bitter disappointment of it all." "Yes," Bonzo agreed. "I remember when I first raised this subject with Ron many years ago. He used to be a Democrat, you know, and that's why he believed in evolution. But then I pointed out to him that On the Origin of Species and the first volume of Capital were both published in 1839. This was no accident, no mere coincidence."

"Gee," I was forced to admit, "I never realized that Darwin was a Marxist. That certainly places things in a new light."

"Typical human reasoning," Muggs said impatiently. "That's not the point at all. The real point was that Marx was a Darwinist. Evolution is not a Communist plot; Communism is an evolutionist plot. That is the key difference. When I think of all the time we wasted back in the old days trying to kick the Communists out of the union, when what we really should have been doing was going after the evolutionists, why, it's enough to make a grown chimp weep."

And, with that, he did indeed begin to weep, taking several minutes to regain his composure. "After all these years, we're finally on the right track," he resumed, "and this time we're not about to fail."

I was much encouraged by the upbeat tone the interview had taken and I thought it an appropriate time to depart.

Bonzo and Muggs very graciously provided directions to Marineland of the Pacific where, they assured me, there were several intelligent and articulate dolphins who would confirm everything they had said.

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**A HANDBOOK FOR MAIDENS**

by John Simon

What, one might well ask, does the sacrifice of a few words matter as long as the social fabric is strengthened thereby? Bear in mind, however, that no change ever stops there, wherever the particular there may be. Take the case of feminist English and its demands from, and predations on, Standard English. Take, for example, the war on the masculine pronoun in its all-encompassing sense. Whole treatises have been written by feminists to prove the enormous psychic damage done to women by the grammatical masculinity of everyone and anyone—by our saying, for instance, "Everyone was in his place" or "Anyone can make up his own mind," and the like. Such usage has allegedly convinced countless women through history that they were second-class citizens, excluded from full participation in humankind or, as male supremacists through the ages have called it, mankind. If I were frivolous, I could remark that at least half of such statements carry a negative value, and that women might count themselves lucky to be excluded from such asseverations as "Everyone is dumber than he ought to be" or "Anyone can become the victim of his gullibility." But let me be strictly serious.

In the just-published *Handbook of Nonsexist Writing,* Casey Miller and Kate Swift—two journalists who previously collaborated on the book *Words and Women*—have a relatively long chapter on "The Pronoun Problem." I shall address my remarks chiefly to this; to attempt to refute the *Handbook* point by point, I would have to write a book myself and stoop so low as to debate the authors about why I still prefer "manhole cover" to their "utility hole cover," the kind of casuistry I'd just as soon put a lid on.

Miller and Swift first point in the representative chapter under discussion is that when the early English grammarians used masculine pronouns in a seemingly bisexual way, they were actually writing "grammars . . . for male readers in an age when few women were literate." This use, therefore, "did not reflect a belief that masculine pronouns could refer to both sexes," our authors claim, on what evidence they do not choose to state. Grammarians, they continue, later invented the so-called "generic he in an attempt to change the long-established English usage (as Miller and Swift call it) of "they as a singular pronoun," of which they give quite a few examples from good writers, e.g., Lord Chesterfield's remark, "If a person is born of a gloomy temper . . . they cannot help it." It is not till 1850, however, that "an Act of Parliament gave official sanction to the . . . 'generic he . . ." The new law said, "words importing the masculine gender shall be deemed and taken to include females." The authors conclude that "as a linguistic device imposed on the language rather than a natural development arising from a broad consensus [is there such a thing as a narrow consensus?] 'generic he is fatally flawed.'

Miller and Swift then refer to "several recent systematic investigations of how people of both sexes use and understand personal pronouns." They do not tell us, however, how and by whom these investigations were conducted; if by committed feminists, the results would most likely reflect what the investigators set out to prove. And who but a committed feminist would conduct such an investigation? The outcome allegedly showed that "at all levels of education people whose native tongue is English seem to know that he, him, and his are gender-specific [lovely word!] and cannot do the double duty" of representing both men and women.

Well, I could go out into the street right now to do a little questioning of my own and find contrary evidence aplenty. For much as our embattled authors advocate such constructions as "I shouldn't like to punish anyone, even if they'd done me wrong" (this from George Eliot), the construction is manifestly illogical and grates on any ear connected to a thinking brain. I do not care how many good writers have at times fallen into such illogic—there simply is no way in which anyone or everyone can suddenly multiply, as if it were a rabbit, into a they. And not even rabbits could produce parthenogenetically a litter between a main and a subordinate clause. In fact, a logical mind might be thrown by Eliot's sentence, and go looking for some antecedent to they other than that inappropriate anyone. But, along with like-minded feminists, Miller and Swift insist that 'like 'generic' man, 'generic' he fosters the misconception that the standard human being is male.' Isn't it odd that in no non-English-speaking country have women's groups found it necessary to quarrel in this mode with the language for psychopolitical (or is it psychopathological) reasons?

But it isn't odd at all that the only authority of any kind whom Miller and Swift actually quote by name in this section of their book is not a grammarian, linguist, writer, or other word-oriented person, but an obscure psychologist now called Wendy Martyna, though in a book she edited in 1972 she was still Wendy Martin. In their previous collaboration, *Words and Women,* our crusading authors wrote:

At a meeting of the Modern Language Association the story was told of twin girls who came home from school in tears one day because the teacher had explained the grammatical rule mandating the use of he when the referent is indefinite or unknown. What emotions had reduced them to tears? Anger? Humiliation? A sense of injustice? It is unlikely that any woman can recapture her feelings when the arbitrariness of that rule first struck her consciousness: it happened a long time ago, no doubt, and it was only one among many assignments to secondary status.

Now, I ask you, who shall prevail? Those unnamed twins whose eyes brimmed over with tears of anger, humiliation, or righteous indignation at such organized grammatical misogyny, or the tradition of good English that has functioned for centuries, that accords with other Indo-European languages, and that, despite the unrecapturable feelings
of any woman, did not condemn her to secondary status, but allowed her to become Jane Austen or George Eliot, or even Casey Miller or Kate Swift. Note, however, the inconsistency of the latter two when, in The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing, they argue that because in the past the prescriptive grammarians permitted the plural you to become singular as well and displace thou, nowadays the plural they should be allowed, in spite of the grammarians, to become singularized when necessary, or when the feminists deem it so. And what, pray, has happened to the "broad consensus" that was said to be required to justify such a change? Superseded, perhaps, by a consensus of broads.

We would not be in serious danger from Miller, Swift, and their sorority if we still had prescriptive grammarians, if the vast majority of linguists and lexicographers were not of the descriptive and permissive persuasion that arrogates the right to pronounce one usage correct and another incorrect. The reason is political. One wants to be the champion of progressive causes, repressed minorities—in short, the People—and so takes it out on the English language. One cannot get remuneration, votes, or even a pat on the back from the language; but there is abundant recognition and remuneration for taking up the cudgels for the People and bludgeoning the language, logic, even mere common sense, with them. What Miller and Swift conveniently overlook is the price we have paid for losing our second-person-singular pronominal form. Both in life and in literature, the switch from you (familiar) to thou (informal and intimate), or back again, carried enormous emotional impact. Gone, all gone! Although Miller and Swift are perfectly satisfied with the singular they, another solution also holds evident appeal for them. They cite at length and with palpable approbation recent attempts to coin "a new sex-inclusive singular pronoun." From "myriad suggestions," they adduce co, E, tey, and heshi; as well as na, from a novel by June Arnold, and person or per, from a book by Marge Piercy. They even reach back to the nineteenth-century eccentric Charles Converse, who proposed then (a contraction of that one), and approvingly mention the new supervisors' guide of American Management Associations, published by AMACOM (which sounds like some dreadful film from Fellini's artistic dotage), in which her is used "as a common-gender pronoun meaning he or she." "In a cogent introductory statement," our authors report, "the publishers explain the purpose of the innovation and the reasons for their selection of her." Consider now a simple sentence, say, "Everyone must do his duty," which could become, "Everyone must do co [or E, tey, heshi] duty." Or it could become "everyone must do na [or person, per, then, hir] duty." "I can envision a time when someone casually saying "na duty" to someone who usually says "hesh duty" will be overhead by someone else who uses "tey duty" in the presence of yet another accustomed to "hir duty"—and the result will, of course, be Babel. Unless perhaps an Act of Parliament, or some other such legislation, mandates (or, more properly, womanadates) one of these pronouns into law. But since Miller and Swift are against such legislation, could this happen? Possibly, because it is in the nature of radicals who bitterly oppose laws that disagree with them to foist equally or more restrictive laws on people of another persuasion.

Still, you might interject, where is the danger in making a few footling concessions if the result is peace in the republic? The danger is in that small concessions lead to big ones, that a few concessions lead to many, that one type of concession may encourage demands of quite a different type, and that the result will be chaos. Remember the great couplet from Pope's Essay on Criticism: "Our sons their fathers' falling language see, And such a Chaucer be, shall Dryden be." Do you grasp the full implications of this? Thanks to changes in our language—some in the cause of simplification, but many more based on political interest or sheer ignorance—Shakespeare is already beyond the reach of most people, Chaucer has to be read in second-rate modernizations, and Dryden, for the amplitude and elegance of his rhetoric, is not read at all.

There are two further problems with Miller and Swift's position. One is self-contradiction and consequent wishy-washiness. Take the question of girl versus woman. Miller and Swift first define their attitude thus: "A person . . . which could become, "Everyone must do co [or E, tey, heshi] duty." Or it could become "everyone must do na [or person, per, then, hir] duty." "I can envision a time when someone casually saying "na duty" to someone who usually says "hesh duty" will be overhead by someone else who uses "tey duty" in the presence of yet another accustomed to "hir duty"—and the result will, of course, be Babel. Unless perhaps an Act of Parliament, or some other such legislation, mandates (or, more properly, womanadates) one of these pronouns into law. But since Miller and Swift are against such legislation, could this happen? Possibly, because it is in the nature of radicals who bitterly oppose laws that disagree with them to foist equally or more restrictive laws on people of another persuasion.

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living before they have had the time to become "men," and they duly turn into charmless, premature adults lacking that sense of the child in man that Nietzsche rightly admired. That a female could remain much longer like unto the lilies of the field—having, perhaps, to spin a little, but, with luck, not toil at all—was, and still can be, a piece of good fortune for the loss of which the title "woman," with its real or implied responsibilities, is hardly adequate compensation.

But if "girl" applied to a person of nineteen or more is indeed something that makes red blood boil (blue blood, clearly, is immune to this demotic disorder)—if, in other words, it is an insult, an indignity, why is it all right for friends and kinfolk to use such filthy language to a woman of twenty? A few pages later, though, our authors go back even on their "late teens" deadline and cite with approval a reference to "young women in the thirteen-to-sixteen-year age-group." Clearly, this is the same kind of upgrading that turns undertakers into funeral directors, garbage collectors into sanitation workers, maids into household technicians—in other words, part of that self-serving, unrealistic procedure that tries to exalt the humdrum, and thus contributes to the confusion of meanings, debasement of values, and erosion of notions of excellence. And all this for a chimeras that the workman who collects garbage will smell no sweeter even if it becomes compulsory to call him Philosopher King.

Inconsistency is everywhere. The feminine ending—ess is not acceptable to women who, it seems, must be called actors and sculptors, not actresses and sculptresses; but alumnae, with its feminine ending, is a must: to women who would feel discriminated against if subsumed under alum. "Goddess" is not only permissible, however, but may indeed become preferable to the Christian God with his chauvinistic male-ness. Yet if women consider themselves included under "actors" and "sculptors," why do they feel excluded by "everyman" or "journeyman" or other such no longer masculine endings? Contradictions proliferate; even Saint Joan is no longer to be known as a heroine but as a hero. Poor girl—or woman: The Inquisition forced feminine clothing on her thus exposing her to the lust of her jailors; now the sisters are foisting a masculine ending on her, thus depriving her of the double glory of being simultaneously a female and a leader.

Finally, Miller, Swift, and their ilk have no sense of euphony, of the sound words make. They wonder what is wrong with "repairer" for repairman and "laundrer" for laundrian. You have to be pretty monomaniac and tone-deaf to ignore the ugliness of "repairer" and of the erer in launderer. Laundress is presumably unacceptable because of the feminine ending. It is hard to resist the conclusion that feminists either hate their feminity or smart under their lack of feminine comeliness—unhealthy situations both.

However that may be, by allowing irresponsible alterations in the language, we are not only losing the necessary touch with the glories of our literary past, but inviting a linguistic turmoil that must lead to the breakdown of everyday communication in the not so distant future.

SUNNI DAYS

Everyone's favorite ayatollah suddenly found that there are rulers in the Middle East that do not take kindly to calls for their removal. The Shah, despite his reputation for bloody repression, was a passive victim of Khomeini's revolution in Iran, and the Ayatollah made no attempt to mask his imperialistic ambition to extend the boundaries of his Shi'ite revolution to the entire Moslem world. This doctrine, preached from the mosques and radios of Iran ever since February 1979, had taken concrete form in Iraq, where Khomeini had explicitly called upon the local Shi'ites—more than half the population—to overthrow the regime of President Assad. Iraq did not adopt the "human rights" solution so dear to the hearts of Carter loyalists (according to which the followers of the Ayatollah get full civil liberties, are not subjected to tear gas or arrest, and are encouraged to form political parties), and invaded Iran.

This seems simple enough, but American journalists preferred to "go academic" and offer learned sermons on sixteenth-century conflicts between the Ottoman and Persian Empires, and even on the seventh-century division between Sunni and Shi'ite Islam. As a result, Khomeini's explicit attempt to destroy the current (Sunni) regime in Baghdad got lost in the verbiage. A.O. Sulzberger, Jr., for example, noted the Sunni-Shi'ite conflict, observed that it had gotten worse since the Iranian revolution, and then dryly wrote, "statements by Ayatollah Khomeini urging the Iraqi Shiites to overthrow their "satanic" Government has [sic] further disrupted Iraqi-Iranian relations."

The best analysis came from the Washington Post's William Branigin, who spelled it out clearly: "After he returned to Iran in triumph in February 1979 (Khomeini) set about encouraging Iraqi Shiites...to rise against their Sunni Moslem leaders. But even Branigin gives insufficient weight to the very nature of the Khomeini revolution: It is a pan-Islamic movement, claiming hegemony over all of the Muslim world.

The worst treatment comes from Don A. Schanche of the Los Angeles Times, a newspaper that in my view is about the best in the country these days. Schanche produced a pure thumb-sucker from Cairo, an interview with "a Western scholar who has lived in both Iran and Iraq." This scholar gave us the bread-and-circuses theory of history: Both nations have the same urgent need to divert attention from devastating domestic problems, so they make war. . . . But Iraq had extra reasons, so it started the war."

One would have hoped that at some point, the American analysts would have noticed that none of this happened when the Shah was in power, and speculated that perhaps Carter's foreign policy was in some way related to the new catastrophe. But I did not see this written anywhere, at least in the first week of fighting.

Inaccuracy in Media: The award for worst one-liner of the month goes to Frank Reynolds of ABC Television News, who on the night of 16 September reported that Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, former chief of naval operations (and now in the Reagan organization) accused David Aaron of the National Security Council staff of leaking the story of the "Stealth Bomber" to the Washington Post. Reynolds then said: "ABC News has learned that the Washington Post will report tomorrow that Zumwalt's ac-

by Michael Ledeen

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