

their romance with her, perpetuate male supremacy. In this mythic process, the Wild Woman holds up a mirror that reveals the selves men desire to be.

The dream world about women in exotic other worlds, where the imagined comes true, is seen through men's eyes. Men use remote places as playgrounds for their psyches.

The image keepers of all women are civilized men.

Nature, woman, and wilderness resonate men's disappointing fantasies.

The quest for self begins by recognizing that woman is a derived construct based

on male interests obscured in romance.

I believe statements such as these close the historical, cultural and linguistic dimensions opened so thoughtfully earlier in the book and collapse them into the male/female dualism the book purports to overthrow.

While the 'Wild Woman' indeed "communicates multiple meanings," she is also confined to being the invention, dream, image and fantasy of men, and hence becomes singularized because of the essentialism of her referent, i.e., (all) men. What needs to be said is that the social practices which hegemonize men and inferiorize women are not simply a reflection of a naturalized inner core of male characteristics. On the contrary,

these male characteristics have to be examined and understood as being one of many possibilities of how maleness can be constructed. While I credit the authors with understanding this point I criticize them for not revealing it and for allowing their conclusions to suggest that power relations are an effect of a transhistorical maleness producing a transcultural femaleness. The last line of the book optimistically claims that understanding the romance of the 'Wild Woman' enables us "to take up the challenge of creating new realities." I would hope that priority be given first to a new reality of a liberated humanity where neither women nor men are 'wild.'

WOMEN WHO LOVE TOO MUCH

Robin Norwood. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985. Repr. Pocket Books, 1986.

Judy Steed

The only thing I don't like about *Women Who Love Too Much* is the title. It's misleading, but it does suggest the major delusion that's at the heart of Robin Norwood's book.

This is not your typical, superficial self-help treatise. Ms Norwood presents a radical thesis whose time has come: she argues that the conditioning of females in a male-dominated society tends to produce pathological behaviour in women — and men too, but that's another story. Her focus is female disease as in addiction to relationships. Some names for this little-known affliction are co-dependence or co-alcoholism. Don't be turned off if you don't happen to pick alcoholic mates. The only requirement for being a carrier is that you come from a dysfunctional family and were imprinted with those dysfunctional patterns that make empty souls of women, that place women in dependent roles, obsessed with the behaviour of their dominant males.

Ms Norwood, a California therapist who admits to having been a "woman who loves too much," begins her book thus: "When being in love means being in pain we are loving too much. When most of our conversations with intimate friends are about him, his problems, his thoughts, his feelings — and nearly all our sentences begin with 'he...' we are loving too much."

She describes the symptoms of the disease: picking inappropriate, uncaring or unavailable partners and being obsessed with what's wrong with them; becoming more and more obsessed with the relationship, no matter how negative his behaviour; being unable to withdraw, convinced that if you figure out how to look right, act right, be right, you'll solve the problem; swinging from elation to despair, alternately feeling like you're perfect and in control and then plunging into a deep depression because you're so bad and rotten. And so on.

But it's all a repeat of childhood patterns, and it's familiar. Norwood describes a typical case: Margo, a highly competent woman with a well-paying job and well-looked-after children. The only thing wrong with Margo's life was men. "Margo was drawn to men who were impossible: abusive, unpredictable, irresponsible or unresponsive. In these kinds of relationships there would be many arguments, even violent fights, dramatic exits and reconciliations, and periods of tense and fearful waiting in between. There could be serious problems with money or even with the law. Much drama. Much chaos. Much excitement. Much stimulation." Then comes the Norwood kicker: such relationships, she writes, provide "a great escape, a great diversion" from the real issue, which may be chronic, underlying depression from a stressful childhood. As long as Margo obsesses on destructive relationships with men, she will never have to face herself.

But don't despair. Ms Norwood suggests ways to break the pattern. Having convinced you that the disease exists, she also convinces you that there's only one way to cure it: "Make your own recovery

the first priority in your life." For women conditioned to put others first, from men to children, this is heresy. Recently, on the op-ed page of the *Globe and Mail*, there was yet another example of a saintly, self-sacrificing woman arguing against day-care: she had decided to stay home and look after her children because "children's needs come first." She didn't have to add that this arrangement above all suited her husband's needs. What of her needs? If women have needs, she made clear, they need to fulfill others' needs. This attitude, once considered the ideal of femininity, Norwood describes as pathological — or, to use a short word that means the same thing, sick.

So, to get better, she recommends one-to-therapy and some form of group work, ideally in a self-help program like Al-Anon, which is for the families and friends of alcoholics. She refers frequently throughout the book to Al-Anon philosophy, whose major themes — focus on yourself, stop the futile attempt to control others — reinforce her own perspective.

Women Who Love Too Much is clearly written, to the point and quite devastating. It's also inspiring. Last year it was hard to go anywhere without some woman telling another to read it. Try it, you might like it.

