

# Marriage Is For Men, and Divorce Is For Women

*A Self-Think Book*

(Volume I of Roles and Rules™: A New View of Human Relations.)

4-28

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The ideas and opinions in this book arise from practicing and reflecting upon psychotherapy and consultation with individuals, couples, teens, families, and organizations since 1968.

*All anecdotes are true. Any identifying information of those described is altered to protect anonymity.*

## Chapter 1: How Cruel the Bridal Shops.

Why do so many women seem to think that their wedding will have anything to do with their marriage? Are men tricking women into believing that they will be queens? Is that what courtship is all about? Or, are women's hormones deceiving them? Are women tricking themselves into buying something that they cannot return easily as easily as clothing, called marriage? Why do women march off as if blindly to marital life, dragging men along with them? Does a male-dominated society force or bribe woman to accept marital status?

This book ought to begin in a woman's voice. So, here are extended excerpts from a review of another book. This review states very well half of the problem that we address in this book.

[rights not yet secured if necessary for the following article]

**The Sunday London Times - Books**

February 27, 2005

**Women: The Meaning of Wife by Anne Kingston**

**REVIEWED BY KATE SAUNDERS**

### **THE MEANING OF WIFE**

**by Anne Kingston**

Some of us pretended not to be interested, but most of us couldn't resist sneaking a look. Anne Kingston, on the other side of the world, actually set her alarm for four in the morning so that she could watch it on television. "It was as if I had been drawn by a mysterious gravitational force," she writes. "Free will had nothing to do with it."

On a warm July day in 1981, half the world stopped to gaze at what was indisputably the wedding of the century. The Prince of Wales was plighting his troth to Lady Diana Spencer — not that anyone was looking at him. The groom was nothing on his own. All eyes were fixed on the bride, a fresh-faced 20-year-old, dressed in miles and miles and miles of pure white silk. Later, after the exchange of vows and the ride in a

horse-drawn carriage, the prince and princess sealed their nuptials with a public kiss. For little girls of seven to 70, Diana was the embodiment of the ultimate fantasy.

The fairytale always ends with a wedding. It's like the walk-down at the end of a traditional pantomime, when the young lovers are united and the entire cast, including the horse, makes a valedictory appearance in white-wedding garb. The end. Roll credits. Lights up.

In the case of Charles and Diana, of course, the end of the fairy tale turned out to be the beginning of quite another sort of story... "We didn't see," says Kingston, "that Diana had been slotted into her position like someone sent from personnel." It doesn't matter. More than 20 years later, poor Diana is still frozen in the image of the virgin sacrifice. What, exactly, is the power behind that enduring image? And what does the word "wife" mean to a modern woman?

The Meaning of Wife is Kingston's pitiless meditation on a myth that won't leave us alone. If you know an otherwise sensible woman who has started driveling on about white frocks and wedding place-settings, please give her this book. Encourage her to wonder what the act of becoming a wife will do to her relationship. What will the world expect of her once the gold band is on her finger? More crucially, what will she expect of herself?

When nearly half of all marriages end in divorce, Kingston asks why women are still in a state of collective pixilation about weddings. A traditional marriage will be most advantageous for the blushing groom, but it's not the oppressive males who are forcing us up that aisle, or shoehorning us into white meringues. Oh dear me, no. A traditional wedding is something that brings many a man out in hives. It's us girls who are keeping what Kingston calls "the wedding industrial complex" booming. We're hurling ourselves up the aisle like lemmings. A woman can head a corporation and split the atom, but her appearance as a bride is still seen as her moment of triumph and the pinnacle of her career.

As a divorced woman in her mid-forties, I am only too aware of the ghastly truth that feminism has never touched. My career is irrelevant. Not having a husband makes me a total loser in the eyes of the world — particularly, I'm sorry to say, in the eyes of other women. We have a dismal tendency to look behind a successful woman, and to pity the poor dear if she hasn't managed to grab a man and a couple of children on her way up the ladder. She may be successful, we say, but she can't possibly be happy.

Happiness, Kingston suggests, is the new tyranny. Feminism exposed traditional marriage as a prison for women, so it can no longer be pushed as a career-move. Instead, it is all about love. Today's wife does the lioness's share of the housework out of love. She places herself at the disposal of her husband and his job — out of love, just as wives have always done since Adam delved and Eve span. She maintains the home and the children, providing a kind of power-base from which her husband can conquer the world.

I would love to have a wife — but that doesn't seem to be the deal. Men, quite understandably, regard that supportive role as crap. They often want the kind of career that requires the input of two people. In many careers — politics, diplomacy, academia — having the right wife is vital. A man saddled with a bolshy<sup>1</sup> wife, or a wife who works full time at her own career, might not get promotion. When Americans elect a president, they are also quite consciously electing a president's wife. A proper wife can only have a job if it doesn't impinge on her main job, which is — or ought to be — full-time wifing. Interestingly, Kingston identifies a new trend of acknowledging the role of the prominent wife with a salary. This, she says, has to be the future.

This book is a witty, incisive deconstruction of the entire bridal myth. It is not a call to arms. Kingston is not urging us to burn our white frocks. Although unmarried herself, she is not against the institution of marriage. She thinks that marriage is still the best framework for the bringing up of children. She acknowledges that "for some, self-fulfilment can be realised by supporting and inspiring those we love".

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<sup>1</sup> 'Bolshy' is a British-ism, and is short for 'Bolshevik', referring to the communist revolutionaries who overthrew the government of Russia in 1918.

Well, isn't that the point? Some of our chains are made of daisies, and we love them. Which is why the Woman in White will continue to hobble the progress of feminism for the foreseeable future.

Contemporary culture has it that men are constitutionally afraid of marital commitment, and that for a man to grow up, he must give up his individual, selfish, "sowing of wild oats" life. Women and girls, on the other hand, seem in contemporary culture to have marriage on the brain from day one, as if marriage, or at least an engagement and wedding, fulfill their individual life aspirations.

However, women and not men quite consciously give up individuality in marriage when they surrender their family names, and accept the role of "wife". Accepting her husband's name, a bride trades the equality of individuality for marital status. She has become a role to play for other people, perhaps especially for her husband. He is less committed to a role to play for her.

Traditional, religious cultures seem not to presume that women are individuals in the first place, and so traditionally there seems nothing for women to give up. Women's roles as "sustainers" of men and children in non-democratic societies seem even by women to be taken for granted.

However, in the West, specific emphasis on the surrender of bridal individuality pervades the traditional wedding day. To avoid attributing to a bride the unlady-like sin of individual intent, in polite society, one congratulates a groom on his marriage as an achievement, but only offers "best wishes" to a bride. In traditional marriage, a woman "leaves it to the man" to represent individuality.

The wedding path seems strewn with promises to a bride of high status in return for her nominal surrender of individuality. The engagement ring and its size symbolize, and the wedding ceremony celebrates her new rank. The ceremony seems the apotheosis of female grandeur; the attending men seem mere props. The bride's mother is usually the force to reckon with during wedding planning. The bridal gown is the ranking centerpiece of the affair - no one may out-dress her -- while he is dressed as anonymously as possible, perhaps formally identically to his "best man". She parades down the aisle to the altar as if she were a bashful yet ravishing flower, while he waits as if for the delivery of a trussed sacrifice.

It may seem that marriage is designed for women more than for men, because the wedding day enhances her status more than his. However, while the wedding may be hers, the marriage may not be. She may have given herself away for a status not achievable in the merely reflected glory of marriage. Every woman risks coming to understand, especially when she becomes a mother, that giving up individuality

for the sake of her new status as "sustainer of others" was not as good an idea as she was led down the aisle to believe.

When a monarch speaks in the royal "we", he or she acknowledges an identity as a role rather than as an individual. "Wife" is no less a role to play than "monarch". However, when Prince Phillip of Great Britain walks several steps behind his wife, Queen Elizabeth II, it is not because she is his wife, but because she is the Queen, and he is only the Prince.

Even if commoner husbands sometimes hold doors open for wives, wives may discover that men care less to play marital roles for women, than men expect women will play for them. When a man ignores what she perceives as his marital role, the importance of her role to herself reduces.

Whether or not she realizes it, a woman may marry more to seek status among other women than to enjoy male love. Clearly, a boyfriend is prized among young girls not for "himself", but because he enhances her status among her friends -- her female friends. Boys may seek status among other boys by relating tales of fearless sexual experimentation and sly conquest, but boys likely consider each other "losers" when caught in the "tender trap". Boys do not necessarily gain status among other boys for having a girlfriend, as girls do for having boyfriends. "Sadie, Sadie, Married Lady" was a popular song title, but there would never be a heterosexual, "Dan, Dan, Married Man". (When Nelson, a brutal enemy of TV's pre-teen cartoon character Bart Simpson kissed a girl, his friends called him, "Gay". How could heterosexuality be "gay"? For pre-teen boys, liking a girl may imply insufficient achievement of masculine identity at a safe distance from mother. To heterosexual males, gay males may seem like "mama's boys".)

Evolutionary psychologist David Buss describes girls' feelings about boys as "mating strategies". Comedian Chris Rock has further insights. He points out that guys discover having a girlfriend makes them more attractive than previously to other girls. In his brilliant "Bring the Pain" in 1996, he assumed the new attraction was because a girlfriend "cleans you up" (combs your hair, gets you to wear nicer clothes, etc., as a mother does for a child). Perhaps when women see evidence of another woman taking care of a guy, it excites their drive to compete.<sup>2</sup>

It used to be joked that women attended college to receive an MRS. degree. Contemporary marriages, in which a woman's career may be just as vital to family finances and identity as a man's, nevertheless may founder on the same

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<sup>2</sup>Optional obscene anecdote: Paraphrasing Chris Rock: "I got a phone call from two girls saying they wanted to have a blow-job contest, with me as the judge. I'd never get a call like that if I did not have a girlfriend."

psychological problems as wrecked the hopes of previous generations. The problem is not too little or too much money. The problem is intimacy, and the roles we do or do not play for each other.

For many women, finding themselves alone in life with an actual man, the dream of marital status fades away. Divorce often represents women's subsequent, traumatic births as individuals, often to the surprise and at the expense of the men whom women may feel have usurped their individuality. Many women decide that a man has failed to justify the sacrifices a woman has made to play her role for him, and she is angry with him for it.

A divorced friend once said to me, "When I divorced Phil, my IQ went up 20 points. I didn't have to waste my time thinking about him!"

A man contemplating a third marriage said, "This time, instead of getting married, I'll just find someone I don't like, and buy her a house".

A man joked to me, "Why is divorce so expensive? Because it's worth it."

On the one hand,

And on the other hand

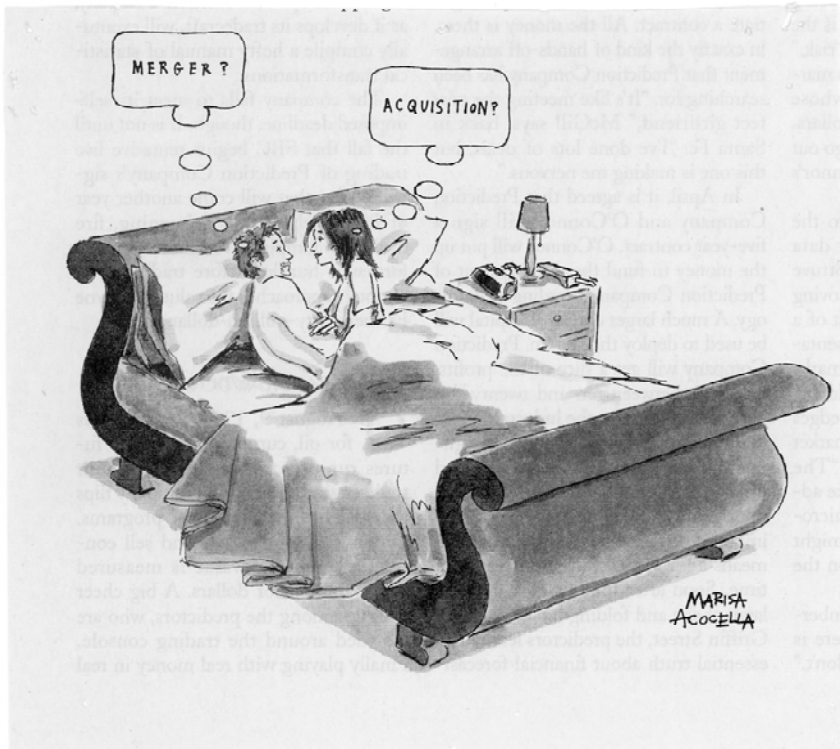


Perhaps the paragon of women of who after marriage find themselves as individuals was Eleanor Roosevelt. She was the wife of President Franklin Roosevelt, who was confined to a wheelchair because of crippling from polio. As his "eyes and ears", she traveled the country, bringing encouragement to millions during the Great

Depression and World War II. When Franklin suddenly died, he was at a posh resort in Georgia to which he had resorted with a lover whom he had promised Eleanor not to see again. Her book, "On My Own", told the story of her burgeoning, new life after leaving the White House.

How does all this happen? What may we do about it, do with it, and do for it?

In a psychiatric office waiting room, a cartoon clipped from a magazine sums up the problem. A man and woman in bed gaze at each other in amorous wonder. Over his head, the bubble says, "Merger"? Over her head, the bubble says, "Acquisition"? Here begins the truth of the problem. A man gazes at a woman, and imagines that their love is a merger, a making of one flesh, of one heart. He might as well imagine that his earliest loss of mother is now healed, and he is home again.



In other words, when a man marries a woman, he seems to feel or to expect a psychological merger or union with his wife. A man may soon patronize his wife as his "better half".

His wish for merger is her market opportunity. If she plays the "merged" role correctly, "understanding" him perfectly and accepting his romantic idealizations, she gets the man.<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that men are loving and women insincere, or

<sup>3</sup> Another optional, obscene remark: There is an old joke: Why is the bride smiling? Because she has given her last "blow job".

that men are naïve and infantile, and women savvy and pragmatic. Neither is usually the case, and neither actor is good or evil, even if outcomes may be regrettable. President Clinton had a famous sexual affair with a young woman while in office that changed the course of democracy, because it undermined the ability of any progressive politician to succeed him. The story goes that he induced Monica to consort with him by suggesting that after leaving the White House, he and his wife, Hillary, might divorce. Bill offered himself as an acquisition target to ensnare Monica.

It seems that women are more comfortable than men in the intimately merged state, as though women were in their element- as if intimacy is training for motherhood. In intimacy, there are roles to play, but not many rules to follow. To the extent that men count on rules of fair play to make the world comprehensible to them, the fact of illogical, intimate roles will confound. He will have to learn ritualized things to say like, "You look wonderful, honey", whether or not it is true, or whether or not he feels like saying it- again. He has no one to blame but himself, of course, since he has hitched himself up to this apparently alien creature.

With marriage, there seems to be some kind of "phase shift". Someone might be the "strong, silent type" before marriage, and "have trouble communicating" after marriage". Someone might seem charming and vivacious before marriage, and flighty and unreliable after marriage.

Perhaps there should be a Surgeon General's warning on the marriage license: "Caution - getting married may be harmful to your mental health". Intimacy is not often the solution - intimacy more often is the human problem. How can this be? The most intimate time in human life is infancy - we call each other "baby" when we are intimate, as if to recall those good old days. Many men who have not learned to "cover up" the obvious call their wives, "mama", even if just as a recognition of rank. If intimacy reduces one to infantile feelings and behavior, one can hardly expect to be at one's adult best.

Intimacy is regressive. It is tough to be a responsible adult and intimate at the same time.

When people are intimate, the psychological boundary maintaining each as a separate person in one's own mind seems to dissolve, and the other becomes an extension of oneself. It may become difficult to distinguish where one person leaves off, and the other person begins. One usually "projects" one's own wishes and feelings onto the other, and interprets the other in terms only of oneself, and of one's role expectations of the other. One forgets that without effective

communication, which includes an eager willingness to listen, no one can possibly figure out what is going on.

Many make the mistake of thinking that a good relationship inspires telepathy- that either can read the other's thoughts because they understand each other so well. Many believe that this is how it should be. However, to make this kind of thing work, even if it were possible, people would have not to be innately selfish, and instead be capable of generosity without demand. One would have to prefer completing the other, as the other would define it, rather than expect the other to complete oneself.

An ironic "Peter Principle" sometimes applies in business. The principle is the suspicion that people will be promoted to their level of incompetence. Someone competent in a position or job is promoted time after time until finally arriving at a rank or job too tough to handle. That is where the person stays employed forever. Something similar seems to apply as couples climb the ladder of love. Good friends may make poor roommates. Good roommates may make poor lovers. Good lovers may make poor marriage partners. Good marriage partners may make poor parents of one child. Good parents of one child may not be able to deal with two children....

Many of us cannot resist the temptation to get closer to another person than we can really handle. There is a joke about someone from out of town asking, "Which stop is South Street?" of another passenger on a city bus. "Easy", comes the reply. "Just watch me, and get off one stop before I do." Many of us find that we did not get off the bus down the Road to Love in time. What clue was one waiting for?

Perhaps people ought not to marry until they know what they have to lose. Marriage is not simply "adding value" to one's life, like a safe investment. Marriage may be an end to loneliness, but there is a cost. Marriage partners must be prepared to sacrifice some individuality to the other, to play a loving role for the other. Perhaps a good definition of love is "loving to play the role the other needs". What often happens is the opposite: expecting the other to play the role one has in mind for the other to play. When marriage partners hand each other a life script to read, all hell may sooner or later break loose.

Within the intimate state, people polarize into opposite stereotypes that we shall precisely describe. The closer lovers become, the more each becomes one stereotype or the other, and then tries to control the other rather than to learn from the other. It seems not that "opposites attract" so much as that "those who are attracted to each other become opposites". Or, it is perhaps better put that, "those attract each other who will become opposites".



Again: intimacy is the problem, not the solution. Loneliness and meaninglessness seem to call for sexual, or at least for marital healing. At least one is not alone! Rather than as the cure to one's problems, it is better to think of marriage as trading in one set of problems for another, based on the hope that the new problems are better to work on than the old. Intimacy is difficult to manage. Many or most marriages in developed countries end in divorce; in the USA, most fatal violence is domestic violence.

Perhaps one can better understand the picture by comparing the intimacy of the "nuclear family" to what goes on within the nucleus of the atom. Social interactions resemble everyday physical object interactions - they are logical to understand. One can understand what goes on at the supermarket checkout - things add up. Even romance seems to make sense - before one is married. Physical forces that operate at the scale of every day life are also logical to understand. Gravity, electromagnetism, and visible light -- all of these operate such that, for example, the further one is from a light source, the dimmer it appears. The further apart are planets or satellites, the weaker is the gravitational force among them.

Inside the nucleus of an atom is a wacky, Alice in Wonderland world. The nucleus of an atom is made up of positively charged particles called protons. Particles of the same electromagnetic charge repel each other; only opposite electromagnetic charges attract. Made up of positively charged particles, how does the nucleus of an atom stay together? Well, it turns out that there are "emergency brake" forces within the nucleus of the atom that behave strangely. The further away protons try to get from each other within the nucleus, the stronger gets the "intra-nuclear" force holding them together.

The seem to be "forces" within the nuclear family that behave, at least metaphorically, the same way as physical forces within the nucleus of the atom. The more one tries to leave a family, the stronger get the forces keeping one at home! Separation from home for many late teenagers is a traumatic experience. The forces unleashed during a divorce, as the nucleus of a family splits open, are primitive and deadly indeed, much like an nuclear bomb explosion.

The laws of physics are rules of particle and wave behavior. The "laws" of civilization -- of economics, of governance -- are also rules. There is no special name needed to distinguish the operation of forces within the nucleus of the atom from those in general. The logic of mathematics takes care of everything. However, within the nucleus of the family, the word "roles" describes what goes on much better than does "rules". Even so, one can understand the intra-nuclear, physical forces as playing a "role" for the universe, keeping atomic particles together out of sheer loyalty, and receiving no particular benefit for itself. There

is something similar in biochemistry. A molecule called ATP appears as if by magic to give certain vital chemical reactions the energy kick they need to proceed. No ATP, no cellular life. ATP seems to play a "role" in biochemistry. Looking at a cell as a whole, one can imagine that cellular DNA plays a role, identifying and defining a cell while remaining unchanged, while proteins follow the biochemical rules of metabolic interaction as they break down and re-combine. Viruses represent free-lance DNA, looking for cells to infect. Prions, the cause of "mad cow" disease, are rogue proteins pretending to look for DNA guidance.

Understanding love and marriage, therefore, requires understanding roles, and how roles are different from rules. The goal of this book is to make roles as understandable to lovers and therapists as rules are to scientists.

Our first job is securely to distinguish roles from rules, because they are not interchangeable. They are not even compatible.

No collection of rules, whether abstracted from religious writings like the Jewish "Talmud", or created and applied by a legislature will solve the problem of marital roles. Yet, people (especially men) will try to solve the problem of roles with rules. The following is from Time Magazine: [Note: The Hillel Foundation is a national support organization for Jewish college students.]

Increasingly we hear of prenuptial agreements being made between prospective spouses. One genre, such as Stanford's Hillel Foundation's "Private Tena'im", details and compares the expectations individuals bring to their relationship, such as how children are to be raised and willingness to take in enfeebled parents. Another, representing a new legal niche in a society of divorce, addresses the distribution of familial assets should the marriage fail. See, for instance, Michael Fay's "Prenuptial Agreements: Promoting or Undermining Sound Family Relations and Sound Family Businesses?" Francine Russo, "Bridal Vows Revisited", Time (July 24, 2000)

Prenuptial agreements attempt to place the rules of divorce ahead of the marriage roles. While this makes sense when a couple has wildly different assets, and may seem to ensure that individuals may love and respect each other as people rather than as bankbooks, it may injure one party's sense of the wholeness of the relationship. This is particularly true when a couple will live in a house that is excluded from any definition of marital assets. Pre-nuptial agreements must not apply to what a couple uses as marital resources in everyday life, or for vacations.

It boils down to some pretty simple things. One lives in marital heaven if one loves to play one's marital role for the other person. Marital hell is role expectation: trying to get the other to play the role one has in mind for the other to play for oneself. One may take this expectation so much for granted that one feels no need

to say what one needs. "If you loved me, you would have...". Most of all, sex cannot be required of the other as part of a marital role expectation. Otherwise, sexuality is not love, but slavery. The Talmudic dictum that having sex with one's spouse is a marital duty turns love into rape.

There is at least one marital duty: presence of mind. One must be willing to convey what and how one actually feels and thinks at any given moment. Openness to your spouse is like showing up for work. One must be more honestly expressive and responsive to one's spouse than with any one else on earth; otherwise there is nothing "unique" about the marital relationship. After all, technically speaking, one can have sex with lots of people; there needs be nothing sacred about sex, because it is natural. Honesty is sacred, perhaps because it is unnatural.

The requirement for frank communication in the moment may be the only true, marital rule. This does not mean revealing dark secrets, or hurling abuse. Communication "in the moment" is about what one actually thinks and feels. The trick is to be able to know what one thinks and feels, and to distinguish such things from judgments and accusations. "I think you are a jerk" does not qualify as a thought. "If you loved me, you would..." does not qualify as a feeling. It is difficult to learn to say, "When you do that, or say that, I feel this way".... The logic of communication breaks down in the pressure cooker of intimacy, because of the roles one expects the other to play, and furthermore, to play without having to say so.



However, communication is no substitute for love. Communication is a negotiation; love is non-negotiable. A divorcing woman, who had recently changed careers and

entered local politics, said to her expelled husband, "If I have to work hard to communicate, it will be on the City Board of Aldermen!"

Good communication requires not using any statement that instills guilt in the other person, because the other already "should have known". No one can figure these things out by oneself. Love is not telepathy. Good marital communication starts and ends with listening. However, somebody does have to say something.

There is a marital scenario one may call the "negative hockey puck situation". In the spirited, aggressive game of ice hockey, two teams face off. At the starting whistle, the center player of each team jabs a crooked stick at the rubber puck between them, seeking to control the puck before the other does. In a marriage, often the opposite occurs. The puck just sits there. Neither partner will make a move until the other does. Neither partner will try to "understand" the other until either he or she feels "understood".

Sometimes it helps an actively or passively fighting couple to remember these mottos:

In a family, if you win an argument, you lose.  
 In a family, if you lose an argument, you lose.  
 In a family, if you argue to tie, you win.

Love is like a driver's "right of way". You may never have it, but you may always give it.

Again:  
 If you play to win, you lose.  
 If you play to lose, you lose.  
 If you play to tie, you win.

## Chapter 2: The Awful Truth

Formerly in the USA, marriages were pronounced as between "man and wife", and not between "husband and wife". Wife had the roles to play; he remained an individual. Today, men and women frequently enter marriage with the idea that they are equally enrolled with each other. This is a democracy, after all.

The miserable past fades away, but the present "design" of marriage does not usually produce happy couples. The divorce rate proves it. If marriage were a medication, its failure rate would keep it off the market. Many blame the high divorce rate on the declining moral values of individuals. Those who blame individuals for their problems with marriage believe that people are created to be married, and not that marriage is created for the benefit of married people.

We turn to a famous, scholarly paper that presented a study of divorce. Everyone looking for objectivity on the subject of marriage and divorce must consider its findings. Here is its citation.

Brinig, Margaret F. and Allen, Douglas W., "'These Boots are Made for Walking': Why Most Divorce Filers are Women" American Law and Economics Review, Volume 2, #1, pp. 126-169, 2000. © American Law and Economics Association

Here is its accompanying abstract.

Because of the financial and social hardship faced after divorce, most people assume that generally husbands have instigated divorce since the introduction of no-fault divorce. Yet *women* file for divorce and are often the instigators of separation, despite a deep attachment to their children and the evidence that many divorces harm children. Furthermore, divorced women in large numbers reveal that they are happier than they were while married. They report relief and certainty that they were right in leaving their marriages. This fundamental puzzle suggests that the incentives to divorce require a reexamination, and that the forces affecting the net benefits from marriage may be quite complicated, and perhaps asymmetric between men and women. This paper considers women's filing as rational behavior, based on spouses' relative power in the marriage, their opportunities following divorce, and their anticipation of custody.

Here is an excerpt from the Introduction to the paper.

"Throughout most of American history, wives rather than husbands have filed for divorce. The proportion of wife-filed cases has ranged from around 60% in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to more than 70% in some States immediately after the introduction of no-fault divorce. Traditional explanations... cannot explain... the persistence of the "gender gap" in filing through time... pp 126,7

Custody laws and economic circumstances have changed much over recent centuries, but even before women attained the right to vote, women more than men sought divorce.

My impression is that having children is a risk factor, tending to make divorce more likely. Having children likely does not help to keep a marriage together. In my experience, having children places a strain in the marital couple that makes a couple more likely to divorce, and more likely to have a messy divorce. I have not located studies that might confirm what I infer.

Here is a joke. Three women discussed the question of when life begins. One woman insisted that human life begins at conception. The second protested that life begins at birth. The third woman argued that life begins when the children leave home.<sup>4</sup>

Women and men can more or less perceive their spouses as people in an equal partnership until there are children. Once there are children, the rigidly different roles of men and of women as fathers and as mothers intensify the differences between us.

If a father feels as connected to his children as does their mother, he may become a competitor with her in their upbringing. He may not simply agree with her, and accept to do whatever she wishes. He may want to parent differently than she does, perhaps by being in general less comforting and more challenging than she would be. He may not wish simply to be supportive of his wife's parenting, because he may have his own ideas. If he feels less connected to the children than does his wife, he is even less likely to want to devote himself to helping her to parent the children.

Understanding the polarization into typically different roles after there are children leads to another, more chilling, clinical hypothesis. Women may not love men. Men may not love women.

Here is an illustration of what I mean. A young man wrote,

I was with my girlfriend visiting a friend of hers. My girlfriend is notably progressive about romantic matters. The young woman we were visiting discussed a friend of hers who was having a fight with her boyfriend. The girl was upset because the boy still hadn't asked her to marry him. I asked her why she had not proposed to him.

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<sup>4</sup> I have been urged not to denote that the three women in the joke originally were Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish.

My girlfriend interrupted, "That's one tradition that needs to be kept".

I asked, "Why?"

My girlfriend went on, "Well, when your girlfriends ask you how he proposed..."

She stopped because she realized what that implied.

Her friend went on for her. "Yeah, and you have to show them your ring..."

I said, "Oh that's funny. I know someone who is writing a book in part about how women don't actually love men, that men are just a status symbol among women".

The friend replied, "Yeah, that's pretty much true."

He continued,

My girlfriend bought a new fur coat for winter vacation, and she wore it around very proudly. Everyone complimented her. We were going to go out to dinner with her family, and she said to me,

"I bet you my mom will be wearing her fur coat; she's such a bitch".

Ten minutes later her mom showed up in her fur coat.

At one point I say, "Don't you two look pretty, mother and daughter in matching fur coats".

Mother responds, "Well, hers is rabbit; mine is real fox".

Clearly Mother's coat was nicer. My girlfriend got hers at a thrift store for 40 bucks, but Mother still needed to point it out.

That was funny.

There is an important and obvious reason why women may not love men. Men are not usually very good mothers to their wives.

In my clinical practice and life experience, women who sincerely have loved the men in their homes have had very mixed feelings about, or have actually hated their mothers. It seems that if a woman loves her mother, she will find her husband an unsatisfactory replacement, and her marriage to him a drag. She will realize too late that women tend to use men in their battles with each other, and that women may not care for men as people at all. She will realize too late that her wedding day was a celebration of her social status among women, and that her wedding has nothing to do with her marriage to a man.

In other words, if a woman loves her mother, her marriage may already be in trouble. Her mother will be a difficult act for a man to follow. Not many men will measure up, or will even want to measure up to her mother.

Here is the problem in a nutshell, or perhaps in a nutcase. Women and men, girls and boys all have "mother" as their first love- their first "love object". Boys and girls both have to grow up, and have to leave their mothers. The psychological fate of boys and girls as they separate from mother sharply divides by around age three, as children begin to recognize the significance of girl-boy differences. Each must prepare for a different end of the "separation from mother" story. Most

boys grow up, and marry women, and so replace one woman with another. As many women discover to their horror after marriage, married men seem to return to their childhood disguised as husbands. Men typically do not have to separate from "mother", and learn to take care of themselves and of others to the extent that women do.

Does this mean that a man can love a woman, or that he cannot? Can a man love a woman only as she replaces his mother? Can a man love a woman as she sees herself? The psychological term for seeing another person as he or she sees him or herself is "mirroring". Can a man understand or "mirror" a woman? Does he want to? Why should he? Do women mirror or understand men?

Unlike men, women must truly leave their mothers, and become mothers. Any separation from whom one loves, either because of death or because of normal growing up, works by "identification" with the lost person, the lost object of love. One becomes somehow like the loved one whom one has lost. When a woman becomes a mother, she has truly lost her mother more than a man can ever know. There are many advantages for a woman in the relationship with her own mother when she becomes a mother. For example, the younger woman in Western culture in her own mind now has a social rank at least equal to that of her mother, and to that of her mother-in-law. However, many women feel stranded as mothers, and turn to their husbands for support. The typical failure of husbands to be good mother-replacements to their wives is often catastrophic. Men ought not to be surprised at their wives' ambivalence toward them. To put it bluntly: not many men would give up loving a breast to suck on a penis. Why should women?

Mother may be a lost "ideal" of love that both men and women might equally have as a goal to reclaim, at least symbolically. Men may have a relatively easy time perceiving women as symbolic successors to their mothers for two different reasons. One is fairly obvious, in that mothers and wives are both female. The other is the fact of men's rivalry with each other. Men can understand and identify with each other as rivals. Men can tell who is a friend, who is a foe, and who or what is the goal. Males can perceive each other and identify with each other as rivals for the prize, in whatever shape it appears. The prize may be an athletic trophy, a business victory, or a desirable beloved. In all cases, the prize is outside of and beyond oneself.

The situation is less clear for women. Mother and what she represents is no less an ideal of gratification left over from infancy for girls or women than for boys or men. However, identification with her mother as both are female makes daughter a rival with Mom for whatever Mom may want, at the same time as mother represents the goal. How confusing! Mom is daughter's "Ideal of love" at the same time as



mother and daughter are rivals! But, what are they rivals for? Men must not flatter themselves that they are the real goal. Men mainly serve to externalize rivalry among women.

Most men can identify with each other as rivals because their goal is not male. Women have no such easy formulation. Women are both each other's rival and each other's goal. To a man, this looks like an electrical "short circuit". It seems that there are painfully few rules of fair competition among women, perhaps because among women it is more difficult to distinguish friend from foe, and even more difficult to agree on what everyone is fighting about. Is it all just about who owns the kitchen?

Much of the time, it may seem to men that women use men as weapons of subtle destruction in a war among themselves. In a daughter's mind, her charm makes her a fierce competitor with Mom for market share in Dad's psychology. Daughter has an easier time being more flattering and accepting of Dad than does his wife. When a daughter flirts with dad, and he calls her his "princess", they conspire to bypass, and even to eliminate her mother from their equation. Fathers and daughters may have different reasons for their political alliance, but it is still all about her mother.

It might help to recall that we are talking about the psychology of children from ages 3 to 6 years old. It might help to recall that fact, because of how little we all may have changed or grown up since then.

Compare a traditional boys' game, such as football, with a traditional girls' game, such as hop-scotch. Boys' games have goals to reach, and numbers to pile up. Hop-scotch consists of jumping up and down, and being sure your feet land in the right boxes. How much imagination does it take to decode that game? How many men feel that their wives stuff them in a box, and jump up and down on them? How hard do women have to work not to step on each other's toes, or not to criticize each others' house-boxes? So many women's games seem to be about cooperation, automatically burying and forbidding any rivalry among them. However, their rivalry is not far away!

As a man, I can only infer that women use men as clubs with which to hit each other over the head as they fight for status. I can only infer that men as themselves do not matter to women. What do women want? Women want the same thing as men want. Mother.

When her husband suddenly died, his widow took over the family business, learning from her in-laws how to make it work. She cared for two sons, a retarded sibling, and an aging

mother for decades, while she "grew the business" into a prosperous and stable powerhouse. At last, her mother died. A year later, suddenly, her boyfriend of twenty years, he only recently financially successful on his own, left her. Shortly after, while returning on an airplane from a business trip, as the plane descended and she tried swallowing to equalize the changing air pressure on her ears, she experienced a violent, vomiting vertigo. She was carried off the airplane on a stretcher, and lay in an emergency room for nine hours, comfortable in a supine position, but unable to lift her head. (This was no anxiety attack). Her sons were with her, and comforted her. Later, in a psychotherapy session in which she recounted the details of her misadventure, she started to weep. "I miss my mother", she said. "Isn't that silly?" "No", the therapist replied, "it is wonderful that you do."

There may be no antidote for this condition. Perhaps the best one can do is to understand it. Perhaps the job of this book is to explain men and women to each other. After all, men and women are in this life together, more or less, and we ought to learn to understand each other's language. If we understand each other, then we may be in a better position to figure out how to make marital love work for everyone.

Here is a case example of what we are talking about.

A forty-year old woman named Geraldine reported this dream.

I was in a room very much like where I hung out a lot in college. Or, maybe high school. Everyone was in a couple, and everyone was "making out". I sat on a red leather couch by myself, and I was frightened. Then I found myself in some one's arms. I was very happy and secure, and after a minute, I pulled back to see who it was. It was my mother! I was angry. My mother said to me, "It's OK, honey, this is fine" I was furious. "What is wrong with you? You are SICK!" I said to her. No, I didn't say that, I shouted that at her. But, everyone else in the room seemed fine with it. So, I walked out of the room, and I think I brushed my teeth.

Two days later, Geraldine had this dream.

I was sexually aroused, and I wanted a private place to have a climax. Like, I was looking for a place to have my puppies. I was in a hurry, but I wanted the right spot. Finally, I sat under a waterfall, and felt the water splashing me. The orgasm was so intense; it woke me up. My husband stayed asleep, and the orgasm went on for quite a while.

The first dream occurred right after a psychotherapy session in which her therapist remarked how much her husband was like the perfect mother. "Of course there is not much sex between you and Gerald. Marrying your mother is unlikely to be very sexy", said the therapist. That evening, Geraldine watched Gerald with their young children. She noticed as if for the first time how happy Gerald was in the kitchen, and how generously he doted on the children. He was proud of the new

apron she had helped the children to buy for him for Father's Day. Gerald seemed more comfortable in the kitchen than she, but Geraldine did not feel any competition with him, or any regret. The whole scene simply felt supportive to her. Gerald was also very supportive of Geraldine's wish to pursue her own education, now that the children were all in elementary school. His work schedule permitted him to be home in the afternoons with them. Gerald was so unlike her first husband, and so unlike her father! Gerald, come to think of it, seemed more like her all-accepting mother. Geraldine felt bad to think that her perception of Gerald as maternal inhibited her sexuality toward him.

As a teenager in the South, Geraldine had been "wild and crazy", and sexually very active. As a pre-teen, she had thought that she was father's favorite child, or maybe even his favorite person. Then her parents' marriage suddenly failed, and father went off to live with another woman. Geraldine maintained an awkward relationship with them; she knew that she had to make nice-nice with the despised step-Mom to have any relationship with Father. Geraldine was an angry teenager, and disappointed that her mother seemed to have allowed all this to happen. After all, it is one thing to be an accepting mother, but another to accept abandonment and betrayal from her husband without a struggle! Geraldine remained close to her mother through the years, although Geraldine felt that she often had to forgive her mother's inadequacies. Sometimes it seemed to Geraldine that she was more her mother's mother than the reverse.

By the age of fifty, Geraldine's children had grown. She was pursuing a gratifying and successful career in personnel administration, and her husband was accepting early retirement. Geraldine and Gerald had maintained a successful marriage, even as Geraldine battled through the turmoil left over from her childhood of alternating abuse, neglect, and indulgence. The reason for her marital success seemed that Geraldine had married a proper successor to her mother. Geraldine associated her sexually active adolescence with impulsive unhappiness, and so the heights of sexual passion with her husband seemed possible, or even necessary for her to relinquish. Regardless the reason, Geraldine's sexuality had become her own property. As the sublime fuel of her individuation, her "unfulfilled" sexuality was not a threat to life at home. Geraldine seemed to have escaped god's curse to Eve: "You shall be eager for your husband, and he shall be your master".

There is surely more to the meaning of the dream than we have presented. For example, listening to how Geraldine described disappointment in her mother, one might infer that sometimes Geraldine performed sexually more to receive nurturing- to receive mothering- than simply to enjoy herself in love with another person. That her mother in the dream encouraged Geraldine to continue to "make

out" suggests mother's OK to receive "nurturing" from sexuality. Or, her mother in the dream might have been encouraging Geraldine to take care of her.

Of course, we present only Geraldine's side of the story. We do not know what might be her husband's "take". Is Geraldine's perception of him unfair to him, especially if it relieves her of sexual interest in him? What of his sexual interest in her, and what of his presumed sexual un-fulfillment? His wife enjoys his support, but what does she do for him? Bottom line: is Geraldine's perception of her marriage wholesome, or is it not? Ought her perception of her sexuality to change?

Answers to all such questions may differ in every case. The business of psychotherapy is to help to raise and to ponder such questions, and not to provide formulaic answers.

Regrettably, not many couples will likely recognize themselves in that story. Men and women do not often come to such a stable compromise, even if the end of the Geraldine and Gerald story has yet to be written (we will revisit them in a later chapter). All one may infer in general from their story and countless others is that the natural, sexual interest of men and women in each other seems not automatically to translate into loving human relations. Understanding that women and men may not naturally get along very well may make it easier, or at least possible for us to accept each other, and ourselves.

A year later, however, the story picked up. Geraldine, very upset, sent an email.

He just seems to be effortlessly able to fulfill our children's needs intellectually and emotionally. He just knows what they need and want. I do too but he just jumps and gets there first. I feel so inadequate because he is home and takes the maternal place I used to fill. There are times that I cannot tolerate being second as far as who my children turn to. I know intellectually this is due to his presence, now that he is always there. I had been the 'main squeeze' during their very young years. But when we all are together I feel like I cannot tolerate the air I am breathing. I feel like I am in foreign territory... It just seems when we are all talking that I could just fade away forever and it would never matter. Everyone would so seamlessly get over it and the meaningful stuff of life would continue very nicely without me.

The therapist emailed back.

Well, you have come quite a ways from where he was simply wonderful as a maternal figure. Now, it seems you are competing with him, as though he were another woman! Actually, many working fathers feel as you do, but assume that they are supposed to accept their secondary, emotional status, and not compete with their wives. Just hang in there, and for god's sakes, if you discuss this with any of them, be sure you don't ask for reassurance!

This is a feeling, not a fact, and has to do with you, and not with any of them. There will be a good way to discuss all this with your husband- but just as a feeling, because your role is secure. Don't make him feel bad! However, if he realizes that you are at a loss to know what to do, he may have an easy time not doing anything you might take as competitive. He might include you in the list of for whom he plays a role.

We shall return to their story in a later chapter.

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Why do men and women so often seem like such different kinds of people to each other, especially after marriage?

We shall spend several chapters continuing to deal with the developmental psychology of both men and women, both boys and girls. There are reasons why boys and girls emerge from the intimacy of childhood differently. These reasons explain and predict why we have trouble with each other. They explain and predict because intimacy is regressive, turning us back toward who we were as children. It is no accident that lovers like to call each other, "baby".

It comes down to this: the distinction of Roles and Rules™. Is life a set of loving, meaningful roles to play for others, or is life a "contact sport", a ruthless contest for survival? Can it be both?

We use Roles and Rules™ to describe the working elements of intimacy. Even though "roles" will seem to have more to do with women, and "rules" with men, both of these terms describe what we all do, and what we all must understand. A wonderful reason to think of "roles" as maternal or feminine, and of "rules" as paternal or masculine is to set up a 'conception' metaphor. Roles and Rules™, like "feminine and masculine", may come together as a new conception, a new creation, and a new structure.

Insofar as emotional "roles" and logical "rules" represent "feminine" and "masculine" aspects of an individual mind, these may come together as a "self-concept". It is a psychotherapist's job, like a midwife, to help to deliver such a self-concept. Roles and rules represent elements of a marital self-concept as well. The concept of "the marriage" is an entity as real in the mind as any brand name or ethnic identity.<sup>5</sup>

Let us define our terms, as we shall carefully, and even technically use them.

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<sup>5</sup> We may repeat here, that we use the word, "maieutic" to describe what we do. "Maieutic" is from the Greek for "pertaining to midwifery". Socrates called himself a "maieutic" philosopher, because he helped to deliver other people's conceptions.

A "role" is a set of actions performed more for others than for oneself. A "rule" describes interactions, such as among automobiles in traffic or people in the workplace. A rule applies fairly, democratically everywhere to everyone, as if all had agreed. The rules called the "laws of physics" treat every particle the same way. Every dollar is created equal. Unlike rules that apply equally everywhere, roles set up ranks, and place some people above other people. The role of general outranks private. The role of parent outranks child. When "in role", one's actions are subject to the conditions and requirements of the role. So, any role so-to-speak outranks the individual who plays it. In the role of father or of mother, one cannot do whatever one wants.

Roles as we use the term are actions performed more for others, or more for another, than for oneself. Roles are not phony. A marital role is performed more for one's spouse than for oneself. OK, OK, you may respond, but then the other person does the same for me, right? Wrong. That is a rule statement. There is no such rule of reciprocity in love or marriage as there are rules of compensation in the workplace. There is no entitlement to anything in a marriage, even to sexual intercourse, and no guarantee of what anyone gets in return for the loving roles one plays. One may very well end up feeling that one has spent or "wasted the best years of my life" at home, and gotten nothing. (Addressing the reality of that perception for example in psychotherapy is very important.)

Functions in a workplace or in an organization are very much like roles, in that they represent positions in a hierarchy. However, one is entitled to direct financial compensation for what one does at work. Professional functions, such as physician or teacher, may loosely be referred to as "roles" because of the presumption that professionals give more than one could ever pay for.

Rules promote fairness and equality, whether or not that is a good thing in any given case. Traditionally, for example, physicians have great power over their patients; physicians seem to "outrank" their patients. However, does a rule permitting medical patients unlimited access to a physician's notes, and therefore tending to equalize the power of physician and patient, make better or worse the quality of medical care? Rules destroy roles when they destroy ranks. Today, instead of the roles of "physician" and "patient", one discovers "health care provider" and "health care consumer". The physician-patient role pair is replaced by an economic transaction.

[The entertaining 2004 computer-animated movie, *The Incredibles*, wonderfully represents the conflict of roles and rules. Our nation's superheroes have had mighty roles to play, enjoying their actions and their secret identities. Of course, the superhero role does require a mask and a secret identity- otherwise superhero would be no role. The heroic Mr.

Incredible made a mistake, and the world of rules entered his life. He rescued some one jumping from a building who did not want to be rescued. The situation was rather like that of a surgeon operating without signed permission. So, the rescued person sued the superhero for damages, as a case of aggravated whiplash and "wrongful life". Soon, everyone ever rescued without his or her permission by superheroes join in lawsuits, and superheroes must retire from practice- like asbestos manufacturers going bankrupt. [Many, many movies new and old present the same theme. In the fabulous musical *Guys and Dolls*, the guys love rules- they are gamblers. The "dolls" want to domesticate the guys into household roles, "comfortable, conservative, and clean".

[No popular movie or book series better exemplifies roles versus rules than the Harry Potter franchise. Harry and the wizards live in a purely roles world, filled with magical illogic and emotional categories. Issues of class and rank abound. Fantastical figures play astonishing roles. However, rules are alien here. For example, a ludicrous game played among the students at Hogwarts School is called, Quiditch. Everyone flies around on brooms, chasing various flying objects. However, catching one special thingy wins the game, regardless of anything else that has happened, and of course, the hero seems always to get the thingy. Games are supposed to be about the interaction of rules, not the hierarchy of roles. Even a rank-ridden, medieval exercise like chess has rules.

[In the Potter series, the non-wizard world is populated by "muggles". These are ordinary people who have no imagination, and are angry about it. Their world of rules and regulations is boring and nasty. When they are forced occasionally to function in the muggles world, witches and wizards are fish out of water. They can cast magic spells, but they cannot make change or place telephone calls. Abstract arithmetic is a system of rules that wizards cannot fathom.]

An orientation toward either roles or rules may seem obvious in both men and women under various conditions and circumstances. It is parenthood that reduces us to our most elemental, 'role versus rule' selves. There is no escaping that motherhood is a role to play that includes no rules that protect a woman in the home-workplace. There is no escaping that men have trouble accepting a role in the home, and would prefer to rule the roost. Actually, this is a misuse of "rule". Men often learn too late that their rules are really unfair "role expectations" of others for whom they feel no need in return to play a loving role.

Here is how a psychiatrist learned that, the more intimate is a relationship, the more roles outrank rules.

A married woman in her 40's suspected her male psychiatrist's ability to understand her. She asked, "Do you know about the "toilet seat problem"? He did not. "I cannot get the men in my family to lower the seat after they pee. As a result, sometimes at night, if I am not careful, I may sit down right into the toilet bowl."

His next line was the perfect, male mistake. "I see. And, after you use the toilet, you raise the seat for them, right?"

"No, dummy. I need the seat down more than they need the seat up. They should lower the seat for me as a courtesy".

This woman wanted the men in her life to perform a role for her. Her therapist uttered a "typical male", "reciprocal rule" response in his reflex escape from role-playing.

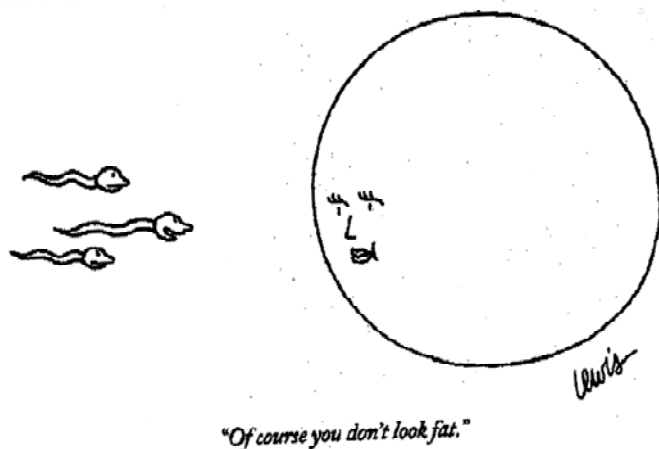
An anecdote presents the problem from a male perspective. "I am a tall man in a family of short women", a man told me recently. "I have begged everyone for decades kindly to slide the driver's seat back after they use the family car. Otherwise, it is impossible for me to get in the car without awkwardly reaching over to find the lever to slide back the seat. No one has ever extended me that courtesy. Finally, I have bought an expensive car with a pushbutton that slides the seat back".

The proper role response from men is easier and more comprehensible for some men to perform than for others. Here is a cartoon comment on the subject from the Boston Globe, April 2005.



Sexually speaking, however, for many men it all boils down to this:





Not many men may have made peace with the situation. Many men, especially when their culture lets them get away with it, construct a family that will dote on them as their mothers did, or as their mothers were "supposed" to do- in his mind. Men actually believe that they can come home again, and this time, be in charge. Their sense of "role" applies to roles played for them, and not so much to roles they wish to play for others.

Women's disappointment in men as marriage partners and as co-parents leaves many women after divorce sadder and wiser. Many divorced men seem to eager to marry younger women. Perhaps they want to marry women who are not yet disappointed in them. Younger women achieve a victory over older women when they marry older men. Older, divorced women may be less likely to marry again than men not because divorced men prefer younger women and so are unavailable, but because they have learned their lesson, and wish to have their minds to themselves.

Men like to pretend that they do not like drama, but that they prefer action. Perhaps the reluctance of men lost when driving with their families to ask for directions relates to the male distaste for drama. He often unreasonably persists trying to figure out the map, and its rules. To ask for help would be to enter the world of drama. "It was a dark and stormy night, and the family pulled into Dracula's gas station to ask for directions...

Men regard with suspicion women's preferences for soap operas, which are dramas about roles. However, men enjoy spectator sports. These are dramas about rules. Perhaps men and women are just tuned to different channels.

Understanding roles as actions performed more for another or for others than for oneself permits us to address the demon of "role expectations". A "role

expectation" is a role one has in mind for the other to play. One abides in marital heaven if one loves to the marital role that the other needs. One falls into marital hell when insisting and demanding that the other play the role that one wants the other to play.

Following is a clinical excerpt from the marriage of Mr. and Ms.

Mr. and Ms. have been in couple's therapy for a year. He brought his wife into therapy with him, having been encouraged by successful short-term individual therapy, following a meltdown on the job. Parents of four children, they approached their issues slowly; many lives were at stake. One Sunday, Ms. called, and insisted on meeting ASAP. She was putting two and two together.

"He only wants me. He doesn't want the children. When we got married, I told him he could have me if we had children. But, he has not grown up. He still only wants me! This is too much; I've given up. I cannot be his mother. He comes to me for approval of how hard he works, how much he does for me, but he hates taking care of the kids unless I am there, also. He takes care of the kids only so I'll love him, and not because he loves them, and wants to be their father".

She went on to complain that he has not learned to talk right to the children - he still sounds critical or ambiguous - she corrects him - he snaps, "Don't correct me in front of the children". Seeing a chance for balance, the therapist pointed out that he might perceive her correcting him as unjustly and mistrustfully controlling his relations with the kids. If he takes this as gratuitous micromanagement, the therapist went on, it would not help him to develop his own sense of parenting. He might well perceive that she does act the role of his mother at those times.

Days later, at another urgent individual meeting, she reported the following contretemps.

We were in the living room, watching pro football, which we both like. I was also knitting. He offered to put on another light, so that I could see the knitting better. I said, "thank you". Later I stopped knitting, and we watched the TV. Suddenly, he realized that I was not knitting. He exclaimed with anger, "If you loved me, you would have turned off the light". I was deeply annoyed that he would be so petty. I could hardly hold back from telling him that I can barely stand to be married to such an infantile galoot.

Ms. has only told part of the story. She knows in general that the light bothers him while watching TV, and that he likely felt that he was making an important, gracious gesture. When she did not reciprocate, he felt betrayed.

"It didn't occur to me to turn off the light", was her defense.

After a bit, the therapist said, "so he was not in your mind right then".

"Of course not. He wants to be uppermost in my mind all the time, and I cannot stand it".

"All the time? You were hanging out together, watching TV. Surely that is a time he might expect to be in your mind."

"I do lots of things for him!"

"Yes, but I guess only when you feel like it". The therapist went on, "Perhaps you see why he feels that you may not love him. He was not in your mind at a time when you might have been close, and after he had offered a tender gesture".

"But I don't want someone in my mind all the time! I hate being in his mind so much, like he cannot be himself without me, like I'm supposed to feel guilty, or that I owe him something because I am so important in his mind!"

This is a perfectly "normal" sort of role conflict, and not at all petty. She does not love to play the role he needs her to play: Love Goddess to Whom He Sacrifices. She cannot get him to play the role she needs of him, which is: Co-Parent. All she wants from him is loving support for her as a mother, and for her as an individual who wants to develop a home internet-based business. She does not really want to give him anything. He should not need her to give him anything. Why cannot he grow up?

He wants what he feels as intimacy. She does not think of intimacy the way he does.

She appears more as a "rule" person than he. She recalled a "deal" that she had made with him- that he could "have her" only if they had children together. So, she feels that he has broken the deal. She believes that she is operating under a rule of fairness. Yet, did he ever "have" her, as he might define it? Has she come through on her part of the agreement?

She is wary of giving to him, as though to do so without a clear *quid pro quo* traps her in the "his mother" role. Yet, his "sacrifices" do not qualify as giving, either. He also expects something in return. He expects reciprocity, as though his sacrifice had purchased her love. Sacrifices on the altar of a goddess are not payments. Sacrifice and generosity are different from fee-for-service. His "rule" is a "role expectation" of her.

Both think that they live in a fair world, in which each has made a "deal" with the other. They both have rules- not rocks- in their heads. However, each rule exists only within the head of one of them. "Deals" such as these are not like agreements among pick-up basketball players to the rules of that morning's game. The "rules" in the minds of Mr. and Ms. are not agreements, and so are not "rules" at all. They are "role expectations".

A therapeutic "rule intervention" can at least temporarily patch up bad cases of "role expectation". The rule on this occasion might be: each is responsible for how the other person understands one. *One is responsible for how one is understood.* One is responsible for expressing oneself fully and properly, and for communicating well. No assumption of telepathy is allowed. No unspoken expectations are allowed.

One cannot expect the other person to read one's mind, but one can expect the other person to listen. One member of a stormy, forty-year relationship between two men complained, "I want you to love me less, and to listen to me more". The other just laughed. "I do listen to you, and I know you better than you do". The second person was not listening. He had his mind already made up. For all those decades, one man had played the anxious, controlling, and infuriating mother, while the other played the irrepressible child. They were usually very happy together. When his partner died after a long illness, the man in the mother role would not leave the other alone in the funeral home.

In the case of the couple watching football, the husband might have been responsible to utter something about her turning off the light when he first turned it on for her, rather than consciously or not, to leave love to chance. Such tests of another's love, whether deliberate or not, will fail. Whether or not she does love him, any true love of him for her would have required that he forgive her evident oblivion of him, and turn off the light himself. He would thereby have played a loving role for her. He must come to understand that he silently and dysfunctionally counted on her love for him to remind her to turn the light off.

Yet, who can live in such a focused, disciplined situation, constantly forgiving the other for disappointing one's expectations, regardless of how infantile those expectations might be? Rules can foster love, but rules cannot conceive love. Rules are sterile.

Even though their steps were carefully choreographed, the movie dancing of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers portrayed spontaneous, romantic mutuality. They danced as two immovable objects irresistibly moving each other. Instead of enjoying the flying grace of Fred and Ginger, Mr. and Ms. feel the other stepping on their toes. Is her need that he respects her distance more important than his need to be in her mind? Can he love her enough to play the "cool" role she has in mind? Can she love him enough to replace his "cool" mother?

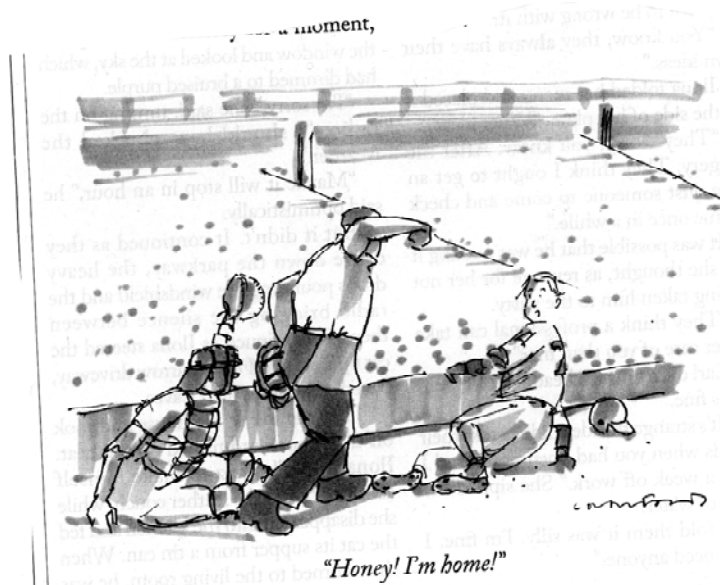
The answer is harsh. It takes two people to marry, but only one person to get a divorce.

### Chapter 3: The Course of True Love

How did we get here, and where is there to go from here?  
Where is "here"?

It may be obvious to those who are parents more than to those who are not, that life's opening theme is "mother". Mother is everyone's first object of love. We are mammals, after all. We are defined as breast-fed organisms. "Mamma" means breast, as in "mammary glands".

Women and men have different ways of coping with the need to grow up, and to separate from mother- and from mothering. For many men, life is like a baseball game. A man scores a "home run" by coming home again, by getting back to "home plate". He marries someone who may very well seem to pick up where his mother left off picking up after him. That is why "marriage is for men". Women, however, do seldom acquire a mother replacement, but must instead usually separate from mother by identifying with her, and by becoming like her. Women usually do not get to play the baseball game of life. Women more often must serve as home plate, and serve up home-cooked meals on home plates.



Men in the typical family are often surprised when their wives are not delighted to replace their mothers, and to take care of them as their mothers did, or were

"supposed to do". Many men still today expect that their wives will cook for them, and will know where are their socks. However, many men are even more surprised when their wives actually do seem to turn into their mothers, and expect them to do chores.

Many women in the traditional family are surprised when the unifying feelings of pre-marital romance polarize into the disappointments of married life. Why does he think it fair that she should do all these things for him and for the kids, and that he should do so little in return? She exchanged her name for his- what can he do in return?

At least one requirement for marital happiness is beyond anyone's control to accomplish by oneself. There are, after all, two people in a marriage. That requirement for happiness is the acceptance and the understanding of oneself as a person by the other person. Usually, that means acceptance by the other person at one's worst- when one is the least pleasing to the other.

Anyone might like to see oneself "mirrored". Anyone might like to see oneself as if reflected in the understanding gaze of another, as if one's soul lived within the soul of the other. Anyone would want to be known by another as one sees oneself. However, one cannot compel such love and understanding. One can communicate all night, and never ensure that another person may understand one. Either the other person can "get it", or cannot. No amount of logical explanation or of selfless devotion will necessarily engender what is basically an act of grace.

When it comes to mirroring: can one give to the other what one is asking for from the other? Does one give to the other what one is asking for from the other?

Many of us enter marriage precisely for that wrong reason: to be loved and to be accepted by the other person. One wishes the other- one wishes to use the other, to force the other- to make one feel "complete" and "known", and not just for a moment during sex. Such a motivation, such a wish to be loved is a role expectation of another person most usually doomed to fail. If one enters a marriage to be loved more than one enters to love, life will forever disappoint and infuriate. The antidote for such repeated disappointment is the remembrance even in the heat of the moment that love is like the "right of way" at a traffic intersection. One may never have it, but one may always give it. Perhaps one reaches adulthood when one realizes that to love is to give, and perhaps to receive, but never to get, or to take.

Here is what one might accept as a marital "yoga", jihad, or spiritual discipline. *To love another is to love to play the role the other needs.* Sometimes, this concept is easy to grasp. Loving children is loving to be their parent. Loving a dog means

loving to be its owner. However, loved ones often may seem to take for granted the roles one plays for them, so that one feels unappreciated. Yet, one cannot expect appreciation from children as though they were moral adults. One cannot expect to have a deep conversation about a movie with one's dog. OK, but is it too much to expect appreciation from one's spouse? Unfortunately, one can hardly compel love and understanding, let alone romance, in return for selfless love. For one thing, such demanding love would not then be selfless love! The other must be as free to love as one is oneself. One cannot compel another to appreciate one's love, which would mean that love would necessarily increase in value as a return on one's investment in the other. Of course, there is no such guaranteed ROI- return on a (loving) investment.

However, even selfless love has its limits. Loving sacrifice is not slavery. Love cannot command, but it can hope. Sooner or later, love unappreciated may fail, evaporate, or just wander away. One day, to love the other is just no longer any fun. One can no longer love to play a loving role for the other. One is no longer in love. Jazz artist Billie Holiday wrote and sang, "Love is like a faucet. When you turn it off, it is gone". Women especially as mothers often may find themselves terminally unappreciated and individually stultified. When they do, "divorce is for women".

So, the real question for intimacy is simply whether or not the other person is worth loving. How does one measure the other's "loving-worth"? Is the measure of the other's loving-worthiness the other's love for oneself? No. There cannot be any such measure to apply to another person, because the problem does not exist between oneself and another person. The problem is within oneself. The question for oneself is whether or not one loves to play a loving role for the other person. Is it fun, or it is not, to love the other? Perhaps the failure of the other to respond as one would like sooner or later "sucks out all the juice", so that one can no longer enjoy to love the other. Still, the decision is one's own. The other person may love one all he or she can, and one may still fall out of love. The other person may seem more and more like a selfish rat, and yet one may continue to love him or her. One may either love the other or not, and may either seek a divorce or not. All of these "categories" are unrelated.

Making matters still more difficult to grasp is the apparent un-relation between sexuality in a marriage and anything else in a marriage. Perhaps a huge statistical study would reveal trends. However, clinically one may discover either good sex or no sex in either a good marriage or a bad marriage. Marriages may stay together even with unsatisfying sexuality. Marriages may break apart even though sexuality is frequent and gratifying.

With all the pieces of the marriage problem laid out to consider, perhaps we can return and review what we mean by Roles and Rules™, our novel way of identifying and working with the elements of intimate struggle.

A "role" is a set of actions performed more for others or more for another person than for oneself. A "role" puts the other ahead of oneself, or above oneself. A man might hold a door open for a woman, symbolically for the moment elevating her above him. A woman might put her children before herself, giving up her entire life to take care of them.

So, "roles" put others ahead of or above oneself. A "rule", however, operates as if by agreement, and applies equally to everyone. Rules apply to cars in traffic, to players in sports and games, and to the interactions of physical objects, and of sums of money. Rules implicitly do not put anyone or anything ahead of anyone or anything else, but rules do foster and regulate competition.

Questions remain. If parents outrank children, does this mean that children are supposed to worship their parents? Or, are parents supposed to put their children, who rank below them, above themselves? Is the world a kiss-up hierarchy, in which people at each rank are there to "serve" those above, in a rank order leading up to god? Or, is the world a kiss-down hierarchy, in which people at each rank serve those below? (Christianity introduces an idea of the "son of god" as a suffering servant, below everyone else.) Does a manager require those who report to him or her to make the manager look good to his or her superiors? Or, is a manager supposed to make possible and rewarding the jobs of those below?

That marriage is not obviously tailored to individual needs is a condition that raises confusing questions in a democracy. Somehow, marriage must in a democracy be justified on the basis of individual self-interest. So, scientific surveys seek to discover whether married people are happier, or live longer than those unmarried. These "consumer-style" evaluations of marital bliss are as silly as are arguments that people join the military because they want to enjoy a long life of expressing kindness to others. Some things in life are, and are meant to be, sacrifices to a higher power, or to a higher meaning. Just look at those formally dressed, generic "inaction figures" on the wedding cake.

As a system of benefit for those either above or below, either for one's children or for one's country, marriage cannot be said necessarily to exist directly for the benefit of any individual.

Some family cultures seem to tolerate or even to foster individuality. A century and more ago, a progressive Boston Brahmin said, 'People can do whatever they want



to do, as long as they don't do it in public, and frighten the horses". Mostly, however, marriage seems to represent the herding of what might otherwise be wild, animalistic, individualistic, sexual and aggressive instincts into the corral of redemption- into the corral of redeeming marital, social importance.

Roles are "subjective", in that they may arise from the emotions in response to a sense of how things ought to be. One subjects oneself to the conditions of a role, for example of parenthood, because one wants to be a good parent. Subject means "thrown under", as "subject to authority", or as a "subject" of the Crown. One is "subject" to a role, because the role outranks one as an individual. The role is more important than the individual playing the role. "Subject" is an important word. The main character of a novel may be its "subject", meaning that the character is "subject" to the plot conditions and developments of the novel. A main theme in a symphonic work is its "subject", because the theme is subject to the developmental and expressive conditions of the music. Even the subject of a sentence is its "subject", as if when "John goes to the store", going to the store "happens" to John. That is, the sentence tells a story about John.

So, on the one hand, "to subject" means "to throw under". On the other hand, "to object" means 'to throw against'. Rules are objective, in that they describe how things may crash into each other, or otherwise interact. Rules ignore role and rank. A family "rule" might be that everyone regardless of rank washes up before dinner, or knocks on a closed bedroom or bathroom door before entering.

So, roles put others before one, while rules establish equality or parity, a level playing field, among individuals.

Neither roles nor rules puts oneself ahead of or above anyone (or anything) else. In "roles and rules" language, one is either serving others, or equal to others. There is something missing in this system, of course, that which some people call "ego". To some, having an "ego" means suffering from a bad case of vanity or "prima Donna" selfishness. One wants a "vanity" license plate, because one believes one is more than a mere number. To them, "ego" means to put oneself ahead of or above others. A smarmy corporate brainwashing motto insists, "There is no 'i' in 'team'". Of course, a response in self-defense is, "there is no 'u' either, so shut up". (Maybe better: When the "i" at the center of "united" is misplaced, it becomes "untied".)

However, "ego" need not mean to put oneself above others. "Ego" does not mean "look at me-me-me". "Ego" does not mean "me", but "I", which is the sense that one exists as an individual, and has a point of view. In roles and rules terms, "ego" is a POV or point of view in an interaction. Points of view establish themselves socially, and develop in interaction according to rules of communication and expression in

language. Believing in some kind of individual, "original sin" casts an unfortunate, undemocratic pall over the "ego".

Perhaps the most radical moment in the history of Western Civilization is the opening word of the "Ten Commandments" - the tablets, not the movie. That word is, "I", as in "I am the Lord thy God". The Hebrew Bible equates divinity with individuality, and with the recognition of a point of view. Individuality is divine, and not a sin. The "covenant" between the Biblical Abraham and "god" established, so to speak, a communication between two points of view, and did not establish terms either of surrender and redemption. (Christianity offers salvation and redemption in return for "turning the other cheek". Islam means "surrender". Israel means "wrestler with god".) Some may well justify developing a point of view in a psychological interaction as a sanctified act. Psychotherapy exists not simply to improve behavioral adaptation and conformity, but to support the developing points of view of individuals in their life roles.

As we have mentioned, women more than men seem associated with "roles", and men more than women with "rules". For example, women more than men seem to enjoy "soap operas", which are daytime television dramas about roles - mother, father, sister, villain, vixen, doctor, abandoned child, jilted lover, and so on. Men more than women seem to like spectator sports, which are dramas about rules- safe, out, fair foul, enough yardage for a first down, off-sides, holding, clipping. In general, roles seem to be about love; rules seem to have to do with aggression.

Let us take a moment to nail down how we may distinguish dramas from games as roles from rules. First, drama is about meaning, while games are about winning and losing. A lot may be hidden in a drama; much may go on behind the scenes, even when a drama is not a mystery drama. Sports and games proceed right in front of you. All the players accept the rules of how the "plot" may unfold. Drama implies an audience; things may be done for their effect upon an audience. Doing something for effect implies that the effect precedes the cause. Furthermore, special Hollywood effects are those that may have no possible, logical cause. Sports and games proceed exactly by cause and effect, and require players, but no audience. There is no "deep meaning" to any game as it is played.

The first role that is played for each of us is "mother". Roles forever nurture others, one way or another. Roles idealize; one must idealize the other to put the other above oneself. ("Isn't he cute? What a wonderful baby!") Parents may constantly need to idealize their children to tolerate them (especially as adolescents). To find school teaching worthwhile, teachers must see the best in their students.

Roles seem to have to do with things "oral", or feeding. If roles are "oral", then rules have to do with the other end of things, sometimes called, "getting your 's...t' together". One person plays roles for another, but understanding and following rules are individual practices. Rules define how to interact, how to communicate, and how to compete as individuals. Rules support autonomy, such as by requiring homework to be done on time, and by regulating a workplace environment to ensure its safety for individuals. Most of all, rules deal with aggression and pollution, either to prevent everything from turning into "s...t", as in car accidents, or by safely disposing of that which is already toxic, such as industrial pollution, or human, aggressive impulses.

ast she was acting like a c--t, trying to have sex. She understood that the angry provocation was neither sex nor love.

I went on to explain an image of marital conflict adapted from the writing of Karl Jung. Jung thought that the medieval practice of alchemy included symbols that had psychological meaning, and that these symbols might appear in dreams. My use of his metaphor was very simple. I explained that alchemists used to put various repulsive ingredients into a vessel, and hermetically seal the vessel. Then, the alchemist would heat the vessel until an explosion happened within it. The hope was that gold would be produced within the vessel. The metaphor obviously has more psychological meaning than physical. Sometimes explosions happen within a marital vessel, and if everyone survives, marital crap may turn into marital gold. Alchemists knew that if the vessel had even a subtle crack, the vessel might burst dangerously during the explosion. When Geraldine refused to leave the house, she made it clear that the marital vessel was intact, and would sustain the explosion she was provoking.

Perhaps her provocations were necessary to accomplish her goal, but as they say on television when using a dangerous driving routine to sell a car, "Don't try this at home".

We will return to the subject of transforming conflict into gold in Chapter 10. But first, here is a tiny tale on the subject from the golden age of radio. Jack Benny was a huge radio comedy star. His marriage was among the few in Hollywood that seemed successful. Always looking to stir up trouble, a reporter asked Jack if he and Mary ever considered divorce. "Never", replied Jack, "but murder a million times".