

THE WORLD

'All sex is abuse,' says writer as

Her book *Intercourse* has been called extreme, yet Germaine Greer is a fan and SUSAN ANTHONY found that beneath the ranting is a rational thinker.

AMERICAN author Andrea Dworkin wants us all to think about sex. She wants us to think twice (at the very least) about the basic sexual act between men and women.

She wants us to pause and consider the social and political implications of it — how it contributes to the social submission of women.

Then, if her recently published book, *Intercourse*, is any guide, she wants us to stop doing it.

Her views, put somewhat strongly in a work peppered liberally with the dreaded four-letter f-word, have not endeared her to American critics.

But that is no surprise. Most of her books, from *Women Hating to Ice and Fire*, have raised critics' hackles.

In fact, the literary pages in America lately have been full of heated discussions of Andrea Dworkin's latest effort as the injured author herself writes to rebut the volley of insults and explain what she really meant.

According to the slim press kit for *Intercourse*, Germaine Greer is something of a fan of Dworkin's work.

"Andrea Dworkin has confronted the question that no feminist hitherto has dared to ask: whether intromission is compatible with equal status," Greer is quoted as commenting.

"Feminist analysis can make no advance without giving due consideration to Dworkin's case," Greer continues. "This is the most shocking book any feminist has yet written: it forces us all to ask ourselves if we have not been deliberately ignoring the obvious."

This "intromission" Greer speaks of is actually the same act that Dworkin repeatedly uses the four-letter word to describe. (Greer must have been feeling a bit mellow when she wrote that or else she likes longer words these days.)

In fact, in a telephone interview this week, Dworkin said that her publisher, after reading the first few pages of her manuscript, had remarked that the book really should be called *F....g*.

Dworkin maintains that her argument and her method of argument are not extreme.

Her argument, in short, is that intercourse socialises women to accept inferiority, largely because the woman is "invaded". Many men, she adds, find intercourse repulsive.

As a matter of fact, she concludes, all sex is sex abuse.

To make her point, she analyses the more relevant work of various writers from Tolstoy and Flaubert to a round-up of the usual suspects — Hemingway, Mailer — and she looks at historical figures, such as Joan of Arc,



Andrea Dworkin ... a battered wife who turned to feminism.

as she examines questions on why sex so often is regarded as dirty.

What she says of the vampirism in *Dracula*, is typical of the tone of the whole book:

"The act in blood is virtually a pun in metaphor on intercourse as the origin

of life; reproduction; blood as nurture; the foetus feeding off the woman's blood in utero.

"And with the great wound, the vagina, moved to the throat, there is, like a shadow, the haunting resonance of the blood-soaked vagina, in men-

struation, in childbirth; bleeding v a virgin...

"While alive, the women are v... the draining of their blood over long, lingering sex act of penetra and violation; after death, they carnal, being truly sexed...

"... and with the great wound, vagina, moved to the throat, there i harbinger of what has become common practice of sexual as now: throat rape... in the manne the pornographic film *Deep Throat*.

"But *Dracula*, the book, the m goes beyond metaphor in its intu rendering of an oncoming cen filled with sexual horror... killing sex act; slow dying as sensuality; watching the slow dying and watching is sexual; mutilation of female body as male heroism adventure; callous, ruthless, preda lust as the one-note meaning of se desire; intercourse itself need blood." *Et cetera*.

Like all social theorists who ma living pushing their opinions, Dwo has gained attention by publi views that seem extreme.

This is, after all, about the only to get noticed in a world ful self-promoters.

But she pulls in her horn conversation, sounding far more sonable than the book would lead to expect.

Indeed, many of the points ma the book — variations on the th that women kow-tow to men far much — are well worth further tho

Systems Software Programmer.

CONSTRUCTION
EXECUTIVES

'house,' says writer as critics howl



situation, in childbirth; bleeding when a virgin...

"While alive, the women are virgins... the draining of their blood over one long, lingering sex act of penetration and violation; after death, they are carnal, being truly sexed..."

"... and with the great wound, the vagina, moved to the throat, there is the harbinger of what has become a common practice of sexual assault now: throat rape... in the manner of the pornographic film *Deep Throat*."

"But *Dracula*, the book, the myth, goes beyond metaphor in its intuitive rendering of an oncoming century filled with sexual horror... killing as a sex act; slow dying as sensuality; men watching the slow dying and the watching is sexual; mutilation of the female body as male heroism and adventure; callous, ruthless, predatory lust as the one-note meaning of sexual desire; intercourse itself needing blood." *Et cetera.*

Like all social theorists who make a living pushing their opinions, Dworkin has gained attention by publishing views that seem extreme.

This is, after all, about the only way to get noticed in a world full of self-promoters.

But she pulls in her horns in conversation, sounding far more reasonable than the book would lead one to expect.

Indeed, many of the points made in the book — variations on the theme that women kow-tow to men far too much — are well worth further thought

and discussion. But since they are cloaked in what often sounds like pornographic poetry, they tend to be obscured.

"I don't think it's extreme," says Dworkin when we talk on the phone, "but two things make it seem extreme".

The first, she says, is that very few people have dealt with this intercourse as a political subject.

And the second is: "I think it's very unusual for a woman to write without writing basically in a tone of apology. I think people find the tone of voice really out of line, especially because it's coming from a woman."

IF IT were a man writing it probably would not be considered extreme. "Men always write in a tone of total authority," she says. "They can be sly and cunning like Saul Bellow or outright sadistic, like Norman Mailer, but there's always that authority."

Women writers, on the other hand, she says, always have a tone of, "I'm sorry, please don't think badly of me for saying this, I'm really not trying to offend, I hope you don't mind..."

She has a point, but whether it justifies what essentially is a rant is another question.

Dworkin, a longtime campaigner against pornography and one of America's more controversial feminists, became involved in sexual issues as a result of a destructive relationship with a Dutch radical she was married to for three years.

"I was a battered wife," she says, "and pornography entered into it."

She was "saved" by a feminist, who convinced her that she was not alone in being battered and encouraged her to consider the social and cultural forces that had contributed to her situation.

Her book *Women Hating* was the result, and a dedicated crusader against all kinds of sexual abuse was born.

Because of the strength of Dworkin's views, it is interesting to learn that she lives with a man and has done so for 13 years. They own an apartment together.

How can this be if, as she says, all sex is sex abuse and men are the enemy?

After some fancy verbal footwork she concedes that men don't *have* to be the enemy. "It's not something that's biological and inevitable," she says — in contrast to arguments in the book.

There are even, she says, some men who are kind, gentle and loving.

She also concedes that not *all* men find sex repulsive.

In fact, it turns out that she is really not the howling harridan her book would suggest: rather she is trying to make a point as strongly as she can.

So what does she really want people to get from the book?

"I'd like people to come away from it disturbed and asking some questions about things they've taken for granted up to now."

Anyone who reads it certainly will get that out of it. The trouble is, with passages such as the one on vampirism, they just might not be the right questions.

Andrea Dworkin ... a battered wife who turned to feminism.

as she examines questions on why sex so often is regarded as dirty.

What she says of the vampirism in *Dracula*, is typical of the tone of the whole book:

"The act in blood is virtually a pun in metaphor on intercourse as the origin

of life; reproduction; blood as nurture; the foetus feeding off the woman's blood *in utero*."

"And with the great wound, the vagina, moved to the throat, there is, like a shadow, the haunting resonance of the blood-soaked vagina, in men-

CONSTRUCTION
EXECUTIVE

If you live work