

ACME

The Ladder

75¢

A LESBIAN REVIEW

JUNE - 1967

Go Ahead

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Selfish*



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 Lesbian, enabling her to understand herself and to make her adjustment to society in all its social, civic, and economic implications - by establishing and maintaining a library of both fiction and non-fiction literature on the sex deviant theme; by sponsoring public meetings on pertinent subjects to be conducted by leading members of the legal, psychiatric, religious and other professions; by providing the Lesbian a forum for the interchange of ideas within her own group.
- ② Education of the public, developing an understanding and acceptance of the Lesbian as an individual, leading to an eventual breakdown of erroneous taboos and prejudices - by public discussion meetings and by dissemination of educational literature on the Lesbian theme.
- ③ Encouragement of and participation in responsible research dealing with homosexuality.
- ④ Investigation of the penal code as it pertains to the homosexual, proposing and promoting changes to provide an equitable handling of cases involving this minority group through due process of law in the state legislatures.

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The Formidable Blue Stocking

-- *Vernon Lee*

by Lennox Strong

Maurice Baring, a life-long friend, described her as "by far the cleverest person I have ever met in my life and the person possessed with the widest range of the rarest culture."

Violet Paget, the now nearly forgotten (yet eminent) Victorian writer, was born on October 14, 1856, in France. She was the daughter of a reasonably well-to-do socially prominent family, and suffered few financial restrictions. Her life was cosmopolitan: a childhood in Italy, Germany, France and England, social opportunities to meet the great and near-great of her day and the good fortune to be possessed of unusual brilliance and talent coupled with noted conversational ability.

She was, however, an intensely lonely child. Her only sibling was a much older half-brother, vastly preferred by her mother. Her father apparently had no hand in her upbringing and her first warm human contacts were with some of her governesses.

As is true of many other prominent women of her era, she appears to have had no emotional ties to any man at any time in her life. Her literary career (under the pseudonym, Vernon Lee) began in her early teens and extended to her old age. She produced an enormous body of work: books of essays, criticisms (mainly on artistic subjects), short stories, novels and philosophy.

Due to an unreasonable instruction in her will, Violet Paget has made thorough examination of her private papers impossible until 1980. Many writers have gotten around this prohibition (and her expressed wish that NO biography of her life be written) by writing "memoirs" of her. Since most of her contemporaries are long dead, we have probably seen the last of these memoirs and, fortunately, her literary executor has recently relaxed her restrictions and enabled one lengthy biography of Vernon Lee's life to be written.

This book, *VERNON LEE*, by Peter Gunn, emphasized the overly acid tongue Vernon Lee possessed. Various memoirs have made it clear that she was often unkindly candid and many of the famous of her time feared her wit, intelligence and candor. Indeed, in 1893, Henry James wrote to his brother, William, who was then in Italy, "A word of warning about Vernon Lee...because she is as dangerous and uncanny as she is intelligent which is saying a great deal. Her vigour and sweep are most rare and her talk superior, altogether...she is by faraway the most able mind in Florence."

One of the most lasting tributes to her was Robert Browning's casual mention of her in one of his poems, not for the content, but simply because of the certainty of his immortality in the world of letters.

Because of her times and her family position she had to fight for personal freedom. Until she was 23 she was not allowed out of her house without a maid. In 1878, at 22, or possibly just a little earlier, she met a Mme. Annie Meyer about whom very little is known except that she was Vernon Lee's first serious romance. The affection lasted about two years. The cause of its termination is not known, though it took place in 1880. Until her death Vernon Lee kept a faded early portrait of Annie Meyer over her bed.

Mary Robinson first met Vernon Lee in 1880, apparently at about the same time Vernon's romance with Annie Meyer ended, though there is no documentary reason to assume a connection. Mary was to be a most important person in Vernon's life, and possibly an undesirable element. She is known to the world as Mme. Duclaux, the writer, but when she first met Vernon Lee they were both just getting started on their careers. In 1881 Vernon Lee left her home in Italy and went to England, solely to be with Mary Robinson. She remained until July and on her way home she stopped to visit a cousin in Brittany. Mary was to accompany Vernon, but her father forbade it -- though later that same year Mary went to Florence to stay at the Pagets. By June 1882, Vernon Lee had worked her way (socially) back to England where she spent most of her time with Mary Robinson. However, her presence at the Robinson's caused a family quarrel and Mary, standing by Vernon, left the house with her and the two travelled about until the end of August when Vernon went home to Italy.

During this time Vernon Lee continued her writing and her fame increased. She went back to England in 1883 and spent some time living alone with Mary at lodgings in Kent and Sussex. This yearly trip continued until 1887. It was then that Vernon suffered the blow that was to nearly destroy her mental health: the surprise announcement of the engagement of Mary Robinson to James Darmeteter, a man who was almost unknown even to his betrothed. Very fortunately, at almost the same time, Vernon met Clementina (Kit) Anstruther-Thomson, who was to be her salvation for many years while she struggled to overcome the effects of a complete emotional breakdown.

These letters written by Vernon Lee, in London, to her mother, in Italy, dated August 25, 1887 and August 30, 1887, express the situation:

The first letter: "I am perfectly well and nothing at all has happened which affects me directly; but my plans are shattered, shattered for the moment by a rather astonishing occurrence.... shall ask you, Mamma dear, to enable me to give myself a great satisfaction and to repay (if such things can be repaid) a great debt for most timely kindness, by allowing me to have Miss Anstruther-Thomson with us in the course of the winter, if circum-

stances should take her anywhere near Florence. I ask you this as a very great favour at a moment when, if I could explain everything to you, I don't think you would refuse me any request."

The second letter: "Last week I received half a sheet of note-paper from Mary (Robinson) telling me that she has engaged herself to marry James Darmsteter, a Jewish professor at the College of France, whom I have seen once (he brought a letter three or four days before I left town) and she had then seen thrice, including the occasion upon which she asked him (for she says she asked him rather than he her) to marry...I don't know how I would have felt that evening and the following days, if good luck had not put me into the house of one of the most wonderfully good and gentle, and strong and simple of all created things, namely this big Kit Thomson, with the face of Annie Meyer and the body of Mme. Cantagalli who talks slang like a schoolboy and who cares in reality for nothing but pictures and trees and grass, and Browning and Shelley, and what is right and wrong and why..."

Mary Robinson was not out of Vernon's life, however, for after Vernon left England in September, 1887, to see her cousin in Brittany, she travelled to Paris, where Mary met her and accompanied her to Florence. This was a hellish period for Vernon, the helpless watching over a lost beloved.

After Mary's departure, Vernon Lee's health broke and Kit arrived in Florence in March, 1888 just in time to act as nurse and companion for Vernon during the worst portions of her illness. When she began to improve, Kit accompanied her on a trip to England. As one might expect, she immediately suffered a relapse and from August until November again was nursed by the attentive and understanding Kit. Soon after this she persuaded her family to allow her a villa for herself and Kit away from noise and distraction. With this granted she managed to regain her stability.

From 1889 to 1898 Kit lived at least half of each year with Vernon at the Villa Il Palmerino. Together they travelled Italy by donkey cart so that Vernon could be out-of-doors as much as possible. They also visited much of Italy's literary and artistic society. Together they gained the experience which formed the groundwork for their studies in psychological aesthetics. They journeyed to London, going day after day to the British Museum or to the Victoria and Albert or the National Gallery. As side trips they visited the Louvre, various French romanesque churches and the gothic cathedrals of northern France. The happiness of these years is reflected in Vernon Lee's better writings.

Later Kit Anstruther-Thomson became less interested in their mutual study of empathetic aesthetics. Though there was no specific break between them, they ceased to be constantly together after 1899.

This was the final blow to Vernon Lee. There is much evidence in her writings, particularly her letters, that though she lived on to be very old, she simply didn't care as much about anything after that time. It is clear that she had expected to live out

her life with Kit, her second deep attachment--second, at least, to Mary Robinson. In 1902, in a letter to her half-brother, Vernon Lee expressed her sorrow over the loss of Robinson years before which indicates that this may well have been the most severe loss of all. However, other letters written between 1899 -- 1900 to a friend, Mrs. Taylor, are very unsettling, even at this distance, in their degree of naked emotional loss over Kit. Despite all this spent emotion, it is clear that sexuality, per se did not enter into the relationships. This rather sad thought is not uncharacteristic of Vernon Lee's type of woman.

Dame Ethel Mary Smythe, militant suffragist, composer and writer, knew Vernon Lee well and commented at length in her own many autobiographies on the terrible sadness of Vernon Lee's love for other women -- not that she had these loves, but that she could not break over and express them physically. Specifically, these words seem to sum up Vernon's life story:

"Myself, I believe the tragedy of her life was that without knowing it she loved the cultes* humanly and with passion; but being the stateliest, chastest of beings she refused to face the fact, or indulge in the most innocent demonstrations of affection, preferring to create a fiction that these friends were merely intellectual necessities."

The intellectuals did love or hate Vernon Lee, as the dice were thrown, though, and she lived out her slightly abortive though romantic life and died at home in Italy in February, 1935, at age 78 -- still the formidable blue-stocking. Possibly Bernard Shaw wrote the best lines for her epitaph: "I take off my hat to the old guard of Victorian cosmopolitan intellectualism and salute her as the noblest Briton of them all."

*Cultes: friends -- someone in whose honor a cult is created.

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The Bibliography is Coming!
Yes it is, yea!

AN ADDRESS

By Richard L. Sutherland, M.D.

Ed.: A strange title, we admit, but this came in late and in a frenzy to include it this month we labeled it with sterile brain, but hope that you will be glad it was possible to print it at this time.

Homosexuality comes in many forms and from many sources. At the outset I assume the bisexual nature of human beings and believe that the direction of conscious desires, as well as overt activity, is conditioned from a great many events, perhaps at first, even pre-natal events, both somatic and psychological. Or it may consist of infantile conditioning from the attitudes and actions of parents or other children. This effect of social pressure continues through the latency period and on into adolescence, where of course the direction, already set, may then manifest itself; and if not yet committed, the young person will still find himself influenced by the attitude of people around him. This possibility of direction and change of direction continues on into adult life. Of course, much of the conditioning has to do with a broader self-identity which may only indirectly shape specific sexual feelings and actions. Attitudes, for instance, towards aesthetics as opposed to combat in a boy, or some bias against wifehood or motherhood in the girl may combine themselves with theories that certain social activities are incompatible with the desired role, and thus must be avoided. And of course, even in the established sexual pattern, a brief or long standing shift may be made, as in the well known cases of limited sexual opportunity in military service or prison life. Very often also homosexuality is not homoerotic so much as "heterophobic," the choice of an object not being so much attraction to the same as flight from the opposite sex.

We do not yet know enough about the growth of the mental and spiritual to say how much of what our culture holds to be normal is truly healthy in the sense of ultimate human meaning. Only recently studies of spontaneity, creativeness, and fulfillment have been urged and they are far from conclusive. At this time, only tentative conclusions can be reached; but we believe that love is healthy and that aversion (hate and fear) is unhealthy. What we mean ultimately by healthy and unhealthy, however, is open to much exploration.

Because in our culture so many disadvantages accrue to homosexuality, the inner freedom to develop in many directions will usually lead toward heterosexual identification. Thus, most homosexuals, we would presume, have been faced by some considerable block in their free development. In other cultures this may not

have been true; but we find also that a good many homosexual patients (and here I have the clinical bias of the psychiatrist) emphasize more the aversion to members of the opposite sex than fellow feeling for their own. In these many cases, then, the avoiding, fearing, or hating aspect of the homosexual choice we can consider unhealthy, in the sense that growth has been stopped at a defensive level. We have to recognize that all psychological defenses are necessary to health, because only what is protected against hurt and injury can grow. But where the defense is frozen and fixed, it blocks the very growth it is designed to help. Certainly homosexuals are not the only people with problems of fixation, compulsions, phobias, and the like, and it is doubtful if the average heterosexual in our day is any freer than the average homosexual. Certainly his choice of sexual involvement with the opposite in no way proves his freedom. In the attack on homosexuality by the main part of our society, we find a manifestation of psychological compulsion. To be compelled toward the "normal" and unable to give it up is as much a block to growth as a compulsion toward the "abnormal." It may be of greater social advantage but is just as injurious and, for the very reason that it has cultural sanction, is much harder to question.

Where the homosexual impulse really goes beyond eros to fellow-love, how can we hold it to be unhealthy? Where the emphasis is on compulsion or fixation on eros, regardless of whether it is homo or hetero, like much in modern life, it is relatively empty and of course we can see many people on both sides of the fence so unhappily fixated. When the fixation goes even further, to hostility and exploitation; here like much of heterosexuality, it becomes self-destructive.

The social factors that lead to estrangement, whether from the opposite or same sex, need to be explored. Anything that condemns and blames people leads to estrangement, not only of the one condemned but even more of the condemner. Thus, whether homosexuality is a true love between people of the same sex or a compensation to a block in loving the opposite, acceptance of the person by the Church and society is essential. In the former case, the homosexual does not need the acceptance, since he has it already in himself and in his partner; but society and the church will profit from communion with such a rare and gifted person. In the second case, only an attitude of acceptance will be at all therapeutic in removing the blocks.

Since we are not ready yet to say that the homosexual condition is usually healthy, we must make a clear difference between agreeing with a person's choices and acceptance of him as a person. An attitude of openness toward values, our own as well as the other person's, is the most effective role of Church, society or doctor, as therapist and promoter of growth.

Last, there is the psychology of the establishment (society, the Church, all of us). There is a natural resistance to change.

Like defense mechanisms in the individual, this resistance is necessary and healthy, if a group of organisms is to survive; but resistance to change, again, can become a fixation. As the protective impulse hardens, any change is seen as an increasing threat and the status quo, in value and structure, is held onto for its own sake.

Most people do not recognize the homosexual side of themselves and fear it; and even their loving commitments to the opposite sex may become a rigid protection against the hidden part of their own nature, blocking creative resources in themselves and finally spoiling the relationship with the partner. The more they are frustrated by this sterile relationship, the more threatened they are from their own unconscious, and the more violently the latter is rejected and projected onto others. Rebellion, similarly is an instinct we tend to condemn and deny to ourselves.

And when the obvious defiance of the hurt homosexual (who may have originally developed his sexual direction out of defiance) manifests itself, the more "normal" members of society, feeling the temptation to rebellion within themselves, project and condemn it. Therefore, to help people become more acceptant of the minority, we must help them accept themselves. One does well to recognize his own homosexuality and rebellion without necessarily acting it out. As a matter of fact, the acting out of these impulses is often a sign of their non-acceptance by the one who acts them out; but this is a longer story. The teaching job of the Church is toward genuine self-acceptance and this of course is part of the Great Law -- psychologically the first although the last stated: It is necessary to love one's self, in order to love our neighbor, and finally, God.

Llangollen on the Left Bank

by Vern Niven

The literary address of the 20th Century was 27 Rue de Fleurus. Mail sent to its former occupants might now well be returned, marked, "Moved, No Forwarding Address."

Early in March, 1967, Alice Boyd Toklas, 89, died and was buried next to Gertrude Stein in the famous Pere Lachais Cemetery in Paris. Miss Stein has lain there since July 27, 1946. The death of her lifelong companion and friend of 43 years marks the end of one of literature's famous couples--the end of one of literature's great events.

Between World War I and World War II, the left Bank apartment of these women was the nursing home for the literary and artistic greats of this century. Virgil Thomson, Picasso and Matisse, T. S. Eliot, Sherwood Anderson, Ford Madox Ford, Carl Van Vechten, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway all were welcomed there -- all came away richer, and with one notable exception (Hemingway), very appreciative.

About every 100 years the general public seems to find some extenuating circumstance in a relationship to crown it with the approval and honor ordinarily reserved for more conventional liaisons. The last time was for the LADIES OF LLANGOLLEN, who have rested in their graves in Wales since 1829 and 1831. In a sense they were fortunate, following one another so closely. Alice Toklas' last years, over 20 following the death of Miss Stein, were marked with unhappy incidents: increasing poverty, and unpleasant lawsuits by members of Gertrude Stein's family over the possessions Alice inherited from Gertrude.

Toward the last Alice joined the Roman Catholic Church, asking her priest if "this will allow me to see Gertrude when I die?" Whatever one believes, it is pleasant to contemplate some comfortable corner of heaven, two heavily brocaded chairs, some Picasso works on the walls, and Miss Toklas doing needlepoint while Miss Stein entertains the gathered notables.

COMING IN JUNE

Bibliography of Lesbian Literature

AN ALPHABETICAL LISTING BY AUTHOR OF ALL KNOWN BOOKS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, IN THE GENERAL FIELD OF LITERATURE, CONCERNED WITH LESBIANISM, OR HAVING LESBIAN CHARACTERS.

Nearly 100 pages -- You will want several copies for gifts and one for your own guide to vacation reading and winter gift-buying.

COMPILED BY GENE DAMON and LEE STUART

Poems on a Rainy Day

by Christina

I demand
I protest
I SHOUT
EVERYtime
is a time for poetry
(moments run away into
death only)
to stop for a flower is
so important
so important I'm breathless
(a poem is sunlight on trumpets
through dusty windows...
red or blue
or even black any kite
against the sky...
how a gardenia smells...
sounds of leaves moving...
torn papers in the gutter)
from right in me
I SHOUT
for god's sake stop
stop for the poetry
STOP EVERYtime...

some part of the day
has to have
no order at all
NONE
no hurrrytimerush
dodo DO
some sunray flash has to hit
for just
BE

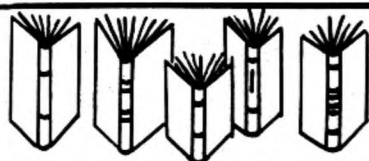
for leslie
how much a paper
daisy opening too
fast
when you touch
me

sing a song made
for me only
right
out
of your center starting
ending point
(guts * soul * essence)
for me
for me ONLY
very loud
so we are wrapped in
our sound
unable
to hear
the rattle of the ghosts
(people * world * strangers)
not for
others
like us in thought
AT ALL
just and only me
so damn loud
I know
it's
(just and only me)

It came like a sunrise:
you lost...
I turned mauve rose
with gray clouds in my eyes
not breathing at all
(too filled with sunhot white pain)
you disappeared
and only a memory
of vacant lots
torn posters scratching against
fences in the wind
standing
on a soap box
I said
very quickly (so no birds would hear)
I said: the sun went down...

Lesbiana

by Gene Damon



When both the buying public and the literary critics welcomed THE SPY WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD with open arms, the spy story, so popular in the 1920's and 1930's suddenly became the "thing" again. Dozens of spy novels have appeared since then, some of them quite dreadful. Noel Behn's, THE KREMLIN LETTER, N.Y., Simon and Schuster, and London, W. H. Allen, 1966, is suspenseful and well written -- one of the better examples in the "new" genre. There are several homosexual themes in the story, which is primarily of male homosexual interest. However, there is an overt and unpleasant Lesbian section which has serious consequence in the plot. The picture of the United States Secret Service is not calculated to win friends and influence people. Good, if you like the type.

In the yearly report in the March-April issue, I promised further mention of MUSIC UPSTAIRS, by Shena Mackay, London, Andre Deutsch, 1965. Out of the large group of pointless, plotless novels which came from England this last year or so, this seems the best. The author has a remarkable ability to portray grime so realistically that the reader itches for the necessary soap and water to wash the walls. The story line, what little there is of it, concerns a young drifting female, Sidonie, who is pursued by her landlady, Pam, and Pam's husband, Lenny, as well. They both "catch her," at least to the point of physical intimacy. The end of the novel, when Sidonie "escapes" the pair of them is hair-raising. Miss Mackay, to judge from her unkempt portrait on the dust-jacket, is very young. When she gets a little older, she may be a vital literary force. Read this, trying to keep tomorrow in mind as you do.

VALLEY OF THE DOLLS, by Jacqueline Susann, N.Y., Gernard Geis, 1966, is as poorly written as the reviews indicated, and it is simply not possible to determine why it is such a big best-seller. The story revolves around three girls in show business, and the attendant miseries, the drinking, the drugs (those "dolls" of the title), the sex, etc. They also face a few other delights, abortion, cancer, bastardly husbands, and rotten families. One of the three, Jennifer North, devotes half-a-dozen pages to recalling her history, which consists of a girl's school in Europe where she meets a Spanish girl, Maria, from a very wealthy family. Maria falls in love with her and they are lovers for five years. At the end of this time, Jennifer finds the affection cloying and runs away from Maria. After this, Jennifer shows no signs of interest in other women, though she has apparently en-

joyed the affair. It is clear, however, that Jennifer is a slut, primarily interested in Jennifer. Her rather ugly fate seems justified, at least in part, if only for the cruel treatment of Maria. There are, incidentally, several male homosexual characters in the book. It is safe to say that whatever Jacqueline Susann's success, it is wholly undeserved. She writes on a level that would be poor in the cheapest paperback.

From the very ridiculous Miss Susann, to the near sublime in Louise Bellocq's FLED IS THAT MUSIC, London, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1962, another of the many books that should have reached our shores and didn't. The novel was originally published in France in 1960. It is a very subtle portrait of a repressed Lesbian, Monique, who is one of the three main characters. This is not for everyone, because it is a psychological novel and it is written on several levels of consciousness. For the few, caviar.

Reviews and advertisements have leaned heavily on the Lesbian content of Christina Stead's, DARK PLACES OF THE HEART, N. Y., Holt, 1966. It is true that the major character, Nellie Cotter Cook, is a Lesbian -- but she doesn't know it, and this puts a damper on the book, to some extent, for the reader. Nellie is really a bitch, and unlikely to win much sympathy. Her symbiotic relationship with her brother, Tom, in a post-war London setting is the basic plot. Tom is a fool and a child, driven into sexual relationships he cannot cope with. Nellie, on top of being just generally bitchy, is also a power-driven sadist. She is married, and miserably so and she dreams of a world that fortunately cannot exist. She runs her brother, drives her husband away, and weaves a web about each of the female characters in the novel. No one escapes her, even her husband's first wife, Eliza, is one of her victims. It is an ugly book, beautifully written with great control, despite the author's heavy handed prose in spots. It might have been a better book, but then it might not, written with less mockery and mystery. Nellie is a memorable figure, but the frustrated always seem more lifelike than the fulfilled. Miss Stead is a memorable writer, we need more like her.

Apparently we are to continue to hear more of the under-the-counter publications which first appeared in Paris, in English, published by Olympia Press. Last year, quite early, we had THE STORY OF O, by Pauline Reage. Now we have THE IMAGE, by Jean de Berg, N. Y., Grove Press, 1966 (first published by Olympia Press in 1956). This book is very major Lesbian, heavily laden with sadism, and very erotic. The protagonist, Claire, keeps a young woman, Anne, in physical and mental bondage. A male is introduced into the plot, but is primarily there for window-dressing. This sort of thing is NOT for most readers. It is, first of all, the kind of book easy to call pornography (not strictly true in this case) and whatever it is called, it is bad public relations for Lesbians in general. One waggish reviewer, in fact, remarked that if enough books like this one appeared, "Lesbianism could

get a bad name." Incidentally, Jean de Berg, on internal evidence, is probably a woman.

A small bit of news, but only for the science fiction buffs. Poul Anderson, who can write very well, produced a rather crude space opera, VIRGIN PLANET, N.Y., Bouregy, 1959, paperback, Beacon, 1960. This, as the title implies, is about an all female planet. Surprisingly, the Lesbian action is minor, and the details about parthogenetic birth are rather easily dismissed. Sex is left out of most of the society (something the author doesn't bother to explain. Minor Lesbiana and poor science fiction.

How sad to have to say that Hilary March's novel EITHER/OR, London, Secker and Warburg, 1966, might well have been one of the better Lesbian novels for this new year (appearing too late for last year's record) -- and have to add, it isn't. The novel's heroine, Barbara is never properly developed, though many of the novel's minor characters are quite real. Barbara first falls in love with her mother, who doesn't want to return the affection. With classic symptoms of the burgeoning Lesbian, Barbara next falls in love with her school friend, Lindy, who is only too eager to return the love. But her happiness is short-lived and turns quickly to ashes under the verbal attack of a jealous, vindictive headmistress. Thereafter Barbara decides that one must be either/or -- and to admit to being attracted to women will divorce her from the human race. As you might expect, she manages to divorce herself from the world without much help from anyone. Her relationships with men are abortive and unpleasant. Her relationships with women are stymied and frustrated episodes. She wreaks havoc with the lives of at least two women who fall in love with her, thus losing reader sympathy. The book trails off to an unbelievable and abrupt close. No one could possibly give a damn. Too bad.

A friend of mine, familiar to long-time LADDER readers as a contributor, Jody Shotwell, has uncovered several pertinent items from the past, as a result of doing some intensive searching into the works of Thomas Burke, a rather obscure English writer of the early 20th Century. She has kindly provided this information to me to pass on to LADDER readers. His short story, "The Pash," in his collection, EAST OF MANSION HOUSE, N.Y., George H. Doran, 1926, is surprisingly major Lesbian. It is, as the title implies based on that old familiar thing, a crush. In this case it is a cruel fate for the older member of the pair, who honestly loves the girl and tries to help her. Mr. Burke is obviously well aware of his subject matter and it is a sympathetic story. There are also minor, but unmistakable and overt incidents in two of his novels, THE SUN IN SPLENDOR, N. Y., George H. Doran, 1926, and TWINKLETOES, N.Y., Robert McBride, 1918, 1919. It is quite possible that more items will be uncovered as she continues her work on his life and works -- and if so, these will be passed on to you readers in the future. I believe I said in this column, not too long ago, just when I feel that surely no new items from the long past will be uncovered, up pops a good one. "The Pash"

surely qualifies--well worth a trip to your library, or even inter-library loan if you can't find EAST OF MANSION HOUSE locally

Ed: Jody Shotwell is still a contributor and we hope you will enjoy the second installment of her short novel which follows

The Shape of Love

by Jody Shotwell

Part 2

Last month we left the story with Julia painfully re-living the beginnings of her affair with Angel. Angel has spent the night and they have talked and talked. Julia has remarked that when she and Angel were together with two other friends Angel hadn't spoken a word to her, but now had found extensive voice.

It was true. After Ron's accident when they came, Angel and Viv, to visit, you were greatly amused when Angel communicated only through Viv. "Do you speak only to God and Vivian?" you teased. And when she blushed, painfully, you were remorseful and never mentioned it again, until now. It was a cute trick, but you were unconvinced. No one could really be so fey. To Ron you remarked, "Somehow I feel there's a great deal more to that young lady than meets the eye." It seems now you were correct.

Most involuntarily, you yawn, and Angel jumps up, stricken.

"I'll go home now." She stands there like a new-born gazelle, ready to bolt, but so wistful, so touching in her faded blue jeans she nearly tears your heart out. You want to bathe her and feed her and tuck her into bed. And, inexplicably, you have forgotten the dissimulation you once suspected.

"Why don't you stay, Angel? If you don't mind sleeping in Scott's little bed--"

She positively shuffles her feet, bites her lip, and casts down her eyes. "Well--if its all right--"

You find a pair of pajamas for her. "Forgive me,"

you say. "I've just got to go to bed." You say "Good-night, Angel," and leave her clutching the pajamas and looking after you as you pass through the bathroom and into your own bedroom.

You are climbing into bed when she appears and says, "Would it be all right if I leave the lamp on in there?" And then you know she is afraid of the dark and you wonder how she has made it alone since she left Viv.

"Of course, leave it on if you want to," you reply.

"Well, good-night," she murmurs.

"Good-night, Angel," you say again. You hear her moving about in Scott's room and then you begin to sink away. You are almost asleep when she reappears.

"Julia, may I have a cigarette? I'm all out."

"In the living room, on the table."

When she returns she stops beside your bed and adjusts the covers over you and pats them. You draw your breath, sharply, and lie perfectly still. She bends over you and kisses your cheek, lightly. "Good-night," she says. Her voice is a lonely whisper, and she doesn't move, but bends over you again. And then you put your arms up and draw her down to you.

And that was how it happened. Without thought, without reason. Except for the reason of the raw wound inside you and the silent need for someone close to you. Something of and for the moment, something without a tomorrow. But it had a tomorrow, and a tomorrow and a tomorrow. Enough tomorrows to make you forget the random beginning. Until now. Now you understand that such an end as this was inevitable, and why are you surprised?

"But not like this!" You say it aloud, standing there, looking at yourself in Philip's mirror. What you mean is--you had it projected so differently. Some day, you often thought, Angel would come to you, distressed, saying, "Julia, Lancelot Vandervelt," (or whatever his name will be) "He wants to marry me. I don't love him. I couldn't possibly. But I could have children. You know how I love children! And Mother would be so happy--"

And you would embrace her, hurting inside but not showing it. "Darling, that's wonderful. I'll miss

you terribly, but this is what I've wanted for you."

And you and Marian Linden would go trousseau shopping for Marian Linden's daughter who is engaged and lovely. And at the last minute when she clings to you and cries, "Oh Julia, I can't do it. I love you and I don't want to get married!" you put her from you, gently, and say, "No, this is the best thing for you. We will always be friends and I want you to come to me with all your problems."

That way. But, if not that way, then some other way. Just so long as it would leave you your dignity, leave you with a sense of having given, not lost.

"But not like this!" You say it again, and you know that you aren't doing a bit of that productive thinking you'd come here to do. The fact is, the way it happened has flipped you right into the cold pool. You've been standing on the edge of it for months. Needing desperately to make the leap away from the miasmatic atmosphere of this thing between you. Now, out of a few casual words, a generously-intended gesture, Geronimo! You got shoved when you weren't looking. Lonnie said afterwards he should have kept his big mouth shut. But his intentions were excellent.

You were at lunch one day and Lonnie said, Mrs. Anderson's got her new girl from Denmark."

"Oh, have you seen her?"

"Yes. And, incidentally, maybe you can come up with something." And he tells you of Mrs. Andersen's concern because the new girl has been here for two months and hasn't left the house because she doesn't know anyone.

So, when the accessories for Mrs. Andersen's library come in, you go up there with Lonnie and you meet the girl. She isn't quite what you expected, because you had the notion that all Scandinavians were tall and fair. Ilga was short and dark. In fact, a younger and somewhat stockier version of yourself.

Before you left you proposed a Sunday afternoon outing and promised to call. Ilga seemed excited and pleased.

"Are you sure you want me along?" Angel asks when you tell her about Ilga.

"Of course I want you along, silly."

You've been called naive. Philip says you have a child-like thing about you that is endearing. You are more inclined to think you are stupid. Stupidly trusting. Or were you simply unjustifiably secure? Whatever--it never occurred to you that this diffident-seeming young woman was going to charm Angel out of her mind.

You met her on the steps of the Art Museum two weeks later. She was dressed in something pink, and her brightly painted toenails peeked, unfashionably, from open-toed shoes. But she was a different Ilga away from the Andersen house, assured and talkative.

It had to be called a successful day. After a tour of galleries, the three of you sat for a long time in the cool dark of a cocktail lounge, sipping vodka and lemon. Angel, always so withdrawn with strangers, chattered and giggled, and this should have seemed significant. But it didn't. You were pleased that she could talk about horses with someone not as ignorant as you about them. You were happy and somewhat wistful, just to relax and listen to them chirp about Paris and Spain.

"If I am back home again when you two come to Europe, you must stay with me," Ilga said.

You drove her home after dark that night.

"She's fun, Angel said. You agreed. On the way back you said, "We must take her to New York one day. She'd love it."

And often, in the next few days, one or the other of you would say, "We should take Ilga here," or, "We must take Ilga there." You had already arranged to spend the following Wednesday with her at the Horse Show. But when Wednesday came, you were ill.

"Please go," you urged. "We had a whole day there last Saturday. It would be too bad to disappoint Ilga."

Angel didn't even pretend to demur. Not even a little, the way she did when you sent her out with Ginger a few times. When you felt her restless and chafing under the domestic routine, and insisted that she take some time away from you. Then she would have to be assured and reassured that you didn't mind, that you wanted her to go.

Now she said, only, Would you call Ilga and ask her? Maybe she wouldn't want to go just with me."

You said, "Don't be ridiculous," but you called and Ilga voiced sympathy for your illness and said she would be delighted to go with Angel.

They telephoned you early in the evening from a bar near the Fair Grounds. They were having a glorious time. They were on their way back to the Horse Show for the next events and you were not to worry if Angel is late getting home.

You speak to her from your bed, through your cold in the head, and you say you are glad they are having fun. You tell her you will probably be asleep when she gets home, so you will see her in the morning. Ang then you hang up and you shed a few childish tears because she hasn't said that she misses you or wishes you were there. And because she sounds as she should sound--young and happy.

But the next morning she was there, asleep on your sofa, and whatever vague qualms you had dispersed. But not for long. All that day, and all the next day, and the next, she spoke of nothing but Ilga. And now she was saying, "When I take Ilga riding." No more "we" after that. Not, at least, any "we" that meant you and Angel.

So there it is. Stupid you might be, and naive, and child-like. But not so much that you don't know when a door is being slammed in your face. The only problem remaining is how to look dignified with your nose caught in the door.

And that, dear girl, is why you are here. Not to think, really, but to rehearse. Or whatever it is actors do just before the curtain rises and they stop being themselves and start being someone else. It shouldn't be so difficult. You've been onstage for almost a year now. Playing a hybrid character composed of Peter Pan and Alice-in-Wonderland, with overtones of Mother Macree. Most of it's been fun. Admit it. You've done some silly, wonderful things. The weekend on Marian Linden's yacht, the fantastic night at a beatnik party, the roller-coasters, and backstage after a Broadway show.

But now, suddenly, there is another role for you to play. And this one isn't going to be easy. It's Pagliacci for an audience of one. For Angel. You have to face her, soon, with a smile on your pan and

an "on with the show" attitude. That's what it is. You have to strike an attitude. If that's what you call it. Once, when Ron did something especially hurtful, you asked, "What attitude shall I take?"

"God-damn, hon," Phillip said. "What is your attitude? How do you feel?" But how you feel has nothing to do with the case. Not this time. If you behave the way you feel, you would lie down on the floor and kick and scream. No, Angel must have time. At least the rest of this day, to keep the pact you'd made in the beginning.

"I'm too old for you, Angel. You can't be with someone so much older."

"No, no!" Feverishly. "You are young. Young! You're my baby and I'm going to take care of you until you're 105!"

"Remember what I say, please. Someday you will find someone younger and you will leave me."

"I promise I promise, Julia. If that ever happens I'll tell you--right away."

But, so far, she has not told you. Not in words. But she must, because there can't be another day like this one. You will be sure of that.

So, you leave Philip's house, stopping to scoop Cheetah up and plant a kiss on her wet pug nose. "Just from one old lady to another," you whisper, and close the door behind you.

The streets are quiet. There is almost a Sunday feeling. And thinking of Sunday, you think again of the cathedral and the arches.

The parkway was never more beautiful. It's the long way home, but the long way home is exactly what you want. The cathedral is dark green against the light May-green of the trees. You cross the first grassy lane and stand on an island to observe the doors and windows of St. Pauls from the angle you visualized them for your painting.

The sight is unbelievably magnificent; the stone, weathered, mellow. You have a very definite thing about churches--about the outsides of the, anyway.

Your religiosity is vestigial, if you have any, and you feel something disturbing about modern churches, something of an affront.

Continues on Page 27

Readers Respond

We have a letter addressed to Ben Cat from Snowflake...obviously a cat of excellent good taste. She seems to have a number of dog and cat friends as well as a proper pair of girls to take care of her needs. Thank you, Snowflake for your contribution to the Blanche Baker Scholarship Fund and Ben has prevailed upon the San Francisco office to take care of your subscription.

Dear Miss Sanders:

No doubt Lennox Strong and Terri Cook undertook their article, "Poetry of Lesbiana," with the best of intentions; but it is so full of misstatements and exaggerations as to call for a public correction, which I hope you will print in THE LADDER. For example, it is difficult to see how H. D.'s novel, *Bid Me to Live*, is "pertinent to some extent," since it deals almost entirely with the author's relationships with D. H. Lawrence and her husband, Richard Aldington, thinly disguised. Again, those who have studied the life and works of Katherine Mansfield know that the causes of her "bitter, frightened inner life" were tuberculosis and poverty plus the inability of her husband, John Middleton Murry, adequately to return her intense love. Her cousin and companion, "L.M.," apparently cherished a deep sentimental (probably not erotic) feeling for her which she was unable to return. (See "Toothache Sunday.")

These minor inaccuracies, however, might be overlooked. What does call for comment is a series of gratuitous insults to Amy Lowell, "fat and ugly, an over-grown toad, who smoked cigars and slapped backs." Miss Lowell was fat, true, and she smoked cigars. She was far from ugly--massively well proportioned, with a pleasant face, as can be seen from the several photographs of her that are in existence. She was not a back-slapper, but a dignified and reticent woman. "Died a little each day for love" is an inexcusable Victorian sentimentality. All of us die a little each day, but Miss Lowell died eventually of double hernia and kidney trouble complicated by glandular malfunctioning. Real life is so unromantic.

And why, in heaven's name, "loved hopelessly in life"? Miss Lowell's beloved friend shared her home for many years, was devoted to her, and was at her bedside when she died. Does this spell hopeless love to your would-be critics?

May Sarton, Edna St. Vincent Millay and others cited loved both men and women, erotically and as comrades. One grows a little tired of these evaluations in which one line out of a hundred or a thousand is seized upon to prove that So-and-So is one of us. Until homosexuals stop insisting that they are a persecuted minority on one hand and an elite on the other and recognize that their sexual orientation is only one phase of personality--and a private one at that--they are not going to be, as THE LADDER puts it, integrated into society.

Sincerely,
Valerie Taylor

Oh, dear! This is a battle we can't referee, on grounds of total ignorance. After all we had to join the DOB to learn much more than "bar literature," and as for poetry we wrote one once (a poem, that is) just to see if it could be done and when it was published we returned to the printing and publishing business. We will turn this over to Gene Damon to arbitrate since she has kindly consented to be our Poetry Editor in addition to her wonderful work on LESBIANA.

Hi --

Just finished reading the latest issue of THE LADDER and want you to know how very much it was enjoyed and appreciated. After so many issues of Convention coverage, "problem" coverage, "and necessary (though often dull) reports from lawyers, doctors, eminent psychiatrists, etc., this light, airy issue of poetry and quite good fiction was a delightful, refreshing change.....more, please!

I wonder if your Lesbiana columnist has read any books by Kyle Onstott, one of the best selling authors today. Oddly enough, in every book by Mr. Onstott there are homosexual overtones -- and what particularly interests me is the way it is presented -- not as something "different" or abnormal, but simply human, everyday emotion. He often collaborates with someone named Lance Horner.

.....

Kay
Houston, Texas

We couldn't resist printing a portion of that letter...It expresses the sentiments of many readers responding to the "Literary Issue." We promise another soon.

We have a number of inquiries about books reviewed in THE LADDER. Our New York Chapter is trying to get our Book Service in order and we will print information on that as soon possible.

Cross-Currents

and Miscellany

THE LESBIAN'S MAJORITY STATUS

(an editorial by DEL MARTIN)

Lesbians tend to think of themselves as belonging to a minority group which is commonly known as the homosexual (or homophile) community. In reality and certainly for all practical purposes, this is a myth, a delusion, a bill of goods sold to us by male homosexual organizations which pretend to be co-educational in character and membership.

The news media has certainly emphasized what we had become increasingly aware of, but reluctant to admit openly. CBS Reports, of course, did us a favor by excluding us. The same could be said of the Capitol Records Documentary, and we are grateful to Larry Schiller, as well, for taping the 1966 convention of the Daughters of Bilitis and providing copies of the tape for our chapters free of charge. Life and Look have been equally kind in their omissions. There are advantages, we find, in the slanted press, in the bias of male reporters trying desperately to cling to the last vestiges of the superior male image -- the Masculine Mystique, if you will -- which is as hollow as the culturally learned and perpetuated Feminine Mystique, so aptly described by Betty Friedan.

There are many other phases of the American Sexual Revolution to which Lesbians may address themselves than to get bogged down in the defense of promiscuity among male homosexuals and of public sexual activity in "tea rooms."

There are many other organizations with which the Daughters of Bilitis may align themselves in the good fight for civil rights. The Lesbian, after all, is first of all a woman -- an individual who must earn her own livelihood, who must provide her own household. She is much more concerned with problems of inequality in job and educational opportunities than in the problems of male hustlers and prostitutes. She can much more readily identify with organizations such as the League of Women Voters of the Business & Professional Women's Club than the "co-educational" Society for Individual Rights, whose 500 male members are thrown into panic because of the "invasion" of 20 women.

There are two new organizations which might more successfully capture the imagination of the thoughtful and responsible Lesbian than the concerns of a credentials committee of the National Conference of Homophile Organizations, which has become a debatin' society, an exercise in self-aggrandizement of self-pro-

claimed leaders of an unrepresented minority.

The National Organization for Women (N.O.W.) has been formed "to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American Society NOW, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men." N.O.W. proposes "to initiate or support action, nationally, or in any part of this nation, by individuals or organizations, to break through the silken curtain of prejudice and discrimination against women in government, industry, the professions, the political parties, the churches, the judiciary, the labor unions, in education, science, medicine, law, religion and every other field of importance in American society."

Those interested in joining N.O.W., which is presided over by Betty Freidan, author of The Feminine Mystique, may send a membership fee of \$5 to Caroline Davis, secretary-treasurer. 8000 East Jefferson Ave., Detroit, Mich. 48214.

Another organization which Lesbians may readily identify with is the Single Persons Tax Reform Lobby, for which Dorothy Shinder is president and leading spokeswoman. Miss Shinder's group contends there is discrimination of the Internal Revenue Service against single persons by not allowing them "Head of Household" status to get better tax rates. The Single Persons Tax Reform Lobby is also concerned that renters be allowed a percentage deduction of their rent as property tax, since increased property taxes are passed on by landlords in the form of higher rents. Certainly Lesbian couples, forced by society to remain in the "single" status, could benefit by these tax proposals and find at least a measure of tax relief from present discriminating laws.

Membership fee of the Single Persons Tax Reform Lobby is \$1. The address is 1692A Green St., San Francisco, CA 94123.

It is time that the Daughters of Bilitis and the Lesbian find and establish a much broader identification than that of the homosexual community or the homophile movement. The "battle of the sexes" which predominates in American Society prevails as well in the homosexual community and the Lesbian finds herself relegated to an even more inferior status.

This is not to say, however, that DOB or the Lesbian should withdraw entirely from participation in the homophile movement, for there are many worthy mutual endeavors demanding and deserving the support of female homosexuals, such as the Councils on Religion and the Homosexual, the National Legal Defense Fund, the Tavern Guilds and Citizens Alert. But participation, which is time consuming and costly, should be limited to areas where there is some semblance of cooperation, or at least some hope thereof. There is no such indication as yet in the Regional or National Planning Conferences of Homophile Organizations.

While we do not have the latest census figures at hand, it is our understanding that there are more women than men in the United

States. Women thus comprise a majority of the population. Let us join that majority and assume responsibility for necessary reforms in the status of women in our society and its institutions.

DOB GIVES NATIONAL LEGAL DEFENSE FUND BIG SEND-OFF !

A donation of \$1500 in the name of the Daughters of Bilitis was used to open the account of the newly incorporated National Legal Defense Fund in San Francisco during March.

The Fund, which was endorsed in principle by the National Planning Conference of Homophile Organizations last year, will operate and function similarly to the American Civil Liberties Union, but will concentrate its efforts in defense of homosexual cases involving protection of civil liberties and constitutional law. The attorneys and founders of the NLDF believe that some, if not all, penal code reform can most easily be achieved through the judicial process (development of case law, particularly in the area of constitutional law.) This feeling has been borne out by various state legislators who have encountered opposition to the adoption of the Model Penal Code, which was drawn up by the American Law Institute -- Illinois being the only state which has adopted the new code to date.

The incorporators for the NLDF are the Rev. Dr. Clarence Colwell, President of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual; Herbert Donaldson and David Clayton, attorneys; Bill Plath, President of the Tavern Guild of San Francisco and Bill Beardemphl, former president of the Society for Individual Rights.

Various homophile organizations are now being asked to join the Fund as sponsoring members at an annual fee of \$25.00. Individual memberships and donations are also being solicited by Paul Langley, attorney and fund raising chairman. Donations should be directed to NLDF, 330 Ellis St., San Francisco, CA 94102.

Policies are set by the Board of Directors and cases to be taken or defendants to be aided are selected by the Board. However, cases will be presented to the Board for approval only with the endorsement and prior approval of two or more attorneys so as to insure that proper legal issues are raised and that the cases supported will benefit the greatest number of individuals. Any attorney from any part of the country, whether a member or not, may present cases for consideration.

In submitting cases, a statement of facts should be addressed to the Legal Committee, and if so addressed, will be seen only by an attorney. All matters will be held in the strictest confidence.

The Governing Board of the Daughters of Bilitis heartily endorses the National Legal Defense Fund as a big step forward in achieving the goals of the homophile movement. NLDF will act as the watch dog against unconstitutional practices with regard to ho-

homosexual citizens as perpetrated by police and other governmental agencies.

CAT REPORT

While all of us were attending the Western Regional Homophile Planning Conference on a recent week-end, Ben got in a fight over property rights and sustained a nasty black eye. (we hesitate to call it a "mouse" for obvious reasons.) It had been his intention to write a column for this month's LADDER and also to include a picture of himself, but vanity forbids this until he is satisfied that his eye has healed and that appearance is satisfactory for the portrait. (Vanity's name is not only Woman!) While confined to his rug and fire, he is composing another chapter of his memoirs which, if not too inflammatory or pornographic, will be published soon.

We like the quote from Rev. Malcom Boyd, the controversial Episcopal minister, author of the book, "Are You Running with me, Jesus?" When asked if he thought it proper to take Christ into a homosexual bar, he is reputed to have answered, "I didn't. I only joined him there for half an hour."

A rag called the "National Informer" headlines that over 5,000,000 female "homos" are roaming in US. It is a pretty gruesome and totally idiotic article, but we managed to smile a bit at the incongruity of such a statistic stacked up against all the noise current about the "pill" and legalized abortion, etc., to say nothing of "wife-swapping" and other heterosexual games.



Oh, it isn't really
all that bad -- but
next month we will
tell you about the
"Equal Rights for
Women" discussions
at the Regional
Planning Conference held in
L.A.

The Shape of Love

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

Am I being inflexible, you wonder sometimes. Perhaps so, in some things. A sign of aging? And yet, not long ago you found an old diary. One you had kept from your eighteenth birthday to your twenty-third. Some of the entries were blush-making, but there was one that read--"An old church is the most beautiful thing in the world. It is music and poetry and everything lovely. Churches, like religion, belong to the past, and should remain there." You wrote this when you were twenty, and you still feel the same.

You stopped keeping the diary when you married Miles. Just a few pages before the last entry, you wrote, "How dull men are! And the dull ones, how good and kind, how little-boy they are! Too much for our maternal instincts to withstand. Those wistful expressions put us quite beside ourselves with tenderness. How we want to indulge them, pamper them. And all the while, we think how stupid they are."

Your very last line in the diary says, "I feel tossed and rootless, like a tumbleweed."

If you ever wondered why you married, there is your answer true. The need. You were drifting, chartless, and there was Miles, and you grabbed hold. You married Miles and you became another Julia. No more the intense Julia, writing poetry in a four-dollar a week room. The proud, revellious Julia who left her comfortable home with her uncomfortable parents and lived on spaghetti.

It wasn't the poverty. That had been a challenge. When Miles came, you had beat the poverty down. You had a decent apartment and wine with your spaghetti. Music and a few special friends. Plus one great big emptiness that you didn't know how to fill. The vacancy somewhere inside you since Kay left. Your own words in the diary tell you about that, too. "Oh, love of a woman, why do you remain aloof and a stranger, even when I have known you? I cannot achieve you. You will always be a silent longing and a sharp pain."

The silent longing lasted through Miles and the pain was put away where you couldn't feel it. Until Ron. Then the longing ended, and the pain began. You didn't

know what pain was, Julia, until Ron.

When Miles died you stayed for a long time alone, within the cloister of your home. With only the child to love and fill your days. And nothing to fill your nights, except words on paper. Words you wrote and words you read. Friends, yes. Trying to draw you out, to console and occupy you. But there was a space that couldn't be occupied.

Then, one desperate evening you remembered a place you used to know. You went, in fear and trembling, and sat hidden in a booth and drank bourbon. The place was the same and the same kind of people were there, but no one you knew until you were on your way out.

"Julia!" And you turned and there was Clinton from the old days. He pressed you into a seat at his table and you didn't leave after all. And so was formed the first link in the chain that led you to Ron. New people, parties, and a reaching out again for love. Reaching out--or reaching back into the shadows of the past for something you had lost and wanted to regain. Thinking that the getting and the giving are the same. Finding that they never are the same. And in the searching, learning that you don't know what you seek. For there are some who speak the words of love, and there are some who love and cannot speak it. There are those who throw themselves into love as they would leap into a pool of water, and those who only trail a fingertip and never leap at all. And each with whom you merged yourself felt love each in a different way. And your way was the most lamentable because it wasn't there at all. Until Ron.

How do these things begin? An evening at Joan's, and a tall, lanky girl, silent against the flow of conversation. One evening, out of many such an evening, and each time, the lanky girl, sitting in her corner, contributing nothing to the talk, talk, talk that went on sometimes through the night. And if you noticed her at all, it is to think she is a clod, whatever in the world could Joan have seen in her?

And then one night, and a drink spilled and no one in the room but the frisky German Shepherd pup, the lanky girl and you. You are kneeling on the floor together, mopping up the puddles. Lips brush, suddenly, against your temple, and she says, "I'm sorry. I just had to do that."

You jump to your feet and look at her, still kneeling on the floor. A feeling of suffocation and your heart

pounding. You go into the dark kitchen, carrying the dripping sponge, and stand there trembling. And she comes in and takes the sponge away and draws you close with quick strong arms. And that was all she had to do.

How do you know doom when you meet it first? You don't expect it to come wrapped in a lanky Gary Cooper of a girl with Irish blue eyes. There isn't anything sinister about a female airplane pilot, except as she orbits in on your life and something momentous happens.

You fought it, for just a little while.

"It took you so long to fall in love with me," Ron said. "Why?"

"Such humility! I didn't have to fall in love with you at all, you know."

Oh, but you did have to. There was this almost galvanic pull through the telephone wires when she called. Her fervent demand, "When? When!" And then you couldn't fight it any more, and the when became now. On that grey afternoon when the ceiling was zero, you said, "Come."

Just inside the door, you went into her arms. You were in the place you wanted to be. In your world, bounded east and west by her wide shoulders, north by her lips, and south by the long, strong length of her body.

She held you first without kissing you, just murmuring "At last, at last." And then she kissed you, and the room was a carousel. When the embrace broke, when you couldn't keep your feet any longer, you moved together to the sofa, wordlessly. Timidly, you hid your face against the crisp white collar of her shirt, and, silent no longer, she spoke love words, her lips to your ear and her wonderful hands caressing your hair, your back, until you were timid no more.

Later she said, "It just had to be, Julia. I knew it from the first moment I saw you."

"But you were always so quiet. Sitting back in your corner. You never said a word."

"You people and your Shakespeare sonnets and your psychology! What do I know about such things?" She grinned that wonderfully Irish grin. "My campus is

in the sky, remember?"

"But you never gave a sign. I didn't think you even noticed me--"

"Foolish One! That very first night, when you came to the party at Joan's, I looked at you and I said to myself, 'Of all the ladies in the room, I would choose only this pretty lady.'"

She had a quaint way of speaking. When she was sober. Which, as you discovered too late, was not often.

But, you were the one she chose. Question: What selective system does life use, to populate its heavens and its hells? Second question: How much voice do we have in the matter? How much did you have, Julia? Well, you could have said, no thank you. Meaning, no thank you, I do not choose to kiss you. Or, no thank you, I do not choose to love you. I do not choose to do anything, for fear of choosing hell instead of heaven. Which is to say, I do not choose to live. Simple as that.

So, surely as Ron chose you, you had chosen her. By whatever processes are called into action, you had made a choice. And one not so easily revoked. Even when you took that last big walk and made that first big decision. The one that lasted for less than a year. During which time you nearly died, but you didn't. You stayed alive in a million tiny aching pieces, living with pain and with ghosts.

And then, on a New Year's Eve, when you should have stayed home, you went out. You sat in a place with friends, watching the celebration but apart from it because of your pain. And then there was a hand on your shoulder, a dearly-beloved voice, and Ron bending over you.

"Happy New Year, Julie." And her lips coming down upon your upturned face, touching your lips. That was all. No questions, no answers. You were together again. The way, it seemed, you belonged.

It isn't true, of course, Nobody belongs to anybody. Some of us spend our lives trying to complete the half-circles we are. Some of us never learn that two half-circles are not necessarily a whole. Or that today's circles are tomorrow's triangles. We don't, actually, perceive anything, in this great, growling hunger for love, We are infants, clawing at the breast that must

be our's alone.

"That's pretty horrible," you remark to Philip.

"Explains a lot, don't you think, hon?"

"But I didn't claw at her. My God, sometimes it seems I was forever trying to cut loose--"

"But you wouldn't have. Not if the thing had been just the way you wanted it."

How had you wanted it? Exclusive possession? But you don't believe in that. Up there where your thinking is done, you explore possession, possessing, being possessed. But then Ron said, "You're mine, aren't you? My girl?" you answered, eagerly, "Yes, oh yes!" And you believed, childlike, that "You're mine" implies, "I'm yours."

"I don't know," you say to Philip. "Maybe I've a middle-class mind. If I love someone, I want to be faithful."

"Sweetheart, be faithful. Be as faithful as you like. But don't expect it from anyone else."

"Not from the one you love? What good is it, then?"

"You're missing the point, baby. What I'm saying is-- it's good, it's wonderful, when two people love and feel the same way. Only, it should be a revelation, not an expectation. When you expect back, you are, in a sense, saying, 'I have given such and such an amount. I demand the same amount from you.'"

"And that's wrong?"

"That, my darling girl, is why you come to grief."

What do you do, then, when the clawing infant, if that's what you are, continues to claw? When Ron calls and tells you, "Joan is here. She's upset. I can't come."

And your insides go into a spasm, but you say, "I see. All right. I'll see you tomorrow."

You don't sleep. You cry and walk and get back into bed and get up again. You reach for the telephone, but you fight it, because Joan is sick and upset and she had Ron before you did. Then, when Ron comes, you try to be proud and all she has to do is put

her arms around you and say you are her love, and everything is right again.

"No, no, no!" Did you say it aloud, standing here on this triangle of grass, watching the sun glitter on the stained-glass windows of St. Paul's? Then it wasn't gone, was it? Ron is gone, but the pain is still here. Waiting to leap out at you, to join itself to this newer, and yes lesser, pain. The old dragon resurrected, come to give succor to its little-brother dragon.

So now, you are facing your real enemy, and you know what kind of a dirty fight it is going to be. You turn away and walk slowly toward home.

UNHAPPENING

If this happened to a man and woman
they would make love, take out
their hunger and their hate
in finger furrowed skin,
losing themselves so in the smells
and the touch of sex,
the hard miraculous physical fact alone
would assume the shape of all their differences.

I think that, watching you light your cigarette,
hearing our talk, two cultured canaries
warbling contrapuntal on a theme;
our eyes, hostile and helpless, meeting
retreat to the table top, to the heap
of my daughter's scattered forgotten crayons

And I want to reach for here the red,
the blue, and wrench it free. A child could,
one broad line wound across the page
and into space, and there in the center
a tortured net of primary red,
the shape of what is left of caring.

Only some violent act, some gross sacrilege
of taste could save us now;
to murder words, the predatory birds
perched in our lying, would take
the tantrums of a child
or even the simple banality of this:
alone in a room, to see each other crying.

- Lori -

DAUGHTERS of BILITIS

INCORPORATED

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