

The Politics of Recovery: Reading *The Courage to Heal*

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Politiques de rétablissement:

Lire *The Courage to Heal* (Le courage de guérir)

*Écrire à propos de l'inceste, et écrire à propos d'écrire sur l'inceste, l'article de Yeo examine les politiques du discours des survivantes d'abus sexuel. Alors que les récits d'inceste ont été traditionnellement lus par les anthropologues, non comme parlant de l'abus, mais comme révélant un tabou de l'inceste, le féminisme de seconde vague a remis en question cette lecture en réinterprétant l'inceste comme une violence patriarcale. Le féminisme a permis un espace dans lequel les histoires d'abus sexuel peuvent être écrites; et où "briser le silence" est un acte politique féministe. Yeo débute en survolant le mouvement des survivantes, s'occupant d'un argument politique particulier implicite et explicite dans le mouvement. Mais par la suite, elle regarde au-delà du mouvement, vers l'utilisation des récits des survivantes dans le discours de croissance personnelle et elle analyse le potentiel pour ces récits d'être cooptés par la culture dominante. Yeo examine quel genre d'identité de survivante est produit et commercialisé par de puissants récits de croissance personnelle influencés par le féminisme, par exemple, le récit-maître fourni par la très populaire bible de croissance personnelle *The Courage to Heal* (Le courage de guérir). Contrairement au mouvement des survivantes qui cherche à placer l'inceste dans le contexte politique plus large de la famille patriarcale, le discours de croissance personnelle se concentre sur la victime d'abus à un point tel que le personnel devienne de la plus haute importance. Ultimement, la responsabilité demeure fermement au sein de la victime qui est incitée à se guérir elle-même. Yeo argumente que le mouvement de rétablissement ne conteste pas les structures qui permettent l'abus incestueux; en fait, il préserve essentiellement son propre marché en s'assurant que les structures qui produisent des survivantes en besoin de guérison demeurent intactes.*

i. "I never saw anyone like me..."

I never saw anyone like me in the incest books. I never saw anyone who said she had a good relationship with her father. All the perpetrators looked like angry, ugly, mean people, and yet my father appeared to be a loving, charming, wonderful man. I loved and adored him. He treasured me. That made the whole thing more insidious. My story needs to be told because women need to know their experience counts. There's no such thing as mild abuse.

“Randi Taylor”¹

This has become, to borrow Vikki Bell's phrase, a familiar story (pardon the pun). Since second wave feminists began to raise public consciousness about the political, social and personal consequences of incestuous sexual abuse in the late 1970s, incest victims – now self-identifying as “survivors” – have shared their experiences in a wide variety of public forums including (but not limited to) newspaper and magazine articles, television talk shows, dramas and movies-of-the-week, popular novels, films and celebrity autobiographies. The proliferation of survivor narratives in popular culture has been criticized, paradoxically, both for its exploitation of shocking sexual content, and for the banality of the conventional narrative form in which the “secret” of incest is often revealed. However, as Randi's story reminds us, this public outpouring of incest narratives is intended, first and foremost, to serve a political purpose by redefining the popular perception of the practice of incest and of its victims and perpetrators, emphasizing both its frequent occurrence and its long and short term personal and social consequences.

Although often framed as the untheorized (and therefore authentic and authoritative) experiences of female incest victims/survivors, survivor narratives pointedly and aggressively contradict traditional definitions of incest, which are perpetuated in what feminist texts often refer to as the “patriarchal incest myths.” Incest is traditionally defined as a sexual relationship (or, more precisely, heterosexual intercourse involving vaginal penetration) between blood kin too closely related to legally marry.² The primary social concern underlying anti-incest legislation is for the potential progeny of an incestuous union, as it was (and still is, in some circles) widely believed that incest weakens the gene pool, producing physically and/or mentally disabled offspring.³

This traditional understanding of incest sidesteps the issue of consent entirely, presenting incest as a moral issue – a sin against society and future generations – rather than a sexual violation of an individual victim. However, prior to the proliferation of survivor narratives during the past three decades, incest was generally constructed as extremely rare, aberrant behavior breaching a powerful universal taboo. Sociologist Vikki Bell points out that before feminist analyses of incest became prevalent, sociologists and social scientists rarely studied actual occurrences of incest, focusing their research primarily on uncovering the historical origin and the social function of the incest taboo (1).

Second wave feminists, however, drawing on evidence gathered in consciousness raising groups during the 1970s, redefined incest as an abusive practice that is much more prevalent than previous sociological and psychological studies would have us believe. They argue that incest is a widespread social practice in families of all racial, ethnic, religious, class and economic backgrounds, contradicting reports suggesting that in North America incest happens only in poor and/or non-white, non-Western, non-Christian homes.⁴ Feminist researchers developed an expanded definition of incestuous behavior that includes any form of explicitly sexual physical contact (such as oral and anal sex, kissing, and fondling) and any behavior that is *experienced by the victim* as sexually intrusive (Blume 2). This feminist understanding of incest also redefines family as a social unit, rather than just a biological bond, thus including common law and step-relatives in the family. This move defines the injury of incest as more than a physical violation, but a violation of a relationship of trust and dependency (Blume 2). Incest is now understood to be an abuse of authority, rather than a transgression of an ancient prohibition.

Studying incest alongside feminist analyses of sexual violence (rape and wife assault in particular), which focus on power dynamics, the effects of abuse on women's self perceptions, social constructions of male sexuality, and popular representations of sexual crimes, feminist theorists argue that "incest signals not the chaos it did (and does) for sociological functionalism, but an order, the familiar and familial order of patriarchy, in both its strict and its feminist sense. Incest reveals the gendered power dynamics of the society in which we exist" (Bell 3). No longer framed as a consensual relationship disrupting social order, incest is now constructed as a crime "produced and maintained by

social order: the order of male-dominated society," involving abusers and victims. Moreover, as Randi's narrative attests, these feminist analyses refuse to distance the abuser by constructing him as an "angry, ugly, mean" perverted social deviant. Rather, he is the apparently "loving, charming, wonderful" *normal* man whose abusive actions are "an extreme form of the training all girl children receive" (Bell 68). In other words, when fathers sexually abuse their daughters,⁵ they teach them that their social function is to submit to male power – in this case in the form of sexual desire – against their own will. The impact of incest on the developing identities of young female victims is extensive:

abuse produces more than the immediate moment of subordination: it has effects beyond violence and violation. Where there is violence, the Daughter's body may carry the mark of power in the most physical of senses. With the violation, the effects of incest can be extremely damaging in terms of psychological well-being. All of the feminist analyses agree on these two arguments. But the sociological argument that emerges from the feminist analyses is that the Daughter is subjected to and subjectified through the abuse in ways that continually attempt to place her within prevailing familial and gender relations. (Bell 70)

It is not sufficient, then, to address incest at the level of individual abusers and victims. Feminist analysis calls for a complete re-examination of the political structure of the nuclear family, focusing in particular on the ways the family engenders male and female subjects.

The "discovery" of the prevalence of child sexual abuse in seemingly "normal" families led feminists and survivors to re-examine the notion that there exists a powerful universal taboo against incest. The taboo, many concluded, does not prohibit committing incest, but rather forbids speaking about it (Bass and Davis 441). In the past, even when individual women and children did speak about incestuous sexual abuse, their experiences were interpreted through the lens of mainstream (read: male-dominated) discourse, and the victims' own interpretations of the abuse were effectively silenced. If the sexual abuse was not denied outright, the victims were often either constructed as "little Lollitas" and blamed for seducing their sexually

helpless male relatives, or seen as mentally ill and put into psychiatric “treatment” programs. Accordingly, feminists concluded that if individual women and children could not be heard, the answer must be to bring women’s experiences of incest “out of the closet” *en masse*, using public speech as a weapon with which to wage war against patriarchal myths. Thus the survivor movement was born, premised on a politics of visibility:

[n]umbers – massed bodies – constitute a movement and this, even if subterranean, belies enforced silences about the range and diversity of human sexual practices. Making the movement visible breaks the silence about it, challenges prevailing notions, and opens new possibilities for everyone. (Scott 23)

Incest victims began publicly identifying themselves as survivors – women who refuse to submit to the patriarchal imperatives of silence and obedience, refuse to take the blame for the abuse, refuse to continue protecting their abusive relatives and conforming to the social order that enables such abuse to continue unpunished. As Alcott and Gray point out,

the strategic metaphor of ‘breaking the silence’ is virtually ubiquitous throughout the movement: survivor demonstrations are called ‘speak outs,’ the name of the largest national network of survivors of childhood sexual abuse is VOICES, and the metaphor figures prominently in book titles such as *I Never Told Anyone*, *Voices in the Night*, *Speaking Out*, *Fighting Back*, and *No More Secrets* (Adams and Fay 1981; McNaron and Morgan 1982; Bass and Thornton 1991). (260)

Although the details of the survivors’ experiences vary from one woman to the next, the underlying message of feminist influenced survivor narratives remains consistent: society must stop ignoring sexual abuse or blaming its victims and address the ways that social practices, attitudes and values perpetuate the conditions in which child sexual abuse continues unabated.

ii. “... incest as illness had overwhelmed and swallowed

feminism..."

Undeniably, the survivor movement has had a significant impact on mainstream North American society's perception of incest. Many victims of child sexual abuse who had previously been silenced by traditional representations of incest were finally able to acknowledge their experiences privately and publicly, reassured that they could find sympathy, support and validation within a community of survivors. Slowly, survivor speak outs and other activist interventions began to have an impact on some social institutions as well, as reflected in the changes that have been made to the legal definitions of incest and child sexual abuse, and to the treatment of abuse survivors by the psychiatric profession. In addition to lobbying for legal reform, survivors and their supporters have developed advocacy and support agencies for abused women and children (or expanded existing programs), implemented public education programs in schools, produced television and print child protection advocacy campaigns, and written hundreds of publications addressing the issues involved in identifying and preventing child sexual abuse.

However, feminist influenced survivor discourse has neither erased nor wholly replaced the traditional mainstream discourses about incest. Rather, the various discourses uneasily co-exist, constantly influencing and reshaping one another. For, while "[t]he act of speaking out in and of itself transforms power relations and subjectivities, or the very way[s] in which we experience and define ourselves," as Alcoff and Gray point out (drawing heavily on Foucault's *History of Sexuality*), "bringing things into the realm of discourse ... is not always or even generally a progressive or liberatory strategy; indeed it can contribute to our own subordination" (260). They argue in "Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?" that although survivor narratives disrupted, and continue to disrupt, the dominant mainstream discourse about incest, they constantly risk being co-opted by the dominant discourse, which actively seeks to channel survivor discourse into non-threatening outlets (268). Alcoff and Gray specifically address the concern that the political impact of survivor discourse is defused when survivor discourse is regularly featured in the mainstream media, and in particular on television talk shows, the modern-day confessional. Their essay explores the political effects of survivor speech as it is presented on these talk shows,

questioning the impact the representation of survivors in this context might have on the construction of women's subjectivities, and asking whether the proliferation and dissemination of survivor discourse is having a subversive effect on patriarchal violence, or is being taken up and used by the mainstream media in a manner that diminishes its subversive impact (261). Their general argument is that we cannot be complacent about the social, political and cultural impact of the popular proliferation of survivor discourse. The contexts in which survivor discourse is produced are constantly shifting, and we must continually reassess the political effects of survivor speech, even, or perhaps particularly, in its most ostensibly 'feminist' forms.

Toward this end, the remainder of this discussion will be devoted to an analysis of the politics of the construction of the sexual abuse survivor in "the most promoted—and most vilified—book on incest," *The Courage to Heal* (Armstrong 5). I've chosen to focus on this self-help text because, since the mid 1980s, the recovery movement has become virtually synonymous with the survivor movement in the popular consciousness. In *The Politics of Survivorship*, Rosaria Champagne argues that *The Courage to Heal* has "turned a whole generation of women into feminists" (19). Certainly it has provided thousands of women with a powerful feminist-influenced master narrative through which to re-interpret their childhood experiences. However, we must question what sort of survivor identity is being produced and marketed by *The Courage to Heal* and what the political implications of adopting and promoting this identity might be.

"This book" write Ellen Bass and Laura Davis in the preface to *The Courage to Heal* "...is based on the premise that everyone wants to become whole, to fulfill their potential" (14). This self-help book, which combines elements of feminist survivor discourse, liberal feminism, and the 12-step recovery program, is designed, as its title suggests, to help adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse heal. Building on the foundational premises of the feminist survivor movement, Bass and Davis assert that "[a]ll sexual abuse is damaging, and the trauma does not end when the abuse stops. If you were abused as a child, you are probably experiencing long term effects that interfere with your day-to-day functioning" (20). *The Courage to Heal* assures survivors that it is possible to heal the damage caused by sexual abuse—it is even possible to thrive—but only "if you are willing to work hard, if you are determined to make lasting changes in your life,

[and] if you are able to find good resources and skilled support” (20). The journey toward healing, Bass and Davis argue, begins when survivors recognize both the damage that the abuse has caused in their lives and the coping mechanisms they have developed to cope with that damage, and make a decision to heal. Although the authors reassure readers that they need not remember the details of the abuse in order to heal from its effects, the first few stages of recovery centre on coping with recovered memories and believing that the abuse happened. Once the survivor has accepted that she was abused, she must “break the silence” that undoubtedly surrounds the abuse because “[t]elling another human being about what happened to you is a powerful healing force that can dispel the shame of being a victim” (Bass and Davis 58). The survivor is then encouraged to “place the blame [for the abuse] where it belongs—directly on the shoulders of the abusers” (58). At this point, the survivor must “[make] contact with the child within” as a way of developing compassion for her wounded self and cultivating anger toward her abuser. Mourning the inner child’s loss of innocence and trust, directing anger toward the abuser (possibly, though not necessarily, by confronting the abuser) and “having a sense of a power greater than you” that will guide in the healing process also help the survivor move toward her ultimate goal—“resolution and moving on” (59).

It is, in many ways, extremely difficult (and, in the face of the right-wing backlash fueled by the False Memory Syndrome Foundation, politically dangerous) to criticize the project of *The Courage to Heal*. The authors’ emphasis on the importance of believing abuse survivors and acknowledging the role that abuse can play in the construction of survivors’ sexual and gender identities is consistent with the goals of the survivor movement. Both the survivor movement and *The Courage to Heal* work from the assumption that incestuous behavior is damaging, both encourage survivors to “break the silence” surrounding child sexual abuse, and both emphasize that it is the adults who are responsible for the abuse, not the child victims. However, because *The Courage to Heal* is primarily concerned with personal healing, as opposed to social change, it lacks the survivor movement’s critique of the “normal” family and analysis of the ways that incestuous abuse is consistent with the dynamics of “normal” gendered interactions.

It is important to keep in mind that, unlike the survivor movement,

the self-help and recovery movement is an industry whose ultimate goal is financial profit. In *The Culture of Recovery*, Elayne Rapping points out that self-help books are the dominant means by which the therapeutic ideology is disseminated in North American culture, largely because they offer readers a kind of certainty and reassurance that is rarely, if ever, provided by group and individual therapy, or the various versions of the Anonymous program (130). Moreover, unlike therapy and Anonymous programs, books are available whenever and wherever the reader needs them, and allow the survivor to move through the recovery program at her own pace, and on her own terms. Arguably the most significant difference between books and therapy groups, though, is that self-help books “are written and edited to be consistent, clear, and adapted to the needs of a clearly researched market segment seeking a very clearly understood set of analyses and guidelines for a specific set of problems...[b]ooks have a clear market to reach and a bottom line to consider; groups have none of this disciplinary structure” (Rapping 130). Therefore, as committed as the authors of books like *The Courage to Heal* may be to helping their readers recover from their wounds and reach their full potential, they do not seek to change, or even radically challenge, the structure of North American society, or of the nuclear family, because one of the many social functions that these structures serve is to support the industry that produces self-help books (Rapping 150). As a result, the politics of the recovery movement are complex, as Rapping points out:

[the recovery] movement is at once the most political and the most apolitical of recent social developments. Determined by its very nature and vision to focus on the self as a spiritual and biological, but not a social, entity, and to offer guidance in personal internal growth and transformation, in a political vacuum, it nonetheless borrows from and lends to the larger political culture in many ways. (161)

In other words, while the authors of *The Courage to Heal* borrow the basic arguments of the feminist survivor movement and play a significant role in disseminating them in mainstream society, they may ultimately take these arguments in directions that work against its political goals.

Louise Armstrong, author of *Kiss Daddy Goodnight*, one of the first

autobiographical survivor narratives to be widely publicized in the United States, argues that the recovery movement has had a negative impact on the politics of the feminist survivor movement, writing that “[s]omewhere along the way, rather than feminism politicizing the issue of incest, incest as illness had [sic] overwhelmed and swallowed feminism” (207). Whereas the survivor movement emphasizes the injury that incestuous sexual abuse causes in order to reinforce the urgent necessity of addressing incest both as a crime and as a social and political concern, the recovery movement makes identifying and healing survivors’ suffering its sole focus. As Armstrong points out,

[t]he therapeutic ideology—whatever its language—raises the personal to the paramount, placing the individual at the hub of her very own claustrophobic universe; putting her “in recovery” ... For all the exuberance of the collateral language— healing, and so forth—to be *in recovery* derives from the disease model of alcoholism: thus, to be “in recovery” suggests a rather permanent placement. (There is no such thing, we have long been told, as a *recovered* alcoholic.) (209)

Armstrong also draws attention to the fact that even the ostensibly political act of speaking out is transformed into a mere stage in the healing process in *The Courage to Heal*. Some argue that the therapeutic emphasis on individual healing and personal growth in books like *The Courage to Heal* is inherently political because raising women’s self esteem and encouraging them to accept and embrace their gender and sexuality are subversive acts in a hetero-patriarchal society (Alcoff and Gray 283, Kitzinger in Armstrong 210); however, others argue equally passionately that self-help books defuse the politics of the survivor narratives by pathologizing incest survivors (Armstrong 214). The “brilliance” of the recovery movement, Armstrong suggests, is that it preserves the status quo, and thus offends no one. The “help” the recovery movement offers survivors appears to be socially and politically progressive, while its emphasis on personal healing diverts energy that might otherwise put into political protest toward the self. The suggestions in *The Courage to Heal*, like those in most self-help books, can be useful in helping individuals sort out their feelings, emotions and behavior patterns, and can even help readers raise their self-esteem (Rapping 150). We must, however, carefully explore the

political effects of this emphasis on self esteem and healing, and ask what kind of "self" *The Courage to Heal* is producing.

In a sub-section of *The Courage to Heal* entitled "Self-Esteem and Personal Power," Bass and Davis reconstruct the adult survivor's childhood experience of sexual abuse:

When you were abused, your boundaries, your right to say no, your sense of control in the world were violated. You were powerless. The abuse humiliated you, gave you the message that you were of little value. Nothing you did could stop it.

If you told someone about what was happening to you, they probably ignored you, said you made it up, or told you to forget it. They may have blamed you. Your reality was denied or twisted and you felt crazy...[y]ou felt isolated and alone.

(34)

The child, we are unequivocally told, is a helpless victim—powerless in the face of the abuser's authority and his ability to deny her reality outright. The text's tone of assurance and its direct address to the reader are convincing and comforting, as is the seemingly universal scope of *The Courage to Heal*. Davis points out in the preface that as she was collecting survivors' stories for this book, "it became clear that there were tremendous similarities in the stories. The black ex-nun from Boston and the ambassador's daughter from Manila described the stages of their healing process the same way. A pattern started to emerge" (16). Earlier, Bass emphasizes that although she is a trained therapist, "none of what is presented here is based on psychological theories. The process described, the suggestions, the exercises, the analysis, the conclusions all come from the experiences of survivors" (14). As these passages indicate, both Bass and Davis see experience as the root of knowledge about incest, the "bedrock of evidence" upon which their explanation of the dynamics of sexual abuse and of the path to healing is built (Scott 25). This naturalization of experience, Joan Scott argues, forecloses questions about the constructedness of experience, about how subjects are constituted, about how one's vision is structured, and about the role that language, discourses and history play in the construction of vision and experience (25). Thus, she continues,

the project of making experience visible precludes critical examination of the workings of the ideological system itself, its categories of representation (homosexual/heterosexual, man/woman, black/white as fixed immutable identities), its premises about what these categories mean and how they operate, its notions of subjects, origin and cause. (Scott 25)

In effect, instead of disrupting the ideological systems that enable child sexual abuse, by universalizing and essentializing the experience of child sexual abuse, recovery discourse accepts the terms of the dominant discourse, and reinforces the notions of gender difference and adult/child power dynamics upon which that discourse is premised.

My intent is not to challenge or undermine the truth value of the experience Bass and Davis describe, but rather to examine its discursive construction. The authors' emphasis on the child's powerlessness against adult authority is clearly meant to counteract victim-blaming accusations that survivors of child abuse are complicit participants if they do not protest loudly and violently. However, if, as feminist theorists have argued, the abuser's sexual desire for the child/victim is rooted in a need to exercise power over someone, doesn't reinforcing the child's helplessness (which is itself a cultural construction) ultimately reproduce desired and desirable victims? Must victims of abuse be seen as helpless in the face of the violence in order not to be responsible for producing or inviting it? Jenny Kitzinger raises similar questions about the child protection movement's construction of sexual abuse as a violation of childhood innocence, noting that although in part it counteracts victim-blaming stereotypes, "it has also become a fetishistic focus in itself" (79). Kitzinger suggests that using the notion of innocence to provoke revulsion against sexual abuse is potentially counterproductive because, as a brief glance at pornographic and mainstream images of sexuality suggests, innocence is a sexual commodity, and a source of titillation (79). Moreover, the emphasis on the child victim's innocence is problematic because it stigmatizes the 'knowing' child, potentially punishing those abuse victims who do not conform to the romanticized ideal of childhood purity (Kitzinger 80).

The reification of childhood innocence and, I would argue, the recovery movement's emphasis on victims' powerlessness, draw

attention to the child's social vulnerability, but fail to adequately analyze the social and political structures that produce and reinforce that weakness and vulnerability. Instead of critiquing the social structures that produce the innocent, helpless, and (to some) sexually desirable child, *The Courage to Heal* indirectly supports these structures by urging survivors to re-discover their "inner children" in order to protect and comfort them. In *Victimized Daughters: Incest and the Development of the Female Self*, Janet Jacobs argues that in order to heal from abuse, survivors must acknowledge "the victimized child self," thus recreating "a female identity that can be valued and trusted" (154). Jacobs suggests that therapy can provide the ideal setting in which a survivor can learn to value "the denigrated and rejected female self":

through the process of transference, the survivor recreates a childlike dependency on the therapist who replaces the idealized parent in the unconscious of the survivor. When this transference is negotiated successfully by the therapist, the clinical relationship becomes a model of respectful caretaking through which the survivor's autonomy may be safely tested and realized. (154)

What is disturbing about this description of a supposedly "successful" therapy relationship, aside from the tremendous burden of responsibility it places on the shoulders of the therapist, is that its aim is to reproduce the very power dynamics that enable—and possibly instigate—the sexual abuse in the first place. This form of therapy does not empower survivors, but attempts to make them more comfortable in disempowered subject positions and to help them learn to value their vulnerable female selves. Jacobs also notes that this form of therapy is most productive if the therapist is a woman, because a woman can provide the survivor with "gender validation" which helps combat the destructive effects of incest on the mother-daughter bond (54).

Bass and Davis do not advocate the development of this transference therapist/patient relationship in *The Courage to Heal*,⁶ but they do encourage survivors to mother their own inner children by listening to and responding to their needs and demands. They argue that "[i]t is only in taking care of [the child within] that you can really learn to take care of yourself" (113). This advice is politically

progressive insofar as it fosters respect for children's agency and desires, but it simultaneously reinforces the image of the helpless child in need of adult protection. It is also troubling that Bass and Davis write about "the child within" not as a metaphor, but as though it were an actual being, describing one woman who threw birthday parties for her child within, and another who "set up whole playrooms for the injured children who lived inside her. She created safe places for each one, complete with age-appropriate toys, stuffed animals, postcards sent and received, drawings, and lots of affirmations" (114-15). As Armstrong points out, this "treatment" not only infantilizes women, but also encourages them to domesticate their anger by focusing their energy on nurturing the wounded child within.

Clearly, the path to healing Bass and Davis describe in *The Courage to Heal* is firmly rooted in the survivor movement's theorization of incestuous sexual abuse. This does not mean, however, that the two movements pursue the same goals. It is neither co-incidental nor surprising that the recovery discourse Bass and Davis helped create has gained wider popular currency than feminist survivor discourse from which it grew. *The Courage to Heal* focuses on one aspect of child sexual abuse—the damage it causes women—ignoring the survivor movement's plea for a radical re-examination of the social structures that produce and enable incestuous abuse. By encouraging women to accept and embrace their vulnerability and urging both sexes to protect the innocence of children, the recovery movement essentially preserves its own market by ensuring that the structures that produce survivors in need of healing remain intact.

Notes

¹ Randi Taylor's survivor narrative can be found in Ellen Bass and Laura Davis' *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*, New York: Harper & Row, 1988. 405. Randi Taylor is a pseudonym, used for legal reasons.

² Laws and customs about which family members are too close to marry vary from one country to the next.

³ See Vikki Bell's discussion of the parliamentary debates about the criminalization of incest in England (1908) and Scotland (1986).

⁴ For more on this topic, see Elizabeth Wilson's "Not in This House: Incest, Denial and Doubt in the White Middle Class Family" *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 8 (1995): 35-58.

- ⁵ This argument is also applied to sexually abusive relationships between grandfathers and granddaughters, uncles and nieces, siblings, and so on.
- ⁶ Bass does, however, construct herself as a sort of midwife, writing that "[t]he opportunity to be a part of women's healing feels a little like assisting at a birth. It's awesome to touch the miracle of life so closely. When women trust me with their most vulnerable, tender feelings, I am aware that I hold their spirit, for that moment, in my hands, and I am both honored and thrilled" (15).

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