

# THE LADDER

Adults Only .50

July 1966

## A LESBIAN REVIEW





**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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# LET US OUT OF HERE !

by Nola

Nina is home! The house is full of her. I can smell the soiled laundry the moment I open the door. And the foyer light has been left on.

Havoc in the living room. Her open camp trunk is in the middle of the floor and clothes are everywhere - on the floor, chairs, coffee table. Clothes? Ragged ends of Tee shirts and shorts. Broken tennis racquets. Wet bathing suits stuffed into plastic bags. Two wall-sized half-finished Action paintings. A fine piece of Driftwood. Shells. Several 15-pound rocks. A paper bag full of--fungus? old sandwiches? Several inept ceramic ash trays. And where is Nina? No doubt she grabbed a blouse from the bottom of the junk and went out for a soda with her father.

Damn him! Damn that man! I light a cigarette with trembling fingers. There can be no mistake. Last week he said he'd pick her up on Thursday and spend the weekend touring New England with her. A weekend Just for her and Daddy. And here it is Friday. No phone call. No explanations. He wouldn't risk it. No doubt his wife has made weekend plans for them. As for me - tough luck Mommy.

The bathroom. All steamy, wet towels on the floor, black footprints in the tub. The bathroom I had to myself for six weeks. Myself and--

"Surprise!" Nina bursts out of her bedroom and grabs me in a bear hug. How sweet she smells! Her skin is still full of sunshine and mountain air. Her dripping hair smells of shampoo. Drops of water sparkle on her deeply tanned face, shoulders, breasts. Tiny silver streams zig-zag into the towel she has draped sarong-style around her self. Aphrodite out of the foam.

"You thought I walked out and left this mess, didn't you? Now tell me the truth!" She grabs my face and holds it between her strong, callused hands. "The truth!"

"I thought you just went out for a soda with Dad," I laugh.

"Puleez - no more sodas for me. I gained ten pounds. Look!" She takes my hand and places it on the full, firm curve of her hips.

"Well, let me look at you!" I step back and look while she poses, arms above head, twirling around on her toes.

"Stay still a minute!"

Unbelievable. Goddess. At fourteen she is a full head taller than I am, full-breasted, with long, strong arms and legs and magnificent gleaming shoulders. What vitamins, swimming, fencing, horseback riding, ballet dancing and tennis have wrought! And that face! Neither from me nor her father does she get that bold, elegant modeling of head and neck - not my scrawny, tormented face, nor her father's plump, flaccid one. It's as though she had to reach back to some primitive ancestor to find the vitality she needed. Yet her expression is veiled, half-fearful, half-expectant. Not quite Aphrodite. Persephone, perhaps.

"You look fine," I say. "You can skip the sodas, but no diets!"

"You just want me to be fat and ugly so you can be the beauty of the family!"

We laugh, but we are uneasy already. Her gaze slithers past mine and petulance hovers at the edge of her mouth. I hate her progressive-school jibes about mother-daughter rivalry. She is as crammed with jargon as with vitamins. But worse than that. She is attacking me because she has been hurt by her father.

"Daddy's gone down for ice cream. He has to get back right away," she says carelessly, turning away from me and inspecting the plants on the window sill. "Ann's sick. Something or other about her pregnancy. We figured we might just as well not waste time calling you. And guess what! He's going to take me to the Coast with him for Christmas!"

She has managed to compose her face enough to turn to me with a smile. Damn that man. If only he'd learn not to make promises.

The bell rings and she runs to the door. Vic blusters in and grabs me in an embrace. So I won't see the guilty look on his face. He hands the bag of ice cream to Nina.

"Fix us each a nice sundae, Hon," he says, and turns to me. "Well, aren't you a picture! Get some fun in on week-ends?" He lowers his voice. "Hope the change of plans doesn't upset you too much. Ann has been having a very bad time. We may lose the baby." He is about to cry.

"Sorry. You could have called."

"I....I couldn't." He rubs his hand over his face to show me how desperate he is. Then he pulls me down beside him on the couch and asks me about my job. Get it? He's never too distracted by his own problems to be concerned about me and Nina.

We sit side by side and he tries to look interested as I tell him my latest job problems. He shakes his head. I work too hard. He thinks I should marry again, retire, take it easy, have another child. "After all you're still young." His blueprint for me.

"And how's Erik?" he breaks in. Erik is his choice for my second husband.

"Erik sent me the most divine Op art shirt," says Nina, materializing in the doorway with a tray of sundaes. "He's the thoughtfulest person in the world. He remembered my birthday, my size, my colors, everything!"

She and Vic twinkle at each other over their ice cream. Got it fixed, those two. Just as sixteen years ago my mother and my aunt had it fixed, twinkling and chortling at one another. (Vic loves you so much. He's so kind, so stable, just what you need.)

Kindness, stability. Just what I need. Somehow I've given everyone the impression that I'm an invalid. And have I not been one? Nervous, vague, never able to decide which foot to put down next. My left hand always wildly undoing the work of my right hand. It's hard for those who live with me. No wonder they try to put me in a box. Don't they see a change in me? Of course not. They're too busy twinkling.

"I really wish you had called me yesterday," I say.

Vic flashes an understanding look.

"You can go away for the week-end," says Nina quickly. "You don't have to baby-sit with me."

"Nine, would you please leave us alone for a few minutes," says Vic.

"Here we go again! This is where I came in!" She slams down her ice cream plate. Persephone's face becomes that of a witch as she stomps out of the room, stomps back for her ice cream. At last she slams her door.

I turn on Vic. "Why, why in hell did you do this?"

"Oh come, Lee. Is it really so awful? After all, she can stay with a friend over the week-end. Or take her with you and Erik. She's no more baby."

"It's not Erik."

"Oh?"

Vic is amazed, crushed.

"This is....something different."

"Do you want to tell me about it?"

Big Daddy. He knows his little girl. Our game. Confession. Analysis. Acknowledgement of "confusion," "immaturity." Resolve to make rational changes. Not this time, Buster.

"No."

The telephone. "I can't talk now," I whisper, a sob strangling my throat. "They're here." Helen's voice is a meadow full of sunshine. "Don't worry. It'll work out."

Vic paces back and forth, letting me know I'm driving him to distraction.

"Well, what do you want me to do?" he says after I hang up.

"Take her away - for good." This is hysteria. I know it, but I must go through with it.

"Nine? Your daughter?"

"Your daughter."

"But Lee--"

"But Vic--"

"Look Lee--"

"Look Vic. You and Ann can give her a normal home, the kind you approve of. I can't."

He stares at me, his face uncertain about what form to assume.

"Oh come. This is nonsense. Ann is just a young girl herself. She can't cope--"

"Can I cope?"

"You're a mother."

"Is a person who has never acted out of her own volition a mother?"

"Were you chained to the bed?"

"Psychologically, yes."

"And how about when you drove me away? Was that your volition? You just don't want to take the consequences."

True. I can only be silent. Besides, we have been over it, ad nauseam.

"This is all very silly, Lee," he says, gaining strength from my weakness. "We'll talk more later. You have a right to your life, of course. But you love Nina and you've got to make your adjustments. Cancel your week-end plans this time. And we'll take Nina next week-end, keep her with us until school begins - that is if Ann is better."

Of course it's the only reasonable thing. But it isn't just the week-end. It's my life. How long must I be a prisoner? Lying, evading under her watchful, knowing eyes. Her pained eyes. Better the truth. We'll talk it out - rational, like



Vic and me. Your mother is a lesbian, darling. It can't be helped. "But Mommy it can be helped. It's a sickness. You need more analysis." Little Miss Analysis 1966. "Help," "adjustment"....these have made an invalid out of me. Let me burn away of "sickness," not dissolve of antidotes. A real death. Better than an unreal life.

"Vic, I'm afraid for her."

"Nonsense. Marry whom you please. She'll make her adjustment."

Shit.

Nina stomps into the room.

"And how long am I supposed to stay locked up? A couple of years maybe? Or would it be more convenient if I jumped out of the window?"

We rush to her, but she is wild, her voice rising to a scream.

"Don't you worry. I wouldn't do it for you two stupid idiots. I've got a better idea. Why don't you shoot each other? Why didn't you shoot each other before I was born? What kinda country is this anyway? They give marriage licenses to anybody. No Wasserman tests for their heads! Crazy lunatic nuts! Can't somebody stop them from making babies? Murderers! Every second of my life with you two has been hell. Drop dead, both of you! Drop dead! Drop dead!"

Nine. Nina. Nina. Forgiveness. Persephone, our daughter. Forgive us. Forgive us.

Is there no way out?

## Lesbiana

*by Gene Damon*

340. FROM DOON WITH DEATH - by Ruth Rendell. London, Long, 1964; Garden City, N. Y., Doubleday, 1965; Ballantine, 1966.

Margaret Parsons, mousy housewife, is found strangled in the woods. Nothing in her mundane life seemingly could have led to such an end. But Inspector Wexford finds in the Parsons' attic Margaret's hidden collection of expensive love-poetry volumes, each one inscribed romantically "From Doon." Mr. Parsons didn't know Doon. Nor did any of their friends know Doon - but one of them had to be Doon.

341. STORY OF O - by Pauline Reage. New York, Grove Press, 1965; also paperback, Brandon House, 1966.

This is a classic in the field commonly called erotica. Originally published in France in 1954 (and again there in 1957 and 1960), it is at last legally available in this country.

O, the heroine, is deeply in love with a man, her master, and to make herself wholly his property, she submits willingly, indeed eagerly, to a Krafft-Ebing catalog of erotic mishandlings. Superficially, then, this is a well-written tract on the methods and means of masochism. Unlike most erotic writing, however, this deals more in philosophy than counting orgasms, and seems preoccupied with the woman's need for this debasement. Almost to be expected, there is a strong thread of repressed lesbianism in O's personality (quite apart from the recounting of actual lesbian contacts and desires of which she is fully aware).

I cannot recommend this book, and I am not certain that it is literature, despite the enormous praise it is now receiving from the critics. However, it is not pornographic and will not disgust those with sophisticated literary tastes. You may find to your surprise - as I did - that the pseudonymous Miss Reage writes very well indeed.

## APARTHEID FOR WOMEN

*by BRIGID BROPHY*

(This article is reprinted with the kind permission of Miss Brophy and of the British weekly NEW STATESMAN.)

The deftest way to oppress people is to keep them uneducated. So long as you deny them schooling, they will find it hard to organise and articulate a demand for the vote, and you can plausibly withhold the vote from them on the grounds that they wouldn't know how to use it responsibly. But once you do give them the vote you must, for the very safety of the state, give them an education as well. As soon as the franchise was extended, the Victorians saw the need 'to educate our masters'; and the Second Reform Act was quickly and inevitably followed by an Education Act.

No one in present-day Britain would - as yet - seriously propose to take the vote away from half the citizenry. But rumblings have been going on which virtually propose to deprive

them of the vote's concomitant, an education. This isn't put, of course, as depriving. The rumblings emphasize that this half of the community would receive just as many, and just as costly, years of tuition as the other. But it would be tuition in different subjects. Their schooling is to be equal but different. The victims in this proposed apartheid are the children who happen to be female.

I hoped these rumblings had stewed to a standstill in their own absurdity some 18 months ago, when I read an article in which Sir John Newsom proposed that girls' education should concentrate on subjects requiring a type of thinking which he described as 'personal' and which, he maintained, girls are particularly good at. One of these subjects was biology - because, Sir John asserted, 'biology is the personal science'.

This in itself struck me as a remarkable piece of thinking. Given that all sciences are impersonal in their methods, I supposed Sir John must mean that biology was personal in its subject-matter; but in fact biology, which rarely comes down from the level of the species to that of the group or individual, has much less claim to be the personal science than psychology. So I tried out the hypothesis that Sir John meant that biology is personal to the student, in the sense that it deals with the student's own species. Unfortunately, though, biology, which studies plants and non-human animals as well, has much less claim to that sense of Sir John's phrase than anthropology and sociology, which study only humans.

At that point, having myself had only the old-fashioned classical education which women of earlier ages struggled so hard and nobly to get for me, I gave up Sir John, presuming that all readers of his article would have enjoyed as much as I did the joke whereby this difficult little knot of thought formed part of an argument in which a man asserted that men are better than women at abstract thought.

But now the volcano - or the hungry belly - is rumbling again, and I begin to fear it seriously means to consume the female sex. The OBSERVER Magazine has published a two-part article which takes seriously that figment of hard-put-to-it journalists, the 'sex war.' Part Two opens with a photograph of a boy and a girl in similar costumes and haircuts, plus a blurb declaring that 'the margin between the sexes has become confusingly slender' and that 'if rivalry is to end, the difference must be admitted and defined.' I would myself have thought that if the first declaration were true, the second must be superfluous: if it's really hard to tell which sex your potential rival belongs to, then rivalry between the sexes as such, as distinct from rivalry between individuals, must have ended already.

This point is, in fact, taken by the article itself, which calls the recent minimizing of the differences between men and women an 'attempt to end the sex war.' But the article is not on the side of peace. It attributes the minimizing of the differences to the decline of the authoritarian husband and father, and holds this decline responsible for three results

- increases in (1) juvenile delinquency, (2) homosexuality and (3) the numbers of people who, like characters in existentialist novels, find life 'nebulous, unreal and inconsequential.' These supposed results the article assumes, without discussion, to be bad. I can't feel so sure. Suppose life is nebulous, unreal and inconsequential? If so, shouldn't we admit it? Are existentialist characters so deplorable? At least they try. Is it better to be complacent, worldly, conventional?

Then there's homosexuality, a morally neutral activity which, in our present overpopulation, may be helpful. What's wrong with homosexuality? (I hereupon resign myself to a week's post reading 'Dear Miss Brophy, you ask what is wrong with homosexuality. It is unnatural. Our anatomy ordains that we should procreate.' This time I must get round to having my circular in reply printed. 'Dear Sir, it is unnatural to wear clothes, create works of art and send rockets to the moon. You cannot judge whether something is good or bad from merely describing it as unnatural. You have to think. This also is unnatural. P.S. Your anatomy ordains that when your nose runs the discharge shall slide down a groove towards your mouth, but I pay you the compliment of assuming you use a handkerchief.' There is an alternative reply which goes: 'Dear Madam, it does not matter twopence if your son grows up homosexual. Be thankful if he can love anybody, and direct your anxiety to seeing he doesn't grow up a vivisectionist, a matador or a napalm-bomb-dropper.')

Juvenile delinquency, of course, no one in his senses could think helpful or even neutral. But if it really has increased as a result of a less authoritarian and patriarchal society, we may still be getting the better end of a bargain. How shall we weigh the crimes now committed by juveniles in comparison with the crimes committed against them by all those authoritarian old patriarchs, the flogging headmasters and patres familias, the factory-owners who exploited juvenile labour, the contractors who sent little boys up chimneys?

I'd require sound evidence that the supposed result of losing authoritarianism was worse than authoritarianism itself before I'd take a step towards bringing it even half-way back. And I'd require some evidence that homosexuality and existentialism are bad at all before I'd adopt the remedy proposed in the OBSERVER - which is, of course, apartheid again.

Women are to be equal but separate or, as the article puts this, 'different and valuably complementary.' Womanliness is to be 'the capacity to create a warm and stable family environment,' whereas manliness involves the 'kind of simple courage that will get a man from his bed in the middle of the night to investigate a noise downstairs.' No provision is made for spinsters, widows and married women whose husbands are heavy sleepers, cowards or away for the weekend. Though women may equally need it, this 'simple courage' is reserved to men, since it's 'akin to the manliness needed to resist social and political enemies.' Heavens, though, don't women need that 'manliness,' too? Or is it implied they have no part in society and politics?

Not that women's votes are directly threatened: their education is threatened first. Sexual apartheid is evidently not so 'natural' that you can rely on it to happen spontaneously. It must be inculcated by equal but separate educations. The OBSERVER article lands women with 'personal' thinking again, this time called 'a subjective, emotionally sensitive view'. This can't be the subjective, emotionally sensitive view taken by Kierkegaard, Berlioz, Hitler, Mahler, Donne, St. John of the Cross or Baudelaire, because that could hardly be supposed peculiar to women. I'm afraid it really means non-thought, non-logic and non-knowledge, and that the whole programme amounts to: Back to the sampler, to 'doing the flowers' and to 'accomplishments for young ladies'.

Accomplishments, however, have nowadays a posher name. The OBSERVER article wants us to revise 'the present emphasis in girls' schools on mathematics and science in favour of the humane arts'. Sir Hohn Newsom includes among girls' subjects not only the 'personal science' of biology but 'creative writing'.

And do you suppose I'm taking feminist umbrage at all this, that I'm insulted in my capacity as a woman? I swear the insult goes deeper than that. I'm taking human umbrage - on behalf of those of my fellow humans who are men. Must they be forced back into the role of oppressor or, which may be even worse, the role of clot? (To see a necessary connection between wanting to make love to a woman and expecting her to darn your socks is to brand yourself a clot. Drive women back into the kitchen and the sewing room and you'll drive them back to contemptuously tut-tutting that all men are only babies at heart.)

And I'm insulted in my deepest capacity of all, that of artist. 'Creative writing'? A girls' subject? Three thousand years of civilisation show, at a generous stretch, ten great women writers. For the rest - well, who does Sir John Newsom think wrote our literature? Then there are the 'humane arts'. They're to be emphasised more in girls' than in boys' education, are they? Does the OBSERVER imagine that THE MAGIC FLUTE was composed, St. Paul's Cathedral designed and THE BIRTH OF VENUS painted by girls?

The only 'education' which has any meaning or value is that which transmits our culture. And our culture has up to now been created almost single-handed by men. Sappho, Jane Austen and George Eliot demonstrate that women can contribute to it. But what they contribute to it is not some feminine, some 'separate but equal' culture. It is the common culture, which is neither feminine nor masculine (think of the millions of perfectly masculine men who don't and can't contribute a jot to it) but human. Future MAGIC FLUTES may be composed by women - but not if you deny women the serious, difficult and thinking education which alone makes it possible to add to human culture or even appreciate it.

Politically, to leave women the vote but shut them up again in the stuffy, thoughtless, ignorant conservatory whose panes the

suffragettes struggled to smash once and for all is sheer state-suicide. And, in logic, the rumblers have presented the whole argument upside down. If it's true (it may not be) that women have less aptitude than men for abstract thinking (that is, in plain language, for thinking), then we must obviously give them not less but more of the kind of education which promotes thought.

## WHEN MEN WERE MEN AND WOMEN WERE WIMMEN!

### THE DISAPPEARING SEXES

by Robert P. Oldenwald, M.D.  
(New York, Random House, 1965)

This appealingly titled little book was a great disappointment to me, and I'm sure it would be to most of our readers. In all honesty, had I read the back of the jacket properly, I would have had some warning - but it was a distinct shock when I got home to find that I had spent \$5 on a piece of propaganda directed AGAINST most of my beliefs!

The author, now deceased, was for some years assistant professor of psychiatry at the Catholic University of America. His ability as a writer was high; it is unfortunate that he used it for the present purpose.

Dr. Oldenwald does a masterly job of listing the REAL differences between the sexes - and quietly slides in a few false ones tailored to fit his point. He notes the increasing freedom of men and women to do as they please rather than being forced into artificial poses, applauds this break from Victorian tradition - and then sets up arguments for return to Edwardian standards. (He must have been born about 1895 and acquired his outlook in the decade before World War I.) The methods he uses can only be described as "expert sophistry," and he never fails to debase each argument with some bit of intellectual trickery.

Having "proved" that all men are really like Tarzan and all women like Sweet Alice in the Ben Bolt poem, and that any interference with this divine plan is unhealthy, immoral, and disgusting, he threatens us with "a great surge of homosexuality." Jess Stearn is quoted at some length, after which Dr. Oldenwald pontificated: "Lesbianism can never be a completely satisfying way of life, however. ...Even in the most ambitious and briskly masculine of women there lingers a desire for motherhood." He then cites TWO case histories to justify this sweeping generality.



Finally, near the end of his 175 pages, Dr. Oldenwald arrives at the solution to the problem he has so skillfully created. The modern school system, he starts off, shares SOME responsibility.... Ten lines later: "I feel strongly that the education of boys after their ninth or tenth year of age SHOULD be in the hands of men." On the next page it becomes, "The special education of boys as boys and girls as girls MUST go even further." (Emphases added by reviewer. Isn't this a world's record for rapid escalation?)

So take that \$5 and invest it more wisely I suggest flowers, or perhaps a new purse....

- Reviewed by S. N.

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Miss S. N. was born at the beginning of World War I and has been battling ever since. Her mixed ancestry has let to two kinds of authorship: some painfully explicit engineering manuals, and a small output of rather pixieish poetry.

ERITZ A. FLUCKIGER, a psychologist in New York City, came to this country from Switzerland, where he was trained in psychodiagnostics and psychoanalysis. He earned his Ph.D. at New York University. He has done research at the Downstate Medical Center of the State University of New York, and has taught at New York University. From time to time, he serves as an editorial reader and evaluates research reports submitted for publication in professional journals. He is the author or co-author of articles in the fields of psychometrics, psychopharmacology, projective techniques, and philosophical psychology. One of his current projects is a critical review of the research on homosexuality done over the past two decades in this country and abroad.

BRIGID BROPHY, daughter of novelist John Brophy, was born in London in 1929 and has already achieved a brilliant reputation as a novelist and critic of discernment and originality. She was educated at several schools including an art school, and was a classical scholar at Oxford. She lives in London with her husband Michael Levey (art historian and Assistant Keeper at the National Gallery) and her daughter Kate. Her books, some of which have homosexual elements, include *BLACK SHIP TO HELL*, *KING OF A RAINY COUNTRY*, *FLESH*, *THE FINISHING TOUCH*.

NOLA is a professional writer who is living in New York City and working on a novel with a lesbian theme. She says her fiction career began at age four when she started to try to create herself in the image that society foists on women. An ardent feminist, she believes that history has to be re-written in terms of women's experience.

# DOB National Convention

## SAN FRANCISCO AND ITS HOMOPHILE COMMUNITY - A MERGING SOCIAL CONSCIENCE

IS THE THEME OF THE Fourth National Convention of Daughters of Bilitis, Inc., to be held on August 20, 1966 at the Jack Tar Hotel in San Francisco, California. DOB has selected San Francisco as a target city and is focusing its convention program on resolution of the city's "homosexual problem."

The morning session will explain "The Homophile Community and Civic Organizations--How They Relate." Speakers from groups with which the homophile community has a working liaison will include Bernard Mayes, head of San Francisco Suicide Prevention, Inc.; Rev. Lewis Durham, director of Glide Foundation; A. Cecil Williams, chairman of Citizens Alert; Robert Gonzales, president of the Mexican-American Political Association, and Dr. Clarence A. Colwell, president of The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, Inc.

The afternoon session will explore "The Homophile Community and Governmental Agencies--Can They Relate?" Speakers will include Janet Aitken, assistant district attorney; Elliott Blackstone, Police-Community Relations Unit; Dr. Joel Fort, criminologist-psychiatrist and director of the S.F. Mental Health Department's Center for Special Problems, and a personal representative assigned by Mayor John F. Shelley. This session will end with a round-table discussion by all speakers.

Mrs. Dorothy von Beroldingen, newly-appointed member of San Francisco's Board of Supervisors, will be the banquet speaker.

The Rt. Rev. Bishop James A. Pike, previously announced as the luncheon speaker, has cancelled all speaking engagements as a result of his resignation as head of the Episcopal Diocese of California. His replacement on the program has not yet been announced.

This convention is open to the public. Cost of the all-day meeting, including lunch and the banquet, is \$15 per person. Reservations may be made for \$5 down, with the balance payable in two installments of \$5 each. For registration forms, a schedule of fees for portions of the program, and information on housing, contact Daughters of Bilitis, Inc., 3470 Mission S Street, San Francisco, California 94110.

DOB is arranging a full schedule of social events, seminars and workshops for the week of August 19-28 in cooperation with other homophile groups in San Francisco and the National Planning Conference of Homophile Organizations which will meet at the Bellevue Hotel August 25-27. For details write to DOB.

Make your plans now to vacation in San Francisco August 19-28!



# RESEARCH

## Through a Glass, Darkly

### An Evaluation of the Bieber Study on Homosexuality

by Fritz A. Fluckiger, Ph.D.

In a past issue of THE LADDER (Note 1), a thoughtful contributor raised the question: Does research into homosexuality matter? He concluded that it did not.

Of course research does matter. Its findings influence the attitude of the public at large, the policies of the social institutions and professions concerned with mental health, and the decisions of legislators and law enforcement agencies. Last but not least, research findings influence the attitudes of homosexuals toward themselves.

Therefore, a critical examination of the research that is being done on homosexuality is imperative. This is particularly so for research that is hailed by some as a major piece of work, and the conclusions of which are disseminated by the mass media as "the truth" about homosexuality.

In the United States, the study by Bieber et al. (Note 2) has probably been the most widely disseminated and discussed. Since it has recently been reprinted as a paperback, its repercussion is likely to continue. Thus a sober evaluation of the findings in the Bieber study, and the methods used to obtain them, is in order. Such an evaluation is especially needed when the assertions that are made have potentially important social consequences. These assertions in the Bieber study can be summarized as follows:

1. Male homosexuals are homosexual not because they like men, but because they fear women (p. 303).
2. Homosexuality is a form of psychopathology (pp. 303ff.).

1. Dr. Franklin E. Kameny: "Does Research Into Homosexuality Matter?" THE LADDER, 1965, Vol. 9, No. 8, pp. 14-20.

2. Irving Bieber et al.: HOMOSEXUALITY: A PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY. New York, Basic Books, 1962. Also paperback edition, New York, Vintage (Random House), 1965. Page references in parentheses in this paper apply for both editions.

3. Treatment is desirable, and with a sizable proportion of homosexual men in psychoanalytic treatment, the treatment results in cure (p. 318).

The purpose of this paper is to describe and evaluate the research techniques which led to these assertions.

### The Basic Assumption

The authors of the study headed by Irving Bieber open their book by presenting a brief review of current theories of homosexuality, emphasizing two contrasting viewpoints:

1. Homosexuality may be viewed as "one type of expression of a polymorphous sexuality which appears pathologic only in cultures holding it to be so" (p. 18).
2. Homosexuality may be viewed as a psychopathological state. In this theory, the main point of contention is how much of this psychopathologic state should be attributed to constitutional determinants ("nature") and how much to the growing individual's experience ("nurture"). All psychoanalytic theories share this second viewpoint that homosexuality is a "sickness," and consider "nurture" the major determinant. (P. 18)

The members of the Bieber research group made a major strategic decision at the outset. True to their psychoanalytic orientation, they were unanimous in making the following basic assumption: "Our conception of the genesis of homosexuality gave minimal attention to hereditary, chemical, or organic-genetic theories. We assumed that the dominant sexual pattern of the adult is the adaptive consequence of life experiences interpenetrating with a basic biological tendency toward heterosexuality" (p. 20). In other words: Humans are launched at birth onto a path toward heterosexuality, and anything which leads them away from that pre-ordained path is learned. A crucial part of the basic assumption is that such deviant learning is pathological.

It must be noted here that a major assumption of this kind needs to be substantiated and defended against competing viewpoints. Many investigators of animal and human sexual behavior have accumulated strong evidence regarding the relative contributions of nature and nurture to the sexual development of organisms. Briefly, a key argument in these investigations is that, as we ascend the evolutionary ladder, all sexual behavior becomes less and less determined by biological blueprints, and more and more influenced by the learning experience of the individual. The hypothesis that heterosexuality is a biological "norm" (p. 319) is no longer taken for granted by knowledgeable sex researchers. The strongest statement that can be made from the evidence available at present is that heterosexual behavior is most frequent. (Note 3)

3. A lucid treatment of the topic was recently published in this review. See Clarence A. Tripp: "Who Is a Homosexual?" THE LADDER, 1965, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 15-23.

One may call homosexual learning experiences or their outcome wrong, "sick" (or more formally, pathological), on various grounds. Homosexual acts are, after all, deviations from prevalent social norms. But to define them as "sick" on the ground that they deviate from a biological norm shows a thoughtless acceptance of the quasi-biological concepts in which psychoanalysis had its origins. Such a definition is one more of those numerous moral judgments which are disguised as clinical observations; it is one more example of the frequently noted fact that what is really felt to be a moral or social wrong according to certain values is called a mental illness, a term which is supposedly free of value judgments. (Note 4)

The basic assumption is not questioned at any point in the Bieber study. On the very last page, it is re-stated as an assumption. But in between page 20 and page 319, the reader is talked to forever as though the assumption were being tested, and as though evidence in support of it were presented. This is not the case. Rather, the authors' observations are interpreted in the light of the basic assumption.

For the researcher who is interested in scientific methodology and in finding out what the world is like (as opposed to the man who is intent on showing that the world is what he always thought it was), this procedure is objectionable. Perhaps the best way of explaining why is by an illustration. I may have many experiences of seeing the sun rise in the east and set in the west, and I may have concluded that the sun is turning around the earth. This view, as everyone knows, was held for thousands of years, and was used as a basic assumption for all-encompassing astronomical, cosmological, and theological theories. When men decided to examine this "natural" world-view, established philosophers put up a great deal of resistance, some of it strong enough to force a trouble-maker like Galileo into recanting his heretical views. The point of the illustration is that a great many observations of physics, astronomy, and so on can be ordered with a high degree of coherence and plausibility on the basic assumption that the earth is the fixed center of the universe.

When theories of sexuality are constructed, it is equally easy to order one's observations so as to make them fit a basic assumption that heterosexuality is a biological norm and that deviations from that norm represent faulty learning experiences leading to faulty outcomes.

The men who defended the geocentric world-view found strong support in established social institutions such as the Church and the universities.

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4. For a discussion of this point, see Ernest van den Haag's "Introduction" to Richard von Krafft-Ebing: *PSYCHOPATHIA SEXUALIS*. New York, Putnam, 1965. Also Thomas S. Szasz: *THE MYTH OF MENTAL ILLNESS*. New York, Hoeber-Harper, 1961.

The men who defend the view that heterosexuality is a biological norm find strong support in the established social institutions which are designed to bring deviants back into the fold. Again, churches and universities are prominent among these institutions.

A major argument of this paper is that Bieber et al. have failed to examine critically their basic assumption. Moreover, in presenting their observations, they have systematically emphasized those which support the basic assumption, and have underplayed, ignored, or explained away the numerous observations which do not accord with the basic assumption.

It is fair to say that the authors have all too often followed Maier's law to which they themselves make a passing reference (p. 29). This "law" is a facetious statement of a serious problem and can be summarized as follows: If you have a theory and find facts which refute it, throw away the facts and keep the theory. Also, you can always find at least some facts which will fit the theory. (Note 5)

#### The Design of the Research

The form of the Bieber study follows one of the simplest experimental paradigms. It is a comparison of a group of 106 homosexual and bisexual patients with a control group of 100 heterosexual patients. Note that both are patient groups - all the subjects felt disturbed enough to consult a psychoanalyst. Strictly speaking, any difference found between the two groups indicates at most that the pathology of a homosexual patient is different from the pathology of a heterosexual patient. The authors try to avoid using their control patients as a standard of normalcy. But homosexuality is described so dramatically as a tragic phenomenon that the reader inevitably is often led to feel that the control patients were paragons of mental health.

Applicability of the Study: The patients were, in the main, middle-income-level New York men. The authors make an attempt to show that their findings can be generalized to all homosexuals, rich or poor, patients or non-patients, American or English. For this purpose, they select for comparison, from a vast body of research, a total of eight studies showing some findings which agree with their own.

The first two studies were done by the authors themselves. One is an unpublished descriptive report on 50 men who served in the armed forces during World War II and who came to the authors' attention because they were apprehended for homosexual acts. The second study is of 30 overtly homosexual adolescents, mostly inmates of a New York City mental hospital. The observations made on these young men are presented as Chapter VIII, "Homosexuality in Adolescence," in the Bieber

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5. N. R. F. Maier: "Maier's Law." *AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGIST*, 1960, Vol. 15, pp. 208-212.

volume. They are a poor substitute for the scanty data on the adolescence of the 206 men used for the research proper. (Pp. 37f.).

Another descriptive study is cited which involved 50 "markedly effeminate" homosexual prisoners, all of whom were classified as criminally antisocial. (P. 40).

None of these studies had a control group. They all use the case history and anecdotal report method, which is the one most notoriously subject to biased interpretation by researchers.

Two further studies - again without control groups - are cited which are based on questionnaire and interview responses by homosexuals themselves rather than by their analysts, psychiatrists, or guardians. One study involved 100 homosexual men who volunteered to answer a questionnaire distributed by Daughters of Bilitis, with the results published in *THE LADDER* (September 1960). The second study was based on the responses of 127 homosexual Englishmen who agreed to be interviewed by a psychologist. The similarities between the findings of these two studies and the findings of Bieber et al. are stressed (pp. 38f.). While a detailed comparison cannot be made here, the manner in which the data are used can be illustrated by an example. 57% of the Englishmen reported that they had had a dominant mother. The judges for the Bieber study report that 58% of the homosexual Americans had had a dominant mother. This is presented as one piece of evidence for the statement that homosexuals, whether they be English or American, of upper or lower social level, are similar in their parental background. This evidence looks awfully thin to a reader who bothers to check the Bieber questionnaire (p. 321) and finds that 55% of the heterosexual controls in the Bieber study also had had dominant mothers.

Finally, three studies are selected from the voluminous research published in psychological journals. Here the methodology is less defective; at least we find such elementary requirements as the use of control groups satisfied. Not one of these studies, however, has adequate checks against the preconceived notions of the investigators. (Pp. 39ff.)

Many of the seemingly concurring findings of these eight studies refer to items which are superficial, or only peripherally relevant to the main argument of the Bieber study. The results which agree with the Bieber group's view of the central importance of maternal "engulfment" and paternal "detachment" in a homosexual outcome are without exception based on observations insufficiently guarded against the researchers' bias. In sum, the claim that the eight studies cited allow for a generalization of the Bieber et al. findings to homosexual men who were not represented in their sample is not substantiated.

The Questionnaire: The contributing analysts answered a questionnaire for each of their patients, and their answers provided the basic data of the study. These answers were taken

from case notes. Presumably they also were sometimes filled in from memory by the analyst and sometimes obtained directly from a current patient.

The questionnaire included about 350 questions (or "items," as researchers sometimes call them). Pretty much in line with psychoanalytic theorizing, the emphasis was on early childhood experience. About 160 questions were about mother and father, and a goodly 100 items more were about pre-pubertal experience. The rest was left for a few questions each on such topics as relationships with men and women, sexual practices, and so on.

The selection of questions was influenced not only by the general theoretical framework of psychoanalysis, but also by many specific hypotheses. Briefly, the vast majority of questions were expected to show differences between the homosexual and the heterosexual groups (p. 21). This is important to note, for when such an approach is used, items which do not show the expected difference become of special interest. They refute the underlying hypothesis and thus constitute a direct challenge. Such challenges occurred frequently in the study, and were rarely taken up.

The Judges: The questions were answered not by the patients, but by their analysts. This way of gathering data creates a research problem which had been widely discussed even before 1962, the publication date of the Bieber volume. No awareness of this discussion is shown in the text or in the singularly defective bibliography.

The analysts' responses were not "blind." When answering the questionnaire, the analysts had a specific patient in mind, a man whom they knew to be homosexual or heterosexual. They had conducted an inquiry into his past which had been directed by theoretical notions generating certain expectations on the analysts' part. The training of psychoanalysts consists, among other things, of learning to order the history of a patient in the light of a body of theories about socio-sexual development and early social interaction, especially with mother and father. If the patient shows "pathology" in later life, his early experiences must have been "pathogenic," according to these psychoanalytic theories. When one approaches a patient from such a point of view, it becomes surprisingly easy to detect in the complex array of facts about his early history, "omens" of later behaviors defined as "pathological."

It is precisely this influence of conscious or unconscious expectations acting on a researcher's selection and perception of "facts" that has led to the recent development of research techniques designed to eliminate or at least curb the impact of the researcher's preconceived notions. The authors of the Bieber study do not understand that their procedures severely limit the validity of their questionnaire responses. They even go so far as to claim that the analysts' training - the very source of the underlying bias - constitutes a safeguard against bias (p. 30).



The following example may serve to illustrate theoretical bias affecting clinical judgment. Psychoanalytic theory holds that the mother of a homosexual establishes an excessively intimate relationship with her son and thus interferes with his "natural" tendency toward heterosexuality, and that this interference is often continued into the post-pubertal period. Thus we have question II R 1, 2 (p. 326): Did mother interfere with the patient's heterosexuality in adolescence? The analysts' responses show a statistically significant difference: more mothers of homosexuals are said to have so interfered. This finding is used later to construe the authors' picture of the "close-binding, intimate" mother who keeps her son from women. However, this is one of the very few questions where the analysts were also asked to state what their patients thought. It turns out that 33 patients disagreed with their analysts and claimed that mother had not interfered with heterosexuality in adolescence. The patients' responses do not show a statistically significant difference between homosexuals and heterosexuals. This finding, which could have been used by the authors to explore the problem of the judges' bias and its probable effect on the research results, is completely ignored.

One should not conclude from the above that the analysts were wrong and the patients were right. Nor is it necessarily true that it would be a great improvement to have the questionnaire answered by the patients themselves. They, too, order their past experience in the light of their own (more or less formalized) theories. In our day, such theories are very likely to be derived from popularized psychoanalytic viewpoints. This reflection of popularized psychoanalytic theories is particularly likely in the case of social outsiders such as homosexuals who are made to wonder how they got to be that way.

If neither the analysts nor even their patients can be trusted to give a valid account of the patient's life history as it was (rather than as it looks to them now that they are grown up), can one reconstruct one's past at all? This disturbing question with its philosophical as well as pragmatic implications is a matter of deep concern to contemporary thinkers. (Note 6) The shallowness and parochialism of the Bieber study become most painfully evident when one sees that this whole issue has been brushed away.

Statistical Treatment: The construction of any research instrument largely pre-determines the type and level of statistical treatment to which the data can be subjected. In the Bieber research, the majority of questions are phrased so that the answer has to be "Yes" or "No." The statistical methods

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6. Two outstanding analyses of the difficult issues involved are: Ernest G. Schachtel: "On Memory and Childhood Amnesia" in METAMORPHOSIS. New York, Basic Books, 1959. Pp. 279-322.  
- John H. Gagnon: "Sexuality and Sexual Learning in the Child." PSYCHIATRY, 1965, Vol. 28, pp. 212-228.

available for such responses are, generally speaking, low-level indices of association (such as chi square). These are the procedures which Bieber et al. have used.

Where there is a large number of questions, many of which are overlapping (if not duplicating) each other, it is desirable to investigate the extent to which such overlapping occurs. There are many statistical techniques for this purpose. They have the added advantage of pointing out complex relationships which may or may not have been expected. The authors chose instead to use the lowest-level statistical devices: (1) a determination of the statistical significance of the responses to each question; (2) a determination of the degree of association of two or more items with each other, these items being selected individually according to a vast number of underlying hypotheses; (3) the grouping of some questions to form "scales" covering certain broad areas. All these techniques hark back to early clinical research and are inadequate for a study covering such a wide range of observations as the Bieber study.

Some detailed criticisms of the statistical aspects of the study will be given later. The following general remarks on the authors' use of the three techniques mentioned above can be made here:

On (1): For each question, a determination was made as to whether the responses for the homosexuals were different from those for the heterosexuals. For instance, if a large number of homosexuals were mother's favorite but only a small number of heterosexuals had that dubious privilege, the difference between the two groups is said to be statistically significant. An inspection of the questionnaire shows that for a majority of questions, no statistically significant differences are found. More important, where such differences are found, they are often small, so that the interpretation of their meaning should be cautious indeed. (Note 7)

Not only do the authors fail to heed the counsel of caution, but they even take the liberty of using statistically not significant differences and of interpreting them as "trends" - when such trends seem to support their hypotheses. Trends that go against their hypotheses are ignored. It has been many years that professional journals have frowned on or have downright prohibited the practice of interpreting trends that fall short of a given, and justified, level of statistical significance.

On (2): The procedure outlined under (2) above is legitimate in principle. But, given the complexity of the matters which

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7. Recently a psychologist has taken researchers severely to task for drawing major conclusions from small differences which happen to be statistically significant. See Marvin D. Dunnette: "Fads, Fashions, and Forderol in Psychology." AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGIST, 1966, Vol. 21, pp. 343-352.

are investigated in this study, a systematic exploration of all associations of items would clearly have been preferable.

On (3): The description of selective groupings of responses as "scales" is inappropriate. None of these scales is constructed in accordance with even elementary psychometric principles.

In addition to these general remarks on the procedures used by Bieber et al., some recurrent ambiguities in their interpretations need to be noted.

One is the use of findings which involve only small sub-groups of subjects. Such findings may be statistically significant, but they are derived from the observation of so few people that the interpretation should be very cautious. All too often, the authors do not warn the reader adequately. They indulge in dramatic extrapolations from small sub-group samples (e. g., the comments to Table V-6, p. 123). Or again, they state findings on small sub-groups as percentages of the sub-groups, and thus create the impression that the finding is much stronger than it really is (e. g., the comments to Table IX-15, p. 247).

Another ambiguity is the confusion between frequency and intensity. Most responses should only be interpreted in terms of frequency. The following example may clarify this point. Many fathers of homosexual sons rejected that son. Fewer fathers of heterosexual sons rejected that son. But the authors take this to mean that the rejection shown by the fathers of homosexual sons was a more intense kind of rejection (p. 108). The data presented in that context do not warrant such an interpretation. This is not just a verbal quibble. It is precisely this ambiguity which encourages the authors to dramatize the "pathogenic" family background of their homosexual patients - and to forget so often that their heterosexual controls also were patients in treatment, also showed "pathology," and by the authors' own logic also had had a "pathogenic" family background.

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The attentive reader of a research study must try to retrace every single step taken by the investigators, and be on the alert for steps that should have been taken. This writer has made such an attempt with the Bieber et al. study. It is obviously impossible to recount this process of evaluation in detail. Therefore, only a brief presentation of the salient features of each chapter which reveal most clearly the spirit in which the Bieber inquiry was conducted, will be given in this paper.

### Chapter III: Mother-Son Relationship

Over 70 questions investigating the relationship between mother and son were asked. For 27 questions, the responses given for the homosexuals were different from those given for the heterosexuals at a statistically significant level. This

means that many more responses showed no significant differences between the two groups, i. e., the majority of responses showed that homosexuals and heterosexuals tended to be similar to each other rather than different from each other regarding the mother-son relationship. This finding is ignored.

The findings which are statistically significant are, for the most part, not very strong, since there are still many members of the two groups who are similar rather than different. This writer's selection of the 14 items which show the clearest differences indicates a pattern which might roughly be called a "mother's boy" pattern. By this selection, six out of ten homosexuals were mother's boys. But so were four out of ten heterosexuals. Note that we are only one notch away from a pure chance run in which five out of ten members of each group would be mother's boys.

The authors must have felt some discomfort at the extent of the overlap. So they improved on their findings. Rather than use the complex statistical techniques available for summarizing patterns of responses, they chose to have two members of their committee go over the questionnaires plus additional reports by the contributing analysts, and summarize their overall impressions in a number of ratings. Mainly the patients were categorized as to whether they had a close-binding/intimate mother or not - i. e., whether or not they were mother's boys. The very loose method by which these ratings were obtained is described in Appendix B (p. 349).

Now of course the two raters shared the basic assumption of the research committee - they were members of that committee. They had helped construct the questionnaire with its built-in bias. They had contributed cases (p. 31). Their ratings were not blind: they knew who was homosexual and who was heterosexual. If a legal analogy be permitted, they had helped to make the case for the prosecution. But now they were sitting as judges. Inevitably, in such a situation, the initial biases are compounded. No wonder we get some improvement: when the raters finish their evaluations, we now find that seven out of ten homosexuals were mother's boys, and only three out of ten heterosexuals were.

Most of the subsidiary analyses in this chapter are based on these second-round "mother's boy" ratings. Given the multiplicity of biases which entered these ratings, the findings are questionable.

### Chapter IV: Father-Son Relationship

In evaluating the responses to the father-son questions, we run into problems similar to those for the mother-son questions. Out of over 70 items, only 25 show a statistically significant difference between the homosexuals and the heterosexuals, so that again there are many more similarities than differences. Again this finding is ignored.

Overall, the responses describing the relationship between father and son show a much less consistent picture than do

those describing the relationship between mother and son. Therefore, summarizing the pattern of the responses becomes even more difficult. The authors used a rating procedure similar to that described for the mother-son responses, to set forth a number of categories such as "paternal hostility" and "paternal rejection." The chief categorization, however, is that of "detached" versus "not-detached" fathers. A father who spent little or very little time with his son was called detached. A father who spent an average amount or a great deal of time with his son was called not-detached.

Eight out of ten homosexuals had detached fathers. But so did five out of ten heterosexuals. The authors' interpretation of this finding is that paternal detachment is a significant determinant of a homosexual outcome.

One may ask why some sons of not-detached fathers became homosexuals anyway. The authors try to show that there is a difference between detached and not-detached fathers of homosexuals on 23 items (Table IV-4, p. 89; the first two questions listed in this table are not relevant for this paragraph). It turns out that no statistically significant differences between these two groups of fathers are found. But, as there happened to be few not-detached fathers of homosexuals, the authors claim that differences might have been found had there been more such fathers (p. 88), and that anyway there are "trends" indicating differences. What differences? The "trends" are toward "less involvement and interaction between father and son" in the case of the detached fathers of homosexuals. A fair summary of this statement is that detached fathers are detached fathers, a finding which can be arrived at without statistics.

The fact that so many sons of detached fathers (more than half of the heterosexual group) did not become homosexual makes one wonder how relevant paternal detachment is. The authors, to be sure, claim that the detachment was a lesser kind of detachment in the fathers of heterosexual sons (p. 116). This is not a correct way of reporting the findings. The data only show that fewer fathers of heterosexuals were detached (Table IV-4, p. 89).

A final section of this chapter explores specific relationships between fathers and sons. Not too surprisingly, if a father is hostile, his son (whether homosexual or heterosexual) hates or fears him. Much is made of an association between the child's fear of physical injury from father and the adult's fear of injury to or disease of his genitals - a finding which is interpreted in terms of a sexual competition for mother between father and son. This is an extrapolation from the data which several pages of hypothetical connections do not succeed in making wholly plausible to anyone who is not sold on the Oedipus complex theory to begin with.

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To Be Concluded Next Month

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