

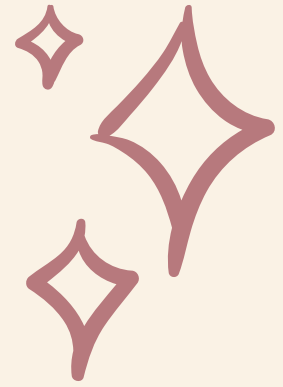


Journey of Self-love and Ecofeminism

Madeleine Potter

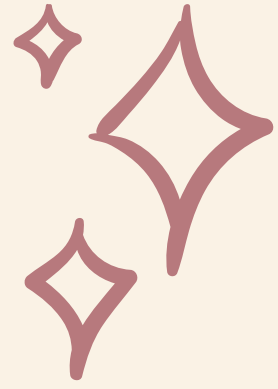
**SOCI 3210
Feminist Theory
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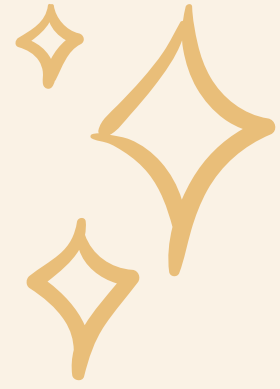




Dedication

I would like to dedicate this anthology to my little sister, Elisabeth. Forever a strong woman who stands up for herself and knows her true worth.





Introduction



This anthology is a collection of feminist pieces that fall into two themes: self-love and protecting Mother Earth using the concept of ecofeminism. I chose my first theme, self-love to start my anthology because self-love has been a big part of my journey as a feminist. Living in a male-dominated society, it has been hard to grow up and not feel the pressures of fitting into the ideal beauty standards. Women are born into a competition of who is beautiful and the most worthy of a man's love. The everchanging of ideal beauty standards can make it feel impossible for women to grow confidence within themselves. Growing up, I struggled with self-confidence especially with having access to the media and consuming photoshopped pictures of what I thought my body was supposed to look like. I am so fortunate to have grown up in a loving household where we ate healthy meals with dessert and were not made to feel bad about having a second slice of cake, but the media I consumed as a young girl started a pattern of unhealthy eating habits and a decline in my body image. My body matured a lot faster than my peers and I remember being a 12-year-old girl being teased for my wider hips and growing chest. All I wanted for so long was male validation because I thought that's what would make me beautiful. Feminism and this course have helped shape my mind into believing I do not need a man to tell me I am beautiful to feel worthy. I have learned that it is okay to block accounts that make you feel bad about yourself. Social media is fake and it should be remembered as a highlight reel where people will post the best pictures of themselves. The media today has also evolved into a much more loving place with spaces for realistic body types to be shared.

I have an 11-year-old sister and we are 10 years apart. I see myself in her and I never want to say negative comments about my appearance around her. I do not ever want her to think that it is okay to talk about yourself like that. Looking at my little sister, I would never say anything negative about her appearance, so why would I say it to myself? She is the most



confident young girl and watching her grow up into a woman is a privilege. Over the years, she has been nothing but confident in herself and is always the friend at school who will stand up for herself but also for people who cannot stand up for themselves. With media becoming more apparent in children's daily lives it always worries me that she will experience the same struggles that I had at her age. She surprises me every day and I have learned about self-assurance a lot from watching her grow up. I chose to dedicate this anthology to her in hopes that one day she will resonate with all the pieces I have compiled together.

One of the pieces I placed in the self-love section is a part of a book written by, bell hooks. I would like to read the full book this summer but for this anthology, I chose one chapter out of the book. The chapter struck me because it emphasized the importance of loving yourself before trying to love someone else, "the more we accept ourselves, the better prepared we are to take responsibility in all areas of our lives" (hooks, 2000, p. 57). It is so important to take responsibility for your own life and be selfish sometimes. Self-love has taught me to do activities that make me happy before worrying about what others think about me. In my third year of university, prioritizing school and self-care before other people has done wonders for not only my grades but as well as my mental health. My education and the degree I am working towards is something for me and no one can take that away from me. When choosing to allow more time for self-love it has made me a better sister, friend, daughter, and partner. I am lucky that women are more accepted into university and I can be selfish with my time and education.

The first piece of feminist writing I knew I was going to add to my anthology was Alice Walker's *Womanist*. Her piece is four definitions of what she thinks a womanist is. Alice Walker is a black feminist and her writing reflects that. She includes in her piece what it means to be a black woman and some of the experiences she may face. One of the quotes that stood out to me



was, “3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. *Loves* the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. *Loves* the Folk. Loves herself. *Regardless*” (Walker, 1983, p. 257). I thought this quote and this piece of writing was a great addition to my anthology. This quote wants all women to believe they are beautiful in their own ways. I also think that it is so important to love yourself regardless. Your body is your home and it is there for you every day so it is crucial to take care of yourself. Affirmations of self-love can help shift your mindset about yourself and see yourself in a more positive light. This piece starts off the self-love section and while it is short, it leaves a lasting impression throughout the anthology.

My second section and focus for this anthology is protecting Mother Earth with the concept of ecofeminism. I first learned about the concept of ecofeminism in this class. I enjoyed the focus on how our male-dominated society has continued to take advantage of the Earth and how this has affected women. I chose to use Andy Smith’s piece to begin the section as the piece focuses on using an anticolonial framework to look at ecofeminism. I wanted to focus on pieces that involved intersectionality and different women’s oppressions. Many women suffer from the effects of colonialism and I always appreciate learning about them. I wanted to dedicate a section of my anthology to focus on women in the Global South who have been exploited by the development of the Global North. I also wanted to use this space to empathize the importance of protecting Mother Earth and how colonial society takes Mother Earth for granted while hurting her every day. Ecofeminism is one of the many concepts we learned in this class that I will always remember. As our world develops and consumerism grows I will have ecofeminism in the back of mind when I am consuming. I want to find ways I can make a conscious effort and take care of the environment. We live in a capitalist society so this can not always be possible as everything we need to live will fill the pockets of another individual. The development of society



made men the ideal gender while women are there to support and take care of the unpaid labour at home. In chapter 6 of Merchant's, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* she deep dives into the history of women's roles dating back to Renaissance Italy. I chose to include this piece in my anthology because it proves how women have been victims of capitalism for centuries, "the direction of the change was to limit and curtail the married woman's role as a partner, so that she became more dependent on her husband" (Merchant, 1998, p. 150). This quote results from seventeenth-century England and the beginning of capitalist industries. Many of the jobs did not allow women to work and they were just led to stay home. We can see continuous patterns of capitalism exploiting women from centuries ago up until today. Capitalism continues to exploit women, especially women of low socio-economic status and Mother Earth.

Another piece I included in my ecofeminism section was Montesino's, *Gynocide: The Murder of the Goddess*. The term gynocide means the killing of women and girls. I liked this piece and felt it fit well in my anthology because it discusses Mother Earth being a goddess and the source of life. One quote I found striking was, "Every man is born from a *woman's* womb" (Montesino, 2021). Men take women for granted without realizing we all come from women.

This anthology was one of my favourite assignments I have worked on in my university career. I enjoyed tapping into my feminism and discovering what being a feminist means to me. I selected all the pieces of feminist writing in their anthology with self-love and ecofeminism in mind. I feel rewarded that I have found many pieces of feminist writing that I resonate with. I feel honoured to read the pieces I have and use them for a part of my anthology. I hope the readers can find a way to relate to some of the pieces in this anthology and appreciate the writers as much as I do.



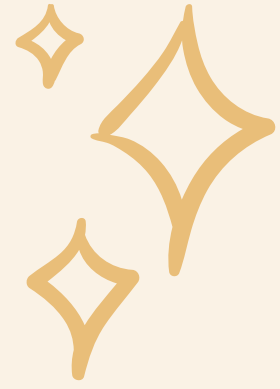


Self - Love



Self-love is so important to me and a big part of my feminist journey. Societal standards have trained women that they should take care of everyone else in their lives before themselves. We have been forced to listen to people's opinions about our life choices and bodies. Different people's opinions whether it comes from a stranger, a friend, a partner, or a family member can cloud your judgment and make it difficult to accept yourself for how you are. Self-love will benefit not only yourself but also people and other women around you. Women who build each other up instead of tearing each other down are my idea of great feminists and the type of feminist I strive to be. The happier you are will reflect your attitude towards life and other women. Women are stronger when they work together and show support for one another. The readings I have compiled for this section emphasize the importance of self-acceptance. It is beneficial to be selfish for yourself and take time to prioritize rest and activities that make you happy. Pressures from the media can make it difficult to fit into what society believes the standards are for women, "one of the best guides to how to be self-loving is to give ourselves the love we are often dreaming about receiving from others" (hooks, 2000, p. 67). We cannot expect to receive the love we wish to have without loving ourselves first. All the pieces included in this section touched me and helped develop my definition of a feminist.





Internal Readings





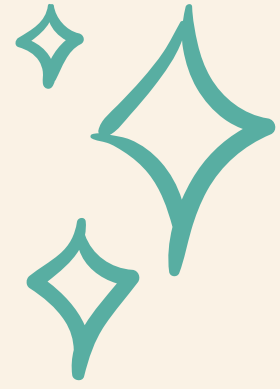
Womanist by Alice Walker
Published in 1983
2016





Being Real: An Introduction
by Rebecca Walker
Published in 1995
2016





External Readings





**The Radical Politics of Self-love
and Self-care
by Soojin Pate
Published in 2014**



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The Radical Politics of Self-Love and Self-Care

By *Guest Contributor* on April 30, 2014

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By **SooJin Pate**



When most people think about love, it is usually a feeling that flows outward towards some person or some thing: “I love my mom,” “I love chocolate,” or “I love my partner.”

This is not the kind of love I think of when I think about the radical possibilities of love. In a society that socializes women (especially Third World women and women of color) to put the needs and desires of everyone else ahead of their own, this kind of love that flows outward can leave those most in need of loving consideration in the dust. Literally. Women of color feminists like Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, bell hooks, and June Jordan point out how the various racist, heterosexist, capitalist, and patriarchal forces that organize our society wreak havoc on the minds, bodies, and souls of women of color and Third World women. Indeed, racism and heterosexism kills. It not only kills dreams, but it also kills bodies.

But there is a salve, an elixir to the poison of the –isms that target our bodies and souls. That healing medicine is self-love. Love, redefined as self-love, has the power to manifest dreams, to heal broken spirits, to rejuvenate fatigued bodies. And when self-love is expressed through self-care, miracles can happen.

Living in a society that constantly marginalizes you, invalidates your experiences and emotions, and fosters insecurity, it becomes an uphill battle to love yourself. Based on the messages that we receive from all corners of society (from politics to economics, from media to schools), we are taught to hate ourselves. To affirm, value, and validate yourself—to love yourself—amidst this daily onslaught of disparaging messages is not only political but also radical. It is radical because you’re not supposed to survive. It is radical because you’re not supposed to exceed the boundaries and limitations that society has set for you. It is radical because you’re not supposed to see self-love

and self-care as worthwhile practices.

But when you prioritize your needs, your feelings, and your desires ahead of others, that is precisely what happens: you find yourself worthy and deserving of care. The goodness that you pour to others becomes rerouted inward to your own self. Love turned inward heals the scrapes and wounds you've accumulated through daily living. Love turned inward weaves a cocoon of protection, where you can recharge, rejuvenate, and restore. Love turned inward conjures a reservoir where you can tap into your own power and manifest the highest expression of yourself.

So what does this look like? How can you tap into your own power *every* day? Here are some ideas to keep you grounded in self-love on a daily basis.

How to Take Care of Yourself

Daily Affirmations

At every turn, there are external forces vying for your attention. Living in a media-ridden, technology-driven society, messages from the outside world seek to occupy our minds. In addition, we have voices that are not our own (e.g., family members, friends, intimate partners, strangers, supervisors, etc.), trying to control what we think, how we think, and how to respond to what we think. Oftentimes, their “advice” and “feedback” act as barriers that limit us from achieving our full capacity. Their words of caution or flat out rejection of our ideas form a dam inside us, blocking our ability to dream and imagine otherwise. It is precisely because of these outside forces that usurp our thoughts and feelings that we must affirm and validate ourselves on a daily basis.

Daily affirmations counter the messages that disparage us and cause us to doubt ourselves. These affirmations can be any phrase that empowers you. Sometimes, the simpler the sentiment, the more powerful it is. For example, a friend of mine created this affirmation, “I am loveable.” Another simple yet powerful affirmation: “I am beautiful just the way I am.”

As a women of color professor, I have been “presumed incompetent” by administration, staff, faculty, and students over the years simply because of the body I inhabit. To resist internalizing this message, I created an affirmation to stop the process of internalized oppression in its tracks: “I am worthy of speaking my truth.” Here’s another one I created that helps me endure the daily cuts and bruises from institutional racism and sexism: “I don’t need the system to validate me anymore. I can validate my own self.”

The purpose of daily affirmations is to create a “No Trespassing Zone” in your mind and energy field that blocks out negative messages that harm and sap your spirit. Customize a phrase or saying that speaks to your own particular history, experience, or situation. You know what combination of words will best empower you. So begin writing today.

Daily Goals

Every day, we wake up with things to do. Sometimes our to-do list is in our head or written down. Sometimes our to-do list is so engrained in us that we go on autopilot the moment the alarm goes off. We take the time to help other people achieve their goals on a daily basis—whether we are meeting the goals of the company we work for, helping our children meet their educational goals, or fulfilling the expectations that go unspoken within our relationships. We put energy into fulfilling the goals of others all the time. When do you make time for your own goals? Setting daily goals for yourself that center your needs and desires is another act of self-love and self-care.

I have struggled for years with the concept of self-care. When I first heard the phrase, my colonized mind immediately thought, “That’s so selfish!” After realizing that my response was a reflection of my socialization in patriarchy, I began to let the idea of self-care penetrate my mind and body. In so doing, other questions emerged: What is self-care? How do you do it? What makes feel rejuvenated? What helps me get out of my funk? In answering these questions, I began to identify

activities that made me feel like I was being cared for. From this list, I created daily goals that have also doubled as my daily affirmations. Here they are:

I take good care of myself by journaling every night.

I take good care of myself by doing daily affirmations—in the morning and at night.

I take good care of myself by identifying ten things I'm proud of and grateful for every day.

I take good care of myself by sticking to these goals.

Since January 1, 2014, I have been doing all four of these things. I haven't missed a day. Even when I was sick. And I have never felt more grounded or peaceful in my life—despite the fact that I'm about to lose my job in two months with no future prospects in sight. Some days are harder than others. To be sure, after a twelve-hour workday dealing with institutional racism, the last thing I want to do at 11:30 p.m. is journal and make a list of ten things I'm proud of and grateful for. But I do. And here's why. On the days when I feel especially tired and down, I pull out my magic trick. Here it is:

I envision driving home on a raining night. I see a child standing in the middle of the road, all alone and shivering from the wet cold. Do I stop and help the child? Or do I swerve around the child and drive by? If I don't journal and make that gratitude/pride list and go through my nightly affirmations,

I am leaving that child alone in the rain. If I do those things, then I am scooping up that child and taking care of her. I haven't abandoned her yet. And in so doing, I haven't abandoned myself.

This mental trick works like a charm because I created a scenario in which I could never drive by that child and, thus, *not* take care of myself.

So make a specific goal for yourself. The keyword here is *specific*. It's not effective to say, "I'm going to take care of myself," or "I'm going to exercise." Be specific about when, how, and how often. Also, it's more empowering to frame the goal in a positive way; begin with "I am..." rather than "I am not..." For example, "I am not going to eat sugar today" could be rephrased into "I am going to eat whole foods at every meal." Then after you write down your goal(s), create a mental trick that will keep you on track in times of fatigue, depression, guilt, or sadness. You need to plan for a "bad" day because you will have one. So be proactive and create a mind game that you can access on those days you feel down. Conjure up a situation in which the only choice you can make is to take care of yourself. Only you know what that scenario is, so customize the scene to maximize its effectiveness in pulling at your heartstrings.

Practice Empowering Interpretations

Because the various -isms in our society have led to oppressive conditions for historically marginalized communities, it is easy to let painful circumstances and events determine our attitudes and beliefs about each other, ourselves, and our lives. While there are many things that we cannot control, what we can control is our interpretations of and responses to the daily assaults of life.

But first, we need to distinguish fact from fiction. According to personal transformation expert Debbie Ford, facts are events observed from the perspective of an outsider; it is observation without judgment. Fiction is the story we create about the fact. And oftentimes, the story we create reflects unresolved emotions from our past (e.g., pain, fear, hurt, guilt, etc.). Here's an example from my own life.

Fact: I have been unable to secure a permanent academic position as a professor.

Fiction: Rejection. The story of my life. Why am I constantly rejected? I guess I'm not as smart as I think I am. I am such a failure.

This is the fiction that I've been carrying with me for nearly six years. Given this story, you can imagine the shame I have suffered, year after year, applying to academic jobs to no avail. Unfortunately, this fiction is also the story that many unemployed or underemployed Ph.D.s tell themselves. I know that I'm not the only one suffering in this job market, but this fact doesn't make me feel any better.

What did make me feel better was transforming my fiction into an empowering interpretation. Rather than allowing my fiction to determine my reality, I created an empowering reinterpretation of the fact. Ford recommends that you create three new interpretations of whatever seemingly negative event you are experiencing. Then choose the one that best lifts away the heaviness. Going through this exercise, I chose this new interpretation:

Empowering Interpretation: You thought the Ph.D. was about getting a tenure-track job and being a professor for the rest of your life. You thought wrong. The skills you acquired are actually for something that is more significant and rewarding than an academic life can offer.

This new empowering interpretation has become a daily affirmation I tell myself twice a day. And this interpretation is why I feel at peace about my impending unemployment. It gives me the strength I need to get through each day, hopeful about what the future will hold. I have no idea what will come after May, but if I continue to do my work (to take care of myself, to love myself despite my circumstances), I know that I will be OK. And it is this knowledge that makes me feel secure rather than fearful of the unknown.

Reinterpreting seemingly negative events and experiences into something positive and empowering is an act of self-love we can access every day. We can choose to have either disempowering or empowering interpretations of life events. If we choose the empowering interpretation, we give ourselves the gift of validation, acceptance, generosity, and hope. If we choose the disempowering interpretation, we feed ourselves shame, insecurity, fear, and despair—which can lead to abusing our selves and others.

When we choose to reinterpret painful or difficult events into something that is empowering, we are able to access peace in moments of discord and stability in times of instability. Empowering interpretations have the power to make you feel grounded when you feel the ground shifting beneath your feet. Empowering interpretations have the power to make you feel like everything will be OK when your present circumstances suggest otherwise.

So take a moment to identify a situation that is sucking the life out of you. Then answer these two questions: What is the fact of that situation? What is the story (fiction) that you have created around that fact? Now create three statements that reinterpret that situation into something empowering. Reflect on the three statements and choose the one that makes you feel most empowered. Write this statement on a post-it and meditate on it at least twice a day until it becomes intuitive in your body and soul.

It is powerful to know that your circumstances don't have to define you. We can determine how we perceive the various things that happen to us in a day. You don't have to be controlled by the various forces that try to diminish or destroy your quality of life. Rather, you can define your own self and the circumstances you experience by taking control of how you interpret the daily events of life. You might find that in doing so, what appeared like the worst thing could very well be the thing that will lead you to the highest expression of yourself. After all, in creating our own interpretations, we are able to construct our own reality.

An Invitation

Let me be blunt. Our world does not love you or me: our world does not love women of color, immigrants of color, indigenous peoples, queer folks, trans* folks, the disabled and old. Our world doesn't love those who exceed the normative categories of race, gender, class, sexuality, religion,

age, or ability. Given this reality, it’s imperative that you practice self-love on a daily basis.

And so, I invite you to reconsider love as self-love. Think about all the ways in which you support, value, and give of your time to others. How would your life be different if you turned that energy onto yourself? Make yourself the target of loving care today and every day. And witness the transformative, healing, and magical power of self-love and self-care.

SooJin Pate is a writer and educator who is dedicated to praxis that centers the lives and experiences of historically marginalized peoples. Since receiving her Ph.D. in American Studies, she has taught courses on critical race theory, multi-ethnic American literature, and U.S. history and culture at various colleges and universities in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota. She is the author of *From Orphan to Adoptee: U.S. Empire and Genealogies of Korean Adoption* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014). Her writings on African American literature and Korean adoptee film and literature have appeared in academic journals and edited volumes. Her most recent article appeared in The Chronicle of Higher Education, where she discussed her decision to leave academe. She is currently working on a book that explores issues of mothering and raising a nonwhite daughter in a white supremacist society.

A portion of this article was originally published as part of a larger story in The Mac Weekly, Macalester College’s independent student newspaper. <http://themacsweekly.com/2014/02/bringing-sexy-mac-the-radical-politics-of-self-love/>



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All About Love: New Visions

by bell hooks

Chapter Four: Commitment: Let Love Be Love in Me Published in 2000



Four

COMMITMENT: LET LOVE BE LOVE IN ME

Commitment is inherent in any genuinely loving relationship. Anyone who is truly concerned for the spiritual growth of another knows, consciously or instinctively, that he or she can significantly foster that growth only through a relationship of constancy.

-M. SCOTT PECK

COMMITMENT TO TRUTH telling lays the groundwork for the openness and honesty that is the heartbeat of love. When we can see ourselves as we truly are and accept ourselves, we build the necessary foundation for self-love. We have all heard the maxim “If you do not love yourself, you will be unable to love anyone else.” It sounds good. Yet more often than not we feel some degree of confusion when we hear this statement. The confusion arises because most people who think they are not lovable have this perception because at some point in their lives they were socialized to see themselves as unlovable by forces outside their control. We are not born knowing how to love anyone, either ourselves or somebody else. However, we are born able to respond to care. As we grow we can give and receive attention, affection, and joy. Whether we learn how to love ourselves and others will depend on the presence of a loving environment.

Self-love cannot flourish in isolation. It is no easy task to be self-loving. Simple axioms that make self-love sound easy only make matters worse. It leaves many people wondering why, if it is so easy, they continue to be trapped by feelings of low self-esteem or self-hatred. Using a working definition of love that tells us it is the action we take on behalf of our own or another's spiritual growth provides us with a beginning blueprint for working on the issue of self-love. When we see love as a combination of trust, commitment, care, respect, knowledge, and responsibility, we can work on developing these qualities or, if they are already a part of who we are, we can learn to extend them to ourselves.

Many people find it helpful to critically examine the past, particularly childhood, to chart their internalization of messages that they were not worthy, not enough, that they were crazy, stupid, monstrous, and so on. Simply learning how we have acquired feelings of worthlessness rarely enables us to change things; it is usually only one stage in the process. I, like so many other people, have found it useful to examine negative thinking and behavioral patterns learned in childhood, particularly those shaping my sense of self and identity. However, this process alone did not ensure self-recovery. It was not enough. I share this because it is far too easy to stay stuck in simply describing, telling one's story over and over again, which

can be a way of holding on to grief about the past or holding on to a narrative that places blame on others.

While it is important for us to understand the origins of fragile self-esteem, it is also possible to bypass this stage (identifying when and where we received negative socialization) and still create a foundation for building self-love. Individuals who bypass this stage tend to move on to the next stage, which is actively introducing into our lives constructive life-affirming thought patterns and behavior. Whether a person remembers the details of being abused is not important. When the consequence of that abuse is a feeling of worthlessness, they can still engage in a process of self-recovery by finding ways to affirm self-worth.

The wounded heart learns self-love by first overcoming low self-esteem. Nathaniel Branden's lengthy work *Six Pillars of Self-Esteem* highlights important dimensions of self-esteem, "the practice of living consciously, self-acceptance, self-responsibility, self-assertiveness, living purposefully and the practice of personal integrity." Living consciously means we think critically about ourselves and the world we live in. We dare to ask ourselves the basic questions who, what, when, where, and why. Answering these questions usually provides us with a level of awareness that enlightens. Branden contends: "To live consciously means to seek to be aware of everything that bears on our actions, purposes, values, and goals—to the best

of our ability, whatever that ability may be—and to behave in accordance with that which we see and know.” To live consciously we have to engage in critical reflection about the world we live in and know most intimately.

Usually it is through reflection that individuals who have not accepted themselves make the choice to stop listening to negative voices, within and outside the self, that constantly reject and devalue them. Affirmations work for anyone striving for self-acceptance. Although I had for years been interested in therapeutic modes of healing and self-help, affirmations always seemed to me a bit corny. My sister, who was then working as a therapist in the field of chemical dependency, encouraged me to give affirmations a try to see if I would experience any concrete changes in my outlook. I wrote affirmations relevant to my daily life and began to repeat them in the morning as part of my daily meditations. At the top of my list was the declaration: “I’m breaking with old patterns and moving forward with my life.” I not only found them to be a tremendous energy boost—a way to kick off the day by my accentuating the positive—I also found it useful to repeat them during the day if I felt particularly stressed or was falling into the abyss of negative thinking. Affirmations helped restore my emotional equilibrium.

Self-acceptance is hard for many of us. There is a voice inside that is constantly judging, first ourselves and then others. That voice enjoys the indulgence of an endless nega-

tive critique. Because we have learned to believe negativity is more realistic, it appears more real than any positive voice. Once we begin to replace negative thinking with positive thinking, it becomes utterly clear that, far from being realistic, negative thinking is absolutely disabling. When we are positive we not only accept and affirm ourselves, we are able to affirm and accept others.

The more we accept ourselves, the better prepared we are to take responsibility in all areas of our lives. Commenting on this third pillar of self-esteem, Branden defines self-responsibility as the willingness “to take responsibility for my actions and the attainment of my goals . . . for my life and well-being.” Taking responsibility does not mean that we deny the reality of institutionalized injustice. For example, racism, sexism, and homophobia all create barriers and concrete incidents of discrimination. Simply taking responsibility does not mean that we can prevent discriminatory acts from happening. But we can choose how we respond to acts of injustice. Taking responsibility means that in the face of barriers we still have the capacity to invent our lives, to shape our destinies in ways that maximize our well-being. Every day we practice this shape shifting to cope with realities we cannot easily change.

Many women are married to men who were unsupportive when they decided to further their educations. Most of these women did not leave the men in their lives, they engaged in constructive strategies of resistance.

One woman I spoke with was inhibited because her husband worked in a plant and she felt uncomfortable having more education than he did. Yet she wanted to reenter the workforce and needed an advanced degree to do so. She made the choice to take responsibility for her needs and desires, believing it would also enhance the well-being of her family. Returning to work boosted her self-esteem and changed the passive-aggressive rage and depression that had developed as a consequence of her isolation and stagnation. Making this decision and finding ways to realize it was not an easy process, however. Her husband and children were often disgruntled when her independence forced them to accept more household responsibility. In the long run, everyone benefited. And it goes without saying that these changes boosted her self-esteem in ways that showed her how self-love made it possible to extend herself in a constructive way to others. She was happier and so were those around her.

In order to make these changes she had to make use of another vital aspect of self-esteem, "self-assertiveness," defined by Branden as "the willingness to stand up for myself, to be who I am openly, to treat myself with respect in all human encounters." Since many of us were shamed in childhood either in our families of origin or in school settings, a learned pattern of going along with the program and not making a fuss is the course of action we most frequently choose as a way to avoid conflict. As chil-

dren, conflict was often the setting for put-downs and humiliation, the place where we were shamed. Our attempts at self-assertion failed as an adequate defense. Many of us learned that passivity lessened the possibility of attack.

Sexist socialization teaches females that self-assertiveness is a threat to femininity. Accepting this faulty logic lays the groundwork for low self-esteem. The fear of being self-assertive usually surfaces in women who have been trained to be good girls or dutiful daughters. In our childhood home my brother was never punished for talking back. Asserting his opinions was a positive sign of manhood. When my sisters and I voiced our opinions we were told by our parenting adults that this was negative and undesirable behavior. We were told, especially by our dad, that female self-assertion was not feminine. We did not listen to these warnings. Even though ours was a patriarchal household, the fact that females far outnumbered the two males, my dad and my brother, made it safe for us to speak our minds, to talk back. Luckily, by the time we were young adults the feminist movement had come along and validated that having a voice and being self-assertive was necessary for building self-esteem.

One reason women have traditionally gossiped more than men is because gossip has been a social interaction wherein women have felt comfortable stating what they really think and feel. Often, rather than asserting what they think at the appropriate moment, women say what

they think will please the listener. Later, they gossip, stating at that moment their true thoughts. This division between a false self invented to please others and a more authentic self need not exist when we cultivate positive self-esteem.

THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT really helped women understand the personal power that is gained through positive self-assertiveness. Gloria Steinem's best-seller *Revolution from Within* cautioned women about the danger of achieving success without doing the necessary groundwork for self-love and self-esteem. She found that achieving women who still suffered internalized self-hatred invariably acted out in ways that undermined their success. And if the self-hating successful person did not act out she may have lived a life of private desperation, unable to tell anyone success does not, in fact, reverse crippled self-esteem. To complicate matters, women may feel the need to pretend that they are self-loving, to assert confidence and power to the outside world, and as a consequence they feel psychologically conflicted and disengaged from their true being. Shamed by the feeling that they can never let anyone know who they really are, they may choose isolation and aloneness for fear of being unmasked.

This is true of men as well. When powerful men reach the height of personal achievement in their careers, they

often undermine all they have worked for by engaging in self-destructive behavior. Men who reside at the bottom of our nation's economic totem pole do this and so do men at the top. President Clinton engaged in deceitful behavior, betraying both his personal commitments to his family as well as his political commitment to be a paragon of American values to the people of this country. He did so when his popularity was at an all-time high. Having spent much of his life achieving against the odds, his actions expose a fundamental flaw in his self-esteem. Although he is a white male, Ivy League-educated and economically well off, privileged, with all the accompanying perks, his irresponsible actions were a way of unmasking, of showing to the world that he really was not the "good guy" he was pretending to be. He created the context for a public shaming that no doubt mirrors moments of childhood shaming when some authority figure in his life made him feel he was worthless and that he would never be worthy no matter what he did. Anyone who suffers from low self-esteem can learn by his example. If we succeed without confronting and changing shaky foundations of low self-esteem rooted in contempt and hatred, we will falter along the way.

IT IS NO accident that "living purposely" is the sixth element of self-esteem. According to Branden it entails

taking responsibility for consciously creating goals, identifying the actions necessary to achieve them, making sure our behavior is in alignment with our goals, and paying attention to the outcome of our actions so that we see whether they are leading us where we want to go. Most people are concerned about living purposefully when it comes to choosing the work we do. Unfortunately, many workers feel they have very little freedom of choice when it comes to work. Most people do not grow up learning that the work we choose to do will have a major impact on our capacity to be self-loving.

Work occupies much of our time. Doing work we hate assaults our self-esteem and self-confidence. Yet most workers cannot do the work they love. But we can all enhance our capacity to live purposely by learning how to experience satisfaction in whatever work we do. We find that satisfaction by giving any job total commitment. When I had a teaching job I hated (the kind of job where you long to be sick so you have an excuse for not going to work), the only way I could ease the severity of my pain was to give my absolute best. This strategy enabled me to live purposely. Doing a job well, even if we do not enjoy what we are doing, means that we leave it with a feeling of well-being, our self-esteem intact. That self-esteem aids us when we go in search of a job that can be more fulfilling.

Throughout my life I have endeavored to not only do work I enjoy but to work with individuals I respect, like,

or love. When I first declared my desire to work in a loving environment, friends acted as though I had truly lost my mind. To them, love and work did not go together. But I was convinced that I would work better in a work environment shaped by an ethic of love. Today, as the Buddhist concept of “right livelihood” is more widely understood, more people embrace the belief that work that enhances our spiritual well-being strengthens our capacity to love. And when we work with love we create a loving working environment. Whenever I enter an office, I can immediately sense by the overall atmosphere and mood whether the workers like what they do. Marsha Sinetar writes about this concept in her book *Do What You Love, the Money Will Follow* as a way to encourage readers to take the risk of choosing work they care about and therefore learning through experience the meaning of right livelihood.

While there are many meaningful insights in Sinetar’s book, it is equally true that we can do what we love and money will not always follow. Although this is utterly disappointing, it can also offer us the experiential awareness that doing what you love may be more important than making money. Sometimes, as has been the case in my life, I have had to work at a job that is less than enjoyable in order to have the means to do the work I love. At one point in a very mixed job career I worked as a cook in a club. I hated the noise and the smoke. But working nights left me free to write in the day, to do the work I truly

wanted to do. Each experience enhanced the value of the other. My nighttime work helped me relish the quiet serenity of my day and enjoy the alone time so essential to writing.

Whenever possible, it is best to seek work we love and to avoid work we hate. But sometimes we learn what we need to avoid by doing it. Individuals who are able to be economically self-sufficient doing what they love are blessed. Their experience serves as a beacon to all of us, showing us the ways right livelihood can strengthen self-love, ensuring peace and contentment in the lives we lead beyond work.

Often, workers believe that if their home life is good, it does not matter if they feel dehumanized and exploited on the job. Many jobs undermine self-love because they require that workers constantly prove their worth. Individuals who are dissatisfied and miserable on the job bring this negative energy home. Clearly, much of the violence in domestic life, both physical and verbal abuse, is linked to job misery. We can encourage friends and loved ones to move toward greater self-love by supporting them in any effort to leave work that assaults their well-being.

Folks who are out of the paid workforce, women and men who do unpaid work in the home, as well as all other happily unemployed people, are often doing what they want to do. While they are not rewarded by an income, their day-to-day life often provides more satisfaction than it would if they worked at a high-paying job in a stressful

and dehumanizing environment. Satisfied homemakers, both women and the rare men who have chosen to stay home, have a lot to teach us all about the joy that comes from self-determination. They are their own bosses, setting the terms of their labor and the measure of their reward. More than any of us, they have the freedom to develop right livelihood.

Most of us did not learn when we were young that our capacity to be self-loving would be shaped by the work we do and whether that work enhances our well-being. No wonder then that we have become a nation where so many workers feel bad. Jobs depress the spirit. Rather than enhancing self-esteem, work is perceived as a drag, a negative necessity. Bringing love into the work environment can create the necessary transformation that can make any job we do, no matter how menial, a place where workers can express the best of themselves. When we work with love we renew the spirit; that renewal is an act of self-love, it nurtures our growth. It's not what you do but how you do it.

In *The Knitting Sutra*, Susan Lydon describes the labor of knitting as a freely chosen craft that enhances her awareness of the value of right livelihood, sharing: "What I found in this tiny domestic world of knitting is endless; it runs broader and deeper than anyone might imagine. It is infinite and seemingly inexhaustible in its capacity to inspire, excite, and provoke creative insight." Lydon sees

the world that we have traditionally thought of as “woman’s work” as a place to discover godliness through the act of creating domestic bliss. A blissful household is one where love can flourish.

Creating domestic bliss is especially useful for individuals living alone who are just learning to be self-loving. When we intentionally strive to make our homes places where we are ready to give and receive love, every object we place there enhances our well-being. I create themes for my different homes. My flat in the city has the theme “love’s meeting place.” As a small-town person moving to a big city I found that I needed my environment to truly feel like a sanctuary. Since my one-bedroom flat is so much smaller than the places I had been accustomed to living in, I decided to take only objects I truly loved—the things I felt I could not do without. It is amazing how much stuff you can just let go of. My country place has a desert theme. I call it “*soledad hermosa*,” beautiful solitude. I go there to be quiet and still and to experience the divine, to be renewed.

OF ALL THE chapters for this book, this one was the most difficult to write. When I talked with friends and acquaintances about self-love I was surprised to see how many of us feel troubled by the notion, as though the very idea implies too much narcissism or selfishness. We all need

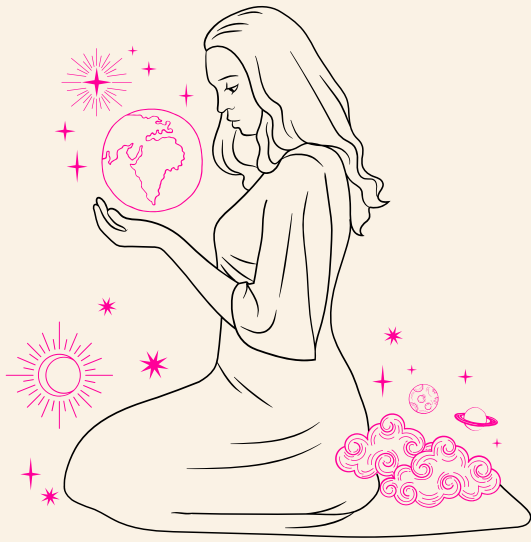
to rid ourselves of misguided notions about self-love. We need to stop fearfully equating it with self-centeredness and selfishness.

Self-love is the foundation of our loving practice. Without it our other efforts to love fail. Giving ourselves love we provide our inner being with the opportunity to have the unconditional love we may have always longed to receive from someone else. Whenever we interact with others, the love we give and receive is always necessarily conditional. Although it is not impossible, it is very difficult and rare for us to be able to extend unconditional love to others, largely because we cannot exercise control over the behavior of someone else and we cannot predict or utterly control our responses to their actions. We can, however, exercise control over our own actions. We can give ourselves the unconditional love that is the grounding for sustained acceptance and affirmation. When we give this precious gift to ourselves, we are able to reach out to others from a place of fulfillment and not from a place of lack.

One of the best guides to how to be self-loving is to give ourselves the love we are often dreaming about receiving from others. There was a time when I felt lousy about my over-forty body, saw myself as too fat, too this, or too that. Yet I fantasized about finding a lover who would give me the gift of being loved as I am. It is silly, isn't it, that I would dream of someone else offering to me the

acceptance and affirmation I was withholding from myself. This was a moment when the maxim “You can never love anybody if you are unable to love yourself” made clear sense. And I add, “Do not expect to receive the love from someone else you do not give yourself.”

In an ideal world we would all learn in childhood to love ourselves. We would grow, being secure in our worth and value, spreading love wherever we went, letting our light shine. If we did not learn self-love in our youth, there is still hope. The light of love is always in us, no matter how cold the flame. It is always present, waiting for the spark to ignite, waiting for the heart to awaken and call us back to the first memory of being the life force inside a dark place waiting to be born—waiting to see the light.



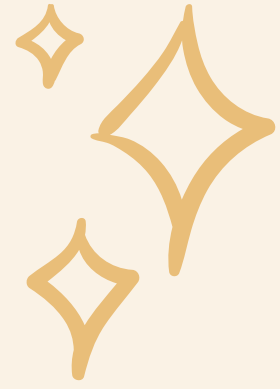
Protecting Mother Earth Ecofeminism



In this section my main focus was ecofeminism. Throughout this class, I found myself coming back to the concept of ecofeminism. This concept covers many different oppressions a woman may feel in their lifetime, "many ecofeminists theorists argue that there is no primary force of oppression, as all oppressions are related and reinforce each other" (Smith, 1997, p. 289). Ecofeminism stuck with me as many women can feel the effects of different oppressions. Women of colour especially feel the effects of climate change and the exploitation of our lands. Indigenous women treat the land with respect and do not ever take the materials the land provides us for granted. Our male-dominated society has taken advantage of the raw materials they can extract from the Earth. Women have been coined as the gender who stays home to take care of the unpaid labour, "Women lost their economic base and came to be valued mainly for their female attributes of child bearing and providing sexual gratification" (Tinker, 1975, p. 437). Consumerism has taken over our world and will continue to exploit the land as well as the Global South. The Global North holds all responsibility for the state it has left the Global South in.

I concluded my section with two Instagram posts from the account, @feminist. The posts stood out to me and proves how consumerism has taken over the minds of youth. Society does not pay enough attention to the Earth and nature while development continues to exploit natural resources and the Global South.





Internal Readings



Ecofeminism Through An Anticolonial Framework

By Andy Smith

Published in 1997

2016





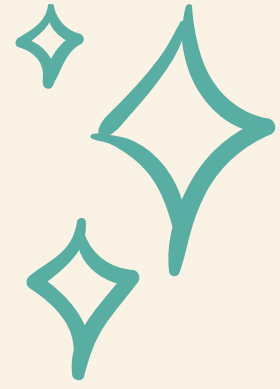
The Adverse Impact of Development on Women

By Irene Tinker

Published in 1975

2016





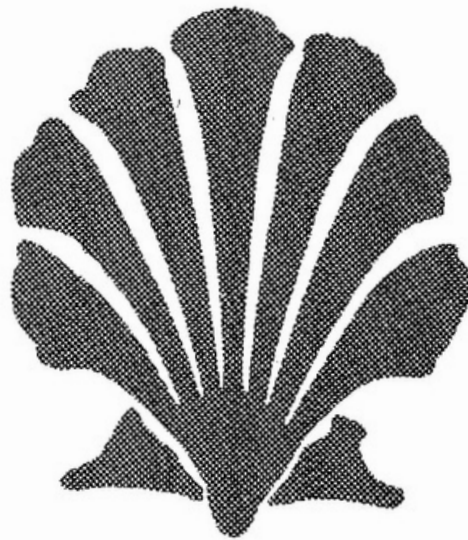
External Readings



**The Death of Nature: Women,
Ecology, and Scientific
Revolution**

**Chapter 6: Production,
Reproduction, and the Female
By Carolyn Merchant
Published in 1989**





Production, Reproduction, and the Female

The new economic and scientific order emerging in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe would be of lasting significance for both nature and women, for at its ideological core were the concepts of passivity and control in the spheres of production and reproduction. Disorderly female nature would soon submit to the controls of the experimental method and technological advance, and middle- and upper-class women would gradually lose their roles as active partners in economic life, becoming passive dependents in both production and reproduction.

In hierarchical society, women's economic and social roles were defined by the class to which they belonged through birth or marriage. In the lower orders of society, peasant and farm wives were integral parts of a productive family unit. Married women carried a heavy burden of labor—childbearing and childrearing, gardening, cooking, cheese and soap making, spinning and weaving, beer brewing, and healing. Unmarried women worked as servants in another household, as unskilled labor in mowing, reaping, and sheepshear-

ing, or at spinning and weaving. Urban women worked in the crafts or trades, owned shops, were members of craft guilds, and even occasionally worked at construction and ditch digging. At the upper levels of society, noblewomen were busy supervising the economic activities of the estate, owning and managing property, and keeping accounts.

Within preindustrial capitalism, women's economic roles became more restrictive and their domestic lives came to be more rigidly defined by their sex as women, rather than by their class. The ideal developing for the upper-class and well-to-do bourgeois wife was a life of leisure, symbolizing the success of her husband's economic ventures. In countries on the cutting edge of the capitalist advance (such as Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and, as will be elaborated in this chapter, England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), the contraction and redefinition of women's productive and domestic roles was consistent with changes in the ideology of sexuality.¹

In Renaissance Italy (ca. 1350–1530), where a mercantile economy had developed much earlier than in northern Europe, men's public lives were expanding, while urban women's were contracting into domesticity. Many medieval Italian girls had been raised in the court of an educated noblewoman—which functioned as a cultural center in determining social values and mores—but in the Renaissance their education emphasized morality, chastity, and readings in the newly recovered classics of Greece and Rome. This shift presupposed male public and female domestic spheres. Medieval courtly love had been based on a knight's service to a lady who gave him her love in mutual exchange, combining genuine sexuality and passion with Christian love; his Renaissance counterpart loved a platonic ideal whom he seemed to serve, but who in reality was a chaste and passive subordinate.

In seventeenth-century England, significant changes were taking place in the productive work of women in domestic life, in the home, in family industries producing and selling foods for the local market, in early capitalist industries (such as agriculture, textile manufacture, and the retail trades), and in professional employment. The direction of the change was to limit and curtail the married woman's role as a partner, so that she became more dependent on her husband. In the sphere of reproduction, women midwives

were losing their monopoly over assisting at childbirth to male doctors. Simultaneously, the female's passive role in biological generation was being reasserted by physicians and natural philosophers. The witch and her counterpart, the midwife, were at the symbolic center of a struggle for control over matter and nature essential to new social relations in the spheres of production and reproduction.

WOMEN AND PRODUCTION. Aristocratic women of the Elizabethan era managed the business affairs of their estates during their husband's absence and after his death; yet Restoration "ladies of quality" often had "nothing better to do, but to glorify God and to benefit their neighbors," the expectation that women should be trained in business affairs having by then markedly decreased.

Under subsistence agriculture, the wives of yeomen and husbanders had participated in the family farming operation, the profits of which benefited and were shared by the whole family. But as yeomen became wealthy agricultural improvers and market farmers, hiring more servants and day laborers, their wives withdrew from active participation in daily farm work, devoting more time to pleasure. These changes reduced the married woman's ability to support herself and her children on her husband's death.

Male day laborers in the new capitalist agricultural operations were completely dependent on the wages earned for their labor to support their families, having no land on which to grow family food. A wife's earnings, if she worked outside the home, were considerably less than her husband's, because her capacity for outside employment was reduced by the number of small children to be cared for at home, and the health and nutrition of the family suffered as a result. If her husband deserted her, a mother encumbered by children was unable to engage in sufficient productive work to support her family.

The English export market for woolen goods was one of the earliest and most important capitalist industries. Women played no role as clothiers or wool merchants, and little mention is made of them as assistants in the business ventures of their husbands, their employment being confined to wage work, primarily in the spinning branch of the industry. Women bought wool and, when not occupied in agricultural production, spun it at home and sold the yarn

on the market. If, however, a wife was forced to work outside the home, the wages she earned were insufficient to provide both food and clothing for her and her children, although an unmarried spinster could support herself. By 1511, women had been forbidden to weave, because strength was needed to operate the looms. A widow, however, was allowed to continue the weaving industry of her husband, directing the servants employed by him as long as she remained unmarried. In addition to spinning, women also participated in the bleaching and fulling operations. In periods of depression in the industry, fathers all too frequently deserted their families to seek work elsewhere or to become "masterless" vagabonds, leaving women with their children as the objects of charity.

In the retail trades, women fared well as long as the family operated as a productive unit, the wife helping in her husband's business and taking it over if widowed. But as the trades and crafts began to adopt the capitalistic mode of employing wage workers, the wives of master craftsmen had less opportunity for participation, while the wives of journeymen, who had hitherto received guild privileges through marriage, were now excluded from the new journeymen's organizations, which sought to protect the man's position vis à vis the master. These wives either became more dependent on their husbands, who were said to "keep them," or were forced to enter the marketplace on their own. They were able to become apprentices in women's trades such as hat making and cloak making, but as a group gradually lost ground in trades such as baking, butchering, fishmongering, and brewing, as rules and statutes began to limit the numbers of persons engaged. By the end of the seventeenth century, women had lost control of the brewing trade, an occupation that in earlier times they had monopolized.

Until the seventeenth century, midwifery was the exclusive province of women: it was improper for men to be present at such a private and mysterious occurrence as the delivery of a child. Midwives were professionals, usually well trained through apprenticeship and well paid for their services to both rural and urban, rich and poor women. Yet no organization of midwives existed that could set standards to prevent untrained or poverty-stricken women from taking up the practice. Moreover, women were excluded from attending universities and medical schools where anatomy and medicine were being taught.²

Seventeenth-century London midwives, rightly or wrongly, considered themselves a responsible, well-trained group of women. But by 1634, the midwife profession was being threatened by the licensing of male surgeons who wished to practice midwifery with forceps, a technology that would be available only to licensed physicians. The midwives had complained to the bishop of London that such a practice was often marked by violence and that men had insufficient experience with deliveries. The Chamberlen family, which had invented the forceps, was attempting to establish educational and legal restrictions on their use. Earlier, in 1616, the Drs. Peter Chamberlen, elder and younger, had tried to form a corporation of midwives. The midwives doubted the Chamberlen's ostensible motives to educate and organize them because they feared that the latter would attempt to assume sole licensing authority. They favored the older delivery methods of which they had knowledge and called the new forceps method a violent practice. Their 1634 petition directed against Peter Chamberlen III stated, "Dr. Chamberlane . . . hath no experience in [midwifery] but by reading. . . . And further Dr. Chamberlane's work and the work belonging to midwives are contrary one to the other, for he delivers none without the use of instruments by extraordinary violence in desperate occasions, which women never practiced nor desired, for they have neither parts nor hands for that art."³

In addition to the Chamberlens, other doctors of the period were sharply critical of the practices of midwives. William Harvey, noted for his discovery of the circulation of the blood, and one of the four censors of the Royal College of Physicians responsible for enforcing the College's monopoly over licensing laws, took issue with some of their methods in his essay "On Parturition" at the end of his *Exercitationes de Generatione Animalium* (On Generation), 1651:

Hence it is that midwives are so much to blame, especially the younger and more meddlesome ones, who make a marvellous pother when they hear the woman cry out with her pains and implore assistance, daubing their hands with oil, and distending the passages, so as not to appear ignorant in their art—giving besides medicines to excite the expulsive powers, and when they would hurry the labor, retarding it and making it unnatural, by leaving behind portions of the membranes, or even of the placenta itself, besides exposing the wretched woman to the air, wearing her out on the labor stool, and making her, in fact, run great risks of life.

In truth, it is far better with the poor, and those who become pregnant by mischance, and are secretly delivered without the aid of a midwife; for the longer birth is retarded the more safely and easily is the process completed.⁴

Harvey's *De Generatione* did not deal extensively with human reproduction, and his examples of difficult births by women were not a significant contribution to the period's inadequate gynecological science. Yet in spite of obvious lacunae in the state of obstetrical knowledge, Harvey's contributions have been eulogized by historians of medicine as the work of a "grand broad intellect which could at the same time teach the profoundest physicians and the most ignorant midwives" and "whose beneficial influence . . . can scarcely be overestimated."⁵

During the 1630s and 1640s, male physicians in addition to Harvey wrote treatises that helped to discredit midwives, contributing to the decline of female midwifery. Male physicians who wrote disparagingly about female practices included Peter Chamberlen the Elder and the Younger, who had petitioned Francis Bacon in 1616 to incorporate the "ignorant midwives"; Peter Chamberlen III, who wrote *A Voice in Rhama: Or the Crie of Women and Children* (1647), probably in retaliation for the midwives' opposition in 1634; Hugh Chamberlen the Elder, Paul Chamberlen, author of *Dr. Chamberlain's Midwives Practice: Or a guide for women in that high concern of conception, breeding and nursing children* (1665); and Percivall Willughby (1596–1685) whose *Observations of Midwifery* praised Harvey's obstetrical directions. Since most historical accounts of midwifery in this period are based on the data supplied by male writers and male midwives—some of whom, like the Chamberlens, had political motives—an accurate assessment of the state of midwifery as a woman's art is difficult to make.⁶

After the middle of the century, English midwives such as Jane Sharp (fl. 1671) and Elizabeth Cellier (fl. 1680), along with medical practitioner Nicolas Culpeper (1616–1654), wrote midwifery handbooks in an attempt to make obstetrical and gynecological training available to women in the profession. In France, a school of midwifery was established where anatomy was taught through dissection, and surgeons examined women apprentices. Yet despite these attempts by a few persons to upgrade and include women in the advancing medical and scientific knowledge of the period, wom-

en began to lose control over midwifery and thus over their own reproductive functions. By the end of the century, childbirth was passing into the hands of male doctors and "man-midwives."⁷

While women's productive roles were decreasing under early capitalism, the beginning of a process that would ultimately transform them from an economic resource for their families' subsistence to a psychic resource for their husbands, the cultural role played by female symbols and principles was also changing. The female world soul, with its lower component, *Natura*, and the nurturing female earth had begun to lose plausibility in a world increasingly influenced by mining technology essential to commercial capitalism. The older organic order of nature and society was breaking up as the new mercantile activities threatened the ideology of natural stratification in society.

Symbolic of these changes were the midwife and the witch. From the perspective of the male, the witch was a symbol of disorder in nature and society, both of which must be brought under control. The midwife symbolized female incompetence in her own natural sphere, reproduction, correctable through a technology invented and controlled by men—the forceps. But from a female perspective, witchcraft represented a form of power by which oppressed lower-class women could retaliate against social injustices, and a source of healing through the use of spirits and the regenerative powers of nature. For women, the midwife symbolized female control over the female reproductive function. But until medical training became available to women and licensing regulations were equalized for both women and men, women had no opportunity to compare the effectiveness of the older, shared traditions of midwifery as an art with the new medical science.

REPRODUCTION AND THE FEMALE. William Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood, published in 1628, is considered one of the outstanding achievements of early modern science. Although Harvey's cosmos and physiology were still infused by vital animistic principles, his analogy of the heart as a pump would soon be incorporated into a mechanistic physiology by René Descartes (1596–1650), Dutch physician Hermann Boerhaave (1668–1738), and French physician and philosopher Julien La Mettrie (1709–

1751). The machine metaphor based on a dualism between body and soul, with the soul as an external operator, contrasted with the older vitalistic view that the body was permeated and enlivened by an animating spirit.⁸ This "incredible machine" (as it was called in a recent television documentary) must therefore be repaired by medical intervention, rather than left to the healing powers of nature.

In addition to his work on blood circulation, Harvey devoted much energy to the subject of biological reproduction, an area influenced by cultural ideology about female roles. Harvey's *On Generation*, was filled with rich metaphor and value-laden phraseology.⁹ When his biological ideas are set in the broader context of the cultural changes of his time, the passive role he assigned to both matter and the female in reproduction is consistent with (although not caused by) the trend toward female passivity in the sphere of industrial production and with the reassertion of the passivity and inertness of matter by the new seventeenth-century mechanical philosophy. Harvey's theory of biological reproduction is compatible with new scientific values based on the control of nature and women integral to the new capitalist modes of production.

Harvey's ideas were formulated during the same period in which the controversies over women's role in society and their declining role in productive work took place in England. He was "Physician Extraordinary" to James I and doctor to Francis Bacon, who, he observed derisively, wrote philosophy like a lord chancellor. After the death of James I, in 1625, Harvey became "Physician Ordinary" to Charles I, who placed the royal deer parks at his disposal to study the generative processes in the doe and the hind. As a royal employee, Harvey identified with the political values of his sovereigns, his sympathies being royalist, at least until 1649 when Charles was beheaded.¹⁰

Ideological assumptions about the female sex permeated English culture during the years in which Harvey was collecting data and writing the *De Generatione*. A middle-class "controversy over women" which raged in Elizabethan England continued to inspire new works on women's nature in the 1630s-1650s. Charles I, who was more cultured than James I, might have allowed women more freedom in education had it not been for the intervention of the Civil War.¹¹

The view of biological generation that guided William Harvey's

experimental work and theoretical interpretations had originated with Aristotle and, as discussed in Chapter 1, supposed that the female contributed the matter, or passive principle, on which the semen, the active male principle, worked in creating the embryo.

Aristotle's association of the male with the perfection of the sphere was emphasized during the medieval and early modern periods. Albertus Magnus agreed that male chicks developed from the more spherical eggs because the sphere was the most perfect figure in solid geometry. Long pointed eggs produced females; the rounder ones produced the stronger more perfect animal, the male. People were advised to eat the long, thin, sweet and more nourishing eggs rather than the hard round ones which contained the yolk of the male.

During the sixteenth century, the theory of female passivity in reproduction became well established. Although some writers followed Galen in assigning both formal and material causes equally to the male and female, even Galen viewed the female as less perfect than the male, because her genitalia did not emerge externally and her "semen" was imperfect. Most sixteenth-century writers sided with Aristotle's theory that the female provided only the matter, while the active principle was attributed to the male semen. Gossip and popular opinion held the male seed to be the chief agent in generation, although the female's cooperation was needed for development of the embryo. Most texts supported the ancient idea that the male embryo was twice as hot and developed twice as quickly as the female. Embryological illustrations showed the female blood along with the semen in an egg-shaped mass in the womb. Harvey's Paduan teacher, Hieronymus Fabricius, maintained in his *Embryological Treatises* (1621) that the sperm never reached the egg. It merely vivified it by an immaterial fecundative faculty. As sole agent and efficient cause, it imparted quality to the egg. The female supplied the nutriment and warmth for the embryo's development. Thus the theory of the man as parent and the woman as incubator formed the prevailing sexual ideology of the latter sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.¹²

Although Harvey's *De Generatione Animalium* dealt primarily with reproduction in the chick and the deer, comparisons to human reproduction were made throughout, and human conception and parturition were discussed in the final chapters. Harvey's work followed Aristotle and Fabricius, in many respects. But whereas Fa-

bricius' work mainly described biological structures and generative processes, Harvey's writings were filled with sexual metaphor.¹³ Although some historians have interpreted Harvey's ideas on generation as a cooperation between sperm and *ovum*, with the egg assuming a newly elevated place of dignity, close attention to his language reveals the influence of cultural sexual biases in his scientific work.¹⁴

Harvey's work on generation led him to differ from Aristotle in assigning an efficient cause to the mother hen, but this did not imply the primacy of the female line in procreation. The hen's egg developed through its own internal principle, its vegetative soul. This soul was not derived from the mother hen, and the egg did not live by the vital principle of the mother . . . but was "independent even from its first appearance."¹⁵ Free and unconnected to the uterus, the egg perfected itself by its internal formative force. Following an inner developmental plan, structures, including the soul of the chick, were formed in succession after fertilization. The plastic virtue or formative principle was present in the matter of unfertilized eggs and could act without the male contribution, albeit imperfectly.

Because a hen could lay unfertilized eggs, she served as an efficient cause, a role Aristotle had denied to the female. Thus, not all creative force was derived solely from the male agent, as Aristotle had argued. Nevertheless, the male for Harvey was more excellent as an efficient cause than the female. A hen's egg obtained perfection only when fertilized by the male "in virtue of an authority . . . or power required of the cock. . . . Among animals where the sexes are distinct, matters are so arranged that since the female alone is inadequate to engender an embryo and to nourish and protect the young, a male is associated with her by nature, as the superior and more worthy progenitor, as the consort of her labor and the means of supplying her deficiencies."¹⁶

The male also supplied "reason" and excellence to the egg, "as if the hen received the art and reason, the form and laws of the future embryo from his address. . . . Nor should we so much wonder what it is in the cock that preserves and governs so perfect and beautiful an animal, and is the first cause of that entity which we call the *soul*; but much more what it is in the egg, . . . of so great virtue as to produce such an animal and raise him to the very summit of excellence." Harvey recognized, as had Aristotle, that the offspring

was not the conscious result of the male mind; hence they both held the position that it was nature working through the parents that produced the young. The "skill and foresight" contributed by the male must ultimately proceed from God, since the vegetative, not the rational, portion of the soul was used in reproduction.¹⁷

Harvey argued against Galenist physicians "conversant with anatomy" that women excreted a seminal fluid necessary to generation and that the semina of both male and female had material and efficient faculties. Although he was correct that the female did not produce semen, his reasons were value-laden and based on the masculine bias that energy and perfection could proceed only from the male:

The other argument is drawn from the genital organs of the woman, the testes, to wit, and *vas spermatica, praeparantia, et deferentia*, which are held to serve for the preparation of the spermatic fluid. I, for my part, greatly wonder how anyone can believe that from parts so imperfect and obscure, a fluid like the semen, so elaborate, concoct, and vivifying, can ever be produced, endowed with force and spirit and generative influence adequate to overcome that of the male; for this is implied in the discussion concerning the predominance of the male or the female, as to which of them is to become agent and efficient cause, which the matter and pathic principle. How should such a fluid [the female's] get the better of another concocted under the influence of a heat so fostering, of vessels so elaborate, and endowed with such vital energy?—how should such a fluid as the male semen be made to play the part of mere matter?¹⁸

Cultural bias also guided his research on the theory of impregnation, in which he argued, contra Aristotle, that fertilization could take place without material contact of sperm and egg, a theory testable only after the perfection of the microscope. His conclusion that the male semen was so powerful that it could act at a distance by a seminal aura, or magnetic emanation, was supported by prevailing cultural ideas of male superiority.

This cultural preconception guided the interpretation of his experiments on the king's deer. During the 1630s, he dissected large numbers of King Charles' does just after coition with bucks and found "no seed in their uterus":

But when after repeated inspections, I still found nothing more in the uterus, I began to doubt, and to ask myself whether the semen of the

male could by any possibility make its way—by attraction or injection—to the seat of conception? And repeated examination led me to the conclusion that none of the semen whatsoever reached this seat.¹⁹

He had also reached the same conclusion regarding the cock and the hen, an opinion first put forth by his teacher Fabricius:

The semen which is emitted by the male during intercourse does by no means enter the uterus of the female, in which the egg is perfected; nor can it indeed (as I first announced and Fabricius agrees with me) by any manner or way get into the inner recesses of that organ.²⁰

Since there was no contact between egg and sperm, Harvey endowed the male's semen with the prodigious power of acting at a distance. The semen acted through a sympathy or magnetic emanation in a way similar to that by which diseases were transmitted. It was the same as the manner in which

Epidemic, contagious, and pestilential diseases scatter their seeds and are propagated to a distance through the air, or by some 'fomes' producing diseases like themselves in bodies of a different nature and in a hidden fashion silently multiplying themselves by a kind of generation.²¹

The female was impregnated by contagion! Generation was analogous to a disease caused by the introduction of a parasitic or foreign cause, which played the role of an active, generative, vital principle. A contagion was an active power as opposed to putrefaction, which was the degenerative principle found in decay. Later, Jean Baptiste Van Helmont characterized disease as the introduction of a foreign semen that became superimposed on the organism's own plan of vital internal growth and development.

For Harvey, the male semen had a "plastic power" that made it prolific, a spiritual power analogous to the essence by which the stars influenced earthly beings. The semen carried within it the virtue of divine agency affecting the female like lightning from above, a spark from a flintstone, or the magnetic power of the lodestone.

But since it is certain that the semen of the male does not so much reach the cavity of the uterus, much less continue long there, and that it carries with it a fecundating power by a kind of contagious property; the woman after contact with the spermatic fluid *in coitu*, seems to receive influence and to become fecundated without the cooperation of any sensible corporeal agent, in the same way as iron touched by the magnet is endowed with its powers and can attract other iron to it.²²

The male's semen was so powerful that it even affected the woman's mind: "The virtue which proceeds from the male *in coitu* has such prodigious power of fecundation, that the whole woman both in mind and body undergoes a change."²³ The theory that the brain had the power to affect the developing fetus in the uterus was not an uncommon notion in Harvey's time. Paracelsus had written that "the imagination of a pregnant woman is so active that in conceiving seed into her body she can transmute the fetus in different ways . . . her interior stars are so strongly directed to the fetus that they produce impression and influence."²⁴

The male sperm endowed the female uterus with the "plastic power" to create an offspring. Thus the uterus was similar to a brain about to create, in the same way that the painter about to produce a work of art pictured to himself the painting. But this uterine brain was not a free agent. It produced only what was impressed on it by the more perfect male:

And just as a "desire" arises from a conception of the brain, and this conception springs from some external object of desire, so also from the male, as being the more perfect animal, and as it were, the most natural object of desire, does the natural (organic) conception arise in the uterus, even as the animal conception does in the brain.²⁵

Through the imposition of the form or plan of the father on the uterus during coitus, "it results that the female produces an offspring like the father." The "'form' of the father existing in the uterus generates an offspring like himself with the help of the formative faculty."²⁶

Harvey's work on generation thus reflected the cultural sex biases of his society, especially in areas where he most strongly disagreed with received authority. He differed from Aristotle by claiming that all animal life was generated from eggs and that the egg was an efficient cause, but he maintained that the sperm was superior to the egg as an efficient cause and was the agent of perfection. Secondly, his argument against Galenist physicians concerning the existence of a female semen was based on the cultural assumption that semen was too elaborate, vivifying, and energetic to come from obscure, imperfect, female parts. Thirdly, he disagreed with both Aristotle and Galen that generation occurred through the mingling of contributions from female and male, and concluded instead that impregnation took place without contact. This meant that the male

semen must be endowed with an extraordinary magnetic power capable of affecting the female uterus and mind from a distance. While his conclusions were consistent with Aristotelian sexual ideas, they were reinforced by the conservative social values of his time. Far from championing the equality of male-female principles in reproduction, Harvey's theories fall within the tradition of male superiority.

Mid-seventeenth-century natural philosophers continued the tradition of male superiority in generation, maintaining that the soul itself was distributed through the male lineage. Descartes believed that the egg was impregnated by the power of the male semen, which endowed it with soul. In Emilio Parisano's opinion (1621), the semen was infused with soul for the propagation of the species. Even the atomists, traditionally associated with democratizing tendencies in cultural history, differentiated between those contributed by the male and those from the female. Thus physician Nathaniel Highmore, in his *History of Generation* (1651), postulated two sorts of seminal atoms in the seed—material and spiritual atoms. "These seminal atoms fall from all parts of both parents, the spiritual ones from the male, the material ones from the female. Thus the atoms of Democritus are transmuted into 'substantial forms' endowed with the efficient cause of Aristotle . . . and permitted to remain material."²⁷

As late as 1661, Anthony Everard still held that the male semen contributed the spiritual element and the mother the matter. Everard argued that the fetus was formed from the union of the male and female seminal spirits. The "female semen," as such, did not contribute to generation, while the masculine semen, acting only as an efficient cause, did not contribute anything material. After Anton Van Leeuwenhoek's (1632–1723) introduction of the microscope, the problem of generation began to take on new dimensions in the controversy between spermists and ovists over preformation.

The use of science as an ideology to keep women in their place was not confined to ancient and early modern times. In the nineteenth century, Darwinian theory was found to hold social implications for women. Variability, the basis for evolutionary progress, was correlated with a greater spread of physical and mental variation in males. Scientists compared male and female cranial sizes and brain parts in the effort to demonstrate the existence of sexual

differences that would explain female intellectual inferiority and emotional temperament. Women's reproductive function required that more energy be directed toward pregnancy and maternity, hence less was available for the higher functions associated with learning and reasoning. The "adventurous sperm" and the "passive ovum" continued to serve as reproductive metaphors.

In the twentieth century, hormonal differences between men and women have been used to imply abnormal levels of androgen in women who displayed high intelligence, competitive behavior, leadership, and executive ability. Thus "scientific" authority could be used to keep women in their place as intellectually inferior and economically dependent.²⁸

While in each of these cases, male and female critics exposed the theoretical and cultural assumptions underlying the leap from differences to inequalities, new fields and new scientific studies continue to generate "evidence" to maintain outdated assumptions about the male-female hierarchy. Reproduction—hormones, menstruation, and pregnancy—is used to infer and justify the female economic dependence brought about in the seventeenth-century transition from subsistence to capitalist modes of production. For women, this aspect of the Scientific Revolution did not bring about the presumed intellectual enlightenment, objectivity, and liberation from ancient assumptions traditionally accorded it.

Gynocide: The Murder of the Goddess

By Dalilah Montesino

Published in 2021



The Feminist Poetry Movement

ENGL, WGSS, AMST 113

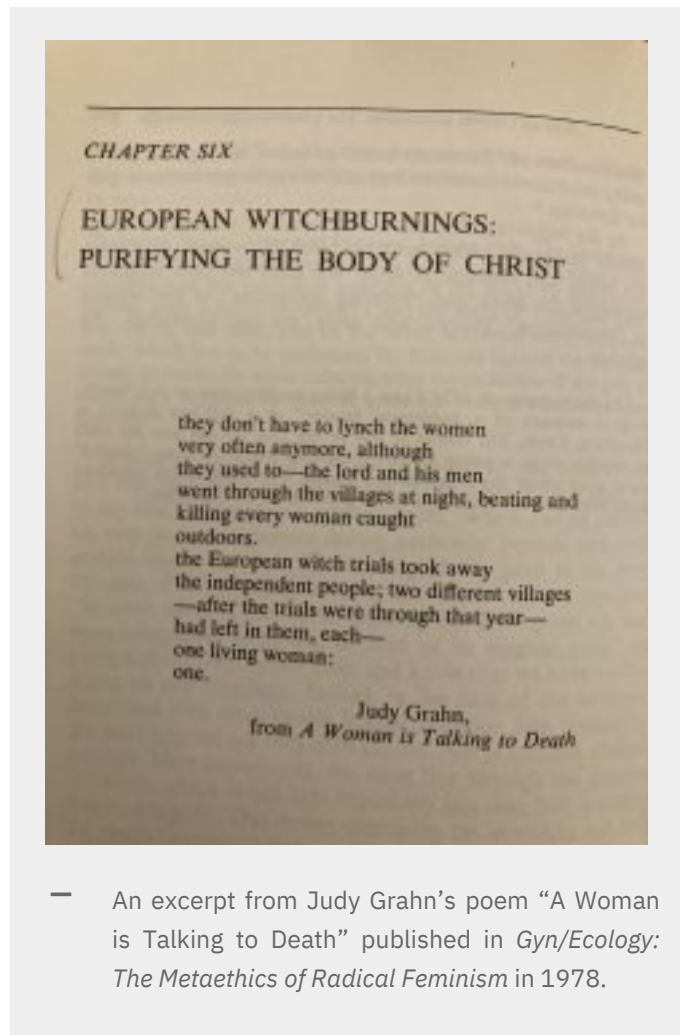
Gynocide: The Murder of the Goddess

Posted on [December 12, 2021](#) by [Dalilah Montesino](#)

The historical inception of the patriarchy as we know it today can be dated back thousands of years ago with the nascent of Abrahamic religion and the consequent oppression of pagan religions, which were notably matriarchal paradigms of the belief that revolved around nature goddess worship. As far back as antiquity as western religion can be traced, the supreme deity was female. The Great Goddess was not only an earth mother or an extension of a male god, she was the Source of life itself. The new male ruling class ushered in the patriarchal revolution, imposing a patrilineal kinship system that sanctified the oppression of women (Eller 285). It is of no surprise that the second version of the creation myth presents the creator as an omnipotent male deity, creating a male human being, from whose ribcage a woman is “born”, although every man is born from a *woman’s* womb. The creationist myth achieves the mythical transference of the power of creation and fertility from Goddess to God and from woman to man. The woman’s “original sin” is also held culpable for man’s fall from morality, thus justifying his dominion over her inherent sinfulness. Thus, the dichotomy of the gender binary was solidified— there was the male divine creator (spirit) and female natural creation (body) wherein other dichotomies were characterized as masculine/feminine (superior/inferior).

First published in the second issue of the lesbian radical feminist periodical *Amazon Quarterly*, in the epic nine-part poem “A Woman is Talking to Death,” Judy Grahn implicitly elucidates how the gynocide of women was a result of their association with nature. The narrator parallels the endemic lynching of African-Americans in the United States to one of the most notorious manifestations of the subjugation of female power, the witch hunts of medieval Europe, which were carried over with the pilgrimage of the Puritans. Indeed, the white patriarchs are no longer “[lynching] the women anymore” because they found a new class of people to subordinate (8). There is a long history of women holding positions of power or of stepping out of the boundaries imposed by patriarchal norms being discredited and persecuted that is evident throughout the pages of European history, and which formed the blueprint for the genocide of Native Americans and the ecocide of their lands during the colonization of the Americas. Threatened by the power women healers possessed with their knowledge of herbal remedies, the sons of the church “had to erase women with the power to heal, not only by killing them, but by denying that they

healed *of their own power*,” attributing their healing powers instead to devil worship (Daly 218). Nonetheless, most of the women burned at the stake were not practitioners of witchcraft, but merely the victims of the patriarchs’, “the lord and his men,” paranoid obsession with “independent people,” as women are deemed to be “witches” for defying gender norms imposed by Judeo-Christian doctrines (8-9). According to Mary Daly, a prominent feminist scholar of religion, the sole intent of the witchhunt was “to break down and destroy strong women, to dis-member and kill the Goddess, the divine spark of be-ing in women” (183). The poet then anthropomorphizes Death as the patriarchy itself. The abstract entity of “Death” is literally given he/him pronouns and is manifested in domestic violence, as exemplified by “death [sitting] in her bedroom, loading / his revolver”), presumably to murder his wife and the mother of his “6 young children” (8), the modern incarnation of the mass genocide of women in the name of Christendom during the European Crusade. Because of the creationist myth perpetuated by the Bible, the woman’s original sin, attributed to her “carnal, bodily desire,” is held culpable for man’s fall from morality, thus justifying his dominion over her inherent sinfulness (Daly 180).



Grahn implicitly articulates how the root of patriarchal oppression is the dichotomy that fragments reality into the male/female duality, with the former oppressing the latter. This results in not only the patriarchal subjugation of females, but to conflicts and wars between nations, to racism and the colonization of civilizations deemed as inferior, and the exploitation of the environment by humankind who seeks to dominate the untamed wilderness. The patriarchy is the “father” of oppression experienced by humanity and nature and has historically been constructed on the foundation and learned from the exploitation of women. This idea is echoed by “Toward a Woman Vision,” a critical essay purposefully situated right after

Grahn's poem. In this essay, the editor, Laurel, emphasizes that the women's liberation movement and ecological concern are "inextricably linked"—the only solution to end the "rape of [our] sister earth" is to shatter the male mirror and to resurrect a "womanvision" (33). Just like how Grahn personifies patriarchal capitalist society as the character of "Death," Laurel compares the exploitation of the source of life itself, the earth, to the sexual terrorism inflicted upon the givers of life, women. Until the male culture of rapism is transformed into a culture of reciprocity, life as we know it, Laurel warns, will be bled out of existence and into extinction, just like women have for millenia.

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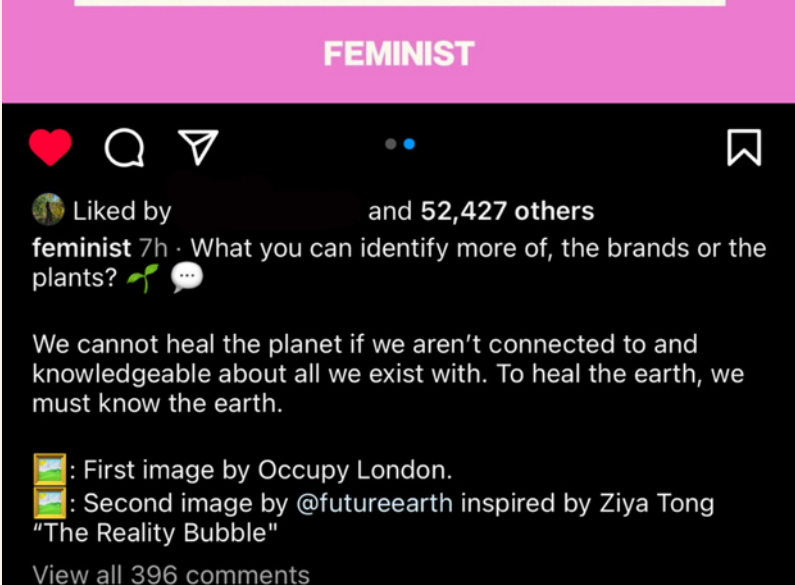
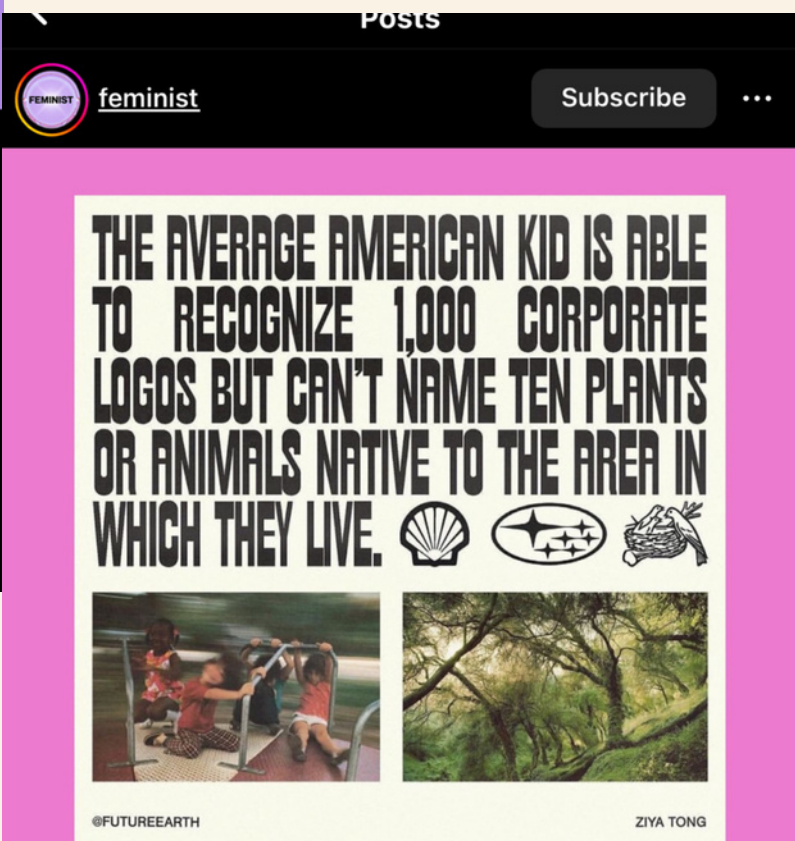
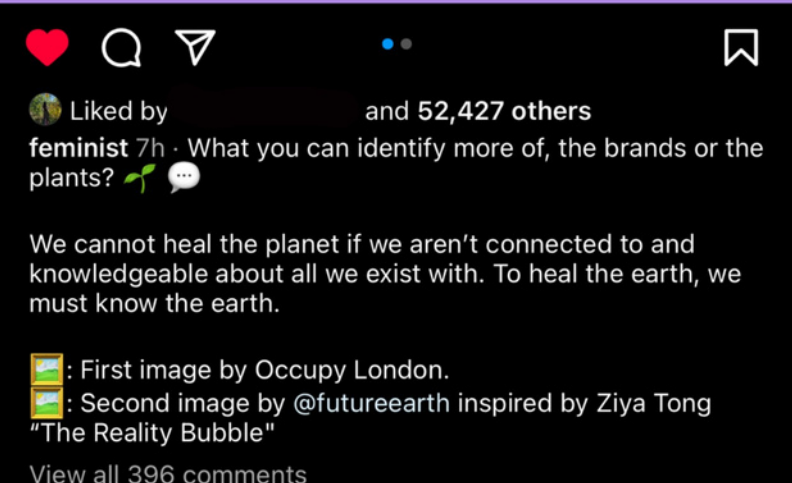
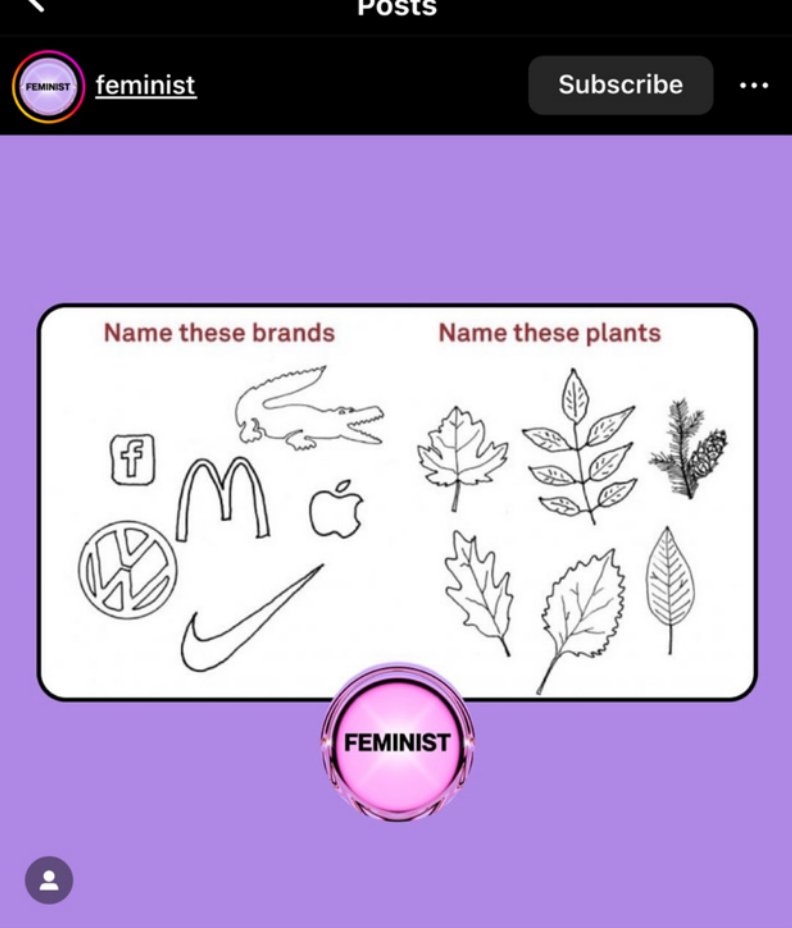
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Feminist Infographic

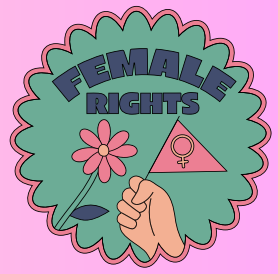
I chose to focus my infographic on, why you should be a feminist.

This could be a useful visual source to share with someone who does not agree with the concept of feminism.

feminist
forever



WHY YOU SHOULD BE A FEMINIST



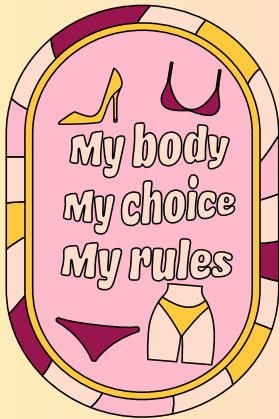
Gender Pay Gap

Women earn 84 cents for every dollar a man earns.
Women of colour earn 56% of what a white man would earn.

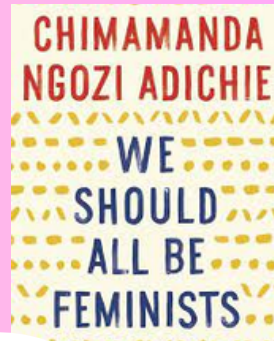
Women are 17% more likely to die in a car crash as the crash test dummies are designed for an average male body

Feminism encourages equity for all

1 in 4 women experience severe partner violence



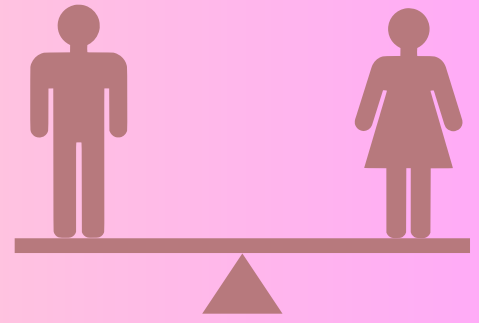
Feminist views encourages all women stand up for each other.
Feminism normalizes women's success'.



Written by a Nigerian woman. The book was written to challenge stereotypes about feminists. Introduces a space for Black feminism to be heard.



WHY YOU SHOULD BE A FEMINIST



19.3 million women have reported being stalked in America.

Gives a space for all women's voices to be heard

Feminism refuses societal gender norms especially when discussing queer theory

Who run the world?? GIRLS!

Empowered Women Empower Women

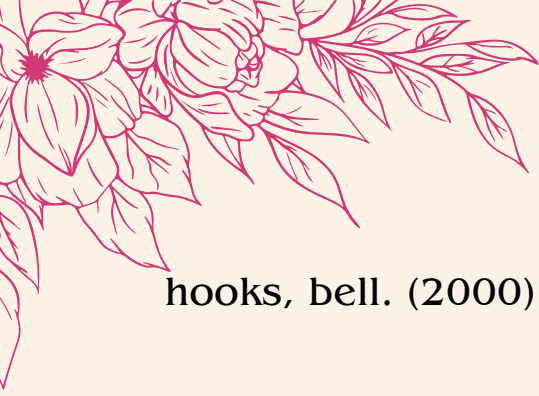
Women working towards breaking the glass ceiling

Feminist views encourage pregnancy rights for all women. Women should have the power and right to do what they want with their bodies.

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<https://www.forbes.com/sites/evaepker/2023/09/12/faster-your-seatbelts-a-female-car-crash-test-dummy-represents-average-women-for-the-first-time-in-60-years/?sh=2c58b30355ba> Adichie, C. N. (2015). We Should All Be Feminists. New York, NY: Anchor Books.
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