

THE NON-SEXIST WORD FINDER: A DICTIONARY OF GENDER FREE LANGUAGE by Rosalie Maggio. Beacon Press, \$9.95

By LINNEA LANNON
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

A few months ago I used the word "seminar" to describe Susan Brownmiller's "Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape" and was promptly chastised by a reader. She pointed out that "seminar" is derived from "women," which is about as male-oriented as one can

For the compleat feminist: a non-sexist dictionary

get. Given that the book "seminar" was describing in a feminist landmark, she suggested I might find something more neutral or, better yet, more feminine.

This task will be easier with the paperback printing of "The Nonsexist Word Finder, A Dictionary of Gender-Free Usage" by Rosalie Maggio (Beacon Press, \$9.95). For a start, it offers more than 30 non-sexist alternatives to "seminar."

Maggio's dictionary primarily offers substitutes for sexist words and phrases, but there are also explanations of why a word or phrase is sexist.

For example, under "kaffeeklatsch" we learn that in Germany this expression is completely neutral and refers to informal gatherings of both sexes to visit and drink coffee. In the United States, however, it has come to be used in a belittling and patronizing manner

for gatherings of women." Maggio suggests "gathering" or "coffee" as alternatives.

Non-sexist applies to men as well as women, by the way. Maggio argues that writers not use "he-man" because "first, there is not a parallel for women, and second, because it perpetuates a stereotype that appears to be false and damaging to men."

By the way, before anyone writes to say that "chastised" was a poor choice of word, let me defend myself: Although "chastity" is listed, "chastised" is not. Makes sense, because "chastise" means "punish" or "castigate" and is not derived from chastity.

National events provide some inexcusable gaffes

The opening ceremonies of the Olympics were about to be televised and I settled down with my notepad I had just heard at the close of the previous program George Bush and Michael Dukakis referred to as "those two gentlemen." Whether either is of high birth or rank, as attendant upon a monarch or a noble is irrelevant to the roles they are now playing. Both were nominees but the newscaster preferred to call them gentlemen, which was neither pertinent nor germane.

The screen flashed to Seoul. The contestants marched in. An NBC network pro informed me that the flag bearer leading one nation's contingent was a woman but the screen clearly shows it is a male. No, the pro said, his notes can't be correct. "She can't be that gentleman," he said. Whether the man was a gentleman or scoundrel is irrelevant. Fitness, music, talent and training were what counted there. He was an athlete or a contestant.

The pro pointed out all the "security" that is in existence. "There is security in existence all over the world," I concluded he means "in evidence."

As the athletes left the field after the ceremony and entered the tunnel that led outside, the pro observed, "The athletes are going out

New book probes harem's mystique

HAREM: THE WORLD BEHIND THE VEIL by Alex Croutier. Athlone Press, 224 pages, \$35

By DENIS COLLINS
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

Alex Croutier's book was already at the printers when the late Ayatollah Khomeini pronounced his death sentence on author Salman Rushdie. Suddenly, her expose of one of the Islamic world's most forbidden subjects took on a new perspective.

Croutier has tread where no author of a coffee-table book has dared — into the Grand Seraglio, the Sublime Porte, the eunuch-guarded world of the harem. The Turkish-born Croutier, executive editor of the San Francisco publishing company Mercury House, has written a sober account of harem life from the Middle Ages to the beginning of the 20th century. She has illustrated her sensuous writing with dozens of sensuous, provocative paintings of harem women as imagined by artists, who more often than not imagined them languorous and naked.

"One man made the comment, 'It will appeal both to the scholar and the dirty old man,'" Croutier says. Harems were outlawed in Turkey in 1908, but Croutier — though only in her 40s — has a personal association with the 400-year-old tradition. She was born in a house that was once the harem of a pasha, and her maternal grandmother and a great aunt lived in a harem.

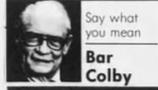
"I used to hear stories when I was growing up about the harem," says Croutier, who was delighted as a child by the trappings of that life — the costumes and tales of leisurely public baths. As she grew older, and more influenced by Western ideas, the subservient role that women were forced to adopt in the harem and in modern Turkey became distasteful to her.

Croutier's experience in some ways mirrors the history of the harem in Turkey. For four centuries, women were isolated in separate parts of a home or palace, cut off from the outside world. In many, though not all harems, the women were reserved for the sexual pleasure of one master.

In the late 19th century, two events provoked a revolution in the harem system, according to Croutier. The first was a visit to Istanbul by Empress Eugenie, the wife of Napoleon III. "This visit began a chain of irreversible effects. The Turkish women living in harems suddenly acquired a taste for everything French. . . . Aristocratic Turkish ladies copied the empress' appearance to the best of their ability. . . . Before the end of the century, the sultanas were dressed by the French couturiers of Paris."

The publication in 1906 of "The Disenchanted," a novel by French author Pierre Loti about love smoldered behind the impervious walls of the harems, was the final blow to that tradition. "Turkey was suddenly flooded with European women who were appalled at the situation of their sisters," Croutier writes. Within three years, harems were outlawed and polygamy abolished.

There are still harems in some parts of the world, particularly Saudi Arabia, and Croutier speculates she might try to infiltrate a harem and write a sequel. In the meantime, she is writing a novel and preparing for a book tour.



Say what you mean
Bar Colby

from whence they came." Inasmuch as "whence" means "from where" he was saying they're going out from from where they came. Or, from where they came from.

Later, as the games progressed, the pro got better. He said the weight a weight-lifter lifted was "formidable." He didn't know it's pronounced "FORmidable."

He asked a former medal winner, "Did this Olympics mean anything differently to you?" He meant the adjective "different" not the adverb "differently."

After another pool victory for Janet Evans of the United States, the commentator expressed the opinion she "had got too large of a lead" to be leader. When he was a youngster on the grade school playground he stuck in the "of" and he can't stop. He has too strong of a bad habit.

A top athlete was described as having been "medaled four times." He thinks English needs more verbs so he converted a noun.

I switched to a channel covering the presidential campaign. A newscaster was saying that "the eyes of the world are literally to



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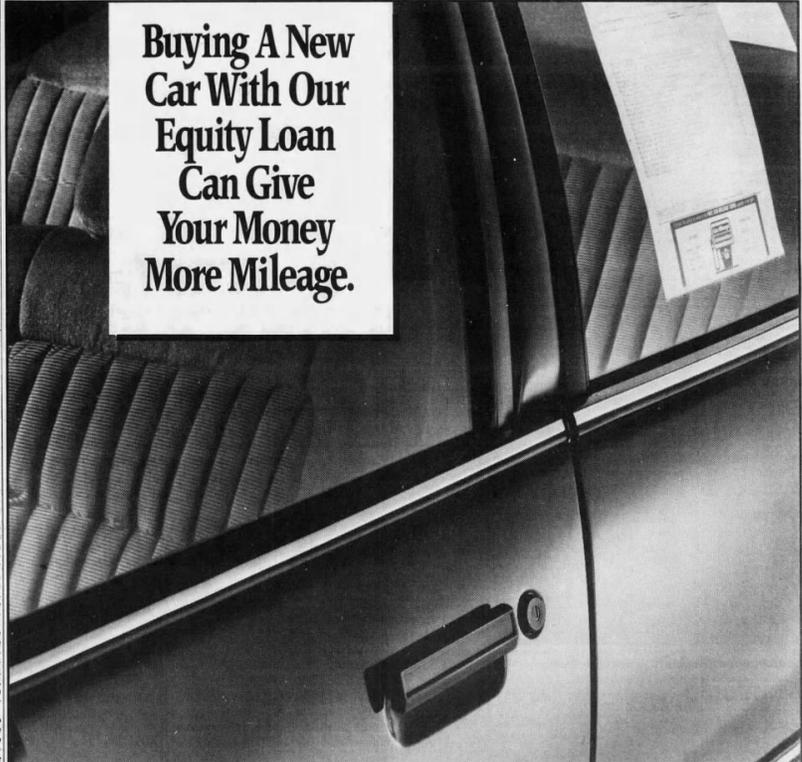
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