

the conviction that, as a spectator gratified by creativity, woman reaches the highest possible point in the evolution of her species.

But, on the contrary, woman is discovering that the patriarchal world *needs* her—that man's self-liberating efforts absolutely depend on her—and that *woman's* liberation can only be realized independent of patriarchal provisions and the dynamics by which men liberate themselves. The artist depends upon woman to glorify his work and she, until she begins her own liberation, is happy to oblige. The work of art cannot afford to lose the security inherent in her exclusively receptive role.

Once aware of her position in relation to male creativity, woman is left with two possibilities: the first—until now, the only available option—of distinguishing herself within the creative hierarchy historically defined by men (which alienates her from other women while men recognize her only indulgently); or—the feminist alternative—of autonomously recovering her own creativity, nourished by her awareness of past oppression.

To celebrate male creativity is ultimately to submit to the historic sovereignty of men, to that patriarchal strategy which deliberately subjugates us. But let woman remove herself, and the struggle for male supremacy becomes not man lording it over woman, but merely a struggle between individual men.

By refusing to celebrate male creativity, we are not judging creativity, nor are we contesting it. Rather, with our absence, we are refusing to accept it as defined; we are challenging the concept of art as something which men graciously hand down to us. By ceasing to believe in a refracted liberation, we are unleashing creative energy from patriarchal bonds.

With her absence, woman performs a dramatic act of awareness, creative because it *is* liberating.

*Text written by Rivolta Femminile, March 1971; free translation by Arlene Ladden from Carla Lonzi, *Sputiamo su Hegel: La Donna clitoridea e la donna vaginale e altri scritti*, Scritti di Rivolta Femminile, 1,2,3, Milan, 1974.

Assata Shakur (Joanne Chesimard) has been associated with the Black Panther Party and other political groups, including the Black Liberation Army, which she has said "is not an organization. It is a concept. A people's movement, an idea" emerging from conditions in the Black community. She is currently a political prisoner being held in New Jersey, ostensibly on charges of bank robbery.

WHAT IS LEFT?

Assata Shakur

WHAT IS LEFT?

AFTER THE BARS AND THE GATES AND THE
DEGRADATION

WHAT IS LEFT?

AFTER THE LOCK INS AND THE LOCK OUTS AND THE
LOCK UPS

WHAT IS LEFT?

I MEAN, AFTER THE CHAINS THAT GET ENTANGLED
IN THE GREY OF ONE'S MATTER

AFTER THE BARS THAT GET STUCK IN THE HEARTS
OF MEN AND WOMEN

WHAT IS LEFT?

AFTER THE TEARS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

AFTER THE LONELY ISOLATION

AFTER THE CUT WRIST AND THE HEAVY NOOSE

WHAT IS LEFT?

I MEAN, LIKE, AFTER THE COMMISSARY KISSES

AND THE GET-YOUR-SHIT-OFF-BLUES

AFTER THE HUSTLER HAS BEEN HUSTLED

WHAT IS LEFT?

AFTER THE SAD FUTILE MANEUVERS

AFTER THE SHRILL AND BARREN LAUGHTER

AFTER THE CONTRABAND EMOTIONS

WHAT IS LEFT?

AFTER THE MURDERBURGERS AND THE GOON SQUADS
AND THE TEAR GAS

AFTER THE BULLS AND THE BULLPENS AND THE
BULLSHIT

WHAT IS LEFT?

I MEAN LIKE, AFTER YOU KNOW THAT GOD CAN'T BE
TRUSTED

AFTER YOU KNOW THAT THE SHRINK IS A PUSHER
THAT THE WORD IS A WHIP, AND THE BADGE IS

A BULLET

WHAT IS LEFT?

AFTER YOU KNOW THAT THE DEAD ARE STILL
WALKING

AFTER YOU REALIZE THAT SILENCE IS TALKING
THAT OUTSIDE AND INSIDE ARE JUST AN ILLUSION

WHAT IS LEFT?

I MEAN, LIKE, WHERE IS THE SUN?

WHERE ARE HER ARMS AND WHERE ARE HER KISSES?

THERE ARE LIP PRINTS ON MY PILLOW

I AM SEARCHING

WHAT IS LEFT?

I MEAN, LIKE, NOTHING IS STANDSTILL AND
NOTHING IS ABSTRACT

THE WING OF A BUTTERFLY CAN'T TAKE FLIGHT

THE FOOT ON MY NECK IS A PART OF A BODY

THE SONG THAT I SING IS A PART OF AN ECHO

WHAT IS LEFT?

I MEAN, LIKE, LOVE IS SPECIFIC

IS MY MIND A MACHINE GUN?

IS MY HEART A HACKSAW?

CAN I MAKE FREEDOM REAL? YEAH,

WHAT IS LEFT?

I AM AT THE TOP AND BOTTOM OF A LOWER-ARCHY

I AM IN LOVE WITH LOSERS AND LAUGHTER

I AM IN LOVE WITH FREEDOM AND CHILDREN

LOVE IS MY SWORD AND TRUTH IS MY COMPASS

WHAT IS LEFT?

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