

Rebuttal to Rubin

Feminism created in 60's? Yeah, right, Jerry

BY WENDY COOMBER

I FOUND OUT RECENTLY THAT FEMINISM WAS CREATED about 10 years ago. Sixties activist-turned-Yuppie (Young Urban Professionals), Jerry Rubin, created feminism in the 1970's with his Yuppie pals.

That surprised me. In fact, it surprised a lot of people in the Dalhousie audience. Two women chose that moment to exit and one yelled a four-letter obscenity at the stage. That didn't surprise me.

Albie Hoffman, who was touring with Rubin, said he didn't support feminism because it was narcissistic and dealt with only the political advancement of one group to the exclusion of others. But it was Rubin's comment which spurred me to this article. In fact, if I'd had my resource books with me, I would have written this then and there.

Maybe Jerry forgot about the Suffragettes of last century, not to mention Flora MacDonald (of Stuart rebellion fame), Queen Elizabeth I, Queen Matilda, Boudicca, Hypatia, Hapshetsut, Queen of Sheba.... Or perhaps Jerry was just using that old trick of manipulating history—or forgetting bits of it you'd rather didn't get passed around. It's nothing new. To the victors go the spoils along with their own version of history. Funny how a few quick strokes of the quill can wipe out entire civilizations.

(Male) Governments and organised religions are quite adept at this—unpopular rulers, rival deities—who needs them? They only agitate the (female poor) victims.

All that remains now of the world's strongly feminist history and of the Old Religion—the religion of the Goddess—are subtle references to it in the religions of other nations (what we now call 'mythology'), or brief mentions in the works of 'classic' male scholars.

Geraldine Thorsten, in her book, *God Herself*, asserts the original sociological group was mother and child. Men weren't needed outside of fertilization and, in fact, were kept away from this group because of their inappropriate aggressive behaviour.

For their own part, men had little reason to form their own groups (television football hadn't been invented yet).

The stable, active community of women and children built towns and invented the practical crafts of pottery (containers built to hold water as their breasts held milk) and weaving. And because they were a stationary community, the developed agriculture (caring for milk-giving animals and sowing seed) and their own religion, based on their own life-giving abilities.

Men were slowly brought into the community as it expanded. They were essential for the fertility-magic which made the crops grow and the women pregnant, which in turn made the community prosper.

For this reason they were slowly initiated into the matriarchal religions. Men could become the king consort of the Goddess, priestesses and keep them fertile, or they could castrate themselves, wear the robes of a priestess, and serve the Goddess through devotion.

In the case of the king consort, once the king showed signs of impotence or sometimes depending on the phases of the Moon, he was killed by a more virile replacement and sacrificed to the Goddess, his blood saturating and nourishing the earth/Mother Goddess.

As society grew more affluent, male religious sects grew and men themselves became jealous of the wealth being passed from mother to daughter. Their God was a jealous god who could brook no competition from other gods—especially a female one. Male-centered religions grew—Judaism, Mithraism, Islam, and Christianity—and implemented ways to make women subservient to men.

The most popular line was 'God wills it'. Crimes and sins were created and attributed to women as an excuse to punish

them. The basic tenets of the Old Religion were warped to present a nest of devils and female perversity. The Goddess in her garden with her symbols of creation, the snake and the apple, was turned into the ultimate in moral bankruptcy—the fall of MAN (although MAN was eventually saved by Christ, leaving Woman to bear the whole of Man's sin). She was no longer offering him her gift of long life and kinship with the Goddess, she was tempting him to sin, eternal damnation at the hands of his God.

Even Aphrodite, identified with Ishtar, Kali-Ma, Isis, the incarnations of the Goddess in different forms, is now depicted as a superficial light-weight goddess out for a good time. How many remember her as the earth mother so well respected in parts of Greece?

In her book, *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, Barbara G. Walker said, "She (Aphrodite) governed the world by *ius naturale*, the natural law of the maternal clan...ruling birth, life, love, death, time, and fate, reconciling man to all of them through sensual and sexual mysticism."

The Amazon race has also been relegated into that ambiguous realm of myth. Writers like Herodotus and Diodorus spoke in their works of "the war-like women of Libya" and Suetonius wrote, "Amazons once ruled over a large part of Asia..." If Herodotus and his buddy Suetonius had ever made it to the New York Times Book List, Hippolyta and Penthesilea would be as worshipped as Daniel Boone and Davey Crockett.

Patriarchy came into some regions rather late. Places like Crete, Sparta, Lesbos, Carthage, southern India, Alexandria, and pre-Christian Rome were slow to let go of the peaceful, agrarian Goddess religion. And later, when they did 'convert' to the Father, they never

completely let go of their Mother.

These are, of course, things you never heard about in school, and with good reason. Don't want those girls getting too uppity—they'll start talking about social reform again. Our Christian society works hard at perpetuating the myth that this God is the only god, and to be a disbeliever is to spend eternity in pain and suffering...there was no god before this God, and anything else was just divine penis envy.

But why does the mention of the Goddess bring a shower of denials and angry feelings? The religion of the Father is built on guilt—original sin—and where does this guilt come from, if not from a mother scorned? The Greeks believed the Furies (Erynies) would hunt down and punish any man guilty of harming or killing a woman, especially a mother. The 'mother's curse' was known as 'miasma', an evil, infectious disease which could stain the criminal forever. To the Romans, 'pious' referred to the respect due all mothers by their sons, be that son 5 or 50. It's still an Old World value—to love and obey the woman who gave you birth.

Not too many pious people around these days, if you go by that definition.

Now Jerry Rubin is claiming feminism as a Yuppie invention. It gets scary when you think of the societal values built on history and what this new version of feminism implies.

"You've come a long way, baby!" Yeah, it's taken us a couple dozen centuries to regain what was ours in the first place. Thanks, Jerry. Thanks for nothing.

God Herself — The Feminine Roots of Astrology. Geraldine Thorsten, Avon Discus, 1980.

The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets. Barbara G. Walker, San Francisco, Harper & Row Publishers, 1983.

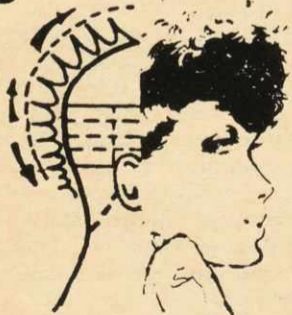


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