

# Language, Gender and Violence: An Inquiry

I have a friend, married some years, whose spouse is very articulate. So it used to be that when they argued, my friend (who has trouble expressing thoughts and feelings) always took a verbal lashing. Very hurtful things were said in such a way that my friend felt absolutely helpless and very much attacked.

Then one day, cornered and angry and feeling defenseless, my friend struck back physically, something that had never happened before.

Suddenly they both realized what had been happening; the pattern they had fallen into. Today they try to work through things differently.

It's true that the story emphasizes the power of language. But there's another aspect of this power which I think I can demonstrate in a question:

How does the above story change if the one who struck the first blow was a man — or a woman?

I have tried telling this story both ways (it's a true story but I change

the genders around) and have gotten very different responses. Almost without exception, women have protested that the man was wrong to hit his wife, but very few have said the same thing when they thought it was a woman who struck her husband.

Why? If the given motives are accepted as I stated them, why should there be a different emotional reaction? Violence is violence and it's possible to be very violent with words.

Is it simply impossible to impute certain motives to men? Men's reactions have been more mixed, but quite a few have reacted similarly, saying the man was wrong to hit but the woman was defending herself when she hit.

Let me give another example of the power of gender in language.

If I were to claim that biology dictates that men and women serve significantly different roles in society, I set myself up for criticism, even though the facts of birth and

child care are all too well known.

If I go on to claim that some of the biological differences between men and women include a higher threshold of pain and greater physical endurance in women, some (by no means all, but a significant amount, I think) of the criticism against my proposition vanishes.

If I keep on, however, and suggest that men are biologically more likely to excel at higher mathematics, I risk calling down a flood of criticism for my ideas. Clearly I should have quit when I was ahead.

Even now, some of my readers have decided I'm saying something derogatory about women. I sincerely hope I'm not.

We can't avoid talking about gender and continue to talk about ourselves. So there must be some way found to defuse the language without unlearning the truths that feminist criticism of language has taught us.

Mark Baldrige is a senior English major, and a Diversions contributor.

## True friends are hard to find today, but they can be found through God

In this daily walk of life, discovering an individual who contains the fruits of unselfishness, confidentiality, honesty and self-esteem is difficult and seemingly impossible. There lies a distinct difference between an acquaintance and a friend. Many of the burdens carried by brothers and sisters exist because of the misconception that when a person acts friendly, it means that he or she is a friend.

We are quick to judge one another negatively or positively, which only causes our backs to become heavier, and our daily walk transforms into a state of non-advancement.

A friend is a gift from God, and friendship is a relationship that must be earned. God is a perfect being, and through Him a friend can be found. Because we are quick to judge and much of our trust is placed in acquaintances — who often appear friendly and yet have identities that are unknown — they have taken away the true meaning of what a friend is. Acquaintances have caused the destruction of relationships through shadiness

(two-faced people) and miscommunication, intentional or unintentional. These so-called friends create hurdles that defer the progress of brothers and sisters uniting to achieve a common goal and to form meaningful, everlasting relationships.

So what is a friend? A friend is aware of what is important and makes sacrifices for others when necessary. For God will bless according to His will. A friend is a listener.

One can tell a friend personal beliefs, opinions, and innermost secrets because the information will be seriously listened to — but not run out the mouth — and kept in the mind.

Throughout our lives, people will come and people will go, times will be hard and confusing, and times will be full of rejoicing and understanding. The storms will rage and the billows will blow, and the sun will shine and the rays of light will lift up our heads. And there will stand a friend — for friends last forever.

Charles McClendon is a sophomore finance major and a Diversions contributor.

**Aloha Tanning Salon**

**15**  
Days Till Spring Break  
Our 9th Anniversary

**5 tans for \$7.50**

- buy March 5 or 6 only
- Limit one package per person
- Use anytime

5555 S. 48th We carry swim suits!  
423-2134

**WHEN DRINKING, CALL A FRIEND.**

**OR GET A RIDE WITH A STRANGER.**

MOTORCYCLE SAFETY FOUNDATION

## Comic dissidents vie for niche



Courtesy of DC Comics

About one year ago, a group of artists left Marvel Comics to form their own comic book company: Image comics. Supposedly Marvel had been holding these artists back, not allowing them to reach their creative prime. These artists were chained to their drawing tables, forced to turn out a book on time, and were paid a million dollars to do so. Unhappy with these conditions, they formed Image, so they could turn out their books whenever they felt like it and still make millions doing so.

The books that Image has released so far range from the OK "Spawn," and "Wild C.A.T.S.," to the downright pathetic, "Youngblood," and "Brigade." When Image was formed, a tremor rippled through the comic book industry, possibly signalling a whole new line of totally unique books. Instead, all of Image's books are basic comics that could easily fit right in with the Marvel or DC universes.

The best book put out by Image is "Spawn," written and drawn by former Spiderman artist Todd McFarlane. The hero, Spawn, is quite unique. He was killed and went to hell where he sold his soul to the devil. His reasoning behind this is that he misses his wife. The devil sends him back to earth, but five years has passed and now Simmons (Spawn's real name) is horribly disfigured and has great powers. The catch is that the more he uses his powers, the closer he comes to dying again. And to make matters worse, Simmons was originally black, and now he is white.

By the time Simmons returns to earth, his wife has remarried. The man she has married is the man who killed Simmons in the first

place.

Although McFarlane cannot write very well, "Spawn" isn't too bad of a book. His dialogue is long and wordy, a true sign of someone who hasn't been trained in writing. McFarlane has recognized this, however, and has hired some writers to do a series of stories: Neil Gaiman, Alan Moore, Dave Sim, and Frank Miller will all write an issue of "Spawn." Later in the year, Grant Morrison will take over the writing duties and Bart Sears will draw "Spawn," while McFarlane works on a spin-off series.

Rob Liefeld, the guy who was in the Levi commercials sometime ago, is currently creating his own little niche in the Image universe. So far, the books that he has created for Image, "Youngblood" and "Brigade," flat-out suck. Liefeld's writing makes McFarlane look like Ernest Hemingway. Although his art is okay, the stories he presents are of about a fourth-grade reading level. Avoid them like the plague.

Image Comics biggest problem seems to be shipping the books on time. Most of the books have been anywhere from a month to two months late, and "Spawn" is the only book that appears on a regular basis. Also, they really need to take the hint from McFarlane and hire some real writers. Maybe then their books will be worth reading.

If you enjoy meaningless fight scenes with terrible dialogue, then check out the Image books. If you are looking for something with a little substance, pass them on by and pick up a Vertigo book.

William J. Harms is an Arts and Entertainment reporter and a Diversions contributor.

**APU CHOIR**  
SHARING SONGS OF PRAISE

**SUNDAY, MARCH 7**

**10:30 AM**

**CORNERSTONE**  
640 N 16TH

**SALE**

Spring Clearance - Everything Reduced!

**Second Wind**  
Vintage Clothing and Collectables  
720 "O" Street  
(Under the Viaduct)

**Need A Lawyer?**

ASUN Student Legal Services Center offers free legal advice and representation to UNL Students.

For an appointment call 472-3350 or stop by Room 335 Student Union