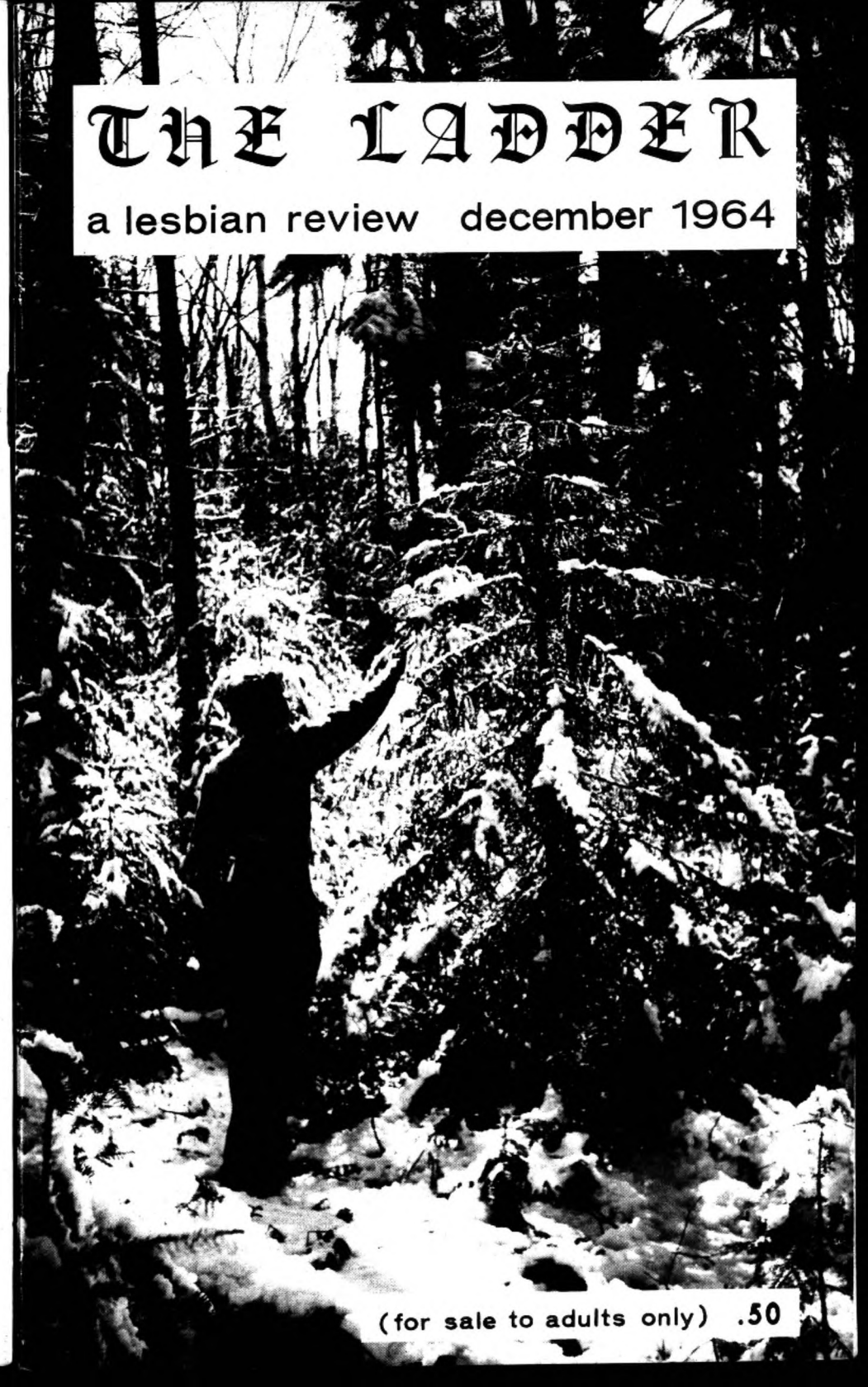


THE LADDER

a lesbian review december 1964

A high-contrast black and white photograph of a person standing in a snowy forest. The person is silhouetted against the bright, snow-covered trees and ground. They are reaching up towards a large, snow-laden evergreen tree. The background is filled with more snow-covered trees and branches, creating a dense, wintry scene. The lighting is very bright, causing some areas to appear washed out while others are in deep shadow.

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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.

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CONTENTS

Another Look at Christian Morals -	
by Rev. Robert W. Wood.....	4
Symptom of the Times - by Philip Gerard.....	9
A Christmas Dialogue - Nola.....	13
The Moral Decision About Homosexuality -	
by Iris Murdoch.....	19
Notes from Abroad: Gift Books for	
Indonesia - Ger van B.....	24
Readers Respond.....	25

Cover photo: "Sizing Up the Tree" by Kay Tobin

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Another Look at Christian Morals - by Rev. Robert W. Wood

(Pastor, First Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)
in Spring Valley, N. Y. Author of CHRIST AND THE HOMOSEXUAL.)

An increasing amount of dialogue is taking place between segments of the homophile community and portions of the church. Discussions between clergy and homosexuals, field trips for the clergy to gay bars, speakers at each other's gatherings, and articles by clergymen in homophile publications such as this can all be constructive, and more such are needed. But these are only frosting; i. e., they seldom get beneath the surface of the Christian relationship to homosexuality and to individual homosexuals. At best such contacts are with a very few of those millions involved on both sides of the dialogue.

Of much greater importance, albeit less publicized, is the change taking place right now in the church's approach to the complex subject of morals. Already there are discernible signs that an increasing number of our younger Protestant theologians are re-examining this most basic of church doctrines and coming up with some new interpretations. This is occurring at the same time that the church's entire view of man is undergoing change. All of this bids well for the homosexual and in the long run will benefit the entire homophile movement to a greater extent than the more heralded surface events.

Not since the days of the Renaissance has the subject of "morals" been so re-evaluated. Much in the Christian understanding of moral behavior has become dated and stereotyped, fostering falsehoods and half-truths concerning the way one should live. There is now the realization that millions have been deceived by a false image of goodness as created and imposed by someone else and that countless more have been wounded by church, pastors, doctrines, ecclesiastical authorities. There has long been a cry to repudiate the legalistic perversion of so-called Christian moral standards and to bring into review certain timeless truths. We now recognize that we have the freedom to swim and not just to cling to the rocks.

Helmut Thielicke, Bishop John Robinson, and G. F. Woods are indicative of the theological minds now at work in the fundamental area. Such questions as "What makes an act moral or immoral?", "What is the basis of morals?", "Are morals a net or a blanket?", "When is one a sinner?", and "What is God's role in all this?" are being re-asked. Staid churchly answers of past centuries are being discarded and our moral theologians are going back once again to basic New Testament Scripture for guidance and relevance. And they are making their re-evaluations in the context of the pastoral relationship

(the existential element) and a realization that there can be no "experts" in morals since morals are everybody's business. When they return to the New Testament they also discover that the purpose in Jesus's coming to man and doing what he did was not to create a moral code but to proclaim The Kingdom. Re-stated, there is now a shifting from the old morality which has for too long proclaimed principles first and people second to the new morality which reverses the process and declares people before principles. Jesus did this when he proclaimed that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.

Christian moral theologians of previous generations had taken the Levitical and Pauline texts relating to homosexual expression and given them the status of the Decalogue. But now that the Gospels are being returned to their rightful place as the foundation of the church's thinking on moral behavior, we see that Jesus dealt with sensual sinners much more leniently than he dealt with sinners who committed sins of the spirit or of cupidity. There is no such thing as an absolute Christian moral standard for all mankind, immutable forever. When we so simplify morals we immediately find ourselves dealing with only a fraction of the vast complex of morals. For a moral standard, if it is to have any meaning at all, must become one's own; it must be internalized, made personal, subjective, a "thou" and not an "it." This is one reason why the shibboleth of centuries known as "natural law" can never be fully valid for it proclaims only what has happened to vast numbers, it doesn't state what ought to happen for the individual.

As we search for the basis of morals, let us first recognize that there are four different types of moral standards and frequently we are caught up in two or more at any given moment. There is TRIBAL morality of the gang, the club, the mob, even sometimes the church. Higher moral standards are forgotten when tribal morality takes over. The lives of those destroyed by this level of morality remain unnumbered because so many have been so systematically annihilated by it. Taboos and lynchings are common bedfellows at this level.

Then there is CUSTOMARY morality which is the lowest common denominator of any group, barely above the tribal. This is the moral standard which takes a public opinion poll before making a decision. This is the morality that does just enough to get by or that whines "but everyone else is doing it." This is moralism but it is not morality.

A third type of moral standard is the AUTOCRATIC: the law, the "thou shalt not" approach. Here are the institutionalized self-interests backed up by threats of damnation, hell, sin, imprisonment, fear. This is the standard requiring blind obedience and a degree of ignorance. It is rigidly structured and does not hesitate to sacrifice the individual human personality on the altar of the status quo.

Most homosexuals have been confronted by one or the other of these three, and each at times has taken unto itself the honored title of being "Christian." But fortunately there is a fourth type of moral standard we will call RATIONAL. This is

the one which encourages us to make our own decisions while at the same time urging us to keep these decisions on the highest spiritual level. This is the standard at which the re-thinking concerning Christian morals is now taking place. It is also being recognized that the cards are stacked against anyone who seeks to live on such a rational moral level just as they were stacked against Jesus, just as Sara Patten Boyle has found them stacked against herself in today's Virginia, just as Ralph found them stacked against himself in "Lord of the Flies," just as many homosexuals have found them so stacked.

But let us continue our search for the bases of morals, meaning a rational moral standard. There are two and only two and they must always both be present partly as a check and balance on each other and partly as representing both sides of the same coin. One basis for a rational moral decision (and as applicable to the homosexual as to the heterosexual) is GOD'S WILL FOR ME IN THIS PARTICULAR SITUATION. At Pentecost the cry addressed to Peter was "What shall we do?" This calls us beyond ourselves to new spiritual heights. We cannot pretend to have the answers in advance. But in humility and seeking we meet the transcendent God. We need this influence on our actions lest they only be motivated by the utilitarianism of consequence. This means we must grow in the knowledge and love of God through worship, the sacraments, church membership, study, prayer, good works and faith so we are on a personal relationship with our Creator when we seek to know His will for us in a given circumstance. One can hardly expect to learn it if he comes to God cold and indifferent.

The other part of the two-part basis for rational moral decisions is HOW MUCH DO I LOVE THIS PERSON OR THESE PERSONS INVOLVED IN THIS DECISION? Nothing else makes a thing right or wrong except the impact of love! The Law may be the tutor of love but it is not love's master. On this basis we go beyond the Law that says such-and-such is always right or always wrong, to a concern for persons as individuals seen in their social context. The old adage of St. Augustine comes back in force: "Love, and what you will, do."

Jesus again is our best example of one who sought to invoke the will of God in each situation and to love others as involved persons; i. e., to do God's will and to love. These were the bases of his morals. The church at last is beginning to realize they and they alone ought to be the bases for the Christian moral standard today.

At once the homosexual can see some light coming into his or her situation if this new morality were to become standard. But at the same time we recognize the need for the homosexuals as much as the heterosexuals to exercise their responsibility involved in also striving to live on this higher moral level. Recognizing the freeing power of the rational moral level, we also recognize the dangers in trying to live by it. Such an effort cost Jesus his life.

Living on the level of rational moral standards is not going to give us the pat answers, for there will always be the

wrestling with the problems which moral behavior raises. As Bishop John Robinson says, such a moral standard is a net not a blanket, giving us the bare outline and letting us fill it in each one in his own situation. These two precepts, then, will build for us a foundation but they are not designed to provide a permanent superstructure. For such superstructures easily become prisons.

One final observation. We all recognize that mankind is living in a great age of flux and this is one reason so many try to find a non-existent changeless moral standard. But God is as much in change as He is in stability and this two-pronged rational moral standard is more valid for the age of rapid social change than is any other standard: tribal, customary, autocratic. If God is our good shepherd we shall hear His voice in change and chaos as well as in green pastures and beside still waters. The New Testament faith was not designed to be defeated by change, rather it was created as the faith which promises victory (salvation) over change. And the moral standard outlined here, now being advocated in varying degrees by newer voices within Protestantism, is capable of bringing this victory to individual and community without the deadening by-products of previous moral systems.

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SPECIAL NOTICES

- THE U.C.L.A. QUESTIONNAIRES are out. Is yours in? Because of unavoidable delays, DOB did not receive and send out the research questionnaire from U.C.L.A. (as announced in the September LADDER) until the middle of October. If you are a paying subscriber, you should have received two copies with a return envelope sometime during October. Give the second copy to a lesbian friend - both copies may be returned to Dr. Richard Green in the same envelope. Your cooperation in filling these out promptly will be appreciated.
- WHEN YOU MOVE, please notify our Circulation Manager. The postage rate used for THE LADDER does not permit forwarding even though your former post office may have your new address. Avoid missing any issues! Send your new address promptly to the Circulation Manager in San Francisco.

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Merry Christmas

from

San Francisco

Symptom of The Times

On the front page of the New York Times of July 27, 1910, there appeared a story about the sale of a house in a white neighborhood to a Negro. It begins: "Up in Kingsbridge Terrace...in which none but Caucasians have ever lived, there is threatened an invasion of negro families and great is the disgust of property owners thereat." The whole story is slanted. It implies the Negro is unsavory and his presence a threat to accepted social values. The unmistakable slant reflects a popular attitude of that era, propped up by certain phrenological studies which "proved" Negroes were subnormal.

On the front page of the Times of December 17, 1963, there appeared a story about homosexuality. It is titled "Growth of Overt Homosexuality in City Provokes Wide Concern." This story also is slanted. It implies homosexuality is unsavory and a threat to accepted social values. It too reflects a popular attitude of an era, nurtured by certain psychiatric and psychoanalytic studies which "prove" homosexuals are sick.

Since the first story quoted was published, the Times has become foremost among newspaper defenders of the Negro's rights and dignity. The old "studies" that fostered the attitudes expressed in that early story have been discredited. Will the editors in 2011 regard the slant of the second story with the same embarrassment as current editors must regard the slant of the first? Will the psychiatric and psychoanalytic "studies" become as obsolete as their forerunners in phrenology?

The Times is an extremely influential newspaper, especially in New York City, with an awe-inspiring power to create public opinion. One may say it creates more than public opinion - it creates the public consciousness. A story printed in the Times becomes part of current folklore, whether true or not. Part of the Times' power comes from the fact that in the past it kept the liveliest sex and crime stories down to a few short paragraphs in the back pages. The Times was serious, thoughtful, and reliable. Its august front page was devoted to major national and international news events.

At least that was the policy until a year ago, when a new city editor named Rosenthal began to beef up the front page with local crime stories which cumulatively created the impression dangerous characters were prowling the city's streets. The Times then also began a new kind of front-page "background" article, filled with hearsay, impressions, and quotes from unidentified sources, and geared to building a picture of a middle class surrounded by growing bands of menacing outsiders from the worst elements of society. One flagrantly unsubstantiated article, for example, conjured up a Harlem group called the Blood Brotherhood, whose members learned karate for use in attacking whites. This article was criticized for its sleazy

journalism by white and Negro journalists in other publications. In the later investigations of the Harlem riots, no such organization came to light.

In the same mood, the Times printed on December 17, 1963, its startling page one story giving the impression that homosexuals were flooding New York and threatening to engulf the normals - for example, "Sexual inverts have colonized three areas of the city. The city's homosexual community acts as a lodestar, attracting others from all over the country."

The long piece went on to cover almost a full inside page with such "facts" as: "A homosexual who had achieved good progress toward cure through psychoanalysis recently told his analyst that at certain hours on certain evenings he could identify as homosexual approximately one man out of three along Third Ave. in the 50's and 60's. This was probably an exaggeration, but the area named unquestionably has a relatively large homosexual population." From a journalistic viewpoint, this passage is shocking. "A homosexual who had achieved good progress toward cure through psychoanalysis" - note the plug for analysis, the pat-on-the-back air of "good progress," the implication that here is a worthy witness because he's going to the doctor to be cured, the dramatic confrontation of this hard-trying fellow with those dangerous others walking unleashed through the blighted city, the overtones of menace they represent to him as well as to the straight population. "Recently told his analyst" - unnamed even though he is being cited as an authority - "he could identify as homosexual approximately one man out of three" - no kidding! Even the Times admits this is a little too impressionistic - a reporter giving his impressions of the analyst's impression of his patient's impressions - because the article goes on, "This was probably an exaggeration, but...." This is news reporting?

Looking for "experts" to quote in this article, the Times found a couple of publicity-eager psychiatrists. (We know, from the FACT Magazine in which 1,189 psychiatrists blithely diagnosed Goldwater at a distance, not at all loathe to give "expert" opinions on a man they'd never seen, how easy it is to find those.) The psychiatrists chosen, Irving Bieber and Charles Socarides, agreed naturally that homosexuality is an illness and needs treatment. The story then quoted a priest, as representative of the clergy of all faiths, to the effect that homosexuals are sick and should be treated by psychiatrists. Also quoted was the police commissioner who also said it's a medical problem. This heavily psychiatric orientation feeds the impression that "sick" people are prowling the city and menacing the normal citizens. The article was dressed up with knowing tidbits like "Homosexuals are traditionally willing to spend all they have on a gay night." Like standing in a crowded bar nursing a dollar beer all evening?

The Times refused to print many letters protesting this write-up, including one by psychologist Lee Steiner, which appeared in the May 1964 LADDER. However it did print a letter by Rev. Robert Wood, who noted the Times reporter is in no position to write about what he thinks homosexuals are because neither he

nor anyone else knows how many of them exist. Rev. Wood said, "The usual factual reporting of the Times is lacking in this article...(which) gives considerable space to the Bieber book but makes no reference to the equally qualified books that tell the other side of the story." He also noted that "There is an increasing number of clergy in all three faiths named who no longer condemn homosexuals, but the author in no way indicated this." Rev. Wood concluded with the hope that the reporter will "at some future date...do further research and discover there is much to be said in favor of the homosexual."

The way an item in the Times becomes a solid "fact" in the public consciousness was illustrated some months later by the statement of a young poetess advancing radical political views on a TV panel. Reciting with baby-faced earnestness the ills of the world which poets should protest, she mentioned U. S. aggression in Vietnam and Cuba, starvation all over the world, police brutality in Harlem, and the fact that "homosexuals are attacking people on the streets of New York." Poets Allen Ginsberg and LeRoi Jones, who have written subjective shock-eroo pieces on homosexual experiences and were also on the panel, whooped derisively, but said nothing to counteract this statement, at least not on the aired program. The young lady had apparently absorbed the idea as part of the folklore of the world around her, as presented on page one of the Times.

The Times made a further contribution to anti-homosexual folklore on May 19, 1964, when, continuing its efforts to alert the public to the homosexual menace, it published on its front page a story on a N. Y. Academy of Medicine report under the headline "Homosexuals Proud of Deviancy, Medical Academy Study Finds." The subsequent LIFE Magazine article on homosexuality said, "The Academy report, and the newspaper stories it inspired, were just another example of the confusion and downright ignorance that surround the entire subject." The British press had fun with the Academy report. But the Times clothed foolishness with dignity by featuring it on page one.

One Sunday morning, lolling on their couches with the fat Sunday paper filled with comforting ads for food, drink, clothing and furniture, Times readers who are parents got quite a shock when they turned to the magazine section and found an article by Dr. Irving Bieber telling them parents are responsible for making happy little babies into sick, miserable, perverted homosexuals. Fathers who don't take their sons camping, and mothers who don't give their daughters pretty dresses, were threatened about the outcome. One can picture these parents looking with guilt and fear at their innocent tots, wondering if they are "prehomosexual" - an ominous label, used 9 times in the article, which when applied may assume the nature of a self-fulfilling prophecy, like an expert stock market prediction - then towing them off for diagnosis, as urged by Bieber.

The scientific quality of the Bieber study, on which he bases his advice to parents, has been challenged in many quarters. Dr. Marshall Deutsch, science editor of radio station WBAI (Pacifica Foundation), pointed out the Bieber study is based on questionnaires answered by psychoanalysts rather than on

first-hand answers from their patients. The therapists quite possibly start with the Freudian "family romance" (domineering mother, weak father) bias, and fit the patients' histories in to their preconceptions. Further, the subjects are only 106 homosexual and 100 heterosexual patients of psychoanalysts, and so are not representative of the general population. The Bieber study starts with the unscientific, culture-bound assumption that homosexuality is sick and must be explained and cured, rather than with an open-minded conception that it may be a sane and legitimate way of life.

The Times-reading parents were in for more jolts when the editors printed one sickening confessional letter after another by homosexuals in response to the Bieber piece. These letters were carefully selected to reinforce the heterosexual's vision of how a homosexual ought to be suffering. One hysterical letter headed "I Weep..." says, "Let all these parents (who made their children homosexual) be tried for murder." A marriage counselor drumming up trade notes that children are sensitive to unconscious hostility in the parents' relationship, which should be treated lest the child become homosexual.

When the Jenkins "morals" case broke, the strongly pro-Johnson Times apparently got more upset than the Democratic leadership. The Times' horror of homosexuality nearly got the better of its political loyalty, for on the first frenzied day it plunked one of Goldwater's routine "morality" speeches (referring actually to Bobby Baker, not Jenkins) in the center of page one, and featured a column by dean of political reporters James Reston, a strong Johnson supporter, speculating that the scandal would hurt Johnson's campaign seriously. Considering the Times' disposition to blow up medical views of homosexuality to front-page "news," it is indicative of its slant that when the American Mental Health Foundation issued a statement, highly relevant to the hottest news of the moment, that homosexuals weren't necessarily sick or security risks, the Times ran the item in an obscure spot on an inside page with a small headline. Its editorials, of course, joined the chorus which called for more careful security checks to keep sick deviates out of key positions. Not one voice spoke up - certainly not in the Times - to point out that homosexuals wouldn't be security risks if outmoded sex laws were abolished.

I am told it was Abe Rosenthal himself, the Times' new city editor, who covered the DOB convention in New York last June. It is extraordinary for the city editor of any large newspaper to go out on a story himself, especially on a story like the DOB convention, which in the perspective of the total day's news in the city is minuscule. He was probably seeking to build up his background on the intriguing subject of lesbianism. The short account of the DOB convention that appeared on a back page was fair, noting that some of the convention speakers did not think homosexuality is an illness. One hopes that further contact with homophile groups will temper the Times editors' hostility and fear, and lead to fairer representation for homosexuals in the country's leading newspaper.

- Philip Gerard

A Christmas Dialogue

by Nola

Time: Shortly after midnight, Christmas Eve.

Characters: Dora, Beatrice, off-stage voices of Mom and of Joe, Dora's husband.

Scene: A comfortable, typically over-furnished suburban living room. A good fire is going in fireplace at center of stage. At one side of fireplace is a large, heavily decorated Christmas tree. Packages in Christmas wrappings and a tricycle are set under tree. Some packages have been opened and the wrappings, as well as liquor glasses left by the adults, are scattered on tables. As the curtain rises, Beatrice and Dora stand in doorway of room saying good night and Merry Christmas to Mom and Joe, whose voices recede as their steps are heard on the stairs. Dora is an attractive woman about 30, wearing tight red sheath, costume jewelry, bouffant hair-do, very high heels. Beatrice, who appears about same age, presents a striking contrast in a fashionably elegant but very simple dark dress, low heels, no jewelry or make-up, short dark cap of hair framing her pale face.

Mom's voice (off-stage): Don't stay up too late, girls. I know how much you have to talk about.

Joe's voice (off-stage, in tone of forced joviality): I'll try to let you sleep in the morning, Dora - even if it means stuffing the three of them into Timmy's drums.

Dora: Please do. I'm planning to sleep until New Year's Eve.

(More good nights and Merry Christmas sounds while Beatrice moves silently to easy chair in front of fireplace, settles herself and lights a cigarette. There is total silence after voices and steps die down. Dora moves to fireplace and stands staring down at Beatrice.)

Dora: I have another Christmas gift for you. I didn't want to give it while the others were here. (She kneels down and kisses Beatrice hard on the mouth, clings while Beatrice tries to push her off. Beatrice finally gives up, accepts kiss, making no gesture of response. Dora releases her.)

Beatrice: Well, that one didn't cost you much anyway.

Dora: You think not?

Beatrice: Yes - I think not.

Dora: Haven't you any idea what it means to me to see you again? How many years has it been? Ten?

Beatrice (shrugs): I'm sure I have no idea of what anything means to you.

Dora: You didn't recognize me at first, did you? (Beatrice shakes head in negative.) I know I've changed a lot. Do you think I look horrible?

Beatrice: What difference does it make what I think?

Dora: I often wonder what you'd think - about different things...

Beatrice: I should imagine that with a husband and three babies to look after you'd be much too busy to wonder about anything - least of all about what I might think.

Dora: It's strange, isn't it? I'm really swamped and yet, always in the back of my mind is a little voice asking, "What would Bea think?" I don't know how I do it, because you simply can't imagine what it's like to have one in the carriage, one in the crawling stage and one not yet in school.

Beatrice (shudders): Aren't you laying it on a little thick? Or has your psychiatrist already ordered a fourth?

Dora: Dr. Brooks? Oh, I finished with him ages ago - just after Timmy was born.

Beatrice: That was when you got turned into a "real woman," wasn't it?

Dora (hiding her face in her hands): You got that letter after all? I had hoped it went astray. It was so stupid. But you must understand - when you're trying to sell yourself something you need a slogan or two.

Beatrice: I can understand that all right. What I can't understand is the meaning of your passionate kiss.

Dora: It wasn't a passionate kiss, really - just a warm, loving one.

Beatrice: Oh. (Wipes hand across mouth.) I thought it tasted lousy. What a capacity you have, woman - a husband, three children and a mouthful of warm, loving stickiness for me, too! What did that psychiatrist pump into you anyway?

Dora: How bitter you are! You haven't forgotten or forgiven a thing, have you?

Beatrice: You make it damn difficult with your screaming letters and your icky kisses.

Dora: One letter, one kiss, in ten years.

Beatrice: And what for? To see if the old Dora nerve still reacts?

Dora: Forgive me, forgive me. (Buries her head in her lap and cries. Bea stares coldly and silently until she stops.) I'm sorry...I didn't...I thought that now that you've...I'd heard about...now that you've been with one person for a few years, we could again become...

Beatrice: Sisters? (Laughs.) Little sister, little sister Dora...

Dora: If it could only be that!

Beatrice (icily): I never wanted a sister.

Dora: I know that well enough. They inflicted me on you. I can still see you as you were that first day. Dad carried my things to your room - three paper bags full of torn underwear and over-sized dresses. Mom kept saying I was to think of this room as my own - my own home, my own family - even if my real mother were to come back. Mom and Dad kept smiling away, hugging me, kissing me. But you just stood near the window, looking out, not even looking at me, and yet...

Beatrice: I saw your reflection in the window pane. You were a beautiful girl - like a creature from another world - with your wild, crazy hair, your ridiculous red gypsy dress and your big, mistrustful eyes.

Dora (laughs painfully): Oh, I was mistrustful, all right. I believed nothing any adult told me. Only you, who said nothing, did I trust.

Beatrice: I didn't want you to come to live with us. I had a premonition that something terrible had come into my life, something I would never be able to shake off...

Dora: You knew at once?

Beatrice: Of course not! How do you know love at 15? I thought love was the crushes I had on my teachers. This was different. Just a painful feeling that I had met you before in an unknown place and that we had made a sort of pact - and now that you had come I would no longer be free.

Dora: You didn't even look at me, yet I felt that I had been really seen by another human being for the first time. I felt that my very existence depended on my remaining near you.

Beatrice: I wanted them to take you away. But I knew it wouldn't happen. They had told me it was hopeless about your mother. I felt trapped.

Dora: You were so cold and nasty to me. Mom tried to make me feel better by telling me you were jealous because she and Dad loved me so much. But I wasn't fooled. I had stored up 13 years of wisdom. I knew they were just trying to use me to pull you out of your loneliness - and I knew you hated them for it.

Beatrice: How you must have resented it!

Dora: No. I was proud. I felt I was destined to be the one who would get through to you. You were so remote and strong. Only when I was with you did I feel happy and secure. I knew that someday you were going to put your arm around me and I'd be allowed to rest my head on your breast. Oh, how I wanted that!

Beatrice: And when I finally did put my arm around you...

Dora: Five years later...you put off destiny too long...I had grown up. I panicked.

Beatrice: It was a slow panic. For two years you came to my bed every night - at your insistence.

Dora: I know. But I was fighting myself every minute. I felt guilty, confused, frightened...and then you left me.

Beatrice: Left you! I begged you to come with me!

Dora: Come where? You had no idea!

Beatrice (suddenly furious, shaking her by the shoulders): It wasn't a matter of where - it was with whom. The only person you ever loved and trusted was asking you to come away from everyone you hated and mistrusted!

Dora: I know. I know. But suddenly my spirit was broken. It was growing up that did it. I no longer believed in my own dreams, my own instincts. Or else I never was quite what you thought I was - a creature from another world. I'm not like you, Bea. It frightens me to be away from people. I loathed the sticky-palmed boys and the girls with their engagement rings, but I wanted to be right there with them.

Beatrice: You just wanted to turn to me for occasional escape.

Dora: Perhaps. I had to believe that something authentic, something beautiful still existed. I used to imagine that just outside of town there was dark wilderness where the wind always whistled in the treetops and the sun never penetrated through to the earth. The thought of it made me shudder, but I imagined that you took walks there, Bea, and that you loved it. (Bea snorts in contempt.) Yes, I know you hate nature, but I'm speaking in a different sense. You're so far, in every way, from the everyday pattern of life. You scorn patterns. I need them. On Sunday when I go to church (Bea snorts again). Yes, I do that too - I put on my Sunday dress and my hat and my white gloves and I take Joe's arm and Timmy's hand and I walk up the church steps smiling at my neighbors and my neighbors smile at me. I feel so safe. People, patterns, the past and the future. They're what hold me together. (She walks over to the Christmas tree and puts her hand on the tricycle.) Without Christmas lights, without the sounds of children I'd feel lost and lonely in the void. I'd

always hear the whistling of the wind in the treetops. Aren't you frightened, Bea?

Beatrice: What madness! What hypocrisy! Sure I'm frightened - but not of what scares you. What harm did the wind in the treetops ever do you or anyone else? But look at you patterns, your past, your people. Christmas lights and oceans of blood. They have gone together through history like love and marriage. Has one Christmas light driven the treacherous darkness out of one human brain? The future! Sounds of children! Can't you hear them screaming in agony? An exploding population spawned by amorally and spiritually destroyed generation! Why, if you had any reasonable sense of fear, any true desire for security...

Dora: Bea, you're just as damned rational as you always were! Don't you need the reassurance of human flesh? Don't you crave to hold the flesh you can create out of your own body? Isn't your life empty and sterile? What will you have when you're old?

Beatrice: What will you have? If you have your children so much the worse for them and for you. The only thing I want to have is the freedom to be myself. The only flesh I want near me is the flesh I choose.

Dora: But that's such a selfish life. Don't you need to give?

Beatrice: God, woman, what is all this having and giving? Is that how you know you exist? Do you say to yourself, "I must be I, because my children need me; I must be I, because I have a new car and a houseful of wall-to-wall carpeting; I must be I, because everyone smiles at me"? How much does it take to assure one woman of her existence? A husband, children, a house filled with furniture and appliances - all that plus a psychiatrist, a minister, neighbors - and now you want me for a sister, too! And is that why you hang all this junk on you? So much stuff couldn't be hung on nothing! (Suddenly rushes at her, tears her beads, rubs her face with handkerchief, muses her hair, throws her on chair to pull off her shoes while Dora struggles and tries to stifle her own cries, "Bea! Stop! Stop!")

Mom's voice (offstage): Girls, girls, what's going on down there? (They separate, panting.)

Dora (moving to doorway and shouting up): It's nothing, Mom. We thought we saw a mouse.

Mom's voice: Good heavens.

Dora: But it was just a shadow.

Mom's voice (petulantly): Isn't it high time you both got to bed?

Dora: Yes, Mom, We'll be up soon.

Beatrice: How you must have resented it!

Dora: No. I was proud. I felt I was destined to be the one who would get through to you. You were so remote and strong. Only when I was with you did I feel happy and secure. I knew that someday you were going to put your arm around me and I'd be allowed to rest my head on your breast. Oh, how I wanted that!

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Mom's voice (petulantly): Isn't it high time you both got to bed?

Dora: Yes, Mom, We'll be up soon.

(Silence. They look at one another across room, Dora in stocking feet, disarrayed, hair mussed, make-up messed.)

Beatrice: I wanted to see the old Dora for one minute.

Dora: Do you see her now?

Beatrice (shakes head in negative): No. The eyes are all wrong. They've gone dead. (Picks up beads and hands them to her.) Is that why you put all that sparkle around your neck?

Dora: I died when you went away. I was amazed when people spoke to me as though there were somebody there. I told myself I was ill and needed a doctor to make me well. Dr. Brooks said I would come alive when I learned to accept my femininity. I believed him - and yet...yet, I still test everything against the way I felt when we were together. I'm not unhappy, but things still seem unreal. I thought if we could have some sort of relationship...

Beatrice: I'm not capable of "some sort of relationship." I'm not a weirdly-shaped scrap you can fit into the jigsaw puzzle of your life. You must forget the past.

Dora: Have you?

Beatrice (shivering): It's gotten cold.

Dora: The fire is dying.

Beatrice: I'll wait until it goes out.

Dora: Next year, next Christmas - will you come home again - with your friend?

Beatrice: Unlikely.

Dora: You don't want to see me ever again, do you?

Beatrice: Who are you?

Dora (recites softly, automatically): Joe's wife. Timmy's, Midge's and Josie's mother. Mom's daughter. Choir singer. Future Franklin School PTA president.

Beatrice: Good night Joe's wife, Timmy's, Midge's and Josie's mother, Mom's daughter, choir singer, future Franklin School PTA president.

(Dora walks toward Bea uncertainly, but stops and turns toward the door when she realizes Bea will not answer. Bea turns face toward the window as Dora exits. She stands between the now-dead fire and the Christmas tree. Christmas tree lights twinkle in the dark room. The cry "Dora" is torn out of her throat as the curtain falls.)

The Moral Decision about Homosexuality - by Iris Murdoch

(This article reprinted by kind permission of the author and of the Albany Trust's publication MAN AND SOCIETY.)

About the Author: IRIS MURDOCH was born in Dublin in 1919 of Anglo-Irish family. She grew up and was educated in England. After the war she worked with refugees in Austria. Until recently she taught philosophy at St. Anne's College, Oxford University, and she is married to John Bailey, a Fellow at New College. She has written many novels, including: THE BELL; A SEVERED HEAD (which she later adapted as a play in collaboration with J. B. Priestley); AN UNOFFICIAL ROSE; THE UNICORN.

When homosexuality is discussed these days it is often said that "we ought to know the facts." In these discussions it is sometimes assumed that homosexuality is a social problem or disease for the removal of which we need the help of psychiatrist, sociologists and other experts. I wish to argue that the problem of homosexuality is fundamentally a moral problem which the whole community ought to face, and that the facts we need in order to make a judgment about it are quite ordinary facts which are accessible to the observation of ordinary people. However, since the various arguments in the dispute have become (especially of late) so involved, it is first necessary to sort out a number of separate issues.

The discussion about whether the English law ought to be changed is not the one with which I am here concerned. Of course the law ought to be changed, and support of this reform is clearly compatible with very various views about the desirability of homosexual practices. Nor do I propose here to argue with those who object to homosexuality only on the ground that there should be no sexual relations outside marriage. Someone who, on this ground - perhaps for religious reasons - condemned all irregular unions, would seem to me to be making a perfectly arguable moral judgment which one must respect, whether or not one agrees with it. There are also people who interpret their religion as simply and without argument forbidding homosexuality, and with these I will not, indeed cannot, dispute either.

Comprehensible too, though less worthy, are the cautious citizens who argue that one ought never to be a party to persuading or allowing another person to do something of which society disapproves. However, those who find homosexuality objectionable often adopt a rather more complicated position, relying on arguments from what they take to be the 'special

nature' of a homosexual as opposed to a heterosexual relationship, and these are the arguments I want to discuss.

Naturally there are all sorts of general moral considerations which apply to unions of either kind, and about which there is a large measure of agreement. One ought not to seduce minors. One ought to aim at a steady relationship. One ought to be truthful and loyal to one's partner. One ought not to be promiscuous. How exactly we conduct our sex life is an important moral problem for all of us, whether we are heterosexual or homosexual. These general considerations would only enter into our moral judgment about homosexuality if it could be shown that homosexuals were, and heterosexuals were not, inclined to practices of which on other grounds we disapproved. I shall speak of this further below.

It is clear at once, if we consider the hostility which the mere idea of homosexuality often encounters, that many people dislike and fear homosexuals, in a way similar to the way in which people dislike or fear black men or Jews, without being able to understand why. A psychological explanation of these irrational fears, if it can be given, would be helpful, and this is a point at which scientific study can usefully contribute. Let us now however consider the actual arguments which articulate persons who regard homosexuality as undesirable may bring forward.

It is often said that such practices are 'unnatural'. This is an ambiguous term which may be offered as a description or as a moral judgment and is in need of clarification in either case. Many 'natural', in the sense of easy, instinctive human activities are immoral, and traditional morality frequently pictures the good life as the defeat of nature. So the label 'unnatural', if it is to operate as a moral condemnation, will need to be translated into other more specific judgments. If, on the other hand, the label is offered as a description meaning 'very unusual', it would seem to be a false description since homosexuality is very usual. Persons who use the term 'unnatural' often wish in fact to profit from both senses and to offer an unspecified moral condemnation of other persons who they wish to regard as a small peculiar minority.

Before going on to consider how the charge of 'unnatural' behaviour can be translated into more unambiguous terms, let us look at a version of the charge, often current among the more enlightened, to the effect that homosexuality is a disease which psychiatrists should be called in to cure. It seems to me that this notion is usually a moral judgment in disguise, and that it would be difficult to produce any coherent empirical filling for the idea that we have here to do with an 'illness' in anything like the ordinary sense. That homosexuals can be 'cured' has yet to be proved, although of course anyone's attitude to sex, whatever it may be, could be profoundly disturbed by the kind of drastic 'aversion treatment' of which one sometimes reads with horror in the press. Milder attempts at 'cure' usually amount simply to attending to whatever distressed condition has brought the unfortunate homosexual in question into the hands of the 'experts'. The

majority of homosexuals lead ordinary busy lives as clerks or grocers or university dons, and in generalisations about such persons it is sometimes forgotten that the well-balanced members of the community, as of the other one, escape notice.

It is sometimes said, as a rider to the view of homosexuality as a disease, that there are very few 'natural' homosexuals. I am not sure what the meaning of this statement is or whether it has any meaning. Compare "there are very few natural celibates." Human beings are extremely complicated and the tissue of environment, chance and choice which involves them in what may be called their 'destiny' is hard to unravel. Some people, it is true, look as if they had been framed physically upon the model of the sex other than that to which they officially belong: but such people very frequently turn out to be heterosexual. If "there are few natural homosexuals" means that there are few 'physically ambiguous' persons who are actually homosexual, or if it means that few homosexuals have detectably peculiar glands, this may be true but does not entail any particular conclusion. To conclude here that few people are naturally homosexual is simply to make an unfounded assumption about what it is to be homosexual.

It has long been recognized that the majority of homosexuals are perfectly ordinary in their physical appearance and make-up; and if one must draw a conclusion from this, a more sensible one to draw would be that homosexuality is natural to many people as a function of what makes them human, not as a function of what makes them animal. If, on the other hand, the dictum means that there are few who cannot be persuaded, bullied or otherwise coerced by society into abandoning their homosexual practices, then it is plainly not true. In fact it is very difficult to give a sense to the word 'natural' in a human context of this sort. Some people have always been homosexual, others have become homosexual after a brief heterosexual prelude, some have both characteristics, and some, having searched vainly for a heterosexual mate, settle down later in life with a homosexual one. There are a great many paths into this condition and a great many different ways of living it, which is just to say that it is an ordinary human condition.

General arguments from 'nature', whether frankly metaphysical or pseudo-empirical do not, it seems to me, successfully demonstrate that homosexuality is 'undesirable'. Such arguments, when they are not merely expressions of irrational fears, are often in fact confused or summary versions of a moral view, and it is this view which I should now like to attempt to clarify. It might be briefly stated as follows: "A homosexual relationship is a poor, even a bad, sort of human relationship, and it is better not to have such relationships in our society. Homosexuals are promiscuous, neurotic, jealous and generally unstable people. They should be curbed and discouraged and if possible the breed should be made to die out."

I would wish to emphasize that those of us who are acquainted with homosexuals are capable of assessing this argument out of our knowledge of human nature without the help of 'experts';

and persons who do not know any homosexuals are not likely to be helped here by a sociological treatise. It is obviously desirable that more should be known about homosexuality and that more people who are homosexual should openly declare themselves to their friends and acquaintances. Since the law and social prejudice make such behaviour hazardous this particular vicious circle is hard to break. It may help to break it if people who do know about homosexuality frankly express their opinions on what is, in my view, the only plausible argument which could show it to be 'immoral'.

It is extremely difficult to be precise here. There are plenty of neurotic and unstable homosexuals and there are plenty of promiscuous ones. But there are a great many who are none of these things and many heterosexuals who are all of them. Let us consider the charges separately. A homosexual relationship is said to be impoverished or unsatisfying. If by this is meant that such a relationship is 'merely physical' or that such persons do not really 'fall in love', this is untrue. Homosexuals in love can experience the same entire and unselfish devotion of body and soul to another which is characteristic of heterosexual love at its best. Joined to the charge of 'poverty' is the charge of 'promiscuity'. A homosexual, it is said, just wants to find another homosexual. Some do; but plenty of heterosexual men just want 'a girl'. Indeed if one reflects on the extreme promiscuity of heterosexuals, both in the past and today, I doubt if any charge of exceptional promiscuity can significantly be made against homosexuals. Nor do I think that it could be shown that homosexuals are noticeably more 'neurotic' than other people (assuming this to be an undesirable characteristic, which I would not necessarily concede), unless one were to make this true by definition: though it is true that the life they lead is in some respects more difficult than that of heterosexuals.

This brings us to what seems to me the only serious and important piece of the 'hostile case': that a homosexual menage is essentially unstable. It may well be true that it is more difficult to establish a stable long-term homosexual menage than it is to establish a stable long-term heterosexual married menage. The reasons for this are obvious, and some of them are removable and some are not. The secrecy imposed by society obviously makes the dissolution of a relationship an easier matter. When you are not known to be 'married' you can part quietly without undergoing the public misery of a divorce. This may be a source of instability though it may also be a blessing. There is also the fact that homosexual couples cannot have children; this seems to me the only purely biological fact which is relevant to our problem. The arrival of children in a heterosexual menage constitutes immediately a powerful moral reason for the continuation of that menage; whereas the homosexual menage lacks this particular motive. All this may be true, but what follows from it?

It seems to me simply this follows. It is possible that those who choose, or who find themselves instinctively upon, the homosexual road are engaging in a way of life where it may be harder for them to settle down with a permanent partner, or,

to put it another way, where they will not be forced to stick to their decisions. The search for a permanent partner is probably for most people the most difficult as well as the most interesting enterprise in which they ever engage. There are of course many who do not want such partners, and these can be found among both homosexuals and heterosexuals. But the homosexual who does want a steady menage may find it more difficult to achieve one because society will not endorse or approve of or even notice what he attempts, and because he is childless. It may also be that he becomes more possessive and jealous simply because his 'possession' is less secure. A heterosexual in the same situation would experience exactly the same difficulties. A homosexual has here the advantage that he cannot be trapped in an unhappy union which both sides continue only because they fear social disapproval. On the other hand, affection and loyalty may be more readily supported and made to grow in the context of a permanence which is simply taken for granted and not bedevilled by secrecy. In fact many homosexuals do succeed in their search for a steady partner and do achieve a happy and stable menage.

It does not then seem to me that the arguments from the 'special nature' of the relationship succeed in showing that there is anything inherently immoral about being a homosexual; and I have argued that other 'objections', often framed in would-be scientific terms, are really disguised moral judgments. Or one might say that many people regard homosexuality as an illness in order to avoid having to make any straight moral decision about it. Of course persons who are really mentally ill about their sex life may need suitable help, but heterosexuals will need such help just as much as homosexuals. To treat the ordinary homosexual as a sick person is a ridiculous insult to a group which includes, as we all perfectly well know, many of our most distinguished men and women.

In the end it is a simple matter of human rights. One has a right to choose to be celibate: though even this right is sometimes challenged nowadays and the celibate person looked on with suspicion or contempt. One has also a right to choose to be homosexual, or to accept the fact that one is, and to be left alone. Human beings differ vastly, and being heterosexually married is not the only 'proper' or 'rich' or 'rewarding' way of life. The choice to be homosexual is a hazardous choice, for the reasons I suggested; but the choice to be celibate is a hazardous choice, and the choice to marry is a very hazardous choice. It is not easy for human beings to achieve a completely contented and orderly existence whatever they do; and responsibility for others and service to the community can be found on all these paths.

The law must be changed, that goes without saying. But what else can be done to produce a sane and decent attitude to this matter? It is unfortunate that many well-meaning people, who rightly say that we need more information, are still treating homosexuality as a social ailment which 'scientific facts' will help to cure. But if there is illness here it is our society at large that is ill, in the sense of prejudiced or morally blind. The facts which will cure this prejudice belong

to the ordinary talk of ordinary people, and should gradually become more accessible if those who know about homosexuality will refer to it sensibly, and as homosexuals gradually emerge from the demoralising secrecy which is at present forced upon them. Doubtless homosexuals will always be a minority and doubtless they will always be with us. What is needed is not more science but just more humane and charitable recognition of our right to differ from one another.

Notes from Abroad

Gift Books for Indonesia

Thanks so much for your "Books for Ger" action! No, I've nothing to fear of our Customs in Indonesia, for I know that our people are so ignorant they wouldn't even know what those books will be about, if they would think anything at all. I have to ask you, however, not to send to me all at once, for, I am ashamed to say, the sight of too many books would be a temptation and half of them might disappear. Books are so precious in our country - even second ones and irrespective of contents - because of their scarceness.

I just finished reading your letter for the nth time and I am still marveling at your ingenuity. I would never have hit upon something as original as your "Books for Ger" campaign, and admire your spirit accordingly. It's a way of thinking beyond our mentality. In comparison, I do think myself very dull and indolent.

Rora is disturbing me and reminding me not to forget to tell you that we haven't read Simone de Beauvoir's *THE SECOND SEX* and would love to have it! She says I should give you a list of the books we already have but I won't do it because I don't intend to keep all the books for myself. I want to distribute them among our friends and the more we get the better! For they also would be so grateful to own a book, no matter if they already read it. And I want to give spare ones to interested "normal" girls to increase their knowledge of facts. And maybe it will persuade the "more than interested" ones to come out of their shell and be themselves. Who knows what my harvest will be? Oh, I would love to see some pairs of dark almond-shaped eyes widening in wild surprise when I give them some books to read. And I would love to see those doll-like features coloring in panic when I hit their most secret thoughts. I have a whole list of beauties in mind: graceful bamboo stems, society darlings who "just can't find a suitable suitor" and keep fluttering from one man to another.

I am even thinking of sending some books to my sister who is Mother Superior of a school and a well of understanding and humanity. She has hundreds of girls under her wings and I

think it high time she should know how to handle some matters the right way. I am sure she will understand because she has the mind of a philosopher and the indulgence of a saint. She was the only one who didn't reproach me with my divorce, notwithstanding my church marriage...

And once again our fathomless thankfulness for everything, and our warmest feelings to all of you.

- Ger van B.

WILL YOU SHARE WITH GER?

We who take the world of books for granted can hardly imagine the hunger for reading material in countries where books are so scarce it's a treat to own a few. Last month we published earlier correspondence from Ger van B., who shared with you her personal story (and her picture) and appealingly described her longing for books on the homophile and related themes. As you plan your gifts for Christmas sharing, please think of Ger - and share a book or two with her! Mail a quality book or books with a homophile element (non-fiction or fiction, used or new, hardcover or paperback) to: BOOKS FOR GER, Postal Box 8432, Philadelphia 1, Pa., 19101. A DOB member in that city has offered to box and forward the books to Ger in Indonesia. Donations of postage stamps to help with the mailings will also be welcome! Send your donation books or stamps promptly, for the special mailbox will be closed after Dec. 31st. We will publish news of the progress of the Books-for-Ger plan.

READERS RESPOND

The October *LADDER* is a love, a small masterpiece. The cover is nice stuff - a moody street scene in a half light, and the figures sure yet tentative. Scary almost in its multiple symbols. Every month you move forward by leaps and bounds.

I appreciate your printing some of my old "Lesbiana" reviews. In a world of atomic blasts, and a shake-up in enemy land, and hell for a little man with no discretion - still they write and say: "Dear Gene, Tell me about more books" or words to that effect, the gasp of a million waterless fish, the lonely. I'd love to send one "instant girl" to every one of them for

Christmas. I'm no procurer, but loneliness kills, and so many of them die inside without love.

Your report on the "Off the Cuff" broadcast brings out that lovely thing that we have and that "they" do not have and can never understand. That juxtaposition of love and friendship, the way in which lesbians love mentally, is beyond comprehension for the hetero male mind. Somehow, I'm rather glad of it, sad though the implications may be for our public relations workers. Dr. Scher's comments given in your report are poignant: the effort of a well-meaning heterosexual man to discuss a kind of love/friendship ideal he cannot visualize, let alone experience. He rejects (as we all do) a phenomenon he cannot understand. He really thinks that sex and friendship are separate. God pity him.

- Gene Damon

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I do think our world is getting to be "more gay." But not, I might say, fast enough to suit me! I may be unique. I am a lesbian and rather proud of it. I believe it's right and wonderful. I just wish every other lesbian felt the same way.

- R. B., Mississippi

+ + + + +

Congratulations and more of them on THE LADDER which is really getting better all the time. Conrad's review of THE LESBIAN IN AMERICA by Cory is magnificent!

- J. F., Missouri

+ + + + +

We have just seen several copies of THE LADDER and we were thunderstruck! The covers are beautiful! The content has improved 100%. We just look at each other and ask, "Can this be THE LADDER?"

Since coming to Australia, we have lost touch with the Daughters. We feel it would be unwise to subscribe, but we grab every copy that anyone else has. We have discovered one of your regular subscribers, so we can keep up with things now. The report of the convention almost had us in tears. We really planned to go to New York for the convention. Don't know how we managed to get to Australia instead!

Things are a bit different over here but we thrive on the differences. We have met a nice group of people and we enjoy the Australian version of gay social life. Most everyone is impressed with the idea that the U. S. government lets homophile organizations form. After reading recent LADDERS, we've made plans to revive DOB's Los Angeles chapter when we return home!

- J. N., Australia

DAUGHTERS of BILITIS

INCORPORATED

MEMBERSHIP in Daughters of Bilitis is limited to women 21 years of age or older. If in San Francisco, New York, or Chicago area, direct inquiry to chapter concerned. Otherwise write to National Office in San Francisco for a membership application form.

THE LADDER is a monthly magazine published by Daughters of Bilitis, Inc., mailed in a plain sealed envelope for \$4.00 a year. Anyone over 21 may subscribe to The Ladder.

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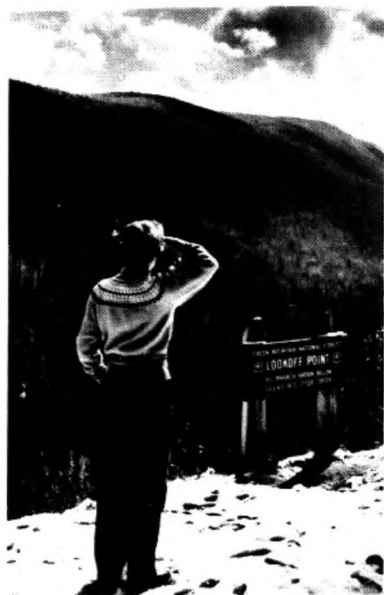
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