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## Reimagining Masculinities: *disClosure* interviews bell hooks

Mary Curran  
*University of Kentucky*


Susan Mains  
*University of Kentucky*

Christine Metzo  
*University of Kentucky*

Sarah Moore  
*University of Kentucky*

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Mary Curran, Susan Mains, Christine  
Metzo, and Sarah Moore

## Reimagining Masculini- ties

disClosure interviews bell  
hooks

April 30, 1999

A discussion of feminist theory in the U.S. context is incomplete without reference to the work of bell hooks, a Distinguished Professor at the City University of New York. Single author of over fifteen books covering such diverse topics as feminist theory, race, pedagogy, black intellectuals, cultural studies, and her latest work on love, hooks' work has been widely read by academics, activists, and the public at large. Her books include, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (1989), *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (1990), *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (1992), *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994), *Killing Rage: Ending Racism* (1995), and *All About Love: New Visions* (2000).

hooks, a Kentucky native, visited Lexington to participate in The Kentucky Women Writers Conference at The Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning, in April 1999. To explore feminist constructions of masculinities, *disClosure* interviewed hooks during her visit. Our conversation covered a range of topics including, violence, white male recovery films, gangsta rap, and education. hooks states that the current backlash against feminism in cinema, music, and other popular media is a response to feminists' success

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Theory, University of  
Kentucky, Lexington, KY

in challenging dominant concepts of masculinity that draw on discourses of patriarchy and capitalism. At the same time hooks states that there is a need for feminists to imagine non-hegemonic masculinities and to develop strategies to assist, for example, feminist women raising sons and to challenge gender categories reproduced in public schools.

**disClosure:** Why don't we start with the question of masculinity?

**bell hooks:** We went through this phase in the late 60s and early 70s where a vision of feminist masculinity was really that. Men would suddenly become feminine in the traditional sexist sense and I think that's why someone like Robert Bly was able to step in and co-opt that focus and say, in fact, that feminism was not helping men be more fully self-actualized; but rather, it was destroying men because it was making them these overcooked vegetables, these wimps, these people who couldn't get in touch with their fears and warrior side. We had a kind of reinscription of traditional masculinity. I would argue that it was a benevolent patriarchal vision of men – I talked with Robert Bly and he sees his vision as not anti-feminist. Yet, if you read *Iron John*, it really is simply a sweetened up version of the idea that men should be in charge. In a way it's like saying to men, "You should be in touch with your androgynous self so you can be more in charge," as opposed to really talking about what an alternative vehicle for self-actualization for men would be like.

**dC:** How do you see that alternative way of imagining masculinity?

**bh:** Well, I have no difficulty with equating masculinity with self-actualization; so that one might use simultaneously the terms self-actualization and what it is to be masculine; so that what it is to be a liberated man is to be in touch, or male. If I had a small boy, I would feel like I was helping him on the journey towards self-actualization by encouraging him to be in touch with the full range of his emotionality, by encouraging him to be able to speak what's on his mind and heart. And I would encourage him, above all, to be loving because I do think that part of patriarchal masculinity is that males of all ages are encouraged to see themselves as recipients of love but not as people who should learn how to love. Being a nurturer, nurturing, is only one dimension of love. But, I think that in our culture we tend to equate love solely with caretaking which is why it's often seen as "a feminine task" rather than caretaking being seen as merely one dimension of love. I never really hear much about boys and love and whether or not boys learn to love differently. We know that they learn early that love isn't their issue, that

work is their issue.

**dC:** Do you see possibilities for that changing in the future? Do you see any examples in our culture today?

**bh:** I wrote in other books about white male recovery films like *The Fisher King* (1991) or *Regarding Henry* (1991), so I think there were attempts in mass media to portray males in crisis but usually, in a sense, males in mid-life crisis who have experienced, ironically, some kind of a catastrophic event like the death of a loved one. I'm thinking of the role played by Robin Williams in the recent film, *Good Will Hunting* (1997), where it's through his experience of grief over his wife that he becomes more challenged to be fully who he wants to be and he tries to share that with a younger man. One trope of that movie was the idea that, in acknowledging his love and need for a female partner, the younger man becomes more whole, opens himself up, becomes less cerebral.

**dC:** In a lot of these movies you're talking about, *The Fisher King* and *Regarding Henry*, it seems to be a one-on-one relationship where that kind of recovery or that kind of reclamation/self-actualization, happens. How important is that one-on-one relationship for the loving that you're talking about?

**bh:** I think its image is one-on-one precisely because there hasn't been an equivalent to, say, feminist consciousness where many of us, as females, young females particularly, in the late 60s, early 70s, came to consciousness. We actually did come to consciousness in group settings but also in a lot of one-on-one conversations with one another. My best friend from freshman year in college visited me over the weekend. She's recently divorced and has four teenagers. We found, in processing it together, that some of our thinking about masculinity, marriage and love had a sense of group consciousness-raising even though it was a one-on-one conversation. It still had the effect of making her feel that she had progressed further in her thinking about what it is to be alone as a woman in mid-life, what it is to deal with patriarchal masculinity. I don't have difficulty with the fact that in a lot of these films men are portrayed as coming into awareness in a one-on-one relationship. It seems that our difficulty is that there isn't really any group setting. Robert Bly stepped in and offered men a group setting. We thought Robert Bly was retrograde and now we have the Promise Keepers. It's another stage where feminism's insistence that men get in touch with their emotions gets enacted within the context of benevolent patriarchy, not within the con-

text of a critique of patriarchy. But, by and large, it seems to me that most males in our culture lack any kind of group setting where they can come to feminist consciousness.

And, let's face it, did anyone say there should be men's groups where men come to feminist consciousness? There again, I see a failure within the feminist movement itself. The feminist movement in the United States has been basically, in its most mainstream parts, a reform movement that really focused on gender inequality, primarily in the workforce, and that's where I think it's been most successful. The problem is that a lot of theoretical thinking about masculinity never reached everyday life, it never reached ordinary people. You have a book like Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering*, which really emphasized the value of male parenting and talked about men learning how to be more fully human through the act of parenting, but who can read *The Reproduction of Mothering* other than people who are in academe? A lot of the great theoretical thinking on masculinity tends to be written in the least accessible forms.

I particularly think that one of the great feminist texts dealing with masculinity remains Dorothy Dinnerstein's *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*. What's interesting is that it was a really accessible book but when the metalinguistic feminist thinkers came along, they were no longer interested in Dinnerstein and they weren't quoting her. Yet she was among the first feminists to say that a lot of boys in patriarchy have this tremendous rage when they find that the mother really doesn't have the power. If this person who has complete and utter autocratic control over them finally doesn't have power in the world outside the home, the boy feels this internal conflict, "I'm supposed to submit to this person, but why?" Because, finally, even if I'm eight years old, my maleness places me within a hegemony of patriarchy as more valuable and more of an authority than she is. Dinnerstein talks about this kind of rage and how it's enacted in adult life which I think makes it a very very important book for many of us thinking about masculinity.

**dC:** This ties into the idea of community. How do you create spaces for community? Academics can use language in one way to reformulate a community, but in another way we can change that language in order to make it more accessible and enable a rethinking of what gender is, what masculinity is. In *Yearnings* you talk about an idea of community and an idea of a lost community and nostalgia for the past. How do we establish new communities where young boys don't have to take the route you just mentioned, where people can rethink masculinity or, at least,

create communities in which it could be approached differently?

**bh:** One, we need to return to a concern with the public school system because a lot of gender differences are learned there. I remember getting together once with a small group of leading feminist thinkers who had given birth to sons. They were suddenly allowing their sons to play with guns and to do all the things that imply a certain kind of stereotypical symbolic patriarchal masculinity. Many of the feminist mothers were saying, "well, he goes to school. He gets this at school. What am I to do?" It just was too much work for them to try to challenge and change what was really happening in the public school system. But, I can also remember when we were really concerned with the content of children's books, when feminism was really concerned with what happens in early childhood education. A lot of that concern with children has gone out of the window and I have to say again that the academization and institutionalization of feminist thinking within colleges and universities had a lot to do with losing that focus on everyday life, on gender relations in everyday life, on children. Many of us were getting our Ph.D.s in liberal arts subjects like literature and other subjects which didn't focus at all on real world things. I mean, on the one hand I was writing *Ain't I a Woman* when I was nineteen but I was also trying to be in graduate school in English departments and there wasn't a lot of connection between my thinking on gender and what was occurring there. It seems to me that the loss of a focus on early childhood education, on what's happening in children's books, on what's happening in children's TV, has been very detrimental to any attempt to revise masculinity because it just doesn't really work that boys get to be little patriarchal people and then when they're twenty-five or thirty-five we start trying to change them. What's fascinating is that we have our first generation of men coming into their thirties now who were raised within the context of feminist social change.

Recently, I was saying to people that, when I was twenty years old, we heard things like, "will women ever get to be pilots?" Today when I flew here one of the pilots was a woman. Whereas I grew up with a generation of men saying women just don't really have the skills to do this, we now have a generation of males whose mothers are those pilots. So they don't grow up with a sense that females are inferior or not their equals in the workplace. Therefore, we don't need to convince them when it comes to the workforce. But when it comes to sexuality and desire, a lot of what gets articulated in the private realm, in the domestic realm, is the same old gender sexist biases, even though those boys coming into manhood never believed that women were incapable of being their

equals academically, intellectually, in the workforce, everywhere else. That's why I think sexuality remains the kind of frontier where great changes didn't take place.

**dC:** In magazine representations, in music representations of gender roles and gender relations and sexuality, there's a lot of that misogyny that boys identify with in a way that they don't necessarily identify with the intellectual arena or the academic arena, as you said. In terms of that, what would you say in response to the comment that gangsta rap is primarily popular among teenage middle-class white boys because its misogynist message responds to the success of the feminist movement with white middle class women in other realms of their experience.

**bh:** Actually, misogynist gangsta rap and its success is tied into an overall backlash, an anti-feminist backlash in the culture as a whole that is expressed in popular culture. But I don't think it's about the success of the feminist movement with middle-class women; I think it's about the success of the feminist movement with younger males. So much of the anti-feminist backlash is a direct response to how powerfully feminist thinking began to take hold among young males. What are you going to do if you have a whole generation of young males who've come up through Women's Studies? When I was twenty-some years old, teaching my first Women's Studies class, maybe there were two men and maybe if I gave a lecture four more men came, but right now when I give a lecture, when I teach a class, there are as many males in that class as there are females. I think that is truly a threat to white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. What we have to remember when we talk about a cultural phenomenon like misogynist gangsta rap is that rap is being produced and created and marketed by older white men who are pro-patriarchal and who have a lot of rage about the success of feminism. I've interviewed Ice Cube and talked with other rappers, and a lot of them don't really believe the misogyny and sexism that they're pushing in their lyrics. What they know is that that's what sells, primarily to very vulnerable boys from the ages of ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen who are also willing to get your violent video or what-have-you and look at it over and over again. Boys at that age are just beginning to try to figure out what their identity is going to be and so I think that what's interesting is to think about the anti-feminist agenda of those adult males, primarily white, primarily over thirty.

If you think about, for example, Disney's Dream Team, all those men are white, male, wealthy, and over the age of forty and yet they're creating the representations that will be seductive to a whole body of young girls

and boys that's really awesome. I've been in the presence of those men, and they do not have a feminist consciousness, they are not concerned about gender. With gansta rap, we're oftentimes talking about a young man who's sitting in his house wanting to be rich and wanting to buy into capitalism; who finds if he does a little love song he can't interest anyone in it, but if he does a song about hating the bitch and what-have-you, he can interest lots of people in it. I think that we have to, again, talk about misogynist rap as a reflection of a ruling hegemony of patriarchy and not like these boys and young men are the creators of a fierce misogyny; they are the inheritors of the misogyny of the older males who have tremendous rage, who feel that feminism took something from them. Among young men in their twenties I see a great deal of struggle, men who have been raised through feminism but who reach a certain point in their young adult lives where they don't know what to do with themselves. They get to be affirmed for being a feminist man in college, but when they enter the work world or when they start trying to mate with peers if they're heterosexual, those female peers start to treat them like they're just kind of wimpy guys and these females want the dangerous macho outlaw guy. That's when many males begin to undergo an evolution. A positive aspect of feminist thinking is that many more males are anti-war, anti-violence; that is deeply threatening to patriarchy. If feminism had only ever spoken to females I don't think we would have ever seen such a fierce anti-feminist backlash. It's because feminist politics had such power in the lives of males, in particular younger males who would be the soldiers who would go to war. Think about recent films, like *Men in Black* (1997) and *Independence Day* (1996), films that are all about, all directed at adolescent boys, directed at encouraging them to be violent, encouraging them to go to war. I was fascinated with *Men in Black* because, when Will Smith has to decide if he's going to join up and fight the enemy for the state, instead of going home to his family, he sits on a park bench. So, we have the image of the real man as independent. We never see him in connection to anyone else so that he actually becomes almost like an agent, he is the symbolic child of the phallus. He's fathered by the state. His relationship to Tommy Lee Jones is that of the child to the white patriarchal father. And remember that Tommy Lee Jones's wife is just a picture, so it's a male universe.

It's about violence. It's really amazing to me. When I first saw the video of the real life shooting in Colorado, it looked exactly like scenes from different movies. You know, the whole idea of "the trench coat mafia," as if it's only about style. I kept thinking about the stylization, the ro-

manticization of male violence in contemporary films. This isn't just about spontaneous expression of anger, hostility, rage or anything; it's all kind of like a drama. And what is the drama that's being performed? To me, it is the drama of white supremacy, white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. It is a kind of symbolic mimicry because it isn't real in the sense that those boys didn't have real power of the state or what have you, but the symbolic drama they enacted was the taking over of an institution, the random slaughter of people. Those kinds of things are so much of the maleness that we see in the movies.

I was watching, with my adolescent nephew just last night, *Mortal Combat* which he had seen three or four times. It's just this endless production of violence, of male on male violence, with one blonde blue-eyed female who's sort of the toy, who's equally a fighter and killing but she's also kind of the sex object toy to give comic relief. I could understand why my nephew, who's very intelligent, who's very thoughtful about issues of gender, was obsessed. The eroticization of violence and glamor that is a part, again, of an anti-feminist backlash is incredibly seductive. To me, all these films are about the resocialization of boys to patriarchal thinking because I think that a lot of feminist change in the culture had broken that.

One of my feminist students, Susan Boyd, now a professor who has written a book, *Mothers and Illicit Drugs*, has a little boy. He liked to wear his fingers polished. When he went to school, other boys said to him, "boys don't wear fingernail polish." So he came home and said, "I can't wear this because this isn't something that boys do." They have show and tell, and his mom did the kind of intervention that I think feminism has to do. She gathered up a lot of adult males she knew who wore fingernail polish to go to school and tell the other boys, "We wear fingernail polish and this is why." So rather than caving in and telling her little boy, "You're right, you've got to conform to this existing patriarchal masculinity, even in this trivial way," she countered it by saying, "look, there is a different kind of masculinity." And she's constantly having to do that. I gave him his middle name which is Ruby. He woke up one day when he was around five or six and decided he wanted to be called Ruby. His name is Ian Ruby, a very traditional masculine name, Ian. Again, he was told in school, "Ruby is a girl's name," and we went through this whole sort of coming up with men who have been named Ruby and deconstructing that constantly. I think that's why a lot of feminist mothers become weary, because it's hard to do that consistently. Why haven't we done the work to follow those boys who've been raised in feminist homes to see if their fate differs from the fate of other

boys as they come into young adult masculinity? I think there's a tremendous attack on single mothers right now, particularly black mothers. Basically in our culture right now, there's a message that's being sent out to everyone, via a focus on black women, that no woman can raise a healthy male child. If *that* isn't about the reinscription of patriarchy, what is? It's one of the most dangerous messages that's coming to us from mass media right now because it really makes women feel very bad who parent without a male. They may then feel like they have got to team up with a patriarchal male who may be violent, who may be abusive, who may be coercive in all ways, in order to provide their male child with an adequate patriarchal role model.

**dC:** It also makes the sons — I have a feminist son that I brought up — very angry.

**bh:** It's as if mass media, and our government through public policy, are saying that this woman, this single mother deprived you, her child, of something that would have made you a better human being, which I think is just absolute nonsense. There is no evidence that suggests that patriarchal masculinity produces healthy, wonderful, loving boys. And yet, again, it's almost as if we have a subculture that is class-based around masculinity. I think of Arlie Hochschild's *The Second Shift*, and her second book when she talks about the fact that educated men, particularly liberal white men, tend to see themselves as doing housework and childcare more than they actually do, while working class men, particularly men of color, tend to do more childcare or housework, but see themselves as not doing it because they don't see it as masculine labor. So, even though they do it they deny that they do it, whereas liberal men of educated classes often see themselves as doing more than they actually do.

**dC:** I worked on a study where we interviewed men and women before they had their first child, and then after, to see the differences in housework and that exact thing actually came up, the different perceptions of how much work was done. Women tried to explain they did the much bigger percentage. But, when we interviewed the men many of them said, "yeah, we did a lot of this and this and this." It's very interesting in that how people talked about it was class-based as well.

**bh:** Again, I think about feminism stopping here in the sense that there was so much emphasis for so many years on women entering the workforce and gaining equality with men there that people really didn't give a lot of attention to whether or not we had in actuality created a

feminist conversion in the domestic household. So what we know from feminist scholarship like Arlie Hochschild's is that most women *are* doing two jobs but, in fact, women feel an empowerment that comes through working outside the home. Even when they have to come home and work a second shift, do all the domestic labor, they still feel that they would rather do that than simply stay at home. And, of course, we're made to feel that it's feminists' fault that women are outside the home, but clearly, as her work testifies, many women feel much more psychologically healthy when they work outside the home. What does it in fact mean that we didn't create the kind of feminist movement that made men really assume their equal share of work in the home so that we now have women who are burdened by working?

I was just visiting my sister whose husband works in the auto plant. Her husband feels that all the domestic labor is her labor. The fact that she earns a wage parallel to his hasn't changed his sense that it is still her work to cook and provide in the home and to go to the store and to do all of those chores. She's tired a lot and he complains about her being so tired. Ultimately, as is the case with many men, I think what he would really like would be if she didn't work and they simply had a traditional gendered arrangement in the home.

**dC:** I want to go back to this question for a second, thinking about the violence in high schools and the role of public education in negotiating that tension that younger boys feel, and young men feel, in having a feminist model but also being expected in some ways to enact that typical patriarchal masculinity. How do we as a community interact with the individual effort of people like the mother who intervened in the school? For instance, how could a community do something about public education?

**bh:** Well, we can't do a lot if we're not committed to ending patriarchy. And if we're not willing to see that violence is central to the maintenance of patriarchy, that violence and patriarchy are one and the same in the sense that patriarchy perpetuates itself through the sanctioning of male violence. So, the fact that male violence is now expressing itself in younger and younger males isn't something that I think we can deal with as a community if we don't come to feminist consciousness as a community, which really means having a revisionist feminist movement where we would really begin to talk about masculinity again.

**dC:** I know a little boy who stabbed another little boy in the hand with scissors at school. His pediatricians are now saying that he's manic-

depressive — first they said he had attention deficit disorder, then they said he was severely depressed. The application of mental illnesses to outbursts of violent or disruptive behavior in the schools contributes to perpetuating that sense of patriarchy still being okay and dismisses those behaviors as aberrations.

**bh:** Exactly, I thought about Andrea Dworkin's work wherein she constantly states that one of the things this culture does again and again, when males express the kind of violence that patriarchy sanctions in extreme ways, is to label those men pathological. Think about the situation in Colorado where we suddenly have a narrative produced that says these young males were outsiders, they were not a part of a mainstream. I sat with groups of teenagers last night and heard them say that this isn't true, that a lot of times these violent boys are the mainstream but no one wants to acknowledge it. Think about a film like *Welcome to the Doll House* (1995) which many progressive people liked and thought was really wonderful although the boy in that film is completely coercive toward the young female and coerces her sexually. Think about the fact that he threatens to rape her. And what we see cinematically in a film made by a "progressive" young film maker is that she capitulates totally, "falls in love" with the boy, so there's no sense, in fact, that what he did was inappropriate. We have that same kind of message coming through the film *Kids* (1995). Lots of people have told me, in response to my critique of that film as once again sanctioning a certain kind of adolescent patriarchal male violence expressed through rape, that you could just say what a great film it was and how much you enjoyed it, that you don't have to deal with the fact that part of what is being enjoyed or presented to us as transgressive is a young male deviously plotting to date rape different females. Think of the glamorization of that and how it's not perceived as painful or destructive to their lives.

**dC:** This is going off on a bit of a tangent, but I see a link in terms of how people think of the American dream. What does an American dream mean, and can we think of ways to counteract this sort of reinscription of violence in sexual inequalities and how we think about sexuality?

**bh:** That is why I wanted to return to a discourse of love. I have a new book coming out on love, which is called *All About Love: New Visions*. Feminism in the early seventies was extremely critical of any notion of love, especially of the primacy of love. Of course, at that time most of us could only conceptualize love through a romantic paradigm of domination and submission, male dominance and female submission. But

what it meant was that we didn't create a kind of redemptive discourse on love that would say, in fact, that one of the things that would serve as a counter to male domination and any kind of domination would be learning how to love. In my book I talk about love as defined by a combination of knowledge, care, responsibility, respect. What does it mean, then, to share with a male child how to love? One would have to deal with the question of violence. I have a chapter in that book on children where I use examples of fathers and sons, to show adults who are abused as children are encouraged to feel that they were being loved, and how many males, particularly, get the message that the sort of brutal punishment that they may get at the hands of fathers, and sometimes through maternal sadism, is an expression of love. That confusion cripples boys. This tragedy was wonderfully depicted in the film *Appleton*. There is a collection of essays about boys and manhood that shows that many males feel that they closed down the capacity to love as children in order to deal with the level of hurt.

There's a book, *Finding Freedom*, written by a black man, J. Jarvis Masters, who's on death row. He tells this incredible story about being out in the exercise yard where he sees all these men, mainly black, with these incredible scars on their bodies. He thinks this is a result of their violence but what he finds is that most of their scars have been inflicted by parental caregivers. So, he talks about his own coming to awareness about being abused as a child, by not just his drug-using mom but by the various men who came around or were for a time parental caregivers. I think that's really deep and that's something that our culture doesn't really want to look at. And, again, I think that if we can't talk about it — what does it mean? I think we really still are a culture that's afraid that if boys were taught to be loving they would all be "gay." A lot of peoples' refusal to critique and challenge patriarchy resides with their homophobia. They feel that to be violent, to be capable of violence, is to be male and heterosexual male and that to be capable of nonviolence automatically demasculinizes you. In the collection *Transforming a Rape Culture*, I wrote an essay about my relationship with a feminist black male who didn't want to have sex when he was angry or after we had a fight; it is about my own struggle to change my notion of what is desirable sexuality with a heterosexual man. Take the whole idea of the focus on the dick. I just finished a piece called "Penis Passion" that talks about the reality that we have very few images of the non-erect penis as any way desirable, good to look at, pleasurable in any way. I found very little about the penis that didn't reinscribe it within a patriarchal phallogocentric discourse of weapon, of instrumentality, of having

no value except in its capacity to serve as a tool or what have you. Until we can change those mechanisms of desire and sexuality, whether gay or straight, it seems to me that we won't be able to change overall cultural thinking about masculinity.

**dC:** Is there anything else in particular that you would like to talk about in relation to masculinity?

**bh:** I think that Victor Seidler's work, *Rediscovering Masculinity*, has been useful. I like John Stoltenberg's work although I know that John has been disturbed by my saying in other places that I feel that his books are not very readable. I think one of the things I feel in terms of class is that perhaps some of the old mechanisms that we've had of sharing information — long books that take lots of time to read — are simply very difficult for lots of working people who do a ten or twelve hour day to come home and read. It's interesting that the one sort of space of what appears to be an alternative discourse on masculinity is in new age or self-help writing. Think about the incredible impact of books like John Gray's *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, which, by its very title, invests in a kind of biological determinism and has a kind of psycho-biological spin. How incredibly successful that's been! He kind of nods his head in the direction of gender difference but he doesn't ever call for a change in patriarchy. He simply offers ways for women to come to terms with what patriarchy has sanctioned, i.e., the whole idea that your man goes into his cave and when he goes into his cave you shouldn't bother him. In other words, when your man is emotionally withdrawn or cold or aloof, you shouldn't see that as negative; you should see that as positive and just leave him alone and he will come back to you. I actually think that his books are very helpful for women who are themselves in some way more liberal and progressive about gender but who want to remain in relationships with sexist men. It's a kind of combinationist thinking. Yet, this is the primary thinking that affects many men in our culture because women are buying these books and taking men to these seminars. It's very parallel. It does say to men, "you need to get in touch with certain things, your feminine nature, etcetera, etcetera," but none of it really talks about patriarchy as a system and what it means for patriarchy to be challenged. That's where I think that John Stoltenberg's writing is very useful. I find it fascinating that John Bradshaw, in his book *Creating Love*, is one of the few male new age gurus who actually targeted patriarchy. In his least successful book he starts off talking about patriarchy as producing the dysfunctional family system and what he has to do as a man to break with that. Now as long as he was talking about the wounded inner child



he had a kind of charismatic hold on the public imagination, but when he started talking about patriarchy as a system informing the family, making it a location of violence and fascism, people weren't that interested. I think that's very telling, how invested we remain as a culture in male domination. And I think, again, we don't know enough, we haven't done the studies to find out why we remain invested in it. Why do women who want to go out and work and receive equal pay for their work want to come home and have traditional sexist relations reinscribed? What will it take to create a new feminist movement that can galvanize masses of folks so that the struggle to end patriarchy can once again be seen as one of the most necessary movements for social justice in our times?

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