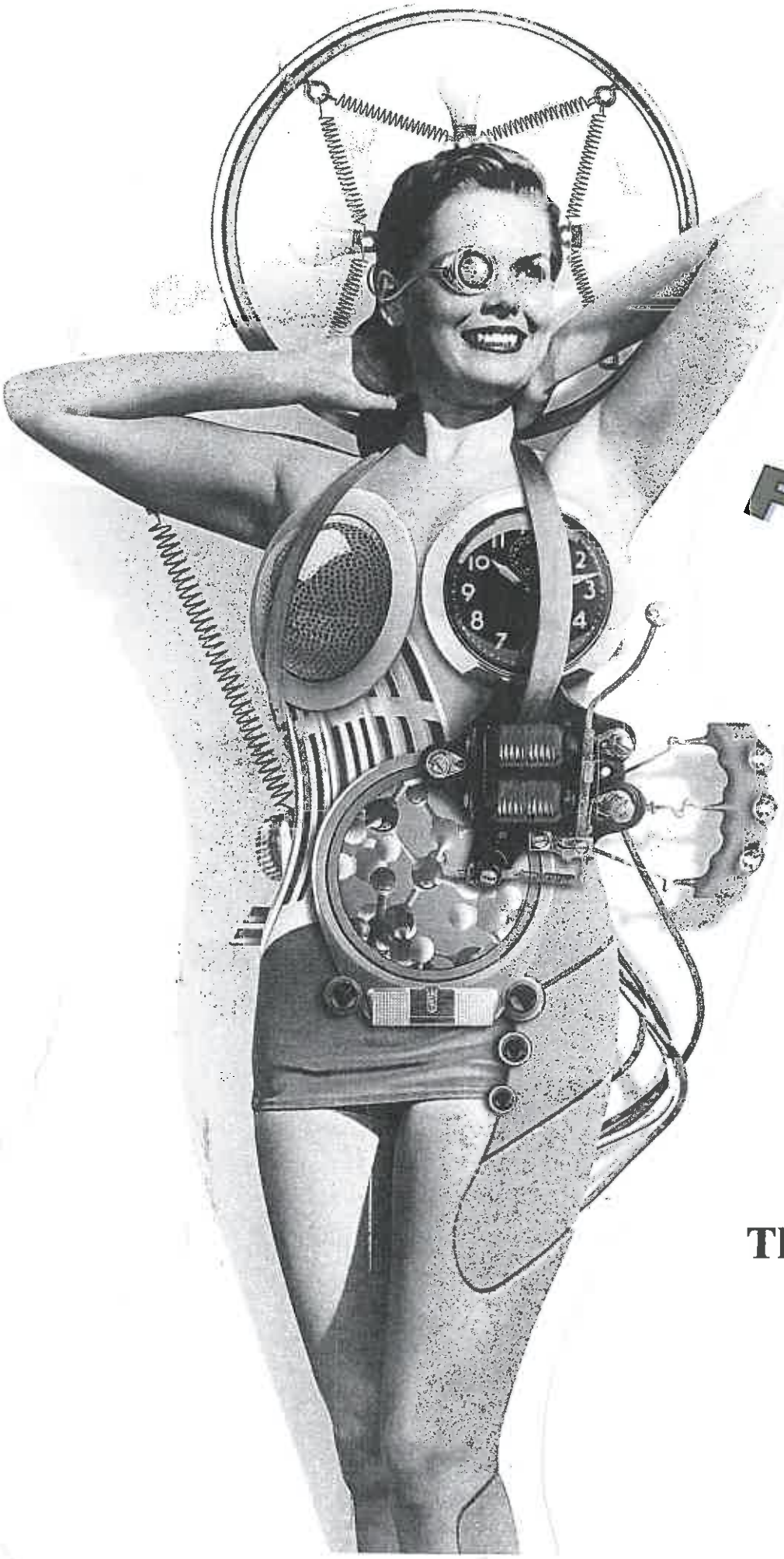

BODILY FICTIONS

The Body in American Literature

7th semester elective

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Nationalism and Sexuality: Crises of Identity. Ed. Yiorgos Kalogeras and Domna Pastourmatzi. American Studies in Greece 2. Thessaloniki: Aristotle U., 1996.

ARTICULATIONS OF SEXUALITY, RACE, AND NATIONALISM IN CONTEMPORARY UNITED STATES

E. San Juan, Jr.

In 1965, the African American scholar Calvin Hernton claimed that "the sexualization of racism in the United States is a unique phenomenon in the history of mankind; it is an anomaly of the first order" (6). After surveying in detail the historical vicissitudes of the sexual transactions across the black/white divide, especially the castelike prohibitions and myths of miscegenation surrounding white-skinned and dark-skinned bodies, Hernton concludes: "The racism of sex in the United States is but another aspect of the unequal political and economic relations that exist between the races in the American democracy" (179). After more than twenty-five years of civil rights agitation and liberal reforms, Hernton returns to his theme and reflects that "the unwritten taboo" against racial intermingling still prevails, that "the sexualization of racism [in the United States] is a *fait accompli*" (xiii). Hernton is actually pursuing an insight common to many commentators but pointedly stated by the novelist James Weldon Johnson: "Through it all I discerned one clear and certain truth: in the core of the heart of the American race problem the sex factor is rooted, rooted so deeply that it is not always recognized when it shows at the surface" (quoted by Hernton xxi).

Instead of concurring with these cogent expressions of pansexualized racism rampant in the United States, I would like to explore in this essay the articulations between sexuality and nationalism, more precisely how the categories of patriarchy and ethnonationalism contour the parameters of discourse about identities in U.S. society. How the idea of the nation is sexualized and how sex is nationalized are topics that may yield clues to how racial conflicts are circumscribed within the force field of national self-identification. Sexuality is of course not a pure self-evident category. It manifests its semantic and ethical potency in the field of racial and gendered politics. In now classic studies, Roger Bastide has acutely analyzed the psychodynamics of race, sexuality, and patriarchal nationalism in the relations between Europeans and people of color. He underscored the paradoxes and ambiguities surrounding sexual miscegenation as a form of racial/nationalist combat:

> For in the lovemaking of partners of different colour, in the courting which went before, in those privileged instants which seem to destroy race and rediscover the unity of the human species, we find this paradox: the insinuation of racialism in its most savage, most withering forms. In these bodies finding each other, fusing, there are two races at each other's throats.
>
> ...In conclusion, that contrary to a widely held opinion, closer relationships between the colours, whether in marriage or in simple sexual pleasure, are not a

> sign of absence of prejudice: the Dusky Venus hides the debasement of the black woman as a prostitute; and the Black Apollo is seeking revenge on the white man. It is not so much that love breaks down barriers and unites human beings as that racial ideologies extend their conflicts even in love's embraces. (188, 197)

In the layering and sedimentation of beliefs about sexual freedom and national belonging or togetherness in the United States, one will detect ambiguities and disjunctions analogous to those between sexuality and freedom delineated by Bastide, as well as the persistence of racist ideology.

The bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City last April 19 was at first attributed to Muslim terrorists by CNN and other media. But as soon as suspects were arrested who turned out to be white men from Middle America, "freedom-loving" right-wingers (according to *Newsweek*, 1 May 1995), the opportunity to galvanize a nationalist consensus by way of a fixed external enemy uniting the country disappeared. This threat, however, was diagnosed as "sickness somewhere within the American family," editorializes *Newsweek*. "Right-wing groups are much harder to stereotype.... They look like mainstream Americans (white, male, rural, blue collar) and their self-proclaimed patriotism masks their sometimes treasonous intent" (Alter 55). Staunchly convinced of the sacred Constitutional right to bear arms so as to protect their liberties against an intrusive state, the numerous "right-wing" armed militias and para-military groups across the continental United States claim to derive their *raison d'etre* from such founding texts as the Declaration of Independence, *Letters from an American Farmer* by St. Jean de Crevecoeur, *Democracy in America* by Alexis de Tocqueville, and others: the nation equals rugged white male individuals confronting the dangerous frontier, the "new man" apprenticed to the soil, battling savages and others with strange languages and religions to protect their freedom and private property (land, women, children).[1] From Frederick Turner's thesis of the Western frontier to President Kennedy's "New Frontier," such discourses do not directly manipulate consciousness but act through the mediation of institutions and relays of collective practices and sedimented *habitus*.

The discourse of United States nationalism uses symptoms and fragments from the archive of public memory and anticipation, deploying scenes not just imagined but lived, witnessed, and recorded to construct the nation, "people like us." Nation thus signifies a community or (better yet) communion of individuals who share "our way of life," what always returns, more precisely our own way of organizing our common enjoyment. Conversely the "Other" becomes those who steal our enjoyment, or that surplus of our own enjoyment that we find unbearable and cannot acknowledge except by projecting it to the Other via fantasy, hence the fear, loathing, and secret desire for the Other (Salecl 212). The discourse of the national Imaginary (the nation as trope or constellation of figures) necessarily bears an essentializing telos, one which can alter or mutate according to the pressures of changing historical circumstances.

From an essentializing viewpoint, the U.S. national identity is usually defined as commitment to a political ideology comprised of the abstract ideals of liberty, equality, and republicanism (government on the basis of consent) (Gleason 31-2). Not homogeneity by common descent, religion, or language but by interpellation of subjects

through texts/discourses that constitute the national subjectivity, according to the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*. In addition to this ideological underpinning, U.S. national identity is distinctive in its affirmation of its newness — a new order without precedent has been inaugurated in the "New World" — and its orientation toward the future. The new beginning was not just a "glorious heritage" but also "a sacred trust." These elements make up the Symbolic Order of U.S. nationalism which is replicated in subsequent discourses. In 1964, Arthur Schlesinger, Sr. traced elements of the national character to the settler's "adventurous" and "rebellious" stance which fostered individualism, the acquisitive spirit, work ethic, and the peculiar idealism of making money. With the growth of urban industrial society, Schlesinger believes that to preserve "the traditional spirit of self-reliance and free competition" (29), fundamental principles of the national ethos, citizens placed their duties to government above their private interests, as reflected in the widespread support for the New Deal during the Depression.

This liberal "New Deal" version of U.S. nationalism whose resonance can be found in versions of communitarianism and fantasies of a "common culture" has roots in a Hegelian conception of the state as the embodiment of ethical reason. The ideas of American educators like William Mcdougall and Josiah Royce lurk behind John Foster Dulles' insistence that the United States represented the highest morality during the Cold War (Davis 35). With the state enforcing an exclusivist, purified concept of the nation, one can understand the anti-immigrant hysteria of the Palmer Raids (1919-21) and the incarceration of over 110,000 Japanese Americans during World War II. In those conjunctures, "law becomes reified as an end of human conduct" and "fascism in America" becomes "the form of law without its content" (Aronowitz 16).

In the nineties, however, the ideology of Keynesian liberal democracy seems to have lost the positive cathexis it once enjoyed.[2] The decline of the U.S. economy and the sharp conflicts over the welfare state and its future — marked by signs of social decay, intense racist violence, violence of the right-to-life movement against pro-choice doctors and health workers (Eisenstein), the debate over Affirmative Action, pornography, "undocumented aliens," and so on — have undermined the classic U.S. civil religion, especially the state as the embodiment of the nation.

In the 1820s and 1830s, a primordial American nationalism pervaded the country. The state articulated the ideals enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the belief in the singular redemptive mission of the United States vis-à-vis the corruption and decadence of Europe. Anglo-Saxon nativism asserted white supremacy over the lesser breeds — from the time of the 1838 "trail of tears" to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and the 1924 Immigration Act based on the national origins quota system. Later on, from the gospel of "Manifest Destiny" (proclaimed before the war with Spain) justifying its acquisition of colonies (the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Guam, Hawaii), to the role of guardian/defender of the "Free World" against the Evil Empire of Soviet Communism and its satellites, the state incorporated essential ingredients in U.S. civil theology (Kaplan; Pease). National unity founded on racial/sexist hierarchy unfolded in a narrative inherently Oedipal, naturalizing, and imperialist. This self-ascribed providential role which sustained *pax*

Americana after World War II began to self-destruct with the rancorous divisions over military interventions in IndoChina, Iran, Grenada, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. Only with the ascendance of Reagan-style neoconservatism, the entrenchment of the "national security state," the collapse of state-bureaucratic "communism," and the victory in the Persian Gulf War was U.S. civil religion able to recover.

Despite the rightist resurgence, the postmodern fragmentation of the "body politic" continues to challenge the unitary state, as I have noted at the outset. With such challenges to gendered and racialized statism as the ethnic revival, the various regionalisms, the resurgence of religious fundamentalism, and the intellectual predilection for historicist and even sectarian versions of multiculturalism, can we predict a withering away of the United States as a "nation-state" endowed with as much libidinal investment as during the time when the colonies revolted against the British monarchy?

In 1971, the international monetary system based on the identification of the dollar with gold ended; likewise, the concepts/referents of state and nation need to be disengaged. For Etienne Balibar, "Every social community reproduced by the functioning of institutions is imaginary" (Balibar and Wallerstein 93). Consequently, the national Imaginary really engenders and reproduces the people (peoplehood), not the state. State sovereignty as territorial control needs to be distinguished from nation as quasi-familial ideal of purity, eroticized habitat, fetishized scenarios of identification — in short, the national Imaginary. Except for the only viable secessionary threat at present — i.e., the Hawaii sovereignty movement, a trend which may not decisively affect the hemispheric geopolitical integrity of the state — the centralizing state still commands effective hegemony. The mode in which U.S. nationalism manifests itself as a quasi-religious impulse follows a traditional pattern: a passionate, organic attachment to family, locality (*Gemeinschaft*), and other modes of group belonging such as voluntary associations like the armed militias of white males feeling beleaguered by what they consider anti-American forces who have taken over the state in order to confiscate their guns and deprive them of religious freedom (betokened by the suppression of the Branch Davidian cult at Waco, Texas, in 1993). Anthropology views kinship and nationality as structured in analogous terms, though "loyalty to and love for one's country is the most generalized expression of diffuse, enduring solidarity" (Schneider 68). While kinship valorizes the particularistic, biogenetic criterion of solidarity, nationality privileges the commitment to a code of conduct, a system of symbols and meanings that comprise a culture. At this point, we begin to understand how the nation as artifact or style of inventing subjectivity shares affinities with the practices of representation associated with religion, kinship, and gender system. Unlike the competing logics of scientism or the transnational corporate firm, both nation and sexuality are not so much "imagined communities" (in Benedict Anderson's terminology) as "volatile sites for condensing and displacing ecstasies and terrors of political life" (Parker et al. 13).

I adduce here one instructive specimen of textualizing modern U.S. nationalism. In his standard reference work *America As a Civilization* (1987), Max Lerner defined the U.S. nation's social myth as inherent in the universal "psychic hunger to belong" (904)

centered on the central U.S. historical achievement of an "open society." Lerner celebrates the "practical messianism" of the American character (905) which informs its "Big Empire internationalism" (893). Reflecting on the sexual/cultural revolutions in the sixties and seventies, Lerner laments the radical transformations of the family polity: "Cohabitation, early out-of-wedlock childbearing, postponed marriages, single-parent households, resort to outside child-care services, shifting partners — these were not the building materials for enduring family structures" (987). Believing that the patriarchal family is the "cultural envelope for selfhood and relationships," Lerner bewails the reduction of human sexuality to a matter of "life-style taste and choice" in a "more hedonic [sic] society, less restrained by its Puritan origins and traditions." In the struggles over the nature of family life, religion, morality, and the home, the resulting backlash to this anarchic and permissive milieu revolves around abortion (between the "right-to-life" and the "pro-choice" forces) and pornography. With eros brought into the political arena, sexual, religious, and family passions now converge into a traumatic if delayed shock of recognition: the AIDS epidemic, Lerner continues his commentary, "threw a cordon of fear and danger around the sexual act, for heterosexuals as well as homosexuals. For what had been a hedonic society it undercut the celebration of Freud's 'pleasure principle' which had once conquered the United States more completely than any other culture of the West. It played havoc with both the 'modernization' and the 'Americanization' of sex" (989-90). However, the AIDS menace may have been neutralized in such films as *Ghosts* where safe sex and the stability of the heterosexual order are achieved through a skillful montage of fantasy, superficiality, and mystical experience.[3] What such texts effect is the conversion of the "unhappy consciousness" of the petty bourgeois spectator into the "good conscience" of the average law-abiding citizen (see McRobbie).

Lerner's mainstream reaction has been proved alarmist and premature. In 1968, the pop sociologist Vance Packard noted that despite the challenge of humanistic liberalism, radicalism, and the "fun morality" espoused by Albert Ellis and the "sexual anarchy" of the French Rene Guyon and the British A.S. Neill, American society still subscribed to the codes of bourgeois morality and feminine respectability, to middle class norms of sexual behavior and care of the body (for European analogues, see Mosse). Even in the transitional mood of the sixties, United States civil religion still pivoted around "traditional repressive ascetism" centered on marriage and procreative sex, supplemented with "enlightened asceticism" in which self-mastery and self-control — emblems of Puritan virility and of "high culture" — are learned by disciplining the sexual urges (Packard 69-70). Meanwhile, "fun morality" shared with "alternative lifestyles" promising self-fulfillment and immediate gratification the status of commodities on the mass market — countercultural modes of acculturation to the prevailing consumerist ideology of late capitalism.

In 1970, in his widely-read *The Pursuit of Loneliness,* Philip Slater comments that "Even the 'sexual revolution' has been contaminated by male preoccupations with competition and achievement" (101). Critiquing Dr. Spock's child-rearing precepts as responsible for feminine domesticity, Slater ascribes to this "maternal overload" the production of men "who are vain, warlike, boastful, competitive, sadistic, and skittish

designed to insure the preservation of private property and its transfer to definitely ascertainable heirs (Clark 36-7). With the rise of monopoly capitalism, however, the obsessional anal character is required not only to produce (in particular, weapons of mass destruction consumed by states) but also to consume; more consumption enables the reproduction of capitalist relations. Sexuality is released/sublimated to serve the reproduction process. Reimut Reiche points out that the rigid functionalism of early capitalism, as evidenced in its fostering of thrift and the postponement of gratification, has given way to controlled desublimation (46-7). This linkage of sexuality (the pleasure principle) and the national economy immanent in the performance principle of the market, a nexus of forces insuring the stability/legitimacy of the nation-state, is theorized by Herbert Marcuse thus:

> Without ceasing to be an instrument of labor, the body is allowed to exibit its sexual features in the everyday work world and in work relations.... This socialization is not contradictory but complementary to the de-erotization of the environment. Sex is integrated into work and public relations and is thus made more susceptible to (controlled) satisfaction....The range of socially persmissible and desirable satisfaction is greatly enlarged, but through this satisfaction, the Pleasure Principle is reduced — deprived of the claims which are irreconcilable with the established society. Pleasure, thus adjusted, generates submission....(70-2).

From this perspective, the "narcissism" of the sixties and seventies as well as the resurgent evangelicalism of the eighties and nineties appear as structural features of the cultural hegemony of consumer capitalism and its possibilities of discharging aggression. Civilization's discontents are then rendered starkly visible in the contradictory impulses condensed in postmodern cultural phenomena such as the cult of the singer Madonna (of which more later).

There was a time in U.S. history when the figure of the nation was made to coincide with the virile, military warrior and its critique of effete, decadent business civilization. In the 1890s, public personalities like Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Cabot Lodge, and Brooks Adams upheld a republican moralism associated with putative Anglo-Saxon qualities of courage that rejected vulgar moneymaking and late-Victorian complacency. A perception of the nation's fall into decadence stirred messianic vigilance. Fearful of impotence and anxious about the sterile and stagnant milieu of *fin-de-siècle* United States, ex-general and former president Benjamin Harrison called for universal military training in 1894 — a few years before the Spanish-American War and the conquest of overseas colonies — because "a free, erect, graceful carriage of the body is an acquisition and a delight. It has a value in commerce, as well as war" (Lears 116). The disciplined male body, endowed with the classic bourgeois virtues of order, efficiency, and productivity, becomes an instrument to rejuvenate the heroic will, infuse reality into anomic existence, and restore authenticity and wholeness to the disintegrated ego. United States nationalism channeled libidinal resources to accomplishing a hegemonic project of class regeneration: "The acquisition of empire reinforced the self-confidence, the economic power, and the cultural authority of a bourgeoisie which felt threatened by

toward women" (73). Because of their "fear of losing self-control, of becoming dependent on women, of weakness," these maternally privileged men "often huddle together in male gangs" exemplified today by the all-male militias that vehemently attack the state. If this is true, then these armed nationalists owe American mothers a singular debt: the defeat of the Oedipal complex and state-worship.

About a decade after Slater's book, Christopher Lasch denounces the dominant "culture of narcissism" and its therapeutic claims by nostalgically evoking the old progressivist slogan of "Americanization" around the turn of the century. The "sexual revolution" and feminism have undermined the work ethic and helped usher a "new paternalism," Lasch argues. "Americanism" identified with Progressivism is, however, equivalent to beliefs and values of industrial civilization such as: "a belief in order, rationality, and science; a respect for production, efficiency, power, discipline, and above all work; the need for planning, organization, and even bureaucracy and the state....; an intense interest in mass culture or the culture of the masses; stress on cooperation, participation, the importance of the well-being of the community; a vision of Progress, especially under science" (Susman 83). This Enlightenment meta-narrative of progress has now been bracketed by "Third World" revolutionary struggles and deconstructed by feminists and other subaltern victims of Eurocentric instrumental rationalism. Historical "Americanism" may, however, be opposed to the "Americanization" Lasch has in mind, for he yearns for a "new order"— certainly not an androgynous utopia — to resuscitate the energies and inspiration of the past, for example, loving memories of the exemplary morality of the American farmer (as extolled by Michael Chevalier in the 1830s (231-32). It appears then that Americans have lost their virile, pristine virtues; hence narcissism is the real enemy of the nation.

Unfortunately Lasch's critique is misleading because it confuses the phases of historical development. It misses the point that we no longer inhabit the stage of early laissez-faire, competitive capitalism. In that period after primitive accumulation when exchange-value becomes generalized, the anal personality of the mercantile bourgeoisie becomes confirmed in the separation of sexuality from love and from work resulting from repression in the name of performance, competition, and maximization of profits. These processes also underwrite the script of the national creed centered on liberty, equality, and representative government — the juridical-political forms surrounding private property and commodity exchange as the content. In time, the changes in mode of production register in the transformations of social relations and in the texture of everyday life. In the early thirties, Antonio Gramsci already predicted the clash between the bohemian, pettybourgeois orientation motivating the antimodernist, avantgarde reaction against the factory system and the obsessional anal character: "It seems clear that the new industrialism wants monogamy: it wants the man as worker not to squander his nervous energies in the disorderly and stimulating pursuit of occasional sexual satisfaction.... The exaltation of passion cannot be reconciled with the timed movements of productive motions connected with the most perfected automatism" (304-05).

Sexual pleasure is tabooed for the sake of monogamous heterosexual intercourse. Thus, in Locke's philosophy, the primacy of the male-dominated family, the space in which women's sexuality and the use-value of her reproductive labor are controlled, is

internal decay and lower-class discontent.... And the stage was being set for the full-scale militarism of the later twentieth century: the interests of the dominant class were being redefined as an ever-expansive 'national interest,' global and virtually limitless" (117). We are in the era of Vietnam, Contra-Gate, and the Gulf War, especially the rediscovery of the "boy eternal" via the public spectacle of techno-muscular male bodies, "narcissistic and homoerotic" (Boose 588). What is at stake in all the contemporary culture wars and partisan debate on "Contract with America" is American masculinity, the synecdoche of national honor, which was humiliated in Vietnam and Iran but eventually vindicated in the Gulf War.

The myth of Anglo-Saxon supremacy, of course, dates back to the rise of English nationalism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries during the rivalry with Spain and other absolute monarchies. In the next two centuries, this myth became conflated with republicanism, democracy, Protestantism, laissez-faire capitalism, progress, and empire. It served as the fountainhead of "Manifest Destiny," the doctrine of white supremacy and of American warriors as the "chosen people" destined to rule and civilize "others" (Smedley 191). In its historical genealogy, the diacritic of American national identity is both racialized and sexualized.

It was only after World War I that United States nationalism displaced the Anglo-Saxon ethnocentrism which flared up during the 1870s and, with Wilsonian propaganda, equated "America" with "democracy." While there may not be any single national narrative or collectively sanctioned trope for the U.S. nation, whether that of the "American Dream" or the "American Adam" and the "pastoral myth" invented by literary critics, the valorization of canonical authors like Emerson and Hawthorn since the study of American literature became institutionalized suggested the power of entrenched masculinism and racism at the heart of the program to construct an American civilization as the "Free World's" bulwark against communism (Shumway 124-26). The anti-communist crusade inflected the messianic charge to build "the City on the Hill" and redeem the fallen wilderness—a site now occupied by "internal colonies" of people of color in revolt against colonizing settlers and intruders.

The United States national Imaginary underwent sexual polarization right from the beginning. While Miss Liberty (with torch and book, as Kafka conjured her in the novel *Amerika*), an early icon of the new nation, gained immense popularity for countless immigrants fleeing the feudal-authoritarian milieu of Europe, it was the male Uncle Sam that after the Civil War became the quasi-official personification of the nation-state. Uncle Sam incarnated not the government but the state conceived as "a great overarching, nonideological abstraction, the 'we-ness' of a complex, centralized, deracinated modern society" (Zelinsky 26). Uncle Sam shared the connotations of fatherly wisdom, masculine maturity, and independence associated with George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Jackson, Buffalo Bill, and other folk-heroes. All imagery of motherhood and feminine activism have been purged from the pantheon of national heroes, even though (as in Third World nationalist movements) women may still be regarded as "bearer of the community's memory and children" (Enloe, *Bananas* 55; for women as guardians of the patriarchal tradition, see Kammen 266-69).

Gendered interrogation of U.S. national identity dates back to the "Second Great Awakening" (1795-1835), the religious revival in which women assumed status as performer of "good works" and personal witness. Women became activists also in the abolitionist movement and in labor organizing in the New England textile mills in the 1830s. We have to move quickly to 1848 at Seneca Falls where the first Women's Rights Convention was held, then to 1851 and Sojourner Truth's indignant cry of "Ain't I a woman?" and to Emma Goldman and Mother Jones in the early decades of this century. Three strands (movements divided into the white middle class, working-class women, and black women) converged in the civil rights struggles of the sixties. In 1968 we witness hundreds of women in the anti-war movement marching to the Arlington National Cemetery to stage "The Burial of Traditional Womanhood" (Zinn 497). But the U.S. nuclear family continue to be governed by males as a caste; in capitalism, patriarchal authority is needed to regulate the reproductive labor of women and the property relation embodied in the family and marital relationship. It is also required to inculcate "the ethos of possessive individualism" and the norms of hierarchy and competitive performance indispensable for reproducing the social relations of production and reproduction (Edwards 354-55). The nation under patriarchy guarantees the reproduction of the "American Dream of Success" and its efficacy in fulfilling each individual's longing for transcendence (material success is one form) that is renewed by immigration and the notion of ethnic/cultural pluralism as distinctive of the "American Way of Life."

In spite of the resistance to the gains made by the women's liberation movement in the last four decades, Americanization is, however, undeterred in deploying symbols of women's "liberation" to project the liberal capaciousness of the state. Such symbols are, of course, incorporated in a cooptive or recuperative way and harnessed to promote the interests of transnational corporations (Sklar). In the chapter on "The American Woman Soldier" in her book *The Morning After*, leading American feminist scholar Cynthia Enloe reminds us that in the constitution of the U.S. national identity, the image of the "professionalized, militarized woman patriot" after the Gulf War has become pivotal to the goal of unfixing the masculinized hubris of the American military in order to rally disaffected but not ideologically antagonistic women behind statism. This may also be interpreted as one way of resolving the crisis of masculinity in the forties and fifties when the traditional organization of the family gave women enormous power over the lives of children, resulting in "momism" and the mother-induced immaturity of males (Epstein 250). With the traditional family based on the male wage in eclipse, the ascendance of homosexuality as a major social force, and the questioning of gender roles, it seems that the image of the woman-soldier/patriot can be commodified without much threat to the patriarchal regime.

Why was this construction of the feminine accepted by the general public, and even by some liberal feminists? The gendered stake of the Gulf War inheres not so much in the claim of liberating helpless Kuwait and curbing the evil Saddam Hussain as in certain assumptions about normative values that Enloe lucidly spells out:

> Many Americans appear to view war as the institution where more than in any other, (a) the *state* and the *nation* converge, and (b) that convergence is suffused

> with both organized *violence* and selfless *sacrifice*. Violent sacrifice under state discipline in the name of the nation—this seems to get very close to what many Americans still today, at the dawn of the post-Cold War era, understand to be the essential criterion for first-class citizenship. (*Morning* 202)

We might backtrack a little bit and contextualize the recent vicissitudes of masculinized nationalism. It used to be the consensus that the gendered politics of the Cold War coincided with the rise of the "national security state," the militarization of Third World societies at the behest of Washington, and the demonology of the communist threat. Not only women but everyone had been conditioned to feel the need to be protected by the gigantic weapons buildup and by sons and husbands in uniform. Wives of soldiers as well as mothers were trained to accept extra duties of household maintenance to safeguard the country from the enemies of democracy and freedom.[4] Enloe clarifies the linkage of sexuality, gender, and national anticommunism during the last three decades:

> The Cold War was a thicket of gendered relationships that had to be either reshaped or entrenched. Often those gendered politics of national security were played out under the glow of public celebration or the harsh light of public scrutiny. Usually they occurred within ordinary households. Women tried to figure out whether being a good mother meant waving a tearful though proud goodbye to a son going off to do his military service or hiding him from the army's recruiters. Men tried to suppress fears of emasculation when denied public roles in their country's political life or else took a manly pride in being allowed into the inner sanctum of their state's national security bureaucracy. Government officials devised occasionally uneasy relationships with church officials so that they could collaborate in the entrenchment of patriarchal family values. American girls dressed their Barbies in the latest doll fashion, an Air Force dress uniform, while their Yugoslav cousins stifled yearnings for degenerate Barbies of their own (18).

So whatever individual adjustments are made, the erotic investment in the national romance of the country's global supremacy and its redemptive mission remains integral to the sense of community belonging and the uninterrupted reproduction of the solidarity of civil society in the United States. It is important to qualify this postulate of "community belonging" as still conjectural, given the continuing immanent polarization between the partisans of a high bourgeois "national culture" ("big government," from the populist perspective) and the partisans of "folk culture" (the militias and their myths of locality), symptoms of what the historian Michael Kammen calls the tension between the American habit of historicizing the present and depoliticizing the past (407-43, 700-04).

Before concluding, it might be useful to recapitulate the coordinates of our cognitive mapping. Nationalism and sexuality, terms from seemingly incompatible spheres of social life, appear intimate bedfellows rather than strangers in our understanding of the shaping of modernity. In his pioneering work, George Mosse pointed out the historically defined relationship between nationalism and respectability, the latter referring to "decent and correct" manners as well as the proper attitude to sexuality. In

Europe, specifically, the ideal of manliness — strength of body and mind — served as the foundation for the self-definition of bourgeois society and the national ideology; it symbolized the nation's "spiritual and material vitality... invoked to safeguard the existing order against the perils of modernity" which threatened blurring the distinction between the normal and the abnormal (23). Women, on the other hand, functioned as the national mystique, standing for "immutability rather than progress, providing the backdrop against which men determined the fate of nations." Our concern here is whether this paradigm applies also to the origin and development of U.S. nationalism, its genealogy and current dynamics, particularly in the context of debates on the centrality of race in the U.S. social formation. It will become evident that in the constellation of U.S. civil religion — concerns and scenarios of public memory and desire that enable the production of the abstract entity we call "nation" — sexuality and gender cannot be fully grasped without its integral articulation with race and class.

In the national Imaginary dominant in the United States, the constitution of American identity has so far depended on the articulation of a masculinist/patriarchal model of agency rooted *inter alia* in the historical myths of "newness," the United States' exceptional future-oriented destiny, the challenge of the Western virginal frontier, and military supremacy. Such myths are framed within the ethos of a fundamentalist individualism that has been expressed in various semantic modalities and contexts: nativism, Anglo-Saxon racial supremacy, "Manifest Destiny," defender of the "free world," and lately neosocial Darwinism couched in religious fundamentalist vocabulary. In today's neoconservative hegemony, the recently obsolete anticommunist civil religion has been displaced by coded signifiers like "family values," restoration of motherhood and "the right to life," civic responsibility, etcetera, all counterpointed by a resurgent nativism hostile to the alleged perversions ascribed to aliens, immigrants, and people of color in general. United States self-identification thus stages a spectacle of consensus in which sexuality and difference are used to sublimate issues of class and race in order to project an "American" essence that establishes a ratio of equivalence among the white population and a logic of dominance over "Others," mostly people of color, in a world system of transnational rivalry for recognition, wealth, and power. While this nationalism may be, like others in history, a "transcendental illusion" claiming to have direct access to "the Thing," as Slavoj Zizek contends, there may be contained in it undamaged elements of the "utopian narratives of possible but failed alternative histories" that question its self-evident identity and render it vulnerable to the antagonisms that sustain it, the play of contradictions that is its ultimate condition of possibility.

In this epoch of the "Contract with America," we enter a period where United States civil religion and its fate is played out in the plot of exacerbated and intensely disintegrative class war (in the systemic sense). But this war, as the rhetoric of the media and exchanges in the public sphere demonstrates, is disguised as a return to primordial American values of hard work, individual liberty (right to bear arms), refusal of State or "Big Government" intrusion into private lives, and so on. In this Contract, racism is deployed to pit one group against another. Attacking basic constitutional and civil rights especially of people of color through the abolition of Affirmative Action in

employment and education, the Contract seeks a restoration of a version of the "Victorian Age" in this era of disaggregated global capitalism: restoration of the death penalty, subjugation of women (cut-off of Aid to Families with Dependent Children, AFDC), child labor, immigrant servitude, oppression of lesbians and gays, destruction of labor unions, the environment and the arts. Vowing to cut $700 billion in social services and give more billions for the Pentagon, as well as handouts and tax breaks to military profiteers and corporations, the Contract aims to destroy the fabric of social services and civil rights for people of color gained in the last 60 years of "welfare state" reforms.

The turn to the right far in excess of the banalities of the old "Moral Majority," a turn that might conceivably herald an authoritarian-fascist dispensation, has been signalled more egregiously by the return of social-Darwinism in such texts like Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve*, Robert Wright's *The Moral Animal*, and others. It might be useful to recall that Woodrow Wilson, who urged the principle and right of self-determination on all nations, believed that social-Darwinist laws governed international relations. This is the framework that explains Harry Truman's apology that "the Open Door policy is not imperialism, it is free trade" (Jones 236). Today the legitimation of social decay evidenced in homelessness, criminality and drugs in the cities, rampant impoverishment of African Americans and other people of color, and so on, invokes genetics and Darwin's theory of natural selection (as applied to public policy by Herbert Spencer) as unquestioned axioms of explanation (Cowley; Teitelbaum 8-11). Even anti-porn feminism and chastity education resort to this revival of biological determinisms repudiated long ago. It informs the "difference" feminism that upholds family values and "right to life," a modern version of the Victorian ideology of separate spheres (Tanenbaum).

It may not be inappropriate to conclude with the remark that United States civilization today finds in the legendary "expenditures" of superstar Madonna Ciccone the erotic representation of social-Darwinism as the dominant national ethos. Her casual utterances are registered with aphoristic resonance, for example: "Power is a great aphrodisiac, and I'm a very powerful person," "It's a great feeling to be powerful ... I think that's just the quest of every human being: *power*," "I'm tough, ambitious, and I know exactly what I want. If that makes me a bitch, okay" (Andersen vi, 54, 336). Madonna now reconciles the thematic oppositions in popular culture: in the classical Western film (morally pure individualist rooted in nature versus evil savages or degraded urban intruders), in the detective story, horror movies, science fiction films, and social melodrama (Cawelti).

Her biographer says that "millions pray at the altar of Madonna, Our Lady of Perpetual Promotion," "the smartest businesswoman in America" (according to *Forbes* magazine) [Andersen 375-79]. This "Material Girl" has now totally replaced the brainless and docile Marilyn Monroe, the Playboy Ideal, with her own artifices of idiosyncratic parody and scandalizing pastiche (e.g. "Like a Virgin," "Like a Prayer"). With her ambiguously nuanced and polyvalent performances, Madonna represents the nation as unfixed, unstable, and protean, thus allowing the dialectic of unity and difference to operate and grip the fantasies of millions. From the perspective of our

topic, the Madonna phenomenon is a genuinely sexualized-nationalized simulacrum that nevertheless gestures to a referent, an old friend of ours: commodity-fetishism.

Angered by the Canadian censorship of "sacrilegious acts" in her Blond Ambition tour, Madonna, in *Truth or Dare*, waves the flag by boasting that in the United States she enjoyed unequalled freedom of expression, making her the most effective messenger of American "exceptionalism." National chauvinism and universal commodification cohabit together in Madonna's intuitive mapping of the world. Mixing messages of "safe sex" and promiscuity, Madonna is credited too with the exercise of "gender-free sex," blurring the male/female boundaries by flirting with bisexuality, multiple partners, cross-dressing, sadomasochism, and other permutations of forms of sexuality in her immensely popular MTV performances.[5] Baudrillard reinscribes Madonna's postmodern stylistic register — waning of affect, loss of depth and critical distance, heterogeneity, absence of difference — in the new erotic culture he finds in the United States. This culture is distinguished by the questioning of sexual difference, of one's sexual identity amid the mixing of genders and genres; the search for a gender model or generic formula with the dissolution of the meaning/value of seduction, difference, sexuality itself, which is in the process of being replaced by a model/ideal of performance and of the genetic fulfillment of one's own formula:

> After a triumphalist phase, the assertion of female sexuality has become as fragile as that of male sexuality.... The outer signs of masculinity are tending towards zero, but so are the signs of femininity.... No longer explosive figures of sex and pleasure, those new idols [including Madonna] pose for everyone the question of the *play* of difference and their own lack of definition. (46-7)

Indeed, Madonna climaxes the itinerary of U.S. nationalism from the self-love of a people with a divinely-ordained mission — how far we have travelled from Miss Liberty and Washington and Lincoln — to a transnational, cosmic gospel: the American Dream of Success as the will-to-global power, the nation finally dissolving into the mirage of an all-encompassing, evangelical, charismatic exchange-value.

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NOTES

1. Consider this antithetical opinion expressed by the French philosopher Etienne Balibar: "the American 'revolutionary nation' built its original ideals on a double repression: that of the extermination of the Amerindian 'natives' and that of the difference between free 'White'men and 'Black' slaves" (Balibar and Wallerstein 104; see also San Juan).
2. Richard Pfeffer provides a lucid exposition of liberalism as the ideological underpinning of American nationalism:

   > The ideology and mythology of American society, which apply in variations to its central institutions where men and women work, are liberal. Liberal ideology is

founded on individualism, competition, private ownership of the means of production, formal economic and political freedoms, procedural due process, constitutional rights, legal equality of opportunity, and formal democracy. Liberal ideology demands a commitment to and justification for these ideals as among the highest human goods. In its mythology American liberalism asserts that these ideals are being practiced in our society and that that practice in fact contributes to social and individual well-being.

The reality is quite different from ideology and myth. Within the context of capitalism, which necessarily has nurtured liberalism, liberal concepts today serve to legitimate a social system that, despite some positive aspects, is on the whole quite destructive to social and individual well-being and poorly serves the majority of its members. This reality, like the ideology and mythology, exists in variations throughout the society, but it is most easily comprehended in such institutions as factories. There, liberalism is daily exposed as a thinly veiled class dictatorship, which, often in subtle ways, dominates all areas of life in the United States (215-16).

3. Eugene Victor Wolfenstein's remarks may be interposed here: "national or political identity is far more totalizing. Although it does not go so far as to constitute a spirit of a people in an Hegelian sense, through group psychology it often approximates to the Hegelian word made flesh. It may be that the spirit of the nation is a fantasy, but that doesn't mean it isn't real" (284).

4. Fredric Jameson's insights are relevant here in his meditation on the country's situation during and after the Gulf War: "...to be anti-American from our view is not a matter of healthy national independence, but rather of evil: think of those things you would have to be "the enemy" of — democracy, freedom, elections, etc. etc .... the narrative is thus fairly written in advance, and its moral is not morality but autarchy and self-determination.... Perhaps some new alternative Utopian vision, politically more adequate and acceptable than either nationalism or fundamentalism, may now slowly begin to emerge" (146).

5. Arguing for a negotiated, oppositional semiotics, the cultural studies expert John Fiske discovers in Madonna's figure a politics of resistance: Madonna's image is "not a model meaning for young girls in patriarchy, but a site of semiotic struggle between the forces of patriarchal control and feminine resistance, of capitalism and the subordinate..." (160). Madonna's exaltation of sexual-physical pleasure has nothing to do with men: "in choosing the navel upon which to center it, she is choosing a part of the female body that patriarchy has not conventionally sexualized for the benefit of the male" (162). Such speculations seem to tax credibility and confound any attempt at discriminating between different categories of power, between levels of analytic conceptualization, between individualist resistance and substantive political transformation of historically specific conditions for large groups or communities of people.

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ing a limit; she thrills in our becoming. And we'll keep on becoming! She cuts through defensive loves, motherages, and devourations: beyond selfish narcissism, in the moving, open, transitional space, she runs her risks. Beyond the struggle-to-the-death that's been removed to the bed, beyond the love-battle that claims to represent exchange, she scorns at an Eros dynamic that would be fed by hatred. Hatred: a heritage, again, a remainder, a duping subservience to the phallus. To love, to watch-think-seek the other in the other, to despecularize, to unhoard. Does this seem difficult? It's not impossible, and this is what nourishes life — a love that has no commerce with the apprehensive desire that provides against the lack and stultifies the strange; a love that rejoices in the exchange that multiplies. Wherever history still unfolds as the history of death, she does not tread. Opposition, hierarchizing exchange, the struggle for mastery which can end only in at least one death (one master — one slave, or two nonmasters ≠ two dead) — all that comes from a period in time governed by phallocentric values. The fact that this period extends into the present doesn't prevent woman from starting the history of life somewhere else. Elsewhere, she gives. She doesn't "know" what she's giving, she doesn't measure it; she gives, though, neither a counterfeit impression nor something she hasn't got. She gives more, with no assurance that she'll get back even some unexpected profit from what she puts out. She gives that there may be life, thought, transformation. This is an "economy" that can no longer be put in economic terms. Wherever she loves, all the old concepts of management are left behind. At the end of a more or less conscious computation, she finds not her sum but her differences. I am for you what you want me to be at the moment you look at me in a way you've never seen me before: at every instant. When I write, it's everything that we don't know we can be that is written out of me, without exclusions, without stipulation, and everything we will be calls us to the unflagging, intoxicating, unappeasable search for love. In one another we will never be lacking.

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Luce Irigaray

b. 1930

Luce Irigaray was born in Belgium and took her master's degree in philosophy in 1955 with a thesis on Paul Valéry. After teaching in a lycée in Brussels for four years until 1959, she went to Paris, taking a doctorat de troisieme cycle *in linguistics at the University of Paris at Nanterre in 1968 and a* doctorat d'état *in philosophy at the University of Paris at Vincennes in 1974. She also did psychoanalytic training at the Freudian School, directed by Jacques Lacan. Her dissertation,* Speculum d' l'autre femme *(1974; translated in 1985 as* Speculum of the Other Woman*) is a feminist interrogation of philosophical psychology from Plato through Freud, and it so outraged the Lacanian establishment that upon its paperback publication Irigaray was barred from teaching at Vincennes and expelled from the Freudian School, which blacklisted her from teaching in Paris for over ten years. Nevertheless, Irigaray continued to produce her radical feminist essays including* Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un *(1977; translated in 1985 as* This Sex Which Is Not One*),* Amante marine *(1980), and* Passions elementaires *(1982; translated in 1992 as* Elemental Passions*). Irigaray's reputation developed abroad through translations of her work, including the title essay of* This Sex Which Is Not One, *which began to appear in English as early as 1978. In the early 1980s, she taught at Erasmus University at Rotterdam and at the University of Bologna. By 1985 it was clear that Irigaray had become an international luminary and had to be recognized as such even in Paris. She was given a seminar at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales that year and she has taught there ever since, at the*

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College International de Philosophie, and at the Centre Americain d'Études Critiques. Irigaray's other works include I You We: Towards a Culture of Difference *(1992),* Sexes and Genealogies *(1992),* An Ethics of Sexual Difference *(1993), and* Thinking the Difference: For a Peaceful Revolution *(1994). The Claudia Reeder translation of "This Sex Which Is Not One," reprinted here, first appeared in* New French Feminisms, *edited by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980).*

This Sex Which Is Not One

Female sexuality has always been theorized within masculine parameters. Thus, the opposition "viril" clitoral activity/"feminine" vaginal passivity which Freud — and many others — claims are alternative behaviors or steps in the process of becoming a sexually normal woman, seems prescribed more by the practice of masculine sexuality than by anything else. For the clitoris is thought of as a little penis which is pleasurable to masturbate, as long as the anxiety of castration does not exist (for the little boy), while the vagina derives its value from the "home" it offers the male penis when the now forbidden hand must find a substitute to take its place in giving pleasure.

According to these theorists, woman's erogenous zones are no more than a clitoris-sex, which cannot stand up in comparison with the valued phallic organ; or a hole-envelope, a sheath which surrounds and rubs the penis during coition; a nonsex organ or a masculine sex organ turned inside out in order to caress itself.

Woman and her pleasure are not mentioned in this conception of the sexual relationship. Her fate is one of "lack," "atrophy" (of her genitals), and "penis envy," since the penis is the only recognized sex organ of any worth. Therefore she tries to appropriate it for herself, by all the means at her disposal: by her somewhat servile love of the father-husband capable of giving it to her; by her desire of a penis-child, preferably male; by gaining access to those cultural values which are still "by right" reserved for males alone and are therefore always masculine, etc. Woman lives her desire only as an attempt to possess at long last the equivalent of the male sex organ.

All of that seems rather foreign to her pleasure however, unless she remains within the dominant phallic economy. Thus, for example, woman's autoeroticism is very different from man's. He needs an instrument in order to touch himself: his hand, woman's genitals, language — And this self-stimulation requires a minimum of activity. But a woman touches herself by and within herself directly, without mediation, and before any distinction between activity and passivity is possible. A woman "touches herself" constantly without anyone being able to forbid her to do so, for her sex is composed of two lips which embrace continually. Thus, within herself she is already two — but not divisible into ones — who stimulate each other.

This autoeroticism, which she needs in order not to risk the disappearance of her pleasure in the sex act, is interrupted by a violent intrusion: the brutal spreading of these two lips by a violating penis. If, in order to assure an articulation between autoeroticism and heteroeroticism in coition (the encounter with the absolute other which always signifies death), the vagina must also, but not only, substitute for the little boy's hand, how can woman's autoeroticism possibly be perpetuated in the classic representation of sexuality? Will she not indeed be left the impossible choice between defensive virginity, fiercely turned back upon itself, or a body open for penetration, which no longer recognizes in its "hole" of a sex organ the pleasure of retouching itself? The almost exclusive, and ever so anxious, atten-

Translated by Claudia Reeder.

tion accorded the erection in Occidental sexuality proves to what extent the imaginary that commands it is foreign to everything female. For the most part, one finds in Occidental sexuality nothing more than imperatives dictated by rivalry among males: the "strongest" being the one who "gets it up the most," who has the longest, thickest, hardest penis or indeed the one who "pisses the farthest" (cf. little boys' games). These imperatives can also be dictated by sadomasochist fantasies, which in turn are ordered by the relationship between man and mother: his desire to force open, to penetrate, to appropriate for himself the mystery of the stomach in which he was conceived, the secret of his conception, of his "origin." Desire-need, also, once again, to make blood flow in order to revive a very ancient — intrauterine, undoubtedly, but also prehistoric — relation to the maternal.

Woman, in this sexual imaginary, is only a more or less complacent facilitator for the working out of man's fantasies. It is possible, and even certain, that she experiences vicarious pleasure there, but this pleasure is above all a masochistic prostitution of her body to a desire that is not her own and that leaves her in her well-known state of dependency. Not knowing what she wants, ready for anything, even asking for more, if only he will "take" her as the "object" of *his* pleasure, she will not say what *she* wants. Moreover, she does not know, or no longer knows, what she wants. As Freud admits, the beginnings of the sexual life of the little girl are so "obscure," so "faded by the years," that one would have to dig very deep in order to find, behind the traces of this civilization, this history, the vestiges of a more archaic civilization which could give some indication as to what woman's sexuality is all about. This very ancient civilization undoubtedly would not have the same language, the same alphabet — Woman's desire most likely does not speak the same language as man's desire, and it probably has been covered over by the logic that has dominated the West since the Greeks.

In this logic, the prevalence of the gaze, discrimination of form, and individualization of form is particularly foreign to female eroticism. Woman finds pleasure more in touch than in sight and her entrance into a dominant scopic economy[1] signifies, once again, her relegation to passivity: she will be the beautiful object. Although her body is in this way eroticized and solicited to a double movement between exhibition and pudic retreat in order to excite the instincts of the "subject," her sex organ represents the horror of having nothing to see. In this system of representation and desire, the vagina is a flaw, a hole in the representation's scoptophilic objective. It was admitted already in Greek statuary that this "nothing to be seen" must be excluded, rejected, from such a scene of representation. Woman's sexual organs are simply absent from this scene, they are masked and her "slit" is sewn up.

In addition, this sex organ which offers nothing to the view has no distinctive form of its own. Although woman finds pleasure precisely in this incompleteness of the form of her sex organ, which is why it retouches itself indefinitely, her pleasure is denied by a civilization that privileges phallomorphism. The value accorded to the only definable form excludes the form involved in female autoeroticism. The *one* of form, the individual sex, proper name, literal meaning — supersedes, by spreading apart and dividing, this touching of *at least two* (lips) which keeps woman in contact with herself, although it would be impossible to distinguish exactly what "parts" are touching each other.

Whence the mystery that she represents in a culture that claims to enumerate everything, cipher everything by units, inventory everything by individualities. *She is neither one nor two.* She cannot, strictly speaking, be determined either as one person or as two. She renders any definition inadequate. Moreover she has no "proper" name. And her sex organ, which is not *a* sex organ, is counted as *no* sex organ. It is the negative, the opposite, the reverse, the counterpart, of the only visible and morphologically designatable sex organ (even if it does pose a few problems in its passage from erection to detumescence): the penis.

But woman holds the secret of the "thickness" of this "form," its many-layered volume, its metamorphosis from smaller to larger and vice

[1]See Mulvey, p. 1446. [Ed.]

versa, and even the intervals at which this change takes place. Without even knowing it. When she is asked to maintain, to revive, man's desire, what this means in terms of the value of her own desire is neglected. Moreover, she is not aware of her desire, at least not explicitly. But the force and continuity of her desire are capable of nurturing all the "feminine" masquerades that are expected of her for a long time.

It is true that she still has the child, with whom her appetite for touching, for contact, is given free reign, unless this appetite is already lost, or alienated by the taboo placed upon touching in a largely obsessional civilization. In her relation to the child she finds compensatory pleasure for the frustrations she encounters all too often in sexual relations proper. Thus maternity supplants the deficiencies of repressed female sexuality. Is it possible that man and woman no longer even caress each other except indirectly through the mediation between them represented by the child? Preferably male. Man, identified with his son, rediscovers the pleasure of maternal coddling; woman retouches herself in fondling that part of her body: her baby-penis-clitoris.

What that entails for the amorous trio has been clearly spelled out. The Oedipal interdict seems, however, a rather artificial and imprecise law — even though it is the very means of perpetuating the authoritarian discourse of fathers — when it is decreed in a culture where sexual relations are impracticable, since the desire of man and the desire of woman are so foreign to each other. Each of them is forced to search for some common meeting ground by indirect means: either an archaic, sensory relation to the mother's body, or a current, active or passive prolongation of the law of the father. Their attempts are characterized by regressive emotional behavior and the exchange of words so far from the realm of the sexual that they are completely exiled from it. "Mother" and "father" dominate the couple's functioning, but only as social roles. The division of labor prevents them from making love. They produce or reproduce. Not knowing too well how to use their leisure. If indeed they have any, if moreover they want to have any leisure. For what can be done with leisure? What substitute for amorous invention can be created?

We could go on and on — but perhaps we should return to the repressed female imaginary? Thus woman does not have a sex. She has at least two of them, but they cannot be identified as ones. Indeed she has many more of them than that. Her sexuality, always at least double, is in fact *plural*. Plural as culture now wishes to be plural? Plural as the manner in which current texts are written, with very little knowledge of the censorship from which they arise? Indeed, woman's pleasure does not have to choose between clitoral activity and vaginal passivity, for example. The pleasure of the vaginal caress does not have to substitute itself for the pleasure of the clitoral caress. Both contribute irreplaceably to woman's pleasure but they are only two caresses among many to do so. Caressing the breasts, touching the vulva, opening the lips, gently stroking the posterior wall of the vagina, lightly massaging the cervix, etc., evoke a few of the most specifically female pleasures. They remain rather unfamiliar pleasures in the sexual difference as it is currently imagined, or rather as it is currently ignored: the other sex being only the indispensable complement of the only sex.

But *woman has sex organs just about everywhere*. She experiences pleasure almost everywhere. Even without speaking of the hysterization of her entire body,[2] one can say that the geography of her pleasure is much more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is imagined — in an imaginary centered a bit too much on one and the same.

"She" is indefinitely other in herself. That is undoubtedly the reason she is called temperamental, incomprehensible, perturbed, capricious — not to mention her language in which "she" goes off in all directions and in which "he" is unable to discern the coherence of any meaning. Contradictory words seem a little crazy to the logic of reason, and inaudible for him who listens with ready-made grids, a code prepared in advance. In her statements — at least when she dares to speak out — woman retouches herself

[2]See Foucault, p. 1478. [Ed.]

constantly. She just barely separates from herself some chatter, an exclamation, a half-secret, a sentence left in suspense — When she returns to it, it is only to set out again from another point of pleasure or pain. One must listen to her differently in order to hear an *"other meaning" which is constantly in the process of weaving itself, at the same time ceaselessly embracing words and yet casting them off to avoid becoming fixed, immobilized.* For when "she" says something, it is already no longer identical to what she means. Moreover, her statements are never identical to anything. Their distinguishing feature is one of contiguity. They touch *(upon)*. And when they wander too far from this nearness, she stops and begins again from "zero": her body-sex organ.

It is therefore useless to trap women into giving an exact definition of what they mean, to make them repeat (themselves) so the meaning will be clear. They are already elsewhere than in this discursive machinery where you claim to take them by surprise. They have turned back within themselves, which does not mean the same thing as "within yourself." They do not experience the same interiority that you do and which perhaps you mistakenly presume they share. "Within themselves" means *in the privacy of this silent, multiple, diffuse tact.* If you ask them insistently what they are thinking about, they can only reply: nothing. Everything.

Thus they desire at the same time nothing and everything. It is always more and other than this *one* — of sex, for example — that you give them, that you attributed to them and which is often interpreted, and feared, as a sort of insatiable hunger, a voracity which will engulf you entirely. While in fact it is really a question of another economy which diverts the linearity of a project, undermines the target-object of a desire, explodes the polarization of desire on only one pleasure, and disconcerts fidelity to only one discourse —

Must the multiple nature of female desire and language be understood as the fragmentary, scattered remains of a raped or denied sexuality? This is not an easy question to answer. The rejection, the exclusion of a female imaginary undoubtedly places woman in a position where she can experience herself only fragmentarily as waste or as excess in the little structured margins of a dominant ideology, this mirror entrusted by the (masculine) "subject" with the task of reflecting and redoubling himself. The role of "femininity" is prescribed moreover by this masculine specula(riza)tion and corresponds only slightly to woman's desire, which is recuperated only secretly, in hiding, and in a disturbing and unpardonable manner.

But if the female imaginary happened to unfold, if it happened to come into play other than as pieces, scraps, deprived of their assemblage, would it present itself for all that as *a* universe? Would it indeed be volume rather than surface? No. Unless female imaginary is taken to mean, once again, the prerogative of the maternal over the female. This maternal would be phallic in nature however, closed in upon the jealous possession of its valuable product, and competing with man in his esteem for surplus. In this race for power, woman loses the uniqueness of her pleasure. By diminishing herself in volume, she renounces the pleasure derived from the nonsuture of her lips: she is a mother certainly, but she is a virgin mother. Mythology long ago assigned this role to her in which she is allowed a certain social power as long as she is reduced, with her own complicity, to sexual impotence.

Thus a woman's (re)discovery of herself can only signify the possibility of not sacrificing any of her pleasures to another, of not identifying with anyone in particular, of never being simply one. It is a sort of universe in expansion for which no limits could be fixed and which, for all that, would not be incoherency. Nor would it be the polymorphic perversion of the infant during which its erogenous zones await their consolidation under the primacy of the phallus.

Woman would always remain multiple, but she would be protected from dispersion because the other is a part of her, and is autoerotically familiar to her. That does not mean that she would appropriate the other for herself, that she would make it her property. Property and propriety are undoubtedly rather foreign to all that is female. At least sexually. *Nearness,* however, is not foreign to woman, a nearness so close that any identification of one or the other, and therefore any form of property, is impossible. Woman enjoys a

closeness with the other that is *so near she cannot possess it, any more than she can possess herself*. She constantly trades herself for the other without any possible identification of either one of them. Woman's pleasure, which grows indefinitely from its passage in/through the other, poses a problem for any current economy in that all computations that attempt to account for woman's incalculable pleasure are irremediably destined to fail.

However, in order for woman to arrive at the point where she can enjoy her pleasure as a woman, a long detour by the analysis of the various systems of oppression which affect her is certainly necessary. By claiming to resort to pleasure alone as the solution to her problem, she runs the risk of missing the reconsideration of a social practice upon which *her* pleasure depends.

For woman is traditionally use-value for man, exchange-value among men. Merchandise, then. This makes her the guardian of matter whose price will be determined by "subjects": workers, tradesmen, consumers, according to the standard of their work and their need-desire. Women are marked phallically by their fathers, husbands, procurers. This stamp(ing) determines their value in sexual commerce. Woman is never anything more than the scene of more or less rival exchange between two men, even when they are competing for the possession of mother-earth.

How can this object of transaction assert a right to pleasure without extricating itself from the established commercial system? How can this merchandise relate to other goods on the market other than with aggressive jealousy? How can raw materials possess themselves without provoking in the consumer fear of the disappearance of his nourishing soil? How can this exchange in nothingness that can be defined in "proper" terms of woman's desire not seem to be pure enticement, fool, all too quickly covered over by a more sensible discourse and an apparently more tangible system of values?

A woman's evolution, however radical it might seek to be, would not suffice then to liberate woman's desire. Neither political theory nor political practice have yet resolved nor sufficiently taken into account this historical problem, although Marxism has announced its importance. But women are not, strictly speaking, a class and their dispersion in several classes makes their political struggle complex and their demands sometimes contradictory.

Their underdeveloped condition stemming from their submission by/to a culture which oppresses them, uses them, cashes in on them, still remains. Women reap no advantage from this situation except that of their quasi-monopoly of masochistic pleasure, housework, and reproduction. The power of slaves? It is considerable since the master is not necessarily well served in matters of pleasure. Therefore, the inversion of the relationship, especially in sexual economy, does not seem to be an enviable objective.

But if women are to preserve their auto-eroticism, their homo-sexuality, and let it flourish, would not the renunciation of heterosexual pleasure simply be another form of this amputation of power that is traditionally associated with women? Would this renunciation not be a new incarceration, a new cloister that women would willingly build? Let women tacitly go on strike, avoid men long enough to learn to defend their desire notably by their speech, let them discover the love of other women protected from that imperious choice of men which puts them in a position of rival goods, let them forge a social status which demands recognition, let them earn their living in order to leave behind their condition of prostitute — These are certainly indispensable steps in their effort to escape their proletarization on the trade market. But, if their goal is to reverse the existing order — even if that were possible — history would simply repeat itself and return to phallocratism, where neither women's sex, their imaginary, nor their language can exist.

nature – innate or acquired in oppression – women could not use thought to help free themselves: that the only scansion of violence permitted them is obtuse, unthinking in its expression. That would mean that language is always masculine, that it is determined according to sex, and that discursiveness is not an integral part of feminine discourse. Even if somewhere it is true that rhetoric and vocabulary are formed by centuries of male cultural domination, to renounce the exercise of thought, to give it to them, is *to perpetuate*, as always when it is a matter of 'not being part of the system.' 'Be a feminist and shout'; an unchanged variant of 'Be beautiful and keep your tongue.'

(1981)

Translated by Marilyn R. Schuster

From: Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader. 2nd ed. Ed. Mary Eagleton. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

ANN ROSALIND JONES

'Writing the Body: Toward An Understanding of L'Ecriture Féminine' Feminist Studies

Can the body be the source of a new discourse? Is it possible, assuming an unmediated and *jouissant* (or, more likely, a positively reconstructed) sense of one's body, to move from that state of unconscious excitation directly to a written female text?

Madeleine Gagnon says yes, in *La Venue à l'écriture*, written with Cixous in 1977. Her view is that women, free from the self-limiting economy of male libido ('I will come once and once only, through one organ alone; once it's up and over, that's it; so I must beware, save up, avoid premature overflow'), have a greater spontaneity and abundance in body and language both:

> We have never been the masters of others or of ourselves. We don't have to confront ourselves in order to free ourselves. We don't have to keep watch on ourselves, or to set up some other erected self in order to understand ourselves. All we have to do is let the body flow, from the inside; all we have to do is erase . . . whatever may hinder or harm the new forms of writing; we retain whatever fits, whatever suits us. Whereas man confronts himself constantly. He pits himself against and stumbles over his erected self.[25]

But psychoanalytic theory and social experience both suggest that the leap from body to language is especially difficult for women.[26] Lacanian theory holds that a girl's introduction into language (the symbolic order represented by the father and built on phallic/non-phallic oppositions) is complex, because she cannot identify directly with the positive poles of that order. And in many preliterate and postliterate cultures, taboos against female speech are enforced: injunctions to silence, mockery of women's chatter or 'women's books' abound. The turn taking in early consciousness-raising groups in the

United States was meant precisely to overcome the verbal hesitancy induced in women by a society in which men have had the first and the last word. Moreover, for women with jobs, husbands or lovers, children, activist political commitments, finding the time and justification to write at all presents an enormous practical and ideological problem.[27] We are more likely to write, and to read each other's writing, if we begin by working against the concrete difficulties and the prejudices surrounding women's writing than if we simplify and idealize the process by locating writing as a spontaneous outpouring from the body.

Calls for a verbal return to nature seem especially surprising coming from women who are otherwise (and rightly!) suspicious of language as penetrated by phallocentric dogma. True, conventional narrative techniques, as well as grammar and syntax, imply the unified viewpoint and mastery of outer reality that men have claimed for themselves. But literary modes and language itself cannot be the only targets for transformation; the *context* for women's discourses needs to be thought through and broadened out. A woman may experience *jouissance* in a private relationship to her own body, but she writes for others. Who writes? Who reads? Who makes women's texts available to women? What do women want to read about other women's experience? To take a stance as a woman poet or novelist is to enter into a role criss-crossed with questions of authority, of audience, of the modes of publication and distribution. I believe that we are more indebted to the 'body' of earlier women writers and to feminist publishers and booksellers than to any woman writer's libidinal/body flow. The novelist Christiane Rochefort sums up with amusing directness the conflicting public forces and voices that create the dilemma of the French woman who wants to write:

> Well. So here you are now, sitting at your writing table, alone, not allowing anybody anymore to interfere. Are you free?
>
> First, after this long quest, you are swimming in a terrible soup of values – for, to be safe, you had to refuse the so-called female values, which are not female but a social scheme, and to identify with male values, which are not male but an appropriation by men – or an attribution to men – of all human values, mixed up with the anti-values of domination-violence-oppression and the like. In this mixture, where is your real identity?
>
> Second, you are supposed to write in certain forms, preferably: I mean you feel that in certain forms you are not too much seen as a usurper. Novels. Minor poetry, in which case you will be stigmatized in French by the name of 'poetesse': not everybody can afford it. . . .
>
> You are supposed, too, to write *about* certain things: house, children, love. Until recently there was in France a so-called *littérature féminine*.
>
> Maybe you don't want to write *about*, but to write, period. And of course, you don't want to obey this social order. So, you tend to react against it. It is not easy to be genuine.[28]

Whatever the difficulties, women are inventing new kinds of writing. But as Irigaray's erudition and plays with the speaking voice show (as do Cixous's

mischievous puns and citations of languages from Greek through German to Portuguese, and Wittig's fantastic neologisms and revision of conventional genres), they are doing so deliberately, on a level of feminist theory and literary self-consciousness that goes far beyond the body and the unconscious. That is also how they need to be read. It takes a thoroughgoing familiarity with *male* figureheads of Western culture to recognize the intertextual games played by all these writers; their work shows that a resistance to culture is always built, at first, of bits and pieces of that culture, however they are disassembled, criticized, and transcended. Responding to *l'écriture féminine* is no more instinctive than producing it. Women's writing will be more accessible to writers and readers alike if we recognize it as a conscious response to socioliterary realities, rather than accept it as an overflow of one woman's unmediated communication with her body. Eventually, certainly, the practice of women writers will transform what we can see and understand in a literary text; but even a woman setting out to write about her body will do so against and through her socioliterary mothers, midwives, and sisters. We need to recognize, too, that there is nothing universal about French versions of *écriture féminine*. The speaking, singing, tale telling, and writing of women in cultures besides that of the Ile de France need to be looked at and understood in their social context if we are to fill in an adequate and genuinely empowering picture of women's creativity.

But I risk, after all this, overstating the case against *féminité* and *l'écriture féminine*, and that would mean a real loss. American feminists can appropriate two important elements, at least, from the French position: the critique of phallocentrism in all the material and ideological forms it has taken, and the call for new representations of women's consciousness. It is not enough to uncover old heroines or to imagine new ones. Like the French, we need to examine the words, the syntax, the genres, the archaic and elitist attitudes toward language and representation that have limited women's self-knowledge and expression during the long centuries of patriarchy. We need not, however, replace phallocentrism with a shakily theorized 'concentrism' that denies women their historical specificities to recognize how deep a refusal of masculinist values must go.[29] If we remember that what women really share is an oppression on all levels, although it affects us each in different ways – if we can translate *féminité* into a concerted attack not only on language, but also directly upon the sociosexual arrangements that keep us from our own potentials and from each other – then we are on our way to becoming 'les jeunes nées' envisioned by French feminisms at their best.

(1981)

Notes

25 Madeleine Gagnon, 'Corps I,' *New French Feminisms*, p. 180. See Chantal Chawaf for a similar statement, in 'La Chair linguistique,' *New French Feminisms*, pp. 177–78.

26 Cora Kaplan combines psychoanalytic and anthropological accounts of women's hesitations to speak, in 'Language and Gender,' *Papers on Patriarchy* (Brighton, England: Women's Publishing Collective, 1976). Similarly, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar demonstrate how socially derived ambivalence toward the role of writer has acted upon women's writing in English, in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

27 See Tillie Olsen's *Silences* (New York: Delacorte, 1979) for a discussion of the practical demands and self-doubts that have hindered women's writing, especially 'The Writer Woman: One out of Twelve.' pp. 177–258.

28 Christiane Rochefort, 'Are Women Writers Still Monsters?' a speech given at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis., February 1975, translated in *New French Feminisms*, pp. 185–86.

29 'Concentrism' is Elaine Showalter's term, used in a speech, 'Feminist Literary Theory and Other Impossibilities,' given at the Smith College Conference on Feminist Literary Criticism, Northampton, Mass., October 25, 1980.

KADIATU KANNEH

'Love, Mourning and Metaphor: Terms of Identity' New Feminist Discourses

The privileging of the body in the writing of Cixous and Irigaray as the focal point for a radical subversion is in many ways, however, a dangerous political move. It is undeniably crucial to revalorize the female body, to rescue it from the vilification which, for centuries, has been practised against it through oppressive codes and institutions. When men are degrading women sexually, hating them carnally and violently, it is positive to reclaim and revalue the female body. To see the body as a source of potential power and intense pleasure is a needed reaction to the kind of anti-female sadism which is explored by Benoîte Groult in 'Night Porters',[32] and is the sad fate of the heroine in *The Story of O*. It is highly important, however, to determine which aspects of this femininity should be held up for celebration, and to sort out just what would be the political ramifications of such a move.

Lacan's insistence that there is no feminine outside language is useful here in that it marks out the difficulties into which Cixous and Irigaray fall. Cixous's description in 'The Laugh of the Medusa' of the painful moment of a woman speaking in public is an example of the dubious valorizations upon which she relies. The description concentrates upon the interplay of language and body which is the peculiarly feminine mode of discourse: 'She doesn't "speak", she throws her trembling body forward; she lets go of herself, she flies; all of her passes into her voice, and it's with her body that she vitally support the "logic" of her speech.'[33] Here the woman is seen bursting from the 'snare of silence' and flying free in the *jouissance* of her own natural self-expression, a form of expression which spills out of the definite structures of 'masculine' discourse: 'Her speech, even when "theoretical" or political is never simple or linear or "objectified"

(1986), and *Cat's Eye* 1988). Atwood is interested in the complexities of language, and her subjects are wide-ranging, from the personal to the global. In the following essay, Atwood uses a lively, unconventional style to address a serious theme.

From: Muller, Gilbert H., ed. The McGraw-Hill Reader 6th ed.
NY: McGraw-Hill, 1982.

MARGARET ATWOOD

The Female Body

. . . entirely devoted to the subject of "The Female Body." Knowing how well you have written on this topic . . . this capacious topic . . .
—Letter from the *Michigan Quarterly Review*

1. I agree, it's a hot topic. But only one? Look around, there's a wide range. Take my own, for instance. 1

I get up in the morning. My topic feels like hell. I sprinkle it with water, brush parts of it, rub it with towels, powder it, add lubricant. I dump in the fuel and away goes my topic, my topical topic, my controversial topic, my capacious topic, my limping topic, my nearsighted topic, my topic with back problems, my badly behaved topic, my vulgar topic, my outrageous topic, my aging topic, my topic that is out of the question and anyway still can't spell, in its oversized coat and worn winter boots, scuttling along the sidewalk as if it were flesh and blood, hunting for what's out there, an avocado, an alderman, an adjective, hungry as ever. 2

2. The basic Female Body comes with the following accessories: garter belt, panti-girdle, crinoline, camisole, bustle, brassiere, stomacher, chemise, virgin zone, spike heels, nose ring, veil, kid gloves, fishnet stockings, fichu, bandeau, Merry Widow, weepers, chokers, barrettes, bangles, beads, lorgnette, feather boa, basic black, compact, Lycra stretch one-piece with modesty panel, designer peignoir, flannel nightie, lace teddy, bed, head. 3

3. The Female Body is made of transparent plastic and lights up when you plug it in. You press a button to illuminate the different systems. The circulatory system is red, for the heart and arteries, purple for the veins; the respiratory system is blue; the lymphatic system is yellow; the digestive system is green, with liver and kidneys in aqua. The nerves are done in orange and the brain is pink. The skeleton, as you might expect, is white. 4

The reproductive system is optional, and can be removed. It comes with or without a miniature embryo. Parental judgment can thereby be exercised. We do not wish to frighten or offend. 5

4. He said, I won't have one of those things in the house. It gives a young girl a false notion of beauty, not to mention anatomy. If a real woman was built like that she'd fall on her face.

She said, If we don't let her have one like all the other girls she'll feel singled out. It'll become an issue. She'll long for one and she'll long to turn into one. Repression breeds sublimation. You know that.

He said, It's not just the pointy plastic tits, it's the wardrobes. The wardrobes and that stupid male doll, what's his name, the one with the underwear glued on. 8

She said, Better to get it over with when she's young. He said, All right, but don't let me see it. 9

She came whizzing down the stairs, thrown like a dart. She was stark naked. Her hair had been chopped off, her head was turned back to front, she was missing some toes and she'd been tattooed all over her body with purple ink in a scrollwork design. She hit the potted azalea, trembled there for a moment like a botched angel, and fell. 10

He said, I guess we're safe. 11

5. The Female Body has many uses. It's been used as a door knocker, a bottle opener, as a clock with a ticking belly, as something to hold up lampshades, as a nutcracker, just squeeze the brass legs together and out comes your nut. It bears torches, lifts victorious wreaths, grows copper wings and raises aloft a ring of neon stars; whole buildings rest on its marble heads. 12

It sells cars, beer, shaving lotion, cigarettes, hard liquor; it sells diet plans and diamonds, and desire in tiny crystal bottles. Is this the face that launched a thousand products? You bet it is, but don't get any funny big ideas, honey, that smile is a dime a dozen. 13

It does not merely sell, it is sold. Money flows into this country or that country, flies in, practically crawls in, suitful after suitful, lured by all those hairless pre-teen legs. Listen, you want to reduce the national debt, don't you? Aren't you patriotic? That's the spirit. That's my girl. 14

She's a natural resource, a renewable one luckily, because those things wear out so quickly. They don't make 'em like they used to. Shoddy goods. 15

6. One and one equals another one. Pleasure in the female is not a requirement. Pair-bonding is stronger in geese. We're not talking about love, we're talking about biology. That's how we all got here, daughter. 16

Snails do it differently. They're hermaphrodites, and work in threes. 17

7. Each Female Body contains a female brain. Handy. Makes things work. Stick pins in it and you get amazing results. Old popular songs. Short circuits. Bad dreams. 18

Anyway: each of these brains has two halves. They're joined together by a thick cord; neural pathways flow from one to the other, sparkles of electric information washing to and fro. Like light on 19

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waves. Like a conversation. How does a woman know? She listens. She listens in.

The male brain, now, that's a different matter. Only a thin connection. Space over here, time over there, music and arithmetic in their own sealed compartments. The right brain doesn't know what the left brain is doing. Good for aiming though, for hitting the target when you pull the trigger. What's the target? Who's the target? Who cares? What matters is hitting it. That's the male brain for you. Objective. 20

This is why men are so sad, why they feel so cut off, why they think of themselves as orphans cast adrift, footloose and stringless in the deep void. What void? she asks. What are you talking about? The void of the universe, he says, and she says Oh and looks out the window and tries to get a handle on it, but it's no use, there's too much going on, too many rustlings in the leaves, too many voices, so she says, Would you like a cheese sandwich, a piece of cake, a cup of tea? And he grinds his teeth because she doesn't understand, and wanders off, not just alone but Alone, lost in the dark, lost in the skull, searching for the other half, the twin who could complete him. 21

Then it comes to him: he's lost the Female Body! Look, it shines in the gloom, far ahead, a vision of wholeness, ripeness, like a giant melon, like an apple, like a metaphor for "breast" in a bad sex novel; it shines like a balloon, like a foggy noon, a watery moon, shimmering in its egg of light. 22

Catch it. Put it in a pumpkin, in a high tower, in a compound, in a chamber, in a house, in a room. Quick, stick a leash on it, a lock, a chain, some pain, settle it down, so it can never get away from you again. 23

COMPREHENSION

1. Why do you think this essay was written? Justify your response.
2. List the different ways in which Atwood views the female body.
3. What distinction does Atwood make between the male and female brains?

RHETORIC

1. What is the tone of Atwood's essay? Supply concrete evidence from her writing.
2. Does the essay contain a thesis? Is it stated or implied?
3. Define the following words in section 2: *fichu, bandeau, Merry Widow, weepers.* Why do the words *bed* and *head* also appear in this list?
4. How does Atwood's use of details and metaphors strengthen her points in the essay? Cite specific examples.
5. What is the object being described in section 4? How does its inclusion help underscore Atwood's point?
6. Why did Atwood choose this particular way to organize her essay? What does it tell the reader about her attitude toward the subject?
7. Is the tone of the final paragraph similar to that of the rest of the essay? Provide evidence from the writing and explain.

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WRITING

1. Using a style similar to Atwood's, write a brief essay in which you describe "the female brain," "the male brain," or "the male body".
2. In an argumentative essay, consider the role played by sex-specific toys in reinforcing sexual stereotyping in children. Use Atwood's essay as well as your personal experience as support.
3. Analyze the ways in which sex and the female body have been used in sales and advertising.

MARY LEAKEY Mary Douglas Leakey (b. 1913) is the director of the Olduvai Gorge Excavations, one of the most important paleontological sites in the world. Among her publications are *Olduvai Gorge* (1971); *Africa's Vanishing Art* (1983); and *Disclosing the Past* (1984), an autobiography. In addition, Mrs. Leakey has contributed numerous papers to *Nature* and other scientific journals. In this essay, a preliminary report on a remarkable find, Leakey provides insight into the challenging field of paleontology.

MARY LEAKEY

Footprints in the Ashes of Time

It happened some 3,600,000 years ago, at the onset of a rainy season. The East African landscape stretched then, much as it does now, in a series of savannas punctuated by wind-sculptured acacia trees. To the east the volcano now called Sadiman heaved restlessly, spewing ash over the flat expanse known as Laetoli. 1

The creatures that inhabited the region, and they were plentiful, showed no panic. They continued to drift on their random errands. Several times Sadiman blanketed the plain with a thin layer of ash. Tentative showers, precursors of the heavy seasonal rains, moistened the ash. Each layer hardened, preserving in remarkable detail the footprints left by the ancient fauna. The Laetolil Beds, as geologists designate the oldest deposits at Laetoli, captured a frozen moment of time from the remote past—a pageant unique in prehistory. 2

Our serious survey of the beds, which lie in northern Tanzania 30 miles by road south of Olduvai Gorge, began in 1975 and gained intensity last summer after the discovery of some startling footprints. This article must stand as a preliminary report; further findings will almost certainly modify early interpretations. 3

3. Write an essay that uses definition to make a comic or satiric point about manners or social behavior.

ALICE WALKER Alice Walker was born in Eatonton, Georgia, in 1944 and now lives in San Francisco and Mendocino County, California. A celebrated poet, short-story writer, and novelist, she is the author of *Revolutionary Petunias and Other Poems, In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Women,* and *Meridian,* among other works. Her 1983 novel, *The Color Purple,* won the American Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize in fiction. Her latest book, *Possessing the Secret of Joy,* was published in 1992 and continues the story of the characters introduced in *The Color Purple.* In the following narrative, Walker writes of a childhood accident that almost destroyed her self-esteem.

ALICE WALKER

Beauty: When the Other Dancer Is the Self

It is a bright summer day in 1947. My father, a fat, funny man with beautiful eyes and a subversive wit, is trying to decide which of his eight children he will take with him to the county fair. My mother, of course, will not go. She is knocked out from getting most of us ready: I hold my neck stiff against the pressure of her knuckles as she hastily completes the braiding and then beribboning of my hair.

My father is the driver for the rich old white lady up the road. Her name is Miss Mey. She owns all the land for miles around, as well as the house in which we live. All I remember about her is that she once offered to pay my mother thirty-five cents for cleaning her house, raking up piles of her magnolia leaves, and washing her family's clothes, and that my mother—she of no money, eight children, and a chronic earache—refused it. But I do not think of this in 1947. I am two and a half years old. I want to go everywhere my daddy goes. I am excited at the prospect of riding in a car. Someone has told me fairs are fun. That there is room in the car for only three of us doesn't faze me at all. Whirling happily in my starchy frock, showing off my biscuit-polished patent-leather shoes and lavender socks, tossing my head in a way that makes my ribbons bounce, I stand, hands on hips, before my father. "Take me, Daddy," I say with assurance: "I'm the prettiest!"

Later, it does not surprise me to find myself in Miss Mey's shiny black car, sharing the back seat with the other lucky ones. Does not surprise me that I thoroughly enjoy the fair. At home that night I tell the unlucky ones all I can remember about the merry-go-round, the man who eats live chickens, and the teddy bears, until they say: that's enough, baby Alice. Shut up now, and go to sleep.

It is Easter Sunday, 1950. I am dressed in a green, flocked, scalloped-hem dress (handmade by my adoring sister, Ruth) that has its own smooth satin petticoat and tiny hot-pink roses tucked into each scallop. My shoes, new T-strap patent leather, again highly biscuit-polished. I am six years old and have learned one of the longest Easter speeches to be heard that day, totally unlike the speech I said when I was two: "Easter lilies/pure and white/blossom in/the morning light." When I rise to give my speech I do so on a great wave of love and pride and expectation. People in the church stop rustling their new crinolines. They seem to hold their breath. I can tell they admire my dress, but it is my spirit, bordering on sassiness (womanishness), they secretly applaud.

"That girl's a little *mess,*" they whisper to each other, pleased.

Naturally I say my speech without stammer or pause, unlike those who stutter, stammer, or, worst of all, forget. This is before the word "beautiful" exists in people's vocabulary, but "Oh, isn't she the *cutest* thing!" frequently floats my way. "And got so much sense!" they gratefully add . . . for which thoughtful addition I thank them to this day.

It was great fun being cute. But then, one day, it ended.

I am eight years old and a tomboy. I have a cowboy hat, cowboy boots, checkered shirt and pants, all red. My playmates are my brothers, two and four years older than I. Their colors are black and green, the only difference in the way we are dressed. On Saturday nights we all go to the picture show, even my mother; Westerns are her favorite kind of movie. Back home, "on the ranch," we pretend we are Tom Mix, Hopalong Cassidy, Lash LaRue (we've even named one of our dogs Lash LaRue); we chase each other for hours rustling cattle, being outlaws, delivering damsels from distress. Then my parents decide to buy my brothers guns. These are not "real" guns. They shoot "BBs," copper pellets my brothers say will kill birds. Because I am a girl, I do not get a gun. Instantly I am relegated to the position of Indian. Now there appears a great distance between us. They shoot and shoot at everything with their new guns. I try to keep up with my bow and arrows.

One day while I am standing on top of our makeshift "garage"—pieces of tin nailed across some poles—holding my bow and arrow and looking out toward the fields, I feel an incredible blow in my right eye. I look down just in time to see my brother lower his gun.

Both brothers rush to my side. My eye stings, and I cover it with my hand. "If you tell," they say, "we will get a whipping. You don't want that to happen, do you?" I do not. "Here is a piece of wire," says the older brother, picking it up from the roof; "say you stepped on one end

of it and the other flew up and hit you." The pain is beginning to start. "Yes," I say, "Yes, I will say that is what happened." If I do not say this is what happened, I know my brothers will find ways to make me wish I had. But now I will say anything that gets me to my mother.

Confronted by our parents we stick to the lie agreed upon. They 11
place me on a bench on the porch and I close my left eye while they examine the right. There is a tree growing from underneath the porch that climbs past the railing to the roof. It is the last thing my right eye sees. I watch as its trunk, its branches, and then its leaves are blotted out by the rising blood.

I am in shock. First there is intense fever, which my father tries to 12
break using lily leaves bound around my head. Then there are chills: my mother tries to get me to eat soup. Eventually, I do not know how, my parents learn what has happened. A week after the "accident" they take me to see a doctor. "Why did you wait so long to come?" he asks, looking into my eye and shaking his head. "Eyes are sympathetic," he says. "If one is blind, the other will likely become blind too."

This comment of the doctor's terrifies me. But it is really how I look 13
that bothers me most. Where the BB pellet struck there is a glob of whitish scar tissue, a hideous cataract, on my eye. Now when I stare at people—a favorite pastime, up to now—they will stare back. Not at the "cute" little girl, but at her scar. For six years I do not stare at anyone, because I do not raise my head.

Years later, in the throes of a mid-life crisis, I ask my mother and sister 14
whether I changed after the "accident." "No," they say, puzzled. "What do you mean?"

What do I mean? 15

I am eight, and, for the first time, doing poorly in school, where I 16
have been something of a whiz since I was four. We have just moved to the place where the "accident" occurred. We do not know any of the people around us because this is a different county. The only time I see the friends I knew is when we go back to our old church. The new school is the former state penitentiary. It is a large stone building, cold and drafty, crammed to overflowing with boisterous, ill-disciplined children. On the third floor there is a huge circular imprint of some partition that has been torn out.

"What used to be here?" I ask a sullen girl next to me on our way 17
past it to lunch.

"The electric chair," says she. 18

At night I have nightmares about the electric chair, and about all the 19
people reputedly "fried" in it. I am afraid of the school, where all the students seem to be budding criminals.

"What's the matter with your eye?" they ask, critically. 20

When I don't answer (I cannot decide whether it was an "accident" 21
or not), they shove me, insist on a fight.

My brother, the one who created the story about the wire, comes to my rescue. But then brags so much about "protecting" me, I become sick.

After months of torture at the school, my parents decide to send me back to our old community, to my old school. I live with my grandparents and the teacher they board. But there is no room for Phoebe, my cat. By the time my grandparents decide there *is* room, and I ask for my cat, she cannot be found. Miss Yarborough, the boarding teacher, takes me under her wing, and begins to teach me to play the piano. But soon she marries an African—a "prince," she says—and is whisked away to his continent.

At my old school there is at least one teacher who loves me. She is the 24
teacher who "knew me before I was born" and bought my first baby clothes. It is she who makes life bearable. It is her presence that finally helps me turn on the one child at the school who continually calls me "one-eyed bitch." One day I simply grab him by his coat and beat him until I am satisfied. It is my teacher who tells me my mother is ill.

My mother is lying in bed in the middle of the day, something I have 25
never seen. She is in too much pain to speak. She has an abscess in her ear. I stand looking down on her, knowing that if she dies, I cannot live. She is being treated with warm oils and hot bricks held against her cheek. Finally a doctor comes. But I must go back to my grandparents' house. The weeks pass but I am hardly aware of it. All I know is that my mother might die, my father is not so jolly, my brothers still have their guns, and I am the one sent away from home.

"You did not change," they say. 26

Did I imagine the anguish of never looking up? 27

I am twelve. When relatives come to visit I hide in my room. My 28
cousin Brenda, just my age, whose father works in the post office and whose mother is a nurse, comes to find me. "Hello," she says. And then she asks, looking at my recent school picture, which I did not want taken, and on which the "glob," as I think of it, is clearly visible, "You still can't see out of that eye?"

"No," I say, and flop back on the bed over my book. 29

That night, as I do almost every night, I abuse my eye. I rant and 30
rave at it, in front of the mirror. I plead with it to clear up before morning. I tell it I hate and despise it. I do not pray for sight. I pray for beauty.

"You did not change," they say. 31

I am fourteen and baby-sitting for my brother Bill, who lives in Boston. 32
He is my favorite brother and there is a strong bond between us. Understanding my feelings of shame and ugliness he and his wife take me to a local hospital, where the "glob" is removed by a doctor named O. Henry. There is still a small bluish crater where the scar tissue was.

but the ugly white stuff is gone. Almost immediately I become a different person from the girl who does not raise her head. Or so I think. Now that I've raised my head I win the boyfriend of my dreams. Now that I've raised my head I have plenty of friends. Now that I've raised my head classwork comes from my lips as faultlessly as Easter speeches did, and I leave high school as valedictorian, most popular student, and *queen*, hardly believing my luck. Ironically, the girl who was voted most beautiful in our class (and was) was later shot twice through the chest by a male companion, using a "real" gun, while she was pregnant. But that's another story in itself. Or is it?

"You did not change," they say. 33

It is now thirty years since the "accident." A beautiful journalist comes 34
to visit and to interview me. She is going to write a cover story for her magazine that focuses on my latest book. "Decide how you want to look on the cover," she says. "Glamorous, or whatever."

Never mind "glamorous," it is the "whatever" that I hear. Suddenly 35
all I can think of is whether I will get enough sleep the night before the photography session: if I don't, my eye will be tired and wander, as blind eyes will.

At night in bed with my lover I think up reasons why I should not 36
appear on the cover of a magazine. "My meanest critics will say I've sold out," I say. "My family will now realize I write scandalous books."

"But what's the real reason you don't want to do this?" he asks. 37

"Because in all probability," I say in a rush, "my eye won't be 38
straight."

"It will be straight enough," he says. Then, "Besides, I thought 39
you'd made your peace with that."

And I suddenly remember that I have. 40

I remember:

I am talking to my brother Jimmy, asking if he remembers anything 41
unusual about the day I was shot. He does not know I consider that day the last time my father, with his sweet home remedy of cool lily leaves, chose me, and that I suffered and raged inside because of this. "Well," he says, "all I remember is standing by the side of the highway with Daddy, trying to flag down a car. A white man stopped, but when Daddy said he needed somebody to take his little girl to the doctor, he drove off."

I remember:

I am in the desert for the first time. I fall totally in love with it. I am 42
so overwhelmed by its beauty, I confront for the first time, consciously, the meaning of the doctor's words years ago: "Eyes are sympathetic. If one is blind, the other will likely become blind too." I realize I have dashed about the world madly, looking at this, looking at that, storing up images against the fading of the light. *But I might have missed seeing the desert!* The shock of that possibility—and gratitude for over twenty-five years of sight—sends me literally to my knees. Poem after poem comes—which is perhaps how poets pray.

On Sight

I am so thankful I have seen
The Desert
And the creatures in the desert
And the desert Itself.

The desert has its own moon
Which I have seen
With my own eye.
There is no flag on it.

Trees of the desert have arms
All of which are always up
That is because the moon is up
The sun is up
Also the sky
The stars
Clouds
None with flags.
If there were flags, I doubt
the trees would point.
Would you?

But mostly, I remember this:

I am twenty-seven, and my baby daughter is almost three. Since 43
her birth I have worried about her discovery that her mother's eyes are different from other people's. Will she be embarrassed? I think. What will she say? Every day she watches a television program called "Big Blue Marble." It begins with a picture of the earth as it appears from the moon. It is bluish, a little battered-looking, but full of light, with whitish clouds swirling around it. Every time I see it I weep with love, as if it is a picture of Grandma's house. One day when I am putting Rebecca down for her nap, she suddenly focuses on my eye. Something inside me cringes, gets ready to try to protect myself. All children are cruel about physical differences, I know from experience, and that they don't always mean to be is another matter. I assume Rebecca will be the same.

But no-o-o-o. She studies my face intently as we stand, her inside 44
and me outside her crib. She even holds my face maternally between her dimpled little hands. Then, looking every bit as serious and lawyerlike as her father, she says, as if it may just possibly have slipped my attention: "Mommy, there's a *world* in your eye." (As in, "Don't be alarmed, or do anything crazy.") And then, gently, but with great interest: "Mommy, where did you get that world in your eye?"

For the most part, the pain left then. (So what, if my brothers 45
grew up to buy even more powerful pellet guns for their sons and to carry real guns themselves. So what, if a young "Morehouse man" once nearly fell off the steps of Trevor Arnett Library because he thought my eyes were blue.) Crying and laughing I ran to the bathroom, while Rebecca mumbled and sang herself off to sleep. Yes indeed, I realized, looking into the mirror. There was a world in my eye. And I saw that it was possible to love it: that in fact, for all it had taught me of shame and anger and inner vision, I *did* love it. Even to see it drifting out of orbit in boredom, or rolling up out of fatigue, not to mention floating back at attention in excitement (bearing witness, a friend has called it), deeply suitable to my personality, and even characteristic of me.

That night I dream I am dancing to Stevie Wonder's song "Always" 46
(the name of the song is really "As," but I hear it as "Always"). As I dance, whirling and joyous, happier than I've ever been in my life, another bright-faced dancer joins me. We dance and kiss each other and hold each other through the night. The other dancer has obviously come through all right, as I have done. She is beautiful, whole and free. And she is also me.

COMPREHENSION

1. Describe Walker's self-image before and after the accident.
2. How do the adults' perceptions differ from Walker's when she confronts them years later?
3. How does Walker's daughter react to her mother's deformity? What effect does this have on the writer?

RHETORIC

1. Why does Walker go into detail when describing clothing and appearance in paragraphs 2, 4, and 8? How do these descriptions underscore the thesis of her essay?
2. Examine the use of the word *mess* (paragraph 5); look it up in the dictionary, and compare its meaning to the way it is used in the paragraph.
3. What device does Walker utilize to take us through the key points in the narrative? How does this device help to "ground" the story for the reader?
4. Why is paragraph 7 italicized and set apart from surrounding paragraphs? What is Walker trying to emphasize here? What effect does this paragraph have on the reader?
5. Identify the devices and strategies that Walker uses to divide her essay into sections.
6. What point is Walker making toward the end of paragraph 32, where she recounts the tragic end of the girl voted "most beautiful"? What is its value to the narrative?

WRITING

1. Write an essay in which you analyze the emphasis placed on physical beauty in American society. Is the pressure placed equally on males and females? Would a man write an essay similar to Walker's? Why, or why not?
2. Write an essay defining *beauty*. Consider both the denotative and connotative meanings. Where does human physical beauty fit in your definition?
3. Write a personal narrative describing your own body image. What positive or negative messages did you receive from your family and environment as a child? How did other people's opinions help shape your current body image?

CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE Alexis Charles Henri Clerél de Tocqueville (1805–1859), descended from an aristocratic Norman family, was a French lawyer, politician, statesman, and historian. Sent to the United States in 1831 to study the American penal system, he wrote instead one of the most penetrating inquiries into the nature of the American system, *Democracy in America* (1835). In this chapter from his study, Tocqueville compares and contrasts manners as manifested in the political and social contexts of democracy and aristocracy.

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE

Some Reflections on American Manners

Nothing, at first sight, seems less important than the external formalities of human behavior, yet there is nothing to which men attach more importance. They can get used to anything except living in a society which does not share their manners. The influence of the social and political system on manners is therefore worth serious examination.

Manners, speaking generally, have their roots in mores; they are also sometimes the result of an arbitrary convention agreed between certain men. They are both natural and acquired.

When some see that, without dispute or effort of their own, they stand first in society; when they daily have great aims in view which keep them occupied, leaving details to others; and when they live surrounded by wealth they have not acquired and do not fear to lose, one can see that they will feel a proud disdain for all the petty interests and material cares of life and that there will be a natural grandeur in their thoughts that will show in their words and manners.

Interpretation (1966), advocating the use of the senses when critiquing art, as well as *On Photography* (1976). While battling cancer, she wrote *Illness as Metaphor* (1978), and in 1989 she wrote *AIDS and Its Metaphors*. Sontag's fictional works include *Death Kit* (1967) and *The Volcano Lover* (1992). In the following essay, written in 1975, she reexamines ancient and modern notions of beauty, especially as they apply to women.

SUSAN SONTAG

Beauty

For the Greeks, beauty was a virtue: a kind of excellence. Persons 1
then were assumed to be what we now have to call—lamely, enviously—*whole* persons. If it did occur to the Greeks to distinguish between a person's "inside" and "outside," they still expected that inner beauty would be matched by beauty of the other kind. The well-born young Athenians who gathered around Socrates found it quite paradoxical that their hero was so intelligent, so brave, so honorable, so seductive—and so ugly. One of Socrates' main pedagogical acts was to be ugly—and teach those innocent, no doubt splendid-looking disciples of his how full of paradoxes life really was.

They may have resisted Socrates' lesson. We do not. Several thou- 2
sand years later, we are more wary of the enchantments of beauty. We not only split off—with the greatest facility—the "inside" (character, intellect) from the "outside" (looks); but we are actually surprised when someone who is beautiful is also intelligent, talented, good.

It was principally the influence of Christianity that deprived beauty 3
of the central place it had in classical ideals of human excellence. By limiting excellence (*virtus* in latin) to *moral* virtue only, Christianity set beauty adrift—as an alienated, arbitrary, superficial enchantment. And beauty has continued to lose prestige. For close to two centuries it has become a convention to attribute beauty to only one of the two sexes: the sex which, however Fair, is always Second. Associating beauty with women has put beauty even further on the defensive, morally.

A beautiful woman, we say in English. But a handsome man. 4
"Handsome" is the masculine equivalent of—and refusal of—a compliment which has accumulated certain demeaning overtones, by being reserved for women only. That one can call a man "beautiful" in French and in Italian suggests that Catholic countries—unlike those countries shaped by the Protestant version of Christianity—still retain some vestiges of the pagan admiration for beauty. But the difference, if one exists, is of degree only. In every modern country that is Christian or post-Christian, women *are* the beautiful sex—to the detriment of the notion of beauty as well as of women.

To be called beautiful is thought to name something essential to 5
women's character and concerns. (In contrast to men—whose essence is to be strong, or effective, or competent.) It does not take someone in the throes of advanced feminist awareness to perceive that the way women are taught to be involved with beauty encourages narcissism, reinforces dependence and immaturity. Everybody (women and men) knows that. For it is "everybody," a whole society, that has identified being feminine with caring about how one *looks*. (In contrast to being masculine—which is identified with caring about what one *is* and *does* and only secondarily, if at all, about how one looks.) Given these stereotypes, it is no wonder that beauty enjoys, at best, a rather mixed reputation.

Chapter Five
Gender and
Human
Development

It is not, of course, the desire to be beautiful that is wrong but the 6
obligation to be—or to try. What is accepted by most women as a flattering idealization of their sex is a way of making women feel inferior to what they actually are—or normally grow to be. For the ideal of beauty is administered as a form of self-oppression. Women are taught to see their bodies in *parts*, and to evaluate each part separately. Breasts, feet, hips, waistline, neck, eyes, nose, complexion, hair, and so on—each in turn is submitted to an anxious, fretful, often despairing scrutiny. Even if some pass muster, some will always be found wanting. Nothing less than perfection will do.

In men, good looks is a whole, something taken in at a glance. It 7
does not need to be confirmed by giving measurements of different regions of the body, nobody encourages a man to dissect his appearance, feature by feature. As for perfection, that is considered trivial—almost unmanly. Indeed, in the ideally good-looking man a small imperfection or blemish is considered positively desirable. According to one movie critic (a woman) who is a declared Robert Redford fan, it is having that cluster of skin-colored moles on one cheek that saves Redford from being merely a "pretty face." Think of the depreciation of women—as well as of beauty—that is implied in that judgment.

"The privileges of beauty are immense," said Cocteau. To be sure, 8
beauty is a form of power. And deservedly so. What is lamentable is that it is the only form of power that most women are encouraged to seek. This power is always conceived in relation to men; it is not the power to do but the power to attract. It is a power that negates itself. For this power is not one that can be chosen freely—at least, not by women—or renounced without social censure.

To preen, for a woman, can never be just a pleasure. It is also a 9
duty. It is her work. If a woman does real work—and even if she has clambered up to a leading position in politics, law, medicine, business, or whatever—she is always under pressure to confess that she still works at being attractive. But in so far as she is keeping up as one of the Fair Sex, she brings under suspicion her very capacity to be objective, professional, authoritative, thoughtful. Damned if they do—women are. And damned if they don't.

One could hardly ask for more important evidence of the dangers 10
of considering persons as split between what is "inside" and what is "outside" than that interminable half-comic half-tragic tale, the oppres-

sion of women. How easy it is to start off by defining women as caretakers of their surfaces, and then to disparage them (or find them adorable) for being "superficial." It is a crude trap, and it has worked for too long. But to get out of the trap requires that women get some critical distance from that excellence and privilege which is beauty, enough distance to see how much beauty itself has been abridged in order to prop up the mythology of the "feminine." There should be a way of saving beauty *from* women—and *for* them.

COMPREHENSION

1. How did the Greeks define *beauty?*
2. To what does Sontag attribute the lowered prestige of beauty in our society?
3. According to the author, what are the consequences of associating beauty exclusively with women?

RHETORIC

1. State Sontag's thesis in your own words. What are her supporting ideas? What transitions does she employ?
2. Describe the level of language used by Sontag. Cite specific examples from the essay. What does the level of language tell us about Sontag's intended audience?
3. Discuss the writer's use of punctuation marks in paragraph 7. Consider the purpose they serve in the paragraph and their effectiveness. Why does Sontag begin with a quotation in paragraph 8? How well is it supported by the subsequent sentences?
4. How does Sontag develop an extended definition in this essay?
5. Where does the comparative method appear in this essay?
6. Examine the essay's conclusion. How well does it help to round out Sontag's ideas? How does it compare to the essay's introduction?

WRITING

1. Write an argumentative essay entitled "Beauty Is Power."
2. Write an essay analyzing the importance of physical appearance in your family. Consider issues such as the amount of time, energy, and money individual family members spend on makeup, hair products, and clothes. Do you feel obligated to look attractive at all times?
3. Compare and contrast Sontag's thoughts on beauty to Atwood's essay on the female body. What ideas do these two writers hold in common? In what areas do they differ? Use quotes from both writers to support your claims.

DEBORAH SALAZAR Deborah Salazar was born in Ecuador but grew up in Denhem Springs, Louisiana, and attended Louisiana State University, where she received her master of fine arts degree. Salazar's poetry has been published in many literary magazines. In this essay, which appeared in *Harper's* in 1990, Salazar offers an ostensibly objective account of her abortion, describing a medical procedure that readers themselves must make final judgments upon.

DEBORAH SALAZAR

My Abortion

The procedure itself was the easiest part. A friend had told me to close 1
my eyes and think about anything, think about Donald Duck—sweet and useless advice, I thought at the time—but when I heard the machine come on and the doctor say, "The cervix is slanted at a right angle, this could be a problem; okay, honey, *relax*," I thought, Donald Duck, Donald Duck, Donald Duck, Donald Duck. I will never be able to watch another Donald Duck cartoon without thinking about my abortion, but I went through the experience feeling pretty calm and entitled. Twenty-seven years old and pregnant for the first time in my life. God bless America, I thought, I sure as hell want a cheap, legal, safe abortion.

After I learned that I was pregnant, I started practicing a necessary 2
detachment. The Supreme Court was due to hand down its *Webster* decision any day, and the usual mobs of protesters around women's clinics were doubling in size. I got up before dawn on the fifteenth of June and packed a paper bag with a sweater and socks (because the receptionist said it would be cold inside the clinic) and maxi pads. I wanted to get there as soon as the doors opened, before most of the cross-waving, sign-carrying, chanting, singing protesters showed up. When I pulled into the clinic parking lot with my friend Beth, I saw only two people standing on the curb: a woman, dressed all in black, and a man. As we got closer, I saw that the woman was about my age, with straight black hair and pale eyes turned skyward. She was moaning the words, "Don't kill me, Mommy, don't kill me."

The man and the woman followed our car until it stopped at the 3
door. I stepped out, and the man stood in front of me. He was tall, wearing a suit and tie and singing, "Jesus loves the little children." I laughed in his face. Strange. Three years ago I had worked as a volunteer escort at this very clinic, and I'd always been so solemn with these people. I never would've expected to laugh today. The man obviously hadn't expected me to laugh either. He got angry. "Lesbian!" he called

after me as I walked into the clinic. "You're a lesbian. That's why you hate babies!" A tall young man wearing an official clinic-escort T-shirt was standing at the threshold. "Sorry about this," he muttered as I passed by. I was still laughing. "I wish I were a lesbian," I said a little hysterically. "I wouldn't be pregnant." And then I was inside the clinic.

I knew the routine. I took my forms and my plastic cup. I went directly to the bathroom. I could hear the protesters while I was in the bathroom. I could hear them the whole time I was in the clinic. The chanting was discontinuous, but it was louder every time it started up. "Murderers! Murderers!" I could hear them in the dressing room, in the weigh-in room, in counseling, in recovery, although I don't remember if I heard them in the procedure room itself. I was told later that my encounter with the protesters had been relatively undramatic: one escort said that these days he was seeing protesters trying to hold car doors shut while women fought to get out.

After I turned in my urine cup, I sat back in the waiting room and started filling out forms. One of them was a personal questionnaire that included the question, "What method of birth control were you using at the time you got pregnant?" I thought about lying for a second before I checked the box beside "none." One of the protesters outside had started playing a tape of a baby crying. I signed my name over and over. Yes, I understand the risks involved, yes, I understand that the alternatives to abortion are birth and adoption. I wanted to do more—I wanted to fill out a page or so explaining why I had chosen to do this. I wanted to explain to someone that I was a responsible person; you see, ladies and gentlemen, I never had sex without condoms unless I was having my period; I got pregnant during my period, isn't there something I could sign swearing to that? I had a three-day affair with a friend, I'm broke and unemployed, I can't give up a baby for adoption, I can't afford to be pregnant while I look for a job.

In counseling, I was asked why I'd gone off the pill, and I didn't hesitate to respond, "I can get rid of an accidental pregnancy. I can't get rid of cancer." In the lounge room where I sat in my dressing gown before going in to see the doctor, there was a tiny television (Pee-wee Herman was on) and a table with magazines *(Cosmopolitan, Vogue, American Baby)*. The room was already filled to capacity, all twelve chairs taken, when the little bowhead came in. She couldn't have been more than seventeen, wearing only her gown and a very big white satin bow in her hair. She was a beauty. She looked like she belonged on a homecoming float. She had been crying. "I hate them," she announced, dropping her shopping bag of clothes on the floor. "They don't have to say the things they say. Makes me want to go out there and shoot them with a gun."

"You can't hear them that well in here, honey," one of the older women said. "You can watch the cartoons."

"You know what one of them called my mama?" the beauty said. "Called her a slut, an unchristian woman. My mama yelled back that I got raped by a priest, that's how come I'm here." Stares. The bowhead picked up her shopping bag and leaned against the wall. She spoke again in a quieter voice. "I didn't really get raped by a priest. My mama just said that."

The doctor was late that morning. Outside, the chants were getting louder, competing with Pee-wee Herman, who was on full blast. The protesters were singing a hymn when my name was called. I walked down a short hallway in my bare feet, and then liquid Valium injected directly into my left arm made everything after that feel like it was taking place on another planet. I remember that the doctor was wearing a dark red surgical outfit and that it looked pretty gruesome—I wished he'd worn the traditional pale blue or green. I remember that the Valium made me want to laugh and I didn't want to laugh because I was afraid I'd wiggle, and I'd been warned *not* to wiggle unless I wanted my uterus perforated. I'd been at the clinic six hours already, preparing for this little operation that would take only five minutes. I remember that after the machine came on, it seemed like less than five minutes. I remember that it hurt and that I was amazed at how empty, relieved, and not pregnant I felt as soon as it was over. The cramps that followed were painful but not terribly so; I could feel my uterus contracting, trying to collapse back to its former size. I was led by a nurse into a dark room, where I sat on a soft mat in a soft chair and bled for a while. I closed my eyes. The woman in the next seat was sobbing softly. I knew it was the blond with the white bow in her hair. I reached over and took her hand in mine. The Valium made me feel as though we were both wearing gloves. Her hand was so still I wondered if she knew I was there, but the sobbing grew softer and softer and eventually it just stopped.

COMPREHENSION

1. How would you describe the writer's state of mind during the abortion procedure?
2. Why does the narrator choose to have an abortion?
3. How would you describe the atmosphere outside the clinic?

RHETORIC

1. How would you describe the author's tone in the essay? Are there any indications of Salazar's feelings about the event?
2. Why does Salazar use dialogue in her essay? What impact does its use have on the narrative? Find especially powerful uses of dialogue in the essay to support your views.
3. Cite specific use of descriptive details and figurative language. How does their use enrich the atmosphere in the story?
4. Why has the writer chosen narrative to explore her topic? What makes it an effective choice?
5. How does Salazar organize her essay? What transitional words contribute to the structure of the piece?

incompatible with scientific evidence and that where the two disagree, the revealed word of God is a better indicator than is a fossil record. Write an essay explaining which side of this debate you find more compelling. Offer reasons and evidence to support your position.

3. Leakey asserts that "nothing really alters. Least of all the human condition." From your reading of this essay and your perspective, is she right or wrong? Answer this question in an argumentative essay.

PAUL THEROUX Paul Theroux (b. 1941) has explored the effects of colonialism on Americans and Europeans—effects which he experienced firsthand as a teacher in Malawi, Uganda, and Singapore—in books such as *Saint Jack* (1973) and *The Consul's File* (1977). Theroux's other fictional works include *The Mosquito Coast* (1982), *O-Zone* (1986), and *Chicago Loop* (1990). In addition, he has written a number of travel books, among them *The Great Railway Bazaar* (1975) and *The Old Patagonian Express* (1979). In the following essay, Theroux explores the meaning of masculinity and its relation to writing.

PAUL THEROUX

Being a Man

There is a pathetic sentence in the chapter "Fetishism" in Dr. Norman Cameron's book *Personality Development and Psychopathology.* It goes, "Fetishists are nearly always men; and their commonest fetish is a woman's shoe." I cannot read that sentence without thinking that it is just one more awful thing about being a man—and perhaps it is an important thing to know about us. 1

I have always disliked being a man. The whole idea of manhood in America is pitiful, in my opinion. This version of masculinity is a little like having to wear an ill-fitting coat for one's entire life (by contrast, I imagine femininity to be an oppressive sense of nakedness). Even the expression "Be a man!" strikes me as insulting and abusive. It means: Be stupid, be unfeeling, obedient, soldierly, and stop thinking. Man means "manly"—how can one think about men without considering the terrible ambition of manliness? And yet it is part of every man's life. It is a hideous and crippling lie; it not only insists on difference and connives at superiority, it is also by its very nature destructive—emotionally damaging and socially harmful. 2

The youth who is subverted, as most are, into believing in the masculine ideal is effectively separated from women and he spends the rest of his life finding women a riddle and a nuisance. Of course, there is a female version of this male affliction. It begins with mothers encouraging little girls to say (to other adults) "Do you like my new dress?" In a sense, little girls are traditionally urged to please adults with a kind of coquettishness, while boys are enjoined to behave like monkeys towards each other. The nine-year-old coquette proceeds to become womanish in a subtle power game in which she learns to be sexually indispensable, socially decorative, and always alert to a man's sense of inadequacy. 3

Femininity—being ladylike—implies needing a man as witness and seducer; but masculinity celebrates the exclusive company of men. That is why it is so grotesque; and that is also why there is no manliness without inadequacy—because it denies men the natural friendship of women. 4

It is very hard to imagine any concept of manliness that does not belittle women, and it begins very early. At an age when I wanted to meet girls—let's say the treacherous years of thirteen to sixteen—I was told to take up a sport, get more fresh air, join the Boy Scouts, and I was urged not to read so much. It was the 1950s and if you asked too many questions about sex you were sent to camp—boy's camp, of course: the nightmare. Nothing is more unnatural or prisonlike than a boy's camp, but if it were not for them we would have no Elks' Lodges, no pool rooms, no boxing matches, no Marines. 5

And perhaps no sports as we know them. Everyone is aware of how few in number are the athletes who behave like gentlemen. Just as high school basketball teaches you how to be a poor loser, the manly attitude towards sports seems to be little more than a recipe for creating bad marriages, social misfits, moral degenerates, sadists, latent rapists, and just plain louts. I regard high school sports as a drug far worse than marijuana, and it is the reason that the average tennis champion, say, is a pathetic oaf. 6

Any objective study would find the quest for manliness essentially right-wing, puritanical, cowardly, neurotic, and fueled largely by a fear of women. It is also certainly philistine. There is no book-hater like a Little League coach. But indeed all the creative arts are obnoxious to the manly ideal, because at their best the arts are pursued by uncompetitive and essentially solitary people. It makes it very hard for a creative youngster, for any boy who expresses the desire to be alone seems to be saying that there is something wrong with him. 7

It ought to be clear by now that I have something of an objection to the way we turn boys into men. It does not surprise me that when the President of the United States has his customary weekend off he dresses like a cowboy—it is both a measure of his insecurity and his willingness to please. In many ways, American culture does little more for a man than prepare him for modeling clothes in the L. L. Bean catalogue. I take this as a personal insult because for many years I found it impossible to admit to myself that I wanted to be a writer. It was my guilty secret, because being a writer was incompatible with being a man. 8

There are people who might deny this, but that is because the American writer, typically, has been so at pains to prove his manliness that we have come to see literariness and manliness as mingled quali- 9

ties. But first there was a fear that writing was not a manly profession—indeed, not a profession at all. (The paradox in American letters is that it has always been easier for a woman to write and for a man to be published.) Growing up, I had thought of sports as wasteful and humiliating, and the idea of manliness was a bore. My wanting to become a writer was not a flight from that oppressive role-playing, but I quickly saw that it was at odds with it. Everything in stereotyped manliness goes against the life of the mind. The Hemingway personality is too tedious to go into here, and in any case his exertions are well known, but certainly it was not until this aberrant behavior was examined by feminists in the 1960s that any male writer dared question the pugnacity in Hemingway's fiction. All the bullfighting and arm wrestling and elephant shooting diminished Hemingway as a writer, but it is consistent with a prevailing attitude in American writing: one cannot be a male writer without first proving that one is a man.

It is normal in America for a man to be dismissive or even somewhat 10
apologetic about being a writer. Various factors make it easier. There is a heartiness about journalism that makes it acceptable—journalism is the manliest form of American writing and, therefore, the profession the most independent-minded women seek (yes, it is an illusion, but that is my point). Fiction-writing is equated with a kind of dispirited failure and is only manly when it produces wealth—money is masculinity. So is drinking. Being a drunkard is another assertion, if misplaced, of manliness. The American male writer is traditionally proud of his heavy drinking. But we are also a very literal-minded people. A man proves his manhood in America in old-fashioned ways. He kills lions, like Hemingway; or he hunts ducks, like Nathanael West, or he makes pronouncements like, "A man should carry enough knife to defend himself with," as James Jones once said to a *Life* interviewer. Or he says he can drink you under the table. But even tiny drunken William Faulkner loved to mount a horse and go fox hunting, and Jack Kerouac roistered up and down Manhattan in a lumberjack shirt (and spent every night of *The Subterraneans* with his mother in Queens). And we are familiar with the lengths to which Norman Mailer is prepared, in his endearing way, to prove that he is just as much a monster as the next man.

When the novelist John Irving was revealed as a wrestler, people 11
took him to be a very serious writer, and even a bubble reputation like Eric *(Love Story)* Segal's was enhanced by the news that he ran the marathon in a respectable time. How surprised we would be if Joyce Carol Oates were revealed as a sumo wrestler or Joan Didion active in pumping iron. "Lives in New York City with her three children" is the typical woman writer's biographical note, for just as the male writer must prove he has achieved a sort of muscular manhood, the woman writer—or rather her publicists—must prove her motherhood.

There would be no point in saying any of this if it were not gen- 12
erally accepted that to be a man is somehow—even now in feminist-influenced America—a privilege. It is on the contrary an unmerciful and punishing burden. Being a man is bad enough; being manly is appalling (in this sense, women's lib has done much more for men than for women). It is the sinister silliness of men's fashions and a clubby attitude in the arts. It is the subversion of good students. It is the so-called Dress Code of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Boston, and it is the institutionalized cheating in college sports. It is the most primitive insecurity.

And this is also why men often object to feminism, but are afraid to 13
explain why: of course women have a justified grievance, but most men believe—and with reason—that their lives are just as bad.

COMPREHENSION

1. What does Theroux hate about being a man?
2. What does the writer mean by "the terrible ambition of manliness"?
3. According to Theroux, why are writing and manliness at odds?

RHETORIC

1. What is Theroux's thesis? Where is it stated?
2. Explain Theroux's choice for an introductory paragraph. How does it help to set up the reader for what follows? What was the writer's intention?
3. Does the writer's example in paragraph 5 help validate the paragraph's topic sentence? Why, or why not?
4. Explain the reference to the L. L. Bean catalogue in paragraph 8. What connection is Theroux making between it and the American concept of masculinity?
5. Trace the sequence of ideas through the paragraphs in the essay. Do they follow a coherent pattern? How does the conclusion help to unify the ideas presented?
6. What argumentative strategies does Theroux employ in this essay?

WRITING

1. Write a definition essay on *manliness,* considering both the denotative and the connotative meanings of the word. Use support from Theroux's work.
2. Theroux states that being a man is "an unmerciful and punishing burden." Write an argumentative essay in which you agree or disagree with this assessment.
3. Write an essay in which you pretend to be a member of the opposite sex for a day. Describe how your conditions, behaviors, and perceptions might be different. Consider how others would respond to you.

GLORIA STEINEM Gloria Steinem was born in 1934 and raised in Toledo, Ohio; she attended Smith College, receiving a B.A. in government in 1956. A noted feminist and political activist, Steinem in 1968 helped to found *New York* magazine; in 1971 she cofounded *Ms.* magazine and has served as its

RHETORIC

1. Look up the words *erotica* and *pornography* in the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* or any large dictionary. Trace the etymology of these two words and any shifts in meaning.
2. Use the dictionary as necessary to understand the following biological, psychological, and sociological terms: *evolutionary* (paragraph 2); *environment* (paragraph 3); *primate* (paragraph 4); *atavistic* (paragraph 5); *patriarchal* (paragraph 6); *voyeur* (paragraph 8); *sadism* and *masochism* (paragraph 13); and *aversion therapy* (paragraph 15).
3. Why does the author delay the introduction of her key topic until paragraph 6? What is the relevance of the first five paragraphs? How are these paragraphs developed?
4. What is the relevance of definition to the essay's development?
5. Explain Steinem's use of comparison and contrast to structure parts of this essay.
6. Examine the author's use of illustration in the essay.

WRITING

1. Do you accept the author's distinction between erotica and pornography? Answer this question in an argumentative essay.
2. Describe and evaluate an erotic scene that you have viewed in a film or read in a book.
3. Should pornography be banned? Answer this question in an essay.

MICHAEL DORRIS Michael Dorris (b. 1945), a member of the Modoc tribe and a native of Washington, is a professor of anthropology and Native-American studies at Dartmouth College. He has written, among other works, *The Broken Cord: A Family's Ongoing Struggles with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome* (1987). He has also written about the Native-American experience in books such as *Native Americans: Five Hundred Years After Cromwell* (1975). He and his wife, Louise Erdrich, coauthored a novel, *The Crown of Columbus* (1991). In the article below, Dorris shares his feelings about parenting.

MICHAEL DORRIS

What Men Are Missing

I've been changing diapers now for twenty years, half of that time 1
as the single adoptive parent of three young children, and half—with three more daughters, the oldest of whom is now seven—as a partner in a two-career marriage. I started with cloth in 1971, graduated to plastic in 1976, and am ending up, in 1991, with biodegradable. That's progress. By necessity, I've learned to become sanguine about certain inevitable tribulations (chicken pox, science fairs, the escalating price of sneakers) and fairly proficient at handling others (laundry, birthday parties, interviewing baby-sitters). I can tell a snappy version of "Cinderella," make peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches in the dark, and qualify for membership in the chauffeur's union.

When I was growing up as an only child, I used to envy my friends 2
with younger siblings. I'd listen to their complaints about tagalong brothers and sisters, about the combustion around the breakfast table or the chaos of bedtime, and long for the excitement of a crowded house. My mother, widowed after only four years of marriage, had moved back to Louisville to live with my grandmother and my aunt, and throughout my youth I was doted upon, listened to, encouraged in every project by three smart and independent women. They led me to believe that I could accomplish anything I set my mind to, that nothing was impossible.

Perhaps as an adult I was especially impatient to be a father because 3
I missed having one of my own as I grew up, though probably the impulse is not so obscure. Due to the unusual circumstances of my upbringing, I was spared much of the gender typecasting that discourages a good number of men from taking an active role in the primary care of their offspring—because of embarrassment or ignorance of the rewards, or through a basic lack of self-confidence.

Women, it should be noted, can be as susceptible to the mythos of 4
the bumbling, inept man-about-the-house as men, though they suffer a different, less abstract consequence when the prophecy is fulfilled. During the tenure of my bachelor fatherhood, the immediate reaction to my situation on the part of certain female acquaintances was to express condolence for my mommy-deprived children and to wonder who, for instance, bathed and dressed the babies—as if the only way our family could function was via Mary Poppins. There's no explaining to people weaned on *The Donna Reed Show* and *Father Knows Best* that the nuclear family is but one style among several or that children tend to accept as "normal" any arrangement that is loving, consistent, and secure.

I never theorized about such matters all that much—there was too 5
much else to do in the space of each day—but then again I never quite anticipated that fatherhood would turn out to be my most demanding profession (though teaching at Dartmouth College and writing books paid the bills) and constant occupation: a never-ending round of shopping, cleaning, cajoling, and being late for appointments. I didn't expect to be stigmatized with stereotypes, whether of the patronizing, sexist *3 Men and a Baby* variety or of the unctuous, flat-footed, loser-tinged "house husband" stripe.

In my family, the choice to be a single parent was regarded as a 6
viable, normal option, as potentially available (except for the hurdle of biology) to a male who wanted children as it was to a female. After all,

gender does not, on a day-to-day basis, make the balancing act of work and responsibility for children easier to manage. When a school or a day-care center closes for "spring vacation" right when a deadline or important meeting is scheduled, you get no extra points for having a Y chromosome.

That's not to say you don't receive a few strange, perhaps even initially sympathetic, glances—the body-language equivalent of "Huh?" or "Ah!"—when you decline an opportunity because you have a prior engagement to read *The Little Engine That Could.* When "real" work is on the table, career men *and* women are expected to be 100 percent on the job. 7

Last week, for instance, when my wife had to go to Seattle for an important conference, I was unexpectedly summoned to be interviewed the next morning on a national TV news program as a result of my 1989 book on fetal alcohol syndrome, *The Broken Cord.* The good news was that I didn't have time to be nervous, because—the bad news—it meant I had to have our three little girls dressed for school, fed, and in the studio waiting room by 6:30 A.M. I did have the forethought to ask the producer to make sure that the small Vermont affiliate station would provide child care while I was on the air, but somehow that request got lost in the scramble, and no one was free when I arrived. My face and voice may have been beamed to a million viewers by satellite for five minutes, but all the while my mind was on the pointy-edged glass table in the room where my daughters watched cartoons. Don't ask me what I said. 8

The truth is, though, I wouldn't trade my decades of crayons ground into the carpet and playpens set up in the living room. To experience intimately the freshness of life with a child is to be dazzled all over again by the surprise of snow, the gratification of a wish come true. Fathers who for whatever reason miss these moments are forever cut off from the quintessentially human acts repeated by a new generation. To nurture is, on some basic level, to *be* nurtured—and no matter how old, how successful, we become, we never cease to yearn for that consolation. To divide the labor of parenthood too rigidly along conventional lines—the men on one side, women and children on the other—may satisfy the accepted practice of patriarchal tradition, but it's not a mode of existence carved in stone. Other societies have always organized family life differently. The goal should be to find an equitable pattern that satisfies all parties rather than one that simply conforms to a generic sitcom plot. 9

When in 1981 I fell in love with Louise Erdrich (and she, miraculously, fell in love back) and we got married, at least one thing soon became clear: parenthood is a new ball game when done in concert. Raising children with a spouse or a partner as opposed to solo is, at best, like the difference between pedaling a bicycle and traveling in a car with alternating drivers: there's a greater chance to occasionally look at a map, to notice where you're headed, and to view the scenery along the way. 10

As the oldest of seven siblings, Louise was practiced, relatively confident, and calmly undaunted as the new mother of my three older children. That doesn't mean that the transition from living in a household headed by a single man to one operated by a husband and a wife was automatic or free of stress. Much of my identity had become anchored in "doing it alone," and at first it wasn't easy to share decision making, responsibility—or credit.

Moreover, Louise and I both aspire to careers as writers as well as to warm, rewarding relationships with our children. In delineating our jointly inhabited territory we were determined not to respect artificial or hypothetical boundaries. She no more wanted to completely take over the province of the home than I wanted to totally give it up, but how to carve up the individual precincts? Who cooked, and on what days? Who did the laundry and the shopping? Who went to PTA while who put the children to bed? Who put the kid into the car seat and who took her out? And of course: diapers. 12

With the births—in 1984, 1985, and 1989—of three more daughters, our lives became even more hectic. (The resolution of at least one issue was incontrovertible: Louise gave birth.) From our collective gene pool (Chippewa-Modoc-Irish-German-French) emerged a trio of personalities so disparate as to define the limits of diversity within the species. 13

Persia, now seven, is pure heart. Even as a baby she was empathic, looking up at us in condolence when she needed a midnight change or a feeding. She's an actress, a ballerina, a would-be equestrienne. She weeps freely for either joy or sorrow, and always with great gusto. Her dolls are dressed in the latest styles, told stories, and bathed daily. Persia has the look in her eye that as a child the French Lieutenant's Woman must have sported: romantic, enigmatic, mesmerizing. 14

Pallas, just turned six, is all mind. As a toddler she insisted upon sleeping each night not with a teddy bear but with a red block of wood. Her passion is spiders, and her joy is that one tiny brown arachnid has spun a delicate web in an eave above her bed. When we asked what she wanted for her birthday this year, she said wistfully and despondently, "I have a dream, but I know it can't come true." 15

"Try us," her mother implored. 16

"Well," she said, "I've decided I want to be a carpenter. Do you think I could have a tool chest?" 17

Compared with her older sisters, Aza already, at two, is iron will, Gertrude Stein's soul transmigrated. Before the age of one she had taught herself how to instantly dismantle, from within, any crib or other restraint devised by modern science. Her first words were, emphatically, "good girl," and she has seemed ever afterward to be immune to self-doubt. The other day, as I was zipping her jacket, I said, "You're a sweetie pie." 18

"No," she corrected me. "I'm a woman." 19

It's no accident that whatever Louise and I write, whether fiction or nonfiction, there always seems to be a baby getting born and being 20

cared for. When you're typing with one hand while aiming a bottle of juice at an open mouth with the other, you take your inspiration where you find it. And not just for fiction.

I doubt that we'll ever get all the duties parceled out, or that once distributed they'll stay constant. For now, Louise sorts the laundry. I wash and fold it. We each function periodically as a single parent while the other is immersed in a project or away from home. It's an ongoing trek, with no posted directions, no Michelin guide, no paved surfaces. But we all seem headed in the same direction.

COMPREHENSION

1. Why did Dorris want to become a father?
2. What is the "mythos" Dorris refers to in paragraph 4?
3. Does Dorris see a difference between parenting and "real" work?

RHETORIC

1. What is the purpose of the accumulation of details and examples in the introductory paragraph? What do they help to establish about the essay's thesis or writer?
2. What is the point of Dorris's essay? Where does his main idea become apparent?
3. Who is Dorris's audience? What evidence can you find for this?
4. What tone does Dorris use in his essay? Cite examples to support your response.
5. Define these terms used in the essay: *gender typecasting* (paragraph 3); *nuclear family* (paragraph 4); *stereotypes* (paragraph 5).
6. What is the reason for the extended example used in paragraph 8, and how does it serve the overall thrust of the essay?
7. What forms of comparison appear in this essay? How is the comparative method reflected in the essay's conclusion?

WRITING

1. Dorris's essay argues that children can grow up reasonably well in any loving household regardless of how it deviates from the nuclear-family norm. Do you agree or disagree?
2. Debate this proposition in an essay: If given the choice, most American men would choose *not* to be full-time fathers.
3. Write a definition essay entitled "What Is a Father?"

SIGMUND FREUD Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), founder of psychoanalysis, was an excellent writer. His theories concerning the pleasure principle, repression, and infantile sexuality are still controversial; nevertheless, they have had

in the essay, and describe how they are used. Compare his use of metaphor to that of Virginia Woolf in "The Death of the Moth" (Chapter 10).
3. Paragraph 4 is crucial to the organization of the essay. What two methods of classification does it introduce?
4. What is the difference between solitary and collective behavior among the social insects? Thomas compares this behavior to certain kinds of human behavior. What are the details of this comparison?
5. According to your dictionary, what is the etymology of the word *explore*? How does Thomas use this etymology?
6. Thomas extends his discussion in paragraph 9 beyond insects. What effect does he achieve by doing this?

WRITING

1. Do you find it reassuring or disturbing to compare human behavior to insect behavior? Do you find it difficult to consider human society an organism? Why do you think Thomas finds this encouraging?
2. Divide human behavior into groups (school, sports, business), and compare solitary and collective behavior within one or more groups.
3. Write an essay comparing your pet's behavior to human behavior.
4. Thomas has complained about "how awful the prose is in scientific papers." Evaluate the author's own prose in this essay. Argue for or against its effectiveness.

RICHARD SELZER Richard Selzer (b. 1928), a surgeon with a full-time practice in New Haven, Connecticut, began writing several hours each night after already establishing a successful medical career. His first book of essays, *Mortal Lessons: Notes on the Art of Surgery* (1974), established him as a prominent essayist specializing in the world of medicine and surgery. Selzer employs his elegant prose style in describing the often tragic, unpleasant, and painful world of medical patients. He is a contributor to popular magazines, and his essays have been collected in several books, among them *Confessions of a Knife* (1979) and *Letters to a Young Doctor* (1982). The following essay demonstrates Selzer's experience and expertise as a surgeon as well as his unique ability to describe the world of medicine in poetic and graceful terms.

RICHARD SELZER

Sarcophagus

We are six who labor here in the night. No . . . seven! For the man horizontal upon the table strives as well. But we do not acknowledge his struggle. It is our own that preoccupies us.

I am the surgeon.

David is the anesthesiologist. You will see how kind, how soft he is. Each patient is, for him, a preparation respectfully controlled. Blood pressure, pulse, heartbeat, flow of urine, loss of blood, temperature, whatever is measurable, David measures. And he is a titrator, adding a little gas, drug, oxygen, fluid, blood in order to maintain the dynamic equilibrium that is the only state compatible with life. He is in the very center of the battle, yet he is one step removed; he has not known the patient before this time, nor will he deal with the next of kin. But for him, the occasion is no less momentous.

Heriberto Paz is an assistant resident in surgery. He is deft, tiny, mercurial. I have known him for three years. One day he will be the best surgeon in Mexico.

Evelyn, the scrub nurse, is a young Irish woman. For seven years we have worked together. Shortly after her immigration, she led her young husband into my office to show me a lump on his neck. One year ago he died of Hodgkin's disease. For the last two years of his life, he was paralyzed from the waist down. Evelyn has one child, a boy named Liam.

Brenda is a black woman of forty-five. She is the circulating nurse, who will conduct the affairs of this room, serving our table, adjusting the lights, counting the sponges, ministering to us from the unsterile world.

Roy is a medical student who is beginning his surgical clerkship. He has been assigned to me for the next six weeks. This is his first day, his first operation.

David is inducing anesthesia. In cases where the stomach is not empty through fasting, the tube is passed into the windpipe while the patient is awake. Such an "awake" intubation is called crashing. It is done to avoid vomiting and the aspiration of stomach contents into the lungs while the muscles that control coughing are paralyzed.

We stand around the table. To receive a tube in the windpipe while fully awake is a terrifying thing.

"Open your mouth wide," David says to the man. The man's mouth opens slowly to its fullest, as though to shriek. But instead, he yawns. We smile down at him behind our masks.

"OK. Open again. Real wide."

David sprays the throat of the man with a local anesthetic. He does this three times. Then, into the man's mouth, David inserts a metal tongue depressor which bears a light at the tip. It is called a laryngoscope. It is to light up the throat, reveal the glottic chink through which the tube must be shoved. All this while, the man holds his mouth agape, submitting to the hard pressure of the laryngoscope. But suddenly, he cannot submit. The man on the table gags, struggles to free himself, to spit out the instrument. In his frenzy his lip is pinched by the metal blade.

There is little blood.

"Suction," says David.

Secretions at the back of the throat obscure the view. David suctions them away with a plastic catheter.

"Open," commands David. More gagging. Another pass with the scope. Another thrust with the tube. Violent coughing informs us that the tube is in the right place. It has entered the windpipe. Quickly the balloon is inflated to snug it against the wall of the trachea. A bolus of Pentothal is injected into a vein in the man's arm. It takes fifteen seconds for the drug to travel from his arm to his heart, then on to his brain. I count them. In fifteen seconds, the coughing stops, the man's body relaxes. He is asleep.

"All set?" I ask David.

"Go ahead," he nods.

A long incision. You do not know how much room you will need. This part of the operation is swift, tidy. Fat . . . muscle . . . fascia . . . the peritoneum is snapped open and a giant shining eggplant presents itself. It is the stomach, black from the blood it contains and that threatens to burst it. We must open that stomach, evacuate its contents, explore.

Silk sutures are placed in the wall of the stomach as guidelines between which the incision will be made. They are like the pitons of a mountaineer. I cut again. No sooner is the cavity of the stomach achieved, than a columnar geyser of blood stands from the small opening I have made. Quickly, I slice open the whole front of the stomach. We scoop out handfuls of clot, great black gelatinous masses that shimmy from the drapes to rest against our own bellies as though, having been evicted from one body, they must find another in which to dwell. Now and then we step back to let them slither to the floor. They are under our feet. We slip in them. "Jesus," I say. "He is bleeding all over North America." Now my hand is inside the stomach, feeling, pressing. There! A tumor spreads across the back wall of this stomach. A great hard craterous plain, the dreaded linitis plastica (leather bottle) that is not content with seizing one area, but infiltrates between the layers until the entire organ is stiff with cancer. It is that, of course, which is bleeding. I stuff wads of gauze against the tumor. I press my fist against the mass of cloth. The blood slows. I press harder. The bleeding stops.

A quick glance at Roy. His gown and gloves, even his mask, are sprinkled with blood. Now is he dipped; and I, his baptist.

David has opened a second line into the man's veins. He is pumping blood into both tubings.

"Where do we stand?" I ask him.

"Still behind. Three units." He checks the blood pressure.

"Low, but coming up," he says.

"Shall I wait 'til you catch up?"

"No. Go ahead. I'll keep pumping."

I try to remove my fist from the stomach, but as soon as I do, there is a fresh river of blood.

"More light," I say. "I need more light."

Brenda stands on a platform behind me. She adjusts the lamps.

"More light," I say, like a man going blind.

"That's it," she says. "There is no more light."

"We'll go around from the outside," I say. Heriberto nods agreement. "Free up the greater curvature first, then the lesser, lift the stomach up and get some control from behind."

I must work with one hand. The other continues as the compressor. It is the tiredest hand of my life. One hand, then, inside the stomach, while the other creeps behind. Between them . . . a ridge of tumor. The left hand fumbles, gropes toward its mate. They swim together. I lift the stomach forward to find that *nothing* separates my hands from each other. The wall of the stomach has been eaten through by the tumor. One finger enters a large tubular structure. It is the aorta. The incision in the stomach has released the tamponade of blood and brought us to this rocky place.

"Curved aortic clamp."

A blind grab with the clamp, high up at the diaphragm. The bleeding slackens, dwindles. I release the pressure warily. A moment later there is a great bang of blood. The clamp has bitten through the cancerous aorta.

"Zero silk on a big Mayo needle."

I throw the heavy sutures, one after the other, into the pool of blood, hoping to snag with my needle some bit of tissue to close over the rent in the aorta, to hold back the blood. There is no tissue. Each time, the needle pulls through the crumble of tumor. I stop. I repack the stomach. Now there is a buttress of packing both outside and inside the stomach. The bleeding is controlled. We wait. Slowly, something is gathering here, organizing. What had been vague and shapeless before is now declaring itself. All at once, I know what it is. There is nothing to do.

For what tool shall I ask? With what device fight off this bleeding? A knife? There is nothing here to cut. Clamps? Where place the jaws of a hemostat? A scissors? Forceps? Nothing. The instrument does not exist that knows such deep red jugglery. Not all my clever picks, my rasp . . . A miner's lamp, I think, to cast a brave glow.

David has been pumping blood steadily.

"He is stable at the moment," he says. "Where do we go from here?"

"No place. He's going to die. The minute I take away my pressure, he'll bleed to death."

I try to think of possibilities, alternatives. I cannot; there are none. Minutes pass. We listen to the cardiac monitor, the gassy piston of the anesthesia machine.

"More light!" I say. "Fix the light."

The light seems dim, aquarial, a dilute beam slanting through a green sea. At such a fathom the fingers are clumsy. There is pressure. It is cold.

"Dave," I say, "stop the transfusion." I hear my voice coming as from a great distance. "Stop it," I say again.

David and I look at each other, standing among the drenched rags, the smeared equipment.

"I can't," he says.

"Then I will," I say, and with my free hand I reach across the boundary that separates the sterile field from the outside world, and I close the clamp on the intravenous tubing. It is the act of an outlaw, someone who does not know right from wrong. But I know. I know that this is right to do.

"The oxygen," I say. "Turn it off."

"You want it turned off, you do it," he says.

"Hold this," I say to Heriberto, and I give over the packing to him. I step back from the table, and go to the gas tanks.

"This one?" I have to ask him.

"Yes," David nods.

I turn it off. We stand there, waiting, listening to the beeping of the electrocardiograph. It remains even, regular, relentless. Minutes go by, and the sound continues. The man will not die. At last, the intervals on the screen grow longer, the shape of the curve changes, the rhythm grows wild, furious. The line droops, flattens. The man is dead.

It is silent in the room. Now we are no longer a team, each with his circumscribed duties to perform. It is Evelyn who speaks first.

"It is a blessing," she says. I think of her husband's endless dying.

"No," says Brenda. "Better for the family if they have a few days . . . to get used to the idea of it."

"But, look at all the pain he's been spared."

"Still, for the ones that are left, it's better to have a little time."

I listen to the two women murmuring, debating without rancor, speaking in hushed tones of the newly dead as women have done for thousands of years.

"May I have the name of the operation?" It is Brenda, picking up her duties. She is ready with pen and paper.

"Exploratory laparotomy. Attempt to suture malignant aorto-gastric fistula."

"Is he pronounced?"

"What time is it?"

"Eleven-twenty."

"Shall I put that down?"

"Yes."

"Sew him up," I say to Heriberto. "I'll talk to the family."

To Roy I say, "You come with me."

Roy's face is speckled with blood. He seems to me a child with the measles. What, in God's name, is he doing here?

From the doorway, I hear the voices of the others, resuming.

"Stitch," says Heriberto.

Roy and I go to change our bloody scrub suits. We put on long white coats. In the elevator, we do not speak. For the duration of the ride to the floor where the family is waiting, I am reasonable. I understand that in its cellular wisdom, the body of this man had sought out the murderous function of my scalpel, and stretched itself upon the table to receive the final stabbing. For this little time, I know that it is not a murder committed but a mercy bestowed. Tonight's knife is no assassin, but the kind scythe of time.

We enter the solarium. The family rises in unison. There are so many! How ruthless the eyes of the next of kin.

"I am terribly sorry . . . ," I begin. Their faces tighten, take guard. "There was nothing we could do."

I tell them of the lesion, tell of how it began somewhere at the back of the stomach; how, long ago, no one knows why, a cell lost the rhythm of the body, fell out of step, sprang, furious, into rebellion. I tell of how the cell divided and begat two of its kind, which begat four more and so on, until there was a whole race of lunatic cells, which is called cancer.

I tell of how the cancer spread until it had replaced the whole back of the stomach, invading, chewing until it had broken into the main artery of the body. Then it was, I tell them, that the great artery poured its blood into the stomach. I tell of how I could not stop the bleeding, how my clamps bit through the crumbling tissue, how my stitches would not hold, how there was nothing to be done. All of this I tell.

A woman speaks. She has not heard my words, only caught the tone of my voice.

"Do you mean he is dead?"

Should I say "passed away" instead of "died"? No. I cannot.

"Yes," I tell her, "he is dead."

Her question and my answer unleash their anguish. Roy and I stand among the welter of bodies that tangle, grapple, rock, split apart to form new couplings. Their keening is exuberant, wild. It is more than I can stand. All at once, a young man slams his fist into the wall with great force.

"Son of a bitch!" he cries.

"Stop that!" I tell him sharply. Then, more softly, "Please try to control yourself."

The other men crowd about him, patting, puffing, grunting. They are all fat, with huge underslung bellies. Like their father's. A young woman in a nun's habit hugs each of the women in turn.

"Shit!" says one of the men.

The nun hears, turns away her face. Later, I see the man apologizing to her.

The women, too, are fat. One of them has a great pile of yellowish hair that has been sprayed and rendered motionless. All at once, she begins to whine. A single note, coming louder and louder. I ask a nurse to bring tranquilizer pills. She does, and I hand them out, one to each, as though they were the wafers of communion. They urge the pills upon each other.

"Go on, Theresa, take it. Make her take one."

Roy and I are busy with cups of water. Gradually it grows quiet. One of the men speaks.

"What's the next step?"

"Do you have an undertaker in mind?"

They look at each other, shrug. Someone mentions a name. The rest nod.

"Give the undertaker a call. Let him know. He'll take care of everything."

I turn to leave.

"Just a minute," one of the men calls. "Thanks, Doc. You did what you could."

"Yes," I say.

Once again in the operating room. Blood is everywhere. There is a wild smell, as though a fox had come and gone. The others, clotted about the table, work on. They are silent, ravaged.

"How did the family take it?"

"They were good, good."

Heriberto has finished reefing up the abdomen. The drapes are peeled back. The man on the table seems more than just dead. He seems to have gone beyond that, into a state where expression is possible—reproach and scorn. I study him. His baldness had advanced beyond the halfway mark. The remaining strands of hair had been gallantly dyed. They are, even now, neatly combed and crenellated. A stripe of black moustache rides his upper lip. Once, he had been spruce!

We all help lift the man from the table to the stretcher.

"On three," says David. "One . . . two . . . three."

And we heft him over, using the sheet as a sling. My hand brushes his shoulder. It is cool. I shudder as though he were infested with lice. He has become something that I do not want to touch.

More questions from the women.

"Is a priest coming?"

"Does the family want to view him?"

"Yes. No. Don't bother me with these things."

"Come on," I say to Roy. We go to the locker room and sit together on a bench. We light cigarettes.

"Well?" I ask him.

"When you were scooping out the clots, I thought I was going to swoon."

I pause over the word. It is too quaint, too genteel for this time. I feel, at that moment, a great affection for him.

"But you fought it."

"Yes. I forced it back down. But, almost . . ."

"Good," I say. Who knows what I mean by it? I want him to know that I count it for something.

"And you?" he asks me. The students are not shy these days.

"It was terrible, his refusal to die."

I want him to say that it was right to call it quits, that I did the best I could. But he says nothing. We take off our scrub suits and go to the shower. There are two stalls opposite each other. They are curtained. But we do not draw the curtains. We need to see each other's healthy bodies. I watch Roy turn his face directly upward into the blinding fall of water. His mouth is open to receive it. As though it were milk flowing from the breasts of God. For me, too, this water is like a well in a wilderness.

In the locker room, we dress in silence.

"Well, goodnight."
Awkwardly our words come out in unison.
"In the morning . . ."
"Yes, yes, later."
"Goodnight."
I watch him leave through the elevator door.

For the third time I go to that operating room. The others have long since finished and left. It is empty, dark. I turn on the great lamps above the table that stands in the center of the room. The pediments of the table and the floor have been scrubbed clean. There is no sign of the struggle. I close my eyes and see again the great pale body of the man, like a white bullock, bled. The line of stitches on his abdomen is a hieroglyph. Already, the events of this night are hidden from me by these strange untranslatable markings.

COMPREHENSION

1. What has the author implied by choosing his title for the essay? How is the title reinforced by the final paragraph?
2. Based upon Selzer's description of the surgeon's work, to what other profession does the author draw analogies? Explain.
3. Why do the other members of the operating team refuse to tamper with the medical apparatus, even after being ordered to do so by the surgeon?

RHETORIC

1. What is the dramatic effect of telling the story in the present tense?
2. The author often eschews conventional sentence structure. For example in paragraph 16, he employs fragments: "Another pass with the scope. Another thrust with the tube." In paragraph 21, he uses odd syntax, "Now is he dipped; and I, his baptist." And some sentences are extremely short, such as paragraph 96: "I turn to leave." What is the cumulative effect of using such innovative sentence structure?
3. Why has the author divided his essay into six parts? What is the function of each part? How does the author create drama via the juxtaposition of one section to the next?
4. Dialogue is used frequently in the essay. What is the function and effect of the dialogue?
5. Selzer's imagery is often vivid and original. How do the following excerpts contribute to the tone of the essay:
   "I understand that in its cellular wisdom, the body of this man had sought out the murderous function of my scalpel"; "Tonight's knife is no assassin, but the kind scythe of time" (paragraph 74).
   "There is a wild smell, as though a fox had come and gone" (paragraph 99).
6. There are several references to religion in the essay. Locate them, and explain what their cumulative effect is on the tone of the essay.
7. The role of mystery plays a significant part in the author's mood; for example, the final sentence reads, "Already, the events of this night are hidden from me by these strange untranslatable markings." What other passages reflect this mood of mystery in the essay? How does this mood affect the description of the essay's events, which are supposedly based on science?

WRITING

1. We take for granted many things which are mysterious to us; for example, the act of reading, writing, and breathing. Write a descriptive essay of 500 words in which you reflect upon some basic activity that you have never analyzed before.
2. Write a 400-word critique of Selzer's essay, entitling it "Religious Imagery in Selzer's 'Sarcophagus.'"
3. Create a metaphor or simile for a particular profession, such as "a professional athlete is superhuman" or "a rock star is like a god (or goddess)." Extend your metaphor in a 400-word essay, using analogies to fit your central metaphor.

ISAAC ASIMOV Isaac Asimov (1920–1992), a writer and scientist, taught biochemistry at Boston University. He was born in Russia and educated in America. Asimov's works included both scientific textbooks and science fiction, most notably *The Foundation Trilogy* (1951–1953). Asimov was extraordinarily productive, the author of more than a hundred books; his texts on popular science helped to explain difficult concepts for the lay reader. In the essay below, Asimov uses a clear, straightforward style to explain the function of cholesterol.

ISAAC ASIMOV

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a dirty word these days, and every report that comes out seems to make it worse. A government study of more than 350,000 American men between 35 and 37 years old was reported last month and 80% of them had cholesterol levels of more than 180 milligrams per 100 milliliters of blood. Anything over the 180 mark indicates an increased probability of an early death from heart disease. The higher the measurement the higher the probability.

And yet this grinning death mask is not the only face that cholesterol bears. Cholesterol happens to be absolutely essential to animal life. Every animal from the amoeba to the whale (including human beings, of course) possesses cholesterol. The human body is about one-third of 1% cholesterol.

The portion of the animal body that is richest in cholesterol is the nervous system. There we encounter masses of nerve cells which, in bulk, have a grayish appearance and are therefore referred to as "gray matter."

Cultural Studies

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