Ida Nikolovska


In the critiques of the ‘80 we can notice a glorification of this book, from the perspective of publishing something that was served to the female intellectual energy as impossible and unnatural. Misogyny was the very air they breathed at the time. Here we are talking about the time when the American woman was unquestioningly belittled, taken away from the path of success, aggressively ignored or ignorantly aggressed, taken for a helper, and when the case was not so, she was called a bitch or a witch.

Recently this book has already been accepted not as an instrument in the fight against the men, but more as an analysis of the differences of which both genders are unaware but still continue to build the stonewall that buries the foundations. The book offers a full anatomy of the men who, despite running the world, still behave like frightened children. Such men, *Dinnerstein* argues, infinitely continue to separate from the ruler of their infantilism, the Mother. Women, too, are complicit in the daily injustices they suffer since they, too, distrust the mother in themselves. The author offers a subtle, revealing account of the accusations men and women have traditionally been throwing at each other, including the women’s acquiescence to male power. It is a woman who introduces us to the world before we can recognize her as a limited, mortal being like ourselves. Struggling out from under the control of this first alluring, seemingly omnipotent person, we actually fight the biggest battle we ever
Towards The Mermaid and The Minotaur

Dinnerstein's evocation of the age-old arrangements between men and women often approaches poetry. In her lyricism, she recreates the familiar pull of culturally rich versions of the heterosexual past, the dance in the villages, the men kicking and shouting and twirling women whose job is to admire and honor male strength.

This book is not a defense of female existence; it is a loom with years of related observations about the strengths and weaknesses of human thought. Clearly, this work is only a part of a great project: To create in us a mature recognition of the fact that we are not alone here, that we are the makers of future and the caretakers of a wild nature that now depends on our mental growth, on our knowledge of ourselves and to learn self-restraint if that nature is to survive. Therefore, Ann Snitow in the Preface of the book says:

This is the point of The Mermaid and The Minotaur - forbearance and responsibility, an amalgam always changing, the very stuff of life.

We can understand this point only by comparing Dorothy Dinnerstein to Ariadne, who, knowing that we must move through complex and frightening pathways of the labyrinth, believes that in the end we will come out of it gaining the genuine freedom as a personal value. Ariadne freeing Theseus from the Minotaur's maze opens a new way for men and women. Those are the pathways for overcoming the differences that had often been abused in order to dishonor the character of the Mother,
in which the author sees the symbiosis of all living creatures and that is why she stresses the importance of the primary experience with the maternal body. What we can be sure of is that the average gender differences that are observable after the neonatal period have been subject to heavy environmental shaping. The danger in this case is in the growth of these differences up to a point where they will create a gap, like the racial one, which could easily get transformed into a sociopathological and aggressive behavior.

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