

'Women refeminized through rape'

Bound by Love: The Sweet Trap of Daughterhood by Lucy Gilbert and Paula Webster
Beacon Press
Boston, 1982
172 pages

Review by A.D. Wright

"There has never been a women's revolution.

"Although individual women have resisted, rebelled and refused to accept the violent acts against them, the majority of women endure and survive without challenging the status quo, dividing the world into good and bad men . . . Instead, women accept their victimization with fatalism, believing there is nothing they can do to change men's natures and no way to

wrest power from them."

Thus begins *Bound by Love*, which blames the process of daughterhood for this basic social inertia. The book suggests that women have been socialized to passively accept domination.

In the chapter on mothers and daughters, the reader is introduced to the concepts of the Princess, the Good Girl and, of course, the Bad Girl. These are not radically new concepts, but neither are most of the concepts in the book.

The authors tend to generalize: "The more feminine women are, the more we have been programmed for victimization." This tends to diminish the impact of their message. By staying on relatively safe feminist ground, and

avoiding any firm conclusions, the authors have made a book of horror stories without resolution.

This book says that the basic idea of the nuclear family is unfair to women; it is unfair to the mother (herself socialized) and particularly unfair to daughters. The only mother-daughter relationship portrayed in this book is one of harsh training for eventual motherhood. The only father-daughter relationship is one comprised of heavy sexual overtones.

The book is at its strongest when it utilizes short case histories to illustrate its stated generalities, but it does this only when sexual abuse is involved. Incest is mentioned as an interfamilial conspiracy: "the mother advises the daughter not to refuse or resist because disobedience causes family conflict and makes life worse for Mom." The family is a socially sick structure, allowing Dad to abuse Mom and daughter at will.

Rape "mocks the romantic image of heterosexuality . . . and validates the gender hierarchy." Women are "refeminized through rape."

The entire book follows this tone. Every image it conjures up is a sick image. All men are bad, even the young ones: "Boys are potential men. Many of us realize with shock, over and over again, that the sweet little boys before us will someday be men who will possibly oppress women, that the princes we're raising will automatically receive a number of women's best nurturing efforts for the rest of their lives."

All women are victims, entering "the arena of heterosexuality physically defenseless, socially powerless, but erotically powerful."

In this book, nobody is a winner, no solutions are proffered and all is corrupt. It is hard for the book's truths to compete with this. Rating: four out of ten.



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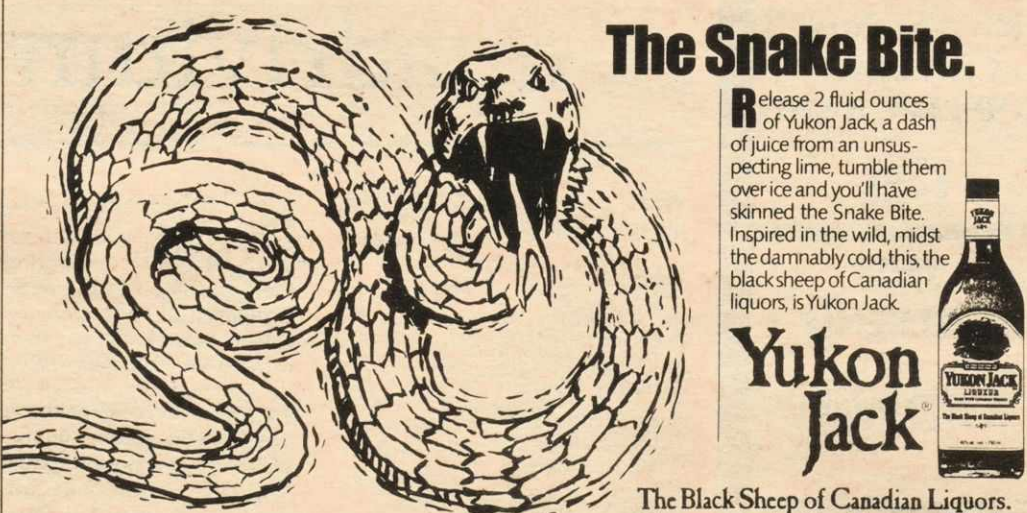
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