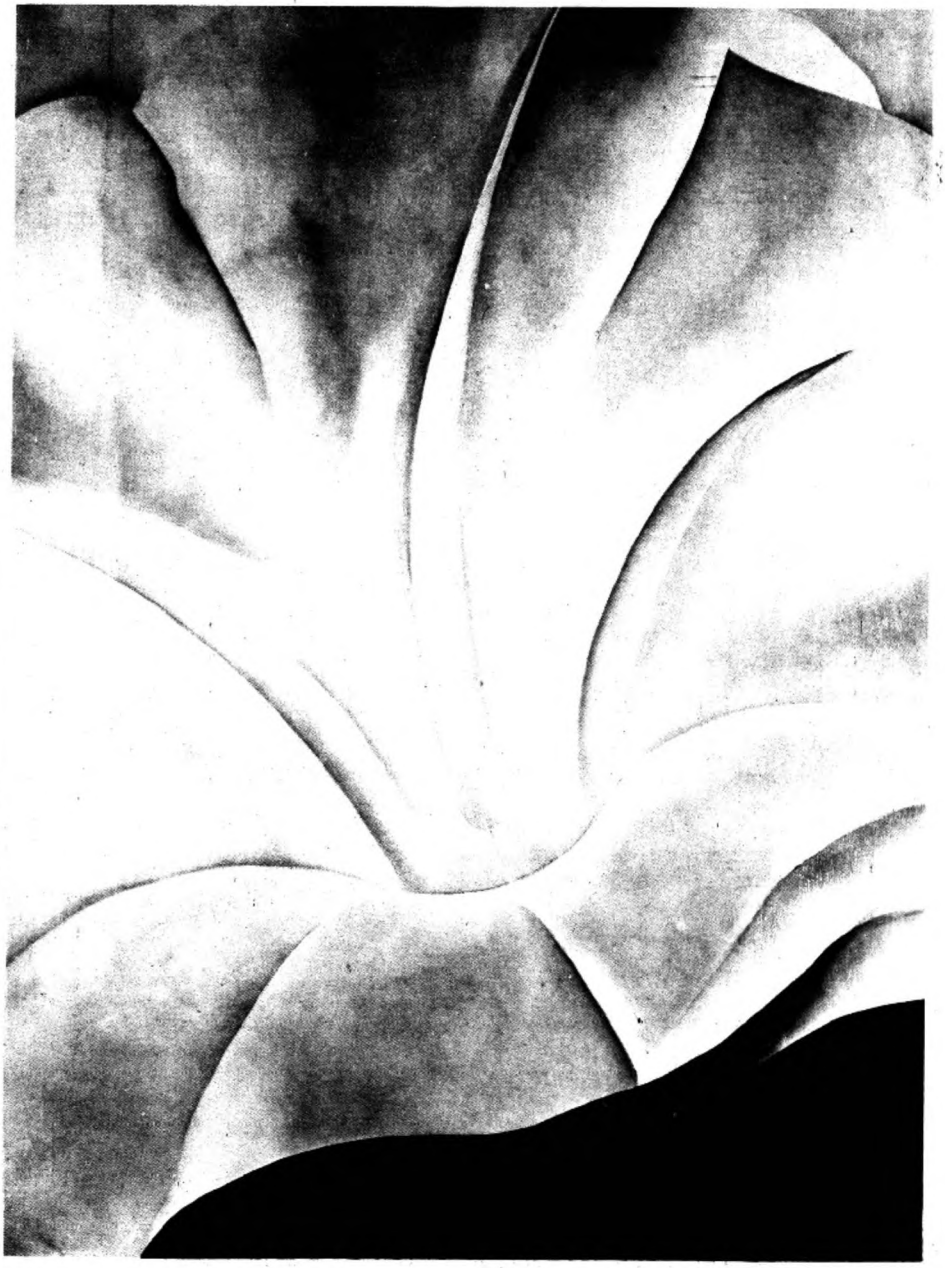
THE LADDER

JUNE/JULY, 1972 $1.25



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

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

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

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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THE LADDER

THE LADDER STAFF

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COVER: Georgia O'Keeffe. *Morning Glory with Black.* c. 1926. Oil on canvas. The Cleveland Museum of Art, bequest of Leonard C. Hanna, Jr.

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Notes from a Summer Diary

PUPPYDOG TAILS AND LIEUTENANT CALLEY

By MICKIE BURNS

"I hear that Sue Jane Moorehouse is back here datin' him again, *datin'* him again. Datin' that Rayburn boy *aygeein!* That's what *Ah* hear."

At that, I squirted one worm of Bain de Soliel suntan jelly horizontally across my forehead and then another, vertically down the bridge of my nose.

"Wall, mah Bill Joe was out at the Bar-B-Cue place on Livermore Road the other night and Bill Joe, he says to me he saw that Rayburn kid right back out there. Never missed a night. Why, Bill Joe he says to me Dr. Rayburn's boy still hangs out with all them other kids from Senior High just lack he don't have a care in the world. Bill Joe says Dr. Rayburn even went out and bought that John a brand new one of them little red farrin' cars, and he done wrecked it twicet. Eight *hun*dred dollars worth damage, last time. And puked bourbon *all* over the upholstery, all them kids that was with him."

At that, I made two diagonal lines along each of my cheekbones, being very careful to keep my eyelids absolutely still throughout. *Throughout,* you *hear.*

"Wall, *my* girl says John Rayburn is going out with a little gal from Catholic High, and she told me she saw them two a drivin through the Dairy Drive In and Frisch's Burgers just the other night. *And* my Carol Jean says *this* little gal's a cheerleader over at Catholic High and pretty *as* a picture. *Long* blonde hair. Carol Jean says she never *saw* the like."

At that, I extended first one arm, then the other, making two more satisfying squirts from each shoulder to fingertips.

"Did you hear about that place they sent her to?"

My eyelids didn't twitch, you hear.

"Well, they tell *me* this *fine* older couple in Louisville adopted a child out of a situation like that, and they decided that they have wanted to do something for other young girls that has gone out and got theirselves into trouble. People say they have a real *nice* home up there for these girls. Take round six girls every three months into their very own home, that's what Marge Ferguson in my Sunday school class said."

At that, I made a giant "X" of suntan grease right across my stomach ending with a flourish where the hipbones went into the bikini.

"You *heard* what I was just saying' Gertrude?" one of the women said to my mother as she reappeared through the back door with a tray of iced tea and glasses. "I was just sayin' to Mildred here I hear that little Sue Jane Moorehouse is back in town now and datin' the Rayburn boy again."

Mother addressed the group encapsulating the matter, "Well she's just going to be old stuff to that boy now. The kids all are sayin' he just takes her out to park in some cornfield when he wants himself a sure thing. Won't even be seen with her in public, kids say. Figures if he can get it once, he can get it again, I reckon. Why he's going to be a doctor lack his daddy, sowin' a few wild oats, lack they say. Kids that age aren't about to go and get themselves . . ."

"Mother," I said, "will you *please* go *inside* and get me some more iced tea?"

". . . all tied down."

You see, I was being very careful. You see, I have seen people who are "street crazy" in New York, deranged people who stand on street corners and babble and twitch and yell at phantom communists and scream about how rats are plotting to take up the streets, people who go up to perfect strangers and harangue them like mad prophets. People whom even the beggars on 34th Street shun as companions. Weirdos who drool in Bickford's at dawn, senile hags and catatonics fresh from Bellevue, always with shopping bags of curious belongings, cryptic odds and ends, roaming the city with suppurating syphillitic feet. One wonders, were they ever once responsible office workers, efficient housewives, dependable secretaries, perfectly calm human beings who once, one day, on subway or bus had quite lost their tempers and never quite again found them? I know how to avoid such pitfalls. I am careful of public discrepancies, of talking to myself, of going up to strange women and saying, "Don't you see what they have done to you . . . Don't you see what they have done?" "They," a paranoid's word, a dangerous word. You see, I am being very careful. I have not moved my eyelids in three days and if I can keep this up, I will be permitted to leave Obensburg and return to the city of syphillitic feet.

It grows difficult because they keep going on and on, in that *cant,* in that half-hillbilly cawing, carping, Kentucky cant. I am getting tired now but I want you to know I have gone great distances; I have made great efforts to outrun that half-midwestern, half southern sound, that sound of women talking. But everywhere, in other accents that sound overtakes me. In offices, in powder rooms, in department stores, in supermarkets, once in Gimbel's basement, on the escalator at La Guardia, in elevators.

"Why, that ought to take her down a notch or two."

". . . thinks things are so free and easy."

"Well, she's just going to have to find out different."

"Cut the wind out of *her* sails."

". . .*thinks* she can just come and go whenever *she* wants."

My brother is home. My brother is almost two years younger than me, almost twenty-four, out of the University of Kentucky and finished with his two-year hitch in the Army, home again and enjoying his bachelorhood. He had been stationed his entire time in service at Fort Polk, Louisiana, where he held some sort of troop processing and dispatching position, never leaving the United States and never, therefore, seeing active duty. And, in our times, never going to Viet Nam. It happens that my brother, being a good old Southern boy, has been, in this respect, instrumental in providing for his own comfort, since his duties at Fort Polk provided him with the convenient opportunity of being able to pull out other good old Southern boys passing through that he might have known at U.K. and being able to replace them on his Nam-bound rosters with a few negligible blacks and stray, baffled Puerto Ricans. One must not gather from my brother's efforts to avoid combat duty that my brother is some sort of pacifist or hippie war-protester, nor must one conclude that he in any way objects to any of our past several chief executives' policies in the Vietnamese conflict. Indeed, my brother knows nothing of communism (the most ostensible reason which seems to be given for our engagement in Southeast Asia), except that it seems to embrace an ignorance of football. I would suppose my brother is typical of the right-wing or reactionary portions of our nation's population in that he does not know what the terms right-wing or reactionary mean. He would simply style himself politically as a "Normal American." When he graduated from that good old Southern institution of higher learning, the University of Kentucky, he declared, over a pop-top Pabst Blue Ribbon, his intention never to read another book so long as he should live. It would appear that his superior straight "C" minus intelligence has been destined for higher things than being blown out on foreign soil. Selfish interests aside, my brother seems to be vaguely aware that the reason we have to stay in Viet Nam is in order to protect "our boys in Viet Nam who in turn have to remain in Viet Nam in order to protect our boys who have to stay, who in turn . . ." And so on.

Yesterday when the sun went down I quit lying out in the back yard and started hanging around in my brother's room, watching him put on his tie. He was going out. I was attempting to conduct some sort of conversation that I hoped would be typical of a normal transaction of brotherly and sisterly affection and in keeping with the interests of a normal beer-consuming, burping good old Southern boy of good (my mother's own) breeding. You know, some sort of hail-good-fellow-well-met indolent passing the time of day remark. You know, a nice, sloppy been-gettin'-any-lately agreeable sociable midwestern-redneck sort of conversation. I was really going to the trouble; I was hanging around because my mother always encourages me and my brother to "see more of each other when you are home." So I was in his room messing around with a bottle of his after-shave lotion and I said, "Who all are you going out with tonight?"

My brother said, "Me and old John Rayburn has us a double date with June and a cute little cousin of hers from Henderson. They are kinda young, still seniors in high school, but hell everybody else worth going out with is married." Then he seemed to remember something

funny as he was examining his thick new moustache and sideburns. He sort of snorted in amusement and shook his head admiringly. "I tell ya, sis, that John Rayburn is a good ol' boy. Him and me and Bill Joe have sure raised us some hell together. He's a good ol' boy, yes ma'am, the best ol' boy ever was. Did I ever tell you about that time when he was up at U.K. and him and me and a bunch of other boys all took on this old whore up 'ar in the frat? Why, that old girl took on about twelve of us and was begging for more."

I said, "How old was that girl?"

"Hell, I reckon about sixteen. We picked her up in the car in front of the Chevy Chase high school in Lexington and got her so drunk, man, why you never seen . . ."

I said, "How much did you pay that girl?"

"Why, what in the Sam Hill do you mean? Hell, I never had to pay for it in mah life. Old gal sure put out for free. Gawd a'mighty could that little gal take it in too. Man, we really raised hell with her, me and John Rayburn and Bill Joe and the other boys. John Rayburn pissed right in her mouth. Hell, that was some time. That little old gal really threw up after that. She was stinkin' so much – that old sweat hog – we finally had to kick her out. Man, I bet her butt froze. It was colder'n *hell.*"

My father and mother are proud that my brother was a fraternity man like his father before him. Because my brother's fraternity, they feel, has given my brother a lot of "polish" and improved upon his table manners. "Polish" means when my brother goes out on a date he opens the car door for the girl. At my brother's fraternity, while he was still a pledge, as part of the hazing, the pledges were required to throw a "pig-party" and all the initiates were required to bring to the party the doggiest girls they could find. The girls who were chosen were, therefore, those coeds who had not been able to afford braces for their teeth, were too fat, who had had a bad case of acne, or who had been sexually indiscreet. Undoubtedly the young women had been pleasantly surprised to find themselves inexplicably invited to the SigChi house and had been looking forward to the evening for two whole breathless weeks as the fraternity brothers had planned they would. The party went along innocently enough until at a given signal the fraternity brothers began to excrete in a big pile in the center of the room or spray whipped cream in the "pig-girls" faces.

By contrast, I went to a Northern university where fraternities (vestigal of the 1950's innocence) had slipped out of style and given way to a student body who were for the most part into politics and enlightened trends. The big men on my campus were into revolution and humanity and long hair and like Abbie Hoffman made a point of never opening doors or buying flowers or otherwise spending a nickel on their "old ladies" (as they called them in my day), or other movement squaws. In this respect, the Southern pig-girls were somewhat more advantaged.

In all ways, my brother belongs in society. He is the most normal American male I have ever met. Even in the intimacy of family life, I have never noticed one tiny idiosyncracy. I have never heard my brother utter one phrase or express one idea any differently from the way the phrase is usually rendered. He is a master of idiom both in speech and thought. He possesses the most accurate, the most exacting, the most sure-footed herd instinct one could possibly discover. Sometimes my brother seems to me not to be a specific human being but a living stereotype, a hypothetical juncture of mean, median, and mode. I grasp for a straw to remember him by. He is an ideal candidate for a communal society, so incapable is he of individuality. Even his handwriting is utterly undistinguished. If my brother had grown up in the East rather than in Kentucky, he would surely be Woodstock Nation incarnate. Of course, one cannot be so normal-minded without also being normal in appearance. Any physical defect, it seems to me, is bound to produce less than an unquestioning acceptance of the universe. As Thomas Mann said, he is "blond, blue-eyed, and troubled not by a doubt."

Descriptions are not as simple as they once were. A few years ago I could have said my brother wore Gant shirts and Bass Weejun loafers and have done with it, but fashions have been getting out of hand. All the New York homosexuals are now wearing what the black pimps in Harlem wore three years ago, and the hippies on Eighth Street are wearing what the homosexuals were into two years ago, and visiting midwestern straight conventioneers look like hippies did last year, coming along fast with those see-throughs and chokers. Hopelessly complex as fashion now seems, my brother manages with grace to remain in the mainstream, his sideburns creep down, each fraction precisely representing the exact center of the trend in sideburn growth.

"At this time," my transistor happened to mention, "there are a number of different views one might take of the Calley affair. A Calley friend in Atlanta declares: He's one of the few real men left in this country. He's being crucified by this government and keeping his cool because he loves his country."

I have been lying for the past few days in the back yard on one of those aluminum and plastic webbed yard chairs, the long folded-out kind that you can get at the shopping center out in front of the A&P. Some women friends and neighbors of my mother had "dropped by to say hello to Gertrude's daughter who is going to be home for a few days and isn't that naah-ice for you now, Gertrude," while I, Gertrude's girl, lay there flat on my back half-naked and firmly shut-eyed there in the middle of my mother and all those other matrons, looking for all the world like a centerpiece or a sacrifice, while Gertrude discussed me with them as thouth I were not there. Mother said I was taking a badly needed rest. The women pulled up more yard chairs, surrounding me more closely while their gossip resumed over me. They were retelling one of my very favorite stories. When it was rumored that Sara Pate, a bad woman, managed to get, for legitimate reasons, a tubal ligation, the envy of Obensburg's matrons was dazzling to behold. "Now she thinks she can get away with it." "The good Lord will punish her, can't get away with going against nature." How confounded the women of our town all were – a tubal ligation! They hadn't thought of that. How could that whore dare to be so lucky. Now she can't ever have her nose rubbed in the dirt like the rest of us. They were almost at an impasse, those good women who had passed directly from virginity to maternity with no transactions of passion in between. Their efforts to ostracize Sara Pate, a bad woman, doubled and redoubled. And now, in the midday heat, the eternal perdition of Sara Pate had again been settled upon. Having agreed to that, my mother and her friends turned to an enthusiastic discussion of constipation, enemas, and cathartics. I have frequently heard married women talk with great sensual fervor of their bowel movements, but I have never heard them speak even once with any heat of what their husbands do to them in bed. Once, my mother said that she was very glad of the invention of Vaseline, but I do not know if she had any idea of what she was telling me. Once, a friend of my generation complained that his mother had castrated his father by being frigid toward him. "Big deal," I had retorted, "all our mothers were frigid." Except, of course, for the few isolated cases of Lesbianism and the one above-mentioned area (allowed them for medical reasons only, of course). And why not? Even dogs have their pleasures.

Once in a cultural anthropology class, my professor described an African puberty rite: When a young girl is old enough to marry; that is, when she enters menarche, the matrons of the village (I do not remember the name of the tribe) surround the virgin and pull out all her hair in clumps. When I heard this lecture, I found it strange that women who had once gone themselves through such a ritual could bring themselves to inflict identical torment upon the younger women as they came of age. It was a curious custom. Primitive in its way.

Finally, the women trooped indoors to inspect one of mother's more recent furniture acquisitions. After they left, a teenaged neighbor girl appeared through the back hedges that separated our yard from hers, and I found myself for the balance of the afternoon receiving on my aluminum couch my brother's would-be fifteen-year-old inamorata. The neighbor girl was all dressed up in spite of the heat, which was making a moustache of moisture on her dainty upper lip. The neighbor girl had come up to hang about sniffing around hoping to catch a glimpse or have a word with my brother, to her an older and exciting man, her hero, and the object of unrequited but nonetheless star-crossed affection. As my brother was not around, she made do with me, hoping I would put in a good word. We had quite a long chat about my brother, discussing his accomplishments and attributes.

The discrepancies between the way my brother refers to the eligible young women of the county and the manner and tone of voice which they, in turn, allude to him, I always find mind-bending. "She's got a great pair of jugs, piece of ass, et cetera," seems somehow an inequitable counterpart to, "Your brother is sooo handsome, strong yet tender, friendly and easy to get along with, sincere and lots of fun to be around,"

and other excerpts from *Seventeen* magazine's ten qualities you most look for or admire in a) a steady, b) the man you want to marry, c) ideal date, or d) all of the above.

There is, after all, only so much a twenty-six-year old woman can tell a fifteen-year-old one and be believed. I just lay there, neuter and bronze as an Oscar award statuette, feeling for the moment no kinship with either sex.

On another intense July afternoon, when I was just a few years younger than my visitor, when the concrete of our driveway quivered in my vision until the gray cement went white in the heat, and the lawn black, I was pulling back into the garage damp out of the high-contrast of the sun after being sent out on my bike for ice cream for everyone. I scooted my bike alongside the car and leaned the bike against it, not bothering with the kick stand, knowing my clairvoyant mother was going to notice in short order I hadn't parked my bicycle where I was supposed to. But I was eager to get into the ice cream. I was trying to get away with it just one more time, taking the risk of having my mother prod me right back out into the garage to repark. We twelve-year-old suburbanites were trying in our ways. I didn't have time to revel in my little sin of omission, to continue blithely indoors before I was brought up short. But not by my mother. There *they* were again. I stared at them in a moment of horrible fascination and slammed the door to the breezeway in a fury of impotence. How long was it going to go on, day in and day out? They had been there for weeks and weeks. Spoiling everything. Until I hated, just hated, having to go into the garage on any errand I might have there, to get something for my mother, my bike or tennis racket, or a screw driver for my father.

I had taken the matter up with my mother only the week before, trying not to be the kind of person who "forgets" to park her bike so the car won't run over it, but trying very hard to be like on TV when they showed the United Nations debates, trying to be more like a grown-up petitioning the government or something like I had learned about in history class. I knew I didn't know everything yet and I knew sometimes I still did stupid stuff, but I knew that there were some things I was as sure of as any adult and I knew for one that I was right about them and that there was something very wrong with having them out there in the garage all the time like that.

The boys of the neighborhood had their own interesting variation of the old game of tying tin cans to dogs' tails. One of the older boys devised our local version but my brother perfected it and added a number of innovations, inspired during a family trip when my brother and I visited the Smithsonian museum in Washington, D.C., and he became acquainted with small replicas of Oriental torture devices. My brother's principal piece of equipment was a toy cookstove that really baked and fried, which I had abandoned in the garage. My brother had observed a slightly older neighbor boy tearing the legs from grasshoppers, spiders, water bugs, and butterflies, and otherwise slowly dissecting them. My brother recognized the larger possibilities of the enterprise and added to the above repetoire of tortures and victims somewhat larger animals: frogs, squirrels and birds, whose agonies were more grandiose. Before long, the Torture Game became a neighborhood fad and my parents (absentmindedly indulgent of us both) took to leaving one half of the garage vacant so that my brother would have more room to entertain his friends. My brother and his audience and assistants were about nine or ten years old then. One corner of the garage near the door to the house where all members of the family had to pass every day, was intricately laced with the implementabli of torture, chief among these were a toy vise, an electric burner that had been part of a leather work hobby craft kit, my cookstove, mother's old eyebrow tweezers, and acids from a chemistry set, which turned out not to be particularly effective. Sometimes alone and sometimes with friends, my brother would tinker with his bug tortures for hours each day, whiling away mapley wide-lawned suburban afternoons, for a couple of years until he became interested in girls.

The year before, the neighborhood boys' favorite recreation after school had been digging foxholes in a vacant lot, but the preoccupation of the entire male corps of neighborhood children soon became absorbed in the art of small animal vivisection and insect dismemberment. I disliked every time I returned from school or the grocery having to pass through the garage where at all times a number of bugs and small animals could be seen writhing under dressmakers' pins from my mother's sewing box with their little legs lying beside them.

I do not know how much capacity, if any, the smaller bugs had for pain, but I felt that my brother, as he was performing his mutilative arts upon them, wished the pain great. He used to tell me when I asked him why he liked doing that so much that he was practicing up for when the Japs invaded. I was precocious enough a student of history that I tried to explain to him that the Japanese were no longer our enemies, to which my brother would reply that he would do it to the niggers then. I asked him if he intended to torture Mattie, who was at that moment baking my brother's favorite pecan pie, but he didn't seem to get the contradiction. His ingenuous boyish face would just glisten, leering lasciviously and any of his buddies who were around would chime in, *"Yeah,* torture!" At last I screamed at them, "I hope someone does that to you! I hope you really get it. Serve you right!"

I wasn't really tattling, I decided, since my mother and father knew as well as I did how my brother spent his time in the garage. They saw the top of the cookstove the same as me everytime they went in and out of the garage. My mother would step out of the car with a bag of groceries and smile her cheerful motherly smile, beaming a good-natured hello down to my brother and his little buddies hovered together over the frying animals on the cookstove.

So I appealed to my mother to make my brother stop. I was standing at her dresser while she put her hair in pincurls the way they used to. "Don't you realize, mother, that's *all* he ever does anymore? Please tell him he has to stop it and make all those others stop it, too. Don't you see it's bad for him to be thinking cruel thoughts all the time? Don't you see?" Mother didn't see. "Well," she said, "You should be glad your brother is a normal boy and likes to do rugged things. He'll outgrow it soon enough. You should be glad your brother is not a sissy like that little John Parks who plays the piano all day long. Your brother will never be a sissy boy."

We are all grown up now. My mother and father and brother and me were together having grilled hamburgers in the back yard just like when we were children on other summer evenings. Now that my brother is home from service and I am home for a few days we seem to have become giant siblings sitting at our old places at the table as though we had never moved. We were arguing about the war in general and the My Lai massacre in particular. My mother's position was: "Well, it was only some crazy ones that did it if any such thang ever happened at all. Normal American boys just wouldn't do such a thang. Probably no such thang never happened anyways – just some communist talk trying to run down the United States. If any part of what you said happened, it was just some crazy ones, just a couple of shell-shook bad ones. You never know what kind of people you're going to get thrown in with when you get drafted. Why they even have to take showers with niggers. They just throw the trash in with the educated ones like your brother. No normal American boy ever did a thang like that."

My father said, "Now Mother, I'm just a little bit afraid sister may have some truth to what she says. I was reading an article the other day and from what I could judge it was told by a fellow that was trying to get his facts straight. Now, of course, I can't be absolutely sure of it, but I think the man by the tone he took wrote the truth as best as he could remember it and report it down. It was about a bunch of American soldiers raping and killing a thirteen-year-old Vietnamese farm girl and I don't think they had anything mentally wrong with them. I think this feller seemed to feel they came from just as fine a family as ours and I don't believe they were crazy at the time. It was a terrible thing and I tell y' I just couldn't read the whole thing but it was in *Saturday Review* and I think they are preety careful about letting anything get in there that's a complete misrepresentation. I just don't think it could have been too far off."

I asked my brother, "Tell me, how do you distinguish between South Vietnamese Gooks and Slopeheads and North Vietnamese Gooks and Slopeheads? The South Vietnamese are supposed to be on our side, you know?"

"Aw, sis," he answered rather weary with me, "You don't know how thangs are over thar in Nam."

"Well, you haven't exactly been over there either," I said. "By the way, what about torture? How do you stand on that issue?"

"Wall," he said, "I tell you what *Ah'd* do if we ever was to take us some prisoners. They got some kind of special tribe of Vietnamese or somethin' like 'at over 'ar

and I tell you the natives in this tribe are very skilled in the art of torture. The United States has got them working for the Marines. If I ever caught me a gook I would turn 'em right over to some of them. They sure would know how to handle them. They can think up thangs no white man could dream up in a hundred years."

For just the length of a jolt of a second my parents, both of them, sat shattered, comprehending the breakthrough of some sort of nonretractable ethical horror that threatened for an instant their regard for their only son. My brother grinned good humoredly, having no earthly notion of there being something irrevocable in the air.

"LIEUTENANT CALLEY LAST WEEK UNDERWENT PSYCHIATRIC EXAMINATION WHICH SHOWED HIM TO BE COMPLETELY NORMAL,"[2] my transistor announced. Well, I mean, isn't "gang-bang" the most resoundingly all-American thing you ever heard of anyway. My nose was sticking through a square of the plastic webbing so I could read *Time* magazine down underneath on the grass. I read about "The victim, a 5½ inch assemble-her-yourself girl model wearing hot pants and a permanent look of terror on her pretty face. 'I should look as good,' the Aurora p.r. gal said . . . Over 800,000 sets have been sold to date."[3] Then I read that, "The superintendent of West Point told Congress recently that, 'young ladies of liberal persuasion' may have influenced Military Academy graduates to make allegations of U.S. atrocities in Vietnam. The general went on to say, 'In one or two other cases we have found the female of the species more deadly than the male and have found men who fell under the influence of young ladies of liberal persuasion."[4] Then I read about Bernadine Dohrn, the Weatherwoman who is wanted by the FBI for blowing up things. I believe and I was really interested in hearing any news of her because *Rat* magazine, a "radical feminist" sheet that I sometimes read back in New York keeps trying to tell me Bernadine Dohrn is a liberated woman and keeps calling her "our sister who's gone underground." "The big issue that year was Vietnam," *Time* said, "and Bernadine worked hard trying to organize law-school students and others to resist the draft. 'She was an overwhelming personality,' says a male associate. 'First of all, there was her sex appeal. She had the most amazing legs – every draft resister on the East Coast knew those legs . . .'"[5] *Time* went on to say (before our sister went underground, that is), "Bernadine told the War Council in Flint: 'Dig it, first they killed those pigs, then they ate dinner in the same room with them, then they even shoved a fork into a victim's stomach! Wild!' Next came a new Weatherman slogan: 'Manson Power – The Year of the Fork!' A four finger salute symbolizing the tines in Sharon Tate's belly briefly replaced the clenched fist in vogue."[6]

If anybody wants to know where was I during the great war, what exactly was I doing during the police action, summer of '71, I will have to reply that I spent the entire season as a compulsive sunbather for an audience of my mother and her friends – not the most appreciative imaginable audience – but as long as I stay among these women not one single draft resister on either coast will ever be able to look up *my* dress, baby. As long as I remain among them I will not inspire deeds in men great or small. They are old, these women, they have sagging breasts, stretch marked stomachs; but it is to them I address all the coquetry of my splendid young body – even though they tend to pluck at the tender hairs near my temples.

FOOTNOTES:

For reasons of expediency, some of the quotations which have been attributed to *Time* magazine in the above text actually appeared in the publications indicated below as well as in *Time:*

1. "The Hero Calley," *Time,* Vol. 97, No. 7 (February 15, 1971), 14.
2. From a February 16, 1971 radio news broadcast, New York, New York: Station WOR, 98.7 FM at 6:00 p.m.
3. Fern Marja Eckmun, "Torture Toys, Sick Scenes? 'Kids Love It'," New York *Post,* June 11, 1971, p. 4.
4. Morton Kondracke, "Atrocity Charges? Blame Girls: General," New York *Post,* June 11, 1971, p. 6.
5. Lindsy Van Gelder, "Bernadine Dohrn Is Weighed in the Balance and Found Heavy," *Esquire,* Vol. LXXV, No. 4 (April, 1971), 168.
6. *Ibid.,* p. 170.

HIGHPOCKETS

By JO TRAHERNE

After a year of teaching around the fifteen little country parishes of the diocese of Patzcuaro in Michoacan, Maria had become about as Mexican as any American woman could become in that time. She had a head-start by being small, dark, mystical and domestic, sensuous and down-to-earth at the same time. Her skin was even darker now after so much sun and she delighted so much in the food and the housekeeping that the transition from the ways of the United States to those of Mexico had been extraordinarily smooth, almost completely so. She wrote home jokingly that she was "completely expatriated", but it was true, as jokes often are.

Maria lived by herself in a little rented house not far from the shining shore of the region's famous frigid lake. This was the high country of Mexico where the nights were cool and heavily scented with Ponderosa pine, while the days were warm and as serene and clear as the beautiful waters of the lake.

Like most of the other houses of the area, Maria's had a red tile roof and a patio surrounded by walls topped with pieces of broken bottles embedded in the concrete to keep out intruders. The patio had a well, a pump, flower beds, and, although Maria was not Catholic, even a shrine to the Virgin. The house had a kitchen, two bedrooms and a living room, and was furnished with petates, pottery, serapes, a guitar from Pachuca, strings of chilis and lacquered gourds, American magazines and Mexican furniture, a collection of straw and clay toys, a transistor radio, English-language newspapers and short stories in Spanish, candles and lamps and electricity, an inside toilet and water purifier, a crucifix, and all the powders, paints, lotions and oils women everywhere in the world use.

She was moderately poor but content. Her room and board plus $40 per month were provided by the bishop of the diocese in exchange for her work – teaching English in the private and public schools. Her needs were simple: the good cheap Mexican chickens, tortillas, pastries, and the delicious local fish. Her pleasures were moderate: the good Mexican beer, music and children. She could even afford to have a handyman, and Cayatano, the old and wise and small one, dug the flower beds and gathered wood and charcoal and repaired the water-pump (in itself almost a perpetual task) and did almost anything else she was not clever or strong enough to do herself.

She was as chaste as the nuns who in Mexico wear not habits but a kind of uniform, and who she saw frequently in the market buying fruits and vegetables. She was a very good and efficient teacher without being especially conscientious about it; she loved the children and had a wealth of patience and ingenuity. She was alone and thirty-two years old. She never spoke, or even thought, of "going home". She had the status of an "English profesora" working for the bishop in the town and throughout the countryside, a status which inhibited the local caballeros – even if it did not blind them and numb them to the softness and warmth she still had.

She never looked back. She *went* back every six months, over the Texas border, in order to keep her tourist papers in order and stayed for a day or two and bought new dresses and cosmetics and shoes. But it might be said that she had almost forgotten most of what had happened to her before she came here, to this lake and to these mountains, to this work and to these people and to this faith. To this shining shore and ringing air, alive with silver-white fish and bells. To this place, so far from every other place, and yet so close to life and death themselves – to this Mexican village of fishermen, surrounded still by fields upon fields of corn . . .

From whence had she come and why?

She had come from an Ohio country road and this is why . . .

It had all begun so innocently and with no hint of hurt or death. It was late August and hot and bright, a year ago, the first day Maria rode her red garden tractor down the road to do a favor in return for a favor – to cut the weeds on a new neighbor's five-acre homestead in payment for having had the sickle-bar repaired for her free of charge. She was still lonely and free as she took that first ride in the sun.

The neighbor was not even at home when she arrived. But she worked all through the hot afternoon just the same, just doing a job . . . with the already

ripened milkweed pods bursting in her face and clinging to her clothing, with no hint at all of what was to come, in a silvery silkiness and softness . . .

Later she went back in the evening and worked again. But the ground was too marshy in other spots and the growth too rank, and after her little tractor would work no more she ended up eating pizza and drinking beer with the neighbor in the backyard until midnight.

So went the first day.

And the second and the third ones were almost like it. They continued the battle together now against the water-soaked, unmowable grasses on the back of the new place.

It all began so innocently and with no hint of hurt or death in it at all. The hot August sun and unblurred daylight were shining full upon the beginnings of these two.

Maria brushed the milkweed routinely off of herself, not connecting it at all yet with the softness and brightness of cornsilk or golden hair.

The neighborwoman was building a new house. Or rather, just finishing the building of it. The workmen had finished most of the major jobs by the time they met. But there were still enough unfinished little jobs left to keep both of them working almost constantly together for a whole month – enough time for Maria to learn to know this woman and her world intimately.

The woman's world was fast and colorful. Made up of fast automobiles, golden beer and stereophonics. Made up of sweetness, motor oil and Pepsi Cola. Made up of card games, transistors and pizzas. Made up of flannel shirts and blue jeans and bravado. Made up of drums, Joni James and Sarah Vaughn. Made up too of probantine, belladonna, and maalox which the woman fed her ulcer on. Made up of speed, sensuality and sanitariness.

For this woman was possessed of an exaggerated need for cleanliness which kept the washing machine and taps in the bathtub running almost constantly. How she loved the sheets and shirts and underclothes all to be blindingly white! One of Maria's most persistent memories of their days together would always be of the smell of soap and ammoniated combs, of glistening washes, shining hair – and emptied cisterns and wells.

The woman was big – five-foot-ten, two hundred pounds. Very fair, with hair the color of a honeycomb and green eyes. The kids in the neighborhood called her Highpockets, and the nickname stuck, fitting her perfectly.

Her walk was a cross between a strut and a swagger. She was irresponsible, materialistic, spoiled and superstitious. Big spending and over-sized lamps and clocks seemed to make her feel superior to other people. But she was frightened to death of dogs, storms and omens.

She was aggressive and passionate. She had wit and a vocabulary as colorful and crude as an alley cat's – also too much pride and fear. Maria would remember for the rest of her life Highpocket's laughter and amazing strength – her bigness and what seemed to Maria to be originality.

She walked with her hands in her pockets most of the time. She looked best in black, wool slacks and a black sweater, with her fair skin and golden hair and sultry smile. With her beautiful eyes, green and swamplike, drawing Maria finally into her . . .

They did not work all the time. Later they went fishing along the river, although Maria was as bad a fisherman as Highpockets was a good one. They took long, fast rides in the car. They went to a country auction where Highpockets bought a typewriter (although she could not type at all) and a television cabinet, which she had visions of converting into a liquor cabinet. They went to see a fortune-teller who told them nothing, but who worried Highpockets for days, just the same. They shopped for new records, fancy olives and plaid shoelaces. They went out at midnight and bought fried chicken. They ate one night at an Italian restaurant where Highpockets drank eleven Manhattans and stored all the cherries away inside her brassiere.

They often visited a friend of Highpockets called "Ma". Usually they found her heating water for her washing, which she did outside over a fire in a big, iron kettle, in a jungle of old trees and junked automobiles. She was a widow with eight children, always dressed in a thin cotton housedress, shapeless casuals and a coral-colored sweater. It was beginning to be cold in late September now, and already her hands were chapped and sore. All of her boys' hands were perpetually black with mechanic's grease and her little girls were beginning to fill out in the breasts. She always walked with her arms folded and

bent forward a little. She was about fifty-five, and always cheerful . . . And Maria would never forget her hoarse laughter and clipped, throaty speech – or her bad teeth and dull eyes.

Usually they had a couple of beers with "Ma", under the flaming trees, while Highpockets talked automobile parts and neighborhood gossip with the other woman – and Maria finally came to admire only Highpockets' yellow hair, shining in her personal loneliness and dark like a lamp, altogether as fascinating, soft and warm as the burning maples. It was on just one of these afternoons that Maria first came to ask herself – would the place she was not seeking, inside Highpockets' arms, be for her a place of peace or doom?

But that day they only slammed the doors of the car, blew the horn loud and long and drove away through the fiery afternoon before she could think any more about it.

Yet later in the day Highpockets was strangely quiet, and drove more slowly, which was different too.

Maria had never known anyone like her in her life. She had never rode in speeding cars, nor gone fishing, nor played cards half of the night. She had never been so fascinated. She had never known so much seeming security before in her whole life. For, all at once, SHE WAS NOT ALONE ANYMORE. She was not yet aware of any physical need. Maria, at this point, merely had someone to go to and to be with everyday, to work and play and joke with, to be expected and wanted by.

So, while the whole countryside was glowing and stilled, since autumn had come and the birds had all gone, it inevitably came about. At last all Maria had to be finally was with her, and miracles of light and security were simply wrought. She was suddenly happy and safe . . . also blind, deaf and dumb to the actual source of this thing . . .

They cut down more weeds together and even dug a trench for a tile-line. They sweated still in the September air and cooled out on beer and laughs. Also during this time Maria began to feel strangely distracted when she was with this woman, and yet more distracted and somehow restless when she was not.

But all the while the house Highpockets was completing step by step and task by task was still the biggest thing to Maria. The windows and floors and cupboards and cabinets went in. And the furnace and pumps and finally the cellar steps. The first month of their short life together was thus filled up mostly with the smell of sawdust and the feel of fresh, soft concrete and the sounds of hammers and saws. Their first days close to one another were thus so busy and perfect that Maria saw not even the perfection itself – until it was finally and fully upon her almost thirty days later. And only that closeness itself was left to complete.

The evening Maria helped Highpockets lay the tile on her bathroom walls both finished and began it all. The night was fresh and cool coming through the opened windows, and scented with the clover-blooms they had cut just that day in a nearby field. Highpockets came up behind her all at once and gripped her with both hands on her shoulders. And Maria tensed at the touch and Highpockets asked, slowly and softly, "Are you afraid of me?"

Maria lay down her tools and tiles and walked, without a word or look, out of the house.

But in less than a week she was back. Sitting with Highpockets on the living room couch by the big new picture-window – with Highpockets' hands in her hair. She tolerated this, and even rested in it, inexplicably.

The house was finished and smelled new and empty. It felt strongly unoccupied in every room, awaiting only life and love to warm it clear through. Maria would remember afterwards the beautiful, sanded surfaces of the cupboard doors when they walked into the bedroom together. The paint on the plaster, as fresh and clean as the sheets on the bed. The way the light came through the windows in this freshly-created place – and the paper stickers still on the new panes. Then Highpockets looked at her with the look which finally told her what she really was and wanted, and yet left her so helpless to judge and resist.

There was a little bright pile of 8-penny nails left in one corner by the carpenters. And there was a hammer with paint on its handle on the dresser-top. And the bare ends of two wires, for the thermostat yet to be installed, hung like great, raw nerves out of the wall – all these things looked so singularly real and sharp to Maria – just before she turned to Highpockets, into the blurr and dark which would be both delight to Highpockets and – for a while – to Maria, too.

After that Maria went to her regularly, in the early mornings. Past the big cornfield, which was just outside the picture-window, and which had now in October turned into a field of fluttering flags. Past the withered wild asparagus and frost-blackened clover along the edges of the road. Past the big elm tree halfway to her house, the tree filled with so much cool shade and so many singing birds all the August-long of their love. Towards the golden square of the picture-window – towards the place on Highpockets' shoulder, which was her place – towards the most peace and rest and warmth Maria had ever known in her life.

Every morning she let herself into the kitchen and made them both a pot of hot tea first, then while the water came to a boil she went and looked at Highpockets as she slept. It would still not be quite daylight, but she could see the brightness of Highpockets' head on the pillow in any light at all, and the dim shape of her under the covers, so strongly comforting.

This is what Maria had to give: An enormous appeal physically. Sheer, sensuous pleasure. A beautiful body. Waving, black hair and brown eyes. A passionate, beautiful mouth and thick, soft eyebrows. A degree of primitiveness. Humility and honesty adding up to directness and simplicity, physically and emotionally. A shade of loneliness and bravery. Complete femininity – passive and yet sensitively responsive.

And no wilder winds ever could have blown to sweep Highpockets so wholly to peace. Nothing else, nothing calmer and duller, could ever have so completely precipitated her, no matter how briefly, so entirely into ecstacy.

This is what Maria had to give: A little, a little pleasure. A little time, it was summer and the weeds were rank with sweetness and flowers.

And then all at once the golden leaves, the color of Highpockets' hair, were falling, and covering Maria up.

Autumn – always associated with death and dying, and quite naturally so.

But always associated for Maria from this year in her life on, with Highpockets, and the year the maples all at once turned the exact color of golden hair, and the corn-tassels were just as golden and silken soft inside the ripened, yellow husks Maria broke open. The year the sky was a deeper blue than she had ever known it to be in her life – and was so brilliant with stars that for awhile she regularly found her way both from her own house and to Highpockets' and back home again by this light alone.

Autumn – so filled with the sound of the bells on the cattle on the surrounding farms and the burning of the trees and of themselves.

Autumn: so bright and shadowed at the same time.

Maria's last year in a shower of flaming leaves, shooting stars and caresses, and the security of always being accepted, defended and cherished above everyone else . . .

But the tassels on the corn finally turning inevitably stiff and dark. The soft leaves too crisping and finally to powder like ash and becoming part of the woods and lawns and earth . . .

How could Maria know that Highpockets would be able someday suddenly – just to give it all up?

Their experience was so deep and fresh and intense to Maria that it was strong and bright enough to survive almost anything. But there was a fatal, hidden difference between them.

Highpockets, too weak to relate to anyone permanently, tired easily and needed above all only someone to baby her: she could not go on forever pretending to be strong and grown-up enough to take and receive another wholly and responsibly – not just sensually and temporarily . . .

So even sense itself died in her before long . . .

Even though Highpockets could not help it, this was undeniably so. Highpockets had used Maria to satisfy a lust in herself. When it was finally satisfied, irritability and coldness, guilt and satiety, set into Highpockets like winter . . .

By the last week in October it was all over.

There came a night when Maria walked home only just bewildered and exhausted.

She went into her own house and got out two woolen serapes she had bought once on a vacation to Mexico and a lantern and went out into the cornfield and sat down and lit the light and tried to rest and think.

The dried up corn leaves rustled every once in a while with a little wind or winter rabbits. She sat with her head resting upon her drawn-up knees and watched the stars in the sky and the automobiles on the road.

It was Halloween, the eve of all Saints day.

She sat this way for a very long time, but finally she walked across the field and stood still before the house that Highpockets had built. There was a difference between them now like the centuries, or a foreign tongue. This night Maria stood thus in the winter of their separateness, looked through the picture-window from the outside, and saw the picture of a stranger.

After this, Maria walked back to the center of the field and the lantern-light, and lay down full-length upon the Mexican blankets and slept a sleep of exhaustion. After that everything was simple and final at least. Maria never went back to the house that Highpockets built.

And a year later she was still deep in Mexico.

Death is not a kind of dread or flattered guest in Mexico. He is not a stranger or even an enemy. No one is surprised at him, or afraid of him, or even particularly opposed to him. Rather, he is a kind of play-fellow, an everyday companion, almost a lover.

So when the Mexican "Halloween" rolled around, Maria knew what to expect. Candy skulls and paper skeletons, little altars and coffins made out of seeds and matchboxes. Fireworks and chants. Crosses and candles and visits from one's relatives returned from the other world. The "bread of the dead" set out in little baskets and covered with white napkins and flowers. Incense and happiness. Faith and longing and picnics in the cemeteries.

It was the time that the corn was gathered in and the glory shone round in every face as if reflected off the heaps of golden ears. No ghost walked, but the resurrected saints were everywhere. Not the saints of the litanies – but those who had gone to God directly from one's own arms.

Now the dead came back for a holiday and this was not entirely incredible; we are all, according to the Mexicans, closer to one another in El Senor than we are to ourselves. A literal Christianity abolishes in Mexico even the loneliness of death. Even this final separateness melts away under the Mexican sun. Like the wax of the thousands of candles being reformed into fresh, luminous bodies at the shrine of the Guadalupe everyday, the dead never really die and never go very far away in this strange land – they are only re-formed too, and burn as passionately as ever with all their old desires for favorite songs and foods and loves. The yellow marigold, the Mexican flower of the dead, is really the color of life – the color of corn. And life is as perishable and yet as indestructible as the tortilla. Or again – "wear it like a flower behind your ear and toss it to the first love you meet" goes an old Mexican proverb about life.

In such a place one may go to extremes like the land, contract a permanent and powerful faith like that of the Indians themselves.

"Into the hollow of your heart will enter the charmed stick whose bliss is in the rains" runs the song of blessing chanted over the gentle pulque. Your own heart a sword shall pierce. But out of it shall run all the sorrows of your life to sweetness and forgetfulness, like that which the pulque brings, in its own kind of little dying everyday.

The sad face of the burro is still and at the same time the face of a clown. And you can, if you understand, be as whimsical about death as you can be serious.

You have seen the marks of the rubber-tire sandals in the soft ground – the same as those found on the cheeks of sleepy children in the mornings? See then too: they are the marks of the woven petate, which is love-bed and bier both.

You have smelled the acrid, singularly sweet smell of tule, the petate reed, a bouquet of earth, corn, chili, and flesh. Death in Mexico is as familiar and as intimate as these – and as beloved and real.

The Juanitzio Island Vigil of the Night of the Dead is held in a little cemetery at the foot of the steep cliff on this island in the middle of the lake of Patzcuaro. Here the women begin to kneel at the tombs around nightfall and stay near the graves until the midnight procession alight with tapers and smoking torches winds its way down the cobblestoned streets to the village church. The tombs are draped with wreaths of flowers and there is a bowl of fresh food near each cross. Hundreds of lighted candles stuck in the ground all around flicker and shimmer all night long like fallen stars.

All the women dress in black. Children and dogs sleep in piles everywhere amid the baskets of food and scent of flowers and beeswax. The whole scene is solemn and yet relaxed and familial. The incessant hum of prayer biends with the crying of babies and the barking of dogs. The women are as happy and busy as if they were still in their own kitchens, as they set meals for the dead on these graves. Graves covered so thickly now with candles and flowers and figures of the still living that one wonders that there is room enough for a spirit even to turn

around.

When Maria arrived by boat in a crowd of other pilgrims at about 11 o'clock, the island was already alive with lights and scurrying figures. She stopped first at the church and knelt down briefly by the draped coffin in the center aisle just inside the huge, opened front doors – the coffin was covered with corn-stalks. More corn-stalks stood upright all the way up the nave to the altar. A giant orange candle burned at each corner of the coffin. The church was like a marketplace, busy and crowded and noisy. But it smelled heavily of an admixture of incense and urine and melting wax and once outside again Maria was grateful for the fresh, cool lake-air.

She pulled the black rebozo she wore more closely about her and hurried up the winding, steep streets to the blossoming, glistening cemetery, just as the bell in the village church began to toll heavily and unrelentingly. She stepped into a field of flowers and lights and stunning community – the living and the dead fraternizing with one another – just as if the resurrection had already occurred an hour ago.

The little cemetery was filled with the sound of chanted prayer. At the same time fireworks began to go off in the village square down below. The chanted prayer had an eternal, haunting, and yet new quality about it, as all half-Indian, half-Christian worship has, as if the barbaric and the divine come completely together in the force and flare of the fireworks and chants which always accompany such services – resulting in an entirely fresh liturgy as human as it is supernatural and as magical and immediate as it is everlasting.

Maria stood perfectly still in the center of the cemetery and celebration.

And then all at once in the golden candlelight – she saw the golden hair again at last. Saw it everywhere, all around her, where Highpockets walked once more. Highpockets in her black sweater and slacks, her head shining as stunningly as it always had. Highpockets – carrying a beautiful, long ear of American corn in one hand – drawing Maria slowly into her again, as she had used to do, with her green, swamp-like eyes.

A little wind blew off of the cold water periodically and made all the candlelight quiver. And this passed through Maria each time too, like a tremble of desire. But then, each time also, as the flames of all the candles settled back into stillness again, so did Maria.

Highpockets was like she was in the beginning, strong and bright and warm. She walked among all the kneeling women and children saying nothing, but looking at Maria and smiling, or looking at them and into the lights and smiling again. Maria stood as if transfixed looking at her and this seemed both to amuse and touch Highpockets. For she finally came and stood directly in front of Maria, and Maria heard her laugh a little soft laugh as she kissed her hair again lightly, and then held Maria's head between her two big hands. She stood perfectly still for a moment, looking out upon the dark flat lake over Maria's head, before she moved away again into the crowd of gleaming lights and dark rebozos.

How did it happen? Maria thought suddenly – How did you die?

Yet, at this moment, Highpockets was so solid and real that she left the prints of her black American casuals in the sand and the marks of her fingers on each side of Maria's face, burning and lingering behind her.

Maybe it was "only physical", as I came to think, Maria finally admitted to herself, wonderingly, but even that can be as tremendous as the mountains around here, as deep as the waters and as all-enveloping, as green and gold as lakes and seed. After all, as engrossing as planting or reaping – and as completely enclosing as an embrace or drowning, and as final as death. I remember your eyes and your hair, Maria thought – Cornsilk in a swamp, cool sun-ripened and dark – your love and lovelessness. Your faith and your fear – the nets spread bravely and beautifully here, like butterfly wings, and the final agony of the little white fish in the same nets all along the shining shore.

Highpockets finally swaggered or strutted up to a flowery cross and picked one of its blossoms, winked, and hid it in her sweater. Maria saw her drinking pulque and stealing the bread of the offerings – it was her alright. And then Highpockets was gone as quickly as she had come.

That was the last thing Maria remembered on the Island of Juanitzio.

The little winged boat came and brought her back to Patzcuaro and her compadres took care of her with a faith and understanding she could have earned only through serving them in ways and manners quite beyond anything physical and sensual. She believed as they believed. She saw as they saw. They finally had so little to say to one another on this night, in any language, simply because it did not need to be said. The tiny white fish jumped in the waters, covered with flowers now, and the winds continued to speak as they had for centuries of life-in-death and the quivering with desire there must be to the end of all of us until all the lights are blown out and we are wafted, just as in this boat, to another shore, peaceful and quiet as the waters at last.

The children and dogs slept all together and heavily, in the bottom of the boat. Maria slept in the wake of her apparition of Highpockets in an enormous sudden weariness. Her head was cradled in the lap of an old woman who was clad from head to foot in black, and who had hair and eyes as black as the waters themselves now were.

When the boat landed at Patzcuaro with a sound like a sigh as its bottom touched the sandy shore, one of the fishermen carried Maria to land and the old woman put a long ear of American corn into her hand.

No one said anything.

It was getting daylight slowly. Maria would remember forever – the fisherman was gentle as he set her down on her feet by her house with a sign of the cross, a bottle of pulque and a smile. She went in weakly but happily and put the strange ear of corn down in the hearth with candles and amulets and charcoal – and burned it to a black ash.

(Jo Traherne writes that she is a former social worker and journalist. "Highpockets" is a portion of an unpublished novel about five American women in Mexico. She lives in a 10 room house on a 20 acre farm in Ohio, with 5 cats, 2 dogs, 10 sheep (plus unborn lambs) 1 donkey and acres of rabbits as well as sundry miscellaneous wild friends. She speaks of her farm as "the ecological haven I will see that it remains", and of her writing in fiction instead of some other form because "there is nothing in the clinic or the church to compare with what is simply in the body and heart".)

What's Underground, Secret, Subversive, & On the Best Seller List?

By NILA BOWMAN McCORMACK

On March 20, 1972, *Time* magazine put out an issue called "The American Woman," which proved to be a progress report on the feminist movement. Each of *Time's* usual subheads – "Art," "Business," "Religion," etc. – listed news of women in each area. The "Books" section included a small photograph of all well known contemporary female writers whose works can be construed to have a feminist stance. The listing seemed to me complete for all women writers at the particular level of *au courant* fame *Time's* editors seemed to have settled upon. Except for one name. I find the omission of Joyce Carol Oates striking since I found *Wonderland*, currently in hard back on the best seller list, just as descriptive of women's quietly desperate situations as Joan Didion's *Play It As It Lays* or Lois Gould's *Such Good Friends.* To my mind, Joyce Carol Oates makes in *Wonderland* far more militant statements through the characters Helene and Shelley than Germaine Greer has ever made in her life. *Wonderland* is the best feminist book I have yet read. If I were in a position of having to explain or convince anyone of feminism and I were only allowed one book with which to do it, I would choose *Wonderland.* Most "feminist" books make me angry, make me want to say, "Come on, why didn't you dare tell the whole thing; why won't you go all the way," ending by saying, "You understand nothing, after all, traitoress, why did you write this lie," (a feeling I did *not* have after *Play It As It Lays* or *Such Good Friends,* by the way – I recommend them both highly).

The extraordinary thing about *Wonderland's* author is that in a few reviews and interviews with her that I have read, she has not been considered feminist. I think I understand why. She is just too subtle, too exacting, for such gross Madison Avenue categorizations. But her relentless subtlety

only serves to make her all that much more seditious. I may be quite wrong, but I believe Joyce Carol Oates has even managed to escape being asked what by now has become one of the world's most tiresome journalistic queries, that dreary unto death, "Uh, how do you feel about *Women's Lib?*" I do believe that question has by now been asked every woman well known for anything from adultery with high government officials to her cake recipes.

Perhaps *Wonderland* escapes notice because its protagonist is a man. Oates seems as at home telling us the intimate thoughts of a man as a woman. Part of her genius is her ability to comprehend absolutely the motives of almost any other human being who may bear no immediate resemblance to herself in background, age, race, occupation, religion, intelligence, or sex. She can reconstruct the formation of any human personality. If she were to write of the anxieties of a Thirteenth Century Hindu, I would not be surprised or incredulous. Only halfway through *Wonderland* do we meet Helene, Dr. Jesse's wife and then his daughter, Shelley.

When Helene is first pregnant as a young intern's wife, Oates writes an account of a visit to the gynecologist so excruciating, so tediously, minutely, gruesomely realistic that it is guaranteed to spiritually castrate, for at least a month, any woman who reads it. Years later Helene becomes a woman of 40, then 45, no more, no less, just a woman of 45, hated by the young for that and that alone. Realizing she is hated, Helene jolts from a lifetime of passivity long enough to strike a young woman at an anti-war demonstration. It is one brief action, but it is the assertion, the single assertion, of her life.

Her daughter Shelley, embodies the new kind of odyssey available to the present generation of women as the alternate culture would have it. A dream of freedom that overdoses at twenty-eight, like Janis Joplin, of the rock culture, Diana Oughton of the revolutionary culture, or Edie Sedgewick of the pop culture. (In case you don't remember, Edie was Andy Warhol's 1967 Girl of the Year underground superstar.) Shelley is a run-away with a Charles Manson type boyfriend, a "sensitive" young guru who trains her to "erase," humiliate, and finally obliterate herself. Shelley's boyfriend I find archetypal of the kind of sensitive young man the alternate culture has spawned.

Another of Joyce Carol Oates' novels, *them*, also has some tremendous portraits of trapped women – Loretta and her daughter, Maureen, both so different in their conclusions but both so understandable. *them* also has a Lesbian character, Betty – Maureen's sister – who is not a major character but is a good, accurate, sociologically sound description of the history of the lumpen-proletariat-little-city-mutt type of Lesbian. She is a juvenile delinquent circa late 1950's. She does not turn out any less successfully than the other characters, but Oates never treats any of her characters with crudity of understanding. Maureen goes from an early bout with prostitution to finally, ten years later, at age 25, escape into a nice, normal, quiet, married life. She yearns for stability so much that love seems a frivolous luxury that she doesn't even consider.

The Wheel of Love is an excellent collection of short stories for readers who would like to sample Oates' abilities before perhaps going on with her novels. I would suggest starting with "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" This story concerns an All-American McDonald's Drive-In teenager, Connie, whose dreaming adolescent faith in pop-tune lyric love songs has lured her totally unprepared into a nightmare. This story is a truly contemporary horror story, realistic and allegorical at once.

The superficial circumstances of Joyce Carol Oates' life – she is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Windsor, Ontario, born in 1938 and raised in the country outside Lockport, New York, married to another professor – offer no indication of a worldly experience so vast as to have enabled her to have written six novels – all of which have received high literary acclaim. She is as incredibly prolific as she is excellent. But then, whenever did we get the idea that to be a great writer you have to have lived some kind of out-of-the-mainstream existence and hitchhiked a lot a la Kerouac and Hesse, or have spent a great deal of time drinking in Irish pubs like Brendan Behan or at least pretending to be a brawling Irishman like Norman Mailer, instead of the nice little Jewish boy he is.

I can't call Joyce Carol Oates a feminist, I suppose, since I don't know if she calls herself one. She might deny the whole thing, I don't know. But she is whatever creature it is who can be said to be ultimately sensitive to the condition of the contemporary American woman. It doesn't matter, just read what she writes.

Books Reviewed:

Wonderland. New York: Vanguard Press, 1971.

them. New York: Vanguard Press, 1969.

The Wheel of Love. New York: Vanguard Press, 1970.

them and *The Wheel of Love* are also available in paperback (Fawcett Crest Editions).

The Ladies of Llangollen

A RE-REVIEW

(Editor's Note: The December/71-January/72 issue of THE LADDER contained a review of Elizabeth Mavor's book on the Ladies. A reader has supplied this very different view of the same book which we feel is important enough to share with all of you.)

The book, THE LADIES OF LLANGOLLEN, by Elizabeth Mavor, London, Michael Joseph, 1971, merely by reason of its subject, should not be overlooked. The Ladies of Llangollen were, of course, Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, two Anglo-Irish women who at the end of the 18th century, in spite of much opposition from their families, escaped from the tutelage that was the common lot of women of their class and succeeded in establishing their own independent household in Wales, in which they lived in conjugal felicity for fifty years.

But the first question that arose in my mind when I read it was, Why did Ms. Mavor choose to write it? It is a fine job of research, some of it in original material. The characterization (as the characters present themselves to this author's view) is painstaking. There is much in it of great interest to anyone who enjoys the social history of the period. But the book has a fatal flaw – a flaw that derives from the ambivalence in the author's mind concerning the nature of the relationship between the Ladies.

Ms. Mavor subtitles her biography "A Study in Romantic Friendship" and it becomes apparent at once that it is her intention to "rescue" the Ladies from the imputation of having been Lesbians. She goes to considerable length in her Introduction to present the argument that "romantic friendships" were a form of platonic devotion common among women of the period, which nowadays are misunderstood since they were wrapped in the excessively sentimental language of endearment cultivated, especially by women, and often surrounded by all the outward manifestations of affection that are now no longer "possible outside an avowedly lesbian connection." (at p. 11). There is much more in her book in this strain. The reader has the distinct impression that Ms. Mavor equates "a Lesbian connection" solely and pejoratively with ephemeral, purely physical erotic encounters between women.

This would be the same as saying that all "love affairs", between any two partners, are merely casual sexual encounters. However, Ms. Mavor also declares that (at p. 10), "In a word, the two women's relationship was what we in modern times would consider a marriage." Now, does Ms. Mavor mean that, although the Ladies were not Lesbians, they were "married", i.e., that theirs was a marriage in which there was no physical consummation? Such marriages, though they are known to exist between men and women, are not usually considered the ideal nor the most likely to support the happiness of the couples involved. Why this should be insisted upon as having been the case with the Ladies is not clear to me. Presumably it is done for the sake of "rehabilitating" the Ladies' reputations – rather late in the day, one would think.

The flaw in Ms. Mavor's book lies chiefly in the fact that she is not outspoken in this matter, which is central to her theme. She skirts the issue constantly, she approaches it as closely as may be, but she never says it in so many words, not even in the chapter in which she discusses at length the attack on the Ladies as Lesbians published in their lifetime. In support of her argument concerning this as the epitome of the "romantic friendship" she cites Eleanor Butler's alarm over this attack. Nothing in what Eleanor Butler said would be taken by any woman with experience in trying to build her life with another woman as

anything but self-defense. Eleanor Butler was well aware of the problems she and Sarah Ponsonby confronted. The two of them had defied their families, and had fled from the threat of marriage or relegation to a convent in order to stay together and this in face of the fact that neither of them had anything to live on beyond family allowances and governmental pensions. It really defies one's powers of belief that a relationship that was merely a "romantic friendship" would have steeled two women of cultivation and sensitive feeling to withstand the varied assaults that were made on them.

Ms. Mavor also discusses the entries in Eleanor Butler's journal in regard to what light they may throw on the intimate side of her life with Sarah Ponsonby. Again Ms. Mavor is not forthright in what she says, but she seems to imply that, although Eleanor Butler spoke at length and in great detail (which she quotes) of her own physical ailments and Sarah's tender care of her, she makes no reference to erotic passages between them and therefore it may be deduced that there were none. This seems hardly a justifiable assumption. Even in their intimate journals people of Eleanor's and Sarah's background did not relate such details. One may cite Boswell's candid accounts of his encounters with whores in the streets of London or Pepys' descriptions of lying late abed another hour to "sport" with his wife. But these were men, with the freedom of men in licentious society and Pepys, furthermore, wrote his journal in a cipher that was not broken till years after his death. No lady, in an age when it was not admitted that respectable women received any pleasure from sex, would refer to such things. It really is too much to expect that Eleanor would speak of "sporting" in bed with Sarah, or even make a far more oblique comment to that effect. Ms. Mavor does conclude her discussion of this point (at p. 105) with the remark: "Psychologically the character of their relationship seems clear, but technically an enquiry must be inconclusive. Certainly love speaks in these entries." There again is Ms. Mavor's ambiguity: "technically". By this I presume she means that the question of a physical relationship between the Ladies – or, to put it more bluntly, whether the Ladies' marriage included the enjoyment of sex together, in the goose-down warmth of their celebrated double bed, cannot be answered by means of Eleanor's journal.

Ms. Mavor concludes her book with a discussion of the material that has been published on the Ladies since their death. She seems to take particular exception to Dr. Mary Gordon's *Chase of the Wild Goose,* published in 1931 by Leonard and Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press. Dr. Gordon, she feels, interpreted the Ladies' relationship in the light of her own predilections. This reader, however, feels that, in spite of reservations about the supernatural phenomenon described there – Dr. Gordon's good faith cannot be questioned – and the shortcomings of her style, the earlier book gives a far more convincing picture of the Ladies and their marriage. The portrait there is not as studied, it is not encased in such an admirably complete background drop of the period, but the women themselves are far more vividly realized and the strength of their devotion less equivocally portrayed.

I have one more cavil with Ms. Mavor's book. This is a minor point, but since it bears directly on my main complaint, I shall mention it. Ms. Mavor refers (at p. 202) to Simone de Beauvoir's allusion to the Ladies in her book, *The Second Sex.* She takes exception to Mme. (the French usually accord her the Mme. in place of Mlle. as a mark of respect for her standing as a woman of letters) de Beauvoir's remark, "The union of Sarah Ponsonby and her woman companion lasted for almost fifty years without a cloud," saying that it is "incongruous" that such a vague phrase appears in "a treatise that pretended to be so scientifically specific," and that life, for the Ladies, as for anyone else, was never "without a cloud." In the first place I should like to point out that Mme. de Beauvoir's French is full of such felicities of phrase as "without a cloud" and they in no way detract from the scientific exactness of her statements. In the second place Ms. Mavor has taken the statement out of context. In this passage Mme. de Beauvoir is speaking of the similarities and dissimilarities between unions of men with women and of women with women. She says (my translation): ". . . between women, carnal love is more equal, more continuous; they are not carried away by phrenetic ecstasy, but they never fall back into a hostile indifference; they look at one another, they touch one another, with a tranquil sort of pleasure which prolongs in a muted way the pleasure they experienced in bed. The union of Sarah Ponsonby with her beloved endured for nearly fifty years without a cloud; it would seem that they knew how to create a peaceable Eden on the edge of the world." (*)

Mme. de Beauvoir obviously has no difficulty in recognizing the real nature of the relationship between the Ladies, since she has no difficulty in grasping the fact that a "Lesbian connection" can have all the attributes of a marriage, that a devoted love between two women can encompass a sexual relationship as well as all the other elements Ms. Mavor cites as the ingredients of a "romantic friendship." When she speaks of the Ladies' union lasting for fifty years without a cloud she is not referring to their practical difficulties, their struggles to achieve a place for themselves together, their on-the-whole-successful effort to win acceptance for their marriage in the eyes of their world, their anxieties about money. What Mme. de Beauvoir means is that their private life together, their intimate association, lasted for fifty years without a cloud. And on the record, even as presented by Ms. Mavor and less sympathetic biographers, that was the fact.

**The quotation from Mme. de Beauvoir is taken from the 1949 Edition Gallimard of* Le Deuxième Sexe, *vol. II, p. 188: ". . . .entre femmes, la tendresse charnelle est plus égale, plus continue; elles ne sont pas emportées dans de frénétiques extases, mais elles ne retombent jamais dans une indifference hostile; se voir, se toucher, c'est un tranquille plaisir que prolonge en sourdine celui du lit. L'union de Sarah Ponsonby avec sa bien-aimée dura pendant près de cinquante ans sans un nuage; il semble qu'elles aient su se créer en marge du monde un paisible eden."*

THE SHADE

By BEVERLY LYNCH

It was worst when he was on top of her like this, using her for his own pleasure and not just to make money. She supposed that was because it hurt most to be doing something that once meant he loved her and now put him in the same category as the other pigs who just wanted to move around, heavily, using her like a machine to feel good. As long as she could keep thinking about it she almost blocked out his physical presence, but it was harder this time. She had not expected him and he had given her no time to prepare her body for his assault. She was afraid he would know this time that he was no good for her anymore. That he was just another trick for her, that he would throw her out. As long as she could just keep thinking so the hate didn't start the hurt and anger which would clamp her shut, make her body say what she would not. Oh, if she could just hurt him like that, though. The rage was flowing through her as his breath came sharper, rasping against her hair shining in the morning sun that streamed, hot, through a large tear in the green shade. That heat made her sweat and sicken. She could let herself go, maybe damage him for good, shut on him like a cold iron clamp, rip him at his greatest moment as he seemed to be ripping her. "Relax, baby, I can't make it with you so tight," he urged hurriedly. She let his old voice, the same voice she had worshipped, work on her. The anger cooled and she began to move as she should. "Ahh, chick," he breathed finally, heaving one last time before rolling over and shading his eyes from the sunlight she had been staring into;

"Don't I turn you on no more, Dot? Don't you love me, babe?"

"I just don't feel so good today, Pete," she managed to mutter through her swallowed frustration.

"Hey, hon, that's okay. I wish you could take a day off, but we didn't make much this week and we got to put bread away so we can get out of this." And she must again pretend she did not know she wasn't the only woman he had working, that this was not all to build their life together while he looked for a job. She knew because an old john once said to her. "You're just about his best, honey. Strap-

ping young Irish like yourself. Just ripe. Some of the others, they're over the hill, on dope, look all beat." Her anger had built from that. Or possibly even from before that. Her morals had not bothered her when he had first suggested it – it was a good way to make bread when there was no other way. She earned more than waitressing, twice as much, and, at first, it didn't take any time at all. Now, though, she slept until two or three in the afternoon to escape from the heat and the hate she had for what she was doing and for Pete, spent a couple of hours getting ready and the rest of the time she did not have the strength to do anything, shop, go out for a good meal, spend some time with her friend Madeline. Just too down, she would expalin when Madeline chided her for not returning visits, realizing as she said it the danger of that, of getting so tired of down that she would resort to anything to get up. The high she needed would only come from a drug strong enough to obliterate reality. That, she knew, would be the end of her. As long as she did not shoot up there was some far off hope that someone, something would come and pull her out of this. That Pete, maybe, would come to his senses or get a job so they could live together, so their love could be like it used to be when she left home for him five months before and they hid, she thought, because she was sixteen and he twenty-three, from the pursuing police. But even then, she supposed, when he went out drinking he must have been checking on his other women, collecting bread, not winning it at pool, like he said.

"Why don't we leave this?" she'd asked Madeline when they first met in the hallway bathroom, where Dottie had run when she heard someone crying in pain. Madeline was half-collapsed on the toilet in the peeling green bathroom, leaning against the dirt-smeared sink. Madeline was letting the last of her aborted child run out of her body into the blood-clot filled toilet water.

"Where should we go?" Madeline had answered before another horrible groan tore out of her. Neither had an answer. The next week they had walked for a while at twilight, to get out of their day-baked rooms, into the cooling New London streets and down by the docks. Gulls sang around them and Madeline, still wrecked by her abortion, had leaned against Dottie sitting at the edge of a pier. They watched little kids fish futilely for pollution-sick fish, but it was beautiful, cool and close here together. They stayed until the two Coast Guard trainees, shining in their whites, came to lead them back to their rooms for ten dollars apiece. Since then, Madeline had visited at least twice a week, but they had not gone out again, reluctant to see each other on sailors' arms being led to their greatest commonality and away from the comfort of each other.

Pete was asleep, snoring, his fly still open, pants slightly down. Dottie hated the sight of him, but feared to cover him with a blanket and wake him. She thought, instead, of the picture she and Madeline must make together. She herself was short, with long wavy reddish-brown hair and was still, she did not know why, red-cheeked and flushed with her new sexuality and what was left of her freedom. She was strong looking in a hefty way. Built to pick potatoes she sometimes mused, after the romance of youth, had she been in Ireland, had married her to some handsome Irish boy destined to drink too much. Madeline was taller, too thin, with dark, shorter hair and Mediterranean eyes – sexy, the men called them. But she was fifteen and not quite what a woman should look like. She was also paler, less fresh looking than Dottie, having started with her pimp at fourteen after running from New York. She always thanked her lucky stars that she'd had the sense to get out of New York where it was worse, she said. At least she was still alive. Madeline was really nice, Dottie thought. Not bitchy like the girls she had grown up with in Providence. And then, such a relief after being with men all the time for so long. As nice as Pete in the beginning, only it was real, she did not want anything but Dottie from Dottie. She ran her hand over Pete's tangled long hair, thinking of Madeline.

Pete stirred, coughed and woke to turn to Dottie once more. He started to kiss her, but suddenly his frizzy beard, his hot male breath, his wire-rimmed glasses always cutting into her because he did not give her time to take them off as he used to, revolted her. She pushed at him, feebly, then became frightened, hoping he had not noticed.

"What the fuck's the matter with you, chick?" But hadn't he rejected her, she thought, in a way a hundred times worse? She could not lie again, just put an arm across her eyes and waited. Nor could she play the game when he began to talk about his college degree and a job he had lined up

and how they'd have enough money aside to take a vacation before he started working. She just lay there.

"Talk to me, Dottie, tell me what's the matter, we'll be out of this soon."

"Pimp," she whispered, screaming in her heart.

"What?" he commanded, sitting up.

"Pimp. Pig. Prick. Lousy hippy bastard liar. You're no flower child," she continued in the same enraged whisper, "you're no beautiful person. You're shit. I wouldn't even walk on you."

His face was contorted, full of contempt, but he let her talk.

"I know, Pete, I know about your other girls. I know you pulled the same shit on them. I know what I am to you. I wish I could kill you, I hate your stinking male body and all the cunt-hungry pigs you send up here. I hate every man who gets off on fucking women and I always did, always will. You made it pretty for a while. Even if we'd just been together and had everything you said we would, it wouldn't be pretty. It would be just like my father pinching my mother's ass and I'd have to pretend like the mother, that it was fun. Maybe there's something wrong with me that sex with you is lousy, maybe there's something wrong with me that I can't even start to get turned on by you any more. But I think it's just hate, cause you all sit on women, every last pig one of you, you walk all over us. Don't tell me prostituting blew my mind, I know I'd be a prostitute even if I was just with you cause I would have seen through you sooner or later anyhow. You'd say it different. You'd say marriage blew my mind. Or kids. But it's you.

They faced each other on the edge of the bed. Pete smiled.

"Okay, Dot, you got it all out. But remember, I'm still your meal ticket. Ain't nothing else you can do, jail-bait, except run home to mommy and daddy. You stupid chicks can't get yourselves together enough even to get fake I..D. But don't worry, babe, Daddy'll take care of you. I'll give you a little hint. If you want good sex, sounds to me like you better find a girl friend."

Pete had dressed as he was talking and when he was finished, left. Dottie put on jeans and a jersey, then went to the paint-spotted mirror on the dresser to brush her hair. She looked at the woman in the glass, at her set mouth and determined eyes. She walked to the window and looked down at the men on the street unloading trucks, standing in the doorways of their stores. Gradually, thought came back to Dottie. She was hardly concerned with what had just happened. He would still make it possible for her to earn money if she wanted to. It was the other things she had said – about hating men – that concerned her. What did I say, she wondered? That all women are prostitutes. All men pimps or johns. My mother. My father. I didn't want to be like mama. Pete didn't treat me like dad did mama, so I wanted Pete. But they're the same. Mama would kill me for doing this, but she's the same as me. Only he can't just leave her. He doesn't want anybody but him screwing her. If he had a bunch of women like Pete I bet he would do the same thing.

Then Pete said – I guess he said I'm queer because I think like this. That's supposed to freak me out. Her mind was getting fuzzy. She strained to understand. Anyway, I stood up for myself. She felt good, better than her silence had made her feel. Excited. Even knowing she had to figure out more she could not. She had thought too much.

Out in the hall she stepped over the ripped linoleum and ran up a flight of steps to Madeline's room.

"Dottie, what happened?"

"I told off Pete."

"Oh, Dot, did he walk out on you? Listen, man, maybe my . . ."

"No, no. It's okay. I just got to think about it all and I need help." She explained what she had been thinking, watching Madeline's face brighten all the while.

"Dottie, Dottie, that's what I've been trying to figure out, too. Like, how come my sister thinks she's better off than me, with five kids already and her man's stepping out on her. My mother that almost died after Pa hit her and she fell down the stairs and the cops took his side and said it was an accident. Even my other sister who's working her ass off in a factory so she can wait to find the right man."

"Yeah, that's the same kind of thing. But what do we do about it?"

"I don't know, Dottie, but it seems like we can't do anything while we're working for them."

"You know, one thing Pete said could help us. He said that women can't get themselves together enough to even make fake I.D.'s. Maybe we can do something if

(Continued on Page 34)

Journeys in Art

By SARAH WHITWORTH

THE OTHER FACE OF LOVE, by Raymond de Becker, Grove Press Inc., New York, 1969, ($10.00, 209 pp).

The Other Face of Love by Raymond de Becker contains 175 illustrations including sculpture, prints, paintings, drawings and photographs that depict or allude to the homosexual theme. Of these, 62 concern themselves with women. Nevertheless, this is not a book on gay art. The text is a socio-political account of homosexuality from ancient Mesopotamia through contemporary psychological attitudes and legal conditions. However, it is not only predominantly concerned with male homosexuality but is surprisingly (since its viewpoint is entirely supportive of male homosexuality) derogatory of Lesbianism in several notations.

The following quote is sufficient to explain the tone of the book in regard to Lesbianism. "The sadistic aggression of the Amazons foreshadows that of the warlike heroines of later ages who, wearing man's dress like Joan of Arc, Mathilda of Tuscany, Jeanne de Montfort, and many others, show a violent revulsion against heterosexual relationships and display a super-virility calculated to humiliate their indolent contemporaries, but who also reveal Lesbian tendencies which were, at least, latent. It foreshadows the kind of liaison or marriage in which the man, dominated by the woman, prefers practices such as *fellatio, cunnilingus,* or *coitus per annum* to the usual sexual relationships. Lastly, it explains to some extent the criminality which certain psychiatrists believe they have noted as a frequent factor in female homosexuality."

This statement, as well as many others in the book could be criticized almost word by word from the standpoints of drawing an illogical conclusion from the beginning premise, the use of proof by psychiatric prejudice, insufficient data, and most important, its greatest inaccuracy lies in its definition of Lesbianism as an act of sex rather than an act of love. And yet, even though the text is at times infuriating and for the Lesbian generally disappointing, *The Other Face of Love* does function as one of the few collections of homosexual art that can be purchased in book form and for this reason does have a unique value for its reproductions alone.

The Lesbian works of art chosen for illustration range from a Japanese print

Justice and Peace. Flemish School. Sixteenth century. Musee Thomas-Dobrée et Musée Archéologique, Nantes, France.

which rests on the brink of pornography to selections which might be considered too ambiguous to be called homosexual at all. But here we are faced with the problem of *visual inference* where the meaning of a painting rests finally in the mind of the viewer. Since Lesbianism is not solely a matter of sexuality, it should not be necessary to depict a sexual union in order to depict a Lesbian union. Even if a work of art is not explicit or titled in some way to give the necessary clue, the idea of a complete relationship between two women can be implied.

There are a number of such works reproduced in the *Other Face of Love* including drawings by Mariette Lydis (illustration for *Les Chansons de Bilitis),* Maillol (illustration for *Guide to Frolicking)* or the *Dance at Moulin Rouge* by Toulouse-Lautrec. There is also a small collection of delightful photographs from films including Lesbian scenes. Especially charming is a still from the film, *La Garçonne,* by Jacquiline Audey showing two women dancing who are so obviously enjoying each other that one only doubts whether it is a photograph of a real situation or a dramatized one.

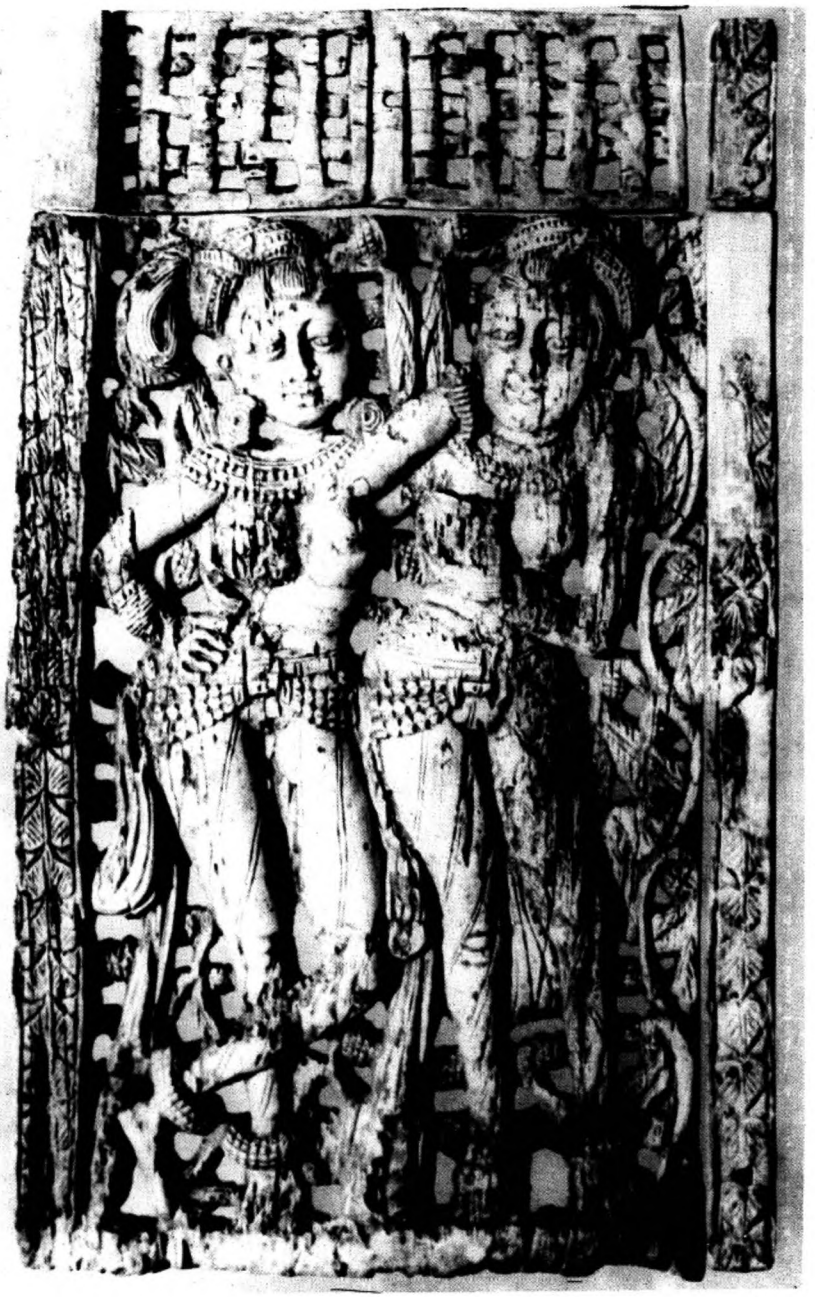
Justice and Peace, reproduced here, is another illustration in this book which does not indulge in pure sexuality but which nevertheless points to a more complete portrayal of the physical and emotional responsiveness between women. Foremost, the painting is, of course, an allegory of the virtues of justice and peace. But in addition, there is an implication of sensual feeling by which an intimate relationship between the two women may certainly be inferred. The idea of art for art's sake had not been scholastically conceived in the 16th century when this work was painted; artists were usually required by commission to paint religious or mythological conceptions. However, the personification of these moral messages was often chosen to cloak a freer expression of sensual and sexual feeling than would otherwise have been allowed.

Further examination of the background of the painting reveals the cupid on the left and the dove in a tranquil scene on the right which are surely designed to symbolize justice and peace but may also be employed as signs of love. As well as these symbolic references there are also unmistakable indications of intimacy such as the closeness of their bared breasts, the gesture of the hands and the touching of the lower parts of their bodies. The position of the faces adds to their intimacy an element of seriousness in conversation, as one woman expostulates with the other.

But, as previously stated, *The Other Face of Love* also contains many Lesbian works which do not rely on inference but are quite explicit sexually. A group of these are prints from Japan and China whose artists have for many centuries delighted in drawing the gamut of sexual possiblities in private editions of prints. These prints, of course, are not usually reproduced in the art textbooks but when they are included, the Lesbian theme must be considered more prevalent in Eastern art than is usually supposed.

The Indian works of art reproduced are far more subtle. The Indian print of *Women Embracing* shows two clothed women with legs intertwined on a bed. There are several other paintings of harem women who are seen together as friends: *The Women Friends of Ceylon,* circa 1760, *The Women Friends of Ajanta* and the relief sculpture, *The Women Friends of Begram.* As can be seen from the *Friends of Begram* relief, little more than an affectionate friendship is indicated in these works entitled "Women Friends". However, according to the text of *The Other Face of Love,* there is documentation for the existence of Lesbianism in the harems of India. The author states that Lesbianism is described in the *Kama Sutra* and that "there is no shortage of carvings and ancient vases, some of which are in the Berlin Alte Museum, which show women carrying out various sexual practices between themselves . . . There are apparently no fewer than five words in Hindustani for describing a Lesbian. At the same time Havelock Ellis has pointed out that the Hindu poets have described Sapphism with complete freedom and in the crudist manner." This being true, *Two Women Friends of Begram* may well depict a Lesbian relationship of two harem women. At any rate, the jauntiness and openness of affection seen here is rare in Western art and quite satisfying in itself.

The contemporary works reproduced are divided in half between those that are simply commercial book illustrations evidently drawn for purposes of sensationalism and those that are from the hands of serious artists. Of the latter, there are included paintings or drawings by Gustave Klint, Edvard Munch, Jules Pascin (who is well known for his Lesbian themes), Albert Marquet, Leonore Fini and a rare find of



The Women Friends of Begrām. Panel from the ivory chest of an Indian princess. Śātavahāna work, Second century A.D. Musée Guimet, Paris.

two women kissing by Pierre Bonnard, illustrated here. There is also a collection of early 20th century photographs of Lesbian encounters which are perhaps notable for the time in which they were produced but are much less inventive in terms of the art of photography per se.

Looking over the full range of illustrations in this book, the conclusion that one arrives at is the realization of the extent to which works of art concerning both Lesbianism and male homosexuality have been excluded from the general art texts or monographs. Anyone who has done research in this field knows the difficulty encountered in uncovering reproductions of homosexual art though a great deal does in fact exist. Any conspiracy of silence is designed to make the outsider feel alone in his or her difference so that out of loneliness the ostracized person will deny individuality and rejoin the fold. But throughout history, the visual arts have not excluded Lesbianism or male homosexuality as subject matter and *The Other Face of Love* attempts in this respect to break through the silence so that we may all speak aloud.

Pierre Bonnard. Lithograph. Bibliothèque Nationale, Réserve, Paris.

A LIFE OF ANGELS.
Margaret Fuller's World

By LYNN FLOOD

Early in life Margaret Fuller was awakened to her unusual place in a world where women were accustomed to stifle their own minds and identities. Margaret was not one of those women, because of her father's insistence on a strict and broad education for both his sons and his daughter. She grew up in the early nineteenth century with her intelligence developed in the same way as that of the brightest young men around her. While she talked with these boys and later men, grew with them and was a part of the intellectual communities of Boston and New York, Margaret never forgot her sex. Probably she was not allowed to do so. In the male Harvard community of her late teens and early twenties, as well as in precocious youth when she talked with great men in her home, she was the *only woman* matching wits with men and surpassing the thinking of many of them. This led her naturally to reject the belief held then as now that women were incapable of functioning in matters of the mind as effectively as men. She suffered from her knowledge of female oppression and taught more than once in situations where she could expand both the consciousness and education of women. Margaret also wrote WOMEN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, the American parallel to Mary Wollstonecraft's VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN.

There was more than a lopsided education to account for Margaret's concern for women. She had a deeply felt preference for women as companions and as recipients of her emotional expression. She therefore developed a respect for the wholeness of women as human beings which she never felt for men. Constantly through her MEMOIRS (Boston, Phillips, Sampson, 1852, 2v.) Margaret makes reference to the gentleness of other women and herself, to the intensity of emotion between women and to her own cherished relationships with women.

The "angels" referred to in this title were the women Margaret loved as distantly as she would have loved angels. Her emotions were first opened to her sex in early childhood through an incident which she deemed sufficiently important to herself that she included it later in an autobiographical sketch. This was the death of her younger sister. She wrote, "She who would have been the companion of my life was severed from me, and I was left alone. This has made a vast difference in my lot. Her character . . . would have been soft, graceful and lively . . ." Through the rest of Margaret's life she remarks on these qualities in other women. She seems, in fact, to be seeking them.

It was in the "first angel" of Margaret's life that she found what she had been seeking for the first time after losing her sister. A little older by then, she was attracted to a woman yet older than herself, visiting from England and "was arrested by a face most fair, and well known as it seemed at first glance – for surely I had met her before and waited for her long . . . the first knowledge of such a person was intoxication." Margaret's first love was thus described and the relationship developed into a friendship which "engrossed me wholly".

While living in Cambridge, Massachusetts, she became friends with Emerson and many other famous men of letters. At the same time "Margaret commenced several of those friendships which lasted through her life, and which were channels for so large a part of her spiritual activity". One of the editors of MEMOIRS, J.F. Clarke, after this statement in the MEMOIRS, became very reluctant to discuss her friendships in any but a superficial manner and warned readers of his reluctance by speaking of "prudency", "risk", and "misunderstanding". One friend told Emerson years later that Margaret's position in the Cambridge-Boston society and her relationships to the women therein was such that, "Had she been a man, any one of those fine girls of sixteen, who surrounded her here, would have married her: they were all in love with her . . ."

It was in Cambridge that Margaret wrote a poem supposedly occasioned by the gift of a "passion-flower" from one lady to another. The poem, it will be seen, reflected much of Margaret herself. Below is one of its stanzas.

The mystic flower read
in thy soul-filled eye
To its life's question
the desired reply,
But came no nearer.
On thy gentle breast
It hoped to find the haven of its rest;
But in cold night,
hurried afar from thee,
It closed its once
half-smiling destiny.

A Miss Martineau entered Margaret's life in this period too. She was the object of Margaret's more mature love. She found in Miss Martineau the "vigorous reasoning powers, invention, clear views of her objects" which she sought in a woman. Margaret said she wanted an equal, not a student or a worshipping young girl, but a woman of intellectual strength to match her own in a world where only men seemed to have developed that strength. Despite their intellectual appeal she had no interest in involvement with men. "What I want", Margaret wrote to a man, "the word I crave, I do not expect to hear from the lips of men". She felt that she had found in Miss Martineau the first person who could "comprehend me wholly, mentally, and morally . . ." Here, then, was the peak of the love Margaret could express in friendship. It is implied in the MEMOIRS that Miss Martineau understood whatever it was that kept Margaret from expanding their friendship.

The emotional level of Margaret's friendships is referred to often in the course of the MEMOIRS. Emerson states, "Her friendships, as a girl with girls, as a woman with women, were not unmingled with passion, and had passages of romantic sacrifice and of ecstatic fusion, which I have heard with the ear, but could not trust my profane pen to report". Margaret herself complains of "days and weeks of heartache", the source of which is not revealed, but whose symptoms can be identified with an unfulfilled longing for a love object. Again Emerson indulges himself in wonder at the "violent" emotional life his friend lived in comparison with his own. She seemed always beyond his comprehension with her energy which was "too much a force of blood" and which left her incapable of peace. One description of Margaret with a friend shows Margaret attempting "to transfuse with her force this nymph-like form, and to fill her to glowing with her own lyric fire". If all that was visible, to a man, one can imagine the actual intensity of the relationship.

Yet she still dealt almost instinctively, unconsciously, with her desires. Her relationships and feelings were so obvious and naturally indulged that Margaret did not come to terms with them, to rationally name them for what they were, or to discover a name for herself. While reading Balzac's LE LIVRE MYSTIQUE she told Emerson she identified with a character who "exerts alternately a masculine and a feminine influence on the characters". Emerson continued, assuring us, "Of all this nocturnal element in her nature she was very conscious . . . ." She once wrote about her awareness of her dual nature, damning "this tremendous repression of an existence half unfolded . . . ." She accepted male comment that her mind was a "masculine" one, not courageous enough of intellect to recognize that she had merely been allowed to grow more than her sisters. This is why the men who wrote about her had to find redeeming qualities in her like "a woman's appreciation of the beautiful in sentiment and the beautiful in action". (One wonders what *that* means). She let them convince her that her mind was of two elements and it was that conception of herself which trapped Margaret into later decisions to deny one half of her self. Poor Margaret; surrounded by men who admired her because "her judgments took no bribe from her sex", and attributed her idol-like status among the women she knew to her "burly masculine existence". She just did not know she was a woman developed to near the fullest of her powers and felt constrained to accept society's view of herself as a borrower from men.

Margaret did express some overt thoughts on love between women. They appear outright twice in the MEMOIRS, once in explaining her marriage in the last few years of her life. She excused her decision to marry partially by saying her husband "is capable of the sacred love – the love passing that of woman". From this and other evidence it is apparent that Margaret saw love on three levels, the lowest between men and women. Of this type of love she wrote: "I shall never forget that my curse [inability to love whomever she wished] is nothing, compared with that of those who have entered into those relations, but not made them real; who only

seem husbands, wives . . ." The second level was that between women. The third and highest was a selfless, god-inspired love transcending all human wants and needs. It was this third type of love that Margaret imagined in her revering husband.

Margaret's most outspoken recorded thoughts on the subject of love between women are below.

> "At Mr. G.'s we looked over prints, the whole evening, in peace. Nothing fixed my attention so much as a large engraving of Mme. Recamier in her boudoir. I have so often thought over the intimacy between her and Mme. DeStael.
>
> It is so true that a woman may be in love with a woman, and a man with a man. I like to be sure of it, for it is the same love which angels feel . . .
>
> It is regulated by the same law as love between persons of different sexes; only it is purely intellectual and spiritual. Its law is the desire of the spirit to realize a whole, which makes it seek in another being the strong, the beautiful; the mute seeks the eloquent, etc.; the butterfly settles always on the dark flower. Why did Socrates love Alcibiades? Why did Korner love Schneider? How natural is the love of Wallenstein for Max; that of DeStael for DeRecamier; mine for ___. I loved ___, for a time, with as much passion as I was then strong enough to feel. Her voice was always echoing in my ear; all poetic thoughts clustered round the dear image. This love was a key which unlocked for me many a treasure which I still possess; it was the carbuncle which cast light into so many of the darkest caverns of human nature. She loved me, too, though not so much, because her nature was 'less high, less grave, less large, less deep'. But she loved me more tenderly, less passionately. She loved me, for well I remember her suffering when first she could feel my faults, and knew one part of the exquisite veil rent away; how she wished to stay apart and weep the whole day.
>
> I do not love her now with passion, but I still feel towards her as I can to no other woman. I thought of all this as I looked at Mme. Recamier."

At this point it may seem that Margaret Fuller was a dashing, romantic young figure who had the love of all around her for the taking and whose position in society offered her a certain freedom to have relationships with whomever she pleased. Unfortunately Margaret made a decision during the time when she was involved with Miss Martineau to abstain from all love relationships. The memoirs do not, of course, say what prompted this decision, but it occurred at about the time, in the early 1830's, that Margaret's father died and left her with much responsibility for the younger members of her family and for her mother. This circumstance, however, seems little more than an excuse for Margaret to avoid a decision to commit herself further to any one of her relationships for fear of their obvious outcome. One might suspect from the tone of her writing around 1833, when she met Miss Martineau, that she was on the verge of becoming more involved with the lady. When her father died, though, she was reinforced in her moralistic fear of consummating the relationship. Margaret had a long history of this kind of conflict and suffered from its persistence even after this decision. She entered a mystical period sometime after her withdrawal. It may be that she sought to relieve herself of the thought that her temptation to "sin" had somehow shortened her father's life.

Margaret tried from her youth to channel her "intensity of passion". It was that disruptive tendency toward passion which she felt "unfits me for life". She thought, as one of the generation of transcendentalists, that free will was an issue for her. In exercising free will Margaret would have sucumbed to passion, but she did not know how to "reconcile its workings with necessity and compensation – how to reconcile the life of the heart with that of the intellect . . ." She complained that her "Destiny" was not her fault, that she did not lead herself into situations which ended in sorrow, but stumbled upon them. Yet by calling herself "a poor magnet, with power to be wounded by the bodies I attract", she recognized her unnecessary passivity in relation to those people who could make her happy. Rather than act to bring happiness to herself and the women she did attract, Margaret would not move toward wider experience at any level of her relationships, but stood accepting the pain of self-denial and the anger which misunderstanding of her non-motives probably provoked in some of her friends. She called her state one of "strange anguish" and "dread uncertainty". She longed to "rule circumstances, instead of being ruled by them" and to be "what Nature intended". One editor wrote that she was full of feelings, but that those feelings were smothered and became "stagnant", bitter. Margaret Fuller rejected her own feelings for fear of their disclosure. She rationalized that rejection with high ideals of self-sacrifice and spiritual love, but "this high idea which governed (her) life, brought her into sharp conflicts, which constituted the pathos and tragedy of her existence . . ."

Margaret seldom dealt with herself compassionately, preferring to continue a pattern of self-destructiveness begun early in life than to deal courageously with her conflicts. When separated from her first love she was duly miserable. Her father sent her away to school as a cure for her depression, but once there she suffered a feeling of being out of place until she drew attention to herself by becoming ill and withdrawn. She was so successful at the tactic that she became close, as a direct result of it, to an older woman, a teacher. That incident was the first recorded evidence of a lifetime of psychosomatic illness. That is, the illnesses were real, but it is probable that they were emotionally based.

Margaret Fuller and Bettine Brentano, drawing by Bentley Edmonds.

After a meeting with Miss Martineau, for example, Margaret became sick with actual fever and head pain. Her symptoms were usually as severe as the emotional strain she had been through. Often in the MEMOIRS people who knew her were quoted speaking about her infirmities with pity, even saying that any social contact made by Margaret rendered her unfit for anything but a darkened room and the soothing ministrations of her hostess. Wives of men she visited were most likely to perform this function. The more intense her experience with another person, the worse her condition would be afterwards. Emerson noted that when she visited him, "She was in jubilant spirits in the morning, and ended the day with nervous headache, whose spasms, my wife told me, produced total prostration". It is difficult to tell which spurred on the attacks more, the depth to which she opened herself to other people, or her desire to be tenderly involved with women who could extend their sympathy. She told Emerson that she "had read that a man of letters must lose many days, to work well in one." Emerson concluded, "Much more must a Sappho . . ." Since her writing did not provoke illness, though, Margaret's work was only affected by the persistence of her symptoms in time. It was people who were her downfall.

The MEMOIRS offer definite indications that Margaret did not indulge her emotions. Sometime in the 1830's, presumably around the time of her decision to devote herself to her work and family, Margaret wrote that she "should rejoice to cultivate generosity, since affections gentler and more sympathetic are denied me". She wrote later that she "took on me the vows of renunciation". In this passage her language, as in many other places, betrays the lady. She wrote, "my mistresses will not thank me for fires made of cinnamon; rather they run from too rich an odor". The imagery is altogether too sensuous for complete innocence. In 1840 Margaret reminisced about the flowers of her childhood and her way of hugging them "with passionate emotions, such as I have never dared express to any human being". One's sympathy rushes to the child Margaret here, to see her in innocence allowing herself the pleasure of feeling and to know that she would deny the power of her heart later in life. For, Emerson wrote, "At all events, it is clear that Margaret, later, grew more strict, and valued herself with her friends on

having the tie now 'redeemed from all search after Eros.' "

This rejection of emotion was the tragedy of Margaret Fuller. We can trace its source through her MEMOIRS. She felt from an early age that "growth" would be her object in life and that "idolatries" and "impatient longings for happiness" would be interruptions in the straight path to intellectual wisdom. She advised her younger brother that fantasy would mar his ability for "real love" later and that "permanentness" should be a quality of that love. Margaret's own childhood was excessively full of fantasy. She developed her supposed distaste for the excesses of emotion probably initially through fantasy and reading. On reading the published letters of Mlle. D'Espinasse, she scorned their lack of "pride or delicacy" and their "abandonment" to pasion, calling it selfish and without pleasure. At the same time Margaret said she recognized the portrait, "so minute in its touches", and in doing so admitted her own experience. She prayed for something she called more worthwhile, truth, not realizing the truths she hid from herself. Nature, Margaret felt, could lift her above "wounded affection", "unworthy care" and "lowest aspirations", but she did not recognize nature in herself.

In order to avoid a submission to feeling Margaret ensconced herself in an aura of self-isolation. Although she was "always surrounded by admirers" she seemed not to be aware of their feelings. "While they were just ready to die of unrequited love", one editor writes, "she stood untouched as Artemis . . ." That last was a more apt comment than the prudish editors intended. They describe her as having an inward look rather than one directed to others. During the critical period of her life while she was formulating her decision for emotional withdrawal, she wrote a letter in anticipation of that decision. In it she expressed disappointment that she was not as independent as she wished to be. She planned her withdrawal (had she been hurt by Martineau's lack of understanding?) to avoid the dependence of being close enough to people to weakly accept their help instead of enforcing the self-sufficiency she required. The wisdom of her desire for strength was lost in her confusion about where strength lay. Instead of one good relationship Margaret kept "one I always love in my poetic hour . . . another whom I visit . . . when I crave sympathy . . ." It was better than nothing, but an easy way to escape from depth in a relationship.

As there is evidence of Margaret's repression, so is there evidence of attempted and broken relationships which had come too close to crossing beyong friendship. The editors let slip a dream, dreamed four times when she noted it in her journal as follows.

> In C., I at last distinctly recognized the figure of the early vision, whom I found after I had left A., who led me, on the bridge, towards the city, glittering in sunset, but, midway, the bridge went under water. I have often seen in her face that it was she, but refused to believe it.

Margaret's first friendship warned her of the future when Margaret "laid my head against her shoulder and wept – dimly feeling that I must lose her and all – all who spoke to me of the same things . . ." She wrote later of this same friend as being too superficial for her later tastes and excuses her passion with the explanation that she did not know "how little it could satisfy; more, more was all my cry . . ." Interestingly, she contrasts types of women as wine and water, the latter like her friend C. The last "angel" of Margaret's life as mentioned in the MEMOIRS was a woman in Europe. To her, while married, she sent regrets that they had not had more time together "to act out my feelings as seems right at the time, and not heed the consequences . . ." The reason for her regret was the realization that they were not close enough to escape the differences of opinion or conduct" which might destroy their friendship. As in her first relationship, the last brought thoughts of loss and sorrow that there had not been more.

Emerson gave some reasons for the collapse of Margaret's friendships. He called on inequality of the friends to Margaret, "ingratitude", or "incapacity", and "the collapse of overstrained affections and powers". Margaret herself commented to Emerson on the "disappointing forms of men and women". She wrote in her journal that some people thought her feelings were "strange". One editor wrote the most touching description of her failure: "She had never met one who could love her as she could love; and in the orange grove of her affections the white, perfumed blossoms and golden fruit wasted away unclaimed".

Margaret mused about her lot as a woman. She blamed her physical infirmities on her sex, believing that her attempt to extend womanhood into unaccustomed realms was punished in this manner to demonstrate that women are not physically capable of adapting themselves to new roles. She was not, however, convinced of this and always pushed herself despite pain. At times Margaret saw herself as the incorporation of two natures, the woman, "who kneels and weeps in tender rapture" and the man "who rushes forth, but only to be baffled". She expected the two to be transcended by one self, a "union of this tragic king and queen". It made her both "sad" and "proud" to have been denied entrance to "the common womanly lot". Finally she reconciled herself to the thought that she would "always return to myself, to be my own priest, pupil, parent, child, husband and wife" and to the thought that "all has helped me to decipher the poem of the universe".

Two symbols of womanhood particularly excited Margaret's admiration and perhaps emulation. Neither of these, unfortunately for herself, was a living woman who would be an example for her. One was a copy of a statue of the goddess Diana who, she said, was "a woman's ideal of beauty" as opposed to the Venus which "is for men". In Diana she saw "elegance", "spirit", and a "graceful preemptory air" – not submissiveness or the emphasis of secondary sex characteristics. The other symbol was the Sibyl, or ancient female prophetess. In it she saw "female Genius" and respected it for interpreting the will of Apollo rather than merely singing his praises, as the muses did. When offered "the divine union", the Sibyl "preferred remaining a satellite to being absorbed into the sun". These qualities coupled with Margaret's admiration of a symbol who was not "ideal" in any one strength, but noted for the enthusiasm of her nature, would indicate her identification with the figures. In this way a little more of her mind is revealed.

Margaret Fuller felt unsuccessful in all she attempted to achieve in her life. It seems apparent that the difficulties she imposed on her own life, the emotional suicide she underwent, were barriers to her full development as a person. She was satisfied with the conversational ability for which she was famous and attributes its success to her "need to be called out, and never think alone, without imagining some companion". Yet she thought the need and talent reflected "a second-rate mind". She was also successful as a teacher. Her younger students seemed "to reverence my tastes and opinions in all things . . ." The older ladies with whom she conducted her seminar-like classes, or formal "conversations", "felt challenged by the strongest personal influence to a bold and generous life".

Below is quoted in full the impression Margaret made on a young girl at Brook Farm, an experimental community (believed to be a model for Hawthorne's BLITHEDALE ROMANCE and Margaret the basis for the character Zenobia in that novel. See THE LADDER, Aug./Sept., 1970) which was a gathering place for some adventuresome individuals who wished to live according to their intellectual beliefs. Margaret was a frequent visitor to the farm.

> For my part I reverenced her. She was to me the embodiment of wisdom and tenderness . . . I recognized a being to whom every shade of sentiment was familiar. She knew, if not by experience then by no questionable intuition, how to interpret the inner life of every man and woman; and, by interpreting, she could soothe and strengthen. To her, psychology was an open book. When she came to Brook Farm, it was my delight to wait on one so worthy of all service – to arrange her late breakfast in some remnants of ancient China, and to save her, if it might be, some little fatigue or annoyance, during each day.

For all this Margaret felt out of place in her time. She waited for "some proper and attainable object of pursuit . . ." While in Italy she wrote to her mother, "In earlier days, I dreamed of doing and being much, but now am content . . . to rest my plea hereon, 'She has loved much.' " Had she recognized this greatest achievement earlier, Margaret Fuller might have incorporated it into a life full of many achievements. She fought every love she felt worthy of her talents and wasted her life keeping within the straight and narrow road.

CHRONOLOGY

1810 Born in Massachusetts
1833 Met Miss Martineau
1835 Met Emerson

1837 Organized a girls' school in Providence, R.I.
1839 Moved close to Boston
Published translation of Eckermann's CONVERSATIONS WITH GOETHE
Began "conversations" in Boston (to 1844)
1840 Became editor of DIAL magazine, organ of Transcendentalists
1841 Moved to own rooms in Cambridge
1842 Translated correspondence of Gunderode and Bettine (see SEX VARIANT WOMEN IN LITERATURE by Jeannette Foster)
Had friendship with Hawthorne
1844 SUMMER ON THE LAKES published
Moved to New York and became critic for N.Y. TRIBUNE at Horace Greeley's request
1845 Wrote WOMEN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY (pub. 1884)
1846 PAPERS ON ART AND LITERATURE pub. (included articles from the TRIBUNE, DIAL, WESTERN MESSENGER, AMERICAN MONTHLY)
Went to Europe
1848 Son was born
1850 Died in a shipwreck off Fire Island
1856 AT HOME AND ABROAD published
1859 LIFE WITHIN AND LIFE WITHOUT published
1903 LOVE LETTERS OF MARGARET FULLER, 1845-1846 published.

Poems

Cats Are Soft and Fluffy

Cats are soft and fluffy.
They are like that nearly all the time.
Then all at once they get mad.
They get furious.
They get so mad all at once
They shock you.
They really get furious.
They bristle up so fast they shock you.

Women are soft and fluffy.
They are like that nearly all the time.

Mickie Burns

The Adventures of Maria Quinones

Once upon a time,
April came all the way up to Harlem.
Maria Quinones cut school.
Maria Quinones laughed.
Maria Quinones drank beer.
Maria Quinones had a baby.
Then the baby laughed.
Then the adventures began.

For the baby.

Mickie Burns

THE SHADE (Continued)

we do it together. Maybe that's one way to start, on I.D.'s, since kids are fucked over as much as women. Madeline, maybe we can get out! I know we can if we just stand up for ourselves, be as tough as them. Maddy, I love you, I just want to hug you!"

They hugged and danced around the room.

The joy Dottie was feeling in this woman's arms! As if they had something to say about what they were doing. Dottie stopped.

"There's one thing, Madeline," she said, suddenly, without joy. "Pete said I was queer."

"Shit, don't let that bother you. That'd be a groove if you could dig women. I've known I dug girls more than guys for about six months now. He just wanted to scare you, make you think it's something wrong with you."

"You like women?"

"Yeah! Women are the only ones that know how to make love with other women – cause they're women, too! Men just aren't any good for sex. If we can make it on our own with money we don't need them at all!"

Dottie's mind crowded with doubts, but she felt the rightness of what Madeline said as if she had been waiting to hear it. She hugged her again, more closely, feeling, as she did, that she had never felt stronger, nor had men ever seemed weaker.

"They are," she said, "they're as weak as us. Men. They only feel strong, look strong cause of the way they treat us. We just have to stop letting them use us for anything, anything at all and not only will we see how weak they are, they will too!"

Long time readers will recall that there was a time when the editor of THE LADDER had only the duties of this column to perform, and the finding of older items of Lesbian interest was a more frequent occurrence. Elsa Gidlow has shared with me two very old examples that were missed by Jeannette Foster in SEX VARIANT WOMEN IN LITERATURE and also missed in my many searches. One is "From An Argument on the Equality of the Sexes" by Clara Reeves, included in her book, ORIGINAL POEMS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, London, 1769. The other is "On The Friendship Betwixt Two Ladies," by Edmond Waller, published in London in 1686. These only serve to prove that there will never be a time when "all" pertinent material will be recorded and gives me an opportunity to once again beg you all to remember to tell us about anything you find that we might have overlooked, so it can be shared with everyone else.

The Washington, D.C., Women's liberation group has issued a 50c booklet by Norma Allen Lesser called WHAT IS A WOMAN? This is an excellent simple graphics and text combination that could be used very well for consciousness raising from teenage up.

Once again we are treated to the family gathering novel occasioned by the death of a parent in MY SISTER, MY SELF, by Anna Taylor, London, Longman, 1971. Kate, who narrates, and her sister, Lindsey, make up the cast for the most part, with the assorted half-brothers and sisters present semingly there only for window dressing. The father is dead, and the burial at the family home near Hull provides the opportunity to examine in short glimpses the unhappy lives of Kate and Lindsey. Abandoned by their mother, raised by their not too loveable father (remarried and again a father of four more children), they are marked for tragedy. Kate's unhappy marriage culminating in divorce and symbolic assumption of her father's role in the family is fairly well presented. Lindsey, seen only through sister Kate's eyes, is less explained. She is beautiful, a Lesbian, and with superficially good reasons for personal happiness. Why her career is ruined by her passionate affair with another nurse is not too believable . . . nor are promiscuity and suicide attempts very realistic. Good, but not good enough. Ms. Taylor's 1969 novel, THE GODS ARE NOT MOCKED, was also very substantially Lesbian and considerably more successful. It was set, however, in "times past," where authors often feel more comfortable about discussing Lesbians.

We learned too late to include in last column that Isabel Miller's fine novel, PATIENCE AND SARAH (originally published as A PLACE FOR US), was chosen as a Literary Guild selection. This is astonishing for a major Lesbian novel and should be considered a breakthrough, albeit recalling that in the 1930s several Lesbian novels were chosen by large good book clubs and promoted to a wide audience.

Jane Rule's AGAINST THE SEASON has been published in England now, by Peter Davies (London), 1972. Not to be missed.

Edward Lewis Wallant's 1963 novel, THE TENANTS OF MOONBLOOM, was one of the first of a series of novels taking as basic premise the decay of our city apartment buildings and the people inside them. Few have come up to his effort, though many will enjoy John Roc's WINTER BLOOD, New York, Trident Press, 1971. Widower Lew and his black friend, Cal, buy a tenement building and proceed to try to evict the tenants. As you would expect, the tenants range from believable to exotic, and among the latter are a pair of Lesbian hairdressers whose dying beauty shop (they have specialized in hair straightening and skin whitening) is a microcosmic mirror of the dying worlds of each of the tenants. Ending is surprisingly good . . . positive, a little hopeful. Very well written, though it is unlikely that many of you will find Carmen and Monique either familiar or believable.

Shena Mackay's AN ADVENT CALENDAR, London, Jonathan Cape, 1971 (as was her earlier MUSIC UPSTAIRS, London, Duetsch, 1965), is a quiet English view of the realities of one type of Lesbian life, the teacher whose boundaries, real and imagined, threaten her sanity. A novel about unrealized hopes and realized horrors in simple lives, AN ADVENT CALENDAR contains a marvelous portrait of a teenage

BERTHA HARRIS whose new novel, CONFESSIONS OF CHERUBINO, is published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
Photograph by Bruce Roberts

girl thwarted in all directions, whose flailings and desperate attempts at freedom are very moving. Joy Pickering is bright, ugly by contemporary standards, and hated by her schoolmates and her mother and her sister. She turns first to Elizabeth, aforementioned frustrated Lesbian schoolteacher, and then to Eric Turle, an aging mentally impotent poet. Not happy reading, but Elizabeth's death in life and Joy's hopelessness are real and believable problems.

Public vomiting of personal lives began with the fiction (?) of Violette Leduc. In the same general vein is Sarah Davys' A TIME AND A TIME, London, Calder & Boyars, 1971. Davys is said to be the pseudonym of a famous woman writer. If so, she is famous for some field other than biography certainly. A TIME AND A TIME is boring, it is in bad taste, it isn't necessary. Davys' problems seem to be that she is interested in commiting suicide, so interested in fact that she has tried twice in her life to do so. Moreover, this isn't connected apparently to her Lesbianism, but that's not resolved either, for she goes through several women without much attempt to work out a relationship past the bedroom door (except in one case where there is no bedroom at all in the relationship). I can't help wondering what would happen to her precarious balance (mentally) if some friend simply pointed out to her the one glaring fact she has left out of her yawning autobiography, that she is self-centered to the point of having mental myopia.

The Lesbian as vampire is one of the oldest themes in Lesbian literature, with the classic example being J. Sheridan LeFanu's CARMILLA (which, if you haven't read, and you enjoy the idea of women running the world, do read sometime). Thomas Blackburn's very well done novel, THE FEAST OF THE WOLF London, Macgibbon and Kee, 1971, may be the first novel to attempt to deal with the Lesbian/-vampire theory seriously. Simon Armstrong, Professor of English at an unspecified London university, dreams of being haunted by the various "other world" creatures, including vampires. The violence of his dreams is transferred to some extent into his relationship with his wife, Laura. They adopt a child, a daughter, in a futile attempt to stabilize the marriage. A psychiatrist introduces Simon to a recovering patient, Stella, hoping to help his recovery. Simon, Laura, and Stella are soon locked in psychic battle, with power part of the stake. The novel ends in a death, and I leave it to the reader to find out who dies and why. Very highly recommended, but not if fantasy disturbs you.

Readers who remember Bertha Harris's CATCHING SARADOVE, N.Y., Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969, may have already noticed her new book, CONFESSIONS OF CHERUBINO, N.Y., Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1972. No easier to read, this is an improvement over the earlier novel, and it is very pertinent both to a Lesbian and a women's liberation reading audience. The original Cherubino is an adolescent boy in Mozart's opera, THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO, and it is a role sung by a mezzo-soprano. Using this symbol, and much material from THE TROJAN WOMEN (basic theme, captive women), Bertha Harris traces the weird convoluted life of central character Ellen Fairbanks. Ellen is a southern woman who leaves home to go to college, to engage in what can only be considered an unusual sex life. She is, apparently, a Lesbian; but she gets off the track somewhere along the way and by the end of the book is a raving maniac. The writing is much more controlled than in CATCHING SARADOVE, but the reader who demands that every detail be spelled out had better not read this. Caviar for everyone else.

A reader sent us the paperback edition of the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University SURVEY OF BROADCAST JOURNALISM, 1970-1971, edited by Marvin Barrett, N.Y., Grosset and Dunlap, 1971. One chapter, WOMEN ON THE AIR, by Helen Epstein, gives a complete rundown of the record you would expect – there are damned few women on the air, period, and those that are have the shit jobs.

If you are a reader, write to FEMINIST BOOK CLUB, 2140 WESTWOOD BOULEVARD, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90025. Ask for VOLUME A, SPRING, 1972. Everything in the book club is directed to women, and much Lesbian material is included . . . most of it at bargain prices. THIS IS DIRECTED AT THE MANY DOZENS OF YOU WHO WRITE ASKING WHERE TO BUY BOOKS. If they aren't carrying something I review and you feel they should be, tell them so . . . they invite this kind of suggestion. The book club is no rip-off . . . this was started by Varda One (of EVERYWOMAN), with two other sisters.

We are checking out a collection of short stories, FEMINA REAL, by A.L. Barker, London, Hogarth Press, 1971. Larger public libraries will have this and also some college and university libraries We know it will be strongly feminist (from the reviews) but suspect it may also be Lesbian in view of Barker's 1967 novel, THE MIDDLING, which was quite major though youthful.

Colette lovers (are there other kinds of women??) will want to get PLACES to read. Out in 1970 from Peter Owen of London and published here in 1971 by Bobbs-Merrill, it includes fine photos of Colette.

We received for review a book called POEMS, by Anna Seward and Catherine Sedley, published in paperback with an imprint of Pilgrim Hill, New York. Distribution is by Tunbridge Press, P.O. Box 345, New York, N.Y. 10021; the cost is $2.50. We knew that Anna Seward was the famous "Swan of Litchfield" – an English poet who is best known for her biography of Darwin and her voluminous correspondence (a characteristic of the period, since she lived from 1747 to 1809) – but we didn't know anything about Catherine Sedley. The only historically prominent woman with that name was mistress of Charles 2nd, and she lived from 1657 to 1717. We felt certain this couldn't be the right woman, and we wrote the publisher to inquire but received no reply. In any case, the poetry by Anna Seward quite clearly establishes her as a Lesbian. That by Catherine Sedley is considerably more pertinent . . . but we are at a loss as to who she is or was, and why her work is included with Anna Seward. If any of you readers know, we'd like to know too.

Poem

DESERT (for Georgia O'Keeffe)

Inspiration?
In that brass-bound land of sun?
Not only through the bright fever-bird grown dim;
(the bird of pain)
But in the organ pipe residuum;
that golden light gunning down
over sweeps of sand.

No sheaths of green blue water round.
O does the sun rule with an iron hand?

Like an old treasure chest, unbound
consciousness might yield such troves
(flowers, jewels)
as only the releast soul comes upon
when let out into holy groves!
* * *
The Lady of Imagination towers high:
And raises swans against a cobalt sky.

Lynn Strongin

FRIENDS

By SARAH ALDRIDGE

[Introductory Note: Maria Graham was born in 1785 in the north of England, the daughter of a rear admiral in the British navy. She grew up to be a bluestocking, whose interests ranged from history and politics, botany, music and the arts to economics and current social conditions. As a young woman she went to India and there married a naval captain, who as a husband was indulgent of her intellectual tastes. In 1821 she accompanied him when he was ordered to South America with the squadron of British naval vessels sent to protect the many British merchants in Brazil and the countries gaining their independence from Spain. After a stay of a couple of months in Rio, where the Portuguese king John VI and his court had taken refuge from Napoleon fifteen years before, they went on to Chile on the other side of the continent. Captain Graham died on the passage around Cape Horn and Maria buried him in Valparaiso. She remained in Chile for almost a year before returning to Rio on her way home to England. During her absence Pedro, King John's son and the heir to the Portuguese throne, declared Brazil no longer a colony but an empire independent of its mother country Portugal and himself its emperor.

His consort, Brazil's first empress, Dona Maria Leopoldina, was a Hapsburg, a daughter of Francis I of Austria and a sister of Marie Louise, Napoleon's second wife. She was married to Pedro by proxy in Vienna in May of 1817 and in November of the same year arrived in Rio, a very blonde, sweet-natured girl whose graciousness won all hearts. She and Pedro were an ill-assorted couple. She came from the most sophisticated court in Europe, used to the society of cultivated people. Pedro, the son of a termagant mother who despised her slow-moving husband, had grown up ignorant and uncouth among his chosen companions, the grooms of the royal stables. He was promiscuous and through almost the whole course of his marriage was dominated by an aggressive and ignorant mistress, who sorely tried Leopoldina even in her unquestioning acceptance of the traditional role of uncomplaining wife. As emperor Pedro was quick-witted and forceful but arrogant, hasty-tempered and capricious, easily swayed by self-seeking courtiers.

Maria's journals of her sojourn in South America are now important sources for historians and botanists. At the time of their first meeting, Leopoldina was 26 to Maria's 38.]

It was a windy, rainy day in March, 1823, when Maria Graham arrived back in Rio de Janeiro. The weather prevented her from seeing the beauty of the bay. On her first arrival from Europe eighteen months before she had described it as beyond anything she had hitherto seen. She was a competent judge for she was a hardy traveller, veteran of stormy voyages in sailing vessels to India, the Mediterranean and around the Horn.

Uncertain of the future, on her way home to England where her family ties had been loosened by death and absence, she lingered in this capital of a new empire. She was aware that she was an eyewitness of tremendous events and she was eager to record her observations, set against the background of history.

She began by establishing herself in lodgings. With the sympathetic aid of the few Brazilian scholars she availed herself of the scant intellectual resources. In the Carmelite convent, which housed the library of sixty or seventy thousand volumes brought from Lisbon in 1810, she was given "a pleasant, cool little cabinet . . . where whatever book I asked for is brought to me, and where I have pen, ink and paper always placed to make notes."

But in Rio, only a generation away from the colonial backwardness in which women had lived in more or less harem-like seclusion, she was an anomaly. She was a true daughter of her age. As an Englishwoman of good family, she was quick to resent the affronts and aspersions too readily cast upon any woman who lacked a husband or close male relative, in this conservative society that had no place for active, independent women. Although she had friends among the English residents and the first families of Rio, she decided she needed protection and she thought of the new empress. Pedro's wife had the reputation of being bookish and well-bred in the midst of a court that was characteristically neither. She wrote to her, seeking her notice. To make matters worse, she had fallen gravely ill for several weeks and felt herself isolated indeed.

But she was cheered during her illness to receive more than one letter from the empress – "saying that she had been told of my isolated situation and illness; that she wished me to consider myself under her especial protection as long as I was in Brazil and that I should appeal to her if I needed help of any kind."

When she was recovered she was summoned to accompany the wife of the British ambassador to an audience. To her surprise, at this meeting, at which she expected only to be received by a lady in waiting, Leopoldina herself came forward with the greatest sweetness of manner to greet her, taking her by the hand and saying that she hoped she would not leave Brazil at once.

It was evident that Leopoldina, surrounded by vulgar and intriguing people, had heard something of this Englishwoman who combined graces of mind with a tactfulness of manner that disarmed even men who scorned the intellectual capacities of women. Maria could not really remember later when the idea was first broached of her being governess to Leopoldina's eldest little girl, but once the suggestion was made, the empress welcomed it wholeheartedly. But first Maria must pay a visit to England to settle family affairs.

Almost a year later Maria was back in Rio and on her way to the imperial residence, the palace of Sao Cristovao on the outskirts of the city. As she entered, the first person she met was Pedro himself, dressed in cotton trousers and coat, his bare feet thrust into slippers, with a straw hat trimmed in green on his head. With his usual careless cordiality he talked a little and then said she must see the empress. There on the verandah there would be a lady in waiting to show her to the empress's apartments.

Leopoldina welcomed her with open arms. But things had changed in the meantime. Leopoldina had explained the changes in a letter that had only reached England after Maria's departure for Brazil. The political fortunes of the Bragancas had taken another turn. As a consequence, Pedro proposed soon to take his eldest daughter across the Atlantic to place her on the throne of Portugal in opposition to the claims of his brother.

Nevertheless, Maria moved into the palace. A special suite of rooms, next to the empress's, had been arranged for her. The imperial family, Brazilian fashion, dined in the middle of the day and afterwards Pedro retired for his afternoon nap. "It was then that I usually had the pleasure of conversing with the empress," said Maria. At first she sent for her to her own apartments, but she soon was irked by the fact that they could not be alone and were always surrounded by the ladies in waiting, whose instant jealousy was openly displayed. So, after three or four days, Leopoldina "preferred for me to stay in my own apartments after dinner and she would come to seek me." Leopoldina preferred the room that had been fitted up with books and bookcases for Maria's use as a library and there she insisted on having another chair brought so that Maria need not stand while in her presence.

As governess Maria sought to bring English decorum into the upbringing of the little princess. She was soon in difficulties, in spite of the empress's sympathy and support. Her efforts aroused the animosity of Pedro's hangers-on, who always had the ear of their unpredictable master. Once she went herself to send away a group of men who each night climbed the private stairs to the little princess's sittingroom, after the child was in bed, where they could gamble undisturbed. Leopoldina shook her head when Maria reported this to her the next day. She agreed that Maria's action was proper, but with her greater knowledge of the people among whom she lived she foresaw trouble. Maria had undoubtedly made an arch enemy of the ringleader of the cardplayers, Pedro's majordomo and boon companion, who certainly would complain of the highhanded Englishwoman. The man did and he also conspired with the ladies in waiting, who were jealous of the favor Leopoldina showed this foreign woman. For Maria had quickly become as much Leopoldina's favorite companion as the princess's governess. Together they read the new books the empress ordered from Europe, discussed botany, examined catalogues of seashells. In the flow of this intellectual intercourse she had become the one friend to whom Leopoldina could open her heart and mind.

The result was that Maria remained in the palace only from September 5 to October 10. She was ordered out by Pedro in one of his sudden fits of temper, deliberately sparked, she suspected, by a lady in waiting who roused him from a nap with yet another complaint against this foreigner

who was usurping the place of his loyal subjects. His capricious moods, though absolute in their effects, were ephemeral. A few weeks later he was to meet her again with bland good humor, as if nothing untoward had happened.

Obviously the empress had foreseen the probable course of events and indeed hesitated to involve her friend in the discomforts of her own uneasy life. The very day Maria left the palace she wrote acknowledging Maria's own letter, probably one of explanation. Maria, upset, had mentioned leaving forthwith for England.

"My dear friend," said Leopoldina, "I have received your amiable letter and believe me I make an enormous sacrifice in separating myself from you; but my destiny has always obliged me to place a distance between myself and those dearest to my heart and regard. But be persuaded that no matter what the terrible distance that will shortly separate us, nor other circumstances that I foresee may triumph, can weaken the friendship and regard in which I hold you and I shall always seek occasions to prove this."

She hoped that Maria would accept the small money gifts she was able to make, saying, "By accepting them you will be doing what I wish you to and you will contribute to my happiness."

Deeply upset though she was, Maria decided against leaving Rio at once. She rented a house in the suburb of Laranjeiras, at the foot of Corcovado, one of the mountains that rise dramatically from the shore of the beautiful bay – in Maria's words, "a little valley . . . so-called from the numerous orange trees which grow on each side of the little stream that waters and fertilizes it." There she could fill her leisure with writing, painting and botanizing, and keep in touch with her friend by letter.

They corresponded in French. "My very dearest friend," Leopoldina wrote, "not a moment passes that I do not bewail the loss of your company and amiable conversation, my only recreation and true consolation in these melancholy hours . . . This is a very unhappy time for me. I cannot follow the promptings of my heart and ask for news of your health. Here unfortunately there are certain persons who are not satisifed to have deprived me of a friend who is doubly dear to me, educating my dear daughters and in that way relieving my heart and my spirits of a burden, doing what I have not the strength or education to do. You are so capable in supporting me in making my dear daughters useful members of society, through your talents and moral qualities. Still they spy on me . . . So many times I think with longing of your daily conversation, consoling myself with the hope that I shall see you again some time in Europe, where no one in the world could force me to leave off seeing you every day and telling you by word of mouth that I am for the whole of life your loving and devoted friend."

She added a postscript to this letter, revealing in poignant phrases the hostile atmosphere in which she lived: "I ask your pardon for my poor handwriting. But my poor head is confused and I write these words in the garden, where I am not observed."

Maria expressed concern, assuring her that she would stay for a while in Brazil. Leopoldina replied: "If I were persuaded that your remaining here is repugnant to you, I would be the first to counsel you to leave Brazil. But, believe me, my delicate and only friend, it is a sweet consolation to my heart, to think that you will be living for some more months in the same country as I.

"At last, when an immense distance, which my fate will not permit me to cross, separates me from you, I shall resign myself, with the sweet certainty that our manner of thinking is the same and that our friendship will endure forever. Be easy about me. I am used to resisting and fending off hatred and ill-will, and the more I suffer from intrigues the more I despise the intriguers. But I confess, *only to you*, that I shall give thanks to heaven when I am delivered from this riff-raff."

Mindful of Maria's vulnerable position and anxious to preserve her from the dangers that surrounded herself, Leopoldina resolutely deprived herself of her friend's "dear company". But one day Maria received a letter asking her to come to the old palace in the center of town at an appointed hour. She hastened to obey, but the coachman of the hired carriage, driving too fast, upset them. She emerged from the wreck badly shaken and with a small bone in her wrist broken. Determined not to disappoint her friend, she first visited the English doctor and then hurried on. She arrived at last with a bandaged hand in the empress's presence, to be received with anxious sympathy. The empress sought her

aid in a political matter. Dubious that Leopoldina, not politically asture, was being made use of, she nevertheless promised to do what she was asked and carried out her promise. The result she never learned.

But her personal situation got no better and at last she decided she must return to England. It cost her much to take leave of the empress. She saw her last on September 8, 1825.

"I found Her Majesty in her library, quite alone, and she seemed to me in frail health and in greater depression of spirits than usual. She gave me several letters to take to Europe, calling attention especially to one to her sister . . .

"After the empress had spoken of her own family and her wishes regarding Europe, we spoke little. I promised to write to her, and by her particular wish, to tell her everything that I could about the members of her own family. She promised to answer my letters and then asked me if there was something she could do for me or give me. I asked her for a lock of her hair. There were no scissors at hand and she did not wish to summon a servant. She took up a penknife that lay on the table and cut off a lock. But it is no use to dwell on these unhappy moments. I went out with a feeling of oppression, quite new to me, because I left her as I foresaw to a life of greater vexations than she had already endured and in a state of health that could bear little more."

Maria left Brazil forever on September 25, 1825. She and Leopoldina continued to write each other, through the intermediation of the Austrian ambassador in Rio. This man, who was devoted to Leopoldina and a great admirer of Maria, took the empress's letters from her own hands and delivered into them those he received from Maria.

These meant a great deal to Leopoldina. On the second of February following Maria's departure she wrote: "I was very agreeably surprised when our excellent friend delivered to me two amiable letters of yours. This is the only consolation that remains to me in my isolation. Believe me, my devoted and trustworthy friend, I feel very much the sacrifice that is laid on my heart, which can appreciate the sweetness of friendship, by my separation from you. It is a true consolation to my soul and helps me to support the thousand difficulties with which I am surrounded."

In a postscript to that letter she tells Maria of the birth of a **son** in the preceding December, who was to be Pedro II of Brazil. In June she wrote again, saying that, "I begin by telling you that your last letter gave me such sweet pleasure, that I think of you a thousand times, my delicate friend, and of the delicious moments I spent in your dear company."

She wrote once or twice more, thanking Maria for the things she sent – a scale for assaying minerals and some "enchanting books." But the effects of mental depression and physical collapse brought about by her unhappy life were closing in on her. The only repose of spirit that she could envisage was to go to Europe, "for the consolation of being near my family and you, whom I value with the dearest friendship," and this was impossible.

Maria's last letter to her was dated November 2, 1826. In it she tells her beloved friend of the severe bout of pneumonia she has just survived and the news that, being tired of living quite alone in the world, she had made up her mind to marry a man who had loved her a long time, the English painter, Augustus Callcott.

Leopoldina never read this letter. It was returned to Maria by the Austrian ambassador, with the news of Leopoldina's death on December 11, 1826. She died from the complications of her eighth pregnancy, made worse by the angry blows of her husband, enraged at her protest against his ever more flagrant allegiance to his cruel and aggressive mistress.

Maria died in London on November 28, 1842, after years of earning her living as an author and as reader for John Murray, the publisher. Leopoldina's letters and her own account of the events in Rio were found among her effects.

(Editor's Note: This article is based on the letters addressed to Maria Graham by the Empress Leopoldina and Mrs. Graham's own unpublished account of her last year of residence in Rio. These documents are now in the archives of the National Library in Rio.)

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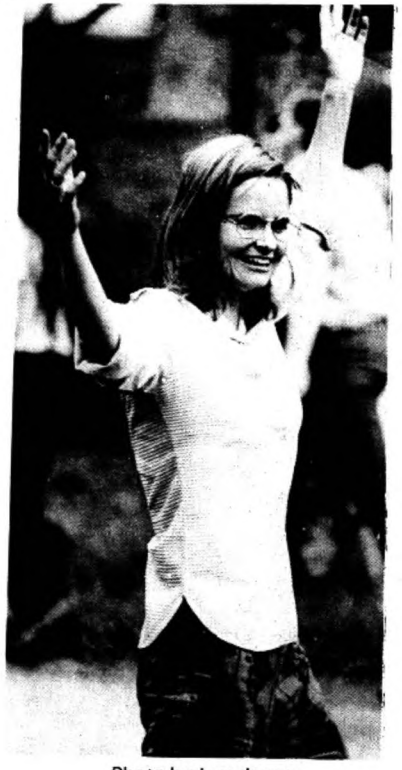

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From a Soul Sister's Notebook

THE LESSER OF THE WORST

By ANITA CORNWELL

Since joining the Movement, I find myself associating mainly with white women. Most of the time I forget there is a racial gap between us, but I sometimes feel that such may not be the case with many of them.

That is not a sneaky way of saying racism exists within the Movement – which it does, of course, yet not nearly as much as one would expect considering the nature of our society – but rather that I do miss my black Sisters and yearn for the day when they will embrace the Movement more whole-heartedly.

Still, I know why they have not, the main reason being that age-old sickness, racism and sexism, and the damage it has done to all of us.

What really got me onto this train of thought, though, was neither sexism nor racism, per se, but Lesbianism. I was somewhat shocked recently when I realized that most of the white Lesbians I know seem to feel more oppressed *as Lesbians* than I do.

At first I thought it was because I am older than most of them, that since I had been oppressed longer, I noticed it less. Normally, I guess I would have assumed it was because I am black. But, really, one does grow weary of making *that* assumption.

One of the absolute certainties of life in this country is the almost endless parade of dilemmas you find crossing your path daily. Not that you take such a rational, detached attitude while trying to grapple with one, however.

As a case in point, when George Jackson, the Soledad Brother, was killed, I happened to be in Kent, Connecticut, at a Conference for Gay Women. I had gone there in a caravan of three cars consisting of ten women, two of us black. About 125 Sisters attended the Conference, and at most I can recall only about twelve black women being present.

Which means that at any given time, one could look in all directions and see only white faces.

Then, as I lay in our tent on Sunday morning, I heard one white Sister saying to another, "There's a story on the front page of the Sunday Times that says George Jackson was killed in prison . . ."

I lay there, not unmindful of the fact that I was a fairly great distance from home, from any public transportation apparently as we were out on a large farm, that I had come in a white woman's car, and was at that moment lying in another white woman's tent. *And their white Brothers had killed by black Brother!*

Their Brothers were pigs, I thought then, and I think so now. But what of my Brother? A pig too, in all probability, as most black men are no different from white men as far as sexism is concerned.

But they didn't shoot him because he was a pig. They got him because he was black. I am black, too, and as James Baldwin is reputed to have said to Angela Davis, "If they get you in the morning, they will certainly come for me in the night."

So what does one do at such a time? Do you get drunk at eight o'clock in the morning although you're already on the verge of ulcers, and you don't want a drink anyway? Do you go on a rampage, ripping white Sisters apart merely because they are white like your oppressors who are coming for you also? Or do you shove the problem into the vast, overstuffed room located somewhere in the deep recesses of the mind and slam the door?

I lay there a while longer, then finally realizing that divine inspiration was not forthcoming, I turned to stare at the canvas wall of the tent and told myself I would deal with the situation after breakfast.

Yet many hours later, when I saw the black headline regarding Jackson's death, I quickly averted my eyes, unable to even look at the newspaper, let alone cope with the dilemma it had dropped in my lap. I still haven't, for that matter.

Then, several months afterwards, I heard a bleating voice on the radio describing how Angela Davis' health had deteriorated in prison (because of poor medical care and other environmental stresses) before they let her out on bail. And again I had to swallow my impotent rage because I knew

she would not have been treated in such fashion had her skin not been the color of mine.

But why travel far across the country? Why not consider the black Sisters in my own front yard who are raped, beaten or/and murdered with monotonous regularity and whose violators are *never* apprehended because our white law insists that black women do not exist, nor poor white women either for that matter?

Thus year after year, the hidden chamber is crammed with repressed fury, but you dare not stop to wonder what would happen if the walls should suddenly give way. You simply keep on hoping that with a little luck, the reckoning will not come today.

Yet there is always tomorrow which haunts the mind like a half-forgotten nightmare.

I suppose that is why I was so surprised when I first heard some of my Gay white Sisters complaining about Castro's oppression of homosexuals in Cuba. Not that I don't think they should complain. Indeed, I am just as pissed off as they are!

But why didn't I or the other black Lesbians I know get more uptight over the oppression of Gay people? Don't we feel just as threatened by a Castro as we do by the cop on the corner? Weren't we just as concerned as our white Lesbian Sisters that "society" forbids us to hold hands or kiss in public?

Inevitably, one comes up with the indisputable truth that oppression is oppression no matter what the ideology behind it. And just as there is no such thing as a little bit of pregnancy, ditto with oppression. So why should one be concerned about which label is attached to one's oppression? Does it make any difference?

Then a tiny door of the vast room opened just a crack, and a few of the outrages I have faced on a daily basis because of my color floated through my mind. I had to admit, yes, there is a difference, it matters like hell. Because as someone has said, "When things go wrong, all blacks are black, and all whites are whitey."

That things stay wrong in this nation, can be readily seen by even a casual reading of the morning paper. And the moment I or any other black forget we *are* black, it may be our last. For when the shooting starts *any* black is fair game. The bullets don't give a damn whether I sleep with woman or man, their only aim is to put me to sleep forever.

A Very Special Case

By BERNICE BALFOUR

Miss Sarah Little awoke on that beautiful Saturday morning with a feeling of pleasant anticipation. Today was to be both an end and a beginning: the end of her visits to the Mercers for professional treatment, and the beginning of a personal relationship that she knew they all wanted.

For almost three months Miss Little had been receiving physical therapy for a slipped disc, and, if the truth were told, she had come to look forward to her twice weekly treatments. In fact, she had been quite depressed just a couple of weeks ago when the orthopedist who had referred her to the Mercers told her she had improved to the point where she no longer needed the treatments. Then the thought had come to her: Why not continue her relationship with the Mercers – if not on a professional level, then on a personal basis, which, after all, would be even more satisfactory? She knew the three of them enjoyed the relationship – in fact, she had begun to suspect that she was someone rather special to them, and, of course, they both were very dear to her.

She put on the freshly pressed slacks, bought at Mrs. Mercer's suggestion after her first treatment since they were more functional for the sessions than a dress or skirt. Then she stood before her mirror and examined herself critically. Strange, in a way, that she should be so special to such attractive young people as the Mercers. After all, she was a middle-aged, graying, plain-faced, bespectacled spinster with no really redeeming features except perhaps a slim body fairly well preserved through the years.

During her drive to the medical center for her final treatment, she thought about Mrs. Mercer and the warmth and joy this charming young woman had brought into her lonely life. Mrs. Mercer was, in essence, everything Miss Little was not: extroverted, popular, and exceptionally attractive with beautiful auburn hair which she wore long and uncurled. She assisted her husband, a highly recommended physical therapist and a delightful person himself. Of course, Miss Little didn't see very much of Mr. Mercer since she understood he took charge of the more difficult rehabilitative therapy.

Mrs. Mercer was the one who took care of Miss Little, massaging her back, giving her the ultrasonic treatments, and putting her in traction. Janey, a young therapist fresh from college, usually handled other patients – the less special ones, Miss Little thought with more than a smidgen of satisfaction. The only other regular person in the office was the receptionist Marge. All of them had become kind of a family to Miss Little over these past few months.

Twenty minutes after leaving her apartment, Miss Little pulled into the parking lot of the medical center. She had trouble finding a space to park since there were far more cars than during the week when she usually came. This was her first Saturday here, since on Thursday, her usual day, she had been forced to make an emergency trip to the dentist.

When she entered the office, Miss Little was surprised by the number of patients in the waiting room. During the week there were only two or three patients besides herself. Now she found herself forced to stand until Janey came out and called someone's name. A moment later a man with crutches struggled to his feet and hobbled into the inner office. Miss Little sat down and scanned a magazine. Almost thirty minutes later Mrs. Mercer looked into the waiting room and smiled at her. "Would you like to come in now?" Miss Little, unable to control her emotions on this momentous day, began to tremble. "Room Three," Mrs. Mercer said pleasantly as her patient entered the therapy section. Inside the room, Miss Little removed her blouse. A few seconds later, Mrs. Mercer came in and began to prepare the heated pack.

"My, but you're crowded today," Miss Little declared.

"We certainly are." Mrs. Mercer shook her head good-naturedly. "Saturday here is becoming impossible. We may have to hire another therapist if this continues."

"Perhaps I shouldn't have come today."

"We can always work you in, Miss Little. No problem at all."

Miss Little climbed onto the table and lay on her stomach as Mrs. Mercer put the warm pad on her lower back. "Have a nice rest," the young woman called as she switched off the light.

Miss Little had decided she would extend a dinner invitation to the Mercers while her back was being massaged. Although there was little doubt in her mind about Mrs. Mercer's acceptance, she had to admit she felt nervous about the prospect of asking her. As far back as she could remember, Miss Little had suffered a terrible dread of being unable to achieve what she desired or of losing those pleasures she did attain. The callous, negative judgments of family and "friends" that had served to undermine her confidence in the past seemingly were indelibly inscribed in her conscious mind. Even when people appeared to like and accept her at first, invariably, in her eyes, their interest would fade on the second encounter.

With the Mercers, though, it was a different story. They had made it clear from the very beginning how highly they regarded her, and, moreover, they had never changed. She remembered Mr. Mercer phoning after one of her early painful treatments to make sure she had arrived home safely. And then there was his wife, always seeing that she was the one to take care of Miss Little and assigning Janey to other patients. Why, sometimes when she wasn't too busy, this lovely person would even stay with her during pelvic traction, always turning the conversation to Miss Little herself – about how she was feeling, whether she was doing her exercises twice a day, how her secretarial job was coming along – and sometimes tactfully questioning her about her early life in New York before she moved to the West Coast. Miss Little, with a chronic heart condition, had never been adaptable to the fast pace of eastern city life. Neither was she a good risk for surgery, according to her orthopedist, who had recommended physical therapy instead.

A few minutes after Mrs. Mercer's departure the light flashed on and Miss Little jerked involuntarily. Surely it couldn't be time already for her massage.

"Only me," a friendly masculine voice called.

Miss Little looked up to see Mr. Mercer rummaging through one of the cabinets. "How are you, Miss Little?" he asked, his back to her.

"Pretty good," she replied, lazily observing the handsome white-coated figure

with the dark outmoded crew cut that gave him a rather old-fashioned collegiate look.

"You know, today is my last visit."

He turned now and smiled. "Yes, we know."

A moment later the room was dark again and she was alone. Another ten minutes or so and Mrs. Mercer would return to massage her back and give her the ultrasonic treatment. For perhaps the twentieth time, she went over the invitation in her mind. "I wonder, Mrs. Mercer, if you and your husband would care to have dinner with me sometime soon. I'm sure we've all enjoyed our contact here, and it seems a pity to terminate it just because my treatment has ended."

When the light went on for the second time, Miss Little did not look up immediately but waited for Mrs. Mercer to remove the heating pad and wipe the excess moisture from her back. She couldn't quite believe it when she felt a towel being slapped against her back. Why, Mrs. Mercer always gently patted away the moisture. She jerked her head up and saw, to her amazement, that the person about to rub oil on her back was not Mrs. Mercer but Janey!

"Hi," the young assistant said. "Were you asleep?"

"Uh – no. I was – I was expecting Mrs. Mercer."

Janey laughed. "Not today, sweetey. She's up to her ears helping Mr. Mercer with a new case. Some poor guy with a broken leg, a bad neck, a wrecked back – Wow!"

Miss Little put her head down and made an effort to think clearly. She would still be here for almost an hour. Surely Mrs. Mercer would come in to see her while she was in traction. She felt relieved when Janey finally finished the massage and ultrasonic therapy and she was able to slip her blouse back on and go to the pelvic traction room. In the hallway she caught a glimpse of Mrs. Mercer adjusting the cervical traction equipment on a young man, presumably the new case.

She was hardly conscious of Janey fastening her with a wide elastic belt and assisting her on the table for another half hour of therapy. As she lay on her back and felt the gentle pull of the machine, aware of the minutes slowly ticking away, she tried to figure out what had gone wrong. Perhaps if she had not come on a Saturday – but no, that couldn't have made any difference. She had seen both of the Mercers today, and either one of them could have made some arrangement to see her again since they knew her treatment was ending. *Perhaps she wasn't as special to them as she'd thought. Or, more likely, all of their patients were important to them, but as patients only!*

When the traction was completed and Janey unhooked her, Miss Little picked up her purse and slowly made her way down the hall, not really caring that she was walking stoop-shouldered again. She recalled, as a child, wearing a brace because of poor posture, and momentarily wondered if her current back problem had its beginnings then. She stopped at the receptionist's desk and cleared her throat several times. Marge did not even look up from her books until Miss Little spoke, her voice unnaturally low.

"This is my last visit. Do you have my statement, or will you mail it?"

"It will be mailed to you, Miss Little." Marge smiled perfunctorily. "Goodbye now, and good luck."

"I was wondering if – if I might see the Mercers to say goodbye."

"Hold on." Marge, not trying to hide her annoyance at being interrupted, rapidly disappeared down the hallway, returning almost instantly. Miss Little knew the answer even before the receptionist spoke.

"I'm sorry, both of the Mercers are tied up now with a very difficult case. But they said to tell you how much they enjoyed having you and to let them know if there are any more problems with your back."

Miss Little nodded and went outside to the parking lot, feeling the aching weariness of the past descend upon her. *What a fool she had been! To relieve her unbearable loneliness, she had lied to herself and dreamed the impossible.*

It wasn't until she had almost reached her apartment that she saw the situation in a different light. A personal friendship would have been fine, of course, but, undeniably, she had received much pleasure from a totally different kind of relationship. She *had* been important to them as a patient, and this, after all, was a role she might well have to play again – yes, and again! No matter how careful she was, she knew that almost anything could set off a bad back. Furthermore, she could hardly be blamed if, occasionally, she would make a mistake. Perhaps she would bend the wrong way or forget to do her exercises, or maybe even fall asleep on the couch while watching television ("Always sleep with a bedboard," the Mercers had cautioned). Yes, almost anything could happen. Sighing happily, Miss Little realized she might be forced to return in no time at all.

As she pulled into her carport, she could hear Mrs. Mercer: "Why, Miss Little, how nice to see you again . . . We're so sorry, though, that you've been having more trouble . . . This time we'll just have to do a better job on you . . . Room one, please . . ."

(Bernice Balfour does free-lance editorial work and book copy-editing. She has had short stories in various little magazines and in ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE and articles in WRITER'S DIGEST and CALIFORNIA WRITER. Active in civil rights work for years, connected with Fisk University, and into women's liberation, Bernice is married and has a 10 year old daughter. She adds that the rest of her time! is taken up with seven resident cats and many visiting felines.)

I COULDN'T SAY, I REALLY COULDN'T SAY

By CAROL MORAN

The rain was noisy, a repetitious clamor. When I finally reached the address, I was soaked inside and out. The August heat was constant. It had become part of me, slowing my movements. For weeks I had crept around, looking for a job, mumbling bitterly to myself after each interview. There were moments of complete despair, when the only thing adding up was my bills. I pondered robbing a bank. This was at least uplifting and the whole idea, like some romantic dream, mobilized me. I saw myself as Bonnie without the weight of Clyde, and every fanciful episode propelled me through the streets with a bouncy stride. But today wasn't an uplifted day. I was uninspired and my mind remained a blank screen.

The building before me was modern, with art work in the lobby. The atmosphere evoked the image of a snob saying, "Well, what do *you* want." The building was thoroughly air-conditioned (my favorite on rainy days), and had musical elevators. I squeezed my dripping body between other dripping bodies and took a ride. "Peg O' My Heart" was playing, and it lasted for the first three stops. As the elevator doors opened and closed, each floor seemed more impersonal until it reached a nadir at my stop. I stepped demurely from the elevator – which was now playing "Red Roses For A Blue Lady" – and a feeling of nauseous awe swept over me. Could I face this five days a week?

The walls were a devouring green, the furniture an eye-smarting yellow, and in the center of the room was a platinum-haired receptionist, her elbow propped on a desk intended to look like a tree stump. She was chewing on half a bagel and completely ignoring me.

I told her I had an appointment with Mr. Gerter. After a long pause she looked at me through two pairs of false eyelashes and said he wasn't in. I repeated that I had an appointment. She said there was nothing *she* could do about it, he wasn't in. I asked her if I could wait. She gestured with her thumb toward an enormous couch and I slouched into it.

After six magazines and the first forty pages of a book, Mr. Gerter kept his appointment, bolting from the elevator in wrinkled bellbottoms and a loud printed shirt. He was over thirty and trying hard not to be. I knew in one glance he was a seether and I ultimately hate seethers. Our personalities never clash blatantly. They face each other, taunting.

He gave me the once-over with his bloodshot eyes and said, "Oh, you're the one." I nodded yes and followed him into his office. I handed him my references and he dropped them on the desk saying they were really unimportant, and then he left the room. I stood there in knots, shivering in my soggy clothes, wondering what was happening.

He returned shortly, carrying a cup of coffee for himself and, between loud sips, began the interview. A woman entered the room out of breath and asked him if there was anything pending. He didn't answer her question but asked if she had anything to munch on. She scurried from the room and returned with a large box of biscuits and some napkins. She asked again if he needed anything, he said no in a spray of crumbs, and she left the room.

"Listen, can you start tomorrow?" he asked me. "Oh, wait a minute. Can you operate a switchboard?"

"Sure," I said, "but will someone acquaint me with the names and incidentals of the job?"

"Oh, no! She's through, finished, she was expecting this anyway," he said nastily. I didn't know who *she* was but I assumed that I was taking someone's place and that someone would be there to help me for a few days.

But I was finally employed and I made up my mind to stay, at least until my name was vindicated with the landlord. I was, apparently, hired during a purge. The office deity had decided that the company needed a new image. There was talk every day of who would be the next to go and who should be the next to go. As it turned out, the ones who survived the purge were under thirty or pretended to be, with the exception of Miss Ellis, who did most of the work for everyone and was the one who supplied Mr. Gerter in his moment of need with cakes, biscuits and coffee, which he took without recompense or gratitude. Miss Ellis's age was hard to determine. She seemed lost between forty and fifty. She had been with the company for fifteen years and knew every office procedure. She was the most competent secretary I had ever met and her competency scared the hell out of me in the beginning. Dedication to such a thankless job seemed madness to me.

I became fascinated with Miss Ellis, who was always there when I arrived in the morning and who stayed long after I'd gone in the evening. She was a happy victim (I can think of her in no other way), glad to assist, glad to keep secrets and lend money. She was the calm in the office storms – and there were many office storms. I felt a closeness with her, despite the difference in our ages, a closeness that only confirmed single women seem to have. They never lower the boom on each other for what their private lives might be, but enjoy a vicarious participation in the mystery. There was a stronger bond between us, unspoken – a certain camaraderie women share who are not wholly accepted by their contemporaries for whatever reasons.

Although we spoke very little (she rarely had the time), I learned that Miss Ellis had traveled a great deal and had done many of the things I hoped to do. When things were slow in the office, she allowed herself time for lunch and ate a cream cheese and datenut sandwich at her desk in a confusion of papers and envelopes. I preferred to stay in the office for lunch and always hoped she would take the time to eat with me. When she did, she spoke softly amid the drone of typewriters and telephones. She knew I liked her and seemed pleased about it. Not that I was any different from the usual realm of office clerks – waiting, saving and studying for a better slot in the spectrum of bureaucracy – but she was pleased by my interest in her. I asked her once what she would like to have been had she not become a secretary (or settled for the position). Her face slowly loosened from the wearied pull of conscientiousness and she smiled deeply. "Oh, I . . . I . . ." She didn't finish but sat there blushing and I knew I had more than touched on something. I had rammed into it. There was a long pause while she shuffled papers and wiped her mouth with a napkin. Then she told me in a bursting whisper, "An actress." I was expecting a teacher or something along the academic lines. Even the first woman president would have been easier to accept than an actress. For the fact was that Miss Ellis, though enthusiastic in her work and not unattractive, was incredibly bland. It was an acquired blandness, a protective coating on a frightened lonely woman who had seen and felt a lot but was keeping it to herself. The thing that really amazed me about Miss Ellis was her obvious lack of conclusions concerning people and issues. But, for all this, she was an eternal student of life, and an avid film buff, although she preferred the theatre. I asked her if she were sorry she hadn't pursued acting and she said, "I couldn't say, I really couldn't say," and dropped the subject.

The weeks went by slowly and I didn't get to know Miss Ellis any better, although I grew more fond of what I did know. She was not liked by the other women in the office and was despised by two new ones. There were three people hired since I'd begun working there. They were very straight, very hip, very lazy additions to the already very straight, very hip, very lazy staff. The two women who hated Miss Ellis arrived the first day in Hot Pants and the men arrived later the same day, brimming with machismo and four letter words. They were thoroughly liberated, they said, especially the women, who explained in front of the entire office their liberated views on sex and life styles (heterosexual, of course). Watching the reactions of Miss Ellis very carefully, they seemed to bait her, self-assured that anyone who did not curse, smoke pot, take time off, read pornography or talk the "in" derogation of the common culture was "the enemy." They accepted me somehow, probably because I used profanity occasionally and told the new male addition he was a lazy pain in the ass when he tried to push his work on me. This bluntness set me apart from Miss Ellis and in my abandoned manner around the office (I had squared my bills by then) they sensed a hidden story. I was accepted as a curiosity, not a person. They never spoke to me or included me in any consensus, but they directed no innuendos my way – at least not in hearing range. Miss Ellis got them all, but she was unaware of the ramifications and the growing dispute over her concern for the work they did.

There were constant meetings by the hierarchy behind closed doors without Miss Ellis, who confided in me that this was unusual, that she had always been present at the meetings, and that her suggestions were important to Mr. Gerter.

They may have been important before the new image but Mr. Gerter found it harder and harder to take his eyes off the posteriors of the two women additions as they pranced in and out of his office complaining about Miss Ellis (or the virgin queen, as they called her). What work they did produce was sloppy and half-finished until Miss Ellis took over most of their duties, allowing them more time to reglue their eyelashes, talk about their idea of women's liberation and compete for the below-the-waist stares of Mr. Gerter and Co.

Late one afternoon during another meeting, I noticed Miss Ellis sitting at her desk, staring at the typewriter, her lips quivering. I went quietly over to her and asked what was the matter. She looked at the closed door of Mr. Gerter's office and said, "I couldn't say, I really couldn't say." Well, I could but didn't. I had a pressing urge to kick Mr. Gerter's door in and throw an open box of biscuits in his face. But I didn't do it.

I know now I should have. That afternoon was fatal for Miss Ellis. Behind the closed door in the heat of whispers, they had made another wise decision: that Miss Ellis was bad for the new image. They explained it all to her when they called her in. They said that although her work was outstanding, she was intolerant of her coworkers (for wanting them to work too), was a reactionary (for reprimanding one of the "liberated" women for graphically detailing the gymnastics of a sexual encounter she had had with two men at the same time), was a religious fanatic (for reading and sometimes quoting Norman Vincent Peale), but, most of all, she was contemptuous of men (because she nearly struck the male addition when he told her she needed to be ripped off, a euphemism for raped and mutilated).

By the time they had finished, they had convinced Miss Ellis that she was some kind of monster. She walked self-consciously from Mr. Gerter's office and sat down at her desk shaking. I stared at her for a long time, and she said something I'll never forget: "You don't have to worry. They like you."

EXCERPTS FROM A LIFE

By BARBARA LIPSCHUTZ

"Aggression"

When she was four she lived down the block from Keith who was seven and the meanest kid in the world. Every time she would go by Keith's house, Keith would grab her and drag her into his backyard and spank her. When she played in the woods near where she lived, Keith would follow her and spank her again.

She told Keith's mother (who knew all about it, having watched from behind the kitchen curtains). Keith's mother said, "Keith is only playing, dear. Why are you being such a baby?"

She told her own mother who said she should pray to Jesus about it.

So she did pray to Jesus and He answered her prayers. One day, when she was playing in her own front yard, Keith was climbing a tree in his front yard.

She heard the impact of body on cement all the way from his yard to hers.

She looked and there was Keith, on the sidewalk beside the tree, moving but obviously dazed and hurt. She knew that Jesus had heard her prayers and that this was her chance. She ran from her house to Keith's house, ran to his sidewalk beside his

tree, ran to Keith's body lying on the cement.

When she got to Keith she didn't hesitate a minute. She straddled him and banged his head against the sidewalk. She banged it and banged it and didn t care how much Keith screamed or how bloody his face got. She bathed in the righteous ecstasy of revenge. She flowed in the sweet irresistible transition from the oppressed to the oppressor. "And the meek shall inherit the earth." Thank you, thank you, Jesus. Eventually she became aware of Keith's mother pulling her away, slapping her face, and carrying Keith into his house.

She sat there on the meanest kid in the world's sidewalk, red with the meanest kid in the world's blood, and knew that she was right. She knew that she would be punished but that didn't matter. She was avenged and she was right. She hoped that Keith would die.

"Thank you Jesus for answering my prayers." Somehow she got home, was spanked by the father and sent to her room. She heard the parents talking to Keith's mother in the living room, beginning in tight low voices and ending in screaming threats.

Finally she and Keith (who had recovered by the next day) were forbidden ever to play with each other again. Which suited her fine and only proved again that she was right. She had freed herself from the tyranny of the terrible Keith.

For the rest of that year, until her family moved, she would look from her yard and see Keith in his yard, and somewhere inside of her she would feel clean and good.

She knew in her absolute four-year-old wisdom that bullies must be stopped.

She knew that if she had not struck him down, Keith would have spanked her and bullied her and terrified her until she would have had to stay in her house all the time, out of fear. She knew that to conquer the bullies of this world, a person gets one chance only, and must seize it, unerringly, regardless of future ramifications.

Otherwise she is lost, and will be bullied forever.

"Suzanne"

For a while in high school her best friend was Suzanne: Suzanne of miniatures, calligraphy and sonnets. Suzanne whose face was porcelain which cracked a little when she laughed, a laughter just this side of hysteria, and one time, in a drunken, darkened kitchen, on the other side.

The boys would date Suzanne (who would *not* date her) but they would not touch Suzanne for they knew how gauche they were, and her fragility frightened them. Suzanne would tell her this and would laugh and break a bit before her eyes.

In the summer of their friendship on Suzanne's farm they picked ripe corn from Suzanne's fields and roasted the ears and smeared them dense with butter. As they ate, ear after ear, brown and dripping hot, they knew how wild they were at heart and did not speak.

Suzanne turned Bah'ai and married a man with an Arabic name. Now she has religion and babies to cover up her porcelain, like a pancake makeup, matte. There is still a madness down beneath her eyes, and Suzanne's body, so soft in adolescense, has grown quite painfully thin. She will call Suzanne and Suzanne will come to visit her, but women cannot always love, who loved as girls.

The Bath

By LYN MICHAELS

I am often hiding things. It goes with not being able to bend my back, with keeping pain private. To bend is to tell. To bend is also to experience excruciating pain; for though they put me over the barrel, they could not limber my spine. To tell this story as it should be told would require an openness as if a terrific storm had blown every cloud from the sky, left it scoured clean. Or as if a scar were torn off a wound. Can I? Ought I? (although that is another question.) Picture a veil lifted from the face; that face has been covered for many years; it is alien to the sun; now the shroud is removed in order to reveal the exquisite beauty and trial of being human; in all the features, the history is written. It cannot be rewritten. Or unwritten.

Only what's relevant should be told, but it suddenly strikes me that no vignette will do. All the details are ice-sharp; mother, marriage, the teacher.

From the gym teacher I could hide nothing. She felt me. (One can always sense these things.) I was fifteen – looked about ten. The other kids took gym, but I had had polio; I sat on the sidelines in my wheelchair, rooting them on. (I'd been a whippersnapper, the fastest runner and could outstrip the boys before my illness – every time.)

Does this story turn more on the winter I was twenty-one? when all hiding stopped, when the wingblow was driven by my father that laid the fox open? Or does it turn more sharply on that ashen winter afternoon when everything was the color of blown ash, O ash blonde!, when I was fifteen and the vignette with the gym teacher was etched indelibly on my mind?

My home was broken. Right down the middle. I am the daughter of a moody Russian Jewish psychologist, and a beautiful wild gypsy girl who loved a woman, and who turned uncountably cruel toward me. I never held it against her that she loved a woman; I learned it from father. years after the divorce, that winter I was twenty-one when I ran away to him and his wife. I only held it against mother that in loving a woman, she hurt *him*. I always held it to be the greatest emotional dishonesty on mother's part that she didn't marry the woman.

She would come up to his college weekends, supposedly to visit him, her fiance; but would visit on the sly the woman she was in love with. It pierced my father to the core, although he told me about it quietly. After ten years with my mother, father will not tolerate secrets or closed doors. At the marriage, mother had worn thick brown satin: an early putting on the cloth of mourning? Years later, she took it down from her closet where she kept it: so shiny and so bleak. It sent chills up my spine.

And she had been a raving beauty when she wed him, twenty-three. She'd won a beauty contest two years before; in fact, was so arresting in her classic beauty – aquiline nose, perfectly clear fine features. deep set brown eyes and fine reddish-brown hair – that an artist in the streets of Ithaca had begged her to let him paint her portrait: an exquisite miniature I saw years later. On porcelain. She kept it in our home. I think in her thirties, she reached the height of her beauty: she wore suede hunting jackets, crush hats with huge feathers. She was always in the act of flirtation. And I saw dreamy-eyed pictures taken of her as a girl in St. Mark's Square, Venice, all the pigeons fluttering about her shoulders. She resembled a girl of stone. Exquisite but frozen. There was a vague, unearthly gaze in her eyes – if one peered closely enough at the photographs – which unnerved one.

I wonder whether she ever really cared for anyone? I think she was cruel; I think she broke many hearts. One young Greek professor fell so deeply in love with her that when she turned him down, he left the college where he taught, in destitution. I question whether she ever loved-truly. Even the woman? For, years afterward, when I lost my woman and said to mother in bitterness, "Ah you've never been let down in love; you cannot know what it's like," she laughed, lightly, even now aware of her attractiveness and charm. (My own strict definition of beauty was of course taking form.)

On the Hungarian stage, my mother played an angel as a girl of five. Her eyes were coal, her cheeks round and rouged, everybody's darling, imploring and winsome. I think she has never quite outgrown playing the role. I'm sure she sensed even then she was a winner: could take, and break anyone's heart she had a mind to. And so she did with the accurate crack of firewood.

Father said, "Your mother is not a Lesbian; but she is drawn to women." I said little at the time. Nor have I ever let on to her that I knew of her affair with the woman. But I have mulled over what might have been the seriousness of the relationship. I was simply aware that she would be phoned from time to time by a woman – with low, masculine voice; would flirt over the phone with this woman. I would be embarrassed for mother, knowing she was hiding. Hiding – something. I had fled from her in psychic pain, only to learn how truly raw my wound. In fact, Bobbie, mother's woman, had come to father during the divorce proceedings specifically to plead her innocence; she felt herself *not* the cause of the severing. At any rate, it rankled in me like a thorn – this unknown woman. Still does from time to time.

Father only once cried out to me that I bore the bad seed. I forgave him picturing again the funereal beauty of mother as young woman, mother in brown satin. The winter I was twenty-one was my legal coming of age, out of the age of innocence into the age of understanding.

But the gym teacher occurred when I was fifteen. I loved to watch her move. One

icy winter afternoon when by four p.m. it was evening, and when I was feeling particularly rotten, she came up to me after gym, asked:

"Want to take a hot shower, Jenny?"

I was stunned.

Baths at home were a special problem. We had a fine old fashioned tub of porcelain, though we were hard up for money, always trapped. But these old West Side New York apartments had deep tubs. In the hot tub, I could forget my pain; I loved to trace my fingers over the cracks, veins in the aged milkwhite porcelain. But I got into the bath seldom: I had to be helped by my mother, her sharp eyes focused upon me; riveted. I could feel them burning a hole through my shoulder-blades, which were skinny. I could feel her running her critical gaze over my badly twisted spine. I imagine she felt guilt over my condition, which she vented by some swing at my body. It made me overwhelmingly shy; I'd rather lie in bed all night, cold and aching, than expose myself to ridicule and humiliation. I took to casting my eyes down. But the bath – became the symbol of balm.

Dragged back from death at twelve, I got the intuition she'd rather I had not been returned. The bath became the whip: she would run a steaming tub at eight in the evening; neither my sister nor she would say a word. It would still be standing at nine. Once or twice, we had a scene. But usually she'd pull the plug from the drain, without a word, let the water rush back down.

Whole summers in shacks we rented, I'd go without bathing. But winters were worst. Now came those long hours when I would make of my spirit a spire of burning flame to warm the ravaged body. First, there would be the cold of the bed, and deep ache of cold in the legs. There would be rigidness in shoulders and back, deep through to the bone; there would be tightness all through the limbs. But then – through the marble cold of rooftops, one worn star would kindle an instant flight of fancy! Color, light, movement. I'd be living through one thousand spheres at once. I'd ascend, far from the body, then dip down suddenly as I rose to the small darkened room. It is gentle, the dark, like the feel of hot water. It is blessed, the dark, like the feel of hot water. Sacred. So is hot tea. And that far floating star will glide past that smokestack soon. I think the star is green – almost blue. One with night.

I slept long. No dreams. It is almost dawn. The world is rose and gold. The tenements are bathed in light. It is icy, frosty this morning. I am warm, I can bend, and stretch! To leap upon stars and bells of wind, drift above this city. It is good, the cold about me and the warm within. The cold bare scent of dawn in this room is good now in February. Soon dawn will smell of coffee, and will be deep-colored. I cannot breathe enough of bright silver about me against this far fire within. I shall be a bird, soar too sharp with joy, leave this wasted body alone here in the dawn.

Off with the covers! Now, cold, you cannot sorrow me to the core. Soon there will be coarse wool about the legs and soon enough there will be pain to bring salt tears to the eyes. Soon I will be up and out and – arise. See in the small cracked sphere of mirror glass these wide green eyes moist with tears. Look how strange, they smile, cry, grow wider still – till all you are is wide green eyes. See the pale long lightly freckled face, and thin dark blonde hair aglow with morning light. Queer little madonna! Smile, laugh, cry. Gaze now far from the tiny sphere of glass, past morning rooftops, take care not to think; you must not think. Let your thoughts fly as the stars fade . . .

Forget the wide green eyes and thin stiff limbs. Only gaze deep into the dim water of ashen morning sky. Watch that first softness of scrolled smoke rising from a distant smokestack. WATCH IT CLOSELY, FEEL IT DEEPLY. Up, up, up through air easily to and fro. And only remember, now, far far back: a bird, pure bright gliding through a sky of grey . . .

* * *

So went my reverie. Really how it was, was I'd lie awake dreaming of Arizona. How would I ever work up courage to ask my mother to take me there? I'd sometimes watch old westerns on TV to see the desert, or put suntan lotion on my limbs at night to smell the sun; I collected a little box of gaudy postcards of cactus. Arizona. My mother'd say one went to such a climate to die . . .

If it took four hours to fall asleep, alright. I'd bitterly remember the sound of the last of the bath water that evening drawing down the drain. It epitomized the bitterness of our relationship. If I could get warm up to the hips, I was fine. When I couldn't fall asleep,I'd be sure my ten year old sister was softly breathing, then shift to

my wheelchair, then to the windowsill which overlooked West 73rd Street, Manhattan. If one craned the neck, you could see a strip of the oily Hudson, lights of the Jersey coast. I'd do this, letting in a blast of icy air. Fortunately, we had a rusted black windowguard to keep me from becoming the swan I wanted to and flying away, although often in my dreams I took off that way. And once as a girl of twelve, I nearly flew from my stretcher into the East River, alarming the nurse and incurring severe rebuke. But here, there was blessed calm. If it had snowed, all the Puerto Rican rooms in brownstone houses appeared touched by benediction; a still palm laid on a burning forehead. Milkbottles were lined on the windowsills. Some nights, there would be explosions from faulty gas heaters which would send families of nine or ten pouring out into the streets. My dreams were haunted by these explosions. To flex one's wings like a swan, to get away from sudden fire and destruction. But one might get burned nonetheless by flames cycloned up into skies by winter winds, all the feathers disintegrate like ashes. Swan whose wingtips were ignited, and then the whole blessed bird burned. There was no way out.

I spent most of my time between twelve and seventeen on the windowsill.

That to which I came home was always with me. So that afternoon, in the gym, when Miss Smith suddenly asked me this question, I started looking intensely down at the concrete floor of the locker room.

"It would make you feel better–"

(How did she know I was feeling rotten?)

"Listen, you know, Jenny," she said sitting down on the wooden bench alongside me, by my wheel chair so I didn't have to turn, "I have a secret to tell you: I, too, had polio as a child; when I was about ten; for a few years I wore braces on my legs up to here" – she indicated a bit below the knee. "They didn't think I would walk again; but I did, and now I only feel it sometimes in my legs when I'm very tired."

I stared at Miss Smith. Did my mouth fall open? I was blushing. She was smiling deeply, frankly, into my gaze.

There beyond us was the row of steaming stall showers the girls had just come out from. Now, all the girls were gone. There was about three-quarters of an hour before I had to meet my ride home. Christ, how I longed to get in. I felt immensely shy, yet open.

"Let me help you," she began quietly. Half aware of what I was doing, I began fumbling for the zipper in back of my navy blue pleated skirt; I reached to my toes to lift one leg and pull off my black knee stockings. (My feet were icy as usual, turning blue; I didn't want her to feel them, or even see them.) Now came the hard part: I clenched my teeth: I had to unzip my orange turtleneck jersey along the back: my shoulders ached most when I did this, and my neck felt like iron: I still needed to have it stretched out, but treatments cost a fortune, a brace was cheaper. I was one of four children and had already cost my parents a mint. (My parents, divorced by that time, drew together to pay my expenses, not without bitterness and blame.) Our polio insurance used up, we could afford no more. No more Sister Kenny hot packs (I had wept when they discontinued them ten days after they began, as they brought the only relief at hand.

Bending my neck was my greatest trial Agony at times. I'd rather anything. But Miss Smith was knowing; she unzipped the awkward jersey (why did Mama make me wear THESE things? O yes, they told me to wear turtleneck things to keep warm.) Then, gently eased off the brace I wore round my neck which made me feel like a turtle: cumbersome, vulnerable thing I wouldn't have to wear again until I was thirty-one.

My clothes, she laid out neatly on the wood bench; there was the rip in my stocking; the skirt a size too big; my Willie Goodwill wardrobe. Somehow she took embarrassment out of the thing; or, rather, put us beyond such emotions.

Within moments, there I sat out of the scratchy underthings. Nude in my young girl body, just coming into puberty. The way she smiled on me, I felt she looked upon mine as a beautiful body.

I was undergoing . . . a transformation. I suddenly started smiling, then laughing. And I was not given much in those days to laughing. From that day, I would hold my head a bit more high, despite the pain.

My mind flashed back in those seconds before transferring into the shower, to those baths we children were given soon after we had been deathly ill in state hospital. They were hell, run by armies of Satan. I have never been in war, nor prison. But nurses in gunmetal gray uniforms would arrive; huge battalions of women in

grey frocks would descend, lower our emaciated bodies on steel stretchers into vats filled with about two inches of tepid water, and there bathe our private parts; just a hint of water, no warmth, nothing to immerse yourself in; there, beneath tall barred-in windows letting in little light, and that a yellow brackish one in winter to match the vomit colored walls of those rooms. Sometimes, from the next tub one could hear a child softly whimpering. If we cried, we were penalized by no dinner that day. But our bodies were stiff, if they jolted us there would be a needle run through our spine. Then, the bath done, they would lift our bodies out again on precarious, waving stretchers and wheel us back down ward, evening drawing on, where there lay fifty other children: on, into our particular yellow-tile cubicle, with our cubicle-mate. For hours afterward, we would be shivering.

So it was. The luxury of bathing. I was shivering . . . But now, before me, this warm young woman, in blue slacks, short blonde hair damp with exertion; but grey eyes calm. She helped me gently to transfer from wheelchair to stall shower seat. She turned the water on, warm.

"Warm enough?" she smiled.

"Yep . . . just right, perfect," I said. She scrubbed my back, especially gently where I hurt most. I closed my eyes for half a second. Then got ready to come out.

"Why not stay in longer?" she asked.

"I . . . yep. OK." And I stayed in, till the hot water had beat all of the pain out of my neck, and shoulder bones.

Then the unaccountable thing happened: Something I have never been able to fully explain: mingled with the shower water, streaming, I suddenly realized that I was crying. Hard strong tears; honest crying, as I hadn't those three long years since I was sick. I looked at her – all a blur, madonna through all that steam; fox-blonde. After, she turned the water off, she wrapped me warm in a white towel.

"Snow child!" she laughed. (Or I think those were her words.) Like a drenched rat, my blonde hair hung down. I remember it had just begun to snow large grey flakes into early winter evening . . . Then she asked me, kindly, to try to bend my neck forward to my chin, three times. I could bend! Didn't feel the pain. Then, she helped me to slip the neck brace back on; helped dress and hustled me upstairs, to meet my ride home.

– – –

I never met but once my mother's woman. It was after I had had polio. We three had a very restrained tea in our New York apartment one afternoon. I didn't like her, straight off. She was the type I would always steer from, fleeing as though I were the shot deer: sharp-angled, abrupt, evasive, coy, with strident voice. I knew she was in back of unhappy things. She made me feel raw-boned and wrong.

But later, when I first came to love a woman, she resembled Miss Smith, tall, blonde, thirty-one with candid grey eyes. She was the woman I had already wholly created in my mind and had only to find.

Of the thousand things my beloved said to me, one stands shining, burning at core: Always having dreaded being touched, I braced myself involuntarily when she laid her hand upon my shoulders, for I thought they felt to others like stone, marble (as they felt inside) not human. I withdrew . . .

"Darling!" she said, "it's alright! I mean – it's not: it's brutal. But *everything* about you is alright with me."

So I had been drawn out of hiding. They say: One feather of the wing flawed, the bird cannot fly. But all that can flaw is dishonesty. In her arms, I soared, ay, we soared so high that earth below looked like velvet dotted with tiny lights.

Like the shot deer, I fled from my mother's woman. But my own: direct and strong: her I would seek out over and over again. I vowed in my blood that if she'd have me, unlike my mother when I found her, I would make her mine: would marry from then until the end of time.

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