exposed. Also because you knew that when this was achieved, the girl really liked you, and that getting the bra unhooked and off would not be far away. Maybe as soon as next week. When older, the same night. And you also sensed that you were getting closer to the core of sexuality (excuse the geographically mixed metaphor). Then began the assault on the crotch, in steps similar to those of the battle of the breast. You caressed her hip, worked around to her ass, pulled her close to announce (if it hadn't already been discovered) the existence of your penis and give it some pleasurable friction (and provide the girls with a topic of gossip later? if you were erect). Then you worked down to the side of her leg. Then the front of her thigh. Then with a deep breath, and microscopic steps, you slowly progressed toward the vaginal entrance (how many of you had imagined the entrance four inches higher than you found it to be?). Now here there are many variables: was it a swim party when she had on the bottom part of a two-piece suit, or was she wearing jeans, or did she have a skirt on? Whatever the case, you usually ended up rubbing her crotch through cloth and then worked down from her belly toward her crotch, getting your hand (as one variation of the phrase goes) into her pants. Then you sort of played around above or on top

of her slit and eventually got a finger in it, and by accident or design (depending on your previous intelligence briefings) found the "magic button." And soon (usually), all hell broke loose, and more than ever before, you didn't quite know what to do with yourself if fucking wasn't yet in the script.

And that pretty much covers the pre-coital scenario. Except it was described in a semi-humorous manner and, as a male, many of these events were terrifying. You, most often, had to take the first step. And you could be rejected. Refused. Denied. Cold and flat. And that could hurt. Hurt bad. In your eyes and in your male friends' eyes. Being scared to try and therefore not trying could just as easily become the subject of psychological self-punishment and social ostracism. So there was always this elementary duality: while apparently the aggressor and conqueror, you were captive to a judgment by the female who would accept or reject you.

Also important to remember is how these events were reported to/discussed with male friends after the party or date. Or gone over in your own mind, again and again, detail by detail. How every step along the initiation route was stimulating and could/did cause an erection (remember the four-hour erections and blue balls?). How we compared notes, made tactical suggestions, commented on important signs—heavier breathing, torso-writhing, aggressive hands, a more daring tongue, involvement of teeth, goose bumps, erected nipples, and when menstruation occurred or was expected to occur. Which girls liked what, since in those days "relationships" were short-lived and you never knew which female you might be with another time. And if you were ever in doubt as to what came next in the scenario, your friends informed you of the specifics of the next escalation. And sometimes, if that wasn't possible, the female you were with (embarrassingly enough) let you know in any one of a number of subtle (or not-so-subtle) ways what was next on the agenda.

There were, in retrospect, many funny occasions that cropped up in this initiation process. I don't really need to talk about them because you probably have your own to tell. What stuns me now is that origins of the tragedy of sex emerge clearly from that process of socialized sexuality.

Three elements seem to reappear constantly in every step of the development of male sexual stimulus and response: Objectification, Fixation, and Conquest. (Idealization is a romantic concept that is both bible and aspirin for the three basic elements and tends to obfuscate them.) In any given situation, the order of occurrence and importance

of these elements varies, but I believe the order gives the chronological reality (most of the time) and discussed.

*Objectification:* From a very young age, male by everyone to objectify females (except Mom?). The female, in an almost platonic sense. This generalized concept, a lump sum, a thing, an object, a non-individual. The female is always "other." Against this backdrop, male society allows, overtly to exercise bits of their sexuality.

Males learn to objectify through a process of identification, and have identified for us, many female attributes simply: girls have long hair, wear ribbons on it, have like pink and yellow things. And, of course, they play comes a sexual understanding: females have no penis, have breasts, thinner waists, and hips that swell. Until the vagina's existence, we think females are missing their essence, absence is a void (are they incomplete?). As we accrue the female social role has already been defined everywhere we play hospital, the little girls are, of course, the nurses and the doctors. If it's time for exercise at school, they play while we play football. When it's time to learn practical they sew and bake while we use tools and build. They are recognized as different. There's them and there's us. And do a silly girl's thing anyhow?

*Fixation:* Part of male sexual initiation is learning the portions of the female's anatomy: at first, breasts, hidden unknown quantity, the vagina. Somewhere, in some part of our brain, before we consciously know about sex, we register on us that we never see males touching the lower belly. And in movies, on TV, in advertisements, we look when the camera's eye focuses on breasts? So often we fixate. Emotionally, too. We learn that if we eventually get pleasure and have fun. And be men. Be reacted to as male.

Because of the way we are socialized, erection follows occurs in a situation in which fixation plays a role. We learn we can will an erection without near us. And since it is pleasurable (and, at first, astounding), gives us assurance that we are male, we create erection through imagination, by merely objectifying a female of our choice, the parts of her body that excite, and usually manipulate.

of these elements varies, but I believe the order given corresponds to the chronological reality (most of the time) and is more easily discussed.

*Objectification:* From a very young age, males are taught by everyone to objectify females (except Mom?). They generalize the female, in an almost platonic sense. This generalized woman is a concept, a lump sum, a thing, an object, a non-individualized category. The female is always "other." Against this backdrop males begin, when society allows, overtly to exercise bits of their sexuality.

Males learn to objectify through a process of "definition." We identify, and have identified for us, many female attributes. It starts simply: girls have long hair, wear ribbons on it, have on dresses, and like pink and yellow things. And, of course, they play with dolls. Then comes a sexual understanding: females have no penis, bear children, have breasts, thinner waists, and hips that swell. Until we realize the vagina's existence, we think females are missing their penis and in its absence is a void (are they incomplete?). As we accrue this knowledge, the female social role has already been defined everywhere for us. If we play hospital, the little girls are, of course, the nurses and we, of course, the doctors. If it's time for exercise at school, they play hopscotch while we play football. When it's time to learn practical living skills, they sew and bake while we use tools and build. They are easily recognized as different. There's them and there's us. And who'd want to do a silly girl's thing anyhow?

*Fixation:* Part of male sexual initiation is learning to fixate on portions of the female's anatomy: at first, breasts, and later, that hidden unknown quantity, the vagina. Somewhere, in some deep cavern in our brain, before we consciously know about sexuality, it must register on us that we never see males touching the female chest or lower belly. And in movies, on TV, in advertisements, where else can we look when the camera's eye focuses on breasts? So our eye is trained and we fixate. Emotionally, too. We learn that if we do that, we will eventually get pleasure and have fun. And be men. Be seen as male. Be reacted to as male.

Because of the way we are socialized, erection follows fixation or occurs in a situation in which fixation plays a role. We observe this coincidence. We learn we can *will* an erection without a woman being near us. And since it is pleasurable (and, at first, astounding), since it gives us assurance that we are male, we create erections out of our imagination, by merely objectifying a female of our choice, fixating on the parts of her body that excite, and usually manipulating that body

(see Conquest, below). By denying this process, by repressing our desire and fantasy, we avoid embarrassing erections in public, which is vital since we are always "seeing" breasts and vaginas, hundreds of them, which have the potential of putting us into gear. So we exercise control over our penis while often saying that our penis has a mind of its own—all of which is true.

**Conquest:** To conquer is a highly valued skill in our society. We are taught to alter the enemy into nothingness, to convert the bear into a stuffed head and rug, to gain power and rule. It's very much either/or: you're a winner or a loser, a good guy or a bad guy, someone who has made it or hasn't. Male initiation rites and activities always require trophies (e.g., sports) and the more numerous and advanced your "awards," the more of a man you are. In sexual matters, the male conquers when he succeeds in reducing the female from a being into a thing and achieves some level or form of sexual gratification—a kiss, or your hand on her breast, or intercourse, depending on your age, sexual advancement, and surrounding social norms. Conquest logically (ahem) follows Objectification and Fixation. I mean, after all, what the hell's the sense of objectifying and fixating if you're not going to get off your ass and do a little conquering? And when we do conquer, what is the trophy? In the old days it might have been a lock of hair or a garter strap. A ring can also announce your achievement. But always, your own knowledge of what transpired is your reward—being pleased with yourself and being able to say to yourself, "I am a man." And if others have knowledge of your conquest, your knowing that they know is as great an award as any.

That, in brief, is the Objectification/Fixation/Conquest dynamics. The implications and ramifications of these elements of socialized sexual responses are staggering and too numerous to attempt to list and discuss here. But let me offer one implication (as an example) that seems realistic to me: that male sexual responses have little (or nothing) to do with the specific female we are with at any given moment. Any number of lips or breasts or vaginas would do—as long as we can objectify, fixate, and conquer, an erection and (provided there is some form of penile friction) ejaculation will occur.

If this example rubs you the wrong way, think about the existence and effectiveness of pornography, both verbal and photographic. What pornography does is create a fertile environment that makes it "natural" for the imagination to objectify, fixate on, and conquer a verbally or photographically depicted female. So even without a female being present in the flesh, the penis grows. Now you may say

that the female is present, that is, in the male mind. And the female is not physically there. So in a certain sense, the penis becomes a self-contained sexual system—not homo- or hetero- but self-sexual.

This shouldn't surprise anyone: it's based in our culture and it's based in society's denial of sexual gratification. But on the conscious and unconscious levels, this is threateningly close to the truth. Because having a penis and getting erections is equivalent to having a self and ego, it seems that what's important to us as men is our genitalia, and that might appear suspect to the puritans of the mind-set.

How then do we draw the line between our own penis and those other penises which are virtually identical to ours? The answer: we do to our penis what we do to females. We fixate on it, and conquer it. In that way we "thingify" it as "other," so that we can talk about "it" and avoid responsibility for our behavior and laugh at "it" as if it were a child on the range whom we can't control. So we have confirmed "its" status as "other" to us. We can even give our penis a name, like John Travolta's penis, which states positively to the world that our penis is its own penis (therefore we are not responsible for its actions?)

Because our penis is central to our own sense of self and manhood, it is natural that anything that causes erection—resulting pleasure and power and self-identification)—is important. Objectification/Fixation/Conquest of females allows us to exercise this function this way. Because we have been socialized to respond to sexual stimuli this way (nothing succeeds like success, etc.), we do function that way.

Now there is a new female before us. Without really knowing (or caring?) what she thinks or feels about her. Because she is female. Because she is "other" and we are not. We are to be yourself—a male in a potential relationship that she is. She affirms, proves your manhood. Which means that at the moment of meeting, we have already objectified the female. And that is why this is a necessary first step which permits us to fixate on her and then to conquer so that our climax can strengthen our sense of self and maleness. When you hear a man "complain" that he has been seduced by his wife "hundreds of times, and each time I have to seduce her like I were a virgin," you observe a woman who has learned to respond well and a man who loves responding to them (though this is not necessarily a typical relationship). So the most crudest sense and crassest form, is nothing more than

that the female is present, that is, in the male mind. And I'd agree, but the female is not physically there. So in a certain sense, most males become a self-contained sexual system—not homo- or heterosexual, but self-sexual.

This shouldn't surprise anyone: it's based in our physiology and it's based in society's denial of sexual gratification. But, on conscious and unconscious levels, this is threateningly close to homosexuality. Because having a penis and getting erections is equivalent to maleness and ego, it seems that what's important to us as males is the male genitalia, and that might appear suspect to the puritan heterosexual mind-set.

How then do we draw the line between our own penis and all those other penises which are virtually identical to our own? The answer: we do to our penis what we do to females. We objectify it, fixate on it, and conquer it. In that way we "thingify" our penis, make it "other," so that we can talk about "it" and apologize for "its" behavior and laugh at "it" as if it were a child on the rambunctious side whom we can't control. So we have confirmed "its" separateness from us. We can even give our penis a name, like John Thomas or Peter, which states positively to the world that our penis is its own man. (And therefore we are not responsible for its actions?)

Because our penis is central to our own sense of ego and manhood, it is natural that anything that causes erections (with the resulting pleasure and power and self-identification) is to be used. Objectification/Fixation/Conquest of females allows us to function this way. Because we have been socialized to respond that way. So we do function that way (nothing succeeds like success, etc.).

Now there is a new female before us. Without really knowing her, without really knowing (or caring?) what she thinks or feels, we "like" her. Because she is female. Because she is "other" and with her you will be yourself—a male in a potential relationship that re-establishes, affirms, proves your manhood. Which means that at the moment of meeting, we have already objectified the female. And for our maleness, this is a necessary first step which permits us to fixate and hopefully go on to conquer so that our climax can strengthen our ego and sense of maleness. When you hear a man "complain" that he's slept with his wife "hundreds of times, and each time I have to seduce her as if she were a virgin," you observe a woman who has learned her lessons too well and a man who loves responding to them (though I don't mean this to be an example of a typical relationship). Seduction, in its crudest sense and crassest form, is nothing more than Fixation and

Conquest made possible because the male has already made a generalized object out of a specific female. (Listen to the language: cunt, tits, pussy, boobs, snatch, jugs . . .) This is the procedure males follow to get their sexual machinery into gear (with many personal idiosyncrasies, which is why prostitutes keep careful notes on the likes and dislikes of their clientele). Again, pornography and its effectiveness is telling us that we needn't have a real, living, breathing female with us to respond sexually. What is needed for a good old healthy erection to occur is the opportunity to objectify, fixate, and conquer.

Well, now we have some clues as to how our penis gets socialized and what it responds to, and there are endless questions to ask. But my first question is: What happened to me on those three occasions when I didn't get it up at the proper time?

Tell me how this sounds. My relationship to the woman and the woman's relationship to me were similar in all three instances. They were women I knew very well. They were people I liked very much. Liked because they were decent, liked because they were loving, liked because they were involved in the struggle (at great risk and cost) to make this world a better place. But with them, though I find them very attractive, I didn't automatically play stud the way I had been socialized to do. Because I knew them as whole beings, I couldn't objectify them, and consequently couldn't fixate on (though I tried) or conquer them. And they didn't put pressure on me to do that (as women can, and do, for a variety of reasons). So I didn't play my role and they didn't play theirs. No roles; no seduction, no Objectification/Fixation/Conquest—ergo, no erection (except at those odd, un-propitious times when I was probably unconsciously fixating on a part of their body or fantasizing and got the penis into gear).

We spent, I think, very intimate and sensuous moments together. And since those evenings, we've talked about what happened. And about this essay (each of the women has read it). And we'll spend other evenings together, trying to learn about the damage, the terrible damage, that has been done to all of us. And stopping its continuance. And trying to undo as much of it as we can. Well, that's one possible explanation for the "no erection at the right time" mystery. And I come off looking pretty good. Looking pretty damn egalitarian. At least I did until I talked to a friend who, given the same information, had an entirely different interpretation of what happened. Her version follows.

*I have, to a certain degree, re-socialized myself and become liberated because I was able to accept these women on all levels as*

*equals. Except for one level: I was not capable of accepting sexual equals. I held onto this last bastion of male superiority—the death-grip. I was willing to deal with these women on a non-erotic (rather than male-to-female) basis, except in relating to them as objects. I still had to deal with them on an objectify, fixate, and conquer basis. But since I couldn't objectify them, I rejected them as objects. I gave up my last heirloom of maleness. I totally refused to let them sexually stimulate or arouse me. By preventing my penis from getting into gear, I ironically preserved my male superiority. This is because the women, who also need to be re-socialized, could not understand that my lack of erection was a result of my being going to lose touch with the last remnant of my masculinity. They could not understand that I was in fact forcing myself to take the last step. What the women would feel is that I have not taken the last step. Since they knew other women stimulated me sexually, they knew that there is something wrong with them, some way in which they are lacking, if they cannot arouse me. So in refusing to let them sexually stimulate me, I have in fact turned the tables and made them feel inadequate in relation to me. In making them feel inadequate, I made them doubt the very thing in themselves that I was doing—being sexually stimulated. And while they are pretty liberated, it is not their own sexuality which they still have to deal with more.*

Well, there's another explanation for the syndrome. It comes off looking so good. In fact, I look rather better than I do. It's an interpretation that is fairly consistent and comfortable. I first heard it, it really threw me, which gives some validity. Then I thought, although my friend's interpretation is interesting, I really think mine is more accurate. But it is not an equivocation. Also, I'm not sure that the two are mutually exclusive (to explain that would take another essay). The important points to remember are that we still have to deal with the fact that there are alternatives to avoiding, fearing, and denying our sexual realities. If we nurture our blindness and choose to ignore it, change, the damage will continue and worsen.

Some of you may be thinking that because I dealt with the first night of a relationship, the analysis is complete. Some of you may be thinking that even if a relationship is not a classical sex-role way, the couple can still grow beyond the roles that they embodied when they first met. I agree. I have seen relationships that never grow beyond their initial qualifications. I have seen relationships that never grow beyond their initial qualifications.

equals. Except for one level: I was not capable of accepting females as sexual equals. I held onto this last bastion of male supremacy with a death-grip. I was willing to deal with these women on a human (rather than male-to-female) basis, except in relating to them sexually, where I still had to deal with them on an objectify, fixate, and conquer basis. But since I couldn't objectify them, I rejected these women rather than give up my last heirloom of maleness. I totally refused to allow them to sexually stimulate or arouse me. By preventing my penis from getting into gear, I ironically preserved my male superiority in the situation. This is because the women, who also need to be re-socialized, would not understand that my lack of erection was a result of fearing that I was going to lose touch with the last remnant of male socialization. They could not understand that I was in fact forestalling my own liberation because I lacked the courage or the knowledge necessary for the last step. What the women would feel is that I have rejected them, since they knew other women stimulated me sexually. They would feel that there is something wrong with them, some way in which they are lacking, if they cannot arouse me. So in refusing to allow myself to be stimulated by them, I have in fact turned the tables and made them feel inadequate in relation to me. In making them feel inadequate, I made them doubt the very thing in themselves that I was doubting in myself—sexuality. And while they are pretty liberated, it is the area of their own sexuality which they still have to deal with more.

Well, there's another explanation for the syndrome. And I don't come off looking so good. In fact, I look rather bad. Even desperate. It's an interpretation that is fairly consistent and contains energy. When I first heard it, it really threw me, which gives some credence to its validity. Then I thought, although my friend's interpretation is interesting, I really think mine is more accurate. But that may be male equivocation. Also, I'm not sure that the two interpretations are mutually exclusive (to explain that would take another essay). But the important points to remember are that we still have much to learn and that there are alternatives to avoiding, fearing, and ignoring present sexual realities. If we nurture our blindness and cheer our resistance to change, the damage will continue and worsen.

Some of you may be thinking that because all three instances dealt with the first night of a relationship, the analyses are invalid. And some of you may be thinking that even if a relationship begins in a classical sex-role way, the couple can still grow beyond the male/female roles that they embodied when they first met. I agree, but with major qualifications. I have seen relationships that never grew beyond where



they began. No comment necessary. I have also seen relationships that have grown, but I think we have to ask: What is the nature of that growth? What do they grow from? I think those are important questions because when the shit hits the fan in a relationship, friends of the couple will often say things like: "After all those years . . ."; "It's hard for me to believe . . ."; "Of all the couples we knew, they seemed . . ."; "It came out of nowhere . . ."; "I just can't understand . . ." Was the couple's break-up really "unexpected"? There are surprises, I think, only if certain basic questions were never asked, existing realities not examined, and alternatives not explored.

The terrifying (to me) evidence is that we males never are dealing with the whole female being at the beginning of a relationship. We have been socialized, on behalf of our penis, to divide a woman's body up. The vernacular of males is usually a dead give-away and varies from slightly crude to incredibly crude. Phrases like "I'm an ass man" or "a breast man" or "a cunt man" or "a leg man" are common self-perceptions and self-descriptions. The street jargon of males watching females stroll by is similar: "Would I like to get my hands on those tits" or "Look at that beaver [cunt]" or "I could suck those sweet nipples for days." The refined professor in the yard gazing at a coed amongst the grass and trees might offer up "a veritable Diana with alabaster orbs" in a non-iambic mode. But the phenomenon is the same. Fixation. That is how we see. We objectify (generalize) the woman and then we fixate on a physical characteristic. And even later in a relationship, when to varying degrees we do deal with the whole female person, very often we snap back into our original sex roles (as if sleeping together for the first time?). We do it because that is how we have been socialized to act and respond. We do it because it is the path of least resistance. We do it. It is the only way we know.

During the past year I have tried to call up and reabsorb conversations I have had with various males over the years concerning females. I've also spent a lot of time talking to all kinds of males, working class and professional, young single males and males who are "happily married and have three lovely children." When sexual fantasies were discussed, I found that there are very similar fantasies among most males.

The fantasy is revealing. "The ideal turn-on would be two or three women at once, who are lesbians, and who are of different racial/cultural origins." Why is this the super-dream? Simple: it allows for magnified Objectification, Fixation, and Conquest. Two or three women are more than one. Lesbians are by definition the most

difficult conquest, so they are potentially the greatest strongest vitamin for building healthy egos and solid as powerful male. Differing racial/cultural origins add and make one a universal image of manhood. And the common fantasy of what are normally regarded as well-adjusted males.

So, while many relationships do grow beyond encounters, I think it becomes increasingly clear upon a diseased foundation. And as a result, there are (and too often, built-in tragedies) in relationships them - which means perhaps all relationships we have been personally involved in. And that is why we can surprise when a relationship we consider good and crumble and the old sex roles come exploding off sprint champions. It happens in many forms, depending economic backgrounds of the people involved. But it happened. Will continue to happen—if left unexamined.

I've spoken to a number of friends about this them to read it and offer criticisms. They did. Some some calm, some just smiled. But most of them agreed thrust of the argument (there were disagreements over we talked for many hours about sexuality. But our have an immediate or visible effect on our existing real have all been thoroughly socialized. We are all trained actors. Method actors. And no method actor with more experience is going to lose his skill, forget or conform the lines at the right time, unless the script is re-written the sets changed, and the desires and expectations of hands, directors and audience re-socialized.

I want to ask people to do that, but I can't. Because what that kind of re-socialization entails. I have some at this point I'm struggling. I can't offer any simple and there are many risks involved. Some of my male and who are pretty open and enlightened people, have said rather keep things the way they are if trying to change cause doubt, pain, and an awful lot of work. I suspect tions will have to be a step in the transition (although think); men and women are going to have to be prepared times and be ready to deal with them. But when I look the alternatives to taking risks and living with us alternatives are so unpalatable that the need to change

difficult conquest, so they are potentially the greatest trophy, the strongest vitamin for building healthy egos and solid definitions of self as powerful male. Differing racial/cultural origins add exotic uniqueness and make one a universal image of manhood. And this, remember, is the common fantasy of what are normally regarded as sexually healthy, well-adjusted males.

So, while many relationships do grow beyond the initial sex-role encounters, I think it becomes increasingly clear that the growth is upon a diseased foundation. And as a result, there are built-in limitations (and too often, built-in tragedies) in relationships as we know them—which means perhaps all relationships we have seen, known, or been personally involved in. And that is why we can no longer feign surprise when a relationship we consider good and mature begins to crumble and the old sex roles come exploding off the blocks like sprint champions. It happens in many forms, depending on the cultural/economic backgrounds of the people involved. But it does happen. Has happened. Will continue to happen—if left unexamined.

I've spoken to a number of friends about this essay and asked them to read it and offer criticisms. They did. Some were nervous, some calm, some just smiled. But most of them agreed with the general thrust of the argument (there were disagreements over specifics). And we talked for many hours about sexuality. But our discussions didn't have an immediate or visible effect on our existing realities. Because we have all been thoroughly socialized. We are all trained actors. Character actors. Method actors. And no method actor with twenty years or more experience is going to lose his skill, forget or confuse his role, miss the lines at the right time, unless the script is re-written or eliminated, the sets changed, and the desires and expectations of the cast, stage hands, directors and audience re-socialized.

I want to ask people to do that, but I can't. Because I don't know what that kind of re-socialization entails. I have some vague ideas, but at this point I'm struggling. I can't offer any simple answers. Obviously, there are many risks involved. Some of my male and female friends, who are pretty open and enlightened people, have said that they would rather keep things the way they are if trying to change them is going to cause doubt, pain, and an awful lot of work. I suspect that those conditions will have to be a step in the transition (although easier than we think); men and women are going to have to be prepared for rough times and be ready to deal with them. But when I look around me and see the alternatives to taking risks and living with uncertainty, those alternatives are so unpalatable that the need to change becomes a

command. Even though it's not going to be a rose garden. At least for a while.

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I would like to raise a few questions. I think all of them have been asked before. And they have been answered before. But I would like to ask them again and attempt to at least partially answer them in the context of the socialized penis. I'm very aware that these questions don't have simple answers, and I don't want to discount other answers that have been offered. I have read answers to these questions that I have agreed with. But my intention isn't to definitively answer these questions by exploring all info available. My intention is much less ambitious: to see what (if any) new perspectives are available by placing the questions against the backdrop of Objectification/Fixation/Conquest. Some of the "answers" may seem old hat; others may seem substantively different; still others may strike you as foolish. What really matters is that we all understand that there's so much more to learn and so many essays and personal accounts that still need to be written.

My attempted "answers," even within their defined context, aren't sufficiently thorough and aren't intended to be the last word on anything. So consider each "answer" a question, and deal with your own shit.

*Why do so many men fear women's liberation?* One of the things that terrifies men about the women's movement is that women are talking to each other. About themselves. But also about men. And that as women do this, the man's game is up, his strategy is laid bare, and he feels the threat of being objectified. As his machinations, maneuvers and *modus operandi* become known, he won't be able to perpetrate the fraud that he is something special to his woman (women?), since many women are getting to know that all men do pretty much the same things in striving to empty their sacs. Now, many women have known this all along but have either kept quiet about it or repressed their knowledge of it because they have been socialized to do so and because there are pressures that bear down hard if they don't. And men didn't know, or pretended not to know, that women knew; so they thought they were always successful in convincing their women that they were special and unique (and therefore a valuable commodity). And now that men are being exposed, some of them are cowering in their nudity. As a close woman friend once wrote to me, "Men don't marry harlots; they know too much."

*Why do men hate women?* Not too many men will and I'm not sure what percentage of men actually do hate more than a few women believe men do. And I think a lot do hate women but aren't aware of it.

To hate someone (because of race, religion, or gender) you must first de-humanize them, make them sub-human. If you have done this, you can hate them (and even be right) because they aren't worthy of human regard, considered sub-human (e.g., "gooks"). When men objectify (generalize) and take the female's human-ness away, making her less than human, specific, sub-human. This allows men to carry out their power over women, exert their power over them. But if a man has a lurking in his brain (and I like to think most do), he has been evil enough to destroy the female: that is, he has taken a whole, breathing, thinking, feeling human being and made something less than human of it. He also dislikes the crude games he plays, the strategies he develops and the pain he feels "the torment of the testicles." And he may even hate that this role is demanded of him and that he is a sub-human.

But all this is difficult for a man to realize and deal with consciously. So he transfers the blame to the woman for making him act in a less than human way. He becomes responsible for his sub-human actions. So she becomes sub-human a second time because the man feels she is the one who is the de-humanizer. And because her existence as a woman, reminds him of this. Constantly.

*Why do men get jealous?* If a woman rebels (flirts, has an affair), it lets the man know that he has failed his woman, failed to make her his subject. Therefore, his thought doubles back because he feels that that is why he prefers other men who are more manly than he. (Am I right?)

*Why do men go to other women?* In relation to the initial sex-role-playing, a time often comes when the man can no longer conquer his woman because she is winning. The man has his penis socialized (and his brain along with it) manly when he is fixating and conquering. And he marries her too well even to be able to fixate on her, since he comes to realize that her breasts and vagina are connected.

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*Why do men hate women?* Not too many men will admit to this; and I'm not sure what percentage of men actually do hate women. But more than a few women believe men do. And I think a number of men do hate women but aren't aware of it.

To hate someone (because of race, religion, or political belief) you must first de-humanize them, make them sub-human. After you have done this, you can hate them (and even be righteous about it) because they aren't worthy of human regard, consideration, or treatment (e.g., "gooks"). When men objectify (generalize) women, they take the female's human-ness away, making her less than human, non-specific, sub-human. This allows men to carry out their role with women, exert their power over them. But if a man has a bit of decency lurking in his brain (and I like to think most do), he hates himself for having been evil enough to destroy the female: that is, evil enough to have taken a whole, breathing, thinking, feeling human being and to have made something less than human of it. He also dislikes himself for the crude games he plays, the strategies he develops and implements to relieve "the torment of the testicles." And he may even resent the fact that this role is demanded of him and that he is a prisoner to it.

But all this is difficult for a man to realize or admit about himself. And deal with consciously. So he transfers the hate to the woman for making him act in a less than human way and she thereby becomes responsible for his sub-human actions. So she is made sub-human a second time because the man feels she is the one who caused him to be sub-human. So he hates her. Hates her even though he is the one who is the de-humanizer. And because her existence, as a socialized woman, reminds him of this. Constantly.

*Why do men get jealous?* If a woman rebels (flirts, denies him sex, has an affair), it lets the man know that he has failed to de-humanize his woman, failed to make her his subject. Therefore, he is a failure, less than a whole man, with cracked ego and lost manhood. And this thought doubles back because he feels that that is why his woman prefers other men who are more manly than he. (And what if she's right?)

*Why do men go to other women?* In relationships that grow beyond the initial sex-role-playing, a time often comes when the man can no longer conquer his woman because she is willing and there. But the man has his penis socialized (and his brain along with it) to feel manly when he is fixating and conquering. And he may by now know her too well even to be able to fixate on her, since he has probably come to realize that her breasts and vagina are connected to the rest of

her being. So the old excitement isn't there. "Something" has gone out of the relationship.

Another explanation for why men run to other women is that other women are closer to being whole human beings (like their loves once were). The other woman is by definition more attractive, more interesting, a potential new trophy, while his wife (or lover) is a less-than-whole human whom he has already de-humanized. When (if) he conquers this new other woman, and succeeds in de-humanizing her, the man will tire of her also and look for yet another close-to-whole female being.

Men who are not capable of running around are often considered suspect by men who do run around. Again, the crude male vernacular tells the story: "She's got him by the balls." Or: "He's pussy-whipped."

*Why is premature ejaculation a problem?* There are three varieties of premature ejaculation. The first is a result of some anthropological studies which suggest that all Western men ejaculate too soon; but since this problem has been discussed elsewhere and is considered the norm, it will not be discussed here.

The second variety of premature ejaculation is described by that great teenage pre-coital phrase—"coming in your pants." Which translates as ejaculating before the reality seems to warrant it. The third variety is ejaculating before the woman has orgasm (what if she doesn't have orgasm?). Both of these latter varieties lead us back to the way the penis is socialized: it responds to Fixation and Conquest. Usually men come too soon because they are having fantasies which include Fixation and Conquest. They are not really sleeping with/involved with the woman in their arms.

When I was in my teens there was a common bit of advice provided by experienced males on the subject of premature ejaculation. It was: "Think of garbage cans" (oh, the power and beauty of language). Which was profound advice although no one knew why. What the advice means is: if you think of garbage cans, that is, if you interrupt your Fixation and Conquest syndrome, you will interrupt your sexual functioning. When the time is right, forget the garbage cans, and you'll ejaculate on schedule. So the problem of premature ejaculation is really rooted in the factors which caused the present kind of penis socialization to develop.

*Why are men afraid of "nymphomaniacs"?* If you're laughing at this question, you'd better figure out why the ideal turn-on for most males is a lesbian and not a "nympho."

"Nymphomaniacs," by definition, can't be conquered. In fact,

they may be objectifying/fixating/conquering the man. In the man is being used. He is nothing special or unique because she's had a hundred more like him. So sleeping with her is the man's definition of self. Also, because a "nympho" is insatiable, a man (in his heart of hearts) knows his limitations. He isn't likely to let him admit this easily. So the "nympho" is not because she destroys the male role in a very basic way.

*Why do some people have an aversion to homosexuals?* The simple answer is that all of us have been socialized to scorn homosexuality. For that reason, I may not be comfortable with homosexuality in a non-prejudiced manner. The only reason I can think of for my aversion to homosexuals is that the homosexuals I have known have not transcended the sexual games we play except that they play them with their own sex. Which may explain part of our aversion to homosexuals because they are the epitome of what we dislike of how we act, as males and females. In that way, they are us. They mock us, make a joke of us, seem to caricature us. They really look and act like if only we had the sufficient intelligence to rationally observe our actions.

There is another obvious, perhaps too obvious, reason for our aversion to homosexuals. A female homosexual makes a man feel inadequate, and un-manly because she doesn't need men. A male homosexual makes a woman feel unnecessary, inadequate and un-feminine because he doesn't need women. And nothing in our socialization prepared us for not being needed by members of the opposite sex.

*Why do men masturbate?* Because it feels good. Masturbation may be a natural outgrowth of our unnatural sexual socialization. It provides sexual release and may be the only sane choice between abstinence or rape, for example) where there are no other alternatives.

Perhaps we should first ask: how do men masturbate? First, the penis (sensitive thing that it is) responds to friction. If that friction is connected with Fixation and Conquest (underpants and zippers by themselves do not constantly stimulate walking around with erections all the time). And second, the penis has been socialized to respond to the imaginings of Fixation and Conquest.

So, when men are in a situation or society where Fixation and Conquest does not result in genital intercourse, men may

they may be objectifying/fixating/conquering the man. Instead of using, the man is being used. He is nothing special or unique to this woman—she's had a hundred more like him. So sleeping with her undermines the man's definition of self. Also, because a "nympho" is defined as insatiable, a man (in his heart of hearts) knows his limitations but his ego isn't likely to let him admit this easily. So the "nympho" is feared because she destroys the male role in a very basic way.

*Why do some people have an aversion to homosexuality?* The simple answer is that all of us have been socialized to fear/hate/scorn homosexuality. For that reason, I may not be capable of dealing with homosexuality in a non-prejudiced manner. The only non-partisan reason I can think of for my aversion to homosexuality is that most homosexuals I have known have not transcended the sexual roles we are all damaged by. They have their male and female too and are playing the same games we play except that they play them with members of their own sex. Which may explain part of our aversion: namely, we dislike homosexuals because they are the epitome of what our roles are, of how we act, as males and females. In that way, they are an insult to us. They mock us, make a joke of us, seem to caricature what we'd really look and act like if only we had the sufficient distance from ourselves to rationally observe our actions.

There is another obvious, perhaps too obvious, reason for our fear of homosexuals. A female homosexual makes a man feel unnecessary, inadequate, and un-manly because she doesn't need men. A male homosexual makes a woman feel unnecessary, inadequate and un-womanly because he doesn't need women. And nothing in our socialization has prepared us for not being needed by members of the opposite sex.

*Why do men masturbate?* Because it feels good and it's fun. It may be a natural outgrowth of our unnatural sexual socialization. It provides sexual release and may be the only sane choice (as opposed to abstinence or rape, for example) where there are no other alternatives.

Perhaps we should first ask: how do men successfully masturbate? First, the penis (sensitive thing that it is) responds to friction, and that friction is connected with Fixation and Conquest (that is why underpants and zippers by themselves do not constantly have all men walking around with erections all the time). And secondly, the penis has been socialized to respond to the imaginings of Fixation and Conquest.

So, when men are in a situation or society where social intercourse does not result in genital intercourse, men may masturbate for

any one of (or combination of) a number of reasons. It feels good. It's amazing to see what their own body can do. They're "horny." They fear impotence, and masturbation (inadequately) alleviates that fear for a while. They played around with a woman for a few hours but they didn't make it into bed, and their balls hurt, and masturbating is an effective way of relieving that pain or pressure. They didn't want to "attack" a woman (let's say, on a first date), so they masturbate to insure their penis won't be in control of their social actions that evening. If they are impotent with women, or if they have no one to sleep with, masturbation provides sensual pleasure. And most important, ejaculation defines one as male; so if you're not "shacked up," or having an affair, or married, masturbation allows a man to continue defining himself as male, as a power, as a conqueror.

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I wrote this essay during the summer of 1971. From the beginning I was annoyingly aware of the limitations of what I was doing. I knew it was a narrow exploration, a formulation that would help me deal with one aspect of male sexual socialization. It also had an undercurrent of behaviorism, which I don't like and didn't want; but I just wrote, and what happened is what you read. The essay isn't, and wasn't intended to be, a consistent historical tract or sociological treatise. Nor was its design political, in the worldly sense. I felt the need, and thought I saw the reasons, to stay fairly specific.

Because it's easy to escape. From self and others. It's safer to be all-inclusive in generalized "out there" ways. It's tempting to become resigned to the "realities," to let the definition of the disease become an argument that supports the disease's continuance. To say, "Yes, I'm damaged, but just look around at the whole fucking world and how messed up it is and how the hell can I change until all those things out there change, allow me to change, help me to alter my being?"

I agree: it is near-impossible for any one of us to change the world. I agree: it is difficult to change the self if the world remains a constant (especially since self is contained in the definition of world). But the world doesn't change by itself, and the one place the individual can begin is with self, translating self to the world in a personal, rather than grand, political way. (And maybe, at some time, in a grand, political way, too.)

Perhaps the greatest short-coming of the essay is its avoidance of political and societal questions. "Does unalienating work necessarily

result in unalienated sexuality?" "In what ways does p  
mine social-sexual roles?" "To what extent does our p  
our social development?" And many others. All vital  
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result in unalienated sexuality?" "In what ways does patriarchy determine social-sexual roles?" "To what extent does our physiology affect our social development?" And many others. All vital questions, but ones which permit the possibility of escaping one's self. And since what I've read is largely political or scientific or psychological, and predominantly academic, I thought it might be meaningful to deal with a specific topic, from a personal and self-specific stance.

Another problem was trying to envision the audience. Males only? Males and females? Whichever individual happens to be reading the words? I didn't have an answer to that, though I tended to conceive of it as a dialogue with men. But what if the essay alienated some men who didn't share my experience of "normal" sexual socialization? I couldn't discover anything close to a perfect solution to the whole question of audience (or voice). So I wrote by feel and instinct. And if I've insulted or harmed anyone, that wasn't the intent.

During the six months I re-read and re-thought what I had written, yet another problem became apparent: the essay raised many questions (direct and indirect) which I didn't deal with. And now that I've done the final re-write, I still haven't dealt with them. Because discussion is endless and I'm just not up to writing a monstrous tome. So I avoided tangents and detours and tried to exercise self-restraint. And also because many of the questions are questions I can't answer.

Another point of information. Throughout the essay I used the word "socialized" rather than a word like "conditioned." Intentionally. A word like "conditioned" loses sight of who does what to whom. The word "socialized" never lets you forget that there are many things—males, females, cultures, societies, institutions, nations—that do it to all of us. Not the maligned mother or mythified father, but everyone and everything that embodies and fosters sexual role-playing. And I didn't want to lose sight of that larger context, even though my parameters overtly excluded it.

All this is as explanation. And premature apology. And maybe self-defense.

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