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CONTENTS, October 1972

The Shape of Things to Come	page one
News	page six
Poetry	page seven
Classes and DOB Announcements, Calendar	page nine
Noviciates	page fifteen
Willie	page eighteen

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

by

Rita Mae Brown

This is Part II of a copyrighted article from Women: A Journal of Liberation, Summer, 1972. In Part I, Ms. Brown argued that just as women-identified women have rejected heterosexuality, so must the non-women identified women reject heterosexuality if they are sincere in their beliefs that male supremacy is oppressive. The oppressed cannot live with the oppressor and assume that oppression will cease.

In Part I, Ms. Brown wrote: "You will change yourself by discovering your woman-identified self, by discovering other women.... As you change yourself you will begin to change your society also. A free, strong self cannot live in the muck that men have made." In changing, in finding our women-identified selves, we will "revolt against this whole filthy world that tried to cover you and your beauty under a ton of male supremacist slime. That is what Lesbianism offers you."

Those of us who have found those new lives, that hope and courage, find ourselves in the position of being attacked and undermined by women in the women's liberation movement to say nothing of forces outside that movement. We cannot allow ourselves to be oppressed by men; how then can we turn around and allow ourselves to be oppressed and harassed by women clinging to heterosexual privilege? We can't. Therefore, large portions of the political Lesbian population in women's liberation and gay liberation have split from those movements in order to survive. Does that mean we hate straight women? No. But would you volunteer your neck for someone to step on? Does this mean we can never again work with straight women or with gay men?

No. But we aren't going to work with anyone until they begin to change their behavior. Some changes are: they can no longer push us around, hide us under rugs or try to seduce us when everyone else has gone only to deny us in the morning.

Straight women by virtue of being tied to men don't understand Lesbians or the political meaning of Lesbianism. Straight women don't know what our lives are like. They can't think like we do. We understand their lives because we were all raised to be straight. It is one-way communication. Straight women are confused by men, don't put women first, they betray Lesbians and in its deepest form, they betray their own selves. You can't build a strong movement if your sisters are out there fucking with the oppressor.

Further, as long as men have women under their control, they aren't going to change. By withdrawing support, men have to change. Sure a few individual men here and there will and have changed. Those few treat you and other women like human beings, but those men still haven't joined in the organized battle against sexism. They have to throw in their lot with us like any group dedicated to political change. Straight women are constantly bought off by the good behavior of a few rare men. Good behavior is not enough, he must join the struggle and take risks like the rest of us. Until that time, no man is our brother, he is still our oppressor. We can't work with straight women while they are misled by "good" men.

A short note about bisexuality. You can't have your cake and eat it too. You can't be tied to male privilege with the right hand while clutching to your sister with the left. Lesbianism is the only road toward removing yourself from male ways and to begin to learn equality.

Equality teaches strong lessons. Once you feel your strength you cannot bear the thought of anyone else being beaten down. All other oppressions constructed by men become horrible to you, if they aren't already. Class and race, those later day diseases sprung from sexism, maim and destroy people every bit as much as sexism itself. No oppression is tolerable. All must be destroyed. Once you have come out you can no longer fall back on race and class privilege, if you have any. Those privileges divide you from your Lesbian sisters who don't have them. Any Lesbian who tries to salvage her racial and class privileges does so at the expense of other Lesbians; she weakens all of us by this mistake. A mistake in recognizing the hatred of male supremacy for Lesbians, also; men award privilege for serving them -- the Lesbian does not serve them, so you will be clinging to your privilege without really having the power to back it up. All you have left is the behavioral patterns born of those privileges, the bark without the bite -- but that bark turns away other Lesbians. You don't automatically stop acting those ways. In most cases you have to be taught by your Lesbian sisters who lacked those privileges and understand how divisive they are.

None of this is easy. Becoming a Lesbian does not make you instantly pure, perpetually happy and devotedly revolutionary. But once you have taken your life in your hands you will find you are no longer alone. There is a growing movement of Lesbians dedicated to our freedom, to your freedom, to ending all man-made oppressions. You will be part of that surge forward and you will leave your fingerprints on the shape of things to come.

The following is a very brief outline of practical program which is the first step toward organized struggle:

I. Work Projects: Women with economic privilege, whether straight or Lesbian, Black, Asian, Indian, Latin or White, should organize to meet the survival needs of women without economic privilege. This means food distribution centers, child care centers, health care centers, self-defense programs, skill centers and halfway houses.

II. Consciousness Raising: For all its abuses and misuse, consciousness raising still remains a good step toward understanding one's own oppression. If the C-R is disciplined, each woman should learn from other women and her own life how those lives are a response to the dominant culture, the existing power structure. Women should learn that their personal lives reflect power politics on an individual level. By examining those lives and then going further to connect those lives into a pattern, women learn the mechanics of oppression. Once you know how something works you can fix it or fight it.

III. Media: We must develop and extend our own media -- newspapers, films, magazines, art, music, etc. The existing white, male, rich media institutions distort the truth of any political movement and get rich off reporting our oppression in the bargain (i.e., David Susskind). It is imperative that we build our own media. No serious political movement in history has ever relied on the communications of its oppressor. Without our own media we are without voice.

IV. Ideology: Before we can advance as a political force, we must have a coherent, comprehensive ideology -- a body of ideas that analyze our oppression in all its ramifications, economic, political, social, etc. A body of ideas that constructs the way to end that oppression. Lesbianism is the cornerstone of this structure. It is the touchstone of our independence, self-image, creativity. It is the distillation of women's oppression and the crystallization of women's power. Without this as our intellectual base we are doomed to reformism and disunity.

NEWS

V. Organization: These last few years have seen work projects, C-R, the beginnings of media and the beginnings of clear ideology, spring up throughout the country. All these activities are progressing at different rates of speed, different levels of understanding. If we are to forge a powerful political instrument to end our oppression then these activities must be coordinated toward that common purpose. This means that we must be organized, we must be a party. We must concentrate our forces rather than scatter them. The embryo of this concept, of organized struggle, is slowly growing. Lesbians are realizing that there will be no real political change without a party. Within five years we will have our party. With the formation of that body we will begin the second phase of our struggle against over 10,000 years of servitude.

Forward, sisters, forward.

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The Southwest Regional Lesbian Working Committee's purpose is threefold: (1) To organize and establish communications between Lesbians and Lesbian groups in the Southwestern United States; (2) To ascertain the directions, plans, actions and further developments of the National Coalition of Gay Organizations with a view toward full Lesbian participation in this organization; (3) To initiate a call for another Regional Lesbian Conference.

Any individual women and/or Lesbian/feminist groups are encouraged to participate in this open Committee. For further information, contact the city secretary nearest you:

Joanne Mitchell, San Diego
(714) 279-7248
8603 Dubonnet Street
San Diego, California 92123

Tessier, Orange County
(714) 836-7761
1330 West 9th Street
Santa Ana, California 92703

Sally Anderson, Los Angeles
(213) 656-1049
1146 North Gordon Street
Hollywood, California 90028

All interested individuals and groups are urged to send their names and addresses to Tessier, Orange County address above, for the SRLWC mailing list.

Ellie

Ellie in your blue velvet coat
 long hair flying
 tamed only by your thin scarf
 wandering so aimlessly
 down state street
 depressed, crying
 searching
 I've been searching for you/child
 for a year now
 in deserted alleys
 down one-way streets
 cornering you in dimly lit rooms
 my drunken/sober haze
 driving you up walls
 never giving you a chance to think
 never giving you time/reason to change
 if you went away tomorrow
 taking your soft brown eyes/
 slow shy smile/timid way/tired
 view of life
 just took off for Berkeley/
 Portland/New York
 and were watered everyday
 for months
 you might return laughing
 choking with happiness
 you might come back with a woman-lover
 unafraid
 no longer loving me
 but understanding/
 comprehending our patterns
 in your fading (no longer)
 guilt-ridden memories

--Judy Greenspan

untitled

this morning
 early
 the hills were flat with mist
 and trees danced to the touch
 to rain
 blended
 to your kind of weather.
 traffic colors bounced
 to headlights
 merged on windshields
 blended
 to be slapped away
 to be swept away
 or lie in droplets
 to pull my eye
 to pull my mind
 to your kind of weather
 to colors
 to halos on the hill
 blended
 to pull my eye
 to pull my mind
 to you.

--Norma Montgomery

untitled

Once by the sea you came to me
 Rushing as madly as the wind
 dancing, leaping through the salt air
 you came to me
 Breathless . . . be with me
 pleaded those eyes
 the two you lose in me.
 I touched them,
 your heeding hand
 and we embraced
 yes

walked into the sea

--Karen Lee Downard

Registration for classes offered through Breakaway -- a free university by and for women -- will take place on Sunday, October 15th from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. at Unitas House, 2700 Bancroft Way in Berkeley. There are women's studies, art, skills and consciousness-raising courses. A \$3.00 donation will be requested at the door. For further information call Lisa at 527-0180.

If there are women in the San Francisco area interested in attending classes in AUTO MECHANICS, please call 863-7407 to register. (Call evenings after 7 PM.)

Instruction is free, except for parts and/or donations. Classes will be in the evenings, day of the week not yet established. Classes are not affiliated with any of the alternative universities. Thus, schedules can be flexible, and you can learn what you want, when you want.

Material covered:

- General maintenance: tune-ups, tire care, minor electrical systems
- General information on engine operation
- Practical experience
- Major overhauls
- Brake installation, adjustment, bleeding

Course taught by woman mechanic with tools, small space, and actual engines to play with.

Starting this month, we will be having a book rap for everyone interested. All of the books chosen by the committee will be available in paperback, or you can get a copy FREE at the library. Every month we will be undertaking a different type of book (novel, drama, poetry, biography, etc.) so that everyone is bound to find at least __ topic that interests her. If you have suggestions, write them down and give them to someone on the committee: Sharon Crase, Linda Wesley, Diane Richardson, Paula, May C., Ginny, Marley, Charlene, Lyndall Cowen -- or leave them in the DOB office.

This month we'll be discussing Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. Perhaps you've read it before, or perhaps you've successfully avoided it from junior English to the sophomore survey in college. But, if you can put away the thought that it falls under the heading of "Required Reading" for most educational institutions, you will find it a surprisingly good and a surprisingly relevant (despite the 1850 date) book.

In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne reverses the traditional concepts of good and evil and sheds light on a phase of feminism that was overlooked by his contemporaries.

If, after you've read the book, you're interested in what critics have to say about it, there are several good works on the subject. In order to find them, look under "Hawthorne, Nathaniel" in the card catalogue of the library or under "Scarlet Letter -- Works About."

October '72 - Events

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1 DOB ON KPFA 5:30 PM	2	3	4 Rap 7 PM	5	6 Bus. Mtg. 8 PM	7
8 Football 2 PM	9	10	11 Rap 7 PM	12	13 Party 8 PM	14
15	16 Board Mtg. 6:30	17	18 Rap 7 PM	19	20	21 Party 6 PM
22 Football 2 PM	23	24	25 Rap 7 PM	26	27	28 Halloween Party
29 Book Rap 2 PM	30	31				

DOB ON KPFA, FM
5:30 PM

Oct. 6 - Business meeting, 8 PM, DOB office - 1005 Market #208

Oct. 8 - Football strikes again, Glen Park, 2 PM

Oct. 13 - Friday the 13th Party, 1743 8th Avenue, 8 PM

Oct. 21 - Dinner Party at 182 Gambier St., 6 PM, FOOD PROVIDED. \$1.00.

Oct. 22 - Football, Glen Park, 2 PM

Oct. 28 - HALLOWEEN PARTY - Wear a costume and get in for \$1.00. Don't wear one and pay \$2.00.....

Alternative Futures, 2012 Pine, S.F. - 9 PM.

Oct. 29 - Book Rap Out, 150 Landers (between Church & Dolores, off 15th St.)

Wednesday night raps: 4th - "Evasion", Linda Wesley; 11th - "Involvement", Paula; 18th - "Group Pressure", Marley; 25th - "Being Alone Naturally", Diane Richardson.

Wed. Night Raps will cost \$1.00 to non-DOB members, 50¢ to members.

House fund:

\$1382.65

Listen to DOB women
on KPFA, FM Radio
at 5:30 PM = 95 on your
dial. Tell your friends.

This month, the book discussion will take place at 150 Landers Street #4, San Francisco (between Church and Dolores, near 15th -- take a J Church and get off at Church and 15th).

SISTERS Magazine
needs your art work. Send
your drawings - in black & white -
with a self-addressed envelope
for return.

DOB is now attempting to start a pen friend club. Please indicate if you desire your pen friend to be located as close to your city as possible. Let us know if you would prefer your pen friend's name and address sent to you via postcard or plain envelope. Please send \$1.00 with your request to help pay for expenses. This dollar will put you on our mailing list for as long as you wish.

Send your name and address, including ZIP code, to:

Ms. Paula McCorkel
PEN FRIEND
1005 Market Street #208
San Francisco, California 94103

LETTERS

14

Dear SISTERS,

First of all I would like to tell you how much I enjoy your magazine SISTERS. Ever since I've subscribed to it, I have had but one wish. I wish it were about ten times the size it is.

Once you published a story I had submitted, "A Dream Come True", and I couldn't have been prouder in my life to see it appear in your magazine, believe me. But ever since then I have been thinking of something worthwhile to submit to your magazine. Something that would be enjoyable to other gay women. I thought of mentioning the very thing I just read about in this last month's issue: a pen friend club. Only my idea was just a little different. I was thinking it would be nice if you were to have a page or two devoted to women with particular problems. Needless to say, like myself, I'm sure there are many women with problems such as ours. Then maybe, if they wrote in their problems, someone could answer them through the magazine. Or someone else reading could answer them from her perspective.

I have already sent my name and address to Ms. Paula McCorkel and I can hardly wait to hear from someone.

Sincerely,

Lynne Greenwood

[Is there any reader response to this kind of thing? Apparently, the pen friend idea is a good one. How about this? ed]

NOVICIATES

by

Laurel

I leafed through my manuscripts as I waited for her. What would she see in them? This time, could they carry us beyond the words, the images, the allusions?

The noontime lunch crowd streamed into the hofbrau house mixing with the professors' wives and the wealthy matrons from the hills. I could feel my stomach tightening as I pictured how Leah would be, how she would see all this. I began to take notes -- random impressions of the people, the decorations' pathetic attempt to transform a drab Berkeley storefront into a bit of old Europe, the feel of the morbidly hot autumn weather pressing the smog into my skin. Details, sweet details to anchor me in this chair, at this table, waiting for this friend.

But that wasn't it at all. When Leah pushed her way through the lunch line to get to me her face drowned out everything else. It was almost indecent; thirty years old and she looked like a child just about to open her Christmas presents.

I wanted to catch my impressions on paper. I wanted to sketch the hollows in her cheeks beneath the huge hungry eyes. The eyebrows etched in a note of pathos somehow like a dog cocking its head to one side. Not noticeable, maybe, if it weren't for the fluttering hands, birdlike and frail, darting to her face and clutching each other under her chin. She was saying oh excuse me for being late. Her mouth seemed always to be shaping an oh. Leah's is

a face that says oh.

Through the line and the eddy of little chores -- silverware, water glasses, dressings for the salads, we found our way to the table. We laughed as we caught ourselves throwing out the usual gambits. What have you been doing? How have you been? -- No different from the dowdiest lady lunchers.

Impossible to begin at the point we had reached before. We knew the usual dances people use to warm up to each other -- should we use them just to get started? Or wasn't there a way to plunge into a deeper level without the trivia.

Leah stared at her sandwich, clutching her napkin and her water glass. We could look around us and remark on the kinds of people eating lunch here. We could catch up on what each of us is writing. There are books, movies, people we could use to get started. It would be easy to laugh a little and pass off the silence. We could chide each other for being too involved in our writing to be decent company. Dialogue is the heart of our work, have we none left over for real life? Or is there a block, something coming between us?

The minutes passed, we ate, smiled at each other, busied ourselves with salt shakers, catsup, sugar bowl. Finally, the silence had taken power. Anything which might follow must be of equal weight.

I had made a pact with myself that I would say and do exactly what crossed my mind. No editing the scene before it happened. I hadn't rehearsed anything, hadn't thought of how it would be, hadn't counted on the intensity of Leah's eyes and the way her fragile hands would dart after each other like mating birds. I hadn't

WILLIE: A SAD STORY

pictured what was happening in my stomach, the back of my neck, the hollows of my hands. I had barely suspected what this silence was telling me.

Feeling my sex contract -- acknowledging -- I caught Leah's hand. I must go on . . . risk these words into her hands . . . I want to make love with you. I want to swim with you naked and lick you dry in the sun. I want to tame your hands and ride the wind with them until you come with your head thrown back and cry out.

Poetry I lay my life in your hands . . . to speak so without the paper to absorb you. . . .

She pulled my hands into hers and captured them between her palms caught at her chest like a prayer.

Her face said oh. Oh yes.



I was almost raped recently, partly as a result of my own naivete, and partly, and most disgustingly, as a result of the Lesbian tolerance for a male "fruit fly."

The purpose here is to serve a warning to my sisters, as well as a chastisement of the women who will always believe in a man who buys them a drink.

Facts: There is a black man named Willie who can often be seen at such bars as Scott's Pit and La Cave. Willie is usually well-dressed, well-behaved, and fairly cultured -- the perfect "John." I had moved to San Francisco from Texas about six weeks before I met Willie. He was sitting next to me at the bar and we, naturally, began a conversation. I was delighted to hear he was also from Texas. He bought a few drinks for me, showed me some pointers on good pool-playing, and danced a few dances with me. He said that he was lonely and would like to be friends. I said that I would also like to be friends but that I had no sexual interest in him. He readily agreed to that stipulation and I was delighted to have found a new friend in the city.

There are three important factors that led to the incident. 1) I was very lonely and delighted to find someone who wanted to be my friend. 2) My own loneliness led to the second factor -- an empathetic reaction to what I thought was loneliness in this man. 3) I was raised to tell the truth and to keep my promises. As a logical extension, I learned to trust another person's word. I've always be-

lieved that people behave the way you treat them: If you treat a person as a thief or a liar, he or she will live up, or down, to that expectation; and conversely, if you treat them as good people, they will most often become good people. I believe this, and I applied it to Willie's words.

Willie asked me to dance a slow dance with him, and I wasn't unduly alarmed that he was dancing very close because I thought it was a cultural attribute of the black community. I wanted to go over to Peg's Place and Willie said he would take me there. I didn't have a car. The trip to Peg's was without incident. Willie asked me to have dinner with him some night and I agreed.

At Peg's Place we danced a few fast dances, but I sat with some friends while Willie sat at the bar. My roommate was there and I assumed she would take me home, but later she said she wasn't going home and Willie offered me a ride.

When we started to drive off, I began to have doubts about Willie. He wanted to take me to Twin Peaks to see the city, but I said I was tired and wanted to go home. He politely agreed, but after a while I began to see that he was not taking any route that I knew to my house. Here we were on Twin Peaks. Then I got mad because I finally realized he had lied. He stopped the car and threw himself on me but I pushed him away and demanded that he take me home. He did, but the trip was ironic as he denied doing anything and started accusing me of laying a trip on his sensitive soul.

We arrived at my house and I was so furious I wasn't speaking to him. He wanted to

walk me to my door but I told him no. However, he pleaded with me to let him be a gentleman and see that I got in safely, so I wearily agreed.

I unlocked the door, he pushed me in, pushed the door closed, pushed me down on the steps, and started tearing at my clothes. I would call this attempted rape, even though some women told me my accusations were too strong. I was truly frightened. I knew I couldn't fight him because he knew judo and karate, and I didn't. I also felt that by fighting back he would become more excited. So I talked my way out of it by trying to both shame him and appeal to some seed of humanity in him. He stood up, and I pushed him out the door.

Willie can't be given all the blame because he thought that my denial of any interest in him was merely part of the female etiquette. Unlike the other women, I didn't know this was Willie's method of operation for bedding a woman. The other women didn't warn me because they assumed I knew what I was doing. This is as ludicrous an idea as the one, usually thrown out by males, that a woman who walks by herself or hitchhikes, deserves to be raped. I have an inalienable right to speak with whomever, walk where and when I please without an implied physical assault.

I also have the right as a Lesbian in a Lesbian bar to have my sexual/emotional proclivities honored by any straight visitor to that bar.

Willie is more than a visitor. He is a pervert who derives some strange egoistical message from trying to conquer (and that word

is intentional) Lesbians. But Willie is made to feel welcome because he is seemingly well-mannered (which lends a pseudo-culture to some of the bars) and he spends a lot of money in the bars.

Nevertheless, it is only realistic to add that the three M's -- money, males, and might -- run our society. This formula leads to the most perverse side of the story. I talked to other women who have had similar experiences with Willie, but only I spoke up. I complained to the owners and the other clients about Willie; and I was ostracized, ridiculed, and threatened for it -- and this was done by other women.

I called an acquaintance who flatly told me I was lying because she knew Willie was a gentleman. The next day I saw two other women who had seen me leave with Willie. They knew what Willie was like because they had also had trouble with him; but they hadn't said anything since they thought I knew the consequences. I'm not blaming them because had they said something I might have dismissed it as hysterical hatred of all men.

A week later I saw Willie at La Cave and began to say things at the bar. The male bartender told me to shut up and one of the more "butch" female customers told me to shut up or she'd beat me up. A VIP from Scott's, upon learning I was to write this article, warned me not to because Willie had friends and I might get hurt. A friend asked me not to write it because Sisters is sold in some of the SF bars.

It hurt to see a woman I had become close to, a woman who had had a similar experience with Willie, smile at him when we next saw him.

I asked her why she did that and she said that was the way she had been conditioned to act toward men -- even the ones who try rape.

Again, this is a warning to others not to be as stupid as I was. I'm also asking my sisters why we continue to tolerate this man or any man like him at the expense of another sister.

- Sheila W.

I'd like to make some comments. I, too, have been hassled by Willie, and Sheila's story is a warning to others who aren't aware that Willie is a practiced rapist.

This article raises good questions. Why is a man like Willie tolerated by so many Lesbians? Where is the solidarity within the so-called "Lesbian community"? Why do women's bars encourage his patronage? Why can't we keep such men out of our bars? And, most important, why do women ignore a sister in trouble, saying that "she had it coming"?

I don't believe that Sheila "got what she deserved." Her story will probably raise a debate between those women who tend to be humanists and those who are total separatists. Sheila is, as she said, still in her humanistic stage, and because she trusted Willie, it does not mean she deserved a physical assault.

Women who are total man haters, and who expect Sheila and others like her, to feel the same or "suffer the consequences," are wrong

and are being cruel and unrealistic to say "you had it coming" to a sister; to refuse to support her when she tries to warn others is to tear down ourselves and our movement.

*-Lyndall Cowan
Editorial Staff*



Gina

COVER DESIGN: ~~LORENAE WONG~~