

CHAPTER 1

OPPRESSION OF THE BODY, MIND, & SPIRIT

First Words

I have been thinking about women my entire life. While that may sound like an opening line from a comedian, it is actually the defining nature of my intellect. Friends and family might contend that I have been thinking about men more, but from an academic standpoint, I have devoted the past decade to understanding the causes and effects of cultural misogyny -- hatred of women, and cultural gynephobia -- fear of womankind. I have truly wanted to know *why* the men around the globe seem at times determined to destroy the other gender, the second sex, the sex which is not one -- in all its various names and forms. I have wondered about the men who may have been sitting around a campfire in Africa when they first decided to mutilate women's genitals. (Fortunately, African men today are uniting with women against that atrocity.) I have observed that historically women have not demonstrated the same intensity of misandry -- hatred of men. Yes, we women experience a love/hate relationship with our male others, but even when we have attained political power, we have not exercised it repeatedly to obliterate men.

As you may imagine, I am a victim and a survivor of the destructive force within the male psyche. I acknowledge both those identities because they are necessary to understanding my psyche. I have been recovering for two decades now. I spent the first decade too damaged by my experiences to even be aware of *who* I was let alone *what* had happened to me. But I returned to graduate school in my 30's to study English Literature and graduate school in my 40's to study Psychology -- and as a result, I have been able to piece together the shards of a broken life. In the process of retrieving the pieces, I believe I have solved a few puzzles for others -- whether for women or for the men who love them.

I write this book for every woman and for every man who has ever loved a woman -- whether a friend, colleague, romantic partner, mother, step-mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, aunt, great aunt, sister, step-sister, cousin, second-cousin, daughter, grand-daughter, great-granddaughter, niece, grand-niece, etc.

Introduction to a new Theory of Oppression

I wish to give women and men a primer that offers a comprehensive sweep of the psychological and feminist theories that will help them best understand their experience in a patriarchal society structured on the basis of domination and submission instead of egalitarianism. In domination/submission societies, certain groups (such as heterosexuals) believe they have the right to dominate other groups (such as homosexuals) and to deny them rights. In egalitarian societies, all groups participate equally in the social order.

More specifically, this text offers a new Theory of Oppression that can be applied to members of all oppressed groups but focuses primarily on the experience of women in global culture. Herein I theorize what I believe to be the comprehensive methodology used by the oppressor to dominate the oppressed -- whether an individual, a group, a family, or a nation. This methodology has been applied in most situations and systems of oppression and can be used to analyze and understand them. I have spent over a decade researching literature from the past two centuries in multiple disciplines including psychology, sociology, anthropology, history and women's studies. This research, combined with two decades of observation and direct experience, has organized itself into three categories and enabled me to conclude the following: Oppression involves three levels of assault upon the body, mind, and spirit. Oftentimes neither the perpetrator nor the victim is fully conscious of this methodology, which has been absorbed from the culture.

To repeat, the new theory offered in this text states that oppression is systematically carried out on three separate levels. Level one involves assaults upon the body, including physical and sexual violence such as battery, rape, incest and molestation. Level two involves assaults upon the mind including mind control and brainwashing using indirect directives, covert hypnosis, and naturalistic trance induction -- as practiced (for example) by cults and abusive partners. Level three involves assaults upon the spirit including disparagement and destruction of the spiritual practices and iconography relevant to the victim/s. When all three levels of an individual's self have been assaulted, the victim experiences total submission to the perpetrator's total domination -- a state that will be referred to herein as *Totalism*.

When any woman (or man) feels that she has been unwittingly subsumed by another individual or group -- has submitted partially or completely to domination -- then totalism is underway and must be systematically dismantled. This text will discuss how to identify tactics of domination so as to liberate oneself from them, as well as how to identify physical and psychological symptoms of oppression so as to be able to recover from them.

The impact of oppression upon the female psyche has been profound. The lasting effects of single or multiple traumas can distort the personality for a lifetime. Childhood sexual abuse can predispose a woman to a career in the sex trades as a form of repetition compulsion. Any form of abuse can lead to substance and process addictions -- all of which are potentially fatal. In relationships involving domestic violence, the batterer can achieve complete control over a woman's mind in a manner nearly identical to methodologies practiced by destructive cults. Most perpetrators are males; most victims are females. Then in recovery, most women are told to pray to a male God. Nowhere are female Goddesses to be found in whom to take comfort because their representations have been nearly eliminated from the globe over the past 5,000 years.

But there are creative solutions to the destruction: Women and men can learn the signs of domination, from influence to brainwashing, from the trivial to the totalitarian. Women can vote for politicians who fight for the rights of women, minorities, the poor, and the Environment -- instead of against them. Women can run for office and run corporations. Women can speak their stories to therapists and to society in multiple forms. Women can write trauma narratives, which are then witnessed by others. Women can seek refuge in history -- in ancient herstory from 23,000 to 3,000 B.C.E. when civilization worshipped the Goddess. Women can seek models in Goddesses past and present. Women can integrate their own animus -- the male within -- so as to fight back against the male without. And women can learn that although patriarchy may be the social order of the present, it need not be the social order of the future. In fact, as visionaries such as Riane Eisler claim, the Golden Age of which so many cultures speak did indeed exist before -- and it can exist again in new and improved forms.

Nature & Background of the Study

This study will explore the nature and extent of patriarchal oppression of the feminine psyche. I will take a three-tiered approach that examines cultural influences upon the *body*, *mind*, and *spirit* primarily of women. Chapter 2 will discuss patriarchal acts upon the female *body*, as demonstrated by sexual trauma and recovery and its symptomatology of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Complex PTSD (CPTSD). Chapter 3 will discuss patriarchal influences upon the female *mind*, as demonstrated by the continuum of mind control beginning with rhetoric and persuasion, through studies in influence, and ending with thought reform and brainwashing. Chapter 4 will discuss patriarchal influences upon the female *spirit*, as demonstrated by the destruction of Goddess archetypes and iconography around the globe, which symbolize and energize the feminine psyche. Lastly, I will endeavor to use accessible language free of academic

jargon, and to use the female pronoun throughout so as to counter-balance the use of the male pronoun and male-centered (phallogentric) language over the past 5,000 years.

The foundations of this study have been laid by the Women's Rights Movement of the past two centuries. As a brief introduction to feminist theory, I will present in Chapter 1 a selection of 10 main arguments of the modern Women's Rights Movement. These include two of the most important principles: (1) that feminists are not "anti-male"; they are "anti-sexism" (Hooks, 2000, p.12); and (2) that feminists are not merely anti-sexism; they are against all forms of oppression on the basis of race, class, gender, age, species, Nature, and so forth. Prominent feminists will be acknowledged who have helped us to understand the effects of oppression on the feminine psyche, including philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft, social theorists bell hooks¹ and Riane Eisler, and psychologists Phyllis Chesler and Judith Lewis Herman. Lastly, in an effort to demonstrate the ongoing need for feminist discourse, I will address atrocities committed against women around the globe.

Some young women and men today have adopted an attitude that feminism has become outdated, that women now have opportunities nearly equal to those of their male counterparts -- at least in America -- and that activists for women's rights are mostly disgruntled lesbians. Such assumptions are not only profoundly misguided but also dangerous. Consider for example the World Bank Report of 2012, which states that women own 1% of the world's wealth. Although women have risen to prominence in numerous professions since the Women's Rights Movement began in the mid-1800's under the stewardship of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton among others, barriers to advancement remain in place and must be removed -- both domestically and internationally, where the fate of women is often worse. Moreover, social reforms that have been achieved are often in danger of being eroded -- such as affirmative action and abortion -- and thus their beneficiaries must remain forever vigilant.

¹ bell hooks prefers her name written in lower case.