Book Review Essay: Healing Feminism's Broken Heart

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HEALING FEMINISM’S BROKEN HEART: 
A REVIEW OF HEARTBREAK: THE POLITICAL 
MEMOIR OF A FEMINIST MILITANT 

Katie Rose Guest
BOOK REVIEW

Healing Feminism’s Broken Heart

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I. INTRODUCTION: THE MEMOIR MODE.

Andrea Dworkin is a radical feminist and one of the architects of dominance feminism, a major strain of feminist theory.1 She co-wrote groundbreaking civil rights legislation that recognized pornography as legally actionable sex discrimination.2 She is a well-known lecturer and teacher and the author of fourteen books.3

Heartbreak: The Political Memoir of a Feminist Militant,4 Dworkin’s memoir, barely mentions any of these accomplishments. Instead, Dworkin takes us back to when she began her crusade, as though she would teach her reader to be a beginner feminist. She shows us how to live on nothing (brush your teeth with salt, from a stolen salt shaker5), how to run a campus rebellion,6 how to begin a career as a feminist lecturer,7 step by step. In this sense, Heartbreak is a primer on becoming an activist.

Dworkin strives to answer the question, “How did I become who I am?”8 The focus on “becoming” makes Heartbreak unique among memoirs. The difference is one of perspective: the author does not tell where she has been; she tells where she came from. The first mode is

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2. See the Model Antipornography Civil-Rights Ordinance, Andrea Dworkin and Catharine A. MacKinnon, Pornography & Civil Rights: A New Day for Women’s Equality (Privately Printed, Minneapolis 1988) at Appendix D.


5. Id. at 95-96.

6. Id. at 107-12 (Dworkin’s campus organizing at Bennington College).

7. Id. at 139-43.

8. Id. at 189.
dreary recounting. The second tells a story of birth, and makes this memoir infinitely more valuable. Dworkin never forgets the links between her past and present. By focusing on these links, on "becoming," she leaves a path for others to follow into political activism.

The subtitle of Heartbreak indicates that this is a "political" memoir. Yet much of the book is personal. Dworkin describes her childhood and young adulthood, often with raw honesty. The book might be labeled a "confessional" for Dworkin's willingness to lay her history on the table: sexual abuse at the hands of a high school teacher and, later, prison staff while in college; the violence of her husband; her prostitution. The description of these experiences is vital to allow the reader to understand the shaping of her politics. Anything short of complete candor would be cowardice. She writes: "The worst immorality is selling out simply because one is afraid." 9

The confessional mode is "the incorporation of guilty personal detail for emotional effect." 10 In 1959, confessional poetry was born, 11 with the publication of both Robert Lowell's Life Studies 12 and W.D. Snodgrass's Heart's Needle. 13 Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton added their voices to the new mode as well. Despite these formidable literary figures adding their names to this mode, as David Yezzi 14 explains, literature—poetry, for example—written in the confessional mode is often criticized as a lower form of literary art. Yezzi separates the reasons for its lesser value into four main groups.

First, critics consider confessional writers mercenary, poaching their personal lives for financial gain. After all, "[a]utobiography has been doing big business lately." 15 Second, confessional writing is considered overly-sentimental, especially if it is written by a woman. 16 In other words, confessional poetry is simply bad poetry, "bad aesthetics." 17 Third, not only is the writing sentimental, but critics question the ego required to write so openly about one's personal life. One critic referred to the "gian­ tism" of Plath's and Sexton's egos. 18 Yezzi writes that Plath must have had ego and "a particularly dangerous form of . . . solipsism" to write her poem "Daddy." 19 Finally, confessional writing is criticized as "bad morals." 20 The writers' honesty is condemned as "shamelessness" 21 and "emotional stronggarming." 22

Yezzi's aversion to the confessional mode is clear from his well-written article. He describes the "tonal range" 23 of the poetry of Snodgrass, Lowell, Sexton and Plath as "wide," 24 "from sad whisper to hectoring squawk." 25 That all poets he mentions have that all truth can be found in her own roiling, untempered emotions."

9. Id. at 202.
11. Id.
15. Id.
16. Id. Note that Yezzi criticizes Sexton and Plath as sentimental while Lowell and Snodgrass evade that label. Id.
17. Id. (quoting John Ciardi, Mid-Century American Poets (1950)).
18. Yezzi, supra note 10 (citing literary critic Charles Molesworth (Professor of English, Queens College, City University of New York)).
20. Id.
21. Id. (citing literary critic Donald Davie (b.1922, in Yorkshire, England – d.1995; Professor at Vanderbilt University, Stanford University, University of Essex, University of Cambridge)).
22. Id. (Yezzi criticizes Plath and Sexton specifically with this phrase.)
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won major literary awards\textsuperscript{26} for their writing does not hinder him from letting loose his free-wheeling criticism of these four poets, considered by many to be four of the best poets of the second half of the twentieth century. Critics often have trouble accepting direct, personal writing. Perhaps fear inspires such ferocious responses in normally staid literary reviews. As any writer (and any critic) knows, the harshest criticism is apathetic dismissal. These "confessional" writers created a storm that still rages forty years later.

In contrast to the confessional mode, Dworkin has written memoir, not poetry. Memoir is where a writer expresses the aspects of her history that might frighten a reader of poetry. A reader should not pick up a memoir and expect a watered down recounting of history. A memoir is a life. A life is painful, bloody, and scary. Dworkin writes: "A memoir, which this is, says: this is what my memory insists oh; this is what my memory will not let go; these points of memory make me who I am, and all that others find incomprehensible about me is explained by what's in here."\textsuperscript{27} Each chapter of Heartbreak is a fragment of life relived as it is read. Dworkin triumphs when we know what it feels like to be her at the moments she has captured for us. To step into another person's life is never comfortable—we prefer the safety of isolation. Perhaps this is what critics fear: to be forced from small, critical worlds inside the suffering, brilliant, yet deadly, minds of geniuses like Plath, Sexton, Lowell, Snodgrass, and yes, Dworkin.

Dworkin must have found liberation in writing Heartbreak.\textsuperscript{28} Her more rigorous and controversial texts, such as Woman Hating\textsuperscript{29} or Intercourse\textsuperscript{30} required constant self-scrutiny to ensure that her arguments could withstand the inevitable barrage of criticism that would follow. In Heartbreak, Dworkin could write without footnotes: her life, unmodified, open to scrutiny, but above argument. And unlike many memoirists today, she has been around long enough, and done enough, to have something to write about.

Dworkin's "confessions" have a distinct purpose. She is not driven by ego or solipsism. The content of this memoir predates her professional success. Instead of focusing on her accomplishments, she creates life-lines between seminal moments in her childhood and young adulthood and the politics that define her life now. The small rebellions of the child echo the large rebellions of the adult. At the end of the book, she writes, "I hope this work can serve as a kind of bridge over which some girls and women can pass into their own feminist work."\textsuperscript{31}

II. DWORKIN'S CHILDHOOD.

Throughout Heartbreak, Dworkin expresses deep sympathy for children. "The worst immorality is to hurt children."\textsuperscript{32} She believes that children and young people are often treated unfairly by adults, with lies, tyranny, and abuse. She gives many examples of all three types of unfair treatment, and shows how this treatment shaped her political self as an adult.

Andrea Dworkin was born in 1946. She lived the first ten years of her life with her parents in Camden, New Jersey.\textsuperscript{33} She describes moving from Camden: "I was ten when we moved to the suburbs, which I experienced as being kidnapped by aliens and taken to a penal colony. I never forgave my parents or God, and my heart stayed with the brick row houses on Greenwood Avenue."\textsuperscript{34} They moved to Delaware Township, which later would be renamed Cherry Hill.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{26} Snodgrass won the Pulitzer Prize in 1960 for Heart's Needle. Lowell won the National Book Award in 1960 for Life Studies. Sexton won the Pulitzer Prize in 1967 for Live or Die. Plath won the Pulitzer Prize in 1982 for her Collected Poems.

\textsuperscript{27} DWORKIN, HEARTBREAK, supra note 4, at 211.

\textsuperscript{28} Stephanie Schorow, "Heartbreak" of a hard-liner, Boston Herald, March 12, 2002, at 37. ("She [Dworkin] said she wrote 'Heartbreak' because 'I wanted to do something different'.")

\textsuperscript{29} ANDREA DWORKIN, WOMAN HATING (E. P. Dutton & Co. 1974) [hereinafter Dworkin, WOMAN HATING].

\textsuperscript{30} ANDREA DWORKIN, INTERCOURSE (The Free Press 1987) [hereinafter Dworkin, INTERCOURSE].

\textsuperscript{31} DWORKIN, HEARTBREAK, supra note 4, at 211.

\textsuperscript{32} Id. at 204.


\textsuperscript{34} Id.

\textsuperscript{35} Id.
Dworkin is a staunch pacifist, despite her dispute with the sexism of the anti-war and pacifist movements.\(^{36}\) It is not surprising, then, that some of the biggest adult lies to children that Dworkin discusses in *Heartbreak* concern nuclear war. She describes being forced to hide during Cold War bomb drills at school:

In K-3 we hid under our school desks, elbows covering our ears. From grades four or five through graduation, we were lined up three- or four- or five-thick against walls without windows, elbows over our ears. We were supposed to believe that these poses would save us from the bomb the Soviets were going to drop on us sometime after the warning bell rang. In the later grades, the teachers herded us, then stood around and talked. They didn’t seem to think that they were going to die, let alone melt, any minute.\(^{37}\)

Dworkin soon rebelled against the bomb drills, refusing to pose. She says that “not one teacher could explain why, if these were our last few minutes, we should spend them in such an idiotic way.”\(^{38}\) She identifies the root of the problem: that the teachers, and the government that they represented, used the threat of Soviet nuclear warfare to keep the kids in line. “What was one to do with these grown-ups, these liars, these thieves of time and life—my teachers, not the Soviets? Did they expect us to be so dim and dull?”\(^{39}\)

Dworkin takes her adult/child metaphor a step further, making all of America the children of the government/adults. The government propaganda about the Soviets and nuclear bombs “was calculated to make one afraid enough to conform.”\(^{40}\) She writes: “Maybe all the students except me and a few others rested warily against walls and kept quiet, but most of us knew we were being lied to, being scared on purpose, and being treated like chumps, just stupid children. Those boys who didn’t know ended up in Vietnam.”\(^{41}\)

When Dworkin was a junior in high school, she linked her resistance to a similar resistance by people who refused to take shelter and were arrested in New York.\(^{42}\) She wrote a letter to theater actress and political activist Judith Malina,\(^{43}\) who had been arrested for refusing to take shelter during a bomb scare.\(^{44}\) Malina wrote her back. Dworkin writes that Malina “was part of what she called ‘the beautiful anarchist non-violent revolution,’ and I was going to be part of it, too.”\(^{45}\) She tells how she would follow in Malina’s footsteps, protest a new war—Vietnam—and eventually move to Europe, just as Malina did.\(^{46}\)

Dworkin provides a story of formation: from early childhood through her adult political beginnings. She shows how her experiences at the hands of adults in the public school system, whom she portrays as puppets acting out the government’s worst intentions, led her to become an anti-war activist as a young adult. For Dworkin, another path to activism—the fight for women’s reproductive rights—began as a different paradigm of adult misinformation.

She describes how difficult it was to glean any useful knowledge about sex or contraception during her youth. Her mother told her that “one must never let a man use a rubber because it decreased his pleasure and the purpose was to give him pleasure.”\(^{47}\) She tells about the sex education lecture she was sent to by her parents at the Jewish Community Center.\(^{48}\) At the time of this lecture, contraception and abortion were still illegal.\(^{49}\) After the explanation of repro-


\(^{37}\) Id. at 49-50.

\(^{38}\) Id. at 50.

\(^{39}\) Id. at 51. See also Dworkin, Autobiography, supra note 33 (“Never, I believe, has a generation of children been so relentlessly terrorized by adults who were so obviously and stupidly lying.”).

\(^{40}\) Dworkin, *Heartbreak*, supra note 4, at 51.

\(^{41}\) Id.

\(^{42}\) Id. at 52.

\(^{43}\) Judith Malina is an actress of stage and film. She was born in 1926, the daughter of an orthodox Jewish-German rabbi. In 1946, she founded the Living Theater in New York City with her partner Julian Beck. During the 1950s, Malina was often imprisoned due to her participation in political nonviolent protests. In the early 1960s, the troupe moved to Europe. Biographical information can be found at The Living Theatre, [http://www.livingtheatre.org/about/history.html](http://www.livingtheatre.org/about/history.html) and Yahoo! Movies: Judith Malina – Biography, [http://movies.yahoo.com/shop?d=hc&id=1800153492&cf=biog&intl=us](http://movies.yahoo.com/shop?d=hc&id=1800153492&cf=biog&intl=us).

\(^{44}\) Dworkin, *Heartbreak*, supra note 4, at 52.

\(^{45}\) Id.

\(^{46}\) Id. at 52-53.

\(^{47}\) Id. at 64.

\(^{48}\) Id.

\(^{49}\) Id. at 64. Abortion was legalized in the United States in 1973. Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113 (1973). The Supreme Court struck down state laws against birth control use by married couples in 1965 and by unmarried couples in 1972.
duction, Dworkin asked about contraception. The lecturers resisted her questions. She writes, "I fucking wanted to know what it was, and they fucking were not going to tell me." The lesson she learned from this experience was not about sexuality, but rather about adult pedagogy:

What I learned was simple and eventually evolved into my own pedagogy: listen to what adults refuse to say; find the answers they won’t give; note the manipulative ways they have of using authority to cut the child or student or teenager off at the knees; notice their immoral, sneaky reliance on peer pressure to shut up a questioner (because, of course, if one persists, the others in the audience get mad or embarrassed). The writing is in the configuration of white around print; the verbal answer is buried in silence, a purposeful and wicked silence, a lying, cheating silence.

Dworkin blames those who withheld information about contraception for the pregnancies of single girls. She then links the hypocrisy of teaching children about reproduction without teaching about contraception to another, more fundamental hypocrisy: the group that taught Dworkin the sex-education lecture at the Jewish Community Center many decades ago has a different mission today. Dworkin writes, "now that group, headed by the same woman until she died in the last decade, is part of the free speech lobby in the United States protecting the rights of pornographers."

Dworkin's anti-pornography passion is well-known, although she only briefly mentions her accomplishments in Heartbreak. By bringing pornography into her chapter on contraception, she makes a strong argument for the interconnectedness of oppression of female sexuality. The same adults that exercised tyranny and told lies to children about contraception worked to keep pornography legal—a business that abuses children every year.

Dworkin describes how adults use tyranny along with their lies to manipulate and dominate children and youth. As a child, she rebelled against this tyranny. When she was ten, her class was to sing "Silent Night" together and Dworkin, Jewish, refused to join. She describes her actions as political, not religious: "I knew about and liked the separation of church and state." Most importantly, she believed in the act of rebellion itself:

What they take from you in school is eroded slowly, but this was big. I couldn’t understand how they could try to force me. Transparently, they could and they did. Force, punishment, exile: so much adult firepower to use against such a little girl. To this day I think about this confrontation with authority as the “Silent Night” Action, and I recommend it. Adults need to be stood up to by children, period. It’s good for them, the adults, I mean. Pushing kids around is ugly.

Her rebellion solidified her self-image as a civil activist. She describes how she confronted other problems of conscience in the sixth grade, for example, abortion, and began to confront what she labels the "dilemma of [her] life," wondering how she could effect change. She saw two paths—that of a writer and that of a lawyer. The challenges that faced an aspiring female lawyer were evident to Dworkin even at

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50. Dworkin, Heartbreak, supra note 4, at 65.
51. Id.
52. Id.
53. Id. at 64-66.
54. Id. at 65.
55. Id. at 169-70.
In 1983 Catharine A. MacKinnon and I drafted, and the City of Minneapolis passed, a civil law that held pornographers responsible for the sexual abuse associated with the making and consuming of pornography. If a woman or girl was forced into making pornography or if a woman or girl was raped or assaulted because of pornography, the pornographer or retailer could be held responsible for civil damages.
56. Dworkin devotes only one paragraph of Heartbreak to the Model Antipornography Civil-Rights Ordinance.
57. Id. Dworkin interviews now-adult victims of child pornography. See, e.g., id. at 178-79. "I found women whose whole lives were consumed by pornography: ‘I’ve been involved in pornography all my life until 1987. I was gang-raped, that’s how I conceived my daughter, and she was born in a brothel in Cleveland, Ohio.’" Id. at 178. "This same women has ‘films of pornography that was taken of me from the time I was a baby until just a few years ago.’" Id. at 179.
58. Id. at 21.
59. Id. at 21-22.
60. Id. at 22.
61. Id.
that young age, so she chose writing. "By the end of that year, I had decided that they could stop you from going to law school—and would—but no one could keep you from writing because nobody had to know about it."62

As a writer, she was also very much a reader. As a reader, Dworkin describes run-ins with school librarians, another group of adults exercising tyranny over young people.63 She begins her criticism of librarians by revealing their connection with pornography: "Nowadays librarians actively try to get students Internet access to pornography, at least in the United States. Organized as a First Amendment lobby group, librarians go to court—or their professional organizations do—to defend pornographers and pornography."64 Dworkin contrasts the work librarians do today with the work they did when she was in school: "[L]ibrarians were the militia, the first line of defense in keeping the underaged away from books . . . ."65 She writes, "[t]he librarians treated the books like contraband, and so did I."66 She created a political movement around the library and the books the librarians tried to keep from students.67 One of these books was J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*,68 a novel banned from the library. Dworkin describes the students' tactics:

> We bought a lot of copies [of *Catcher*] over time. We shelved them. Each time it would be a different one of us who had the responsibility for getting the book into the library, on the shelves. Sometimes we catalogued the book — what was gained if no one knew it was there?—and other times we shelved it as if it were plastique. Eventually the head librarian would find it; we'd know by the dirty looks we got from her long before we got to check on the book itself.69

The tyranny of adults served as a training ground for Dworkin's political action.

It would be nice if Dworkin left us with the impression that adults merely lie and exercise petty tyranny over children. But that would not be telling the whole story. And Dworkin, if she does nothing else, tells the whole story. Adults lie to children, yes, but far worse, adults abuse children. Dworkin describes many incidents of sexual abuse of children in *Heartbreak*. In some cases she was the victim, in others, friends or family. Many strangers have shared their stories with her. She tells one story of her own sexual abuse at the hands of a trusted adult—she calls him "The Pedophilic Teacher."70

He was a teacher in her high school, and he had friendships with Dworkin and her two best girlfriends.71 The relationships were "sexualized"72 and eventually sexual.73 He was attractive because he knew about attractive things: jazz, philosophy, marijuana, and sex.74 Most importantly, he was willing to talk about these things with the girls. However, he was manipulative with his favors and the manipulation became destructive. Dworkin describes the consequences:

> I almost committed suicide at sixteen because I didn't think he loved me, though he later assured me that he did . . . under his influence and Salinger's I had walked out into the ocean prepared to drown. The waves got up to about chest level when I realized that the water was fucking cold, and I turned myself around and got right out of that big, old ocean . . . .75

Dworkin describes the "hook"76 of the teacher, how he was able to trap the girls in the first place. "Because most adults lie to children most of the time, the pedophilic adult seems to be a truth-teller, the one adult ready and willing to know the world and not to lie about it."77 In this way, we are all to blame for his actions. The Pedophilic Teacher cannot be dismissed as a miscreant who abuses girls, but a cog in a

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62. *Id.*
63. *Id.* at 33-38.
64. *Id.* at 33.
65. *Id.* at 34.
66. *Id.* at 36.
67. *Id.* at 36-37.
69. *Dworkin, Heartbreak, supra* note 4, at 36.
70. *Id.* at 13.
71. See *id.*
72. *Id.*
73. *Id.* at 17 ("He fucked one of us on graduation night and kept up an emotionally abusive relationship with her for years.").
74. See *id.* at 15-16.
75. *Id.* at 17.
76. *Id.* at 18.
77. *Id.* at 19.
greater machine; he would have no power if the girls were empowered by other adults to withstand him.

III. YOUNG DWORKIN’S CRUSADE.

By the time Dworkin arrived at college, her self-identity as a political activist had solidified. She attended Bennington College, a school attended mostly by women, forward-thinking for its day, yet not without tyranny and oppression. In Heartbreak, Dworkin describes the “anthropology” of Bennington in the 1960s: “Anyone famous who came to Bennington was provided with one or more Bennington girls; my college was the archetypal brothel . . . .”78 She was disgusted by the amount of sex between male professors and female students. What disgusted her most was that, despite the sexual use of students by professors, the school continued to have parietal hours for the female dorms. Dworkin regarded this as a windfall for the male faculty. Since the female students’ boyfriends had to leave, the faculty had the girls to themselves:

The elimination of parietal hours was a huge issue, in some ways as big as the war. In colleges across the country girls were required to be in their gender-segregated dormitories by 10. Girls who went to Bennington in the main valued personal freedom; at least this girl did. As one watched male faculty sneak in and out of student bedrooms, one could think about lies, lies, lies. As one saw the pregnancies that led to illegal abortions from these liaisons, one could think about the secret but not subtle cruelty of fully adult men to young women. Everyone knew the Bennington guard who was deaf, and one prayed he would be on the 2-to-6 shift so one could have sex with a man one’s own age without facing suspension or expulsion.79

The confrontation soon escalated to one between two leaders: college president Edward Bloustein on the side of the administration, and Dworkin on the side of the students.80 Dworkin describes, step by step, how she engineered a rebellion at Bennington.81 Her living group, Franklin House, “seceded from the school. We declared ourselves entirely independent and we voted down parietal hours . . . . We elected an empress, an oracle, and other high officials . . . . This was a pleasant anarchy.”82

Dworkin never lets the reader forget how closely the tyranny of the administration was tied to the sexual exploitation of the female students by the male faculty. She writes, “[t]he secession heightened the conflict between students and the administration. It was just another version of adults lying, having a pretense of order, as the foxes on the faculty sneaked into the henhouse with impunity. They impregnated with impunity. They paid for criminal abortions with impunity.”83 She rebelled with a purpose. This purpose informs every act she describes in Heartbreak, and, if we look closely, every act of her life: her love of women as a people and her desire to free an oppressed group from their suffering.84 After the rebellion, she moved to Amsterdam, and from there mailed her senior thesis.85 Her father attended graduation in her place to pick up her diploma in 1969.86

In Europe, Dworkin married young. Her husband was a political activist who turned out to be a batterer.87 Women friends helped her to escape him.88 She was a prostitute, and survived that as well.89 Her formative moment came when she was ready to return to the United States. Dworkin talked with Ricki Abrams, “the woman who had helped me most

78. Id. at 60.
79. Id. at 108.
80. Id. at 109.
81. See id. at 107-12.
82. Id. at 110-11.
83. Id. at 111.
84. See, e.g., id. at 211 (“I want women to stop crimes against women. There I stand or fall.”); id. at 191 (“I long to touch my sisters; I wish I could take away the pain; I’ve heard so much heartbreak among us.”).
85. Dworkin, Autobiography, supra note 33.
86. Id. (“I am considered a graduate of the class of 1968, however, because that is how Bennington keeps track of its students.”).
87. Dworkin, Heartbreak, supra note 4 at 117-18.
88. See id. at 117-20, 122.
89. Id. at 161-63.
Dworkin made a promise, which she calls her “vow.”

I would use everything I knew, including from prostitution, to make the women’s movement stronger and better; that I’d give my life to the movement and for the movement. I promised to be honor-bound to the well-being of women, to do anything necessary for that well-being. I promised to live and to die if need be for women. I made that vow some thirty years ago, and I have not betrayed it yet.

Dworkin describes the formation of her conviction at an early age, the hardening of her conviction in the form of the vow in her early twenties, and the proof of her conviction in that it has stood the test of time.

After her return to the United States, Dworkin faced extreme difficulty finding a publisher for her first book, Woman Hating. So, she lectured to any feminist group that could afford to pay her expenses. Her topic was violence against women. She describes trying to make a living:

I spoke in small rooms filled with women, and afterward someone would pass a hat. I remember a crowd of about fifty in Woodstock, New York, that chipped in about $60. I slept on the floor of whoever had asked me or organized that event, and I ate whatever I was given ... 

Eventually Dworkin earned more money as a speaker as demand for her services grew. She said that she felt guilty asking for money from women. “Money is a hard discipline, not easy to learn ...” Later, Dworkin decided to ask for her fee up front, at first only a few hundred dollars. She earned a few thousand dollars for each engagement and she hired a speaking agent. Eventually she decided to represent herself, and said, “[b]y this time my nervousness about money had disappeared, a Darwinian adaptation ...

She describes, step by step, how she arranged a speaking engagement. The memoir again takes on the feel of a lesson-book. Here, Dworkin seems to say, is how to become a feminist lecturer. The trick, it seems, is to develop a “fixed set of necessities.” She writes, “I never would have been able to put in more than a quarter of a century on the road had I not figured out what I needed.” Although some women wrote letters and called Dworkin a “capitalist pig,” she grew tougher and stood up for herself. “Everyone doesn’t need what I need, but I do need what I need.”

IV. CONCLUSION.

Heartbreak’s main weakness is Dworkin’s tendency to take a defensive stance when she feels threatened, although we as readers may not see the threat. For example, she opens the book by stating, “I have been asked, politely and not so politely, why I am myself.” She explains that “[t]his is an accounting any woman will be called on to give if she asserts her will.” The vagueness of the perpetrators’ identities (they are unnamed), of the punishment (the “accounting”), and of the female behavior that will invoke this punishment (asserting her will) all diminishes a reader’s belief in Dworkin’s fear. The fear transforms into paranoia. The same fear seems to create the highly dramatic language that also weakens Heartbreak. For example she quotes Kazantakis’s
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grave: "I hope for nothing, I fear nothing, I am free."\textsuperscript{108} "One wants to know if one will write something important enough to die for; or if fascists will kill one for what one writes."\textsuperscript{109} "I promised to live and to die if need be for women."\textsuperscript{110}

On the other hand, reviewers of Heartbreak have personally attacked Dworkin, revealing that she may not be paranoid after all. Her life may not be in danger from fascists, but her character is far from safe from assassination. Dworkin concludes her novel saying, "I need to say that I don't care about being understood..."\textsuperscript{111} an odd statement to make at the end of a memoir. After reading Heartbreak, a reader gets the feeling that Dworkin cares very much about being understood. Therefore, the statement feels defensive. But the statement was made by a person who has spent a lifetime being misunderstood. She seems to have predicted the negative response she received in the popular press. Reviewers of Heartbreak said many uncomplimentary things: Dworkin "is angry, bitter, argumentative, and fat;"\textsuperscript{112} she has "an instant affinity for taking the most extreme position and expressing it in the most attention-grabbing manner possible;"\textsuperscript{113} she is "furthering the time-worn stereotype of the angry feminist."\textsuperscript{114} Although reviewers of Heartbreak appeared to have overlooked it, the book expresses Dworkin's vulnerability. "I have a heart easily hurt."\textsuperscript{115} She exposes her supposed toughness for what it truly is: commitment to her cause. "I can't be bought or intimidated because I'm already cut down the middle. I walk with women whispering in my ears. Every time I cry there's a name attached to each tear."\textsuperscript{116}

Dworkin is tired after a lifetime of political struggle. Her exhaustion surfaces periodically toward the end of Heartbreak. "I'm empty; there's not much left, not inside me. I think that it's bad to give up, but maybe it's not bad to rest, to sit in silence for a while."\textsuperscript{117} But she does not believe she can afford to rest, not while so much work remains to be done. "[T]here's a child being pimped by her father with everyone around her either taking a piece of her or looking the other way. How can anyone rest, really?"\textsuperscript{118} The beauty of Heartbreak is Dworkin's refusal to rest on her laurels. Although reviewers accused her of "bravado"\textsuperscript{119} and "name-dropping"\textsuperscript{120} she does not brag about her accomplishments. She writes, "I want my work to exist on its merits and not on the power of personality or celebrity."\textsuperscript{121} Dworkin can rest easy knowing that intelligent feminists recognize the merit of her life's work.

\textsuperscript{108} Id. at 105-06.  
\textsuperscript{109} Id. at 100.  
\textsuperscript{110} Id. at 122.  
\textsuperscript{111} Id. at 211.  
\textsuperscript{112} Schorow, supra note 28.  
\textsuperscript{113} Rubin, supra note 18.  
\textsuperscript{114} Stephen Millin, \textit{Still a Rebel With a Cause}, ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS, March 29, 2002, at 25D.  
\textsuperscript{115} DWORKIN, HEARTBREAK, supra note 4, at 189.  
\textsuperscript{116} Id. at 189-90.  
\textsuperscript{117} Id. at 191.  
\textsuperscript{118} Id.  
\textsuperscript{119} Millin, supra note 111.  
\textsuperscript{120} Miller, supra note 17.  
\textsuperscript{121} DWORKIN, HEARTBREAK, supra note 4, at 211.