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The other Anxiety

On the Genderedness of an Emotion¹

Once I participated in a TV-program on female anxiety. It starts with the camera being directed to a very dark sort of park, more precise the gaze focused on a narrow bent of a small way which got lost in the darkness of the same park. A woman entered the scene. Her sudden appearance struck the spectator like a forbidden-sign: this is the wrong place for a woman, at night, alone. This realization of the wrongness of the woman was immediately rewarded by the camera. It showed her panicking face, large fearful eyes, attentively listening to something. But there were only her highheeled shoes clicking on some stones. She hastened her pace. She was still overattentive to some noise. It sounded like a heart beating. She hastens her pace even more, her eyes are in terror, sweat starts forming on her front. And now you hear it as well. Under the heart beat covered and somehow enlarged by it there is simultaneously another step, stronger and quite different from her own clicking noises. A man's step. The camera leads your gaze all the way back, which the woman has already managed to run, making her effort somehow useless in this way, until it comes to a sudden halt: men's shoes, feet, legs. The camera takes up his pace, which is also fastened, back to the woman. She is running by now. But the distance becomes shorter. She will never make it.

Now he has reached her, rips her shoulder, turns her around. He opens his other hand and there lies innocently a car-key, which he hands her now.

You feel an immense relief, because it was nothing but harmless care; and you feel

¹ Lecture, hold at Duke University, October 1997. Later elaborated as a Chapter of a book which never appeared. Part of it is included in: »Memory Work: the Key to Women's Anxiety«, in: S. Radstone (ed.),

shame, because you and the woman have almost become hysterical without reason. And you feel annoyed and cheated because you know, there was a reason. There is something wrong. The scene was not altogether about care and protection.

Preliminary Remarks

In this lecture/chapter I want to show how memory-work proceeds with anxieties like the preceding.

I will start with situating my topic in the all-over landscape of anxiety. I then discuss theories of anxiety and turn to memories of anxiety for the body and develop some general theses on the basis of these findings. I relate them to child development, and work out some of the specific contradictions girls meet when growing up. In a third part I move to another country and culture: Canada and try to show the net, woven out of fear, gender and race.

With my topic - female anxiety - I turn to psychology and cultural studies. My report on a long term study on anxiety should give us the possibility to learn about memory work in the process and gain some insights into the issue at hand; to have the possibility to compare the results with some of the well known theories in the field and to remember our own experiences of anxiety. I hope you can listen both cross-culturally and critically simultaneously.

The Concept and the Sample

We will have the problem of translation both scientifically and in everyday-language, because there is no adequate translation for the German term *Angst*. Since I work from experience, you might almost always understand which emotion is at stake, and besides even studying the different possibilities of translating the term - fear, anxiety, *Angst* - leaves us somewhat at a loss, because the specific meanings melt into each

other and - as the translators of Freud stated: Angst cannot be translated, it is both: anxiety and fear.² So we just start solving the translation-problem by approaching our issue.

Do we need a definition of anxiety? Freud started his famous lectures on Angst with the sentence: Ladies and gentlemen I do not have to define Angst, because everybody knows it out of own experience. I will follow his example.

First I give you some data on the empirical study as such. The research group began with about 50 women - coming to the women's study Program of the University of Hamburg. The majority were students from the university. But the group also contained women from different occupations, including local housewives, professional people - like nurses, librarians, teachers, theologians, social workers, unemployed women with no special background. Some were already retired. They came from everywhere - women who were interested either in women's issues or in anxiety or both. Therefore the range of our sample was rather large, both in age - from 20 to 60 - as well as in professional background. As is still customary in Hamburg the group did not include any black women. We worked for four years. The resulting qualitative material consisted of 83 narratives from our own experiences of anxiety. 32 essays were written by 11-years old boys and girls from a public school, because we tried to win some knowledge into the beginning of the development of experiences of anxiety as gendered ones. The study is published in German (second edition 1994) and was planned to be published by Verso in English, but, due to problems with the interpreter, it fell into oblivion.

² For the discussion of this question, see the Appendix 'The Term Angst and its English Translation', The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. James Strachey. Hogarth Press 1962, Vol. 3, pp 116-17.

Rodney Livingston, the translator of part of my book on anxiety for a yet unpublished collection on method in English and whom I owe a lot of well translated phrases within this essay has written the following footnote for the problem of translating the German term Angst: »'Angst' has traditionally presented a problem to the translator (as indeed the use of the German term in English suggests). In German it is found in common usage and just means 'fear'. 'Ich habe Angst' means 'I am afraid'. But in psychoanalytical contexts it has acquired a semi-technical meaning. In consequence starting with the standard translation of

The Landscape of Anxiety

Looking back in a sort of autobiographical way most of us can remember, that anxiety is a memory reaching from far back into the present so that it almost seems to be a natural condition, always prepared to disturb body and soul.

Very early there is fear in the dark; then there is fear of heights and depths, of speed. Later there is fear of the public, of the unfamiliar, of change. It is fear which hinders us, attacks us, keeps us under spell. Anxiety which we have to flee, which forces us to find refuge, a home. In this way anxiety accompanies the path of women into protected areas in a convenient way. The situation hinders us to take the steps we need for change.

Therefore anxiety above other topics is an important issue for women.

From the beginning of our research, we found the field occupied by rather strange and for us difficult to understand emotions, connotations and stories.

For example there is this fairytale from Grimm, which was so fascinating for Bloch, dealing with this man, who set out to learn anxiety. He never experiences fear; he is not afraid of white figures at night, nor of spooks; hanged men, huge black cats, and dogs with glowing chains he just throws around; he is not afraid when his bed drives on its own, or throws him out. He even feels nothing when halves of corpses, crossbones and skulls come along; on the contrary, his productive mind is stimulated and he makes skulls round in order to bowl with them. The churchyard or any other gruesome place at night does not give him any feeling of fear; even the cold of a corpse, whom he takes into bed to warm him, cannot make him afraid. Every production of horror meets his readiness to help, or, if his life is in danger, he

Freud, it has customarily been translated as anxiety.«

competently overpowers those who should make him afraid. The longed for horror only comes, when his wife has a bowl of cold living wriggling fish poured over him (she does not do it herself, but asks a maid to do it, because she herself is of course a princess).

There has been a sophisticated discussion of this fairytale. The main idea was that it must be a fairytale on the Age of Enlightenment, because fear and superstition now belong to the Middle Ages; nevertheless as absence is felt, a sort of alienation from nature, which can only be met by a confrontation with life and death. It was interpreted as a story of the successful bourgeoisie, which appropriates and dominates nature, overpowers dark riddles and superstition, at the price of alienation from nature, even one's own. To be human would then mean to regain one's own naturalness, including anxiety and horror. - This discussion does not sound at all strange or old fashioned for our female ears; our problem is that as soon as we think about ourselves as women, we find this leap too far for us, because we cannot really leave this world of pure rationality when we have never reached it, even if rationality is a questionable goal. Somehow we ourselves still live in the Middle Ages of anxiety, confronted with numerous dangers.

Once you start doing research on anxiety, you find it suddenly everywhere: in politics, in newspapers, in flyers which try to give us advice, in films, etc. We read sophisticated essays on a general fear of death and of course fear of the ecological catastrophe, and especially recently fear of all the others, of racism, of a new growing fascism. - Strangely enough there are also long articles which deal with anxiety as a means of educating and controlling people - e.g. you need a certain amount of anxiety to behave properly, pay your taxes, do not drive too fast, keep a good family etc.

Where ever you look you find the strangest opinions on anxiety, thousands of books and above all, that it is certainly clear what anxiety is and where you meet it, so it is

both too huge and superfluous to study it further.

We started with a brainstorm on anxieties which gave us the impression, that there is actually nothing which cannot be the source of anxiety and that even opposite reasons were understood and even shared by everybody in the group - like being alone and not being alone; being seen and not being noticed at all etc. There was no way to come from collecting phenomena to any possible research-path. So we simultaneously studied theories on anxiety. To have more time for actually showing our work with memories I will briefly summarize only two schools here, which are almost opposite towards each other: psychoanalysis and behavioral theory.

Theories on anxiety

1. Psychoanalysis

Most provoking is Freud. In his early writings he thinks Angst to be the effect of unsatisfactory sexuality. He looks at the bodily symptoms of anxiety: vertigo, sweating attack, trembling and shaking, exaggerated heartbeats and difficulties to breathe etc. From here he derives that there is obviously a blocked excitement, energy which is waiting to be used. Without further delay he thinks that there might be something wrong in sexual life. To summarize: anxiety comes from frustrated excitement, from unsatisfactory sexual intercourse. Women in addition to this might have virginal anxieties, because they might not be able to imagine what sexual life was like and were therefore unable to handle their excitements. Both sexes suffer from inaction and above all from interrupted intercourse which was at that time the common way of preventing pregnancies.

Because it is so easy to laugh at this, since it would among others mean, that sexual intercourse would always be satisfactory for women if there was no interruption and there might be no anxieties any longer in the age of the anti-baby-pill, it is easy not to see the originality and usefulness in his ideas which should be retrieved. These are

especially two assumptions: first that anxiety even in its most extreme forms would not be a disease or hysteric but just normal following certain practices; and second not to look for the origin of anxiety in one place or coming from one cause but to look for it in the common social practices of human beings. Freud of course neither assumes gender relations as relations of domination nor does he think that all social relations could be fundamental for developing anxieties which both had to be worked into his scheme of the normality of anxiety and its coming from social mass practices.

In his later writings - after experiencing the First world war - Freud abandons the idea of a too little of satisfaction and positions anxiety between life and death. Now anxiety becomes the answer to a situation of danger, which the Ego cannot handle. Which is especially interesting in this context for our own research on female anxieties is the elaboration of a model of contradiction. I don't go into the details of the different instances of the psychic apparatus here, but just summarize that anxiety arises if contradictory demands show up, out of which the Ego does not find any way out on its own. In this way it is no longer displacement or repression which is the source of anxiety but the other way round, displacement comes from anxiety.

This turn also allows us to think that anxieties which individuals name might not be the ones they have. Not to jump to interpretations it will be useful to concentrate on the contradictions within which people act. We will look for socially given contradictions and do so from the situatedness of women. Thereby we hope to be able to include the possibility that social demands which seem to be unambiguous might be perceived as contradictory and therefore also be the source of anxiety.³

³ The study of Freud's writings is stimulating even though his works have rightly attracted the anger of feminist researchers on account of their male-centred and family-oriented hypotheses about the 'nature of women'. The early view can be studied particularly in 'On the grounds for detaching a particular syndrome from neurasthenia under the description 'anxiety neurosis' (1895, *The Pelican Freud Library*, Vol. 10, pp 31 - 63; and especially 'First Steps towards a Theory of Anxiety Neurosis, *Ibid.*, pp 53 - 60; for the later radical change from his earlier view see particularly 'Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety,' (1926), *ibid.* pp. 229-333.

2. Behavioral Theories

Most irritating in behavioral theories is the total lack of interest in the possible reason(s) of anxiety. Anxieties are presumed as a function disorder, a state which we should get rid of, if we want it, or other social instances think it to be necessary. The therapist cares for the main principle: humans should function. (Since 1988 there is also an international journal *Anxiety Research* where you can study the usefulness and progress within this strand.) You might recall that behavioral science is above all about learning, so the main question is, which practices have been learnt to deal with danger and conflict and afterwards to substitute them by better ones. This idea is the more convincing the more you remember that you also usually spontaneously develop a way of dealing with yourself in situations of anxiety in the same way as behavioral therapy recommends. E.g. you promise yourself something if you succeed in walking on your own by night for two blocks, or approaching a dog bit by bit, or speaking in front of a small then bigger and bigger audience etc. In this way recommendations from behavior therapy seem to duplicate usual practices of everyday life. The uneasiness we feel might come from different sources: we might not especially like those practices where we try to outsmart ourselves; and theoretically spoken: behavior theories have no space for the idea that anxieties might answer to something beyond the obvious, that anxiety might be justified and therefore protecting and that the main implicit assumption is wrong: that anxiety comes from false perception so that re-educating would enable us to function healthily in this world full of contradictions, domination, violence and oppression and that we would like to function undisturbed in such a society.

So it was altogether useful to study behavioral theories because they taught us how we dealt with ourselves in everyday life and they helped clarify our research goal. We did not want to function and be fit within this society, but to be capable of changing the conditions to which we reacted with anxiety. In this way the main difference was as to the perception of society which was seen as something like nature to which we

should adapt in behavior theory or in our case as the world which had been made by humans and could therefore be improved to make it better for all to live in it.

Our Research

We started remembering scenes of anxiety on a very general level. We wrote on the topic: »Once, when I was afraid«. Working on the written down scenes, which were multifold and astonishing but understandable for all, led us to work out and concentrate on three main fields of research:

»Anxieties not to be normal in relations of production«,
 »anxieties not to be competent in relations of politics«,
 and »anxieties for the body in gender relations«.

If you compare those fields of study with other research on anxiety, you can easily see, that our positioning anxiety within these fields of production, sex/gender and politics is to be understood as the first result of our study; at the same time, it is the beginning of the next step of research. In the following I concentrate on:

Fear for the body in gender relations

Before presenting and analyzing such a written down scene it is important to discover the commonsense reactions of the group so that if necessary they too can become the subject of discussion. If this is not done views that derive from commonsense, but whose assumptions have not been examined, try to impose themselves by the back door. Moreover, if this is not done, we pass up the opportunity to learn something from ideas that are commonly held, about cultural hegemony and perhaps also the power of dominant theories in everyday life. In the case of the following scene under discussion we can be sure that in every women's group there will be a consensus that women are afraid of men, of male violence, of encountering them in the dark, of their loud voices, their dominating demeanor. This feeling is so powerful that it seems almost superfluous to study such anxiety, to be

astonished by it, and even to appeal to women to overcome their fears. After all every woman knows that in Germany a woman is raped every four minutes - in the USA the time gap is even shorter. In other words, this anxiety is real; dealing with it successfully can only result from the reeducation of men or training women in self-defense groups. Women's anxieties are related to the badness of men and women's greater physical weakness. Accordingly when we decided to investigate women's anxieties we were not surprised to discover that many anxieties are inscribed in this space where women are at the mercy of men. But on the other hand, there were problems in persuading us that such anxieties were worthy of study. Precisely because we all recognized that it is realistic to be afraid of men, especially in the dark, further questions and analysis seemed beside the point. Covertly, then, we had assumed that anxiety could only be theorized if it was a fantasy, something imagined, exaggerated, unrealistic - if, in short, it were itself a theoretical construct. The fact that the perception and analysis of a reality might itself be the source for the further theoretical understanding of dominance, was overlooked. This was something we now had to relearn.

I give you one of those scenes, written by a young woman:

The Underground Shaft

It had only been a short time since she had moved to this city; her plan was to take public transport home that night after a concert. She liked to go out on her own in the evening, but today she was uncomfortable about setting out alone without a partner - it was already very late and hardly anybody was in the streets. The others who had been at the concert scattered in all directions; it was very likely that nobody else would be taking the same subway as her. She stood alone in front of the entrance, the subway tunnel, and was afraid to go down. Up there in the street she had an overview of what was happening in front of her and could also look back once in a while. In the subway tunnel she would not know what was behind the next bend. In addition, she might easily find herself stuck there, with no means of escape or return. She was furious because she felt dependent. In fact she was really

not making any progress at all. She did not want to wait any longer to see if other people might arrive, people with whom she could safely go down to the platform below. So she plucked up courage and descended the staircase. It was a horrible feeling, to go along the well-lit passage and gradually move closer to the bend. The more she left the entrance behind, the more she felt herself delivered up into the unknown. Just one step behind the bend and nobody would be able to see her and help her. She was afraid of the first moment of panic, the moment that would come when she would catch her first glimpse of the passage behind the bend. The moment of checking, whether everything was clear or whether there was a man lurking there with his back to the wall. And what if there were really a man leaning against the wall? She knew this feeling, when there was a man approaching her in the street at night or when a drunken man bumped into her. For a very short time the heart misses a beat in shock. Imagining this moment gave her a fright. She felt helpless and lonely, like an animal driven into the corner.

When other people were nearby or when she was with a girlfriend, she did not allow herself to be harassed. She swore or yelled back. She hated having to lower her eyes out of caution.

When other people were around in the subway, she would struggle for power. Whenever a man looked at her, she would stare motionless into his eyes, until he had to lower his own. Sometimes men smiled when they tried to withstand her gaze. She did not smile back. Sometimes it was not easy. Then she would think of an abusive word and would quickly remind herself that it really was not a game.

Just before she reached the corner her anxiety was so great that she turned round and ran back to the entrance as fast as she could. As she ran, her anxiety increased still further. She now felt she really was being followed. At the same time, she felt that she was involved in an insane, self-induced panic.

Back in the street she thought for a moment that she would only get home again if she took a taxi. But she did not want to take a taxi. If she did not manage to get home in the ordinary way, she would never manage it again. She would think twice about going out alone again.

She was still unfamiliar with the bus system in Hamburg. So she just walked round where she was, in search of a bus stop. When she found one, she saw by the timetable that the last bus had gone.

She felt desperate. While she stood wondering what to do she saw a group of women and men walking in the direction of the Tube station. She followed them in the hope of being able to walk along the passage at the same time as them. In fact they were all going the same way. With a feeling of relief she went down the steps with them. There were a lot of people on the platform. She felt happy and was scarcely able to believe that a few minutes earlier she had been in the street alone and in despair.

At all events she would buy some CS gas. On straight roads it was reassuring to have her finger on the trigger and know that she could spray it at someone. But she still felt anxiety when approaching the corner in the Tube. The moment of terror remained.

In order to avoid the pitfalls of empathy, simply reexperiencing the experiences of others, we begin to create distance. This is achieved by simple questions directed at the story. This does not mean that we try to read meanings and interpretations into it, but instead to take note of what has actually been written. The analysis of the text by means of various questions is the actual process of deconstruction. The aim is to clear a path and not simply to follow the suggested meaning that the writer has conveyed in the text and which we can easily supplement for ourselves. Instead to look at the different elements that go to make up the story in a different light, to reassemble them in different ways, if necessary, or else to make visible any gaps, ruptures or contradictions. The analysis of the text by reading against the intended meaning in response to specific questions also serves a further purpose. It means that the various constructs that the writer creates about herself, other people or the subject matter of her story can themselves be made visible by any halfway intelligent questioning.

In the present case the first question was: What does the writer describe as anxiety, alternatively, what does she claim to be afraid of? Even this simple question has the effect of making something she had taken for granted - her fear of men - seem a little less clear cut: she is afraid to go round a corner, and she is afraid of this fear, of the moment of terror. The two anxieties overlap each other and together

they are so great that she fails to describe what she might find round the corner. All we hear is that a man might be lurking, but not what she expected him to do. She is at far greater pains to describe the brightly lit passage and the approach of that corner behind which there waited she knew not what. We established that we knew this scene from countless horror movies; and that this playing on people's nerves was familiar among film-makers. Even if such images do not necessarily trigger feelings of anxiety, they may well intensify them, and since they are familiar from films, fairy-tales or television, we concluded that it was important for our research into anxiety to look at the ways in which the imaginary is produced, illustrated and reinforced among others by the mass media. In other words, anxiety has to be understood *inter alia* as a cultural product.

Our second question asked what is anxiety connected with, what social construction of anxiety has the writer produced. The answer to this question yields a world picture that is not conscious for the most part, but is no less effective in governing the author's actions. She describes anxiety in the context of loneliness, or more exactly, of non-sociability. This anxiety is directed at men as soon as they are not together in groups. She feels safe in every group, either of concertgoers, whom she does not know, or of »young people«, whom she also does not know. She explicitly describes men in groups as neutral (as men and women); the group is on the lookout to keep danger at bay. As soon as men appear in anonymous crowds - in the bus, for instance - the element of control is extinguished - this is what we learn from the interpolated scene - and she becomes the target of arrogant, violent glances. As long as she is protected by the crowd, she can play at resistance and return their gaze. This act is one that prevents any misdemeanor. It is itself asocial, a mode of defense, and not a peaceful communication. If a woman and a man meet, the writer tells us, this does not lead to an innocuous social interchange, but to violence. Thus the words »a man or a drunk« are juxtaposed interchangeably a proof that we are dealing with beings not in control of their senses, if they are not controlled by their

peers. As a woman she is quite at their mercy. And she too is mere nature as soon as she lowers her gaze; for she abandons control of her body, or, alternatively, is defenseless and at the mercy of the masculine gaze. The fact that her nature encounters nature condemns the woman to passivity; it prevents her from describing what the lurking man wants from her. Her expectation of what awaits her round the corner is not based on direct experience and is therefore not susceptible to interventions at the level of experience. Instead it feeds on the other experience in which arrogant men gaze at her aggressively. By experiencing every glance from every man as a potential act of violence, she intensifies her own fear of the unknown man at whose mercy she finds herself.

However inclined we may be to sympathize with her imaginative construct, we cannot blind ourselves to the fact that there is something monstrous about thinking of the place of men in the social world exclusively in terms of protection and control, and also of thinking of the encounter between the sexes as entirely a matter of brute force.

The third question for the construction of the other persons in the field of action has already been answered within the last context.

The fourth question relates to the construction of the self. The writer presents herself as a resister and as a woman, who takes all sorts of active steps. Nevertheless, her construction of the scene leaves her with no possible course of action in practice. Even her planned purchase of a teargas-pistol will prove of no avail, since the cause of her panic does not come to meet her on the open street, but is lurking round the corner. Moreover, the fear of fear cannot be combated in this way. The strategy of going round the corner with other people is not one that will conquer fear, but only an evasion - indeed she foresees that if things go on like this, she will soon not be able to go out alone again.

In a number of scenes we found this construction of an unnamed evil that

emanates somehow or other from individual men and renders women incapable of action. In it women experience themselves as sexual beings, as nature, rather than as human beings encountering other human beings. In the scenes imagined this is achieved by reducing each individual man to mere nature and hence to violence. The scenes are intensified by the elaboration of women's own inability to act. In the scene described above one of the ways this is achieved is by the idea that the man is not only lurking behind the corner, but that once she has gone down the stairs, he could also cut off her retreat. In another scene a woman is lying in bed in her own room, imagining what might happen, if she were to go to work in an as yet unfinished and hence isolated floor of an office building. In her mind she runs through every possible escape route from a man she has imagined. She pictures herself just managing to reach a door, but the corridor is too long, or the door cannot be opened quickly enough, or she cannot negotiate the stairs fast enough, etc., until she ends up lying in bed, trembling, bathed in perspiration and her heart racing, quite unable to go to work at all.

Even with a large amount of empathy in female anxiety of male violence we must admit that most of the fear works without experience. And in addition to this the sexes interact in multifold social situations; they even live together, so that this fear of men must be limited not to incapacitate women totally, but at the same time it can be extended any time and can therefore threaten the whole social situation of women.

Anxiety in the dark

Taking a second step we attempted to shed more light on this unspeakable threat by concretizing the question more precisely. Everyone knew from their own experience that the worst anxieties about men arose in the dark. In scenes about *Anxiety in the dark* we hoped to fill a gap in the earlier series in a more specific and precise way.

Almost any woman could write these scenes about the dark. Surprisingly they were

all very similar, and nowhere was the degree of subjective identification as great. But even though people knew exactly what it is like in the dark, the analysis still produced some surprising results. In one scene, e.g., a woman talked about escaping from a constricting social situation into the freedom of nature.⁴ But almost at once the trees seem too tall, the wind was tremendously blustery, the rain beat down, the fog was uncanny, etc.

From the confusion between nature without men and the fear of masculine nature we were able to arrive at the following theoretical formulations:

For women in our society there is no social space in which they can be free, and this is why they develop anxiety. This leads them to search for freedom in nature, a freedom which they then find is too much for them. A new anxiety overwhelms them. Resistance drives them to an individual quest for a suitable living space that turns out to be outside society. - We had assumed that fear in the darkness would lead us to statements about fears of masculine violence. And although everyone was quite certain that even scenes about the fear of nature were 'basically' anxieties about men, that in the darkness that was described a man was lurking, and that trees, wind and fog were merely signs for him, we began to realize that we were not so much concerned here with individual men, but with men as the agents of a social structure, a model of civilization, in which women have been assigned an unacceptable position in sexual relations.

Further scenes about fear of the dark also contain men, or the idea of men lurking. At their center is the fear-stricken woman whose death is certain but who for that very reason is not ready to fight for her life. Instead we find attempts to achieve sexual neutrality - a woman conceals her hair beneath a boy's cap and strides around with a masculine gait,- another tries to appear manly in a sleeping bag; - a third

⁴ Margaret Atwood has used this syndrome in one of her novels. The main character stays in the forests in the expectation that she will gradually grow the fur that will enable her to survive in the wilds. *Surfacing*, Bloomsbury 1972

thinks of herself as plain and hopes to escape notice by reaching a lantern in time so that she could be recognized as looking unattractive and hence not truly feminine. In all these scenes nature becomes a woman's fate which she can only escape by becoming disembodied. Since these scenes contain no society no social space worth aspiring to, there are also no possible partner. In society women are as lost as they are in nature - in every case it is her own nature that is her existential problem, one that restricts her scope for action and in which numerous extraordinary incidents disempower her.

One difficulty with working with such scenes about women's anxieties is that our societies actually contain men who rape and murder women. With such images before their eyes, images that the mass media constantly add further fuel to, it seems to us that it is normal for women to feel anxiety when they meet men - all the more, the more men have the opportunity to act free from supervision by others of their kind. This convenient coincidence conceals the fact that the real process is much more complex. In every social situation women can feel themselves reduced to their bodies and attempt to use their anxieties to help them escape from the realm of the social. The problem turns out to be much more deeply anchored in sexual relations in general and in the ways in which women are positioned in them.

It frequently happens in the course of memory-work that you reach a point where the analysis of the scenes points beyond the horizon of what has been thought up to then, but that you somehow seem unable to make any progress. - As is the case here with the question of the *fear of men* that seem constantly to slip from one's grasp. In my experience it is often helpful at such moments to move onto a different terrain. One option is to look at additional theories on the same topic in the hope that criticism will enable us to make a breakthrough. Another is to interrupt the process of collecting individual testimony and insert a phase in which we explore the socio-economic conditions in which women experience anxiety. A third possibility is to have a look at fairy tales, myths and images, in short, the material of which the

imaginary is made. Basically, every path leads somewhere useful. In the present instance we try one after the other. We ask what role is played in our society by women's bodies and women's nature, both of which are crucially the starting point, the source and heart of anxiety? Which contradiction cannot be solved but must be avoided by anxiety?

Women's bodies in society

In Critical Psychology⁵, a creative Marxist attempt to found a »new« psychology the decisive distinction between animals and humans has been identified in the fact that the development of the species no longer occurs at the expense of the individuals (as it does if, for example, an animal, like the hare, which is prey for others, begets numerous offspring several times a year, the species survives even if many individual hares die), but depends instead on the development of the individual. This is explained by the ability of human beings to make history, to create their own world. This arises from the fact of objected labor, language, concepts etc., in other words, from the fact that every individual faces the task of appropriating his/her own humanity in order that mankind as a whole should survive in a human fashion.

Inherent in these statements is the question of human reproduction a process shared by us and the hares, which has been elegantly put aside through neglect. Although all the statements about essential human energies are undoubtedly valid, they bypass the question of how the reproduction of the species is to be regulated in a specifically human manner. At this point we meet a curious silence, even though it is obvious that this aspect of humanization is acted out at the expense of women:

⁵ The name is adopted by a group that had arisen out of the work of Leontjew, Sève and Marx and has attempted to ground the whole of psychology on materialist foundations. Its chief exponent was Klaus Holzkamp, who died in 1995. Critical Psychology has been active for almost three decades; it has numerous publications and its own journal: *Forum Kritische Psychologie*. An essential feature of the school is that its methods are historical and developmental, that is to say, after tracing the development of living creatures it attempts to define the social as the specific characteristic of humanity and attempts on this basis to

physically, morally and above all as far as the »appropriation of essential human energies« is concerned. Women »know« this, but since they also perceive themselves as human beings, they simultaneously deny it. They have to meet the various social and historical demands of life and have to maintain and protect their body for this task, to keep it clean, healthy and in readiness. That means also that for a certain period at least they also have to prevent reproduction and live with the countless signals unconsciously and semi-consciously inscribed in society. One such relevant social value is morality in its significance for women (see my article: *Morals also have two genders*, in *Beyond Female Masochism*, 1992). But even though the prevention of reproduction is one of the aspects of women's behavior that is simply taken for granted and even though it determines women's emotional world, by the same token women must be absolutely prepared and willing to accept the task of becoming enthusiastic mothers with all the consequences that this entails for their lives and their life-plans. For example, they may always act on the assumption that real life will begin afterwards, that in effect they have a number of lives.

We may perhaps describe the position accurately by saying that women find themselves subject to their own bodies. It is their duty to act as overseers over their bodies and at the same time, they realize that these overseers have almost no power - either with regard to physical pleasure or their own protection, or even their role in the reproduction of mankind. Hence they incur guilt on every side.

Women's fear of men as a fear about their own bodies must be enormous; what it expresses is that women's entire bodies, their senses and their whole life are at the mercy of this reproductive task. Furthermore, it means that they have no control over the conditions of their lives. They neither »take collective action« to »achieve such control« (quotes from *Critical Psychology*) nor can they do so in the situation prevailing in our societies. We can readily see that the task of reproduction

is one that they must both desire and fear, and that they live within a system full of contradictory signals. It is not thought to be human to have all too many children in what may well be deprived social circumstances, nor is it held to be feminine to have absolutely no children at all. Society continues to uphold the social rules that assert that sexual behavior outside certain specified conditions is indecent and depraved, and simultaneously that in other specified circumstances the same behavior is special and wonderful. (More could be learnt about these contradictory expectations from a study of the social and individual attitudes to both male and female homosexuality. Similarly, the bigoted discussion about the abortion laws should be also reexamined in this context.) - Light could also be shed on the vulgar-psychoanalytic thesis that has once again gained currency among men and according to which women's sexual anxieties or fear of rape spring from their intense desire and longing for the very things they resist. The force of this thesis can be understood as an expectation imposed on women, not as a desire they really possess.

Conclusion

In the history of mankind the contradiction about women's bodies sketched here points both to immutable constraints, and also to socio-political and cultural deficiencies in the historical relations between the sexes. The problem of human reproduction calls for self-evident values that need to be fought for culturally. They require, among other things, the overthrow of our system of morals. Perhaps we do not only lack the experience, but also the fantasy to develop intervening utopias.

What would we see as a specifically human way of reproduction and adequate moral and cultural system? In our situation the development of society as a patriarchy implies a huge waste of natural resources; in this process women are among those wasted resources. At the stage reached by our civilization the efforts to develop a human way of reproducing the species seem to have been thought of as individual problems and hence have been delegated to individual women, while on

the cultural level expectations are safeguarded by a network of contradictions that itself drives the anxieties that reproduce the system. The anxiety that women are forced to develop becomes existential and thus prevents them from recognizing their individual problems as problems of humanity as a whole. There are thereby prevented from even thinking of alternative approaches.

Anxiety about myself

Let us change course once again and return to the anxiety actually experienced by women in sexual relationships and in a cultural system which semi-consciously fuels this anxiety in a contradictory fashion in the service of its own reproduction.

Developmental contradictions

We now encounter the problem not only that men can represent a threat to women in reality, but that women themselves grow into society in such a way that they learn to fear men at the same time as they learn to come closer to them and to submit to them. They thus acquire a kind of ability to act that simultaneously blocks off every escape route.

How is this being achieved? On this point we wrote scenes to the question about *Anxiety about myself*. This new formula derives from the impression that grew from our work hitherto and from the conviction that when women express anxieties about their body, it is really the entire person that is at stake.

Fear for myself

You will read a scene which might be quite historical for readers of the end of this century but still shows emotions and actions which go on being quite understandable today.

A Midnight Cycle Ride

It was immediately after the Currency Reform in 1948, a magic word which seemed the incarnation of all sorts of promises for her. She was 11 years old at the time, and her sister was 13. In Leipzig the first Fair - another sparkling word - was being put on and her mother wanted to take the opportunity to travel through all the Allied Zones to visit her parents in Berlin, since she had not seen them for years, not during the war. There was no way of traveling from the village she was living in. But a bus left at midnight from one of the neighboring villages. To get there took over half-an-hour on foot - too far in the dark and with luggage. So the plan was that their mother would take the luggage on one bicycle and she and her sister would ride on a second one. On the way back the two girls could have a bicycle each. Of course, they would ride back quickly - it was already very late and their two small brothers were left sleeping alone at home. She was very proud that she was indispensable to this plan, something that seldom happened, since usually her mother worked out her plans just with her sister.

The journey there went quite smoothly. They rode in the pitch-black darkness through puddles and potholes in the road - the carrier on which she was riding was as hard as ever, and she longed for the moment when she would at long last be able to ride on her own. Together with their mother they waited for the bus at the chestnut tree in the other village. But there were a few drunks wandering around who pestered them. Their mother became uneasy and so sent them off on the return journey before the bus came, at a moment when the men were not looking. They raced off - the thrill of the dark and the importance of their excursion had now shrunk somewhat, thanks to the danger they felt pressing in on them from behind. She kept looking back. As she did so she caught sight of some bicycle lights and heard voices, swearing at them - the voices of the men they had eluded. They were now in full flight; the men raced after them and despite their drunken state they caught them up quickly, making a lot of noise. The girls pushed down on the pedals as hard as they could - they ought to put their lamps out, since they were just illuminated targets. But the distance between them was already so small that they would never have managed to stop, undo the dynamos and still make their getaway. They could already hear them panting behind them and she felt that she was both moving weightlessly and that she could not go on. »Quick, get into the ditch«, her sister cried - and disappeared

from her side. She also threw her bicycle into the ditch on the other side and jumped in after it. It was all wet and she was holding on to the nettles above her for protection when she heard the furious voices of the men above her. They had stopped, having lost sight of their quarry. She pressed against the ground and held her breath although she wanted to scream from fear, and was also afraid for her sister since she somehow imagined that they were after her because she herself was still too small.

Much later she heard her sister calling her quietly. Stinging from the nettles, her feet soaked, she clambered out, pulling her bicycle behind her. The physical pains filled her with tentative pride for having managed to escape. They decided to ride back into the village either to look for their mother or to seek out the smith whom they knew. Somehow or other he had expected them, since the men had been seen chasing them. He loaded them and the bicycle into his delivery van and drove them home. She felt bad that she could no longer prove that she was grown-up and could cycle in the dark, and at the same time, felt there was some justice because she was now allowed to go in a car.

Methodological Interlude

As we have shown above, we normally start our work on such scenes with the sort of interrogating that you might find with teaching the study of texts in school. That is to say, we design a set of questions and apply them to the text. An effective method has been to start by compiling lists in columns with very simple pieces of information about, for example, the actions of the narrator, actions of others, feelings, and interests (see chapter eight in this volume). At the second stage we move on to more complex issues dealing with the construction of the self, the construction of others or the objects concerned, questions that involve some measure of synthesizing. In the case of the initial question we just enter words that occur in the text, while at the second stage the actual words used are to be avoided, in other words, there should be a higher degree of abstraction. The breakdown of the scene into such columns normally brings an immediate insight. For example you can see at a glance how someone can be completely immersed in a multiplicity of

emotional situations, or alternatively describes no feelings at all. Or you can see the extent to which someone takes action or whether the other participants in the scene behave passively, and so forth. - The breakdown of the text into columns is simply a tool, though one that precedes the creation of an analytic, reconstructive text about the scene. It is also very illuminating to carry out an analysis of the language used in the scene, something which at his stage has barely been tried with these scenes about anxiety. Our more than a decade long experience with memory-work enables us to conclude tentatively that for the majority of their experiences most women only have a borrowed language at their disposal. Moreover, even on the subject of feelings, which are supposed to be the special terrain of women, there is a huge linguistic deficiency. Clichés are common, a kind of prefabricated set of linguistic expressions that destroys knowledge instead of increasing it. Memory-work is itself a kind of school of language, an opportunity to try out, to seek out and discover words with which to describe one's own experiences.

Custody

Let us return to the analysis of the above given scene.

In 1948, shortly after the Second World War, order was far from being restored. Travel possibilities were very inadequate. That forced people to adopt unconventional methods, such as bicycle rides at midnight with children who should have long since been in bed, as indeed their brothers were already. The author describes all of this as a welcome adventure that gives her added importance as an individual, indeed makes her seem useful, even indispensable, and credits her with other abilities. This means that she does not just stride out into the hitherto forbidden world of the night; she also estimates her rank of relative insignificance in the hierarchy of the siblings. After all, unlike her brothers, she is able to take part in carrying out a plan, even it is one her older sister has worked out with her mother. The world of order is left behind; she grows up.

Unlike the scenes with older girls or women danger here does not manifest itself initially as a subjective feeling, but as a perception on the part of her mother, more or less as a kind of infectious uneasiness. The author also conveys this linguistically: she is not threatened by darkness or strangeness. Instead »a few drunks were wandering around« and they »pestered« the family group. Nothing indicates that the words »drunken«, »pestered«, meant anything particular to the author; indeed, the fact that her mother sends them away quickly seems at first to be a continuation of the adventure; racing off on the bicycle seems as if it were part of the game.

But the newly constructed collective »we« of the action soon gives way to the isolated »I« that is pursued by danger. The body begins to speak to her: the danger is »pressing in« on them, her eyes signal »lights«, her ears »voices«, »panting«. When the men pass by as she hides in the ditch, she can imagine what danger might be awaiting her. Oddly enough, the original hierarchy has now reinstated itself: the men are »after« her sister, because she herself was still »too small«. In this way the growing girl's fear of men is not extinguished - on the contrary she is out of her mind with fear -, but it is explained as being part of growing up. In contrast she soon learns the lesson: *you have to enlist the protection of men whom you know. The bigger you become, the more important that is.*

At the same time the little girl's anxiety is immediately comprehensible. She mobilizes paternalist feelings, including resentment towards her mother who sends her daughters »home« under such conditions. But empathy can do no more than convey the insight that children - especially female ones - should not be allowed out on the streets after dark, particularly when drunk men, not in control of their senses, are out and about. From the standpoint of analysis we learn a little more about how ideas of men enter the feminine imaginary. They appear self-explanatory so that further questions are otiose, and seem to call for associating with anxiety rather than with men (men are just beings to escape from). These ideas are formed on the one

hand through a sort of emotional infectiousness: the mother is obviously afraid, whereas the daughter only sees an adventure. But the mother represents order, so that her own violation of customary behavior - which promised taking unusual steps, new significance, usefulness and growing up - was at the same time transmitted to the girl as extremely problematic. Escape from men is at the same time a leave-ticket from her mother, indeed it abandoned her to a danger that her mother had herself drawn attention to. The pursuit of the girls is in a sense a liberation of the mother; the privileges of the older sister also mean endangering her. In short, the author finds herself in a tangle of contradictory signals that necessarily inhibit any accurate account of and search for the real danger.

We come to the following developmental contradictions in the above shown and other stories: to leave the world of childhood and extend your ability to act also means trying to escape from the protection and accustomed order of the child's world. The early lesson is: *girls need a new protector when they grow out of the old one*. Where then would be the satisfaction of growing up? But at the same time growing up is known to be unavoidable. What additional reserves of curiosity are needed to picture to oneself the future dangers men seem to represent, when at the same time men are supposed to be the source of protection? Can a girl escape from this contradiction simply by ignoring it? Or conversely, what efforts must she make to achieve adulthood in an energetic and self-confident way? How can she live out this contradiction that seems to be an inherent part of male images without submitting to them? A preliminary finding seems to be that the vacant space obscurely occupied by the dangers posed by men can be filled by prefabricated images from a variety of sources. In the above read scene the narrator's perception is influenced by adventure stories from childhood in which cops and robbers, hot pursuit and games of hide-and-seek enrich our imagination. This would be a possible way of extending our project. We ourselves opted for a different route. We examined the literature which gives adolescent girls advice on how to deal with such problems. We also referred

back to fairy tales, a cultural building-block that has an impact on our imagination. Here, for example, we discover one solution to the paradox according to which masculinity simultaneously represents threat and protection. Even the examples that appear at first glance as a threat only turn into protective beings if only you share your table and above all your bed with them. They cast off their hedgehog quills or lion-skin, and slip out of their frog-shape, if only a woman takes them into her bed. Sometimes, however, they fail to change and persist as nasty dragons. In that event you just have to wait for the arrival of the good man to provide protection and salvation. In every case women's activity remains confined to selfless devotion, and the additional piece of advice is: »*Don't trust your senses*«.

The wicked uncle

Let us take a step back to girls of pre-school-age. A further way of overcoming the contradiction of paradoxical masculinity is the introduction of the »wicked uncle«. We assume that the efforts of parents and teachers to create a mysterious aura of unnamed sexuality around men with sweets and hence to stop girls from being too trustful towards strange men, do not really help girls survive, but instead lead to anxiety and an inability to act. This lesson about the »wicked uncle« still occupies a place in the curriculum of the first years at school, even though the threat of sexual abuse is far more likely to come from a trusted member of the family than from strangers in the street.

It is understandable that one of our scenes should portray this as the author's chief problem: »What would her parents say if she accepted presents from strange men?« She ends up throwing her chocolate bunnies away because she found even her parents' questions »unpleasant« and »they should on no account learn that the uncle had picked her up and carried her.« The event crystallizes in her mind into a kind of crime which is her fault - she is afraid that »everything might come out«. This is a fertile soil for the guides that warn against strange uncles. It is possible to train

modes of perception that result in insulating people from the world through fear. The lesson is that *it is dangerous to become involved with the unknown*. This attitude is inscribed in relations between the sexes.

The contradiction about the wicked uncle described by our author lies in her relationship with such men, alternatively, in her parents' injunction to beware of strange men. In order to recognize the uncle as a threat, she has to be close to him. But this is the very danger her parents have warned her to avoid. She incurs guilt if she informs herself. Her chosen strategy of perceiving the uncle's various actions as threatening is itself a violation of their warnings. The contradiction then is that she should avoid coming into contact with any possible evil, but that she must come into contact with it to recognize it for what it is. The solution can only lie in an early-warning system that springs into action long before any danger comes on the scene.

Preliminary conclusion

What we have achieved is a preliminary insight into a highly contradictory process of socialization which in practice recommends a retreat into self-denial, domesticity and submission at every stage in the growing-up process. Contradictions block the path of development and place taboos on the world in an almost archaic manner. They begin with the twofold riddle that *men* - having been endowed with sexuality long before sexuality has become a real issue - oscillate between familiarity and an alienness that cannot be interrogated. It is inappropriate to explore the badness that is thus intimated. This mindset persists and propagates itself in the world. The world is so bad and full of dangers that a girl should not venture into it and a woman would be well-advised to stay at home. The next contradiction concerns adulthood as such. The desire for liberation, the wish to escape from parental protection, is frustrated by the insight that this can only be achieved at the cost of a new protective custody. We thus find that women in a sexual relationship

with men are caught up in a contradictory identity in the sense that they cannot develop their personality without losing it. The desire for spaces controlled by one's own man is self-denial in the cloak of freedom. There is no experience to which women can appeal that would enable them to find their way without anxiety around a world they have appropriated in theory. Indeed their knowledge of the wickedness of the world stands menacingly in their way to prevent them from setting foot in it.

For our initial question about anxiety in sexual relations and about its paradigmatic power in our society we now learned that anxiety about the body is not restricted to the process of reproduction and women's role in it. On the contrary, the subjugation of the female sex to this social function seems to press both women's bodies and the mysterious male figures into service. Women's acceptance of modesty, of retreat, their loss of curiosity and adventurousness, indeed their renunciation of inquiry and knowledge seem to have been purchased by this anxiety about the body, with the consequence that physical anxiety becomes the synthesis of all these experiences. At the same time, it becomes impossible for women to obtain any understanding about these relationships. How can you want to learn about dangers when knowledge itself seems to be a danger?⁶

Curiously in almost every scene other women stand as guards blocking the entrance into the world, knowledge and autonomous action. They include sisters, girl friends and strangers. And nowhere do they join forces in search for solutions, or enable them to recognize obstructive contradictions together or to discover new modes of acting and living. On the contrary, the danger perceived as coming from men drives women to men for protection. So this complex of danger ensures that heterosexual relationships develop in a way that entails the renunciation of any

⁶ We have repeatedly found this strange connection between women's anxieties and the fear of knowledge in widely differing contexts, at different ages and social position. When we read Christa Wolf's story about the nuclear accident at Chernobyl (Strfall) we found the same link between anxiety and the fear of knowledge. It seemed important enough to us to warrant making further research into the relationship a major priority.

development at all. This goes along with the worldwide practice of leaving the conduct of public affairs to men, insofar as they are conducted at all. Anxiety prevents women from reserving the defeat of the female sex and this brings further anxiety in its wake. Thus anxiety makes a double appearance at a strategically significant point; it is both the sign of awakening and the guardian of the different points at which women (as individuals) might break out of the framework that society assigns them to. It is the emotion that both signals an awakening and also impedes and retracts it. This is a vicious circle which we have to break.

»SEX« AND »RACE«

We have seen some of the strange relationships women have to the other sex and to themselves. We could also see how the problematic is linked to the perception of both nature and the social. Both had an impact on the preparedness to discover and to obtain knowledge. Character traits that would result there from would rather be a tendency to ignore the unknown, to avoid communication and interaction, flight, searching protection and above all never to engage with somebody or something strange.

While there is certainly a lot to discover as to the other sex, these other others in our society, there is the additional question, whether this might have any bearing on the question of strangers in society, i.e. the question of racism?

I would like to present an impression by reading another final scene, which was also written to the question - fear for my body - this time by a woman from Canada (where I spent a term as a visiting professor at the OISE, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, linked to the University of Toronto).

Fear for the body

She said hello to him as she stepped out of the gully beside the park road. She was enjoying the sunshine and mostly the time alone from the rest as she walked in her shorts and bikini top towards a group she was supposed to visit. She was carrying her t-shirt and a pack of cigarettes.

He pointed a gun at her and told her to get down in the gully. Once there, she fell on her knees and begged to be left alone. She thought she would pretend to be hysterical, but soon realized that she really was out of control and probably this wasn't a good idea, so she tried to rein herself in. He kept pointing off into the jungle and telling her to walk. She kept saying 'no'. She tried to explain to him that she was just a Canadian girl who'd come with some kids from the Boys' School in Santa Marta, and that she was just going down the road a bit to visit some of the boys. She said she wouldn't tell anyone if he'd just let her go. She offered him all she had - the t-shirt and cigarettes. She thought she would pretend she thought he wanted to rob, not rape her. Even though he would say, 'I just want to be with you.'

He would look interested in what she was saying for a few minutes, then he would say, 'walk'. Sometimes he offered to let her walk in different directions into the jungle, as if that would make a difference. She imagined herself spending days/months/years living in the jungle with no water and little food, the prisoner and sex slave of this guy. His hair looked like it had seen neither water nor comb in years - it was all matted together and stuck out all over. He was very thin; his eyes looked a bit crazy. But she was also afraid of the jungle, knowing she didn't know enough to survive on her own in there, so she wasn't sure running away would be a good idea either. She imagined people wondering forever what had happened to her. Some people went by with a horse and cart. She thought they must have heard them down there, but they went by anyway. She thought it was a plot.

After what seemed like forever but was probably ten minutes, he put away his gun (she doesn't remember where he put it) and got out a knife and placed it against her breast. She tried not to flinch. He got angry, yanked her to her feet, saying, 'Walk - you can go that way or that way, but walk.' She remembered learning to break holds in life-saving class and broke his grasp, scrambling up the ditch to the road and running. She didn't really think he would shoot her, but anyway she thought he might miss because he was too weak, and also that it was preferable to the other options. He

*followed her to the road, making the sound Colombian men make when trying to attract a woman's attention. She thought this was really nuts, but kept running. She flagged down a car full of men. She was afraid of them but more afraid of the guy with the gun.*⁷

Like in all scenes the author immediately convinces her readers of the danger she was in, the evil coming from the guy, the courage, resistance and activity she herself took. So the roles are justly distributed: the nice and friendly innocent western girl against the unfriendly, violent and dangerous male - who in this case is an inhabitant of some place close to the jungle as well. Strangely enough she only told us much later that he was a man of color though everyone of our group thought so immediately. It was hinted at not said, though the whole situation is structured by this fact. Let us look at the description of this guy first. He is depicted as dangerous and unpredictable and at the same time as dirty, disgusting and crazy. He does not wash or comb his hair, he is thin and weak. Whereas she is a Canadian girl, who is strong and rational, she can manage even her own hysteria, she enjoys her Spanish, and the sunshine. She is obviously stronger than he is. The scene lives at the same time from racism and from sexism. It is on the rails of gender relations that she is more afraid of being raped than being shot - though the gun is directed towards her head. She imagines to become his sex-slave for years, of not being able to escape, of being stuck with the guy. She has hardly any strategies to escape this spell. In the scene the decisive point is an empty spot. How come that she follows him into the gully if the gun is not the main threat? Why does she leave the sunshine only to be together with this dangerous man? The author says: »He told her to get down in the gully« and the next words are »once there ...«.

The rationality she tries to develop comes from the superiority of the white. She insists on being Canadian and from a certain school. She promises not to tell.

⁷ This scene was kindly given by the author for this collection. A research group in the seminar did the difficult job to work at the story together with the author. I was allowed to use the work they had done and only slightly rewrote it for this book.

She offers cigarettes and T-shirt. All these actions and remarks must sound ridiculous if they were not embedded in a structure where the telling, the offerings, the nationality meant a superiority, meant at the same time that the man was not supposed to act like he did because he was from a lower kind of people, he was a Columbian man.

Racism and sexism melt into each other - the man makes the sound »Columbian men make when trying to attract a woman's attention«. This is at the same time ridiculous, because he was threatening her with a gun only minutes before, as it is rendering Columbian male flirtatious manners into possible violence.

Because she is experiencing the whole scene on the foil of gender relations she would rather die than being raped. Here is the strong woman and all she can think of doing is offering him her cigarettes and pretending to be hysterical. He is holding a gun between her eyes, but she is not afraid of being shot, she is afraid of being raped. Rape is skimmed over: unspeakable, unthinkable. She thinks, thinking is her way out, but she can't think about being raped so she is immobilized; in the end it is not intellect but physical strength that frees her; being unable to go near the thought keeps her from her body, but her body is her power. There are two more strange things in the story: the one is that the whole idea of her intellectual superiority is part of her being white and not Columbian which does not help her in gender relations. The second is that she is actually walking half naked (in a bikini) in a culture where the people walk dressed and this fact does not even enter her considerations.

And the lesson we can learn is: women don't have power in the society to manage male violence but they think they must. Male violence is everywhere but it is the more unpredictable the lower the men are in intellect, class and culture. Somehow male nature and the nature of the jungle work together; they are both dangerous. In addition to this she has the feeling as if the whole thing »were a plot«. A conspiracy of Columbians against a white woman.

We have seen this construction of men as bare nature already in gender relations with white men. The only weapon women have is to look for protection through a man of their own. This is useless in confrontation with people of color who are not only perceived as being even closer to violent nature but who are at the same time not seen as possible companions for protection. Whole families are perceived as a male threat and conspiracy. They seem to want to rape white women as a sort of revenge to the whole white colonial culture.

In this situation white superiority over »inferior« men of color is especially useless because for women it only means the superiority of intellect, not of the body. Women are in such a situation precisely because they are women. There is no way to be a woman and survive.

Let me add one summarizing remark to this first glance at the possibility to use memory work for the study of racism and link it to the study of sexism. As long as people perceive each other as subhuman, as violent nature the whole project of multicultural piece and harmony is an illusion. But this very perception is part of gender relations. It is not only so that women are afraid of men because of their nature and in fear for their own nature; also men perceive women as nature even if in a different context. The superiority of the white over other ethnic groups has one of its pillars in the perception of others as being less cultural, less intellectual, more part of nature still, which means less human. This very pillar and perception remains strong as long as gender relations nourish and guarantee the eternal image of the other sex as being less human than the own.

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