

THE LADDER

APRIL/MAY, 1972

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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.

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

OCCUPATIONS have no sex and must be opened to all qualified persons for the benefit of all.

LIFE STYLES must be as numerous as human beings require for their personal happiness and fulfillment.

ABILITY, AMBITION, TALENT —
THESE ARE HUMAN QUALITIES.

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APRIL/MAY, 1972

THE LADDER

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SOME SHARDS . . .

By KAREN SNOW

Vignettes from HELLO, BRIGHT BIRD, GOODBYE

I. "Seeds"

September, 1927

Blowing dandelion seeds from the swayed stoop of an abandoned shanty are two four-year-olds. She, with an aura of pearl hair and eyes more silver than gray and a lullaby voice, known among the social workers, as "Fairy", is Mina. He, with a lid of brown-thrasher hair and amber eyes and a chirping chuckle, known among the social workers as "Cherub", is Nicky.

He blows a seed onto her arm. She blows a seed onto his arm. She blows a seed to his cheek. He blows a seed to her cheek.

His big brother and her big sister have gone to school. Their fathers have gone down into the coal mine. Her mother is at home tending a sick uncle. His mother is dusting the church.

He puffs a seed to her knee. She puffs one to his knee. She lifts her dress. He puffs one to her stomach. Yes. He lifts his shirt. She puffs one to his stomach.

She glances towards the door . . . which he squeaks open. Indoors, they stand, displaying bellies, fair and smooth as two loaves of bread. His is fatter. Her belly button is round. It gazes. His is a wink.

She blows his a seed. He blows hers a seed . . . which spills to the edge of her pants. She eases the pants down a bit. He blows her a fluff. Her pelvis tastes it, stinging sweet as a lemon drop.

He eases his pants down. His pelvis likes the fluff, too. A wriggle urges her pants to her knees. A ditto wriggle: his pants obey. She feels herself pucker at the sight of him.

"Yours is like a thumb," she says. "Look. It's hitch-hiking."

"Sure."

She blows a fluff onto his. Yes. He blows a fluff to hers.

A black pounce. Her mother is yanking, snatching, spanking. "Wilhelmina! Nicholas!" — like a spider that jabs and stabs and bundles its prey into two paralyzed packages.

October:

"Does Daddy know?"

Her mother looks away.

"Please. Did you tell Daddy?"

"Maybe I did. Maybe I didn't."



"I'll never do it again."

"You'd better not."

"I know I won't. I can't."

"Bah!"

In and out, up and down, 'round and 'round, like a yoyo in her mother's hand.

December:

In the kitchen beneath Mina's bedroom, Nicky's mother tells Mina's mother Nicky has been very sick. "His tonsils are full of poison and must be cut out in the hospital."

Tonsils? The thumb-thing in the throat? It will bleed.

By evening, she, too, is sick. Her mother, standing over her bed, making a witch-shadow on the wall, that mother, whose face is the color of buttermilk, whose eyes are big bruises, says, "You've been thinking nasty thoughts. It shows in your eyes. I can smell it on your breath."

February:

"Does Daddy know?"

Her mother shrugs.

"Please, please! Does my Daddy know?"

Her mother leaves the room.

Mina, who has always slept with her father, while Mamma and sister Dena share the unfolded davenport, hitches herself like a cocoon to the edge of the bed.

He doesn't tell her stories anymore. He coughs. He stinks. He snores.

She whispers, "Daddy? I can't sleep, Daddy."

He says, "Pray. 'Pray without ceasing.'"

He knows.

April:

Uncle Klaus has had D.T.'s again. He comes to the house right after Daddy has gone to work and Dena has gone to school. Mina has been sent to her room. Down in the kitchen, Mamma cries. Uncle Klaus cries, too. The house fills up with his odor: sour.

Then the washing machine chugs. He, staggering about in her father's clothes, pushes open her door. He grins, musses her hair, wrings it in his shakey hands. He shoves her to the bed, buzzes a hornet-finger at her skirt, which she squeezes shut with hands stronger than his.

After he has left the house, with a big bag of lunch under his coat, Mina says, "Mamma, Uncle Klaus tried to pull up my dress."

"When?"

"While you were washing his clothes."

"Are you making that up?"

"No. He came to my bed and pushed me down and—"

"Klaus is my brother. He's got no home but this."

"Will you tell Daddy?"

Silence.

"Shall I tell Daddy?"

"Don't you dare." She shakes her head.

"I can't put an old head on your shoulders. Before the booze got Klaus, you wouldn't believe it but it's true, he was such a gentleman — so smart and strong and good-lookin'. Ha. Yer father couldn't hold a candle to him."

September:

"Will you tell my teacher?"

Silence.

"Please! Will you tell my teacher, Mamma?"

"I'll think about it."

"I'll be good."

"Let's hope so."

"Is it still on my breath?"

"At times."

All week, the worry lashes upon itself again and again and again, like pulled taffy . . . On the terrible Tuesday, Mina arrives brittle at breakfast.

Dark Dena says, "Look: The Christmas-

tree angel."

Daddy stares into his oatmeal.

Mamma huffs a kiss on top of Mina's head. "Yer breath," she whispers.

Mina starts to cry.

"Stop it!" Mamma says. "I'll be praying for you."

After Dena and Daddy have left, Mina says, "Is it still in my eyes?"

"Just a trace."

"I don't want to go to kindergarten."

"You have to. Else I go to jail."

"Will you pray hard?"

"You can be sure of that. As long as I live, you can be sure I'm praying for you."

"Oh, Mamma, thank you!"

"Now, go."

So she goes . . . The teacher, glancing across the thirty bobbing heads, sees the one pastel enter, alone, and glide to a chair in the far corner . . . a Sunday smile in the shadow, less like a girl than a trillium.

II.

"Virago"

In the high school locker room, Willo stands on the scales, her breasts two timid touches against her slip, her face closed tightly as a lady's compact against the shrieking and the shrill scents of sneakers and cologne; a bamboo figure, with ivory hair falling watersmooth over sharp scapulae.

"Eighty-four pounds. My God!" says a sweat-beaded stallion of a girl, cedar-colored, in a man's shirt taut at the shoulder seams. The stallion records the weight on the teacher's clipboard, slicks back her brief hair, elastically, and her indigo gaze narrows on the fairy-girl like shears.

On the woodland path, standing unaware on the Indian pipe, the big girl blocks the way. She shoves the zipper of her leather jacket up and down, slicks back that short hair, and says, "Hey, Willo, want me to carry your books?"

"No thanks."

The big girl picks up a gray rock and hurls it against a boulder. The rock drops, gashed, into halves, glowing salmon-pink. "I don't want to go home today. My parents are finishing their divorce," she says.

Willo looks away. When she looks back, the girl is staring at her, still blocking the path, like a hound holding up a thorned paw.

"Call me 'Pete,'" she says on the second

walk home from school, still shoving the zipper up and down.

Willo consents, holding her silence against the spurs of the other's monologue, wincing as she tramples again on the Indian pipe and kicks at a bracken fungus, which spatters like entrails.

On a rare warm day in November, when a last maroon leaf pangs against a too-blue sky . . . on a day when Winter should be sealing seeds away into the sleeping soil, Pete, still talking, talking, draws Willo's hair around them both, like a curtain, and kisses . . . It is as when a silk thread is slipped across flesh, there wells the red jewel of pain.

Wan with wonder, Willo confesses.

Her mother, with hair still thatched from a year in the state asylum, holding a Bible in her hand, keeps a goiterous gaze on the door, where she has laid ready a butcher knife and a bottle of ammonia.

Dena says, "You're lucky they don't burn witches anymore."

Her father, blinking out of skinny hunched shoulders like a worrybird, opening his Bible to the Book of Paul, says, "Surely, Little Sister, we are living in The Last Days."

Pete's parent, ponderously picking a lipstick to match her scarlet slacks, says, "How sweet. Ask Willo up for the weekend."

Thus, each girl, in that kiss, has thrust an antenna into a baffling Otherness.

High on the school firescape they sit, Pete's hard gabardine thigh against Willo's gingham one: Pete's Girl Scout ring, sized down with string, is a bumblebee on Willo's finger. Pete's thigh presses so hard that Willo (praying: *Oh, wait for me, Mr. Dreamman!*) springs alive like starched organdy under a hot iron.

Kissing was their springtime. Lying together, whispering, sighing, in their elaborate web of wanting, other lips grow frantic for kissing . . . and the ripe, burning bud, like an electric button, shoots summer into their luminous limbs, and beyond. More . . . and more . . . and more . . . until they are afraid of so much genius.

The genius has its price: Pete, watching Willo hand an eraser to a boy across the

aisle, is scalded with stud-salt. Willo, watching Pete help a limping girl off the softball field, receives the cold coin with one blink that leaves her eyes for the rest of the day two colorless slots.

With cold hands and crisp smile, Willo lets him lead her onto the prom floor. He — track man, editor, class president — smells of toothpaste and hair oil, and being held this close to him is a lesson in male anatomy.

After a while, he says, "You are a Dresden doll."

Knowing now he is no poultice, she grows faint and has to be taken home.

On her bed, her flutterings huddle around the memory of Pete, like a covey of quail returned to safety.

From the gym teacher, with her warning . . . to the principal, with his "hmmmm" . . . to the Presbyterian minister, with his blush . . . to the psychologist, with his ink blots . . . to the social worker, with her suggestion of scholarships . . . to the endocrinologist, with his: "It isn't even legal" . . . they become searchlights plowing, repeatedly, the cloudloom . . . back to the gym teacher, with her shrug . . . to the surgeon, with his "No!" . . . to the psychiatrist, with his fee ("Why don't you try Hollywood?") . . . back to the social worker, with her smile and scholarships . . . they become wanderers, prowling, octave by octave, this peripheral music until

they are twenty, and in college. Pete, the Practical, dreary from drifting, needing a job, coaxes her what-the-hell swagger into a slightly softened stride, and becomes, for a season, amphibious.

With one rush up the rocks, she enters, stammering, the Accepted Idiom.

Across the campus bruised with hyacinths, Spring comes again, like a census-taker to record re-births, and Willo, responding with a cipher-smile, watches the fly on the warm window, wringing its hands.

III

"Twenty-One"

"This is no place for a Garbo," the WAVE recruiter had warned her.

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Brooklyn, out of the God-knows-what of West Virginia and Kentucky . . . seventy-one patriots, uniformed like bars of soap, clack-their bargain-basement creeds: "Personally, I believe . . ." "They can't make you march during your monthly, can they?" . . . "And then, I had to slap his face."

"A hut tew an' a hut four! Yer lep rot lep!" the commander — Lord — is an Old Salt version of Pete. "Yer lep rot lep. Git onnnnnnnn yer lep!"

"A shingle, Kiddo, is not just a style of haircut" . . . "This is My Beloved?" states Maryland, fondling the rosary under her pillow, "Isn't that that dirty book?" . . . "Don't 'Roger' me." . . . "Go have the chaplain punch yer T.S. chit."

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Under her purr . . . under her fluff . . . the mascot restrains her claws.

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"You have the look of a refugee," he tells her.

He orders her transferred, at once, to the Dependents' ward.

White-robed, white-masked, she waits with a little warmed blanket in her hands to receive from the end of opalescent undersea-looking umbilical stems — babies — a whole series of them: rose-colored, cream-coated, compressed from their journey, looking worried at the white-walled world.

The priest comes often to watch through the big window.

"My task is to transplant them from the plant- to the animal- kingdom," she tells him: "A Pilgrimage of Pity." He shakes his head. "I can't tell whether that's Calvinism or atheism you are tolling."

She shrugs. "I can't believe — I suppose I have never really believed — that there is a God who cares for us."

This Jesuit, Father Vincent, meets her evenings in his office "for instruction". As he lights up his pipe, his hands tremble. She likes to think it is her emanations, but he explains: "That's my gift from Guam."

"All I really know about Catholicism", she says, "is that phrase: 'Kyrie Eleison'."

"Tell me about — this disbelief", he says.

She flits from Schopenhauer to Spinoza to Sartre.

He talks about Aristotle and Aquinas

and warns her away from that beautiful devil, Plato.

She flutters around Zen.

"Butterfly!" he scolds.

Week after week. She still cannot believe.

"Haven't you ever heard about 'The Communion of Saints?'" he asks.

She shakes her head.

He tells her. It is midnight when he finishes.

"It's beautiful," she says. "Here, for now, with you, it seems true."

"Come next Friday," he says.

She does . . . and the next Friday . . . and the next . . .

He talks of other things: The Japanese. He forgives them. ("They're such little guys.")

Twice she nearly tells him about Pete.

They laugh a lot.

One starlit night, at the end of their talk, he says, "I wonder, Willo, are you and I the only ones on this base who can sublimate?"

*I have another name for it, she thinks.
Kyrie Eleison.*

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Karen Snow has received two major Hopwood Awards. Other vignettes from this novella have appeared in MICHIGAN QUARTERLY REVIEW and GENERATION.)

In the Basement of the House

By JANE RULE

I can't go back to a women's lib meeting even if he thinks I should. When we break up into small discussion groups, rapping about kids or housework or sex, everybody else says things like, "As a mother . . ." or "As a female rake . . ." or "As a lesbian . . ." I can't start out as an anything. It's like being the only kid at camp without labels sewed in my underpants. I could say that, I guess, and nobody would mind, but it doesn't help me any. He's the only one I can talk to. I don't feel like it much, though, or, when I do, there isn't time. Maybe I only do when I know I can't. Like making love or thinking about it. I'd rather think about it. Not about the way it is. Nobody gets around to that. Everybody says, "Now let's really talk about sex," and pretty soon we're all talking about money or freedom or baby sitters. Well, the girl

with the deep voice did say laying girls was fun, but then someone else got off onto whether or not that was really male chauvinist stuff, and we were into politics. When Sharon said, "What's wrong with being an easy lay?", it was just like when we talked about long term relationship: half an hour defining terms, and then somebody got onto her bastard gynecologist who wanted to know how many different guys screwed her and what color they were. I did find out what a cone biopsy was that night, but the next day I read an article in *Redbook* that made it a lot clearer.

Wanting me to go to women's lib is the same as wanting me to sleep around. It's like he's got this idea in his head about freedom. He's not comfortable with it unless I'm free, too. But he doesn't screw

around . . . except with me, and he doesn't go to meetings to talk about it. I don't think he talks about it with anybody, except maybe with her. I don't know about that. Funny the things you just don't know, even living in the same house. Maybe it's just me, though, Maybe almost anyone else would know.

Sometimes I think I do learn something at those meetings. That night everyone was talking about the myth of vaginal orgasm and Masters and Johnson, I wondered if that was why I only ever really come when he's licking me. But I could come the other way, or it feels like I could. I just don't want to. I don't know why I don't. There's too much going on for him then. Or I really do think coming with him would make me pregnant, pill or not. I know that's not true, even if Norman Mailer believes it. Germain Greer says coming with a full cunt is nicer. I don't know what all that stuff has to do with being liberated. But he does like screwing better than I do. It's harder for him, but he gets more out of it, as if he'd really accomplished something. Still, I can't see that it's his fault. I didn't like any of it at first. It was like getting used to Sarah's dirty diapers. Now I don't even take a bath afterwards. I like to sleep with his smell or my smell or whatever it is.

I worry about her, more than anything. I think I really like her better, but isn't it natural that I would? I can identify with her. I can imagine how she feels. But I don't know anything about how she feels. I thought I was going to throw up or faint or scream that time I walked into the kitchen and saw her pulling her hand out of another woman's pants. It doesn't bother me at all now. Oh, I knock or whistle or somehow let her know I'm around, but for her sake, not mine. At first I thought, so that's why he wants to screw me, but now I'm not even sure he knows. And what if she does it because he screws me? She does know about that. That's what she meant when she said, "If you don't really like everything that goes along with the job, quit. Or if you do, don't get up tight about it." Maybe I like her better because she can say things like that, which makes more sense than all his worry about freedom and guilt. He doesn't know how to be that kind of honest. I never hear him encouraging her to go to women's lib. If we both went, he'd have to stay home with the kids. He's nice to the kids though. He really listens to them, a lot more than she does, probably more than I

do, too. And he's gentle with them. She and I do more roughhousing with David than he does. So who's making a man of David? And she doesn't even want a man, and I like him because he's so gentle. When one of the kids is sick, he's better than either of us. He doesn't get up in the night, of course, but she says, "He sleeps like a human being, not like a dog, the way you and I do." It's true, I have my head off the pillow at any sound in the night. It's not just because I sleep in the basement, all of their noises right on top of me. I slept that way at home, too, in the attic. It's being the oldest or a girl.

It really was funny when that woman said, "I dig raising kids. I really do. Only two things I miss: a good, long uninterrupted sleep and a good, long uninterrupted crap." Never had either to miss. Will I sometime? If I get through college, if I get a real job, if I move out of this house?

"The trouble with pets and husbands is that they never grow up and leave home." When she says things like that, I do feel guilty, and I'm not sure why. Am I sorry for her? She's got a good job of her own, and, in the last couple of months, she got rid of the woman who was hanging around so much and is into a new kind of thing, somebody she's really friends with. I like to see them together, but, of course, I stay out of the way as much as I can. I am getting paid to watch the kids.

She's attractive. I didn't used to know what that meant. It isn't good-looking, though she is that, her hair particularly. It's good feeling, good vibes. I understand why people like to be around her. Sometimes I'd like to ask him straight questions, lawyer's questions, like, "Why don't you screw your wife?" Maybe he does. Maybe she doesn't want him to.

He's not attractive. One of those thin men with a watermelon pot, thin hair, thin mouth. Even his voice is thin. But that's not it. Nobody ever knows he's in the room. That his body is. His head is there all right, and people like his head. If she came into my room with a bunch of books for me, I'd know in a minute what she was there for. She wouldn't even have to smile in a certain way or touch me. Maybe women have that and men just don't. Or he's different from other people. Nobody talks about being attractive at women's lib. I couldn't talk about it.

"Speaking as a baby sitter who lives in the basement and gets screwed by the boss . . ." and I'd have to say which one, not

just because of the real possibilities here, but because that sort of thing is expected. I couldn't call him 'my lover.' At first he was like a very gentle gynecologist, really interested in my body, only he wasn't feeling around for lumps. Then he wanted me to be interested in his, as if I were taking a course in it and might need to write up a lab report. Once I got over being afraid he'd pee in my mouth, I didn't mind sucking him, and I think he likes it that way, too, not having to think about anybody else. Just a little while ago, when he came in my mouth, I started peeing, right on the floor, and I didn't want to stop. Sometimes I wonder if sex is just learning not to be embarrassed about anything, letting it all go. So why housebreak Sarah? I'm not serious, and nobody in this house is uptight about housebreaking anything. I clean it all up, dog, kids, the lot.

I couldn't say any of that. It makes me sound like an animal. Or something worse. I haven't read enough Freud to know what people would call me, even if he is wrong. Like when I read Reich's *Sexual Revolution*. Why does he think that if you let little kids pee around and play with themselves and each other, they'll grow up to live in communes without any trouble? Serial monogamy, 100 percent heterosexual. I don't understand what I read. If it's supposed to have something to do with me, I don't.

I'm sorry I don't think he's attractive. I don't know why I care. He's another human being. He's gentle, and he's kind. He likes to do the right thing. He talks about that a lot. But what is the good of people talking to each other if they can't tell the truth? I get scared about what will happen. Nobody at women's lib ever seems to be scared. Let it all hang out, get your head straight, be liberated.

If I ever said it like it is . . . I know my label. "Speaking as a slave . . ." that's what they'd all think. I'm a wage slave, a student slave, diddled by the lord of the manor just like some Victorian governess, and I even clean up dog shit, never mind the kids. It doesn't make me mad. Mostly I don't even mind. But it isn't safe. Sometimes, when I hear him coming down the basement steps, I pretend it's her instead, and she's got a gun, and she's going to kill me, and then I'm really relieved and glad to see him, even though I know all along it's silly. I like her better than I do him. But I'm not comfort-

able with her. I'm always getting out of her way.

I'd like to go some place and do something that didn't make me feel guilty. I did try to tell him that women's lib for me was just another guilt trip, but I didn't understand it well enough myself to make him understand. He started talking about good guilt. If I felt guilty about not really taking myself seriously enough, not respecting my own mind, that was good guilt and I should face it. I get really embarrassed when he tells me what a fine mind I have. He needs to think so; otherwise he's just another guy trying to forget he's going bald. It would be better for me if my psych prof thought I had a good mind. He's never raised his eyes high enough to see that I've got a head. I don't want to pass psych on the size of my tits, and I wish I could figure out whether it's wearing a bra or not wearing a bra that turns men off. Can't ask something like that at a meeting. Nobody else knows either. What's so really bad about being a guy trying to forget he's going bald? Why would he be ashamed of screwing somebody ignorant and ordinary? He loves his kids. They're ignorant and ordinary. He probably doesn't think so. Can't. Maybe that's why he can listen so well. He's hearing all sorts of amazing things. When I was mad about getting the curse (I'm not supposed to call it that; it's unlabeled) and said I wished I could give all that blood every month to the Red Cross, he told me I was an original thinker. Seriously! Would some guy figure out a way to do it and get famous? I don't even know what you'd have to major in.

Maybe part of it is that I'm younger than most of the others. I don't have their experience. Sex is still a big thing for me because I don't know much about it. If I could find out whether or not most girls pee like that, I maybe wouldn't be scared I'm abnormal. Old people go back into second childhood. They put Granddad in a home when he began to lose control of himself, 'foul himself', Mother said. What if I have a senile bladder at eighteen? He liked it, but how do I know he's not some sort of pervert? Or telling me just to make me feel good? I tell him things to make him feel good, but I know when I'm doing it. Sometimes I'm not sure he does. He'd have to think I was attractive whether I am or not.

I couldn't let some kid screw me now. I wouldn't know what to do. If I don't do

anything with him and just lie there, like the first time, he says it's very passive, and that's bad, but how do I know which things he's taught me are okay and which aren't? I could be really weird. If he doesn't know his own wife is queer — and I don't think he does — how would he know whether I was or not? Maybe somebody else could tell in a minute. I wouldn't show anyone else the way I showed him how I did it to myself. I didn't mind. He only wanted to see what I liked, but somebody else might know from that. She doesn't ever come on to me. Wouldn't she if I were?

"Please, could somebody tell me, if my landlady doesn't want to lay me, does that prove I'm straight or just unattractive?"

Maybe she doesn't because of him. Maybe she only likes people her own age. There's no way I'm going to find out about that at a meeting. There's no way I'm going to find out. I don't want to know.

Nobody in that room ever comes out and says they're scared to death they won't get married or will marry some guy who isn't really interested in them and is always off screwing some kid in the basement. Am I the only one who is? If I feel so sorry for her, why do I let him do it? She doesn't seem to care. I'm scared of her. I don't think she's going to shoot me. I make that up to have something I can imagine to be scared about. These last couple of months she's been so happy she has a hard time even getting irritated. What if she left him? Do women ever just go off with each other? But she couldn't take the kids. And I couldn't stay here if she wasn't here. It wouldn't look right. I wouldn't want to anyway. I think one of those women at the meeting did leave her husband and go live with another woman. When I asked him about women loving women, he laughed and said that was for flat chested school girls. I should feel sorry for him. At least she knows. She lives in the real world. He doesn't. He wouldn't know how.

If I just didn't have to think about it, if I just didn't have to go to all those meetings, maybe I'd stop being so scared. They all talk as if there weren't any danger, as if nobody ever really got really mad, as if there weren't any laws. She could divorce him because of me, take his kids and his money and the house, everything. But liberated people don't do things like that. She wouldn't. But what about him? Wouldn't he go crazy if she tried to leave him and he knew why? He's gentle, and he's

kind, and he's just afraid of going bald. But if losing his hair makes him screw his baby sitter, what would he have to do if he lost his wife?

All I want to do is get through college and then find some nice, ordinary guy to marry me. I'll do my own baby-sitting. We won't have a basement. What if it happens anyway? If somebody is afraid of losing his hair and somebody else is queer . . . are all women queer? Do they turn queer? What else could she do? The men are all after kids like me. She's not going to run after boys; she couldn't kid herself they were original thinkers, and she'd be bored. So what's left?

One thing I wish I had the guts to tell him: you send me to women's lib meetings much longer and I'm not going to be lying here making up her footsteps coming down the stairs to kill me. I'm going to be praying she's coming down the stairs to love me. And one thing I wish I had the guts to tell all of them is, if that's what women's liberation is all about, some of us may get killed for it, and I wasn't socialized like that. I'm too young to die.

It isn't funny. I shouldn't be living in this basement at all. There must be a basement somewhere else that's different, where I could just do my work and hole in until it's over. All I really need to figure out is how to use my very ordinary head and keep my tits out of my classwork and my landlord's mouth. I don't need to go to meetings for that. I just have to get out of here.

But what about her? What if he doesn't like the next one? What if the next one said something? She's not that careful. What if the next one was attractive? To her. Oh, shit! shit! Why do I have to live through all this shit and then all the marriage and baby shit before . . . before a woman like her would look at me. She can't make me up the way he does. I'm just a kid. What do my tits mean to her? She's got her own. She isn't afraid of losing her hair or her husband. I'm scared. I'm just too scared to love her. I won't be able to for years.

If he makes me go back to another one of those meetings, I'm going to tell him I won't. I'll move. I don't want to be liberated. There's got to be another way out.



ATROCITIES AT HOME!

Who Speaks for Women?

By CLUE DENNIS

Are we in a dark age of brutal men with a terrible subterranean image that we cannot fully face nor wish away? Every city in the country has almost daily headlines of girls and women brutally slain. New York City on an average day records eighty-eight rapes in a twenty-four hour period. The increase of these various forms of savagery should make someone ask the question. Not one senator, not one center for scientific research is asking. The only thing we do know is that the male of the species is attacking and killing at a much more alarming rate than even ten years ago. Again the question, why?

In a recent prison study only one percent of all women prisoners were in for a violent crime and that one percent had committed a crime as the result of aggravated assault or by reason of insanity.

The thought is mentally numbing: the fact that the boys and men we meet on the streets are all potential murderers. Newspapers constantly describe the man who wipes out his entire family as a quiet, church-going, good family man. We know that the XYY chromosomes do show up in men in prison to a larger extent than those without that combination. But why must we wait for them to reach prison to discover their dangerous potential? All studies agree that the male of the species shows up as the killer more frequently than the female; yet what is being done to stop his lethal capability? We spend millions each year to find a cure for cancer and heart disease. Can we not spend some on the source of the criminality in the male? Certainly these senseless crimes in dark streets and lonely apartments equal the atrocities at My Lai.

It would seem there is a conspiracy of silence, for who has spoken of the blatant fact that women are the prime target of all violent crime, that it is indeed the male of the species who is responsible for the mutilated bodies of school girls and that old women are raped not for dollars but from some mad sadistic impulse? True, if all this were said often enough some action might be taken. But to speak of men in this vein is to offend the image of the father, the son,

the hero figure. Maybe that is why we have heard no deeply troubled voices of psychiatrists or sociologists. The silence is not only eerie in the face of statistics but malignant in its implications.

It is true a few academic theses have raised the question but these lie buried in academic dust. One A. Stephane in *L'Univers Contestationnaire* has said, "The male is dominated by narcissism, self-admiration and intolerance. He, the male, expects and demands everything from woman whom he secretly wants desperately to destroy." Another, F.C. Malone, believes "All male children reject their mothers before they are three and their mothers unconsciously sensing this spend the rest of their lives working at getting accepted by them."

That the male propensity for violence has increased is attested to by a hardened sergeant in an army training center who has seen recruits over twenty years. He says those in the last ten years were the easiest to train. They didn't have to be "whipped" up into a mad frenzy to bayonet the dummies in the field. They seemed to love it! One indeed shudders to think what the Viet Nam veterans who are now stringing human ears on their gun belts will do for fun and games when they come home.

Atrocities, we are told, are committed by desperate men in a perverse quest for meaning. These are the same elements Jean Paul Sartre describes as inevitably genocidal. In the starkness of the violence and the dehumanization of women as the object of these crimes, we wonder who WILL speak for women. How long will society go along the path that says it is a sexual aberration of a FEW men, when daily statistics are mounting to show how much of a national emergency it really is? Will collective rage be effective or are we bound into a situation where a study or national research in depth into the causes would prove too psychically disturbing to the whole male population? After all, we would be studying the male in all walks of life: the men who make our laws, preach our sermons, father the children.

It is true an honest commission under-

taking such a study of violence in the American male would shake the foundations of family, industry and the whole professional world of doctors and psychiatrists. They who tell US what is wrong with women!

Only women acting in concert and collective rage can save themselves. Can we forget so soon, the Boston strangler, the Chicago nurses, and the Zodiac killings? It is women who fear the streets at night, fear staying alone in their homes and even fear driving along lighted streets or roads. Women live in the shadow of male violence. How long would a herd of wild animals be allowed to run around cities loose, killing at will, before they would be hunted down and exterminated?

The first step is to demand a nationwide study at the highest level. Sisterhood is not powerful unless it can protect the life and liberty of its sisters.



AND NOW, A TOUR OF THE WHITE HOUSE WITH THE FIRST GENTLEMAN.

"Love, Beyond Men and Women..."

By CAROL LYNK

Our poets cannot be taken from us. H.D. is called an Imagist, one woman in an otherwise all-male school of poets. Critics bind her in the category of Imagism and do not recognize that she worked with male parasites who gleaned whole reputations from the teachings of her talent. It was the peculiar imagination of H.D. which created or inspired the style of Imagism so avidly adopted by the male poets. H.D. does not "know that labels matter very much. One writes the kind of poetry one likes. Other people put labels on it. Imagism was something that was important for poets learning their craft early in this century." (*Selected Poems*). What continued to be important was the poetry of H.D. Her lack of concern with the ambition which spurs men was probably the quality which most permitted her growth when all else was set as an obstacle in the path of this woman who had genius.

The whole history and literary output of H.D. is as mysterious, yet as obvious as that of Sappho, the only other poet with whom we can compare H.D. We know H.D., like Sappho, was married and we see in her poetry and novels that she did love and live in the society of men. We also know that she had, again like Sappho, one child, and

that H.D. and her daughter spent many years with another writer, a woman who called herself Bryher, to whom H.D. dedicated more than one volume of verse. Yet there is little in the poet's work to make it easy for the reader to know and understand the woman H.D. was.

The patterns of her life and verse somehow transcend common methods of reading the life of a poet in her poetry. The reason for this is that H.D. "... has a 'foot in two camps' - a life in two different civilizations." (Collins, p. 155). The poet lived in the two worlds reflected in all her poetry and prose: ancient Greek civilization and the modern world. It was her everyday real application of the Grecian ideals which colored her acts, her way of life, with the transcendency we can only appreciate through witnessing in her writing the confusion and triumphs she experienced in her cross-cultural existence.

The Grecian ideals referred to here all dealt more specifically with the reverence for beauty which infused Greek thinking in the times of Sappho and Plato. Plato in his *Symposium* depicts the philosopher Socrates idealizing friendship between men and its ultimate perfection in the man teacher-boy student lover relationship. This



social institution was the means by which love of beauty was taught and beautiful living practiced. Sappho is, of course, the woman best known to us for applying this philosophy to women. This she did and wrote about almost two hundred years before Plato heard the ideas of Socrates. Thus, in those ancient times, Lesbianism and homosexuality flourished and colored all of living with its presence and with the reverence of beauty associated with it.

H.D. lived by the values and life styles of the Greek civilization in which she had steeped herself by study and by travel. She says of herself that she is not a Greek scholar: "She did not want to 'know' Greek in that sense. She was like one blind, reading the texture of incised letters, rejoicing like one blind who knows an inner light, a reality the outer eye cannot grasp. She was arrogant and she was intrinsically humble before this discovery. Her own." (*Bid Me To Live*, p. 163) At the same time she is the possessor of "a kind of temperament," "a saturation with the spirit of Greek mythology." (Collins, p. 156). Whatever this "temperament," it allowed H.D. to live in constant awareness of "beauty" in the classical sense. In her personal life as well as in her poetry she sought always the essence of beauty.

H.D.'s style was particularly successful as she used it to deal with women. In her novel *Bid Me To Live* we find the character that represents H.D. much taken by her friend Rico's (D.H. Lawrence) advice, "...

man is man and woman is woman." There is something in the way H.D. succeeds when she follows Lawrence's suggestion that she "stick with" women that offers us a feeling for our sex unequalled, again, since Sappho. She provokes us with the subtle imagery only a woman would know to use. As only a woman can know and properly care for the body of another woman, it feels right that the woman H.D. should be this adept at lyricizing her own sex.

To turn a feeling for women to poetry of genius took an exceptional person in a culture as alien as H.D.'s from the Greece of Sappho. "H.D.'s saturation with the spirit of Greek mythology . . . seems to be the inevitable development of a kind of temperament, to which genius has for once given articulation." (Collins, p. 156) There is both ecstatic beauty and precision of impression (another trademark of the Greeks), in lines describing women as ". . . a purple shadow / on a marble vase. / Ah, love, / so her fair breasts will shine / with the faint shadow above." ("Along the Yellow Sand," *Selected Poems*). Or, ". . . and the flame / of the woman, tall like the cypress tree / that flames sudden and swift and free . . ." ("Toward the Pireaus," *Heliodora*).

Because H.D. was obviously involved in the Grecian ideals and their manifestation in her everyday life, she could easily step into the legendary cast of Greek literary characters and speak through them. This is a major reason for her obscurity. The reader unfamiliar with H.D. may come upon much boring talk by imaginary characters. When one realizes that H.D. did think in terms of two cultures always, or always in her writing, then it becomes clear that it is not H.D. putting words in the mouths of the ancients, but she herself who is speaking. H.D. merely uses characters like Helen and others both named and nameless to demonstrate the universality of one person's, her own, responses to the world and to people around her.

One very obvious instance where H.D. has used reality to make real a myth is in the poem called "Pallas" in *Selected Poems*. The poem originally appeared in *Hymen* on a page facing H.D.'s dedication to Bryher and to her own daughter, Perdita. It had no title, but served as an introduction to that book whose long title poem, or narrative in verse, dealt with the marriage ceremony. The book was published in 1921, three years after H.D. had met Bryher and in a

period of time when H.D. and her husband began the separation which led to their divorce years later. Bryher explains in her autobiography that H.D. was suffering the hardships of war greatly. The rich Bryher offered to take both H.D. and her daughter away from bomb-ravaged London. It was in 1921, too, that Bryher married the publisher Robert McAlmon in a "marriage de convenance" in order to escape her family's grip on her. (*Ladies Bountiful*, p. 173). She wished to be free to "travel." And that was exactly what the three, H.D., her daughter and Bryher, did until they settled on the Swiss lake which was to remain H.D.'s home until she died in 1961.

H.D., it would seem, wanted the poem "Pallas" to face her dedication to Bryher for various reasons. The first verse describes Bryher. It is in agreement with other descriptions of the eccentric lady writer. (*Being Geniuses Together*, Pp. 49-57, 60-67).

They said
she is high and far and blind
in her high pride,
but now that my head is bowed
in sorrow, I find
she is most kind.

This was the personality of Bryher. It also describes the situation of H.D., hurt by her husband (see novel *Bid Me*), violated by war (it was a nightmare which left deep impressions on her and on her poetry), and deprived of her sustenance of beauty and even physical necessities.

The third verse of "Pallas" is an exclamation of what she would or did feel for Bryher.

Ah, could they know
how violets throw strange fire,
red and purple and gold;
how they glow
gold and purple and red
where her feet tread.

In *The Walls Do Not Fall*, a later book of H.D.'s poems which was dedicated to Bryher, we find H.D. and some companion, presumably Bryher, following a path to a spiritual life, threatened always by the sword, or the guns of war, and certain that their weapon, the pen, once a stylus, would triumph. Bryher opened the path with her person and her wealth for H.D. and herself to "tread" the "gold and purple and red" of their minds' journeys.

All this went into the making of the poem, yet, when it was titled, H.D. chose the name of a giant slain by Athena in the

mythical war between the Olympians and the giants. This device merely disguised the fact that "Pallas" was a poem of thanks, a love poem, to Bryher. Years later readers cannot recognize it as such because her skill has taken it so far from its original esoteric purpose. Now the reader must suspect on first reading that it is simply one of those obtuse, literary-laden poems impenetrable to anyone but a scholar familiar with mythology and its intricacies. H.D. succeeded in throwing a protective veil between the reality from which she drew the poem and the reader's perception of that reality, by infusing it with myth.

Heliodora was published in 1925 after H.D. had some time to write her marriage out of her system. One of the poems in which she deals with her husband (they were not divorced until 1938) is "Toward the Pireaus." It approaches the man indirectly and exhibits the poet's tendency to turn mortals to gods even outside of literature. In section four of the poem she says: "If I had been a boy, / I would have worshipped your grace, / I would have flung worship / before your feet . . ." This is how H.D. came to love a man. He had for her the nobility of a Grecian hero and she could herself play the role of a worshipping boy. That she avoided accepting the role of a woman, an act that forced this further removal of herself from reality, becomes even more obvious in the fifth section of the same poem where H.D. asserts that

It was not chastity that
made me cold nor fear,
only I knew that you,
like myself, were sick
of the puny race that crawls
and quibbles and lisps
of love and love and
lovers and love's deceit.

She had discovered that her attraction to the man was not a romantic or sexual one. It was something else: an avid embrace of a being who scorned the love rites of "normal" society, who accepted her and, as she wrote in part one of the poem, "set me apart from the rest / of men." This was the only kind of relationship she, as many other women, could accept with a man. She feared that her husband "might break / my own lesser, yet somewhat fine-wrought, / fiery-tempered, delicate, over passionate steel." In other words, she feared for her personhood because it was encased in a woman. For his "hand / skilled to yield death blows" could disintegrate her by

forcing her to too much womanhood, or submission. When that possibility threatened, H.D. thought of her relationship with her husband in terms of the Greek adolescent with his male lover-teacher. It was, certainly, a defense mechanism with the stamp of a poet.

"Myrtle Bough" from the book *Red Roses For Bronze*, delves into H.D.'s thoughts about her variant predilection. Two men of the Platonic mold are the superficial subjects of the poem's beginning. They pledge love to each other:

let women fall beside us,
and men frown,
let us be soul and brother,
having won
the bitter wisdom
of Love's bitterest greed.

Part two is a brusque change from the two men and their "Love, beyond men and women . . ." to Narcissus. It is as if H.D. addresses the men when she says, "And turn, / turn, / turn, / Narcissus," telling them that they have become in their love for each other, Narcissus.

In sections IV and V, H.D. continues her exploration of narcissism and homosexuality. She discovers in looking at another person and/or a reflection of herself, that love is only possible if

you rouse your marble self
and greet
your live self,
filled with fervor
in my face.

From that point in her poem the poet casts aside any more allusions and speaks plainly to herself, or to her lover:

your mouth
is my mouth
and your throat,
my throat . . .

It is an eye-opened moment of awakening, of awareness and of fulfillment wherein she recognizes her love for women, rooted, she suspects, in narcissism, as an emotion to be dealt with head-on, without fantasies of boys or gods or goddesses intervening between herself and her actions. Her poetry after *Red Roses* does not lose its Grecian tone, but integrates it better into her everyday life.

One final questioning of her own involvement with the Greek "temperament" which influenced so deeply both her feelings for women and her poetic style appeared in her last book, *Helen In Egypt*. Helen asks, "Is it death to stay in Egypt? /

is it death to stay here, / in a trance, following a dream?" (Eidokon, Book 6, [7]). The idea of Greece and the idea of Egypt are the same for H.D. in this context, both are the "dream" she has always followed.

Ironically H.D. answered this question in a much earlier poem, "Epitaph," (*Selected Poems*). The second and last two verses are below.

so you may say.
"Greek flower; Greek ecstasy
reclaims forever

one who died
following
intricate song's last measure.

Whatever the song, Helen's love song, H.D.'s poetry, or life itself, H.D. lived for the song which called her and that song was the one she sang to us in her poetry. There is much in the song to which a Lesbian reader can respond.

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TAKE A LESBIAN TO LUNCH

By RITA MAE BROWN

Women's tragedy is that we are not defeated by hubris, gods or our own passion but by society; a society controlled by insensitive, rich, white men. We are not the masters of that social organization and so it towers over us just as Moira, fate, towered over the mythical chauvinist, Oedipus. Women began to fight that corrupting, anti-human, anti-life structure. This beginning is known as the Women's Liberation Movement. However, before there was a WLM there were always a number of women who questioned the system and found it destructive to themselves. Those women became women-identified. I am one of those women. The male culture's word for this kind of woman is Lesbian. This is a narrow definition so typical of the male culture's vulgar conceptual limitations. In their world, the term applies only to sexual activity between women. In our world, to be a *political* Lesbian means to be a woman-identified woman. It means you move toward women and are capable of making a total commitment to women. The male party line concerning Lesbians is that women become Lesbians out of reaction to men. This is a pathetic illustration of the male ego's inflated proportions. I became a Lesbian because of women, because women are beautiful, strong and compassionate. Secondly, I became a Lesbian because the culture that I live in is violently anti-women. How could I, a woman, participate in a culture that denies me my humanity? How can any woman in touch with herself participate in this culture? To give a man support and love before giving it to a sister is to support that culture, that power system, for men receive the benefits of sexism regardless of race or social position. The higher up they are on the color line and the salary line the more benefits they receive, but all men benefit by sexism at some level.

Proof of the pudding is that the most rabid man haters are heterosexual women, and with good reason — they are directly oppressed by individual men. The contradiction of supporting the political system that oppresses you and the individuals who benefit by that system, men, is much more intense for the heterosexual woman than for the homosexual woman. Lesbians are oppressed by the male power system but

not by individual men in the same intimate, insidious fashion. Therefore, we Lesbians are the ultimate insult to the sexist male and the world he has built up around his weaknesses. Why? Because we ignore him. Heterosexual women are still caught up in reacting to him. Because we ignore him, because we are the ultimate insult, we pay and we pay heavily. Following are some instances of how a woman pays for Lesbianism in America. The examples are from my direct experience.

In 1962, when I was 16, a schoolmate's father threatened to shoot me on sight. He had found love letters that I had written to his daughter. He literally locked the girl up. He drove her to and from school. She couldn't go out at night and she couldn't receive phone calls unless he screened them. He went so far as to go to the administration of the school and have her transferred out of the classes we had together. I also got kicked off student council, thanks to his moral purity. Naturally, our classmates were surprised at my getting bounced and at the sudden ending of my friendship with this girl. Many of them vaguely figured out what was happening. The result of this sleuthing was that our friends split over whether we were Lesbians or whether we weren't. Our closest friends hotly defended us by saying we couldn't possibly be such horrible creatures. Our not-so-close friends smacked their lips over the scandal and in a short time it was all over our high school as well as every other high school in the city. The gossip was shortlived as I flatly stated that I did love the girl and if that was Lesbianism I was glad of it. The gossip stopped and so did the friendships. My closest friends nearly trampled each other in the rush for the door. My civics teacher and student council advisor, a pompous, pasty-faced, balding white man who proudly proclaimed his membership in the John Birch Society, declared as he canned me that I was "unhealthy." I was sick all right but not in the way they imagined — I was sick of all those dirty looks, snickers and outright fights I was having with every loud-mouthed heterosexual who crossed my path.

The next year I went to the state university. I had won a scholarship which was a good thing because my family's total

income for 1962 was \$2,300. The university had around 15,000 students, if not from the state itself, from neighboring Southern states. Everything was fine until I became mildly involved in the just beginning civil rights movement. I had been seen on the black side of town. One of my friends called me into her room to talk about my sudden change for the worse. I told her I thought just the opposite about my behavior. She upbraided me for mixing with those people — blacks and Jews (who were behind it all, of course — can you believe it?) I told her I didn't give a rat's ass about race or sex. As far as I was concerned it was the person that counted, not pigment, not sex.

Within three hours of that conversation I was called into the office of the Dean of Women, guardian of morals and the flowers of Southern womanhood. This cheery-faced, apple-cheeked, ex-Marine sergeant offered me a cigarette with a tight-lipped smile and then blasted me with, "Now what's this I hear about your relationships with other women?" She went on to accuse me of seducing the president of Delta Delta Delta, of seducing numerous innocents in the dorms and, sin of sins, of sleeping with black men. She threw in a few black women for good measure. If I had kept such a busy schedule, I think I would have been too exhausted to walk into her office. She hinted in heavy tones that in addition to my numerous sexual perversions I was also a communist and was "stirring up the nigras." In a burst of anger I cracked her with, "How dare you accuse me of Lesbianism when you are a Lesbian yourself? You persecute me to protect yourself, you broad-assed sow." Rational discourse collapsed. She put me under house arrest and I couldn't leave the dorms at night. I was checked hourly by the resident counselor in the dorm and I had the pleasure of reporting to the university psychiatrist once a day and if I didn't the campus guards went out looking for me. My psychiatrist couldn't speak good English but he was a whiz at Turkish. I couldn't speak Turkish. He had, however, perfected one English phrase with remarkable enunciation, "You sleep with women?" He had a habit of embracing me after our half hour of international exchange. I question whether those embraces were part of my therapy since he always had a hard on.

All of this happened during exam period. One night I was busy cramming for

a physics exam when a self-appointed contingent of physical education majors burst into my room. It was quite a shock since no one had been speaking to me since the beginning of this mess (two weeks' time). They didn't exactly speak to me. Frightened past reason, these wild-eyed women informed me that if I even hinted that they were Lesbians or that any of their beloved faculty fell into that damned category, they would kill me. Nothing like a little melodrama to spice my misery.

The next day, I was treated to a demonstration of how sexism kills what little good there might be left in the human heart. I walked into my exam and silence fell over the crowded auditorium. When I would try to sit in an empty seat, the student next to it would inform me that it was taken, that I should drop dead, that it was broken — plus a few I don't remember. I took my exam sitting on the floor and I know I got an A. I had a 99% average before the exam and the exam itself was easy. When the grades were reported, my average was 61%. No explanation, just 61%.

One final note concerning my university experience: During my brief encounter with the civil rights movement and the white candy asses who were in it, I found something out that was sure to disquiet the administration of the university. Many of the ramshackle buildings in the black community were owned by city and university officials. The occupants paid double for gas and electricity. Water was drawn from a well. Two or three families were crowded into the building and there were many children. If rent was not paid on time, the landlord's lackeys removed the front door regardless of weather conditions. Most of the people had menial jobs at the university and were paid scratch. A few of us were preparing to write an article on our discovery for the student newspaper. It is more than likely that Lesbianism was the way for the university to throw me out and quash the issue. After all, who is going to listen to a Lesbian?

Southern hospitality does not apply if you are a Lesbian and if you dared to wink an eye at civil rights. I couldn't get a job. My scholarships were suspended so I couldn't go back to school. In other words, I couldn't go home again. I arrived in New York City after a long series of adventures. I felt as though I were in the hanging gardens of neon. Home now was an aban-

doned red and black Hudson automobile off Washington Square. I lived in the back seat, with another orphan — a kitten named Baby Jesus. The front seat was inhabited by Calvin, a South Carolina male homosexual. Calvin had suffered many beatings from his heterosexual black brothers because of his homosexuality. Our pain was a common bond. Nobody wants their queers. We stayed together until Calvin found someone to keep him, which didn't take long.

If you are young, female and poor, New York City is worse than Dante's Inferno. You are walking game for all manner of sick hunters. Looking back on those days, I'm not quite sure just how I survived. Being a woman-identified woman helped as I was determined not to give in and seek male protection. I got a job as a waitress. I had to wear demeaning clothes, a costume really, and put up with passes that ranged from the tragically transparent to the truly creative. I saved money by living in a cold water flat, without stove and without heat. I had two pairs of jeans, two sweatshirts (which I wore inside out as I couldn't bear to see the name of that hated university), and one pair of sneakers. I saved until I could enroll in New York University.

After the first semester I earned a scholarship and in that way I finished my education, an education designed to process you into the white, heterosexual male, middle class world.

During the week I would sometimes go into gay bars. The women I met were interesting. Many were tied into establishment jobs and others were secretaries trying to look like the women tied into the establishment jobs. New York's old gay, Lesbian world has as many rules as the tsarina's court. Most often I was struck by the isolation the women enforced upon each other. Oppression runs deep and among our own we sometimes act it out on each other with as much viciousness as the very culture which produced the oppression. It was in gay bars that I learned that a world of women can only work if we destroy the male value system, the male pattern for human relationships (if you can call it human). These methods employ role play, economic exploitation, dominance vs. passivity, and material proof of your social rank. These things can only keep people apart and fighting with each other. As long as you work within that system of values, you can never really know anyone, least of all yourself.

When the rumblings of the just born Women's Liberation Movement reached me, I was filled with hope. I was off to find and join Women's Liberation and to conquer sexism once and for all. What I found was that sexism exists between women in the movement and it is potentially as destructive as the sexism between men and women.

I came to Women's Liberation via a political homosexual group, The Student Homophile League, which three women and about ten men helped to found in 1967 at Columbia University and N.Y.U. I left the homosexual movement because it was male dominated. Homosexual men (with few exceptions) are like heterosexual men in that they don't give a damn about the needs of women. As soon as I heard of it, I went to the National Organization for Women. N.O.W. was the only group that I had heard about. N.O.W. is not the same as Women's Liberation, but at the time I didn't know that. I went to a few business meetings where the women conducted themselves in a parliamentary manner and played polite power games with each other. There were vague rumors of more radical groups but I couldn't get in touch with any of them. It was almost like prohibition days — you had to know somebody who knew somebody in those groups. I didn't know anybody, so I gritted my teeth and stuck it out with the golden girls. I sat at the general meetings and said nothing. Eventually a woman did talk to me. I questioned her on the Lesbian issue and she bluntly told me that the word Lesbian was never to be uttered. "After all, that is exactly what the press wants to say we are, a bunch of Lesbians." She then went on to patronizingly say, "What are you doing worrying about Lesbians, you must have lots of boyfriends." Okay, sister, have it your way. I kept silent for a few more months. Finally N.O.W. had what it termed a rap session for new women. It was at the apartment of a woman lawyer and was full of stockbrokers, editors, art directors and others of similar professional privilege or aspiring to similar professional privilege. I showed up too, minus the privilege, but I figured that I was a new woman and that's what counts. Anyway, maybe I'd get the chance to open my mouth without standing up and orating about Madam Chairwoman and points of order, etc. The rap session droned on. Women bitched about job discrimination, the pill, etc. Here let me insert a note about my character. I am not a silent, retiring woman. I kept

silent up until this meeting because I was unfamiliar with the organization, because I was born poor and remained poor and I was surrounded by privileged women who took food, housing and education for granted. Lastly, I did not want to jeopardize other Lesbians. By this time I had had a few months to review the political issues at stake and to come up with the firm conclusion that N.O.W. was, to make a long story short, full of shit. A woman's movement is for women. Its actions and considerations should be for women not for what the white, rich, male heterosexual media finds acceptable. In other words, Lesbianism definitely was an important issue and should be out in the open. [Editor's note: N.O.W. has adopted a national supportive policy toward Lesbians and Lesbianism as of October, 1971. See *The Ladder* for December '71/January '72.]

I stood up and said something that went like this: "All I've heard about tonight and in the other meetings is women complaining about men, in one form or another. I want to know why you don't speak about other women? Why you deliberately avoid Lesbianism and why you can't see anything but men? I think Lesbians are ahead of you." (At that time I believed the Lesbian politically superior to the heterosexual woman, and I still do although now I recognize there are such gaps as apolitical Lesbians and political heterosexuals.) What followed my short remarks resembled a mass coronary. One woman jumped up and declared that Lesbians want to be men and that N.O.W. only wants "real" women. This kind of thing went on for a bit. Then the second wave set in — the sneaky, sly curiosity that culminates in, "Well, what do you do in bed?" (I paint myself green and hang from the rafters.) After approximately one hour of being the group freak and diligently probed, poked and studied, these ladies bountifully decided that, yes, I was human. Yes, I did resemble a young woman in her early twenties. Yes, I even looked like what young women in their early twenties were supposed to look like. (I had long hair and was in a skirt. Now I have short hair and if I wear pants, I'm told I look like a young boy. You figure it out.) There were other Lesbians in the room and they too looked like what women are supposed to look like. The difference between them and me was that I opened my mouth and fought the straight ladies. I was even angrier at my

silent sisters than at these incredibly rude, peering, titillated heterosexual wonders. Lesbian silence is nothing new to me, but it never fails to piss me off. I know all the reasons to be quiet in front of the straight enemy, and I find them false. Every time you keep your mouth shut you make life that much harder for every other Lesbian in this country. Our freedom is worth your losing your job and your friends. If you keep your mouth shut you are a coward; you silently assert heterosexual imperialism; you allow it to go on by not fighting back. The women in that room were cowards. They thought they could pass for straight. In the last three years since that meeting, every one of them has been brutally purged from N.O.W. — and they are still silent!

In that room, somehow, a few women got beyond the label, Lesbian, and tried to see me as a person. At the next general meeting, some of them came over and talked to me. They were trying to break down the barriers between us. The N.O.W. leadership was another story. They would in no way recognize the issues of Lesbianism as relevant to the movement. Secretly, a few of them called me and "confessed" to being Lesbians themselves. They were ashamed of their silences but their logic was, when in Rome do as the Romans do. They were very busy playing straight because they didn't want to lose their positions in the leadership. They asked me not to reveal them. There were hints that I could have a place in the leadership if I would play my cards right (shut up). This kind of buy-off is commonly known as being the "token nigger." They got a real bargain with me. Not only was I a Lesbian, but I was poor, I was an orphan (adopted) without knowledge of my ethnic origins. At the time, I saw the co-option but I had nowhere else to go and it didn't occur to me then to start a Lesbian movement. I became editor of New York N.O.W.'s newsletter. From that I moved up to being the administrative coordinator for the national organization, an appointed post. It sounds good if you care about titles but what it really means is that you collate, staple, and mail. Everything was fine as long as I did not bring up the Lesbian issue. After all, the issue was solved because I was in the power structure and I was a Lesbian. Being the token Lesbian, I also helped take the heat off the hidden Lesbians. It wasn't right. I knew it wasn't right but I couldn't figure out how to fight it. I still couldn't get in

touch with the "radical" groups and when I mentioned my interest in these groups, a

By this time, I had discovered some of the other groups. I went to Redstockings, an organization which pushed consciousness woman on the Executive Board told me they were all a gang of unclean girls who hated Lesbians and who talked about their personal hang-ups. I asked her if she had ever been to a meeting and she said that she hadn't. However, she assured me that she had heard this on very good authority.

As women began to be comfortable with me and see that I was a fairly decent human being, they began to turn on to me. It was very painful for me because when they experienced warm or sexual feelings they began to treat me as a man. All these women knew was men. The old seduction game we learn in pre-school sex-role training — that's what I was getting. I can't respond to that kind of thing. Some of the women were hurt, some angry and some vicious. Then there was the most manipulative woman of all, the one who was going to liberate herself on my body. She could then pass herself off as a right on brave feminist, because she had slept with a woman. It was pretty confusing. As you can see, the women still thought of Lesbianism as a sexual activity only. This is the way in which men define it. The women couldn't understand that Lesbianism means a different way of living. It means, for me, that you dump all roles as much as possible, that you forget the male power system, and that you give women primacy in your life — emotionally, personally, politically. It doesn't mean that you look at girlie magazines or pinch the bottoms of passers-by. Difficult as all this was, worse events were to follow. A N.O.W. national officer of much fame made a clumsy pass at me. Not only do I not want to make passes at other women, I don't want women to make passes at me. It all sounds like a football game. Needless to say, I did not respond to the woman. Within an amazingly short time, I was relieved of my duties at the national office for lack of funds. While the leadership was nervously casting its eyes about for someone to take on the burden of the newsletter, I decided to go down fighting. I put out the January 1970 issue of the newsletter with a blast at the leadership for its sexist, racist and class biased attitudes. Two other N.O.W. officers, fed up with the back room politicking and high powered prison guarding, helped with

the issue and also publicly resigned their offices.

raising and the pro-woman line. Redstockings was not too pro-woman when it came to Lesbians. They could empathize with the prostitute, support the housewife, encourage the single woman and seek child care for the mother, but they wouldn't touch the Lesbian. The token Lesbian once more, I became more and more depressed. At least, I had enough insight to realize that this was not my personal problem. It was and still is the crucial political issue, the first step toward a coherent, all-woman ideology. But when there is just one person pushing an issue that one person becomes the issue, she becomes a Cassandra of sorts.

Lesbianism is the issue that deals with women reacting positively to other women. All other issues deal with men and the society they have built to contain us. The real questions are why are women afraid of one another? Why does the straight woman throttle the Lesbian? Why do women keep insisting this is a bedroom issue and not a political issue, when in fact this issue is at the bottom of our self-image? If we cannot look at another woman and see a human being worth making a total commitment to — politically, emotionally, physically — then where the hell are we? If we can't find another woman worthy of our deepest emotions then can we find ourselves worthy of our own emotions or are all commitments reserved for men, those that benefit by our oppression? It is clear that men are not reserving their deepest commitments for women, otherwise we wouldn't be raped, butchered on abortionists' tables, jeered at in the public streets and denied basic rights under a government that preaches equality. We are taunted in the streets, in the courts, in our homes as though we were nothing more than walking sperm receptacles.

A few Restockings tried to deal with these issues. They received no support from the other women. By this time I was too tired and too wise to spend much energy on the straight ladies. I left the group without recriminations and blow-ups. Those women from the group who have become Lesbians have also left.

The next move was to the Gay Liberation Front, a radical group for homosexuals which began in 1969-70. It supposedly is for men and women. I knew from my previous experience that I wouldn't work with homosexual men again

unless something wonderful happened inside their heads and in their system of priorities. But there were gay women there with little women's consciousness and I thought maybe I could push a more feminist understanding among them. It would be a positive step for them as well as me as I needed to be among other Lesbians. Gay Liberation contained women who were highly politicized concerning homosexual oppression so if they could get a consciousness of woman oppression and connect the two, it would be a step forward.

There are good reasons why many Lesbians have no political consciousness of woman oppression. One of the ways in which many Lesbians have protected themselves from the pain of woman oppression is to refuse to see themselves as traditional women. Society encourages this view because if you are not a traditional woman, then you must be some kind of man. This is the other side of the male-identified coin: Heterosexual women live through their men and thereby identify with them, gaining heavy privilege; some Lesbians assume a male role and thereby become male identified, although they receive no political-economic privilege. She wants her own life but the only way to have your own life in this society is to be a man (it also helps to be white and middle class); so many a Lesbian became an imitation man. Other Lesbians feel themselves as women, know intensely that they are no imitation men but stay away from Women's Liberation which could develop their political consciousness. They know from direct experience that straight women cannot be trusted with Lesbian sensibilities and sensitivities. Many of the women in GLF fell into that group. They would rather work with male homosexuals and endure male chauvinism than expose themselves to a more obviously hostile element, the heterosexual woman. More hostile because if her man suspects she is trucking with Lesbians she loses the privileges she gains through association with him. More hostile because Lesbians force her to face herself with no societal props. More hostile because inside she *knows* and she hates herself for her fears.

When I suggested consciousness raising to the women in GLF, they were suspicious. They thought I was a Pied Piper wooing them into Women's Liberation instead of fighting homosexual oppression by working through GLF. They didn't bother to ask me much; if they had, they would

have found out that I went that route in 1967-68.

In spite of their suspicions, they did form consciousness raising groups. A sense of woman oppression was developed and many were well along the way because of their increasing anger over how the gay men mistreated them. They saw that Lesbian oppression and male homosexual oppression have less in common than they formerly thought. What we have in common is that heterosexuals of both sexes hate and fear us. The similarity stops there because that hate and fear take on vastly different forms for the Lesbian and the male homosexual. As the months rolled by, a few of the homosexual women began to see that yes, I was human. Yes, I did resemble a young woman in her early twenties, etc. Through the work of those original consciousness raising groups, a new phase was started in the struggle against sexism. Women who love women began to get it together. We are no longer willing to be token Lesbians in the Women's Liberation Front, nor are we willing to be the token women in the Gay Liberation Front.

The first explosion from this new direction came at the Second Congress to Unite Women when the Lesbians (40 in number) confronted the women there. For the first time, straight women were forced to face their own sexism and their complicity with the male power structure.

Since the Congress, in the spring of 1970, Lesbians have come out in ever increasing numbers and the backlash has



MY FELLOW LODGE BROTHERS, THIS IS A GREAT COUNTRY. ANYONE CAN BE PRESIDENT BE HE RICH OR POOR, WHITE OR BLACK, MALE OR MALE.

increased proportionally. Many Lesbians have come to the conclusion that they can no longer work with straight women, women who remain tied to men ideologically as well as individually.

This is a call for a separatist movement of Lesbians? Yes and No. No, (speaking for myself) because I do not want to be separate from any women. Yes, because until heterosexual women treat Lesbians as full human beings and fight the enormity of male supremacy with us, I have no option but to be separate from them just as they have no option but to be separate from men until men begin to change their own sexism. Separatism is the heterosexual woman's

choice by default, not mine.

Separatism is what the ruling, rich, white male wants: female vs. male; black vs. white; gay vs. straight; poor vs. rich. I don't want to be separate from anyone — that just keeps The Big Man on top of all of us. But I can't work with people who degrade me, don't deal with behavior that is destructive to me and who don't share their privileges. The last thing that I want is separatism. We can only achieve reformist changes for our sub-group if we remain separatists. Together we can change the entire society and make a better life for ourselves individually and collectively.

GAY AND STRAIGHT IN THE MOVEMENT

By CHRISTINE MIMICHILD

When I first heard about Women's Liberation, I wouldn't have anything to do with it. Aloud I said I was liberated and didn't need that stuff, but inside I was afraid people would think I was a Lesbian if I associated with all those women. I had no way of knowing what other women were thinking because no one was even talking about Lesbianism. This silence drove me wild with frustration. I had had strong feelings for women all my life, and, although I had never slept with a woman, I had been sure for some time that I was gay. But Women's Liberation was publicly determined to prove that they weren't a bunch of dykes and privately unable to deal with such a threatening topic. As a woman who loved women, I remained isolated even in the movement.

Secrecy has always been a fact of life for most Lesbians. Some find a lover or enter "the gay world." While sharing their lives with each other, they are always dealing with the very real consequences of exposure of their life style. Others, like myself, are what I call "head gay." Because we have not related to women sexually, we lock a big part of our lives away from ourselves as well as from everybody else. Either kind of double life is painful, but the choice isn't simply a decision between "coming out,"* with all its personal rewards versus remaining "straight" in order to avoid society's censure. I never came out because I never

*"Come out" — for those of us who are "new gay," this means to make love with a woman for the first time.

dared tell anyone my feelings, and the people from whom I hid my feelings most completely were the girls and women to whom I was attracted.

I remember having crushes on girls when I was in junior high school. Even then, before I knew the word "homosexual," the taboo on feelings for one's own sex was so strong that I never let anyone know that I cared for them. My feelings for girls were much too powerful for me to know how to deal with them. Boys were only friends to me, and, after puberty, boys aren't supposed to be friends anymore. The result of this was many years of isolation and loneliness. At school and at work I was outgoing and active, but I had few close friends. I always held back from relationships, running from people before I could be hurt by them. Most people, straight and gay, have some defenses, but society's taboo on homosexuality added to my own fears of rejection and made it almost impossible for me to relate honestly to anyone. However, I was always conscious of how much I wanted to communicate this one secret part of myself to others.

At the age of 23 I fell in love. For the first time I imagined myself holding a woman, making love with her, spending a lifetime with her. As I look back, I'm sure she returned the feeling, but we were both in Peace Corps training and afraid to jeopardize our chances of being selected. She never said anything, and I never said anything. The saddest realization is that if only I had known how to break through those walls of isolation and fear, I would have

said, "I love you, and the Peace Corps can go to hell."

But I never did say "I love you." And it was a long time before I could even say out loud, "I love women." In women's groups, we talked about orgasms with a hundred people present, but discussions of Lesbianism never went beyond the mention of the word. Finally I got into a small consciousness-raising group where the women were unusually supportive. It wasn't easy, but I finally said, "I think I'm a Lesbian." Their reactions were mind-blowing! A married woman: "That doesn't seem like such an impossibility for me." Another married woman: "I've had feelings for women all my life, and I even had a kind of affair in high school." A single woman: "I am a Lesbian." (She had come out all of one week before.)

That night started a high which I've been on for over a year now. Soon after that meeting, two Radical Lesbians came from New York to speak at a course on "Women and Our Bodies." They stayed overnight with me, and, for the first time in 29 years, I poured out those feelings boiling inside me to women who understood, who knew what I had been through. One woman shared my bed. After two hours of tossing and turning, I finally said to hell with all the walls and asked her to make love to me. I wasn't in love with her. In fact, I never saw her again, but I will always treasure that night as one of those magical interactions that can occur between women when they are mutually open and honest.

My life has completely changed since my hidden self has become a part of the whole me. For the past year, I have been happier and more together than I ever would have believed possible. Hoping that other women wouldn't have to go through the isolation and loneliness I had experienced, a friend and I called a meeting of gay women in New Haven. The eight women who came included Lesbians who were not active in the women's movement, women who had come out within Women's Liberation, and women who were thinking about their relationship to other women. This was the beginning of the New Haven Gay Women's Group.

One of the things I did for several months after I came out was to try to tell women they should be thinking about Lesbianism, if only because many of them weren't relating to men. Interestingly, among women new to Women's Liberation,

there was a willingness to discuss women's feelings for each other, but women who had been in the movement for a long time still weren't talking about the issue. Finally, in relaxed one-to-one situations, a couple of these women did say things like, "I felt threatened . . ." "I was afraid . . ." Gradually, it became clear to me. It wasn't that they *wouldn't* talk, it was that they *couldn't* talk.

Despite all the difficulties in opening up to each other about such a painful topic, there has been a slow, steady growth in understanding between gay and straight women in New Haven. Whenever we get depressed about dealing with the problems in this relationship, we think about so many other cities where there have been ugly splits between gay and straight women in the movement. There has never been a separate gay women's movement in New Haven. This togetherness is due in part to the fact that we are a small city, which means most of us know each other personally. We have the New Haven Women's Liberation Rock Band, and New Haven women have always partied and danced together. Almost all women are or have been in consciousness-raising groups and, therefore, have developed a tradition of listening to each other and genuinely trying to be supportive and sisterly. There were a few women who from the beginning reacted positively to the revelation that some of their friends were Lesbians. Although most movement women in New Haven have yet to deal with Lesbianism as an issue, they are almost inevitably supportive of Lesbians as individuals.

The high point in New Haven's gay/straight scene came at a retreat in June of 1971 when 80 of us spent a weekend discussing our movement. We worked hard all day and partied exuberantly at night. On Sunday morning, it was the turn of the Gay Women's Group to report on its activities. After a brief report there was dead silence. I had expected that because, although we were becoming open in small groups, the response of the movement as a whole was still silence. Finally a woman said, "Why do we always make Chris the spokeswoman? Why don't we talk for ourselves?" Silence. Straight woman: "I'm really glad there are so many gay women here. It made it much easier for the rest of us to express physical affection with each other." And then they were off and talking. For two hours all of us — "old heavies," new women, gay,

straight — talked about our feelings. "It's so hard to be a woman in this society that I'm afraid to take on Lesbianism." "I've been so fucked over by men that I'm afraid to get into that kind of relationship with women whom I now trust." "Has anyone noticed how many times people have gotten up and moved around during this discussion? Could that say something about how threatening this is to deal with?"

The reasons for women's difficulty in talking about Lesbianism seem obvious now. However, my own personal hurt from the reluctance of the women's movement to deal with Lesbianism held me back from recognizing that, although the levels of awareness were different, many women experienced the same kinds of fears as I had. I have learned that most women's indifference, hostility, or tension comes from fear, and, for most of the women I have talked to, this comes down to fear of their own Lesbianism.

I have to keep remembering this commonality of experience in order to deal with the anger and hurt I continue to feel at the subtle and not-so-subtle anti-Lesbian attitudes women still display. Straight women lessen this hurt by showing that they understand where we are coming from and by opening up the subject of Lesbianism themselves rather than always expecting gay women to do so. The responsibility for understanding Lesbianism belongs to all of us.

In discussing Lesbianism, we are dealing with something very different from classism or racism in the movement. Our class and race are the backgrounds we come from, and they're not going to change. We must develop an understanding of our racist and classist attitudes in order to eliminate them. Lesbianism, however, is not something to be discussed in order to be eliminated. The more we talk about it, the more we are going to discover it is part of ourselves.

I don't believe that all women are gay. I'm not even sure I think that all women are potentially Lesbians because none of us have talked to enough women to really find out. It is certainly clear, however, that many more women would be Lesbians if this option were really open. This is my own philosophy, and other Lesbians would probably disagree with parts of it, but I have never heard any Lesbian give substance to the women's movement myth that all women should become gay. We have all been pushed around enough, and we don't

need any more trips laid on us by anybody.

What we do have to force is discussion and analysis of Lesbianism's meaning for ourselves and our movement. This has been a painful thing to talk about, but that very discomfort should be a signal that this issue is one which must be discussed. First, straight women have to learn to talk to gay women about Lesbianism. Your silence hurts and angers us. It hurts because we project into it society's reason for silence — condemnation. It angers us because we are your sisters. We are part of the women's movement, yet in your efforts to support particularly oppressed minorities of women, you have overlooked the ones you live and work with.

All of us, straight and gay, have to consider the personal implications of Lesbianism. We have to be able to talk about sexual feelings for each other, about some women's desire to have a "gay experience," and about gay women falling in love with straight women. We have to get over the hard parts and hangups so that straight and gay women can be friends, each able to talk about her own sexuality without feeling put down by the other. Ultimately, we have to reach the point where each of us accepts as a possibility for ourselves a sexual relationship with a woman we love.

In the women's movement as a whole, the impact of Lesbianism has been explosive. The resulting force is pushing us in two directions. Everywhere there is tension between gay and straight women. In some cities, there has been an open split between the groups. We are obviously in danger right now of becoming two movements, one for gay women and one for straight women. Worst yet, because Lesbians' total involvement with women gives them more time and energy to devote to the movement, the

CHANGING YOUR ADDRESS?

If you are planning to move, please let us know six weeks before changing your address. Please send your old address and your new address, clearly marked. You MUST include BOTH your old and new zip codes. REMEMBER, third class mail is not forwardable. Send to CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT, THE LADDER, P.O. Box 5025, Washington Station, Reno, Nev. 89503.

women's movement might become all gay. This would be a disaster for everybody and we cannot allow it to happen.

The only way to prevent such a schism is to deal directly with Lesbianism and all its implications for ourselves and our movement. This has been happening to some degree already. The changes are not nearly fast enough, but, when we consider that in just two years the women's movement has gone from active rejection of Lesbians to formal support of Lesbianism as a life style, our progress has been phenomenal. It hasn't been easy for women to deal with friends

who "come out" or the possibility that they themselves might be Lesbians. But women are struggling.

If we can keep going in this direction, then the impact of Lesbianism on the women's movement will be fantastic. Women are dealing with an issue so socially and personally threatening that, until recently, it couldn't even be mentioned openly. In rejecting the prohibition of Lesbianism, we are rejecting one of society's most strongly imposed taboos. If we can do this, we can do anything.

extraneous things like blasting **ADVOCATE** (a male newspaper) for running sex fetishistic adds . . . which, after all, hasn't anything to do with Lesbians and isn't of any interest to them at all. I agree with her on the subject, but I fail to see its relevance in a book about women. She spends a good deal of time begging for tasteful and quiet magazines and newspapers; but the few times she mentions **THE LADDER**, it is with the usual expected venom. She mentions past issues (meaning 10 years ago) with deserved scorn perhaps, but she has seen at least as late an issue as February, 1970, for she quotes from it . . . yet she still implies (in one case by deliberate omission) that **THE LADDER** is about where it was 8 to 10 years ago. She also passes on a bit of scorn toward all Lesbian organizations while praising the male-oriented groups, which is a bit much. We have the same reservations about her "fictionalized" portraits of supposedly real Lesbians that she knows on an intimate or friendly basis. The writer of this review quite possibly knows a couple of thousand Lesbians — and has yet to meet or even **HEAR** about the "types" of women that Ms. Aldrich apparently finds running rampant in the streets of New York City. There is the ever-present underlying tone of nasty condescension — the slightly "sick" sense of her presence in these homes, where she clearly feels superior to her "friends" in every way.

In closing Ms. Aldrich says: "Years ago, when I first began reporting on homosexual life as an insider, it used to anger me when homosexuals wrote anything mediocre (by my judgment) or irresponsible . . . or exhibitionistic. Nor could I fathom any reason for homosexuals announcing publicly that they were homosexuals, wanting to marry each other, adopt children . . . or any of it." Well, Ms. Aldrich, assuming you

mean here "Lesbians" for your chosen word "homosexuals," we answer you thusly: We don't like books that portray Lesbians dishonestly and irresponsibly, nor do we like anything mediocre.

Long before we go to school and are assaulted by literature that tends to shape us into our "role" in life, when Dick gets all the action and Jane talks to dogs, cats and dolls, we first see "fairy tales" . . . but they are all pretty sexist too. Now we have a "fairy tale" for the young Lesbian: **SLEEPING BEAUTY: A Lesbian Fairy Tale**, by Vicki, Atlanta, Georgia, Sojourner Truth Press, 1971. Their address is 432 Moreland Avenue N.E., Atlanta 30307, and the book is only 70c including postage and handling. Vicki has done a good job of rewriting the classic tale — and even if some errors in form creep in, it's very highly recommended. Illustrations are by Gail and calligraphy by Ginny, and the printing is better than almost any of the "little" presses now proliferating in the women's movement. Nice.

Iris Murdoch has always been one of my favorite writers, and we may well get a review of her new book, **AN ACCIDENTAL MAN**, N.Y., Viking, 1972, into this column — but if not, it will be in the next one. It promises to be substantially Lesbian, which comes as no surprise to anyone who has read her work. Her younger sister, Norma Meacock, whose short stories have been reviewed in past issues of **THE LADDER**, has a novel out, **THINKING GIRL**, N.Y., Dial, 1972. I had really wished to be able to say something good about it, if only because of her sister. Then I remembered I also have sisters and you probably do too, and we aren't anything alike at all. **THINKING GIRL** is remarkable only in that its heroine doesn't think at all, as far as I could tell. She is a Lesbian, she knows she is a Lesbian, she is even happy about it — but before it is out, she has slept with half the unattractive males of England and married one you wouldn't believe if I described him. So much for that. She can, grudgingly admitted, write rather well. We hope she grows up soon and begins using her skills.

The subtle charm the English are famous for is reflected in **LATE IN THE AFTER-NOON**, by Lettice Cooper, London, Gollancz, 1971, wherein not too recently widowed Sybil Fairford discovers just why she has been so inordinately fond of her former daughter-in-law. Quiet, slow moving, pleasant reading with unusually sharply

drawn characterizations.

The Fall-Winter, 1971/72, issue of "The Little Magazine" calls itself "Special Double Women's Issue" and editorially pleads for forgiveness for having ignored women in the past. They are to be forgiven, provided they mend their ways, if only for this issue, which is well worth the \$1.25 price tag. Good fiction is represented by only one short story, "51%" by Judith McCombs, a parody on the raising of young women in our society. There is a so-so interview with Denise Levertov — you can skip it — and the rest of the magazine is poetry, most of it good and some of it marvelous. The usual knowns are here, Marge Piercy and Joyce Carol Oates; but don't miss Miriam Palmer's two poems, "Getting Into Focus" and "A More Perfect Union."

Wonderful to be able to include a must book and one that will be popular with most readers. Those of you who have been reading in this field for years will feel a sense of déjà vu at the title, but **ODD GIRL OUT**, by Elizabeth Jane Howard, N.Y., Viking, 1971, is in no way like Ann Bannon's 1957 novel, **ODD GIRL OUT**, except in the ending. Into the insular and upper-class world of Anne and Edmund comes the forlorn waif, Arabella, the titular "odd girl." Anne and Edmund, though loving, are not in love; and with usual male arrogance, Edmund quickly seduces Ara-



Elizabeth Jane Howard, author of **ODD GIRL OUT**
Photo: Jill Kremenetz



After quite a few years of silence, we have a new book from Ann Aldrich, our old nemesis. The title is from the marvelous Radicalesbian slogan, **TAKE A LESBIAN TO LUNCH**. Publisher is Macfadden-Bartell, 1972. You ought to be able to find this on your newsstands that carry wide paperback selections. Most of you who have seen her earlier titles will want to read her poisonous, but entertaining, new book. It is a mishmash of gay liberation, personal recountings of her friends (who must be very angry frequently), and some smidgens of the growing women's liberation movement. As far as movement literature is concerned, this isn't even an adequate look at the 1969 and on gay liberation movement; and where she ends (with events that took place in early 1970), women were just beginning to separate themselves from men altogether in these organizations, and this is simply not covered. Also ignored, of course, because of the timing, is the entirely new look in Lesbians when you consider the thousands of women who have come out via women's liberation.

It is hard to figure out what she is trying to do. She says as many of the expected nasty things about Lesbians as ever, though she does add an apologia at the end saying she had previously thought Lesbians (presumably including herself) were all sick but now has changed her mind. She also advocates coming out of the closet, though not entirely. Whole chapters are given over to

bella, who responds without commitment. When Edmund goes on a trip, it is immediately apparent to Anne and Arabella that they are in love. Their affair is treated graphically, erotically . . . and in very good taste. Edmund's inevitable return triggers the denouement. Very highly recommended.

Isabel Miller's 1969 sentimental must novel, *A PLACE FOR US*, has been issued by McGraw-Hill in February, 1972, with the title changed to *PATIENCE AND SARAH*. If you have missed this, don't go on depriving yourself — it's major Lesbian and one of the best ever issued.

The first issue of *THE FURIES*, a Lesbian/Feminist Monthly, is highly recommended. If the quality of this first issue is maintained, this is a newspaper most of you will want to subscribe to. Available for \$5 per year from Box 8843, S.E. Station, Washington, D.C. 20003. They show no sample rate, but a single issue cost of 35c, so you can probably get a sample for about 50c to cover cost plus postage.

There is an ever increasing number of small women's presses in the country. The latest, Violet Press, P.O. Box 398, New York, N.Y. 10009, offers *LOOKING AT WOMEN*, poems by Fran Winate, Violet Press, 1971. Cost is 50c plus postage (be generous, make it 75c — there is no margin on publications like this). *LOOKING AT WOMEN* is uncommonly good . . . strictly a Lesbian collection.

Alta, whose name is becoming a household word, has a collection, *POEMS AND PROSE*, put out by KNOW, Inc., P.O. Box 10197, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15232. This is a purple bound paperback, printed on lavender paper, very attractive but practically impossible to read. Most of the poetry has been in other collections of Alta's work. Cost not listed in book . . . but it cannot be too high.

A group called Friends of Malatesta, Box 72, Bidwell Station, Buffalo, N.Y. 14222, has a book (very modest paperback) called *A SELECTION OF WOMEN'S POETRY*. Copyright isn't listed and neither is the cost . . . but again, this has to be 50c or under. Contents are uneven, though some very well known women are included — Marge Piercy and Martha Shelley, for example.

Diana Press, 1854 Wyoming Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009, has issued *REFLECTIONS*, a very well done collection of poetry from the technical printing

and editing standpoint (good graphics, well spaced, good margins, good paper) containing good and well known poets mixed with lesser works. It is only somewhat feminist, since the primary function of the collection seems to be political and leftist.

One collection everyone reading this column will want, hopefully, is *EDWARD THE DYKE* and other poems, by Judy Grahn. Cost is \$1.25 and you can get it from Judy by writing to 1018 Valencia Street, San Francisco, California 94110. We have mentioned the marvelous satire, "The Psychoanalysis of Edward the Dyke" in these pages; and long time readers will recall we carried a selection of Judy's poetry in *THE LADDER* some years ago. Judy writes that she is a "slow" worker, and this book contains virtually her entire body of work. Don't miss this; it's more than worth the \$1.25. Include postage — remember there is no profit margin on privately printed material.

In the last column we mentioned a good story from *REDBOOK*, but we now have a more amazing event to report. The December, 1971, issue of *COSMOPOLITAN* contains a very major Lesbian short story, "Love and Friendship," by Edith Konecky. (A reader clipped and sent this to us . . . thank you.)

Another New Lesbian newspaper is *LAVENDER WOMAN*, from 7621 Saginaw, Chicago, Illinois 60649. Volume One, Number One is dated November, 1971 — and that's all we have seen so far. Contents are uneven, but it's a much better than average beginning. Cost is 25c for this first issue. No subscription rates are shown . . . write to them and ask.

Colin Spencer has written a good many books with Lesbian characters, and some of them we have been able to recommend. His latest, *PANIC*, London, Secker and Warburg, is quite a substantial study; but it is a very poor novel, hanging coincidence and sensationalism together apparently without regard for the suffering reader. This one is to be ignored, even when it comes out over here, as it inevitably will.

Taking a page from the *WHOLE EARTH CATALOG*, a women's group in New Hampshire has issued Volume 1 of *THE WHOLE WOMAN CATALOG* (Fall, 1971). Contents are primarily a listing of the many women's publications and groups all over the country, and it is useful for this reason. Address is P.O. Box 1171, Ports-

mouth, New Hampshire 03801. No cost is listed; write for information.

[Rita Laporte contributes the following]

WOMAN'S ESTATE by Juliet Mitchell, Pantheon, 182 pp, \$5.95, is another Marxist ideology book, an attempt to fit heterosexual women's liberation into 19th century male thought. For those who are already believers, this book succeeds, as any book would that puts Marxist ideology front and center. Mitchell examines England, some western European countries, and the United States with respect to the student movement, the black movement, and women's liberation. Remember, in Marxism, the establishment of the Socialist State takes precedence over the rights of any group or person. But Mitchell feels that women do count, heterosexual ones, that is. The most pervasive ideology of them all, heterosexual

ideology, is never even noticed by Marxists, let alone considered oppressive. It is time these ideology buffs ideologized about heterosexual chauvinism. Mitchell poses as being terribly well informed about the United States (she is English, though born in Australia). This country, she tells us, is the cradle of imperialism, apparently forgetting that Empire upon which the sun never set and against which we had a little war of liberation back in 1776. Female Marxists are the coldest, most heartless writers I have read in connection with women's liberation and Mitchell is no exception. In her zeal for ideology she drains life of all warmth and humanity. We are all pawns in a theoretical superstructure — no, we Lesbians do not even rate that much existence. But then, we do not in real life Marxism either — vide the USSR, Cuba, and China.

TANGLED HAIR

A REVIEW BY ELSA GIDLOW

The publication in 1971 by Purdue University of *TANGLED HAIR*: selected Tanka from Midaregami, by Akiko Yosano, a Japanese woman born in 1878, reminds us again for how long women worldwide have been struggling to be recognized as persons. These beautiful translations from the Japanese by Sanford Goldstein and Seishi Shinoda reveal a woman passionately at variance with the restrictions of her day, courageously asserting personal, artistic and sexual freedom, expressing her sensuous affirmations in poetry and in her life. This in nineteenth century Japan when she could be (and as a young woman was) locked into her bedroom at night by her father and forbidden to go out at any time unless accompanied by a relative or attendant.

One can only guess at the strength it required under such circumstances to assert and win independence and as poet break with tradition to inject life into an art form dying of rigidity and cliché.

Into her twenties before she escaped family dominance, Akiko lived a heterosexual life as wife and mother; but the biographical notes prefacing the poetry suggest some degree of variance. She had a devoted friendship with another woman, Tomiko Yamakawa, also a poet, lasting until the latter's death at twenty-nine years of age. The man who became Akiko's husband, a

poet of lesser talent than herself named Tekkan Yosano, also loved Tomiko throughout her life. The biographical material contains this curious line: "Both girls loved each other, and both wanted to share Tekkan." Tomiko was forced into a family-arranged marriage with a businessman. Having informed Akiko of its imminence, we are told: "That night Tomiko and Akiko slept in one bed." Tomiko became a widow two years later when her husband died of tuberculosis. The notes lay considerable emphasis on the jealousy Akiko was believed to have felt because of Tekkan's continuing devotion to Tomiko after his marriage to Akiko — a union apparently brought about by her insistence — whether through love alone, or to be free of her father is not clear. On the ambivalence of the actual emotions involved in this unconventional three-way relationship we can only speculate.

The ample and fascinating appendix notes to each of the 165 Tanka (five-line poems) assume that the suffering expressed in many of them confesses to Akiko's resentment at not having Tekkan's undivided love; but one cannot help feeling that the complex feelings of this remarkable woman may have been oversimplified by her commentators. The volume presents the poems in their original Japanese and also in

Romaji renderings; so anyone with a knowledge of Japanese might delve for different interpretations.

For this reviewer the beauty, the sensuous strength, the freedom of the poetry is rewarding enough. We are told that the translations are faithful to the original. As poetry in English they communicate satisfyingly and most often with a haunting beauty. There is one trick that bothered this reviewer: the repetition of adjectives. Once or twice it is effective in suggesting intensity, as:

"A thousand lines
Of black black hair
All tangled, tangled –
And tangled too
My thoughts of love."

But we find it again and again: "Drab, drab green;" "A white, white mare;" "Her long long/Waistband/Longer than her long sleeves;" and "That pink band/Worn/To bind her hair in front/Ought to have been/Bright bright red." This is a minor cavil. The majority of the poems come to one musically as just right in the directness of their portrayal of a vast range of experience in simple and sensuous language.

A few examples:

"Inside the coffin
Of my beautiful
Friend
The flowers
A riot of color."

Another:

"Disregarding right and wrong
The next world
Fame
We face each other
Loving and loved."

an example of the kind of poetic content that, coming from a woman, shocked Akiko's generation.

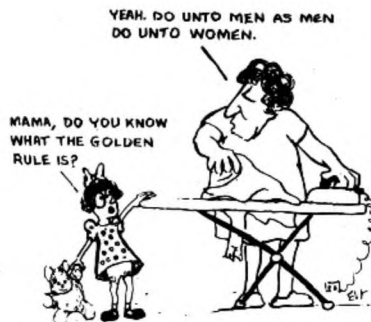
And this one:

"Evening of departing spring
How alive
The sutra
Chanted by the insane girl
Under the temple wisteria"

illustrating a choice of subject matter for poetry that projects this daring innovator into our own times.

The book itself is handsomely made, one that any lover of poetry would prize; and, as book prices go these days, a bargain at \$5.95. The notes that occupy about a third of the volume are an education in Japanese customs (many of them still alive today); although one can be left with the tantalizing feeling that different interpretations of the genesis or inspiration of some of the poems might be made. There seems to be a tendency to make them too specifically autobiographical. Poets are not as a rule as literal as that.

(Reviewer Elsa Gidlow is a long time LADDER contributor in the poetry line and as essayist. First to describe the moving and now famous women's liberation meeting in San Francisco where most of the women in the audience stood when asked by the Lesbian speaker how many of them could admit to having felt erotically drawn to another woman, Elsa is best known as a fine poet. Her recent book, MOODS OF EROS, is still available from Druid Heights Press, 685 Camino Del Canyon, Mill Valley, California 94941 at \$2.25.)



Lesbian Literature in 1971

An Annual Report

By GENE DAMON

1971 was a very good year in many ways, with 51 titles outside of the plethora of paperback tripe that we no longer even give statistical space to. Forty-five of these were hardback books and the others quality paperbacks. A few of these titles, primarily English books, haven't yet been reviewed. It takes up to 6 months to get a book from England, so there is a long delay between my hearing of these titles and being able to bring them to you. Thus, some 6-8 hardback novels that belong among the counted 51 haven't yet appeared in the regular column. Those of you who have been reading THE LADDER since at least the April/May, 1971, issue have seen the year's titles, so we are going to only list some especially fine books. If you would like more complete information, we invite you to purchase back copies of THE LADDER.

The better novels include THE BIRD OF PARADISE, by Lily Powell, N.Y., Knopf, 1971; Jane Rule's AGAINST THE SEASON, N.Y., McCall, 1971; Joan Haggerty's DAUGHTERS OF THE MOON, Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1971; and possibly Monique Wittig's LES GUERILLERES, N.Y., Viking, 1971, though the last named is difficult reading and is basically about women's liberation. Monica Dickens' THE END OF THE LINE, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1969, 1970, a carryover from an earlier year, is also highly recommended – we were just late in finding and reporting it.

Secondary novels, not necessarily lesser from a literary standpoint but less major in their treatment of Lesbians, include DESTROY SHE SAID, by Marguerite Duras, N.Y., Grove, 1971; Marie-Claire Blais's THE MANUSCRIPTS OF PAULINE ARCHANGE, N.Y., Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970; A.B. Guthrie, Jr.'s ARFIVE, Boston, Houghton-Mifflin, 1971; Richard Dougherty's WE DANCE AND SING, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1971; and a couple of titles that might properly belong in the paragraph above: THE LOVE-KEEPER, by Colin Gibson, London, Chatto and Windus, 1971, and MLE. SAVELLI?, by Suzanne Prou, N.Y., Harper, 1971.

Biography fans were rewarded by the appearance of CARRINGTON, edited by David Garnett, N.Y., Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971, yet another chapter in the book of the Bloomsbury group. Elizabeth Mavor's delightful THE LADIES OF LLANGOLLEN, London, Michael Joseph, 1971, is the long needed study of a rather fabulous pair of Lesbians in our "herstory"; and Richard Bridgeman's GERTRUDE STEIN IN PIECES, N.Y., Oxford University Press, 1970, more or less diminishes lesser studies of Ms. Stein, though it is hardly the final word.

There has been so much Lesbian poetry published in the past year that we hardly believe it. Anyway, here are the major overt and most recommended of the lot: Elsa Gidlow's MOODS OF EROS, Druid Heights Press, 1970; Harriette Frances' SAPPHO '71, San Francisco, Donahue/Arlington, 1971; WATCH OUT BROTHER, I'M HERE, by Heather, Berkeley, Calif., Shameless Hussy Press, 1971; and Rita Mae Brown's THE HAND THAT CRADLES THE ROCK, N.Y., New York University Press, 1971. Less major, less overt, but very literary and very necessary to all completists is Phyllis Webb's SELECTED POEMS, 1954-1965, Vancouver, B.C., Talonbooks, 1971. We have to mention Lynn Lonidier's marvelous THE FEMALE FREEWAY, San Francisco, The Tenth Muse, 1970, though it is not exclusively Lesbian or even exclusively women's liberation.

Statistic nuts may be interested in knowing that you have to go back to 1967's total of 46 hardbacks to find a year with a higher count. On the other hand, there is no question that much more material by and about Lesbians is available now than at any time in the past, what with the constant coverage in most women's liberation media and generally increased public interest. Cut-off date for this count was November 15, 1971 – and we are already seeing signs that indicate 1972 will be a much bigger year.



Wendy, age 9, of the Kauchema Community



Elise, age 7, of the Kauchema Community

a river to hear
 a person to play with
 a poem to read
 a mountain to look at
 is all I need

EDITOR'S NOTE: KAUCHEMA COMMUNITY CONSISTS OF ADULTS OF BOTH SEXES AND CHILDREN. AN INTENTIONAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY LIVING AND GROWING TOGETHER. WE ARE HAPPY TO SHARE THEIR CREATIVE GROWTH WITH ALL OF YOU.

It does so matter where you live!
 If it's a Labyrinth for amazing tenants
 Or a chalet with bay windows
 Facing out to a Wyeth view.
 Green chiffon drapes, on golden hoop loops;
 Three wicker coffee tables; a Gauguin island print;
 One climb high bookcase filled with the sequence of time.
 There's also a grandfather clock in the corner near her vine;
 I heard it chime.
 I like her house better than mine.
 We had a dinner there at twilight once,
 Two girls, missing nobody, with Puccini arias
 And incense to surround. Whispers and cats and hydrangeas in the night.
 She wore a straight blue shift with white polka dots
 And ran barefoot to the hearth to put the deer above the fire.
 Venison in the mountains.
 Flameshadows spilled magic on her cheeks and eyelashes; around
 Her an aura of secrecy and charm. I knew
 That she had found herself in another. Mutual indwelling
 Bound in the whorls of a concha shell.
 The one he sent from the island of Tarawa.
 On the window sill in her bedroom.
 It will always give me pleasure to see her smile,
 So sad she was through all those moon-nights while
 I sketched her eyes on hair
 In that rented garret flat on the edge of the city near the pier
 Where she wrote me her first word poem.
 (Because before that only sounds — of bells and cymbals and gypsy tambourines)
 "Sylvia, You Should See The Clouds Parade,
 Showing Themselves Off—
 So Transparent, Light, Free;
 The Wind's Blow Their Insides Away.
 Sylvia, My Flesh Is Heavy On My Bones,
 My Shadow Droops."
 It does so matter where you live,
 If it's away from mystery and your only friend,
 Now on the other side of men.
 I live in a panelled tomb, lost, lost, and at the end of a dream.

Rochelle Holt

Alicia we can't!/"we can."

colored coats on windmill children
 dancing laughs greyed by rain,
 pastel paintings racing gulls, and
 dragonflies of lonely dreams...

"Alicia is me!" giggles from "before"
 alone takes wing

and innocence is yellow hair
 cheeks flushed by winter's sting.

I turned (breath hard
 tides flooding fast) to run.

hands caught me spun me round
 strength cutting red marks on sweated
 flesh, -the eyes were blue
 intense to haze

her words, steam on my face-
 "you realize that dust is dust
 and only angels sing."

Alicia Langtree

flesh is as grass
 you are my private meadow
 free to blow and grow and take root where you will
 I close the gate around myself
 and rest my cheek upon your fragileness
 a prisoner to what I can't confine
 bound because I chose to call you mine
 while winds I won't control
 carry love's seed
 through fences out of my reach
 your flesh is grass
 one season's all I need of love
 and nature understands

Susan Staff

I've been deceived
 by groups of letters clumped
 and clotted on bold pages
 by accents, tones and dialects
 and phrases trite or obsolete
 by epitaphs and eulogies
 mocking with insincerity
 by oaths and creeds
 broken — out grown
 and saints turned mortal overnight.
 So if I come to you in silence
 promising nothing
 and am not prone to praise yourself
 or pledge myself with words.
 Understand that I love the best in silence
 And while I sit by you speechless,
 And when I walk away without goodbyes,
 Know that you mattered more than words
 And I still pray for you.
 without amens.

Susan Staff

You left yesterday
 and today I'm still looking
 for scraps of paper with your writing
 on them.
 When I find them by accident,
 the shock hurts.
 Almost as much
 as you saying you may not remember
 me
 two years from now.

Elise Kirk

save me with silence
 your "no" can defy gravity
 I won't ask the question
 and if my private war becomes an issue
 don't enlist.
 be that silent majority
 omnipresent
 unsuspecting.
 and if I fall —
 though it is by your roadside,
 pass by me at a distance.
 it's my own conquest
 save me with silence
 I am the aggressor
 Let me be the only casualty.

Susan Staff

A SENSE OF PRIORITIES IN ELMHURST

What's the matter with you.
 Why are you behaving like that.
 I just lost my best friend, Mother.
 Well, stop that crying.
 Why are you crying like that
 Crying like that over some girlfriend.
 I must say:
 You always have been peculiar.
 Stop that at once.
 But Mother,
 She's my lover.
 I always thought there was
 Something about that girl I didn't like.
 You mean to tell me,
 You have kissed her on the
 Mouth.
 Oh, many times, Mother.
 Well this has got to stop.
 Well you had better stop this.
 Running around with freaks.
 I'll bet you haven't cleaned
 Your apartment in weeks.

Mickie Burns

The House by the Sea by Ann Sheldon

In England over the endless sea
 (I dream, my darling, for you and me:
 Tomorrow if not today)

There stands in Devon by the sea,
 In the gentle airs of the West Country,
 A house that is tall and grey,

An old grey house beside the sea,
 And there two ladies live merrily,
 Most merrily and gay.

Two willows near and a great oak tree
 Trace starlight patterns of fantasy,
 And spring in the breeze by day.

These ladies go walking by the sea,
 Their hair in the wind blows light and free,
 And their lips are kissed by the spray.

And they stroll in the lane and follow the bee,
 They lie in the grass beneath a tree,
 And they sing as they wander away.

At dusk they turn to the house by the sea,
 Lightly and gaily trot home to tea,
 They carry a bright bouquet.

And they stop at the church quite faithfully
 And sweetly together they bend the knee —
 Oh it's thanks they give as they pray!

Sometimes they dress most prettily
 And go up to London Town to see
 New frocks and friends and a play.

And twice, O Oxford town, to thee:
 First for the joyful ecstasy
 Of the dreaming spires and the may;

And then in soft winter dusk to be
 In cold empty streets without a key
 Yet never alone or astray.

Then home to the tall grey house by the sea
 To sit close by the fire and read poetry
 As long as the night will stay.

Just so in England right merrily
 These ladies so lightly live and, see!
 Hands linked as they go their way.

One lady, my darling, looks like thee;
 The other lady, dear one, is me —
 And to dream can be to pray.

Option
 by
 Ann Sheldon

"Men," said the wise old woman,
 Are like that.
 I always loved my man —
 But I knew, knew about the others.
 Accept it, dear.

I suppose I'll have to. And, of course,
 I, too, could have — well, others.
 Only, I love him, I guess.
 Why is it that we women
 Love like this — solely?

No, I don't see that women's liberation
 Helps, Sisterhood and that.
 Of course, I believe in freedom,
 And I'd get into it more, except
 He's so against it.
 Still, what has it to do
 With whether he loves me?
 And how I, a woman,
 Love him? Maybe
 The fault's in me.

But that girl from liberation
 Said a strange thing. She said,
 "Yes, men really are like that,
 And women do want to love for keeps.
 So for you the freedom
 Of a guy's flitting about
 Is hardly freedom, is it?
 Yet freedom is options, and for you
 There's always the other one."

And then she said, "But only you
 Can put it all together
 And choose a woman's liberation."

"Call me, love," she said.

I love the rain
for the memories it brings back
with each tree-shaking gust
that rattles around the windows
and the eaves of the house.
I remember these sounds
and your steps
clicking on the kitchen tile,
thudding on the rugs.
Staying home,
or driving through a summer storm,
I remember your face
lit by the neon-glow of a storm last August.
Let it rain,
I need the memory.

Elise Kirk

CYPRESS TREE WORLD

An unfamiliar place is this;
Trees have breasts,
Bark softens to my touch.
I crawl into the branch-bed
Pillowed in musk-moss,
Twining fingers in down,
Nuzzling the damp.

I will nest here,
Secret from shaded earth,
Open only to the Sun's
Polka-dot love.

Jane Chambers 1970

SCULPTING YOU FROM MEMORY

Excess flesh
Slides down palms,
Pulses homeward.

Small thumbs lift your forehead;
Sturdy cliff,
Carnival lights
Blink below.

Middle fingers stroke temples;
Down cheekbones,
Jawbone frames
Locked smile.

Pliable, moist
Flesh responds;
Lips purse, open.

I cast you in bronze.

Jane Chambers 1970

WOMAN

I am caught up in her;
A child at seaside play
Lifted by the tidal wave.

I am possessed by her;
Jesus' eyes in a painting
Follow you.

She wraps me in her belly
From
Across the room.

Jane Chambers 1970

The Cat and the King

By JENNETTE LEE

She had been up this morning at four o'clock, and had crept out through the gate, almost guiltily, and off across the fields for a long walk. There might be nothing wrong in taking a walk at four o'clock in the morning; perhaps no one would have stayed her in her flight through the college gates, munching her bit of crackers and cheese, had they known. But no one knew. She had carefully *not* inquired . . .

She had had her walk, with the freshness of the spring luring her on, up Redmond Hill, down the slope by Boardman's and along home by the road, gathering from the bushes on either side the great masses of trailing vines that draped her head and shoulders and hung swaying from her arms. It had been a wonderful walk — pulling the vines from the bushes, shaking the dew from the clustering blossoms and drenching herself in freshness.

The blossoms were a faint, greenish white and, with her green-and-white-striped skirt and white blouse as she stood in the gateway looking in on the college halls, the flowers and the twisting stalks of leaves twined about her and framing her in, she might have been the very spirit of the outdoor world peeping shyly in at the halls of learning, curious, wistful and tiptoe for flight.

She stood a moment gazing up at the great masses of brick and stone that made up her college world. The side of the buildings nearest the lodge gate was in shadow and the vines and the dull red of the bricks seemed to hold for her something mysterious and strange. She went slowly up the brick walk, holding in check a sudden longing to turn back, to flee once more to the fields and the little brook that ran gurgling by Boardman's and make a day of it, out in the free world.

It was mysterious and wonderful — this college where her name was enrolled: "Flora Bailey, 1920." But there was something overpowering about it. The great walls that looked so gracious in the fresh morning light had a way of shutting one in, of hampering and binding the movements of freshmen. There were so many things one must and must not do within the gracious walls! Her eye glanced up to a tower of South Parker, high up to a window where silken curtains hung in even folds, and a sigh escaped her lips. One must not make

friends with seniors, for instance, except by invitation — and a senior was very high up!

The curtains parted a little. The girl's eyes glanced quickly. A firm hand pushed back the curtains and a figure stood between them looking out on the morning. The lifted head bore a mass of reddish hair gathered carelessly, and the light that fell on the tallest peaks and gables of the college touched it with gold. To the freshman, gazing from her walk, it was as if a goddess, high-enshrined and touched by the rising sun, stood revealed. She gave a gasp of pleasure.

It had been a glorious walk out in the dew and sunrise, and now Annette Osler was gazing from her tower window — not on the girl on the college walk, to be sure, but on the world of wonder.

She looked up adoringly at the figure in the tower of South Parker. And the girl high in the window turned a little and looked down. There was no one in sight — only the quiet light of morning on the campus and the wind rippling shadowy waves in the ivy leaves on brick walls. A little rippling wave seemed to run from the walk to the high tower window, and with a gesture of happiness the girl on the walk turned toward the entrance of Gordon Hall. Her pulses sang as she went, her step danced a little, hurrying up the stairs and along the corridor to her room. She opened the door quickly.

Across the room by the window, her roommate, surrounded by books, was taking notes, dipping in here and there with alert pencil. She looked up in swift surprise. "Why, where have you — Oh, how lovely!" Her eye caught the green-and-white blossoms and she sprang up. "Here — I'll get the pitcher!"

She brought a pitcher from the bedroom, and Flora placed the vines in water, standing back to survey them. They trailed down over the window sill and onto the seat below. She touched them with quick fingers. "That will do. We'll arrange them after breakfast."

Her companion had gone back to her task of scooping up notes with flying pencil. She suspended it a minute and looked up. "Do you remember Bainnutter?" she asked absently.

"Bainnutter?" repeated Flora. "I don't seem to remember — was he on the Yale

team?"

Her roommate stared. Then she chuckled. "He's ancient history, Flora dear! Early Egyptian. I was wondering if Doxey would ask us about him. Do you suppose he will?"

Flora wheeled. She regarded her with startled eyes. "History exam! This morning!" she gasped. "I forgot — oh, I forgot!" She seized her books from the table, hunting out a stub of pencil in haste. "I hate 'em all — everybody that's had any history done about 'em. I hate 'em!" she said savagely.

"Why, I thought you liked history! You did splendidly in the February exam. You're such a clever thing! I wish I were!" She sighed deeply and returned to her scooping and dredging.

The roommate's name was Aspasia — Aspasia Elton. That was another of the perplexing things about college, living night and day with a girl named Aspasia. It made life topsy-turvy. No one at home had names out of history books.

Aspasia glanced at her casually. "Better cram on Rameses II," she said kindly. "They say he's dippy on Rameses!"

The room was quiet. No sound came from the corridors or from the rooms above or below.

The two girls turned leaves and crammed notes. Now and then one of them sighed. Sounds began to come from the corridor — hurried feet in slippers, and splashes and calls from the bathrooms, and bits of conversation floating over transoms.

Flora closed her book with a little shrug. She put a pencil carefully in the place. "Doxey gave me warning last week," she said.

Aspasia looked up. "What a shame!"

"No-o. It's all right. I knew I wasn't doing anything; only I hoped he didn't know. I thought the February exam had fooled him — maybe."

"Anyway, you don't need to worry. Your February mark will carry you through."

"Yes; but it won't put me on the team. That's all I care about, all I've ever cared about," she said slowly.

Aspasia nodded. It was sympathetic and vague. "Well — you can live if you don't make the team. Other folks do."

"I can't!" said Flora.

Her roommate looked at her reflectively. "It's Annette Osler," she announced. "Just because she's captain, you want—"

Flora's face was scarlet. "I don't care if it is!" she murmured.

"Be a sport, Flora! You can't have a crush on a senior—"

"It is not a crush!" said Flora vehemently. "I just want to know Annette because she's the kind of girl I like. And if I get on the team, she'll notice me; she'll have to notice me! There isn't any other way to get to know a senior, is there?" she demanded.

"You're too aspiring," said Aspasia. She gathered up her books and notes. "Come on to breakfast. There's the bell."

"I'm not going to breakfast," said Flora firmly. "I've got to study."

Her roommate reappeared from the bedroom. "You're a weak, sentimental freshman!" she remarked casually.

"I am *not* sentimental! I want to know Annette Osler because she's a great, glorious creature! So, there! Let be teasing, Aspasia."

"Let be teasing! I must save that for Professor Goodwin. Funny English! Did you get it from your grandmother, honey? He'll be sure to ask the 'source', you know."

"Go along!" said Flora crossly.

She was left alone, and there was only the sunlight falling on the green-and-white vines in the window and traveling to the scattered books on the table. She looked at them a minute; then her arms dropped to the table with a little gesture of defeat, and her face dropped to her arms . . .

A bumblebee hummed in the window and went away.

It may have been the blossoms.

She lifted her face and looked at them balefully. If only she had known enough to get up at four o'clock to study instead of going off for that miserable walk! And suddenly the sunrise as it came over Redmond Hill flashed back to her; it brought the song of a bird that trilled softly out of the woods.

Her face seemed to listen to the fluting call. Then it grew thoughtful. If there were some way, some legitimate way, of attracting the attention of a senior! Annette liked the things she liked. Often she watched her setting off alone over the hill that led to the fields. And because she was a freshman she might not hurry after her and say: "Come on for a walk with me!" . . . And suddenly she looked at it. Why not? Why not go to her, this very morning, lay the case before her and ask her to go for a walk? Why not?



... The history exam might as well be cut; she was bound to flunk anyway! She pushed the books aside with a look of distaste. She would do it — and do it now!

There was a sound in the hall. She picked up her book and opened it swiftly to *Rameses II*.

The door swung open on *Aspasia*, one elbow holding careful guard over a glass of milk and two large slices of bread and butter.

Flora sprang up. "You dear!"

Aspasia set the milk on the table and turned, a little breathless. "What do you think? *Annette Osler* has sprained her ankle! They're taking her up to the infirmary now!"

And *Flora* looked at her with a foolish, half-startled smile. "Now isn't that a stupid thing to do!" she said slowly. "How long do you suppose she will have to stay in the infirmary?"

"Oh — ages!" said *Aspasia* carelessly. "A sprained ankle isn't a thing you get over in a day, you know. She'll be there weeks maybe."

And *Flora* looked down at *Rameses II*. "How stupid!" she said to him softly.

It had seemed so simple this morning to go to *Annette*. And now she might have been a thousand miles away, for any chance there was of getting at her.

The history examinations came and went in a maze of gloom. She had flunked of course. She did not care particularly about the flunking, but it was embarrassing to meet Professor *Dockery* on the campus next day; and she made a little skillful detour to evade him — only to see him coming toward her along the path by the elms.

He stopped as she came up and looked down at her consideringly. "You wrote a good paper yesterday; a very good paper indeed!"

"I did!" cried *Flora*.

"I shall withdraw my opposition to your being on the team," he said kindly.

Flora gazed at him mutely. "Now isn't that a shame!" she said swiftly. And she hurried on to the fields, leaving him to extract what sense he could from the wail.

She tramped far that afternoon. A new bird lured her on; and she found a curious hummocky nest on the ground, with a breakfast of shining roots spread out before it. She went down on her knees — a field mouse probably — or a mole perhaps. She wished there were someone to share it with

— the delicately lined dome that her fingers explored and the shining roots at the door ... Her thoughts traveled rebelliously to the infirmary — "weeks perhaps," *Aspasia* said.

When she came in from her walk she went directly to the library and asked for medical books. The librarian bent a keen, spectacled inquiry on her.

"I want them for fiction purposes," explained *Flora*, "for local color."

But when the musty books were laid before her, she had a period of depression. She attacked them in a little gust of discouragement, selecting the most modern-looking one with colored plates and diagrams and opening it at random. The charts and plates held her. Next to outdoors could there be anything more fascinating and mysterious than the human body? Why had no one ever told her about these things!

She looked down curiously at her own hand resting on the book. It seemed to her a new hand, one that she had never seen before. The network of blue veins fascinated her; they were little branching trees or the delicate veining of leaves. She had not guessed people were like that, as wonderful as trees! — like trees really, with all those branches of muscles and nerves and veins.

Perhaps they *were* trees once.

Her mind dreamed on happily. She knew how it felt to be a tree, swaying in the wind with the rain on your leaves. Perhaps she was a tree once, and grew on a hillside, and the squirrels ran up and down and nibbled at branches. She gave a little chuckling laugh in the silence of the library, and the librarian looked over reprovingly from her platform.

Flora made a gesture of apology and plunged again into her search. But it had changed now from seeking to dallying enjoyment. Why had no one told her? And she read on till the librarian touched her on the shoulder and she looked up, blinking.

"The bell has rung," said the librarian reprovingly.

"Oh-h!" breathed *Flora*. "Yes; I want them again, please!" And she hurried off blithely.

It was only as she was making ready for dinner that it occurred to her she had not found what she started out to seek.

But in the evening, in the library again, she came on it. She had almost given up her search and was only looking idly at the oldest of the brown books when her eye fell

on "The Curious Case of *Prudence Small*."

She began to read. And as she read her cheeks glowed and her eyes danced. She looked speculatively at the librarian. The librarian was a small woman, and there were only two other girls in the room. Better wait? She shook her head. She would never have the courage if she waited! She opened the book again to "The Curious Case of *Prudence Small*" and read the details once more — and looked up.

The green-shaded reading lights in the dim room made little ghostly circles about the two girls bending over their books; and the librarian, mounted on her platform, seemed like some priestess of knowledge waiting for mystic rites to begin. *Flora* fixed her eye on her and stood up. The librarian went on counting out cards. *Flora* scraped her chair a little on the floor; and then, as no one paid attention, she gave it a shove that upset it with a clatter and brought the spectacled glance full upon her and a look of annoyance from the girls across the room.

Flora lifted her arms slowly. She gave a long, low moan and subsided gently to the floor.

There was a flurry of green-shaded lights, a glimpse of the librarian's startled face; then the sound of running feet, and the two girls were bending over a rigid figure and lifting it from the floor.

Five minutes later, in the consulting room of the infirmary, the college physician, summoned from a comfortable game of whist, bent above the rigid figure.

Flora's eyes rested trustfully on the physician's face. She had recovered consciousness almost as soon as they had deposited her on the infirmary couch. Five minutes the book said; she judged it must be about five minutes — and she opened her eyes and gazed pensively at the perturbed faces that surrounded her.

The physician dismissed them all with a curt gesture. She brought a basin of water, with a bit of ice tinkling in it, and began to bathe the girl's forehead with swift, sopping strokes.

"I fell," murmured *Flora* dreamily.

Doctor *Worcester* nodded. "You will have a good-sized lump, I'm afraid." She went on sopping with skillful strokes.

Flora's eyes closed meekly. She felt a little thankful for the bump. She had never seen Doctor *Worcester* before, near to, and there was something in the face bent above her that made her wonder how "The

Curious Case of *Prudence Small*" would come out. "There!" The doctor put aside the basin. "I don't think it will be discolored now. How do you feel?" She was looking down at her critically.

Flora's face flushed. She recalled hastily how she felt — and stretched out her arms and rubbed them a little. "I feel better," she said slowly, "only there is a little buzzing in the top of my head, and the soles of my feet are slightly paralyzed, I think."

She said it neatly and glibly and lay with closed eyes, waiting for what might happen.

The doctor's swift eyes studied the passive countenance. "I think we will keep you here tonight," she said quietly.

She touched a bell and gave directions to the nurse. Her fingers rested lightly on *Flora*'s wrist. "We will put her in the ward," she said, "next to Miss *Osler*." She started and glanced sharply down at the wrist under her fingers, and then at the girl's placid face.

She held the wrist a minute and dropped it slowly, her eyes on the face. "I shall look in again before I go to bed. She may need a quieting draft to make her sleep."

From her desk on her platform, the librarian peered over at the doctor, who was standing looking down the green-shaded, quiet room.

"Tell me just what happened," the doctor said briskly.

And while the librarian recounted the meager details of the story, the doctor's thoughtful face surveyed the vacant room and the table where the brown books lay.

"It might have been studying too soon after eating — don't you think?" inquired the librarian helpfully.

"I don't think anything," said the doctor. "I'm puzzled." She walked across to the table and picked up one of the books. "What was she reading?" she asked.

The librarian flushed. "She said she wanted them for fiction purposes; English A, I suppose, don't you?"

But the physician did not reply. She was looking at a page that had fallen open in her hand, perhaps because an energetic elbow had held it pressed back for half an hour. "The patient said, on inquiry, that her head still buzzed a little, and the soles of her feet were slightly paralyzed."

She shut the book with a laugh. "I'll take this along with me. No, I don't think it's serious — a case of nerves maybe."

Her face wore a thoughtful look as she

gave directions to the night nurse in the infirmary and looked over charts. She did not go to the ward, and she left no directions for a sleeping draft for the new patient.

The nurse wondered afterward if the doctor could have forgotten. But there was no sign of restlessness in the ward when she went in a little later. The new patient was asleep. There was only one other patient in the ward, a senior who had sprained her ankle a few days ago. She had been asleep when the new patient was brought in. The nurse stepped very softly and passed out of the shaded ward, drawing the door to behind her.

Flora opened her eyes. Through the chink of door a light burned dimly. And through the open window beside her the moonlight streamed in. The infirmary was at the top of the building, and she could look down on the sleeping world and off at the great clouds drifting and swinging against a blue-black sky. She turned her head a little. The senior was asleep, one hand tucked under her cheek, the reddish hair gathered into a quaint cap; the moonlight, touching the quiet face, made it seem like a child's. Flora gazed with devoted happy eyes. The little pricks of conscience that had stirred in her under the doctor's inquiring gaze subsided. She felt happy and at home for the first time in her college life.

Something flew across the window, shutting out the moon, with great flapping wings. She turned quickly; a bat maybe – no, too large for a bat! . . . The doctor's keen eyes flitted before her, and she sighed a little and moved restlessly and caught a glimpse of her hand lying on the coverlet. How pale it was in the moonlight! She lifted it curiously and gazed at the delicate strangeness of it – all the little veins and bones and tissues. They were made of moonlight! Charts and diagrams floated before her – filmy lungs, delicate branching nerves, all the mysterious network of wonder.

Then her mind flashed to the mole's nest and shining roots. And she gazed again at the pillowed head in its cap. Tomorrow she would tell Annette! Tomorrow – and a whole week to come! She was not sentimental! She only wanted to know Annette – and take long walks – with Annette. Her eyelids drooped a little. She tried to prop them open, to gaze at the beloved face. She wanted to show Annette the mole's nest and the breakfast-of-roots . . . And she

trailed away into a dream world, carrying the mole's nest and the little roots with her far down into her sleep . . .

When she opened her eyes they were gazing straight into a pair of gray ones framed in a curious cap. The gray eyes smiled.

"Hello!" said the senior. "Did you drift in in the night?"

And Flora smiled back shyly. No need to talk or make advances now. There would be a week – a whole week –

The senior sat up and reached for a purple robe that hung at the head of the bed and drew it about her. It was a gorgeous robe with tracings of gold running over it; and, as she gathered it about her shoulders, a lock of the reddish hair escaped from her cap and fell across it. She made a royal picture for watching eyes.

She tucked in the escaped lock with half-apologetic fingers. "Stupid, to wear a cap! But my hair tangles so!"

"I like it," said Flora promptly. "I think it looks – quaint!"

"Thank you!" said the senior. She turned a smiling glance. A little look of surprise touched it. "Why, you're the wood nymph – green and white!" she exclaimed. "I saw you the other morning, didn't I, coming in, before breakfast!"

"I'd been for a walk," said Flora.

"You were a little bit of all outdoors!" said the senior laughing. She stretched her arms in a restful gesture and looked about the sun-filled room. "Glorious day, isn't it? Perfect – for the game!" She glanced at Flora kindly. "Too bad you'll miss it. Are you in for long?"

"I don't know," said Flora happily. "They haven't found out yet what's the matter with me." She stopped short.

The senior had thrown back the covers and was sitting on the edge of the bed, gathering her robe about her.

Flora's startled gaze held her. "You'll hurt your foot!"

"My foot?" She glanced down at it and thrust it into a purple slipper by the bed, and stood upright – on both feet. "I didn't hurt it at all – not really. But they thought I'd better be careful. Rest for a day or two – on account of the game. Too bad you can't come!"

She had knotted her girdle about her and was moving toward the door with vigorous stride.

"Oh-ah!" gasped Flora. She waved her hands in a helpless gesture.

The senior glanced back. "Yes?" she said.

"Did you – did you ever happen to see – a mole's nest?" asked Flora. It came in a little jerk, almost a cry of pain.

"A mole-s – nest?" The senior paused doubtfully. "I don't think so. It sounds interesting!" But there was a laughing note in the voice that brought a quick flush to the freshman face.

"It might have been a field mouse," said Flora weakly.

The senior's eyes were laughing now and she nodded kindly. "I hope you won't have to stay long. But they're awfully good to you here – take the best care of you!" And she nodded again and was gone.

And Flora gazed for a moment where the purple cloud of glory had been. It vanished into a misty blur; and she subsided, a bundle of sobs, under the tumbled clothes.

Doctor Worcester appeared in the doorway. The hunched-up figure in the bed by the window was very quiet. Only a damp handkerchief pressed tight over two eyes was visible, and a tumbled mop of hair.

The doctor came in, glancing about the sun-filled room with a look of pleasure. The infirmary ward was always a cheerful place, but never so attractive as when all the beds were vacant – or nearly all. The fewer heads on pillows the better, to Doctor Worcester. She was a tall, motherly woman, with snow-white hair and a little stoop of the broad shoulders that seemed to take something from the keenness of the straight-glancing dark eyes. She wore a white dress of soft material and in her hand she carried a book, an oldish-looking book in brown covers.

She sat down by the bed and the brown book rested unobtrusively on her lap. For a time there was silence in the room. The doctor's chair creaked a little as she rocked. Outside the window great white clouds were floating; the sunshine in the room had something of the same cloudlike quality of ethereal lightness. Only the huddled figure on the bed was darkened with grief.

"They tell me you didn't eat your breakfast," said the doctor tranquilly.

"I didn't want any." It was muffled and subdued.

"It would have been better to eat it," said the doctor.

"How long do I have to stay here?" asked the voice from the clothes.

The doctor's chair creaked. "Well, it

depends. I have to find out first just what's the matter with you. It seems to be – a curious – case."

The words came slowly, and one small ear emerged above the bedclothes and cocked itself with almost startling alertness.

The doctor gazed at the ear attentively. "If you get on all right, of course you will not have to stay long, not more than a week or so –"

There was a movement of the clothes and a muffled sound from beneath.

"But of course if you are foolish and cry –"

The handkerchief moved briskly and drew back from one eye, and the eye gazed down at the doctor intelligently. After a moment it dropped and traveled downward and reached – the brown book. "o-h-h!" said Flora. She sat up swiftly and wiped both eyes and gazed at the book.

The doctor's hand rested on it. She nodded quietly. "Wouldn't you better tell me all about it?" she asked.

Flora gazed from the window at the great clouds traveling by. Her short upper lip trembled. "I just read about her – in the book." She waved her hand. "And so I – I did it."

"Yes; I'd got as far as that myself," said the doctor. "But why?"

The two souls were silent. The doctor had brought up three daughters. There was something about this alert-eyed freshman that touched her interest – and her sense of humor.

"You didn't do it because you wanted to meet me, did you?" The shot was closer than she knew, and Flora cast a quick glance at her.

"I didn't know about you. If I had, I'd have done it maybe." Her eyes had a look of shy pleasure.

The doctor laughed out. "Pretty good – for a freshman!" She held up the book. "Was it reading this put it into your head?"

"I thought of it first, and then I hunted in the library. I didn't know she was there. I was just looking for a disease – a disease that was quick and easy to have, you know – and I came on Prudence."

"I thought so," said the doctor with a look of satisfaction. "Go on, please."

So, little by little, the story came out, sometimes in bold sweeps and sometimes with Flora's back half turned and her eyes following shyly the great white clouds that went billowing by in the sky. She told it all – even to the catastrophe of the mole's

nest, Annette's laughing exit and her own tragic grief.

But a little smile touched the words as she ended. "And that's all," she said.

"You're not looking at it sentimentally any more," said the doctor practically.

The face flushed. "I wasn't sentimental," swiftly, "not exactly sentimental, I guess. Only it's hard sometimes to tell. Your feelings got mixed up so."

She glanced inquiringly at the doctor, who nodded with amused face. "That is one of the discoveries of science," she replied.

Flora looked at it. She shook her head. "You're not making fun of me?" she inquired timidly.

"Not in the least!" said the doctor.

"Anyway — that's the way it was. I wanted to know her. She's so beautiful! Don't you think she's beautiful?"

"Yes," said the doctor gravely.

Flora nodded. "And she likes walks, the way I do. But it was the mole's nest. Maybe it was a field mouse," she said reflectively. "Anyway, I wanted to show it to her. It was so wonderful!" She sighed softly. "It seemed as if I couldn't stand it not to have her see it. And I was lonely, looking at it all alone! You see it's all mixed up." She looked appealingly at the doctor.

"I see," said the doctor.

"The little roots were shiny and laid out for breakfast, as if somebody was coming back in a minute. And it was all still around, and the light in the sky just growing pink. It almost hurts you when things are like that. You can't help being lonely." She had forgotten the doctor and the infirmary. She seemed to see only the shining roots and the little nest on the ground. "I guess it's because it's like me, inside," she was saying softly, "the way I am inside — all little branches and bones and shining things."

The doctor leaned forward to catch the words. Perhaps she asked a question or two. Her steady eyes watched the girl's face as the story went on — the discovery of the charts and diagrams, and the swift response and delight in them.

The doctor sat very quiet. This was the sort of thing one sometimes came on, once in an age! And the child had supposed she was playing a prank — getting to know a senior! And the books she opened were life! The doctor had watched girls come and go, reaching out to choose some nothing. And now and then it seemed to her a gentle hand reached down and touched the chosen

nothing and it became shining, a crystal ball holding life in its roundness.

The doctor was a scientist. To her also the human body was mysterious and wonderful, and often she seemed to graze the edge of truth and catch a glimpse of the unity that binds life in one. She looked at the girl, who had finished speaking and was lying back watching the sky and the clouds moving in it. "Which of your studies do you like best?" she asked gently.

The girl turned. "I hate 'em all," swiftly. "History's worst, I think — studying about Rameses II and mummy things!" She threw out her hands. "It's wicked — when there's all outdoors and all the beautiful things inside of us!"

She had spread both hands across her chest, as if to cover as much territory as possible; and to the doctor there was something almost tragic in the gesture. Her eyes dwelt on the small figure — the disheveled hair and round eyes and reddened lids.

"You'd like to study biology, I suppose," she said reflectively.

"Everything that's alive," said Flora promptly.

"Perhaps you'd better have your breakfast now — and keep alive yourself."

And Flora ate it, propped against the pillows, the brown book lying on the foot of the bed. Now and then she cast a swift, resentful look at the book. But she was hungry and the marmalade was good and it was a wonderful day.

And then she glanced at the window and remembered suddenly the game that she was not to see!

The doctor had returned and was standing by the bed, looking down and smiling. "All through?" she asked serenely.

Flora nodded. "I was pretty hungry," she acknowledged.

"I thought so." The doctor removed the tray.

"How long do I have to stay here?" meekly.

The doctor sat down. She seemed to ignore the question. "I've been thinking about a biology course for you. There isn't any class you could go into just now."

"No," Flora sighed. "I didn't suppose there would be. Perhaps I can do it after I'm through being educated." She said it with a gleam of mischief, and the doctor laughed out.

"How would you like to work in my laboratory, once a week?"

Flora leaned forward, breathless. "To study, with you!"

"Well — study, or call it what you like. I am working there Saturdays, and I generally have a student with me to help and look on. Sometimes she experiments a little herself."

"Oh!" It was a sigh of pure joy.

"It's usually a senior of course. In fact, I have a senior now." She was watching the glowing face. "Annette Osler is helping me this year."

Flora's face flushed; then the joy in it laughed out. "I don't deserve that, do I?" she said softly.

The telephone sounded in the next room and the doctor left her a moment. When she returned she glanced at her with a little smile. "Do you think you are feeling well enough to get up?"

The girl sat up with a swift glance of hope.

The doctor nodded. "It's from the team. Someone has given out; they are calling for

the next reserve. I thought of you" — she looked teasingly and dubiously. Then she smiled. "Well, go along! And remember you're to come to me Saturday."

She went toward the door. She turned and looked back. "I forgot. You are to report at once to the captain — in her room."

Ten minutes later, in the morning of clouds and wind, a small figure in knickerbockers and blouse, with hair in a braid down its back, was scudding along the walk that led to South Parker. The braid of hair was tied with green-and-white ribbon and it swung gayly behind as the figure scudded on.

(THE CAT AND THE KING first appeared in the LADIES' HOME JOURNAL in October, 1919. Although the world keeps changing, obviously human emotions do not.)

Wildflower Woman

By SUSAN STAFF

I stumbled over her. Well, nearly. Hardly a minute from the freeway where I planned to leave the car idling and let who would find me sleeping the final sleep, I crashed into her domain.

I was thinking, of course. Every system of my computerized body is programmed to motion. Changing Tracy's diapers, packing Kevin's jelly sandwich, posting Rob at the train station — I've been committed to motion for so long that I have out-programmed myself.

Unable to sit still long enough for prescription drugs or monoxide gas to stop the motion, I fled from the car and ran blindly over the edge of the freeway until she stopped me.

She was conspicuous because she sat motionless offering no pseudo smile in response to my "excuse me". My voice rang impersonal, like the tone you use when you've bumped a shopper with your mart basket or trampled an anonymous toe in a crowded elevator. I heard myself chattering syllables, words, meaningless phrases. They sounded louder in her presence than on the freeway. She didn't try to smile or answer them.

Shreds of meadow grass seeded and

September dry clung to her brown denim thighs. She had spread her wool plaid jacket tablecloth-like and set it with a profusion of lake cress, unhatched milkweed pods and samplings of daisies and berries too common to identify. Some were back yard weeds — the kind Kevin carried in — that find their way into juicer glass vases and go wilted into the disposal after he has gone to bed.

"You must be a biologist," I rambled, despairing that I couldn't lure her into the comfortable abyss of conversation. The lake lapped noisily among the stones snickering at my embarrassment. Grass rattled about my feet. Birds screamed at me. Wind whispered inaudible criticisms from the dark trees boxing the meadow into the lake. She didn't notice.

"Bring me a bit of that candy root, please." She didn't raise her head. I looked about babbling my apology for standing in and walking on the ratty little pink weed she mentioned. She picked a bloom close to my shoe without looking up. I resented that — not because she displayed any self-satisfaction at knowing the name of the weed she picked. It was her way; the air of kinship with the flower she held more tenderly than I carressed Tracy or Kevin or Rob.

The flower seemed contemptible in that instant. I hated her too. I waited needing her to notice me when she looked up from what she was doing.

Minutes of shrieking silence allowed me to study her rabbit colored hair, coarse and harshly chopped across the back of her neck. I knew that the face she buried in her business would be broad, plain and strewn with fifty years of crow's feet.

I knew her type — unfeminine and anti-frills, thrusting their brashness into the public eye; out-braining, out-brawning and outlandish in their criticisms of the male dominated world. I knew her before she looked up. Her face was their faces mocking me through television screens and news magazines.

"There aren't many of these left," she said. "They're lovely, don't you think? More delicate than crystal?"

I looked at the weed she handed me avoiding gray eyes studying my face as deliberately as they examined wildflowers. I felt unmistakable vibrations — the kind of telepathy Rob and I share when Tracy and Kevin are in bed and dinner was just right. Her proximity reminded me that I was unkempt, brunch dress and house shoes dashed on in the rush to make Rob's train, Kevin's bus and drop Tracy at the day nursery.

"We must be careful now," she went on. "The little things get passed over so easily. There aren't many left."

Three fishermen idled by us canoeing close to shore. They saw us half hidden in tall grass and squat dogwood bushes. Was it obvious from where they sat — what she was? Of course. The mistake would be inevitable from that distance. She looked that masculine.

I felt secure while the canoe was in sight. Always, I find isolation unbearable. It's like I don't exist if there is only my reflection to prove it. She didn't crowd my isolation — not like the fishermen and clots of friends and contacts I conversed with daily in rounds of verbal confusion.

She was like that early morning silence when I wake up nervous and the clock-radio hum becomes a nightmare — when I take pills to lull me into breakfast bedlam. She was like the lake noises mocking me, the wind whispering so I couldn't hear it, like disquieting bird screams.

I tried to imagine her buzzing down the freeway or talking cross-legged at a cocktail party. I pictured her shouting from a television newsreel. I slipped her coarse countenance into every slot my computer imagination could conceive. One pattern wouldn't compute. It was her heavy hand,

light on the wildflower she showed me.

"There aren't many left, you know. Lovely, don't you think?"

Her gray eyes penetrating evenly, persistently.

"We must be more careful. The little things are passed over so easily. There aren't many left."

She watched the fishermen, letting their canoe pass quietly from her, reabsorbing the weed samples on her plaid jacket.

"What are you doing with those?" My voice cracked like clumsy feet in a thicket.

Something hormonal in her tone spoke more of spiritual depth than masculinity. She slipped some grasses into the pages of a dark-bound ledger. The wild asters and candy root she gathered into a small nosegay. She proved herself to me — rising from broad haunches and pulling her seedy jacket over wide shoulders.

"Nothing." She shrugged noting the weeds she had wasted on the ground with a smile of tender apology. She studied me with the same tenderness, more profound than a myriad of poetic regrets. "I just enjoy them."

I knew her type: rough-featured, boisterous, angry, aggressive. I felt her dissatisfaction intruding upon the orderliness of my living room. She knew me too — soap and supermarket, wet diapers and brocaded sandals; a perfumed, pipe-and-slippers mouse unwilling to stand up with her.

She lumbered along the lake rim, her gentle gestures lost in walking, leaving her trace of softness in the discarded nosegay of asters and wild candy root. Vibrations lingered from the pressure of her gray eyes, strong enough to drag me down the lake's edge after her disappearing shoulders.

My coded, carded self eased the car onto the freeway flashing chrome bumper smiles

CHANGING YOUR ADDRESS?

If you are planning to move, please let us know six weeks before changing your address. Please send your old address and your new address, clearly marked. You MUST include BOTH your old and new zip codes. REMEMBER, third class mail is not forwardable. Send to CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT, THE LADDER, P.O. Box 5025, Washington Station, Reno, Nev. 89503.

front and rear. Pills in purse, monoxide cop-out flowing freely from the exhaust pipe, I traced the route from Tracy's nursery school to Kevin's bus stop, the pharmacy, dry cleaners, supermarket.

At home, over the screaming dishwasher, television, Kevin's road racer noise, and the sound of dinner cooking too slowly, I watched her vanishing at the lake rim. Mental nosegays of wild candy root more delicate than crystals took me gently through dinner. Feathery and feminine, I

felt awkward remembering her plain face and even gaze.

Odd that I who nursed and nourished nature inside me did not possess her tenderness for living things. I always crashed through thickets and trampled wild flowers. Tangled by talking and tarnished with tasks — taking out, changing, picking up and carrying in, I had overlooked tenderness as subtly as I lost her image passing the rim of the lake that fall morning.

Cross Currents

TOKENISM, WOMEN IN BUSINESS, WOMEN IN RELIGION, ETC. We still receive about 20 clippings each 60-day period between issues of THE LADDER in each of these general areas. Articles concern some 20 or so women who have become something women weren't allowed to become a few short years, weeks or days ago. An example this time is law professor Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who has become a full professor at Columbia University for the first time in the institution's 114-year history. And about 20 clippings about women creeping slowly into church positions (very slowly) and the latest "tokenism" in that with the increasing difficulty in attracting top male graduates into the fields of business and business related professions, some women are being recruited. We are happy to see this and encourage even more clippings, but we doubt progress in these areas has any wide meaning for women in general. The trend toward fitting a black woman (killing two birds) into a previous male post continues, i.e., the recent election of Dr. Wynona Lipman to the New Jersey State Senate.

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S LIBERATION UNDER ATTACK: Sydney, Australia, May 10, 1971. We have just learned that the Postmaster General of Brisbane has closed the women's liberation movement post office box. Reason for this was a mild pamphlet on abortion and female sexuality circulated by the group. If you think its rough in the U.S., thank your stars you don't live "down under".

WOMEN MARCH IN CANADA: November 20, 1971. We received a good selection of Canadian clippings about the demonstration for abortion law reform in that country. Over 250 women marched in

Montreal (this is a strongly Catholic and conservative city and that is an amazing turnout) and front-page publicity was the rule rather than the exception. Good for our Northern sisters.

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS? New York, December, 1971. A Roman Catholic law professor has had himself appointed guardian of the unborn fetuses of New York City in an effort to force women to have children whether they want them or not. So far the courts are bucking him as much as assisting him, but if you ever wondered just how sexist the human male is, think about this development.

SHIRLEY WHEELER FIGHTING FOR HER LIFE: Daytona Beach, Florida, December 4, 1971. 23-year-old Shirley Wheeler is still fighting being sent to jail following her conviction for having an abortion.

MORE ON SESAME STREET: Jane Bergman of the NEW YORK TIMES (January 2, 1972) wrote a stinging indictment of the viciously sexist program, Sesame Street, which is being force fed to virtually every young male and female child in the country. The damage that the image of women (or rather, the almost total lack of women as other than mothers or housewives or children pretending to be either mothers and/or housewives) on this program does to the already luckless female child seems likely to be extensive. Do we have to tolerate this?

WE'RE OUT OF THE CLOSET: CHICAGO DAILY NEWS, January 7, 1972. More and more of the young, whose incomes cannot be jeopardized by their statements, are making public acknowledgements of their Lesbianism. Susan Kahn and Linda Shear, co-editors of LAVENDAR



GENE DAMON (left) and ROBIN MORGAN

WOMEN, a Chicago Lesbian paper, were interviewed by Patricia Moore. Very positive material showing the wisdom of Lesbians sticking with women's liberation and not with gay liberation is included in the interview.

MOTHERS WORKING TO END SEXIST EDUCATION: New York City, January 8, 1972. Mothers whose children attend Woodward School in Brooklyn have formed a group called the Sex Roles Committee to try to keep their children from being educated into traditional sexist roles.

BLACK WOMEN MEET: Chicago, January 9, 1972. Over 200 black women from all over the country met for a two-day symposium to discuss their differences from the overall women's liberation movement. Emphasis was placed on the fact that middle class black women tended to overlook the more numerous lower class black women in much the same way that many middle class white women tend to ignore both blacks and lower class white women.

New York, January 30, 1972. This day saw the forming of the Coalition of 100 Black Women, though actually more than 200 women belong to the group. Intention is to gain political leverage, and, since Representative Shirley Chisholm is a leader in the group, they might just get it done.

H.E.W. REPORT SURPRISING: January 12, 1972. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare, surprisingly, prepared a report on the status of American women and indicted itself as being rampantly biased. Sadly, it reports that from college campuses to doctors' offices, discrimination against women exists in virtually every aspect of life. We know this, and we do not need it proved . . . we need it stopped.

AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH IN TROUBLE: The nation's largest single employer, with over one million employees, is under attack from the government over its sexist (and racist) policies, and is also being attacked by many of its female employees. We do not know the outcome, but the noise in the press is surely helping.

WHAT PRICE WHORING? VILLAGE VOICE, January 13, 1972. Writer Susan Brownmiller, one of the organizers of a New York City "Womans Conference on Prostitution" which ended in a brou-ha-ha discussed and rediscussed in **VILLAGE VOICE** and other newspapers, provided the following: "Prostitution is as old as slavery. Prostitution is slavery. Prostitution is Man's

rental of Woman's body. The victim is the woman. The victim is all women. If one man can buy a woman's body, then it is presumed that all women are for sale. What is Sex? Sex is something that men want from me and are willing to pay for. What price whoring? Fifteen years ago I learned that with my youth, my looks and a good crying act, I could command \$150 on the sex-flesh market, the body commodity exchange. Top dollar for a half hour of my time and a serviceable vagina. ABC, NBC, **NEWSWEEK** or the **VILLAGE VOICE** never paid me as much. It is no accident that the best paid women in America today are not corporation executives, baseball players, or 'elitist writers' but a handful of movie stars, models and high-priced white call girls. Replaceable, interchangeable objects of sex. Next year's broken toys."

BERNICE GERA MAY YET WIN: Albany, N.Y., January 14, 1972. The New York State Court of Appeals has ruled that the Professional Baseball League (of New York/Pennsylvania) has practiced illegal discrimination in refusing to employ Bernice Gera as an umpire. This case has been going on since 1967. The decision definitely opens the doors to women in this previously all-male field.

NOT MANY BOOKS FOR GIRLS: **LIBRARY JOURNAL,** January 15, 1972, has a good article, "Reducing the Miss Muffet Syndrome", on the paucity of books for girls that present girls and women in other than idiot roles. A fairly good bibliography is included for librarians and others charged with supplying good books to younger women.

SOME BAD-ASSED DYKE: **VILLAGE VOICE,** January 20, 1972. That marvelous heading could come only from the pen of Jill Johnston, though it is, in this case, not too relevant to the column which concerns a quickie course in Emily Dickinson, some Sylvia Plath, a bit of Nina Simone, and if you haven't started reading Jill Johnston you should. (The January 13, 1972, column, "Stamp Out Clitoral Imperialism", is worth a look too.)

CHILDREN NOT NECESSARILY AWARDED TO MOTHERS: **TIME,** January 31, 1972, reports that anywhere from 8% to 25% of custody cases now are ending with children being awarded to fathers. This is a substantial change from the not so long ago practice of awarding children automatically to the mother regardless of financial or other circumstances.

NATALIE CLIFFORD BARNEY IS DEAD: Paris, February 3, 1972. 94-year-old Natalie Clifford Barney, American expatriate, died at her home in Paris. Her death marks the end of the literary circle she established in the early 1900's in her 18th-century pavilion on the Rue Jacob. Famous as the lover of poet Renee Vivien, painter Romaine Brooks and other equally famous women in the arts more than as an artist, Ms. Barney did publish a book of poetry, essays, a novel and some reminiscences. Only one of her works has been translated into English (her poetry) and this is unobtainable or so expensive as to be out of reach. A later issue of THE LADDER will contain a biographical article about Barney and her circle.

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON YOUTH DISAVOWED BY ADMINISTRATION: In April, 1971, in Estes Park, Colorado, a group of young men and women met to discuss their political views. In January, 1972, the U.S. Printing Office published the report of this meeting, but there was little or no publicity because embarrassed administration officials had disavowed the results. Among other things, the group felt "all social sexual oppression of homosexuals and Lesbians must end".

BURIED IN FALSE SIGNATURES: WOMEN IN ART: A January, 1972, article by Jacquin Sanders of Newsweek Features appeared in several newspapers. Evidence is increasing showing that many paintings attributed to various male artists were the work of lesser-known women artists (lesser known only by virtue of their sex and not their talent, as proven by the attributions themselves). The most outstanding example is the evidence that many so-called "Tintoretto's" are probably not by Jacopo Tintoretto, the father, but by his daughter, Marietta.

SAN FRANCISCO DAUGHTERS OF BILITIS SURVEY: January, 1972. A study of women, done by women, is now being conducted by the San Francisco D.O.B. with the financial assistance of N.O.W. (National Organization for Women). If you are willing to be part of this research, write to: Dr. Ruth McGuire, 1005 Market Street, Room 208, San Francisco, Calif., 94103. You will receive a pre-questionnaire designed to examine women's attitudes toward Lesbians and you will be asked for your opinions on the validity of the questions. These questions will then go into creating a final questionnaire designed to



Robin Morgan, Editor of SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL

examine all women's attitudes about themselves and other women.

POLITICS POLITICS: January and February, 1972. All over the country women are forming political alliances with each other on varying levels to get more women into the system as it now stands. We aren't sure how useful this action is, but it is at least helpful to some extent. Truly Margaret Chase Smith needs company and Washington's "Women's Action Alliance" and New Jersey and New York's "Women's Political Caucus" might just accomplish this.

AMAZON WOMEN REALLY DID EXIST IN SOUTH AMERICA: Gene Savoy, a 44-year-old explorer, has discovered fairly convincing proof that the centuries old tales of a tribe of tall blonde women warriors in the Amazon jungle were more than just legend. A larger group of anthropologists and archeologists will be returning to the site located by Savoy this next year, to try to uncover more evidence.

SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW: Joan of Arc has long been a bothersome woman. She had to be burned at the stake

to start with, and then she had to be argued about by the male celibates of the Roman Catholic Church for a long time before they decided that a little error had been made and she was really a saint and not a sinner (except for that old original sin). Now comes a male Oxford University Professor, one F.E. Kenyon, who has assured us of something else that worries males and the Roman Catholic Church quite a bit namely, he has relieved us of the uncomfortable suspicion that Joan might possibly have been a Lesbian. What he says is: "The warrior Saint's predilection for men's clothes was for protection when she was with troops and in male company." He goes on to say: "Despite the French heroine's transvestism, physical prowess and apparent 'masculine' drive (sic), there is no very convincing evidence in her history of overt Lesbianism." He does concede that Joan had a girlfriend Haviette, but "their habit of sleeping together was a common custom at the time". Is that so?

ORDINATION OR SUBORDINATION: Special to THE LADDER. "Historically," so writes Faith Ritale, an Episcopalian seminarian working toward priesthood, "the Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican Churches have always welcomed women's money and housewifely back-breaking chores around the Church but have never put a woman in an equitable light, although Jesus Christ did. The recent ordination of two matronly-type Anglican women in November, 1971, in Hong Kong is not really a break-through but rather a perpetuation of the type of woman men will 'allow near' the altar and the priesthood. The first woman ordained to the Anglican priesthood in 1944 was divested of her priestly authority before she ever had the opportunity to exercise it, having been ordained to minister to the incarcerated in a war-time concentration camp in Hong Kong. Throughout history there have been Christian women priests, generally transvestites, although their history is obscure. The 'Church' is the last vestige of male chauvinism and for the misogynist male to surrender his cassock and alb (long skirt-like vestments) to a woman is a crushing blow to their 'mythical masculinity'. On the U.S. scene, Episcopalian women preparing for ordination have banded together into an organization appropriately called "The Episcopal Women's Caucus" which maintains instantaneous communication with its membership and potential members, issuing a newsletter and



ROBIN MORGAN

holding national and regional meetings. If there is any hope for the Episcopal Church, it must come through equal opportunity for all members or die."

HOT PANTS SI, LONG PANTS NO: Washington, D.C., January 1972. House of Representatives rules forbid women employees to wear long pants but not hot pants. Major reason cited being that the Representatives like to look at legs. Whose representatives?

WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND INSURANCE: One of the blessings of liberation now being prematurely visited on young "single" women is increased automobile insurance. Note that we get the disadvantages but not the advantages. Articles on this particular subject appeared in newspapers from both coasts during January, 1972.

MALE SCIENTIST URGES "LET WOMEN RULE THE WORLD": Dr. Peter A. Corning of the Institute of Behavioral Genetics at the University of Colorado, argues that women would be much better suited to handle the world, and put an end to war and other similar male goodies.

COMPUTER CHAUVINIST PIG: Stanford University has a computer that talks to men, but will not talk to women. Of course, male programmers decided this particular bit of foolishness. Excuses? Well, women "have a different way of speaking". Yes,

yes, they do, and a different way of everything else. Praise be!

UNITARIAN-UNIVERSALIST SEARCH: The Unitarian-Universalist Gay Caucus is looking for U/U Lesbians all over the U.S. East of the Rockies contact Julie Lee, P.O. Box 62, Fanwood, N.J. 07023. West of the Rockies contact Rev. Richard Nash, 3338 Adrita Street, Los Angeles, Calif. 90065.

DR. ESTELLE RAMEY URGES WOMEN "TAKE OVER THRONE": Stop being the "power behind the throne" and take it over altogether, says Georgetown University Medical School gland specialist. Dr. Ramey, it will be recalled, became nationally prominent when she made an ass out of a prominent male doctor over his assertions that women were biologically unsuited to some employment. Since that time Dr. Ramey has been on a national speaking circuit, working for increased political power for women.

GLADYS DIAZ REFUSES A PRIZE: Chilean Woman journalist, Gladys Diaz, refused the \$500 Helena Rubenstein Foundation award saying that the cosmetics industry "exploits" women and she doesn't wish to be associated with it. Considering what \$500 in U.S. dollars can buy in Chile, this was a considerable refusal.

F.E.M. ANGLE: CHICAGO SUN TIMES (Feature). A number of clippings from this small column have been sent to us. Each day they run a letter showing some minor bit of sexist treatment of women. Some of them are so blatant we wonder how the women can tolerate the incidents.

WOMEN AT ANNAPOLIS: As this is being written there is much publicity surrounding the possibility of two women being appointed to Annapolis despite the hostility of Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Elmo Zumwalt. Both women are qualified, and their sponsors, Michigan Congressman Jack McDonald and New York Senator Jacob Javits are pushing the issue.

WOMEN TOP STUDENTS: Columbia University Law School class of 1973 contains 368 students, and of these 46 are women. The three top students in the class are all women.

"MOTHER" NOW "PROUD WOMAN": The Lesbian newspaper, MOTHER, begun just last year, has changed its format and editorial policy and name. Formerly primarily Lesbian, but slanted towards gay liberation (males), MOTHER was finding it difficult to attract an audience since most



ROBIN MORGAN

Lesbians are into women's liberation. Accordingly, PROUD WOMAN will be a 12 page bi-monthly newspaper dealing with Lesbian and women's liberation material. Cost has been raised to \$5 a year, regular mail, \$6.50 airmail.

LET'S GET TOGETHER — A newsletter for women temporary employees who work for agencies. The newsletter will be made up from letters from temporary employees citing fact cases of injustice which cannot be legally proved. Write us a letter. We will wait on response before making this a subscription item, but the first copy will be 35c. Address: Winifred Gandy, 2425 Riverside Place, Los Angeles, California 90039.

SEVEN OUT OF EIGHT: February, 1972 Sapporo, Japan. It took 12 men to win the Silver medal for hockey for the United States. While they were doing this, six U.S. women were winning seven other medals (one greedy girl won two of them) at the Winter Olympic Games.

TWO HUNDRED PLUS ATTEND LESBIAN CONFERENCE: YELLOW SPRINGS, OHIO, February 11-13, 1972. Yellow Springs is a small Ohio town more or less centered around Antioch College. In this unlikely middle western setting over

200 Lesbians met to work on some of the problems of Lesbian liberation. Women from all over the midwest and both coasts were represented and while we have no formal report, informal reports would indicate a successful and enjoyable meeting. A second conference is tentatively scheduled for the weekend of May 21, 1972 at Ohio State in Columbus, Ohio.

ROBIN MORGAN SPEAKING VARIOUS AREAS: Kansas City, Missouri, February 16, 1972. Robin Morgan spoke at

University of Missouri-Kansas City on this day, enabling THE LADDER editor to hear her for the first time. Indeed, to hear any prominent spokeswoman for women's liberation. Any notion any of you may have about being too "into" the movement, perhaps too blasé to enjoy a basic talk on the things we all know too well about our oppression, might be happily surprised to forget that idea and go and hear Robin (and others who tour and talk) if you get the chance.

PRACTICAL SELF-DEFENSE

(BARE HANDS, NO GIMMICKS)

We offer these protective measures with the knowledge that in every city in the U.S. every day . . . hundreds of women are assaulted, robbed, raped. This won't solve all the problems but it might help if a few of us learned a little about caring for our safety without help.

To prevent trouble:

1. have a good dead bolt lock on your door.
2. when out at night alone hold your head up, stay alert. If you walk with your head down, unaware, you look like a good victim.

If attacked:

1. don't hit the man in the chest or arms because there is too much muscle there,
2. don't try to pull your arm loose if he grabs it because he's stronger and you would be wasting time, instead attack. If you surprise him with a blow you may get a chance to free yourself and run. Don't try to fight.

Blows:

1. chop with the edge of hand (keep hand taut).

Chop to:

- a. adam's apple
- b. bridge of nose (kills by driving tissue thin bone into brain).

c. groin

2. Clapping both your hands over his ears at the same time (practice by cupping your hands over someone's ears — allow no space for air. This creates a vacuum when you hit and causes brain damage or kills.) Be careful practicing this, don't actually make contact because a slight hit even on one ear can cause damage.
3. Hit him on the back between shoulder blades with both hands in a rabbit punch. This staggers the heart.
4. Kick in the groin.
5. If grabbed from behind, look back and locate his foot, stomp down hard on top breaking bones in his foot. (Don't stomp wildly — look).
6. If he grabs you around the neck, grab his wrist with one hand to capture it and with your other hand take one of his small fingers and bend it backward, breaking it.

PRACTICE so that you can react immediately with some useful defense.



Readers Respond

Dear Ms. Damon:

I maintain that some women now claiming to be Lesbians are, in fact, not, and I have divided these pseudos into four groups. Elitist and snobbish as this sounds, the types are readily recognizable.

The first group are the Masochists. Certainly, Lesbians can be masochists too, but these people are non-Lesbian masochists who say they are Lesbians because they've discovered that that's the easiest, fastest, and most rewarding way to get kicked in the teeth. These women were previously content to shock and alienate family and friends in heterosexual ways, but as homosexuality gained publicity (or as their supply of family and friends ran out), they found that they had to lead gay movements in order to get their gratification most directly and intensely. It is these (usually uninformed and zealous) creatures who make such statements as "Lesbians always think about sex because society forces them to," or "Yes, most Lesbians are sick" (except of course I and thou).

The next group are the Rebels. These women are rebelling against authority, daddy, or whatever, and have found that calling themselves Lesbians is the easiest, fastest, and most rewarding way of kicking society in the teeth. These people enjoy being in the front lines because there they can offend best, and it is these very women who state that Lesbianism "would be no fun if it were legal."

A third group is the Radical-Chic. When black was in vogue, they kinked their hair; when hippie was in vogue, they didn't bathe; now that gay is in vogue, they sleep with women. As soon as another Cause comes along, they'll be straight again, ever after to claim that they're bisexual and incidentally leaving some true Lesbian behind wondering where she went wrong.

The last group are the Experimenters, sometimes confused with the Radical-Chics. Now that free love (heterosexual) and drugs are old hat, the latest kick is gay, and the Experimenters are willing to use any convenient (and lonely) Lesbian along the way. Usually these women maintain that they are bisexual, but they see this as

no obstacle when speaking for the entire Lesbian movement, and can be heard saying, along with the Radical-Chics, that "many Lesbians are bisexual," which is a monstrous contradiction in terms.

For reasons that should be apparent, women from many of these groups now find themselves in the forefront of the Gay Lib movement. I resent these women speaking for me! They have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo: the Masochist to keep being shit on; the Rebel to have something to flaunt; the Radical-Chic to have a Cause; and the Experimenter to have a ready supply of new kicks. Overtly or covertly they are undermining my cause; they are holding me back; they are sullying my love as much as any straight man's leer. I don't need you, sisters. Please, for your sake and for mine, get out.

(Editor's Note: Most authentic and concerned Lesbians have left Gay Lib for women's and Lesbians' liberation groups.)

Dear Gene Damon:

Perhaps there does seem to be a preponderance of married women belatedly claiming interest in Lesbianism. If the letter from Julie Lee of New Jersey (the Ladder Oct/Nov 1971) is representative of the thinking of many of your readers, however, it might be well to take issue with it. First, I suggest that D.W., of the small midwestern town, and the many others like her hope to find understanding, not pity. Second, I contend that they probably had an *alternative* rather than a choice. Alternative implies a necessity to choose one and reject another possibility, while choice suggests the opportunity or privilege of choosing *freely*. No one under pressure from whatever source is in a position to choose freely. Finally Julie Lee, whatever else she may have forfeited, still has her self-esteem. Women like D.W. are already filled with self-reproach. I doubt if they are in any way helped by being told, "We did it - you could have done it too if you weren't so gutless".

It behooves us all to pull together and never mind who is more deserving.

M.H.
Wyoming



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