tages under conditions of struggle in being able easily to define "the adversary," the danger of using biological difference as a liberatory strategy is that the struggle for liberation also becomes biologically bound—and murderous.

Sally Gearhart in *The Wanderground*[17] begins with a vision of woman and nature as the victims of men, and natural allies in the last great struggle to save life on earth. The ritual connection of woman and earth as daughter-mother lovers is a powerful lesbian mythos. The rape of earth and the revolt of the mother provide the context for female solidarity and a definition of female energy as life-giving and male energy as violent; but Gearhart does not simply accept this dualism. Although she introduces virgin birth, retains her mistrust of "maleness," and does not envision the possibility of humane heterosexual society, Gearhart not only does not write men off, she even allows them to challenge the moral superiority and righteousness of women-as-victim. Claiming they are a special breed, different from other men, "the gentles" have learned to become autonomous and no longer feel they need the women; they are developing their own type of non-violent psychic powers. Evona distrusts them:

> "Non violent? Never. You know what will happen. You'll use your new power all right. You'll use it, perfect it, manufacture it, package it, sell it, and tell the world that it's clean and new because it comes from a different breed of men. But it's just another fancy prick to invade the world with. And you'll use it because you can't really communicate, you can't really love! . . .
>
> Andros did not flinch. But her words had reached him. He spoke quietly. "You still want it all, don't you? Just like every-woman since the dawn of time. You demand your holy isolation from men so you can develop your unique female powers, but you are threatened to the core by the suggestion that we might have equally unique powers—don't even whisper that they might be equally valuable" (pp. 170–80).

The underlying drama of the work is here revealed as the threat of the (male) "gentles" to female superiority. The radical feminist stance and the utopian vision of women's empowerment have been created on the moral notion that the victims of

male oppression were better than the victimizers. When an ideology assumes that social behavior is inherent, it is locked into an assumption that the oppressor cannot change. This is generally reinforced when he will not. But what if some do? Gearhart has been correct in utilizing the assumption, hidden so well in patriarchal culture, that men are dependent upon women for survival. And women know this, too, fearing they would indeed be murderers if they stopped holding up men. This self-protective tie is different from standing beside them. For if women really believed men did not need them to survive, women would not feel guilty for freeing men to support themselves. This truth has been so buried that to reveal and use it is a service.

Gearhart is careful, however, to describe the "gentles'" evolution as the product of practice, discipline, and painful growth to mutual dependency, not—like the women's—a "gift of nature." The maintenance of this distinction allows her to retain the possibility of biological superiority for females, a kind of moral ranking system for humans (women on the top, gay men next, and then men), while fudging questions about distinctions among women. Apparently, lesbians aren't biologically different, although the novel displays, while denying, a high level of disgust for city women—the distinction of geography replacing that of sexuality for women. Thus, there is no intermediary, organizable group of women, no space that is not either hill country or city space, either the women's community or female slavery. Women must either submit, or pass as men, in the city, or they can be part of building the new, all-female, utopian society. Utopian writing serves the function of highlighting present tendencies by solidifying and distancing them in a dramatic context that reveals their characteristics and contradictions; yet, by changing their context, it makes them inaccessible, remote, and apparently immutable.

Amid debate about whether women have ever lived free of male supremacy, in fiction as in anthropology, some women have looked to the pre-patriarchal past for evidence of the possibility of freedom for women.[18] In *Retreat: As It Was!*[19] Donna Young created a fantasy past, a vision of an advanced yet healthy civilization on the eve of its destruction by invading forces caus-

ing the genetic mutation that created males. The pacific women decided to reverse their millennial stance of nonviolence; they retool for war, and the novel ends with the town in ruins, a few survivors setting forth with the new male child to begin again, presumably to build the patriarchal society we have inherited.

The patriarchal city in several novels so radically disempowers women as to render them victims outside the realm of feminist action. In Charnas' *Motherlines*,[20] where procreation for an all-female society is achieved through intercourse with women's "more natural" allies, horses, the focus is entirely on divisions among women. The interest in the novel lies in the tension between the femmes, who have escaped from their servitude under patriarchal rule, and the Amazonian race of horsewomen, descendants of women who had programmed their own survival in the laboratories of the patriarchy before escaping to the land. The novel closes before we discover if the battle between the newly organized femmes and the men freed those enslaved in the city—or destroyed all the women.

Rochelle Singer's *Demeter Flower*[21] takes us into a fictional future after the holocaust when patriarchal fiefdoms have been established, except for an enclave of women who live secretly in northern California hills. The women fight among themselves, the younger women determined to leave and start another women's community elsewhere. Will their venture bring detection and pursuit? Will the divisions weaken the groups? Divisions also rock the community when a male invades and strategy must be determined; should they keep this enemy among them, kill him, or evict him and risk betraying their existence and location? There is no answer; the novel focuses more on the dangers to the women's unity than on working out an alternative social order, or addressing the plight of patriarchal city women.

By 1980, fears concerning divisions among women and the need for security against men, maleness, and capitalist patriarchy appear primal, obvious consequences of identifying women as a class and men as adversaries victimizing them. But racism, perhaps the most serious immediate division among women, has not been adequately addressed. *Wanderground* begins. But having two frightened women of color rescued by a group of (all-