

THE LADDER LESBIAN REVIEW

(available to adults only)





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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A Practical Platform

Homosexuals should form political pressure groups to fight for their rights. They should also organize and run their own social clubs, like those in Europe. Homosexuality is virtually impossible to cure, and studies which claim the opposite are questionable.

These were the main points in a talk given late last year to the New York Mattachine Society by Dr. Hendrik M. Ruitenbeek, sociologist and psychoanalyst, and editor of *THE PROBLEM OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN MODERN SOCIETY*.

Dr. Ruitenbeek noted that in the American political system, minority groups exert pressure on the politicians who represent them to make their voices heard. We are at present seeing an upsurge of the Negro minority. Homosexuals too should raise their voices "to establish themselves as persons" and demand their rights, Dr. Ruitenbeek urged.

Locally, in New York's Greenwich Village, he said, there is a large enough homosexual population to influence the outcome of an election, but the homosexuals don't use this power. Recently Edward Koch, leader of the vocally "liberal" group that ousted the Tammany machine in the Village, received a lot of newspaper space on his campaign to rid the Village of "bums, degenerates and homosexuals." Dr. Ruitenbeek, a Village resident, said he phoned Mr. Koch to protest this derogatory reference to homosexuals. He said that Koch's surprised reaction indicated it had apparently never occurred to him he was maligning a group of perfectly good constituents who might swing their votes to the opposition candidate in the next election.

"Any minority group being persecuted by small-time politicians should unite and fight," Dr. Ruitenbeek advised. Homosexuals "must bring political action against those who represent them and are ignorant of their problems."

Dr. Ruitenbeek questioned the concept of "security risks" in government. He pointed out that Sherman Adams takes vicuna coats, heterosexuals have mistresses on the sly, but homosexuals are singled out for discrimination in government employment. Security risks, he said, are made by the government, which makes homosexual activities illegal. Homosexual or heterosexual, a competent person can do a good job in government. "If I heard a transvestite was working in the White House, I'd say, who cares, as long as he's doing his job," Dr. Ruitenbeek proclaimed.

He observed that the Puritan tradition has left a "narrow-mindedness about sex" and a "climate of intolerance" in America that results in such harassment of the homosexual as the

closing down of gay bars. Noting the bars are run by criminal syndicates, Dr. Ruitenbeek said American homosexuals should organize clubs like those in Europe, which are run on a legitimate basis by the homosexuals themselves, not by criminals who pay off the police.

Dr. Ruitenbeek made some important statements on psychotherapy. "It is virtually impossible to 'cure' homosexuality, and psychotherapists treating homosexuals should concentrate on helping them become functioning members of society."

He said psychotherapists should go beyond the standard diagnosis that (male) homosexuality is caused by a strong seductive mother and a weak father, and realize it is also closely related to current changes in our culture, like the new roles of women and the family and the shifting of many social patterns. "The patient is not necessarily served by the therapist's delving into the origins of his sexual orientation," a process which may create conflicts which get in the way of solving his present problems. Instead of discussing psychological origins, analysts and psychiatrists should concentrate on helping the homosexual function well in society, Dr. Ruitenbeek said.

Many studies prove homosexuals can be cured, Dr. Ruitenbeek observed, but he questions their methods and their accuracy. As an example, he cited the much-publicized Bieber report. "It's distressing that it's always misquoted," he remarked. Bieber says 106 homosexuals came into psychoanalysis, and 27% of them became heterosexual. "But in the papers where he is quoted, they don't mention that of the 106 patients, 72 were exclusively homosexual, 30 were classed as bisexual, and 4 as inactive. This makes his 27% 'cure' of homosexuals very questionable," Dr. Ruitenbeek noted.

He objected to the classification "bisexual" as an unclear concept. A person functions predominantly as a heterosexual or a homosexual, he said. If a homosexual man has intercourse occasionally with a woman, this doesn't make him heterosexual or bisexual, any more than the fact that a heterosexual has some homosexual experience makes him homosexual or bisexual.

Dr. Ruitenbeek also criticized the Bieber study for claiming that of 28 homosexuals who were in analysis for less than 150 hours, two had become completely heterosexual. 150 hours at three sessions a week is less than a year - a remarkably short time to effect such a drastic change. Of these 2 patients who reportedly became exclusive heterosexuals with such brief analytic therapy, one died in an accident shortly after "cure," and the other was a 16-year-old boy. The latter case doesn't count, Dr. Ruitenbeek said, because an analyst can put an unformed adolescent on a couch and create any sexual identity for him. Therefore, he said, "the study by Bieber and his associates carries no weight and does nothing for homosexuals in terms of helping them become functioning members of society."

In the question period that followed Dr. Ruitenbeek's talk, Donald Webster Cory cited an American Mental Health Foundation statement (occasioned by the Jenkins case) that homosexuality

is not necessarily linked to disease or subversion, as evidence that progress has been made in altering the hostile climate of opinion against homosexuals. Dr. Ruitenbeek said he considered the statement insignificant in the largely negative atmosphere that prevails, and indicated the homosexuals' work is still to be done.

This reporter found it interesting that Mr. Cory - who at the DOB convention last spring lashed out at homosexuals for rejecting the idea of "cure" and pointed out that the Bieber report's small number of "cures" was still a number which held out "hope" for the rest - had nothing to say about Dr. Ruitenbeek's debunking of the Bieber study and its percent of "cures."

- C. K.

Editor's note: An article by Dr. Ruitenbeek will be featured in the June issue of THE LADDER.

Of Woman Unto Woman

The Story of Michael Field

"Michael Field" is the mutual pseudonym of two women who were educated together (in a sense) and who lived out their lives almost as a single entity.

Katherine Harris Bradley was born in Birmingham, England, in 1846, and Edith Emma Cooper, who was her niece, was born in Kenilworth, England, in 1862. Katherine was a brilliant student and a "well-developed healthy young animal." Apparently she had complete care of her niece almost from Edith's birth. Edith Cooper grew up to be an almost equally brilliant - and much more meticulous - person.

In 1878 they moved near Bristol and together took up studies at University College. Friends considered them deeply serious. Both ladies were prominent in woman's suffrage work and belonged to an anti-vivisection group and a debating society. Both also did watercolors. Their completely absorbing relationship irritated some of the other students. Nevertheless, the two were surrounded by a devoted group of women friends who looked up to them.

They were nicknamed "Michael" (for Katherine) and "Henry" (for Edith) and for the rest of their lives they were known to each other and to their friends by these male names. Both are considered to have been attractive-looking women - Katherine the more striking, but Edith (from the few portraits) a gossamer and fragile beauty.

Though their biographers generally view them as withdrawn from the world, the two ladies counted among their intimate friends many great people, including - to name but a few - Mr. Arthur Symonds, the Bernard Berensons, and Robert Browning.

Katherine had published in 1875 a volume of lyrics under the pseudonym Arran Leigh. She and Emma both worked on a drama, BELLEROPHON, which was published in 1881 and signed Arran and Isla Leigh. With the publication of their drama CALLIRHOE (1884) they adopted the writing pseudonym which was to become famous: Michael Field.

The two women always worked together on each writing project and they left a substantial output. Their dramas are now forgotten for the most part, but their poetry - lovely and lyrical - has always had admirers.

There is general agreement that the Michael Field work is so whole, so unified, that the collaboration is truly remarkable. The two women seemed one, in every way. Of course there is no way to prove physical intimacy beyond a shadow of a doubt in any relationship not illumined by our age of invasion of privacy. However, there is every reason to believe that these two women loved one another with a passion so violent and consuming, that most love stories pale beside it.

Biographer Mary Sturgeon wrote: "Their life was in itself a poem, and the beauty of it is unmistakable. These were heroic and impassioned souls, who, in honouring their vow to poetry, gave life, it is true, 'a poor second place', and yet they fulfilled life itself, with a completeness few are capable of, in love...."

Sturgeon's many references to Michael's love for Henry include this passage: "But of her devotion to Henry, its passion, its depth, its tenacity and tenderness, it is quite impossible to speak adequately. From Henry's infancy to her death - literally from her first day to her last - Michael shielded, tended and nurtured her in body and in spirit. Probably there never was another such case of one mind being formed by another. There surely cannot be elsewhere in literature a set of love-songs such as those she addressed to Henry...."

Biographers agree that the specific "Sapphic affinities" of the ladies are expressed in Michael's voice in the ardent love songs she wrote to Henry. These appear in the third book of UNDERNEATH THE BOUGH and scattered throughout other books, including a small group at the end of MYSTIC TREES. To quote Miss Sturgeon again:

"Those poems are a record of her devotion to Edith Cooper, and it is doubtful whether Laura or Beatrice or the Dark Lady had a tenderer wooing. They explain, of course, the slightness of a more usual (or, as some would put it, a more normal) love-interest in Michael's work."

When speaking of the uproar created when the ladies re-worked the existing poems of Sappho into their volume LONG AGO, Miss

Sturgeon gives more critical praise to this book than to any other Michael Field work and explains this by saying: "...its more satisfying inner unity no doubt arises from the harmony that existed between the poets and their theme, Sappho."

One of the Michael Field dramas offers this perfect quotation from which the title of this article was taken. In Act III, Scene III, of THE TRAGEDY OF PARDON, are these lines:

There is love
of woman unto woman, in its fibre
Stronger than knits a mother to her child.
There is no lack in it, and no defect;
It looks nor up nor down,
But loves from plenitude to plenitude.

Early in 1911, Henry was attacked by cancer and was nursed by Michael until her death in December, 1913. It was ironic and tragic that Michael, too, developed cancer, six months before the death of Henry. But she swore her doctor and her confessor to secrecy. On the day of Henry's funeral, she fainted from internal hemorrhage. She died in September, 1914.

It is noteworthy that literary history offers no example of so complete a unity in the work of a heterosexual couple.

- Gene Damon and Lee Stuart

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FRAGMENTS FROM THE GREEK

Not for you are the names of love
I have given others
since I am forbidden to love you.
Therefore your name
will be music to me when one says it suddenly
and I shall speak it with special meaning
because it holds all I may not tell you.

Let me clench my hands behind my back
wounding them with my nails
that I may not offer you caresses
and let my eyelids fall
when you turn your head to me.
Only so can I comport myself before you
as though you were no more to me than others.

If this seem indifference
I offer you in your time of sorrow
know that my breath is stilled with weeping for you
and my bosom
holds sorrow like a stone.

- Valerie Taylor

Someone I could kiss
Has left his, her
tracks
A memory
Heavy as winter breathing
In the snow
And with weight and heat
of human body.

- Elise Cowen

OLDER WOMAN

And now these small new hurting things,
nagging and vague -
peculiar to my age.

Whiskery soon, and wispy?
Firm legs gone shaky - sure voice rangy?
Maundering?

Then to feel tearful and trembly
all through my slow-dimming human assembly?

O Chance - let no such preposterous plan be favored
before all of life is fully savored.

- Blanche Small

The Heterosexual Obsession

A recent news story from South Africa states that doctors in a government mental institution are bleaching two Chinese women white so that they can be transferred from the Negro ward to the white ward to facilitate their cure.

Also in the news of late is a rash of stories in which assorted psychotherapists tout "cures" for homosexuality, boasting they have succeeded where others have given up. Their methods incorporate some of the more advanced brainwashing techniques refined by the Chinese on prisoners of war in Korea.

We who live outside the code of the South African establishment can see that it is ludicrous, arrogant, cruel and stupid to bleach Chinese women white, and that it is being done not, as alleged, for the good of the patients, but to reinforce the myth of white superiority. The doctors are performing a ritual aimed at re-stating to both white and black members of the society that white is better. The Chinese women are incidental victims in this ritual designed to reinforce the obsession of the group in power.

If we take off our blinkers and look at our own society objectively, it becomes evident that it is equally obsessive and cruel for psychotherapists to set themselves - with electric shocks, emetics, humiliation, or the drawn-out misery of psychoanalysis - to rooting out homosexuals' deepest personality patterns to make them conform to heterosexual norms as arbitrary as the white supremacy dogma of the South African government. Like the hapless Chinese ladies, the homosexual is the victim of our society's hysterical concern with heterosexuality and its readiness to use all unnatural means to force everyone into the prescribed sexual pattern. Like the Chinese ladies who are neither black nor white, the homosexual who is not a heterosexual male or female is supposed to be processed through a mad machinery to fit the ruling powers' fanaticism for symmetry.

Adding insult to injury, the members of the psychological professions pretend, like the South African doctors, that they are doing it for the homosexual's own good. In the white ward the Chinese women will get better treatment, and being white is in general an advantage in the South African society. Here homosexuals are told that they should submit to "cure" to make them happier in a society hostile to homosexuality. But just as the real purpose of the South Africans is to assert the rightness of whiteness, the psychotherapists are insisting on the rightness of their society's heterosexual bias.

The South African doctors performing their bleaching action, and the American psychotherapists laboring to turn homosexuals into heterosexuals, have dropped the mask of the objective

scientific truth-seeker and are frankly acting as agents of the status quo. By accepting the ruling values of the society they live in, no matter how irrational, and radically changing the patients to fit the society, they become mere guardians of the official morality and forfeit the prestige of the scientist, who seeks truth wherever it lies, even if it undercuts all the going dogmas of Church and State.

In a most unscientific manner, most psychiatrists and psychologists start with the assumption that **what** is, is right. Their "research" and "treatment" stay well within the limits of the status quo, as though we had already achieved the best of all possible worlds, where progress is no longer desirable or possible. The arbitrary current definitions of male and female roles are treated as sacred and eternal, and everyone must be re-shaped to conform to them. They ignore the fact that we are in the midst of a social revolution that includes a radical re-evaluation of these roles.

The various psychological professions were a liberating force in the sexual revolution triggered by the first World War, but they soon became respectable and institutionalized and are now reactionaries trying to prevent the completion of that revolution. The 19th century gave us fresh humanitarian political and economic concepts and religious skepticism. We in this century are short on political creativity, but we are cleaning out the old festering sex taboos. Contraception, pre-marital relations, divorce, abortion, masturbation, sexual freedom for women, adultery have been taken out from under Victorian and Puritan nightmare blankets and brought out into the fresh air of sane discussion. There are plenty of reactionary forces trying to cling to the taboos, but essentially the sick spell has been broken.

Homosexuality is one of the last areas where superstition reigns, and it is interesting to see how supposedly scientifically-trained people can be trapped in the same benighted prejudices as the man-in-the-street. In the last century, respected medical men warned schoolboys they would go insane if they masturbated. Today similar dire threats have been transferred to homosexuality. Psychotherapists have centered their rear-guard action on male and female identity, and homosexuals have been casualties in this last-ditch battle.

The frenzied pronouncements of some psychiatrists and psychologists on the subject of homosexuality have lately been coming out about once a month, possibly with the full moon, and have an ever wilder ring. There are the medieval treatments by those who give electric shocks or emetics to some unlucky gay boy while showing him pictures of handsome men. But my favorite at the moment is the group therapist who recently grabbed so many headlines with the boast that he had made 12 of 32 male homosexuals positively butch by putting them in all-gay therapy groups. Among his "fine successes," gloats the science reporter for the San Francisco Chronicle, is "a transvestite who was a teacher in a boys' reform school; he is now the foreman of a construction crew," and, chuckles the doctor, "getting tougher all the time".

These so-called scientists indulge in some far-out fantasies in their lust to promote a "cure" for the unlucky homosexual. Their case studies all have a similar fairy-tale (if you'll pardon the expression) ending, like an old Hollywood movie in which the happy couple kisses and goes off into the distance as triumphant music plays and "The End" flashes on the screen. But one of the reasons for the downfall of Hollywood movies was that a maturing public began to suspect that the real troubles, not happiness ever after, followed the fadeout kiss. Yet the naivete of the psychotherapists persists. Their stories end with 2, 12, or 29 (it's never been more) patients who are "cured" and get married and live happily ever after.

Now a patient who has won the psychiatrist's affection and approval by giving him a "cure" he can publish, will try to continue winning that approval as long as possible. He also wants to justify his own investment of agony and cash. So for a time he will go around in a false euphoric glow, bolstered by the doctor's pleasure in his own success. But if you've ever known any of these "cured" homosexuals intimately, you know that the "cure" in fact often ends in dreadful conflict, because their real homosexual personality structure usually asserts itself - not to mention the new complications of an unhappy spouse and children.

It used to be popular to turn left-handed children right-handed, in the same cruel spirit of making them conform to the "norm," until doctors realized the "cure" resulted in stuttering, bed-wetting and worse symptoms. Imagine the medical brutality of trying to blast out something so much more basic as the deep roots of homosexual feeling. This job is undertaken by the psychiatrist in a spirit in which "therapy" moves insidiously close to sadism. A new book by Dr. Daniel Cappon, filled with such gems of knowledge as the statement that homosexuals' favorite color is yellow (as is coincidentally the color of the book and its jacket, which offers "hope for those condemned to a lifetime of sexual deviance"), contains an inspired moment of self-insight by a psychiatrist:

"The question may arise: At what cost salvation? At what cost normalcy? And other questions must be asked: For whose sake must this cost be met? For the sake of society which set the original standards? For the sake of the therapist, as a demonstration of his prowess? Or for the sake of the patient? The answers are extremely difficult."

But this doesn't stop the doughty doctor from jumping in to give them. He goes on: "And how can one gauge the cost which the gain of normalcy would justify? Especially since this is a cost to another, the patient."

Then with a bravado deserving of a military medal, he goes on: "It is not entirely fair to back down at the point when the cost must be put in balance with the gain, and say to the patient, 'It is up to you whether you feel you can pay the price of normalcy.' The patient is not yet in a position to estimate the benefit. ...He will have to take the therapist's word

about this nirvana of normalcy and its value. Yet the patient will have to do the paying.... Is it worth life itself? Is it worth risking the life of a homosexual patient in the hope of gaining his or her normalcy? It may be. One cannot know."

Bravely, he believes in going ahead and seeing what happens. This "risking your life hurts me more than it hurts you" approach is indeed humanitarian. Note how it has become the fashion among these fellows to drop the pretense, loudly proclaimed until now, that the therapist doesn't tell the patient what to do, that each individual patient chooses his own path. All types of therapy have always been subtly, if not openly, directive, because they assume the norms of society are the correct ones and the doctor and patient set out to "find out" why the patient doesn't conform. Once he "understands," he just naturally changes his attitude. The explicit coercion in the new "cures" being promulgated is something of an advance over the sneaky double-talk that has prevailed up to now.

It's a good deal as though a dentist were to set up a model of the perfect mouth, and look with horror at his patients' teeth and decide it would be best to draw them out and substitute false teeth that would fit his "correct" model. Now everyone knows that imperfect real teeth work better than false teeth, and nature makes its own adjustments so the imperfect natural mouth is quite efficient. In fact it is conceivable that a dentist might work up a mechanical model of a mouth that could be considered ideal by general consensus through the ages, but the psychotherapist can only set up a highly subjective psychological model of a male and a female who might easily be considered revolting characters by many other people. I would certainly hate to be stuck in a stalled elevator with any of Dr. Cappon's or Bieber's or Albert Ellis's ideal creatures.

The psychotherapists who "cure" homosexuals are matched in irresponsibility by the psychological researchers with their paraphernalia of questionnaires and computers. They too usually go on the unscientific assumption that the roles of male and female have been forever defined, and that that bastion of bourgeois sanctity, The Family, is fixed permanently in its present mold. Where a true scientific approach would question why we have fixed on these particular psychological and social models of sexual behavior, the typical psychologist today asks "What makes a homosexual?" Their basic concept is that they should be investigating deviates from the norm to find out how they got that way so that at least we can keep children from deviating that way in the future.

This is frank social manipulation. "Scientific research" is reduced to looking for ways to bring mavericks into line with the accepted ideas of correct behavior. The not-so-subtle influence of the advertising business, which uses similar research on consumer motivation, reeks from the brainwashing mentality of these "scientists" who are happy to lend their talents equally for the "understanding" hence "prevention" of social deviations and for browbeating consumers into buying cigarettes and other things that are good for them.

Actually, the information they offer is not even accurate because the way they set up the questions, tabulate the answers and analyze the results makes their "research" merely a matter of throwing the going cliches into the hopper and taking them out again in the form of statistical tables.

While these researchers ask no radical questions about how we arrived at our current concepts of male and female roles, and whether these concepts are still appropriate, the above-mentioned Dr. Cappon knows there's no point in such inquiries. Males must be sexually aggressive and females sexually submissive, he states firmly, and he tells us he sets out to make them that way, even if the treatment should kill them. This rather grim stricture seems out of place in an enlightened era. Why shouldn't a male, hetero or homo, take a passive sexual role, and a female, hetero or homo, take an active one, if that's what comes naturally? This would seriously upset the order of Dr. Cappon's universe.

It will come as a severe blow to Dr. Cappon, as to his cohorts, that the younger generation has got out of hand on this matter. Novelist John Knowles, describing in New York Times Book Review his stay as writer-in-residence at an Eastern College, notes that the psychiatrists there told him the chief problem of students is "their sexual identity." Translated from the doctors' pompous language and point of view, this merely confirms what everyone can see. The younger generation, disenchanted with most of the values offered by a hard-sell society, is refusing to be clamped into the straitjacket of the masculine and feminine roles as defined by its elders.

From the more advanced campuses all over the country, we are hearing the howls of anguish, augmented by the mass media, with which the hypocrite elders watch the new generation ignore the official moral structure and resist being processed into the social machine. The students are performing a highly moral and socially necessary revolution in which they are trying to feel out their own real responses in a prefab, impersonal world. The sexual exploration, and refusal of outmoded identities, reveal themselves in the extreme changes in dress and hair styles taking place on an international scale among boys, who are pointedly rejecting the clean-cut male look. This is not to say they're all becoming homosexual, but that their elders' obsession with masculinity is passe.

As a corollary, homosexuality is becoming accepted in a matter-of-fact way, without stigma or guilt attached, by both straight and gay young people. On any sophisticated campus today, the students are far ahead of the teachers in their "cool" attitude toward homosexuality. They see homosexuals as people who are both like and unlike themselves in various ways. They aren't so worried about their own ability to play the rigid sexual roles as set up by the adults.

It is not only the young who are disenchanted with the sexual status quo. It is said the 75% of psychotherapists' private patients are young middle-class women. It is not only because these women have the money and the leisure to be dissatisfied

and to go to the therapist - it is also because they are miserable in the "feminine role" and too brainwashed and hampered by social taboos to fight their way to some new form. The therapist takes their money, talks to them about their orgasm, or rather their frigidity, and perhaps helps them move on from one well-heeled husband to another, which keeps them busy.

There are as many malcontents and spiritual dropouts among men, who go through their paces in the normal roles of husband, father, wage earner and mortgage owner, and yet are left feeling empty. Instead of talking about "close-binding mother figures" on the one hand and "existential despair" on the other, the psychological professions should peep in and investigate whether these men aren't stifling in their "male" strait-jackets.

Some homophile organizations have mistakenly and masochistically permitted themselves to be used as a platform from which psychotherapists could proclaim the "moral disease of homosexuality" - as the aforementioned Dr. Cappon so eloquently puts it - and drum up business for themselves. It's time to stop concurring in the "sick" stigma with which some of those in the psychological professions pollute the general climate of opinion as they promote homosexual "cures" designed to sell books or procure patients.

A liberal minister agreed when I complained recently that the clergy, along with the laity, has been totally bamboozled by psychiatrists like Dr. Cappon, permitting them to confuse the basic issues on homosexuality by mixing up the categories of morality and disease. They arrogate to themselves the roles of both priest and doctor by substituting the word "sick" for the word "sin" in gunning after homosexuals. This minister agreed but assured me, "That's all over. Everything was psychiatry in the past decade, but now that's 'out' and social action is 'in'."

Homophile groups may well take their cue from this new style in the clerical realm, which goes along with the mainstream of social action for human rights throughout our society. It's time to move, as organizations, out of the stifling, moldy, self-tormenting atmosphere of the psychotherapist's office and into the open fresh air of political action to work for civil and human rights for homosexuals - in changed laws, government jobs, private civilized clubs for meeting places, and other practical areas. Homophile groups too should join the mainstream of our century in demanding human rights and rational attitudes to sex roles.

The South African government hysterically bleaches two Chinese women white to assert its outmoded principles as it feels the tide of history threatening to sweep away those values. Perhaps the noises being made by the heterosexual supremacists indicate they feel the same tide is getting ready to wash them away with the other old, life-hampering, socially destructive debris.

- L. E. E.

The Bosom Theory

OF MASCULINITY-FEMININITY IN LESBIANISM

I wish to apologize at the outset of this paper for its patent incompleteness. Though I have explored the theory discussed in this monograph for almost eighteen years and pondered its deep ramifications, I have withheld publication in the hope of presenting a more fully supported hypothesis. Despite my lingering fears that this present brief account of my work is premature, I bow to the advice of my colleagues that such momentous findings should no longer be denied the world.

I have excerpted here from my more technical paper, still in manuscript form. I shall try to render the essence of my theory and findings in simple language so that the laywoman can follow its purport. To that end I have omitted footnotes and references to earlier works, though I must state in all humility that most of my work is new and original. THE LADDER, with its daring material and passionate interest in the broad field of lesbianism, is an ideal outlet for this modest summation of my research to date.

It might be interesting to relate how the germ of this theory first came to me, and how I set about to test it with rigid scientific objectivity. Rather than state the theory at the outset in its present, fully developed form, followed by graphs, charts, and tables (a procedure difficult for the laywoman to appreciate), I have decided to follow an historical course, if I may call it that. I shall tell the story of this pioneering research just as it happened, thus adding a measure of drama to what might otherwise become another dull scientific treatise. As I mentioned above, I shall be as brief as possible, but not at the expense of clarity.

In a way I have been interested in lesbianism practically all my life, possibly because I am a lesbian, though I do not for a moment let that interfere with the strict canons of the scientific method. I was well trained in that method all during my undergraduate years. (Glorious, exciting years they were.) During my graduate years (the WAC, odd jobs such as streetcar motorwoman, peach pitter, raisin packer) I naturally specialized more in my chosen field. It was during the graveyard shift at the bottle factory, while I was on ketchup bottles, that this story begins.

I had been around some by then - gay bar seminars, etc. - and knew the meaning of such terms as butch and femme. We had both varieties at the factory. While I was idly ruminating about nothing in particular, it suddenly occurred to me that butches were big breasted, and femmes just the opposite. How

odd, I thought as I tossed four more ketchup bottles into a carton. One would think it would be quite the other way around. I was excited - intellectually, you understand. Many questions came to mind. By the time my shift ended I knew my immediate course. I must gather more data. Perhaps my flash of insight was wrong; I had not really been aware of making these observations.

My first detailed observations were completely reassuring. I am omitting my tabulations, as I believe I stated supra. But I realized that my sample of lesbians was small, too small, my calculations told me, for statistical reliability. And then I changed jobs, my love affair broke up, and somehow this whole fascinating problem fell dormant in my mind. Of course, I continued with casual observations. Having acquired the habit, I found it difficult to break. I told no one of my research. I instinctively felt it was a taboo subject. I knew I had made a great breakthrough and was aware that many great discoveries have been ridiculed at first. I must confess that in those days I was more sensitive to such laughter than I am now. Then some years later, it occurred to me that the Russians might claim a first in this field and I had better get back to work.

I was most fortunate at that time in acquiring a reliable assistant. Between us, we pretty well covered the country. Now before I discuss my more refined data and occasional puzzling cases, I would like to say a word about the matter of observation itself. Sizing up breast size is not as easy as it seems. The obvious way - getting in bed with the girl and thus combining tactile with visual evidence - is much too limited a means. The method of asking "What's your cup size?" can be embarrassing to both subject and researcher. Besides it is not too accurate, since some prefer to stuff a great deal into a small cup and vice versa, not to mention those who shun bras altogether. In the long run, I have found the judicious look to be the best method. One must be careful, however, not to be caught staring. I find it advisable to double and triple check; sometimes the first glance yields equivocal or erroneous evidence. So much for breast size.

Now we come to the very complex question of butch and femme. The theory, remember, stated as it stands so far, is that butches are big breasted and femmes are small breasted. For the sake of brevity, if not confusion, henceforth:

BB stands for big breasted butch;
bF stands for small breasted femme;
bB stands for small breasted butch;
BF stands for big breasted femme.

(Later research did turn up what might at first be considered bB's and BF's. See infra.)

I might be tempted to say offhand that the possessor of large breasts is butch (B). To guard against such errors, I first observe the whole girl. Assuming her to be some kind of lesbian, I make a tentative categorization as to B or F. Beware

CONTRIBUTORS!

THE LADDER wants articles, book reviews, news clippings, stories, humor, poetry, and other pertinent materials. Send to Editor Barbara Gittings, c/o DOB National. All submissions will be acknowledged promptly.

of obvious criteria such as haircut, style of dress, exaggerated mannerisms, and the subject's own opinion. What is left? As others are working on this vital problem, I shall not pause to review their interesting conclusions. Suffice it to say that the expert eye seldom errs.

Now to the vexing question of bB's and bF's. An interesting case came to light some years ago. She was obviously a BB and caused me no qualms. But she was a very fat girl. When I saw this BB a few years later, she had lost a lot of weight and tended toward a bB. Something was wrong, and I feared for my theory. To my great relief she later became a bF. This whole matter of obesity as it applies to breast size needs further study. Nevertheless, for a time there appeared to be enough bB's and bF's to cast doubt upon the validity of my theory. They could not simply be dismissed as the exceptions that prove the rule. Some colleagues had even discarded my entire work on the slim ground.

I soon realized that what was needed was a more profound approach. I noticed a few years ago that there were far more B's than F's, a rather unnatural and deplorable (for B's, that is) situation. My theory offered an explanation: namely, there only seem to be more B's! As we all know, most lesbians feel masculine toward straight women. This in turn leads them to think of themselves as B's, whether they are or not. It is just here that the real beauty of my theory becomes apparent. As with all scientific laws, it is the ability to predict that gives them value. Actually there are no real bB's. A bB is merely a mixed-up bF. And, though less common, there are apparent bF's who are in fact BB's. What a boon this discovery is to lesbiankind! As breast measurement is perfected, whether one is B or F can be determined in a trice.

As I stated at the outset, this resume is sadly incomplete, and I have deliberately oversimplified in order not to burden the reader with technical subtleties. And there is so much more to be done. There is the vast area of the medium sized breast. Is one so accoutered neither B nor F, or both? And why on earth should B's be big breasted in the first place? Is it that lesbians are more or less upside-down anyway?

- Rita Laporte

Cross-currents

The current crop of newspaper features about homosexuality signifies, more than anything else, that the public is hungry to read about "Those Others," as one paper titled its series.

The most astute, as well as most extensive, coverage so far in U. S. papers appeared in the Washington POST in February. The five articles were reprinted in the Providence SUN-JOURNAL. The POST's survey of the conflicting "expert" views of homosexuality is one of the most comprehensive run-downs in print anywhere and takes up much of the series' 285 column inches of space. But staffer Jean White also included a great deal of material (partly from interviews with homosexuals, including members of Washington Mattachine Society) about homosexuals' problems with the law, job discrimination, and especially with social stigma. The final article concentrated on the government's anti-homosexual policies and emphasized challenges to the government's position by the National Capital Area Civil Liberties Union, the American Mental Health Foundation, and the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, which noted that "in the governmental as well as in civilian life, homosexuals have functioned with distinction and without disruption of morale or efficiency" and suggested that problems involving homosexuals "be examined on an individual basis, considering the place and circumstances, rather than from inflexible rules."

Lesbianism - usually given token mention if any in the newspaper features - was the focus of an unfortunately brief and superficial pair of articles in January in the New York WORLD-TELEGRAM AND SUN. Staff writer Nina McCain did contact Daughters of Bilitis, and her second article is chiefly a report of her visit to DOB's New York Chapter. Yet she concluded this write-up with psychiatrists' opinions of the DOB organization. Mrs. McCain's only other research on the wide-open subject of lesbianism apparently went little further than the "experts" already garnered by the rival New York TIMES. Notable exception was her reference to Reverend Robert W. Wood (author of CHRIST AND THE HOMOSEXUAL) whom she quoted on permanent relationships between lesbians: "We need more love in the world, and if these unions generate love, that's all to the good."

The Denver POST launched its 3-part series in February with a notice from the editor that "homosexuality is a topic which is at all times distasteful for public discussion." But tackle it he must, because "Militant Minority" Poses Serious Problem for Society," according to the opening headline. The reporter began with quotes from local clergymen, then hurried to mix in police statements, names and addresses of Denver dealers in pin-ups for all tastes, passing mention of homophile groups including DOB, and comments on the venereal-disease problem. "Trouble at the YMCA" was announced as the POST's angle for the coming second article on homosexuality. As the reporter himself observed: "this series...is not pleasant reading."

Over in England, there's a completely different tone to the newspaper publicity on homosexuality being sparked by the lesbian-oriented Minorities Research Group. Conspicuously absent are the columns of pronouncements by psychiatrists and other "experts" and the cause/cure discussions so dear to American journalists. Instead there is emphasis on the human and ordinary aspects of homosexuality, in particular the loneliness of the many lesbians who live "imprisoned...in a private fear."

The December 15 London GUARDIAN featured an impressive article about MRG by its press officer Tony Geraghty in which he noted that fear of unjust dismissal from employment (with teachers especially vulnerable) is a serious problem for lesbians, "since a career is at least as important to the single woman as to a man." . . In a NEWS OF THE WORLD write-up around the same time, the reporter relied almost entirely on an MRG press release (published in the January LADDER), but he also threw in a footnote about the reason male homosexual acts are criminal offenses in England while lesbian acts are exempt. It's believed that when Queen Victoria was shown the original Bill against homosexual acts, including women, she reportedly said, "Surely it is not possible between women. There must be some mistake" - and to avoid having to enlighten her, that portion of the Bill was not passed. . . The most rewarding reading for Americans might well be Monica Furlong's column in the London DAILY MAIL of February 16. More about this in the May LADDER!

BOYS COPY GIRLS - AND VICE VERSA: British hairstylist Gerard Austen thinks the London Look, including the longer hair worn by British boys, will catch on in the U. S. "I suppose it's a sign of non-conformity," he said. "It is a throwback to old times when men wore long hair with curls, very elaborate and ornate, and women wore rather nondescript hairdos." Austen foresees in contrast "a new, short, boyish haircut for girls."

Meanwhile in Sweden, many boys, age 15-18, are wearing high-heeled half boots, lace shirts, shoulder-length hair, feminine bracelets, make-up and perfume. Their girl friends dress more like typical boys. Swedish psychiatrists have duly pondered the fashion revolt and given their authoritative finding that it's not based on transvestism or homosexuality, but is a revolt against conformity - and the long, dark Swedish winter.

"The Mattachine Society of Washington takes the position that in the absence of valid evidence to the contrary, homosexuality is not a sickness, disturbance, or other pathology in any sense, but is merely a preference, orientation, or propensity, on par with, and not different in kind from, heterosexuality."

This resolution was approved on March 4 by overwhelming vote of almost the entire voting membership of the society. Read more about this forthright action in the April issue of the new Mattachine NEWSLETTER/GAZETTE, which combines under one cover the separately-edited publications of the Mattachine groups of New York and Washington. Subscription currently is \$3 and may be placed with either organization (see page 23).

Letter to an Old Friend

by Elizabeth Tudor

My dear Liza:

Can we be done now with all the polite formalities? Can we shut them and stand naked before each other as once we were able to do? No, I think not, You are not able to do this. You fancy that you can, you even think that this might afford you some pleasure - and you remove a glove to show me your good will. A bare hand is not the same as a bare soul.

So you send me a little card - so impersonal, so friendly - "Won't you come visit me?" And you don't sign your name. You sign much more than your name. Do you know what "as always" means to me? Again - I think not. You are playing with fire - you always have - and it tempts you, tempts you. Perhaps you do remember, after all. Perhaps you remember how very completely I belonged to you. Perhaps you remember and that memory is bittersweet and irresistible. Because I did belong, wholly and unreservedly, the way one does when one is very young. (It frightens me a little to think of it - and I had not thought of it for a long time.)

Or perhaps you think that I will be able to hold a mirror to you, a mirror where you can see my Liza (who must be every bit as dear to you as she is to me). A mirror where you can see how very lovely, how young, how desirable you were - the fire and laughter, the ambition, the pride. A mirror that reflects only you, uncluttered by responsibility or obligations. You, singly and individually, before you took on the roles of wife and mother. Surely this must bother you sometimes - as it does nearly every woman - that you have lost your individuality somewhere along the way, that you are no longer a whole being, only a part of the machine, Family. So you must think of my Liza occasionally with tenderness and regret - and wish her back.

Or perhaps you are bored, and sense that further contact with me might relieve that boredom. Once upon a time, we meant excitement. Is that what you seek?

In any case, you persist. You go out of your way to contact me after such a long period of time. You tease me with coynesses. And - very shortly - you may be rewarded for your pains - except that you will not think of it as a reward at all. The result will be something more than you had anticipated, because my bareness will be even more unbearable to you than your own.

Do you wonder, then, since I am armed with all this foreknowledge, why I continue to play your little game? A game that can end only in frustration at best, disaster at worst? Perhaps I-am bored. Or perhaps I want to look in a mirror that only you can hold.

Or perhaps I remember, too. Perhaps I remember even better than you do. The first time I went into your daughter's room and saw your high-school picture on her dresser, my breath left me - so sharp was the memory of your awful (but sweet, sweet) power over me.

And then I remember something else. I remember my disillusionment with you. You walked away from me as though these had never been an "us" at all. Do you know what a void you left? Do you know how systematically I tried to erase every trace of you? Do you know how I had to do this in order to preserve any part of myself?

"That," you say, "was many long years ago. That is water under the bridge." You may console yourself with that if you wish. If you do, you do not know me as well as I thought. And, because I remember the hurt as though it were yesterday (the erasing allows me to live, not to forgive), I play your game. I play your game because the idea of humbling you in some small way is dangerously, beautifully enticing. I have tasted moments of this already.

Does the intensity of my feeling shock you a little - even disgust you? Are you drawing back? Have time and domesticity tamed you, left you little stomach for raw emotion?

What a picture you paint for me - solicitous wife, devoted mother! You charm me with your hospitality, your recollections of our girlhood friendship. And I am almost fooled. Your very artlessness almost fools me, you are so unstinting in your efforts. "It has to be genuine," I say to myself. "No one could so unblushingly pursue, unless it were from open-hearted affection." And the skeptic inside me says "Oh?"

You said you were tense during my visit, and it was obvious that you were. Why? (I was tense too. I almost didn't come. And I know full well my reasons. I've tried to give you some hint of them. Your reasons - at least the spoken ones - don't hold water.) So - I ask myself again and again: Why? Why did you avoid talking of anything any more personal than your children? (Your children are charming and well-behaved, and they interest me greatly - but only because they're your children.) And why did you so carefully avoid touching me?

How gentle were your references to our friendship, when you spoke of it to me and to your fifteen-year-old daughter. I do not think of us in this rosy, taste-or-spring, innocent fashion. I do not think of us as two teenagers blissfully sharing dreams and confidences, disappointment and heartaches. Oh, we shared these things, all right. But we shared much more than this. And my feelings cannot be diluted into this pale, bland substance - this adolescent idyll.

I loved you - wildly - with all the intensity of which I am capable. I had always thought you understood this.

"Oh yes," you say. "I loved you too. But we were only girls. There are all kinds of love. I have grown up now. I have a husband and children. Why do you make such a fuss?"

I would agree with you. There are all kinds of love. Do you not think that I, too, have known other loves, equally compelling and enveloping? This in no way diminishes what I felt for you. And I cannot fit myself into the little cubbyhole you have prepared for me - that of old and cherished friend. In every sense except the physical one, we were lovers. Lovers - not girlhood chums.

Are you drawing back now? Are you saying that grown women don't speak to each other in this manner? Are you thinking that I have overstepped the bounds of good taste? Are you even wondering by what right I speak to you in this way?

I can speak to you like this because there is a part of you that belongs to me - a part of you that you have stirred to life. That gives me the right. And if it offends you, then retreat as gracefully as possible and learn from your displeasure how unwise it was to tamper.

You see, I will not be a party to building a cozy campfire where once a volcano roared. I can warm my heart at no such hypocrisy. And Liza - dear Liza - neither can you! We aren't "old friends." If the people we are now can become friends, they must begin all over, as new friends do. I am not sure that this is possible, for either of us.

Close your scrapbook - and let the pictures fade.

- Beth

E.C.H.O. PLANS FOR 1965

The 1965 conference of East Coast Homophile Organizations will be held in New York City on Sept. 18-19. This year's theme is THE HOMOSEXUAL CITIZEN IN THE GREAT SOCIETY. ECHO conferences are open to the public. Each sponsoring group welcomes your support! Conference cost, program, and other information will be announced in coming issues of THE LADDER - or contact any of the ECHO organizations:

Daughters of Bilitis - (See inside back cover of THE LADDER)
Mattachine Society of New York - 1133 Broadway, New York 10,
New York
Mattachine Society of Philadelphia - P. O. Box 804, Philadelphia 5, Penna.
Mattachine Society of Washington - P. O. Box 1032, Washington
13, D. C.

BOOK REVIEWS

dissent on murdoch

THE ITALIAN GIRL

by Iris Murdoch

(New York, Viking Press, 1964)

You either like Iris Murdoch's novels or you don't. It is the same with the Marx Brothers' films. In fact, they have a lot in common: admirable technique and the same bizarre mixture of realism and fantasy. The main difference is that Brothers Marx sometimes make you laugh; Sister Murdoch never does. The famous cabin scene in "A Night at the Opera" may have blotted out many subsequent unfunny moments, and in the same way THE BELL echoes on, obliterating the discordant notes of more recent books which have made even her most ardent fans restless. THE ITALIAN GIRL does little to pacify them.

Returning home for his mother's funeral, Edmund becomes deeply embroiled in seething family intrigues. Inexplicably, he chooses to arrive by moonlight, after everyone has retired to bed, which gives Miss Murdoch ample opportunity to set the scene for another of her unlikely dramatic situations. Brother Otto is not only alcoholic but constipated, and the reader is constantly reminded of his underwear. Edmund is awoken at dawn by a woman sobbing in the garden. This is Elsa, Otto's half-demented mistress, wandering loose in a not quite transparent nightgown across a lawn which is crawling with worms. Her brother David, Otto's young apprentice, has impregnated both Otto's daughter and Otto's wife. Otto meanwhile eats herbs and dreams of snakes and telephones. There is also an Italian servant girl who is the sole beneficiary under the mother's will, presumably for past - and not purely domestic - services rendered. It comes as no surprise when the house catches fire and Elsa is burned to a cinder. Somewhat shaken by his experiences, poor Edmund turns to the Italian girl for comfort.

This is Victorian melodrama unhappily living in sin with contemporary sex mania. The names are as anachronistic as the setting; the symbolism as indigestible as the stark solemnity.

What is Iris Murdoch getting at? Can she really expect to be taken seriously? Presumably her enormous following of admirers will lap up everything she writes. Where will her unbridled imagination lead her next? An English reviewer has seriously suggested she should try her hand at science fiction before she bores us all into the ground. It might be a worthwhile experiment. In any case, she can hardly afford to go on producing endless variations on something-nasty-in-the-woodshed like THE ITALIAN GIRL.

- Clare Barringer

Editor's note: Guest reviewer Clare Barringer is the regular books columnist for ARENA THREE, the English lesbian magazine.

Subscription to ARENA THREE is \$6.00 (not \$5 as announced in the January LADDER). The Minorities Research Group, which publishes ARENA THREE, now has offices at 41 Great Russell Street, London W. C. 1. Payment must be in the form of international postal money order or bank draft payable in England.

censorship

CENSORSHIP: THE SEARCH FOR THE OBSCENE

by Morris L. Ernst and Alan U. Schwartz

(New York, Macmillan, 1964)

Co-author Morris Ernst was the defending and successful attorney in the famous trial to suppress the novel ULYSSES by James Joyce. Ernst has devoted much of his legal career to fighting the intellectual bugaboo of censorship.

This, the second volume in the "Milestones of Law" series, overshadows many previous histories of censorship in the U. S. and Great Britain. The book is aimed at the lay reader. It includes many significant passages (trimmed of legal citations and references) from court judges' written opinions, and these formal (but not dull) statements nicely counterpoise the pert prose of authors Ernst and Schwartz.

In the earlier years of American history there was practically no legally-supported censorship. Statutes governing obscenity began to appear in the nineteenth century. Then a crusading grocery clerk named Anthony Comstock opened wide the field for legal restrictions on artistic expression. At 24, Comstock began a one-man campaign to stamp out what he called "filth."

The authors comment: "Very soon nearly all freedom-loving editors had been intimidated into acquiescence in Comstock's activities. Thus does man lose a bit of liberty by cowardice.

Perhaps it is historically right that law should push the cowards around." And elsewhere: "...those who run deserve to be chased."

Comstock was also wholly responsible for the 1873 law which, with only trifling changes, still governs "obscenity" in the mails. He became the first Post Office agent to hunt down obscenity. By January 1, 1874, Comstock bragged that under the new law he had seized 194,000 obscene pictures, 134,000 pounds of books, 14,200 stereo plates, 60,300 rubber articles, 5,500 sets of playing cards, etc. Surely the most startling thing in Comstock's list is his method of counting the books - by the pound!

After laying the historical groundwork, the book covers important examples of censorship, including attacks on "classics," on the "vulgar" (without sexual connotation), and the battles fought over the interpretation of such words as "obscene."

Of special interest here is the chapter "On Banning a Theme", dealing with the 1929 court case over Radclyffe Hall's *WELL OF LONELINESS* which ended in victory for open distribution of the novel. This was a far more valuable victory than just for free circulation of this one book, for it was the last time any legal attempt was made to suppress an entire theme. Since the *WELL OF LONELINESS* decision, no action has been taken to legally ban a book on the grounds of theme alone.

Touching briefly on the matter of private as distinct from official censorship, the authors remind us that pressure groups - as long as they try only to persuade and do not intimidate or use government agencies to help impose their views - have a legitimate right to put forth their views in our free marketplace of ideas. But the fact that private censorship is so rampant, say Ernst and Schwartz, underscores the great need for equally strong projection of other points of view, to counterbalance the activities of censor-minded groups.

Ernst and Schwartz conclude by summarizing the specific gains in freedom from censorship, and pointing out the uncertainties that remain. In particular they raise the important question of whether obscenity does in fact cause any demonstrable anti-social behavior - since the law cannot control the effect on thought alone of written or spoken utterances. "With very few exceptions...judges have assumed, without proof, that obscenity produces 'bad acts.' Do we really know that?" The authors feel that what scanty evidence we have points away from such a causal relationship. "Books just do not have that kind of influence," they maintain. "We read, in fact, what accords with our pre-existing interests."

Indeed one might make the opposite assumption, that reading about sex is a substitute for having it. In that case, if the guardians of morality are correct and we are being inundated with quantities of "pornography," so much the better. We will all be kept so busy reading the stuff, we won't have time to get into trouble.

- Lennox Strong

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.

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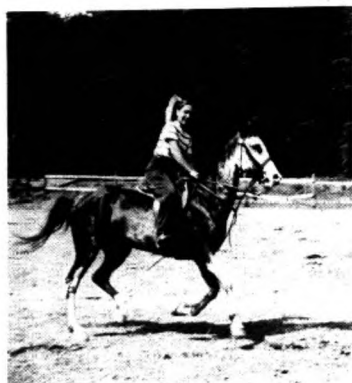
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