

The following essay consists of chapter reviews that examine John Gray's [Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus](#) with arguments, point-by-point.

The Rebuttal from Uranus

Introduction/Chapter One:

It is best to begin a critical analysis of this celestial travesty by combining its introduction and first chapter. While questionable editing has separated into two sections what should have been a comprehensive introduction, it is here that John Gray lays down the foundation on which he constructs the remainder of his sexist and demeaning observations regarding relationships between men and women.

He begins by establishing for himself a position of authority in which he claims to have conducted “seven years of research” leading to the concepts explored in *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*. (3) What is missing, unfortunately, are any references to work that Gray may have published for the scholarly community. This would be tremendously helpful in both assessing his claims and possibly his standing within the profession as a whole (sans infomercial endorsements). What *is* provided, however, are numerous references to his seminars. These self-serving advertisements raise more questions than they answer, specifically in regard to the “more than 25,000” attendees who were questioned at these various seminars. (4)

I ask you, **Have these surveys been published anywhere scholarly and critically analyzed? In what form was this survey (if any) distributed (formal or informal)? What questions were asked? Was it distributed before or after the seminar? Does it take into account class, ethnic, religious, or regional/national differences? Was age taken into account? Are answers separated on the basis of gender, marital status, or length of relationship? Exactly how many individuals were questioned?** And, equally important, **was there any long-term follow-up among any, or all, of the participants?** This is crucial information. Certainly Gray should have provided more than his claim of thousands of seminar participants or success stories in order to buttress the broad, and often insulting, generalizations made in this book.

Also established in the book's introduction is the inference that women must have outside validation in order to feel somehow content within their relationships. Gray claims that after reading this book men are relieved to find that nothing is wrong with them, while women are relieved that someone is validating them. (6) This is the beginning of what I refer to as the “Active-Passive” control mechanism that Gray will consistently use throughout this book. It first becomes obvious in Chapter One where Gray's Mars/Venus metaphor instantaneously disintegrates from a hardly humorous comparison that highlights the author's weak ideas regarding the nature of gender to a miserable and unfortunate reinforcement of destructive gender stereotypes.

According to Gray's metaphor, “Martians (i.e., men) *discovered* the Venusians (i.e., women)” and, after falling in love, “quickly *invented*” space travel.” (9-enhancements mine.) Women (excuse me, Venusians), on the other hand, happily *received* the arrival of the Martians for “they had intuitively known that this day would come.” (9) The basis of this shallow metaphor is the belief that men are actively pursuing what they want by controlling their environments and relationships, while women sit passively waiting to be rescued by the proverbial knight in shining armor who, because of his intelligence and wisdom, will make their lives content and worry-free (and, I suppose, validate them).

Here lies Gray's central thesis: men fulfill active roles and are seen as ambitious and powerful. Women, however, satisfy passive roles and, although the author may grudgingly admit that women are cognizant human beings, they must necessarily take a back seat to the dominant male in their lives in order to routinely accommodate his wants and desires. I ask you, is this the study of mountain gorillas or serious scholarship (in itself a questionable claim) regarding the relationships among rational beings?

Chapter Two: Mr. Fix-It and the Home Improvement Committee

Building on his central thesis of male activity and female passivity, John Gray now invites his readers to visit the home planets of men and women in order to better appreciate their very specific differences and needs. Already, overused, this handicapped metaphor is stretched far beyond its very limits as Gray uses his broad brush to paint men and women into what he has determined to be their respective gender-specific, and thus behavior-specific, corners.

Gray argues that men, as part of their *natural* tendencies, “value power, competency, efficiency, and achievement...Their sense of self is defined primarily through their ability to achieve results. They experience fulfillment,” he continues, “primarily through success and accomplishment.” (16) To prove this point he observes that the jobs that **men perform** reflect their “competence and power.” (16) The only problem with the examples he gives? Well, **women also excel in these positions!**

Law enforcement, science, the military, technical services, taxi drivers, and chefs are all painted “male.” Indeed, just when we thought the example couldn’t become more ludicrous, we are told that men also wear uniforms to reflect their competence. I am confused, then, as to the implications this holds for the nursing profession. Long a profession dominated by women, uniforms have traditionally been the order of the day; so would these uniforms not also reflect the competence and the skill of these women workers? If the wearing of uniforms in powerful positions is really gender-specific, should female police officers turn in their blues for designer khakis and espadrilles? May I suggest, for one specific, individual, Sally Ride—America’s first female astronaut. Consider the uniform that she wore into space. Did this not reflect her “competence and power?” Did her male counterparts wear uniforms that were more important than her’s? Of course not! This uniform reflected her “competence and power” equally to that of her fellow astronauts.

Could not a business suit be considered a uniform? Gray does not mention this, but I argue that the President’s choice of attire would reflect his “competence and power,” and would not a similar mode of dress for a female executive or Congresswoman also convey the same message? Of course it would, which is why Gray has omitted business attire from his hierarchy of so-called important clothing. I suppose the most amusing example that Gray offers would be the taxi driver. If this “uniform” (and I have never seen a driver—male or female—wearing a special hat) conveys “competence and power,” then I suppose the paper triangle worn by the burger guy at your local fast food chain does likewise. Or does the uniform of a male taxi driver rival the education and technical expertise of Sally Ride? This point is, of course, that **both** men and women dress for success for the various duties they perform for their livelihoods. It is not a gender-specific trait for an individual to communicate competence through their choice of attire. To infer that this is so is not only irresponsible, but a further indication of Gray’s sexist proclivities.

The good doctor’s penchant toward sexist stereotyping continues when he observes that magazines like *Psychology Today*, *Self*, or *People* are not read by men and, therefore, we are led to believe that they are read exclusively by women. In addition, we are told that men are interested in “news, weather and sports and couldn’t [sic] care less about romance novels and self-help books.” (16) While I am not terribly interested in sports, I do care quite a bit about news and weather. And I suppose my aversion to romance novels and self-help books makes me something of an anomaly among my female counterparts. That I seek out others who share the same interests is telling, for none of my female friends could care less about those things which Gray would have people believe are gender-specific to women. Likewise, should a man be concerned about the degree of his masculinity if he happens to read the latest issue of *Psychology Today*?

Once again, men are portrayed by the author as active, bold, vanguards of the human race. This concept serves to prepare women for what Gray perceives as their rightful role as passive onlookers. “To offer a man unsolicited advice,” writes Gray, “is to presume that he doesn’t know what to do or that he can’t do it on his own.” (17) Such a broad generalization not only paints all men in an unflattering light (and obscures the reality that many women would perceive such advice as unnecessary), but it also infers that *should* a woman know what to do in a situation where it is clear that a man does not, she should assume the role of a passive mute. A role, unfortunately, to which Gray assigns women time and time again in this book.

And what of the apparent *natural* traits of women? According to Gray, women “value love, communication, beauty and relationships.” (18) Indeed, Gray maintains that a woman’s sense of self is

defined through her feelings and the quality of their [sic] relationships.” (18) Further, Gray maintains that for women, sharing “their personal feelings is much more important than achieving goals and success.” (18) That women are not goal oriented must come as quite a surprise to both the professional business woman and stay-at-home mother alike. Does a mother not harbor goals for the welfare of her children as well as herself? An important component of how I feel about myself is tied directly to my profession and education. Setting and achieving goals, both professional and personal, are very important to me—as is success! I know many women who feel the same way and approach their personal and professional lives with the same gusto Gray accords men. Should we be concerned, then, about our womanhood?

Continuing his sexist observations, Gray argues that lunch between men is another expression of power; it is an arrangement of necessity in order to solve a problem. It is one of convenience meant to relieve them or the ugly chores of dish washing, cooking, and the need to shop. (19) Women, on the other hand, apparently approach lunch in a very different way. “Women’s restaurant talk can be very open and intimate,” Gray observes, “almost like the dialogue that occurs between therapist and patient.” (19) This, of course, infers that men do business and women don’t. Such an observation begs the question: Are such women suddenly transformed from seasoned professionals to giddy schoolgirls when they receive their menus? Since we all know that this is not the case, let us ponder what businesswomen might do at lunch.

Take, if you will, two Congresswomen who are discussing the federal budget at a luncheon. Across town, two male gas station attendants from the local Texaco go out for a pizza and some beers. Are these men out solving the problems of the world while these two Congresswomen are busy exploring how they *feel* about the budget? Such negative stereotyping stirs some concern on my part, for when I attend a business luncheon with other women, I am hard-pressed to recall a time when we did not use the occasion to solve a particular problem. **Where is the research that Gray uses to reach these intriguing conclusions?** Are there actual case studies of luncheon conversations among professional women that provides some basis for this warped conception of women and men? And even if one considers that women (or men, for that matter) are at lunch to discuss personal concerns, does Gray wish to assert that only men, because they work, have problems that are worth solving? Without citations I am left to conclude that this concept was concocted in only one place: deep in the mind of John Gray.

So how do these individual natures affect the way in which men and women communicate and relate to one another? According to Gray, they are paramount, for when a woman offers unsolicited advice to a man (as he argues it is her *nature* to do) he is insulted. Men, on the other hand, just don’t listen attentively. Let us explore the implications of these erroneous conclusions.

Gray advises women to “give up giving advice.” (20) In the ballad of Tom and Mary, we learn that Tom, who was driving around clueless, was insulted by Mary’s offering advice on how to find the party that seemed to elude them. Tom apparently pouted all night which was, of course, all Mary’s fault. You see, she didn’t realize that “offering advice was the ultimate insult.” (20) Indeed, it was at this very moment when Mary missed what Gray describes as “a very special opportunity to love and support” Tom. (20) To moral to the story is that it is good for men to be actively assertive, but it is bad for women to behave likewise. Remember, Gray established early on the passive nature of a woman. Tom should drive around aimlessly for hours if it pleases him, but Mary should not say a word. What this tells me is that her time is not considered valuable. It also tells me that while Tom may not like being wrong, he also has a problem dealing with the times in which he is. Did Tom really cherish Mary’s “warm acceptance and trust” the next time they were lost and she refrained from offering advice? No. I think he appreciated the fact that she just plain shut up and accommodated his childish behavior.

Men have trouble listening; or at least that is what Gray would like us all to believe. Because men work (remember, they often wear uniforms and special hats) they are used to solving problems. Women, on the other hand, just like to talk and get things off their chests. When solutions are offered “a man might mistakingly invalidate feelings and perceptions.” (25) A woman’s feelings need to be validated? I say again, a woman’s (or a man’s) feelings are valid *whatever* the other party thinks or feels. This seems to me a more important message to impart to a public audience than the need to depend on outside validation. That fact that Gray believes men have trouble listening is a negative male stereotype. Many women also have trouble listening to others. Women do not possess some intrinsic brain pattern that makes them more

inclined to listen and live to offer unsolicited solutions! Men, likewise, do not harbor a neurologic penchant toward childish behavior when it is pointed out that they have erred.

Nevertheless, Gray insists that women refrain from “giving *any* advice or criticism,” while men should “practice listening *whenever* a woman speaks.” (28) It appears obvious to me that women are doing the real bulk of the work here. They must bite their tongues, even if they know they are right. Their needs are secondary to his. Men have little more to do than close their eyes and relax. And the rewards? Women get the active response of their mate being “attentive and responsive,” while men revel in their mate’s passive appreciation.

What this all boils down to is one obvious and *very* disturbing world **control**.

Chapter Three: Men Go to Their Caves and Women Talk

Having already established in previous chapters what he believes are the inherent behaviors of men and women, John Gray confidently attempts in this third nebulous chapter to enlighten the reader on how men and women manage stress. By further elaborating on that active/passive control mechanism that is the foundation of his book, Gray tells us that stress makes “men . . . increasingly focused and withdrawn while women become increasingly overwhelmed and emotionally involved.” (20) Notice that by *focusing* on his problems a man takes a pro-active stance. Women adopt a passive response by becoming overwhelmed. The implication here, of course, is that men can deal with problems and women cannot.

Tom and Mary again make their appearance, but this time as exemplars of a typical evening encounter after a hard day’s work. But who is working? We are told that when Tom arrives home, “he wants to relax and unwind by quietly reading the news. He is stressed by the unsolved problems of his day and finds relief through forgetting them.” (29) Mary, Tom’s wife, “also wants to relax . . . by talking about the problems of her day.” (29) Stop and think about this for one moment. Tom *comes home*, which implies that he has been working outside of the home. But where has Mary been all day? It seems that she also has some problems, be she has not come from any particular place; she must have been home all day waiting for Tom to arrive home from his job (where most likely wears a uniforms to convey his competence and power). Naturally, Grays’ sexist proclivities would not have allowed for Mary to have come home from a stressful day’s work outside of the home. But I digress . . .

In an attempt to deal with their problems, Gray tells us that “Tom *thinks* Mary talks too much [and] Mary *feels* ignored.” (29) Again, who is being pro-active here? Tom is, of course. Tom is the initiator of his own thoughts and opinions. Mary is the passive recipient of her perceived reality.

Once again we are propelled into this overused metaphor of “going back” to our so-called “home planets” in order to find out how our ancestors developed this gender-specific behavior. (What is frightening for me is that I almost feel as if some people actually believe it at this point.) Gray tells us that a man faced with a perplexing dilemma “becomes very quiet and goes to his private cave to think about his problem, mulling it over to find a solution.” (30) When a solution has been found, “he feels much better and comes out of his cave.” (30) Indeed, a man “feels good when he can solve his problems on his own in his cave.” (31) Following Gray’s established gender-specific behavior patterns, a man actually *enters* his cave. He is independent. Self-reliant. Self-motivated. He possesses all the answers. However, when he is aware that he needs help, he seeks out the advice of his friends. (Hmm, but not his spouse. Interesting.)

But the ways of the woman are not so bold, I am afraid. Why? Well, according to Gray, a woman’s ego is “dependent not on looking ‘competent,’ but rather on being in loving relationships.” (31) To that end, a woman will look to “someone she trusts and [then talk] in great detail about the problems of her day.” (31) Indeed, women “openly share feelings of being overwhelmed, confused, hopeless, and exhausted.” (31)

What I like best about this particular author is that there is much more communicated in what he does *not* say than what he actually *does* say. For example, Gray has devoted a good deal of space to a discussion of a man’s problems, but women are just “overwhelmed, confused, hopeless, and exhausted.” (31) So, are men not also vulnerable to feeling “overwhelmed, confused, hopeless, and exhausted?” (31) I suppose if they were, *then* such feelings would be problems. Of course, these words also convey a sense of powerlessness

as well. Having long established that it is women who are passive, Gray could not assign such an image to men. Or could he?

When men are in their caves, Gray argues that they are “incapable of giving a woman the attention and feeling that she normally receives and deserves [why, thank you!]. [Their minds] are preoccupied and [they] are powerless to release it.” (32) This is clearly an example of powerlessness, but not because they are “overwhelmed, confused, hopeless, and exhausted,” but because they have *declared* that they are powerless. (31) But a man’s powerlessness at such times fits perfectly into Gray’s gender paradigm because this is an active response to a problem, and thus the proper response for a man.

That all individuals need time to themselves in which to sort out problems or just reflect on their lives is a given as far as I am concerned. Whether you want to call it a “cave” or just “private time,” all couples need to recognize that their partners may need time alone to sort out life’s ever-present complexities. The problem then is not that a man or woman might (forgive me) “cave” (!), it is Gray’s erroneous assessment of gender-based behavior that is the problem.

“To expect a man who is in his cave to instantly become open, responsive and loving,” asserts Gray, “is as unrealistic as expecting a woman who is upset to immediately calm down and make complete sense.” (33) Now I would *like* to think that I did not see this, but it is written down in black and white. Wait! Perhaps he phrased it in a better way!

“It is a mistake to expect a man to always be in touch with his loving feelings as it is a mistake to expect a woman’s feelings to always be rational and logical.” (33) So what is Gray telling us? Again, when the man is silent he speaks volumes! It is the *man* who always rational and logical. Men always make complete sense. They may not be loving at all times, but they always make sense. And women? Well, these two sentences infer that women are hysterical, rambling, illogical half-wits who can *sometimes* be rational and logical. Now are women supposed to be loving and responsible while being irrational and not making sense? Does somebody feel a little put out when a woman is not devoting all of her time to his happiness? In other words, Gray infers that the only thing a woman should be thinking about are the needs of her partner. If she has something else on her mind, her partner feels cheated because it isn’t him and thus he becomes resentful.

Since Gray seems bent on nurturing the male stereotype of the uncommunicative Neanderthal, should we be surprised that women are portrayed as talkative, nonsensical, illogical beings? Mr. Spock would have more compassion for the female sex than this author seems to. Gray tells us that “when [a woman] begins talking she does not prioritize the significance of any problem . . . She is not immediately concerned with finding solutions to her problems . . . by randomly talking about her problems, she becomes less upset.” (36) Well, why should we be surprised that big, strong, testosterone-laden men experiencing stress tend to “focus on one problem and forget others,” yet women “become overwhelmed by all problems.” (36) This is Gray’s primary thesis rearing its ugly head again, ladies and gentlemen. Men are pro-active; they determine the course of their lives, their relationships, and their reactions to stress. Women, however, are the passive victims. Powerless, they are easily overwhelmed by past, present, and future problems. Overwhelmed to the point that they can’t even decide which of their problems is more or less important than the other.

Gray draws on his gender paradigm time and time again in this chapter. “Martians talk about problems for only two reasons,” we are told, “they are blaming someone or they are seeking advice.” (37) Again, men are being pro-active. They are determining why they are talking: blame (an active response) or seeking advice (an active response). “Just as a man is fulfilled through working out [active!] the intricate details of solving a problem,” writes Gray, “a woman is fulfilled through talking about [passive!] the details of her problems.” (39) There is that active/passive control mechanism again! A man actively works out his problems, a woman just passively talks about them.

Now, I should not short change the author completely. I mean, women are not completely passive, they can help their man by reminding him that he does not have to solve any of her problems. Gray argues that this “can help him to relax and listen.” (39) This is important, for “a woman who feels heard suddenly can change, feel better, and sustain a positive attitude.” (39) I see, women do not want any of their problems solved. (Remember, we learned earlier in the book that goals and success are not important to women.)

Indeed, Gray takes us deep into the minds of men and tells us that men have usually seen “how a woman (probably their mother) who did not feel heard continued to dwell on her problems . . . The real problem, however, is that she feels unloved, not that she is talking about problems.” (40)

How could we be so blind? Women do not want any of their problems solved because they do not have any problems! This revelation could change the way we operate in the world! Think about it! Do you need a raise? No! All your boss has to do is love you a little more and your “problem” will have resolved itself instantly! Unable to come up with the rent? Do not take it personally, your landlord wants to kick you out because he/she is just not capable of loving you more! It’s not really a problem! Problems? What me worry? No! Me’s just not loved enough, so I’ll just chatter on about it while I live in my car!

Ultimately the lesson the author would like us to take away from Chapter Three is that when men have retreated to their caves, women should not take it so personally. “They [women] learned that this was not the time to have intimate conversations but a time to talk about problems with their friends or go shopping.” (40) Yes, shopping. Another gender-specific behavior. However, there are two lingering questions that I would like to consider.

First, Gray says nothing about the length of time or frequency that a man might remain in his cave. This is an important consideration. The importance that Gray assigns to the cave left me with the impression that this was a place where a man would occasionally retreat for a lengthy period of time to mull over some really heavy problems. But if reading a newspaper is but one manifestation of a man caving, then it seems as if the cave has the potential for being a convenient excuse to just not communicate. In this vein, it behooves the cave aficionado to be aware that if he stays in his cave long enough, he might emerge to find that his partner has gone. Of course, given Gray’s sexist bias, he would probably not have considered that a woman would actually take such a pro-active stance regarding the course of her life and relationships. Did the author ever consider that maybe the solution is not to convince women to *live with* his cave concept, but to get men to be more open with their problem solving?

Second, you think the good *doctor* would have at least provided his readers with some sort of warning regarding clinical depression or other disorders. As I stated in “Why John Gray?,” individuals who are hurting read a book like this and think that following its suggestions will help them along the road to a healthy relationship. However, if the partner with whom you are dealing is overwhelmed with problems or suffers from clinical depression or manic-depressive disorder, you are left thinking that this man is mulling over problems when he could be suffering from a very serious medical condition. This is irresponsible to be sure but, as we have already seen (and will further examine in chapters to follow) this is par for the course as far as “Dr.” Gray is concerned.

Chapter Four: How to Motivate the Opposite Sex

John Gray is, if nothing else, consistent. In possibly his most offensive chapter to date, we are again inundated with endless comparisons of male-proactive and female-passive behavior patterns. With the paradigm firmly established in previous chapters (ad nauseum, I know), we now learn now men and women are motivated. And, yes, I am afraid, although far from surprised, that Gray’s broad brush has once again painted men and women into their gender-/behavior-specific corners.

How we are motivated to support one another is, according to Gray, determined by gender. Men are motivated to support their partners “when they feel needed.” (43) Women, on the other hand, are more supportive, “when they feel cherished.” (43) Such descriptions imply, of course, that in order to be *needed* you must actively **provide** something that another needs (yes, men being pro-active again) and feeling *cherished* doesn’t actually take too much effort to enjoy *or* to do. What this all boils down to is a concept that I discussed in my analysis of Chapter Two: **CONTROL**.

She: “Why didn’t you support me?”

He: “I didn’t know you needed me to.”

Well, the solution for women is to (1) have a problem that they need to discuss with their partner, (2) alert the man that they have to *turn-on* in order to be aware of the problem, (3) tell the problem to the man, and (4) either wait for an “uh-huh” or “ah-ha” to be sure that she is being heard, or (5) wait for the man to offer a solution or cave. As I see it, this woman actually has two problems. Her first was the problem that she presented to him in the first place; her second problem is the responsibility she bears by alerting him to the problem so that she can get the support she deserves. If she doesn’t alert him to a problem, then he bears no responsibility in offering his support.

If you thought the Martian-Venusians metaphor was overused before, Chapter Four will easily cause you to question how Gray perceives the intellectual level of his targeted audience (if not the editors or the book or those who shower the book with curious praise). The numerous time that I have read this book have convinced me that its target audience is women. Combined with the author’s obvious sexist bent, this should be enough to repel even those with the dimmest of light bulbs over their heads to throw MMWV into the nearest sewer and run as far from it as they possibly can! Read the author’s fantastic voyage back in time to Mars and Venus and *then* defend him.

“After the first Martian fell in love,” writes “Dr.” Gray, “he began manufacturing telescopes for all his brother Martians . . . In an unspoken language the Venusians communicated loud and clear: ‘We need you. Your power and strength can bring us great fulfillment, filling a deep void within our being.’” (44) The Venusians, it seems, were dreaming that their knights in shining armor would appear to rescue and provide for their hapless and defenseless selves. Indeed, Gray writes that a Venusians “dreamed that a fleet of spaceships from the heavens would land and a race of strong and caring Martians would emerge. These being would not need nurturing but instead wanted to provide for and take care of the Venusians.” (44) Do the Apologists **really** want to defend this sexist tripe now?

When you cut through and discard the Martian/Venusian fiction in Chapter Four, what you have left are the stale, hard crumbs of sexism and patriarchy. Flicking the crumbs off the plate we find a distinct difference in what Gray believes are factors that motivate men and women to support one another. As usual, the author paints women with his *passive/needy* brush, but also makes it their responsibility to set the limits (i.e., boundaries of acceptable behavior) through which men can supposedly feel free to wholly support and love their partners. Consider the following lists for comparison.

Men

1. “When a man is in love he is motivated to be the best he can be in order to serve others.” (45)
2. “Given the opportunity to prove his potential, he expresses his best self.” (45)
3. “To become motivated again he needs to fee appreciated, trusted and accepted. Not to be needed is a slow death for a man.” (46)
4. “Instead of blaming his female partner, a man can be compassionate and offer his support even if she doesn’t ask for it.” (49)
5. “As a man experiences limits, he is motivated to give more.” (52)

Women

1. “Women are happy when they believe their needs will be met [by their man].” (47)
2. “She needs to feel that she is not alone.” (47)
3. “She needs to feel loved and cherished.” (47)
4. “Her tendency to be compulsive relaxes as she remembers she is worthy of love.” (48)
5. “Instead of blaming a man for giving less, a woman can accept her partner’s imperfections, especially when he disappoints her, trust that he wants to give more when he doesn’t offer his support, and encourage him to give more by appreciating what he does give and continuing to ask for his support.” (49)
6. “When a woman sets limits, she gradually learns to relax and receive more.” (52)

Let us consider, first, the list for men—numbers two and three are especially intriguing. “Given the opportunity to prove his potential, he expresses his best self.” (45) Turn this around and consider that he will not express his best self unless the woman provides the opportunity. One some level he will decide what defines an opportunity and unless his partner delivers first, he shoulders no responsibility to offer his “best self.” (45)

Likewise, consider number three: “To become motivated again he needs to feel appreciated, trusted and accepted.” (46) Again, the man ultimately decides if he has been “appreciated, trusted and accepted.” In the final analysis it is the man who holds all the power. Remember the ballad of Tom and Mary from Chapter Two? Mary told Tom where the party was and he sulked all night because she missed “a very special opportunity to love and support him” as they may have aimlessly driven around town for three hours? (20) This is the same tired song: Gray assumes that all men will pout if unsolicited advice, irrespective of its constructive nature, is offered to them by a woman. According to Gray, upon being criticized men shut down. If you don’t want your man to shut down, then you can’t offer any unsolicited advice. **Who owns who here?** Who is in the sole position of control? This moronic generalization is an insult to *all* men. It is not wonder to me that the vast majority of mail to The Rebuttal has been by intelligent men who are mystified by Gray’s nauseating generalizations.

Now, consider number five in the list for women. A woman has to “forgive her partner’s imperfections,” and appreciate him and trust that he “wants to give more when he doesn’t offer his support.” (49) This is classic double-speak. Gray has tried to dust off and dress up a class control phrase: “You’ll get what I give you!” After all, if a man doesn’t feel that he has been supported, appreciated, or has not received encouragement—and only he can decide for himself how he defines these things—then he is under no obligation to offer his partner any support.

Hmm, who seems to be doing all the work here? Let’s see, women are certainly portrayed as being awfully needy, but they can’t blame their partner for giving less than they probably should. No. They must be forgiving, encouraging, understanding, appreciating, trusting, accepting, and, above all, they must set limits on the behavior that they are willing to tolerate from their mate. Now why should women set limits? Let us return to the list: men who experience limits are “motivated to give more.” (52) Ahh, so **if the man is not giving, then it is the responsibility to the woman to set limits that will motivate him to give. What happened to Gray’s inventive, “strong,” “powerful,” and “wondrous” Martians?** (43)

No, wait, men *are* required to do something. He can “be compassionate and offer his support even if she doesn’t ask for it.” (49) Well, how convenient for him. Does she actually have to be in the same room when this happens?

Although it seems very clear to me that women bear the direct responsibility of passively accepting their partner’s behaviors with an almost fairy tale grace while, at the same time, setting limits for behavior (all of which will supposedly work toward making her man support her), Gray actually subtitles a section of the chapter “When the Venusian is Ready the Martian Will Appear.” (54) (I supposed those professed degrees in Eastern Philosophy came in handy for this.) What is Gray implying here through his twisted version of religious philosophy? That men somehow know what women want *before* women actually know for themselves? **When you need, I’ll let you know.**

This is a warped and disturbing variant of deity worship that is an affront to **both** men and women. As someone pointed out to me after reading Chapter Four, the entire scenario Gray presents sounds, for lack of a better term, almost “God-like.” Consider: “I know what you need when you need it. If you’re not getting it, it is because you do not really need it. You are not ready to receive.” [My quotes, not Gray’s.] An all powerful deity could lay claim to such power—whether or not you presently believe in one—mere mortals cannot. This is Gray’s philosophy of validation simply reworded. “You keep trying your best to please me, but don’t criticize me (you don’t criticize God; God is all knowing). When you are ready to receive, have faith, and are truly devoted, then I will reward you.” [My quotes, not Gray’s.] Consider Gray’s sexist parallel deduction:

1. “When the Venusian is ready the Martian will appear.” (55)
2. “When the student is ready the teacher appears.” (55)
3. “When the Venusians were ready to receive, the Martians were ready to give.” (55)

Student = Venusian (i.e., Woman)

Teacher = Martian (i.e., Man)

Seriously ask yourself, after reading the “information” put forth by the good “doctor,” why this sexist muck has been on the New York Times Best Sellers List since 1992. What does it say about us as a society? How far have we come in recognizing that men and women are equally important, equally rational and equally deserving human beings? As I see it, not terribly far. As a contributor to The Rebuttal observed in a letter to me recently, **“The ‘Dr.’s’ sexism . . . is hardly incidental to the book: it’s the very reason he’s raking in millions.”**

Chapter Five: Speaking Different Languages

Alright, Star Trek fans, dig out that universal translator! You’ll need it to get you through *this* chapter. Oh, not to understand it, but to garble the tripe with the hope that you will be more apt to forget it! Who knows, in another language the negative images evoked might at least *sound* better than they are in reality!

In Chapter Four, we learned that it was the job of the woman to inform her partner when and if she needed support. At that point, the degree of support was wholly incumbent upon how motivated her man felt to give her the support that she desired. Remember, “given the opportunity to prove his potential, he expresses his best self.” (45) If the opportunity is not provided for him, then he bears no responsibility to put forth his best self. This is why Chapter Five is such an integral part of this book, for we learn *how* men and women communicate. Women will now learn *how* they can provide the opportunity for a man to offer his “best self” to her.

As far as women are concerned, John Gray informs us that in order “to fully express their feelings, women assume poetic license to use various superlatives, metaphors, and generalizations.” (60) [Odd, that sounds *a lot* like this male-authored book, doesn’t it?] Men, we are told, take these exaggerated statements literally and therein lies the cause of conflict in communication between men and women. To help mitigate our understanding of these differences, Gray provides a list entitled **“Women say things like this.”** (60-61) Let’s see what they say.

1. “We never go out.”
2. “Everyone ignores me.”
3. “I am so tired, I can’t do anything.”
4. “I want to forget everything.”
5. “This house is always a mess.”
6. “Nothing is working.”
7. “You don’t love me anymore.”
8. “We are always in a hurry.”
9. “I want more romance.”

While one’s first reaction is to wonder why this list was not entitled “Wails of Shrieking Harpies,” Gray offers a translation for the average man who might not be able to discern what these statements actually mean. Let’s take the first statement: “We never go out.” Gray argues that when a woman says this to her significant other, what she *actually* means is “I feel like going out and doing something together . . . I love being with you. What do you think? Would you take me out to dinner? It has been a few days since we went out.” (62-63) Without this sappy translation, a man might very well hear the following. “You are not doing your job. What a disappointment you have turned out to be. We never do anything together anymore because you are just lazy, unromantic, and just boring.” (63) I submit that if a man embraces this particular translation, there may very well *be* something about which he is feeling guilt. After all, “we never go out” may mean just that: “we never go out.” Gray never stops to assume that a woman means what she says. No, they’re just exaggerations.

Consider some “translations” to a few of the above statements. First, “no one listens to me anymore.” This seemingly innocent comment of frustration (sorry, just using my common sense here) has been translated by our graduate from Columbia Pacific University thus. “I am afraid I am boring you. I am afraid you are no longer interested in me. I seem to be very sensitive today. Would you give me some special attention? I would love it . . . Would you listen to me and continue to ask me supportive questions . . . Or just listen, and occasionally when I pause make one of those reassuring sounds: ‘oh,’ ‘humph,’ ‘uh-huh,’ and ‘hmmm.’” (65) Without this weary and heart-sick translation, Gray argues that a comment uttered in frustration means that “you have become a very boring person to be with. I want someone exciting and

interesting and you are definitely not that person. You have disappointed me. You are selfish, uncaring and bad.” (65) Er, from *where* did he get *that* extreme of an idea?

Consider another phrase: “We are always in a hurry.” (66) Now, I realize that my leaps of common sense make me interpret these statement as ones borne out of frustration *or* accurate assessments of a bad situation, but the good “doctor,” of course, reads much more into them. If I, as a woman, say this, I am really stating that “I feel so rushed today . . . I wish our life was not so hurried. I know it is nobody’s fault and I certainly don’t blame you. I know you are doing your best to get us there on time and I really appreciate how much you care.” (66) Without the handy translation, however, a man would just naturally assume that she is accusing him of being “irresponsible . . . I can never be happy when I am with you . . . You ruin things every time I am with you. I am so much happier when I am not around you.” (66) Could it ever be that, indeed, “we are always in a hurry?”

Let’s review.

| What she says | What he hears |
|---------------------------------|--|
| “We never go out.” | “We never do anything anymore because you are lazy, unromantic, and boring.” |
| “No one listens to me anymore.” | “You have become a very boring person to be with. I want someone exciting and interesting and you are definitely not that person. You have disappointed me. You are selfish, uncaring, and bad.” |
| “We are always in a hurry.” | “You ruin things every time I am with you. I am so much happier when I am not around you.” |

You know, I don’t think it takes a rocket scientist to identify some excessive leaps in logic here.

The important point concerning these examples is Gray’s assertion that men learn over time that “these kinds of dramatic phrases are not to be taken literally. They are just the way women express feelings more fully.” (67) Gray has thus far insisted that men are logical to a fault, so then why would they be apt to interpret such extreme meanings from comments borne out of frustration? More importantly, why wouldn’t a man, being so logical, take that comment for what it is. Maybe he doesn’t listen to her anymore. Perhaps it is true that they never go out. Indeed, is it such a stretch to think that maybe they’re always in a hurry? Oh, that’s right, women exaggerate everything. Now, **why** do women supposedly talk this way?

Why Women [and Men] Talk (70-71)

1. “To convey or gather information. (This is generally the only reason a man talks.)”
2. “To explore and discover what it is she wants to say. (He stops talking to figure out inside what he wants to say. She talks to think out loud.)”
3. “To feel better and more centered when she is upset. (He stops talking when he is upset. In his cave he has a chance to cool off.)”
4. “To create intimacy. Through sharing her inner feelings she is able to know her loving self. (A Martian stops talking to find himself again. Too much intimacy, he fears, will rob him of himself.)”

According to Gray, “men and women think and process information very differently.” (67) Men prefer to silently “mull over” what they wish to say. Women, however, talk “to think out loud.” (71) Because women, by virtue of their gender, evidently ramble on incessantly until they figure out what it is they want to communicate to their partners, they have no need to retreat into a cave. Men, however, need to cave. And following his established pattern of not having a man do anything before he is ready, or unless his partner has provided the opportunity to express his best self, we learn that a woman should never follow her male partner into this proverbial cave. Not understanding this, women try to get their man to talk. Gray provides us with a sample conversation between a man and his shrieking harpy . . . er . . . female partner. (72)

She: "Is there something wrong?"

He: "No."

She: "I know something is bothering you, what is it?"

He: "It's nothing."

She: "It's not nothing. Something's bothering you. What are you feeling?"

He: "Look, I'm fine. Now leave me alone!"

She: "How can you treat me like this? You never talk to me anymore. How am I supposed to know what you are feeling? You don't love me. I feel so rejected by you."

Naturally, Gray has determined that this is gender-specific behavior. This is **NOT** gender-specific behavior; this sounds more like co-dependent behavior that could just as easily be exhibited by a man who doesn't know when to give his significant other space. Gray tells us that a woman who nags, bites, and rags at her partner will ultimately get burned by the dragon guarding his cave. (!) Now, we've already had a list of things that women might say. Examine, if you will, the character of the things that men might say. (74-75)

1. "I'm OK" or "It's OK."
2. "I'm fine" or "It's fine"
3. "It's nothing."
4. "It's all right" or "I'm all right."
5. "It's no big deal."
6. "It's no problem."

When Gray "translated" what it was women were actually saying, the general character was that of someone walking on eggshells, pleading and remaining submissive, struggling never to offend or convey the wrong message. How does Gray translate what *men* say? Well, "I'm fine" means "I am fine because I am successfully dealing with my upset or problem." (74) "It's nothing" translates into the calm and logical "nothing is bothering me that I cannot handle alone." (74) And what of "It's no problem"? Naturally, "I have no problem doing this or solving this problem. It is my pleasure to offer this gift to you." (75)

What a big difference between shrieking/whining harpy and calm, logical, and rational thinking man! You say you don't see any sexism here? Let's take a look at what women can do to support a man when he withdraws into his cave. (And let us not forget that a cave, by its very nature, conveys a structure that is strong, fortified, protective, and intimidating. This will become *extremely* important in following chapters.)

It possibly the only (and I mean *only*) ray of light that exists in this book, Gray suggests that a woman not make her partner "the sole source of [her] fulfillment." (76) [Although I'm not surprised that he doesn't offer the same caution to men.] Of course, this small flicker of hope gets brutally snuffed out when we read over a list of suggestions that Gray has compiled for women to do when their partner has retreated into his cave. These are important, for "anything that distracts her or helps her to feel good will be helpful to him." (77) So much for selfish pleasures, eh?

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Read a book | Write in a journal |
| Listen to music | Go shopping |
| Work in the garden | Pray or meditate |
| Exercise | Go for a walk |
| Get a massage | Take a bubble bath |
| Listen to self-improvement tapes | See a therapist [from an accredited university, I would hope] |
| Treat yourself to something delicious | Watch TV or a video |
| Call a girlfriend for a good chat | |

Gee, I don't see anything on this light and brainless list (one that is *soo* cerebral I'll just go ahead and call it The Lobotomy List) that suggests women concentrate on some work from the office. How about immersing oneself in scholarly pursuits? No, Gray would never stop to consider that women do anything more than primp, preen, talk, and go shopping. Gee, why not go to the public park and find a grill in which to burn a book written by John Gray? Not *that* would not only be useful, but immensely cathartic as well.

I can hear the Apologists wailing now: "These are only *examples*. They don't fit into the argument you're trying to make that everything 'Dr.' Gray suggests is gender-specific!" Oh, no? Try page 78. "It was hard to conceive of being happy when a friend was hurting," writes Gray digressing into his stellar fantasy, "but the Venusians did find a way. Every time their favorite Martian went into his cave, they would go shopping . . . Venusians love to shop." (78) Gray's Apologists, of course, are now nodding their heads reciting the Gray mantra, "Uh-huh."

We are then told that Gray's wife, Bonnie, sometimes goes shopping when Gray retreats into his cave. "When I begin showing signs of interest in her, she recognizes that I am coming out of the cave." (78) This is the time a woman should talk—NOT BEFORE. Gray then proudly tells us that Bonnie will sometimes "casually say, 'When you feel like talking, I would like to spend some time together. Would you let me know when?'" (78) Gray argues that this is the correct approach, for through approaching him in this way "she can test the waters without being pushy or demanding." (78)

We learn that when a woman has criticism or advice for her significant male other, she should bind her feet, put her head down, and walk on eggs without producing nary a crack! Well, what Gray *actually* says is that a woman "should definitely not offer criticism or advice unless he asks. Instead she should try giving him loving acceptance. This is what he needs, not lectures." (79) Hmm. "Loving acceptance." Gray offers four possible approaches should, for example, a woman need to discuss some concerns with her partner about the way he dresses.

Approach #1

As he is getting dressed she could just tell her man that she doesn't like that particular shirt on him and ask, "Would you wear another one tonight?" Should he become "annoyed" by that comment "she should respect his sensitivities and apologize. She could say, 'I'm sorry—I didn't mean to tell you how to dress.'" (79) **Apologize? FOR WHAT?** She didn't deliver an ultimatum, she made an *honest* suggestion. An apology could only be squeezed out of this scenario by a woman cowering in fear after seeing this moron's hand raised to her face.

Approach #2

Well, this is the indirect manipulation scenario. "Remember that blue shirt you wore with the green slacks? I didn't like that combination. Would you try wearing it with your gray slacks?" (80) This suggests to me that a woman must forego honesty and turn to manipulation to get what she wants. Hmm, what was that an Apologist wrote recently? "I learned how I can CONTROL my relationship with my man. How I can, through techniques you refer to as acting passive, gain exactly what I want from my boyfriend without whining and bitching and moaning like a weak woman would do. This book didn't take my power away, it empowered me." (Krista M. Beavers; 12 June 1996.) Well, that's downright scary—whether or not it comes from a man or a woman!

Approach #3

This approach is what Gray has termed "mothering." Here a woman directly asks, "Would you let me take you shopping one day? I would like to pick out an outfit for you." Gray cautions us, however, that "if he says no, then [you] can be sure he doesn't want anymore mothering." (80) Mothering.

Approach #4

In this final scenario, a woman approaches her man directly and says, “There is something I want to talk to you about but I don’t know how to say it. [Pause.] I don’t want to offend you, but I also really want to say it. Would you listen and then suggest to me a better way I could say it?” Er . . . huh? **Let me get this right. I go to my man, cowering with feet bound, and ASK HIM TO TELL ME HOW TO PHRASE MY REQUEST?** Gee, what could have *ever* convinced me that Gray is a card carrying sexist?

If a man behaves in a way that is embarrassing to his partner, Gray advises that she should approach him away from anyone else (oh, that common sense thing kills me every time, “doctor”) and say, “The other night at the party, I didn’t like it when you were so loud. When I’m around, would you try to keep it down?” Well, heck, that sounds reasonable enough for an approach. It is honest and shows respect for your partner. Of course, this whole common sense approach is warped once Gray expounds on it a little more. “If he gets upset and doesn’t like this comment,” advises the “doctor,” “then simply apologize for being critical.” (81) Yes, it’s that old female passivity role that Gray adores so much. Apologize for feeling the way you feel, ladies. Forget your priorities.

These **seven pages of advice for women** are followed by **two pages of advice for men** on how to be supportive to a Venusian.

Basically all men are told to do for their partner is to reassure her that he will eventually emerge from his cave. That’s it! “When a man understands how important this is to a woman, then he is able to remember to give this reassurance.” (85) Hmm, women have been told in seven pages to avert their eyes, apologize, refrain from giving advice unless they are asked, and all men are told to do is reassure their significant others that they’ll be back from their caves eventually. In his segway to a discussion on communication without blame, Gray writes that “just as men can support women by making little changes, women need to do the same.” (85) “Little changes?” Up to now women have been making all sorts of changes. Is it any surprise to you that his five page treatment on avoiding blame is directed at women? No, it shouldn’t be.

“To reassure a man that he is not being blamed,” advises Gray, “when a woman expresses her feelings she could pause after a few minutes of sharing and tell him how much she appreciates him for listening.” (86) How does one do this? Simple! “If she is complaining about finances, mention that she appreciates that he fixed the fence; or if she is complaining about the frustrations of being a parent, she could mention that she is glad she has his help.” 987)

Well, that was simple enough. Let me try it. “You know, honey, you spent a whole week’s pay on beer last month so we don’t have any formula for the baby, but, hey, thanks a lot for flushing the toilet this morning.” Humph, that *was* easy!

“It’s not your fault.” These are the so-called “magic words of support” for a man. (88) Gray tells men that the best thing they can do for a woman is to listen to her without taking things personally (i.e., feeling blamed). But to *head off* any potential conflict, a woman should always remember those “four magic words” and insert them into any statements she may make out of frustration or discontent.

Our lesson for Chapter Five is an interesting one. “A woman does not have to suppress her feelings or even change them to support her partner. [Wait. Here it comes.] She does, however, need to express them in a way that doesn’t make him feel attacked, accused, or blamed.” (88) How is this resolved? It isn’t.

We have seen in example after example how women have been told to suppress how they feel or later apologize for their feelings in order to make their man feel loved, accepted, blameless, and trusted. That’s a hell of a lot more work than Gray’s extensive advice for men: “Honey, I’ll be back.”

Chapter Six: Men Are Like Rubber Bands

A scene from John Gray's 1996 infomercial. Women and men, who have been identified as viewers of Gray's "first series," are listening to Gray speak. They seem to be listening intently. Gray focuses on a blond actress and thus we witness the following:

Gray: "What moved you to order the tapes?"

Actress: "Well, I had been married for thirteen years and I ended up in a divorce. And, believe it or not, we went to five therapists before we finally came to that conclusion. (She bites her lip.) It, by far, was the most traumatic event in my whole life. (Voice cracks.) And so I promised myself that I would *never* let that happen again. (Voice more strained, bites lip.) So I saw your tapes and I had to have them. (Voice cracking, emotional.) And it's changed my life because my relationships now . . . I truly know how to communicate. (Holding back tears.) I really appreciate it."

Gray: "That's such a special share, that I just want to come over closer, if that's okay. (He walks over to her, she smiles.) Just want to sit here . . . (He sits next to her and, looking down at her, places his left hand on her right shoulder and begins rubbing his hand in a circular pattern over her shoulder.) I just want to thank you for sharing that and would you share with me what made the difference when you're listening to the tapes? Did you feel a sense that 'I'm okay' for what then . . . (She wipes away tears.)

Actress: "It was the understanding that I don't need to be fixed."

Gray: "Right."

Actress: "I can be a whole woman without some man telling me that I need to change." (Gray nods. Cut to Gray hawking his tapes.)

Whoa! I don't know what tapes *they* were talking about, but they sure don't sound like the ones based on *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* (which, by the way, *is* the name of the tape series)!

In this book, Introduction and Chapter One is all about women being passive receivers and men active givers. Chapter Two tells women that offering "unsolicited advice" to a man is the "ultimate insult." (20) Indeed, keeping quiet and not offering a solution is "warm acceptance and trust" on her part. It is a "very special opportunity to love and support" her partner. (20) Chapter Three introduces the "cave"—a special place where men retreat to solve their problems. When men go to this place, women need to know that "this [is] not the time to have intimate conversations but a time to talk about problems with their friends or go shopping." (40) Chapter Four tells women that men need to "feel appreciated, trusted and accepted." (46) That when men are *motivated* to give, *then* they will give their best to their partners. Gray also tells women that "instead of blaming a man for giving less, a woman can accept her partner's imperfections, especially when he disappoints her, trust that he wants to give more when he doesn't offer his support, and [encourage] him to give more by appreciating what he does give." (49) And, in Chapter Five, we learn how a woman can express her feelings without making her partner "feel attacked, accused, or blamed." (88) That is, a woman should offer him "loving acceptance (i.e., say nothing), ask him to rephrase any concerns with which she may have a need to discuss with him, reassure him that he is not being blamed for comments uttered in frustration, and, most importantly, what a woman says is never what she actually *means*. We also learn how men could be supportive to their partners: When feeling a need to retreat into the cave, they should always say, "I'll be back."

No, no! Women don't have to change at all—just adopt an attitude of passive resignation. What he's giving is all he's got to give. If he's not giving more, then you're not trying hard enough to love and support and accept him. Hmm, does Gray *ever outright ask* a woman to change? Yes, I think he does.

Fascinated by his cave metaphor, John Gray uses Chapter Six to expound on why men retreat into their caves and, naturally, how women can make life easier for them by learning to understand why men need to have some time alone. The reason, we are told, is because men are like rubber bands.

"A rubber band is the perfect metaphor to understand the male intimacy cycle," writes Gray. "Men instinctively feel this urge to pull away. It is not a decision or choice. It just happens . . . It is a natural cycle." (92) As men experience this *instinctive urge* to "fulfill [their] need for independence or autonomy," they pull away much like a rubber band that is stretched to its limit. (93) Like the rubber band, a man has nowhere else to go but back. When he has done so, like the rubber band, "he will return with a lot of power and spring." (94) If a woman expects her partner to be close and intimate all of the time, the rubber band

will turn limp and flaccid. His “power and strength,” like the rubber band, is gone. Simply put, if a woman quietly accepts her partner’s *instinctive urge* to pull away, she will be rewarded by his eventual return.

However, please indulge me for a moment while I examine this rubber band metaphor in a bit more detail. Now, according to Gray, a man **satisfies his instinctual need for autonomy by stretching away** from his partner. His need for independence **satisfied, he springs back** to her. (94) However, further along in a drama starring Jeff and Maggie, we’re told that as their relationship blossomed, “Jeff was strong and full of desire. His rubber band was fully stretched.” (95) When Jeff felt himself becoming limp from intimacy, he felt a need to pull away. So, I ask you, how does this metaphor work, exactly?

A man stretches away when he needs autonomy. Yet, Jeff was “fully stretched” at the *height of his desire for Maggie*. When he was getting limp from too much intimacy, it is then that he felt a need to pull away. But Gray just said that when he pulled away he was at the height of his desire and felt limp. But then, if he’s limp, how can he be fully stretched? (92) I don’t know, it’s just a thought, but perhaps “Dr.” Gray might want to make sure the metaphor actually *works* before he uses it. But I digress . . .

Ultimately, however, we learn that whether he is stretched *or* limp, Maggie’s first reaction is one of fear. Panicking at the thought she may have “done something wrong” or terrified that “he will never come back,” Maggie runs after Jeff. But Maggie doesn’t realize that this is “just part of his intimacy cycle.” (96) Indeed, once Maggie learned that this was *instinctual* or *natural* behavior for a man, “her trust in this process grew [and] she just accepted him at those times, [knowing] the sooner he would return.” (97) Indeed, keen on this biological interpretation, Gray again tells us that a man cannot help doing this. “Just as we do not *decide* to be hungry,” writes “Dr.” Gray, “a man does not decide to pull away. It is an instinctual urge.” (98)

How interesting, then, that this *instinctual* behavior is often *caused* by the woman herself. Usually “because something she says or does often triggers his departure.” (98) Well, this is very convenient, isn’t it? **The man is not responsible for pulling away, because it is an “instinctual urge.”** (98) And he does nothing to spur this exile because **the woman “often triggers” his instinctual need** for autonomy. (98) Further along, Gray informs us that at another time in this *natural* cycle, it is not so much *what* a woman says “but *when* she says it.” (99) As I see it, a woman in Gray’s universe is damned if she does and damned if she doesn’t. The bottom line that she has no choice but to accept this *instinctual behavior*—behavior that she has prompted by either *what* she has said or *when* she has said it.

Put on your slippers, ladies, you’re about to take a walk on the proverbial eggshell carpet.

Gray’s advice for the *instinctual* behavior that *she* has just triggered, is to “let him pull away. After some time, he will return.” (99) But just how long is “some time?” An hour? A day? A week? A month? A year? Regardless of the time line, a man’s return is a woman’s reward for her patience. *This* is the time that she should talk to him. However, she should not demand that *he* talk, but should just begin sharing her thoughts and feelings with him. Gray assures us that “as she appreciates him for listening, gradually he will have more to say.” (100)

So which is it? Does a woman keep quiet, or does she talk? If she talks, he pulls away because she is talking about feelings. But then, she doesn’t know what part of the intimacy cycle he’s in, so does she risk talking and possibly spark another need for *instinctual* departure, or should she be quiet and take the chance of hurting his feelings because she’s not saying anything and, therefore, provoke another departure. Through all of this, of course, the man is doing nothing but stretching away and springing back—which he cannot control because this is *instinctual*. The woman, on the other hand, reacts and interacts at her own pleasure—or peril.

Should a man be uncommunicative, either before or after his retreat into Autonomyland, Gray informs us that you can *not* reject a man for not talking. A man has to “feel accepted just the way he is . . . He does not feel accepted when she wants him to talk more or resents him for pulling away.” (100) This is the same lesson from Chapter Four: you’ll get what I give you. It is her fault if he pulls away because she likely triggered it (even though it is *instinctual*), but it’s part of his *natural cycle*; meaning that **he has nothing whatsoever to do with his return only his retreat**. Indeed, Gray stresses that “in the beginning, she

should even discourage him from talking.” (100) But what if he *wants* to talk? If she discourages him from talking, she may cause him to pull away yet again!

He just “is.” She must both “act” and “not act.” Either way, she’s between the proverbial rock and a hard place, because, in the final analysis, *he is the one who decides* whether or not he is being “accepted just the way he is.” (100) However, if you, as a woman, *still* fell stymied by this curious scenario, then Gray offers a scholarly and well-researched explanation: “[you are] forgetting that men are from Mars!” (104)

Lisa and Jim are introduced as a couple who feel guilty if they indulge their own selfish pleasures without sharing them with one another. Lisa feels guilty without inviting Jim to participate in something with her. Jim feels guilty if he leaves Lisa. But after Gray’s magical insight, Lisa “released her resentment toward Jim. She realized that she been expecting too much from him . . . [and] how she was contributing to their problem.” (106) Lisa had come to the realization that Jim just *naturally* needed time to be by himself! Once she had accepted him “just the way he [was],” she realized that she was “not only preventing him from pulling away and then springing back but her dependent attitude was smothering him.” (106)

Consider again Gray’s assessment of the situation: Lisa finally “realized . . . how *she* was contributing to their problem.” (106. Enhancement mine.) Oh, I see, Jim’s likewise co-dependent behavior was not a contributing factor because he is driven by instinct—much as a female praying mantis bites off the head of her mate. Coupled with Lisa’s “smothering” and “dependent” behavior, he couldn’t help but be caught in her emotional web. **He is completely absolved of his emotional behavior.** After all, **he is just responding to her. She is obstructing his natural cycle.** Hmmm, it doesn’t sound like Jim is on the higher end of the food chain, does it? He is helpless. Driven by instinct—and, let us not forget, the actions of his female partner—he becomes limp and unresponsive. When *Lisa changed her* “dependent” and “smothering” behavior, however, **Jim began to respond to her changes.** He had determined that he was being fully accepted for just the way he was. As I read it, if he didn’t respond, then *she* would have failed. (Actually, the behavior being exhibited by *both* Jim and Lisa sounds rather co-dependent, if you ask me. But I suppose since this term has been snatched up by a myriad of twelve-step programs and authors, Gray probably didn’t see the practicality—i.e., money-making potential—in a phrase of this sort.)

Women *routinely* obstruct the *natural cycle* of intimacy for men by exhibiting what Gray terms “chasing” and “punishing” behaviors. If she chases, by either physically pursuing him or emotionally smothering him, he will pull away. He feels “controlled.” (107) She may try to pull him back by trying to please him. “She becomes overly accommodating. She tries to be perfect so he would never have any reason to pull away. She gives up her sense of self and tries to become what she thinks he wants. She is afraid to rock the boat for fear that he might pull away, and so she withholds her true feelings and avoids doing anything that may upset him.” (107-108) But isn’t this what Gray has been tacitly advocating all along?

Just as the “perfect metaphor” didn’t work, neither does Gray’s so-called analysis. Gray just told us that *what* she says, as well as *when* she says it, will often trigger a man to pull away. She should encourage, but not demand, that he talk. She should discourage him from talking. She should accept the way he is. When *he* feels accepted, then he will respond. If he has not responded, then she isn’t doing her job. But, then, what exactly *is* her job? Damned if she does. Damned if she doesn’t.

For the first time in his book, Gray breaks from his paradigm of female passivity and assigns women real power. Yes, *real* power. However, the power that she has is altogether negative! Consider that the first time a woman is “active” is Gray’s universe, she is “chasing” her man. In the next, and most revealing, scenario, she “punishes” her man for obeying his *instinctual* urge.

When he returns from his self-imposed (excuse me, *instinctually driven*) emotional exile, she “pushes away his physical affection . . . She may hit him or break things in order to show her displeasure.” (108) This makes a man afraid. If he is afraid, he may never “come back” again. She may punish him emotionally by forgiving him “for neglecting her.” (108) As a result, Gray argues that “he feels incapable of fulfilling her and gives up.” (108) Further, she may mentally punish him by refusing to “open up and share her feelings . . . by not giving him a chance to listen and be the ‘good’ guy.” (109) He returns only to find himself “in the doghouse.” (108-109)

This punishment by a woman is wholly unwarranted, because he has only pulled away because it was biologically unavoidable! As a result of her sordid punishments, however, “he may become afraid to reach out for her love again because he feels unworthy, he assumes he will be rejected. This fear of rejection,” warns Gray, “prevents him from coming back from his journey into the cave.” (109) It seems that when a woman *does* exhibit her true feelings, she runs the risk of turning him away and forever alienating him. He is not expected to change his behavior. He can’t. You cannot punish a man, or expect him to modify his behavior, because he is following his *instinct*.

If, however, a man does attempt to control this *instinctual* behavior, he is cornered into making excuses or “unconsciously [creating] arguments to justify pulling away. This kind of man naturally develops more of his feminine side but at the expense of suppressing some of his masculine power . . . Without knowing what has happened he loses his desire, power, and passion; he becomes passive or overly dependent.” (109) Hmm, you mean he’s becoming more like a woman, “Dr.” Gray? After all, this is the way women have been characterized in this book from the very beginning. In this chapter, Gray characterized women as “smothering” and “dependent.” Earlier chapters established passive behaviors, the familiar muted acceptance and, in some very memorable interviews, passionless ambivalence, as inherent female behavior.

Once again, it seems to be men who have all of the control, and women have to do all of the necessary changing in order to accept and accommodate the *instinctual* behavior of her partner.

“The wise woman learns not to demand . . . she trusts . . . she does not punish . . . she does not chase . . . she understands . . . she patiently and lovingly persists with a knowing that few women have.” (111) Although men are told that when they are “not needing to pull away, the wise man takes the time to initiate conversation by asking his female partner how she is feeling.” (110) Gee, that’s *really* nice. And then the women, happy that her man is “back,” begins to talk about her day, things she likes, maybe some things she’d like to do with him. But then instinct calls. He feels “the call” and says to her, “I need some time to think about this and then we can talk again.” (110) You see, he is ruled by *instinct* and though this sounds harsh to the common sense-thinking-responsible-adult, a man learns through reading this chapter that all he has to do is reassure his partner that “when he pulls away he will be back.” (110) He is released from all adult responsibility and adult consideration of another human being because he is following *instinct*.

Do women have *any* humanity in Gray’s universe? Do they deserve *any* type of consideration for their being? How is it that women are expected to be so accepting? If a woman, according to Gray, “punishes” her man by withholding physical affection, could it be that the woman has been wounded by her partner? Ignored and cast aside because *instinct* tells him that it’s time to hang with his buds, flick the remote control, or brood over the lawn mower? But she is not permitted to express how she feels. No. That would not be accepting. That might not be motivating. And it certainly wouldn’t be trusting. Women must *trust* that when men are off on their own that they’d *really* rather be with their partner, but *instinct* won’t let them.

So, when he “returns,” she’s wounded. She’s been truly hurt by his inattention. And then he sneaks up behind her and offers a hug or nuzzles her neck, but she’s hurt. She doesn’t want to respond. No, she loves him, but she needs time to think now. “No, honey, I’m not in the mood right now. I’m tired. I need some time to think.” What might “Dr.” Gray say to this sincere, albeit guarded, response to her partner? “Honey, you don’t want to have sex? How about a blow job . . . or a hand job?” And she must, according to Gray, acquiesce because her feelings, her protests—what he would deem her “punishments”—are “all excuses. It takes two minutes! That’s all complete baloney and that attitude ruins marriages.”

“I can be a whole woman without some man telling me that I need to change,” says the marginal actress. But if you don’t want to accept this crass behavior, Gray tells you to accept. If you don’t think this behavior deserves patience because it’s just rude, Gray tells you to be patient. If you think it’s just an adult shirking responsibility, Gray tells you to trust, because he can’t help it—he’s driven by *instinct*. And when you reveal your displeasure, your disappointment, in the self-centered behavior of your mate, Gray tells you to be quiet. This is a punishment. You’re not allowed to punish because that may hurt him. *He can’t help it*—he’s responded to an *instinctual urge*.

Wake up. Gray has just told men to stay the way that he believes they are. **Gray has just told you to change.**

Chapter Seven: Women Are Like Waves

Up to this point, the bulk of John Gray's advice has been to women. They've been told how to change in ways that make their men feel accepted, trusted, and appreciated. Page after page is chock full of pointers and suggestions to help Stepford hopefuls cultivate a successful relationship—at least as Gray would define one. As for men, Gray has told these accomplished cave dwellers that it is absolutely essential to reassure their partners by uttering those words that Arnold Schwarzenegger made famous: "I'll be back." In short, **Gray has made no secret of his belief that the balance of power should be with the male half of a heterosexual relationship.** Further advancing this point of view is chapter seven. Primarily concerned with advice to men, Gray endeavors to explain the seemingly unexplainable behavior of women, what men can do to support them, and how they can get out of having to support them should they not be quite up to it.

"A woman is like a wave," writes Gray. "When she feels loved her self-esteem rises and falls in a wave motion." (112) Sometimes they're up and then quite suddenly they're down. However, the good "doctor" cautions us that this "crash" is only temporary. "After she reaches bottom suddenly her mood will shift and she will again feel good about herself. Automatically she begins to rise back up." (112) Not to worry! This "crash" is, apparently, a good thing. To help women and men better understand it, Gray chose a charming domestic metaphor to explain the process: "This time of bottoming out," he writes, "is a time for emotional housecleaning." (112)

"My wife Bonnie," writes the Columbia Pacific scholar, "says this experience of going down' is like going down into a dark well. When a woman goes into her well' she is consciously sinking into her unconscious self, into darkness and diffused feeling. She may suddenly experience a host of unexplained emotions and vague feelings. She may feel hopeless, thinking she is all alone and unsupported." (113) This is a very important concept for men to understand, for how a woman feels about herself is directly related to the relationship. Indeed, Gray says that if a woman is "not feeling as good about herself [then] she is unable to be as accepting and appreciative of her partner." (113) This is paramount, for we all know by now that acceptance and appreciation for men should be a cornerstone of female behavior. But during a woman's "down times," Gray asserts that she "tends to be overwhelmed or more emotionally reactive." (113)

Stop for a moment and view the foundation that Gray has established thus far in his book. Men go into a "cave." This is a place where they can be alone, work out and solve problems, or just generally go to unwind. Indeed, in chapter five Gray lists the specific reasons why men retreat into a cave. First, "he needs to think about a problem and find a practical solution." (70) Second, "he doesn't have an answer to a question or problem." (70) Third, "he has become upset or stressed." (70) And, finally, "he needs to find himself . . . too much intimacy robs them of their power." (70) After this retreat, a man emerges from the cave feeling "rejuvenated" and, as a result, is able to tap into his "loving and powerful self again." (70)

A cave implies a strong, fortified structure, doesn't it? It is a place where you go to retreat, to seek protection for yourself. A man chooses to go into a cave. While there, this man solves problems, works things out, and emerges rejuvenated and refreshed.

Now let's consider the so-called "well" for women. In describing *this* retreat, Gray calls upon the following descriptions: "crashes," "falls," "bottoming out," "going down," "sinking," "darkness and diffused feeling," "hopeless," "overwhelmed," "descent." It implies a loss of control. Women sink into a dark well. Women don't choose to go here, they just begin sinking. You can drown in a well.

Cave: Voluntary. Time to reflect, work things out, solve problems, rejuvenate.

Well: Involuntary. Darkness, overwhelmed, "emotional housecleaning."

Gray further explains that "in a relationship, men and women have their own rhythms and cycles. Men pull back and then get close, while women rise and fall in their ability to love themselves and others." (113) The

thing that troubles me with Gray's analysis is that with women, it's all about self-esteem. How they love themselves and others hinges on it. But what about men? Do men have problems with self-esteem? At first glance, men don't seem to have a problem with it, but another look at Chapter Five reveals there *may* be a problem. "To be trusted that he can handle his problem (i.e., go into his cave and work things out by himself) is very important to his honor, pride, and self-esteem." (76) Think about this. He doesn't have a problem with his self-esteem, but if she doesn't trust him to handle his own problem in the cave that he has chosen to go into, *then* he's got a problem with it. This is very interesting, "Dr." Gray. A woman's self-esteem is HER problem, but a man's self-esteem, it seems, is *also* HER problem. Hmm.

With Bill and Mary, we learn that Bill is frustrated because he just can't understand what's going on with his wife. "She becomes overwhelmed by how much she is doing for everyone and then starts being disapproving of me." (114) Men, of course, are never overwhelmed. Gray's advice is to support her "when she is on her way down . . . What she needs is someone to be with her as she goes down, to listen to her while she shares her feelings, and to empathize with what she is going through." (115) Gray is quick to comfort the man, however, should his significant other not respond to his support. She may fail to feel better immediately. Indeed, Gray cautions that she may even feel *worse* than before. "But that is a sign that his support may be helping." (115) How so, "Dr." Gray? "His support may actually help her to hit bottom sooner, and then she can and will feel better. To genuinely come up first she needs to hit bottom. That is the cycle." (115)

Gray *needs* to provide these words of comfort, if you will, to his male readers. After all, Gray has inferred throughout this book that man's voice is the voice of reason. If a woman doesn't respond to this voice of logic and reason, men have to be reassured. How can you expect the irrational to respond to the rational? She's completely out of control. Indeed, she has to spin completely out of control in order to be normal. But men need to be left alone in the cave. They're reasonable. They can work it out all by their lonesome. Women, on the other hand, need this support—even though reason won't help them. It won't help them because they're out of control.

Indeed, women are apparently so out of control that they *involuntarily* fall into their respective wells. While in there they are overwhelmed, confused, and emotional. Why? Well, Gray argues that "when a woman goes into her well her deepest issues tend to surface. These issues may have to do with the relationship, but usually they are heavily charged from her past relationships and childhood." (117) Funny how you don't seem to mention how a man might be affected by his past in this way, "Dr." Gray. Only women. The cave is all about problem solving or getting some space. The well is about drowning in unresolved past issues.

How might a woman feel while descending into Gray's Inferno? "Overwhelmed, insecure, resentful, worried, confused, exhausted, hopeless, passive, demanding, withholding, mistrustful, controlling, [and] disapproving." (117) Hmm, and all of this because of past relationships or her childhood. Might health problems enter into any of these moods? How about the ticket she just got for speeding this afternoon? Maybe she got passed over for a promotion or didn't get that raise she was promised. She lost her job and the bills are piling up. Her husband's been in his cave for so long that she's wondering if she's really still married or not. No, none of these things are relevant. It's all her unresolved past.

It seems to me that men cave because of work related stress or to solve a problem. Women, on the other hand, fall into a well of despair because of the Barbie doll she lost when she was nine, the date that stood her up when she was 18, or the time her father had to cancel the picnic because he had to work.

For a man to support a woman while she's drowning in her well of pain and despair is a good thing, for as the voice of reason is there to hold her hand, "gradually she will become free from the gripping influence of her past." (118) A woman's past is baggage. And there is nothing that she can do about this but fall into an irrational darkness every now and again to free herself from it. But *a man's support will help to set her free!*

Pardon my vernacular, friends, but what the *hell* is this anyway? Mr. Knight has to protect and save me from my own past?! Well, I don't know why I should be so surprised. Gray has thus far inferred that a woman has no control over the present, so why should she be capable of controlling her past. It's impossible! But a woman **NEEDS** the support of her man to help her through it all. If not, she'll drown in

the well. Her own past will drown her! I suppose there aren't any men running into a cave to escape past problems that lie unresolved, eh?

Now Gray has come up against a very scary prospect here. He's told men to be supportive, but he's also cautioned them that if it doesn't look like it's working they should be happy because it's *really* helping her. She'll "hit bottom" sooner and bounce back up in no time to be with her man. Now, if Billy Joe Bob Doofus out there doesn't want to deal with the problems his significant other is having, then he really doesn't have to sit there and support her anyway. She's going to bounce back. It'll just take a little longer, that's all. So Billy Joe Bob either settles his arse deeper into the cushions to watch TV, goes out with his buds, or he caves. It will work out for him regardless of what he does.

On the outside chance that Billy Joe Bob begins feeling a little guilty about this—you know, not really being there to help her when he'd rather be at the ballgame with his friends, in front of the TV or otherwise caving—Gray has some words of support for Billy Joe Bob and others of his ilk. First, "a man's love and support cannot instantly resolve a woman's issues." (119) Indeed, "he can expect these issues to come up again and again." Second, "A woman going into her well is not a man's fault or his failure . . . he cannot prevent it from happening." (119) Finally, and most importantly, Gray tells men that "a woman has within her the ability to spontaneously rise up after she has hit bottom." (119)

It is very interesting how Gray needs men to know that none of this is their fault. However, isn't it intriguing how he had to let women know that while men may have an "instinctual" need to retreat to their cave, it is usually "because something she says or does often triggers his departure." (98) Fascinating. **Woman are responsible for triggering a man's *instinctual* need to retreat, but a man is not in any way responsible for a woman's capsizing in the bottom of her emotional well.**

As the Church Lady would say: "Well, isn't that *conveenient*?"

Now, what happens if a woman doesn't fall into her well every so often? Gray, of course, has an answer for everything, as we know. "When a woman doesn't feel safe to go into her well, her only alternative is to avoid intimacy and sex or suppress and numb her feelings through addictions like drinking, overeating, overworking, or overcaretaking. Even with her addictions, however, she periodically will fall into her well and her feelings may come up in a most uncontrolled fashion." (120) Well, well, well. These aren't cave behaviors, are they? Gray never tells us that men who aren't permitted to cave might fall into addictions. No! That's for women because they're out of control! They're "overwhelmed" during these "difficult" times. If they can't sink into their well, they'll eat themselves into one! Maybe they'll drink themselves into a well. Or they might overwork themselves into a well. Well, that's a *new* one from Gray. Overwork? Yeah, probably from bending over backwards to make their man feel appreciated, blameless, loved, and trusted.

Women always go overboard in Gray's world. They can't cope. They can't live without being needy, smothering, whining, harping, or feeling overwhelmed and out of control because of the "gripping influence" of their past! *Now* if they're not careful they'll be *addicted* too! Why don't any of these things happen to men in Gray's world? I guess because they're powerful, head strong, independent, inventive, controlled, rational, and logical. And besides, if they do lose control they can't help it anyway—it's usually because of "what" a woman says or "when" she says it.

"You probably know stories of couples who never fight or argue and then suddenly to everyone's surprise they decide to get a divorce." (120) Gray posits an explanation: "In many of these cases, the woman has suppressed her negative feelings to avoid having fights. As a result she becomes numb and unable to feel her love." (120) This is really fascinating. Before, a man reacted because of "what" a woman said or "when" she said it. Now the whole marriage has failed because she didn't say anything. Women have some power in Gray's world. It's just too bad that it's all negative!

Now, if women don't go through this periodic *emotional housecleaning*, "through controlled repression of her feelings her wave nature is obstructed, and she gradually becomes unfeeling and passionless over time." (120) **When we learned how men were like rubber bands, Gray said that women can obstruct a**

man's instinctual need to retreat. But now we learn that women are responsible for their own obstructions through "controlled repression of [their] feelings." (120)

When some women "resist the natural wave motion of their feelings," Gray tells us that they experience premenstrual syndrome. In addition, "in some cases women who have learned successfully to deal with their feeling have felt their PMS symptoms disappear." (120) Wow! I always thought premenstrual syndrome had to deal with hormone levels!

Notice how Gray does NOT use the word instinctual here as he does with men. He doesn't because this would mean that women have no control over their behavior. But women *do* have control, because women who have mastered their negative feelings "have felt their PMS symptoms disappear." Wow! Women are so powerful that they can even regulate their own hormone levels! I can see the next infomercial already: "Hi, I'm Mrs. Ihelpjohngraypromotehissnakeoil, and since I finished reading his books I found that I can spontaneously control my hormone levels. In fact, since putting this book down I can testify to you, brothers and sisters, that I no longer experience bloating or dysmenorrhea."

HALLELUJAH, REVEREND JOHN! SHE'S HEALED!!

"One study revealed that a woman's self-esteem generally rises and falls in a cycle between twenty-one and thirty-five days." (121) Well, that's interesting. A real study! Gray was no doubt sure that the nimrods fawning over his book wouldn't ask, but I'll get the party started: What study? Where was it published? Who published it? What are all of the specifics! Cripes! You *finally* have some evidence, man, and you don't even want to tell us about it! And what about this self-esteem cycle? Is this what the well is? It's apparently a natural cycle, but one that a woman does have a certain amount of control over—unlike a man who has no control over his instinctual need to retreat, except that it's triggered by "what" a woman says and "when" she says it. Curious.

Gray has to continue with his professional facade, so he persists by noting that "no studies have been done on how often a man pulls back like a rubber band [no, the collective **DUH** you heard was not a .wav file. That came out of your mouth.], but my experience is that it is about the same." (121) Gray's "experience?" Well, he says that with a certain amount of pseudointellectual certainty, but is this experience garnered from the men who talk to him at his seminars or from the sexapalooza he had after leaving the Maharishi? "Experience." Not good enough, Gray. The "experience" of what boils down to a seminar facilitator isn't good enough for me.

Gray then says that if a man is truly wise, he "learns to go out of his way to help a woman feel safe to rise and fall . . . As a result he enjoys a relationship that increases in love and passion over the years." (121) If you think this shows concern for women, it is but merely a crumb to satisfy the female reader. Up to now a woman has had to go out of her way to do everything but bathe her significant other because in the end it would benefit him. Now, men are being asked to be supportive because in the end, it will benefit *them*. This sounds a lot like the opinion Gray echoed in a recent interview. "Women should have great sex. It will make better marriages for men."

For this chapter's relationship vignette we are treated to Harris and Cathy, two people who apparently sunk money into at least one of Gray's seminars. They were very much in love. Cathy was on cloud nine. Well, that is until one night when "Harris decided to stay up late . . . and watch TV." (122) Cathy was crushed. "Dr." Gray says that "ever since [Cathy] was a little girl this type of intimacy was her dream . . . To the vulnerable little girl within her it was an experience of giving candy to a baby and then taking it away. She became very upset." (122) Gray calls Cathy's upset an "experience of abandonment. [Er . . . he watches TV and she gets close to a mental breakdown? Either these are some pretty sick people, or Gray is given to extremes.]

Gray digs deeper into Cathy's psyche and asserts that "she began to feel the way she felt as a child when her father was too busy for her. Her past unresolved feelings of anger and powerlessness were projected onto Harris's watching TV. If these feelings had not come up, Cathy would have been able gracefully to accept Harris's wish to watch TV." (123) Okay. Isn't it interesting how in the last chapter we learn that not only is a man's retreat not his fault because he's following instinct, but that the woman usually triggers it

by what she says and when she says it. But Harris is completely blameless now that *Cathy* is upset. And what is she upset over? Not Harris wanting to watch TV, but HER haunting past. He is blameless. Not that I think watching TV is something to be angry about, but it's HER fault. A man caving is never HIS FAULT, it just is. Something funny is going on here.

When Harris pulled away from Cathy "it triggered [her] wave to crash. Her unresolved feelings started coming up. She was not just reacting to Harris watching TV that night but to the years of being neglected." (125) But this was, in the end, a good thing. "By understanding the bigger picture," assures Gray, "it triggered Cathy's time to do (yes, for the seventh time this chapter) some emotional housecleaning." (125)

WAIT A MINUTE!! Harris *did* trigger Cathy's descent into the well, but this was a GOOD thing! When a woman supposedly interrupted a man's instinctual cycle of pulling away it was a BAD thing! A man is not only blameless in Gray's world, but when he *does* trigger something, it's all for the best!

A major dilemma, of course, arises when Harris chooses to retreat into his cave and Cathy needs support as she begins her descent into the well. Gray is very understanding of this need for men to pull away. After all, it is instinctual and there is nothing they can do about it anyway. With this already established in the previous chapter, Gray offers some words of reassurance when a normal, feeling, sensitive man starts to feel guilty for thinking about himself first as his partner stands before him in emotional pain.

First, Gray advises men, "accept your limitations . . . The first thing you need to do is accept that you need to pull away and have nothing to give . . . Don't try to listen when you can't." (126) Second, "understand her pain [but] you are not wrong for needing space [just as] she is not wrong for wanting to be close. (126) Lastly, Gray tells men to avoid arguments and, instead, encourages them to reassure their partners. "Although you can't give the support she wants and needs, you can avoid making it worse by arguing. Reassure her that you will be back, and then you will be able to give her the support she deserves." (127) Hmm, this doesn't sound like steps for supporting her, instead it sounds like a badly needed rationale for placing his needs OVER her's. Wait, you don't agree?

"There was nothing wrong with Harris's need to be alone or watch TV, nor was there anything wrong with Cathy's hurt feelings," writes Gray. However, to avoid an argument over whose needs are more important, Gray tells us that Harris could have said the following: "I understand you're upset, and right now I really need to watch TV and relax. When I feel better we can talk." (127) **So Harris's need to "cave" by watching TV is MORE IMPORTANT than Cathy's needs at that particular moment, eh?** Gray has just described women as screaming meemies who are completely out of control emotionally. He makes it sound as if they are on the brink of a breakdown and then he tells men to take their eyes off the TV for a moment to say, "Look, I need to relax now. When I'm ready we'll talk, okay?" Even Gray acknowledges that a woman would be turned off by this response, but he manages to explain that away as well. "She may not like his response, but she will respect it." (127)

Gray is adamant. "He should take the time he needs and then go back and give her what she needs . . . He cannot give what he doesn't have." (127) Cathy questions this behavior.

Cathy: "If he gets to be in his cave what about me? I give him space, but what do I get?"

Gray: "What Cathy gets is the best her partner can give at the time . . . She gets his support when he comes back." (127-128)

Whoa! Hold on for just a minute! Here we're met with that classic control phrase again: "**You'll get what I give you.**" Naturally, if the uni-browed Neanderthal that Gray has just painted for us doesn't want to deal with his partner's problem, all he needs to say is "wait." **She waits until he is ready. Never mind the nature of the problem, the urgency, or anything else. She "gets what her partner can give at the time."** (127)

But what if she can't give what she doesn't have? Well, John Gray has dealt with that before, remember? If she's not in the mood to have sex, Gray doesn't tell men to respect that and deal with what she can or cannot give at the time. Instead, he tells women that they are offering nothing but "excuses. It takes two

minutes. That's all complete baloney and that attitude ruins marriages. Women make this big deal out of a two-minute hand job. They want him to go do something for her! They want him to go clean this up or whatever. Two minutes! That's all it takes! Big deal! . . . I'm not just talking hand jobs. He'd resent it if all he gets are hand jobs . . . But if you can do a blow job, do that, and if you can have a quickie—intercourse—do that. It only takes a couple of minutes. What's the big deal?" Hmm.

I detect an obvious imbalance of power here—and the scales aren't tipping in favor of women! Yes, John Gray's scale of misogyny is heavily—and shamelessly—weighted in favor of men.

"Without learning how women are like waves, men cannot understand or support their wives." (130) Understand what? Support whom? What have we really learned in this chapter?

First, women have this bi-polar behavior called a self-esteem cycle that, in John Gray's "experience," tends to average about every twenty-eight days. Men might trigger it by something they do, but this is a good thing because women "need" to "crash" or "hit bottom" in order to come up and feel better again. In addition, men are reassured that it is better that they think of themselves FIRST. He utters those three magic words of reassurance that she may not like, but will most certainly respect: "I'll be back."

It is encouraged that men adopt the attitude of "You'll get what I give you." And from previous chapters, women have learned that it is in their best interest to accept this. After all, "what" they say as well as "when" they say it could drive a man into retreat and that would not make the man feel loved, accepted, blameless, or trusted. That's a bad thing. She must learn to accept that as a woman, she comes second. That's a good thing. He cannot give what he doesn't have.

You know, it's funny. The late Diane Fossey had a better handle on human behavior than John Gray has—and she was studying Rawandan mountain gorillas.

Chapter Eight: Discovering Our Different Emotional Needs

"Men and women generally are unaware that they have different emotional needs. As a result they do not instinctively know how to support each other." (132) Ahh, yes, another foray into the unknown world of the *instinctive*.

As has been determined already from previous chapters, men have *instinctive* behaviors that propel them to realize an active and self-motivated reality for themselves. Women, on the other hand, fulfill an *instinctive* directive to satisfy passive roles in society—only being active when their interference works against the *instinctive* behavior of their male counterparts. Now we learn that men and women have differing *instinctual* needs. John Gray tells us that only after satisfying these primary reciprocal needs can men and women be open to accepting and appreciating "the other kinds of love." (134) Just what are these so-called *primary instinctual* needs of men and women? In the table below, I've assembled Gray's instinctual revelations into a table that facilitates an easier comparison of the two lists.

| She Needs (he gives) | He Needs (she gives) |
|---|--|
| CARING He shows interest in " her feelings ." (135) | TRUST She believes that " he is doing his best ." (135) |
| UNDERSTANDING (<i>synonym</i>) She is " heard and understood ." (135) | ACCEPTANCE (<i>synonym</i>) She does not try to improve him, " she trusts him to make his own improvements ." (135) |
| RESPECT (<i>synonym</i>) He " takes into consideration her thoughts and feelings ." (136) | APPRECIATION (<i>synonym</i>) She " acknowledges having received personal benefit and values from a man's efforts and behavior ." (136) |
| DEVOTION (<i>synonym</i>) " He makes her feelings and needs more important than his other interests—likes work, study, recreation ." (136) | ADMIRATION (<i>synonym</i>) She regards him with " wonder, delight, and pleased approval . . . she is happily amazed with his unique characteristics or talent ." |

(136)

VALIDATION (*synonym*)

"A man's validating attitude confirms a woman's right to feel the way she does." (137)

REASSURANCE (*synonym*)

"He must remember to assure her again and again [that she is loved]." (137)

APPROVAL (*synonym*)

She "acknowledges the goodness in a man and expresses overall satisfaction with him." (137)

ENCOURAGEMENT (*synonym*)

She "gives hope and courage to a man by expressing confidence in his abilities and character." (138)

This is a very interesting list. All but two of the words (caring and trust) are synonyms. But why should we be surprised that they mean different things to men and women? These synonyms are perfectly suited to Gray's gender paradigm: Women are from the planet Emotional Venus and Men are from the planet Action Mars.

As always, I am intrigued by the words Gray chooses to communicate his ideas. They speak volumes! In Gray's universe, women float like plankton without direction in a body of swirling feelings. Men, like whales, lend the plankton a real purpose: to nurture and feed the larger, more powerful mammal swimming through them on their way to someplace else. Women, according to Gray, have this endless need to be reassured "again and again" that they are loved. (137) But men have *real* purpose. Notice in this list how men are always *doing* something. Indeed, they must be, for women are advised to look at their men with "wonder, delight, and pleased approval" for his performance. A woman happily "acknowledges having received" things from her man. She is advised to express "confidence in his abilities." (135-138.) In short, the plankton nourish the whale.

Viewed alone, these are wonderful ways to express love to your partner. But after Gray is through massaging them, they take on a whole new meaning. Women are once again passive—always accepting. Men are doing—for what else can women do but accept that which is done or given to them? After all, women are too busy talking to *do* much else (unless it's something negative).

"You jealous, male-hating, femi-nazi, lesbian!" the Apologists yell (followed by guttural snickers that sound suspiciously like the cartoon characters Beevis and Butthead). "You're nit-picking again!" All right! All right!! Let me drag this piano to home plate for you yet again. But this time everyone needs to make a cup of hot chocolate, curl up to the fire, and listen in anticipation to a peculiar fairy tale written by "Dr." Gray.

The Knight in Shining Armor

"Imagine a knight in shining armor traveling through the countryside. Suddenly he hears a woman crying out in distress." (138) It's a big evil, dragon, boys and girls! With fear absent from his heart, the knight draws his mighty sword and topples the dragon in one fell swoop. The woman is beside herself with gratitude. Everyone is happy and the knight marries his fair maiden.

When a month passed, the knight left his beloved at the castle to go away on business. When he returned home, he once again heard his fair beauty "crying out for help." The knight charged forward to save his fair woman, but, alas, before he made his final approach, the lovely lady offered the knight a noose and told him to use it because it was more effective. The dragon was killed, but the prince, it seems, was bummed. "After the event he [was] slightly depressed and [forgot] to shine his armor." (139) Awwwww . . .

Another month passed and Mr. Knight found himself yet again on a business trip away from the castle (leaving his princess behind again). However, before he left, the princess “[reminded] him to be careful and [told] him to take the noose.” (139) When he came home, yet another dragon was found attacking his fine home, but he hesitated to kill the dragon because he wasn’t sure which would be more effective: the noose or the sword. While pondering this dilemma (all caused by that meddling wife of his) the night suffered a burn on his arm! Oh no! At that moment the princess yelled for him to use poison, because the noose wouldn’t work this time! The princess was right! The poison worked, “but the knight [felt] ashamed.” (139)

You know what happened a month later, boys and girls? Right! The knight went away on *yet another trip*. And can you tell me where the princess was? That’s right, she stayed home—yet again. But as she did the last time, she told him to be careful and reminded him to take the noose and poison. “He [was] annoyed by her suggestions but [took] them just in case.” (139) While he was away on his travels, the knight came across *another* passive princess in distress. He hesitated for a moment because of the meddling suggestions he had received in the past, but he “remembered how he felt before he knew the princess, back in the days when he only carried a sword. With a burst of renewed confidence, he [threw] off the noose and poison and charged the dragon with his trusted sword.” (139) The dragon was killed and the townspeople rejoiced!

Now, my friends, sadly the knight never returned to the first princess (you know, the one at home). He stayed with this new piece of . . . er . . . princess and lived very happily for the rest of his days. He eventually married, but “only after making sure his new partner knew nothing about nooses and poisons.”

As we all know, all fairy tales teach us a lesson. Can anyone guess what lesson this wonderful tale has imparted to us? Right! I’m so proud of you! If a princess doesn’t want to lose her knight in shining armor, she will always remember to be passive, hide her intelligence and—even if she knows best—shut up. **The End**

Gray has already established in this book that a quiet woman is a happy woman; for a quiet woman is the woman who will keep her man. Gray established that way back in Chapter Two. Unsolicited advice is the “ultimate insult” to a man. If a woman keeps quiet, she is displaying “warm acceptance and trust” on her part. (20) How quaint. Thus far, Gray has used every opportunity in this book to either tell women to be quiet, or instructed her that it is far better to ask her man to rephrase her concerns so that she will not run the risk of upsetting him and thus sending him to his cave. (88) In this chapter, Gray outlines for us mistakes made by men and women that “may be unknowingly turning off your partner.” (140)

Mistakes Women Commonly Make
(Pages 140-141)

1. She “*offers unsolicited advice.*”
2. She *tries to alter his behavior* by “sharing her upset or negative feelings . . . she must *accept* him as he is.”
3. “She *doesn’t acknowledge what he does* for her, but complains about what he has not done.”
4. “She *corrects his behavior* and tells him what to do as if he were a child.”
5. “She *expressed her upset feelings indirectly with rhetorical questions* like ‘How could you

Mistakes Men Make (but note how they don’t “commonly” make them)
(Pages 141-142)

1. “He *doesn’t listen.*”
2. “He *takes her feelings literally* and corrects her.”
3. “He *listens*, but then gets angry . . . for bringing him down.”
4. “He *minimizes the importance of her feelings.*”
5. “When she is upset, *he explains why he is right and why she should not be upset.*”

do that?”

6. “When he makes decisions or takes initiatives, she corrects or criticizes him.”

6. “After listening he says nothing or just walks away.”

Oh, there we are again! The men are busy doing “stuff,” but women are only chattering away about their feelings. Men are active. Women are passive. Yes, I know I’ve been hammering away at this point for a long time, but that really is the point, isn’t it? Gray’s decision to use specific language when describing the actions of men and women tell you exactly where his world view is. And, if you ask me, I don’t think you have to look through the Hubble telescope to see where his distorted view of gender originates. Yep. No one’s gettin’ a suntan in *that* nirvana of dysfunction.

While I was encouraged that Gray included some advice for men to “listen without getting angry,” in the end it is merely a crumb thrown aimlessly to the side in an effort to appease the women reading this book and bolster his claim that this is also a relationship book for men (144-145). Sure, Gray seems to be telling men to take responsibility for their actions, but he insults men by implying that they all must learn how to listen. It insults women because he implies that all women do is talk. They’re always *feeling*, never *doing*. Why assume that it is only men who have trouble listening? Yeah, yeah, Venusians are supposed to have that special gift of communication. Of course, while Gray is telling men that they should learn to listen, they’re not just any old run-of-the-mill listener, but a *logical* listener. “Remember that [her] feelings don’t always make sense right away, but they’re still valid and need empathy.” (144) Hmm, is this where the famous Gray “fake it” comes into play?

Take responsibility. Empathize. Don’t offer solutions, just listen. Well, at least “fake it.” She’ll never know the difference. She’s just happy to have someone look at her while she aimlessly chatters away. Don’t forget to throw in an occasional “humph” or “hmm.” If men at least fake it, “she feels heard and understood, and the more she is able to give a man the loving trust, acceptance, appreciation, admiration, approval, and encouragement that he needs.” (145) It’s in a man’s best interest to listen. Why “Dr.” Gray even told those men on the ABC special which aired recently to “fake it,” for they’d have good sex afterwards. Why? Because she’s been heard. And, of course, don’t take her feelings literally, because women never really mean what they say.

While Gray advises men to “listen without getting angry,” he encourages women to learn the “art of empowering a man.” (141) It’s interesting that men only have to listen, because all women do is passively talk (and rarely make any sense while doing it). Women, however, must empower a man because men *do* things. They are active and in charge. What is the secret to male empowerment? “Never try to change or improve him.” (145)

“Certainly you may want him to change,” writes the infomercial star, “just don’t *act* on that desire.” (146-enhancement mine) The only time women *actively do* anything in Gray’s universe it is negative. Now, Gray does acknowledge that not acting on this desire “doesn’t mean a woman has to squash her feelings. It’s OK for her to feel frustrated or even angry, as long as she doesn’t try to change him. Any attempt to change him is unsupportive and counterproductive.” (146) In two words? Shut up.

I’m not surprised at the advice, but I am curious about one thing: why is it that *women* are the ones desiring all the changing here? Gray says that “when a woman tries to change a man, he is not getting the loving trust and acceptance he actually needs to change and grow.” (146) Doesn’t that work both ways, “Dr.” Gray? Jeez, isn’t “respect” supposed to be a primary love need for women? Well, there’s plenty of men out there trying to change their wives or girlfriends, but that isn’t mentioned, is it? No. Those men must be an aberration of some sort. This I-want-you-to-change-to-please-me behavior seems to be another instinctual quality that women possess. What’s the phrase that Gray is always saying in his interviews? “Men are simple.” Yeah, *he’s* simple, all right.

“For a man to improve himself he needs to feel loved in an accepting way. Otherwise he defends himself and stays the same. He needs to feel accepted just the way he is, and then he, on his own, will look for ways

to improve.” (146) Why should he? He’s being accepted “just the way he is.” If he’s being accepted, there will be no logic in improving, will there? And, of course, we know from earlier chapters that the final determination of whether or not he feels loved and accepted is *exclusively* his.

Slippers, please. We’re treading on the eggshell carpet again.

This “advice” is absolutely irresponsible! Certainly it is not appropriate for either partner to *change* the other, but this entire treatment assumes two things. First, it is women who are wanting all of these changes. There are plenty of men out there wanting or, indeed, *expecting* their partners to change. All you have to do is turn into the daytime microcosms of dysfunction (the talk show) to see such sick and mindless behavior. Just a few minutes will reveal that the desire to control another person is not restricted to gender. Lose weight. Dress sexy. Dress plain. Talk nicer. Display manners. Change your hair. Stop belching. Stop flirting. Change this. Change that.

Second, this little bit of the mail-order “doctor’s” wisdom doesn’t allow for dangerous behaviors or addictions. There are plenty of women in shelters who thought that if they just shut up their husbands would stop beating them. Likewise, plenty of women can be heard lamenting that their husband’s would give up the bottle if they just shut up. Maybe if they stopped nagging he’d stop gambling away the money.

This is the danger of a “self-help” book written on the intellectual level of a third grade reader: simplify everything so that it doesn’t take into account dangerous behaviors. There are a lot of unhappy people out there reading this book thinking, “Gee, if I just stop reminding him to take the high blood pressure medication he’ll remember on his own—hopefully before he has a stroke and becomes the vegetable du jour or dies!”

Billy Joe Bob Doofus has been exhibiting some pretty crass behavior in the company of his family. Every night after dinner Billy Joe Bob can be heard rumbling through the house, “C’mon! Pull my finger!” His family has grown tired of this joke, but after incessant pleas from Billy Joe Bob, someone inevitably pulls his finger, allowing him to release a burst of compressed air so thunderous that it moves the living room curtains and makes all those in the room wretch from the stench alone. Well, Billy Joe Bob laughs until he can laugh no more, and then he repeats his little trick much to the disgust of the entire family.

Now, Wilma Doofus, Billy Joe Bob’s wife, has read *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* and knows that she must embrace her husband with loving acceptance and not try to change his behavior in any way because he won’t feel loved and trusted enough. So Wilma stops complaining about Billy Joe Bob’s little trick. Now when he extends his finger after a meal, Wilma pulls it without protest, but Billy Joe Bob feels a little resentment. Now he’s on the defensive. He’s not going to change just to spite Wilma! So Wilma finds herself wedged between the proverbial rock and a hard place. Okay. Indifference isn’t working, maybe she’ll just join in. “Maybe I’ll do it *with* him. That way he’ll see that I accept and love him just the way he is. He won’t be on the defensive anymore and he’ll top just because he realizes that he needs to improve this behavior.”

One evening, after eating a heaping bowl of hot Texas chili, Wilma embarks on her plan. “C’mon, Billy Joe Bob, pull my finger!” Billy Joe Bob is now angry. He thinks Wilma is making fun of him. He remains silent and leaves to sit in front of the TV. *That* did it! She’s sent him into his cave! Wilma is beside herself. “I shut up and that didn’t work. I joined in and that didn’t work. I’ve asked him to stop and *that* didn’t work. I have to go back and read the chapter again and learn how to give up trying change a man.”

Wilma turns to page 148 and seriously reads the chart “HOW TO GIVE UP TRYING TO CHANGE A MAN.” And what does Gray tell women that they need to remember? “Don’t ask him too many questions when he is upset . . . give up trying to change or improve him . . . unsolicited advice [makes him feel] mistrusted, controlled, or rejected . . . when a man becomes stubborn . . . he is not feeling loved . . . if you make sacrifices hoping he will do the same then he will feel pressured to change . . . share [your] negative feelings without trying to change him . . . [don’t] give him directions and make decisions for him . . . Relax and surrender. Practice accepting imperfection. Make his feelings more important than perfection and don’t lecture or correct him.” (148-149) Hmm . . .

With her face twisted in confusion, Wilma closes the book and thinks about what she has read. She says aloud to herself: “This chapter started out as a chapter on mutual needs—things we can do for one another to feel loved and happy. Even though women are real passive, at least the *thought* was nice. Then he told women to stop reading up on nooses and poisons if they wanted to keep their men around—keep your better sense to yourself. Then he asked men to listen to women, but all women do is talk. I mean, I *do* things. I *don’t just talk and feel*. Then it ends like all the rest of the chapters in the book—with *more* advice for women. Here it’s on how to give up trying to change a man.”

Wilma throws the book into the trash. “Hmm, with this advice it seems I’m damned if I do and damned if I don’t.”

Wilma, it seems, has just broken the code.

Code Word: Hurl.

the one
SEX
SECRET
you must know

John Gray’s
365 days
of love!

20 years
of passion
how to make your
marriage last forever

**PLUS: Win a romantic
island getaway**

what makes me feel loved by
John Travolta,
Bruce Willis,
and Brooke
Shields

Well, I suppose despite the fact that it’s sold “some 10 million copies around the world,” even John Gray knew that some people weren’t going to shell out \$26.00 for a copy of *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*. Why not sell a watered down version of his personal opinion for \$3.48 per copy? That way even more people will read it! Even better—Gray will make more money off the desperate.

This newest addition to the magazine racks is the same contrived tripe that has been delivered in Gray’s books and interviews: more personal opinion prescribing just how men and women *should* behave in the world. Gray is listed as the editorial adviser and has contributed his articles to the magazine, as is his shadow, Michael Najarian (the Mars and Venus Adviser), and other free lance writers including famous celebrity gossip Jeanne Wolf.

There’s little that is new to readers of *The Rebuttal*. For instance, Gray has contributed an article entitled “The Art of the Quickie” wherein we’re told that James and Lucy negotiated for “quickies.” He receives regular “gifts” from Lucy, and in return she gets “cuddles” whenever she wants them. I could swear I’ve heard this story before. Hmm, where was it? Oh yes, it was on Gray’s web Q&A page—only *there* this “quickies for cuddles” deal was promoted as the brainchild of Gray’s wife Bonnie. Oh well, it’s only an opinion—I suppose you can modify the story at will to at least make it *look* like it’s a new idea.

While the players in this story may have changed, the message is the same. Says “James”: “For the first time . . . I was free to skip foreplay and go right to intercourse. I wasn’t at all concerned about my performance or having to please. It was strictly for me and there were no guilty feelings because we both knew that she would get hers at another time.” (29-30) Women are reported as saying “A quickie is fine because my body isn’t in the mood for an orgasm.” (30) Gray tells us that this is “normal.” Yeah, right! Keep dreamin’ buddy boy!

What does a woman do when she's in the mood and he's not? Don't be direct; instead, send signals. "If she clearly puts away her book when he walks into the room, he knows she's in the mood." (31) Don't ask questions. They'll turn him off "at this most sensitive moment." If she wants an orgasm (remember, women don't always want one) she can pleasure herself and then she can wake him up to turn over and "do the honors." (Guess she can't do them herself, eh?) And, of course, don't pursue that man. That's a turn off, too.

Funny, isn't it? He needs that orgasm so badly that she's expected to lie there while he gets off and then she'll get some cuddles when she wants them. And besides, the woman will "get hers at another time." But he can't masturbate, can he? No, he only can derive his pleasure from a woman. And our mail-order Ph.D. says that in order to keep him happy, a woman must give him this gift. The implied message? She'll do it if she *really* loves him.

Remember Michael Najarian's comment that the quotes in the *Yahoo!* interview were all taken out of context? I don't see anything different in this article that is credited to John Gray. It's written without the vulgarities but it's the same message. That's what I find so amazing. Somehow because it's been wrapped in glossy paper with sexy photos and couched in nicely written phrases, we're all supposed to think that this is something new. It's the same old active-passive control mechanism again. A woman is required to give, else she doesn't really love her man. A man is only required to give when he feels he's ready for it.

Pathetic. But then you know this.

Since Valentine's Day is fast approaching, "Objects of Desire" puts forth some nifty gift ideas arranged in gender categories. Naturally, women are showered in trinkets and all things considered feminine. Men, of course, are surrounded by gadgets, toys, and things electronic. But just in case you're thinking of doing something different for your significant other, this magazine has included some suggestions for you.

First, we're told that men don't "get" flowers and they only want fruit on their cereal—so don't go to your florist. Also, silk boxer shorts are a no-no because "men say they feel slippery and slimy." Thinking of a cashmere sweater? Be warned! "Guys like gear, not high fashion." (News to those men who make a living from designing high fashion *for* men, isn't it?) For women? Buy Godiva chocolates, take her to dinner, treat her to a spa visit, or just cuddle up. Putting men and women into rigid categories just makes life so much easier, doesn't it?

Page 43 tells us how to write a love letter. Date it, use sappy salutations, declare your love in the first paragraph, use amorous analogies, include a "love list" of things you like about your significant other, then close with a statement of commitment. This is a pretty nifty layout. I suppose the next money-making endeavor will be "fill in the blank/check this box" love letters purchased directly from Personal Growth Productions with a *personal* message from John Gray and Michael Najarian written on the verso (with copyright symbol, no doubt).

In an article by Bruce Raskin, we're given a "Parents Guide to Romance." The article itself is typical of those "keep it special and passionate" articles, but I'm amused by the last item in a list entitled "6 Ways to Spark the Flames": "Dads: Bring mom flowers, or better, send them to her at work. It may sound sexist and cliched, but it's a great way to make her feel loved and appreciated, and there's nothing quite as romantic." (26) Uh, why is this sexist? I think if the author wants to employ the term "sexist," he should be looking to Gray and not something as thoughtful as sending flowers to let your partner know they're loved and thought of.

My favorite article is written by Vicky Samuels, the producer of Gray's "ABC documentary" (read: infomercial). She writes of planning the "documentary": "If we do this story well, it might have a positive impact on viewers' lives. If we do it badly, ABC's news division will be embarrassed and my career making TV documentaries will be over." (58) Although I tried to contact Samuels on a number of occasions while this "documentary" was being planned, I *never* received a response. I wanted to know why she was wasting valuable time on this charlatan. Well, I finally I have my answer through this article, and it is the one that I've long suspected: "I'd read the book months before during a rather bleak period in my own love life, and I was fascinated." (58)

After watching this sorry infomercial, I'd be surprised if the ABC *news division wasn't embarrassed* by this two hour excuse of a documentary. This would explain the absence of any contrary opinion. And, naturally, this Gray apologist has provided some sources of where to get some help so that, "like the TV couples, you can improve your marriage." Yeah, you guessed it: Mars-Venus workshops, the Mars-Venus Counseling franchises, books by the questionably credentialed doctor, audiocassettes, videotapes, AND the toll free number for accessing all of these interesting items.

I have an enormous amount of respect for news professionals who put their own predilections aside in order to thoroughly examine something of note. Samuels *isn't* one of them.

Why bother taking you through every article of the magazine. It's not worth it. It's the same old, tired story coming from John Gray and his cronies. Men are portrayed as strong, sexual, tactile creatures who don't "get" flowers and love their "gear." Women, as usual, are given the message to submit and be happy with what you get. If you don't get what you need, don't ask, don't pursue, and don't be direct, instead "send signals."

While my overall opinion of this magazine is very low (yeah, like you're all surprised), two things did catch my attention. First, In the article "Why We Love (and Hate) Ally McBeal," critic Jeff Jarvis observes that the "honest, endearing, smart, tough" and vulnerable television character is "a sign of a new era—or at least a new twist—in sexual relations [in that] TV is merely reflecting what's happening among us." I agree. Well, not about Ally McBeal (gag!), but I do think that this *magazine* is a reflection of what is happening in society.

I contend that in a new age of uncertainty—where definitions of gender are themselves undergoing a change (much as they have throughout history)--putting men and women into pigeon holes makes things a hell of a lot easier in the long run. In Gray's universe, men and women fit nicely prescribed roles and are therefore predictable. They are depicted as coming from different worlds that are dictated solely by gender, without any consideration of the society that surrounds them. Gray advocates a patriarchal social system that as such holds one group in dominance over the other. It's easier that way. If men and women just *accepted* the way they *should* be, we would all get along quite well. This magazine contributes to that patriarchal system by telling women that men "need" quickies and that they're "normal" if they don't want an orgasm. Do they not want an orgasm, or are they just accepting that sometimes they have to settle for less because they don't "need" it like a man? If they don't settle are they in danger of losing their partner because they just haven't been accepting enough? Where is the line drawn? Is this magazine reflecting society, or prescribing patterns of behavior so that society is less disrupted by inevitable social evolution?

Secondly, I found something else that I thought was profoundly interesting and well worth noting: In *not one* place did Gray *ever* follow his name with that marginal "Ph.D." Considering that until now everything to which the man has signed his name has included the mail-order degree I find this new development fascinating. *Very* fascinating indeed.

Chapter Nine: How to Avoid Arguments

As we all know by now, the key to living happily ever after in the world according to John Gray is in accepting what he believes are the inherent differences between men and women. Once these differences are embraced, strategies can be developed that will enable men and women to understand one another better and help them along the road to everlasting happiness. Arguments can be one major roadblock on the old happiness highway. But never fear! "Dr." Gray has the solution to avoid them.

"The best way to stop an argument is to nip it in the bud," writes the good doctor. "Take responsibility for recognizing when a disagreement is turning into an argument. Stop talking and take a time-out." (153) Sounds like good enough advice to me. However, in order for "responsibility" to be defined we have to delve a little deeper into this chapter. Remember: in Gray's world, gender is everything.

According to Gray, men have two approaches to avoiding hurt—both are pro-active. First, they *fight*. "This stance definitely comes from Mars . . . [Men] immediately move into an offensive stance . . . They strike out [and] start yelling . . . their inner motive is to intimidate." (154) Mars *is* the god of war after all, right?

The second approach is *flight*. Also coming from Mars, Gray says that this proactive avoidance is an attempt “to avoid confrontation, Martians may retire into their caves and never come out.” (154) This is apparently because men walk on eggshells. “It is so ingrained in men,” writes the “doctor,” that they don’t even realize how much they do it.” (I guess that explains why this book spends so much time on instructing women how to walk on them.)

Hmm . . .

Now what about women? Goddesses of love have two very different approaches—both are passive reactions to a perceived problem. First, women *fake*. In this mode a woman pretends that there is no problem. “They try to make everything ‘all right, OK, and fine.’” Slotting nicely into Gray’s gender-defined world we are told that “Unlike men, when a woman uses these phrases it may be a sign that she is trying to avoid a conflict or an argument.” (155) Secondly, women *fold*. “This person gives in. **They will take the blame and assume responsibility for whatever is upsetting her partner.**” (155) *Remember that quote*

Well, that may explain what men and women do to avoid arguments, but *why* do men and women argue? Gender differences, silly!

Gray says that men argue because they are “deprived of the love [they need].” When he is deprived of this love “he becomes defensive and his dark side begins to emerge; instinctively he draws his sword.” (157) Apparently, this applies to *all* aspects of a man’s life. Gray argues that while a man may seem to be arguing over things like money, work, and other facets of modern day living, “the real reason he has drawn his sword is he doesn’t feel loved.” (157) The “doctor” provides his readers with effective phallic imagery—not to mention a pretty unflattering picture of men—and predictably places men in a position of power. Only the man can determine when he feels loved. Until he decides that he is loved, the woman at the tip of that sword of his anger is damned if she does and damned if she doesn’t.

Indeed, Gray maintains that men argue as a result of not being admired, not feeling encouraged, appreciated or trusted, and not feeling acceptance or approval. (157-158) A woman, on the other hand, argues for other reasons: she doesn’t feel validated and cherished, she hasn’t been respected or reassured, she doesn’t feel as if her partner cares about her, or she feels misunderstood. (159-160)

It all boils down to the same paradigm we’ve seen for the last eight nauseating chapters: Men receive admiration, trust, encouragement, etc. for *doing*. (And they appear to need admiration, trust and encouragement 24 hours a day in order to function. What are they? Infants?) Women need to have their emotional heads patted and looked after by their male partners. Once again, women are passive reactors. Now did it ever occur to the good “doctor” that people argue because they have two opposing viewpoints? For example, your house needs a new roof and new windows. He wants to have a new roof put on the house first, she wants to replace the windows. How does feeling “unloved” enter into this argument? How does feeling “cherished” apply?

Gray supplies us with the anatomy of an argument so he can make his points. Naturally we all know that misunderstandings happen all of the time, and to that end the good doctor has provided us with his celestial translation guide. The problem, however, is not that misunderstandings between partners happen often enough, it is the guide itself and the position that women must assume if they follow it.

For example, Gray notes that apologizing for misunderstanding is very difficult—if not impossible—for a man. We’re told that on Mars (!) “it means you have done something wrong and you are apologizing.” (162) If this is impossible, does it mean that men never do anything wrong? Well, let me return to that point later . . .

When women say “I’m sorry” it apparently doesn’t mean that they are apologizing for doing something wrong, it’s just a way that women express how they care about others. (I guess when men say this at a funeral it means they did something wrong. I’m confused.) As a matter of fact, women love the words “I’m sorry” so much that Gray advises men to use this little phrase to their advantage. “The easiest way to derail

an argument,” writes “Dr” Gray, “ is to say ‘I’m sorry’.” (163) Indeed, Gray gives us a rare peek into his personal research archive to *prove* that this little trick works:

“Sometimes . . . apologizing is very difficult. At those times I take a deep breath and say nothing. Inside I try to imagine how she feels and discover the reasons from her point of view. Then I say, “I’m sorry you feel upset.” Although this is not an apology it does say ‘I care’ and that seems to help a lot.” (162)

Ooooh! What a remarkable way to skirt around taking responsibility! Just re-word the “apology” a little so that *technically* you’re not *really* apologizing for anything that you may have said or done, but it *sounds* like you are! Wow! Kill two birds with one stone: she thinks you’re truly sorry *and* you’re validating her! That’s genius! Who knew our little rich kid-computer guy-TM monk-facilitator-rocket scientist was a lawyer too! Well, I’ll be!

Yeah, and who knew women were so dumb! Okay, let’s reflect for a moment. So “Dr.” Gray is telling us that in order to avoid a full scale blow out when he’s done something wrong that has upset his wife, he doesn’t apologize for his actions, but instead twists things around a little bit to lay the responsibility on *his wife’s* shoulders! A little doubletalk and maybe a hug could fool any woman. (In fact, I’ll just go ahead and admit it: if “Dr.” Gray gave me a hug and said he was sorry that I felt the way that I do about his snake oil show, I’d pull The Rebuttal off the web faster than a New York minute!) In the end the woman is supposed to think that whatever he has done is fine, what’s wrong is her interpretation of it. Very existentialist! Charlie Manson should’ve used this script at his trial. “Hey, murder isn’t wrong. It’s all in how you interpret it, man.”

Now what was it that Gray said earlier in this chapter? Oh yes, to avoid an argument women “fold.” “**This person gives in. They will take the blame and assume responsibility for whatever is upsetting her partner.**” (155) Now, didn’t Gray just manipulate reality so that she *would* take the blame?

Furthermore, absolutely *nothing* has been solved. Instead the argument has been “derailed.” This is an interesting choice of words. Having effectively “derailed” the argument both parties remain at odds. This is not communicating! It is avoiding communication as if it were the plague. And what do you do when both sides are presenting facts? Do you hire a mediator? A union representative? Do husband and wife enter binding arbitration until he concedes that, indeed, he’s finally feeling loved and she feels cherished and heard? Heard? He hasn’t heard a damned thing—he’s “derailed” the argument by lying to her and saying “I’m sorry”.

Oh, honey! Do *I* have a headache!

According to our mail-order graduate, men usually start arguments because they “*unknowingly* invalidate” their partner’s feelings. (164. Enhancements mine) Gray tells us that men have an instinctual need to offer solutions to a woman’s concerns. Indeed, “*every* cell in a man’s body instinctively reacts with a list of explanations and justifications designed to explain away her upset feelings.” (Wouldn’t you like to see the paper trail on *that* research?) However, a woman “cannot appreciate his solution until he validates her need to be upset.” (164)

Oh, boy! Men have a lot of power. I stand in awe of it every stinking time I read this poor excuse of a book. Women need a man to tell them that their concerns are valid? After all, that’s what validate means. So when talking with a man, I need him to tell me (or infer to me) that what I’m saying to him is valid (Hey, let’s use Najarian’s thesaurus. Logical, well-founded, satisfactory, convincing, cogent, et. al.). Well, how about “acknowledgement”? (Let’s use it again! Agree, concede, thank, appreciate, recognize, et. al.) This is a good word. It shows that while you may not understand someone’s thoughts, you are acknowledging the fact that you’re listening to the person and making an honest effort to understand their point of view.

But Gray *can’t* use the word “acknowledge” because *that* would put men and women on an equal playing field. A playing field where equally powerful human beings are making a mature and honest effort to understand the other’s point of view without the need *to* validate or *be* validated. But, you see, that’s not gender-specific. That approach doesn’t fit into the paradigm that Gray has heretofore established for

women: passive, powerless, and rambling shrieking harpies who need the approval of a man before having a successful relationship.

And while we're told that men have this way of *unknowingly* starting arguments, women have a little different approach. Once again, this is a time when Gray gives women power, but it's wholly *negative*.

"Instead of directly expressing her dislike or disappointment, a woman asks rhetorical questions and unknowingly (or *knowingly*) communicates a message of disapproval." (164. Enhancements mine.) Hmm .

..

"When a woman is upset the tone of her voice often reveals that she is not looking for a valid answer but is making the point that there is no acceptable reason." (165) What power we have as women! Just by the very tones of our voices we can send men spinning through the house like dust devils! "One of the ways women unknowingly communicate disapproval is in their eyes and tone of voice. The words she chooses may be loving, but her look or the tone of her voice can wound a man." (167) (Wow! Come home too late, Herbie, and you might be pecking the cheek of Morgan le Fay!)

Now, you must understand. Gray says that men *unknowingly* start arguments by not validating their partner's feelings. But women, while they may start arguments unknowingly, also start them *knowingly* just by their look or through the tone of their voice. As Gray says, "Women commonly interrogate a man about his behavior with a disapproving tone." (166) But this shrieking tone of disapproval can be completely avoided if we remember our role as women. You see, ladies, you have to be supportive and accepting of your man at all times. And it doesn't matter what he is doing. As the questionably credentialed doctor writes:

"To approve of a man is to see the good reasons behind what he does. Even when he is irresponsible or lazy or disrespectful, if she loves him, a woman can find and recognize the goodness within him. To approve is to find the loving intention or the goodness behind the outside behavior . . . To treat a man as if he *has* no good reason for what he does is to withhold the approval she so freely gave in the beginning of the relationship." (166)

So even if he's being a jerk, don't become angry. Don't judge him. He's got a good reason for acting that way. Trust that he would help you if he could. Maybe he's having an affair to give you a rest because you need your sleep at night. Maybe he's not contributing to the maintenance of the household because he's unsure of proper dusting technique and feels a bit inferior asking you about it. Maybe he's reading this book because he's tried to jump-start his IQ, but he just can't! Trust, my friends. Trust that he would if he could.

Doesn't it strike you as offensive that Gray *never* mentions once in this book that men must always see the good in what women do? Hmm, if she's not accepting, admiring, or trusting him does Gray ever say that men should recognize the goodness within their female partners? Does he ever tell men to be patient and wait because women can't give what they don't have? Does he ever tell men to trust that she would if she could?

No.

And doesn't it offend you that men are portrayed paradoxically as keystones of knowledge, power, and direction as well as your plain old spineless dolts? It doesn't make sense. A woman looks at a man with one look of disapproval and they slink off into the sunset feeling all "unloved." If a woman pursues they're told to spin on their heels before retiring to their cave, holler "I'm sorry" and off they go! So the argument is derailed and nothing—absolutely *nothing*—has been solved!

And people still write to me and proclaim John Gray a "genius." It's a wonder anyone can sleep at night!

To further aid men and women in fulfilling the roles that Gray has deemed appropriate he has provided another translation table wonderfully titled “The anatomy of an Argument.” (Does it surprise me that in all six scenarios it is the woman who is angry and ready to drag her poor defenseless husband into the Coliseum? No.). The ultimate use for this particular table is to enable women to become less disapproving and have men be more validating. Here are a few predictable snippets:

How she can be less disapproving: “I know you need to pull away at times but it still hurts when you pull away. I’m not saying you are wrong but it’s important to me for you to understand what I go through.” [*Woman moves down stage left, falls on sofa exhausted from all the energy it takes placating the stupid moron.*]

How he can be more validating: “I understand it hurts when I pull away. It must be very painful for you when I pull away. Let’s talk about it.’ (When she feels heard then it is easier for her to accept his need to pull away at times.)” (179) [*Man finishes pouring beer with one hand, moves up stage right, finds remote, turns on TV, starts watching the game.*]

And remember, friends, the need to cave is *instinctual*. He can’t do anything about that, but he can talk about it. But because men are following an instinct when they cave you cannot expect—nor should you expect—that they will do anything *but* talk about it. Gray has never told men to try and be open with their problem solving in this book. In fact, in this particular chapter he’s telling men to walk away and avoid conflict all together! This “discussion” is just another trademark of Gray’s: patronize them, validate them, pat them on the head—and just do whatever the hell it was you were going to do in the first place. Oh, and say “I’m sorry.”

How she can be less disapproving: “It’s OK that we are rushing and I don’t like it. It feels like we’re always rushing” or “I love it when we are not in a hurry and I hate it when sometimes we have to rush, I just don’t like it. Would you plan our next trip with fifteen minutes of extra time?” [Again men in a position of power. He is not only setting the tone of the trip, he has even planned it!]

How he can be more validating: “I don’t like it either. I wish we could just slow down. It feels so crazy.’ In this example he has related to her feelings. Even if a part of him likes to rush, he can best support her in her moment of frustration by expressing how some part of himself sincerely relates to her frustration.” (173)

Here we go again with Gray’s favorite endorsement to placate the woman with no interest or intent to modify behavior that may be causing his partner some degree of distress! Why not use those magic words: “I’m sorry”? “Gee, honey, I’m sorry you don’t like to rush.” I mean, technically he’s not really apologizing for doing anything wrong and he has no intention of *not* rushing, but I’ll bet it makes her feel better and shuts her up already!

Seriously, though, consider this carefully! “I wish we could just slow down.” Well, it’s within his power to slow down, but he doesn’t seem willing to modify his behavior. Indeed, Gray has just told men that they *shouldn’t* modify their behavior. Once again it is the woman who accommodates! Gray has merely advised this man to “support her in her moment of frustration.” Read: pay her some lip service and then go about your activities as originally planned.

Okay, so the message we take away from this chapter is “the best way to stop an argument is to nip it in the bud.” (153) Both men and women start arguments unknowingly, but only women are identified as the party who is able to start arguments *knowingly*. Men are told to say “I’m sorry” in order to derail an argument. This will fool the woman into believing that you care about what she has to say. And now that she has been heard and validated, she’ll go away. And, realistically, since arguments can be debates, nothing ever gets solved. In the end we’ve swept everything under the rug and not solved a thing.

This particular approach has real potential. Yes, the potential for a small scratch turning into a gaping head wound that the good “doctor” has told us will heal with his band-aid therapy! Gray hasn’t told men and

women how to communicate in this chapter and he's said as much: "How to AVOID Arguments." He's told men how to maneuver out of taking responsibility and he's given yet another lesson in accommodation for women.

How? Let's apply his technique to a real-life scenario: how should we invest our money? Should we go for a traditional IRA or a ROTH IRA? Two excellent plans! How do we decide? She wants the ROTH and begins to put forth her argument, he disagrees and retreats. She has to tell him she loves him and then he says he's sorry. Well, that's been solved! NOT! So, what plan do we invest in?

She appreciates and trusts him, he feels big and strong, and now he can say he's sorry. But why is he sorry? For liking a different IRA? And her feelings have been validated even though she hasn't had a chance to talk about the advantages of the ROTH IRA and then they, what, go watch TV? Yeah, I guess that's all these rocket scientists can do now since they've effectively nipped this argument in the bud!

If Gray thinks arguments should be derailed, then his reaction to all confrontation, no matter what it is, is passive. And what an amazing revelation that is! You know, I have seen nothing but a fear of women throughout this self-help nightmare and it has been beautifully presented in this chapter. Women paralyze men through their look, the tone of their voice, asking rhetorical questions, probing, and being otherwise disapproving. What fear is this? Are we talking about *adult* behavior, "Dr." Gray?

This book isn't a "guide for improving communication and getting what you want in your relationships." It is a juvenile attempt to avoid all conflict. It solves nothing.