

7

SEPARATING THE WOMEN

An image of women and sexual relations was always implied in individualist theory but never made explicit. The theory was about rational individuals, and rational individuals were assumed to be men. But the theory also contained, in the abstract idea of rational individuals, many hidden assumptions about the 'proper' market roles of men and women. In general, men were assumed to be dominant over women and women subservient to men. These assumptions were implicit in market theory, but they were always explicit in market culture and particularly in the cowboy myth. The theory only talked about abstract individuals, but the myth told social stories, stories about men, women, and sexual relations.

Separate spheres

The implicit assumption of individualist theory was that rational individuals could only be men, specifically white men. The individualist idea of the rational individual, the idea of individual equality, was never about all individuals. Only white men, essentially European men, were assumed to be rational, so the entire attack on class inequality assumed sexual and racial inequality. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries this assumption could be taken as obvious and not explicitly discussed. Men were rational and women were not, so women, it was assumed, should stay in the family and out of the market. Women were not so much forgotten by the theory as set aside and ignored. The early individualists certainly understood that market society would include women, children, and families. Women, however, and thus children and families, were not relevant to the *theory* of the market, a theory about rational individuals, a theory of freedom, equality, democracy, and private property. As Stephanie Coontz has commented, '... the powerful legal, political, and economic principles of liberal theory – liberty, equality, fraternity, and the

rights of man – could claim universality only by ignoring women and the family' (1992: 59).

But if women were not in individualist theory, they were always in individualist culture. The market myth of origin dramatized market relations, so women had to be shown playing their 'proper' role, the role assumed by the theory. Explicit individualist ideas – freedom, equality, private property – had to be portrayed in terms of women, which meant in terms of sexual issues – love, passion, families, children. These sexual issues were implicit in the theory but had to be explicit in the culture. The cultural stories explained the abstract theory for daily social life, and women only appeared in the cultural stories, not in the abstract theory. So the cultural stories, and particularly the frontier myth, explained the issues of women and sex for the new market society. The stories explained all the issues of individualism at the visceral level of culture, and they were the only source of social understanding for the issues of gender and sex. These issues are important for social life, but they were not explained in the concepts of the abstract theory.

Just like the theory, the myth is primarily about men. It shows, just like the theory, that men should be rational, autonomous, and self-interested. The mythical contribution, then, in terms of sex, is how to interpret this idea of men in an explicit context of women. What the myth shows, of course, is that men should be dominant, aggressive, confident, and strong, while women should be dependent, subservient, weak, and passive. In particular, men should be competitive and self-interested while women should be compassionate and moral. Women, in effect, should be the opposite of rational men. Women should provide what a good society needs in addition to rational, competitive self-interest. They should provide, that is, a tempering context of morality, generosity, and support. Women are 'naturally' suited for love, emotion, and obedience, just as men are 'naturally' suited for dominance, aggression, and independence. In particular, women should not be competitive with men. Rather, they should provide a loving, supportive refuge for men, that is, the family.

This familiar cultural image reflects individualist theory, the implicit assumptions of the theory. But it also *revises* that theory in an interesting way, because the abstract theory never included women. According to the myth, women are important to rational men. Women provide a necessary place of refuge and renewal and a necessary moral constraint. Women, as a result, become a necessary component of the idea of a civil society, and this is not true in the theory, at least not explicitly. If rational men need loving women to build a civil society, then these rational men – rational individuals – are not as autonomous as the theory suggests. According to the theory, rational, autonomous individuals should simply pursue private profit, and civil society will emerge. According to the myth, however, women must love rational men and temper their autonomy for the sake of civil society.

Men in the myth need a safe, loving refuge, the family, and this makes them less autonomous and self-interested than the theory asserts. Women, in effect, according to the myth, mitigate male autonomy for the sake of civil society. The culture, then, makes clear, in contrast to the theory, that women and families are necessary for a civil society. Men and women together create a civil society, so the cultural problem, then, ignored by the theory, is how to explain the role of women so that men are still autonomous and self-interested.

The solution is an image of *separate spheres*. Men and women have separate sexual spheres, and each sphere requires specific sexual roles. Both women and men should stay in their respective spheres for the sake of a good society. Men should stay in the rational sphere of the market and women should stay in the emotional sphere of the family. The male sphere must dominate the female sphere, and the female sphere must be defined in terms of serving the male sphere. Men are 'naturally' dominant and competitive while women are 'naturally' subservient and moral. Therefore, the 'natural' morality of women must constrain through love the 'natural' self-interest of men, as E. Anthony Rotundo describes:

The doctrine of separate spheres entrusted women with the care and nurture of communal values – of personal morality, social bonds, and, ultimately, the level of virtue in the community. Men were left free to pursue their own interests, to clash and compete, to behave ... selfishly. Women now stood for traditional social values, men for dynamic individualism ... It gave men the freedom to be aggressive, greedy, ambitious, competitive, and self-interested, then it left women with the duty of curbing this behavior. (1993: 24–25)

The image of separate spheres was implicit in individualist theory, and the culture made it explicit. Women could be seen as socially important but only in their separate sphere, the sphere of the family. Men had to be autonomous and self-interested, as rational individuals, but they also had to be civil and honorable. Their private self-interests had to be tempered somehow by a commitment to trust and honesty, a commitment to shared morality. Both Locke and Smith recognized this moral need when they made their moral assumption, and Durkheim recognized this need in his idea of organic solidarity. The culture also recognizes this need but if offers a different solution. The culture suggests, through its image of women, that women will provide the necessary morality to make rational men civil. Men will create the rational market based on private self-interests, and women will temper those private self-interests by offering love and the family.

The idea of separate spheres meant women had to be unequal to contribute to market civility. In theory, of course, market society was committed to legal equality – equal market opportunity for rational individuals. But women could not be rational individuals and offer the necessary morality, the refuge of love and the family. Women could only

contribute to civility if they had no market equality, no equality as market competitors, and that meant they could have no legal equality. As a result, the market idea of legal equality for men depended on legal inequality for women. The theory never made this clear, but the laws and institutions of early America made it clear, and America was built on individualist theory.

In the laws of early America, women were essentially considered the property of their fathers or husbands. They had few legal rights and little legal recourse from dependence or abuse. They could not own property, could not enter universities, could not serve on juries, and could not vote. They were, however, legally required to stay in their 'proper' sphere, that is, to serve and obey their husbands. This pervasive legal inequality seemed perfectly compatible with the market commitment to equality because of the idea of separate spheres. Over the following centuries in America, women asserted an equal legal status as rational individuals, and most of these legal inequalities have now been removed. The culture of separate spheres, however, is still quite prominent. Our modern society, according to Mona Harrington, continues to struggle with 'the tortuous implications of moving women from the separate sphere of the home to a position of full, meaningful equality' (1999: 7).

The early individualists lived in feudal society, and feudal society also saw women as inferior and made them legally unequal. But feudal society was based on family commitments, not on individual autonomy. Also, feudal society was based on legal inequality – class inequality – while market society, at least in theory, was based on legal equality. Women were always legally inferior to their husbands or fathers, but many men were legally inferior to other men and some men, in a lower class, were legally inferior to some women. In market society, in contrast, all women were initially legally inferior to all men, so market ideas, in a sense, initially seemed to endorse even greater inequality for women. In feudal society a woman would be head of the family in the absence of any men, and then she would have the legal rights of men, rights usually denied to women. In the market, however, at least initially, women could never have the legal rights of men regardless of family issues because women could never be seen as rational individuals.

The market, of course, was based on rational equality, so women could make a claim for legal equality, a claim they have used effectively. They could not make such a claim under feudalism because feudalism saw inequality as sacred. Market society offered an argument for equality even to those it denied equality, and in this important sense individualism improved the status of women, at least potentially. But the idea of a *civil* market always depended on the inequality of women, since women have to stay in the family. If women become market equals, where will the tempering morality come from, the necessary honesty and trust, and who will take care of the children? Women may assert their rational equality and achieve legal equality, but the underlying assumption of their secondary

sphere remains a market necessity. The market can only be legitimate if it is civil, and the idea of civil society assumes the inequality of women. This is why the equality of women has always been contentious, and why a culture of female subservience remains so pervasive today.

In feudal society, women always had an important productive role despite their legal inequality. The family was the productive unit, not the individual, and women were integral to the family. Thus, if a family lost all its men, the family would still have legal rights so a woman could claim those legal rights, normally the rights of men. In market society, however, the individual became the productive unit and individuals (rational individuals) could only be men. The market, as a consequence, took women out of any productive role, a role they had always had when the family was the productive unit. Without a productive role, women could have no legal rights – they could not be owners of property.

This meant, to the early individualists and to market culture, that women should maintain the family as their only important role. The family would remain compatible with an individualist market because of the inferiority of women. When women assert equality, however, they assert a productive role, a role as rational individuals, potential owners of property. This means the equality of women must threaten the stability of the family according to market assumptions. When the family was the productive unit, the family was always compatible with production. But when the individual is the productive unit, the family is only compatible with production if women are ‘naturally’ unequal and therefore socially relegated, culturally if not legally, to the family.

The feminine hand

According to Adam Smith, the *invisible hand* could only work in a context of trust and honor. Like Locke, he assumed innate morality to justify laissez-faire. But this moral assumption was always incompatible with the other assumptions of individualism – rationality, autonomy, self-interest. The market could only be civil if pure self-interest was morally constrained, but the source of that morality, of altruism mitigating egoism, became a difficult problem. Both Locke and Smith just assumed the necessary morality, but they also assumed the structural equality of independent owner-workers on an endless agrarian frontier. Market theorists generally agreed that some morality was necessary, but few could assume it was simply innate, and the market was clearly more complicated than equal independent farmers.

The market problem of morality was difficult to solve in terms of theory, but it was easy to solve in terms of culture. Cultural stories, but not the theory, distinguished men and women, so women could be seen in the

culture as providing social morality. Men could be competitive since women were compassionate. The culture could solve the market problem by designating gender roles, as Stephanie Coontz has remarked:

Self-reliance and independence worked for *men* because *women* took care of dependence and obligation. In other words, the liberal theory of human nature and political citizenship did not merely leave women out: it worked precisely because it was applied exclusively to half the population. Emotion and compassion could be disregarded in the political and economic realm only if women were assigned those traits in the personal realm ... The cult of the Self-Made Man required the cult of the True Woman. (1992: 53)

This cultural perspective essentially revises market theory. The market needs women as much as it needs men, because women provide the morality. The *invisible hand* will only work – the market will only be civil – if there is also a feminine hand. Strong competitive men need loving, moral women, and then these men can create a good society. Men must stay in their ‘proper’ sphere to make the market work, and women must stay in their ‘proper’ sphere to make the market civil. Not only must they stay in their ‘proper’ spheres, but they must be attracted across the spheres, like opposite magnetic poles. The sexual attraction is the basis for a good society, and the culture has made it a central image, the image of romantic love.

From the cultural perspective of separate spheres, love makes civil society possible. Love combines the different spheres into one family unit with a rational, independent man and a moral, dependent woman. Because of love rational men will make the market civil, and also because of love moral women will support and obey their men and take care of the children. This is what the idea of love requires as the basic sexual glue for market social relations. The cultural image of romantic love depends on separate spheres, and the cultural image of separate spheres solves the market problem of morality. Love is a popular image because it is seen as fulfilling, and it can only be seen as fulfilling if it supports a stable family and a stable social order. So the cultural image of romantic love assumes the dependence of women. Women must provide a safe, loving refuge for rational, competitive men, a family haven of renewal for further market struggles. When women fall in love, according to this image, they surrender to dominant men, and when men fall in love, they accept family dominance together with civil morality.

This cultural image of love is clearly successful and appealing. It offers personal happiness together with sexual passion. It is probably the most familiar and pervasive image in our culture, and it always explains market relations. It always explains, that is, the ‘proper’ market roles of men and women, the roles that offer personal happiness as well as a civil society. While the idea of romantic love has been around for centuries, a social commitment to romantic love arose with market society, as a solution to market problems. As the role of the family declined in the face of

individualism, the idea of romantic love developed as the basis for marriage and children. In feudal society marriages had to be based on family needs and duties. But marriages in market society had to be based on private individual choices, so love became the individualist basis for marriage. It could solve the problem of morality because it combined a concern with private self-interest (personal happiness) with a strong concern for another person (a moral commitment). The idea of romantic love was ideally suited for the market issue of sexual difference as long as sexual difference is understood through separate spheres.

Love is important for men because it offers support and renewal. But men are 'naturally' rational and autonomous, so they cannot take love too seriously. Women, however, are defined by love according to the cultural imagery. Their 'proper' social role is to love and serve men, and this is their social contribution. Men contribute rationality to a civil market society, and love must temper that rationality. Women, however, contribute love and love must only support, never dominate, reason. Men must judge their social success primarily in terms of the market and somewhat in terms of love. But women must judge their social success primarily in terms of love, which means marriage and the family. According to the cultural imagery, love must be crucial to women and far less important to men. Both men and women need love for the sake of personal happiness. But men must resist love while women must embrace it, since men must be autonomous and women must be dependent. They should stay in the family, hidden and obedient, providing love from their 'proper' sphere. They should only be appendages of rational men, and this view of women, implicit in the theory, was written into the laws of early America.

Male identity

The romantic idea of love validates male superiority. When a woman loves a man, according to the image, she surrenders to his strength. Her love reinforces his masculine identity, his masculine confidence and control. She reinforces the man's identity as strong, dominant, and independent, an identity derived from market theory. Through this image of love, women validate the individualist qualities needed for market society.

As a consequence the idea of love becomes crucially important for men but only in a subtle way. They do not need love as much as women to fulfill their market destiny, because men must be rational and autonomous. But men, then, in terms of the image, need a woman's love to validate their market identity as strong, dominant individualists. In our popular, mythical stories, the hero not only wins the fight, he also wins the woman. His success in the battle, fighting for law and justice, is validated and completed by his further success in love. According to this cultural image,

then, the love of a beautiful woman is necessary for masculine success. Simply winning the fight and saving the citizens can never be sufficient reward. If a man wins the fight but not the woman, his strength and dominance must be questioned and he cannot be a true hero. Our cultural imagery of masculine success depends on the imagery of love. The hero must win the battle and also the woman he loves. He may, however, lose the battle and still be a hero but not if he loses at love.

Part of our cultural image of success, then, of heroism, is the associated image of romantic love, the love that always follows for heroic, strong individualists. According to our culture, market success (winning at competition) is not by itself sufficient to establish social success – true heroism. The heroes in our stories succeed at competition, and they also succeed at love. If a man fails at love in one of our stories, no matter how many fights he wins, he cannot be seen as a hero or the story will not be popular.

According to our cultural imagery, the love of a beautiful woman validates male success. Women essentially become rewards for strong men. Winning a woman's love, then, according to the imagery, can validate a man's identity, his sense of himself as a dominant individualist. In market society, all men need to see themselves as dominant individualists. Few men, however, can see themselves this way in terms of market competition. Most men work for others, take orders, worry about money, and feel unsuccessful. Few men succeed in the market, but all men can try to succeed at love. Our cultural image of love offers the possibility that all men can feel strong and heroic by winning a woman's love even when they are not so successful at market competition.

A woman's love, however, according to the imagery, can only validate a man's success if she stays in her secondary sphere. Romantic love must take place across separate spheres. A woman must lovingly surrender to male dominance to find her true happiness. A man must feel like a hero so he can compete in the market, and a woman must provide a safe, supportive refuge – the family – to make him feel like a hero. Her social task, in terms of romance, is to accept his control and authority while also constraining, simply through love, his rational, autonomous self-interest. This is what a woman must do to validate her individualist man, so this is also what a woman must do to sustain a civil society.

When men and women fall in love across their separate spheres, just as portrayed in our popular stories, they always feel happy and fulfilled. Men feel strong and capable, women feel soft and loving, families seem happy and promising, and social order seems decent and just. This romantic ideal tells men and women how to interact sexually to maintain a civil market. The problem, of course, is that very few women can stay in their 'proper' place and play their 'proper' role. This romantic ideal assumes that women are inferior and justifies social inequality. It also suggests that women who try to leave their 'proper' sphere are threats to a decent social order. Women have an important job to do, a dependent,

subservient job, and if they refuse to do that job they threaten civil society. If a woman begins to compete with a man as a rational, equal individual, she undermines his strength and dominance, his market masculine identity. She also removes her moral constraints, the constraints that enable civility. If a woman strays from her 'proper' sphere, she endangers the good society. So she needs to be returned to that sphere, according to the image, forcefully if necessary, or she needs to be punished.

In our popular cultural stories women are always being returned to their 'proper', dependent place through the dominant control of men. This is particularly clear in the cowboy myth and in its urban, action variation. Sometimes the men gently rebuke the women, and sometimes they are forceful and physical. The women generally accept the rebuke and admire the men even more, finding true happiness as loving wives. Sometimes, however, a woman resists her 'proper' sphere with too much defiance, and then she has to be killed as a threat to social order. Sometimes she is simply a villain, not only an 'improper' woman but also dishonest and calculating. And sometimes she recognizes the error of her ways and dies in the hero's arms, wishing things had been different. Our popular culture reflects market assumptions, even in the image of love, and market assumptions require women to admire and obey men, not to threaten them.

In our modern market society, and particularly in modern America, women have long been asserting their rights as market equals. Legitimizing market theory asserts the equality of all individuals, but market institutions and market culture have put up great resistance to the idea of women as equals. In many important ways, both legal and cultural, women have been successful, but they have also succeeded in threatening many men and generating much hostility. Even in modern society, the problem is still the original problem, the problem of morality and the family. The idea of a civil market depends on separate spheres with women subservient and unequal. In modern America many cultural commentators have been stressing the need for 'family values' in the face of declining morality. They see the market as increasingly uncivil because the family has been weakened as the source of social morality. The family has been weakened, they argue, because women have tried to be equals. Women should stay in the family, in their view, while men compete in the market, so the family can be stable and the market can be civil.

The romantic image of love implies this role for women in the 'proper' market family. Women were always tacit in original individualist theory, but our popular cultural stories exposed the idea of women, the idea of separate spheres. According to these stories, the market can only be civil if women are unequal. Individualist theory could assert individual equality and ignore the issue of women, but individualist culture had to portray both men and women so it had to confront the assumption of inequality. As a result, the individualist implications for women have generally been worked out in our popular, entertaining stories. These

stories offer an instructive guide to market sexual relations, and the most definitive stories generally take place in the mythical Wild West.

Love and the cowboy

The cowboy typically helps the community because of romantic love. He is alone and independent with no social involvement. The frontier community is threatened, and only he can help. Initially, he is only interested in a woman, not in helping the community. The woman, however – a teacher, a reporter, an entertainer – has independent moral strength, a commitment to the community. She finds the hero attractive but initially rejects his interest because of his social indifference. His ‘natural’ honor, however, is influenced by her love, and he decides to fight the good fight, accepting her social commitments. He also tells her of his dream to start a ranch someday ‘down by the bend of the river’. He becomes more moral in order to win her love, and she becomes more dependent because she falls in love. For him, falling in love tempers his individualism and makes it civil – a moral individualism. For her, falling in love enables true fulfillment in her ‘proper’, inferior sphere. He is a wilderness stranger and she is a social participant, and love binds them together to build a civil society.

Usually they marry and settle down after the community is safe. Sometimes, however, he rides away, winning the fight but leaving the woman and her love. In either case the community is saved by his strength combined with morality. Love creates the necessary civil balance between wilderness and society. He must surrender some autonomy and she must surrender initial independence for the sake of social order. He becomes a strong market individual, not a strong wilderness individual, and she becomes a dependent moral wife, not an independent moral woman. Love always requires compromise across the separate spheres, and both the man and the woman are changed. But the woman is changed more because she must surrender all her independence. He remains strong with slightly less autonomy, but she becomes weak and dependent despite her original strength.

She is initially strong and confident, committed to a moral community. She is initially attracted to the hero because of his strength and honor, but she is also initially resistant because of her moral strength. She is repulsed by his wilderness autonomy, that is, by his moral detachment, and he must become committed to civil honor before she can fall in love. His wilderness sense of fairness, respect, and equality must become a civil sense of law, order, and property. Her strength and independence attract the hero and shape his social actions. She has a moral strength and independence and it matches his wilderness strength and independence.

In this sense they initially meet as equals and both represent social necessities. Their different strengths must be combined for civil society to emerge, and the way these strengths are combined is through the idea of romantic love.

When she falls in love, however, she must lose her strength and independence. Love means she accepts male dominance in order to be fulfilled. She specifically loses her moral convictions, caring more about love than the safety of the community. As a moral, independent woman, she first convinces the hero to fight; then, as a loving, dependent woman, she begs him to run away so he will not be killed. She loses her moral strength, in effect, surrendering to true love, just as he becomes the true individualist, the savior of civil society. He resists her pleas and fights the good fight, since 'a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do'. She becomes weak through love and he becomes moral through love, but he remains strong. She often becomes angry and emotional, even threatening to leave him if he fights the good fight. Sometimes she is so upset he has to calm her down physically, grabbing her, shaking her, slapping her – controlling her with his strength. Only he knows what is best, what honor and duty demand, and she has become weak through love, taking her 'proper' role. Finally she loves him even more, after the villains are gone, accepting and admiring his masculine strength and dominance.

In most cowboy stories there is only one attractive woman, one contender for the hero's love. In some stories, however, there are two women, and the second woman is *too* independent. This woman is socially tainted because of her independence: she is too cavalier about sex, she acts like a market competitor, she associates with questionable men, she seeks wealth and property. Both women are attractive, but one is respectable, concerned with morality, and the other is shady, concerned with self-interest. All men desire the tainted woman and all women are jealous of her, but only the cowboy can win her love. He is always initially interested because of her fiery independence, but he typically chooses the respectable woman who accepts her 'proper' sphere.

The tainted woman is not an appropriate choice to build a civil society. Indeed, she usually has to be killed or at least humiliated and driven away. She is often involved with the villain, but then she betrays the villain because she loves the hero, and she dies saving the hero. She finally accepts, as she dies in his arms, that love is more important than independence. She tries to be an equal and becomes a civil threat, sacrificing what women 'truly' want and need. She must be killed for the sake of decency, but she is also redeemed by falling in love and realizing her mistake. According to this image, independent women are attractive to men, but too much independence is dangerous. Society can only be civil if love makes women dependent, so decent women must want love more than independence. This image of separate spheres appears in many Westerns, and also in many popular films over many years – *Gone With the Wind*

(1939), *Boom Town* (1940), *Leave her to Heaven* (1945), *The Graduate* (1967), *Fatal Attraction* (1987), *Dick Tracy* (1990).

Conquest and violence

The image of love in popular stories shapes our cultural attitudes toward love and marriage. Men are attracted to independent women, and women are attracted to dominant men. If romantic love succeeds, the man must stay dominant and the woman must become dependent. Much of a man's self-respect can depend on a woman's love. She can validate his masculine dominance, his market individualism, if she surrenders to his strength. According to the image of love, a man must conquer and tame an independent woman to prove his masculinity. She must become submissive to demonstrate her love, but her initial independence was what made her attractive. The hope for civil society depends on separate spheres, so weak, dependent women must love strong men. But men need to retain their self-respect in the face of market pressures, and conquering an independent woman can reinforce self-respect.

This means, following the image, that a woman who already loves a man can no longer validate his strength. Once she has surrendered to validate that strength she can no longer serve that purpose. Romance is about conquest, not daily life, so men need new conquests, not simply a woman's submission. This is why our films usually end just as the romantic conquest succeeds. The image offers continued happiness, but the story of romance is over. The masculine star of the film may play a character who has found true love, but the star himself will soon appear in another film making another conquest.

According to our image of love, men need successive conquests of independent women to maintain their masculine identity. A woman may follow the cultural image and surrender to a dominant man. But when she does, according to that image, she is making herself less attractive to a man who needs a new conquest. Marriages in modern society tend to rest on romantic love, and marriages, as we all know, have not been very stable. One possible reason is the image of romantic love. According to this image, love must begin to fail as soon as it succeeds. A woman must become less independent, and thus less attractive, in order to prove her love.

The cowboy hero, as the model individualist, always conquers an independent woman. The woman is beautiful and desirable, the most desirable in town, and she only falls for the hero. The cowboy also defeats the villains and saves the social order, but he cannot be seen as hero unless he wins the woman. If she rejects him, for example, and decides to marry a barber, the cowboy cannot be seen as heroic. The cowboy must win the

woman as well as his fight. The woman must love him from her 'proper' sphere, admiring and obedient, and she must provide a safe family haven. In a positive sense, this image of love promises happiness, validates individualism, and enables civil society.

In a negative sense, however, this image can mean something else. It can mean that men who are rejected by women are somehow diminished as men. A man cannot appear heroic – strong, masculine, dominant – if he fails to win a woman's love. If he were truly a man – a real man – he would not take 'no' for an answer. When a hero in a story is rejected by a woman, he does not take 'no' for an answer. Rather, he becomes more aggressive, and then she falls in love. This is what the image suggests, that women often do not know what they really want. They may say 'no', but they do not really mean it. A woman really wants to fall in love and accept her family sphere, but only if a man is strong enough to conquer her resistance. A woman always wants to be conquered, according to the romantic image, so a woman's apparent resistance is basically a test of a man's masculinity.

According to the image, if a woman rejects a man, he must become more dominant and aggressive in order to win her love. As many people have pointed out, this cultural imagery can easily lead to violence, even to rape. If a man is influenced by the image, he could easily believe that a woman will gladly submit if he takes more control and acts with more force. Many popular stories support this idea. Many heroes in films have forced their attentions on resisting women – essentially an image of rape – and the women have fallen in love. Sometimes a man captures or kidnaps a woman, and sometimes he hits her, kicks her, and humiliates her in public. Each time the woman falls in love, abandoning her resistance. Westerns with this imagery include *Duel in the Sun* (1946), *Waterhole #3* (1967), *Red Mountain* (1951), *The Man Who Loved Cat Dancing* (1973), *McLintock* (1963), *Yellow Sky*, *Tall in the Saddle*. Other popular films with this image of romance include *Gone With the Wind*, *On the Waterfront* (1954), *Rocky* (1976), *The Quiet Man* (1952).

Violence, of course, is a crucial individualist image, an image associated with freedom. As a true individualist, the cowboy often needs to be violent to create and protect civil society. One requirement for civil society is a structure of separate spheres, and violence may sometimes be necessary to create and protect this structure, according to the image of romance. The image often tells us that appropriate male violence toward reluctant women can lead to true love and thus to a good society. This may help explain, again following the image, why incidents of domestic violence – violence toward women – have reached epidemic scale. If a man feels rejected, his identity may be threatened, and according to the cultural image he needs to be more aggressive, perhaps more violent. Women are seen in popular stories as responding with love to masculine force, and this popular imagery must encourage to some degree male violence toward women.

In another aspect of the cultural image a man must be forceful, even perhaps violent, to control a woman's emotions. The strong, rational hero is often seen grabbing or slapping a woman to try to calm her hysteria. She is only concerned with love and wants him to run away. He must fight against the villains to save civil society, but first he must constrain the woman, also for civil society. The villains may pose a social threat, but so does a woman who is too emotional and doubts her man's authority. The hero must use his strength to keep her in her 'proper' place, and this use of force serves civil order, according to the image of love, just like his gunfight with the villains.

When a woman is too independent in the cultural stories, she is seen as a threat to social order, and she also tends to suffer violence. She defies the 'proper' role for women, she is usually killed, and the woman who lives to marry the hero accepts her 'proper' sphere. This is the other side of the romantic image that women do not really mean 'no' and they want men to be more forceful, more aggressive. If a woman really means 'no', if she really wants to be independent, to be an equal, then she must be punished according to the imagery, even killed. From this imagery a man may learn that he needs to be more insistent with a woman who resists, more forceful. If she still resists, then he can see her as a threat to social decency and begin to feel that violence and punishment are justified. Our cultural image of love can encourage male violence for the sake of 'proper' order. Women must stay in their separate sphere, and romance may turn into dominant control, even into violence, when women try to leave that sphere. Romance pervades our market culture as does domestic violence, and romance implies a need for violence whenever male dominance is threatened.

The individualist problem of sexual difference is how to create stable families in a context of market self-interests. Individualist theory offered little help because the issue of sexual difference remained tacit. But individualist culture interpreted the theory, and as it did it interpreted the implicit ideas of sexual difference and sexual relations. It asserted the idea of separate spheres and the idea of romantic love to combine the separate spheres. If women stay in their 'proper' sphere, the family will be stable and happy and the market will operate with rational individuals, individuals who can only be men. Our culture explains our sexual relations, and that explanation modifies and completes market theory. Women should stay in the market background, lovingly supporting autonomous men, and then a market in private property can become a civil society.

The cowboy myth makes all this clear, as the market myth of origin. The cowboy conquers and tames the wild frontier, and also in the process he conquers and tames the women. The market idea of freedom and equality depends on male superiority, as the myth always shows. This sexual image was implicit in individualist theory, and a similar racial image was also implicit, an image of white superiority. As the cowboy conquers the

wilderness and the women, he also conquers all non-whites, and those non-whites, the theory implies, have even less claim on freedom and equality than weak, dependent women.

Illustrative films

An image of a strong woman influencing an independent hero to become more moral is seen in *Stagecoach*, *Dodge City*, *The Westerner*, *Vera Cruz*, *El Paso*, *The Naked Spur* (1953), *A Man Alone* (1955), *The Violent Men*, *Arrowhead*, *Blood on the Moon*. The good woman pleads with the hero to avoid the fight in *Dodge City*, *Shane*, *High Noon*, *Arrowhead*, *Gun Glory* (1957), *Warlock*, *Firecreek*. In *Destry Rides Again* and *The Far Country*, the tainted woman pleads with the hero not to fight and run away with her. A woman falls in love with a man who abuses her, forces her, captures her, or constrains her in *Duel in the Sun*, *Yellow Sky*, *The Man Who Loved Cat Dancing* (1973), *Valdez Is Coming* (1971), *McLintock*, *Tall in the Saddle*, *Waterhole #3*, *Red Mountain*, *A Man Alone*. An aggressive but tainted woman, who dies or is rejected, appears in *Destry Rides Again*, *The Far Country*, *The Violent Men*, *Johnny Guitar* (1954), *Jubal* (1956), *Tall Man Riding*, *Ramrod*, *Rancho Notorious* (1952), *Flaming Feather* (1951).