Why Men Love Bitches: A Feminist Perspective

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ATTRACTION PRINCIPLE #67:

Forcing him to talk about feelings all the time will not only make you seem needy, it will eventually make him lose respect. And when he loses respect, he'll pay even less attention to your feelings.

Introduction

In her national bestselling book Why Men Love Bitches: From Doormat to

Dreamgirl – A Woman's Guide to Holding Her Own in a Relationship, Sherry Argov

outlines one hundred of these "attraction principles" to help a woman capture and sustain

a rewarding relationship. The book advises a woman on how to act before, during, and
after relationships so she can gain valuable ground and appear to be confident, assertive,
and in control of her life. *Appear* to be in control of her life – that is. Although she
attempts and claims to empower women with her work, Argov really does just the
opposite: she empowers men and teaches women to live in, support, and enable a maledominated society.

Why Men Love Bitches is significant in two facets – first, the rhetorical understanding of the book can help us to understand deeper implications of feminist rhetoric; additionally, the book also sends noteworthy messages to women (of all ages) who read and are exposed to the book. The book is important to rhetorical critics because of its undermining of the initial goal: to empower women. The book, although not at first glance or even after reading and absorbing it, is extremely contradictory and paradoxical

in nature. It is plausible that the author did not intend for this to be the case, but as far as I can tell the book's "hidden" principles go against everything it claims to stand for in the first place. Obviously, this sort of ambiguous, perhaps even *ironic*, writing is of great importance to rhetorical critics because it illustrates how an author can use his or her rhetoric to actually fortify the very thing he or she claims to deteriorate.

Not only is Why Men Love Bitches important for communication scholars, but it also has had and continues to have a tremendous impact on those who are exposed to the book. Sherry Argov's biography claims that her book was a *New York Times* Bestseller, which is reason enough to believe that masses of women ran out to get a glimpse into this "bitchy" philosophy. On top of that, however, Argov has appeared countless times on various television shows, including The Today Show, The View, MTV, The O'Reilly Factor, MSNBC, and Fox News (Argov). According to her personal website, Argov's work has been featured in over fifty mainstream magazines, including *People*, Cosmopolitan, Elle, Glamour, Modern Bride, Maxim, and Esquire (www.whymenlovebitches.com). Not to be outdone, I suppose, Argov's work has been published around the world, translated into over thirty languages, and has been transformed into a live theatrical production overseas, where it has reached the Billboard chart zenith for three successive years. I think this drives home the realization that women, girls, and perhaps even men all around the globe are captivated by Argov's message.

Preview

Through her construction of gender and "attraction principles" in Why Men Love Bitches: From Doormat to Dreamgirl – A Woman's Guide to Holding Her Own in a Relationship, Sherry Argov's attempt to empower women actually backfires into absolute support of a patriarchal society. In this paper, I will provide a detailed description of Why Men Love Bitches. I will then present the background of the method I will be using to analyze this book: feminist criticism. I will explain how Argov outlines her book and I will elucidate the way Argov has conceptualized gender within her framework. I will illustrate how Argov, perhaps unintentionally, seems to support the supremacy of a maledominated society. Finally, I will wrap with a review of these ideas and how the contradictions of Argov's rhetoric might be helpful in contributing to rhetorical practice and theory.

The Artifact

Why Men Love Bitches is a 255-page book written by Sherry Argov that one would find in the "self-help/relationship" section of a bookstore. The first 227 pages are devoted to helping women become "bitchier," more assertive, and capable of getting the man she wants and getting him to do what she wants. Pages 229 to 248 contain an index of 100 "attraction principles," or rules for "bitchy" women to follow, which Argov disperses periodically throughout her book. The final section of the book includes a rather unconventional index of terms, with idioms such as "bathrooms, sharing with men, 85" or "ego, male, maneuvering around the, 83-87." The cover of the book is in big, bold

letters, with the word "bitches" imaginatively drawn out in lipstick. On the back cover of the book is a short description, a picture of and information about the author, and the words "Do you feel like you are too nice?" written in red across the top. *Publishers Weekly* claimed that Why Men Love Bitches "is filled with scenarios and advice aimed at making women subtly stronger and self-empowered. The book, which has already been featured on *The View* and *The O'Reilly Factor*, should make waves with its controversial view of relationships" (Argov 1). Peggy G. Miller, a marriage and family therapist and psychotherapist, pronounced that "there is so much insightful information for women presented in a way that really feels good so women can 'get it.' The humor really sets this book apart because it makes the message palatable. It's the spoonful of sugar that makes the medicine go down" (Argov 1) - but one must wonder how healthy this "medicine" really is.

Why Men Love Bitches was written in the year 2000. It is geared toward women from adolescence and up – the only ones it really excludes are young girls. The book is aimed at women in all types of relationships: married women, single women, women who are dating casually or looking for more of a long-term relationship. The book claims to be directed at women who are not already "bitchy," but for the purposes of this book it really means every woman. An online blogger claimed that "if you're a woman who's interested in learning how to control men with various mind games and other manipulative tactics, or if you're a man who's interested in learning what kinds of mind games to look out for, then this book is a must-read for you!" (associatedcontent.com).

in self esteem" (buzzillions.com). That said, perhaps the book has reached *all* kinds of audiences, although it is *geared* toward an all-women audience. The book is obviously somewhat uninviting for a male audience, but perhaps some men do read it for the purpose of knowing what kinds of "tricks" are out there.

Method

I will be using a feminist perspective for my analysis of Why Men Love Bitches. Feminist criticism is interesting in the field of rhetoric because rhetoric itself is commonly known to be the feminine counterpart to the masculine discipline of philosophy. In order to understand feminist criticism, it is essential to first be aware of the nature and history of feminism. Feminism, defined as "the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes" or "an organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests" (Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary), originated in the mid 1800s. There have been three waves of feminism in the United States, with the second and third waves still active and alive at the current time. The first wave of feminism began in the mid 1800s, where the main goal of feminism was politically-based - the central objective was to obtain suffrage for women and allow them a voice in political issues. This wave lasted until the year 1919, when feminist pursuits finally paid off and women were granted the right to vote. After this enormous milestone, feminist activism took a backseat until the second wave emerged in the 1960s, where feminists began to concern themselves with social issues, such as abortions, employment opportunities, and equal pay. The third wave of feminism surfaced in the 1980s, when

fragmentation became the focal point of activists; in this wave, feminists were concerned with minorities and the additional prejudice faced by such groups. Both the second and third waves of feminism are alive today.

Over the years, feminism found its way into literature, communication studies, and rhetorical analyses. Women and men alike began to take the very paradigms that drove the waves of feminism and apply them to rhetorical studies, and consequently began to look at the implications of such discourse. Feminist criticism is typically known to be divisive and highly controversial. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell wrote an essay titled "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: an Oxymoron," in which she outlines the rhetoric of women's liberation as "a distinctive genre because it evinces unique rhetorical qualities that are a fusion of substantive and stylistic features" (Campbell 510). Campbell feels that the rhetoric of women's liberation is more extraordinary than any other type of rhetoric – she believes feminist criticism to be something distinct and unique, very much dissimilar from other forms of rhetoric. She makes the argument that:

...at first glance, demands for legal, economic, and social equality for women would seem to be a reiteration, in a slightly modified form, of arguments already familiar from the protest rhetoric of students and blacks. However, on closer examination, the fact that equality is being demanded for women alters the rhetorical picture drastically. Feminist advocacy unearths tensions woven deep into the fabric of our society and provokes an

unusually intense and profound rhetoric of moral conflict (Campbell 510).

These contentious issues, Campbell believes, are what set feminist criticism apart from other genres.

Campbell describes what she believes to be the most important parts of feminist criticism: substance (which she blends with invention) and style. Campbell highlights two stylistic features: consciousness-raising and "risking of the self." She says these two features do their part in violating our reality structure. "Consciousness raising," according to Campbell, is "a mode of interaction or a type of rhetorical transaction uniquely adapted to the rhetorical problem of feminist advocacy" (Campbell 512-513). She explains that consciousness raising has become a necessary part of the female culture because of the patriarchal society we live in – women spend most of their lives under the direction of males and, perhaps coincidentally, holistically have very negative self-concepts of themselves. However, Campbell expresses that women can benefit, and essentially cultivate societal success, if they can learn to come together as one and revel in their "expertise" that comes from a diversity life experiences.

In its paradigmatic form, 'consciousness raising' involves meetings of small, leaderless groups in which each person is encouraged to express her personal feelings, and experiences. There is no leader, rhetor, or expert. All participate and lead; all are considered expert. The goal is to make the personal political: to create awareness (through

shared experiences) that what were thought to be personal deficiencies and individual problems are common and shared, a result of their position as women (Campbell 513).

The importance of consciousness raising is that it allows personal experience to serve as proof – in Campbell's mind, expertise and leadership stem from personal experience.

In her article "Consciousness-Raising as Collective Rhetoric: The Articulation of Experience in the Redstockings' Abortion Speak-Out of 1969," Tasha N. Dubriwny explores the rhetoric employed in an abortion speak-out that was particularly interesting to her. In her article, Dubriwny shares much the same opinion of consciousness-raising as Campbell, but applies the concept to a specific and influential episode. Dubriwny states that the purpose of the speech was to "raise the consciousness" of the audience, and that perhaps the speak-out will hold more weight in the eyes of the audience if the stories are coming from "experts" in the field - women. Dubriwny says:

The strategic use of such a process of co-constructed narratives in consciousness- raising groups helped create a community by allowing participants to affirm and validate each other's experiences by sharing parts of their own experiences as called for by the situation. This process stresses the involvement of many storytellers in the emergence of a collective rhetoric. As a result of combining their experiences to elaborate a new narrative framework for an experience, the panelists at the speak-out and the

audience worked together to create new knowledge about abortion (Dubriwny 405).

Dubriwny goes on to add that the *privacy* of the abortion topic encourages a more involved understanding of the controversial abortion topic. She says that the experience of listening to the stories of others and building upon those stores can be extremely beneficial to the audience, as well as the speakers. Dubriwny refers to the response of such stories as "emergent structures," because they "emerge from the context in which they appear to support another woman's story, to help achieve a tone of harmony in the group, or to fit the topic under discussion or develop a topic with related ideas" (Dubriwny 405). Dubriwny's ideas seem much in line with those of Campbell, which (together) make for an interesting read into various facets feminist rhetoric.

Campbell says that consciousness raising leads to the "risking of the self."

Maurice Natanson declared:

What is at issue, really, in the risking of the self in genuine argument is the immediacy of the self's world of feeling, attitude, and the total subtle range of its affective and conative sensibility... I open myself to the viable possibility that the consequence of an argument may be to make me *see* something of the structure of my immediate world... the personal and immediate domain of individual experience... (Natanson 513).

Simplistically, the "risking of the self" occurs when women expose themselves on certain issues and express their ideas which challenge patriarchal norms. She is then "risking herself" because she becomes open to attack as she dares to destroy the typical standards.

Campbell declares that consciousness raising and "risking of the self," along with the entire genre of feminist criticism, violate the dominate reality structure because they bring up issues that otherwise would not be talked about. The discussions over these matters draw attention to awkward subjects, and make people feel uncomfortable.

Campbell says that:

...women's liberation rhetoric is characterized by the use of

addressed (Campbell 515).

confrontative, non-adjustive strategies designed to 'violate the reality structure.' These strategies not only attack the psycho-social reality of the culture, but violate the norms of decorum, morality, and 'femininity' of the women

By encouraging individuals to "violate the reality structure," I think Campbell is urging everyone - women and men alike - to challenge what they believe to be "normal." Campbell feels that it is not only acceptable but *necessary* for people to depart from their comfort-zone and begin experiencing outside of the "structure" our society has built for us.

Another important aspect of Campbell's rhetoric of women's liberation is the idea of symbolic reversals, which "transform devil terms society has applied to women into god terms and always exploit the power and fear lurking in these terms as potential

sources of strength" (Campbell 516). Symbolic reversals include words like "bitch" or "witch" as *positive* synonyms for women. "Systematic reversals of traditional female roles, given the mystique associated with concepts of wife, mother, and loving sex partner, make these reversals especially disturbing and poignant. Quite evidently, they are attempts at the radical affirmation of new identities for women" (Campbell 516). Symbolic reversals are somewhat revolutionizing - they take a word that was once considered offense, harsh, crude, or otherwise unacceptable and *mutate* it into a word that is somewhere on the verge of desirable.

In his book <u>The Ethics of Rhetoric</u>, Richard Weaver further discusses the idea of "god terms." Weaver explains that the counterpart of the "god term," or the "devil term" is just as important as the idealized word that was first presented. He also compares the "god term" versus "devil term" situation to be similar to that of a nation with an imaginary enemy.

The counterpart of the "god term" is the "devil term," and it has already been suggested that with us "un-American" comes nearest to filling that role. Sometimes, however, currents of politics and popular feeling cause something more specific to be placed in that position. There seems indeed to be some obscure psychic law which compels every nation to have in its nation imagination an enemy. Perhaps this is but a version of the tribal need for a scapegoat, or for something which will personify "the

adversary." If a nation did not have an enemy, an enemy would have to be invented to take care of those expressions of scorn and hatred to which people must give vent (Weaver 222).

The idea that "devil terms" *must* exist in order for "god terms" to possess meaning makes the paradox all the more fascinating. Additionally, the notion that people *like* to have "devil terms" built into their culture for aggression purposes (according to Weaver) is a mystery and an anomaly unto itself.

Another feminist scholar, Serena Anderlini-D'Onofrio, offers an additional perspective to Campbell's idea of symbolic reversal. She credits the emergence of symbolic reversals (although she does not label them as such) to third-wave feminism; she also states that these "devil terms" help women to embrace their eroticism and rebel against social norms. Focusing on terms like "witch," "bitch," and "slut," Anderlini-D'Onofrio feels that "these terms delineate a type of female personality who is aware of the female side of the sacred, is not prepared to be always 'nice,' and is in control of her sexual energies and erotic desires" (47). The exploration of "devil terms" and symbolic reversals forces us to question the real implications of toying with sensitive issues females have been facing for decades. There is now an entire magazine publication, distributed quarterly, that is titled *Bitch: Feminist Response to Pop Culture*. In the pages of *Bitch*, feminists come together to hash over delicate and trying issues present in the lives of women today. In her article titled "*Bitch*ing and Talking/Gazing Back: Feminism as Critical Reading," Courtney Bailey states that "in the public discourses of *Bitch*,

feminism emerges as a site of debate and conflict, and this dissent is directed both outward and inward - toward mainstream media and toward other articulations of feminism" (2). The fact that there is a legitimate publication dedicated to feminism through the use of a "devil term" further enforces the realization that such terms are important and influential in our society.

Finally, Campbell declares that the "rhetoric of women's liberation" is an oxymoron because the study of rhetoric has traditionally been patriarchal, but "women's liberation" attempts to tear down that patriarchy. She says that "whatever liberation is, it will be something different for each woman as liberty is something different for each person. What each woman shares, however, is the paradox of having 'to fight an enemy who has outposts in your head'" (Campbell 519).

For my analysis of Why Men Love Bitches, I will be taking a feminist perspective. I will go through the chapters and identify in each the construction of gender and the evaluation of that construction. By identifying the construction of gender, I will point out how Sherry Argov has depicted each gender and how she has illustrated them for her audience. By evaluating that construction, I will declare whether Argov's depiction of the genders supports a patriarchal society, challenges a patriarchal society, or whether it both encourages *and* opposes a patriarchal society. Additionally, I will highlight the importance of symbolic reversals within the text, as well as consciousness raising aspects and Campbell's "risking of the self."

Application of the Method

By applying the feminist perspective to Sherry Argov's Why Men Love Bitches, it is easy to see that while she seems to refute a patriarchal society, she in fact supports it wholeheartedly. By going through the sequence of the chapters, I will demonstrate how her examples, stories, guidelines, and "attraction principles" depict each gender and, thus, encourages a male-dominated society.

Chapter one is titled, "From Doormat to Dreamgirl: Act Like a Prize and You'll Turn Him into a Believer." In this chapter, Argov describes to the reader *how* to be a bitch; she gives specific instructions – what meals to cook, when to call, and what to wear, etcetera – on how to distinguish yourself from the dreaded "nice girl" image.

When you react emotionally, it gives him a feeling of control. And if you react emotionally frequently, over time he will come to see you as less of a mental challenge. If he can't predict how you'll always react, you remain a challenge. It also gives him something he absolutely needs: the freedom to breathe. If you don't hear from him for a little longer than usual, show him that you have absolutely no 'attitude' about it. This behavior will make him a little unsure about whether you miss him when he isn't around. It gives him a reason to come your way because he won't perceive you as needy (Argov 11).

With these words, Argov is insinuating that women are excessively emotional, predictable, and naturally needy. She does not factor in the possibility that women, on occasion, might in fact *have* an attitude about something her man does, and she certainly does not allow the thought of acting on this attitude. Argov suggests that all women *are* needy, and must go to any length to try to hide this genetic flaw. Therefore, in this passage and in the the entire chapter (which basically reiterates this same point for twenty three pages), Argov is seriously degrading women. True: she is giving women advice on how to *seem* strong and confident – but is she truly helping them *be* strong and confident? No. Argov is advising women on how to appeal to men, thus characterizing women as weak and men as strong, resulting in a traditional patriarchal view! If Argov truly wished to challenge a patriarchal society, and if she felt that women are generally strong, capable beings, then she would simply encourage women to be themselves – nothing more.

Chapter two, titled "Why Men Prefer Bitches – Cracking the Code: What Every Nice Girl Needs to Know" includes Attraction Principle #16: "A bitch gives a man plenty of space so he doesn't fear being trapped in a cage. Then... he sets out to trap her in his" (Argov 42). Argov is giving the reader *specific* instructions on how to get that dream guy and how to keep him hooked – because women are so inferior (according to Argov), they must be instructed on how to seem confident and certain. For example, Argov says:

When he's shaving and he's late for work, don't push your way into the bathroom to watch him. Don't look in his car's glove compartment as though there's something suspicious in there. Don't appear to eavesdrop on his

phone conversations. Don't try to take over his kitchen or leave girly things in his bathroom as though you're marking your turf. Don't ask him to spend all his time with you, and don't say, 'I miss you' when he hasn't seen you in two hours (Argov 40).

With these words, Argov is suggesting that women are naturally nosy and jealous beings and must resist the urge to poke around and eavesdrop. She makes it clear that she believes women are nosy by advising them not to "appear to eavesdrop" - as though she knows for certain that any woman is *going* to eavesdrop, but must not get caught. She is also toying with the notion that women are innately annoying, and should follow her rules on how to avert this flaw. This supports a patriarchal system because it enforces the notion that men are the dominant species and women should do whatever they can to fit in and be accepted. Argov tells women not to say "I miss you" at the wrong time, but what if the woman really does miss her man? A woman should be able to say whatever she wants, whenever she wants!

Chapter three is "The Candy Store: How to Make the Most of Your Feminine and Sexual Powers." In this section, Argov advises the reader on when and how to give sexual favors, and how to *seem* beautiful to her man. Attraction Principle #21 states: "If a man has to wait before he sleeps with a woman, he'll not only perceive her as more beautiful, he'll also take time to appreciate who she is" (Argov 55). My question is: shouldn't men do this anyway? At the end of the chapter, Argov says:

A quality guy wants to feel trusted because it makes him feel as though you believe in his character. Until he gives you a reason not to trust him, trust him. If he's falling in love with you, he won't tell you he wants to be with you exclusively – you'll automatically know. He will be calling you every day and he will insist that you date only him. Because he won't want anyone else coming near his *dreamgirl*" (74).

In this passage, Argov describes women as mere *objects* - something to be possessed and protected. According to Argov, women need to do what is necessary to *appeal* to men, precisely to be an object of his desire. And if you do it right and have an adequate amount of appeal and pizzazz, your man will *own* you - you will be his. If Argov had a sincere interest in challenging a patriarchal society, she would not be instructing her readers on what to do to be appreciated by men – she would instead expect women to be themselves because, as equals and as *human beings*, women should not have to *try* to be appreciated. Argov is clearly undermining the female gender with this principle, and the entire chapter, and thus empowering the males.

The fifth chapter, and arguably the most intriguing segment, is titled "Dumb Like a Fox: How to Convince Him He's in Control While You Run the Show." This chapter is all about how to act unintelligent and get the guy to *think* you are stupid, while you are actually being manipulative – *smart* – and controlling your man's thoughts and actions. Argov instructs the reader: "A couple of times a week when he's kind or generous, let

him know he's the top dog. Make him feel as if he's the alpha-dog and the Grand Poo-Bah. He wears the pants, and he is the man (Argov 77). Argov goes on to advise: "When you act too much like Tarzan, he feels too much like Jane. Don't even kill a bug when he's around. Don't change a tire. In fact, don't even change a light bulb" (Argov 78). By telling women to act in these certain ways, she is essentially telling them *not to be themselves*. By giving up a part of themselves and surrendering to expectations she outlines, Argov is essentially asking each woman to voluntarily give up her sense of agency. She (each woman) should no longer embrace her individuality, but should instead conform to the model displayed so she can be that perfect object of desire. By telling women to act anything other than what is natural to them, Argov is saying that males are better and women need to conform to *their* standards and expectations – thus promoting an extremely patriarchal society. A perfect example is when Argov says:

Whenever he does something handy around the house like putting up a shelf, praise him. It doesn't matter if the shelf hangs at a 45-degree angle and the stuff keeps sliding off the other end. Clap like the happiest seal at the zoo, and then have a handyman come over to fix it when he isn't around. The minute you say 'It's crooked,' it's all over. He'll never do anything handy around the house again. It will make him feel worse than a little kid who got scolded in arts and crafts class (80-81).

I think this is an outstanding illustration of how Argov feels we should act as women: not *ourselves*, but instead as the woman our man *wants* us to be. We should be "dumb" in the eyes of our men, just to make them feel appreciated, strong, worthy, important, and etcetera! Additionally, Argov blurs the lines of ethics when she asks her readers to become *liars* in order to be desired and appreciated by her man. The ideology presented here does nothing if it does not support a patriarchal society by saying that women ought to appear dumb and would benefit from lying to their men.

The most obvious rhetorical device, and perhaps the most important for this particular text, is Argov's use of symbolic reversal. Not only is the term "bitch" used often and continuously throughout the book, but it is also included in the title. The fact that the word "bitch" appears in bold, red letters across the cover of Argov's book suggests that she wishes this word to be highlighted and focused upon – it is what the eye is drawn toward and certainly what is remembered about the title. I feel that if a woman were to pick up this book in the bookstore and feel offended by the word "bitch" (added to the notion that "men love them" and how to find out "why"), she would put the book back on the shelf in disgust and walk away. However, the fact that Argov's book is a national bestseller implies that women are in fact *not* offended by the word, but instead feel empowered by it, accept it, and, by purchasing the book, women are saying that they wish to *be* bitches themselves. The word "bitch" is used repetitively throughout the book to describe a powerful and confident woman, and is often contrasted with "the nice girl," something (according to Argov), you are *not* supposed to be.

Argov actually addresses the usage of this symbolic reversal in the second sentence of her introduction, saying that "the word *bitch* in the title does not take itself too seriously – I'm using the word in a tongue-in-cheek way representative of the humorous tone of this book" (Argov xiii). She also says:

An important distinction should be made between the pejorative way the word is usually used, and the way it is used here. Certainly, I'm not recommending that a woman have an abrasive disposition. The bitch I'm talking about is not the 'bitch on wheels' or the mean-spirited character that Joan Collins played on *Dynasty*. Nor is it the classic 'office bitch' who is hated by everyone at work. The woman I'm describing is kind yet strong. She has a strength that is ever so subtle. She doesn't give up her life, and she won't chase a man (Argov xiii).

Argov goes on through her introduction, and essentially throughout her entire book, describing what her use of the term "bitch" really means. She is using a term that is generally, historically, and conceptually a *negative* and *degrading* word used to describe females, and transforming it into a *powerful* and *positive* ideal that all women should strive to accomplish.

Now, one must wonder if a man had written this book titled <u>Why Men Love</u>

<u>Bitches</u>, would we have the same attitude toward the use of this symbolic reversal?

Probably not; women generally take great offense to being called a "bitch" by a man – it

just is not acceptable. But the fact that the book was written *by* a bitch, *for* a bitch makes the use of the otherwise destructive word perfectly satisfactory. The implications of this realization for patriarchy are immense - the fact that these "devil terms" are still hurtful from the mouths of men prove that patriarchy is strong and alive. If the usage of such labels by men can create pain, frustration, and anger in the lives of women, then the continuance of this trend will only add fuel to the already raging fire.

Consciousness raising is another important aspect of Argov's book. Consciousness raising, as previously mentioned, "involves meetings of small, leaderless groups in which each person is encouraged to express her personal feelings, and experiences" (Campbell 513). With the idea of consciousness raising, there are no leaders, and all are considered experts – personal experience trumps any formal education one might have. In my mind, this is precisely what this book encompasses; nobody has a degree in "relationship advice," and nobody majored in "how to get men to like you" or "how to be a bitch." While Argov does *appear* to be the expert in this unconventional field of "study," the book is simply a collection of experiences, stories, and narrative tales of failed and successful relationships. The chronicles of these women and the accounts of their affairs make them experts in the field – this is a prime example of consciousness raising and what Campbell would view as a perfect paradigm of women learning and growing from the experiences of other women. However, I do not think that Campbell would see this book as an essential read for women. Campbell would see this as a form of consciousness raising that goes directly against what it was meant to stand for, therefore creating a *false* raising of consciousness, in a sense. Although the book does

exploit the trials and tribulations of various women and can help create awareness of the society in which we exist, Argov essentially and successfully strengthens the already thriving patriarchal society in which we live. This is not the purpose or outcome Campbell envisioned for consciousness raising.

As stated earlier, consciousness raising can lead to the "risking of the self." This is absolutely present in Why Men Love Bitches because, by utilizing the tales of women and compiling them into a handbook-like journal, complete with guidelines and specific principles, Sherry Argov is throwing herself "out there." By bringing up uncomfortable, awkward issues, Argov is exposing herself to attacks by critics, namely the male gender, and inviting disapproval. Although she never discusses this, I perceive that Argov would have no problem facing blatant attacks and vicious critiques because she feels so strongly about the topic and, truly, is a "bitch" herself. However, Argov takes the "risking of the self" to a second level because she is certainly open to attack from feminists, as well. By exposing herself this way, Argov is practically reversing the feminist idea of "risking the self" and using it in the complete opposite way.

Conclusion

In summation, Sherry Argov uses her bestselling book, Why Men Love Bitches:

From Doormat to Dreamgirl – A Woman's Guide to Holding Her Own in a Relationship,
to inadvertently support a patriarchal society. She writes chapter after chapter instructing
each woman *specifically* on how to act in her relationship, and how to get "the guy" to
think she is the most amazing thing in the world. She uses charts, lists, stories, and

"attraction principles" to show the reader *exactly* how she is to act, and what it is going to take to "hold her own" in the relationship. Argov does not feel that *men* need to act in any certain way, because they are always going to be themselves. Men will not change and they will not conform; it is up to *women* to conform to the standards of men and act like something they are *not*. As long as women continue to change their behaviors and attitudes to suit the preferences of men, we will continue to live in a patriarchal society.

My analysis of Why Men Love Bitches provides important contributions to rhetorical theory because it recognizes the author's blatant contradictions. Sherry Argov claims to be "fighting" for women; she is trying to help women get what they want out of relationships and appear to be important and worthwhile to men. However, the very point of this attempt is essentially destructive to women – the fact that women should even have to try to appear worthwhile is degrading to females. This is supporting a maledominated culture because, at least in this case, men make the rules. This becomes important to rhetorical theory because it goes to show that sometimes what the rhetor appears to be fighting for (and speaking or writing for) really accomplishes just the opposite. Contradictions and paradoxes are often present in female "instruction manuals" such as Argov's, so it is important to note that authors of these books often do not accomplish the "goal" or "purpose" that is declared in the title or description of the book. Rhetorical theory can benefit from cases such as Argov's, where the perceived objective of the artifact actually accomplishes something quite different. Books such as Getting in Touch With Your Inner Bitch, by Elizabeth Hilts, Skinny Bitch, by Rory Freedman, Bitch: In Praise of Difficult Women, by Elizabeth Wurtzel, and Stitch 'N Bitch Nation, by Debbie Stoller all encompass a theme similar to that of Argov's book; this use of paradox and sort of *enigma* with the word "bitch" could have captivating and mysterious ramifications for our culture.

On a similar note, Why Men Love Bitches teaches us about rhetorical practice because, in a way, it cautions us to be aware of our argument – and whether or not we are actually fighting in the right direction! We need to be conscious of our organizational and rhetorical strategies so that we make our point clearly and effectively without contradicting ourselves. While Argov's book is humorous, entertaining, and an enjoyable read, the fact that it goes against everything she claims to promote completely depletes the meaning of the rhetoric. When practicing rhetoric, we as rhetors should strive to emphasize the greater meaning of our work, and decide if it ultimately contributes to our initial cause. The exploring of this book can also serve us the lesson of learning to read texts for what they really *are*, not just what they proclaim to be or even what they *seem* to be. We must learn to critically analyze each piece of rhetoric we encounter to determine what is actually taking place within and between the lines.

In conclusion, the feminist perspective can help us learn much about rhetorical practice and real-life. Sherry Argov's book, Why Men Love Bitches, certainly teaches us about both. I find it extremely intriguing that the very point Argov set out to argue is the very concept she ended up destroying. While she claims to empower women and help them survive in relationships, the fact that women even *need* help doing this proves that we live in a patriarchal society, at least in Argov's eyes. Throughout this paper, I discovered that rhetoric is not always what it appears to be, and we must look a little

deeper to find the true contributions each artifact has made. It has been an fascinating journey using the feminist perspective to analyze Why Men Love Bitches, and it is my hope that my findings will be valuable to other rhetorical scholars in the future.

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