

# LIFE AND DEATH

ANDREA DWORKIN

THE FREE PRESS

New York London Toronto Sydney Singapore

# LIFE AND DEATH

ANDREA DWORKIN

THE FREE PRESS

New York London Toronto Sydney Singapore

THE FREE PRESS  
A Division of Simon & Schuster Inc.  
1230 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, NY 10020

Copyright © 1997 by Andrea Dworkin  
All rights reserved,  
including the right of reproduction  
in whole or in part in any form.

THE FREE PRESS and colophon are trademarks  
of Simon & Schuster Inc.

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Dworkin, Andrea.

Life and death : unapologetic writings on the continuing war  
against women / Andrea Dworkin.

p. cm.

Articles originally published 1987-1995.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-684-83512-6

1. Women—Crimes against. 1. Sex discrimination against women.  
3. Feminist theory. I. Title.  
HV6250.4W6D86 1997  
362.88'082—dc20

96-38335  
CIP

## PUBLICATION DATA

### ORIGINS

#### *My Life as a Writer*

First published as "Andrea Dworkin (1946– )" in *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series*, Volume 21, March 1995 (Gale Research Inc.). Copyright © 1995 by Andrea Dworkin.

### EMERGENCIES

#### *In Memory of Nicole Brown Simpson*

First published in the *Los Angeles Times* as three essays: "Trapped in a Pattern of Pain Where No One Can Help" (June 26, 1994), "In Nicole Brown Simpson's Words" (January 29, 1995), and "Domestic Violence: Trying to Flee" (October 8, 1995). Copyright © 1994, 1995, 1997 by Andrea Dworkin.

#### *Living in Terror, Pain: Being a Battered Wife*

First published in the *Los Angeles Times*, March 12, 1989. Copyright © 1989 by Andrea Dworkin.

#### *The Third Rape*

First published in the *Los Angeles Times*, April 28, 1991. Copyright © 1991 by Andrea Dworkin.

#### *Gary Hart and Post-Pornography Politics*

First published in an altered version as "The Right to Know How Women Are Humiliated" in New York *Newsday*, March 13, 1987. Copyright © 1987 by Andrea Dworkin.

#### *A Government of Men, Not Laws, Not Women*

First published as "Political Callousness on Violence Toward Women" in the *Los Angeles Times*, May 14, 1989. Copyright © 1989 by Andrea Dworkin.

#### *Portrait of a New Puritan—and a New Slaver*

First published in an abridged version as a letter in *The New York Times Book Review*, May 3, 1992. Copyright © 1992, 1997 by Andrea Dworkin.

#### *Free Expression in Serbian Rape/Death Camps*

First published as "The Real Pornography of a Brutal War Against Women" in the *Los Angeles Times*, September 5, 1993. Copyright © 1993 by Andrea Dworkin.

#### *Beaver Talks*

First published as a new introduction to *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (New York: Plume, 1989). Copyright © 1989 by Andrea Dworkin.

### RESISTANCE

#### *Mass Murder in Montréal: The Sexual Politics of Killing Women*

Speech at the Université de Montréal, December 7, 1990, organized by The Day After Committee to mourn the mass murder of fourteen women students on December 6, 1989, at the

École Polytechnique, the university's engineering school. First published as "War Against Women: The Sexual Politics of the Montréal Murders" in *The Madison Edge*, December 17, 1991. Copyright © 1990, 1991, 1997 by Andrea Dworkin.

*Terror, Torture, and Resistance*

Keynote speech at the Canadian Mental Health Association's "Women and Mental Health Conference—Women in a Violent Society," Banff, Alberta, May 9, 1991. First published in *Canadian Studies/Les Cahiers de la Femme*, Volume 12, No. 1, fall 1991. Copyright © 1991, 1997 by Andrea Dworkin.

*Pornography Happens*

Lecture at the "Speech, Equality, and Harm Conference" at the University of Chicago Law School, March 6, 1993. First published in slightly expanded form in *The Price We Pay: The Case Against Racist Speech, Hate Propaganda, and Pornography*, edited by Laura Lederer and Richard Delgado (New York: Hill & Wang, 1995). Copyright © 1993, 1995 by Andrea Dworkin.

*Prostitution and Male Supremacy*

Speech at the *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law* symposium entitled "Prostitution: From Academia to Activism" at the University of Michigan Law School, October 31, 1992. First published in slightly altered form in the *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law*, Volume 1, 1993. Copyright © 1992, 1993 by Andrea Dworkin.

*Freedom Now: Ending Violence Against Women*

Keynote speech for the Texas Council on Family Violence Annual Conference, "Rediscover Liberation," October 28, 1992, in Austin, Texas. All participants were workers in the field of wife-battery. Copyright © 1992, 1997 by Andrea Dworkin.

*Remember, Resist, Do Not Comply*

Speech at the Massey College Fifth Walter Gordon Forum, Toronto, Ontario, in a symposium on "The Future of Feminism," April 2, 1995. First published by Massey College in the University of Toronto, May 2, 1995. Copyright © 1995, 1996 by Andrea Dworkin.

## CONFRONTATIONS

*Race, Sex, and Speech in Amerika*

First published in slightly altered form as "Thomas Jefferson, Sally Hemings, and the Real Bill of Rights," in *On the Issues*, fall 1995. Copyright © 1995 by Andrea Dworkin.

*Women in the Public Domain: Sexual Harassment and Date Rape*

Introduction to *Sexual Harassment: Women Speak Out*, edited by Amber Coverdale Sumrall and Dena Taylor (Freedom, California: The Crossing Press, 1992). Copyright © 1992 by Andrea Dworkin.

*Israel: Whose Country Is It Anyway?*

First published in slightly altered form in *Ms.*, September/October 1990. Copyright © 1990, 1997 by Andrea Dworkin.

*The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum: Is Memory Male?*

First published as "The Unremembered: Searching for Women at the Holocaust Memorial Museum" in *Ms.*, November/December 1994. Copyright © 1994 by Andrea Dworkin.

— FOR NIKKI CRAFT —

— IN MEMORY OF MY BROTHER, MARK, 1949-1992 —

In analyzing women's thinking about what constitutes care and what connection means, I noted women's difficulty in including themselves among the people for whom they considered it moral to care. The inclusion of self is genuinely problematic not only for women but also for society in general. Self-inclusion on the part of women challenges the conventional understanding of feminine goodness by severing the link between care and self-sacrifice; in addition, the inclusion of women challenges the interpretive categories of the Western tradition, calling into question descriptions of human/nature and holding up to scrutiny the meaning of "relationship," "love," "morality," and "self."

—Carol Gilligan, *Mapping the Moral Domain*

Let there be no mention of the war. If it were not for those few who could not repress their experiences, the victims themselves would have denied the horror.

—Aharon Appelfeld, *Beyond Despair*

## PREFACE

I have spent the last twenty-five years as a writer, and during most of it I rejected first-person nonfiction writing by contemporary women. Even though I was riveted by, and learned much from, speak-outs, Take Back the Night rallies, and talks in which the point was first-person experience, in literature I regarded this as the back of the bus, for women of all colors. No woman had an “I” that swept up populations as Whitman’s did, such that he could embrace them; nor did women have Baudelaire’s cruel but beautiful “I”—so eloquent, so ruthless—which made God’s world spoil in front of you, become ruined and rotting yet entirely new. The woman’s “I” was trivial—“anecdotal,” as the guardians of white-male writing put it. The “I” of a woman said, “My husband likes his shirts ironed this way; my teenage son is sulking but I remember him when he was three; I am the second daughter of my mother’s fourth husband; and on Sunday, after making love, my husband and I had croissants.” The “I” of a woman always had to be charming; the prose, feminine and without aggression; the manner of writing, gracious or sweet or unctuous. There had better be no hint of Whitman’s grandiosity or Baudelaire’s bitterness. Even if a girl could write “Spleen,” it could only be experienced as an appalling breach of



civility. Women's writings—like women—are judged by the pretty surface. There is no place for the roiling heart.

Yet as I organized this, my third collection of writings—after *Our Blood* (1976) and *Letters From a War Zone* (1988)—I saw with some shock that my “I” is everywhere in these essays and speeches, referring directly and explicitly to my own life. The experiences I have chosen to write about are not polite—they include being raped, battered, and prostituted—and I have not been polite about them; although I hope that in my telling I have honored intellect, veracity, and language. Like many male writers from a previous time, I have used portions of my life for evidence or emphasis or simply because that's what happened, which must matter. Some autobiographical facts and events are reiterated, like a leitmotif pointing to a pattern, a theme with variations. In each context the events are refracted from a slightly different angle, with more detail or deeper knowledge or another pitch of feeling.

I love life, I love writing, I love reading—and these writings are about injustice, which I hate. They are a rude exploration of it, especially its impact on women. This is the “I” forbidden to women, the “I” concerned less with ironing (and I have ironed *a lot*) than with battery. It is an “I” indifferent to the passions of popular culture but repelled by this culture's insistent romanticization of violence against women. This is the forbidden “I” that names the crimes committed against women by men and seeks redress: the “I” male culture has abhorred. There is nothing trivial about it.

In the first section, “Origins,” I tell how I became a writer and why, and I say what I think my work is worth and why. I expect this autobiographical self-appraisal may be more accurate than that of critics, friend or foe. Mostly, of course, critics have been foes, too prejudiced against the reason I write to read with clarity or understanding, let alone to appreciate the writing itself. I'm the expert on me: not Freud, not *Playboy*, not *The Nation*, not *The National Review*.

In the next section, “Emergencies,” I write about crises, many of which stirred public feeling to a fever pitch—the abuse of Nicole Brown

Simpson, for instance, or Hedda Nussbaum, or the genocidal rape of women and girls by Serbian fascists in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Here, too, I write about contemporary abuses of women that have been kept hidden—the attempted murder of Pamela Small by then House Speaker Jim Wright's top aide, John Mack, himself a formidable power and protected by both the political establishment and the media until Wright's fall on ethics charges. I suggest that the privacy of then presidential hopeful Gary Hart should not have been invaded by the press—but that John Mack's should have been. I suggest that the values and perceptions of a younger generation of male journalists have been significantly formed by their use of pornography such that they are now mostly voyeurs, not heroes of democracy. And I report the stories of truly anonymous, unimportant, uncared-for women—those used in pornography, those on whom pornography was used in sexual abuse or battery or to push them into prostitution. "Emergencies" is about the day-to-day lives of ordinary women, their lives degraded or destroyed by exploitation or violence.

"Resistance" is a selection of six speeches, each taking a public stand out loud in a public place, often in the face of some tragedy or atrocity—for instance, the mass murders in Montréal of fourteen female engineering students by a man whose motives were both political and woman hating. Here the terrorism of male violence against women is reported as being far from anomalous; and the dynamics of aggression and violence in pornography, prostitution, battery, and marital rape are made palpable. The last speech in this section—delivered in Toronto as part of an endowed, public policy lecture series at Massey College (founded by the writer Robertson Davies, who attended)—offers a summary of what we have achieved and makes clear where we have failed. The "we" in these speeches is feminists, which many people in their hearts consider themselves to be.

Three speeches were given in Canada—in Montréal, Québec; Banff, Alberta; and Toronto, Ontario—and three in the United States—Chicago, Illinois; Ann Arbor, Michigan; and Austin, Texas.

This geography should give the lie to the notion—reported in dozens if not hundreds of newspapers—that my colleague Catharine A. MacKinnon and I are not welcome by feminists in Canada because of the Canadian Supreme Court's *Butler* decision, which held that pornography violated women's equality rights. Canadian feminists invited me to speak; the speeches were received with enthusiasm and a deep commitment to making women's lives better. At least one was developed by Canadian feminists into a video project. By the same measure, the notion also fails that my feminist ideas are extreme or marginal: my work has been profoundly appreciated in the geographical heartland of the United States. Participants in the Texas event, for example, came from all over the state. "Resistance" represents the grassroots women's movement, made up of ordinary, hard-working, committed women and men everywhere who want an end to injustice. I have never been alone in this. I know that for a fact because of the audiences. They and their love, respect, and desire—to know and understand and act—are what can never come through to the reader of these pages. Especially they are women, and they want relief from male violence.

Still on the life-and-death terrain of violence against women but now going deeper, searching for its roots, is "Confrontations," a series of essays on why and how the perception of women as subhuman evolves such that violence and exploitation become habits rather than crimes. Here I examine women's exclusion from human status and women's political subordination in the United States, in the public domain in most Western countries, in the relatively young state of Israel, in the sparkling new Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. Here I also challenge women's exclusion from the right of speech as such—not simply from personal expression, from art or culture, but from creating the political premises we take for granted. In each essay, the silence or invisibility of women's experience and its meaning are shown as distorting, undermining, or destroying the political and moral integrity of a nation, an institution, a right, or an idea.

It is my hope that because of the political work of feminists over the last quarter of a century, these writings may at last be read and taken seriously. I am asking men who come to these pages to walk through the looking glass. And I am asking women to break the mirror. Once we all clean up the broken glass—no easy task—we will have a radical equality of rights and liberty.

—Brooklyn, New York

May 1996

## CONTENTS

Preface xiii

### ORIGINS

My Life as a Writer 3

### EMERGENCIES

In Memory of Nicole Brown Simpson 41

Living in Terror, Pain: Being a Battered Wife 51

The Third Rape 55

Gary Hart and Post-Pornography Politics 60

A Government of Men, Not Laws, Not Women 63

Portrait of a New Puritan—and a New Slaver 67

Free Expression in Serbian Rape/Death Camps 73

Beaver Talks 77

## RESISTANCE

Mass Murder in Montréal: The Sexual Politics of Killing Women 105

Terror, Torture, and Resistance 115

Pornography Happens 126

Prostitution and Male Supremacy 139

Freedom Now: Ending Violence Against Women 152

Remember, Resist, Do Not Comply 169

## CONFRONTATIONS

Race, Sex, and Speech in Amerika 179

Women in the Public Domain: Sexual Harassment and Date Rape 196

Israel: Whose Country Is It Anyway? 217

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum: Is Memory Male? 240

Acknowledgments 251

Index 253

## ORIGINS





## MY LIFE AS A WRITER

I come from Camden, New Jersey, a cold, hard, corrupt city, and—now having been plundered by politicians, some of whom are in jail—also destitute. I remember being happy there.

First my parents and I lived on Princess Avenue, which I don't remember; then, with my younger brother, Mark, at my true home, 1527 Greenwood Avenue. I made a child's vow that I would always remember the exact address so I could go back, and I have kept that vow through decades of dislocation, poverty, and hard struggle. I was ten when we moved to the suburbs, which I experienced as being kidnapped by aliens and taken to a penal colony. I never forgave my parents or God, and my heart stayed with the brick row houses on Greenwood Avenue. I loved the stoops, the games in the street, my friends, and I hated leaving.

I took the story of the three little pigs to heart and was glad that I lived in a brick house. My big, bad wolf was the nuclear bomb that Russia was going to drop on us. I learned this at Parkside School from the first grade on, along with reading and writing. A bell would ring or a siren would sound and we had to hide under our desks. We were taught to cower and wait quietly, without moving, for a gruesome death, while the teacher, of course, stood at the head of the class or policed the aisles for elbows or legs that extended past the protection of the tiny desks.