

we might well ask whether the conservative has ceased to be what he set out to be. But that is a question for another day.

Even without directly engaging the progressive argument, conservatives may absorb, by some elusive osmosis, the deeper categories and idioms of the left, even when those idioms run directly counter to their official stance. After years of opposing the women's movement, for example, Phyllis Schlafly seemed genuinely incapable of conjuring the prefeminist view of women as deferential wives and mothers. Instead, she celebrated the activist "power of the positive woman." And then, as if borrowing a page from *The Feminine Mystique*, she railed against the meaninglessness and lack of fulfillment among American women; only she blamed these ills on feminism rather than on sexism.<sup>26</sup> When she spoke out against the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), she didn't claim that it introduced a radical new language of rights. Her argument was the opposite. The ERA, she told the *Washington Star*, "is a takeaway of women's rights." It will "take away the right of the wife in an ongoing marriage, the wife in the home."<sup>27</sup> Schlafly was obviously using the language of rights in a way that was opposed to the aims of the feminist movement; she was using rights talk to put women back into the home, to keep them as wives and mothers. But that is the point: conservatism adapts and adopts, often unconsciously, the language of democratic reform to the cause of hierarchy.

One also can detect a certain sexual frankness—even feminist concern—in the early conversations of the Christian Right that would have been unthinkable prior to the women's movement. In 1976, Beverly and Tim LaHaye wrote a book, *The Act of Marriage*, which Susan Faludi has rightly called "the evangelical equivalent of *The Joy of Sex*." There, the LaHayes claimed that "women are much too passive in lovemaking." God, the LaHayes told their female readers, "placed [your clitoris] there for your enjoyment." They also complained that "some husbands are carryovers from the