

THE LADDER

A LESBIAN REVIEW

SEPTEMBER 1964



(for sale to adults only) 50



purpose of the

Daughters of **BILITIS**

A WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROMOTING
THE INTEGRATION OF THE HOMOSEXUAL INTO SOCIETY BY:

- ① Education of the variant, with particular emphasis on the psychological, physiological and sociological aspects, to enable her to understand herself and make her adjustment to society in all its social, civic and economic implications--this to be accomplished by establishing and maintaining as complete a library as possible of both fiction and non-fiction literature on the sex deviant theme; by sponsoring public discussions on pertinent subjects to be conducted by leading members of the legal, psychiatric, religious and other professions; by advocating a mode of behavior and dress acceptable to society.
- ② Education of the public at large through acceptance first of the individual, leading to an eventual breakdown of erroneous taboos and prejudices; through public discussion meetings aforementioned; through dissemination of educational literature on the homosexual theme.
- ③ Participation in research projects by duly authorized and responsible psychologists, sociologists and other such experts directed towards further knowledge of the homosexual.
- ④ Investigation of the penal code as it pertains to the homosexual, proposal of changes to provide an equitable handling of cases involving this minority group, and promotion of these changes through due process of law in the state legislatures.

the Ladder

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The PSYCHIATRIST as SOCIAL TRANQUILIZER

LAW, LIBERTY, AND PSYCHIATRY. By Thomas S. Szasz, M.D.
New York, Macmillan, 1963. 281 pp. \$7.50.

The hideous brainwashing scene near the end of George Orwell's 1984 is patterned after a psychiatric session. O'Brien as therapist convinces Winston with drugs, electric shock, and conversation that two and two make five because Big Brother wants it that way. For his own good, and the good of society, Winston's vision must be adjusted to coincide with the accepted way of seeing, regardless of objective truth.

Periodically, THE LADDER or ONE Magazine cites a report in which a homosexual is given "therapeutic" treatment by psychiatrists with electric shock or drugs to recondition his sexual responses. My favorite is the "cure" effected by putting a lifelong homosexual into an isolation booth and plying him with drugs that induced violent nausea for several days, during which he was shown male pinups. He was then given strong euphoric drugs and shown pictures of females. The doctors report he married a woman and lived happily ever after.

This "medical" treatment, like the brainwashing scene in 1984, has a medieval flavor that brings to mind the punishment of heretics in the Inquisition, which also aimed at extirpating evil from the victim for the good of his soul and the health of society.

The use of psychiatric treatment as punishment for heresies social, sexual, and political is the subject of LAW, LIBERTY, AND PSYCHIATRY by Thomas S. Szasz. Dr. Szasz, himself a psychoanalyst and psychiatrist, sees "striking parallels between the medieval inquisitor and the contemporary institutional psychiatrist," and between the use of the terms "heresy" and "mental illness."

Dr. Szasz notes that psychiatry started as a liberating social force, but having become an accepted and powerful institution, it has turned into a coercive agent of the status quo. "We are accustomed to thinking of psychiatrists as physicians who help people. Of course, they do that too. But let us not forget that organized groups have always tried to dominate and exploit others." Dr. Szasz writes this about his own profession. He warns against "a therapeutic tyranny that knows no restraints in the pursuit of its interests."

We have been sold the image of the psychiatrist as the disinterested doctor. Dr. Szasz has another story: psychiatry "has acquired much social prestige and power through an essentially misleading association with the practice of medicine." But in fact its activity is "medical in name only. For the most part, psychiatrists are engaged in attempts to change the behavior and values of individuals, groups, institutions, and sometimes even of nations. Hence, psychiatry is a form of social engineering. It should be recognized as such."

The concept "mental illness" plays a crucial role in this "social engineering." Dr. Szasz, who is author of another book called THE MYTH OF MENTAL ILLNESS, points out that mental illness is an undefined, elastic concept that can be stretched to cover any form of disapproved behavior. The term creates a misleading analogy with physical disease, which can be located in the body. When we speak of "mental illness" we rarely mean a condition we can locate in the brain, like a tumor - and when this is involved, it is the business of the neurologist, not the psychiatrist. Dr. Szasz says that the psychiatrist deals with "problems in living," which involve moral concepts, rather than physiological ailments. "We call people physically ill when their body-functioning violates certain anatomical and physiological norms; similarly, we call people mentally ill when their personal conduct violates certain ethical, political, and social norms." To use the word illness in this context is to convert moral judgments into mental-health terms and thereby to give them a misleading scientific aura. It also keeps us from questioning whether the norms are desirable, and what exactly they are.

Dr. Szasz makes a distinction between the psychiatric profession as an institution and the individual psychiatrist, who may object to its activities, much as there may be a difference between a socially-powerful organized religion and the individual worshipper. His strongest attack is on psychiatrists who run government mental institutions, which he likens to concentration camps, in which the inmate is "stripped" of his identity and degraded to make him amenable to a basic personality change.

However, Dr. Szasz's general charges about the profession - its false analogy with medical treatment, the semantic hanky-panky by which a diagnosis becomes an accusation, and its reflection of the moral prejudices of the average unscientific citizen - must touch to some degree every practicing psychiatrist and psychotherapist.

The profession has propagandized the public on the importance of something called "mental health." We are snowed with statistics showing that only one in every six persons is "mentally healthy," and that 10% of the other five are "psychotic," which must give us a desperate sense of dependency on psychiatrists and a feeling that we have to

"Support Mental Health," whatever that means. Few ask on whose philosophical basis we are judging what is good ("healthy") or bad ("diseased").

Behind the public's eagerness to accept the "sick, sick, sick" diagnosis is the fatuous belief that ultimately psychiatry might cure all the world's ills by making everyone happy, rational, and cooperative, if only it can get its therapeutic hands on the troublemakers. Passive and morally dulled, people gladly "delegate responsibilities - and hence powers - to the twentieth century shamans, the experts. Herein lies the threat of institutionalized psychiatry to human dignity and liberty," says Dr. Szasz.

This concept of the psychiatrist as the "scientific" expert who can solve problems of human behavior exerts a peculiar power over otherwise sophisticated members of the legal profession. They willingly permit the destruction of constitutional rights by handing the psychiatrist the power to be judge, jury, and jailer of anyone he labels "mentally ill." Dr. Szasz is highly critical of these "self-styled liberals who advocate a far-reaching psychiatrization not only of our criminal law but of the whole fabric of our society..." He attacks particularly the "indeterminate" sentence by which a law-breaker can be institutionalized "until cured," which may mean for life, and subjected to compulsory psychiatric treatment. He quotes such legal lights as Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who praises this "flexible sentencing procedure which works to rehabilitate offenders" - instead of letting them be sentenced for a definite period after which they are released whether they repent or not. Dr. Szasz attacks also the practice of court-ordered psychiatric examination before trial, which can result in an accused person's being denied his constitutional right to be represented by a lawyer and tried before a judge and jury.

The chilling significance of the Attorney General's words appears when Dr. Szasz connects them with the American Bar Foundation's statement that it favors the open-end sentence particularly for offenders against the "sexual psychopath" laws. Noting that there is no "medical syndrome called 'sexual psychopathy'," Dr. Szasz objects to incarceration and compulsory psychiatric treatment under these laws. In many parts of the country, "special statutes govern the incarceration and 'treatment' of sexual psychopaths... In many jurisdictions, no conviction is necessary, the decision to incarcerate being medical and psychiatric." Thus a homosexual may be committed to a "penal institution disguised as a therapeutic one" and given punishment, disguised as treatment, for an indeterminate time, until "cured." Since the rate of "cure" for homosexuality is notably low, presumably a homosexual might be imprisoned in a state mental institution for life for a homosexual act performed in private with another adult.

Thus, the legal minds supposedly dedicated to protecting our constitutional rights and the traditions of Anglo-Saxon law, surrender some of our basic freedoms because of their irrational faith in psychiatry. Their faith is particularly foolish, believes Dr. Szasz, in the face of the appalling conditions in state mental institutions. He points to the harsh effect of "psychiatrization" of the law in the acceptance by would-be liberals of such "cruel and unusual punishment" as electric shock treatment, lobotomy, and indeterminate sentences for law violators.

Regarding psychiatric treatment as an unquestioned good, legal and medical authorities refer to it as a "right." As evidence of confused thinking on the subject, Dr. Szasz quotes a law journal which compares receiving therapy from the state to receiving unemployment compensation. But, he points out, no one wants to refuse unemployment money, and if he does, he won't be forced to take it. Whereas he may not want psychiatric treatment and it may be forcibly inflicted on him. Dr. Szasz asks, if mental treatment is a right, why isn't there also the "right" to refuse it? And if it is a right, how can it be compulsory?

With compulsory mental treatment for sexual and social deviation, the psychiatrist merges into Big Brother. Dr. Szasz says "...the parallel between political and moral Fascism is close.... upon those unwilling to heed peaceful persuasion, the values of the state will be imposed by force: in political Fascism by the military and police; in moral Fascism by therapists, especially psychiatrists. I think that we are rapidly heading toward the Therapeutic State. Perhaps we are there already and have not realized it," he concludes.

Dr. Szasz has some interesting things to say about deviating sexual conduct. If, as we claim, we believe in personal autonomy and responsibility, we should "regard an adult person's body as his own property, so long as his conduct does not injure his neighbor. This would require us to abstain from interfering, legally or psychiatrically, with sexual activities between consenting adults, even though they may violate our personal and collective judgment of the nature of normal sexual conduct.... We often claim, and perhaps even believe, that we favor (this) ethic. But both our laws and our psychiatric practices contradict this." He goes on to say, "If the state were to favor the ethic of personal autonomy and responsibility, it would be compelled to adopt a less restrictive attitude toward adult citizens whose social conduct, though perhaps morally offensive, is harmful to no one." He notes that the Wolfenden Report (which criticized the view that homosexuality is a disease) said there must remain a realm of private morality "which is...not the law's business."

But, says Dr. Szasz, "Contemporary American mental health legislation is moving in exactly the opposite direction.

It seeks to impose close supervision on personal conduct, as if so-called mental sickness were a serious public health hazard." And yet, "labeling conduct as sick merely because it differs from our own may be nothing more than discrimination disguised as medical judgment." Dr. Szasz backs his charges of trespass with hard evidence that is brought together in a fresh way.

This reviewer suggests that those elements in the homophile movement who have an inflated respect for the psychiatric profession and who take masochistic pleasure in inviting psychiatrists to their meetings to tell them that homosexuals are "sick, sick, sick" would do well to study Dr. Szasz's book. Homosexuals are sick, according to these therapists, because anyone who chooses to live in opposition to his society's values invites trouble on himself, and so is "mentally ill." The speakers usually show their liberality by agreeing that nevertheless some of the sex laws should be repealed. Perhaps this is because they want the homosexual to come to them as a voluntary paying patient rather than to be incarcerated by law in a state mental institution where, whether he wants it or not, he gets the treatment for free.

- Reviewed by L. E. E.

* * * * *

FAMILIARITY

Habit, not passion,
Brings your lips to mine.
Or loyalty, perhaps--
You swore, "Forever."

Small, cold comfort
To a mouth not yet
Ready for retirement.

- Elizabeth Tudor

LAND HAVING A DIFFERENT SKY

I have heard named
a land under an elsewhere sky
and sought to find
some haven for this elsewho I -
but found no home
though seeking still some elsehow sign
nor reached a time
that had a shelf
to house or hide this elsewhen self.

- N. F. K.

The Church and the Homosexual: a new rapport

San Francisco was the setting for the historic birth of the United Nations in 1945. And again, in 1964, San Francisco provided the setting for the re-birth of Christian fellowship in the United States to include all human beings regardless of sexual proclivity.

A four-day consultation on "The Church and the Homosexual" was held May 30 through June 2, 1964, between members of the homophile community and representatives of several Protestant churches. The conference opened unexpected avenues of communication and cooperation between the two groups. Sponsors of the conference were the Glide Foundation of San Francisco and the Board of Christian Social Concerns of the Methodist Church. Members of the clergy in attendance represented the Lutheran, Episcopal, United Church of Christ (Congregational), Religious Society of Friends (Quaker), and Methodist faiths. The homophile community was represented by members of Daughters of Bilitis, Mattachine Society, League for Civil Education, and the Tavern Guild.

Prior to the formal sessions of the conference, the visiting clergy from Chicago, New York, Washington, Nashville, and Minneapolis were treated to a "Gay Line" tour, which included several gay bars, a female impersonators' show, and a homophile picnic arranged by the League for Civil Education. After the pre-conference entertainment, participants moved in, bag and baggage, to the White Memorial Retreat in Mill Valley, there to live together and explore together "The Church and the Homosexual" in conversations covering two days and evenings.

Donald S. Lucas, executive secretary of the Mattachine Society, opened the conference by presenting a 43-page booklet prepared from the 40 replies he had received to a questionnaire sent to 150 homosexuals. The homosexual's attitude about the church and his plea to it are illustrated by the words of a 16-year-old boy which appear in the booklet: "The Catholic Church says that they are the most 'true, perfect and merciful Faith.' How am I to believe this when one priest tells me to 'go see a doctor,' another tells me 'forget the whole thing and don't think about it,' another tells me that 'your inclinations are abnormal because carnal love should only result in offspring,' and another says 'you can desire latently, but it's a sin to

follow through overtly!" This makes me come to the conclusion that church is only for the majority and that church is always measuring up to conformity. I have no place to go, and it's impossible to become an atheist."

C. Kilmer Myers, suffragan bishop of the Episcopal Church, representing the Chicago Urban Training Center, pointed out that the church's attitude is not one that can readily be identified and he cautioned the group not to dwell too much on the past. He said that churchmen's attitudes towards homosexuality range from utter rejection to acceptance. He went on to say that the church is sociologically conditioned, that sexual patterns and taboos are a part of the culture and the church is affected by this.

Rev. Myers suggested that many people are confused about the concepts of dogma and doctrine. Dogma represents the essential beliefs of the church, the truths in theological terms. Doctrine, on the other hand, represents the acculturated pronouncements of the church. He said further that there is no dogmatic statement about homosexuality, or, for that matter, about sexuality in general. He went on to propose that doctrine against homosexuality is based on fear of the unknown, lack of knowledge, and legalistic rejection. "There really isn't any relationship between the homosexual and the church unless the church readjusts its views of sexuality as a whole," Rev. Myers admitted. However, he views the church as a sociological entity which is in constant change. There is a theological sense of change, too, in the continuing revelation of truth, which is not a static thing.

Guy Strait of the League for Civil Education distributed among the group copies of a booklet called "The Lavender Lexicon," a dictionary of gay words and phrases. He also gave a talk on "Rights and Human Dignity" in which he enumerated the laws under which homosexuals are arrested and convicted, including "loitering with intent to commit a lewd act." He protested that Americans should not allow laws to be applied only to certain people. He suggested that if the American people could be made to take an honest look at their sexual practices and enforce the law against heterosexuals as well as homosexuals, they might then see the necessity for changes in the penal code to make it more equitable and realistic.

Billie Tallmij of Daughters of Bilitis presented "Demolition Fuses for Four-Walled Thinking," seven pages of statements to spur the conversations in the smaller group sessions. "The murderer has only contempt for the homosexual...the thief feels he is better...the man who rapes his child, physically or mentally, feels he is above him...the liar slanders him...the adulterer despises him...yet can you, the experts, tell me which one of the Ten Commandments the homosexual, just by being homosexual...which commandment has he broken?" Miss Tallmij challenged.

The homosexual has had to resolve the conflict stemming from the church's stand and his way of life; he has had to resolve it (and usually this means "dissolve" it) or become a psychotic, Miss Tallmij said. "No one can survive such a schism and remain sane. He cannot change. So, to retain sanity, he must forego the organized approach to God. He can do this, and still maintain an individual approach to spiritual things and live in a semblance of wholeness," she added. Miss Tallmij named ignorant, inflexible, wall-to-wall thinking as the "original sin," and she invited the two groups of participants at the conference to climb over "a wall that was mutually constructed."

Ted McIlvenna, who is director of the Young Adult Project for the Methodist Church in San Francisco and who conceived the idea of the conference, expressed hope that the conference might produce a statement similar to TOWARDS A QUAKER VIEW OF SEX. He saw the problem of the church as too much separation of good and bad, which in turn separates groups of people from humanity. He pleaded that homosexuals are not a lesser order of being, that they are not all unhappy or immature, and that they are not without God. "The church must say we (all) are sharers in humanity," Rev. McIlvenna said. Acceptance of homosexuals into the life of the church would give added depth to homosexuals' relationships, he averred.

After these formal presentations to the full assembly of about 30, the participants divided into three groups to talk on a person-to-person basis about the homosexual and the church. After two days, the groups came together to give summaries of their conversations and to see if a statement could come out of the conference.

Group 3 reported they had discussed the role of curriculum and the role of pronouncement in the church. They described the church as an extension of family and as "a cop without a badge." Don Kuhn of the Glide Foundation (who was acting as reporter for the conference) said Group 3 agreed that "man has an infinite capacity to love," that all men are under judgment of moral law, and that all men are their own ministers. They further agreed that labeling homosexuals as ill and subject to cure does not help communication. The group recommended a team approach, an exchange of speakers between churches and homophile organizations.

B. J. Stiles, editor of MOTIVE, a Methodist magazine, reported that the members of Group 2 had concentrated on getting to know each other as persons. There were assessments of "how far can we go each with the other?" and attempts on both sides to weed out stereotyped images. Efforts were also made to get inside one another's perspective to promote respect and trust. Throughout the talks there was a sustaining ministering to each other, he said.

However, the group had not been systematic in approaching future strategy and had not come up with a panacea for the problem of the church and the homosexual.

Group 1 came closest to the hoped-for statement, but also decided that a statement would not serve any purpose, that it would be premature because those representing the church at this conference were not truly representative of the power structure of the church. The conclusions of this group, reported by Del Martin of Daughters of Bilitis, were that homosexuality is not unnatural, that the homosexual is a human being who is not excluded from God, and that the homosexual is entitled to the same rights and freedoms as other citizens. It was felt that the church has considerable influence on society's attitudes but does not always exercise it.

Homosexuality as an expression of love, with all the implications of commitment and responsibility, is acceptable, said Group 1. But they added this does not mean encouragement of homosexual behavior. The group also felt that the church should study the Model Penal Code as drafted by the American Law Institute and should press for reform in sex laws, taking certain sexual behavior out of the realm of law and regarding it as a matter of moral conscience.

This group expressed deep concern for the plight of the homophile teen-ager. Since the homophile organizations may not legally deal with minors, the group proposed that an educational program be started so that clergymen at the parish level could deal knowledgeably with teen-age homosexuals. It was also suggested that much could be done from the pulpit to get the congregation to accept homosexuals on a basis of one human being with another in Christian fellowship. Group 1 concluded: "We regard this gathering as exploratory and feel that great strides have been made in breaking down the communications barriers. Let's keep the doors open - and swinging both ways!"

The assembly then broke up into two sections, one of participants from the San Francisco Bay Area, the other a national group of those who had traveled to the West Coast for the conference. This time the question pursued was: Where do we go from here?

Those involved in national activities stressed the need to obtain homophile spokesmen to participate in similar conferences in other parts of the country. It was suggested that six or seven more consultations in different areas be scheduled and then followed up on a national level through the National Council of Churches. Dallas was proposed as the site for the next meeting, since the Methodists are starting a Young Adult Project there.

The churchmen pledged that articles on homosexuality would appear in such publications as CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE, MOTIVE,

THE CHRISTIAN HOME, TOGETHER, and CHRISTIAN CONCERN. They also agreed to submit articles for publication in homophile magazines. It was suggested that the clergy send representatives to the ECHO (East Coast Homophile Organizations) Conference on October 10-11 in Washington, D. C.

Rev. Myers, who trains clergymen for metropolitan ministry, said the Episcopal Church is interested in studying the various cultural levels of city life and in having its future ministers work in community organizations, following this exposure with theological reflection of their experience in an effort to create new forms of metropolitan ministry. He asked the cooperation of Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis in this program. He also foresaw the possibility of a team of clergymen and homophiles working with the Chicago City Missionary Society.

The San Francisco group meanwhile made plans to continue meetings to discuss the possibilities of a training program for the clergy to help them minister to homosexuals, and of developing a referral system. They indicated there would be special emphasis on helping the teen-ager.

The participants in this historic conference in San Francisco were gratified by the rapport established between members of the homophile community and the "new churchmen" who have a deep concern for the "new humanity."

- Del Martin

SEA TROVE

I walk unshod
for shoes you have none

Slow on the sod
on the sand swiftly

And at our feet
the green waves falling
Loosing their burden
yielding their treasure

We may not measure
the breadth of their trove

our eyes know only
the measure of love

and its depth, like an ocean.

- Blanche Small

Lesbian Stereotypes in the Commercial Novel

— by Marion Zimmer Bradley

During the six years I have edited the "Checklist" of variant, lesbian, and homosexual fiction, I've read an awful lot of paperback lesbian novels - and for the most part, the operative word is awful. We all know that lesbian novels have been having a fad lately. I don't flatter myself that I've seen even a majority of the rubbish which has been published on the lesbian theme.

Most of these novels are written for a male audience. This is nothing new. The sex novel is a particularly tenacious form of fiction, having been invented at least two thousand years ago (although there is some reason for believing that the SATYRICON of Petronius was intended to be satirical rather than purely salacious). During most of those two thousand years, the major audience for sex fiction has been male. Nor is the masculine interest in lesbians, sometimes amounting to fascination, anything new. Most lesbians can think of some man, not himself homosexual, who has a detached interest in lesbianism. On a lower level, however, morbid curiosity about the lesbian - built up by expose-type journalism and fed by the secrecy of the more discreet lesbians - has reached an all-time high. So paperback publishers, having already flooded the market with sex novels which have rung all the changes possible on heterosexual affairs, are turning for variety to more unusual themes.

It is rare to find a paperback commercial novel which exploits male homosexuality in the same way. The average man (and remember, the audience for commercial sex fiction is mostly male) is close enough to male homosexuality to be nervous and worried about it. His whole milieu tells him that any overt curiosity about male homosexuality, or any interest in male homosexuals, is dangerous; he may be tarred with the same brush. The serious intellectual can investigate without fear; but the reader of paperback sex fiction is seldom intellectual. The reader of sex fiction is typically a lower-middle-class man, whose fear of homosexuality (often complicated by latent homosexual urges) amounts to panic. However, his qualms do not apply to lesbian fiction. He can read about lesbians without inner fears; after all, no matter what the degree of his fascination, he is unlikely to be mistaken for a lesbian. He can satisfy his curiosity about homosexuality from a safe distance and without much personal involvement.

This flood of paperback lesbian fiction has had, I think, one good result. The average man in the street, seeing lesbian novels on every newsstand, no longer regards lesbianism as something so weird it falls into the category of fantasy. The day may even come when he takes lesbians for granted, as part of the scenery.

Then why am I so bitterly opposed to the male-directed lesbian fiction? Almost every year, after the publication of the "Checklist," I receive indignant letters, usually from men, demanding to know why I have made such disparaging remarks about certain sex novels. Usually they think it is due to prudery, that the novels in question have shocked me.

That's not it. My objection to the commercial lesbian paperback novel is that, in nine cases out of ten, the lesbians portrayed have no existence outside fiction, and that the man reading these books gets a completely false idea of what lesbianism is, or what lesbians may be like.

"But," it may be asked, "isn't that true of all sex fiction? The actress, in real life, does not usually go from bed to bed - she's too busy rehearsing, keeping her figure, taking classes in diction and dancing. The big businessman does not spend his entire working day making love to beautiful secretaries - in fact, the average secretary has a husband, four kids, and no cleavage, or else is an efficient old maid. These novels are wish-fulfillments."

True. But the heterosexual stereotypes do less harm. The average reader of sex fiction, reading about the businessman who is constantly brushing hot-and-cold running secretaries off his lap, can remember his brother-in-law Bill, whose secretary is a motherly woman of fifty; or, reading about the gorgeous, sexy model, he can remember the nice Taylor girl down the block, who went to work modeling when she was seventeen.

But the average sex-fiction reader doesn't know any lesbians, so he is free to believe that the ridiculous stereotypes represent real lesbians. Since lesbians tend to conceal their inclinations, the reader knows less about lesbianism than he does about life in Darkest Africa. I am tempted to believe that the same could be said of the average writer of sex novels. In the excellent (if somewhat over-sexy) novel-autobiography I AM A LESBIAN, the author, Lee Chapman, makes the statement that perhaps one in twenty of the writers of these books would know a lesbian from a lapdog.

So the reader of these sex novels can believe that he is actually learning what lesbians are like. And what is he learning? What is the stereotype lesbian of these books?

First of all - she is invariably pictured as being over-sexed, attractive to men, and usually a sexy tease. She is always ultra-feminine. Never, in these sex books, do we find the boyish or mannish lesbian.

Now it is true that many lesbians are extremely feminine in their dress and manner. It is not true, however, that most lesbians dress and act in an extra-sexy fashion, to attract the majority of male eyes. The beautiful woman in the low-cut gown with exaggerated breasts and a sexy walk is not typically a lesbian. Yet, again and again in the paperback novels, the lesbian is portrayed in the clinging satin sheath, the low-cut gown showing every curve of her pale-rosey breasts, the crossed knees revealing the stock-ing tops to the ogling male. Even the so-called normal woman, unless she is a showgirl or actress, seldom dresses in this exaggerated style. Lesbians, by and large, dress like other women, with possibly a greater emphasis on tailored clothes, sportswear, and slacks.

Second - the lesbian is often portrayed as a predatory woman whose greatest delight is to seduce some innocent girl or housewife. She may be a married woman whose husband never satisfies her, so she spends her days enticing other housewives into bed. Occasionally there is some talk of love, but generally her only desire is for sexual relief, and these frenzied bouts of sexual play usually take place as soon as the women have made their needs known to one another. Or else the lesbian is a predatory single woman, latching on to innocent young girls before they have any chance to establish "normal" relations with men, telling them how vicious and brutal men are, and inveigling them by any possible means - sharing showers, sharing beds, etc. - into sex play and irrevocable lesbianism.

This stereotype is, of course, sheer nonsense. Lesbians, in general, are far more reserved and shy about making advances than are male homosexuals - or, for that matter, than the average male heterosexual with women. Lesbians fear a rebuff, and rarely make advances unless they know the other woman also is a lesbian. The single lesbian will usually avoid, rather than seek, opportunities to share showers or beds with heterosexual women. (The author of DIANA speaks of this exaggerated modesty of the lesbian, and I have often heard it discussed among lesbian friends.) As for married lesbians, they are often desperately secretive about their desires, and if they do find a sympathetic friend, they are not apt to be casual about a love affair.

The idea that lesbians have an obsessive desire to capture or seduce "normal" women is even more of a misconception. Again and again, in the case of lesbians writing about themselves, one finds the fear of "corrupting" some basically heterosexual woman, or of switching some young girl off the main track. Lesbians, of course, are no more

saints than any other women. Doubtless there are a few unscrupulous ones who, from spite against men, are anxious to make recruits; and no doubt there are even more who, out of wishful thinking, can delude themselves into believing that a basically heterosexual woman is a lesbian at heart. But anyone who knows many lesbians will recognize that these are in a minority.

The third stereotype is the "captive" of the lesbian. She is almost invariably, like the lesbian herself, an ultra-feminine, sexy showgirl type. (One would think that lesbians were never attracted to any girls of the boyish or tailored type!) And why does she fall prey to the lesbian? Usually because:

- (1) She is sex-starved - which, in a stereotype sex novel, means that she has been without a lover for a whole week. In these novels, it is considered abnormal and unhealthy to go without sex relations for as long as 4 or 5 days.
- (2) She has been raped or treated brutally by some man.
- (3) She is married to a man who Does Not Understand Her, which usually means only that he is a sexual halfwit.
- (4) She is unable to resist the hypnotic power which lesbians, in these stereotype sex novels, are supposed to have over "normal" women.
- (5) She is a dumb-bunny who knows nothing about sex.

Naturally, in the commercial sex novel, any one of these women is an easy prey for any lesbian who will offer her sexual satisfaction. Worse than this, however, is the treatment of male characters in the lesbian novel.

In some of these stories, a confirmed lesbian who has never been touched by a man before, is "cured" when some man, getting angry at her, beats her up and/or rapes her. Thereupon, having been shown the Wrongness of Her Ways, the confirmed lesbian falls into the arms of the brute and they live happily ever after.

It is easy to understand how this might satisfy the male audience. Lesbians, in these books, are Evil, therefore it is right that they should be "punished." The reader can feel virtuous, because this brutality is not being unloosed on a "good" woman but on an "evil" one who deserves it. Actually, a woman who feared and resented men, if she were subjected to such treatment, might only be confirmed in her opinion of the male. She might or might not revenge herself on her assaulter, but she certainly would not be likely to fall in love with him unless she were a confirmed masochist and an absolute nut in the bargain.

Far more common, however, is the theme of a girl who has fallen into the arms of a lesbian because of sex-starvation, plain ignorance, or revolt from a brutal man. She is subsequently "redeemed" from lesbianism by meeting a Real Man.

Now, this does happen. According to the Kinsey studies, a sizable proportion of girls experiment with lesbian relations, but do not continue as exclusive lesbians. Just as a high percentage of men have had some homosexual experience, while exclusive homosexuals are a minority, a large proportion of women at one time or other undergo a lesbian phase. Sooner or later, they decide they prefer heterosexual relations and become "normal" women. (Regrettably, they sometimes become the fiercest of lesbian-haters.) But does it happen as it happens in a majority of lesbian commercial novels?

Perhaps the most objectionable misconception about the lesbian is that she is usually a woman who has been cruelly treated by a man, and that if she can be persuaded to attempt sex relations with one who is sufficiently gentle and considerate, she will immediately discover how much better this is than lesbianism. Now this may occasionally happen, just as a secretary may occasionally marry her boss. But in the commercial lesbian novel, the theme has been worked to death.

The second most objectionable misconception in stereotype novels is that any lesbian can be converted to heterosexual relations if she finds a man willing to engage in certain magic formulas of love play similar to the activities engaged in between women, that the lesbian's aversion to heterosexuality lies simply in the absence of imaginative love play and non-coital activity. The lesbian's objection to relations with men usually goes far deeper than this.

These two misconceptions, however, are often used as the "happy ending" resolution in the commercial lesbian novel. Again, it's easy to understand how they provide wish-fulfillment for the male reader. Identifying himself with the male protagonist of the novel, he can feel that "his" sexual technique is so perfect that he can even satisfy a woman who turns away from the average male.

Perhaps the "happy ending" conversion of the lesbian to heterosexuality is here to stay in the sex novel. The occasional woman who reads these books wants to be reassured too. She can take a few hours' excursion into the alien world of the lesbian, and yet feel safe, her own inner conflicts not aroused. And at least these novels are contradicting another stereotype just as bad: that any woman who has ever been attracted to another woman is eternally a lesbian. (Obviously this is not true. See the Kinsey report.) A well-known lesbian novel, Sheila Donisthorpe's *LOVELIEST OF FRIENDS*, rests on this stereotype - that any woman who has ever been touched even by the fringes of the lesbian world is poisoned, lost, ruined forever.

Are all paperback lesbian novels equally bad? Of course not. And the ones written for lesbians, and sympathetic

to lesbianism, have their own stereotype plots which are sometimes just as silly - for instance, the girl who discovers her lesbianism, finds that this solves all her problems, decides to share an apartment with a handy girl friend, and lives happily ever after. Randy Salem's *CHRIS* is a stereotype as false, in its own way, as any of the *TWISTED PASSIONS* novels.

But the worst offenders are the male-angle novels. Will they improve? I don't think so. In the first place, they are written chiefly by men. They are seldom written because the authors have anything to say about lesbianism; they are written because some editor of a paperback publishing house has found he can sell four lesbian titles every month. The writer is usually an impoverished pulp writer squeezed between the death of fiction magazines and a distaste for writing for television. Sometimes he is quite seriously dedicated to the idea that sex novels, as such, are a good thing, since they break down prudery and fears of sex. But no matter how honest his purpose, he gets pushed into the rigid formula. Editors know they can sell sex novels about lesbians who have sexy curves, tempt "normal" women, and are converted to heterosexuality by a Real Man in the last chapter. So, the writer must write them that way - or he doesn't eat!

What can be done about these stereotype novels which give the public false ideas about the lesbian? Boycott such books? Useless. The male readership would still be large enough to keep the publishing houses in operation. I suggest two solutions:

First: every time a book comes out with a vicious stereotype of a lesbian in it, you can write to the publisher. Protest it, and give statistics from Kinsey, or quote scientific studies. If the editors believe these books are being read by people who know what lesbians are like and who therefore demand accuracy, they might - I say, *MIGHT* - start insisting that their writers at least read a few authentic books about lesbians and find out, in Lee Chapman's words again, "how to tell a lesbian from a lapdog."

Second: some of those who care about the public image of the lesbian might try writing lesbian novels. Even in the straitjacket of commercial fiction, such writers as Paula Christian, Ann Bannon, Valerie Taylor, Miriam Gardner, Artemis Smith and Sloan Britain are managing to get across an occasional serious picture of the lesbian as she is, in her world and with her problems.

Meanwhile, the "Checklist" will continue listing these male-directed, scurvy gutter-books as "scv" - which is our editorial slang for "short course in voyeurism." When you see such a notation, you will know that the author of the book in question knows nothing about lesbians - and probably cares less.

How Much Research - and Why?

One of DOB's stated purposes is the promotion of research directed to further knowledge of the homosexual. Research efforts of many kinds have begun to burgeon recently, in spite of the difficulties involved* - research going well beyond the old-fashioned case history approach of the Freudian psychoanalyst, into studying larger aggregates, or using new psychological and sociological approaches. This has been most gratifying. It does pose certain questions for DOB's Research Committee, and for you who will be asked increasingly to participate. This article is written in part to raise and try to answer some of these questions, in part to discuss how DOB might best handle the growing requests for cooperation that are coming its way. It is hoped that readers will contribute their own thoughts. **

A. What is the use of research?

This question implies another question - "use to whom?" I would start by saying flatly that DOB is in favor of any research into human behavior that is useful to society, in the likelihood that it will add to society's store of valid knowledge. And that it would be unthinkable for DOB to favor any form of research that did not seem likely to do this. Of course "useful" and "valid" need defining, and there will be arguments. That can't be avoided. I am saying here that though we are an organization with specific purposes, we cannot favor slanted research aimed only at serving special interest while disserving the general interest, and that we must favor unslanted research even if its immediate usefulness to us is not apparent.

Further, I believe that if research is carried out honestly and objectively by competent and experienced researchers who are open-minded as to the results they expect to get, it will contribute in some way - large or small - to an extension of valid knowledge. By honest and objective research I mean research that clearly sets forth the premises and assumptions from which it begins, the hypotheses it wishes to test, and its method of examining them, and that draws its conclusions strictly from the data examined - research which clearly defines its terms, leaving out imprecise and loaded language. Some well-publicized and "reputable" research has not been of this kind.

* See the report of Dr. Sylvia Fava's speech at the DOB convention, in the July LADDER.

** The "Readers Respond" column of the November 1963 LADDER carried an exchange on the value of the Gundlach and similar research projects.

I believe that research of the kind specified will help not only society as a whole, but also persons of homosexual inclination. I think that what the public doesn't know about homosexuals is good, bad, and indifferent - but that the good the public doesn't know (and the indifferent) is greater in amount than the bad, which is already very well known.

Of course "good" and "bad" bring up problems of meaning. Much controversy about homosexuality is concerned less with facts than with the labels applied to them, and the values held by the persons applying the labels. I believe that as research is extended by psychologists, sociologists, and newer schools of psychiatry, into areas once belonging only to orthodox psychoanalysis, that there will be a fuller discussion of the meaning of these labels and values, and that this will help homosexuals.

B. What kinds of research are being carried on?

Existing research on homosexuality in the U. S., so far as this non-professional writer knows (and additions to the list would be welcome) seem mainly to fall into the following categories: (1) research that seeks causes of homosexuality, usually in early family history; (2) research that attempts to predict homosexuality by noting personality characteristics; (3) research that describes "deviant subcultures" and their members, and investigates the effect of society's values and attitudes in developing these cultures. I omit anthropological studies of other cultures as not likely to involve DOB directly. An important kind of research that I believe is just beginning probably belongs under the third heading: research measuring attitudes of various parts of society towards homosexuality, or attitudes of homosexuals to society.

The first kind, research into causation, is at times opposed or feared by homosexuals or sympathizers on grounds it presupposes a "problem" and a "cure." This may be true of some, but not all such research. A discussion of just what constitutes the "problem" of homosexuality is very much needed. Of course problems are involved, but they need to be spelled out. Some writers may use the term "problem" as a bow to convention. As to the implication of "cure," no one, to my knowledge, has ever claimed great success in "treatment" where the individual does not wish to change his sexual orientation. This was true even of Bergler. It is true of the Bieber study, though few seem to have taken note of it. Regardless of research results, so long as this nation continues to pay some attention to civil liberties, no one can force an unwilling law-abiding citizen onto the psychiatric couch.* Nor, if a person

* Unless someone commits him to a mental hospital. This may be a real danger for some. See the books of Thomas Szasz, for instance LAW, LIBERTY, AND PSYCHIATRY.

chooses the couch himself, can anyone force him to become other than what he wishes to be. Even those most addicted to the "illness-cure" approach often favor more permissive laws, and studies written by them may strongly advocate legal change.

On the positive side, research into causation can produce information helpful for parents, helpful perhaps for persons who may strongly wish to "change," and, by showing how homosexual life-patterns develop, can lead to greater understanding of the persons who have developed such life-patterns. It can also lead to a greater awareness of the constructive role that such life-patterns may play for the individuals involved.*

The second kind of research mentioned - the effort to predict - has, so far as I know, achieved little success to date. It may have the substantial value of indicating how broad a cross-section of personality types may be involved in homosexual inclinations or actions. Some efforts to relate personality characteristics to sexual behavior do not appear to have prediction as their goal, and are interesting in their own right.

The third kind - the study of "deviant subcultures" - is a far more careful, systematic, and analytic version of what is now so often done on radio, on TV, in popular magazines and hastily-written books. While there is room for good reporting in this field, what I am talking about here goes beyond that. Because of the greater care with which a genuine research study is done, and the greater knowledge of human motivation and social pressures possessed by those who do it, these studies seem to be clearly useful both to society at large and to homosexual persons. And measuring the attitudes of different parts of society towards homosexuality, and of homosexuals to society, is a job long overdue. It should not be left to the judgment of journalists or those in the entertainment business.

C. What are the dangers of research?

Some of these have already been mentioned or implied. What if a research group turns out to be a victim of its own preconceptions? Or turns out to be incompetent? What if society does not continue to pay attention to civil liberties? What if, contrary to the optimistic assertions above, a clear-cut conflict of interest emerges between "society" and many homosexuals, as the result of research findings? What if research results are misinterpreted by the general public? My answer to most of this is: life is full of risks, and some fruits of the tree of knowledge

may indeed prove bitter; but they have been tasted, and there is no going back. We have to take our chances, and I think there is much more to gain than to lose. There is still freedom of speech; if we think research is not honest, or results have been misinterpreted, we can say so. Who will listen to us? It has been my impression that if what we say makes sense, some do listen. But I believe that cooperation with qualified professional persons will do still more. The answer to poor research is not less, but more and better research.

It should also be added that we ourselves may learn from research results. This is not a danger, but a benefit.

D. How should DOB cooperate in research?

Cooperation goes a little further than just "favoring" research. There are limitations of time and people, and choices must be made. Research requests have begun to multiply. The researchers we hear from range all the way from highly qualified, experienced persons of mature years to graduate students and even to undergraduates. They range from nationally-known institutions to unaffiliated individuals working on their own. What is the best policy for dealing with requests?

Some of the requests are purely local, made to local chapters of DOB, and can be handled locally, using common sense. Possible guidelines might include giving preference to persons with not only appropriate training but also research experience, and who are affiliated with a recognized institution of learning or research. It would be very easy for an inexperienced person to do a bad job, while none of the people in DOB might know what was happening until too late, if ever. Common sense also suggests that the researcher be asked to indicate clearly the nature of his project, the methods he wishes to use, the hypotheses he wishes to test, etc. There should perhaps be a limit on the number of studies made of the same group of people during a year, or over a period of years.

When requests are received for national cooperation, if the sponsors are qualified, experienced professional persons, especially if affiliated with first-class institutions, and if the nature of the project has some interest for us, I would recommend DOB cooperation, unless there is close duplication of a project recently undertaken. (Please see page 24 for announcement of a new project.)

Cooperation does not mean that DOB endorses or approves the entire content of a study or questionnaire. Each person who decides to participate has the right, indeed the obligation, to keep her wits and critical sense about her, while keeping her responses honest. In some cases DOB may only announce a project; in other cases we may mail questionnaires to our mailing list; in still other cases there

* See, for instance, the statements of Sandor Rado in THE PROBLEM OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN MODERN SOCIETY, H. Ruitenbeek, editor, Dutton, 1963.

may be closer collaboration, arrangements for interviews, etc. Decisions would have to vary from case to case.

Some will still feel that cooperation in research projects is a waste of time, or worse. The decision as to whether or not to participate in any particular project is of course up to the individual. But I hope many readers, after considering the ideas brought up here, or other ideas of their own, will conclude that cooperation in research is a highly meaningful activity.

- F. Conrad, Research Chairman, DOB

Invitation from U.C.L.A.

The Gender Identity Research Clinic of the Neuropsychiatric Institute, Center for the Health Sciences, University of California at Los Angeles, has undertaken a study of attitudes towards change-of-sex operations and related matters, and has requested DOB cooperation in distributing questionnaires. We have agreed to mail out to all regular LADDER subscribers a copy of the questionnaire, which also includes questions on attitudes towards transvestism and towards homosexuality, and some general questions aimed at describing the type of respondent. The questionnaires are anonymous, no follow-up will be made, and no record of participants will be kept.

The project, which the sponsors say is aimed at studying the medical, ethical, and legal implications of change-of-sex operations and related issues, will also include distribution of questionnaires to representatives of medical and legal groups and to groups with special interest in transvestism.

Your cooperation in filling out the questionnaire when it arrives may produce some highly interesting and useful information. We recommend that you give it your prompt and careful attention.

- DOB Research Committee

coming next month

- First in a series by author Paula Christian on how to write for the homophile fiction market
- A review of Donald Webster Cory's THE LESBIAN IN AMERICA

READERS RESPOND

"If we grant, with C. O. of Mass. in the July LADDER, the existence of true bisexuals, then surely we must agree that they have the right to establish either a homosexual or a heterosexual marriage. And if they adjust - fine.

"However, in my article I referred to those unfortunate women who try to adjust to heterosexuality and don't make it. The woman who tries this life and finds herself miserable would be better off on the other side. Alas, it's usually too late to change her situation by the time she discovers that the girl next door means more to her than her husband."

- Marilyn Barrow

EDITOR'S NOTE: THE LADDER will soon begin a discussion on "The Married Lesbian." Manuscripts and letters welcome!

* * * * *

"I have been in sympathy with D.O.B. I have seen all the various homophile publications and have kept on reading THE LADDER because I believed it was trying to raise some of its readers above the bawdy bar-clinging level.

"Then I read your February 1964 issue. That comprehensive list of so-called 'Lesbian Literature' certainly doesn't say what is trash and what isn't. But just look down the list and note the paucity of good publishers. The major portion of the titles your list mentions are leering and lewd, put out by paperback publishers who seldom are given good display space in high-minded stores and outlets.

"Whom are you trying to help - these low kinds of publishers, or yourselves? By calling attention to the macabre ideas of what homosexuality is thought to be, or hoped to be, as far as "normal" people are concerned, you lend credence to their warped impressions.

"I publish a newsletter for professional writers, publishers, and distributors of books and magazines, and it is as such a publisher that I write to you. I fear for the minds which will accept your list of 'Lesbian Literature' and think that you, as a homophile group, approve of such commercialism and distortion of the homosexual way of life. The lone cry against such books was a letter THE LADDER printed by D. C. of Michigan. But how about the rest of you? Do you rush to read this trash to see if it portrays you truly, or whether it portrays some of your friends in

disguise? Do you even know or care how much of this trash is produced? I don't refer to the truly literate authors such as Paula Christian and Ann Bannon, but the (ugh!) Don Hollidays, Peggy Swensons, Orrie Hitts, Jason Hytes and other often phoney-named creators of lust and perversion.

"Any honest adult knows that sex is good when it is a part of love, no matter what name you give that sex or love - homosexual or heterosexual - and that it's filth when displayed for its prurient reactions. Lesbian love can be beautiful, but exhibited under such titles as "Degraded Women," "The Shadowy Sex," "Warped Women," "Torrid Wench" and other crude titles, it probably makes naive minds feel that you all represent the crudity visualized there.

"Many lesbian stories were originally offered to low-minded publishers as heterosexual themes and then were rewritten by the editors to give them an oddball sex twist, to make them sound perverted, and to make the author beg not to have his or her real name used. A number of my writer/subscribers have aired their sad experiences with this kind of perverted publishing and when I asked why they allowed it to be done, they answered: 'For the money.'

"If you permit this distortion of what seems right in your lives to you, if you allow yourselves to be made to appear as freaks - then you cannot blame outsiders for thinking you are. Now, before it is too late, you should stop appearing to condone this disgrace.

"You should refuse to buy such trash, to sell it, or to list it as 'Lesbian Literature.' You could ask offending publishers to submit manuscripts to a committee from your own group for opinion before publication, so that you - the same as any other group of public-minded thinkers - can stand up and be counted, not discounted as you now are in so-called lesbian literature. Above all, even if such publishers do not cooperate with you, you can look through copies of their junk and point out its distortions in your magazine, instead of making it appear that anything with a lesbian theme should be presented to your readership.

"I hope you don't mind my frankness or my anger, but I think it's about time that lesbians came out of the shadows to prove their lives are not filled with cobwebs but that they are genuine human beings as worthy of love, respect, and the good life as anyone else!"

- A Subscriber, New York

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"Getting THE LADDER for the first time was like getting a meal after not eating for a week. It was CONTACT!"

- L. C., Pennsylvania

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