

PART TWO

This part of the story won't be so romantic. Or at any rate it won't be romantic in quite so conventional a way. It will also be harder to write. Perhaps, though, it will be even more necessary to write down what I feel. I am going to find it extremely difficult to be honest about my present personal relationships and sex-life, and in certain areas I won't even try. But unless I make some effort, the whole point of this story will be lost.

The point of the story, I hope, is that it is not only sexually oppressed men whose material interests coincide with those of the women's movement. In the final analysis, the oppressors too — ordinary, typical husbands and fathers — have the same interests. In writing about myself, I can't really say much from which general conclusions can be drawn. But at least I can leave it to others to judge how far the case of my relationship with Ann — a "marriage" which for five years didn't really work — was a typical case of its kind. Our own conclusion, for what it's worth, is that marriage doesn't work. This may sound unfair and even possibly insulting to some of our friends who feel that their relationships are extremely good. What right have we to make judgements on others on the basis of our own experience? It is difficult to know how to answer this, except to say that where a marriage "works" on an exclusive basis for more than a few years it seems to us that it is *despite* the structure of marriage rather than because of it. And then there are the millions of cases in which the "success" of the marriage simply results from the fact that one or both of the partners are managing to delude themselves and sacrifice themselves unendingly for the sake of the relationship. I would argue that even where relationships are good, they are still ultimately imprisoning and limiting in comparison with what relationships could be like for both men and women if sexual jealousies, insecurities and exclusiveness could be overcome. Marriage is limiting and ultimately doesn't work because the individual family unit is simply too small. It can't give us the richness of social life and experience which all of us really need.

My aim is to explain why I believe — today more firmly than ever — that it is in my material interests as a man that I should support the women's movement. So far, what I have written hasn't really explained this at all. All I have done is to describe my earlier sexual oppression and impotence, and the way in which this was overcome by Ann. Ann's gift to me was in a real sense the gift of life itself. But it had little if anything to do with the kinds of things which the women's movement is fighting for today. In actual fact, as I will try to describe, I took Ann's gift only to oppress her with it from then on almost until the time of writing.

Ann gave herself to me and I treated her as "mine". I wanted her body to be mine, her mind and everything else about her. This didn't destroy our relationship: such things usually don't destroy love altogether. But it came perilously close, and for several years we lived as I think so many couples live — trying, trying, trying to make the relationship work. I felt that I was trying the hardest. Yet (as Ann herself tried to tell me almost from the beginning) it was really my possessiveness and situation of dominance — things which I identified with my love — which were creating the problems in the first place.

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I think that today we have solved the basic problems, in principle at least and to some extent in practice. Or rather, Ann herself has found the solution by breaking my sexual hold. Three weeks ago, with much discussion beforehand, with great determination and pride, and quite openly in front of her friends and mine, Ann stayed the night with a male friend of hers. She has told me that her body belongs to her and her alone, to do with as she pleases. I am still slightly dazed at the results, but the amazing thing is — amazing, I suppose, by conventional standards at any rate — that it has "worked". I had known for years that it *ought* to work — my anthropological theorizing had been about little else — but I had never seriously considered moving from theory to practice. Ann has taken this step and forced it upon me. Under pressure, I have not only agreed but backed Ann all the way and defended her against the doubts and criticisms of many of our friends and relatives. Ann and I are now much closer than we have ever been before — sexually, emotionally, politically and in every other way. But the important thing is that we have come close in a way which has included, rather than excluded, our closest friends and political comrades. So many people have given us their love and support that our relationship has become socialized and politicized in a beautifully re-assuring way, almost as if our relationship were theirs as well. Writing these lines has been a part of this socializing process.

I know the dangers of blowing all this up out of all proportion, as if my relationship with Ann Bliss were of some immense general significance. I am fully aware that the relationship hasn't this significance, that it only seems so to me. Ann and perhaps to some of those closest to us, and that what Ann and I have gone through has been matched

in many respects by thousands if not millions of couples before us. I know all this. Yet I also know that such things are not usually talked about very publicly. I feel convinced that Ann's very openness about what she has felt and done has made our little "marital crisis" more fruitful and better-organized than such things usually are. And I think that the mere fact that I am writing about it — that I feel obliged for political reasons to do so — makes the whole thing rather unusual. It obviously is unusual that a person should feel able to write about such things in a political context, and I sense the strangeness of it myself. So that is all I am claiming. I am not claiming that my relationship with Ann is, in itself, of any very great general significance. But I hope I am right in believing that our ability to politicise it, discuss it and write about it within the context of the women's movement lends it some significance which it would not otherwise have. If so, then its importance stems less from us than from the involvement of our friends and comrades in what we have been going through.

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Perhaps I should briefly describe what happened to the two of us after our week in Blackpool. I can then return to where we are now and try to explain what I mean in saying that Ann's breaking of my sexual hold has "worked". By way of introduction I will just say that during that Blackpool week and in the first few months after that sex was no problem. I don't want to go into details about feminine orgasm and things: suffice it to say that Ann loved sex and was just as much the initiator in love-making as I was. We usually made love at least once a day, and sometimes much more often — Ann often leaving me pretty exhausted! I sometimes wished only that I was better able to meet Ann's demands.

We were genuinely giving ourselves to each other. I am convinced that all love-making, when it is really enjoyable, is gift-giving. The woman makes a gift of her body, and (I'm assuming heterosexual sex purely for the sake of argument) the man makes a gift of his. The pleasure comes from receiving the gift, but it also comes just as much — and perhaps more deeply and re-assuringly — from being able to give it. For me, at any rate, nothing was more lovely than to know that I could produce real pleasure in the person I loved most in the world. It gave me a sense of pride which nothing else could match. And, of course, I feel this still. To be unable to give is, conversely, among the most crushing and dehumanizing of human experiences.

To be able to give, however, presupposes that the giver possesses something to start with. This is why poverty can be so crushing: it is not just that its material consequences are felt — it can also be humiliating socially when entertainment and gift-giving become virtually beyond reach. In terms of sexual gift-giving, the same principle applies. If you don't possess your body to start with, you can't give it. It isn't yours to give. If women feel so often humiliated in sex, then this is the reason why. It is because the cultural norms of our own society make it quite clear that women's bodies — in marriage at any rate and in other relationships too — are not the property of women themselves. Their bodies belong to their male partners.

Ann gave her body to me and I treated it as "mine". To begin with, this didn't matter: Ann was mine and I was hers — we were giving ourselves to each other. But it wasn't long before I assumed that I had sexual *rights* in Ann's body. She was my property, and in fact the most precious article of property I possessed. It might be argued, I suppose, that Ann was in a position to think similarly about me, but I don't believe there is any real symmetry there. The whole of our culture tells men that women are their sexual property, and this same culture gives men a sense of sexual community, ownership and power which women can only rarely match. In any event, in our case I was certainly dominant — as Ann saw it — intellectually, politically and in most other ways. It is this factor of dominance which determines who belongs to whom. To me, Ann was mine in a deeply-felt psychological and sexual sense. The thought that I had sexual *rights* in her is not something which I like to admit, but this was true and it gave me — having been impotent for so long — the most intense feelings of sexual security. I felt I had an interest in keeping Ann to myself, keeping her from other men, circumscribing her and cutting her off from everyone but me. I am not saying that I would ever have said this, or even that I admitted it fully-consciously to myself, but looking back on things I know that it was true. I was even a little bit jealous of some of Ann's women friends, including her old school friends whom she maintained contact with tenaciously. Ann was "my" woman and nothing and no-one would ever take her away from me. My proprietary feelings were, I believe, even an important underpinning of my sexual potency. Had I felt insecure or threatened politically by Ann or by her solidarity with others, my potency would have been undermined. I know this — I have to admit — from experience.

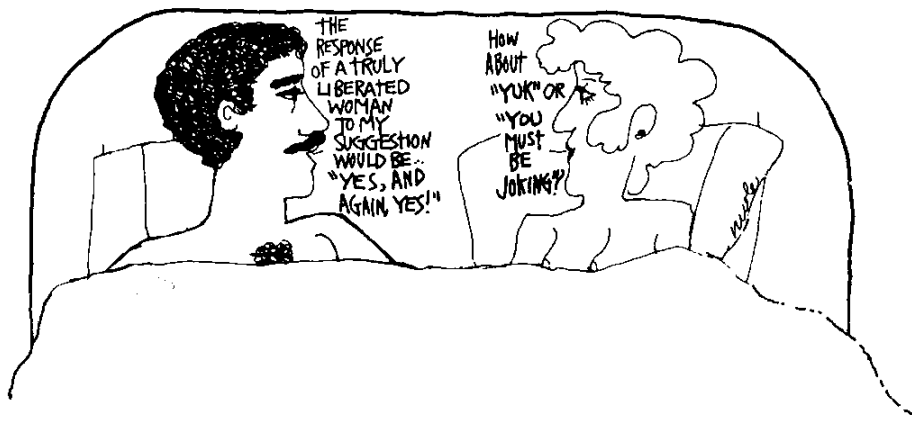
Yet what was my "potency" under such conditions really worth? In oppressing Ann, I gradually stifled our own sex-life. I dominated Ann in order to keep her sexually to myself, yet the actual result was just the opposite, for — as invariably happens — inwardly and sexually Ann distanced herself from me more and more. In one sense I kept hold of Ann's body, but in reality the sexual treasure I was trying to secure was slipping away. Ann stopped taking the initiative sexually. On all but a few occasions — after we had lived together a couple of years — Ann ceased to really enjoy sex. I had to ask for sex. And when pestered enough, Ann would finally "give" it. I wasn't able to give Ann anything at all in that respect. It was impotence in another form. Was this really in my interests as a man?

Sexual fulfilment is a real enough material interest for all of us. And I think that most people who have experienced it would agree that love-making — to the extent that it is really fulfilling — is reciprocal gift-giving of the most loving and intimate kind. But how can a woman give herself if her body is not hers to give in the first place? If — in even the most intimate respects — she *belongs* to her partner, then what more is there to give? In this case, the "giving" has taken place in a sense only once — at the very start of the marriage or similar relationship. A married woman has surrendered rights in herself to her husband, and then that is that. She can't give any more. Everything which follows is then a matter

of the male partner making use of what is already his, like a capitalist exploiting his labour-force. The woman knows this, feels unable to give, feels taken for granted and resents it. The result is inevitable: she doesn't feel fulfilled in love-making but feels simply used, exploited, abused and consumed by an alien power. She freezes up inside, says she is "tired" every night, turns her back to her partner in bed and only "gives" sex when pestered or bullied to do so — in which case she may even feel that "love-making" isn't all that different from rape. I used to feel really hurt when Ann told me things like that, but of course she was only making explicit what so many other women might have felt but never said.

Now I'll continue the narrative where I broke off. It was with Ann and me hopelessly in romantic dreamland during the Labour Party Conference in 1973.

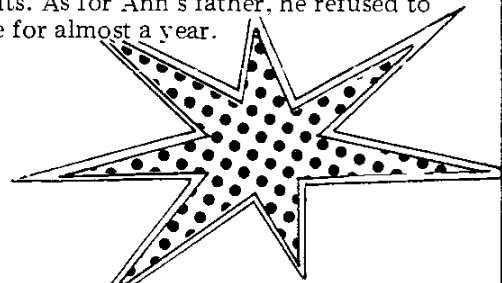
The Conference came to an end and we drove south. On the way home, Ann rang her mother from a call-box. She had been wondering how to break the news about me to her mum and had been gathering up courage for some time before dialling. In the end she took the plunge. I was squashed up in the telephone booth with her and heard everything. I remember only one sentence of the conversation which followed: "Mum -- sex is lovely!"



I am not trying to grovel or say what a horrible character I was! I was sensitive to such matters, and in a way did my best. It was the objectively-given structure of sexual isolation which I was in which made me feel jealous and insecure, and which in turn made me want to isolate and dominate Ann. Part of the problem was that I hadn't found a way of relating to Ann's friends and comrades — including men — on a different, non-competitive basis. We didn't have even the beginnings of a *political* movement or *culture* capable of dissolving or at least softening our insecurities and socializing our personal relationships. For this reason, Ann and I had been absolutely "faithful" to each other for over five years. It certainly wasn't Ann who was the possessive or jealous partner. It was me. I couldn't bear the thought of losing Ann and was inwardly determined to cling to her with all my might and main, remaining absolutely "faithful" to her myself in order to be able to make the corresponding claims on her. I resented it when she said I could have sex-relations if I liked with other women without making her in the least bit jealous. I resented it because I knew she meant it, and this made me feel insecure about her. To this day, I have not had sex with anyone but Ann in my life. I'm not at all proud of this fact — it probably makes me seem somewhat ridiculous — but there it is. I suppose I do feel a certain perverse kind of pride in being able to make the claim. I am quite a good illustration of what sexism can do to a man, although, of course, I am well aware that my case is somewhat extreme. I'm hoping to be emancipated before too long!

Ann and her husband lived in a house in Catford right next to her parents' house. They had only just moved in from another house a mile away. Ann's father had known nothing at all about her and her husband's sexual problem, and her mother had only vaguely guessed that something might have been wrong. Ann tried to explain in her 'phone call, but for her parents it was all too much at once. Ann didn't want to face the music on her own, however, so she brought me along to her parents' house. Her husband was there when we arrived. There was a brief encounter between us all outside the back door. "I'm going to live with Chris!", said Ann. Her poor husband tried to argue a bit and moved to take her arm. I stepped between Ann and him. Ann's father began shouting something at her. He was waving his arms, not really knowing what was happening. I said something about Ann's sexual rights, using the word "fuck" and immediately wishing I hadn't done. Ann and I then went off together to drive to Cricklewood. I felt bad about Ann's husband, who was absolutely heart-broken to lose her, and wished I could find some way of communicating with him without seeming false and ridiculous. I hadn't treated him very well, especially in using that four-letter word in front of him and Ann's parents. As for Ann's father, he refused to speak to me for almost a year.

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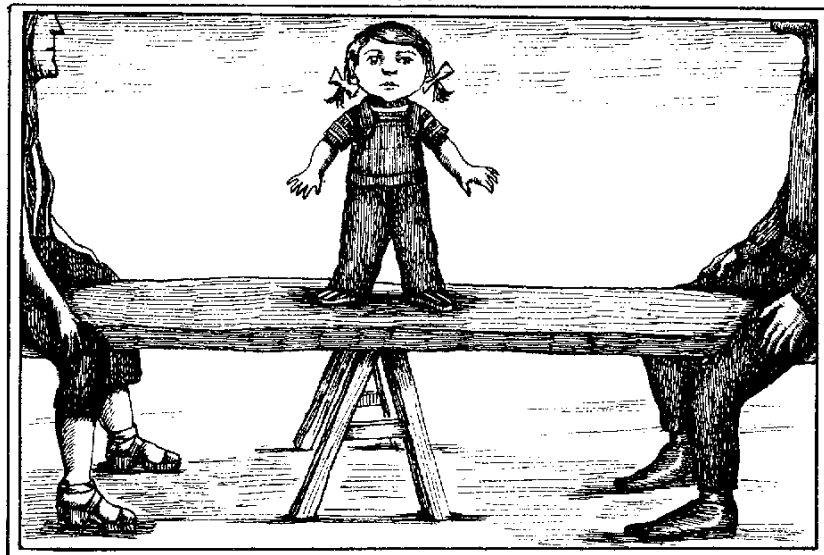
Ann and I lived together in Cricklewood. She had wanted a baby for some time and was soon pregnant. I loved her even more when we found this out. After Christmas, we moved to Brixton where I got a job with the G.P.O. for the next three and a half years. I used to pass our flat (above the *Chartists'* bookshop) at about 7.30 every morning, deliver my round of letters and pop in an hour later for a few minutes in bed before Ann got up. On the late shift (when I drove a big parcel van) I would park outside and pop in for tea instead of going to the canteen in the sorting office which was three minutes' walk from where we lived. Some of the postmen got to know Ann — we went to one man's marriage celebrations! — and I always look back on that post office job with affection. But afterwards, when we moved to Catford and I kept the same job, I used to get home late from work — about 9 in the evening — and Ann hated it. It cut down our social life almost to nothing. Even when I was on the early shift we rarely went out in the evenings because, having to get up at 5 in the morning, I always felt like being in bed by ten. Ann's loneliness and resentment grew quite strong.

Rosie was born in August, 1974. Her birth meant that Ann was almost completely immobilized — as women usually are — for the following year. Ann had to stop going to women's meetings and stop her political activity almost completely. Much the same thing happened to me — I almost completely dropped out of active politics. Partly this was because I sensed Ann's resentment and knew that I simply had to put her and Rosie first or see our relationship break apart. Ann sometimes felt guilty about this and told me that she was holding me back, even urging me sometimes to leave her and Rosie for the sake of my political commitments. I never liked Ann to say that, and couldn't bear the thought of ever again having to "put politics first." To me, "putting politics first" meant returning to the monkish existence I had endured for most of my previous adult life. I felt I just couldn't do it. I clung on to Ann. But it wasn't just this that motivated my withdrawal from practical politics. There was also the fact that I felt I had "theoretical" work to do. I was almost continuously working on my theory of human origins, which Ann was in a sense turning upside down in my head, and which seemed to both of us important for the revolutionary movement in

the long term. And since there was a serious downswing in the class-struggle following the defusing of the potentially revolutionary offensive of early 1974 (when the Heath Government was brought down by the miners), I felt that a "withdrawal into theory" was justified to some extent, although I did have misgivings.

Before I met Ann, I had been "married", in effect, to the Chartist group and to "the revolution" as an abstract idea. After Blackpool in October 1973, I was in effect married to Ann. We never actually got married — Ann wouldn't have it. She obtained an annulment of her previous marriage and we just lived together, using the name "Knight" where we had to. But we might as well have been married. To Ann and myself it felt the same. We sort of loved each other, but we both felt trapped. We clung to each other because it seemed that our relationship was just about all we had got. If that went, there would be nothing left. For me, I suppose, it was just about bearable — at least I had my anthropology to keep me going. But Ann needed *real* friends, *real* social life, *real* political activity and enjoyment to keep her going, not just theory in the abstract. She needed a bigger social world, a richer pattern of happenings and encounters, a wider form of solidarity than she could get from just me. Her resentment was much stronger than mine.

During the worst periods of political downswing — from the end of 1974 to early 1977 — I was pretty pessimistic politically. I encountered extremely intense racist and even openly Nazi ("Hitler was Right") sentiments among quite a few of the postmen with whom I worked, and got quite worried about the future of the revolutionary movement in Britain. The National Front members I knew personally were quite openly Nazi and would joke about Jews, gas-chambers and so on. There was an amazingly widespread consensus in the sorting office that Britain had fought on the wrong side in the last war. Day after day of having to put up with this at work used to get me down, and because many of the men were pretty ordinary characters who would have been considered quite decent in other contexts, it occurred to me that if the NF ever did manage to prove itself a real power, support for it from such "backward" sections of the working class would be pretty sizeable. During this period, I really did tend to pin all my hopes on a longer-term future, working



on my anthropology and treasuring my relationship with Ann. I think I really did "put Ann first", not in the sense of subordinating myself to her needs, but in the sense that I put our relationship — my determination to hold on to Ann — ultimately before all else. I did all the shopping, nappy-changing, baby-minding and so on necessary to avoid arguments as much as possible.

But from about mid-1977 onwards, the political situation began to pick up. The left smashed the fascists at Lewisham on August 13, 1977, in a street-fight that both Ann and I were involved in.¹ From then on, I began to feel more politically optimistic and confident, and therefore less "withdrawn" and dependent upon Ann and our personal relationship. Lewisham in my view was an incredibly decisive turning-point objectively for the revolutionary movement in this country: for the first time, the combined Trotskyist left had shown itself a real power, mobilizing a considerable section of the West Indian population of Deptford and Lewisham in its support. Then — to continue with my personal story — the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory was set up, beginning during the summer of 1978. Within the revolutionary movement, I began to feel some small measure of practical strength once again — something I had not experienced since 1974. I attended *Chartist* meetings more frequently, intervened more and began taking sides, writing documents and so on. I now wanted active political commitment and my "marriage" to Ann. Ann and I both felt — rightly at the time — that these two kinds of "marriage" were pulling in opposite directions and couldn't be reconciled at all. Our second daughter, Olivia, had been born in March 1978, making the burdens of family-life even heavier on both of us. I should perhaps stress that we had both very much wanted our second child, just as we had wanted the first — having children was in a sense the whole idea of our living together, or at least a very important part of it. And both children gave us — and still give us — feelings of pride, pleasure and love which we wouldn't miss for

anything. But Ann had also worked full-time as a social work assistant since 1976, and had every intention of continuing to work, especially as she worked with a really strong team of feminist-minded women whose company she enjoyed. So the conflicts between children and work were quite strong. Now, added to these, were the conflicts between my growing political commitments on the one side, and Ann and the children on the other. Something would have to give.

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The conflicts emerged from the fact that my politics were pulling me away from Ann. In theory, they were supposed to be sexual politics, women's movement politics and so on, as well as Trotskyist working-class politics in my trade union and Labour Party. In practice, though, I was oppressing Ann even in the process of theorizing about the women's movement. Ann in a sense identified with my ideas, but then even that was a form of her own self-denial and oppression and she knew it. The solution could only be some means of giving Ann real political power in relation to me, whilst allowing me to combine my politics with my relationship with Ann and the children. It would have to be a practical solution involving real social life with real people, not just a solution in theory. And it was found. Ann's breaking of my sexual hold has given Ann in many respects the "edge" sexually and politically over me. It has enabled her to take a political initiative in the women's movement which was impossible before. And it has given me a form of politics which I can support without this in any way conflicting with Ann's own needs. The two pulls — political and personal — have suddenly seemed to coincide.

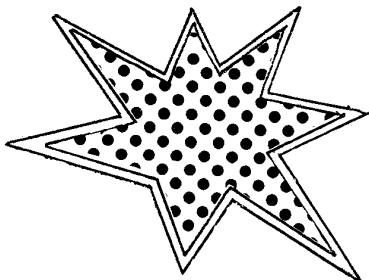
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I It was quite amusing because at work, seven or eight young NF-supporters had been bragging for weeks about what they would do to "reds" like myself in Deptford on the day. The atmosphere for me had become pretty threatening. On the Friday evening before the pre-determined clash, a few of them had said "See you tomorrow, then, Chris!" I'd said "see you!" On Monday, when it was all over, I felt on top of the world. I turned up early for work and sat down in the canteen, waiting for the NF characters to arrive. The first one came through the door, trying not to notice me or be noticed. I don't often swagger or jeer — or at least hadn't done for a long time — and felt I could be excused this one lapse. Almost laughing, I called out: "Hey! What happen to you on Saturday, then! We never saw you!" Ten or twenty other men were all around, listening. The fascist didn't know where to put himself: "Oh, I've got better ways of spending a Saturday afternoon than messing about with you lot! I cleaned up my motor-bike." The next one came through the door. "Where were you on Saturday, then?" I called. "Couldn't get near the march," he replied, looking embarrassed. "— too many of you fuckers around!" He'd got off the train at New Cross station, taken one

look at the smoke, missiles, police horse-charges and masses of anti-fascists around Clifton Rise and decided he'd prefer a Saturday afternoon at home. One after another as they came into work, they all had similar stories. Only one of them — a stupid thug looking like a giant battered baby — had managed to march with the NF all the way, and even he had been pretty worried. I made clear to everyone what a pleasant day we had all had on our side — it really was one of the happiest days in my life — and how a hail of half-bricks (we'd pulled down part of a little garden wall) had caused havoc, how the NF march had been split in two with hundreds of fascists trying to escape, how we had burned their union jacks in triumph and so on. From then on, amazingly, everything was transformed in our office. I could talk to some West Indian postmen freely for the first time. The aura of NF "macho" invincibility had been absolutely shattered, and no-one wanted to know about the NF. The most incredible thing was that one of the main loud-mouths of their faction completely dis-owned them. "My old man was wounded fighting the Nazis", he said — "I wouldn't touch the NF with a barge-pole". There's all the difference in the world between losing a battle and winning it.

I have been warned by several friends (who read the first part of this paper) that I have got to be very careful to be honest in writing about how I felt when Ann first decided to have sex-relations with S—. The whole thing would be useless if I concealed or distorted my true feelings. So I'll just say this to begin with: Yes, I was jealous.

Ann invited S— round to our house one evening (Friday June 1 this year). Before he came, I went out to get some exercise (I'd been driving a lot) and buy some beer. I got back to find S— had arrived early. Through our front window I saw him there with Ann in the kitchen, opening a wine bottle. I'd spent most of the day resolving not to be jealous (I'd never met S— before), but it was no good. My heart just sank as I imagined them talking intimately and cheerfully together in that kitchen with the wine bottle. Anyway, I came in and said "Hullo!" as cheerfully as I could. We sat down to eat the meal I'd cooked. The two of them talked together, mostly about their common friends and experiences at work. They seemed so informal and happy that I was getting increasingly jealous all the time. Washing up in the kitchen afterwards, I thought to myself: "It's all over! She's in love with him!" Although Ann had told me about her "fancying" S—, she had also convincingly promised me that she wouldn't break politically or emotionally with me. I had believed her before. But now, for a few terrible moments, I felt that I had been an absolute fool to believe that. I came in with some coffee, sat down and we started talking about politics — whether revolutionaries should work in the Labour Party. Ann and I had been Labour Party members all our adult lives, but S— had been closer to the Socialist Workers' Party, and thought the idea rather odd. Ann and I argued together against S—. It was all quite friendly and relaxed, I think. But then I began to think that S—, stretched out there on the floor with his beer in front of him, was being a bit *too* relaxed. The horrible thought crossed my mind that he was thinking to himself that he could well afford to lose an argument with me about the Labour Party — if the upshot of it all would be his going to bed with my Ann!



Anyway, S— eventually went. I went with him to the door, smiled and said it had been nice to meet him. I supposed that objectively he *was* nice enough — a good-natured, good-humoured person with political views extremely close on most issues to my own. I told myself that I shouldn't allow my sexual jealousy to distort this objective appraisal of the kind of person he was, especially in front of Ann. But I suppose it didn't really work and it showed. S— smiled nicely enough and went over to his little old car. He drove off. Ann had tactfully stayed inside as he went.

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I came indoors. "Do you think he's nice?" asked Ann. "Yes, very nice". I said. "I'm not at all surprised you like him." I thought he looked much more masculine than me, and assumed that in any sexual competition I wouldn't stand a chance against him. I said something like that to Ann, and gave her a weak smile. She smiled back. We started to wash up some things in the kitchen and clear up a bit before going to bed. "Well, what are you thinking?" I asked. "What are you thinking?" she replied. I felt I couldn't answer. It all depended on what was going through Ann's mind. I *had* to know. Did she love me still? Was she falling in love with S—? He seemed much more relaxed and informal than I could be — much more pleasant company! Had she secretly decided to go and live with S— instead of with me? I asked her again what she was thinking of doing. She wouldn't answer or even look at me. She was silently wiping the table-top in the kitchen. The coldness was getting unbearable, so I tried to kiss her. She turned her face away. This seemed like the end. I went cold and sweaty. My very worst fears seemed to be confirmed now. "If you behave like this and say nothing, you really will make me feel anxious!" I protested. At this Ann almost exploded in a sudden storm of fury. I felt she had never been more venomous. I was a pig, a pig. "How *dare* you say you feel anxious! If I'd wanted to leave you, do you think I'd have been so open? Do you think I'd have brought S— round to see you?" She could *easily* have met S— secretly, she went on. The very fact that she told me everything meant that she had put me first. Why couldn't I be friendly with S—? I had talked all that theory about women's liberation, but when it came to practice, wasn't I just as bad as all the rest? Ann started trembling as she said that all men were pigs — yes, S— included. I felt for the first time in my life that she was close to hating me.

For five minutes, I couldn't look Ann in the face. I stared at my hands on the table-top in the kitchen where we both stood, neither of us saying anything at all. I just didn't know what to do or say. When I finally looked up, Ann was quietly crying, heaving and shaking as if her body were being torn apart. I imagined the turmoil going on inside her, and felt guiltily, horribly, oppressive. I suppose it was only then that I stopped feeling sorry for myself and began to realize what an immense weight of oppression must have been stifling her for years and what immense processes must have been going on in her mind for the past few weeks as she had been plucking up courage to bring S— round and go out with him. She seemed really in despair at my attitude. She just liked S— and fancied him. She was fed up with me and my possessiveness. Why couldn't she possess her own body, as I had always said women should? Why couldn't she be intimate with S— *and* remain faithful and loving towards me?

Anyway, I knew with my head that Ann was right. I hadn't got a single argument to use against her, and she knew it. And I believe she had known all along that I would have to give in. Almost everything I had written or talked about in anthropology or in connection with the women's movement supported Ann's case. Theoretically, I *knew* that a woman's emancipation meant almost nothing if she were possessed exclusively by a male partner who thought he had sexual "rights" in her. I had said as much

frequently in public meetings and had argued heatedly on the subject verbally and in writing. Now that Ann was asking for her own sexual rights, I hadn't a leg to stand on. I even felt proud of Ann — my comrade Ann — as I saw her sobbing and shaking. She was standing up to me as I had always known she eventually would. I wanted to hug her and tell her that she had won the fight. She was free Eventually, she stopped crying. I must have been looking at her lovingly when she caught my eye, for she suddenly smiled behind the tears. I was trembling a little bit as we kissed. We went to bed. I hardly had to tell Ann she could stay the night with S— — she knew I had agreed. I got more kisses and cuddles that night and the following weekend than I had for quite a long time.

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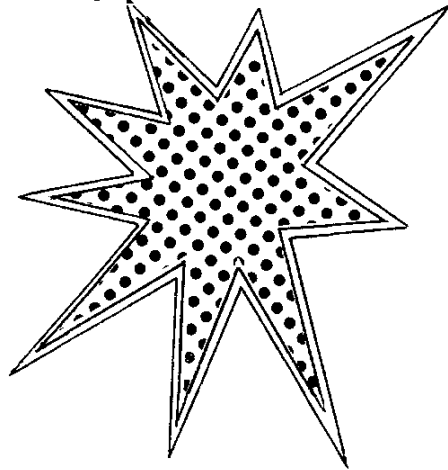
Over the weekend, I was preparing myself for what was to come. It all seemed like a momentous event. I was still apprehensive, but basically felt very close to Ann, as she was to me. There was a sort of trust between us, which felt all the stronger for being put to the test. I have to admit that I asked Ann to wait a bit. "Yes, go to bed with S— — but not just yet," I remember saying once. "Give me a little while longer to adjust to it all!" But Ann had made up her mind, and once that happens with her few things can stop her. On Monday, she telephoned S— and arranged to meet him. When they met, she asked him if she could come round and stay with him the following night. S— was a bit startled, but didn't refuse. Ann went back to tell all her women friends at work, beaming all over her face. They were used to Ann's determination in things, but this was something new. I know them all quite well, and know how much they admire Ann, especially now. I think they are mostly fond enough of me, too — certainly they have all been saying the nicest things about me these past few weeks! Anyway, Ann had their support and felt very proud of herself. On Monday evening Ann and I made love very tenderly and beautifully. There was a special excitement in it: I was making love to an independent person, someone in complete possession of herself, who was giving herself to me as I was to her. It felt like that week in Blackpool again. On Tuesday morning, my heart ached for Ann as she left home for work and walked up the road to the bus stop. She was carrying a toothbrush sticking out of her breast pocket. In the other pocket — as she explained to everyone at work — there were three contraceptives. She wanted the world to know.

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As I write this — it is Tuesday, June 12, 1979 — I am at home with Rosie and Olivia, and Ann is not here. She is staying the night with S—, as she did last Tuesday. The strangest trembling feelings are flowing up and down my arms and legs, and over my chest.

For the past ten days, I have felt like this. It's a kind of fear, combined with an exhilaration such as I have never known before. I imagine jumping with a parachute might feel something like this before the silk begins to open out and break the fall. The air is roaring in my ears, the earth is racing closer — and I can't be quite certain that I will be safe. And yet I have a kind of confidence — which makes it possible

almost to enjoy the element of fear. Ann has said she is staying with me and I believe her. I have let her go to S— tonight. He will release her to me tomorrow. I know this because it is neither I nor S— but Ann herself who is really doing the giving. She is, at last, absolutely the possessor of herself. She has been walking six feet tall since last Tuesday. That is how a woman should be! No-one can possess her. My trust in S— is made possible by that fact.



28 6 1979:

For help in writing this, I must thank many people. I couldn't have done it without Ann and Graham, Jeannine and Andy, Angie and Merle, Janet, Liz and Brian, Denise and Patricia, Linda and Apps, Paul, Chris, Jill, Xochitl, Adrian, Richard, Kevin and a good many others, including the comrades who have attended by "Marxism, Anthropology and the Women's Movement" course of lectures at the Camden Institute since Easter. What has helped me has been the possibility of saying things about Ann and myself knowing in advance that these comrades and friends would help me with whatever they did or said, however slight the contribution might have seemed. I needed emotional support from many people, and was given it. My debt to Ann is obvious.

