

BACKLASH IDEOLOGY: THE ANTI-FEMINIST LITERATURE

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INTRODUCTION

Most social movements engender response from conservative elements of societies. The sources of these responses can be dichotomized as responses from outsiders against whom the movement is directed, and responses from insiders for whom the movement is intended. Response from outsiders may be a form of containment and is often documented, sanctioned and legitimated in the press and elsewhere. White backlash to desegregation has been well represented in written documents which probably reflect the beliefs of a substantial number of whites who opposed desegregation.

The backlash from within, however, often is not documented. Yet this insiders' backlash is important. As Coser (1957) says, "In the modern world, just as in the medieval world, vested interests exert pressure for the maintenance of established routines." Conflict with these vested interests is necessary for the prevention of social ossification and rigidity. One successful approach to the generation and promulgation of the new norms Coser thinks necessary is through understanding the processes by which vested interests exert pressure: the ideology of backlash.

Insiders' backlash from the feminist movement, the ideological revitalization of what Friedan (1963) called the feminine mystique, has been legitimated and published, in the form of books and speeches, so that the ideology is available for analysis.

The essence of feminine mystique can best be expressed by Friedan: "The feminine mystique says that the highest value and only commitment for women is the fulfillment of their own femininity...the mistake says the mystique, the root of women's troubles in the past is that women envied men, women tried to be men, instead of accepting their own nature which can find fulfillment only in sexual passivity, male dominance and nurturing maternal love...the new mystique makes the housewife-mother who never had a chance to be anything else, the model for all women...a pattern by which all women must now live or deny their femininity." (Friedan, 1963)

While the feminist movement has attacked the traditional feminine role as one of the evils of our times, the defense of this orthodoxy which has arisen is what we are calling the backlash from within, the revitalization of the feminine mystique. Two publications exemplify this revitalization: *Total Woman*, by Marabel Morgan (1973), and *Fascinating Womanhood*, by Helen B. Andelin (1965). These books have sold several millions of copies. Andelin's book has recently been reissued, and Morgan's book has been continuously in print since 1973. Both women are well known, Morgan more so than Andelin, as critics of the women's movement. Courses have resulted from their books which have been attended by thousands of potential Fascinating and Total Women (FW, TW) around the country.

THEMES

The themes of both books are quite similar: in the words of Bem and Bem (1970), they make conscious the "nonconscious ideology." Both claim to detail the kinds of behavior by which women can make their marriages happier. The initiative is with women, they say, because, although men will also profit, women are the ones who should and will take the first step; men will for the most part simply respond.

Morgan promises more "zest" in marriage, and Andelin promises to "enrich your life and revitalize your marriage," and to show the reader how to "inspire Celestial Love" in her husband's heart. Both assume that marriage is the desirable state for women and for men, although men do not realize this if left to their own devices. Morgan assumes that things generally do not go wrong until after the wedding, but for Andelin, even getting to the church at any time is problematic: "This book will teach the art of winning a man's complete love and adoration. It is not necessary for the man to know or do anything about the matter." Morgan does say, "First of all, no one says you have to get married. If you do not wish to adapt to a man, the negative implication is to stay single."

Once married, women should stay so. For

Morgan, there do not seem to be any impossible marriages. "If you are married but not adapting, you probably already know that marriage isn't the glorious experience you anticipated." "A great marriage is not so much finding the right person as *being* the right person." "I do believe it is possible for...almost any wife to have her husband absolutely adore her in just a few weeks' time."

For Andelin, there are four special problems which marriage might face. Two of these are to be endured: alcoholism is permanent and deserves sympathy; cruelty to children can be "cured" at times by example, although children should be removed from danger. "You will have to accept even cruelty as a human weakness and not judge the man, but try to understand the causes of his cruelty." Two other problems are more fundamental and not to be endured: "There are two things a woman can rightfully expect in marriage, and they are *fidelity* and *financial support*." In terms of unfaithfulness, Andelin says, if she cannot lure him back by being a FW, "It is morally wrong for a woman to live with a man who is immoral." About nonsupport: "If the man does not provide, there is justification for action." "In this case, the wife has no choice but to support the family but should refuse to have the man return until he arranges for their support."

Love is the major theme of Morgan's book, and its goal is for the man to give the woman things.

Adoration is the desired goal for Andelin, and decent treatment in a happy marriage seems to be the ultimate goal. The book promises to show women how to get those things they want: "She will learn how to cause a man to *want* to do things for her."

APPROACHES

Morgan gives chapter assignments from time to time, such as "Write out your own philosophy of life. Ask yourself, 'Who am I, where am I going, and why?'" [Interesting to ponder on the results, since who she is is her husband's wife, and where she's going is where he's going.] She uses the "Four A's"—accept, admire, adapt and appreciate — as the cornerstones of her approach. While she occasionally quotes others (Lois Bird's *How to Be a Happily Married Mistress*, and Dr. David

Reuben's *Any Woman Can*, Ann Landers, Anita Bryant and "psychologists"), her main source is the Bible followed by quotes from successful TW students.

Andelin also uses occasional assignments, but she takes a "literary" and "scientific" approach. She states that women should be composed of two parts, the Angelic and the Human. She then searches literature for examples of both, and shows how several heroines have erred and come to grief by not developing one of their two halves. Adorable creatures "will win only a part of their husband's love" without the inspirational half. Among her examples of satisfactory heroines is Mumtaz, "the lady of the Taj Mahal," from Bisland: she was pure, simple, generous, sweet-tempered and affable, while bearing his fourteen children, only eight of whom lived. "There was a cheerfulness about her in spite of trying circumstances."

Morgan begins her book with personal reminiscences which serve to show that she, too, once had an ordinary marriage which was presumably typical of most. She nagged, he ignored, they failed to communicate, and both tried to resign themselves to human frailty. Since Morgan had always excelled at everything, she decided that she should also excel at marriage, and she took the whole problem under advisement. The Bible was her first source, both for inspiration and for tips. Her Total Woman philosophy was the outgrowth of trial and error with some help from friends.

LANGUAGE

Both books are written for popular audiences, and the language in both is straightforward. Using the Fry Difficulty Graph (Teaching Sociology, 1977), the reading level of Andelin's book can be calculated as seventh grade and for Morgan's book, sixth. Andelin's work, with its excerpts from literature, pretends to a somewhat heavier readership, perhaps, but contradicts that advocating that women become girls.

MESSAGE

There is an apparent divergence in the messages of the books. While overall the messages are "subservience" and "manipulation," TW is at least, by and large, honest, whereas Andelin advocates dishonesty as the best pol-

icy. The result is probably the same, as Morgan does not have a high conception of women's abilities.

The most striking feature of the messages of the books is their resemblance to social psychological literature concerning personality results of minority membership. Gordon Allport's (1954) description of "Traits Due to Victimization" describes much more succinctly than do the authors the attributes which both of these women advocate as desirable. Allport finds two kinds of personality consequences of victimization, which he says occur in either the intropunitive or the extropunitive individual, the difference being in the direction which the hostility takes.

EXTROPUNITIVE TRAITS

Obsessive Concern: Perhaps the overwhelming example of excessive concern is the fact that it seems to be necessary to buy a book in order to learn how to be a good wife, TW or FW. Considering how natural and "innate" the authors suppose such things to be, it would not seem mandatory to have to learn them from these books.

Slyness and Cunning: Allport says, "Cunning is not confined to forms of stealing. It entails all sorts of pretense. One ingratiates oneself, flatters, gains favor, plays the clown, and generally cheapens the ethics of human relations in the interests of both survival and revenge." Both books, especially Andelin's, contain a myriad of examples of slyness and cunning. Morgan devotes a whole chapter to the rewards to be derived from admiring and flattering him upon his body. One method Andelin suggests for causing a "man to want to do things for her" is admiration. "What a man wants you to admire more than anything else are his *manly qualities*. Admiring his masculinity is, in fact, one of the keys to winning a man's love and devotion. Stop doing anything which requires masculine strength, skill or ability... Then you will have to eliminate any tendency to be *independent, efficient, or capable* in masculine skills or abilities." Morgan is somewhat more realistic: "...don't overdo it. Give him only the jars you really can't handle."

Do they see these pieces of advice as goads to dishonesty? There are indications that they do, because both protest. Morgan says, "I am not advocating that you lie to give your hus-

band a superficial ego boost; even a fool will see through flattery." Andelin, too, protests, saying that honesty is one of the most important virtues. Her advice, however, reads differently: "Some of these actions may seem unnatural to you, at first. If they do, you have to be an actress to succeed..." Through a rather interesting bit of logic, this is not dishonest, however: "If you find it unnatural to express anger in a childlike way, remember, as a child this response was natural to you. It was only in growing up that you lost it. You need only recapture that which belongs to you by nature."

Strengthening In-Group Ties: The whole "movement," especially the classes, represents a sort of affirmation of the group. Both authors capitalize on this, referring to "us girls," "we wives," etc., emphasizing the unity and shared feelings.

Enhanced Striving: Striving should be only in the direction of increased "womanliness," as advocated in the books. Other kinds of striving are a big negative; one should strive only to be a TW or FW, never competing with men. Morgan says, "Once you begin accepting your husband, you can stop worrying about your role as chief advisor. He doesn't need your advice; he needs your acceptance." Andelin continues in that vein: "Do not try to help him solve his problem. This is not what a man really wants from a woman. One of the greatest threats to a man's position of number one is when his wife earnestly pursues a career." Enhanced striving, except to be a better, more womanly person, is definitely too extropunitive a trait to be endorsed.

INTROPUNITIVE TRAITS

Denial of Membership: Both authors deny their membership in the groups they address, in effect, by writing their books. They manage to give the impressions that while they do practice what they preach, they are also somewhat above or out of the fracas. They recommend identification with the dominant group, which is a very similar trait. Andelin says, "Men's ideas of feminine perfection are *different from our own*. The things we women admire in each other are rarely attractive to men. On the other hand, the characteristics which the average woman ignores or condemns in another woman are sometimes just the characteristics which make her fascinating to men."

Withdrawal and Passivity: Allport gives as examples of protective concealment what has been called the "happy darky" and the sycophant.

Andelin describes the withdrawal and passivity which women should express by decrying the effects of being independent: "A feminine woman is dependent and in need of protection from men. As she lessens her need for him, she lessens her femininity. As we view this generation of capable women, who are able to make it on their own in the world, it is not surprising to see the loss of respect men have for them. Marriage is a partnership, but it is not an equal partnership. A family is not a democracy but a theocracy, in which the father presides. Don't have a lot of preconceived ideas about what you want out of life, be obedient." Morgan says very much the same thing, in somewhat more palatable terms: "Marriage has...been likened to a monarchy, where the husband is king, and his wife is queen. In a royal marriage, the king's decision is the final word, for his country and queen alike. The queen is certainly not his slave, for she knows where her powers lie. She is queen. She, too, sits on a throne. She has the right, and in fact, the responsibility to express her feelings, but of course, she does so in a regal way."

What happens if you meet Henry VIII? "A queen shall not nag or buck her king's decision after it is decreed. Remember those speedy trials, gals!"

Clowning: Morgan is famous for suggesting that housewives take long, luxuriant baths an hour before their men come home, douse themselves with perfume, and wrap up in plastic wrap with a big red bow. She also recommends other costumes she has greeted her husband with and tells of remarkable results.

Clowning is not far from childishness, and childishness is at the heart of Andelin's book. Andelin recommends that women re-learn childish expressions of anger. They should be attractive, even adorable, when angry, and never let the "deep emotions of a mature woman" show. They should practice their anger displays: "Many women who have felt silly expressing their anger as I have instructed, have accepted the challenge, worked on this quality, and been surprised to find an inborn talent return." She gives many examples of childlike reactions—sticking out

your lip and pouting, mumbling a few words with downcast eyes, saying such things as, "Oh! You great hairy beast!" and beating on his chest with your fists ("Men love this!") The goal of these displays is to make him laugh, and she gives ample testimony, if such is needed, that the technique works.

Morgan simply recommends sex as a cure for his anger, which, given her proclivity to quote "psychologists," causes doubts about whether she wants to eliminate anger or reward it.

Neuroticism, as the Putneys (1964) demonstrate, can be the norm when an individual adjusts to a culture which does not allow full expression and fulfillment. Although Morgan, Andelin, and thousands of FW and TW would no doubt protest the point, it seems clear that the deceit, pretense, dishonesty and self-abnegation called for by these techniques of human relationships would lead directly to the neuroticism which Allport described as a personality consequence of victimization.

CONCLUSION

The authors assume that marriage is generally a rather dreary affair for most people, although it is the most highly desirable state and can, with work and understanding, become much better. Lewis and Brisett (1967) have described the encroachment of the Protestant Ethic into sex, with their analysis of the work ethic in "marriage manuals." Morgan and Andelin provide evidence that the Protestant Ethic extends to the state of marriage and even the "natural" behavior of what John Stuart Mill called "willing slaves."

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