

AN OPEN LETTER TO JUDITH WILSON:

Dear Judith,

I know that we talked this over between us, but on rereading your galley I find it imperative that I reply, because you misunderstand me in so many spots, and, due to the poor production of my galley, most of the school has only read your side of the story.

In your first paragraph you regret that the debate of "such matters as the relationship of art to society" has not been settled. You even imply that such a debate is anti-intellectual. This seems a shocking evaluation of both intellectualism and our times. At a moment in history when great literature is being produced by the members of society who have always been debased as anti-intellectual, ignorant, and uneducated (I mean authors such as Eldridge Cleaver, Amiri Baraka, Nikki Giovanni, Gwendolyn Brooks) the relationship of art to society is under its most fascinating and important re-evaluation in many years. We are being forced, for the first time, to accept violent emotion as serious literature. Eldridge Cleaver first introduced to us the notion that rape may be a political statement. Through the riots of the sixties, the black populace as a whole has demanded social and intellectual enfranchisement, and the Women's Liberation movement has done the same for white women, although mostly with words. It would seem that the most psychologically and economically dependant groups are finding their voice. As a white woman, then, my statement of anger at what I perceived to be brutally sexist tendencies in the drama productions of this school is totally justified--as class consciousness, as literature as defense of my own body.

Of course, the major point of contention between us is my refusal to accept sexism in any form--including sexism manifested by black men--and your refusal to accept my feminism as applicable to you, as a black woman. All I can say is, if you don't want to sit on the same bus as me, I understand, but I can only be saddened when black women allow their strength and energy to be diminished in deference to black men. And I can only be furious when black women applaud the rape and debasement of white women at the hands of black men.

To close, I must restate my belief that Eldridge Cleaver's political rape and my anger at his political statement, and Amiri Baraka's, are reflections of a similar movement in history and thought. Roughly stated, this is: scream when you can't stand the boot of the man on your back. And, while black men may not rush out and rape white women after seeing "The Dutchman", men of all colors rape women of all colors (literally and figuratively speaking, of course), and until we do something about it--like put razor blades in our cunts*--it's never going to stop.

Thank-you,

Cindy Frazier

* an anti-rape device developed to protect Vietnamese women from U.S. soldiers.