

THE LADDER

JUNE/JULY, 1971 1.25



THE LADDER, published by Lesbians and directed to ALL women seeking full human dignity, had its beginning in 1956. It was then the only Lesbian publication in the U.S. It is now the only women's magazine openly supporting Lesbians, a forceful minority within the women's liberation movement.

Initially THE LADDER's goal was limited to achieving the rights accorded heterosexual women, that is, full second-class citizenship. In the 1950's women as a whole were as yet unaware of their oppression. The Lesbian knew. And she wondered silently when her sisters would realize that they too share many of the Lesbian's handicaps, those that pertained to being a woman.

THE LADDER's purpose today is to raise all women to full human status, with all of the rights and responsibilities this entails; to include ALL women, whether Lesbian or heterosexual.

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THE LADDER, though written, edited, and circulated by volunteer labor, cannot survive without money. We Lesbians are perhaps more anxious than other women to make our views known. We wish we could blanket the country and the world with free copies. But stern reality tells us that, more important even than mass distribution, is the need to keep alive the only real Lesbian magazine in the world. Therefore THE LADDER will no longer be sold at newsstands. We will survive only if there are enough of you sufficiently concerned with the rights and the liberation of ALL women to spend \$7.50 a year to subscribe. (Sample copies are always available at \$1.25.)

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THE LADDER

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the BUTCH/FEMME question

By RITA LAPORTE

Whenever a group of Lesbians gathers together over a period of time, this question invariably comes up and, for some of us, it has become probably the most boring question of all time. Nevertheless, the question is very much alive today, has in fact become more pertinent again in view of women's liberation. The answers given to the question range from: it is a pseudo-question, a matter of aping heterosexual relationships, to the conviction that it is a delightful reality. Why is it that this question is still so much alive today and no nearer solution among Lesbians themselves?

Lesbians are born into the heterosexual world of sex stereotypes just as are heterosexuals. As they mature and gradually surmount the first big hurdle, that of acknowledging and accepting their nature, they are, for the most part, quite without Lesbian models on the one hand, while imbued with heterosexual stereotyping, on the other. Some Lesbians fall in with that stereotyping easily and thoughtlessly, imagining themselves to be essentially male; others toss it out completely, settling for an oversimplified female to female relationship. Many of us, however, have experienced a real meaning to that miserable, slang phrase, *butch/femme*. But this is hardly the end of it. The anti-butch/femme contingent tries to make our lives miserable by making fun of what to them is a ridiculous copy-cat existence. Many young Lesbians therefore find that their own kind can be as vicious as heterosexual society.

Among those Lesbians who try to think sanely and without rancor about the problem, little progress has been made because they uncritically accept heterosexual male psychologists' pronouncements. One strange theory is that masculine Lesbians, i.e. butches, are really men born into a female body and that feminine Lesbians, i.e., femmes, learn or are conditioned to fall in love with butches rather than heterosexual males. We have all been thoroughly conditioned to think the adjectives, male and masculine, are interchangeable, as are female and feminine. This is a mental straightjacket under which not only Lesbians but all of society suffers. Before going further into this matter, let us look more closely at the butch/femme phenomenon with a sociologist's eye. This is the eye of the heterosexual male, who sees himself as



the center of humanity as once he saw the earth the center of the universe. (There may be other "centers" equally valid, e.g., women, Lesbians, etc.)

Most Lesbians live in great isolation, whether alone or married to a woman, but there are many small pockets of Lesbians, usually gathered together around a big city gay or Lesbian bar, that may be designated Lesbian subcultures. The "bar scene" tends to have considerable consistency from city to city. It's habitué come for the most part from the lower socio-economic stratum and it is here that the butch/femme phenomenon is played out in its crudest form. It is here also that most of the "research" on Lesbianism takes place for the 90% or so of Lesbians who do not care for this milieu are invisible to the researchers. It is here that one encounters a genuine copying of heterosexual sex roles. The butches are not simply more masculine women, they imitate males at their worst. No male has spoken more derogatorily of his "chicks" than some of these butches. And the femmes manage to outdo the sexiest of sex bunnies. An elaborate game is played where, if a strange butch happens to smile or say hello to another's chick, she is apt to get slugged in

the best barroom brawl tradition. Chicks are strictly property. Being small of stature myself, I would prefer the relative safety of a waterfront sailor's bar to the toughest of Lesbian bars. But fortunately most Lesbian bars offer no such danger, but they do exhibit much of the less brutal male-female, dominance-submission behavior, exactly that kind of behavior feminists loathe.

Many, if not most, Lesbians, including those belonging to the upper socio-economic stratum, do at one time frequent these bars, knowing nowhere else to meet with their own kind, or what they hope will be their own kind. Many of these Lesbians are appalled by what they see and sense the unnaturalness of it. In their revulsion they throw the baby out with the bath water, throw out the whole butch/femme phenomenon. What they are left with is: "We are all women, aren't we? therefore we are all feminine and must not deny our femininity." Yet many Lesbians know a middle ground, though it may have taken them many years to find it, to accept it, and to be thoroughly comfortable about it. This is the true butch/femme phenomenon.

I would like to digress here for a moment to point out a common error of sociology: to discover what should be, just find out what is. This sort of thinking is particularly misleading where Lesbianism is concerned. We Lesbians have a very difficult time of it for we have no models other than the, for us, irrelevant heterosexual models. Even if heterosexual sex roles were right for all heterosexual women, they could hardly be right for Lesbians. And this brings us back to the straightjackets of female equals feminine and male equals masculine. Since many Lesbians, about 50%, are simply not "feminine" as interpreted by heterosexual society, that leaves them nothing to be except "masculine" which means "male."

As yet there is no reliable sociological study on the behavior of Lesbians, let alone their inner life. A study that is based upon a true, statistical sampling does not exist because most Lesbians hide too well for such a study to be possible. But, even if such a study were possible, what would it prove? Such a study would include all those confused Lesbians who were trying either to imitate heterosexual behavior patterns or to deny them altogether. It is quite probable that the reality of Lesbianism is known only to a minority, and that minority consisting of Lesbians over 30. Truth is hardly a matter of a vote. The

Lesbian can arrive at her own truth, if she ever does, only by much soul searching and experience of life. It is not easy for any human being to achieve an authentic inner life. Women's liberation has taught many a heterosexual woman this, but one still finds studies that "prove" the female to be passive and all those other attributes that add up to a creature no one would care to be, least of all the Lesbian.

How are we Lesbians to escape or resolve the butch/femme controversy? Let us once and for all separate female from feminine and male from masculine. All Lesbians are female, but most assuredly not all Lesbians are feminine, no matter how one defines that elusive word. It might be wise to discard altogether the words, masculine and feminine, for heterosexual men have so loaded them in their own favor. All sorts of desirable qualities such as courage, strength, ambition, leadership, aggressiveness, and mental brilliance are said to be masculine, which means attributes pertaining to the male only. The Lesbian is living proof that these qualities can just as well belong to the female, that they are, in short, human qualities. And yet the persistence of the butch/femme controversy points to a residue of meaning to the words, feminine and masculine. The words have a real, relational meaning. They refer to qualities that exert a mutual attraction, analogous to the attraction between the north and south poles of magnets, to use an inanimate example. Here we get down to the bedrock level of experience, the level not covered by sociological investigation. A butch, however "feminine" she may appear to the general public, feels something she is inclined to label "masculine" and that impels her toward a more feminine Lesbian. She may form a strong friendship with another butch or a femme, for she is not confused between "falling in love" with a woman and forming a deep friendship with a woman. A femme will find herself attracted to the more masculine appearing woman (again, it may be a woman who "passes" as "feminine" to society at large, but whose masculinity is sensed by the femme).

A danger here is that the reader will think there are two and only two kinds of Lesbians, the butch and the femme. This is merely a shorthand way of labeling. The qualities, femininity and masculinity, are distributed in varying proportions in all Lesbians (in all human beings, but we are

here dealing only with Lesbians). A butch is simply a Lesbian who finds herself attracted to and complemented by a Lesbian more feminine than she, whether this butch be very or only slightly more masculine than feminine. Fortunately for all of us, there are all kinds of us. Some femmes prefer a very masculine butch, many do not. No doubt there are some women, confused and brainwashed by heterosexual sex roles, who think they want the butch chauvinist Lesbian, the Lesbian who outmales a male. I say "no doubt" for every kind of human being exists, but in my experience femmes have soon turned away from such types.

Having hypothesized the four separate qualities or traits: femaleness, maleness, femininity, and masculinity, I am left with the problem of defining them. This is an almost impossible task, in view of centuries of cultural overlay and eons of wishful thinking on the part of men. I can define femaleness and maleness only as those aspects of personality that derive from the biology and physiology that distinguish the sexes. But what these aspects are is largely unknown, though I suspect they pertain to differences in the sexuality of female and male. My personal definition of maleness is a negative one — a quality that precludes any erotic feeling. Whatever may be learned eventually about these two qualities, it is not germane to this discussion as all Lesbians are female. And whatever femaleness is, it is a constant when considering Lesbians.

A tougher problem is defining femininity and masculinity. It would indeed simplify matters if butch/femme were no more than the imitation of male/female. Then we could dispense with those two traits as nothing more than cultural convention. The scientific principal of parsimony, that the simplest theory is the best, will seldom work where human nature is concerned. Human nature is more complicated than we are able to conceive in theoretical terms. Since femmes and butches are meaningful categories, so are the adjectives, feminine and masculine. This is so despite the fact that much if not most of what is today designated masculine or feminine is neither, is simply human. Take aggression, for example. The male loves to think that this is a virtue of his alone and, in its cruder aspects perhaps, such as war and street fighting, it is. But there is a wealth of aggressiveness in the female else how would there be any women's liberation

movement? Or take grief. Though the male is not supposed to cry, which is very similar to enforcing a taboo against laughing when something is funny, he can feel grief and should be permitted to cry since this is a human expression of feeling.

Let me begin with my assumption that masculinity and femininity are essences of some sort that have ontological reality. But a mental essence cannot be seen; it is a concept, rather like the concept of an electron, that has an explanatory value. Masculinity can be felt or observed only as it expresses itself through the body, in behavior, however subtle. We posit something we call intelligence, but we can become aware of it only in a live, awake, and acting person. No one could determine the intelligence of someone in a catatonic state. Measuring intelligence is full of pitfalls for it can be measured only in and through a particular culture. We have the same problem with femininity and masculinity. No one can express these qualities in a cultureless vacuum. A child of decided masculine nature, whether male or female makes no difference, will tend to express this nature by engaging in activities that the culture, however arbitrarily, has designated 'masculine.' The little tomboy, if her immediate cultural environment (parents and kindergarten) is not too restrictive, will play husband to another little girl's wife and mother role. These girls may or may not be Lesbians, but the little butch is apt to persist longer than the little heterosexual tomboy because her inner masculinity insists more strongly that she flaunt convention. We all have, not only a generalized urge to live, but to live as our inner nature directs. Too often cultural straightjackets distort us beyond recognition, as would be apparent if we could see into souls. We all know now that Helen Keller was a very intelligent woman, but the average person would not have thought so, seeing her as a young child. The means for her expressing her intelligence were blocked until her teacher opened up the way through touch. Few of us are blocked in this physical manner, but all women are blocked in cultural ways. But, just as Helen Keller found a way around her terrible physical handicaps, some women find ways to pierce through the heavy veil of cultural distortion. Butches and femmes who have found each other in love and marriage are such women, however much they hide their true selves from society.

Those Lesbians who persist in denying any meaning to butch/femme are simply those who either have no experience of this attraction or who are denying it in their fear of being accused of copying heterosexuals. In either case their denials mean nothing, for those of us who know the delight in finding our true mate, one who is like us and yet different, stand witness to the reality of butch/femme. As for copying heterosexuals: as someone has said, there is no worse butch/femme relationship than the male/female one of the heterosexual world. But, though all heterosexual relationships are butch/femme, they vary tremendously. We cannot out of hand condemn all heterosexual relationships. What is so bad about most of them is not their butch/femme quality but their inequality. It is the dominance/submission or master/slave quality of the relationship that is outrageous. A Lesbian marriage that tries to imitate this aspect of the heterosexual marriage is equally rotten. There is nothing inherently wrong with a division of labor in a marriage, so long as it is freely chosen and the labor of the wife is as worthy as the labor of the husband. While most heterosexuals are hopelessly caught up in a sliding scale of values imposed on the everyday activities of living — what the male does is important, what the female does amounts to little or nothing, we Lesbians need pay no attention to this. Housework is a bore and nothing more. It is neither femme nor butch activity. What wrecks heterosexual marriages is not so much the kind of work the woman is expected to do, but the underlying implication that she must do it because she is the inferior. The butch/femme Lesbian marriage that has no place for male or butch chauvinism, that in no way attempts to copy male/female relationships, that is a positive union of two authentic women, one more masculine and one more feminine, is a model of marital happiness that heterosexuals would do well to study.

This is what Lesbians should try to do in the difficult search for their own truth. They should neither copy heterosexual life nor react against it. They must find their own way, unconcerned about how much or how little it turns out to resemble aspects of heterosexual life. We cannot say out of hand that everything heterosexual is bad. We may find that some heterosexual pronouncements about life and love are happy

ones. This should hardly be cause for surprise in view of the fact that heterosexuals are human too. We Lesbians, unlike male homosexuals, know that the basic heterosexual distortion is the myth of male supremacy. In theory Lesbians should be free of this and growing up Lesbian should be easy. Perhaps it would be if Lesbians grew up with each other in a Lesbian world. But Lesbians, unlike heterosexual women, grow up in total psychological isolation from each other. All we see is the heterosexual world and we must cope alone with our inner emotions as they gradually make their way into consciousness. Many of us fall by the wayside, some going through life in a completely heterosexual fashion, others finding only partial and unhappy solutions, and numbers of us finding fulfillment in a marriage of two persons who complete each other in equality and difference. What are some of the hazards awaiting the growing Lesbian?

Let us begin with the "tomboy." She is not as damned as the "sissy" boy, destined to become a more feminine homosexual, for females are not so important, and, anyway, she will outgrow it. I was a tomboy and will never forget, when in my 20's and upon meeting a grownup who had known me as a child, being complimented upon turning into a fine, i.e., 'feminine', woman. I was at the time playing the heterosexual to the hilt, dressed in a skirt, wearing lipstick, and acting like a lady rather in the fashion of an accomplished drag queen. That "compliment" had the flavor of an insult, though it was meant well and it did at least compliment my acting ability. I cannot say that all tomboys are butch Lesbians, but many are. There is a wide range of butchiness to begin with and the outward aspects of butchiness are variably modified by upbringing. The more "privileged" tomboy is apt to be far more pressured into learning to "act like a lady" than her freer, less "privileged", sister. The story of a friend of mine illustrates how tomboys or butch Lesbians are born, not made.

There are today a number of young women who, in the course of "consciousness raising" sessions in women's liberation, have come to realize they are Lesbians (have "come out", as the expression goes) or are wondering whether they might be. These are women who have, at least before joining women's liberation, experimented with heterosexual sex relations. In their

new-found Lesbianism they proclaim that butch/femme must go. They are hopelessly confusing the heterosexual relationship per se with its almost universal tendency to be a master/slave relationship and then to transfer this reprehensible aspect of heterosexuality over into Lesbianism. This ignores the fact that there are heterosexual marriages wherein the male/female attraction does not entail any master/slave, dominance/submission, superior/inferior connotations (all but such marriages are hard to find). For the real Lesbian, however, even such a fine heterosexual relationship is out of the question. Her inner nature makes impossible the enjoyment of sexual relations with any man. It does not follow that a polarity of attraction, whether male/female or butch/femme, must go. What these women seem to be seeking is "friendship plus sex" or an eroticized friendship. This is a far cry from a true marriage between a feminine and a masculine Lesbian.

The heterosexual, in her limited view of human relationships, imagines that it is biological sexual differentiation that determines the attraction of erotic love, that, if one woman is attracted to another woman, it must be an attraction of same to same — hence the word, homo-(Greek for same) sexual. But human beings are a good deal more complex and blindness to the very real difference, which might be called a psychosexual one, between butch and femme cannot make it go away. The persistent need to do so proves only that many Lesbians are still infected with heterosexual stereotyping, still confuse heterosexuality per se with female oppression. . . . Let us now ignore the heterosexual world and its problems and try to look at the Lesbian world as if it were the only one, or, like the sociologist, place the Lesbian at the "center."

This woman, during her childhood, would have made me look like a sissy. In her late teens she fell into the error of thinking herself to be essentially male, having, like all of us, only the models of male and female sex roles to go by. She dressed like a man and held her own with the 'malest' of them. This woman, unlike me, grew up virtually free of parental control and, while I went into a phase of trying desperately to be properly 'feminine', that is, typical female, she erred in the opposite direction. Then, around the age of 17, she came under the guidance of

an older Lesbian who pointed out to her the folly of her course. My friend tossed away her male costume and tried to be a woman. A few years later, dressed in a feminine suit, nylons and girdle, a frilly blouse, and a coquettish hat, she sat on a park bench waiting for a friend. Some minutes later a policeman tapped her on the shoulder and said, "Don't you know you can be arrested for impersonating a woman?" Amusing as this story is, it contains considerable truth. My friend was impersonating. When I met this woman she was in her 30's, she dressed comfortably, made no fuss one way or the other about being female, and was simply butch.

The essence of butchiness is interior, psychological, emotional — a form of psychosexuality as fundamental as heterosexual male, heterosexual female, or femme. Some butches are easily recognizable by outward manner and gesture by even the most naive heterosexual, but most have picked up from the prevailing culture outward behavior that makes "passing" easy. Only the experienced eye of another Lesbian can spot the little telltale gestures. A factor of consequence in this matter of behavior is the butch's own attitude toward herself. If early on she has fully accepted herself, she ceases to be concerned with every little gesture that might give her away. She presents a naturalness that offends no one despite her being thought of as a masculine woman. In contrast, the butch who fears herself, who is overly sensitive to the ridicule generally heaped upon the masculine woman, may suffer the torments of hell. Day in and day out she tries to disguise her inner masculinity, she may even manage to hid it from herself. To others she appears strange and unnatural. Though she has thoroughly accepted her Lesbianism, she knows not what to do with this tender masculinity hidden within her. In some instances this leads to her taking the role of the femme. This is a curious inversion of her true self, one that points out the reciprocity or mirror-image aspect of butch/femme. For the qualities of butch and femme are not opaque to each other — the butch senses the nature of the femme by what it is she seeks in another, and vice versa. An analogy might be the right and left hands. These two hands, though the same in most ways, are also the exact reversals of each other.

An interesting side light in this connection is the masculine, apparently hetero-

sexual, woman. There are some very masculine women who have never questioned their heterosexuality. And then something happens to such a woman that puts the fear of God into her — perhaps a Lesbian, taking this woman's "Lesbianism" for granted, assumes she is butch and says something to that effect. Overnight, such a threatened masculine woman may discard her masculine clothes, get her hair redone, and appear all frilly-feminine and unnatural looking. Many will insist that such a woman is heterosexual. No, this is an extreme case of denying one's self. So long as this woman was convinced of her heterosexuality, she was unaware of her masculinity. It is often easier to spot a Lesbian who does not know she is one, for in this state of ignorance of herself she does not know how to hide the truth. The Lesbian who knows herself also knows how to conceal it. This is sometimes carried to amusing extremes, as when Lesbians go to meet their Lesbian friends arriving from out of town and mingle with heterosexual women who are also meeting their women friends. The women who kiss each other are heterosexual. We have covered three possible errors butches may fall into: imitating men, denying their masculinity, or playing femme. These are errors in addition to the basic one of denying the reality of butch/femme altogether. What errors await the young femme?

She too is aware that there is supposed to be something unnatural about a masculine woman. If she is drawn to the masculine quality in a woman, that must mean she is really drawn to, or should be drawn to, a male, but she knows this cannot be. The least she can do, she thinks, is to try to feminize the butch of her choice. She is not denying her own masculinity, but her butch's masculinity. Another form this may take is that the femme denies and fears her femininity, since femininity in our culture is synonymous with inferiority. She early made up her mind, however unconsciously, that she would not be subjected to the feminine role (and rightly so as defined by heterosexuals) and now cannot accept herself as femme in the Lesbian relationship. She has it too firmly rooted in her mind that feminine (heterosexual type) equals passive and inferior. "PASSIVE?" Whether or not the words "passive" and "active" apply properly to heterosexuals, they do not describe the butch/femme Lesbian relationship. That so-called passivity can be

most active and that so-called activity becomes indistinguishable from passivity. One might say the butch is actively passive and the femme is passively active and make of that what you will.

More common than the butch who has accepted a femme role is the femme who fancies herself butch. This is not simply a denial of femininity. It is more often sheer confusion. If one is attracted to a woman, one must be masculine or man-like. And too, since femmes are indistinguishable from heterosexual women, the young Lesbian is not aware of any difference and imagines that all women (except Lesbians) want someone masculine or as male-like as possible. Like society in general, she has swallowed uncritically the notion that all Lesbians are mannish. This leads some femmes into pathetic role playing. It is written all over them that they are desperately acting a role, wearing a facade that is hopelessly out of place. And it happens that a loving Lesbian couple may consist of a butch playing femme and a femme playing butch. Each is acting out in herself what she desires in the other. This is not necessarily as bad as it sounds for, if they truly love each other and their relationship is a truly equal one, that they have their "roles" upside down is not fatal. But it is hard on each one as a complete person.

I look back with amusement to my early days in the Lesbian world when it seemed to me that there was a terrible excess of butches. How unfair that there should be only one femme for every five or more butches. In later years, again to my amusement, it began to look the other way around. So many butches were afraid to stand up and be counted that those of us who did . . . well. But all is well — nature provides. There is a butch for every femme and a femme for every butch.

To summarize so far: Put schematically, growing up Lesbian means first to come to know and accept one's attraction for women; then to understand and to know experientially the butch/femme reality; and lastly to know whether one is butch or femme. I question whether one could know butch/femme if one grew up entirely alone. This knowledge grows out of one's relations to others, particularly in a love relation. What one comes to understand is that a butch is as real, as ontological, a being as a heterosexual male. And so is a femme as real a being as a heterosexual woman. Just as a woman is not some kind of inferior

man, or male ~~manque~~, as Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas and Freud would have it, so a butch is no ~~imitation~~ male nor is a femme a woman whose motions have strayed in illness from their proper object, a male. We have, then, as fully equal and authentic types of human beings: femmes, butches, heterosexual women, and heterosexual men.* When I finally arrived at this simple existential truth that I, as a butch, am as fully valid as anyone else, a tremendous load was lifted from me.

We have shown that femmes and butches do indeed exist in their own right and not as distorted Lesbians caught up in aping heterosexuals. I cannot say that all Lesbians fall into these two categories nor is the answer to this of much importance. Ultimately every individual must try to find her true inner self however restrictive her society. But it helps to know what others have found to be their truth. It helps to know that the variety of authentic women is greater than heterosexual society would have us believe. I would like now to discuss more in detail the nature of the butch/femme relationships, as opposed to butches and femmes separately.

Since human beings are not disembodied spirits, they tend to express feelings growing out of their inner nature in outward behavior. Culture provides behavior molds and without culture a specimen of homo sapiens would not be human. A cultureless human being is a contradiction in terms, for our humanness can develop only in some cultural context. On the other hand, culture is confining and the more primitive the culture, the more confining it is. Ancient Greek culture was the most liberating culture for men that history has so far known because it provided fully for homosexual as well as heterosexual relationships. But its terrible restrictiveness on women was its limitation and the cause of the death of Greek civilization. Our American culture today is providing a slightly better milieu for heterosexual women, but it lags behind Greek culture in its frantic heterosexuality. Our culture provides no place and no molds or patterns for Lesbians. This is both a drawback, to put it mildly, and an advantage. Lesbians must work out their own patterns of behavior, a very difficult under-

taking, but we can do this in total freedom once we have set aside heterosexual model: as irrelevant. It is a bit ironic that the total condemnation of Lesbianism by a work that also proceeds as though we did not exist should, at the same time, provides us with total freedom, but so it is.

"The institution we call marriage can't hold two full human beings — it was only designed for one and a half." So says sociologist Andrew Hacker. He was, of course, referring to heterosexual marriage. The Lesbian butch/femme marriage can and usually does hold two full human beings. And this is not because it is a friendship arrangement wherein each partner respects the other as a person and agrees to play at sex from time to time, where each goes her own way but provides warmth and affection for the other, where both carefully divide the chores so that neither one gets stuck doing more of the menial. There is nothing wrong with such friendships. Anyone who has achieved so fine a relationship is fortunate indeed. But such a relationship is not a marriage. Nor can one say that a marriage, based on love and entered into for life on a monogamous basis is for everyone. What is so terrible today, among Lesbians and among women's liberationists, is the attempt to deny the beauty and authenticity of such lifelong, monogamous Lesbian marriages. Those of us who seek such a love or who have found it are supposed to be uptight, ensnared in the Judeo-Christian mythology of the "sanctity" of marriage (perverted from the heterosexual reality), unliberated spirits afraid of our sexuality. It is good that many women today are thinking about and experimenting with new patterns of living and loving. It is very bad that they are assuming that all old patterns of living and loving are wrong. The mutual love of a butch and femme is a very old pattern, and for some of us, the happiest.

A 'whole person' is yet not whole. Each of us seeks someone or some idea or God to complete us. The phrase 'whole person' does not mean an individual who has need of nothing and no one. Each of us needs more than herself, though we do not all need or want the same thing. A butch needs and seeks a femme for her completion. A heterosexual woman needs and seeks a man,

but, because of the oppression of women, finds that she must become that half person in the heterosexual marriage of one and a half. In her rage at so horrible a fate, she thinks that making her husband do the dishes while she tinkers with the car will somehow change things. Such solutions attack only the behavior, the symptoms, and not the basic disease. In a typical butch/femme relationship the butch will work on the car while the femme washes the dishes. Why does this in no way strain the relationship? Because neither the butch nor the femme has attached any inferior-superior significance to these activities. They are both chores necessary to the maintenance of the household. The butch does express her masculinity in car-mending activity, since that activity has a masculine connotation in our society and we all need to express ourselves in behavior. However, it may happen that the butch does not even drive, let alone know anything about a car. It may be the femme who has a knack with things mechanical. Sensible grownups will not quibble over who does what, for one's masculinity or femininity may be expressed in thousands of bits of behavior. Each Lesbian couple is free to decide upon its division of labor. Behavior itself is of secondary importance. If the butch has delusions of superiority, no amount of activity juggling will change anything.

There is something immature about heterosexual marriages and those butch/femme marriages that imitate them. How can there be a fulfilling love between a master and a slave, however subtle these distinctions may be? I think all of us can understand the pleasure there is in lording it over someone else. We can all fall into this human (not male or female) foible. But it is a far smaller pleasure than the joy of love, and one cannot have both at the same time with the same person. But love, the kind I am speaking of here, is not easy and there is no reason why it should be right for everyone. Any time one embarks upon a particular course, one at the same time foregoes many other courses. The truly monogamous Lesbian, butch or femme, is so not out of a morality picked up from the church or elsewhere, but out of a deep desire to dedicate herself to one particular other person. She simply does not enjoy promiscuity, or changing partners. Like the monotheist, who prefers one God to many, she prefers to be faithful to one person for life. And this in no way restricts her in

friendship.

On the contrary, being happily married, her freedom to choose friends is unlimited. She can choose as friend someone she could not stand to be married to. She need not worry about whether she should proceed to a sexual liaison of temporary or more permanent character, for her whole sexual life revolves around the person she loves. She may or may not have made this decision consciously, but in either case it frees her. She is made whole by her love, her marriage, and this wholeness gives her the freedom to grow into the fullness of her humanity. The femme is made whole in union with the butch she loves as the butch is made whole by her femme, a wholeness no amount of friendship can give them. I do not know how to put into words the difference between this Lesbian love and a friendship that includes sex. There is a kind of feeling between a butch and a femme in love with each other that is neither purely erotic nor purely friendly, though these feelings are present too. There is a total and liberating kind of possession, each of the other and each by the other.

(Editor's Note: Rita Laporte is in her late 40's and lives in the far west. She was educated at the Brearley School in New York City, the International School in Geneva, received her BA from Swarthmore College, and later a law degree from Boalt Hall, University of California at Berkeley. She served in the WAC during World War II, remaining in the enlisted ranks, after which she held a variety of menial jobs, the only employment available to female college graduates at the close of the war.)



HEY MAC, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

*Also included are male homosexuals, but I do not care to go into their problems with butch and femme, itself an interesting morass of confusion with the culturally assumed inferiority of women.

The Politics of Di Prima

By CAROL LYNN

Diane Di Prima is a contemporary revolutionary poet who has written a series of poems called "Revolutionary Letters." There are forty of them and they are all beautiful, necessary poems. None of them was written for beauty's sake only, as each has a message that must be heard and learned by every revolutionary and by those of us still undergoing radicalization. No poem bows to any poetic system created before Diane Di Prima or since, except for that simple, statement-like style of her own. Her rhythm moves along as she would have the revolution move, although Diane Di Prima is not unlearned of either the ways of the existing civilization or its poetic production, having written several books of prose and poetry. Among her other poetry titles are: *This Kind of Bird Flies Backward* (1959), *The New Handbook of Heaven* (1963), *Earthsong* (1957-59), and *Haiku* (1966).

The only place where I have found the forty "Letters" fully assembled is in *The Whites of Their Eyes*,* subtitled *Revolutionary Poems* (Seattle, Wash.: Craft Associates, 1970). The poems begin right after the title page of the anthology and continue for twenty pages. As this would indicate, the poems average half a page apiece. Some are quick, instructional near-chants which ask to be memorized for future use in revolutionary emergencies like number fourteen's "are you prepared / to hide someone in your home indefinitely / say, two to six weeks, you going out / for food, etc. . . ."

Others are descriptions and predictions of the situation thus far and fast approaching against which the poet feels we must revolt: "... the New York Times / takes a forest, every Sunday" (No. 16). And a few are songs of a revolutionary singing her emotions, or singing to evoke a revolutionary emotion in the reader. One of these ends, "better we should all have homemade flutes / and practice excruciatingly upon them, one hundred years / till we learn to / make our own music" (No. 31).

There is one tragedy in these poems. Perhaps Diane Di Prima has outgrown this tragic flaw since "Revolutionary Letters." In them we see a truly revolutionary spirit, strong with her goals, almost a person, expressing herself. By examining the con-

tent of her poetry, though, we can see how she fails herself and the revolutionary changes she desires through both sins of omission and commission.

In "Revolutionary Letters" number two, Diane Di Prima predicts that, "... thousands of sons / will see to it when you fall, you will grow / a thousand times in the bellies of your sisters." She here describes a division of labor, so to speak, wherein the sons provide the strength to keep everyone going. The sisters can only provide the multitudes of needed strong sons. And the sisters themselves will not initiate equally and coincidentally with men the continuance of their population. The men will "see to it."

Number six suggests that movement people "avoid the folk who . . . / want us to practice birth control". I cringe to hear her condemn herself to pregnancy after pregnancy; to a shorter life than she could use; to a diminished ability to fight. It seems that she, whom I hear calling "genocide" at "the folk," cries "suicide" to herself.

Instructions in number eight indicate that, in a demonstration, "earrings for pierced ears are especially hazardous." This first appeared to be the only advice she would give to her sisters to protect themselves from their objectification through self-decoration. And even this message is confused by the new dress of the male. She may have been addressing herself to both sexes after all.

"& no one 'owns' the land / it can be held / for use, no man holding more / than he can work, himself and family working". In this poem, number nine, it is good that she tells us man can only hold land, but so bad that only man can hold land. He and that extension of himself, his family and its size, define the amount he can hold. She could not see that the family as a whole should hold the land, if family has anything to do with it at all. Her sight was even more limited than this, for she did not see the obsolescence of the family in the revolution. In number four she spoke of how "people left to themselves" had no trouble sharing children, but we have seen by her acceptance of the family as the primary unit in terms of possession, or, in the projected society, non-possession, of material wealth, that this sharing situation would not be on a basic level, but would

occur perhaps temporarily or only on special occasions (she specifies a community gathering).

Number fourteen is subtitled "especially for chicks." I wonder if Diane Di Prima ever thought of herself as a "chick." I wonder if all the depth of her poetry is some sort of illusion, because I really just cannot see someone that strong and beautiful in her mind having "chick" as a self-image. Perhaps she lumped movement women together as chicks and believes that she is different, not realizing that all women are different. That would be easy to see. A woman still blind to her captivity would suppress the knowledge that she is a "chick" to compensate for feeling superior; that is, farther from the "chick" image and closer to that of movement men. If that is the case, then I can see that number fourteen is an exercise in playing the role she feels she has been given, especially in the line, including upper case letters, which instructs women to "KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT." It may have been a coincidence that she chose such an appropriate instruction to give her sisters and herself in this self-effacing exercise, an instruction for which men are infamous. She assumed that her sisters would be stereotypically more inclined toward dangerous verbosity than would her brothers.

"I will not rest / . . . till the young women / come into their own, honored and fearless / birthing strong sons / loving & dancing / till the young men can at last / lose some of their sternness, return / to young men's thoughts". She reinforces her view of sex-differentiated roles in number twenty. Everyone must be free, but free to fulfill their own function. The men must be free to think, while the women must be free to birth and love and dance. And the young women must be honored, something women's liberation also seeks, but this poet wants us honored for our procreative powers. Not only must we breed to be honored, but we must breed sons. These sons are the proof that women have an acceptable place in a revolutionary society. I cannot resist mentioning here exactly where this leaves Lesbians in the new world. Spurned, again, forced into hiding by another male dominated culture where women have one function and that function is parasitic to men.

In Letter number twenty-two the poet asks, "what do you want / your kids to learn . . . / do you care / if he learns to eat off the woods . . .". Again we find that

assumption of greater worthiness of the male in a revolutionary state. Her reference changes from "kids" to "he." With that sort of consciousness creating the revolution, women will not be expected to "[learn] to eat off the woods;" they will, as always, be able to, be expected to, rely on men to gather food and other necessities for them. And the whole pattern of the weaker, dependent sex will grow again. Diane Di Prima is ready to make that most basic mistake in a civilization again, setting up the same pattern for a divisive system of thinking. When that system is set, it blossoms, as we have seen and experienced. We have watched the pattern develop once first between sexes, then between other groups. It has been this fragmentation of society that has from the beginning put people against people. The poet's dream of a free and united world is self-defeating without a recognition of this first deterrent to that state. She has not realized that her line from number four, "left to themselves," has more depth than she can define.

Number twenty-seven includes the line, "... It is better / to lose & win, than win & be / defeated" said Gertrude Stein". Diane Di Prima does know some worth in women.

Were I to read what I would expect from a movement woman, I would have seen the version of number twenty-eight as I have taken the liberty of rewriting it. The original first verse reads:

O my brothers
busted for pot, for looting, for loving
young beautiful brothers & sisters,
for holding out hope
in both hands to the Man, enraging him
O my brothers, freaking out this
moment
this beautiful summer evening
in all the cages of America

The rewrite reads:

O my sisters
busted by tricks, or
shoplifting, learning
love for young beautiful sisters,
holding out hope
through your bodies from men,
enraging them
O my sisters, freaking out this moment
this beautiful summer evening
in the beds and kitchens
of America

"we are not alone . . ." asserts number

twenty-nine. "... they are waiting for us ... / goodmorning sister, let me work with you / goodmorning brother, let me / fight by your side". Whatever the intent of the poet, she divides again. She might be seeking to correct the division, but I cannot trust her enough, because of the rest of her poetry, to assume that is what she is attempting. I must assume it is a poem of brother greeting brother to "fight," the active, superior activity, and sister greeting sister to "work," in their passive, sedentary toil. I am suspicious: what is outlined in this poem is the way I was taught is the right way in middle class America.

Number thirty-four made me angrier than the other poems when I read, "... let's ... / teach the chicks / how to heal with herbs ...". It sounded as if Diane Di Prima was speaking to the whole movement until the "teach" line. "Let's" is, of course, the contraction for "let us" and in the poem there is an additional implied contraction of "Let us men." There is no way I can see to read the poem except as something written by a thoroughly conditioned, unquestioning woman who has accepted her place in a male-oriented society.

On one occasion, in number thirty-nine, she tells us, "... then I / went home and made love like a flower. like two flowers opening / to each other, the jewel in the lotus". It seems impossible that this woman, who has shown us how the movement men think of their women, who has abdicated her full humanity for the place allotted to her in the revolution, should be able to feel so equal to a partner in love making. Could she have experienced a man, in all the powerful majesty with which she endows men, opening to her? Could she even have experienced something so equal and trusting with a fellow slavish woman? Or was she hallucinating (she was tripping) and being led to a truth: that it was the equal opening of one person to another that she sought. She ended the poem at the Museum of Natural History (NYC) thinking, "WHAT BEAUTIFUL CREATURES USED TO LIVE ON THE EARTH." She had an acid hangover, another vision of the truly natural things she sought when all the creatures "left to themselves" (No. 4) thrived in an arena of no synthetic hierarchies. She says, "I have unlearned / regret" in number thirty-nine. I felt that she meant, instead, that she had unlearned trust of herself and of the very self-based messages that acid was releasing to her about

what she really wanted and what she had a right to get.

There is one other Diane Di Prima poem in the same anthology, "Goodbye Nkrumah" (Poets Press, 1968), which is not included in the "Revolutionary Letters." In it there is a passivity more far reaching than mere female socialization. "... it's their war," she writes, "all I can do is wait / is not put detergents in the washing machine, so the soil will still be productive / when the black men, or the Chinese, come to cultivate it." Diane Di Prima, in this poem, was rendered impassive by her whiteness and her womanhood when the latter, at least, held potential for the energies we now see striking at the barricades to liberation of all people. It is a sadder poem even than those in which she allowed herself the strictly defined function of her sex. If it was written before "Revolutionary Letters," as I suspect, then she has progressed at least to the point of recognizing that whites can be valuable instruments of change. Perhaps the next step in the progression will be a consciousness of the power of her womanhood.

Diane Di Prima cripples herself with her sex. She has obviously overstepped other boundaries drawn by her enemy, but she was, at the writing of "Revolutionary Letters," blind to the greatest boundary she had been set behind. Her role in the revolution of which she was so full, and which gave her so much strength and joy, was defined by the same rules which set up roles in the status quo world she would destroy.

Her aims were pure, her expression simple and commanding, but she did not protect herself from those less pure and less simple. She and the men she calls brothers had not finished exploring the bonds they sought to break. Probably she and those brothers would consider my criticisms counter-revolutionary and divisive in themselves. The woman, though, was talking in terms of laying her life on the line. If a woman is to cast her lot in with male revolutionaries, she should at least be certain that the life she is offering is worth something as a revolutionary force now and that it will be granted its full human value in the new society.

Should I be wrong about Diane Di Prima, or if she should have changed since the writing of these poems, I wait for her answer. My lone challenge has not the significance itself to spark a reaction from

her, but if she wants her poetry to mean what it could to those women who, like myself, discredit it through the faults in its content, she must answer somehow. My greatest hope for the poet Diane Di Prima and one of my greatest hopes for the literature of women's liberation, is that she, possibly the best of the revolutionary poets and certainly one of the best of all contemporary poets, will put the revolution of all women into poetry as powerful as that she has made for the whole liberation movement.

Why I Want a Wife

By JUDY SYFERS

I belong to that classification of people known as wives. I am A Wife. And, not altogether incidentally, I am a mother.

Not too long ago a male friend of mine appeared on the scene from the Midwest fresh from a recent divorce. He had one child, who is, of course, with his ex-wife. As I thought about him while I was ironing one evening, it suddenly occurred to me that I, too, would like to have a wife. Why do I want a wife?

I would like to go back to school so that I can become economically independent, support myself and, if need be, support those dependent upon me. I want a wife who will work and send me to school. And while I am going to school I want a wife to take care of my children. I want a wife to keep track of the children's doctor and dentist appointments. And to keep track of mine, too. I want a wife to make sure that my children eat properly and are kept clean. I want a wife who will wash the children's clothes and keep them mended. I want a wife who is a good nurturant attendant to my children, arranges for their schooling, makes sure that they have an adequate social life with their peers, takes them to the park, the zoo, etc. I want a wife who will take care of the children when they are sick, who arranges to be around when the children need special care, because, of course, I cannot miss classes at school. My wife must arrange to lose time at work and not lose the job. It may mean a small cut in my wife's income from time to time, but I guess I can tolerate that. Needless to say, my wife will arrange and pay for the care of the children while my wife is working.

I want a wife who will take care of my physical needs. I want a wife who will keep

*The Whites of Their Eyes is available by sending \$1.00 to Consumption, 4208 8th N.E. Seattle, Wash. 98105.

(Carol Lynk, poet, critic, short story writer, and frequent contributor to The ladder is married to another woman and happily bridges the worlds of her generation with those before her time and looks forward to our better futures.)



my house clean. A wife who will pick up after my children, a wife who will pick up after me. I want a wife who will keep my clothes clean, ironed, mended, replaced when need be, and who will see to it that my personal things are kept in their proper place so that I can find what I need the minute I need it. I want a wife who cooks the meals, a wife who is a good cook. I want a wife who will plan the menus, do the necessary grocery shopping, prepare the meals, serve them pleasantly, and then do the cleaning up while I do my studying. I want a wife who will care for me when I am sick and sympathize with my pain and loss of time from school. I want a wife to go along when our family takes a vacation so that someone can continue to care for me and my children when I need a rest and a change of scene.

I want a wife who will not bother me with rambling complaints about a wife's duties. But I want a wife who will listen to me when I feel the need to explain a rather difficult point I have come across in my course of studies. And I want a wife who will type my papers for me when I have written them.

I want a wife who will take care of the details of my social life. When my wife and I are invited out by my friends, I want a wife who will take care of the babysitting arrangements. When I meet people at school that I like and want to entertain, I want a wife who will have the house clean, will prepare a special meal, serve it to me and my friends, and not interrupt when I talk about the things that interest me and my friends. I want a wife who will have arranged that the children are fed and ready for bed before my guests arrive so that the children do not bother us. I want a

wife who takes care of the needs of my guests so that they feel comfortable, who sees that they have an ashtray, that they are passed the hors d'oeuvres, that they are offered a second helping of the food, that their wine glasses are replenished when necessary, that their coffee is served to them as they like it. And I want a wife who knows that sometimes I need a night out by myself.

I want a wife who is sensitive to my sexual needs, a wife who makes love passionately and eagerly when I feel like it, a wife who makes sure that I am satisfied. And, of course, I want a wife who will not demand sexual attention when I am not in the mood for it. I want a wife who assumes the complete responsibility for birth-control, because I do not want more children. I want a wife who will remain sexually faithful to me so that I do not have to clutter up my intellectual life with jealousies. And I want a wife who understands that my sexual needs may entail more than strict adherence to monogamy. I must, after all, be able to relate to people as fully as possible.

A Hard Row to Hoe

By LYNN FLOOD

Bike locked to a young tree outside the big stone house, Madeline met the old collie Sadie and walked along the flagstones to the doctor's home. "I feel good, Sadie, together, you know?" she told the dog silently as she rang the bell. Inside the window to the kitchen she could see movement, thought the doctor must be finishing his dinner, and reached down to pat Sadie's clean fur again.

The door opened and the doctor's skinny blonde wife, permanent nearly faded, face tired, met Madeline and the dog inside. "Go ahead in, the doctor will be there in a minute."

"Thank you," Madeline answered nervously, glad of the comfort Sadie lent leading her to the accustomed chair. She sat with Sadie at her feet and wondered, as she always did, if she was in the right chair, if the doctor always sat in the wooden rocker and the patient in the softer, yet not comfortable chair and if that meant anything.

"Hello, hello!" He walked down the steps to the little porch heavily, heartily, as if to shake her loose. Instead he went to the fireplace and poked an iron at the small

If, by chance, I find another person more suitable as a wife than the wife I already have, I want the liberty to replace my present wife with another one. Naturally, I will expect a fresh, new life; my wife will take the children and be solely responsible for them so that I am left free.

When I am through with school and have acquired a job, I want my wife to quit working and remain at home so that my wife can more fully and completely take care of a wife's duties.

My God, who wouldn't want a wife?

(Editor's Note: Reprinted by permission of the author from MOTHER LODGE, a San Francisco feminist publication. Lesbians who have made for themselves a female-centric world at least in their own personal living are sometimes not aware of the price heterosexual women pay. We are used to assuming we are special in our underprivileged status. This personal essay shows another facet in women's mutual struggle for human rights.)

glowing log. "A little chilly in here."

Madeline thought she must be the last patient of the day if he had not kept the fire going more. He sat down, smiling with the reassuring masculine grimace that made her suspect that he felt nothing at all and wonder if he was supposed to care, if she was supposed to care.

"Well, I think last time you were telling me about your creative writing course," he started.

"Yes." She paused, wondering what else to tell him about the course. She had told him everything, that the teacher was her friend now, that she wrote very freely for him, that he made literature more relevant to her than any other teacher ever had before. It wasn't any of his business that the teacher was gay, yet she felt she was supposed to tell him that. That's not what's important, she thought. He taught me just as well before I knew he was gay as now. All it means is that I can write gay stories now. I guess that makes it significant.

She offered, "I feel freer to write about real experiences since we got friendly."

"You and the teacher?"

"Yes."

"You like him as a person?"

"Yes. He's very - charming."

"Charming?"

"Yes. You know, he brings you out."

Oh shit, she thought, that does it. He knows it's on my mind. "He said I had a lot of violence in me. It shows in the writing."

"Well, I imagine you do. You see, Madeline, most people who hold back their natural impulses as much as you do can feel their frustration in one form or another. Violence is one of those forms. That is possibly what the man sees in your writing."

"I know. I feel it. I like to write it. And it, like, makes me feel like I won't do it. You know, get violent."

"I noticed you said that he makes you feel freer in writing about actual experiences."

She froze inside. "Yes."

"Madeline, you don't really know much about this man."

"No."

"Sometimes we should be more careful than we would like to be in telling people, in any manner, about ourselves."

"Yes."

"He could, unintentionally of course, be very harmful to you if certain facts about yourself were in the open."

"It's okay, he's gay."

"I thought he might be," the doctor smiled, nodding. "Why were you so hesitant to tell me?"

"Because it's no big thing. He is, I am, that's all. It just means that I can say what I want to say more openly. It all doesn't have to hide behind symbols. That's all. I didn't want to make anything of it. He's my teacher. It doesn't make any difference what we are."

"Of course. The teacher-student relationship is all-important in this case. I see what you are driving at. To you he's just a man."

"No. He's not that either. He's a person."

"Excuse me, I meant man in the sense of 'person,' mankind, as it were."

"I'm sorry, I didn't realize that's what you meant."

"It's an easy mistake to make."

They sat in silence for a while. Madeline avoided looking at the stocky, suited man with the Kennedy haircut on his rocking chair. She tried to glance backwards outside the window to his backyard. It was a big yard. His son, about sixteen, came outside

just then with a saw. He went to one tree, then another, and stopped at a third where he began sawing at a dead lower branch.

The doctor roused himself from rocking and, saying nothing, left the room. Madeline looked back into the room. She could hear kitchen sounds under the sawing. The fire still glowed. The bookcases stood respectably around it. The sawing suddenly stopped. He must have yelled at his kid. No, he wouldn't have yelled. Just asked him to stop. And the kid would have been very well adjusted and stopped, feeling no resentment that his father's business life should interfere with his own free time. Was that possible, she wondered. She reached down and patted Sadie's still sleeping head. The doctor was returning. Will he explain why frustration turns to violence?

"Have you seen Jim this week, Madeline?"

"Yeah, between classes."

"No long phone calls?"

"No, I've been writing too much."

"You asked him not to call?"

"No, he just knows I'm really doing writing."

"He's very understanding."

"He's got his own things to do. His experiments. They've named the lab rats. I think he's getting very involved with them."

The doctor laughed in his "ho-ho-ho" fashion. "But you haven't had a chance to be with him for any long period of time."

"No."

"You don't mind?"

"I don't care. I'm busy."

"Are you? Do you spend much time with your teacher?"

Madeline did not answer. I stop seeing any girls except platonic ones and now he's going to tell me I shouldn't hang around with a man because he's gay.

"It would be a shame, Madeline, to invest too much of your time in a superficial relationship with someone not of your age or even, probably, your interests when there is a boy with whom we have seen you can develop very deep feelings."

But what about writing. Madeline thought. What if my teacher can make me learn all the stuff I want to know but don't even know enough to ask. Jim's a scientist. I'll see him, damn it, but I don't want to see him all the time. Or, am I avoiding him cause I'm scared of a relationship? Am I hanging around the English department cause I want to get back with gay things? I'm not supposed to do that.

"Well, Madeline, I see our time is up for today. I'll see you next week?"

"Yes."

"Is the same time all right with you?"

"Yes. Thank you." Sadie got up to go out with Madeline, but the doctor ordered her to sit down. He walked Madeline to the door and let her out formally.

Always, she thought, it feels like he's teaching me how to have a door opened for me. Oh, poor doggie inside, I don't feel so strong now. Maybe I should cut creative writing tonight and see Jim. Maybe he's right. I'm supposed to work on it harder with him. Maybe he's right.

"Maddy, it's for you."

"Tell him I'll be right down."

"Hey, Jim, she's coming. Okay. Where're you going, Mad?"

"Why the Sweetheart Ball, darling thing."

"Come on. I don't know who it'd be harder to get there, you or Jim."

"Me."

"Probably."

Kathy was just a dormitory hang-around type. She watched people come and go and made sure they had someone to hold their heads when they got drunk. She seemed to love to get Madeline off, possibly because it offered such a great opportunity for criticism. "Don't you think Jim'd like you a little better in makeup, Mad?" she would ask at times. Tonight she plied her victim with a series of questions.

"Why don't you shock him and wear a dress this time? You've got such a good figure, except you're too skinny. I guess he thinks you look good in anything. But isn't it easier in a skirt?"

"Shut up, Kathy."

"I can't believe you never did it with him."

"He's shy."

"Why don't you seduce him?"

"I don't want to."

"You must."

"Listen, Kathy, I got to find a book of poems for him. You look on my roommate's shelf, okay? It's called the *Imagist Poem* or something and it's got swans on the front."

"Is he a fag, Mad? I mean all this poetry and not screwing and everything."

Madeline felt herself reddened. "Here it is. No, he's not a fag. I like poetry. I'm just trying to teach him to like it. He likes rats

and we go watch them run through mazes, so he's got to read some poetry. Bye. Hope your blind date is nice."

"That doesn't matter, long as he's a guy! See you later!"

Madeline escaped to the stairs but slowed to go down them. I couldn't wear a skirt with him, she thought. I'd feel too vulnerable. But he hadn't tried too hard. The doctor kept talking about "affectional," "warm" relationships. I guess he figures me and Jim have one. Shit, I'm not even aggressive physically with girls. How could I be with guys?"

She signed out, left the dorm and ran up the hill to Jim's '54 Ford. He opened the door from the inside for her, only because it didn't open from the outside. Without greeting each other they both started pushing from inside the doors until the car started rolling down the hill. Then they jumped in and Jim got the ignition going while Madeline slammed her door until it shut. When Jim got his shut, he said "Hi."

"Hullo. I think my doctor thinks we should be affectionate."

"Why didn't you tell me that before we got the car started?"

"Guess I didn't want to do anything about it. Nothing personal. But you can't just have a relationship by the book. Which reminds me. I have that book for you - the one with the short poetry I told you about."

"Uh huh. Want to go see George and Hilda first?"

"Can you get in the lab now?"

"Yep. Got my key today."

"Wow. Jim's getting to be very important to the psych department. Okay, I want to be formally introduced."

In the lab Madeline watched Jim put George and Hilda through their paces. He wasn't a bad looking guy. But his lips are so big. And his cheeks scratch. I don't want to, she thought. It's my business who I make love to. He could just be the wrong guy. Or I could be stalling. It's not fair. I just went to the damned doctor to find out why I am who I am. Not to change what I am. But, damn it, he has to think that's why I'm having trouble. Why I keep getting in trouble. Cause I don't want to be who I am. Probably just thinking of Jim's needs anyway. Identifying with him. I just don't want to do it.

"What's next, Madeline?"

"Everything."

"Should we go over to the Grandview?"

"I guess. It's kind of early to get drunk. though."

"That's all right. We'll go for a ride later so we don't stay there all night."

"Yeah, okay." They often went for "rides" after. If it were not for Jim's considerate tactics, that would have finished their relationship long ago. He's inoffensive, she thought. Harmless . . .

They left the Grandview early. Madeline's tension had made her drink more quickly than usual. She was feeling good, just this side of sick drunkenness. Jim would not let her help push the car though. afraid she would stumble and end up under the wheels.

"You think I'm drunk."

"No, Madeline. If you were drunk I'd take advantage of you."

"But you're gallant, so you'll take care of me instead."

"Right. Come to my pad and we'll make coffee for you."

"Why? I feel good. I don't want to get sober."

"What the hell. It's cold out anyway."

Uncaring, she decided it was okay. Jim wouldn't. I've been there sober and he didn't. It's okay.

They pulled up to his slum apartment and parked in the junk strewn yard. The air was very clear. The stars moved around them.

"Jim, you really expect me to make it up all those steps?" He lived at the top of a rickety tenement whose stairs crisscrossed above them in the dark against the windows shaded by tattered colorful curtains. Jim put his arms around her where she leaned against the car.

"I'll catch you if you fall."

"Uh-uh. You'll help me fall." He was just holding her and she still felt good. A little dizzy, but aware of the beautiful night. She felt intense and full of energy. Jesus, I wish I was with a girl. That's bad. Jim is good to be with. His lips were on her neck. She felt that. She felt a little warmth inside. Hey, wow, she thought, maybe he's getting to me. A man and woman began to scream at one another in Spanish from the tenement.

Jim pulled back. "Let's go up. It's cold out here." They did attempt the stairs, Jim behind Madeline to push her forward if she swayed back. Once inside Jim lit the burners on the stove and oven for heat. They

stayed at the stove for a few minutes of thawing. Then Jim went to the refrigerator and took out two cans of beer.

"This is it, Madeline."

"Guess we can't just let them sit there."

They moved to the long narrow living room with their coats still on. Madeline sat on a ragged chair whose springs she could feel as she sat. They had two hours before curfew. Jim stood over her, drinking his beer.

"I feel so full. Why do you make me drink this stuff?" He just smiled and sat at her feet. After a while he put his head against her leg. She was reeling and her mind was numb from the new beer and very aware of her body. It felt good to have someone touching her. She made the effort to reach out and touch the back of Jim's neck. He didn't move. She let her fingers move up the back of his head into his slightly long hair. I'm forgetting this is Jim, his hair feels like a girl's. I've got to be careful. He could get excited or whatever they do. But I feel it. If he could be a girl.

Jim turned, putting down his beer can, and pulled Madeline to him. She fell into his lips and accepted their touch. It was still exciting, not like being with Jim, but she wasn't thinking anymore, just feeling, forgetting who and how. She kept her eyes closed, did not want to see him, pretended enjoyment when their final union commenced. By that time, though, she was completely numb and had to keep awake to simulate response. Her only thoughts were wonder that this was supposed to be the way. How could a man make love to a woman? How could they be expected to know what to do, what women really liked. And had she wanted to increase his pleasure she did not know how, either. Two women can be strangers, she thought, but they have a common base of knowledge. This is ridiculous. What has it got to do with me? Why am I supposed to want it?

This time the doctor opened the door himself and showed Madeline and Sadie in. They all sat in the same ceremonious fashion and were silent for a long while.

"Well, Madeline, did you have a pleasant weekend?"

"I guess. I wrote most of it. I saw Jim Friday night. I don't want to see him anymore."

"Why is that, Madeline?"

She concentrated once more on how to say it. "I don't know. I guess I'm just not

attracted to him. I mean, I like being with him, but it can't just stop at that."

"Why should it, Madeline?"

"For the reason I just told you. I don't seem to be attracted to him."

"I am pleased to see we have gotten to the heart of the subject under discussion so soon."

"Yeah, I guess that is the heart. Only it's not a very interesting one. He just doesn't turn me on. I don't see why I should pretend that he does."

The doctor was silent, as if formulating a profound response. His son was behaving today, but Madeline got a glimpse of his younger blond-haired daughter running around the corner of the house toward the kitchen. Now she'll watch her mother make supper, just like Sammy saws trees. The basic primeval family. He must be very secure.

"Sometimes, Madeline," the doctor began, beating his fist on the arm of his rocker as he talked, "we must give ourselves a chance to learn new feelings. To do this, of course, we must at the same time unlearn old ones. Until they are less present in our minds we cannot give new feelings a fair chance to express themselves."

"Why get rid of old feelings?"

"We are not speaking about 'getting rid of' feelings, merely transforming them, Madeline. Certainly we can never 'get rid of' anything we have experienced as intensely as you have experienced your feelings of the past."

"They're not of the past."

"That is why we cannot merely speak of them as past, but must continue to deal with them in the present. Until we have dealt with them with the full respect which we owe to those strong feelings, we cannot expect to experience the new ones you seem to have been seeking to feel."

Madeline said nothing. Not seeking, thinking I have to feel them, doctor. No, I don't expect any automatic switchover, but the idea of any switchover doesn't appeal to me.

"We'll have to be more patient, Madeline. This is all very confusing to a mind in the midst of change as yours is, so we must go step by step. Perhaps you should not impulsively write Jim off your list quite yet," he ho-ho-hoed.

"Okay." Is he right? Do I want to change? "But I get a break this weekend, anyway. An old friend asked me down to New York and I can get an overnight out of the dorm. I really want to see her because

she's been going through some things too and we've always helped each other in the past."

"The decision is yours. I am not sure that this is the most advantageous time to return to 'old friends' and old environments but if you feel you must help her, I will not interfere with your sense of responsibility. As a matter of fact, I am pleased to see that you are acting out of just that sense."

Christ. "I feel I should go."

"What have you told Jim?"

"Nothing."

"You haven't talked to him?"

"I didn't want to say anything to hurt his feelings until I could think of how to say it best."

"Well, that is good. Very good. Perhaps your hesitation over words reveals a reluctance to act out your hasty decision."

Your hasty decision. Sadie got up and began to lick Madeline's hand. Madeline patted her.

"Down, Sadie. Sit," the doctor ordered in as deep and calm a tone as he used with Madeline. "Sit, girl. That's good, stay down. No? Then come over here. That's right." He patted her somewhat roughly and she stayed. "Good Sadie. Good Sadie."

"I've been reading a lot of sociology," Madeline tried to begin again.

"Yes, I remember you were taking two courses in it."

"We've been doing the looking glass theory in one class. It really makes sense. I mean, puts things together. I can see how people relate to each other in some cases."

"Yes, I hope we can continue to talk on that line next time we meet. I see our time is up for today. I would warn you, however, not to put too much faith in one sociological view of things."

"No, no. Of course not. I just meant I never saw things that way before."

"Good, good," he led her to the door. "Goodnight, Madeline."

"Goodnight." She walked slowly to her bicycle and unlocked it. Is he right? Am I just doing things blindly? What's going to happen with Toni? If Cassidy's away . . . Maybe I shouldn't, though. I'd just be comparing Jim unfavorably. Would that be fair to him? To whom? Why should I be fair? I know what I want. But the doctor says I want something different. Does he know me better than I do? She got on her bike and started back to school. Shit, shit, shit.

* * *

They were going to a bar called The Territorial on 125th Street. It was a long subway ride with many stops into the drizzling night to pick up members of the party. Finally all assembled there were only five — Harve and Joshua, Toni and her current lover Cassidy and Madeline. They stood waiting for admittance outside a prohibition-type door. The four Madeline was with were regulars and the forbidding door opened almost immediately for them. They paid the fee that would cover ice and mixers and were shown to their reserved table where they set up the bottles they had brought.

The Territorial was nearly empty that early in the evening, and the five sat trying to be funny for one another. Toni was dividing her time between placating Cassidy and talking to Madeline while the boys continued their affected routines. Madeline was fascinated by Joshua, a beautiful black man with the grace of a respectable fairy and the sensibility of an untrained poet. Later, he promised, he would show her his poetry.

"He's so talented," Harve boasted.

"It's all for you, baby," Joshua answered, kissing Harve's broad hand. Harve was a nice Jewish boy from the Bronx, heterosexual before he met Toni, but on meeting and falling in love with her, he had somehow confused her sexual predilections with his own desires and ended up with Joshua. They were a beautiful hopeful couple who had not merely passed in the night but were somehow held together by each other's determination; Joshua's to become what he called respectable through his clerical job and to escape from Harlem, Harve's to get out of his mother's house in the Bronx and to become a successful salesman. They were a happy background for the convoluted conversation of the other three.

"Okay, children, here's the ice," Cassidy announced. "Anybody for a drink?"

Madeline had been waiting for her escape to what she hoped would be relaxation and watched Cassidy mix her a strong screwdriver.

"Essential to a happy evening," Madeline announced, drinking largely and trying to ignore the taste.

"College kid, big words, right?" commented Harve.

Toni quickly defended Madeline's mistake. "She always talked like that. In Junior High she was talking like that. You got to

remember, Mad, we're with a bunch of slobs who don't know the Statue of Liberty from their ass."

"I'm sorry. But you have to remember, I don't get to hang around with real people much."

"We're real?" Cassidy asked.

"Yeah. More real, it feels like, than kids at school. First of all, they're not gay."

"I see your problem," Cassidy sympathized.

"So I don't have much to talk to them about really. I mean all we can talk about is school. The life they're really living is just different from mine." Madeline was refilling her drink.

Toni asked, "You still seeing that guy? Can't you talk girl talk, little femme?"

"Shit, I don't know how. Besides, that's different. Jim and I aren't like the kids that make out at the dormitory door every night."

"Why? You too good for the college kids, too?"

"Toni, don't pick on me. It's just different."

"You sleep with him yet?"

Madeline drank several gulps in succession and answered, "You haven't told me how you and Cassidy got together yet." Toni seemed to get the message and she and Cassidy launched into an affectionate report of their active intrigue of parent-dodging and very little privacy.

"One night, Mad, we just gave up, copped some bread and holed up in the Hotel Earle in the Village."

"And I'm never bringing a girl there again. Especially not my Toni. She's too good for a dump like that."

Toni turned away from Cassidy's arms. "It was bad. Roaches. Cardboard walls. How do you make it in college? Those little boxes you live in. They looked like hotel rooms when I saw them."

"I don't, Toni."

"Oh, right, you got your boy to take care of you," taunted Cassidy.

"Hey, Cass, honey, they started the jukebox! Dance with me? Do you mind staying here with the boys, Mad?"

"No, no."

"Listen," interjected Joshua, "I haven't been with my lover here for two weeks now, so we're going to jump in now. You sit this one out, Madeline, and I'll show you how a real lady dances. Okay?"

"I need to learn, Joshua. Go ahead."

Madeline was left with the end of her

second drink alone in what seemed then to be the only empty space in the bar. The dance floor was not crowded at that point and she watched the couples in these, the preliminary lovers' bouts of the evening. Wow, they're all so beautiful together. Aware of each other. Fraternity dances. What a difference. A whole different morality. Must make us freer in some way to be gay. Not date, dance, try to make. Just a continuum of lovemaking. Wrapped in each other because that's all they want. The whole place moving to one rhythm. No wasting time on other things. A kind of communality of the soul. What real marriage is supposed to be.

She finished her second drink and mixed another one. Then she looked around. Weird place. Got to remember this for a story. The dance floor was huge with beams from the floor to the ceiling. There was a balcony around the room so that the ceiling was two stories high. Small tables were around the balcony and beginning to fill up with the overflow from downstairs. Be nice up there, watching all the lovers. Oh god, this is my life. I'm happy here. I don't want to think why. But I have to because it messes up the happiness thinking the doctor would say . . . What would he say? "Madeline, you are happy there because you are protected from your own inclinations. All those people reinforce the war you wage against yourself." Is that true? Is that?

Toni and Cassidy came back to the table. Madeline looked for Joshua, but he and Harve did not look as if they were going to miss the slow song that was playing.

"Come on, don't look so sad. I'm going to give up Toni just this dance. Go ahead, Mad."

"Thanks, Cassidy."

Madeline and Toni walked to the floor. Madeline felt awkward.

"I forget how."

"I'll show you, baby." Toni said into her ear as she put her arms around Madeline.

The third drink had made Madeline forget her defenses. She stumbled in a rush of pure feeling that Toni's whisper and her closeness had evoked.

"So say something, Madeline."

"I miss you, Toni."

"You don't act it."

"I'm going through some things."

"Yeah, so am I. I want out with Cass."

Madeline pulled back in surprise. "Why, Toni? I thought, I mean, you look like you're really enjoying each other."

"Mad, Mad. I don't know. Maybe I should've gone to college, too. This scene down here is so different. Cass is just plain dumb. All the girls are dumb. I know there's got to be different people somewhere. I was hoping you'd meet some at college."

"Well, I did meet one guy, a teacher, but he's older."

"I mean someone to make it with. That you can talk to, too. Like we did."

Madeline tried to pull herself together. Was this another of Toni's bullshit lines to keep her on her string, or was it something more important? For a quick minute Madeline had a cloudy vision of some sort of compromise, a state between what she had known and what the doctor was trying to teach her. A "healthy" relationship with a girl with her own qualities. But Toni's problem.

"You shouldn't compare, Toni. Different people are just different. Just enjoy her for who she is, not for who or what she isn't."

"What do you know about it? All you know is boys since you went to school."

"That's not true. Hey, Toni, there's been more than one girl since you for me."

"But you didn't stick with them. You went on to your lover boy."

"It's just since I started in therapy, Toni."

"Junk the shrink. When my parents had me going, the guy didn't try to make me go straight. He just wanted to straighten me out."

"I wish I could just junk him."

"Why can't you?"

"Because I'm afraid I should listen to him."

"What the hell for? You're all messed up, baby. You were nervous before you went to college, but I never saw you like this."

"Toni, we're into our second dance. Cassidy's going to wonder." Toni held her tighter for a moment and, turning her back on Cassidy, bent to kiss Madeline's neck, saying, "I wish I had just one night with you. That'd straighten you out."

"Probably would, Toni."

"What did you two do out there? Get married?"

"Sorry, Cass. We got a lot to talk about."

"So talk to me. Hey, Maddy, you ain't going to drink that straight?"

"Why not?" Madeline had the vodka bottle to her lips and poured the acrid stuff into her mouth. Why am I doing this? Just like in the movies. I need it. I don't want to think.

"Hey, girls, we're back!" It was Joshua and Harve, holding hands. "This big man's going to release me for our dance, little one. Come on."

Joshua led Madeline to the floor and they began to dance to a fast Spanish song. After the first song, Toni, Cassidy and Harve joined them and they all danced as one couple. Madeline felt in the way and left them to break up into couples while she poured herself more straight vodka.

She sat at the table, watching the movement. The lights had been made lower. Couples were embracing at the tables. Madeline was drunk. She knew it. She sank down into the bench. The movement made her dizzy. Cassidy and Toni were coming back.

"You okay, Mad?"

"Going to be sick. Sorry. Bathroom." Cassidy pulled her out around the table and rushed her to the bathroom where Madeline was sick.

"Wake up, Mad," she heard. She was in the bathroom, still. Cassidy and a stranger were pulling her to a sink. She was screaming and sobbing.

"You don't want to kill yourself, Maddy. You're just drunk," Cassidy was saying over and over.

"Kill myself?" She wondered what she had been saying, if she had been loud.

"Sorry, Cassidy, I never did this before. I'm really sorry."

"Stop crying. This'll make you better." Cassidy pressed cold wet paper towels on her face.

"I don't know what's wrong, Cassidy. What's wrong? Did I really say I wanted to kill myself? Maybe I was right. Why didn't you let me?" All she felt was pain, one huge agony in her mind. I would rather die than keep feeling this.

Cassidy helped her to stand. "You're just drunk, Maddy."

"No, it's more than that."

"I know, but think about it when you're sober. Not now."

"You're good, Cassidy. You're smart. I'm not thinking. For you I'm not thinking. But I can't help feeling." They were going through the dancers.

"Hey, Tone, let her sit between us."

"Can't sit up."

"Okay, lie on my lap."

"I'm sorry, sorry."

"It's okay," Cassidy answered in a soothing tone. Maternally, she stroked Madeline's head. Madeline fell asleep and Cassidy's hand was less maternal when she woke. Too out to pretend, she just enjoyed the touch. Toni was near. Touching her, too, soothingly. A woman's hand. Her lap. My body. I can trust myself to them.

Later, Harve walked Madeline outside to clear her head.

"You'll stay at my parents' house with me tonight, Mad."

"Okay, Harve. I won't be any more trouble. I promise."

"That's all right. It'll be closer than anyone else's place except Joshua's. But I'm not sure you'd be welcome there."

"Right. And Toni's mother would kill her if she brought me home again."

"How do you feel?"

"Better, Harve, thanks. I got to thank all of you." Something was running through her head. "But the pain in here . . ." Bob Dylan. He knew it. "But the pain in here . . ." — no — "And it was raining from the first and I was dying there of thirst, so I came in here. And your long time curse hurts, but what's worse is this pain in here. I can't stay in here . . ." She takes just like a woman. Yes, she does. She makes love just like a woman. She aches just like a woman, but she breaks just like a little girl."

"We'll go back up. Okay, Mad?"

It was unprecedented having the doctor come to the dormitory. But her friends did not know what else to do. She had not moved nor spoken in hours. No one had to know he was a psychologist.

He sat on her bed. She panicked. Stopped willing herself dead. Everyone else who had tried to make her hear was just a buzz, like flies. She was frightened now.

"Madeline, I've come to help you."

She began to cry. He took her in his arms. He had broken the dam. "What is wrong, Madeline?"

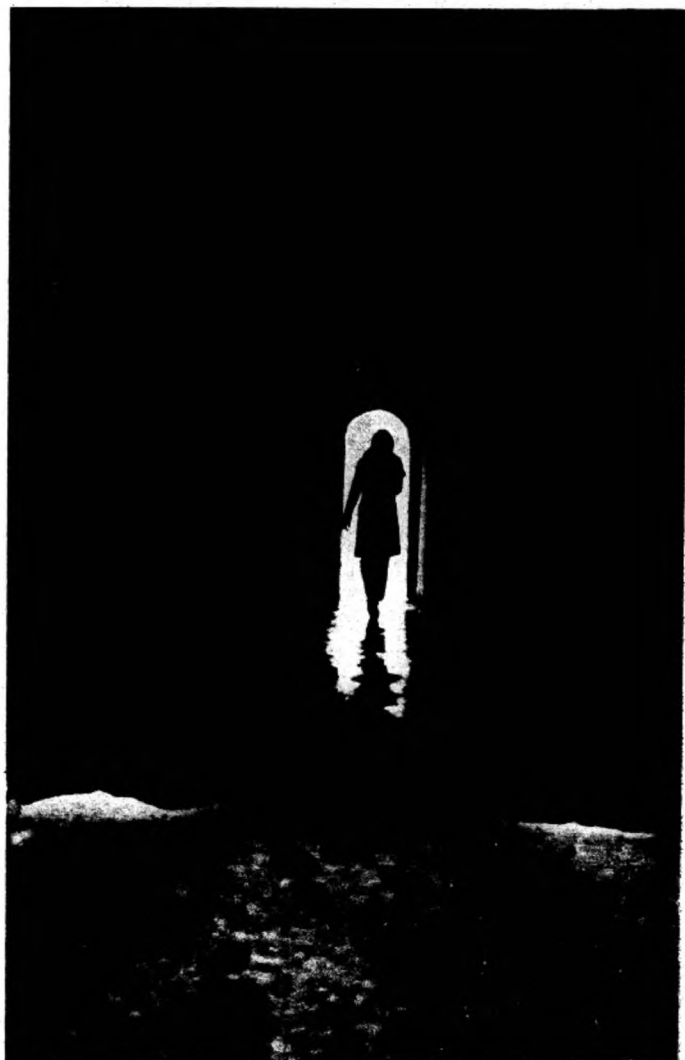
She shook her head. She wanted to groan. She held it in. "I guess I'm just upset."

"I guess you are. You'll be all right now. You come to see me tomorrow and we'll make arrangements for us to meet every day if necessary."

Madeline nodded. He left her. Her friends came back in one at a time and she tried to stay strong enough to reassure them. Then they left her to sleep. She dreamed of a room where two walls were closing toward her. Each had a door that was open. She had to choose. Someone was exposing her to both walls, not letting her walk straight ahead, not helping her out. The walls came closer to her. She knew the right wall, but someone was yelling at her not to touch it, it would burn her, it was hot. He was wearing a dark suit. She tried the other wall and it, too, exuded heat. She

turned her back to him and walked between the walls toward the other end.

(Editor's Note: The story is true . . . and nothing has been changed to protect the guilty. Therapy in this country all too often means "adjust to fit the system". This woman was lucky. Today she is an adult happy Lesbian, married to another Lesbian, and well established in her working living world. How many others walk this corridor and do not come back to life?)



Selected Poems from SAPPHO '71

Harriette Frances was born in San Francisco and now lives in San Rafael, California. She received her art education at California School of Fine Arts and the San Francisco Art Institute. Known primarily as an artist, having exhibited since 1960 and having won 51 awards including the James D. Phelan Award in Art (1965), it is especially delightful to present her work as a poet. Since 1960 she has had 27 one-woman shows in California, Nevada and Texas. Her most recent show opened at the Contemporary Gallery in Dallas, Texas, in May 1971.

Her drawings have been featured in half a dozen U.S. and Canadian magazines and she has given art shows on TV and also read her poetry on educational TV in Sacramento, California.

Her poetry has appeared in NEW ATHENEUM, CARAVAN and VECTOR. These poems are from her first poetry collection, SAPPHO '71, San Francisco, Donahue/Arlington, 1971. The book is illustrated by the author, combining her talents.

SAPPHO '71 can be purchased from SAPPHO '71, 95 Sunny Oak Drive, San Rafael, California 94903, for \$2.50.

S.O.S.
(Save Our Soapboxes)

She slicks her hair back, pulls the zipper
On her fly-front pants and goes to work
In a factory, where no one gives a damn
What she wears, so long's she does her job.
She's been there twenty years, has a position of
Responsibility and trust, well-liked by everyone.
She cares about them all, who need her care;
They seek her out to tell their grievance to.
The women all relate to her, the men take her to lunch,
They are all half-in-love with her
And couldn't tell you why; but it's because
She PUBLICLY and PRIVATELY and VOCALLY
And ACTIVELY GIVES A DAMN, about everything
That makes this country sick:

Poverty
Pollution and
Power-politics,
Prejudice
Perniciousness,
Injustice, racism and
WAR;

Her eyes reflect her caring, her talents are bent
To it, and yet.
At night, in the privacy of our room, when she comes
Into my so willing arms, and bends to meet
My needing and her own she then becomes

A
MENACE
TO
ALL
DECENT
PEOPLE,
EVERYWHERE!

PHANTOM MAN

What happened, see,
Was that you kicked those words around
Like the can
in that game kids played
When I was young.

Shit, man, I got tired
Of being "It"
Always looking
and looking, and finding
Only the goddam words.

Where were you hiding?
All those years? It doesn't matter now
Where,
Or from what,
Or from whom.

I got me a woman now
And her vocabulary's in her guts;
She never hides
And we
Do not play games.

NOT WHO I AM

Because the nine-to-five scene
Insists on my deception
Wants only the
Myth of me
And not who I am,
Because my nine-to-five friends
Insist on my meeting
The men who will
Think I am
Not who I am,
I carry my hidden self
Heavy, from nine-to-five
And in your six-o'clock
Arms I can
Lay my self down.

IT TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE

You did not choose to stand
Naked before me
At that awful reception
In that hot crowded room.

You did not choose to be
All that I saw
In that one glance that stripped you
Of your need for pretense.

I did not choose to prove
The truth of that adage
It was not my intention
To live a cliché.

But god how I know you!
Naked before me
In the arms of our loving
Where you also
know
me.

ULTIMATUM

This is the last time that
I'll ever race to you,
Forcing your unwilling arms,
Breathing the word "beloved"
In your unhearing ear,
Thrusting my thin cold hands
In the torn pockets of your love
Tearing the shirt your heart wears,
Clawing the nakedness beneath
To touch your full, unyielding breasts
And consummate these years of caring
That climaxes in poetry
And digs its nails into your silences
But leaves no scar on your unfeeling flesh.

FOREST FIRE

I touch you and your eyelids glow
And fire spills down from both your eyes
To the twin lips I kiss, below
The tangled forest at your thighs.

PARADOX

It was a really heavy affair;
I dug him — but there was always something,
I didn't know what, dividing us. We live
In the same world, spoke the same language.
Until I met her, I never made comparisons
But, looking back, when I took my problems to him
He'd say, "Honey, I understand" and she
Says, "Baby I know where your head is at,"
And he'd say, "Let me love you" while she
Smiles and says "Let's fuck", but the paradox
Is, that HE always fucked me — and SHE and I make love.

DAWN AND DUSK

She turns, her thigh moves from my own;
Her hands, slowly,
Leaving my breasts, become
Busy with covers, clothes
And coffee;
And I, sleepily, await
Her scrubbed six a.m. face,
Pepsodent mouth,
Her sitting-beside-me smell
Holding the hot coffee-cup
While her eyes hold mine and say
I love you.

I busy myself, while she is gone,
With paints and poetry
Until tonight
When she returns, tired
And hungry. And the miracle is,
I can revive her
With a poem
And feed her with a painting
And when she is surfeited,
We will lift forks
With orange fingers,
And full hearts,
And eat our dinner for dessert.
We will talk
About everything, and mean
I love you.

INSOMNIAC

I wonder how many
other fools
sit up at four-o-five a.m.
in beds ninety-nine & 1/100ths per cent
pure loneliness
and one one-hundredths wrinkled sheets,
Half-crazed with poetry
and needing only
a small miracle of words
to make love scan
and sleep
certain.

CRUISING

In the dim light, half indigo,
I say, "Buy you a drink?"
And mean, my god I miss her, but
You'll do,
At least until the morning catches us,
Naked around our needs.

Book Review By Hope Thompson

A quick way to judge a women's liberation anthology is to look at the back for its list of pertinent journals. If *THE LADDER*, the oldest such magazine, is omitted, you can be sure that most of the contributors are primarily heterosexual and still far from grasping the essence of female liberation. *VOICES FROM WOMEN'S LIBERATION* edited by Leslie B. Tanner, New American Library, Inc., New York 1970 (\$1.50, 445 pp) does not list *THE LADDER* and has little of interest to the Lesbian who has looked through other such anthologies. Judith Brown, in an otherwise excellent joint article with Beverly Jones, *TOWARD A FEMALE LIBERATION MOVEMENT*, has a section on "Homosexuality." She says, that this language ['fag,' 'pimp,' 'queer,' and 'dike'] 'helps to insure that each man has his female slave, and that each woman eventually becomes one.' But she seems not to realize that homosexuality refers to males, males who are as chauvinist as any and who care not about the plight of Lesbians. We all know how upset homosexuals are about police entrapment, about the injustices of their being harassed in their public cruising (and more) activities, but who has read of any indignation on the part of homosexuals over the raping of Lesbians, indeed, women in general?

100 pages of the book are devoted to 19th century feminists. The rest is a very spotty collection, mostly reprints, of all sorts of opinions with an occasional island of clear thinking. One article imagines that the feminist movement consists almost entirely of the under 30 set; others express fear of leadership, that bugaboo of young heterosexual women; some play the "Who's the most oppressed?" game without even thinking of Lesbians; and Ellen Willis says, in *CONSUMERISM AND WOMEN*, that "the beneficiaries of this depreciation of women are not men but the corporate power structure" as if that power structure did not consist of men. Having read a number of these anthologies, I find myself annoyed at having to read through so much female opinion that misunderstands sexism in order to enjoy an occasional gem. The theory is that all women should be heard, as if all women were equally wise. These anthologies are proof to the contrary. This book even contains an embarrassing radio

interview, *LESBIANS ARE SISTERS*, featuring a bisexual and a female transsexual (?) who thinks about "balling another woman."

Sally Medora Wood, in *A GUIDE TO WOMEN WHO DARE TO SPEAK PUBLICLY*, combines excellent advice with quiet humor. For example:

Q: It says in the Bible that "Man was created for the glory of God, and woman for the glory of man." What do you think of that?

A: It proves to me beyond a doubt that men (and not women) wrote the Bible.

Robin Morgan's article, *GOODBYE TO ALL THAT*, avoids the fuzzy male chauvinist analysis of the society's ills, the analysis that says men are as oppressed as women by The System and that "automatic freedom for women — or non-white peoples — will come about ZAP! with the advent of a socialist revolution." "The oppressors are indeed fucked up by being masters . . . but those masters are not oppressed. Any master has the alternative of divesting himself of sexism", but women, the oppressed, have no choice but to fight.

What I found most inspiring in the whole book was a lengthy radio interview of three high school women. The next generation of feminists, if these three are a sign, may avoid the pitfalls of male political ideologies and see clearly to the roots of the oppression of women and that these roots ante-date any theoretical rationalizations subsequently invented by men. I am not overstating when I say I was thrilled by the courage of these teenagers, one of whom was among the first group of 13 women to enter the all-male Stuyvesant High School in the fall of 1969 and who more often than not was the only female in her class, including the teacher. She says, "My official teacher is always telling me that I shouldn't wear pants because it's not feminine. If I'm walking down the hall how will anyone know that I'm a girl, if I'm wearing pants. So I said, 'I really don't care if anyone knows I'm a girl or not; in fact, maybe it's better if they don't know.'" How many adult feminists today have this kind of courage in the face of attacks on their 'lack of femininity' by male authorities?



Poetry

Sylvia Plath—Dead at the age of 30 or so

sylvia sylvia
who put your head in the oven
with the gas jets on
full blasss-t
you did it yourself
sweet-heart
don't lie to me
they found your very own prints
all over the stove
and you stashed the kids
at the neighbors
so they wouldn't have to see
yes, you're right
they don't know it's a pain in the ass
to write good po-et-ry

listen
you had a little darling nazi daddy
but he gave you up for dead
sweetie
the rat kicked the bucket
before your first date
what would sigmund ever say
he'd say
every seer-sucker-suit
turned on the gas
pushed you flat on your back
(you always talked too much
became an artist too
you drew pretty pict-ures
like soft-pinkpetals ona thorny stemmm)

sylvia you KNEW
what it's like to feel in the night
a voice on your neck
and you woke up begging for a drink
of pett-roll

(gas is best
daddy used to say)

well
at least you made the beds
and everything's well scrubbedddd

you left the house in or-derrrr
we escaped inspired madmen
lost the factories in the half light
(temples with their golden spires
and their purple interiors)

we danced across the rope
swaying to a world of passions
and of dreams
without any keys, any secrets, any means

Suddenly
we were hurled
to the corner of the room
and saw the shadows

(in the dizzying heat of a summer's day
let's forget our memories for a time
like blissful ether
we'll feel internal liquors
conquer)

you and I are at the lakes edge
where they brought us and
you and I are lost
in the fog along the shore
and the soft green of the trees
twist
groping to find some light

Adele A. Chatelin

Foundations of the Male-Chauvinist-Nude

Part II: Alternatives

The alternatives to the male-chauvinist-nudes presented in the previous issue are as many as there are unprejudiced artists. However, the female painter should logically be best qualified to portray herself truthfully and in fact, if she is a figure painter, has almost an obligation to do so. Women, who have from the beginning played only the passive role of modelling for art, are now, both actively and symbolically, beginning to reject this relegation and seriously take over an effective role in the more vital act of making art.

For this reason, Suzanne Valadon is gaining greater status in the minds of artists (who are also concerned with their own liberation as women) because she played out in actuality the belief that women must remove themselves from the model's sexual-art-object position. Valadon was

born in Bessine, France, in 1865 and grew up in the artist's district of Montmartre. She worked for a time as a model to Edgar Degas, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and other artists lesser known; but after seeing her image continually portrayed as the anonymous object of art, she felt finally a greater need to personally affect the world around her and so decided to become a painter herself. Unfortunately, much of Valadon's figure drawing is derivative of Degas' idealized male-chauvinist style which depicts women who are supposedly in the act of some "everyday" motion but whose bodies are painted more like the perfectly proportioned nudes of the Renaissance than like those of average, "everyday" people.

In disparity with her drawings, however, Valadon's paintings reflect the fire and independence of the true Valadon person-



Suzanne Valadon. *Chambre à coucher bleue*. 1923. Collection National Museum of Modern Art, Paris.



Isabel Bishop. *Nude*. Oil on composition board. 1934. 33"x40". Collection Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.



Isabel Bishop. *At the Noon Hour*. Tempera and pencil on composition board. 1935. 25"x18". Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Massachusetts.

ality. *Chambre à coucher bleue*, reproduced here, is perhaps her finest work. The female figure which appears in this painting breaks every male-chauvinist rule possible. Her height, weight, clothing and even the cigarette so defiantly placed in the model's mouth are a deliberate denouncement of

the ever repeated male-chauvinist odalisque¹ who reclines in a world of sweet perfection and inhuman delicacy.

The immobilized male-chauvinist image with arms, legs, hands and feet weakened, diminutized or removed is forever challenged and destroyed by Valadon's

"woman" who is not only capable of unlimited muscular action but flaunts her massive size not as a male-chauvinist sign of ugliness but as an undeniable physical attribute. Valadon has purposely chosen for her subject not the usual elusive, aristocratic beauty but a strong, independent and rugged individual who is also capable of a woman's tenderness, a softness which uniquely in this painting does not go hand in hand with weakness.

The more one considers *Chambre à coucher bleue*, the more it is possible to erase the ingrained ideal of what a "beautiful woman" should look like and find instead a new understanding of the unlimited possibilities of what beauty can be. For, if before viewing this work you felt that a massive woman's arm was an unattractive idea, you need only to follow with your eye the line that begins at the juncture of cheek and cigarette and trace it along very slowly until it disappears behind the trouser leg. The line is truly beautiful as it swells, falls, swells again and is at the same time both soft and strong — the very nature of the woman portrayed.

The final point that should be made in discussing the Valadon painting is that it is not necessary to unclothe a figure in order to present the feeling of a nude body. Whereas the backbone of every male-chauvinist nude resorts for its impact on the shock of sexuality, the force of a "clothed nude" is dependent upon the figure's individual "personality" which must be so distinctive so as to make itself felt through her clothing.

Of course, that is not to say that all unclothed nudes rely on sexuality for their content. The unclothed nudes painted by Isabel Bishop present for their content a commonplace movement, a slice of action, and the physical characteristics of the nude are simply part of this movement. Unlike Degas' figures, Bishop's "genre nudes" do in fact present the total concept of an "everyday" woman's body caught in the movement of an "everyday" act. Bishop records the female nude as it exists and, with all its imperfections, allows the woman to stand on her own without added idealistic or sexual illusions. In her own words (quoted from "Isabel Bishop

Discusses 'Genre' Drawings", *American Artist*, June 1953) Miss Bishop states: "'Genre' drawings are never heroic, never in the 'grand manner' and never large. Also they are never 'compositions'. In them form and content seem united by magic or at least by accident . . . In this particular kind of artistic expression the subject must seem unmanipulated — as though a piece of life had been sneaked up on, seized and somehow became art, without anything having been done to it. This is the way it seems, which is part of the content."

Nude, by Bishop, is firstly a moment of life. The figure is in no way "posed" nor is it designed to fulfill pre-existing canons. A woman looking at this work knows instantly that this is her honest self and because the painting is honest to life, it offers the best possible alternative to the male-chauvinist-nude. Bishop is a woman and knows how to paint what she knows — being a woman. Throughout her work, there is a constant sensitivity and verity in the way she translates the world in which she lives.

Isabel Bishop was born in 1902 in Cincinnati, Ohio. She has lived most of her life in New York City and has spent that time recreating in her art the small scenes of urban life around her. *At the Noon Hour* is one of many drawings and prints which depict two women talking, laughing or strolling together. The male-chauvinist female figure is not permitted such liberties. If a second person is allowed to enter the male-chauvinist painting at all, it is almost always a man, child or female relative but never an unrelated female peer with whom the main figure might possibly have a non-rivalling relationship, or worse, with whom she might conceivably have a sensual/sexual relationship. It is important, therefore, to note that much of the art of Isabel Bishop breaks with this tradition and presents, again with honesty, the fact that women can and do enjoy the company of their own sex, sometimes to the point of excluding the opposite sex altogether from the picture.

(Jean Louise is an artist and under her own name, Sarah Whitworth, has just had a month long one woman show of

¹Odalisque — is a French word meaning harem woman or female slave derived from the Turkish, *odahliq* (chambermaid). The odalisque in French painting usually reclines on a couch and is surrounded by exotic drapery. Notable examples may be found in the work of Ingres, Delacroix, Matisse and Renoir.

her ink and dye drawings at the Memorial Union Art Gallery, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona. Sarah attended Rutgers University in Newark and graduated with a double

major in Art History and Studio. She is on the staff of a prominent art museum in New York City and lives in New Jersey with her companion of eight years.)

Angela Davis: Some Questions

Note: I was originally going to sign this article and take personal responsibility for its contents, but I have been advised by an expert in these matters that such a move would be extremely foolhardy. Since I am not making judgments but only asking questions, I feel that I am justified in withholding my name.

Seems like all of my friends in the movement have been following the call to duty as usual. Anyone on the left is our friend. Anyone the pigs don't like is our friend. Seems to me that there is too much emotionalism and not enough intelligent thought on the radical scene. So I have prepared a list of questions concerning the latest martyr around whom we are all supposed to rally, and I give my word that I will rally to her side as soon as someone comes up with satisfactory answers to these questions.

1. Why did a supposedly intelligent black revolutionary buy guns in her own name?

2. Members of the Communist Party are not permitted to own guns. Why did she violate Party discipline?

3. The Communist Party of the USA has often denounced "adventurist violence." Are they defending Angela Davis on the grounds that she would never knowingly become involved in a courthouse shootout? They have been silent on that question.

4. Numerous men and women have been able to go underground by hiding in their own communities — black ghettos, communes, campuses, etc. Why was a black woman caught in the whitest area of Manhattan, in a Howard Johnson's motel?

5. Who is Ralph Poindexter, and how did he get bailed out so fast?

6. Angela Davis claims that during the months she was in hiding, she was too confused to make adequate plans for escape to another country. This is an intelligent revolutionary?

7. Other explanations for her capture

include the statement that the Communist Party is infiltrated by pigs. If so, why did she join it, and why does she continue to recommend it as a viable alternative for black people? And why was she able to remain underground for two months?

8. Angela Davis claims that she stayed in a boarding house in Florida, but left because pigs were living there. How did she know they were pigs, and why didn't they capture her then?

9. The Communist Party, which has steadily lost support for the last thirty years and has been shunned by blacks as irrelevant, and by women as male supremacist, now has a black woman martyr. Is this a coincidence?

10. The Communist Party has been staging demonstrations in behalf of Angela Davis all over the country, and has carefully excluded the banners of groups which support Angela Davis but do not completely support the Communist Party. Communist Party members have beaten up members of Gay Liberation Front, in an effort to exclude "queers" from the picket lines, which the C.P. has been treating as their own private property. Communist Party officials have threatened to call the police to keep unwanted groups from "trespassing" on their private property — picket lines for Angela Davis. After struggling to overcome oppression from the right, do we need it from the left?

11. After the Communist Party and the Socialist Worker's Party split, during the 1930's, the Socialist Workers derided the Communists because the Communist Party insisted that all its members dress conservatively and that homosexuals be excluded from the Party. Over the years, the Socialist Worker's Party has adopted the same policies as the Communist Party, clothed in a Trotskyist rhetoric instead of the straight Moscow line. Who owns the Socialist Worker's Party? They may run female candidates, but who chairs the board?

12. Isn't it time feminists got together and got themselves a political education

which would include the history and methods of left-wing groups?

13. If the Communist Party is as heavily infiltrated by F.B.I. agents as is commonly believed, who is making policy for the C.P. — Moscow or Washington? Hadn't an honest revolutionary better think twice before jumping on a Party-made bandwagon?

14. THROUGHOUT THE 1930's, THE COMMUNIST PARTY CREATED SCORES OF MARTYRS, SET UP COMMITTEES TO DEFEND THEM, AND COLLECTED FORTUNES FOR THIS PURPOSE. MOST OF THOSE MARTYRS — BLACKS, CHICANOS AND OTHERS — DIED OR ROTTED IN JAIL. NO ACCOUNTING FOR THE MONEY WAS EVER GIVEN. IS THIS WHOLE EPISODE JUST ANOTHER FUND-RAISING SCHEME FOR THE PARTY? WHO THE HELL IS RUNNING

ALL THE COMMITTEES TO DEFEND ANGELA DAVIS?

FINALLY, I WOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT SOME OF MY FRIENDS HAVE ADVISED ME NOT TO RAISE THESE QUESTIONS AND NOT TO DESTROY CONFIDENCE IN THE LEFT. MY REPLY IS THAT FALSE CONFIDENCE, TRUST BASED ON IDEALISM INSTEAD OF REALITY, WILL LEAD US STRAIGHT INTO THE ARMS OF PIG AGENTS, INTO A HAIL OF BULLETS; OR EVEN WORSE, INTO THE CREATION OF A POST-REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT MORE FASCISTIC THAN THE ONE WE NOW ENJOY.

A Sister



AGAINST THE SEASON

By JANE RULE

REVIEWED by Ellen Gold

the love one had for everyone?"

—From AGAINST THE SEASON

"If they had no more than five years, no more than six months, why should they live even a moment not worrying much, not mattering much to each other, when from that center flowed



JANE RULE

Photo By Lynn Vardeman

Jane Rule's third novel (N.Y., McCall, 1971) is a chronicle of people who believe or learn to believe that caring for each other is an experience greater for themselves than death or birth or their various specific pairings. It is an almost sociological study of the development of feeling in a community of people defined at the center by two sisters, Beatrice and Amelia, and on the periphery by a disturbed woman, Grace Hill, who, like the society she represents, is the main interruption of free expression among them.

The relationships are simple, but consist of several basic couples. There are the sisters who came to live their lives for each other, relinquishing other possibilities open to them. At the novel's writing, Beatrice has been dead for several months and the elderly Amelia is discovering how much of her emotional life was directed only to her sister or suppressed for her. Peter, a middle-aged banker, becomes involved against his will with the emotions of the young man Cole who is staying with Amelia. The relationship between Cole and Peter is an insight into male homosexuality impressive in a woman. Peter becomes engaged to a woman of his own age and they try together to at least share emotion.

Ida Setworth, who, it is suggested, may

have been involved with Beatrice in their youth, debates marriage with a man like herself in his seventies while there is still time to share their feelings. The daughter of an old family in the town, Rosemary Hopwood, allows herself to love and pursue a young woman, Dina Pyros, whose Lesbianism is almost universally tolerated primarily, it seems, because she lives as unobtrusively in the community as she does in her own consciousness.

Other couples include Cole and an unwed mother who also lives with Amelia as a domestic. Maud is the town's nineteenth century morality figure married to an invalid husband who is no more than an appendage to herself, yet who is her reason for living. There are others, each a study in learning to care for other human beings.

There is little plot to the novel aside from the overall development of each of these relationships, the slow burning of love among all the characters against all the seasons of life. Reaction to death becomes as much an act of love as the various physical intimacies in the relationships. Birth of an unwanted child is not a grim experience, but a situation in which the overt signs of dormant emotion find expression. Love occasions the caress and the violent blow. Old age binds the characters as closely as do the confusions of youth. Even menopause becomes a drive for love and triumphs over the despair middle age can bring to a woman.

Dina Pyros is the most interesting of the

characters. She is the last holdout to emotion and as such is counterpoised to Amelia, the loving old woman who inspires love in everyone around herself. Early in the book Ms. Rule sketches Dina as a formidable bastion of suppression, but even Dina cannot deny Amelia anything while she denies almost everything to herself and to her "women". Dina is a "foreigner", metaphorically rather than literally, and a strange reaction to the warm, emotionally highly-charged Greeks who are her family and friends. As she has done with most of the book's characters, Ms. Rule does not tell us why or how, but only what. The what we find in Dina is an attractive young woman, almost constantly swathed in "layers of clothing", who operates an antique shop and is an otherwise successful business woman. Jane Rule's "Chapter From An Untitled Novel In Progress", which appeared in *THE LADDER* (October/November, 1969), is chapter two of the novel and describes Dina almost thoroughly. We watch Dina shed the cocoon of clothing and fears through the book as Rosemary Hopwood coaxes her out of both.

One misses the intense romance of *DESERT OF THE HEART* and the concentrated introspection of Ms. Rule's second novel, *THIS IS NOT FOR YOU*, in *AGAINST THE SEASON*. Both elements are distributed among the many characters of this new book as if to show the reader the universality of the two concerns. What the Lesbian reader does not find in identification, though, she will easily replace with a sense of satisfaction at the growth of the author. Ms. Rule, like Dina Pyros, sheds the self-concern of her younger self and in the new season of her art reveals her skill at dealing with a wide range of people. Her men, always ineffectual, begin to have reasons for their ineffectuality. Her women continue to have depth and are more varied. Her people no longer need to be almost incestuously intertwined with one another to have reasons to exist within the novel. Many of them are, but Ms. Rule has been able to give us other real people who serve no other purpose than her art.

In her first novel Ms. Rule told us, "I'm in love with the whole damned world. The only problem is maintaining aesthetic distance". It is this she had done in *AGAINST THE SEASON*. The book is another morality tale from Jane Rule, one whose lesson is learning the world's poten-

tial for love — a moving lesson none of us should miss. We can learn from all our sisters, but it takes an exceptional woman like Jane Rule to communicate to all of us because she can encompass all of us — and more.

(Jane Rule is from New Jersey, but has lived all over America, in England and now is settled in Canada. She was a Phi Beta Kappa at Mills College in Califor-

nia and did graduate work at the University of London. Presently she holds a Canada Council Grant for writing and teaches at the University of British Columbia. Ms. Rule has published widely in magazines which include *CHATELAINE*, *SAN FRANCISCO REVIEW*, *REDBOOK*, *THE LADDER* and various foreign language publications. She has, as noted, published three novels.)

Women Composers

By PAULINE OLIVEROS

Why have there been no "great" women composers? The question is often asked. The answer is no mystery. In the past, talent, education, ability, interests, motivation were irrelevant because being female was a unique qualification for domestic work and for continual obedience to and dependence upon men.

This is no less true today. Women have been taught to despise activity outside of the domestic realm as unfeminine, just as men have been taught to despise domestic duties. For men, independence, mobility, and creative action are imperative. Society has perpetuated an unnatural atmosphere which encourages distortions such as "girl" used as a bad word by little boys from the age of 9 or 10. From infancy, boys are wrapped in blue blankets and continually directed against what is considered feminine activity. What kind of self-image can little girls have, then, with half their peers despising them because they have been discouraged from so-called masculine activity and wrapped in pink blankets?

The distortion continues when puberty arrives and boys turn to girls as sex objects but do not understand how to relate on other important levels. Consider the divorce rate! No matter what her achievements might be, when the time comes, a woman is expected to knuckle under, pay attention to her feminine duties and obediently follow her husband wherever his endeavor or inclination takes him — no matter how detrimental it might be to her own.

A well-known contemporary composer has a wife who is also a competent composer. They travel together extensively and often return to the same places for performances of his work. She is rarely if

ever solicited for her own work and no one seems to see anything wrong with constantly ignoring her output while continually seeking out her husband's work.

Many critics and professors cannot refer to women who are also composers without using a cute or condescending language. She is a "lady composer." Rightly, this expression is anathema to many self-respecting women composers. It effectively separates women's efforts from the mainstream. According to the Dictionary of American Slang, "lady" used in such a context is almost always insulting or sarcastic. What critic today speaks of a "gentleman composer"?

It is still true that unless she is super-excellent, the woman in music will always be subjugated, while men of the same or lesser talent will find places for themselves. It is not enough that a woman chooses to be a composer, conductor or to play instruments formerly played exclusively by men; she cannot escape being squashed in her efforts — if not directly, then by subtle and insidious exclusions by her male counterparts.

And yet some women do break through. The current Schwann Catalog lists over 1,000 different composers. Clara Schumann of the Romantic Period and Elizabeth J. de la Guerre of the Baroque are the sole representatives for women composers of the past. But on the positive side, over 75 percent of the almost 1,000 are composers of the present and 24 of these are women. These approximate statistics point to two happy trends: 1) that composers of our time are no longer ignored, and 2) that women could be emerging from musical subjugation. (It is significant that in a biography of Schumann that I have read, Clara is always talked about as a pianist, not a composer, and she is quoted as saying, "I'd give my life for Robert.")

The first of the two trends is developing even though the majority of performers do



I DON'T THINK I WANT TO BE EQUAL.
I'D RATHER STAY SUPERIOR!

not include contemporary music in their repertoire and private teachers seldom encourage their students to try new music or even to become acquainted with their local composers. Agencies such as the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations have helped establish centers for new music in universities across the country and independent organizations such as the Once Group of Ann Arbor and the San Francisco Tape Music Center promoted lively programs of new music throughout the 1960's. Isolated individual efforts throughout the country have gradually created an active, new music network.

At last, the dying symphony and opera organizations may have to wake up to the fact that music of our time is necessary to draw audiences from the people under 30. The mass media, radio, TV and the press could have greater influence in encouraging American music by ending the competition between music of the past and music of the present.

Many composers of today are not interested in the criteria applied by critics to their work and it is up to the critic to discern new criteria by going to the composer. With more performances of new works at which the composers are present, and with the greater mobility of our society, critics have a unique opportunity — a duty — to converse directly with the composer. Since performers are often irresponsible with new works because of disrespect or lack of established models, works with which the critics have familiarized themselves would escape some scathing misjudgments due to poor performances. The ideal critic could not only interpret technically and encourage an atmosphere which is sympathetic to the phenomenon of new music, but present the composer as a real and reasonable person to audiences. Certainly, no "great" composer, especially a woman, has a chance to emerge in a society which believes that all "great" music has been written by those long departed.

The second trend is, of course, dependent on the first because of the cultural deprivation of women in the past. Critics do a great deal of damage by wishing to discover "greatness". It does not matter that not all composers are great composers: it matters that this activity be encouraged among all the population, that we communicate with each other in non-destructive ways. Women composers are very often dismissed as minor or light-weight talents

on the basis of one work by critics who have never examined their scores or waited for later developments.

Men do not have to commit sexual suicide in order to encourage their sisters in music. Since they have been on top for so long, they could seek out women and encourage them in all professional fields. Libraries of women's music should be established. Women need to know what they can achieve. Critics can quit being cute and start studying scores. (The National Federation of Music Clubs has prepared a Directory of Women Composers. It can be obtained by writing to Julia Smith, 1105 West Mulberry Street, Denton, Texas 76201. A complete discography of recorded music by women composers as listed in the Schwann Catalog, accompanies this article.)

Near the beginning of this century, Nikola Tesla, electrical engineer and inventor of A.C. power, predicted that women will some day unleash their enormous creative potential and for a time will excel men in all fields because they have been so long dormant. Certainly the greatest problems of society will never be solved until an equalitarian atmosphere utilizing their total creative energies exists among all men and women.

WORKS BY WOMEN COMPOSERS AVAILABLE ON RECORDS

- Ballou, Esther Williamson — Prelude and Allegro (1955). Adler, Vienna Orchestra. CRI 115.
- Bauer, Marion — Suite for Strings (1940): Prelude and Fugue (1948). Adler, Vienna Orchestra. CRI 101
- Beach, Mrs. H.H.A. — Improvisations for Piano. Rogers, Dorian 1006
- Trio for Violin, Cello, Piano, Op. 150 (1939). Clio Concert Trio. Dorian 1007
- Boulanger, Lili — Music of Lili Boulanger. Markevitch, Orchestre Lamoureux. Everest 3059
- Crawford (Seeger), Ruth — Quartet (1931). Amati Quartet. Columbia CMS-6142
- Study in Mixed Accents: Nine Preludes for Piano (1926). Bloch. CRI S-247
- Suite for Wind Quintet, Lark Quintet. CRI S-249
- Daniels, Mabel — Deep Forest (1939). Strickland, Tokyo Imperial Philhar-

monic. CRI 145

Diemer, Emma Lou — Toccata for Flute Chorus. Armstrong Flute Ensemble. Golden Crest S-4088

Dillon, Fannie Charles — From the Chinese. Andrews. Dorian 1014

Dvorkin, Judith — Maurice (1955). Randolph Singers. CRI 1020

Fine, Vivian — Alceste (ballet music) (1960). Strickland, Tokyo Imperial Philharmonic. CRI 145

Concertante for Piano and Orchestra (1944). Honsho, Watanabe, Japan Philharmonic. CRI 135

Sinfonia and Fugato for Piano (1963). Helps. RCA LSC-7042

Gideon, Miriam — How Goodly Are Thy Tents (Psalm 84) (1947). Weisgall, Chizuk Amuno Congregational Choral Society of Baltimore. Westminster 9643

Lyric Pieces for Strings (1941). Strickland, Tokyo Imperial Philharmonic. CRI 170

Suite No. 3 for Piano (1963). Helps. RCA LSC-7042

Symphonia Brevis (1953). Monod, Zurich Radio Orchestra. CRI 128

Glanville-Hicks, Peggy — Nausica (selections) (1961). Stratas, Modenos, Ruhl, Steffan, Surinach, Athens Symphony Orchestra. CRI 175

Sonata for Harp (1953). Zabaleta. Counterpoint/Esoteric 5523

Transposed Heads (1953). Nossman, Harlan, Pickett, Bombard, Kentucky Opera Association, Louisville Orchestra. Two discs, Louisville 545-6

Howe, Mary — Castellana for Two Pianos and Orchestra (1935). Dougherty, Ruzicka, Strickland, Vienna Orchestra. CRI 124

Spring Pastoral (1936). Strickland, Tokyo Imperial Philharmonic. CRI 145

Stars (1937); Sand (1928). Strickland. Orchestra. CRI 103

Ivey, Jean Eichelberger — Pinball (1965). Electronic. Folkways 33436

Jolas, Betsy — Quatuor II. Mesple, French Trio. Angel S-26655

La Guerre, Elisabeth J. De — Harpsichord Pieces. Dart. Oiseau-Lyre 50183

Luytens, Elisabeth — Motet, Op. 27. Aids Chorale. Argo 5426

Quartet, Op. 25 (1952): Wind Quintet: Five Bagatelles. Dartington Quartet, Leonardo Wind Quintet. Argo 5425

Quincunx. Manning, Howells, Procter, Nendick, Shirley-Quirk, BBC Symphony. Argo ZRG-622

Maconchy, Elizabeth — Quartet No. 5 (1948). Allegri Quartet. Argo 5329

Mamluk, Ursula — Variations for Solo Flute. Baron. CRI 212

Oliveros, Pauline — Outline, for Flute, Percussion and String Bass (An Improvisation Chart) (1963). N. and B. Turetzky, George. Nonesuch 71237

Sound Patterns (1962). Lucier, Brandeis University Chamber Chorus. Odyssey 32160156

I of IV (1966). Electronic. Odyssey. 32160160

Perry, Julia — Homunculus C.F., for 10 Percussionists (1960). Price, Manhattan Percussion Ensemble. CRI S-252

Short Piece for Orchestra (1952). Strickland, Tokyo Imperial Philharmonic. CRI 145

Stabat Mater (1951). Strickland, Japan Philharmonic. CRI 133

Schumann, Clara — Trio in G Minor. Mannes, Gimpel, Silva. Decca 9555

Smiley, Pril — Eclipse (1967). Electronic. Turnabout 34301

Talma, Louise — Corona (Holy Sonnets of John Donne). Aks, Dorian Chorus, CRI 187

Toccata for Orchestra (1944). Strickland, Tokyo Imperial Philharmonic. CRI 145

Warren, Elinor Remick — Abram in Egypt (1961); Suite for Orchestra (1954). Lewis, Wagner, London Philharmonic, Wagner Chorale; Stickland, Oslo Philharmonic. CRI 172

White, Ruth — Trumps From the Tarot Cards (1968). Pinions (1968). Electronic. Limelight 86058

(Pauline Oliveros is Professor of Electronic Music at University of California at San Diego. Before taking that position four years ago, she was a

"struggling composer" in the San Francisco Bay Area for fifteen years. Her latest composition, "For Valerie Solanis and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation", was premiered earlier this year at the New Music Ensemble Concert at Grace Cathedral. Famous now for her electronic music compositions, her original instrument, the accordion, was nearly as unusual in classical music terms.

Her Lesbian marriage to Lin Barron, a cellist, composer and student at University of California at San Diego, last July 4, was turned into national news by columnist Jill Johnston of VILLAGE VOICE. In her January 14, 1971 column, "Dance Journal", Jill described the entire sunrise ceremony performed by a minister of the Universal Life Church on the cliffs near Leucadia, California.)

Cross Currents

BRIEF BITS OF NEWS . . . FROM EVERYWHERE: January, February, March and April, 1971. Not one in 25 clippings can actually be used in this column, but it is very important that we see them, for this is our only way to test the climate coast to coast and in other countries. One thing is clear . . . very, very slowly some areas are opening up for women, and even anti-women writers are careful about what they say in articles about women . . . they are developing that marvelous nervousness that used to characterize writing about black when black was a new word and "Negro" much easier. A clipping from Seattle tells of the first woman to become a major radio station manager via some other route than becoming the widow of the former manager. A clipping from the east gives a detailed account of the women's tennis circuit, with vastly increased purses for women and increased interest in their game. This last mentioned was clearly a women's liberation victory. A princess in Pennsylvania wants to be a mining engineer in the coal mines of that state. She probably will make it too. In Hollywood, Florida, a woman is elected Chairman of the Seminole Indian Tribe of Florida. A Seattle woman plans to climb Mount Everest and U.S. Line's freighter, American Astronaut, has a woman mess steward. That's just a tiny sampling . . . but things are slowly, slowly changing.

THE NEW YORK TIMES SUNDAY MAGAZINE: We do not know how long this will continue, but the Sunday supplement to the NEW YORK TIMES has been carrying a number of articles on both women's liberation and gay liberation. Some of them have been fair, as was "The FemLib Case Against Sigmund Freud" by Richard Gilman. Despite male authorship

he slaps Freud soundly and also society for following him like sheep.

AGAIN MORE THAN WE CAN TALK ABOUT: WOMEN'S STUDIES, WOMEN'S TEACH-INS AND WOMEN'S GUERRILLA THEATRE. These three activities and sometimes all three at one place are happening on many college and university campuses. We figure we do not see even one-tenth of the existing activities being reported, so the movement at least on the university level is growing very rapidly. A typical look at such a happening, in this case from Cornell, is reported elsewhere in this column.

FLORYNCE KENNEDY: SPECIAL WOMAN. Ms. Kennedy is a very quiet woman in terms of pushing her own image, so some of you may not have heard of her. She speaks, however, from time to time on various campuses around the country, and if you get a chance to hear her you cheat yourself by not going and listening. A lawyer, Ms. Kennedy's major interests are the civil rights movement, women's liberation and abortion law reform. Her book, ABORTION RAP, is now out and almost every library will have this. Very good, but some of it is heavy going. Very much recommended if this is one of your concerns.

WOMAN FILMMAKER????? We have been asked by Sharon Smith, 3927 1/2 Flower Drive, Los Angeles, California, 90037, to list her address and ask that you contact her if you write, produce, direct, edit, do camera or sound, animation, computer films, or any other film-related activity. Sharon is doing a book about women filmmakers. THE BOOK WILL NOT INCLUDE ACTRESSES OR WOMEN IN TV OR VIDEOTAPE.

SLIGHT SMILE FOR NICHOLAS VON HOFFMAN: In an old syndicated column,

"Why Men Kick Women Around", dated summer of 1970, Mr. Von Hoffman managed to write a reasonably fair view of the contempt men hold most women in without consciously realizing it. He gets in a nasty slap at Lesbians, but we will even forgive him that, for his remarks in general show that men are taught by literally everything around them from the cradle up that women are subservient and that it is hardly surprising that they grow up believing it. After all, some women still do too.

LANDMARK DECISION - MAYBE: January 25, 1971. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of Ms. Ida Phillips against the Martin Marietta Corp. of Orlando, Florida, saying that "an employer may not refuse to hire a woman because she has children UNLESS the same ruling applies to men". This was the first such case that the Court has heard in 22 years, and is the most famous women's rights case in terms of publicity.

JOBS FOR COLLEGE EDUCATED WOMEN SCARCE: The Occupational Outlook Quarterly, put out by the U.S. Dept. of Labor, commented in its Fall, 1970, issue that jobs for college educated women are becoming scarce. We already know that, and their predictions for the future, say in 1980, sound a lot gloomier.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY IS UNUSUAL, WE THINK MAYBE: In a little booklet called "The Cornell Coed", put out by the Women's Coordinating Council of Cornell in 1970, we find an anonymous (all articles are unsigned) down-to-earth little introduction to life at Cornell if you are a Lesbian. It is called prosaically, "The Lesbian at Cornell". In it you find all the little details of what to do, where to go, etc . . . that dot all the other articles. How very, very different today is from yesterday. May every college and university follow suit soon.

CONNECTICUT LABOR DEPARTMENT BULLETIN: January, 1971. An article extracted from U.S. Labor Department figures comments that "By 1980 the number of women working will be double the 1950 figure, reflecting a major change in American life style". The article goes on to say that a majority of these women will have children and their increase in the labor market in part depends upon "how well and how soon the need for day care is met". We agree, but wonder how well and how soon too.

BOARD OF EDUCATION ZAPPED: New York City, January 7, 1971. Carter Burden, a City Councilman, has accused the Board of Education and two major corporations, IBM and CBS, of discriminatory practices in the hiring of homosexuals. Both industries accused denied the charge, and the Board of Education was "unavailable for comment" . . . ha.

HARRIET VAN HORNE: There is an old saying, supposedly Hungarian in origin, that if you have "someone like this for a friend, you will never need an enemy". That certainly applies to Ms. Van Horne. In her January 14, 1971, column in the PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER, she writes ostensibly about the good things in women's liberation. But she closes her column thus: "My own feeling is that the Lesbians, armed with the justice of their special quarrel, should now regroup and wage their own battle for liberation. Then the rest of us could get back to the real issue: equal opportunity for women in a man's world. Who knows? We might now find the men ready to cooperate". We wonder if she means they might cooperate if we all promise to be "good" and non-Lesbians. If your paper carries her column, you might consider complaining to the newspaper office formally.

NEWS FROM ENGLAND VIA AUSTRALIA: SYDNEY (Australia) DAILY TELEGRAPH, January 14, 1971. No legal action is to be taken in England in the case of the marriage of Terry Floyd and Carol Lord, two women who married last August in Southend. Terry Floyd's full legal name is Mavis Tracey Floyd. Carol, contacted at their apartment, commented: "I can hardly wait to tell her. We can begin living normally now". We hope so, brave girls. Terry is 25, Carol 24.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS: LIBRARY JOURNAL, January 15, 1971. The SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL section of this issue contains an excellent article entitled "A Feminist Look at Children's Books". The "author" is the collective known as "The Feminists On Children's Literature". There is also a good editorial, same issue, same subject. No matter what you THINK you read as a child, you didn't. Read this and weep at the high price of being "born female" in this world in terms of your human rights.

WEST GERMAN WISDOM: NEW YORK TIMES, January 15, 1971. West

Germany classifies *hausfrau* as a legitimate occupation and is seriously considering instituting a pension to more equitably treat women who keep house.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION COALITION IN IMPORTANT SUIT: Report by Betty Thomas Mayen, March 1971. On January 16, 1971, a suit was filed in U.S. District Court in Michigan by four women against Automatic Retailers of America, Great Lakes Steel Division in Ecorse, Michigan, plus a number of smaller firms and several unions. Legal work is being handled by attorneys and law students of the Women's Liberation Coalition without charge. The suit charges the various defendants with "freezing" women in jobs to avoid promoting them and paying them equally with men.

DRESS MAKES A MAN? PANTS MAY ALSO IN SOME VIEWS. On January 24, 1971, the SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE reported that women can now wear pants in Contra Costa County Courts (California), though the right to do so was recently questioned in Nevada's courts. This particular idiocy came about because a female judge had ruled that a jitney driver, Adelaide M. Abalos, who came to court in pants, had to come to court in a dress. Ms. Abalos quite reasonably explained that she had no dresses. A male Superior Judge, Thomas F. McBridge overturned the ruling.

MORE IDIOCY: Los Angeles, February 24, 1971. Judge Wilbur Dettmar ordered trial lawyer, Marguerite Buckley, to go home and change into a dress. Ms. Buckley said she had been wearing pants suits in L.A. courts for three months and no one had worried about it before. The case was moved to another court . . . where Ms. Buckley continued her work IN PANTS.

AUDACIOUS LADY? TIME Magazine, January 25, 1971. Françoise Parturier, 51 year old novelist, essayist and feminist, applied for election to the all-male Académie Française. The males reacted as one might expect. And Ms. Parturier received only one vote . . . but she tried.

EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT FOR WOMEN: January, February, 1971. On January 25 and January 28, 1971, Senate Joint Resolutions 8 and 9 were introduced into the proceedings and debates of the 92nd Congress of the U.S. for the overwhelming (apparently) task of giving women the same rights each and every man takes for granted from birth. Chances of passage are no better and no worse than in

any of the preceding congresses where such resolutions have been introduced in vain since 1923. Watch your papers . . . write your congressMAN and hope. If you live in a state where both of your senators are opposed, blast hell out of both of them by mail and by telegram. And while you are doing this, think about this . . . if every woman in the U.S. at the same time simply said: "OK, I quit . . . you either give us our rights or we stop functioning in any capacity . . ." HOW LONG WOULD THAT TAKE TO WIN?

UNPOPULAR AD CAMPAIGN PRODUCES FEEDBACK: VILLAGE VOICE, January 28, 1971. Minda Bikman, in "Virginia Slims in Feminist Country", reports on a meeting held by major tobacco interests with various prominent women in New York City. Obvious intention of the tobacco groups: cooperation. Results nil. It is interesting to note, though, that the very small minority of women who are actively working in women's liberation are accomplishing much. Think what would happen if twice as many were working?

SUSAN STRUCK "STRUCK DOWN": THE SEATTLE TIMES, January 30, 1971. Susan Struck, a captain in the Air Force who has been fighting discharge from the Air Force because of her pregnancy, has lost a legal battle. U.S. District Judge William Goodwin found against Susan. Her attorney will, of course, appeal.

FRANKLIN KAMENY FOR CONGRESS: Washington, D.C., February, 1971. Dr. Franklin E. Kameny, long a campaigner for male homosexual rights, announced his intention to run for the non-voting congressional seat from the District of Columbia. This required 5000 signatures on a petition, but it was easy to raise that and more as his helpers wound up with 7700 names. Dr. Kameny is 45 a physicist and an astronomer. He had actively worked in forcing cases through the Federal Government's red tape for years on the behalf of male homosexuals (and in a case or two on the behalf of Lesbians in the armed forces). Reports from the area indicate that he is receiving wide local TV, radio and newspaper coverage, but as we go to press no wire service attention apparently outside the capitol area. Dr. Kameny is not expecting to win the seat, but wishes simply to use the resultant publicity to focus attention on the status of the male homosexual.

EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

CHANGE: January, February, March and April, 1971. Clippings from all over the U.S. tell of small victories for women in various companies where one would not have believed progress was possible. Notably, some of the publishing industry has, without much fanfare, given, or promised to give, equal employment opportunity to women, married or single, in the future. TIME, Inc., is a good example. On February 7, 1971, it was announced that TIME had come to terms with some 140 women employed by four of their many magazines, and that equal opportunity was to be the rule in the future. A detailed history of how women at TIME, NEWSWEEK, FORTUNE AND SPORTS ILLUSTRATED took on the bastioned industry, and won, a little anyway, is told in detail in THE MARCH OF TIME'S WOMEN, by Lilla Lyon in the February 22, 1971, issue of NEW YORK MAGAZINE. Fascinating.

MARYLAND MOTTO SCORNS WOMEN: NEW YORK TIMES, February 7, 1971. Delegate Lucille Maurer, Democrat of Montgomery, Maryland, has introduced a resolution into the House to change the motto on the Great Seal of Maryland from "FATTI MASCHI, PAROLE FEMINE" to "FATTI FATTI, NON PAROLE". The former means literally DEEDS ARE MASCULINE, WORDS ARE FEMININE. It is more often interpreted to mean "Let women talk, men act". The suggested new motto is "DEEDS DEEDS NOT WORDS".

NEW BILL WILL PARTLY HELP LESBIANS: New York City, February 9, 1971. Three bills introduced in the State Legislature by three different Assemblymen, are all directed at equal rights for homosexuals. One part of the bill deals with the repeal of the sodomy laws, which obviously cannot affect Lesbians; but the other portion would amend 296-A of the New York State law and make it illegal for employers or landlords to discriminate against anyone on the basis of sexual orientation. That could conceivably be useful to Lesbians, but we do not advise holding your breath up there in New York.

WOMEN'S FESTIVAL AT CORNELL: Special to THE LADDER, February, 1971. A casual article in the ITHACA JOURNAL for February 13, 1971, announced the 3-day women's festival at Cornell, which was to begin (and did) February 19, 1971. Among other things, it listed the workshop topics . . . ranging from abortion and contraception, monogamy, black women

and the women's movement to women's centers, women in China, women in Cuba, women and the law, radical lesbianism, women in education and on and on. Venerable Florence Luscomb, 84 and still very active, related the history of feminism in the U.S. in the opening address, and the three days were under way. Reading the marvelous reports in the CORNELL DAILY SUN, Ithaca's only morning newspaper (university produced of course), makes you wish you could have been a part of the fun. Apparently every item on the agenda was covered (and from some of the photos, everyone was tired), and at the all-women's dance a few gatecrashing males were tossed out. We won't run reports like this often for lack of space, but it is so good to see these changes at this level.

WOMEN STRIKE IN POLAND: Warsaw, February 15, 1971. Thousands of women textile workers in Lodz, Poland's second largest city, have gone on strike for better working conditions and higher wages. Estimates of the number involved run as high as 10,000 women.

NICE GIRLS DON'T GET IN TROUBLE, by Gail Sheehy, NEW YORK MAGAZINE, February 15, 1971. An ironic and civilized angry look at the rape assault situation in New York City (and any other major U.S. city). Some of this is even more terrifying than GETTING RIPPED OFF (article in December/January, 1970-71, THE LADDER) and, indeed, the successful capture of the rapist (we are sure it is the same story) is also related in this article. Read it. Being a Lesbian is no guarantee that you won't be raped. It happens to every woman from 10 to 100 years of age.

MARRIAGE PETITION DENIED TWO WOMEN: LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, COURIER-JOURNAL, February 20, 1971. Circuit Court Judge Lyndon Schmid denied the request of Tracy Knight, 25, and Marjorie Jones, 39, for a license to marry. The women have been battling for this right since July 6, 1970, as has been reported in this column in the past. The case will be carried all the way to the Supreme Court by Attorney Stuart Lyon. The judge, a very enlightened fellow, commented: "no reason why we should condone and abet a spirit of what is accepted as perverted lust any more than we should condone . . . thievery and chicanery".

MORE MORE: SAME SOURCE, March 1, 1971. Stuart Lyon, attorney for Tracy Knight and Marjorie Jones, announced

today that they have filed a notice in Jefferson Circuit Court that they will take their case to the Kentucky Court of Appeals. As anticipated, they are on the way through the courts' system.

NO NO NO FAITH . . . THIS IS THE MESSAGE: Writing in the Letters Column of the NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE, February 21, 1971, following Merle Miller's "coming out" article cited in last issue's CROSS CURRENTS, Faith A. Seidenberg, Vice-President of Legal Affairs for NOW, Syracuse, New York, says: "To our homosexual brothers and sisters, I say, 'Your Day Is Next'. 'Right On!'" The rest of the letter is an excellent view of why male homosexuals have to fear loss of status in our society. What Faith does not see (though her letter is a tremendous step in the direction of good intentions) is that lumping homosexual males and Lesbians into the same bag is the same terrible yoke that is heaped on heterosexual women when you insist on defining them in terms of heterosexual men. THE first revolution is the women's movement, and Faith, we Lesbians are right there with you already.

MILITARY RULES FOR WOMEN EASING TOO: Washington, February 21, 1971. The armed services, facing a battery of charges of sex discrimination, especially against married women with children (or single women, for that matter, with children), are easing their regulations in this area. Pregnancy still brings automatic dismissal, however, though this is being challenged by a number of women in uniform.

WOMEN'S ACTION PROGRAM: NEW H.E.W. BABY: Washington, D.C., February 24, 1971. Xandra Kayden, a non-militant feminist, has been appointed head of the Women's Action Program, an experimental department with six months' life time granted. Official approval and blessings from Elliot L. Richardson, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, were finally granted. The primary goals of the group are to PROVE that women aren't advancing as fast as men, and to find out how the "government can help" improve this situation in case they do indeed PROVE that women are oppressed. We will be watching.

HEART SURGERY WITH A DIFFERENCE: DAILY TIMES ADVOCATE, Escondido, California, February 25, 1971. University Hospital at San Diego was the scene recently of two major operations on males actually dying at the time surgery was

performed. Dr. Nina Braunwald, the chief surgeon in both operations, commented that as far as the hospital knew, the techniques used in both operations were used for the first time. In each operation, Dr. Braunwald directed a team of 40 physicians.

LET'S HEAR A BIT MORE ABOUT SANTA LIBERATA, SANCT ONCOMBER, SAINTE WILGEFORTE, MAID UNCUMBER AND ST. UNCUMBER. All of these are presumably names of a single legendary female saint. Reference to this comes from a letter written by a man in SATURDAY REVIEW, February 27, 1971. Would some woman please volunteer to check this out and perhaps add some information?

ALL WOMEN'S DANCE: Washington, D.C., February 27, 1971. The first Washington, D.C., all women's dance was held, organized by Radicalesbians and women's liberation in that city. Site was the All Souls' Unitarian Church and over 75 women attended. In addition to dancing, liberation songs were sung. We are told a similar dance was held by Lesbians and women's liberation members in Baltimore the week before, but we have no report on this. A long article on the first such dance (held in New York City on Friday, April 3, 1970) in the United States was in the October/November, 1970, issue of THE LADDER.

LESSONS FROM THE MEDIA: Women's liberation is fond of bad mouthing the general media, the women's magazines and the general trade magazines. We have done some of it in this column. However, it is wise to note that even a halfway good article on women's liberation is better than none at all if it will reach MILLIONS more women than anything in the women's liberation media can hope to reach. A magazine like FAMILY CIRCLE, for example, is sold in grocery stores to housewives, and thousands, possibly a million or more buy this and read it faithfully. The February, 1971, issue contains a really excellent, though very basic, article, "Are You Hurting Your Daughter Without Knowing It", which points out what you should and should not do in very basic terms in raising female children, and points out the errors in children's literature. Caroline Bird, in an article in the February 27, 1971, issue of TV GUIDE, covers women in the media and women's liberation in very cursory terms with some

terrible errors of both omission and commission. But it is the most widely read magazine in the WORLD, and if half its readers read it, a few minds must have been nudged an inch or two.

ALAS, POOR NORMAN, WILL ANYONE KNOW HIM SO WELL IN FUTURE: HARPER'S MAGAZINE, March, 1971. Norman Mailer, who must have been feeling very September Morn'ish over Kate Millett ever since SEXUAL POLITICS began to be talked about over two years ago, finally got his blows in, in the cited HARPER'S. Columnist Myra MacPherson, writing in the WASHINGTON POST on February 19, 1971, then takes Norman apart once again. It's rather fun; he is so bad he is funny.

VALLEY WOMEN'S CENTER: March, 1971. Located at 200 Main Street, Northampton, Mass., 01060, the VALLEY WOMEN'S CENTER promises (if it lives up to its brochure) to be a very complete center serving most of the basic needs of the women in the area. With such an ambitious program we suspect they need workers. Area women take notice.

DO YOU NEED LEGAL AID? Try asking your local women's liberation office for referrals. Some places have places to send you to and some cities, L.A. for example, actually have staffs of women lawyers who will help you. (March, 1971, notice).

THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY: March 3, 1971. An excellent lead article, "The Church and Gay Liberation", appeared in this issue of this most distinguished of all Protestant publications. Writer Elliott Wright makes the same error that most such writers do in addressing himself to males and their problems only while including facts that apply only to Lesbians in the article. But even with this it is an interesting view. He is particularly interested in the gay desire for monogamous marriage performed legally in terms of both state and church. The lead editorial of this issue is along the same lines and is an excellent, even militant stand for this church-oriented periodical to take.

LOIS LANE IS A LESBIAN: VILLAGE VOICE, March 4, 1971. A series of foolish articles in VILLAGE VOICE by men proclaiming themselves to be "heterosexual" and "asexual" and having, they say, as many problems as homosexuals, has brought a stinging, marvelous response from Jill Johnston in her column, "Dance Journal". Carefully and cautiously separat-

ing male homosexuals from Lesbians, Jill outlines clearly the amount of extraordinary irritation most Lesbians and male homosexuals feel toward heterosexual males and females, but very, very seldom say. THIS one is too important to miss. If you do not have access to the March 4, 1971, issue of VILLAGE VOICE and want to see this column, write to the editor of THE LADDER and we will send you a photocopy . . . FREE. (Note: at press time we find that this article was only number one in a series - more comment in next issue of THE LADDER.)

BANK OF AMERICA SUIT: San Francisco, March 4, 1971. Three women filed suit in federal court against the Bank of America, contending that the world's largest commercial bank discriminates against female employees.

THOUSANDS MARCH IN LONDON: March 7, 1971. Media estimates say over 4,000 women marched for women's liberation in London on March 7, 1971. This probably means at least twice as many, if England's media "count" the way the media in the U.S. do. Chanting and singing, the demonstrators marched for several hours. Observers note that there are far more "laboring class" and "working class" women involved in the British movement, though they also say that the movement there is about a year behind the U.S. in terms of growth. Marchers were said to represent 56 workshops with over 1000 "hard core" members.

ANGLICANS BACK WOMEN AS PRIESTS: March 7, 1971. In a very close vote, 24-22, the First Anglican Consultative Council agreed that women could be ordained as priests under certain conditions. Last October the House of Deputies of the Episcopal Church in the United States rejected a move to permit the ordination of women as priests or bishops. The 50-member Anglican Council was formed in 1969 to develop common policies among the world's 47 million Anglicans in 90 countries. Debate against the ordination of women centered on fears that this would upset cooperation with both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches.

PLAYBOY SPEAKS OUT AGAINST RADCALLESBIANS: WASHINGTON POST, March 9, 1971. Burt Joseph, Director of Playboy Foundation, indicated that the foundation was going to support certain women's rights demands now being tried in the courts in conjunction with the

American Civil Liberties Union. Mr. Joseph said, however, that though they recognize the difference between "legitimate grievance and illegitimate grievance" this does not mean that they "support radical Lesbianism". We wonder how any man

Lesbiana

By GENE DAMON



A reprint from a new paperback house is one to look for on the newsstands . . . FROM DOON WITH DEATH, by Ruth Rendell. This 1964 (1965 in U.S.) English mystery novel is one of the better ones to be reviewed in years past in this column. The less said about the plot the better, but this is a fine mystery and of relevance here.

Through the years a lot of people have been impressed with the size of the editor's Lesbiana collection. Credit where due brings up the book dealer and sometime publisher, Julia Newman, who acted as my book dealer for many years sometime past. THE TENTH MUSE is both the name of her store and her publishing imprint. Her most recent publication is a quality paperback of Lynn Loniker's poetry collection, THE FEMALE FIREWAY, San Francisco, The Tenth Muse, 1970. Lynn's title poem and a number of others in the book appeared in past issues of THE LADDER, and the collection is recommended. Cost is

dares presume to decide what is a legitimate or illegitimate grievance where women are concerned?

Next issue we'll have a full report on March 8 "International Women's Day" celebrations coast to coast.

\$2. Order direct from The Tenth Muse, 983 Wisconsin Street, San Francisco, California 94107. This poetry is of interest from both the Lesbian and women's liberation standpoint.

We recently received a handful of books and pamphlets from PATHFINDER PRESS, including a collection of plays by Myrna Lamb, by far the best known dramatist in the women's liberation movement. Ms. Lamb is frank in calling her own work many things before she labels it drama. Truth to tell, she is more talented than she gives herself credit for; and her eventual growth will be interesting to watch. The collection consists of THE MOD DONNA and SCYKLON Z, a collection of 6 short plays all leading to the same conclusion . . . that women have been screwed and far too often. It is available both in hardcover and quality paperback. Certainly the latter, at \$2.25, is well worth its cost. These read well, incidentally, which isn't true of all plays.

ONE WOMAN'S SITUATION: A STUDY OF MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT, by Margaret George, University of Illinois Press, 1970, is very good from the standpoint of basic history of a pioneer in women's liberation. But the author does her subject a disservice and, in the doing, all of us, by refusing to deal honestly with Mary Wollstonecraft's novel, MARY, A FICTION, which was quite specifically autobiographical and which offers our best look at the real woman. It is easy to see why this would happen, for MARY, A FICTION, is substantially Lesbian . . . or, to be more accurate, variant, since nothing is spelled out. Indeed, nothing could have been in a novel published in 1788. To be sure, Ms. George does deal gingerly with Mary's many real and imaginary attachments to women, but with deliberate or accidental lack of awareness of the implications coupled with her totally unsuccessful life with men. Mary Wollstonecraft was one of the system's victims . . . and to be sure, the system we mean is the one that has determined the destiny of literally all women from the beginning of time, total rule by men. For the basics, this book is

recommended and everyone needs to know a little of the life of the woman who wrote the first great work on liberation, A VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN.

Elsa Gidlow, familiar to LADDER readers as a very romantic Lesbian poet, has a new book out, MOODS OF EROS, Mill Valley, California, Druid Heights Press, 1970. For those many of you who continually crave Lesbian poetry (to judge from my mail), this is caviar. Ms. Gidlow is careful in her crafting and completely honest in her subject matter . . . no mere changing of pronouns here . . . the poetry could only have been written to a woman, by a woman. (This is available from Druid Heights Press, 685 Camino Del Canyon, Muir Woods, Mill Valley, California 94941, for \$2.25 including postage and handling.)

Another new book of Lesbian poetry (see selections from it elsewhere in this issue) is SAPPHO '71, By Harriette Frances, S.F., Donahue/Arlington, 1971. We suspect this book will make Ms. Frances, previously known as an artist, a new reputation. I'll let the selections speak for themselves, but I predict you all will want the book.

THE MANUSCRIPTS OF PAULINE ARCHANGEL, by Marie-Claire Blais, N.Y., Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1969, 1970, is one of those novels that Jeannette Foster would classify as variant. It concerns the pre-adolescent life of a girl who most assuredly will grow up to be a Lesbian. The standard Freudian theories (now in total disrepute) would indicate that you just cannot tell such a thing from the life of anyone pre-adolescent. We contend otherwise and know readers will much much enjoy this gloriously well written novel.

Marguerite Duras, who enjoys an odd underground reputation in the United States while already established as a major literary figure in her native France, disappears in DESTROY, SHE SAID, N.Y., Grove Press, 1970 (also London, Hamish Hamilton, 1970). Minor and explicit Lesbian scenes are tied into a symbolic novel which defies unraveling. Four people at a hotel in France include a man, his wife and a male friend. All of them fall in love with a female stranger at the hotel, but it is the wife who is most turned on by the stranger and lures her finally into a forest which is somehow a symbol of evil (the forest, not the woman). There is a highly charged erotic near-seduction scene between the two women. In the end the stranger escapes with a "husband." Point, if



any, escapes. Nevertheless, she writes well and holds your interest.

I didn't learn of James Jones' THE MERRY MONTH OF MAY, N.Y., Delacorte, 1970, in time to get a review copy for this issue; but reviews cite a major Lesbian character, Samantha. One review says Samantha is black, another does not so specify. More later if it's worth comment.

UNBOUGHT AND UNBOSSSED, by Shirley Chisholm, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1970, is a clear eyed, well written autobiography by one of our very few women in Congress. Surely everyone reading this is well aware of Shirley Chisholm, black ex-school teacher from the Twelfth Congressional District of Brooklyn, who defeated James Farmer; but very possibly some of you do not know the details of her up-from-under life. Ms. Chisholm believes that women can make it via the system and presents some compelling proofs of her ideas. One interesting note . . . her district has 2.5 women voters to every man voter . . . and she won her seat by a margin of 2.5 to 1. This should say something to all of us . . . WE OUTNUMBER THEM . . . (An excerpt of this book appeared in the February, 1971, COSMOPOLITAN MAGAZINE; but don't settle for the short article, read the book.)

Movie makers have been flirting again with vampires, and one of their horrors (for the viewer) is THE VAMPIRE LOVERS, written by Tudor Gates and directed by Roy Ward Baker. It is a male movie, for a

male audience, and is almost too silly to comment on except for the fact that several readers have brought it to my attention, many of them implying it is a "first." Not so, as I pointed out in a recent past column . . . tying vampires and Lesbians together is an old literary game, with possibly J. Sheridan LeFanu's CARMILLA the oldest example. Also, it's not new in movies since it's been at least five or more years since the rotten film BLOOD AND ROSES dealt with this theme.

Monica Dickens' newest novel, THE END OF THE LINE, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1970, is a slice of life type set in an industrial city in England. The Samaritans are a group of volunteers who sit on the phone with the various troubled of their city, much like various hot-line operations around the major cities of the U.S. The plot, of course, is another of the endless ways to use the most "telling" novel plot . . . a series of characters connected by a single thread. In this case the thread is the misery of their lives . . . and the Samaritans are almost as miserable a lot as the users of their service. Of major interest here are Billie and Morra . . . an ill-matched Lesbian couple consisting of bumbling but well meaning Billie and unappetizing and ill-meaning Morra, who, fortunately as it turns out, leaves Billie for a man. There is a sudden twist ending in this one, involving Billie and one of the Samaritans, Victoria, that leaves the reader hoping . . . which is more than one can say about the fates of most of the characters. Very well done, for her well established fans.

TOUCHING, by Gwen Davis, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1971, is an odd book to review. It is about encounter groups . . . and this is a popular theme (though already old in novel terms). Why people want to gather in rooms etc. with no clothes and beat their breasts and uncover their traumas we are unsure, and this novel does little to clarify that tendency. But it is fascinating. The narrator, enraptured at least, in love to some extent possibly, with her heroine, Soralee, does a neat job of tracking down Soralee's sad life . . . and end . . . and the reader is more than willing to go along for the ride. The ending is hollow though expected. Ms. Davis is a very good writer, though, and it will keep you reading. Lesbian elements are muted, and all the more powerful for that fact. In terms of feminism, it's hardly necessary to mention the presence of the girl who is

terrified of the male organ, the man who uses his sexuality to brutalize, and so forth.

Various previews of LOVERS ALL UNTRUE, by Norah Lofts, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1970, all indicated some interest in terms of women's liberation; so I took a look at this and was delighted to discover that, indeed, it is most interesting. It is a Victorian scene . . . with a father out of hard time indeed, about as much of a heavy handed bastard as one could imagine. The plot is simply too thick to go into except to say that the heroine, Marion Draper, is one of the most underprivileged of women and all because she is wanting to be independent of daddy. Murder, plots and counterplots, abound; and the novel ends with the leading lady very much out of it in all ways. There is a very minor bit of variant interest as well . . . but telling about it will spoil it . . . so I leave it to you to find.

Kingsley Amis' TAKE A GIRL LIKE YOU has been made into a failure type play . . . with a brief run in N.Y.C. early this year. The Lesbian aspects are muted . . . oh, well . . .

Free-lance writer Annie Gottlieb, known to those of you who read VILLAGE VOICE, did an excellent article on recent women's liberation titles available in paperback for the "Paperback Books" section of the February 21, 1971, NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW. It is such a cohesive and intelligent covering that we highly recommend it for groups to use in building inexpensive local women's liberation libraries. All major city libraries and most small ones will have and keep NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW, so you will have easy access to this fine article.

SOMEWHERE LIKE THIS, by Pat Arrowsmith, London, Allen, 1970, is a realistic prison novel. Ms. Arrowsmith has been a political prisoner at various times and she cuts the walls open good and shows it like it must be . . . and it's pretty bad. The Lesbian elements are the major plot . . . but the overall vicious oppression of women gives the book its horror-laden tone. Major, but very sad . . . recommended.

At long last, THE NEW WOMEN: A MOTIVE ANTHOLOGY ON WOMEN'S LIBERATION, edited by Joanne Cooke, Charlotte Bunch-Weeks, with Robin Morgan as poetry editor, is out. This is published by Bobbs-Merrill; and the majority of the contents are familiar to those of you who saw the now famous March/April, 1969, issue of MOTIVE MAGAZINE. The book

will be very useful to libraries . . . and if you missed the MOTIVE issue you ought to get this. Additional material includes much good poetry, some of it Lesbian . . . with contributors familiar to you, Rita Mae Brown and Martha Shelley among others. The bibliography is not adequate at all, having been drawn from a very old edition of Lucinda Cislser's excellent bibliographies . . . but beyond that is a good book. This is the book with Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon's THE REALITIES OF LESBIANISM in it . . . alone worth the cost of the book IF you have not previously seen it.

Lesbian poet Charlotte Mew, now almost forgotten, is the subject of a rather scurrilous article in the September, 1970, issue of BULLETIN OF THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY. The article (by a male, of course) has poor Charlotte cornering author May Sinclair and chasing her around a bedroom . . . highly unlikely in view of the personalities and temperaments of both these ladies. FURTHERMORE, he has English novelist G.B. Stern (called Peter by

her friends) and Rebecca West as the women present when May Sinclair told this weird story. Recommended reading, however, for the biographical material about May Sinclair herself. Most large public libraries and most university and college libraries will have this periodical.

Will someone who has seen the Broadway play, AND MISS REARDON DRINKS A LITTLE, let us know if it is, indeed, Lesbian in part . . . for the reviews are very suspicious.

Remember, if we do not review a book you think we should, you should let us know about it, because we do not see every book nor every review . . . your help is needed.

(Please always provide an address when you write for information to THE LADDER. We cannot always take space in the magazine to reply to inquiries, but we make an effort to answer serious questions, seriously stated.)

Readers Respond

Dear Gene:

I've been an eager reader of THE LADDER for some months now, finding especially commendable and interesting the recent move to relate it to the more inclusive women's liberation movement. The unplanned coincidence of my joining NOW about the same time as I started my subscription to THE LADDER points to my dual interests. In addition, however, a large reason for my getting involved in NOW is that I found the local group to be the most interesting, alive group of females that I'd come across in Milwaukee. Thus I find my social life to be highly segregated: intellectual excitement and a sense of mission I find with my NOW sisters (all of whom appear to be straight); and a species of camaraderie and relaxation I find with my other sisters at the local gay bar.

Naturally, I find this unnatural disjunction in my life distinctly displeasing. It is essential for me, as for all women, that the person I'm involved with emotionally also be someone I'm involved with intellectually. While living for ten years in a nearby university town, I was lucky enough to meet a number of gay people, mostly graduate students like myself, who were able to talk about something besides their

love lives. Here in Milwaukee, however, where I have access to the only Lesbian bar in the state, I've made many gay acquaintances, but can't seem to find more than a very few who seem aware of much beyond the gay milieu. Consequently, my disappointment and frustration have led me to theorize about what I shall term the "sexual timidity" of the suppressed sex.

Why is it that the number of Lesbian bars is everywhere far outnumbered by male gay bars? That all sex researchers confirm this disproportion by concluding that Lesbians are far fewer than male homosexuals? We could, of course, simply agree to accept the pronouncements of the theorists who reason that, given the traditional setup of the family in Western civilization, the chances for alteration of sexual preference greatly favor the male. But, if like me, you've asked about family backgrounds of gay friends, you must find it hard to be wholly persuaded by the family-background theory of causation. Those backgrounds are simply too variable. If, in addition, you work with a lot of single and celibate females, whom age has withdrawn from the rigorous competition of the marriage market, you're led to a tentative hypothesis.

For while their male counterparts are still raking about (usually with women younger than themselves), are indeed very much in demand, these women have simply resigned themselves to the female lifelong pattern of second-best. Just as the female is not expected and encouraged to develop her vocational and personality potentials, so also is she discouraged from developing her sexual potentialities. While it is expected that adolescence is for males a time of significant sexual exploration, comparable activity for the female is much discouraged, and virginity at marriage is still deemed a desirable ideal. Likewise, it must be assumed that after she is no long marriageable (after 30?), the female conveniently loses whatever sexual desire she ever possessed as witnessed by her meek embrace of the bleak joys of celibacy. (Indeed, when feeling despondent about my own lot, I often recall these abandoned women, many of them lovely human beings; in a way it's even sadder that age, which overtakes us all, should relegate them to a hermitic existence, than that deviance, incomprehensible to the majority as a human mode, should do so.)

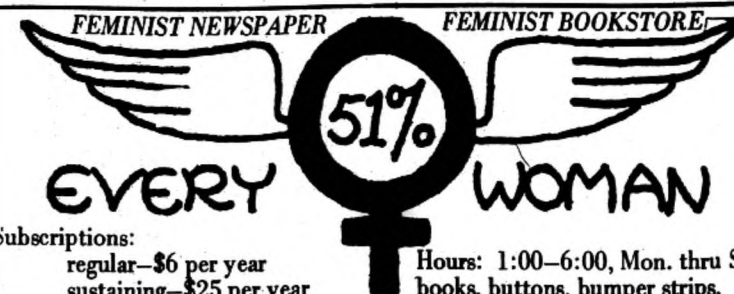
Such quiet capitulation, however, is but a minor manifestation of the painful fact that whatever status women have derives primarily from their sexuality. The Nov./Dec. 1970 issue of "Transaction" has a fine article demonstrating this fact as it emerges in the differing fates meted out to aging men and women. Because male identity is strongly linked to a broad mosaic of personality, intelligence, and job status, physical deterioration does not define a man as sexually undesirable until he is in his late fifties. Indeed, because, as one shrewd observer has noted, power is a powerful aphrodisiac, the increasing job pretige of his maturity may actually increase a man's desirability to the seraglio of young secretaries, receptionists, etc. who hover about in his working world. But for the creature whose worth is so largely a function of her appearance, each new wrinkle, each new gray hair is a frightening portent of undesirability, to be anxiously attacked with a panoply of cosmetic paraphernalia. The article dramatically illustrates these social facts with an ad in which Peter Lawford — clearly in his fifties — is shown in various situations with his Stetson hat, but always surrounded by lovely young ladies — clearly in their twenties. The caption reads, "Try to imagine a female star about Peter

Lawford's age surrounded by adoring young men." In short, in our society, women, like the spring ephemerals, seem doomed to a brief and fragile flowering.

My point is that with reference to women with deviant proclivities similar mechanisms operate. Because for women sexual experimentation is frowned upon, and all sexual activity so severely strictured, true sexual identity has far less chance of emerging in the female than in the male. This is complicated by the Lesbian's requirement of love first, sex second. Thus the chances that the latent Lesbian will break out of her cocoon are, it seems to me, much less than that the male homosexual will come to see himself as such. This, then, probably accounts for some part of the great numerical disparity between overt male and female homosexuals. But I also have a strong feeling that there are probably several million Lesbians, in the "closet", women in business and the professions who again, because conditioned like all females to soft pedal their sexuality, are far less willing than their male counterparts to seek emotional/sexual satisfaction when it entails some risk.

For me personally, this generalized process of suppressive female conditioning has had the unhappy consequence of making me an unwilling celibate, since the kind of women I find attractive and interesting are intimidated into keeping their distance from the bar scene. And if someone has figured out some other way of meeting members of the underground, few of us know about it. I'm reminded of an account of population dynamics related by an erudite naturalist. He said that given a certain number of bugs in flour, their number will increase in proportion to the amount of flour. But after a certain volume of flour, the number will decrease. Why? Very simply, when the flour environment expands too much, the bugs just can't manage to find one another. Well, like all analogies, this is hardly an exact one. Yet, it points to a similar plight among some Lesbians. In addition to the multiple obstacles to happiness facing all Lesbians, there is the additional one of meeting that special somebody who shares your pleasure in the exercise of that faculty which places us somewhere between the beasts and the angels in the vast hierarchy of living creatures — namely, intelligence.

Donna Martin
Milwaukee, Wisc.



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