

It is getting better and I meet more practitioners now who work in an open way which is more loving and sharing and they are not afraid of touch. There are times when the client is deep into their original pain work that they need to be hugged. A total taboo in this context is just cruelty. We all know about poisonous pedagogy in therapy producing cruel therapists. And I want you to hear that I am not advocating being a rescuer so as to abort a clients process, I am talking about retaining some humanity.

For me the journey is only just beginning; I look forward to creative and flexible ways of working with clients. It was OK to qualify in medicine and do psychiatry but it has been through my own journey that a way has become clear to work with my clients in order to be there for them while they make their own unique journey.

STAND UP AND BE A WOMAN

by Shan Jayran

My mother was a stunningly beautiful woman. Really beautiful. When she came in the room people who hadn't met her caught their breath; family history is littered with the corpses of those who loved her hopelessly. As her daughter my looks were a battleground, as were grace of movement, wit, charm, tact, elegant dress etc. Household shopping was punctuated by exhortations to 'pull in your stomach darling', 'try to walk from the hip' and so on. At our dinner table men frequently dissected what they liked and didn't like about female looks; such dictates I dutifully studied.

But by eighteen years old I rebelled against living with the high wire anxiety of the seductress. I took a long, hard, but friendly look at my face and body. 'You and I are stuck with each other' I said firmly. 'So we may as well get to like each other.' With difficulty I accepted my thick short legs and my childlike face that never would look sophisticated. I planned reasonably comfortable clothes that were quite stylish, but practical too. I discovered that lots of men don't want 'perfection' at all because it makes them nervous; there are those who actually delight in neolithics like me. However, society didn't help me sustain this equilibrium so it often caved in under pressure.

Then seven years later, in the mid seventies, feminism blasted Britain and encouraged me to whinge and complain pretty much as Fran Mosley does in 'Dishy' (*Self and Society* Nov 91). How men were so arrogant, and whipped us poor things into line with their labels - Sexy/ Bitch goddess/ sweetie/ cutie It felt so good to have a good moan about it.



.....old bag?

Fran describes how she used a classic group exercise to fight her way out of this barrage of labels which dig us into such inadequacy. After that she felt she 'needn't ever let those labels constrain me again.' So far it's a nice piece about her coming to power.

But then when she meets the same annoying man who spits labels at her, she hasn't changed at all. 'Only men,' she wails 'Only men have the power to define who is pretty and who isn't ... (and) ... When I am told I am an "old bag" ... my own worth is denied ... Only a man can do that.' So she begs, very sweetly and prettily, for men to be kind and considerate in

using their power over us. She asks them to be good boys and say directly that they're attracted to someone, telling us about their own feelings, in proper psychospeak.

After all if we women are stuck in the inferior position the least men could do is be gentle with us. Isn't that so?

Oh for heavens sake Fran Mosley strike off your chains, stand up and be a woman. Sit in front of a mirror naked, look at what the Goddess gave you, piece by piece. Cry about it. Smile at it. Remember the insults you have borne and resolve to love those poor bits more. Look at what you find lovely and dwell on it with time and pride. Look between your legs in a mirror and face the slime and the sweetness at the centre of it all. Sit like this again and again until you can accept and love the precious ugly thing you are. Look at it all together as a whole instead of in bits. Anoint it with perfumed oil, bathe it in candle-light, talk to it, stroke it. Repeat the medicine until the slavery is purged from your soul.

No, men do NOT have the power to define us. **ONLY WE HAVE IT.** But if they pass opinions and we let ourselves be no more than containers for the thunder of their voices, then indeed we deserve to be called old bags.