

no clear evidence that patriarchy emerged in Western Civilization everywhere in the same way.

There are, indeed, many possible explanations for the emergence of patriarchy (assuming, of course, that it was not always with us). One explanation is that patriarchy is an adaption to environmental conditions. Nomadic herders for instance are, according to anthropologists, fiercely patriarchal as are cultures like the Eskimo that depend solely on hunting for subsistence. Hunters and gatherers, on the other hand, tend towards egalitarianism, and even, in lenient environments, towards mother-centred organization. Since social structures seem to depend to some extent on control of food resources and that control on environment, patriarchy in this theory becomes one of a number of possible human responses.

Another explanation traces patriarchy to the early identification of Woman with Earth, with Land. According to this theory, when the plough was invented and males took over agriculture from women, men began to assert ownership of the land they cultivated. It follows, then, that they would assert ownership not only of women but of their offspring.

Yet another theory argues from the discovery of paternity and it is this theory that David Bakan espouses. He argues that 'the basic theme, and seeming preoccupation, of the Bible as a whole is paternity' (p.12) and that the Bible was composed 'in a period following the discovery of the role of the male in conception' (p.13). During this time the patriarchal view of marriage and the family emerged. Further, with other students of the shift from matriarchy to

patriarchy (such as Bachofen), Bakan clearly sees patriarchy as progress.

Bakan's book is, it seems, his response to the emergency of contemporary feminism; in it he attempts to show that the Hebrew Bible 'constituted an important step in improving human quality by making men into carers for children and facilitating large-scale social organization' (p.175). Under patriarchy, Bakan argues, men's involvement with children 'effeminized' them, in that, through understanding their biological role in reproduction, they became like mothers. Indeed, so anxious is he to prove his case that he is willing to amend the Hebrew text freely to support it.

There are several difficulties with his argument, for underlying Bakan's position are some unwritten assumptions. First, he assumes that it is 'unnatural' for men to care for children; that, if they were not aware of their biological connection with children, they would have nothing to do with them. This latter assumption is patently false; in cultures other than patriarchal ones, men do involve themselves with children, whether or not they are aware of paternity. Second, Bakan's use of the word 'effeminize' points to the fact that he is accepting as given the distinctions of sex-role stereotyping; that is, patriarchy (and awareness of paternity) makes men into something they are not. This assumption too is questionable. Finally, Bakan's statement that patriarchy (in the Hebrew Bible or otherwise) results in men's caring for children is not generally valid, for under patriarchy through the ages, men have not 'normally' cared for

children. So, then Bakan appears to be arguing that women should be grateful to patriarchy for getting men involved with children to the extent that they are or have been.

The problem is, I think, that Bakan has not really understood patriarchy. It is not, it seems to me, concerned with making men (as fathers) into nurturers; rather it is concerned with establishing men as owners of women and children. Patriarchy and paternity do not 'effeminize' fathers; they validate their ownership claims. So, finally, *And They Took Themselves Wives* does not in itself do much to help us understand 'the emergence of patriarchy in Western civilization', nor does it throw a great deal of light on patriarchy.

Nevertheless, it does have redeeming qualities. First, because of Bakan's bold approach to a revered subject and his occasional really exciting insights, his book both annoyed and engaged me. Second, he advances a number of stimulating ideas and theories and ranges over a wide variety of topics: sexuality, divine impregnation, family roles, virginity, fidelity, incest, and the like. For instance, in a very involving section he suggests that both baptism and circumcision are, separately, substitutes for infanticide. He is nothing if not provocative on the underlying 'matrocentric' themes of the Hebrew Bible and its radical, anti-establishment undercurrent. Most important of all, Bakan is never boring.

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**Daddy's Girl: A Very Personal Memoir**  
and  
**The Best Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children**

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**Daddy's Girl: A Very Personal Memoir**

*Charlotte Vale Allen, McClland and Stewart, Toronto, 1980, pp. 255, hardcover \$14.95.*

**The Best Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children**

*Florence Rush, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1980, pp. 226, hardcover \$14.95.*

*Merle Wallis Bolick*

I should have known from the subtitle — 'A Very Personal Memoir' — that *Daddy's Girl* would not do what I wanted it to. *Daddy's Girl* is a first-person account of the author's sexual victimization by her father, which began when she was seven years old. In a talk at the York Women's Centre in November, 1980, Vale Allen expressed the hope that the book would help in future studies of incest, and certainly, she gives an honest account of what it felt like, to her, to submit to his attacks and the blackmail by which he enforced her silence. For example, she tells of what seems to be a common feeling of being 'split in two and paranoid' (Rush, p. 10):

I could feel myself splitting, becoming two quite different little girls: one was the sharer of The Secret . . . The One was evil, mean, capable of everything bad. The Other was the little girl who played hopscotch and double-Dutch . . . I set her out on her best behaviour, in the hope someone would see and value her. (*Daddy's Girl*, pp. 97-8)

She dwells especially on feelings of being physically ugly and morally dissolute, unlovable and on the conviction that she had been deprived of a childhood.

A work of integrity, *Daddy's Girl* could give

the victim or former victim of incest a sense of sisterhood in suffering with the protagonist. But Vale Allen has deliberately stayed as far away from political analysis as she possibly could. Instead, she charts her personal recovery to an equilibrium tinged with bitterness. She does not, *Daddy's Girl*, detail her progress to a political awareness of incest through her own reading, writing and research. Yet, in person, she shares statistics and insights into incest that are startling in their audacity and clarity. She does not read from her book to audiences, as if she herself knew that the book did not go far enough.

For a thorough analysis of the problem of the sexual abuse of children we have to go to Florence Rush's *The Best Kept Secret*. While not underestimating the personal anguish of a child deprived of a protective father and a 'normal' family life, and the insult to small bodies involved in sexual acts with adults, Rush moves on to a critique of patriarchy — its history, myths, psychological theories — and concludes that sexual abuse of children is not an occasional aberration but an organic element of a system in which women and children are the property of males. This overview raises her work above the 'ain't it awful' tone of *Daddy's Girl*.

If you can afford only one of these books I have to recommend *The Best Kept Secret*. *Daddy's Girl* demonstrates that survival is possible and suggests ways of 'handling' one's anger. But the final chapter of *The Best Kept Secret* also suggests possible ways of channelling that anger into an effective challenge to the exploitation of children. Specifically, Rush asks us to reject the 'no-win

contest' in which victims and their mothers are seen as the instigators of crime committed by men. This all-too-familiar pattern is clearly not 'personal' at all.

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## Sex in History

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Reay Tannahill,  
McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 480  
pages, \$25.95.

Eve Drobot

Reay Tannahill's treatise on humanity's stumbling and groping in its efforts to reproduce itself and have a good time in the process is so relentlessly masculine in its point of view that anyone with even a mild case of feminism should be urged to park his or her convictions outside the door before sitting down to read it. She claims in her preface that *Sex In History* 'is neither feminist nor anti-feminist' and seems to believe that by simply stating her intentions to be 'straightforward and objective', the text will inevitably be accepted as such. But as a historian, she is extremely conservative and prefers to rely on traditional (i.e., male) sources, dismissing in the occasional footnote any effort at reinterpreting events in women's favour as mere revisionism. If the histories of politics, religion, economics and art have always disregarded half of the human race, why should sex be treated differently?

As a result, the only women who have any life in her writing are whores; be they the hetairai of ancient Greece, the temple prostitutes of Rajput India or the *grandes horizontales* of royal France, the only women to have played a part in the affairs of men were those who sold their bodies to them first. She favours them above their sisters because the practice of professional sexuality through the ages has also

required business acumen, social graces and being conversant with the arts and political events of the day. Any woman who has not been willing to make this trade-off has been confined, either literally or figuratively, to quarters, to ignorance, drudgery and the boring business of bearing children (preferably legitimate).

Tannahill's disdain for females outside the bedroom becomes tiresome. Roman matrons are insatiable shrews who brought down the Empire by their petty preoccupation with fashion — having nothing else with which to fill their time, they drained the imperial coffers by clamouring for silk and jewels, which needed to be acquired from abroad. Sappho may have written poetry, but it was maudlin and shrill. Religion is a high-minded pursuit unless, of course, the deity is in a female image such as Cybele, the Magna Mater of the Mediterranean, in which case her worship is merely a hysterical cult. And the women who helped pioneer North America were 'long-suffering conscripts' who couldn't wait for the land to be settled so that they could get back to the more important business of wearing fetching sun-bonnets.

We find out everything that has ever been done with or to a penis (including the various ways it has been rendered useless in a gruesome but fascinating chapter on eunuchs) and the number of brothels in every major city in the world during the mid-1800s (621 in New York, leading a bishop to complain 'that there were more whores in the city than Methodists') but what women have had to do with sex, other than contributing their bodies to the cause, will have to be dealt with by someone else.

Having said all that, I must now admit that I thoroughly enjoyed this book. One-sided though it may be, Tannahill's account is nonetheless a

terrifically good read, filled with enough tantalizing trivia to keep anyone equipped for the dinner party circuit for months. She writes in an amusingly arch way as though to distance herself from her material and let us know with a broad wink that her interest in the subject is academic, not prurient. She peppers her narrative with outrageous asides (St. Jerome's spiritual torments occurred in Chalcis, 'a popular, even slightly overcrowded resort for fourth-century hermits') to remind us that none of this is meant to be taken *too* seriously and indulges in delightfully bizarre anachronisms to score points off previous scholars in the field. After listing all the erudite explanations that have been put forward to explain the abundance of mis-shapen female forms found by archeologists all over central Europe (the best known of which is the Venus of Willendorf), she concludes: 'To say that no one — or no one desirable to the male — could look like the Venuses is modern Western arrogance. There is nothing to rule out the possibility that they were the paleolithic prototypes of the Playgirl of the Month.'

For all her good humour, Tannahill has not been able to escape the unhappy conclusion that, historically, sex has been anything but fun. It has either been formalized to an absurd degree, as in ancient China when 'there must have been times when even the most dedicated Taoist felt that celibacy would have been easier', or repressed in the name of religion or politics (or an unfortunate combination of the two as personified by the conquistadores in South America and the Puritans in the North). She chose the inscription on the frontispiece, a poem by Don Marquis, wisely:

*i suppose the human  
race*

*is doing the best it can  
but hells bells thats  
only an explanation  
its not an excuse*

Eve Drobot writes Current