

This is an attempt to further the perspective of fat women's liberation and wages for housework. I've not commented much on Lorna Boschman's paper--it was a breakthrough, and said alot; most of which I agree with (details such as uniting to fight to get the big stores to carry sizes to fit us I don't agree with, but I'm not sure if I understand this the way Lorna intended it). Mostly it is a spiel on the condition of fat women--all women--and I haven't gone into the situations of fat older women (though so many of us dressed as matrons when we were young because we were fat)--I'm sure any older fat woman can do that.

~~###~~

Fat women are everywhere. Oppression because of your weight is one of the most subtle and pervasive and total and hidden oppressions. It is difficult to get a clear picture; there are the huge obese women, there are the chubby bustling girls, there are the tall big muscular "heavy chicks"; these women suffer most overtly. There is also the woman who forces herself to maintain a low-calorie diet-year in year out, and young girls who starve themselves into a medical condition which name I've forgotten--when you are unable to eat anything at all and risk starving to death. Some women's bodies stay thin ~~and some women~~--except for these chronically-thin women, almost every woman has an internalized slob who terrorizes her into ~~maintain~~ molding her body into an object. We police each other regularly, keeping ourselves and our sisters in line through all kinds of ways; the net result is a continuation of our role of "femininity", a continuation of self-objectification, of judging our entire existence by one's appearance, and that appearance is of course formed by capital: we must be slaves tottering around on platforms with painted masks and bodies incapable of feeling, or we can be lusty animal-creatures--sexuality--our roles are tied in so much with our appearance that it is essential for capital to force us in line by our appearance - not to mention the huge profit that the clothing and cosmetic industries make. Not to mention the appearance of choice it gives us; while ruling class men choose what they want to do, most women can have a daily fantasy of a different self, a choice in the morning of what to wear, a fantasy of pleasing everyone by what you appear to be, a feeling of power when you look better than another sister -- this is necessary for capital to exploit us. Capital has even co-opted thin sister's power, with the "Twiggy"fad that alot of us lived through as teenagers; as yet they have found it IMPOSSIBLE to co-opt the struggles of fat women in this way. (they've tried in other ways which I'll mention later).

Chronic-thin women have faced the horrors of not being "real women". Their oppression has the same roots as ours, but involves an entirely different trip. We create our own fatness for ~~many~~ many reasons. A lot of us grew up poor, on macaroni & cheese, bread & peanut-butter, bread & drippings, etc. A lot of us never had enough to eat and now feel secure with a full pantry and full stomach. A lot of us cannot afford any but the cheapest starch foods now. We eat through the frustration which surrounds our daily routines, a killer of a job, loneliness, isolation. A lot of us reinforce our individuality by eating--we occasionally feel proud and self-reliant when we don't have to give a damn about our looks. There is a security about eating too, and a defence against intrusion. Lorna's paper outlines alot of the strengths and weaknesses in the struggles of fat women; how we are revolting against the conditions of femininity on one hand, and how we are isolated and made to feel guilty and freakish on the other. A whole social control trip has sprung up around weight. 1
By the time I was seven years old I ~~knew~~ that I ate because I had serious psychological problems--so my parents told me. I knew I was repulsive and morally weak and unable to control my base desires to stuff myself. I grew up with this self-hate, this isolation and loneliness. Then medicine steps in--living as I did in a polluted rotten city, with poisonous foods,

tensions of stress, in a damp and mouldy cold house, I learned that I must worry about my health because for ~~every~~ every pound you are overweight your heart must pump blood through an extra mile of blood vessels. Fat women all know this horror trip. Everything hinges around this character flaw, this horrible obesity.

My fear of men grew up on this entire situation. Men were the tormentors. They were the ultimate judges of my worth as a teenager. Their ridicule denied my existence. I was unable to enjoy any physical closeness, knowing that they looked on every bulge and ripple of fat with contempt. In time, I learned to exploit particular aspects of my situation--all the boys liked girls with big tits. This I exploited to the full, learning how easy it is to spread your legs so that this foreign being, this man, would take me to bed for it, and treat me for an hour like I was wanted. Frigidity--with men and with women--has been with me all my life; an entire dislike of my own body. ~~XXXXX~~ This is common, I think, and one reason why women with "imperfect bodies" are the first to reject objectification--its impossible for us. We lead the way for sisters who are able to conform, who can be beautiful objects in the first place.

~~Sister~~ Childhood hells are overcome, grown out of, forgotten. We learn that we have a wealth of other characteristics, we learn that our brains are there to be used, how beautiful a friendly person is, how little of beauty depends on the skin. But we can never concentrate too much on the physical; and it is very frustrating--after our bodies are forced to be numb daily at the assembly line or typewriter or whatever, we cannot unwind into sensuality at night to try and keep body and soul together. It is a hellish situation. Fat women face it all ~~thru~~ our lives.

Many of us have the strength of independence, of going it alone, of managing to survive through daily ridicule, of a knowledge that the society that damns us is thoroughly fucked up and we are not to blame. But we have to cultivate certain characteristics to get by, as Lorna pointed out; we must be super-charming, jolly, "good old so-and-so, dependable, fat and jolly and loving everyong". This facade kills us slowly, the suppressed rage eats us, we eat to overcome it.

Like women in other situations, fat women are not all fat, nor are "normal" women all normal. Our situations are not as clearcut as other "national" groups, the borderlines are fuzzy. I speak as a fat woman when at this point I'm not as fat as I once was. I met alot of skinny fat women when I was a speedfreak, and it is an indication of the condition of all women that alot of us stayed hooked because it had changed all our old eating habits--regarding our bodies as real estate it was necessary to fix all the time to keep that property in desirable condition. Women who chronically diet are unnoticeable as fat women; alot of us fight back at times by dieting, we gain power by becoming a "normal" as long as we can.

In our struggles as fat women, much of what was hidden about ~~our~~ women's condition has been revealed. Just as lesbians have exposed to other women the brutality of men, just as black people have exposed entire areas of white people's exploitation by the state, just as the third world is the other side of our condition in the metropolis, we have shown to "normal" women our common condition of objectification. We've shown how the state distorts and perverts our ways of seeing people (ourselves), how an entire culture grows up fucked up, and how we are nowhere free (even in nationalist ghettos fat women are ostracized). We revealed this individually, in isolation. We've so internalized our condition that it is difficult to regard our revolt

2

as anything "serious", its just our continual personal problem to us. But the state has realized our revolutionary potential, with its "Weight Watchers" and "Abnormal Psychology". We've been seen as repulsive, pathetic, piteable--victims. We must show the other side of it, how we struggle against being forced into higher levels of productivity as Lorna showed. How we dare to be unattractive to men, how we take initiative to develop ourselves alone. Whole levels of exploitation are outside us--we cannot enslave ourselves when the big shops can't clothe us--fancy boutiques are out for us. x Our role is to terrorize x"normal" women to be more productive; nobody wants to be like us. "Normal" women are there to keep us isolated, to keep us guilty and feeling like freaks. Its similar to what lesbian and straight women are forced to do to each other.

What we have done, as fat women, is to show that the condition of "normal" women is totally unnormal and unnatural. It is not beautiful to have difficulty breathing, to have to live in tent-dresses, to be unable to bend down, move quickly, walk long distances or run. Fat children are tortured every time they break the swings and see-saws--we grow up afraid to play or wrestle (we might crush someone). But alot of us who are "comfortably" fat have shown that there is an alternative to being weak and helpless, that we can be strong and steady, that we can be relied upon to fight off bullies. We move without the shadow of dependance ~~xxxxxxx~~ (because everyone disowned us long ago). We've shown that we can eat heartily, live relaxedly, act un-timidly, and sometimes even deal with the men who are terrorizing our sisters. Our way to fight our ~~xx~~ condition is not to try and join the other side by becoming thin. It is not to sit there gloating in our fat and say that all this flesh is beautiful. A lot of tried the "Fat is Beautiful" trip. While this and all other forms of ~~xxxx~~ uniting at our weakest point is necessary, it is also ~~xxxx~~ true that alot of us became nationalists, and found ourselves in ghettos--Quebecois vs English, Blacks vs. Whites, Women vs. Men, Lesbian vs. Straight, Fat vs. Thin, etc, etc. Without the realization that the differences between us are divisions of power used to reinforce our total powerlessness against capital, none of us get anywhere. We cannot fight by internalizing and ignorin our condition and continuing the struggle elsewhere (we do all these things as tactics to get ourselves through our lives). We cannot fight by guilt-tripping fellow-feminists into ~~xxx~~ trying to love our fatness. Pchychologizing anyone to "accept us" helps very little and as we show ~~xxxx~~ how we dare to be unacceptable, "acceptance" is the last thing we want. It is an insult for "normal" women to be kind enough to accept our condition and cuddle up to us like mommy, when we are bearing the brunt of the war going onx against all of us. Our strategy must be to destroy the state before it destroys us.

Only when we have more time and more money and less work will we be able to eatx what we want when we want to. The discomfort of being extremely fat can be removed when we can stop living on cheap starch foods and nibbling to pass the exersiating routines of our days. When we are free, we can decide how we want ourselves to be--strong and sturdy, thin and agile, whatever, instead of being terrorized into either obesity or the self-denial of dieting. We need wages for housework because only when all women are no longer prostituting their bodies to survive will "fat" and "normal" women be destroyed. And only the perspective of wages ~~xxx~~ for housework allows us to struggle with "normal women" for our common needs - we give them the strength of our revolt and they give us the strength of respect and the end of our isolation. And only the international struggle for the wage will destroy the cause and perpetrator of our torture--the state.