

Men, too, need to accept their share of responsibility. If they engage in this behaviour, they need to stop it. If they do not engage in it, they must ask themselves whether they condone other men doing it. Are they complicitous, or do they speak up, do they object, not as self-proclaimed protectors of women, not as benefactors of women, but simply because they do not want to live in a society in which women are sexually objectified?

We, all of us, need to challenge the two presumptions at the heart of the problem of sexual harassment: that it is men's right to have women sexually accessible to them; and that women should trust men even when men fail to take responsibility for establishing a social climate in which women can move freely without fear of sexual objectification.

Marge Piercy poignantly captures the pain women experience in not being taken seriously in a university context. Here are some lines from her poem entitled "In the men's room(s)":

When I was young I believed in intellectual conversation:
I thought the patterns we wove on stale smoke
floated off to the heaven of ideas.
To be certified of high masculine discourse...
I walked on eggs, their tremulous equal...

Eventually of course I learned how their eyes perceived me:
when I bore to them cupped in my hands a new poem to nibble,
when I brought my aerial maps of Sartre or Marx,
they said, she is trying to attract our attention,
she is offering up her breast and thighs.¹⁷

In closing, I am reminded of another poem, one by Adrienne Rich. In this poem a woman is in conversation with a man. He acknowledges that he *knows* that women are oppressed: he points out that *he understands* their position, that *he sympathizes* with women, that *he feels the guilt* of his gender, of being a man. In each case, in response to him, the woman asks one simple question: "What will you undertake?"¹⁸

"What will you undertake?" is the question women should ask of men they consider trusting. "What will I undertake?" is the question men should ask themselves.

NOTES

1. Cheryl Bernard and Edith Schlaffer, "The Man in the Street: Why He Harasses," in A. Jagger and Paula Rotheberg, editors, *Feminist*

Frameworks. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984, p. 71.

2. *The Classroom Climate: A Chilly One For Women*. Publication of the Association of American Colleges, 1818 A Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. USA 20009, p. 3.
3. *The Classroom Climate*, p. 6.
4. *The Classroom Climate*, p. 5.
5. Sandra Lee Bartky, "On Psychological Oppression," in Sharon Bishop and Marjorie Weinzweig, editors, *Philosophy and Women*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1979, p. 37.
6. Bartky, p. 37.
7. These responses are discussed in Benard and Schlaffer, p. 71.
8. Said by an undergraduate male in a Society and Morals course in which we discussed Bartky's paper, "On Psychological Oppression."
9. Bartky, p. 36.
10. Bartky, p. 36.
11. Bartky, p. 37.
12. Bartky, p. 37 (original italics).
13. Bernard and Schlaffer, p. 71.
14. Adrienne Rich, "Claiming an Education," in *Lies, Secrets, and Silence*. New York: Norton, 1979, p. 233.
15. Adrienne Rich, "Taking Women Students Seriously," in *Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, p. 242 (original italics).
16. This phrase comes from Adrienne Rich.
17. This poem is found in Piercy's collection of selected poems, *Circles on the Water*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1982, p. 80. I have adapted the poem by changing the order of two lines.
18. Adrienne Rich, "From an Old House in America," in *Poems Selected and New 1950-1974*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co. Inc., 1975, p. 243.

A GIRL'S BEST FRIEND

I'd like a diamond ring, she said,
sitting across the table
in a loose, flowered dress.

The eyes looked, far-off,
to the husband who left with his secretary,
to the daughter who ran away,
to the house she was losing,
and the weight she was gaining;

her dress billowed, a ship
lost in fog, listing on shoals;

oh, for the flash of a lighthouse,
the distant twinkle of shore!

But for now,
a diamond would do.

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