

# The Backlash

A Column for the Politically Incorrect

Coeditors: Peter Hanus & Joseph Murphy

## A Journey Through *A Feminist Dictionary*

Throughout the power struggles that have resulted in the patriarchal suppression of women, and its subsequent uncovering by feminists, much of what we have taken for granted has been revealed to us to be tools that have been used to suppress women. This includes the standard English dictionary. Thus feminists Cheris Kramarae and Paula A. Treichler, who have "acknowledged the sociopolitical aspects of dictionary making," have devised of *A Feminist Dictionary* (Pandora, 1985) as a "balance to the weight of dictionaries in men's favor." To do this, they took the definitions of "some" feminists (the bibliography is 72 pages) and presented them in encyclopedic form. The following are some excerpts from this dictionary, none of the definitions presented here are taken out of context or "made-up." All are direct quotes. If you don't want to take our word for it, then check it out for yourself. *A Feminist Dictionary* is available in the reference section of the library. Its call number is REF HQ 1115 .K73 1985.

**ABOMINABLE SNOWMEN OF ANDROCENTRIC ACADEMIA:** Scholars dominated by male-centered traditions.

**ADAM:** Mate of Eve; alleged father of two; an easily led male. History's first nonfunctioning head of household. . .

**BELCHING:** A disruption which--along with yawns and farts--can be seen as jolly shows of power against authority. . . . It may be a peculiarly male type of

aggressiveness and hostility toward authority. If it should ever come into women's repertoire, however, it will carry great power, since it directly undermines the sacredness of women's bodies, a cornerstone of their suppression; and it will consequently command greater retaliation.

**BREEDERS:** A term used in the Chicago lesbian community to label heterosexuals.

**CASTRATION:** One of the surgical methods, mythologies suggest, that men used (before they understood their reproductive role) to try to "make women" of themselves in the hope of achieving womanlike fertility.

**DICTIONARY:** A dictionary is a word-book which collects somebody's words into somebody's book. Whose words are collected, how they are collected, and who collects them all influence what kind of book a given dictionary turns out to be and, in turn, whose purpose it can best serve. Though thousands of dictionaries exist for many different purposes, men have edited or written virtually all of them. . .

**EGO-TESTICLE WORLDVIEW:** Men's point of view on all issues.

**EVE:** The brave one in the biblical story. Perhaps the serpent was Adam masquerading, in his intense desire for the forbidden fruit, and lacking the courage of his conviction! . . .

**FARKSOO:** A language invented when she was a child by the U.S. writer Barbara Newhall Follet (1914-39) to be spoken on her imaginary planet Farksolia. A sample utterance from the *nairheen Farksoo* (farksoo grammar): *Na oparil* "the greatest dream of my life would be to go there."

**HERLAND:** A feminist utopia created by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in 1915. *Herland* is "like a pleasant family--an old, established, perfectly-run country place." The women in Herland have no enemies; the success of the society is due to "sister love" or "mother love." There is no illegitimacy because all children have mothers. All children are female.

**HETEROSEXISM:** The dominant perspective of patriarchal culture which defines wimmin as sexually, intellectually, and emotionally inferior to males, prescribes that the proper conduct for wimmin is passivity, servility, domesticity, and maintains social institutions which insure the economic dependence on males, either through husband or fathers.

**HETEROSEXUALISE:** The process of directing women into heterosexuality. The making of women is the breeding of eunuchs, the breeding of slaves, of