... *Pure Lust* names the high humor, hope and cosmic accord/harmony of those women who choose to escape, to follow our heart's deepest desire and bound out of the State of Bondage, Wanderlusting and Wonderlusting with the elements, connecting with auras of animals and plants, moving in planetary communion with the farthest stars... Women who choose biophilic be-ing belong to the Race of Lusty Women, which participates in the Race of Elemental Be-ing. (Daly, 1984, pp. 3-4).

Under the conditions of patriarchy, women discover our Original Race through the release of deep ontological Fury. By *Fury* I do not mean an agitated state of chronic or acute anger that immobilizes, or that misfires at the wrong target. Rather, I mean a focused gynergetic will to break through the obstacles that block the flow of Female Force... It is the Rage of those who choose this, our own Race of Elemental Be-ing over all man-made, male-designed divisions and categories. (Daly, 1984, p. 5)

These words are from Mary Daly's most recent book, *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy*, and they express, I think, something of the anger, power and force of Daly's vision of autonomous and authentic women, and her conception of the project of feminism. And the means she offers us of embarking on this voyage, of discovering the 'consciousness that is in harmony with the Wild in nature and in the Self' (p. 7) is fundamentally that of breaking the power of language. So, she writes:

... the word *woman* names the alienating archetype that freezes female be-ing, locking us into prisons of ‘forever feminine’ roles. But when we wield words to dis-close the inner beauty, the radiance of the Race of Lusty Women, we/they blaze open pathways to our Background/homeland. Thus *woman*, wisely wielded, Names a Wild and Lusty Female claiming wisdom, joy and power as her own... Breaking the bonds/bars of phallocracy requires breaking through to radiant powers of words, so that by releasing words we can release our Selves ... The Race of Lusty Women, then has deep connections with the Race of Radiant Words. (Daly, 1984, p. 4).

I would like to raise some questions about the voyage that Mary Daly invites us to undertake, and about her vision of the project of feminism.¹ It is indeed true that women have often, in many ways, been denied autonomy, and have felt unable to undertake their own 'authentic' projects; and it is not difficult to understand the power and potential energising force of Daly’s vision for many women. I think, however, that the routes Daly offers us to achieve female freedom are problematic, and the sort of 'freedom' she invites us to realise may have little connection with the practical and material struggles of many women’s lives. She offers us a romantic, idealised and spiritualised notion of ‘autonomy’; and her conception of the authentic, Elemental or Original Female Self is one which is both highly normative and potentially divisive.

Mary Daly offers us an essentialist ‘humanism’ that postulates the following things:

1. An essential or original female self which is wholly autonomous and is sharply contrasted with women who are ‘man-made’ or ‘brainwashed’ by patriarchal ideology.
2. A conception of this self which sees it as potentially unitary, non-contradictory, and wholly perspicuous to itself; and which sees psychic knots, tangles, barriers, obstacles and splits as the result of the invasion of this self, both physical and psychic, by forces which are alien to it.

¹ ‘Humanist’ ideas about the self have a long and important, though also problematic history within feminist thinking. It was the ‘humanist’ ideas of the Enlightenment, for example, which stressed such things as the ‘natural virtue’ and perfectibility of human beings, given the right environment, and the evils brought about by inequality, which formed the context for the work of Mary Wollstonecraft. Wollstonecraft wanted to extend the new humanism to women; she asked that women be
allowed to attain a character as human beings regardless of the distinctions of sex. One of the main targets of her criticism, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, was Rousseau’s description, in *Emile*, of the way in which the girl Sophie, Emile’s companion, was to be brought up. Emile’s virtues were to be those of hardness of body and autonomy and independence of mind and judgement. Sophie’s virtues were to be those which would simply make her a compliant and pleasing companion for Emile. And yet, as Cora Kaplan has shown in her essay ‘Wild Nights’ (1987), despite Wollstonecraft’s bitter attack on Rousseau, there are fundamental respects in which she shares his estimation of women. Rousseau regarded women as inferior because of their excess of sensibility, and he saw female sexuality as a potentially dangerous and anarchic force which needed containing within the patriarchal bourgeois nuclear family. Wollstonecraft, too, saw women as degraded by an excess of sexuality and by a debased and eroticized femininity. But she saw the origins of this degradation, not in female nature, but in the very conditions which Rousseau had prescribed for the controlling of female sexuality. The programme Wollstonecraft recommended for women in the *Vindication* was a strenuous one of re-education to renounce the sensual. As Kaplan puts it:

> Sexuality and pleasure are narcotic inducements to a life of lubricious slavery. Reason is the only human attribute appropriate to the revolutionary character, and women are impeded from their early and corrupt initiation in the sensual from using theirs... A *Vindication* offers the reader a puritan sexual ethic with such passionate conviction that self-denial seems a libidinized activity (p. 35).

The history of humanist ideas within feminism since Wollstonecraft is a complex one. The ‘authenticity’ and autonomy of a reformed or regenerate female self has, for example, been characterised in different ways, sometimes featuring sexuality and feelings, sometimes not. Wollstonecraft’s ideal of the rational and prudent self accomplished by the victory over sensuality and desire was echoed, for example, by some feminists who were involved in such things as moral purity and reform campaigns in the 19th century. 20th-century manifestations of humanism have not, on the whole, opted for this downplaying of the sensual. Sexuality is often included in the ‘authentic self’, though it may be a ‘reformed’ sexuality, purified of any taint of masculine indoctrination and free of contradictions. It is interesting, however, that in the work of Mary Daly, although there is a great deal of discussion of the forms of sexual torture and coercion to which women have been subjected, sexual pleasure and desire barely figure at all in her conception of the ‘authentic’ woman.

Cora Kaplan writes that ‘Idealised humanity, as it appears in (Wollstonecraft’s) text, is a rational plain speaking bourgeois man’ (1987, p. 37). And indeed programmes of liberal feminist reform have recapitulated central themes of humanism – the themes of autonomy, rationality, of choice and self-determination for women. Such programmes have, like Wollstonecraft, tended to see the problem for women as being that they were simply prevented by conditions of inequality from possessing the same rights and choices and opportunities as men. Within much radical feminist thinking, however, humanist ideas have been put to a rather different use. There are interesting similarities between Wollstonecraft and Daly. Both stress the degradation and corruption of women, and are scornful of most ‘feminine’ desires. Both evade the problem of giving an adequate account of female sexual desire. Wollstonecraft’s passionate rejection of sensuality and celebration of female rationality is matched by Daly’s passionate rejection of all conventions of ‘femininity’ and celebration of the Original female self. Wollstonecraft’s impassioned plea, however, was for a humanism that included women. Daly offers us an essentialist humanism that excludes men. And I would like now to look at some of the ways in which this essentialist humanism is elaborated in her work.

In her book *GynEcology* (1979), Daly gives an account of the many forms of violence which have been and are done to women; she discusses, for example, practices such as suttee, clitoridectomy and footbinding. But she is concerned just as much with what she sees as the psychic violence which has been done to women. Women, she argues, have been indoctrinated, brainwashed; and the language she uses is often striking. She describes them as lobotomised, moronised,robotised; as fembots, as the ‘puppets of Papa’, even as ‘mutants’. In fact, virtually all male interactions with women are seen as ‘violent’ in some way, and the act of intercourse itself is often seen as a paradigm of, and symbol for, the degradation and pollution of women by the ‘penetration’ of male force and ideology.

Contrasted with the ‘fembots’ is the woman who is ‘wild’ or untamed. In her writing, Daly aims to reclaim, via such things as explorations into etymology, positive meanings for words associated with women which often have a derogatory sense. Her ‘wild’ women are Shrews, Nags, Bitches and Crones who are strong and self-defined. They live lives that are not mediated; by or dependent on or defined by men. They may ‘bond’ with others, but they will do so out of strength, not out of weakness or need.

I have written elsewhere at greater length about the way some of these themes appear in *GynEcology* (Grimshaw, 1986). Here I want to draw attention to Daly’s most recent book, *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy*, and in particular to her discussion of the passions.

The ‘tamed’ woman, the ‘fembot’ of *GynEcology*, is a woman, Daly writes, ‘whose passions have been “stopped or stuffed”’. She draws a distinction between what she calls ‘plastic’ or ‘potted’ passions, and passions which are real or authentic. Real passions, she argues, are those which connect us with the world; they allow women to name the agents of their oppression. They possess what Daly calls a ‘natural wildness’, and they arise from within the self. Plastic passions, however, are those which, while ‘real’ in the sense that they exist, are ‘blobs in inner space’ which pre-occupy and paralyze their victims. They are substitutes for real passions. They include emotions such as guilt, anxiety, depression, hostility, bitterness, resentment, boredom, resignation; in fact, any ‘negative’ emo-
tion which is not clearly focused on an external object or event in the world as its cause, or which does not lead to a clear course of action.

A woman recognises that when she experiences real Anger – that is, Rage – at her oppressor/suppressor she is moved to action by her Rage. She sees that in contrast to this, if she is merely frozen in states that can accurately be labelled 'hostile' or 'bitter' or 'resentful' she is not moved to act. She sees also that the agents of snooddom are constantly trying to convert her rage into plastic by labelling it as 'hostility', 'bitterness' etc. – the furthest she can move within this package deal is resignation (1984, p. 203).

The plastic passions, Daly writes, are 'unnatural knots, snarls of the spirit' – instead of spiralling outward, these snap backward, strangling their victim. They are unnatural because they are the result of an attempt to prevent women from seeing what is really oppressing them. And what is wrong is always 'out there', in the present.

A woman is often therapeutically directed to express her anger towards her mother for events that transpired several decades ago, when the fact is right now that the sado-society's plug-uglies are physically and/or psychologically battering her (1984, p. 207).

Psychic life, according to this sort of view, has no endemic or intrinsic complexity, ambivalence or contradictions. Tangles, knots and spirals would all disappear if only the violence and brainwashing to which women are subjected could be removed. Self-knowledge could be wholly unproblematic. And 'reality' is in principle transparent; agents of oppression are all clearly nameable so that it should be possible for consciousness always to name the 'real' psychic harm that is being done to it. Any view which suggests that it might sometimes be at least partly to the 'inside' or the past that we have to look to explain these knots and tangles is dismissed by Daly, pejoratively, as 'therapy', which she also describes as 'psychobabble'.

Daly produces, in fact, a highly normative discourse about the 'proper' objects of female desire. What are these 'proper' objects? One example that Daly gives occurs in a discussion of a cover photo of Time magazine which showed the actress Jaclyn Smith pregnant and discussed a supposed 'baby boom' among career women and actresses. This report, Daly argues, was part and parcel of Time's deliberate erasure of 'strong and creative' women. And indeed that article as Daly describes it did seem to imply that it was only motherhood that could give women real satisfaction. Nevertheless, the way in which Daly contrasts the photo of a pregnancy with that of a 'strong or creative' woman raises a suspicion that a desire for a baby is not seen as an 'authentic' female desire. Neither, I think, is desire for sex with a man. Daly is scornful, too, of most forms of 'domesticity'. Almost anything which could in any way be seen as associated with any 'traditional' view of femininity is dismissed as not a proper or legitimate object of female desire. But it is not just sex, babies and domesticity that seem to be ruled out. Daly is almost as dismissive of the aspirations of women to participate and achieve success in any field or institution which either includes or is dominated by men. So restrictive is her conception of the 'proper objects' of female desire, in fact, that it seems to rule out nearly all the aspirations of most women, be they associated with home and family or with work outside the home.

So there are specific 'wrong objects' for female desire. But Daly also gives a much more general account of the ways in which she thinks female experience is dulled and stunted. And here her arguments recapitulate in such a striking way a certain type of argument about experience and the mass media that was common in the 1950s that I will digest for a moment to give an example. It is from an article by Van Den Haag, written in 1957, which offers a critique of mass culture and the mass media. A central feature of this critique is that the mass media are seen as offering poor substitutes for real or authentic experience, and in so doing they inhibit the capacity for the latter. Van Den Haag argues, for example, that the cost of widespread popular appeal is the 'de-individualisation' of the relationship between those who cater and those who are catered for.

Though profit and sensation can be achieved by de-personalisation, the satisfaction ultimately sought cannot be, for the very part of the personality in which it is felt – the individual self – is stunted and atrophied; at least if de-individualisation continues long enough and is comprehensive. Ultimately, too, the sense of violation is numbed (1957, p.11).

The mass media, Van Den Haag argues, impair people's capacity to experience what he calls 'life itself'; and their impact is strong and cumulative.

All mass media in the end alienate people from personal experience... One may turn to the mass media when lonely or bored. But mass media, once they become a habit, impair the capacity for meaningful experience (1957, p.11).

This sort of view of mass culture has been a very common one. Despite the differences in their political perspectives and concerns, a rather similar view was held by members of the Frankfurt school such as Adorno, and by the Leavisite tradition of English criticism. A central problem with this view is its assumption of the passivity of the audience and recipients of mass culture, and its failure to recognise the very different ways in which people may read or negotiate a text in the light...
of their social situation. Another is the mystifying and totally ahistorical conception of the real or authentic experience which is contrasted with mass culture. And it is striking how closely Daly’s arguments both replicate those of Van Den Haag and produce the same problems.

Daly moves, as I have said, from a critique of specific wrong objects of female desire to what amounts to a slamming indictment of almost all of contemporary culture. She writes, for example, of the State of Boredom, or of Bore-Ocracy, and quotes with approval an American book which claims that television is ‘inherently boring’, and that it has a hypnotic-addictive quality which keeps the viewer fixated and hooked and substitutes ‘artificial stimulation’ for real experience. Daly herself writes a breathless paragraph in which she criticises the tedium of work, architecture and furnishings, the nature of modern conversation, guided tours and package vacations, electronic games. These all narrow experience, block creativity and impose passivity. So, she writes:

... Those who are bored, especially if they don’t even know that this is the case, are penetrated and filled with alien and alienating images and impulses that paralyze...

This means that our auras or force-fields are stunted and dimmed, for auras are expanded essentially through acts of creation. Spiritually weakened and withered by bore­ocracy’s infliction of passivity, women suffer from anxiety and look to bores for relief and fulfilment (1984, p. 229).

Daly also plays on the other meaning of the word ‘bore’ – to drill, penetrate or invade. Really, there is very little difference between what she and Van Den Haag say about mass culture, with two exceptions. Van Den Haag contrasts Art with mass culture as something that is connected to real or meaningful experience. Daly, in a number of places, dismisses Art and Literature as themselves part of the bore-ocracy’s plot to deny women their authentic Selves. And whereas Van Den Haag does not suggest that there is a gendered difference in the effects of mass culture, Daly does. In what I think is a revealing sentence, she writes:

Under these conditions women, animals, plants and all of the elements are subjected to the tyranny of the Boring, that is, to the drilling, penetrating, invading touches of Boredom’s privileged prickers (1984, p. 231).

Daly sees the connection between women and nature in terms of metaphors of the elemental, wild and free rather than the vegetative. But the association is no less problematic. Nor is it clear whether there could be, in Daly’s scheme, an authentic male self which was prevented from expression in similar ways to the female self. After all, men watch TV, undertake tedious and mind-numbing labour and go on package vacations. However, one is not uncommonly led to suspect that the only authenticity allowed to men is that of being authentic villains and oppressors.

Daly’s conception of the authentic, elemental, and ‘wild’ creativity of women is often in fact quite mystifying. It is sometimes not clear, for example, what women can actually do, given the extraordinarily global nature of Daly’s critique of modern society, that could count as authentic, or what passions and desires could be seen as real and not ‘potted’. But at times in Pure Lust she does give some hints and suggestions. She contrasts the range of experiences and activities she has indicated with those in which one is ‘alive’, and she gives some examples of the latter. In a discussion of what she calls ‘Metapar-

Furthermore, to say that women often want babies, or sex with men, or find romance pleasurable, or enjoy watching soap operas and so forth, simply because they are ‘conditioned’ to do so or because such pleasures are ‘man-made’ is to offer a quasi-behaviourist conception which wrongly assumes that their relationship to these practices or texts is wholly passive and undifferentiated. It does not help, for example, in understanding the specific and often different ways in which romance may ‘speak’ to women and afford them ways of either recognising or fantasising their own desires. 3 It does not help in understanding the very different ways in which the desire for a baby may arise, or the ways in which women may negotiate the ambivalences and problems involved in being a mother. In Landscape for a Good Woman (1986), Carolyn Steedman discusses the ways in which her own mother, unmarried, lived ‘at the margins’ of maternal and familial ideology. She was a conscientious ‘good mother’ as she saw it, and wanted children, partly out of the vain hope that their father would marry her. Yet Steedman also recalls her saying such things as ‘Never have children dear, they ruin your life’, or ‘If it wasn’t for you, think what I could be doing’. Her children, as she saw it, excluded her from other things that life had to offer. These were mainly material things; after years of wartime austerity she longed for a New Look skirt that took twenty yards of cloth. But this longing should not, Steedman suggests, be dismissed merely as evidence of a consumerist mentality or feminine indoctrination. Material things were to her a symbol of the real exclusions and deprivations suffered by the working class.

In Wigan Pier Revisited (1986) Beatrix Campbell points out that for many British working-class girls with little chance of employment, having a baby may represent the only chance they
have of leaving home and being more independent, albeit very poor, and being a mother the only possibility of an adult identity. The desire for a baby is not necessarily closely linked at all, as it may be in the case of other women, to that of romantic love or marriage, and many of these girls are single mothers. All complexities such as these are ironed out in Daly’s writing. It is not that we should uncritically celebrate all female desires and pleasures just because they are female. The material things such as the ‘New Look’ skirt which Carolyn Steedman’s mother saw as a symbol of her own exclusion did not lead her into any form of real political understanding or resistance, and single motherhood is not a solution to the problems of unemployment and poverty. It is rather that a blanket dismissal of all aspects of ‘femininity’ and most female desires as passively retrograde does not get us one bit further in understanding women’s desires, or the ways in which women may try to use the resources they have to hand for trying to make sense of or resolve the contradictions in their own lives. Nor does it help us to understand texts such as those of romantic fiction. These often do not convey a message about ‘real’ femininity that is all of a piece. Helen Taylor (1986) has shown that the romantic novel Gone With the Wind is valued by many women for its portrayal of Scarlett O’Hara as a strong and independent woman. Scarlett saves Tara on her own. Yet Tara symbolises the values of the Old South, in which racism and the subordination of women were central, and Scarlett herself is in many ways dependent on men.

Daly writes, too, as I have said, as if all women’s problems had a clearly identifiable ‘external’ cause, which could be perceived were it not for the power of male indoctrination. Hence she distinguishes between ‘real’ anger, which is supposedly always directed on to a nameable external object, and ‘plastic’ anger, which is seen as the result of male intervention to stop women seeing the real causes of their problems. Of course it is true that women have sometimes been directed by psychiatrists or therapists to look inside their own psyches, or to see themselves as failing to achieve some norm of ‘femininity’ or ‘mental health’, in circumstances where a change in their social situation might have solved the problem. It is interesting nevertheless to compare Daly’s message about ‘real’ femininity with Freud’s discussion of anxiety in his Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis. In Lecture 25, Freud discusses the difference between ‘realistic’ and ‘neurotic’ anxiety. Realistic anxiety is, he says, a rational and intelligible (though not always expedient) response to a perception of an external danger. In some forms of neurotic anxiety, however, such as phobic anxieties, ‘internal’ dangers are treated as though they were ‘external’ ones; that is to say, the anxiety that arises from some inner conflict is projected on to an external object or situation. (This is the exact reverse of Daly’s account of the way in which external dangers can be treated as though they were internal ones.) Both processes, in fact, can happen. But Freud also argues that it is very difficult to distinguish sharply between realistic and neurotic anxiety, especially in children. A child, for instance, is often afraid of strangers. But, says Freud:

A child is not afraid of these strangers because he attributes evil intentions to them and compares his weakness to their strength... A child who is mistrustful in this way and terrified of the aggressive instinct which dominates the world is a theoretical construction that has quite miscarried... A child is frightened of a strange face because he is adjusted to the sight of a familiar and beloved figure – ultimately of his mother. It is his disappointment and longing that are transformed into anxiety – his libido, in fact, which has become unemployable and is discharged as anxiety (1973, p. 455).

It is not the case, Freud argues, that neurotic anxiety is only secondary and a special case of realistic anxiety. Rather, children seem to have little true realistic anxiety, and often what appears to be a realistic anxiety may share essential features with neurotic anxieties.

One does not have to accept all of Freud’s explanation of anxiety, which is based on the libido theory, to recognise that emotions like anger may often not be easily traceable to any clear set of features of the environment, or may be ‘overdetermined’. The psychoanalyst Joel Kovel points out in A Complete Guide to Therapy (1978) how complex the roots of anxiety, anger and other psychic states are. They may, for example, be directed on to a realistic external object to an unrealistic degree. As Kovel puts it, one can be alienated and oppressed and neurotic. Of course it is true that oppressive social conditions help to shape the human psyche and enter into the making of neurotic misery. But anxiety and neurosis do not, in a simple way, mirror these conditions, and it should not be supposed that their removal would necessarily lead to the undoing of all psychic knots, tangles and contradictions, and the rendering of the human self always wholly perspicuous to itself.

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Discourse about the self may serve both to articulate aspects of experience and to help construct that very same experience. An interesting analogy can be provided for example, by considering discourse about homosexuality. It has been argued, by Foucault and others, that the notion of a homosexual identity, that one was a homosexual rather than simply performed homosexual acts, dates from the mid-to-late 19th century (and that the notion of a female homosexual identity post-dates that of a male one). When Radclyffe Hall wrote The Well Of Loneliness (which was banned amid a great deal of publicity in 1928), she received large numbers of letters from women saying how they recognised their own experience in what she wrote. The theory of homosexuality in her novel is that of the ‘invert’, the ‘third sex’, and Stephen, the central character in the book, is born with ‘masculine’ characteristics in a female body (though the body itself in some ways resembles a male one). Such a theory of homosexuality is immensely problematic, not least because it assumes that sexual desire and
object choice is something predetermined at birth. But, as Jeffrey Weeks (1985) points out, notions of 'sexual identity' are politically ambivalent. They can be experienced as liberating; they can serve as a focal point for resistance to various forms of sexual oppression, and they can give a form of expression to the experience of many people that their sexual desires are not a matter of 'choice', but are overwhelmingly given and intransigent. (In that sense, Radclyffe Hall's theory of the invert probably 'spoke' to female desires more plausibly than some later feminist suggestions that lesbianism is primarily a matter of political choice). But notions of 'sexual identity' can also be oppressive. They can, for example, identify people as the targets or scapegoats of repressive campaigns (one thinks for example of much discourse about AIDS). And they do not necessarily lead to effective or liberating political strategies.

There is no doubt about the power and appeal to many women of Mary Daly's work, and of the inspirational quality of her vision of the authentic untamed female self. It is clear that many women have found that they can articulate aspects of their own experience by reference to her writing. Her work has provided above all, I think, a way of conceptualising the sharp anger many women came, often quite suddenly, to feel, and the passionate conviction that women could understand themselves and relate to each other in ways that were very different from many dominant paradigms. The voyage that Daly's Lusty Women are invited to undertake, however, is primarily a spiritual one. They are invited to Spin Words to break the spells of patriarchal language and to Reach the Realms of Elemental Reality, the Original Self which can be born again (the religious metaphor is apt) from the unregenerate and passive fembot. It is as if it were words themselves that imprisoned women. It is interesting that in Pure Lust, Daly is sympathetic towards the Aristotelian idea of happiness as a life of contemplation. She includes activity in her ideal of happiness, however; but just as there is in her work a highly normative and exclusive conception of the proper objects of female desire, so is there, too, of the proper objects of female activity. Feminist women may legitimately engage in 'Metapatterning' activities, in forms of female bonding, and in romantic association with Nature. They may also engage in what Daly calls: ... the products of women's activism – such as shelters for battered women, rape crisis centers, anti-pornography demonstrations, women's concerts, anti-nuclear protests, the women's health movement, female-identified rituals... (1984, p. 385).

But, as Lynne Segal (1987) puts it:

> Beyond the pale of acceptable women's activity is any which seeks reform or change within existing institutions, in the world of paid work, or the state, or in any alliance with men (p. 20).

Excluded therefore is any serious or sustained political involvement with things such as existing political parties, Trades Union activity, or any institutions which are currently male-dominated. The 'token feminist' who does these things is sometimes seen as almost more dangerous than the fembot. Everything that afflicts, endangers, pollutes or corrupts the earth is seen as the direct and unmediated outcome of the phallic havoc wreaked by the 'killer male', whose nature is unchanging and unchangeable, and who is motivated by his lust to control and destroy women. Mary Daly has been taken to task by some black American feminists such as Audre Lorde (1981) for falsely essentialising 'woman', and for failing to recognise the very different ex-

periences of black and white women, and the ways in which black women, in resisting racism, may have interests in common with black men. It has been suggested (by Lynne Segal, for example) that her work excludes working-class women. Daly does not point out, Segal suggests, that to follow her, 'women must be affluent, highly educated, white, Western, free of needy dependents and all exhausting commitments' (1987, p. 21). It is true, I think, to say that the practical struggles of women, especially working-class women, against the economic and material burdens of their lives, are given short shrift and little space in Daly's work. It is not true to say that Daly simply ignores racism, or the oppression of Black and Third World women. She writes quite a lot about it. It is rather that it is difficult to see how, within her scheme of autonomous female psychic and spiritual voyaging, set against a background of un-differentiated male terror and violence, it would be possible to develop any effective strategies at all for adequately understanding or combating either the specific oppression of women, or the forms of oppression, terror and conflict which often confront women and men alike.

Daly's feminism is, in fact, idealist rather than 'radical'. The breakthrough into new realms of the Spinisters' weaving of cosmic tapestries is really a retreat from the world. Daly offers an exhilarating and strenuous myth of female salvation, rather than any hope of common or effective political action. Notions of 'autonomy' and 'authenticity' have been central to the ways in which women have attempted to conceptualise their lives and their aspirations. But we need, I think, a conception of autonomy which does not see most of women's desires merely as a product of male indoctrination, and does not suppose that to be 'autonomous' is somehow to transcend social location and history. And we need a conception of authenticity which does not posit an ideal of the regenerate self that will tend to exclude this self from those forms of action that seem most likely to meet, and indeed sometimes to challenge, women's aspirations for their own lives.

Notes

1 Very similar views have been put forward by Janice Raymond, in A Passion for Friends. Raymond's view of the Original Female Self and of authenticity for women follows closely that of Daly, although Raymond tries to draw back from some of the apparently problematic implications of Daly's work (e.g. the rejection of all heterosexual relationships).

2 Cora Kaplan (1987) has argued that this is true of Adrienne Rich's view of female sexuality, in Rich (1983).

3 Examples of discussions of 'mass culture', especially those forms of it which have a strong appeal for women, are provided in the books by Ang, Modleski and Radford in the bibliography.

4 For a useful discussion of issues concerning feminism and language, see Cameron (1985).

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