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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.

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THE LADDER

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Sex and Sexuality

By HOPE THOMPSON

"LOVE BETWEEN WOMEN, written by a psychiatrist, is the first authoritative book to have been published wholly devoted to the subject of female homosexuality." This is the first sentence of the jacket blurb for LOVE BETWEEN WOMEN by Charlotte Wolff, M.D., Gould Duckworth and Co., Ltd., London 1971 (St. Martin's Press, N.Y., 1971). "Written by a psychiatrist:" can there be a psychiatrist who is free of the heterosexual-patriarchal framework within which these "experts" operate? Does being a psychiatrist make one an authority on Lesbianism? This book is so good and so bad - so strangely contradictory - that it has prompted me to write the following article, rather than a simple review.

* * *

More and more women are becoming aware of the oppression of patriarchy, of how men see themselves as subject, as the norm of humanness, and women as object or "the other" and thus inferior to men and not quite human. But fewer are aware of the insidious, unthought, even unthought of, underpinning of patriarchy: heterosexuality. Heterosexuality, like maleness, is the tacitly assumed norm and we Lesbians are plagued endlessly with the question: what causes Lesbianism? Behind this question is the unexamined proposition that heterosexuality is "natural" and "normal" and God ordained. Not so long ago people wondered how the sun went across the sky from East to West. That a god drove it across as men drove stagecoaches across the United States was as good an answer as any, as long as the question itself was the wrong one, based on a wrong premise. The premise, not consciously articulated, was that the earth was stationary. Astronomy had to wait until someone thought to ask, Is the earth stationary? before that science could advance. Let us now ask, "Is heterosexuality natural?"

Before we can get very far with this question, we come up against the words, sex, sexuality, heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality. We all throw them around without bothering to define them. They are very loaded words, loaded with emotional connotations that differ widely. Yet they are used by people who consider

themselves "scientific" and who never examine the emotions behind these words. This sort of sloppy approach is called "objectivity," as if any human being could be "objective" about herself (himself) when studying another creature equally complex. The "objective psychologist or sociologist" fancies himself a sort of god able to look down upon human beings, objects whose range of life is less than his, and whose mind is not limited by his own mind. This is sheer nonsense. One mind can study another only from within the confines of its own mind. Every human mind is finite and conditioned by its own life to date and hence every mind is biased. It follows that, particularly in the behavioral sciences, it is most important to state one's values, a more flattering word than prejudices or biases, ("I have a set of values; he has mere bias.")

What are we to do if bias, or value judgments, if you will, are unavoidable? We cannot discard the attempt to understand ourselves and others for we have minds, whatever they are, that refuse to be still. What we can do is pool our biases and thus stretch our minds. To do this we must examine as best we can our underlying value assumptions, make fully conscious and open to others what our basic philosophical and religious tenets are. This too is not wholly possible. A feeling or hunch or thought will suddenly appear as from nowhere and sometimes appear accompanied by a feeling of conviction that it is true. This mysterious phenomenon is generally called "creativity" and operates as well in science as in art. If one fancies oneself a "scientist," one cannot take the hunch at face value. One must apply to it all one already knows and examine it from every angle and then leave it up to other minds to carry on. Science often gets stuck because of having asked the wrong question. Until the right question is asked, what answers one does get are partial at best. Gertrude Stein's last words were something like this: to Alice she asked as she was wheeled into the operating room, "What is the answer?" Alice shook her head upon which Gertrude said, "Then what is the question?"

A question that has seldom been asked (and never, that I know of, within the "authoritative" disciplines of the social sciences) is: Is heterosexuality natural? I shall answer with: NO! But before I martial up what will pass for "scientific" evidence, I must state my biases and define my

words. I am a Lesbian and, whether I like it or not, I see human beings and human behavior through the eyes of a very happy Lesbian who thanks god she is not heterosexual. I am no more disqualified for tackling the question of the "naturalness" of heterosexuality than is the happy heterosexual, assuming there is such a creature.

As a Lesbian I am better able to see the unrelatedness of reproduction and sexuality than are heterosexuals. In the matter of reproduction we can study ourselves as we study animals, especially mammals. But right here I run up against a value of mine. I consider human beings to be more than or different from animals in the matter of consciousness. An animal is conscious, but not self-conscious. Something new was injected into nature or the universe with the advent of homo sapiens. Many social scientists talk as if human beings are no more than more complicated and sophisticated animals. I simply do not share this philosophical or religious view. Our method of reproduction is called sexual. Our method is not that of the amoeba that simply splits in two, nor the method of some trees that are hermaphroditic. Like mammals, we consist of two separate types whose generative cells must come together to produce a new being. If there were no urge on the part of at least one of these two types to unite these generative cells, the whole species would be finished before it got started. We use the word 'sex' in referring to these two types, female and male. We all belong to one or the other 'sex' (leaving aside the very rare occurrence of hermaphroditism in human beings). Unfortunately we also use the word 'sex' to refer to the urge to engage in the act that happens to lead, generally, to reproduction, as well as to behavior that has orgasm in mind but cannot lead to the joining of ovum and sperm.

We can hardly underestimate the importance of reproduction or I would not be here to write this article. But does it have anything to do with human sexuality? The heterosexual human male has done the thinking for all of us on this topic and too often his thinking has been done with his penis, a very demanding organ. As a dog breeder for a number of years I observed that the male was always overwhelmingly anxious to breed with every female in season, but, much to my sorrow from a breeder's point of view, many of my bitches either refused any male or were most selective. Since my breed was St. Bernards,

I found it frequently impossible to force the female into being raped, for a dog cannot rape a bitch and I was not strong enough to help him do so. It seems to me, then, that mammals, including human beings, are still with us because the male of the species has an unconquerable urge to impregnate the female and enough females go along with this to insure the continuance of the species. But even here there is a difference between mammals and humans: only the human female has no "season", that is, a time when she in some way, such as smell, arouses the copulative instinct in the male. My male Saints apparently never thought of "sex" when no bitch was in season. Can one say that animals have sexuality? Only human males are always ready to engage in the reproductive act and only human males can rape the female. But what does this have to do with love or with living together? Hetero-sex is a reproductive function, one that we no longer need engage in pell-mell for we now know how babies are made, as we once did not. I am raising the question whether it has anything to do with specifically human sexuality. It has nothing to do with my sexuality.

In this paper I shall use the word 'heterosexuality' to refer, not to coitus per se, but to the life-style of a man and a woman living together "in love" or to the coming together of males and females in a context of sexuality where erotic expression must be confined to behavior between male and female.

* * *

Is heterosexuality natural? First, there is the problem of what is meant by natural, a thorny problem in itself. We could say that anything human beings do is natural or that only what most people do in a given culture at a given time is natural. I am using the word in the existential sense of authentic, that is, as behavior and feeling that spring harmoniously from one's inward being. I believe, on both philosophical and religious grounds, that we have all at all times some particular inner "nature", one that we in some respects share with all or many other human beings and in other respects is unique to ourselves. As we travel through life we always have the possibility of 'choosing' authentically in accordance with our nature, of 'choosing' to become more fully ourselves, or of 'choosing' inauthentically, that is, of diminishing ourselves. I

cannot accept any kind of positivist philosophy that says we are only the joint product of blind chance in our genetic makeup and prenatal conditioning. What lies behind this belief of mine is the course of my own life. If I had had no say whatsoever in who I have become, I would not now be a happy Lesbian. I cannot see how there would be any Lesbians at all and yet no society has been able to stamp us out despite the most thoroughgoing enforcement of heterosexuality that makes any police state appear benign and inept. But what is remarkable is not that there have always been so many Lesbians, but that there are so many women in whom love for women has been apparently totally snuffed out.

Freud made what I hope is the last great, heroic effort to justify for all time the victory of the heterosexual-patriarchal life-style. Like all thinkers, particularly male ones, he began with what he liked to think and proceeded to establish his desire as immutable scientific fact. He looked at the human condition through the end of his penis and came up with, among other things, penis *easy* in all women and the vaginal orgasm in mature women. I see no reason why I cannot do as well as Freud, though from a different desire. If I end up with at least as logical and "scientific" a theory of human nature as he did, I will not be proving the truth of my vision, but I will shake his vision to the core. My view is rooted in my Lesbianism and my desire to "discover" that women cannot express their full sexuality in the heterosexual relationship. This brings me to another difficult definition: the meaning of *sexuality*. The word is often used as a synonym for sex or sexual activity. I will use it in a much broader way and in a way that only incidentally may include sexual activity. It is quite possible for women to be in touch with their total sexuality without ever having engaged in sexual acts, either heterosexual or Lesbian. While male and female "fit" very well in the matter of reproduction, of getting sperm to ovum, this is not true of their sexualities. Let us take a look at our biological construction.

The male has a handy, all-purpose organ: it urinates, it impregnates, and it gives him delightful sensations. Women are blessed with three separate organs, a considerable evolutionary advance in complexity: a urethral orifice, a vagina (or sperm conduit), and a remarkable little organ from

which can spread sensations that envelop the whole person, namely, the clitoris. This organ differentiation in the female has psychological consequences. "Love-making", that euphemism that has led to so much confusion, is to the woman something very different from what it is to the male. "Tension reduction" is a phrase a number of male Behaviorists like and that describes male sexual activity very well, it seems to me. I am not averse to accepting male terminology when they discuss the male sexual experience. But I have fumed when they try to use that expression to "explain" the "onset" of Lesbianism. Heterosexual "love-making" is behavior that insures the perpetuation of the species and, more often than not, leaves the female pregnant but unsatisfied. I fail to see what it has to do with female sexuality, even biologically. Her sperm conduit is made use of, to the delectation of the male and her impregnation. Love-making, properly speaking, is something that can take place only between two women whose total sexualities and total beings are united in love.

* * *

Let us take a quick look at evolution and its major turning points. Astronomers and geologists attempt to solve the mystery of the creation of our planet and its cooling, etc., to the point where the emergence of life was at least a possibility. Biochemists study how the first living organisms or viruses came into being. Botanists study the evolution of plants from that mysterious beginning of life. Biologists wonder how the first animal organisms began. And paleontologists wonder how the human being and the human mind evolved from some kind of primate. Each one of these momentous evolutionary events – the appearance of earth, the appearance of the first plant life, then animal life, and lastly, human consciousness – is shrouded in mystery. Evolutionary history is pitted with gaps where somehow a new and higher form of life emerged. We guess that homo sapiens evolved from some form of primate from which evolved also our modern primates, but we have not yet found that transitional animal or hominid. Anthropologists have the same sort of difficulty when they try to imagine what really happened after the first humans came into being and before we reach the time of the earliest reliable historical records. Male anthropologists are

thus free to fill in the gaps in favor of the male and now women are beginning to paint the story in their favor. (Cf Review of *THE FIRST SEX* in Dec./Jan. 1971-72 LADDER) I shall try my hand at this game, making it come out in the Lesbian's favor.

We may suppose that our first ancestors simply plucked their food from plants, as gorillas do today. But the real Garden of Eden contained dangerous animals that had to be killed if they could not be chased off. The killed animals were eaten and deliberate hunting became the fashion. Since the women were burdened with pregnancy and nursing, they were the logical ones to look after the children while the males went off to hunt. No one, of course, in these early times had any idea how babies were made and, since women had no special times when they exuded an overpowering attraction that inspired the male to mating activity and themselves had no overpowering urge to be mated, the male was constantly on the prowl when in the presence of women and was endowed with the power to rape, unlike all other animals. [Nothing has changed to this day and in fact rape is on the increase]. But the males and females spent little time together. The hunt was a fine excuse to get away from the ladies, as male clubs are to this day. The women in the meantime gathered food for all and gradually learned the rudiments of agriculture. Sooner or later an unusually kind hearted male brought in a baby lion or jackal or member of the deer family which the women raised. This gave them the idea of animal husbandry and taught them that the male must impregnate the female in order to make her pregnant. Then some stupid woman told the males of the connection between coitus and pregnancy and women's troubles began.

The boys had always marveled at the power of women to produce new human beings, both female and male ones. Women could reproduce not only creatures like themselves, but males too while males could produce neither. A revolution began that is at least as important to human evolution as the original agricultural revolution. Men saw a great truth: that their "seed" was indispensable to the creation of babies. By analogy with the planting of seed in the earth, they assumed that their seed was the complete potential human being, requiring only the soil of woman for growth. For thousands of years the course of human culture was determined by this mistaken

idea, the grand-daddy of male scientific errors. That the ovum contributes equally or more to the genetic makeup of the new organism was not discovered until two centuries ago – half a second ago in evolutionary time. As far as the life of women even today is concerned, it might as well not have been discovered at all.

Men went wild with their self-serving half truth. Now it was they, for all practical purposes, who created children. Their natural urge to possess, to own, spread quickly to the children they created and the women who supplied the soil in which to grow their creations. Agriculture made life easier, at least for some. Food could be stored against a rainy day and some leisure time enjoyed by the lucky few. The males, who already had hunting weapons and the athletic strengths and skills they developed, used this power to keep their women pregnant and working in the fields. One or more women were taken by each male and, all unbidden, heterosexuality was born. In the good old days Lesbianism and homosexuality were given expression as a matter of course. Human sexuality, female and male, was not cramped and stunted. But men saw the dangers of Lesbianism, or more likely sensed it in some inarticulate manner. Racial memories of the power of women, not only as creators of new humans, but as leaders and governors, as Amazons, was much closer then than now. Men sensed that women must be kept apart from each other and kept at odds with each other. They made women dependent upon them for their economic survival. This to some extent cramped their own homosexuality, but they overcame this in two ways. They created all sorts of institutions where women were barred and where men could find outlets for their emotional homosexuality. Gradually this led to a taboo on sexual activity with each other, but the burden of this taboo was eased by the fact that they could use their women for the reduction of sexual tension, or what I call reproductive tension. This complete separation of sexual activity from love was facilitated by the simpler construction of the male genitals as compared with the female. In the meantime the oppression of women was elaborated and increased.

The Hebrews were especially active in promoting the heterosexual-patriarchal life style. Then Jesus was crucified and Christianity ostensibly took over. But where we are now is 95% Hebrew and only 5% Christ.

The Hebrews ~~of~~ore and the Jews of today have so strong a taboo against Lesbianism and homosexuality that it is taboo to name this taboo. To maintain the unnatural and anti-love idea that heterosexuality is god-ordained requires the most vigorous and all encompassing mythological, religious, and scientific reinforcement men are able to muster up. All that our scientists, our psychiatrists and psychologists, are able to ask, is: what comes Lesbianism? We are all of us, Jews and Gentiles alike, so immersed in ancient Hebrew thought, thought that was taken over more intact by Christianity than is generally realized, that to question the naturalness of heterosexuality is unthinkable. Yet human progress demands that we constantly break through that line that separates the thinkable from the unthinkable.

* * *

I have given one imaginary version of how men came to establish and institutionalize heterosexuality, based upon what is desirable for them. The words used to justify this setting to themselves and to sell it to women have changed from the times of the ancient Hebrews to the modern Hebrew, Freud, but the meaning behind the words is the same. Women are proclaimed inferior to men and forced to serve them not only as slaves who do not rebel, but as slaves that adore their masters. This last twist in the master-slave relationship requires constant reinforcing because it is so against the human grain. Let us look at the picture in more recent times. For most of human history and in most parts of the world today, "love" has nothing to do with heterosexual marriage. Marriage is seen as a partnership entered into chiefly for the benefit of the male. The woman gives her body for the sexual pleasure of the male and for bearing his children and labors for him in the domestic arena. In return she is fed and housed. This is a very bad bargain for women, but the poverty and harshness of life necessitated some such partnership and the male's power allowed him to dictate the terms. As the bedrock conditions of life began to improve, at least for some, it became necessary to reinforce the ties binding the woman to the man and "love" entered the picture. Women have a great capacity for love, not only love of their children, but of each other, as Lesbianism proves. The trick was to warp this power to love from its natural course

toward another woman onto a man.

Today in the United States it is a basic article of faith that one marries (heterosexually) for love. Sometime after World War II "togetherness" became the watchword. It was not enough that husband and wife carry out their respective labors; they must now spend as much time with each other and with the children as possible. Almost from the moment of birth girls are taught that they will fall in love with a prince charming and the amount of romanticizing of the heterosexual marriage that takes place in all the media is staggering. What amazes and amuses me today is that I fell for all of it as a teenager and never had to suffer disappointment because I had made a tiny switch in my own mind - I waited for my princess charming. And she came and I married her and am now living happily ever after. I am still trying to figure out what enabled me to make that lucky switch when the vast majority of women cannot or do not. But, once these unfortunate women are married, the frustration begins. Their capacity to love is thwarted at every turn and they try every kind of solution short of the only one, falling in love with a woman. For this is, it seems to me, the most powerful taboo in our society. Ranged against Lesbian love are not only all heterosexual males, but most women, including many women who are not upset by male homosexuality. In fact, many such women like male homosexuals and may unwittingly "fall in love" with one because he is not so filled with crude maleness. He is closer in his sentiments to what a woman understands by love than is the typical heterosexual male, though his sexuality is male, not female.

I am not sure just what is cause and what, effect, but heterosexuality is in a vicious circle today. Our technological civilization has rendered the old division of labor ridiculous. All jobs can be performed by people, regardless of sex. Keeping the little woman imprisoned in the city apartment or suburban home is more difficult than keeping her close to the farm house where she was kept busy milking the cows, making the butter, feeding the chickens, tending the vegetable garden, and raising the children. Our male psychologists are trying hard to fill a woman's whole life with less and less, trying to force upon her an image of herself that is more and more ancillary to the male and his glorious and arduous achievements. While this endeavor

is doomed, women's own fight to liberate themselves, to become persons, opens them to the question whether living with a man makes any sense at all. It makes a great deal of sense to men, for women do a large part of society's work for nothing, freeing much wealth for arms and munitions. But it makes little sense in a world of human beings. To avoid such a "monstrous" revolution it is imperative to maintain heterosexuality, and this in turn requires a very distinct and narrow stereotyping of the sexes. We must avoid at all costs allowing human qualities to flourish. Little girls must grow up to be mothers and nurturers of male egos, in short, to be "feminine." Little boys must grow up to be men, not human beings. Maturity is differentially defined as being either loaded with manhood or with womanhood, never humanhood. The male is permitted some human activities as long as he demonstrates much manhood. The female must remain halfway between children and male adults. The time to bear down heavily to insure this dichotomy of male and female and to avoid the dangers inherent in growth into humanhood, is during puberty. This is the danger period because, as all psychologists know, young teenagers are very prone to develop Lesbian or homosexual attachments. A certain number of us are "lost" to our natural inclinations and, if we are able to conquer the dreadful approbrium of society, do grow into our humanhood. But, "fortunately" for our patriarchal society, most teenagers succumb to the vicious conditioning necessary to warp their loving natures into one of the two heterosexual stereotypes. The question we must begin to ask is, how is this gruesome warping and stunting of human nature possible? What are the "dangers" of permitting people to know and express their natural sexualities? The danger of course is to the status quo. All who profit from the way things are will call such a revolution a danger. Since Lesbians are the ones with nothing to lose, we are also the ones most determined to bring about the women's revolution.

Many feminists seem to be confused as to whether there are any differences between women and men. They are going through (or have already gone through) a phase of sexual promiscuity behind which lies the notion, taken uncritically from men, that this represents sexual emancipation. They question monogamy in imitation of men. They try desperately to separate

sex from love, to accommodate their very different biology and emotionality to the male model. Men, brought up to exhibit "manhood", feel obligated to exercise their reproductive urge, which happens at the same time to give them pleasure. The ultimate expression of this puerile "manhood", this lack of any human feeling for the other, is rape. Can a woman rape a man? Is there anything in her biological and psychic make-up that could, in its ultimate expression of womanhood or femininity, lead her to enjoy the act of raping another? Her sexuality is not geared to reproduction - it is geared to love. But this is not clear to those women "successfully" warped into directing their sexuality toward the male. It becomes crystal clear only in the mature Lesbian.

It seems strange to me that human beings engaged in the social sciences have not taken the simple route to finding the confirmation of the difference between female and male sexuality by studying sexuality as expressed in Lesbians and homosexuals. But the reason is not hard to find. The researchers in this field are mostly men and their theoretical framework is not only heterosexual but dictated by the penis. Thus we get the study of male and female homosexuality, the Lesbian being seen as a variety of homosexual, a being differing from the male only in having a biologically female body and the only reason for studying her at all is to find out "how she does it." I discovered the senselessness of these so-called comparison studies by answering a number of male-designed questionnaires. While the men "learned" pretty much what they already thought, I learned how different male and female sexuality are. Combining both my legal and psychological training, I saw how the questions asked were designed to elicit the answers wanted and expected of the "witness." There were no questions about the importance and place of love in sexual behavior and there were many irrelevant questions that, for a woman, had nothing to do with sexual desire. We Lesbians were made to fit the male researchers' preconceived ideas. This is a first rate example of bias. Such studies must be corrected by studies designed by Lesbians fully conscious of what female sexuality means, and studies designed by women who feel they are totally heterosexual. Sexuality is an area of great subjectivity, where even the pretense to objectivity at this stage of human development is

absurd. We must resort to a pooling of biases as an honest first step in trying to arrive at the truth.

* * *

I will now examine the book, *LOVE BETWEEN WOMEN*, mentioned at the beginning. It is the first non-fiction book I know of to be wholly about Lesbians and by a so-called expert, a psychiatrist, as the blurb says. As well as being an "authority", Dr. Wolff is a woman and this combination led to a curious result. When Dr. Wolff is being a woman, an understanding human being, she demonstrates a fine grasp of what it means to be a Lesbian. But when she is being the psychiatrist, she feels forced to adopt the theoretical framework bequeathed her by Freud et al, that framework based upon the Old Testament myth of the god-giveness of patriarchy and its underpinning, heterosexuality.

Dr. Wolff quotes Simone de Beauvoir (*THE SECOND SEX*): "And if nature is to be invoked, one can say that all women are naturally homosexual [sic]," and then adds, "I am in complete agreement with her when she confirms that all women are by nature homosexual [sic]." Earlier on she introduced me to a German psychiatrist, Georg Groddek (1886-1934), who wrote, "Yes, I hold the view that all people are homosexual, but it so firmly that it is difficult for me to realize how anyone can think differently." Dr. Wolff adds, "Groddek goes so far as to question how man can come to love the opposite sex. He turns the question of homosexuality into a question of heterosexuality." I wonder why I never came across Dr. Groddek in all my readings. And my first introduction to him comes in a book published first in England, written by a woman born in eastern Germany (now Poland), who obtained her MD at Berlin University and went to Paris in 1933 and to England in 1936 when Aldous Huxley brought her to London. It is no mere coincidence that no one mentions Groddek in the United States for this country is a bastion of patriarchy, as feminists are discovering, and a bastion of heterosexuality, as feminists will have to discover if they intend to win more than a little token justice in this man's country. Perhaps, as Dr. Wolff moved westward, she got more hopelessly entangled in heterosexual-patriarchal thought patterns. I am glad she stayed east of the Atlantic or she may

never have been able to write her book at all. Had Dr. Wolff followed Groddek and de Beauvoir and the findings of her own research, the "psychiatric" part of her book would have been unnecessary. She could have skipped her convoluted attempts to explain the cause of Lesbianism and would not have misread some of her own findings.

Toward the end of her book, Dr. Wolff states, "Lesbianism is close to the surface in every woman." Combining Groddek, de Beauvoir, and Wolff herself, I find more than enough support for my own belief that the true expression of female sexuality is Lesbianism and the question to which social scientists should address themselves is: how is it possible to condition the majority of people to heterosexuality? Those concerned with the progress and well-being of humankind should study the harmfulness of so massive a warping of human nature. They should ask: is there any further good to humanity to be wrung from the heterosexual system, heterosexual marriage, the heterosexual family? Is the battle of the sexes, induced by enforced heterosexuality, worth tolerating for its economic benefits? Is war perhaps the inevitable accompaniment to enforced heterosexuality wherein males must exhibit a stunted manhood and women, a stunted femininity and full manhood is prevented on a massive scale? There are many questions to be asked. One small one that intrigues me is, how can Dr. Wolff say that all women are naturally Lesbian without seeing that she herself is a Lesbian? Does she imagine that she has "successfully" repressed her true nature? How can a woman admit that all women are Lesbians and yet theorize from the point of view that she herself is not? And this is what Dr. Wolff does.

She makes a number of strange statements about bisexuality and about a sadness she imagines to be basic to Lesbianism that I could not understand until, toward the end of the book, she made it clear that she uncritically follows Freud in the vaginal orgasm myth and his belief that all of us are born "bisexual." I have deferred attempting to define "bisexual" partly because I cannot and partly because I cannot figure out what others mean by it. If "all women are by nature homosexual", how can they also be by nature bisexual, as Freud's dogma would have it? Before turning to what Dr. Wolff has to say about bisexuality, let me say what I think it is supposed to mean. The concept came into fashion among male

psychologists some years ago and was picked up by a number of people who fancied themselves avant-garde. Bisexuality was touted as superior to either hetero- or homosexuality. Many women, unable to think for themselves and all too willing to jump on the latest male bandwagon, joined the "bisexual kick," as I called it. Whatever it may mean to men, who have borne the biologically determined responsibility for impregnation so long as humanity did not know how babies were made (and artificial insemination was unknown), what could it mean to women? It seemed to me it provided a "respectable" outlet for one's Lesbian sentiments. Could it be, I asked myself, that some women can truly fall in love with a woman and then must, after a time, fall in love with a man in accordance with their "bisexual" nature? I went about looking for such a tragic woman, doomed never to find a lasting relationship. I thanked my lucky stars that I did not fall in love with a bisexual and that I was 100% Lesbian. Of course, I found many women who began their adult life with a man and only later discovered their Lesbianism. Since a woman can engage in hetero-sex simply by lying quiet, by being willing to put up with it, what does it mean to say a woman is "bisexual" if she has engaged in both heterosexual and Lesbian activity? And what does it mean when a woman says she has experienced orgasm both ways? Since she can experience orgasm by masturbating, is she "trisexual"? What it boils down to is that an orgasm pure and simple results from a mechanical stimulation of the clitoris provided the woman is psychologically disposed to allow it to happen.

Such a definition of bisexuality means nothing. There are, as a matter of fact, women who are aware of being sexually attracted to men. But these are women who are psychologically unable to allow themselves the other outlet, a woman. Some women are never sexually aroused by the male. They know at an early age that their sexuality can be given fulfillment only by a woman AND THEY NEVER CHANGE. These are the fortunate ones, those who know they are Lesbians and who are inwardly authentic people, however much they must suffer at the hands of society. A far larger number of women first try hard to live up to the heterosexual role before they too discover that they cannot love a man with their total sexuality. Most women never make the discovery, but the reverse

order - finding the true expression of their sexuality to reside with a man *after* having found their love for a woman, never succeeds. Whatever flimsy and superficial meaning there may be to bisexuality in a woman, I have yet to find the "bi-loving" woman. (For those who will violently object at this point, let me say that I do not mean a woman cannot love a man as a friend, a brother, a human being. A woman is capable of a great deal of love of different kinds, particularly if she can experience Lesbian love.)

"A fixed gender identity is an illusion. Embryology and psychology have revealed that every human being has a bisexual foundation. In the very beginning of foetal life no differentiation of the sexes exists, and it is likely that memory traces of our early hermaphroditic structure never die. We certainly are bisexual creatures . . ." My oh my, what confusion is this? "Gender identity" is fashionable today. Now really, how many children are confused as to whether they are girls or boys? Only those very rare cases of biological hermaphroditism or those cases, hard to understand, where some abnormality of the genitals leads a careless doctor to make a mistake. Dr. Wolff herself emphasizes that masculinity and femininity are not attributes of biological sex, that they are qualities inherent in differing amounts in all people. But she forgets this in her discussion of gender identity. The problem is not one of "am I a girl or a boy," but one of sensing that one does not fit the heterosexual role stereotypes of male and female. More confusion: if foetal life in the beginning has no sexual differentiation, we could as well say we are basically asexual or nonsexual. But what has this to do with adults? I am not an old foetus.

"Women are *psychically* 'double-sexed,' and therefore homosexual by nature." This statement left me thoroughly confused until at the end of the book Dr. Wolff got a lot of mileage out of the vaginal orgasm. It is unfortunate that she had not heard of the Masters and Johnson research and the death of Freud's vaginal orgasm. The idea that women are 'double-sexed' comes from accepting the fact of two types of orgasm, the clitoral and the vaginal. And from this Dr. Wolff believes that the Lesbian is doomed to a measure of sexual frustration, "an element of unavoidable frustration, greater than in male homosexuality, [which] gives lesbianism a tinge of tragedy. It results from

the impossibility of complete sexual fulfillment, and particularly childlessness." This is pure balderdash. Lesbianism can provide a sexual fulfillment second to none, for, in the female, total fulfillment in sex is inseparable from total love of each for the other, not only the giving of total love to the other, but the receiving of that same kind of love from the other. Such a total entwining in the loving sexual embrace is not possible between male and female for the male cannot give to the woman the kind of love she gives to him. Due to their differing sexualities (not merely to their differing sexual apparatus) the quality and tone of female love is not within the power of the male to give. As for childlessness, many a proper heterosexual female has this problem due either to her own or her husband's sterility. But even this is beside the point. A lesbian couple has a double chance of being able to bear children, while the heterosexual couple has only one. Both members of a lesbian couple can generally have children. As a rule they do not, not because of any inherent disability, but due entirely to social oppression, due to the stigma of the unwed mother and the bastard child and to women's inability to earn a decent income.

Dr. Wolff's patriarchal and heterosexual brainwashing is evident in her calling the clitoris "a masculine part" and a "male rudiment." Recent biological and genetic evidence points to the female as fundamental, the male as secondary and ancillary. Why should a large, sloppy organ combining a number of functions that are separate in the female be considered the prototype of anything? I marvel at the persistence of male heterosexual thinking (ball thinking) even by a woman who writes favorably of Lesbianism, who says that all women are basically lesbian. Surely she must know that a man can have hundreds of children to maybe 25 at best for a woman, that a population distribution of 100 women to every man will in no way signal the end of humanity as would a population distribution in reverse - 100 men to every woman. If an invidious word like 'rudiment' must be used, it would be truer to speak of the male as a female rudiment, necessary only for the production of sperm until such time as science finds a way to do without, to unite two ova.

Having admitted that Lesbianism is natural to women, all women, Dr. Wolff then spends a lot of time trying to explain it as

Mom's fault. Dr. Wolff asks, "But has she [the lesbian] perhaps remained closer to the authentic woman than the 'normal' female?" Certainly, if, as Dr. Wolff admits, all women are basically lesbian. But then, how can she put the "blame" on Mom? I will not go into her reasoning here - it is the typical sort of psychoanalytic junk one can read anywhere and derives from asking the wrong question, from assuming Lesbianism to be something wrong, sinful and sick. It is true, however, that only a minority of women today retain their lesbianism intact, and are 'authentic women.' It must then be that a minority of Moms do something right. We need researchers who begin with this thesis, researchers who consciously look for the good in mothers of lesbian daughters. They may find that such mothers refuse to teach their daughters that the male is their superior, that such mothers are in some way, however subtle, aware of their human worth and do not abjectly kowtow to their husbands. Here is a sorry line from our Dr. Wolff: "Lesbians expect from one another nothing less than the wish-fulfillment of an incestuous mother-daughter relationship." We are to be explained "in the light of the particular brand of [our] mother fixation." Is this meant to explain "that lesbian women possess a more global, all embracing love-potential than [our] male counterparts?" If this be so, I say, All power to mother fixations!

"Lesbian feelings have two distinct features: a) their highly aesthetic quality and reverence for beauty, b) their intense emotionality. It is in the latter quality that [Lesbianism] stands apart from any other form of love, and this has not changed in 2600 years." Dr. Wolff does not appreciate the importance of this statement of hers. If this wonderful kind of love has remained unchanged for 2600 years, since Sappho, that is, it shows how fundamental to human female nature this love is. It shows that the vicious repression of the female by the patriarchy has failed. And of course Lesbianism did not just suddenly spring up with Sappho. It is most likely coexistent with humanity. But it is thoroughly destructive of patriarchy. Constant vigilance is required on the part of the male to keep it within bounds and to keep the majority of women 'inauthentic,' that is, heterosexual. "Lesbianism is too near the bone for many women, [those patriarchy has successfully brainwashed] and too disorienting to the arrogance of most men."

* * *

The resurgence of the women's movement in the '60's immediately called forth from these arrogant, or rather panicked, men cries of lesbian and dyke. They knew such "accusations" would have the desired effect upon our brainwashed, heterosexual sisters and would intimidate lesbians. What they did not know was that their "accusations" were true. Though most women have their lesbianism well out of sight of themselves, their move toward feminism is a move toward discovering their authentic selves, their buried lesbian nature, and the men are taking no chances. While the men who make this "terrifying" accusation do not consciously believe that all women are by nature lesbian, in the depths of their unconscious it is known to them as it is known to women. The Victorian notion that women were not capable of orgasm contains a germ of truth, namely, that sexual fulfillment for women is hard to come by via intercourse and mismatched sexualities. And the Judeo-Christian abhorrence of sex and the idea that it is to be tolerated only within marriage for the purpose of procreation is not altogether wide of the mark either. In the dim recesses of the unconscious male mind there lurks the knowledge that women love women and that assaulting them sexually for pleasure, whether it be an overt assault or a more subtle one that is seemingly welcomed by the brainwashed woman, is an immoral act. Most male sex today, as evidenced in pornography, is far more a power play than a loving embrace. The male's hectic need for constant sexual relief upon the body of a woman is not really a need to express love, but just the opposite - to express his power over his possession and his contempt for its (her) worthlessness. It is this that makes the need so compulsive; the male has not quite convinced himself that woman is his inferior and that she can be used with impunity, despite 2000 years of effort. Even that powerful archenemy of woman, St. Paul, betrayed a wisdom he could not know. He put celibacy above the married state for men. How could he do this except for a deep down, unknown to him, sense that violating women sexually for the male's pleasure was immoral?

That most women are crazy about intercourse is probably a relatively recent idea. After taking centuries to teach women that sexual enjoyment for them was their evil,

after thoroughly suppressing lesbianism and relegating it to the outer reaches of outlawry, it is now at long last safe to teach women that they love the male sexual embrace. Patriarchal society has turned most women into totally submissive, inauthentic creatures who can be taught anything men find it to their advantage for them to believe. And today they find the teaching of promiscuity, wife-swapping, sex without love or any commitment, to be to their liking. This may be partly due to economics - prostitutes are becoming expensive. And, sad to say, most women are doing just what the boys teach them. But the lesbian goes her way as she has for millennia, a constant and ineradicable threat to patriarchy.

In my view of the evolution of humanity and human society it was men who invented heterosexual marriage as necessary to patriarchy. The dyad - a word I find abhorrent but useful - is a unique kind of person to person relationship that is rooted in human nature. A couple or twosome has elements in it that cannot exist in threesomes or foursomes or still larger groups. Most, perhaps all of us, have an inner urge to find that one special person with whom we can share our total being. For heterosexual men this is often a special male friend and not the wife. When I was still a teenager and learned the World War I song, *My Buddy*, I sensed in it the kind of love I felt for different girls. For what I felt was a longing for closeness that I now know involved my sexuality but that, at the time, seemed quite other and beyond anything sexual. Women are so conditioned to think that their whole life consists in finding the man that their need to be part of a dyad can be expressed only in terms of heterosexual marriage. And there it remains forever frustrated to a more or less degree. A few of these married women do eventually discover their lesbianism, some become overly attached to their sons, many today are trying group marriages in the hope that having two or more "husbands" will be an improvement over just one.

Marriage is obsolete, say many heterosexual feminists. I agree as long as they specify heterosexual marriage. It was never anything more than an economic convenience and power necessity for males. It never satisfied the woman's emotional needs, not merely the sexual, but the total emotional needs of her sexuality. How could it when woman is basically lesbian?

And so women are casting about for alternatives to heterosexual marriage, alternatives that stop short of that dreaded condition known as Lesbianism. Why is Lesbianism so dreaded by so many women? I have been pondering this question for years and still have no answer. I think the answer must come from women who have experienced that dread and overcome it. There are many women, for example, who can express Lesbian feelings only when drunk and who are horrified at their behavior, should they remember it upon sobering up. When one has invested a lot of energy and many years in conforming to heterosexual expectations, it is indeed difficult to admit one has been a fool but this does not explain that terrible dread.

We "old Lesbians" are puzzled today over all the talk among young women against monogamy. Whether we have succeeded or not — for finding that one and only love of our life can be difficult, we know we want not only a monogamous relationship, but a lifelong one. Yet we hear that "new Lesbians" make fun of monogamy and snobbishly consider themselves terribly enlightened according to the extent of their promiscuity. I think what has happened is a progression beginning with rejection of heterosexual monogamous marriage that has not yet come to rest in monogamous Lesbian marriage. In between stages are promiscuous heterosexual relations, group marriage, bisexual experimentation, and promiscuous Lesbianism. The teens are the time for making dyadic attachments to numbers of persons in succession. One can hardly be expected to choose the "one and only" at so tender an age when one hardly knows oneself, let alone others. We used to call these affairs "puppy love." "Old Lesbians" — those who knew they were Lesbians by their mid-teens, went through this "normal" puppy love stage without succumbing to the pressure to change over to heterosexuality. But those girls who fell in with the majority culture, the heterosexual culture, and who only in their twenties came to sense something unsatisfactory in heterosexuality, must perforce go through the "puppy love" phase relatively late in life.

This is not the whole answer to the rejection of monogamy. The other half of the story, to my mind, is a matter of courage — the courage to love. To give oneself totally to another requires courage. And particularly in Lesbian love, which is

so intensely emotional and all embracing. The break-up of a Lesbian marriage can be far more devastating than heterosexual divorce, as many of us know. Sensing this, many women are loath to commit themselves to so deep a relationship. Love is a gamble, and in Lesbian love the stakes are higher than in heterosexual marriage. The latter is more an economic gamble; in the former one gambles with one's heart. Some of those who lose are unable to try again, so devastating is Lesbian divorce. Every woman has to decide for herself whether to take the gamble, but instead we have women who prefer to deny the validity and truth of monogamy rather than admit to themselves that the gamble is not for them. The single life can be fulfilling and it too requires its own kind of courage. But I will continue to wonder how fulfilling one-night stands and short-lived affairs are for women. It seems to me these women are still under the spell of men and imagine they are emancipated when they imitate male sexuality. If these women represent basic female sexuality, then we can expect to see a sizeable increase in male prostitutes for the servicing of women, as women gain economic parity with men. Or perhaps prostitutes will be put out of business as more and more women give it away.

* * *

Since all women are by nature Lesbian (and they are discovering this in increasing numbers today) what will happen if heterosexual conditioning fails? Let me first reassure heterosexual society by saying that it will hardly disappear overnight. My most optimistic guess is that it will take at least 150 years to reach the point where the heterosexual life style is to be found only in the backwaters of humanity, an interesting curiosity to be studied by anthropologists of the future. That is, all of us alive today will be dead before the majority culture is Lesbian. A too rapid change would be disastrous for most people alive today and so it is reassuring to know it cannot happen, much as we Lesbians would like to live to see it.

But now let us suppose that virtually all women are openly living as Lesbians. This seems, to heterosexuals, to signal the end of humanity. I fail to see why. It is not only women who are meant to love a member of their own sex, but men too. Psychologists and sociologists, most of whom could be

called reactionary without exaggeration, still think there are far more homosexuals than Lesbians. This appears to be true because men have more human freedom than women. What this proves is, the freer one is in society, the more is one apt to abandon heterosexuality. Far from loving women, men more nearly hate them. What we Lesbians have been witnessing since the advent of the women's movement in the 60's is the extent of women's hatred of men, a hatred that surprised many of us. I have to smile now at how terribly careful I used to be in all-women gatherings not to let my lack of interest in men show, for I was still passing for straight except among my Lesbian friends. Never did I suspect the depth of rage against men that existed within heterosexual women, for I had not experienced it myself, never having tried to be heterosexual. The question arose for me as to why, with so much hatred between women and men, there could be so much heterosexuality. I could not see the answer until I seriously began to question heterosexuality's naturalness. When two people are forced into such close proximity and in effect told to find fulfillment of their natures with another who cannot provide it — in the heterosexual marriage, that is, this is a fertile soil for the growth of hatred. The natural Lesbianism of the woman and the natural homosexuality of the man must be forever thwarted and hatred grows beyond all reason. Where "togetherness" is forced upon families via the great impact of the mass media, the marriage is more apt to dissolve than where wives and husbands can go their separate ways without feelings of guilt. The more constantly wife and husband are forced together or the less they are able to escape each other's company, the greater their hatred for each other. It seems today quaint to us that, after dinner the men gathered in one room over brandy and cigars and the women congregated in the kitchen, but this was really a better arrangement that helped keep the level of hatred down. I am not advocating a return to this Victorian style for it would tend to keep heterosexuality alive and I am for ending it. That means I prefer the modern trend which is to make heterosexuality work, to force women and men to be together as much as possible, and thus unwittingly to teach them that it does not work. I am reminded, in this connection, of a film about penguins I saw recently on TV. What struck me is that, though penguin marriages

are monogamous and life-long, Mr. and Mrs. Penguin spent the absolute minimum of time together. They shared equally in the business of raising their children, but, while one was on the nest, the other was off feeding. Raising their young took 4 or 5 months during the summer and, after the young were on their own, the women penguins took off together in one direction and the men went together in another direction, to meet their spouses the following spring for another round of reproduction. It seemed to me that Mr. and Mrs. Penguin spent no more than a total of 24 hours together in one year and each time they met they greeted each other lovingly.

It is very difficult for anyone to believe that heterosexuality is an unnatural, imposed, and learned sexual and emotional distortion, so ubiquitous is our heterosexual conditioning. I imagine it is impossible for women who are convinced they are heterosexual, for this would require them to admit they have been hopelessly twisted at the core of their being. But the idea is also very difficult for Lesbians. Not only are we too conditioned to accept the 'normality' of heterosexuality, but as a practical matter it is so much safer to think this way. The Lesbian runs no risk in assuming a woman to be heterosexual who later turns out to be Lesbian, but to make the mistake out loud the other way around is generally disastrous. For many years I clung to the conviction that most women quite naturally were attracted to men as I was attracted to women. I found it impossible to understand, in any way meaningful to me, how a woman could love a man with the total involvement of her sexuality, but nothing would shake loose my belief that somehow she did. My rationalization was that, being a Lesbian, I could not expect to understand. And so I went through life with the comfortable feeling that I was granting a tolerance to heterosexual women that they seldom granted me. But at the same time I insisted on trying to understand them. And I experienced and observed things that did not quite fit my comfortable assumption that some women are born Lesbians and most are not. I cannot pinpoint just when I took the plunge and threw out the silly assumption (as it now appears to me) that most women are naturally drawn to men, but it happened as a direct result of the women's liberation movement. Before that I did not have the courage really to face up to doubts that had been rumbling around in

my head just beneath the level of consciousness.

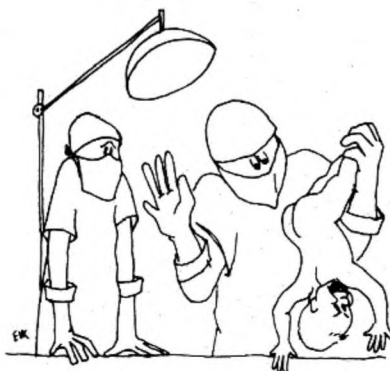
For me, taking this plunge, accepting once and for all that woman is by nature Lesbian, has turned out to be fun! For example, I can imagine a future time when young people rediscover heterosexuality and, in a return to the primitive movement, take it up as a protest against the Establishment. But, more seriously, I am surprised at how much previously incomprehensible human behavior is now understandable. I see heterosexual ~~is~~ everywhere. Here is an example from Dr. Wolff: "The preference for so-called masculine attitudes and games [in girls] does not, therefore, by itself indicate homosexual tendencies." Nor does playing with dolls, I might add, necessarily indicate heterosexual tendencies. What parent would worry about her little girl playing with dolls? Furthermore, Dr. Wolff's remark makes little sense in the first place, since she herself has told us all women are fundamentally Lesbian. The real question is, will the massive heterosexual conditioning work or will nature take its course.

I find I am not terribly concerned whether anyone changes her mind as a result of reading this article, but I would like to ask those whose vocation or avocation is the study of human nature to try, for the sake of argument, applying the reverse of the usual, unexamined theory that heterosexuality is normal. Imagine yourself called upon to debate the pros of the proposition that all women are basically Lesbian. This requires re-examining a vast array of previously held notions and cannot be done overnight. One example that comes to mind is the teaching of the Behavioral or Learning Schools of psychology that heterosexual behavior is learned. This used to puzzle me endlessly for how could there be so many Lesbians, women apparently too stupid to learn heterosexuality. The Behaviorist answer is that Lesbianism is learned too, though this they have never been able to explain satisfactorily in view of the fact that no one teaches it, not even Lesbians. The answer is that the Behaviorists are half right, as men often are: heterosexuality is learned; Lesbianism is not. Heterosexuality is imposed from without by an elaborate system of social rewards and punishments. What would be the result if the same system were used to "teach" Lesbianism and homosexuality?

God forbid that such a system ever be instituted! The Lesbian knows only too

well the horrors and cruelty of heterosexual society. We need work only for an end to heterosexual chauvinism. I no more approve of the Lesbian missionary than I do of the religious missionary. I do wish to see a world in which children can grow up able freely to choose their own way of life. And this perforce includes the right to make mistakes. I see marriage to a man as a mistake, though, given the nature of society today, it may be better for particular women to keep their Lesbianism forever buried and to reap the rewards of conformity instead. We are creatures not only of inner nature, but of our environment too. Feminists are changing this social environment in many areas, little by little. An encouraging straw in the wind: Reno has had a reversal this year in its marriage and divorce statistics — the former declining and the latter rising. The man reporting this was at a loss to explain it.

[Hope, as a youth, so admired Sir Francis Bacon's "I take all knowledge for my province" that she resolved to do the same. Realizing now that all knowledge, or at least that part which pertains to human nature, is male knowledge of males and hence not only sexist but heterosexist, she has taken the more modest course of correcting heterosexual-patriarchal bias. "The proper study of mankind is man," said Pope. Hope is only incidentally interested in the study of mankind, humankind being her province. A little feminist-Lesbian chauvinism is in order, she thinks, to right the wrongs of centuries.]



MALE CHAUVINIST PIG!

Funeral

By LYNN MICHAELS

After the second Kennedy was shot I flew to Ohio. Rather, flew from San Francisco to Detroit, Michigan, where my sister and brother-in-law picked me up at the airport and we drove through the late June fields of grain on into Toledo.

Nation in mourning. Time to gather things, return to the woman I loved in the East, New York City. I had spent winter in my Berkeley apartment writing a book of poems for her. Had thought of returning East that spring. I needed the funeral to spark me. Kennedy shot down in Los Angeles, I must move, be in motion. I passed the day after, my head in my hands over one of the round marble tables in a Berkeley cafe. Shellshock. The country moved like an army of ants in a slow digre.

I withdrew my bank savings the following morning and flew East. (Living alone at this time made even less sense than usual.) In the sweltering June heat, in Ohio, we three watched the funeral over TV. Finally we ended up turning the sound off, or low, so that the cortege moved in silence. A replay of JFK's funeral in 1963. Five years later, same faces, frozen in identical expression of grief. We lay nude in the darkened living room, all the fans going . . .

My sister and her husband were musicians, a violist and cellist in a string quartet. They had rented an apartment above the laundry so they wouldn't disturb tenants underneath. The heat of the laundry rose by day; by night, the apartment steamed. We went to every public air-conditioned place in Toledo: drugstores, supermarkets, restaurants, public library; even ended up going to a high-cost movie which didn't interest us.

I took occasion at one of our restaurant dinners to tell my sister and brother-in-law somewhat about the book I had written. "It's a book of love poems," I said. "For a woman."

They were interested although they couldn't see deeply into the crisis this had created in my identity. "It's in three parts," I continued, "the falling in love, the deepening, the departure and loss." I wondered whether they found the features of my face changed. We didn't use the word Lesbian.

I could not go on to say, "I am returning to her now. It is not chiefly Mother I'm returning to see in New York

City. I'm going back to see where we stand, if the loss is only in my mind."

By the fifth night the funeral was over. I flew out of Detroit into New York City in an electrical storm. First chance I got, I slipped out of Mother's lower Fifth Avenue Greenwich Village apartment to the drugstore down below, to phone Meagan. She wasn't in.

Phoning later, I caught her. We made arrangements to meet the following afternoon. The evening before I went with my Mother through the quiet streets of the village, through Washington Square Arch. Here, O. Henry had lived, Edna Millay, Hart Crane; here e.e. cummings, here Marianne Moore still lived. I had an intense desire to go into a church. But Mother found the thought dangerous and I was at her mercy, in my wheelchair, had to be lifted up a few steps to get in. All those characters in the village, she said, one might cut my throat.

The following afternoon I hailed a taxicab which I took uptown to Riverside Drive. I found myself at the entrance to a third-rate hotel. (This was where my letters had come all winter . . .) Took the elevator to the fifth floor, knocked. She was not in. But the door was unlocked; I entered. Incense had been burning; my eyes stung. I raised the window. I held a rose in my right hand and had apparently dropped some petals at the door (as she let me know later). I sat in peaceful silence in that room for some time. Stuck the rose in a drinking glass I found on the sink.

Her cello stood there. A pile of laundry. A hastily made double bed with iron bedstand. A sink in the corner. The window above the radiator looked over rooftops and a swath of the Hudson River. One could see boats lazily going north and south; one could see over to the hazy smogged-in Jersey coast. The Palisades. I lit a cigarette, started to smoke it very slowly. No, but then I stubbed it out; I wanted to be sharp, clear.

Meagan returned as I was gazing out the window, her arms laden with packages. Laughing, we embraced. (She had eye makeup on. Her eyes were beautiful without; she didn't need it, damn.)

"I dashed to the bank," she said, "but not in time to cash some checks."

"I'll help you unload," I said. "You've brought Retsina! my favorite wine."

"Yes, Bubula, and cheeses."

Then we faced each other for the first time. She kissed me once, long, on the lips.

"Are you confused?" she asked.

"No," I lied.

I turned my wheel chair away from her, stared out over the grey Hudson River. This city where I had grown up, this city where she — country girl — had come from California. Now her home.

"I saw the rose petals you dropped at the entrance to my room," she said, "so knew you must have come."

"You should lock the door . . . The cello. Alone here in the room."

She came up to me from behind. Laid her hands on my shoulders. I closed my eyes.

"It isn't so knotted," Meagan said. "At least to the touch."

"Yes, I'm better." I turned round. We caught hands. And set out cheese and wine on the desk ~~top~~ between the two speakers of the phonograph. Amid a clutter of letters.

"I got your letter just today, about Joan," I said. "That's grand. You really love her?"

"Yes, Bubula, she's black, you know. A dancer I met through another woman dancer. We were involved in a trio at first; Joan was going with a psychologist. But not now. Lie down here with me?"

"I? Now?"

"Come."

She straightened out the bedspread, slipped me a fresh nylon nightgown from the bureau, stretched out. I hesitated for a moment, then shifted from my wheel chair to the sagging bed, lay down alongside her.

The long slender feet I loved, there was the scar on her left shoulder, and one on left thigh. After some time in silence, hand in hand, in the deepening city twilight she said,

"You are magical. Sprite!"

"I am? . . . Andrea Hart, your cello teacher in California, you know I found out she too had poles as a child."

"Hm. Maybe that's why she was . . . strange."

"Why strange?"

"I don't know exactly."

"May I lie on my back on you? as we used to?"

"Of course, B!"

It eased my spine. Then I turned over, lay on her breast. We made love.

"I've come a long way, Meagan. You're still the most beautiful person I know."



It was nearly dark. She had a rehearsal uptown. The food and wine were good. We ate, laughing, spoofing. We exchanged tokens; met once, twice more before my return to California.

The second two times were at a Bohemian restaurant below Eighth Street near Mother's in Greenwich Village, called THE PEACOCK. There she told me that the setting recalled to her a previous lover, Helen, because it was an imitation Renaissance setting.

"You are regal," she told me.

"I am? . . . So you're moving in with Joan?"

"Yes, in autumn. You know, Bubula, the first night I loved her I said, 'You're the first . . . Lesbian I've ever loved!'"

I could picture her practically shouting it in bed. Meagan still in public had no idea of when to pipe down. And she still had no restraint, still kissed me in Fifth Avenue elevators. She was worn. The eye makeup made her look thirty-six, not twenty-seven. It somehow gave her the air of being a "woman with a past." She had put on weight. She had spent thirty hours that week accompanying dancers at Julliard. She wouldn't admit it, but the back of her neck

was aching. And her peasant shoulders, those wide, oarsman's shoulders bothered her. She now wore a blueblack cape — elegant, very expensive — and sunglasses. "It is me," she said, indicating the cape. She appeared to be staring into the last fading coils of her young womanhood.

"Do you still smoke your pipe?" I asked.

"Of course, Bubula! It's a way of life."

I caught our reflection in one of those revolving, Fifth Avenue doors: in her cape, she looked like Florence Nightingale pushing me in my wheelchair. I closed my eyes for a moment remembering how we had once planned to spend a life together; how she would be my companion and had joked, "I like this, people will not know about us. They will think I am your nurse." She was tall, handsome. Bore her weight well. Her short, blonde bob became her. The neckline clean, trim.

I lowered my voice, "Have you done the bars at all again?"

"Only once. I have been tempted, I entered one — but could not stay long. It repulsed me . . ."

That was our last — or next to last? — evening. No, the last was when she pressed a five dollar bill into my hand for a taxi, her eyes bloodshot.

Mother quite plainly was on to us.

"How do you find Meagan?" she asked with some sympathy.

"Aged, Changed."

"Aged women age fast, you know. And their lives are sad."

We didn't argue.

Meagan and I never said goodbye. She was out teaching — or accompanying dancers for Martha Graham's classes. I flew home to Oakland, California, where there was a curfew over the town. July, 1968. The French students were uprising. Berkeley students were demonstrating in sympathy. I flew into a curfewed town. And a good thing, as my whole body broke out in hives the following night. Boils. They started on the hand. I had been hospitalized once for this same thing, brought on by strong emotion. (The Lord does not lack a sense of humor. I remember that Job was sent this humiliating affliction along with his other ones.)

Touchdown. I had broken into sobbing, uncontrollably, as the plane took off from

Kennedy airport the previous morning. There had been a heavy summer rain in New York City. No one had seen me off on the plane. (Mother went down with a bad cold, Meagan was busy, on her own.) It struck me that I was leaving that city for the last time. It struck me what was over. I had no idea of what might come.

Nude, I lay in the darkening room, the fans going . . .

("I felt a funeral in my brain." E. Dickinson.) I watched the French students demonstrate on television. My body put on a new skin, I went into hiding, I lost my voice. The only place I felt in the least comfortable was in a warm tub of water. Could not speak for five days in my own voice. When the phone rang and I attempted to answer, the voice of a man came from me. I apologized as I could to a friend. It was Helen, that same Helen Meagan had loved, who still lived in our town: the thin, Semitic girl whom Meagan had been reminded of in THE PEACOCK because of her near Renaissance beauty.

"How do you find Meagan?" she asked, knowing where I had been.

"Changed. Listen, I'll phone you back in a few days, I'm feeling strange."

Helen was understanding. I saw the Michigan wheatfields flash through my mind as I fell asleep those five nights. I saw a heavy-boned, dark blonde young woman quickly aging. Almost balding, her hair so thin. Grey eyes filled with confusion, and an unfocused power for compassion. I felt hands that knew how to rub a back down.

Even with the riots, the town closing early, I felt glad to be gathered together, alone, home.

(Lynn Michaels is the pseudonym of a poet. This is her first published short story. Born and raised in N.Y.C., Lynn has lived in Berkeley and now lives in New Mexico. She has been widely published as a poet under her own name.)



MIDDLE CLASS RAPE

By WILDA CHASE

There are forms of rape that are quite beyond the reach of the law and which may not be recognized even by the victim. Let me tell you how I was ripped off in a doctor's office in broad daylight.

For some time I had been suffering from sporadic unlocalized pain in the abdomen and finally decided to go to a doctor. Not having a personal physician I called Lenox Hill Hospital (New York City) and asked them to recommend someone. They gave me the name of a doctor in the area and I made an appointment for the next day.

A vague uneasiness came over me when I walked into the doctor's office. He asked me to sit down and then he started grilling me about my sources of income, my educational background, and where my parents came from. I had expected — how naive I can be! — to be medically examined. I described my symptoms but the doctor seemed to be more interested in my emotional condition than in my physical condition and he set about probing my feelings as if he were looking for a weak spot where he might set a hook. Finally he took me into an examining room and told me to undress and then he came in and took my blood pressure, felt my pulse, listened to my heart, and pummeled my tummy. Now, let me digress a moment to explain what the trouble was. For some months I had been keeping irregular hours and nibbling on packaged snacks instead of eating balanced meals, with the result that my digestion was disturbed and pockets of gas had become trapped in the intestinal tract. The doctor must have quickly recognized what was wrong, especially since I was otherwise in very good health. Well, when he finished the examination he told me I needed a "pelvic" and that he could do it himself or recommend a gynecologist, and as he was talking he sat next to the examining table, where I lay naked, and drummed his fingers familiarly on my tummy. I became increasingly embarrassed and stammered that I would see the gynecologist and when he left the examining room to call and make an appointment for me I was greatly relieved although I was beginning to suspect that I was being practiced upon and that the violation of my modesty was itself a kind of rape. In my anxiety over my condition I was not thinking clearly and it was only after I had left the office that I realized that

part of my uneasiness was due to the fact that the doctor was wearing a business suit instead of a white coat.

The next day, after many anxious starts and stops, I arrived at the gynecologist's hoping that I would at least be able to find out what was wrong with me. Now, this gynecologist was no small peanuts. He was in one of the best neighborhoods (as was the other doctor) and since he was wearing a white coat and had a properly grave expression on his face I was moved to trust him. He asked me how long it had been since I had had my last period and I said two weeks, then he asked me if I had ever had sexual intercourse and I was suddenly so confused about what, after all, constitutes real sexual intercourse that I stammered, "Not exactly." Then he sent me into the examining room and when I was undressed and had my heels in the stirrups he came in with a rubber glove on and thrust his finger up my vagina so suddenly and so roughly that I screamed and sat half-way up and noticed that there was blood on the glove when he withdrew his hand. Without the slightest change of expression he again asked me how long it had been since my last period and again I said two weeks. He then told me what was causing my intestinal pains, gave me simple instructions about my diet, and I left the office. Outside I stopped and leaned against the wall to get hold of myself for I was almost in a state of shock, perspiration was rolling off my face, my knees were threatening to fold up, and I felt like vomiting. However, the relief that I felt on learning that I was not really sick inspired me to feel some gratitude toward the doctor and I began to make excuses to justify what he had done. By the time I had finished working on myself I had myself believing that I had wronged him.

Well, in succeeding days I thought a great deal about what had happened to me and nothing struck me as more incredible than my hesitation to believe that I had been wronged. Then I remembered something that had happened to me a few years before, when I was in my teens. I had discovered a small swelling at the outer edge of the vagina, a condition that I later learned to be harmless and which goes away

by itself, and I went to a doctor. I was taken into the examining room and stripped and hung by the heels and the doctor took a syringe with a giant needle and stabbed again and again at the spot to withdraw fluid for a "laboratory test". Now, this stabbing process went on an incredibly long time and I lay there in agony gripping the table and gritting my teeth, enduring what I assumed to be one of the ordinary trials of life. Finally he had enough (whether of blood or of gratification I leave to you to decide) and I was told I could get up but I was so weak I couldn't stand on my feet. He apologized for having hurt me and said that he could have given me an anesthetic but that he still would have had to use the needle, which amounted to the same thing. Well, he handed me the syringe with its huge glass bulb full of blood and told me to take it down to the end of the hall and give it to the nurse. I reached out to take it but I was so weak that it slipped out of my hand and shattered on the floor. He looked indifferently at the mess on the floor and said, "Well, now we'll never know what was causing it, will we?" I apologized for my clumsiness and left the office feeling guilty and wondering if I should offer to pay for the syringe. No mention was made of a return visit, the spot went away and with it my anxiety, and my young thoughts were unclouded with any suspicion that I had been abused.

Well, now that my suspicions had been fully aroused I began to question other women about their experiences with doctors and it soon became clear to me that

women are being subjected to an incredible amount of violence in the course of medical examination and treatment and are forced to endure pain that is wholly avoidable. Most of these victims are not aware that they are being abused and their behavior reminds me of the dog on the experimental table that licks the hand of the scientist who is mutilating it. Those women who do realize that they have been victimized usually insist on believing that there is only one vicious male doctor in the whole world and that it has just been their bad luck to run into him. This sober explanation really strikes your funny bone only after you have listened to it for about the hundredth time.

That some women have had enough of medical sadism, however, is evidenced by the increasing numbers who are seeking out women doctors and dentists to help them in time of need. The trouble is, there are not enough of them. Now, among the other rights for which women are fighting these days should be a demand, a violent screaming demand, for decent medical care, that is, for women doctors. They might at the same time work toward the elimination of men from the medical profession on the grounds that, being male, they are naturally unfit to practice medicine. (I ask you to imagine a woman doctor assaulting the genitals of male patients.) Shall we all loudly insist that the medical schools admit at least an equal number of female students and that the federal government, and other agencies, advance the funds necessary to finance their education, or shall we just bow our heads and pray?

Willa Cather

By LYNN FLOOD

Willa Cather was a male-identified woman. In her books she is always the hero. Her memories are set in the mold of a male existence. Yet she is important for us because she was able to project herself into the heroic situations and forms not intended for women. She rose above women of the nineteenth century in thought and creativity to become one of America's greatest writers.

Born in 1875 in Virginia, Willa Cather moved at about age eight to the frontier: Red Cloud, Nebraska. There she lived a life similar to her pioneers, creating with her neighbors America in her small town. Surrounded by this culture, she found early

that she was destined to be different from the people she knew. First a tomboy and later an overly intelligent young woman, Willa Cather strove to express herself in an environment where self-expression outside of set narrow limitations was considered eccentric and an active mind for a woman was unthinkable. The natural result of her inclinations and their unacceptable consequences was her identification with men and the adoption of the outward trappings of a boy. She wore pants and had short, short hair. She played much with her brothers and showed an "unnatural" curiosity in high school for the workings of things. Her community condemned her for the biological experiments with animals which were a part of her self-preparation for a career as a doctor. She was encouraged only by her

friends — the eccentrics of the community, relatively well-educated older men.

Despite all the suffering being different brought, Willa Cather became a strong individual. She discovered her literary talent at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln and began to write it immediately. She helped her family in her college years, from 1891 to 1895, by writing a column for a large newspaper. After college she entered a career of magazine editing at THE HOME MONTHLY in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She stayed there until 1901 when she took a job in New York with MCCLURE'S MAGAZINE. Successful at journalism, Willa Cather also did well when she taught and still had time to write and publish stories in magazines for years before putting together her first book APRIL TWILIGHTS (1903). With her continued growth in writing she became financially able to support herself through those creative efforts alone and was finally able, before her death in 1947, to publish seventeen books: twelve novels, three books of short stories, one book of poetry and one book of essays.

Willa Cather spent most of her life after she left home with two women. The first was Isabelle McClung, a wealthy young woman into whose parents' home she moved at about age twenty-three, sharing a bedroom with her friend, and with whom she first traveled to Europe.

In 1903 Willa Cather met Ellen Lewis and they were in and out of each other's lives until they began to live together in 1909. James Woodress, in his biography of Willa Cather, states that although Ellen Lewis was greatly supportive to Willa Cather throughout her writing career, she never matched the emotional hold Isabelle McClung had on Willa Cather, even after Ms. McClung married. Ms. Lewis has written a not very intimate biography of Willa Cather which nonetheless reflects the depth of her own emotion for and devotion to the author during their life together in Greenwich Village, New York, and in travels through Europe and America.

The relevance of this woman to Lesbians may simply lie in the fact that she was a Lesbian. Beyond that tie, however, lies the conflict many Lesbians face in this society, that of the aforementioned male-identified woman (see Mae Brown's "The Woman Identified Woman", LADDER, August/September, 1970). Willa Cather had to think of herself as a man, had to imitate men because she had no other behavior model to

follow. The women she could have created in her literature had she been allowed to envision them! She could have written a prototype for Isabel Miller's A PLACE FOR US. She could have written of the great strong women who built this country as primary movers, not as appendages to the hearty men she revered. Granted, she did create characters based on women she admired, artistic women, especially singers. She also wrote some stories which were variant ("The Old Beauty" in the collection of the same title). She wrote others which hinted at homosexuality ("Paul's Case") very subtly. But the power of these is lost in their ambiguity and the obvious societal interference with her thought.

Now we have a legacy, another man-made legacy, from a woman, who, had she not been cramped and stuffed into dresses and acceptable mores, could have defined and explored her own development and near-transcendence over oppression. Willa Cather is fun to read and important if we watch for her own life in her writing. When we remember that Jim Burden in My Antonia is Willa Cather and we follow his reverence for Antonia, his long and respectful love for her, we can see Willa Cather thinking and feeling, a Lesbian expressing her distinctive Lesbian love.

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CHANGING YOUR ADDRESS?

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ON GOING TO A CONFERENCE

... OR THE X-Y-Z AFFAIR UPDATED ...

Report by ANITA RUTLEDGE

Zee: So how was the big confab with all you Gay Sisters high up on a Connecticut hillside?

Yaffa: It was on a farm, not a mountain, and it was a total bust for my part.

Xie: Oh, I thought it was a gas. I got goose pimples I was so excited . . . !

Yaffa: Yeah, well how about all that poison ivy and the two meager latrines that practically overflowed with crap eventually . . . ?

Zee: Aw come on. You don't go to a Conference to convene in the john!

Yaffa: But you do go to the john now and then to crap. And when there're over a hundred of you, the shit sooner or later flows like wine.

Xie: If you want all the comforts of home, you should stay home, you know?

Zee: What about the Workshops? They sound real groovy according to the program: Lesbianism and Feminism; Sensuality and Sexuality; Coming Out . . .

Yaffa: They sounded good, yeah. But did you ever try concentrating while squatting in the damn weeds, dodging poison ivy and a whole batch of attacking insects and . . .

Xie: Oh, your're giving her a distorted picture of the Conference, Yaffa. I thought the Workshops were excellent. The one I attended Saturday on Monogamy was a real gas. And the one Sunday on Sensuality and Sexuality was so big it had to split up into three sections . . . !

Zee: Were there really that many Sisters present?

Yaffa: Yeah, and kids and dogs and beetles and . . .

Xie: And Kate Millett.

Zee: No kidding? Was she really there? What did you say to her . . . ?

Xie: I didn't see her. Yaffa and practically everybody else did though. They told me about her being there, after she left!

Yaffa: Aw, so what? She's only a woman like the rest of us. Nobody got excited because I was there—

Zee: Yeah, well, like maybe they didn't know who you were!

Yaffa: Nah, can the corn, will ya?

Zee: So what else was there besides the Workshops?

Xie: Well, there was the bonfire and . . .

Yaffa: Yeah, and wasn't that you I heard out there around the fire Friday night yelling "Burn the bra! Burn the bra!"?

Zee: Xie! How could you?

Xie: Well, there we were sitting out there with a few beers and a bottle or two and all the burning logs and all of a sudden I see this hand holding this bra up, see? And I got this brilliant inspiration. The media shits are always accusing us of burning bras, I thought, so why the hell not?

Zee: Yeah, well, did they burn it?

Xie: (greatly disappointed): Naw—

Zee: So what else did you do? Didn't you have a party or anything?

Xie: Oh, wow. Yeah! We had a dance Saturday night. And I mean I really grooved like crazy!

Yaffa: Yeah, it was nice until they moved it outside. Zee, did you ever try dancing in weeds that slant downhill like a ski slope?

Xie: But they had to do something. It was too crowded inside . . . ?

Zee: Were the Sisters really together? I mean, sometimes when the Straight women meet, there seems to be a bit of hostility just beneath the surface . . . ?

Yaffa: Hostility we had like the poison ivy, by the bushes. The last meeting we had Sunday before breaking up, we almost had a fist-fight on our hands. It seems this Sister with the thirteen-year old boy . . .

Zee: A thirteen-year old boy at a Conference for Lesbians . . . ?

Xie: Yeah, well, like maybe he was in drag. I for one never saw him—

Yaffa: Well, anyway, it seems these three Sisters were uptight about it as they wanted to go around topless and . . .

Zee: Topless—?

Xie: Yeah, well, you see, it was a pretty sunny weekend, you dig?

Yaffa: So these Sisters told the Mother how they felt, and she split and her friends got pissed off—

Zee: Yeah, well that sounds pretty heavy!

Xie: It was a horror. Nobody much wanted to look at all sides of the thing, you know? Some wanted to punch the three Sisters in the mouth. And others wanted to punch the punchers—

Zee: That ~~sounds~~ very *un-together*. I thought ~~we~~ had built more Sisterhood than that . . . ?

Xie: Well, ~~me too!~~ But I sometimes think it's only ~~skin~~ deep. You touch the wrong button and ~~all~~ the old animosities spurt out—

Yaffa: Yeah . . . I wish I'd stayed home—

Xie: I don't! ~~We'll~~ never build anything at all if we ~~don't~~ keep getting together. Besides, I ~~enjoyed~~ meeting the Sisters. They ~~came~~ from all over the East it seems. That's what we have to do, come together and ~~learn~~ to . . .

Zee: Struggle—?

Xie: Yeah, ~~like~~ that's what life's all about, you dig?

Yaffa: Struggle, ~~smuggle~~. If you'd come down with ~~all~~ this itchy-scratchy shit, you'd be ~~pinned~~ off too!

Xie: Aw, ~~come~~ off it. I know at least five other Sisters ~~here~~ who got poison ivy too, and they're making a joke of it—

Yaffa: Well, ~~the~~ Ho, Haw, He, Hell! Give me that ~~damp~~ pasty crap and let me do my ankles ~~again~~ . . .

Zee: Yeah, ~~medicate~~ yourself and then you can finish ~~telling~~ me about the Conference. I don't ~~have~~ a very clear picture of

the thing yet. You two don't seem to agree on much of anything . . . ?

Xie: Well, that's the crux of the thing. *Everybody* has a different version. If you want a complete, unchanging view of the Conference, you have to make one up the way I'm going to do as soon as I do something about this itch that's beginning under my neck and it seems to be spreading . . . ?

(Editor's Note: This was originally intended for the editor's eyes only, and is not meant to cast criticism on the very serious purpose of the Lesbian Feminist Conference held on a farm near Kent, Connecticut, August 20, 21 and 22, 1971. Ms. Rutledge adds that about 150 women attended and that most of the fairly complex program was managed despite physical inconveniences. She also says "the women who gave the thing deserve all sorts of credit. They worked their hips off to see that we were properly fed and made as comfortable as possible . . . They were very hospitable and a likeable group.")

(London, Peter Owen, and N.Y., Simon and Schuster, 1966). But she also writes obliquely. LES GUERRILLERES is a hymn to women . . . a pioneer exultation to the glory of woman as a powerful and free and loving woman oriented figure. We have a whole world body of literature which is penis oriented, literature that celebrates the mystique of the erect phallus. To try to list even examples of this wholesale preoccupation with the male genitalia would take 10 or so issues of THE LADDER, and we won't bother to do so. LES GUERRILLERES uses much the same approach to women, and it comes highly recommended by the female literary establishment (i.e. Mary McCarthy et al). We regret that so few will take the trouble to read it . . . with its sweep of mythology, mysticism, eroticism, and very bluntly, a celebration of the clitoris which I cannot remember seeing in print outside pornographic literature, with which this novel can in no way be compared. For those who will take the trouble, caviar. It will, however, do its duty by becoming a "much cited" and seldom read novel about the burgeoning explosion of women proud of being women in the real sense of the word PRIDE. (For a detailed

analysis of LES GUERRILLERES, see the review by Sally Beauman in NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW, October 10, 1971, page 5 and on.)

I do not subscribe to the theory that the women's liberation movement has been "taken over" by the media, having lived too long knowing that without publicity NOTHING works, not just in the U.S. but anywhere. Good causes like flowers are still "being born to blush unseen," and the women's liberation movement will proceed with publicity or not proceed at all. But I do resent, vigorously, some of the commercial enterprises that smack of "cop-out-ism" and one of these is a charming booklet called THE LIBERATED WOMAN'S APPOINTMENT CALENDAR AND FIELD MANUAL 1972, edited by Lynn Sherr and Jurate Kazickas, N.Y., Universe Publishers, 1971. The booklet itself is delightful and is worth having, and many of you will want it for its anecdotes, pictures and odd historical (herstorical) facts. But the press releases that accompanied it are bad news. One small comment which particularly interested me was: "The 1972 edition also contains what may be the first Index of Women (only) with 355 (count 'em) female names." This is ridiculous. Later in this column I will review a major reference tool that any of you can find in your ordinary public library or college or university library which contains thousands of women. Furthermore, women's liberation comments to the contrary notwithstanding, there are thousands of books with information about women in any large public or college or university library. That much material has been written with "sexist" views is true . . . but there is a whole world of biographical data out there just waiting for someone willing to spend time looking at it. We need a good bit more research and a hell of a lot less rhetoric.

I am supposed to not show editorial bias in this column, a rule most often ignored. It delights me to ignore this in the case of THE HAND THAT CRADLES THE ROCK, by Rita Mae Brown, New York, New York University Press, 1971. The blurb announces this collection of Rita's poetry in this way: "This is the first book of poetry to be published in America by a feminist Lesbian. It is in the free tradition of Sappho. We will no longer be silent, and this is the first voice but not the last." We can easily quibble with that announcement, for what is meant is that this is the first such book of poetry

published by the established press by an admitted feminist Lesbian. It is a fine collection with some familiar poems: "Dancing the Shout to the True Gospel" . . . "Love on the Run or The Trackshoe Sonata" . . . "Being" . . . and my personal favorite, "Aristophanes' Symposium." Readers will note that some of her work in this collection first appeared in these pages . . . and we are glad of this.

Rita Mae Brown is that talent that combines activism with theory, losing some of the talent with the activism, but leaving enough to delight those who read their lives away. THE HAND THAT CRADLES THE ROCK is a marvelous collection of intensely personal Lesbian and feminist poetry. Very highly recommended. Cost is \$4.50, and any bookstore can and will order this for you. Some of the college and university bookstores will probably stock this since it is a highly regarded university press publication. And to tempt you further, this small bit:

SAPPHO'S REPLY

My voice rings down through
thousands of years
To coil around your body
and give you strength,
You who have wept in
direct sunlight,
Who have hungered in
invisible chains,
Tremble to the cadency
of my legacy:
An army of lovers shall not fail.



Readers who remember the amusing Grove Press 1968 entertainment, COMMANDER AMANDA, by George Revelli, will be most disappointed in RESORT TO WAR, by the ~~same~~ man, N.Y., Grove, 1971. This "sequel" is a mishmash of spy adventure during WW2 without the humor and light touch of COMMANDER AMANDA. Not funny, ~~not~~ good . . . and definitely not recommended, though it is substantially Lesbian in content.

The feminist and Lesbian book of the year, LES GUERRILLERES, by Monique Wittig, N.Y., Viking, 1971 (also, London, Peter Owen, 1971), will be honored more by conversation than attention, for few will be able to fight through it. Ms. Wittig writes beautifully, as she demonstrated in her earlier Lesbian novel, THE OPOPANAX



Rita Mae Brown, author of THE HAND THAT CRADLES THE ROCK. Photo by JEB.

A reader sends notice that two of Sybille Bedford's novels that pre-date her major Lesbian novel, *A COMPASS ERROR*, N.Y., Knopf, 1969, paperback reprint, Ballantine, 1970, are of some interest here. One of these is *A FAVOURITE OF THE GODS*, N.Y., Simon and Schuster, 1963, and the other is *A LEGACY*, N.Y., Simon and Schuster, 1957. Both of them have minor variant interest and both of them are of greater interest for their feminism, which is not stated ~~stidently~~ but is simply there, implied. *A FAVOURITE OF THE GODS* is about Constanza, the mother of the heroine, Flavia, from *A COMPASS ERROR*, and as such, is greatly of interest for the purists who like to visit the whole story. The reader supplying the information to us has this to say regarding Sybille Bedford's work as a whole: "All three of Bedford's novels fascinate because of the author's power in projecting characters and exploring the sensual quality of emotions and physical surroundings. They are a woman's creation in the best sense of the word . . . i.e., her women characters are never denigrated or made willingly or unwillingly subservient to the whims and notions of men."

S.R.O. means single room occupancy, not standing room only, and Robert Deane Pharr's novel, *S.R.O.*, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1971, recounts the lives of the inhabitants of a single room occupancy hotel somewhere in the seediest sections of New York City. As is true of all novels that dwell endlessly with the hopelessness of the world, this is totally depressing, albeit beautifully written. Everyone in the novel lives in hell on earth . . . including the novel's primary figures, Leah and her girlfriend, who sell dope, and Joey and Jinny, known, obviously, as J. & J. who "hold court" . . . all on the fifth floor of this all too real fantasy hotel. The males in the book are no more and no less attractive . . . no one is . . . and the story . . . well, again and again we visit the non-life world of the drug culture, the victimized prostitute, the not very bright males who theoretically survive. Ugly, very good, and only for very strong stomachs. You will hate the book, but you might find yourself empathizing with some of its people.

We are waiting for a review copy of *INDEX TO WOMEN OF THE WORLD: FROM ANCIENT TO MODERN TIMES*, edited by Norma Olin Ireland, Westwood, Mass. F.W. Faxon Co., Inc., 1970. Despite that copyright date of 1970, this is just out

and is a major index of women in collective works. Literally thousands of women are carefully indexed (we have seen a copy but not long enough to do it proper justice), and hundreds of collective biographical works are used as source material. This will be a standard reference tool in most libraries, and anyone working on women in history ("herstory") will want to see it. We will have more later on this.

Schocken Books, a major publisher in specialty fields, has issued four works on women which belong in all feminist libraries. All are quality paperback editions selling for \$3.95, a very fair price for their format. *THE GRIMKE SISTERS*, by Gerda Lerner, first published in hardback by Houghton-Mifflin in 1967, is an account of pioneer women in women's rights and abolitionist work. *PATH BREAKING*, by Abigail Scott Duniway, was first published in 1914 . . . it is an autobiographical study of the equal suffrage movement in Pacific Coast states and is not as widely known as many of the pioneer works. One book, *WOMAN UNDER SOCIALISM*, by August Bebel, can be ignored by the purists, since August is a male. It is, however, an interesting historical document. This version is reprinted from a 1904 edition of the book . . . the work in the book is very out of date, having been completed at or just before the turn of this century. Lastly, there is the fascinating *EIGHTY YEARS AND MORE*, by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, her personal reminiscences of the years 1815 to 1897. This book is reprinted from an 1898 issue of the original. The Schocken series is called "Studies in the Life of Women." It is good to see so many books being revived and reissued in women's rights areas. The proliferation will filter through into libraries in schools and colleges and universities and, hopefully, aid us all, even if only in aiding those who follow after us.

THE GLASS TOWER, by David Osborn, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1971, is pretentious pulp, masquerading as an expose of "public relations" firms. It is better written than lots of the things we have reviewed through the years, and the story hops along breathlessly from nasty character to nasty character. Everyone is unhappy, which may be something of a moral, but we aren't sure of that either. Our interest here is the Lesbian wife of one of the partners of the firm. The affair between Fiona and two other women occupies enough of the book to call it a major treatment, but the quality in-

volves limits its interest to completists. Too many passages comparing blonde and dark women . . . too much standing naked in front of mirrors admiring the tilt of the breasts . . . blather.

On a much more minor, but considerably more serious, level, is *A CITIZEN'S NOVEL*, by Ernst Herhaus, N.Y., Harper and Row, 1971. This was translated from the original German by a woman, Veronika Von Nostitz, which may account for some oddly "sensitive" and intuitive passages. Basically a satire on the narcissism of life in the world today, basic plot revolves around Clemens, who is determined to live the life of a good citizen. He is overly fond of his mother, and his best friend, Christian, is openly attracted to Clemens's mother. She, however, is a Lesbian. Very well written, but not particularly easy reading. Recommended.

Children are neglected in our world; possibly they always have been. Women children are the most often neglected. The Feminist Press, 10920 Battersea Lane, Columbia, Maryland 21043, has just issued its first two titles directed at female children with the specific intention of providing interesting and non-sexist material. I'd like to be able to recommend both titles without reservation, but it's not possible. *THE DRAGON AND THE DOCTOR*, by Barbara Danish, seems directed at the 6 to 16 year old child, and could probably be read to even younger children. The dragon has a sore tail, finds a helpful (female) doctor, and resolves the problem. The illustrations are the saving grace, for the text is wooden. Cost is only \$1, and the benefit of having a female doctor may well make up for the failings. The other book, *CHALLENGE TO BECOME A DOCTOR: The Story of Elizabeth Blackwell*, by Leah Lurie Heyn, is an excellent biography. Cost is only \$1.50, and this is highly recommended. It could be read to ages 9 through 11, and anyone over that can do her own reading. It is very well illustrated, well documented in an unobtrusive way that will not distract younger children and will enlighten the more serious minded. Altogether a marvelous reading experience. If you have any young friends on your gift list, this is a must. The bravery of Elizabeth is clearly and effectively portrayed, and the unspoken message is simply that women can succeed.

Next issue we have a handful of new Lesbian titles to cover, including a fine and somewhat mysterious autobiography, *A*

TIME AND A TIME, by Sarah Davys. This is said to be a pseudonym for a famous woman writer in England. Next issue will also feature the yearly report, recapping the last year in Lesbian and relative material.

Times Change Press, Port Murray, N.J. 07865, puts out various women's liberation, Lesbian liberation, and gay liberation pamphlets, short books, collections and miscellany. Two recent ones are of interest here. One is *BURN THIS AND MEMORIZE YOURSELF*, a collection of poetry and prose by Alta. She calls the book "poems for women." Emphasis on Lesbianism, women, and their relative political positions. Alta is a very uneven poet, but she is so good when she is good, that you will want this. Cost is only 50c. The other pamphlet-book is *GENERATIONS OF DENIAL: 75 Short Biographies of Women in History*, by Kathryn Taylor. It's impossible to not be very pleasant reviewing this book, since it so graciously acknowledges *THE LADDER* and so often quotes from articles that have appeared in years past on our pages. Of the 75 women, many are listed specifically as Lesbians . . . many others that were Lesbians aren't so listed but since in some cases they cite our material on them, the obvious conclusions can hardly fail to be drawn. If the book has a limitation, it is that so many women are left out . . . but then for \$1.25, this is a fine fine gift to any woman you know who has a bad self-image. Despite the handicaps, women have been and done everything, and it's always a hell of a lot harder for them. We need more and more books like this . . . more and more primers on positive thinking for women. While we are busy trying to improve our own lot, it's still very good to know that there have been many brave footprints on those famed sands of time that were distinctly female feet.

Seemingly on the heels of the esoteric *LES GUERRILLERES* (reviewed earlier in this column), we have *DAUGHTERS OF THE MOON*, by Joan Haggerty, Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1971. This is a major novel, and in personal terms I would consider it a major Lesbian novel, though I am expecting to hear some disagreement on this. Sarah is under an anesthetic in a London lying-in room waiting to deliver a child . . . and she goes back in her mind through her marriage to the indifferent Michael, whose interest can be rated by noting he doesn't care when she takes off on a walking trip through Europe and then

off to Ibiza by herself. Anna, on the other hand, who is to be Sarah's woman love, was married to Pierre, who has killed himself over loss of Anna. Sarah and Anna meet in the Balearic Islands and live together . . . both are pregnant . . . and they become lovers. Lots of readers are going to be turned off by this, but we would imagine that in many households in the world in the last few years, just such things have happened as horizons have changed for so many women. We learn all this through the layered confused, time lost wanderings of Sarah's mind as she waits in the hospital . . . and as she is beginning her final labor, she learns that Anna has died in childbirth. The last two chapters are beautifully written . . . indeed, the whole book is . . . and I consider it a must, though I warn it requires close attention. Sarah lives, and the child is a girl.



JOAN HAGGERTY, author of *DAUGHTERS OF THE MOON*, Bobbs-Merrill (1971). Photo by Dave Robinson.

CASE NAME: FELICITA G.
CASE NUMBER: 1764243
CASEWORKER: Ellen Gold



1/5 Felicity applied for admission to the program. Very nervous, thin, attractive young woman of nineteen. Spanish background, but has lived in the States all her life. Large family. Dropped out of school in ninth grade. Little work history since then. Main need educational. Main interest: social work. Living in target area, way below poverty level, has been unable to get a job for reasons as yet not apparent aside from lack of skill. Scheduled to begin program in one month.

2/9 Received copy of referral for psychiatric consult made by instructor. Felicity is gay and unhappy about it. Must get my head together and find more. Must remember to guide without encouraging, encourage without exposing attitudes. *Be objective.*

2/10 Talked to Dr. Q. He states she's "just a little confused," is not a confirmed Lesbian, but "a little scared of men." He referred Felicity to his associate, a paraprofessional "social worker," Bob. Bob reports that given time and her cooperation he'll "straighten her out." I returned to Dr. Q. and suggested that Bob's attitude was such that he might not be most adept at handling Felicity's problem. Dr. Q. asked if I thought I could. I felt threatened and explained that, as a counselor, I was trained to deal with more superficial problems, like entering the labor market with some understanding of how her particular problems would be obstacles to such entry and to

success. Dr. Q. suggested we let Bob try. I agreed because I was in a corner. I feel that Bob can harm her.

2/12 Her instructor came to me. He is a conscientious guy and very worried about her. He is effeminate. He said she will only communicate with two people in the class, an older woman (fifty-four) who is an alcoholic, and a young man, also in my caseload, who is a borderline retardate and a junkie. The instructor would like to see her get a job and get out of this environment. I explained that placing her on a job now would deprive her of the services of the social worker and the psychologist. The instructor replied that the social worker upsets Felicity. I am beginning, from these various people, to get an impression of Felicity as a whole. Someone I would call a "nice kid," not pushy, cooperative, and very troubled.

2/13 I made the decision that I am the only one who can help Felicity if anyone can. I decided to try to be open with her without saying anything definite about myself. To let her understand, to appeal to her intuition and hope that she recognizes our affinity.

—later— Unsure my approach worked. She assumed "they" had told me about her Lesbianism, I was thus spared from bringing it up, but denied the opportunity to react positively to the disclosure. We began by discussing how being gay affected her work and concluded that it did not as long as she did not exhibit overt sexual behavior on the job. I asked if she liked Bob, the social worker, and she said he was "okay." When I probed she admitted resenting him because he "teases" her about being gay. The conversation went like this:

Counselor: How does he "tease" you?
 Felicity: He tells me that he could make me go straight.

C: Does he suggest how?

F: Yeah.

C: Let me in on the secret, Felicity. This is a big breakthrough for psychology!

F: —laughs— No. You know how.

C: The bastard. I'm sorry. I guess I shouldn't say that.

F: It's okay.

C: No. I shouldn't put him down because maybe he can help you. But I do want to be sure you are aware of his attitude to your so-called problem. You know guys are like that.

F: Yeah. It's okay, Miss Gold. I guess I kind of tease him, too.

C: You encourage him to think he's right.

F: Yeah.

C: That is how you defend yourself, then. Do you think he would talk to you at all if you just make him accept the fact that you are a Lesbian and not ashamed of it?

F: Not the same.

C: What is the problem, Felicity? You don't like being gay?

F: Oh, no, I love it! (we had eye contact here which I suspect told everything) But, my mother. I just feel so guilty about her.

C: Why?

F: She wants me to get married. Have kids. I'm the "baby," you know? She wants things to be nice for me.

C: And you feel you have to give her what she wants.

F: Yeah. Like I'm being mean if I don't.

C: Selfish.

F: Yeah.

At this point I lectured her on the necessity of being "selfish" and of living for oneself and not one's parents. She told me she realized all that, but they always fought about it. I suggested that she move out of her house and she liked the idea, but she said she could not afford it. I had another appointment and had to end the interview.

2/16 Thinking about it, Felicity has no unusual problem. She should get away from her mother and thereby reduce the intense guilt produced by contact. She will have to learn to live with the guilt of not living up to cultural expectations as we all do. I do not have much hope that she can transcend that guilt as some of us can and be proud of her rebellion from the subservience of "normal" female role patterns. Wondering about her life. Is she going with anyone? Has she found others? Does she have any idea of her situation in terms of gay or women's liberation? Can I teach her these things without saying too much about myself? Oh, Felicity, how can I tell you we are sisters?

2/17 Short interview. Brevity caused by strain on my part. Tried to get into all the things I'd planned. She goes to Gay Liberation Front dances with her lover and has been to one demonstration. Seems to have an idea of what is going on, but her lack of education makes, she feels, a big gap between her and the other GLFers who, she

feels, "all go to college." I explained this was not true, but as long as she lives in this city she will not find a group she can belong to. So although she gets to New York on weekends, she cannot learn all she needs to learn to make her feel better about herself. I would like to get her a job as soon as possible so that she will have the money she needs to get away from her house at least. She wants a job "helping people," a common goal for people who feel discomfort in this society. Like myself, simply wanting to make it easier for other people to get through life. Particular interest: psychiatric aide at the State hospital.

2/18 No good at State hospital. They will not take women with criminal records. Felicity spent seven months at a prison for drugs. This arose out of necessity: she had a fight with her mother, took an apartment with her friend. Friend had a job, but was fired because the company "found out." Felicity explained that she used to meet her friend after work (at a factory) and the foreman saw them kiss hello once. This combined with her lover's appearance, which Felicity described as "very butch," resulted in immediate layoff the first time the friend was late. Neither could get another job because it was August when many factories were shut down for vacation and not hiring. They could not turn to their families because of their outcast state and lived meagerly for a while selling soft drugs for a small dealer. Felicity made the mistake of selling to an undercover narc and was sent away as much for the way she was living (parents said they could not control her) and for being Puerto Rican as for the first offense. Reaction to prison: she liked it because there was a gay community there and she, being attractive and not at all aggressive, found that they "took care of me. It was real nice." She is presently going with a woman who was released just after her. Attitude to parental rejection: "It was my father. He never wanted me around anyway. One more to feed. My mother was probably too scared to do anything except what he said."

2/19 Talked again briefly. Friend is a junkie. Felicity cannot handle it. Friend wants all her money. I suggested she leave her, but Felicity wants to "help" her. I can see why she's an addict. I can see why any poor person who is also gay and a woman and a minority group member would use drugs. Please, Felicity, don't use them.

Don't let your parents, employers, neighbors, this whole damned society make you kill yourself. She is really a potentially fine woman. She's bright and strong despite (or because of) all the strikes against her. Just one break is all she needs. If we could get her a job she likes and she could get her own place . . . Have at least one success experience, it might be enough.

2/26 Felicity has been absent all week. Follow-up people have been unable to find her. I called her home and her mother either cannot or would not speak English.

3/2 She finally returned. She had another big fight at home and left. She has been sleeping at a friend's. Her lover has promised to kick (her habit is not big) if Felicity finds an apartment for them. I made some calls and located a room. I took Felicity over there and paid the first week's rent.

3/5 Felicity is happy. Only worry is getting into her mother's house to get her clothes. Her friend wants a job. I gave Felicity a name and forewarned the employer that the woman would be masculine in appearance. He said that was okay. The guy just wants someone to work in the back of his store and to drive a pickup truck. I felt lousy apologizing for her.

3/8 Felicity's friend got the job. Things are really moving. We have located a possible job with children for Felicity. She understands the risks and will conceal her personal life from them because I told her they will not let her work with kids if they find out she is a Lesbian.

3/10 She got the job! I have never felt more successful. If only I could control the outside situations. If she could get all the way away from her mother. If together she and her lover can earn enough to get out of the ghetto, away from drugs. If there was some service in this community to keep them from destroying their own happiness by reacting to societal pressures. If I could insulate my two little charges . . .

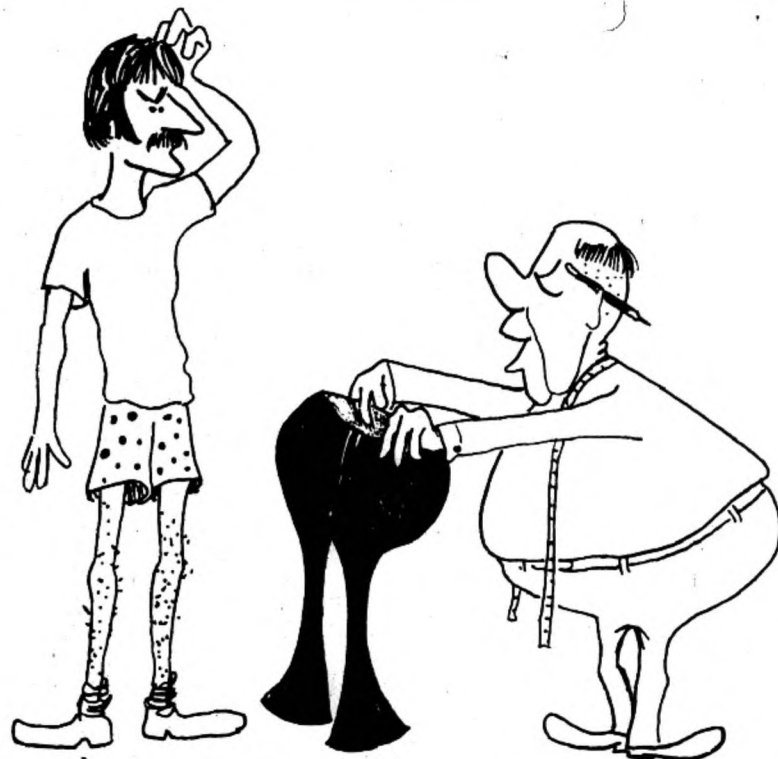
3/23 Met Felicity and her lover on the street. They are still working, planning to move. Thanked me profusely. I wanted to thank them. But held back. Afraid. Did I give enough? Hold back too much? If they do succumb to all the pressures around them would they have been stronger for my overt support?

4/24 I called the neighborhood house

where Felicity was working to see if she was still employed. She was not. The director told me that a co-worker lived across the street from Felicity and her friend and had told her about them. "Well, you know," she said in her Columbia University tight-assed accent, "we couldn't allow her to work with the little girls. She was so wonderful with them, too. Such a sweet, pretty little thing. But if any of the parents had found out themselves, they would have caused quite a lot of trouble! And with money so scarce, we just can't risk losing any of our funds!" She went on. And on. I sent an aide to check their room. They had been evicted for not paying rent. I called Felicity's friend's employer who said that he had laid her off. Because she wasn't strong enough. He confided, too, that she made him nervous. I called her mother who would not communicate with me again.

Summary: I want to give this history to you, as my supervisor, and hope that you will pass it on to the director. It means risking my job, or at the least killing my chances for advancement. But I want it to be more than a personal sad story. It can serve a purpose. It can open one or two more eyes to the terrific oppression a Lesbian has to face in this society. Perhaps it can produce enough sympathy to make other people offer assistance and not rejection.

(Editor's Note: This is a fictionalized presentation of an actual series of events. Names have been changed, including that of the counselor, Ellen Gold is a pseudonym.)



BUT SIR, IT'S THE LATEST IN MENS' WEAR -
HERS FOR HIM!



ARTEMIS OF VERSAILLES. Roman copy of Greek work of 4th century B.C.
Louvre, Paris.

Journeys in Art

By SARAH WHITWORTH
Lesbian and Feminist Images
in Greek Art and Mythology

Greek mythology and Greek art are greatly intertwined and a discussion of feminist images in Greek sculpture must rely largely upon the myths which are their background. The nymphs and goddesses discussed here are limited to those whose history is particularly characterized by feminist or Lesbian behavior, including Artemis, Athena, the Amazons, Callisto, and Iphis and Ianthe.

There is also included a reproduction of a Greek genre terracotta called *Conversation* which has no mythological history but which is so sensually Lesbian in tone that it seems well worth the inclusion. *Conversation* is not the only name given to this work; it has also been called *Gossip*, a title

which has no foundation in visual criteria whatsoever. There is definitely a feeling of communication between the two women but their closed lips would indicate that the conversation itself was not primarily oral and thus far from an indulgence in gossip. But as it is assumed by many that women come together for the sole purpose of this petty diversion, the misnomer is at least not unexpected. Other sculptures reproduced will gain more individuality when seen in conjunction with their myths. Unfortunately, depictions for reproduction of Camilla, Callisto and Iphis and Ianthe were non-existent or unavailable.

"One day, having repaired to a valley enclosed by Cypresses and pines, where gushed a fountain of sparkling water, the chaste Diana handed the javelin, her quiver and her bow to one nymph, her robe to another while a third unbound the sandals from her feet. Then Crocale, the most skillful of them, arranged her hair and



CONVERSATION. 200 B.C. Terracotta. By Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

Nephele, Hyale and the rest drew water in capacious urns. While the huntress queen was thus employed in the labors of the toilet, Actaeon, the son of Antonoe and Aristaeus, having quitted his companions of the chase and rambling without any especial objective came to the place led thither by his destiny . . .

The nymphs, seeing a man, screamed and rushed toward the goddess to hide her with their bodies. But she was taller than the rest and overtopped them all by a head. Such a color as tinges clouds at sunset or at dawn came over the countenance of Diana, thus taken by surprise. Surrounded as she was by her nymphs, she yet turned half away and sought with a sudden impulse for her arrows. As they were not at hand, she dashed the water into the face of the intruder saying "Now go and tell, if you can, that you have seen Diana unapparelled." Immediately, a pair of branching stag's horns grew out of the huntsman's head, his neck gained in length, his ears grew sharp-pointed, his hands became feet,

his arms, his long legs and his body were covered with a hairy spotted hide. Fear took the place of his former boldness and the hero fled . . . Presently, one [of his dogs] fastened on his back, another seized his shoulder, the rest of the pack came up and buried their teeth in his flesh . . . But Diana had no pity for him nor was her anger appeased till the dogs had torn his life out."

The myth of Artemis (or Diana by her Roman name) and Actaeon, described here by Charles M. Gayley (*Classic Myths in English Literature and in Art*), presents Artemis as a zealous avenger, ruthless in her anger to protect herself and her nymphs from the threat of a predominant sexual aggression which overran the male populace of Olympia. Her anger against Actaeon is quite understandable in fact when one considers the exploits of her prototypical father, Zeus, who was continually preoccupied with the raping, at whim, of nymphs and goddesses in his realm. And it is equally logical that, when asked by Zeus

what gifts she desired from him, Artemis should choose at once the gift of eternal virginity.

Unlike the Virgin of the Christian religion, Artemis' chastity was thus self-imposed. Her request for virginity was accompanied by requests for 60 ocean nymphs and 20 river nymphs as companions and a proficiency with the bow and arrow to match that of her brothers. She, thereby, established herself with three dispensations as a completely autonomous woman, independent of child rearing, physically adept at self defense and assured of the love of a train of nymphs that followed her everywhere.

Zeus, apparently like most fathers, found it easy to be in favor of his daughter's virginity, since this made him the only male to touch her in a sexual connection, that is, through his own part in her procreation. But the love Artemis felt for her nymphs may have triggered a mood of sadistic jealousy which resulted in a desire on Zeus' part to seduce her favorite companion, Callisto. Since Callisto was committed to Artemis by a pledge of chastity, she would not allow a male to approach her. Zeus, knowing this, took the form of Artemis and successfully impregnated the nymph before she could discover that it was Zeus, not Artemis, who embraced her. Callisto bore a son through this union and Artemis was so angered by Callisto's seeming infidelity that she transformed Callisto into a bear. However, since Artemis was the protector of she-bears, the goddess apparently felt some compassion for the nymph.

In feminist terms, the interest in the story lies first in its Lesbian element, since Callisto was obviously not repelled by the thought of Artemis' advances. The fact that Zeus used a method of impersonation to accomplish his aims is also quite interesting as it is often the feeling of exclusion from Lesbian unions that intimidates men and the fantasy to invade this union by becoming a woman is a possible reversal on the theory of phallic-envy.

Zeus' meddlesome intrusion between Artemis and Callisto is reiterated in the myth of Pallas and Athena. Athena was also a daughter to Zeus and, like her sister, was vowed to virginity. She was entrusted as a child to the god Triton who brought her up as a companion to his daughter, Pallas. The two girls enjoyed the practice of warfare together and Zeus, fearing that Pallas might



STATUETTE OF THE ATHENA PAR-
THENOS. 2nd century A.D. National Mu-
seum, Athens.

someday outmatch his daughter, felt compelled on one occasion to interpose his aegis between them causing Athena to unwittingly slay her friend. Athena was so stricken by grief and anger she created a wooden figure of her companion called the Palladium and placed it by that of her father worshipping them equally. Meanwhile she herself took the name of her friend, hence the epithet, Pallas-Athena.

The antagonism demonstrated by Zeus toward the female attachments of his virginal daughters is rooted perhaps in the belief that a woman who denies her role as



ARTEMIS & IPHIGENIA. Reconstruction by Franz Stud-
niczka. Hellenistic. The Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen.



AN AMAZON. Roman copy of Greek work of 440-430 B.C.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of John D. Rockefeller
Jr., 1932.

male-receptor and mother should at least suffer the penance of loneliness or lack of companionship. Another aspect of this antagonism is revealed by John Pinsent's explanation (in *Greek Mythology*) of the psychology underlying the myth of the birth of Athena. "[Athena] was quite literally absorbed by Zeus, who by pure thought brought her to birth from his forehead, fully armed in his own magic goat-skin, the aegis, though Hephaestus cleft his head with an axe to effect the delivery . . . The story of Athena's birth in fact reflects the resentment felt in a patriarchal society for women's one indispensable function, actually bearing the legitimate children of the father. At least, they cry, the father-god could have children by himself without the intervention of the mother. In human terms they devised the physiological theory that the child is complete in the male seed, and the mother's contribution is no greater than that of the earth in which also they sowed seed."

The Greek patriarchal view of the dispensibility of female offspring is underlined in the myth of the sacrifice of Iphigenia. Agamemnon, in a plea to Artemis for favorable winds during his voyage to Troy decided, on advice from a seer, to sacrifice his negotiable daughter, Iphigenia. The bargain seemed equitable to Agamemnon but not to the feminist inclinations of Artemis. Thus when Iphigenia was about to receive the knife, the goddess substituted a hind in her place and spirited the girl off to her temple in Tauris, making Iphigenia a priestess there.

The theme of a matriarchy was also existent in the Greek myths especially in the stories of the Amazons who consistently refused to integrate their society with males except as workers in servile or reproductive capacities. It was the woman-child whose gender was given status at birth and the male who was readily sacrificed. The Amazons trained themselves in the art of war and played important parts in the battles of the Trojan War. It was their custom to burn off one breast so as to facilitate the use of bow and arrow and the name, Amazon, meaning breastless, is so derived.

The Amazons are said to have invaded Lycia, Phrygia and Attica but were finally forced to the shores of Lake Maeotis where they were affiliated with the Scythians. This new race, after moving to the Tanais River continued to train women to be

hunters and warriors and it was a law in this nation that a woman could not marry until she had killed a man in battle.

There were other women in the myths who, as warriors, are associated with the Amazons although not truly one of their number. The most noteworthy of these is Camilla. Her father Metabus was driven from his city by civil strife. When he reached the Amasenus River which was flooded and impossible to cross with his infant daughter in his arms, Metabus tied the child to a spear and cried out to Artemis — "Goddess of the woods! I consecrate this maid to thee." He then hurled the weapon to the opposite bank and when he reached the other side himself and found the child unharmed, he fulfilled his promise. Camilla was reared in the ways of Artemis, skilled in horsemanship, archery and war. She devoted herself to the goddess and upon reaching womanhood, though much sought after as a wife, vowed herself to chastity and took a group of maidens to be her companions.

Camilla commanded the cavalry when Aeneas besieged Latinus' capital. During the battle, an ally named Aruns observed her pursuing an enemy whose armor offered a valuable prize. Unaware of her danger, Camilla exposed herself to the javelin of Aruns and received a fatal wound. Camilla fell and died in the arms of her attendant maidens. Artemis was greatly grieved by the death of her protegee and sent a secret arrow from the bow of one of her nymphs which killed Aruns, who died forgotten and alone.

The final myth to be recounted here concerns the love of Iphis and Ianthe. Perhaps because the Lesbian content of this tale is openly expressed, it is absent from almost all the major mythological anthologies. The best description of the story, aside from the original idyl by Ovid occurs in Jeannette H. Foster's *Sex Variant Women In Literature*. "Iphis's mother while carrying her child, is warned by the father that if she bears a girl it will be subjected to death by exposure. Consequently she manages to conceal the child's sex and raise it as a boy, giving it the name Iphis 'which was of common gender.' From infancy, Iphis is the inseparable companion of a neighbor's child, Ianthe, and by the time the two reach marriageable age, a little over thirteen, they are passionately in love. The two fathers have long since arranged a marriage. Iphis and her mother exhaust every pretext for delaying the ceremony, to the sorrow and

anger of everyone else, for even Iphigeneia does not know her beloved's true sex. Iphigeneia spends long days lamenting the cruelty of Nature, which 'surely never before has cursed a living creature with a love so monstrous.' Conscience bids her 'do only what is lawful' and confine her love strictly 'within a woman's right.' She and her mother pray frantically to Isis for aid, to the end that when the wedding day can finally no longer be postponed Iphigeneia is transformed at the altar into a boy, her voice deepening, her color darkening and her body growing in muscular firmness."

Greek mythology, then, contains some strikingly Lesbian and feminist personalities and it is not surprising that many of the female forms in Greek art are devastatingly forceful and aggressive. The statuette of *Athena Parthenos*, for instance, displays a powerful build and facial structure which is pertinent to her role as a goddess of war. Similarly, the contours of the body of

Artemis of Versailles, being those of an athlete, are natural to her history as a huntress. This is also true of the sculpture of an Amazon whose arms and shoulder muscles are developed for the handling of the weapons of war. What can be seen in these works is an image of woman that is self-assured, strong in personality and characterized by a physical prowess that has, unfortunately, rarely been repeated in the centuries of art which followed. The Greeks admired these qualities in all human-kind and happily were not averse to crediting at least some of their goddesses with the same ideals bestowed upon their gods.

(Sarah Whitworth welcomes your comments and suggestions for the column. She is particularly anxious to receive suggestions about women artists, Lesbians in art, material suitable for a possible column. Sarah, an artist in her own right, is on the staff of Whitney Museum in New York City.)

given birth to the moon

By ROCHELLE HOLT

"Sleeping in the forest, thank you. And how are you? Do they treat you badly?"

"I'm never, and conditions are the same — strained. Progress continues forward, out of the circle. There is no communication."

"Don't worry. I'll visit you again when the sun is sleeping. And I'll stay for a long time."

"I hope so, Sylvia. I'm so lonely here, it's always cold. I try so hard, but nobody cares; nobody ever cares. Like when I was coming here. I picked all the daisies under the picket 'Don't' and made a garland for my hair, but the caretakers didn't even notice. At the front desk I even nipped that pudgy, white-stockinged Bulldog right out of her nap. I asked: 'Can I be admitted now?' But she only looked down at her silver timepiece, that adjustable slave wrist-chain, and smiled: 'You may go in now.' None understand, Sylvia."

Then my twenty minutes were up. I had to leave my visitor, for they had warned me that her case was exceptionally severe. Some long, fancy name just meaning a special type of paranoia. Now, eleven months and one formal petition later, Sylvia was cradling her Lily-of-the-Valley chain and consoling me that soon I too would be granted freedom. Or I would escape.

Outside, it was more like a castle than an asylum. I stood back as though I were viewing an El Greco mural. There should have been precious things inside, such as the dishes of Emperor Napoleon, or the presents of Russian Czar Alexander to Prince Metternich. Instead, there were only people — not just here, but there. I paused by the lulling evergreens and smiled, remembering how Sylvia liked to turn names and definitions inside out. "Pine: God's finger pointed up," she once said.

At the crease of the woodland's slope spread the manor's wavy mirror. "Sylvia, aren't you lonely out there in the center, in your own swirls only?" But the swan remained aloof in her bathing. "I thirst you too, Leda." I bowed my head and kicked a pebble down the walk, all the way until a sidewalk fissure stared up at me. I sat down on the grass, and a friendship, formed in my senior year at the university, was starting over again from the beginning.

"One giant may-I step to every single mommy crack," she chanted as we gingered down the gangway, shielded by unpainted awning-stalactites. At the top of the craggy stairway stood two doors.

"Is that a note for you?" I pointed to the left and a half-envelope artistically scrawled: "Alex 'n Benny/Expire." "Die?" I asked.

"No, breathe," she laughed.

A lanky, just-wakened goatee opened Ivan's unwreathed door, and, on Sylvia's shadow, I entered into Calliope's grotto. *Sanctum sanctorum*, truly, this was the dream of every would-be artist's dwelling. A dangling pagoda-chimes, hanging on the windward wall, invisibly partitioned the room. "He can play them when he's in the mood," her eyes blew big, like children's balloons.

We flung our books and jackets to an empty corner. Then Sylvia sat Indian-style on Benny's plaited bed, while I brushed the dust from the other mat. Between us, Benny posed as a skinny Buddha on his oriental cushion. My eyes could not lap the room's splendor fast enough. From one ceiling corner, a single mauve spotlight diverged pink magic on a psychedelic stage. Intrigued by the zodiac map-shade, I asked Benny, "Which are you?"

"Gemini."

"How splendid. We're the same. They're holding hands in friendship."

"Poor me. I'm in the sea."

"Sylvia, don't say that. You're lucky; you'll live for a hundred years and be forever young."

"Oiii!" was Sylvia's constant reaction to an intense impression. I think it was her Jewish background coming out too. "Benny, tell her the story about the Tapestry. Please." She pointed to the hanging carpet behind her. And Benny transported us to an Arabian night.

"The whole thing is one picture-window. The elongated rectangle in the middle is a view of Heaven, ink intertwined in gold — comets and millions of half-lemon moons. Some wizard spilled sepia on the flame-singed sash. On the bottom, far right, sits a lady on the ledge," he pointed to the shadowed imp. "She's the result of years of experience."

I spied so many whirls of color, I was a splotched palette. I was that pumpkin poster over the refrigerator, and I was being sliced. On the coffee table, an unshellacked half-plank balanced on two opaque squares — the kind used for bathroom windows, sat a jasmine lady. That is, her emerald-ivory head was poised on a bronze cuboid. I fingered her sad eyes and waiting lips. "Sylvia, did Benny hear your 'Mother,

Mother Come Close' poem?"

"You want to?" she strung her words together fast like a party streamer.

"Of course." Sylvia always needed oral assent. That's how she lived too, yearning toward, seeking affection, wanting love.

"Mother-Mother—come close

I'll whisper behind my hand—

I'm pregnant with life!

How shocked you are,

hiding behind the black candle,

Veiling yourself so soon.

Mother-Mother—come close

I've given birth to the moon."

"Show me the broom that inspired your witch poem," I begged.

"Out this window," she untacked the kaleidoscope curtain. "That rain-soaked one sleeping on the sagging back of that garage across the alley."

"That is where the witch dropped her broom. Sylvia, quick — look at that pigeon diving past those flowerpots. That's not a pigeon; that's the witch. Eleven A.M., and she's come back for her wisps."

"Oiii!" she clapped her hand over her mouth like a child, and we both giggled. When the breeze breathed music on the golden pagoda-chimes, we were already three minutes late for our poetry seminar.

II

An Alice in search of wonderland, I remember how at first she did not impress me. Squirring in a cushion chair, and barber-shop-stripe twirling round her finger a strand of ecru hair, she distinctly disturbed me. Until that magic day she read her poetry.

They were not words that spilled from her tongue; they were surges of silk. She lifted us all to Olympus with Icarus ease. "The Poetess" she read; the poetess she was. With every line of chameleon verse, we were with her, as she became the hollow of a valley, the cradle of a tree, the dipper of a night. Her breathy voice was April breeze; she modestly bit her lip at unconscious pauses. A sculptress with language, she cut life and molded harmony.

I quivered. I loved her abracadabra notes. Daedalus' other fluttered through my blood, and I wished I were the sun. I hated her for being both suns; she would never melt. After, "Beautifuls" chain-praised her, and I did too. But inside, hate numbed me. I hated her with the envy-love of a struggling artist. I knew instinctively that we would be friends.

Sylvia was always a star, night or day.

She glinted ~~obsidian~~ until dusk yawned in wake. Maybe ~~that's~~ why most people put out their shields and sought the shade in her presence. Though she was opalescent shimmer at night, ~~still~~ some could not stay and talk with her. But we talked.

She asked if I had seen *A Dream Play*. I hadn't. That ~~Saturday~~ we waited, sixth in line at the box office. Later, in the pizza cafe, I was glad; for she confessed to me her same secret wish that the theatre be closed out when we stepped to the window. For five hours, intramixed with garlic bread and anchovy pizza, we talked of feeling, of poetry, of her boyfriend Benny.

"I used to get A's and B.s, but now I hardly ever go to class. And it's pain for me to write a silly paper with all the proper terms."

"I wish I could care less; I feel so guilty when I miss a class."

"Have you ever written frivolous answers on important tests?" she asked me. "We had to read 'Prometheus Unbound.' I read every single Shelley poem in that book, but I just couldn't get into his damn 'Prometheus.' Naturally that was the one included on the final, and I wrote: 'I don't understand your silly question, and 'Prometheus' was boring, but I loved all his other poems.' But she didn't like my answer. Sometimes I feel like throwing all my poems in their faces and saying: 'I'm special; I don't have to follow your syllabic schedule.' The trouble is there aren't that many poems."

"You are special," I gasped. "But I hope you still like me. I get good grades, but they don't mean anything. I mean, of course, I have to work. I just can't stand for anything to get the better of me, that's all. I always have to go beyond. But sometimes I get so frustrated. I'll have to read Longinus for some demanding course when all these images are floating in my mind, screaming to write themselves into existence . . ."

Her eyes of sparrow-gray, always on the verge of tears, spoke in rhythm to her dancing honey brows. Her face contorted like clay whenever she became intensely sensitive. And her fist trembled in clench when static perceptors became life-electrified. "Read this part to me." Never without paperback poetry, she opened Denise Leverlov to page five and pointed to "The Ache Of Marriage."

"It is Leviathan and we
In its belly
Looking for joy, some joy
Not to be known outside it . . ."

I saw her mouth write in pleasure, in pain; she was no sylph, now sorceress. "Is that how it is?" I dared to intrude on witchery. "Are you really one, united; or are you two wholes halved?"

"For a flame of a moment, you are one. But I'm never satisfied, never satisfied, never — and I hate that feeling."

I kept looking behind her, at the shelf of empty wine-bottles, basket-braided. "Let's each take a souvenir of this night," I whispered, slipping a 1963 vintage flask into my straw bag. "I'm so relieved, I'm glad I met you."

"So am I. I was afraid there was only one of me. People go round all the time letting go of their balloons, their pretty pastel balloons."

"Yes. They don't realize sometimes that there's a person inside who'll go up just the same as helium."

She drove me home, and that night I realized that I had been searching for Sylvia all my life.

† † †

Since that time, I have been to Essex, married a handsome scientist, and have two normal children. Why am I on my hands and knees like a child, searching for four-leaf clovers on an artificial lawn? "Don't sit on the Grass." The sign says. But still, nobody notices me.

"Let's go in, darling." The veiled mommy stopped to straighten her son's

bowtie.

"Which way is in, mommy?" He was looking towards the stable in the shadow of the big white castle, at the beautiful free-spirited horses.

"I know, darling. I know the way in."

I remembered what Sylvia had once said after class, while we were on our way down in the elevator. At the ground floor, the squash of seaweed screamed, "Out! Out!" But Sylvia whispered to me, "In! In!" "We should all say 'In'."

I stood up and shook the wrinkles off my shirt. In the distance, I saw a spindle-legs piebald leading some foals in the opposite direction from the other, older horses.

Here I am on the corner of Church and College

Thinking of a girl named Marian,
And after I've just finished reading in bed
Matthew, Mark, Luke and Fred.

Because I liked her blue eyes and
strange New Zealand accent, I suppose.

No, that's also a lie. I was imagining
How it would be to have her here in my house,
With the fireplace going in July.

She might be happy for a while: novelty pleases.

I'd let her out every Monday night too
If she promised to eat berry toast with me
On the following morning. Because,
I like women. I really do.

Not merely that I'm one too, though
We all have our queer prejudices.
But they can touch you. Beautiful women, I mean,
And still be your friend.

Rochelle Holt

Book Review By HOPE THOMPSON

SEX and CASTE in AMERICA by Carol Andreas, Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1971 (146 pp; \$5.95)

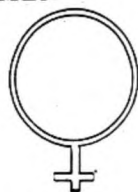
In the last pages of this little book there appears the following: "By the end of 1970 . . . at least a dozen feminist journals, literary magazines, and nationally circulated newspapers were published." That footnote No. 7 lists 25 such journals, magazines, and newspapers, complete with addresses, but — you guessed it — *not* THE LADDER. (Ms. Andreas "now teaches at the Peralta Colleges in Oakland, California," it says on the back flap and the Peralta Colleges subscribed to THE LADDER a year ago). This omission erased the lingering goodwill I was attempting to maintain during the

reading of this rather puerile book. Immediately following the footnote Andreas says, "These publications show increasing concern with the limitations imposed on children and on women and men by the nuclear family, by monogamy, and by the society's emphasis on heterosexual relations." (Italics mine) Perhaps after all she has read THE LADDER on the sly.

The "and men" in that sentence is the theme throughout the book. Andreas is scared to death of offending the male sex and this forces her into inexcusable fuzzy-mindedness for a sociologist. She speaks of 'society', 'institutions', the 'state', and the 'system' as though these entities were quite separate from human beings and would

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continue to exist in the absence of people. I am not surprised when the New Left screams its shibboleths and litanies about the evils of the System, but I am when a college professor does the same. I am not a sociologist, but plain common sense tells me that people have something to do with the nature of our institutions, our society, the System. But if this is so, then we must look to those at the top and near top of these entities, in government, industry, the colleges and universities, etc., and there we find only men. And in order to absolve men from all responsibility, we must believe that all these powerful men are quite unable to change anything. What we are left with is either that the least powerful, i.e., women at the bottom of society, are the only ones capable of bringing about change, or that no one can change society, its institutions, the System and we might as well make the best of it.

Andreas tells us that "both [men and women] are victimized by the system — regardless of who has the preponderance of power . . . each of the agencies of social control in our society reveals their attitudes about the proper behavior of men and women." Apparently agencies, not people, have attitudes. Andreas is often driven to use the passive tense in her anxiety to avoid any implication that men may bear some responsibility for the oppression of women. "These attitudes [worship of the gun, competitiveness as manly, the defense of masculinity] are not instilled without intensive and continuous effort." Such sentences are used in the hope that it will not occur to the reader to ask, "by whom?" But if one asks that question, the answer is, by the men who run the media, the Church, the government, etc. and etc., and by the women who acquiesce therein.

I wonder if Andreas is as kind to men as she means to be. "For those who are conscious of their oppression as men and women . . . new possibilities for freedom exist today . . . But only during times of social ferment have large numbers of men and women seen how inadequate the usual dominance-dependence relationships were for the conduct of a larger social struggle." Fine so far — apparently as many men as women are aware of the evils of sexism, though this is debatable, to put it mildly. But the very next sentence is: "Women *en masse* have then felt justified to move toward independence." What happened to men? Why is it that only women *en masse*

are seeking to right the wrongs of sexism when men perceive its evils as well as women? Could it be that men like things the way they are? Speaking of the draft, Andreas says, "This lack of consciousness [of the sex-role issue] resulted from an unwillingness to give up other features of the sexual caste system that are beneficial to men." Or could it be that, though men are as aware of the evils of sexism as are women, they have neither the courage nor the strength that women have to bring about change? Whichever way it is, the male sex does not come out smelling like a rose.

Like so many writers in this area, Andreas treats us to truths the significance of which completely escapes her. "One observer discovered that girls who were 'tomboys' achieved more academically in later life than the girls who were not. In fact, boys who, from time to time, have been seen as 'sissies' and girls who, from time to time, have been seen as 'tomboys' are both more likely to do well in an academic environment." What this means is too simple — and too threatening — to contemplate, namely, that girls and boys who refuse to be warped into heterosexuality and the straightjacket sex roles that maintain it are best able to express their intelligence and creativity. Those children who succumb to heterosexual conditioning are to some extent smothered in that which makes human beings human. "Man-woman relations can be interpreted as a form of negotiation, in which people bargain with each other for the things that each is able to provide." I find this an excellent description of heterosexual marriage, of the poverty of emotional satisfaction that is part and parcel of heterosexuality. I'll give you a sperm cell if you give me a baby. I'll house and feed you if you give me sexual relief. I'll 'love' you if you keep my ego overinflated.



Poetry

Votive

Artemis, cool and implacable,
I stand burning in your sacred moonlight;
Observe my love for you; perceive it well;
Love beyond love of woods and wild things,
Beyond love of a chase across the mountains.

You who abhor the weakness of mortal love,
Pull a silver arrow from your quiver;
Calm and unsmiling draw your crescent bow
And bring me silent swift death;
Bring me peace.

—Maura McCullough

The Pleiad

Last night I met Electra,
Her hair streaming behind her
And her face pale with grief.
"Troy," she cried, clutching my arm,
"What of Troy and Dardanus my son?"
I shook my head,
Unwilling to tell her Troy had fallen,
That Dardanus, with all his kin,
Was dead two thousand years ago and more.
Electra, quivering in her long bleached robes,
Looked in my eyes and saw the truth.
"But have you seen my sisters," she whispered,
"Maia, Merope, and the rest, my poor sisters,
Doomed to run forever from that Boeotian brute?
There is no peace here; I must go to them."
And she fled, calling to me over her shoulder
Through her tangled bright hair,
"Look for my sisters;
Look for me, if you have keen sight;
Sometimes I am with them sharing sorrows."

Tonight I stand in the damp grass,
Chilled and troubled,
Watching seven sisters move across the sky.
Their faces, blanched by fear and sadness,
Are scarcely visible
As they run their endless course through the night.

—Maura McCullough

A MODERN PENELOPE WEAVES

This is to correct that false Sappho
leaping off the cliffs into the sea
after a god damned boat boy (haplessly)
brightness scattered by sea-spray . . .

That was not she whom I'll follow; not she who is
linked to me.
(O cease to bite me on the heels, girl!)
I am linked to Sappho eternally.

I'm caught up in a kind of weaving:
Have spun my dreams for mother
thinking she would see me whole; come round;
but only the ghost of her soul has arrived:

She knows not how to rejoice;
I greet her each evening: (no choice.)
this is to weave cloth by day,
unweave it each night.
Nor have I been beset
by one hundred and eight
suitors these years
where I have turned away with coldness and disdain:

I am still attending my soul-mate
to sail into harbor;
not even the ship of fortune
would be so sweet!

The three most persistent suitors
were shame, penury, and pain.
My mother's life work has become
mending me -- but I am solvent, heart whole.

I would have peace and a gorgeous cat,
would sit in a window with a classic guitar.
Relieved of those bad suitors' unsought attention
these twenty years:

Would be married
now
when poverty clings like dust from a long journey.
(And the mate who would return would be changed from who went away.)

I would be perfectly honest, smoke a pipe,
rise to that loved footfall; shedding innocence as a disguise:
the cloth-weaving contest by the fire is over!
If I were naked, nobody will look twice.

The idea . . . of elegance rises
like a woman -- cool, clean after her bath.
Ay!
and should have a bath with red tiles.

Sappho

(the real one, poet):
not she who jumped off the Leudadian cliffs,
uncommonly brightheaded (blond) after a sailor boy;

but you, Sappho, little, dark, "ill-favored" by the gods;
true poet:
Are you not a sister of mine?
Writing of nothing but love,

outstripping death
by poems of an ultimate grace: While . . .
Nothing is enough,
nothing.

I have bled my talent to get out
of the cold circle; woven tales:
I have kept the ancient faith;
but breath returns like daylight. Fails. So truth:

with that harsh reality.
What greater bitterness has death?

Lynn Strongin

The Bell Jar

Sylvia Plath
New York: Harper and Row, 1971
Reviewed by BEVERLY LYNCH

In this, Sylvia Plath's only completed novel, we follow an adolescent woman to and through a nervous breakdown. The greatest source of the young writer's pain was her confrontation with the apparent dichotomy of being a woman and being an intellectual. There was no women's liberation then to guide her toward an integration of the two and she suffered, like most of us, from her attempt to relate to the world in both roles.

The story follows a part of Ms. Plath's own life fairly closely and it was for that reason the novel was published only in England until this year. Born in 1932, she spent most of her academic years in Boston winning awards for her talent and diligence. The novel's heroine won a trip to New York City as a guest editor for a month on a woman's magazine. Sylvia Plath based this on the month she spent as guest managing editor of *Mademoiselle* under similar circumstances. She ran through the honors not covered in this book like a Fulbright scholarship (twice) which enabled her to study at Cambridge in England after graduating from Smith in 1955. She published three volumes

of poetry and was printed in *Harper's*, *Poetry*, *London Magazine* and others. All this, however, came about after her "recovery" and continued through a marriage in 1956 to poet Ted Hughes and the births of two children. She separated from Hughes in 1962 and the next year, still producing excellent literature, committed suicide.

What we see in the novel is the troubled state of a woman unprepared for contradictions and the process by which society, in the form of psychiatry and shock therapy, taught her to cope with reality, an education which, by noting her end, was obviously inadequate for her needs. Tossed into the maelstrom of the New York magazine world, and especially the pseudo world created by *Mademoiselle*, the heroine Esther attempted to adjust to it, but found her heart not in it. The editor with whom she worked, also a woman, chided her for her disinterest, but Esther, for the first time in her life, could not accept competition and achievement. Little by little she stopped working. Her vision of the world, altered by the radical changes in herself, was distorted as if she was looking through a "glass bell jar". This was her term for the manifestation of her "sickness" that drove her to attempt suicide.

Conflicts covered by the book began

with the *Mademoiselle* ultra-feminine, consumerist, male-oriented atmosphere versus the genioused, serious and not fully socially acceptable poet Buddy Willard, the all-American, handsome, athletic, pre-med, childhood crush and male figure in the book lost his attraction for Esther, though he wanted to marry her. She rejected Buddy, she wrote repeatedly, because he was a "hypocrite". This, because he came on as a pure, innocent boy, but admitted to Esther that he had an affair with a waitress.

It would be difficult to understand Esther's rejection of Buddy on these grounds except that we know of her difficulties in adjusting to an acceptable role of womanhood. As long as she was somehow equal to Buddy, a friend or even a girlfriend who related to him through exchange of her poetry and his impressive scientific knowledge, Esther was comfortable. When Buddy suddenly became a sexual being, not someone with whom she could discover sexuality, but a man who would, first, teach her and, second, probably view her in the same way as he had the waitress, as a sex object, she revolted and no longer could be happy with him. This is borne out by Esther's immediate decision to divest herself of her virginity in order to reestablish their equality. There is no indication that Ms. Plath understood what had happened in her own mind, but the book is supposed to present itself through a neurotic mind and thereby leaves little room for self-analysis of this sort.

Ms. Plath did not go into an analysis, either, of the woman/intellectual conflict. Yet it was strong. Lois Ames, who wrote the biographical note at the end of the novel said, "As she became increasingly conscious as a woman, the conflict between the lifestyle of a poet/intellectual and that of a wife and mother became a central preoccupation . . ." In *The Bell Jar* itself Esther made statements like, "If I had to wait on a baby all day, I would go mad." Again, on prostitution, "What I hate is the thought of being under a man's thumb . . . A man doesn't have a worry in the world, while I've got a baby hanging over my head like a big stick, to keep me in line." Marriage for Esther "seemed a dreary and wasted life for a girl with fifteen years of straight A's." She knew that "in spite of all the roses and kisses and restaurant dinners a man showered on a woman before he married her, when he secretly wanted when the wedding service ended was for her to

flatten out underneath his feet like Mrs. Willard's kitchen mat." As for working in any conventional women's job, she "hated the idea of serving men in any way. I wanted to dictate my own thrilling letters."

What can we say but, right on, sister. She fought, even to the point of suicide, the impositions put on her as a woman in a "man's world." Had she relied on her sisters, rather than the cooptive socialization of psychiatry, Sylvia Plath would have been able to pull together the torn pieces of her world. Unfortunately she, as Esther, treated her women friends as if they were not worthy of her attention. She "made a decision" about one of her friends. "I would listen to what she said, but deep down I would have nothing to do with her." She was speaking of Doreen, who fought convention by living more "freely," outside the confines of *Mademoiselle*, 1950's puritanism. Another friend, Joan, who approached her timidly as a lover, said simply, "I like you." Esther replied, "That's tough, Joan . . . Because I don't like you. You make me puke, if you want to know." She could not "see what women see in other women." She asked her woman psychiatrist, who for once was apparently human, "What does a woman see in another woman that she can't see in a man?" The psychiatrist paused. Then she said, "Tenderness!"

At the same time Esther did feel a sisterhood with women. This was obviously another source of conflict. She recognized that Buddy had no, what she called, "intuition," but that Doreen had it. "Everything she said was like a secret voice speaking straight out of my bones." Watching a woman giving birth and being told that the mother was under the influence of a drug which did not alleviate her pain, but would make her forget it, Esther thought, "it sounded just like the sort of drug a man would invent . . . she would go straight home and have another baby, because the drug would make her forget how bad the pain had been . . ." The awareness of her common lot with other women was there, but she fought for herself, to be different from other women and did not realize they were fighting too.

The novel itself is written strangely. It sounds just as it is supposed to sound: the thinking of a hurt mind and the changes that mind undergoes until it reaches a calmer, glossed-over view of reality. It is a skilled presentation, using the language and

thought processes of a severely troubled woman. Action in the novel is sometimes sequential, but more often flows by subject across big jumps in time. Sometimes it seems jumbled and confused. Obviously it is and is meant to be. Sylvia Plath has written a fine novel. If she could have held onto her life a little longer she would have been a feminist. As it was, she could not survive. Life must have been unbearable for this woman who, finally separated from her husband, still had two small children and was trying, constantly trying to write against the tide of circumstances, despite being a woman. Finally, the novel is a prime example of the inevitability of a woman's susceptibility to mental illness in this culture. Were we not all a little sick we would have given up the fight. Those more conscious of being unable to adapt to norms,

like Sylvia Plath, and unsupported by other women because such communication is traditionally taboo, have all too often run into irreversible tragedy like hers.

(Editor's Note: Beverly Lynch is a LADDER contributor and major worker and has been for years. This is her real name, and you long time readers know her under a variety of pseudonyms as Beverly has provided us with reviews, fiction, poetry. She is a member of New Haven Women's Liberation and we are glad to have permission to identify her. Reader's will also note that our CROSS CURRENTS Editor, "Gladys Irma," is no more. She is now using her real name, Gail Hanson.)

== Cross Currents ==

WOMEN BEING ACTIVELY SOUGHT: Stanford's school of medicine is actively seeking women faculty members and women for all allied positions in a complete reversal of previous policy, according to an article in the August 2, 1971, *CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION*.

FOURTH WORLD, a new women's liberation paper addressed to minority group women, is out from the Oakland area. Address is Box 8997, Oakland, California, 94608, and cost is \$6 per year. Emphasis in Volume One, Number Two (July/August, 1971) is primarily black women, but chicana women, gay women and even a general article on professional women appear. Try it, it's different.

RAPE: THE ALL-AMERICAN CRIME, by Susan Griffin. This major article in *RAMPARTS*, September, 1971, is by far the best to date on the serious problem of rape in our cities. Libraries will have this. Don't miss it. Some of the women's liberation newspapers have reprinted portions of it, but read the whole thing.

GUAM WOMEN UNITE: September, 1971. Some 50 women have started a women's liberation cooperative in Guam, according to an article in the *PACIFIC SUNDAY NEWS*, September 26, 1971.

TWO BLACK WOMEN SEEK MARRIAGE LICENSE: Milwaukee, October, 1971. Donna Burkett, 25, and Manonia Evans, 21, have filed suit in U.S.

District Court in Milwaukee in an effort to obtain a marriage license. The couple said (among other things) that they were "being deprived of marital benefits such as inheritance rights and the filing of a joint income tax return".

LESBIAN PHOTOS ARE HELD OBSCENE: Washington, D.C., October, 1971. A U.S. Court of Appeals has ruled that explicit portrayal of Lesbian sexual activity in magazines is obscene under general guidelines passed down by the U.S. Supreme Court. While we agree that the sort of material herein being specifically banned is obscene, we do not approve of censorship, period. There are people whose minds are so warped they might find a magazine like *THE LADDER* obscene. Taste cannot dictate publication rights.

LESBIANISM: SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER, October 3, 1971. An excellent article on the Seattle Gay Women's Resource Center appeared in this paper on this date. There have been good articles before, in some of the east and west coast papers, but this was refreshingly open, honest and almost without factual error. It included some fine photos of the young, attractive women who staff the center.

FASHION IS STILL SPINACH: Elizabeth Hawes, designer, writer and women's liberationist, died on October 4, 1971, at her home in the Chelsea Hotel in New York City. Up until 1940, Ms. Hawes

was a well-known designer. She left the industry in disgust, and wrote an expose of it called **FASHION IS SPINACH**. She spent the years of World War II as a machine shop operator and later had a short but successful career as a feature writer and editor for the New York newspaper PM. Later she was an organizer for the U.A.W., specializing in recruiting women. Her book, **HURRY UP PLEASE, ITS TIME**, published in 1946, covers these years of her life. In the 1960's she resumed her career as a designer, doing costumes for movies.

CARNAL IGNORANCE: VILLAGE VOICE, October 7, 1971. This excellent article by Ellen Frankfort, takes David Reuben and his new book, **ANY WOMAN CAN** to pieces in precisely the right way, with wit and facts. The sequel to this article, **EVERY ORANGUTAN CAN!** appeared in the **VILLAGE VOICE** for October 14, 1971. Both are highly recommended.

N.Y. DOB HARASSED AGAIN: New York City, October 9, 1971. Cops burst into a dance on this date and arrested two of DOB's officers for allegedly selling beer at a dance without proper license. Maybe, maybe not, but assuredly not the real reason for the harassment. Lesbians, after all, represent a real threat to the New York Police Department.

A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE OVEN: NEW YORK TIMES, October 10, 1971. This is an excellent article on women in movies and on television, by Sherry Sonnett Trumbo. **NEW YORK TIMES** is on microfilm almost everywhere these days, so do look this up and read it. Ms. Trumbo's summation of women's liberation, what it is, and what it must be, is one of the best we have read.

WOMEN IN RELIGIOUS NEWS: Vatican City, October 11, 1971. A Canadian cardinal asked that the Roman Catholic Church begin serious inquiry into the possibility of admitting women to the priesthood and other forms of the ministry. George Cardinal Flahiff, the Archbishop of Winnipeg, pointed out that the Apostle Paul's objections to women were sociological in nature and not theological and simply had no validity today. Pocono Manor, Pa., October 29, 1971. On the heels of a vicious rejection of women by Bishop C. Kilmer Myers of the Episcopal Church, other church leaders asked that an in-depth study of the subject once again be initiated. On the heels of this a group of women

formed a caucus deploring this step and insisted in formal protest to John E. Hines, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, that the church immediately ordain women to the priesthood. There are many women deacons qualified for this ordination at this time, and many others working toward this end. (We hope to have a more detailed report on current situations of women in religion in the U.S. in a future issue.)

AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION URGES LEGAL ABORTION IN EVERY STATE: Minneapolis, October 14, 1971. The American Public Health Association urged that all states legalize abortion immediately to help curb population growth. The group came down hard on the present exploitation of women by the few areas that allow abortion, saying: "Such flagrant disregard for the health and welfare of women is unconscionable".

WHEREVER YOU GO . . . WOMEN ARE THERE TOO: Senator Edmund Muskie, considered the front-running male

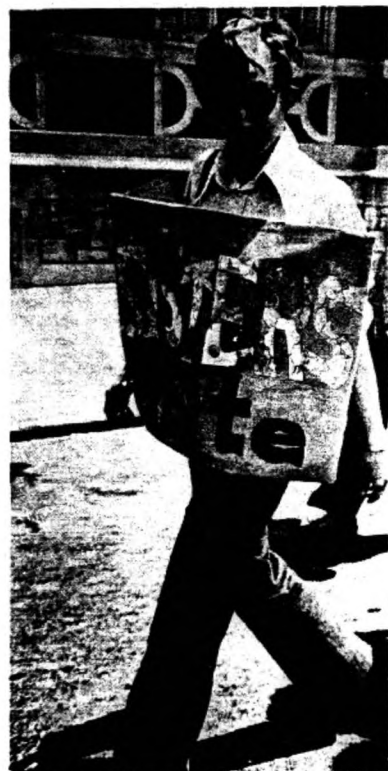


Photo By LYN JONES

democratic candidate, was zapped a bit by women in Gainesville, Florida, on October 22, 1971, at a speaking engagement by a group lead by Betty Friedan. He had previously been confronted by a more hostile group lead by Gloria Steinem in Washington on October 5, 1971, also at a speaking engagement. On both occasions, it must be noted, Senator Muskie behaved better than any other male present.

CHICAGO N.O.W. WORKING ON ANOTHER AREA OF DISCRIMINATION: KANSAS CITY TIMES, October 27, 1971. Chicago NOW is working on the position of women in the U.S. regarding credit. Women are almost uniformly less able to obtain credit than men, and the reasons are almost always sexist. An ugly situation, since even the most unreasonable credit personnel will admit that women are better risks.

THREE WOMEN WIN SEATS IN SWISS PARLIAMENT, Zurich, October 31, 1971. For the first time in Switzerland, women had access to parliament, and they quickly won three seats in the previously all-male organization.

AH WOMEN: Canadian biochemist, Dr. Nora Burns, has developed a silicone membrane for use in place of lung tissue. This is a life saving discovery with applications in many areas including heart surgery and the saving of infant lives. Dr. Burns is connected with a Santa Ana, California, laboratory. Noral Campbell, of Del Rio, California, became the first woman ever to serve in an Army National Guard unit in October, 1971, in Camp Murray (Olympia), Washington. Janet Anderson, age 8, of Fredericksburg, Virginia, was the only girl in the 1971 national Punt, Pass and Kick Competition (and we wish we could reproduce the photos of her - football helmet and all). She plays center. Sandra Knox of Burbank, California, became the second California woman in two years to win the 102 mile endurance trek across Western Nevada. She covered the distance in 16 hours and 50 minutes. Women comprise 60% of the entrants and a higher proportion of women usually complete the run. So much for male superiority. Corrie Ebbelaar, 22, of Holland, set a new world's record for swimming the English Channel in 10 hours and 40 minutes in September, 1971. Ms. Margaret Sigsway has been elected president of the Norwalk-Wilton Bar Association, the first woman in history to hold the post. 27-year-old Marilyn Merrill of Miami, Florida, is the

only woman in a class of 150 men at the Universal Heavy Construction School in South Dade, Florida. She is learning to drive backhoes and bulldozers, and plans to earn \$10,000 to \$15,000 a year, retire at 35 and raise horses.

HERE AND THERE: Women are being vociferously promoted by small pockets of concerned citizens (not excluding some men) in various fields. A group of Yale lawyers is vigorously advocating a constitutional amendment that would remove all barriers based on sex from employment and education. The Los Angeles school system is under fire from a group determined to obtain sexual equality both in classrooms and on playing fields. At the annual meeting of the American Council on Education (October, 1971) a woman was elected chairman for 1971-72 and the other directors authorized the appointment of a committee to recommend a systematic plan for representation of women and ethnic minority groups within the council.

THE SISTERHOOD AS SEEN BY RED-BOOK: The October, 1971, issue of **RED-BOOK** has a short novel, **THE SISTERHOOD**, by Mary Jane Rolfs. It isn't much, its been neutered, and washed in at least 10 varieties of detergent, but for that insular audience, at least a step in the right direction.

WHEN WOMEN LOVE OTHER WOMEN: **REDBOOK**, November, 1971. In one of the very worst articles ever to appear on the subject, **REDBOOK** reaches an all time low. Enough said - pure crap.

BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS "MS" WILL BE AROUND: **NEWSWEEK**, November 8, 1971, **TIME**, November 8, 1971 and everything else, announced the upcoming magazine, **MS**, to be edited by Gloria Steinem, and owned, operated and staffed wholly by women. The preview issue in January, 1972, is supposed to be 100 pages long, run to 250,000 copies and sell for \$1.50. Regular publication is to begin in Summer, 1972, sell for \$1 a copy and have a press run of 500,000. We will review it, and we hope it will live up to its publicity.

NBC IN TROUBLE: On November 10, 1971, NBC was found guilty by the federal government of discrimination in employment practices against women. No news as to what the penalty will be, but the major point is that NBC will have to change its employment practices.

EVEN IF A MAN DID SAY IT, IT IS TRUE . . . UNITED WE STAND AND

DIVIDED WE FALL: Articles are reaching us from everywhere about the divisions in the women's liberation/women's rights movement, and many of these center on the separatism of Lesbians and "straight" women. A good example is an article in the November 14, 1971, WASHINGTON POST, by Karlyn Barker, who conducted an interview (apparently) with staff members of the newspaper, **OFF OUR BACKS**. One psychotherapist commented that "radical Lesbians really have something to say, because the highest form of Sisterhood is to love your sister in every way". While we agree with this, basically, we also realize that not every woman is ready mentally (or physically) to take this step and to have separatist movements in the movement is to cripple the movement. We note, amused, that most of the divided groups are in the large east and west coast cities, while in the middle west, groups seemingly can get along fine. We do not know why, but we suspect a good word might be PATIENCE.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION AIDED BY POSSIBLE TAX LAW CHANGES. November 15, 1971. As this is being written, there are two changes in the current tax bill before the Senate that are very important to those who have children and must work. One provision will raise the current \$600 a year exemption for child care (for those with income under \$6000) to a much wider allowance of \$400 a month (\$4800 a year) for single parents (divorced, widowed, separated or single period) and the same allowance would also be available to married couples with combined income under \$12,000 a year. (Editor's Note: Nixon vetoed it!)

ABORTION MARCH IN WASHINGTON, D.C.: November 20, 1971. About 2000 women (figures are vague on this, so we will accept the figures of a personal friend who simply counted 10 blocks of marching women, marching 10 abreast and figured between 2000 and 3000 had to be right) from all over the country marched on Washington, D.C., and held a demonstration on one side of the White House, protesting all abortion laws. The New Haven Rock Band played, and many women spoke. Many individual spokeswomen withdrew support at the last minute because of the domination of YSA and SWP, and this cut down on the number of women present. However, others expressed the feeling that the overriding importance of obtaining legalized abortion, free abortion and no

forced sterilization was more important than political disagreement with the overall goals of Women's National Abortion Action Coalition which sponsored the demonstration under the SWP and YSA thumb.

MS. BATCHELOR DOESN'T LIKE US: NEW YORK TIMES, November 21, 1971. Ruth Batchelor, a song writer with substantial credits, was interviewed by TIMES staff writer, Joan Cook, about her latest venture. Seems she has written the words and music and done the arrangements for a record called "Reviving a Dream". She has also begun her own recording company "Femme Records" to issue her work. She is quoted as saying: "I think it's a great mistake that women's lib (sic) has become identified with lesbians. I think the image is in trouble. If I weren't interested in the movement and heard all those anti-men speeches, I'd be turned off too. I'm not anti-men". A member of NOW, she wrote a march for NOW, explaining that "a march turns a mob into a parade". I'd be interested in knowing whoever thought of NOW as a mob, and how well its members will want to be considered a parade? I'd be happy if someone acquainted with Ms. Batchelor would point out the unintentional (?) humor in her recording label.

SMALL BUT IMPORTANT VICTORY: Washington, November 22, 1971. The Supreme Court unanimously struck down an Idaho statute that gave men preference over women in administering deceased persons' estates. This is a minor victory in itself, but it is the first time that the Court has ever invalidated a state law on the grounds of SEX DISCRIMINATION, and that is no small victory.

CHURCH THEATER or "SHOW AND TELL" WITH A VENGEANCE: Paris, November 23, 1971. Some 1500 women's liberation demonstrators burst into a wedding ceremony in Saint Ambrose Church, shouting slogans ("The Pill For the Bride", "Marriage Is A Trap" and "Free Abortion and Contraceptives") waving banners and etc. What we would like to know is if the bride helped plan the action?

MORE ON LESBIAN MOTHERS: A serious form of discrimination against Lesbians hits the Lesbian who is a mother. The courts notoriously find against such women in child custody suits. Del Martin, a co-founder of DOB back in 1955, is now leader of a new organization, Lesbian Mother's Union. Women who have children and are in need of help are urged to write to



SURE, MS. ANDERSON WOULD MAKE A GREAT PRESIDENT BUT SINCE SHE DIVORCED HER GIRLFRIEND THE VOTERS WON'T GO FOR HER!

Del Martin, Lesbian Mother's Union, 651 Duncan Street, San Francisco, California 94131. The SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE ran a good article on the new group on November 23, 1971.

MILITANT ATTACKS THE LADDER: The November 26, 1971, issue of MILITANT, a socialist newspaper, vigorously attacked THE LADDER (to our delight) objecting rather strenuously to a LADDER staff member, Rita Laporte, whose equally vigorous article "Political Theology or Practical Government" in the October/November, 1971, issue, sparked the attack. Lots of misquoting and quoting out of context, but very good publicity for us. Thank you.

WOULD YOU BELIEVE TIME MAGAZINE? December 6, 1971. This issue of TIME, in its Education section, contains an excellent run-down on women's liberation activities on campus, coast to coast. Unusually well written and without any of the expected snide tone, coverage is fairly complete. Even Lesbians are included, again without smart aleck commentary. "A few of the pressure groups are openly Lesbian in orientation. But says Bonnie Strote (University of Washington student) 'It's getting difficult to tell who's gay and who's straight'."

SHIRLEY CHISHOLM FOR PRESIDENT: LADDER staff herein editorially supports Shirley Chisholm, (D-N.Y.) for President. We are reasonably positive she hasn't a chance in hell of getting nominated and even if she were and were elected, the men of Congress would hardly be likely to

cooperate (after all, why have a perfect world?). We won't bother to report on all of Shirley's activities since they are being faithfully covered by all local papers; but we are sure of one thing, she will stir up a little comment at the Democratic National Convention this year.

WASHINGTON, D.C., WOMEN HOLD OPEN HOUSE FOR LESBIANS. Two women in the Washington, D.C., area have for some months been running their phone number in the local underground newspaper, inviting lonely Lesbians to an open house. No alcohol, no hanky panky, just an ear, and good friendly open atmosphere. The idea is good, especially for large cities, but we can envision possible problems.

THREE LIVES: Reviews of this movie by Kate Millett are mixed and only New Yorkers have so far gotten to see it. One of the three women is a Lesbian, and the reviewers make it clear that she is the most successful and self-realized character in the film. This is an all women film - cast, crew, the works. Kate, does anyone not know?, is the author of SEXUAL POLITICS.

LA RELIGIEUSE (THE NUN): This is a 1966 French movie which got itself banned in France and is just out now in the U.S. for the first time. Based on the (take a deep breath) 1796 novel, LA RELIGIEUSE, by Denis Diderot, this is all about Lesbianism in the nunnery - an old popular theme. The movie sounds (from reviews) much better than the book, which is a bit much.

TRICKY DICK KEEPS WOMEN OUT: We threw away the huge stack of clippings about a woman possibly being named for the Supreme Court, because long before time to do this column it was ancient HISTORY. Someday we are sure it will be herstory instead, but not for a time.

STILL NO WOMEN'S RIGHTS AMENDMENT: As we write this, papers are full of the death rattles of Emmanuel Celler (D-N.Y.) as he fights to keep women from their rights as citizens, and a report on the House once again passing the amendment by a vote of 354-23 and the waiting while the House and Senate get together. We don't know where it will be when you read this, but we would bet that women still won't get it this year. We will see.

PERVERTING THE MINDS OF CHILDREN: A male lexicographer, Peter Davies, has completed a study of children's literature which shows very clearly how warped it all is. The word "he" turns up 3 times for each appearance of the word "she". The

word "boy" occurs twice for each appearance of "girl" in elementary school reading. "Wife" appears three times as often as "husband" which shows how important "wife" is supposed to be in training young women for life. Dr. Davies comments "for the boy, husband is not an important role". In the word frequency count, "he" is number 11, "his" number 18, and "she" is number 54, with "her" number 64. You are invisible, women, and not just as adults. You start to disappear when you are born.

AMERICAN MEN OF SCIENCE GETS A NAME CHANGE: Hereafter the famous reference to **AMERICAN MEN OF SCIENCE**, will be called **AMERICAN MEN AND WOMEN OF SCIENCE**. There have always been a few token women in its pages, but it's nice to have the sexist title changed.

"STRUCK" DOWN BY THE AIR FORCE AND THE COURTS: Susan Struck, a former Air Force Captain, has lost her appeal before a Federal Court in Seattle. Captain Struck was pregnant, gave birth to the child, and put it up for adoption at once. She intended to stay in the Air Force but the Air Force discharged her and now the courts have agreed with the Air Force. Surprise, Surprise.

LUCKY BILL TO COME BACK? There are moves about to bring back the \$2 bill. Rep. Seymour Walpern (R.-N.Y.) is trying to get the \$2 bill issued with Susan B. Anthony on the face of it instead of Thomas Jefferson. Much ado has been made of this, and articles have appeared saying a woman has never been on U.S. folding money. Not so, say I. In 1886 and again in 1891, there was a \$1 bill with Martha

Washington on it. Since then it's been "let George do it".

Two publications most of you will be interested in. **MAJORITY REPORT**, a monthly newsletter published by FOCAS (Feminist Organization for Communication, Action and Service) c/o Women's Liberation Center of New York City, 36 West 22nd Street, New York, N.Y., 10010. This costs \$3 for 10 issues, 30c for single copy. Make your checks payable to Feminist Organization For Communication, Action and Service, NOT to the name of the publication, please. The other publication, an anthology, the second edition of **LESBIANS SPEAK OUT** is in preparation. They ask for articles, poetry, pictures, drawings, maps, graphs, photographs, short stories, etc. Send to Lesbians Speak Out Collective, 1018 Valencia Street, San Francisco, California 94110.

* * *

CELL 16 LIVES! The members of Cell 16, producers of *A Journal of Female Liberation*, are dedicated to serious analysis of the nature of women's oppression and the necessary social change, and to the sharing of the results of this analysis with all women through the Journal. Besides working together on the Journal, one of our members, a black belt, gives classes in Tae Kwon Do. We have just put out a fifth Journal, entitled, *The First Revolution*. Back issues of the Journal are also available. All Journals are one dollar. Since our trouble with Y.S.A./S.W.P. we have not been receiving any mail addressed to our old offices in Somerville or Boston. To obtain a copy of the Journal write to: Cell 16, 2 Brewer St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

published report. Those involved claimed to begin with no assumptions or preconceptions. The categories of sexual bias they had set up were four: men reviewing men, women reviewing women, men reviewing women, women reviewing men.)

Vancouver, B.C. Canada
November 26, 1971

Dear Dianne Dobbie:

I would be glad to help you with information for your study of sexual bias in reviewing, but, though you claim you begin with no assumptions and have no preconceptions, the evidence I have might prove something of an embarrassment and nuisance to you, given the four categories of

sexual bias you have set up. Oh, I suppose you could, if you were earnest and clever enough, force a number of comments into your categories. When, for instance, Winston Mills of the *Ottawa Citizen* says, "But all the time you keep turning to the photograph of the author on the jacket and wondering how such a nice-looking woman could ever have chosen so distasteful a subject for a first novel," you could say there's a clear bias of a man who likes a woman with pretty thoughts to compliment her pretty face. Or from Kildare Dobbs in the *Toronto Daily Star*, "A world in which only the women are real is at last sterile and airless. We are left with an image of death." Assuming the criticism is valid, you would still have to wonder if Mr. Dobbs would pass the same judgment on a writer like Conrad, for whom only men were real. But once you got to Vancouver's Lorne Parton in *The Province*, coming out with such statements as, "there's more hairy-chested hormones in this one book than the first six from the pen of Truman Capote, but it's all coursing through ostensibly female veins . . . and if this criticism breaches the dykes and we're all inundated, that's life," your categories begin to be inadequate.

I do have plenty of evidence about sexual bias in reviewing, but Mr. Mills and Mr. Dobbs and Mr. Parton are not objecting to my work because I am a woman. They all assume from my three novels that I am a Lesbian, the same assumption made by Rosalind Levitt in the *L.A. Times* when she says, "But if the last novel wasn't unpleasant to read, it also left no lingering appetite for more of the same. . . . Nowadays people must - and should - be careful in speaking about male or female homosexuality . . ."

And here is Molly Frampton in *St. Catharines Standard*, "*The Desert of the Heart* is extremely frank in its treatment of lesbianism. Perhaps a little too frank. The author almost makes it seem desirable." There is a heterosexual bias in both men and women, whether they happen to be heterosexual or not. It isn't called bias, of course. For people to be 'normal' or at least attempt to seem 'normal', it is necessary for them to set up moral, psychological, sociological, and even political barriers against what is 'abnormal'.

Unless the reviewer-writer combinations are more than four, the only way to deal with reviews of my work would be to claim no sexual bias in any of these reviewers who are, after all, only defending the values of

their culture. To open your categories include homosexual and heterosexual biases problems you would probably feel incompetent to solve. Perhaps the solution is to choose writers who more tidily fit into your study so that you need not disturb your original assumptions and preconceptions about sexuality itself. Though there are an embarrassing number of homosexuals among writers, many of them at least don't deal overtly with the subject or, like E.M. Forster, die before such material is published.

Had anyone who proposed my work read it?

Sincerely yours,
Jane Rule

Dear Editor:

I could not help wondering, when reading about the dangers of the pill in the last issue of *THE LADDER*, why the author did not also point out the various dangers of the intrauterine device, or IUD. These range from the immediate and obvious, like bleeding, cramps, and other pain, to the potentially more serious pelvic inflammatory disease and more subtle uterine perforation.

Bleeding and pain remain the chief reasons for discontinued use of the IUD, but not to worry, most symptoms lessen after a few months! Expulsion, or rejection, by the body is also a principal reason for discontinued use. Pelvic inflammatory disease is a bacterial infection; one study reported it to occur in 2 to 3 per cent of women. Most cases can be treated with antibiotics, with the IUD still in place, you'll be happy to know. But it may thrill us slightly less to realize that this disease, in connection with use of an IUD, has caused at least 10 women to die.

Most perforations occur probably at the time of insertion. Since many are unaccompanied by symptoms, they may go undetected. It is important that the IUD be inserted properly and, if after childbirth, at the correct time. One study reported 15 cases of intestinal obstruction, a surgical emergency, because of perforation of the uterus by IUD's. More perforations occur with the bow than with the other types.

It is important for users of the pill and the IUD to be aware that long-term effects are still unknown, and that there are definite serious risks to health and life asso-



(Editor's Note: The following letter from Jane Rule, whose three novels, DESERT OF THE HEART, THIS IS NOT FOR YOU and AGAINST THE SEASON will be familiar to many LADDER readers, was written as a reply to a request that she be one of 20 authors to submit reviews of their work which they thought were sexually biased. The study to be undertaken at York University would result in a

ciated with use of either. The human body knows an indignity when it is confronted with one.

T.G.
Wayne, Pa.

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Tietze, C.: *International Journal of Fertility* Vol. 13 No. 4, 1968
Burnhill, M.S. and C.H. Birnberg: *Am. J. Obst. & Gyn.* Vol. 98 No. 1, May 1, 1967

Dear Gene:

Ever since reading Donna Martin's letter in the June-July 1971 issue of *The Ladder*, I have been thinking a lot about the difference I see in the older and younger Lesbians. I share the views expressed by Ms. Martin.

Twenty years ago we were so deep in the "closet" as to be almost completely frustrated. Gay bars for women were practically non-existent and anyhow that never impressed me as the best way to meet our own kind. Nevertheless, even today when we have come a long way from the repressive years, it still seems to me very difficult to meet others in ordinary life circumstances. Some active groups have been operating in my area in the interest of the gay women. But I find that at almost all meetings and activities, practically everyone there is comparatively young — mostly students, or young working people. My question is where are the women around my age (43), background and interests? I guess what I'm trying to say is that we need to meet people with whom we have some common interests.

L.F.
Massachusetts

(Editor's note: L.F. went on to request that THE LADDER set up some sort of discreet correspondence club . . . a request we have received hundreds of times through the years. This is not possible for several perfectly logical reasons including lack of staff to handle such a project. But the best and most imperative reason is that it is neither our function nor our responsibility to do so . . . and assuming such a responsibility would be extremely unwise.)

Dear Gene:

I'd like to bring to the attention of LADDER readers two more singers whose work is both relevant and lovely. The first is CHRIS WILLIAMSON (and this is the title of her first album). She wrote the lyrics herself or collaborated with other women lyricists for the songs in this album. Very special attention should be paid to the song, "Waiting", by Chris Williamson and Lindee Reese.

The other singer is Dianne Davidson and her album is called BABY. She is also her own lyricist. Her songs are not as directly relevant to women as are Chris Williamson's, but both artists are recommended for those of you who like the current burgeoning of women artists in the counter culture.

June M. Smith
Tennessee

(Editor's Note: From our mail it is clear that many readers are indeed very interested in the current increase in self determining women artists in the popular music field. In this issue we also share with you some unpublished (previously) photographs of Terry Garthwaite, leader of the group, JOY OF COOKING. The pictures of Terry were taken by photographer, Lyn Jones. JOY OF COOKING has been reviewed in THE LADDER, August/September, 1971 issue.)



Photos By LYN JONES

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"Our World Is Our Creation", reproduced here, is one of several cards and posters created by a group of feminist artists in Chicago, called the Women's Graphic Collective. The women designed this card and the others in the series (eight cards, eight posters done by hand silk-screen). A catalogue of their work is available. Write GRAPHICS, c/o Chicago Women's Liberation Union, 852 West Belmont, Chicago, Illinois 60657.

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