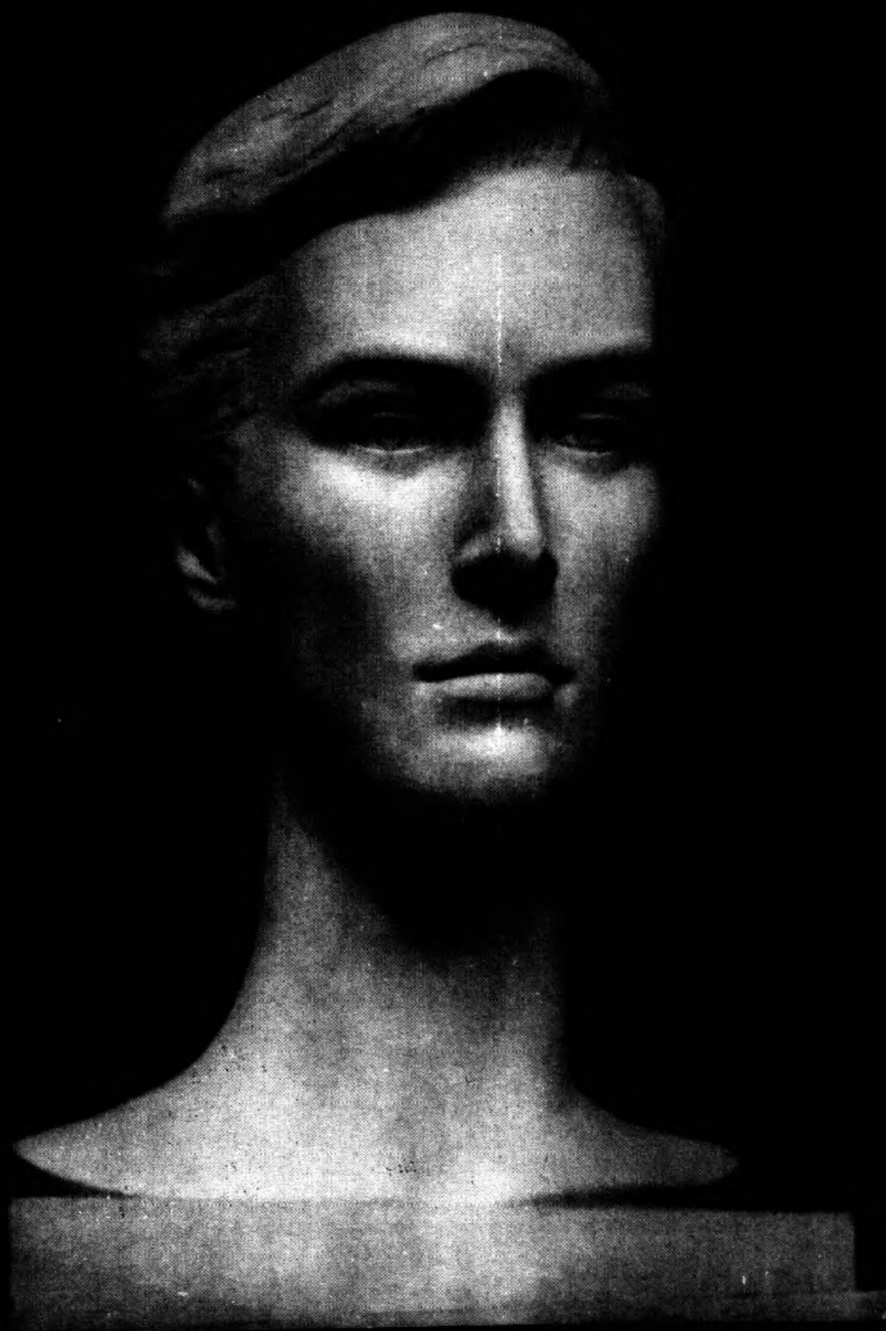


# THE LADDER

DECEMBER/JANUARY 1970-1971

\$1.25



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

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

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

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.

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

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VOLUME 15 No. 3 and 4  
DECEMBER/JANUARY, 1970-71

# THE LADDER

#### THE LADDER STAFF

Editor .....	Gene Damon
Director of Promotion .....	Rita Laporte
Production Editor .....	Hope Thompson
Circulation Manager .....	Ann P. Buck
Production Assistants .....	Lyn Collins, Kim Stabinski, Gladys Irma, King Kelly, Ann Brady, Robin and Dana Jordan
Secretary to the Editor .....	Tracy Wright

December/January, 1970-71

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# IF THAT'S ALL THERE IS

By DEL MARTIN

Assemblyman Willie Brown, author of twice-defeated California legislation to repeal those laws regulating sexual activity between consenting adults, at the SIR Political Action Dinner at California Hall delivered a message of unity — unity of all oppressed peoples, unity of all minority groups, unity *within* the homophile community.

The greatest political force to effect change, he said, could come from a coalition of racial and ethnic minorities, the homophile community, the student and women's liberation movements. The occasion followed the closing session of the North American Conference of Homophile Organizations, which had displayed vividly our divisions rather than our unity, and Brown cautioned that whatever differences each of us had within our own communities should be kept within our own families.

It was an unfortunate analogy. Families usually include women, and they usually include youth — both of whom are integral parts of the homophile community, both of whom were ignored in the grand gesture of unity that closed the festivities. Willie's message went unheeded.

After fifteen years of working for the homophile movement — of mediating, counselling, appeasing, of working for coalition and unity — I am facing a very real identity crisis. Like NACHO I have been torn apart. I am bereft. For I have during this week of struggle between the men and the women, the conservatives and the Gay Liberationists, been forced to the realization that I have no brothers in the homophile movement.

Oh yes, when six of my sisters from the Daughters of Bilitis, Nova and Gay Women's Liberation stood with me to confront the NACHO meeting on August 26th (the day of the National Women's Strike) about the relevance of the homophile movement to the women within it, the delegates passed a resolution in support of the women's liberation movement. They rationalized that all of their organizations were open to women, but the women didn't join in numbers and they just didn't know what else they could do to relate to their Lesbian sisters. We suggested that their programs and their publications were not inclusive of or relevant to women. They decried the segregationist organizations which we represented, but would not address themselves to

the underlying reason for the existence of separate women's organizations — that the female homosexual faces sex discrimination not only in the heterosexual world, but within the homophile community.

And so, like my sister, Robin Morgan, I have come to the conclusion that I must say, "Good Bye to All That." Goodbye to the wasteful, meaningless verbiage of empty resolutions made by hollow men of self-proclaimed privilege. They neither speak for us nor to us. They acknowledged us on our "day" and then ditched us that very same night in their "male only" sanctuaries. It's the system, and there was not one among them with guts enough to put a stop to it. And, too late, they shall find that the joke is really on them.

Goodbye, my alienated brothers. Goodbye to the male chauvinists of the homophile movement who are so wrapped up in the "cause" they espouse that they have lost sight of the people for whom the cause came into being. Goodbye to the bulwark of the Mattachine grandfathers, self-styled monarchs of a youth cult which is no longer theirs. As they cling to their old ideas and their old values in a time that calls for radical change, I must bid them farewell. There is so much to be done, and I have neither the stomach nor the inclination to stand by and watch them self destruct.

Goodbye to co-ed organizations like SIR. The Political Action Dinner, we were told, was a "community" project. The Society for Individual Rights supposedly had finally learned that politics isn't a loner's game and called out the forces of coalition in the gay community. The Daughters of Bilitis responded, came to the first planning committee meetings and were, as usual, overlooked as plans progressed. Better it should be a SIR blow job. And it was.

Goodbye to all that. The finale at the head table said it all. It was no oversight. It was a demonstration of where the head is at — not just one man's head, for he was representative of the vast majority of those men present. Women are invisible. There is only one credential for acceptance in the homophile "brotherhood" — the handle Mayor Alioto couldn't find on Women's Day.

Goodbye, not just to SIR, but all those homophile organizations across the country with an open door policy for women. It's

only window dressing for the public, and in the small towns of suburbia, for mutual protection. It doesn't really mean anything and smacks of paternalism. Goodbye, too, (temporarily, I trust) to my sisters who demean themselves by accepting "women's status" in these groups — making and serving the coffee, doing the secretarial work, soothing the brows of the policy makers who tell them, "We're doing it all for you, too." Don't believe it, sisters, for you are only an afterthought that never took place.

Goodbye to *Vector*. Goodbye to the "Police Beat" — the defense of wash room sex and pornographic movies. That was never my bag anyway. Goodbye to the Women's Page and the NACHO delegate who admitted that's how he regarded my column, professing all the while, of course, that he considered it most worthwhile reading. He meant it as a compliment. Goodbye to my editor, George Mendanhall, who has tried to understand and who is seeking to cement relations between the men and women of the community. He can't go it alone. So I say, "Go ahead, George. Let it all hang out. It's all they have, and *that* needs to be exposed."

Goodbye to all the "representative" homophile publications that look more like magazines for male nudist colonies. Goodbye to the biased male point of view. The editors say they have encouraged women to contribute, but they don't. Nor will they until the format is changed, policy broadened and their material taken seriously.

Goodbye to the gay bars that discriminate against women. Goodbye to those that "allow" them in only if they dress up in skirts, while the men slop around in their "queer" costumes. Gay Liberationists are right when they observe that gay bars ghettoize the homophile community. They are, after all, our chief base for socialization, for meeting *people* of our own kind. But there is no time or place for forming friendships, for exchanging ideas, for camaraderie — only for dispensing of drinks and sex partners.

Goodbye to the Hallowe'en Balls, the drag shows and parties. It was fun, while it lasted. But the humor has gone out of the game. The exaggerations of the switching (or swishing) of sex roles has become the norm in the public eye. While we were laughing at ourselves we became the laughing stock and lost the personhood we were seeking. It is time to stop mimicking the

heterosexual society we've been trying to escape. It is time to get our heads together to find out *who we really are*.

Goodbye to NACHO. It never really happened. It was a non-organization consisting only of reams of purple ditted rules and regulations that no one had the time nor stamina to read and big-mouthed, self-appointed and anointed homophile leaders — the steeple without the people.

Goodbye to Gay Liberation, too. They applauded the Lesbians who wished to establish common cause with them and the other men at the NACHO meeting. But somehow we are left with the feeling their applause was for the disruption of the meeting, not its purpose. There is reason for the splits within their own movement, why there is a women's caucus in GLF in New York and why there is a Gay Women's Liberation in the San Francisco Bay Area. Like the tired old men they berate they have not come to grips with the gut issues. Until they do, *their* revolution cannot be ours. Their liberation would only further enslave us.

Goodbye to the various Councils on Religion and the Homosexual. Like the institutions they sprang from they are bastions of male prestige — male evangelists from two disparate worlds. There is no place for women in the Christian and homophile brotherhoods. Be warned, my sisters, CRH spells only purgatory for you.

Goodbye to the male homophile community. "Gay is good," but not good enough — so long as it is limited to white males only. We joined with you in what we mistakenly thought was a common cause. A few of you tried, we admit. But you are still too few, and even you fall short of the mark. You, too, are victims of our culture. Fifteen years of masochism is enough. None of us is getting any younger or any closer to where it's really at. So, regrettably, I must say goodbye to you, too. It's been nice and all that, but I have work to do. My friends neither look up to me nor down at me. They face me as equals, and we interact reciprocally with respect and love.

There is no hate in this goodbye — only the bitter sting of disappointment. Momentarily I am pregnant with rage at your blindness and your deafness — the psychosomatic symptoms of narcissism and egocentricity. But my rage will pass. Most of it has been spent already. For I realize you were programmed by society for your role of supremacy. But somehow I expected



more of you. I had hoped that you were my brothers and would grow up, to recognize that freedom is not self contained. You cannot be free until you free me — and all women — until you become aware that, in all the roles and games you play, you are always "IT"

Believe it or not, there is love, too, in this farewell — just as there has always been. How could anyone hold a grudge against helpless beings who are compelled to grope for their very existence? But I must leave you — for your good as well as mine. I refuse to be your scapegoat. By removing the target, you may no longer mock me. Besides, I must go where the action is — where there is still hope, where there is possibility for personal and collective growth. It is a revelation to find acceptance, equality, love and friendship — everything we sought in the homophile community — not there, but in the women's movement.

I will not be your "nigger" any longer. Nor was I ever your mother. Those were stultifying roles you laid on me, and I shall no longer concern myself with your toilet training. You're in the big leagues now, and

we're both playing for big stakes. They didn't turn out to be the same.

As I bid you adieu, I leave each of you to your own device. Take care of it, stroke it gently, mouth it and fondle it. As the center of your consciousness, it's really all you have.

*Del Martin is a founder of the Daughters of Bilitis, a Lesbian organization which started in San Francisco in 1955, and since its inception in 1964 has served on the Board of Directors of The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, San Francisco, California.*

*(Editor's Note: THE LADDER is wholly independent of the Daughters of Bilitis, but it is heartening to note that Del Martin, founding daughter, has recognized where the action really is, in the unity of all women in the struggle for human rights for all human beings. THE LADDER is dedicated to this goal, as expressed on the inside of the front cover of this, and every, issue.)*

## Dissent and Radicalism

Editorial by RITA LAPORTE

REFLECTIONS: CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE by Hannah Arendt (The New Yorker, September 12, 1970) is a brilliant article, a keen analysis of the ills of the United States today and their possible solutions. Yet she too completely ignores women. Political thinkers who assume, as has been done since time immemorial, that the body politic is all male will soon become a quaint breed, one of historical interest only. However, some male thinking is pertinent provided one reads it critically and spots its shortcomings.

Ms. Arendt presents a political analysis of our current legal and governmental crisis in terms both of our black minority and our student unrest, an analysis that may be useful to the women's movement. She begins by discussing Socrates and Thoreau, men who spoke to the individual conscience, and the right of anyone to break the law and suffer the consequences in the higher interest of one's integrity. Socrates and Thoreau are like the modern conscientious objector and not like the modern civil disobedient. "Civil disobedients are in fact organized minorities, bound together by

their decision to take a stand against an assumed majority." Criminal disobedience and civil disobedience are two very different things, though few politicians and law enforcement personnel realize this. "Criminal disobedience is nothing more than the inevitable consequence of a disastrous erosion of police competence and power." The civil disobedient, on the other hand, "... defies the law and the established authorities on the ground of basic dissent, and not because he as an individual wishes to make an exception of himself and to get away with it."

Civil disobedience occurs not only to effect change, but to restore a proper balance of power when the government threatens to bypass the Constitution. Of the latter she gives six recent examples: 1. the undeclared war in Vietnam, 2. secret agencies influencing public affairs, 3. threats to undermine the First Amendment, 4. attempts to restrict the Senate's Constitutional Powers, 5. Nixon's invasion of Cambodia without consulting Congress, and 6. "Agnew's even more ominous references to resisters and dissenters as 'vultures'... and

parasites [whom] we can afford to separate... from our society with no more regret than we should feel over discarding rotten apples from a barrel" — a reference that challenges not only the laws of the United States but every legal order."

Ms. Arendt, perhaps having more faith in our Constitution than native Americans have (she arrived in the United States as a grown woman in 1941 from Hitler's Germany) says that, "to think of disobedient minorities in terms of rebels and traitors is against letter and spirit of a Constitution whose framers were especially sensitive to the dangers of unbridled majority rule." The phenomenon of a changing society is nothing new and the framers of our Constitution were well aware of it. Today, despite or maybe because of, the vastly increased rate of change the need for stability continues. Stability is required "to provide the wherein for the flux of change." And it is legal systems that provide such stability. As for change, that "is always the result of extra-legal action." Change is not accomplished by Supreme Court decisions nor by legislation. Examples are: labor legislation that came only after much violent and prolonged labor agitation and the bill recently passed by Massachusetts designed to test the legality of the Vietnam war, a law that never would have been thought of, let alone passed, were it not for the draft resisters. The famous example is the 14th Amendment that was meant to incorporate Negroes into the Constitution. It took the Civil Rights movement some 100 years later to force the Supreme Court to give meaning to that Amendment.

Ms. Arendt's thesis is "that the American republic is the only government that has at least a chance to cope with it [civil disobedience] — not, perhaps in accordance with the statutes, but in accordance with the spirit of its laws." There follows a long discussion of the history of political theory that led up to our Constitution. The United States came into being on the notion of some kind of consent, some kind of contract between the governed and the governors. This "consent", as she admits, has a certain aura of unreality about it — we are born Americans without any choice in the matter. But, if American law, more particularly as embodied in the spirit of our Constitution, provides for dissent, then we may, as adults, consent, for consent is implied in the right to dissent. Such consent is not a fiction. This consent, however,

cannot mean consent to all laws or policies, even those clearly promulgated by a majority, for to give a citizen's consent such a meaning would be to revert to the old fictional consent. Ms. Arendt then discusses at length the omission of Blacks from this original consent. I will return to this later.

There follows an examination of the very American art of voluntary association. de Tocqueville made astute observations 140 years ago on this American knack for the coming together of individuals into ad-hoc organizations for the purpose of pursuing short-term goals. When enough citizens find a fault "they are no longer isolated men but a power seen from afar, whose actions serve for an example and whose language is listened to." (Italics mine).

Ms. Arendt contends that civil disobedients, and in her view students are currently the most important, are the latest form of voluntary association and that these associations should be recognized similarly to lobbyists and pressure groups. Though civil disobedience is compatible with the spirit of American law, it "has not yet found a niche in the American legal system." Voluntary associations, particularly those leading to civil disobedience, can be dangerous, but they are less so than a tyranny of the majority, or a government that ceases to hold to its promises and attempts to swallow up the other parties to the original consent.

Ms. Arendt quotes Wilson Carey McWilliams in her final paragraph: "When institutions fail, political society depends on men, and men are feeble reeds, prone to acquiesce in — if not to commit — iniquity." (Italics mine). "Voluntary associations have been the specifically American remedy for the failure of institutions, the unreliability of men, and the uncertain nature of the future." She sees hope that the United States may be the one country that does have the kind of legal spirit to cope with the current, worldwide turmoil.

Ms. Arendt puts forth two important ideas in her very long article: 1. that blacks were never included in the original consent upon which our nation was founded and 2. that the spirit of American law should make it possible to find therein a place for civil disobedience. It is an excellent article if one assumes that humanity consists of only one sex, the male sex. She treats women as having no more political significance than our numerous dog and cat population.



We might first ask whether the women's movement resembles more that of black males or that of student males. Ms. Arendt, like everyone else, fails to take into account the fact that the black minority contains at least as many women as men and this leads to curious results. After telling us that the 14th and 15th Amendments could not remedy the crime of slavery, she says that "it grew more poignant that blacks, now free, and born and bred in the country, were the only ones for whom it was not true that, in Bancroft's words, 'the welcome of the Commonwealth was as wide as sorrow.'" (Italics mine). She thinks an explicit amendment to the Constitution, "addressed specifically to the black people of America" might have helped. "The failure of Congress to propose such an amendment is striking in the light of the overwhelming vote of a Constitutional amendment to cure the infinitely milder discriminatory practices against women." (Italics mine again.)

I am concerned about Ms. Arendt's strange logic. The logic that puts blacks into one group and women into another always sounds to me as though someone is not thinking. What about black women? Would a Constitutional amendment "addressed specifically to the black people" mean that only white women were henceforth to be excluded from the Constitution? Well, no, I suppose Indian women would remain excluded, but what about Chicano women and Puerto Rican women? And Eskimo women? I imagine our all male Supreme Court would cut this Gordian knot by interpreting such a black addressed amendment to cover black males only. White women could then take some thin, rather immoral, comfort in the fact that they still rated slightly better on the social and economic scale than black women.

It seems to me that we are quite unlike either group, the black males who were once excluded from the Constitution like women, or the student males who were included, unlike women. We have simply always been written off as without political significance. Now it is up to us to determine where we wish to belong and how we will enter the body politic.

A first step is to cease to think of ourselves as just another minority group among many. Why should women constitute one more "voluntary association" to be given lobbying rights by Congress, along with youth groups, poverty groups, senior

citizen groups? Are women once more, albeit in a new way, to come to the hallowed male halls of government to petition for a right here and a right there? Women are not in fact a minority. Men are not thought of as a minority (though indeed they are) for they now hold all the power. Ms. Arendt speaks more than once of a "majority" as when she says that a citizen's "consent" does not mean consent to all laws or policies, even those clearly promulgated by a majority. Clearly, no majority of human beings has ever been given the chance to promulgate anything in this country.

Today, at the beginning of a new consciousness in women, women are in fact given little political significance and so, in fact, seem like a minority group to be wooed at election time. And we rate rather low on the scale of minority group priorities. During the '70's we will see men begin to take the unenviable position of a minority group themselves as they band together solely on the grounds of "maleness" to combat women. In fact, there will then be two large groups within the human family, one making up 51% of the population, the other, 49%. All other sorts of minorities will take secondary positions. There is no foreseeing how long this unfortunate state of affairs will exist, but eventually these two overriding groups will find their differences minor compared to their concerns as human beings.

"Disobedience of the law, civil and criminal, has become a mass phenomenon . . . The defiance of established authority, religious and secular, social and political, as a worldwide phenomenon may well one day be accounted the outstanding event of the last decade." If true, it is nevertheless only a short and quiet prologue to what will reach tremendous proportions in this decade — the rise of women, the only true revolution possible, the only revolution to effect everyone drastically, the only revolution that can save minority groups from everlasting injustice.

Ms. Arendt makes a third point in passing, without expanding upon it, which I find most important. That is her warning that the student movement is in danger of collapse as it allows itself to be infected by foreign ideologies. Groups that substitute ideological commitments, political or other, for actual goals are as much a threat to society as wrongful government action. "When an association is no longer capable

or willing to unite into one channel the efforts of divergent minds it has lost its gift for action. What threatens the student movement . . . is not just vandalism, violence, bad temper, and worse manners but the growing infection of the movement with ideologies (Maoism, Castroism, Stalinism, Marxism-Leninism, and the like), which in fact split and dissolve the association." I am alarmed that the women's movement too may fall under the spell of foreign, male ideology. I can have no respect for women who cannot or will not think for themselves. Women as a political power is an entirely new concept and it can only become a reality by new thinking and by eschewing all male-made models. I wonder whether these "radical," i.e., doting on males of various political persuasions, women are not still enslaved by society's teaching that women are the intellectual inferiors of men. If anything women have more logical minds than men for they are not blinded by the need to maintain a myth of superiority about themselves. Let us leave ideology to men while we push on for our equal rights and responsibilities.

## Poetry

### Gallery

But they were all you —  
the pool shooter, squinting down the cue  
(one lock of brown hair in your eyes  
and a cigarette in the corner of your mouth),  
or the little boy in a red jacket  
who slid on ice-covered streets  
in a Kansas winter twilight,  
even the girl flying a gull-shaped kite  
on the beach at midnight.

I am no more  
than a still life with memories;  
I sit behind this wall of books  
and reach furtively  
into the pockets of my mind  
for yellowed photographs of you.

by Maura McCullough

(Editor's Note: Rita Laporte is in her late 40's and lives in the far west. She was educated at the Brearley School in New York City, the International School in Geneva, received her BA from Swarthmore College, and later a law degree from Boalt Hall, University of California at Berkeley. She served in the WAC during World War II, remaining in the enlisted ranks, after which she held a variety of menial jobs, the only employment available to female college graduates at the close of the war. She staged a one woman strike, as an officer of the Glass Bottle Blowers Local, against Owens-Illinois Glass Company to protest against lower pay for women doing the same work as men. (This was in the '40's and the results were nil.) Currently she is Director of Promotion for THE LADDER and contributes editorials and articles in her continual study of the human condition, more particularly male supremacist bias and distortion in philosophy and politics.)

### WITHOUT ANAESTHETIC

Lying down tonight,  
my nerves are alive in the inner springs.  
They are squeezed by wakefulness.  
The grotesque tale winds up;  
even in hell I'm suitably entertained.

It's a rerun of the old series.  
Chirping Florence Nightingale,  
I strip Third World War fields  
of their last fertile seeds.  
In a dry sunwash I set out  
to uncover my new taproot.

Brittle and thieving, I crave  
evidence of breathing. Torn faces  
spring from foxholes like toads.  
I fester and lurch toward each promise.  
Without wounds there is no healing;  
without death, no sudden hello to life.

And I need this, my hour, because I am like you,  
and each of us grows dark in broad daylight.

Tracy Wright

# My Father's House

By JANE RULE



ILLUSTRATION BY KATE MCCOLL

"Dickie, please can I come up now?" Maly called from her place among the wood shavings at the bottom of the basement window well. "Dickie? . . . Dickie, haven't I been in prison for twenty years yet?"

Dickie was walking slowly and carefully away from her, stepping from joist to joist across the foundation of the new house. He moved not directly across but in a pattern that honored the doorways which, when the walls were up, would be the passageways through this space. His hands were in his back pockets, and he was whistling his own monotone version of the "Star Spangled Banner".

"Dickie?"

"Maybe you've been in for six minutes . . . maybe," he called back when he had finished his tune.

"But there're bugs down here," she protested, pulling her scabbed knees as far up under her chin as she could and peering down between them at her white cotton pants and the shavings. "Black ones."

"Bed bugs," Dickie answered. He was on the far side of the foundation by now and was looking down into the dark basement, then back over his walk, admiring his own skill. "Prisons always have bedbugs. They stink if you squash them; so be careful. I'd have to burn all your clothes."

"Dickie, please? I didn't mean to walk through the wall, honest. I didn't know it was a wall. You said before it was the back door."

"I never did. The back door goes out of the kitchen. You walked right through the dining room wall."

Maly sighed and settled against the cold cement to wait a little longer. After a moment, she called to him again.

"What do you want?" he asked patiently. He was walking back across the joists, quickly this time.

"Daddy said last night that there were glass doors in the dining room. I heard him."

"That's in the house on Circle Drive. He showed me the plans for this one last week, and there isn't any door except in the kitchen."

"Maybe I climbed out the window," Maly suggested.

"It's a picture window. It doesn't open. You walked through the wall," Dickie was balancing on one foot, staring down into the basement. "Now shut up or I'll put you in solitary confinement."

"What's that?"

"Well, it's a place they put convicts . . ." Dickie hesitated. Like a spider spinning a web, he had finally moved back to the center of the network of joists and stood now looking out over the foundation, the vast reality of the small, accurate blueprint his father had shown him. He was very still, as he was when he watched his father build careful models out of balsa wood, the joists tiny and frail and perfect, cut with a razor, set in place with tweezers.

Piece by piece, the fragile structure grew, and, as Dickie watched, the palms of his hands ached and itched just the way they did when he felt the ribs of a new-born kitten under his fingers. Now, at the center, the deep, black basement beneath him, he saw gigantic hands swing two-by-tens like toothpicks into place, saw the bones of the walls like prison bars go up all around him until he was in a cage, the rib cage of a huge animal. His heart pumped thick blood into his ears. And as the huge, quiet hands lifted rafters into place, the scaffolding black before the sun, Dickie cried out, "I am the King!"

"Of what?" Maly grumbled, bored with the bugs and the scabs on her knees.

The cage dissolved. The sun was mild on the new lumber piled in the lot.

"Of everything," Dickie said, but he was walking away from the center out toward the edge where Maly was imprisoned. "Do you ever think," he asked, peering down at her, "that you're inside a house?"

Maly twisted her head around to see Dickie, but his head was only a black patch against the sun, like a large, black jaw breaker. She pulled her nose down and caught her bottom lip between her teeth.

"I mean," Dickie said, "sort of built in and people don't know?"

"You mean, stuck in the wall?"

"Well, not exactly in the walls."

"You mean, like in the bathroom? Only they can't see you?"

"No, not like that."

Maly looked back down at her knees because the sun had spotted her eyes with dozens of tiny black jaw breakers.

"No," Dickie said again. "No, just being there, really being there."

"Oh." But, as Maly saw Dickie in the finished house, scuffing and whistling and making games, she couldn't imagine people not knowing he was there, and it made her sad to think of him in somebody else's family, as if he were an orphan. "I guess so."

"Prisoner released for special guard duty," Dickie said suddenly.

Maly uncrumpled her legs slowly and painfully. When she stood up, her head was just above the top of the window well, and she was looking directly into the pile of lumber. She put her hands on the ledge and felt the rough grains press into the palms as she hoisted herself out. Finally she stood above ground, rubbing her hands flat against her stomach to get rid of the small,

dark dents in the skin.

"Stand by the lumber pile," Dickie ordered, as he jumped down off the foundation and walked toward the edge of the lot.

Maly looked after him and saw another boy, standing very still on the sidewalk. Maly climbed up on the lumber pile to watch. Dickie walked right up to him. They were just the same height, but Dickie's hair was yellow and the boy's hair was black. Maly thought of two boys who were still just spaces between lines in her coloring book and decided that one would be yellow, the other black.

"You're on private property," Dickie said, not unkindly, only to inform.

"Your house?" the boy asked, looking past Dickie at the foundation.

"My father's house," Dickie said. "He's building it."

"Oh."

"You want to look at it?"

"Sure."

Dickie walked back across the lot, the boy following him. Maly climbed off the lumber pile and went out to meet them.

"What's your name?" she asked.

"Ivy."

"Ivy?" Maly frowned, while Dickie began to climb back up onto the foundation. "How old are you?"

"Eight."

"Dickie's eight. I'll be six pretty soon."

"How soon?"

"Why are you Ivy?"

"Because that's my name."

"Well, come on if you're coming," Dickie called, standing above them. "Climb up there." He pointed to a keg of nails he had used.

Ivy boosted himself up onto the pile of lumber and then stepped onto the keg of nails. He hesitated for a moment before he jumped across the foundation. When he stood safely on the edge, he turned back to Maly.

"Aren't you coming?"

"I can't. I can't reach. Anyway, Dickie won't let me."

"Why not?"

"I walked through the wall."

"There isn't any wall," Ivy said, looking around him.

"It's a sort of game," Dickie said impatiently. "I show her where the walls go, and, if she walks through one, I put her in prison. You can come up, Maly, if you want to. Come around in back and I'll pull you up."

Dicky began his slow journey across the joists, through the imagined rooms, while Maly ran around the side of the house to meet him. Ivy paused, looking down into the deep hole of a basement between the boards. Then he began to walk very cautiously around the cement frame of the foundation. Dicky turned around.

"You're supposed to walk across, the way I did."

"I know," Ivy answered, watching his step. "I just want to begin over there instead of over here."

Maly had arrived at the place of the kitchen door. Dicky reached down to take hold of her outstretched hands. He braced his feet where board met cement and swung her up beside him. They stood together, watching Ivy.

"He's walked through all the walls, hasn't he?" Maly whispered.

"Yeh," Dicky answered, his mouth tight at one corner, as it always was when he was deciding about something.

"Maybe he doesn't know," Maly suggested.

"Maybe."

Ivy had come round the last corner of the foundation and was walking toward them. His face was mottled. He put his hands, which he had been carrying like full glasses of water, into his pockets as he stopped next to Maly. Then he looked out across the foundation, rocking a little from his knees.

"It isn't a very big house," he said.

"Well," Maly began, standing between the boys, nearer Dicky than Ivy, "the house fits on top."

"I know that. I just said it was a little house."

"That's because you can't see the walls. You walked through the outside walls," Dicky said.

"There aren't any walls."

Dicky stood, his mouth slightly open, gazing out over the foundation. "I'll race you across."

Ivy's fists tightened in his pockets, pulling his pants tight over his hip bones.

"Why don't we play house?" Maly suggested.

"Okay," Ivy agreed. "Okay, let's. You be . . ."

Dicky hopped out on one foot from joist to joist, his eyes careful and shallow from board to board so that he did not seem to see at all the deep, black pit beneath him. At the center, he stood on

both feet, and looked down. "It's black down there," he called. "And there are snakes." He looked back at Ivy.

"There aren't any snakes."

"Come and see."

"I don't want to. I know there aren't any snakes."

"You're scared."

Ivy stood a moment very still, looking at Dicky. Then he took one step out onto a joist, another, then a third, until he was out over the pit far enough so that he couldn't step back to safety. He hardly looked where he stepped, and he did not look down. He kept his eyes on Dicky out there in the center of this big foundation.

"Watch out for snakes," Dicky called and then laughed.

Ivy involuntarily looked down. He swayed from his knees, standing with both feet on one board. The huge, dark hole, shadowed with fallen boards and pools of water, opened beneath him like a dungeon, like a world under water, like sleep, the life of roots and snakes and dead men's arms wailing up toward him like tears. He was weighted, dragged by fear. And above him the whole vast sky watched as if he must fall in the full sight of the sun into darkness, out of his frail world, this terrible world of unmade houses, of nowhere to step that wasn't as tentative, as dangerous, as openly unfinished as where he stood now, swaying, dizzy, sick.

"You have to be careful, Ivy," Maly said, standing beside him and taking his hand, "or you'll walk through the living room wall and have to be in prison. Put your other foot here."

Ivy shifted his weight, braced now on two joists. He looked across at Dicky. "There aren't any snakes," he said.

"I know," Dicky answered, walking over to them. "I was just kidding you."

Slowly the three together walked across the foundation, careful to move from room to room through the proper doors.

"Look how little the bathroom is, Ivy," Maly said. "Doesn't it look little?"

"Rooms without walls look small," Dicky explained. "Even with walls they look small without furniture."

"Yeh," Ivy said. He stood uneasily straddling darkness. "Say, I know a place to play. You want to see a really good place to play?" He was asking Dicky.

"Where?"

"Near. I'll show you." Ivy looked very quietly at Dicky.

"Well, okay."

"We have to be home at five," Maly reminded.

"It isn't far."

They stood for a moment.

"I'll race you to the edge," Dicky said.

Grimly, Ivy nodded, and they set out, Dicky jumping easily from joist to joist until he was in stride, then taking the joists two at a time. Ivy, head down, hands out ready to grab, wobbled and stumbled across with Maly close behind him. Dicky reached the concrete long before Ivy, watched him come, and caught Ivy in his arms just as he leapt, misjudging the final distance to safety. They rocked together for a moment, then steadied on the edge.

"Boy," Dicky laughed, friendly, "you sure need practice."

"Boy!" Maly said.

"Let's go." Ivy broke away from Dicky roughly. He jumped down onto the keg of nails, from there to the lumber pile and onto the ground.

Dicky lowered Maly to the keg, then jumped past her to the lumber pile. When they were on the ground, they had to run to catch up with Ivy, who walked quickly as if he were going some place alone. Maly fell in step beside him. Dicky walked by her, scuffing his feet on the grass that grew in the parking strip. Maly wished there were a girl in the picture in her coloring book.

"Hey, Ivy," Dicky called as he stopped on the sidewalk and caught Maly's arm before she could follow Ivy across the lawn, "that's a church."

"I know."

"Well, you can't play in a church."

But Ivy kept walking until he reached the steps. Then he turned. "Well, aren't you coming?"

"It's a church," Dicky said again, walking slowly toward Ivy.

"This is my father's house."

"Your dad's a minister?"

"That's right."

"Oh," Dicky looked at Ivy and then at the church.

"It's God's house," Maly said as she began to look around her on the lawn, "so I have to have a hat." She found a large, dry magnolia leaf, picked it up and tried it on, but, as she turned her head to have Dicky's approval, the leaf floated back to the ground. She picked it up again, this time clipping it carefully under her bobby pin.

"Okay," she said.

"Okay what?" Dicky retorted.

"Okay, I'm ready."

"I don't think . . ."

"Oh, come on," Ivy interrupted impatiently. "It's a great place to play. No one's in there."

"You sure?"

"Come and see." Ivy ran up the stairs and opened one of the great doors.

Maly went first, vaguely formal in her hat, on her toes, her head forward and tilted at the darkness. "Cold," she murmured, pushing her short skirt down against her thighs. "Hey, Dicky," she whispered without turning round to him, "it's cold."

Dicky didn't answer, but she felt him crowd against her to make room for Ivy who had come in and shut the door. They stood, pressed against each other in a small, warm huddle, in the gloom of the open vestibule. Before them, far down the center aisle, high on the altar, the cross caught and held a line of late orange sunlight.

"Go on," Ivy said.

"Where?" Maly asked.

"Haven't you ever been in a church before?"

"Of course we have," Dicky answered, forcing his voice above a whisper.

"Do you want to see the altar?"

"Sure".

Ivy pushed past them and walked down the aisle. Maly followed him. Dicky came last, looking up at the stained glass windows, behind them to the rafters fading into darkness overhead. Twice he stumbled against Maly. The second time she turned, annoyed.

"So watch where you're going," she whispered.

"So hurry up," he whispered back.

Ivy did not bother to open the gate. He vaulted the communion railing and jumped up the altar steps two at a time. Maly and Dicky stopped before the railing, uncertain.

"Open it, if you want," Ivy said. He was standing by the altar.

"Why is there a gate?" Maly asked.

"Because this is where God lives," Ivy answered in a matter-of-fact voice. "The gate keeps sinners out of His house."

"What are sinners?"

"Bad people. Grownups."

"What happens," Dicky asked, "if they get in?"

"They don't get in."

"But what would happen if they just did?"

"They'd just fizzle up and die."

"Like slugs," Maly said, swinging on the



railing, "when you pour salt on them."

"I don't believe you," Dicky said, looking up at Ivy.

"Then you're a sinner."

"I am not."

"Come on up here and see."

Dicky stood for a moment, looking at Ivy, then suddenly swung himself over the communion rail and stood on the bottom step of the altar, waiting for the flash of lightning from the cross, waiting to feel himself shrivel and melt. Nothing happened.

"I was kidding you," Ivy said. "But sinners would fizzle up and die."

Dicky swung back over the rail and stood beside Maly. He was not very comfortable.

"My father saves sinners," Ivy said.

"How?" Maly asked.

"Well . . ." Ivy hesitated. "You be the sinners, and I'll be the minister. I'll show you."

"Okay," Maly said. "What do we do?"

"Just stay there." Ivy stood down just before the cross. "You are the damned," he said, his voice curiously resonant. "All the unbelievers of the world are damned, and, when the Day of Judgment comes, when everyone in the world must enter God's house or die, you will fizzle up and die, like a snuffed candle, like a wisp of smoke, like a slug." Ivy was into his part. Below him stood the sinners, the unbelievers, almost damned, but his heart was huge with love for them with pity and tenderness. He gathered up their ignorance and their wickedness into his voice, into his arms, which he raised high and wide above his head. He did not want them to die, to fall forever into the pit of wailing roots and snakes and arms. He wanted them to come into the kingdom of heaven with him.

"Suffer little children to come unto you. Suffer them. Heal them. Do not snuff them out. Do not pour the salt of your tears on them and fizzle them away. Bring them away from wickedness. Give them your body and blood to eat. Come all ye . . ." and here Ivy turned toward the vast congregation, toward the miserable sinners at the communion railing . . . who are heavy laden . . . Then he turned back and knelt before the altar. "Dear Lord, we do not presume . . ."

Maly knelt down and peered at Ivy through the bars of the communion railing. Dicky knelt awkwardly beside her.

"Hey, Ivy," Maly whispered, wanting to interrupt but not to disturb him. "Hey,

Ivy." But Ivy was deep in prayer.

Dicky bit the white knuckles of his fist, which clenched the communion railing. Over his head in the vast, deep gloom, he heard the whir of wings like the breathing of giants or huge, black angels. And God was everywhere in this terrible house. He walked behind Dicky through invisible doors. He stood before Dicky on the other side of an invisible wall. Dicky did not know the rules. He might walk through that wall he couldn't see and be made to drink blood like a vampire in a black dungeon or be burned to death. He wanted to get up and run out of this place, back into the sun, back into the world of houses we knew, but he could not move. God was everywhere.

"Hey, Ivy!" Maly finally called in a loud voice.

Ivy turned on one knee and looked down at her. "What?" he said, vaguely irritated and then a little embarrassed.

"I want to know, what do we do?" She rested her cheek against one of the iron bars and absent-mindedly licked it with her tongue.

"What do you mean?"

"While you're doing . . ." she hesitated, "that."

Ivy leaned back, bracing his foot comfortably against the step below him. "Oh, you're supposed to be saved."

"How?"

"Well, you take communion."

"What's that?"

"You know," Ivy said, "the Lord's supper."

"Supper?" Maly asked, doubtful. "We have to be home at five."

"No, not supper like that. You eat at God's table. Then you're full of God and can come into His house."

"Oh, like going to a party?"

"Do you really have to drink blood?" Dicky asked suddenly.

"No," Ivy answered, "but I will when I grow up." He turned all the way around, slid down and sat on the bottom step under the altar just on the other side of the gate from Dicky. "And when you're grown up, you can, too."

"I'm going to build houses. Maybe I'll even build churches." Dicky's voice was a little more confident, and he rested back on his haunches.

"Okay," Maly said. "I'll make the Lord's supper, and then we have to go home."

She skipped into the choir stalls, re-

adjusting the magnolia leaf which had begun to slip. She took hymnals for dinner plates, prayer books for dessert, and white paper programs for napkins. When she came back to the communion railing, she had four place settings. "One for Dicky," she said, putting a hymnal, a prayer book and a program down before him, "and one for Ivy." She set Ivy's place where she had been kneeling. "And one for me." She was to sit in the center of the aisle, a step below them. Then she opened the gate, walked up to the altar and set a place beneath the cross. "And one for God."

Ivy hesitated, about to protest.

"She doesn't understand," Dicky explained.

"I do so. It's my turn. This is my game."

Dicky shrugged, unfolded his program and tucked it dutifully into his belt. Ivy held the gate open for Maly, then followed her out, and sat down to the dinner she had set for him. Maly crossed her legs and sank, Indian fashion, into the aisle.

She looked up at the two boys, Ivy in a

light that made his hair almost blond, Dicky in a shadow that dulled his crew cut to rust. Perhaps, after all, they should be almost the same color. If she was going to be in the picture, she'd have to draw herself in.

(Jane Rule's work has frequently appeared in our pages. Most recently her story, "Middle Children", ran in the August/September, 1970 issue. Jane is the author of THE DESERT OF THE HEART, World, 1964, and THIS IS NOT FOR YOU, McCall, 1970. The latter novel was reviewed in the June/July, 1970, issue of THE LADDER. In 1971, McCall will publish her novel, AGAINST THE SEASON. Born in the United States, Jane Rule is a Canadian citizen and lives and works in Vancouver, British Columbia. "My Father's House" is an excellent example of early knowledge of the necessity of the liberation of women, by themselves.)

By KIM STABINSKI

## The Roman Catholic Lesbian ... The Old Order Changeth

*The old order changeth, yielding place to new, and God fulfills Himself in many ways.*

Alfred, Lord Tennyson  
*Idylls of the king*

The old order — Roman Catholicism — is changing dramatically. We have seen the tendency for some time now. Whether Catholic or not, we have been exposed, thanks to our advanced news media, to the facts of mass in the vernacular, meat on Fridays, women with uncovered heads in the Church, and so on down the list.

Catholic or not, we have also been exposed to those areas where the Church seems most reluctant to change. Birth control is perhaps the best example — best in that the battle around the issue has been given such thorough news coverage; best also in that the very basis for the Church's position on birth control is primarily the same basis for the condemnation given to masturbation and to Lesbian and homosexual expression. That basis is referred to as the "natural law".

Catholic Lesbians and homosexuals may bemoan the fact that the changes being

made within the structure of Catholicism seem to have little effect on the theological position on homosexuality.<sup>1</sup> This is not completely true.

And perhaps at this point I should insert an apology. This article will not, cannot, be presented as a strict formal essay. I am too personally involved in the plight of the Catholic Lesbian to stand aside, offering only textbook explanations. I must draw also on my personal experiences and those of my Catholic, Lesbian and homosexual friends, relating them to catechistic teachings.

Before we can see the hope of the changing Church, we must understand the stringency of the old Church — and here I

<sup>1</sup>Catholic theologians, like all males, think of homosexuality in terms of male homosexuals, making the common error of categorizing Lesbians as female homosexuals rather than women. Lesbian readers will recognize this in the following exposition of Church teaching and the quotations from UNDERSTANDING HOMOSEXUALITY by John J. Kane.

use "old Church" in reference to the Catholic Church of the early and mid 1960's, only a few years ago — and the Catholic Church as it still is to a large degree.

Catholicism has persistently turned the Lesbian away without hope, perhaps to a far greater extent than any other Christian denomination. It has accomplished this in part through its well defined and well publicized instructions and regulations. Members of any given Protestant denomination would likely offer quite different interpretations of their Church's teachings and the reasoning behind them, for example, on the majority of issues they might be quizzed about — or they simply would not know what position their Church takes. But every Catholic has been confronted with the laws of God AND the laws of the Catholic Church in the form of the catechism. The Catholic has been warned about the dangers of a faulty conscience; rather, she has been provided with a list of sins, neatly categorized as "mortal" and "venial." She has been taught to reason on every other aspect of her life but to accept blindly the Church's teachings on religion. After all, she has a list — a convenient list of blacks and whites that only occasionally acknowledges grey and seldom admits varying shades of grey. And that list ranks overt Lesbian expression as a mortal sin — black, no grey.

When I was in my late teens and had had very little contact with Catholicism, I wondered at times why so many of the Protestant Lesbians I met continued to attend Church while a tremendously greater proportion of the Catholics were non-practicing.

Then, in 1961 I took instructions, joined the Church and learned the answer. I should say I rushed through instructions . . . memorizing the catechism without really analyzing it, without considering its implications on secular life. I did this under firm conviction that it was God's will I should become a nun. I still believe my entering the convent was definitely His will, but just not for the purpose and duration I interpreted at the time. And I did learn the answer to my question about those non-practicing Catholic Lesbians when I tried to apply Catholicism to a life unprotected by convent walls and long black habits.

Consider first the three basic elements involved in creating a mortal sin according to the catechism: (1) the matter of the sin

itself must be grievously wrong, (2) we must be aware that it is grievously wrong, and (3) we must freely consent to the sin.

The obvious point here is that homosexual expression is taught by the Church to be mortal sin and Catholics are obliged to believe the Church's teaching on such matters. Thus, whether the Catholic homosexual engaged in love-making as a one-night stand or the Lesbian's expression of deep mutual love with her chosen life partner would make no difference — the Church would still label it as mortal sin. Whether or not the Catholic Lesbian felt in her heart that the act was sinful would make no difference — the Church's list must prevail.

So, you say, how about confession? How about all those Catholics who live it up on Saturday night, go to confession Sunday morning and receive communion, and then live it up Sunday night?

True, some do. But the Church doesn't make it that easy. Back to the catechism — there are four elements necessary in order to make a confession valid in the Church's eyes: (1) contrition, (2) confession, (3) absolution (spoken by the priest), and (4) reparation (the penitential exercises imposed by the priest — prayers, good works). The last three of these we can skip — the first one is the pitfall for the Lesbian. The Church has been rather definite in what comprises contrition. Not only does it involve true sorrow for the sin, but it calls for detestation of the sin and sincere determination not to repeat it. It calls for strict avoidance of the "proximate occasion" of the sin and reasonable effort at the avoidance of the "remote occasion" of the sin.

Now let us apply this to the Catholic Lesbian attempting to build a life with a partner of the same sex. Assume that there is deep mutual love and desire for a truly lasting marriage. Because of the nature and intentions of the love, it is likely that the Catholic cannot truly feel in her heart that the physical expression of this love is mortally sinful, no matter how strong or extended her indoctrination in the Roman Church.

Yet, if she goes to confession, she *must* confess all such physical expressions of her love (or even the real desire for them) as mortal sins. To deliberately omit confessing something the Church calls mortal sin (even if one does not feel it sinful) invalidates the confession; in addition, it adds the sin of

sacrilege to the unconfessed sins in the eyes of Holy Mother Church. She must confess to believe these acts to be mortal sins, which means she must either devalue her love to the status of gross sex, or else she must make a farce of the confessional by stating her actions to be sinful while not believing them to be so.

If she is to have what the Church considers a valid confession, she must detest the physical expression of her love since the Church calls it sin. In her determination not to repeat it, she must break all contact with her partner AND with all other Lesbian friends and acquaintances (the "proximate occasion" factor). She must be resolved to lead a heterosexual life or else a life of celibacy if she possesses the necessary determination not to repeat her "sin" of Lesbian expression.

So confession becomes much more than a ritualistic exercise for the Catholic Lesbian. It becomes — if done validly and seriously in accordance with the Church's standards — about as feasible as changing one's height or eye coloration through prayer.

And without confession after the commission of a mortal sin, communion is denied by Church law, along with all other sacraments. And if the Catholic does not go to confession and receive communion at least once a year (in order to fulfill her "Easter duty"), then she is automatically excommunicated.

Earlier I mentioned the natural law as the primary basis for the Church's listing birth control, masturbation and Lesbian and homosexual fulfillment as mortal sins. The natural law is a firmly drawn teaching based on vaguely drawn conclusions. As it is stated briefly by Msgr. Philip Hughes in **THE CATHOLIC FAITH IN PRACTICE**: "The first and basic reason for which the differentiation of sex exists is reproduction. To use sex powers in a way that makes reproduction impossible is therefore to misuse sex completely, and to misuse completely a thing meant for such mighty ends cannot but be seriously wrong. Hence the grave prohibitions of individual sex actions and also of the practices known as birth control."

It might be mentioned that Msgr. Hughes' 276-page handbook of the faith makes not the slightest reference even to the mere existence of homosexuality.

D.F. Miller, C.S.S.R., goes a little deeper in a pamphlet put out by the Redemptorist

Fathers: "It is obvious, from even a brief study of human nature, that the powers of sex with which human beings are endowed by their Creator, and the pleasures connected to their use, are related to, and intended to serve, a most necessary purpose in God's plan. That purpose is the procreation of children, which is the guarantee of the continuation of the human race."

"The connection between the powers of sex and this necessary purpose is the basis for the all but universal acceptance of the fact that the use of the sex powers, and the enjoyment of the pleasures connected with that use, are lawful only in marriage. If the primary purpose of sex is children, then the use of sex must be limited to a state in which children can be born, properly reared and prepared for their own adult tasks in life. The only such state is monogamous marriage, that is, the marriage of one man to one woman till death separates them."

After several paragraphs about the glories of husband and wife cooperating with God in populating the world, during which we supposedly forget that "all but universal acceptance," we continue:

"God's law is strict even for the married in that it forbids any deliberate interference with the primary purpose of the privilege of marriage. Such interference with the primary purpose, usually called birth-prevention or contraception, has also logically been called a form of mutual self-abuse on the part of husband and wife."

"It is from these basic concepts and principles that we draw a knowledge of the natural law forbidding any deliberate indulgence in sex pleasure outside of marriage, whether alone or with others, and any deliberate frustration or destruction of the purpose of sex in marriage."

A full page follows listing various mortal sins in the sexual realm, including attendance at lascivious plays or movies, before the section quoted from is wound up with: "These principles . . . flow directly from the established premise that sex actions and sex pleasure must never be deliberately separated from the sublime primary purpose for which God designed them, a purpose that even in marriage must never be destroyed or frustrated."

And there you have it — the "natural law" which is an "established premise" that has found "all but universal acceptance."

It is interesting that Catholicism still clings to the natural law, even in days when the ecological crisis and the awareness of it



are ever increasing, when this natural law is a made-made conclusion with scant Scriptural backing; while at the same time the Church is dropping other rules with much more Biblical logic (i.e., head coverings for women in the church . . . I Corinthians II: 5-6 and 13).

The vagueness of the natural law is apparent — the Church is saying that since procreation is the *primary* reason for sexual union, it is therefore the *only* lawful reason. Perhaps the primary reason for God's creating water was for drinking — does this make it wrong to use water for bathing? I've also wondered why Catholicism doesn't apply the natural law to the lower animals — after all, God intended them to procreate to preserve their species too — yet good Catholics seem to think nothing of having their cats or dogs spayed or their bulls castrated.

A strictly personal belief of mine (which may be entirely groundless) is that one of the Church's main reasons for tenaciously clinging to the natural law in the current birth-control crisis is fear of other implications if birth control should be sanctioned for married couples. To permit birth control would be to repeal the natural law. To discard the natural law would be to leave the Church without sufficient grounds to support its stand on homosexuality and masturbation.

Speculation on the birth control issue runs high. What — and when — Rome will decide is a prediction I won't make, other than to say that at the present rate of consideration nothing will likely be done before this article reaches print some months from now. One certainty: the sanction of birth control, if and when it comes, will be a boon to the Catholic homosexual in its effect on related theological principles.

But aside from the birth control issue, the changing Church shows some rays of new hope for the Lesbian.

John J. Kane, in the Claretian Publications UNDERSTANDING HOMOSEXUALITY, published in 1966, gave evidence of a newer approach to understanding on the part of the Church. A few random quotes reflect this awakening:

"Confessors . . . should tell a sincere homosexual penitent that his condition, in itself, cannot be imputed to him, and that therefore the condition itself is not sinful."

"Homosexual acts, objectively speaking, are seriously wrong, since they involve

persons of the same sex and defeat the natural purposes of sexuality."

"But for the particular individual concerned the degree of guilt may vary with any given act. It is impossible to establish a rule-of-thumb guide for judging the morality of these acts. It is therefore not wise for anyone to speculate about the subjective guilt of an individual homosexual, let alone homosexuals in general. One can neither accuse them of mortal guilt, nor can one free them for responsibility for their acts; for to know anything about the true nature of the allegedly irresponsible impulses of the homosexual one should know all he possibly can about his total personality."

"Put a little differently, this means that the individual, generally speaking, is not responsible for his homosexual tendencies . . . the moral culpability rests in the fact that the individual voluntarily gives way to such temptation. But the degree of his freedom in this matter must be carefully evaluated."

"It is not quite accurate to inform the homosexual that he is just as capable of restraining his desires as a heterosexual. He simply cannot isolate himself from persons of his own sex. Neither is he protected by the various social conventions surrounding the associations of men and women. Men and women do not share the same locker rooms, they do not swim nude together. If unmarried, they do not normally share the same bedroom. So the temptations of the true homosexual are considerably more frequent and stronger than the heterosexual because of these circumstantial factors."

"But the fact that homosexuality, morally speaking, is abnormal does not rob the homosexual of all responsibility for his behavior . . . The difficulty is that homosexuality is primarily a psychiatric problem, and secondarily a moral problem."

From here the pamphlet goes on to advise psychiatric help in addition to spiritual counseling, and a few further quotes specify the limitations of the new awakening: "It must be recalled that such persons are emotionally disturbed and not infrequently neurotic. Ability to cooperate with God's grace may, therefore, be impaired. But through a combination of psychiatric assistance, divine Grace and the sacraments, the homosexual may learn to inhibit such overt activity."

"No doubt the most overwhelming problem of persons who are homosexual is there does not exist any morally legitimate

method of satisfying their desires. For most heterosexuals burdened with sex temptations, there is always the possibility of marriage. For the true homosexual, marriage to a person of the opposite sex is usually not desired, and any type of so-called marriage between homosexuals is not only morally wrong, but on the practical level, impossible."

To the non-Catholic, the stern monitions cited above will be much more striking than the recognition of Lesbians as individuals who may range in the greys rather than being all black. To the Catholic of years' standing, however, this reference will be recognized as a definite step forward in 1966.

The new Dutch Catechism, which is being followed in some scattered U.S. parishes (including mine, thank God!) in spite of the furor currently stirred up between Dutch Catholics and Rome, makes some interesting comments: "The very sharp strictures of Scripture on homosexual practice (Gen. 19; Rom. 1) must be read in their context. Their aim is not to pillory the fact that some people experience this perversion inculpably. They denounce a homosexuality which had become the prevalent fashion and had spread to many who were really quite capable of normal sexual sentiments."

More important than a few rays of hope in the published form is the hope in the changing attitudes of some priests, notably those recently out of the seminary. A warning — some young priests are conservative traditionalists given less to progressive thought and ideas than some older priests with younger ideas. After all, priests are human — and as they vary as individuals, so, to some extent, does their ministry vary. This may be evidenced in the number of priests who rushed to the vernacular while others clung to Latin right up to deadline for the change — the number who turned their altars to face the people during Mass when it was first suggested, while others procrastinated until it appeared the Pope himself would have to come over to point them toward their flocks — the number who rushed to the very recent changes in the text of the Mass, while others apologized to the parishioners up to the last minute about having to incorporate the changes.

Here I digress into some of the points made thus far as they applied — and apply — to my life. I do this not through any vain desire to be autobiographical, but rather

because I know there are many other Catholic Lesbians who have experienced or are experiencing the same agonies and who may find hope in the hope I recently found.

The first year I was out of the convent I did make my "Easter duty." Long before the next Easter I had realized I could not honestly make what the Church would consider a valid confession. There were too many things I simply could not make myself believe. One very basic problem was that I don't believe Mary was assumed into Heaven — yet this is a dogma, an "article of faith" which Catholics are obliged to believe under pain of mortal sin. How does one confess disbelief of a principle and promise to believe it in the future? Yet, until I could make myself believe this dogma, I could not meet the Church's strict requirements for a valid confession.

So, I went the route of others I'd known — automatic excommunication. For almost seven years I struggled with Catholicism, trying alternately to reinstate myself or to break the ties completely. I started back to instructions several times — several abortive attempts that didn't get much farther than the assumption of Mary.

I tried other Churches — particularly the Greek Orthodox and Anglicans with occasional side trips back to the Methodists — but these visits were always interspersed with the Mass. Once I did manage to stay away from the Romans for almost six months — but Catholicism had too great a hold on me for me to let go — and too loose a hold for me to come back with blind acceptance.

So I sat in Mass Sunday after Sunday, watching — often with tears — others receive the sacraments denied me. I watched my Catholic Lesbian friends: the ones who had given up completely and never attended Mass, the ones who scraped in one furtive confession a year around Easter and avoided thinking of the shut door the rest of the time, and the ones who, like me, kept going but were strangers in their own Church.

Then there were the few who were apparently good practicing Catholics, attending Church regularly and receiving the sacraments while continuing to live a Lesbian life. Notable in this group were two women who were very "married" and had been for a good many years. I never discussed religion with those in the latter group — they had something I wanted, envied; and I didn't want to risk confusing



them. In every case they were Catholics from birth, Catholics who were fed the catechism at tender ages when much of its stringent doctrine is lost in games of skipping rope or playing with dolls — at an age when so many of the dire warnings are distant and meaningless, fading into some all but forgotten corner of the memory by the time age would make them applicable. Ritualistic confession was a life-long pattern with them; it was quite a different thing than confession for a convert who has heard those ominous warnings after reaching young adulthood.

In this latter group but distinctly different were a few who attended Mass and received communion regularly without confession — a real anathema in the Church's eyes. I didn't talk religion with these either. They had managed to rationalize in their own hearts their defiance of the legalistic Church but acceptance of the sacraments Christ intended them to have, even though these sacraments were coming through a Church that said they had no right to them. I envied them too — I envied their courage to trust in God's love alone, to defy the Church that said they were "eating their condemnation" by receiving communion "unworthily". I envied them even more than the ones who went through the motions blindly, mentally blocking the legalistic doctrines. But they were shakier in their position than the blind acceptors.

During this period of excommunication I did not consider myself any less Christian because I was less Catholic. I confessed my sins — but to God Himself rather than to a priest. I felt secure in my relationship with Him — but I had no dialogue with the Church I wanted to call my own. Although I believed God would understand my receiving communion, I could not bring myself to do it in a Church that was emphatically, authoritatively, telling me "No . . . not until . . ." And I missed the sacraments — longed for communion — but not at the price of sacrificing my God-given ability to think, to reason, for myself.

Then, in November of 1969, I made what I knew would be my last attempt at reconciliation with Roman Catholicism. I sought out the priest in the parish I'd attended the past year and a half, told him I'd been an excommunicated Catholic far longer than a practicing one, and set up a schedule for counseling. My choosing this particular priest was not convenience in that he was a priest in my Church; rather,

perhaps, I'd gone to this particular Church all along because of him (plus, admittedly, the fact that I've become completely spoiled to folk Mass, and his Church was the closest one offering this warm diversion from ritualism). What a large proportion of priests are unfortunately content with parrot-like recitations of canonical law for sermons. Not Father — his sermons are always sincere, pertinent examinations of modern situations. So many priests can be categorized as instant replays of some Vatican council. Not Father. He's a real live person, alive in 1970 and aware it is 1970. I already knew this much about him before I sought his counsel, yet I still went with fear and trembling, knowing the limitations imposed on even a real-person priest by his Church.

At our first session I told Father my vastly-opposed-to-Catholic views on Lesbian expression in a real love relationship. I described the emotional relationship I share with my beloved (a Catholic, by the way, of the non-confession weekly-communion clan), explaining that neither of us would degrade our love via confession — but that I wanted desperately to overcome my own mental block on the legalistic Church and be able to receive communion with her. I gave Father a copy of the June/July 1969 *THE LADDER* with my article verbalizing my religious beliefs, as he stated he wanted to discuss me with a couple of other priests just out of seminary and more versed on the newer trends in theology.

Father and I touched on many other areas of concern, and I found him a happy change from a number of other priests I'd known — above all a priest, but still a person — a person capable of understanding, of relating as a person rather than as a robot with a tape recorder inside (with a tape bearing the *Nihil Obstat* and *Imprimatur*, of course).

Several weeks later, after circulating *THE LADDER* and soliciting the counsel of other priests, Father gave me the glad tidings — from that day on, my relationship with my beloved was not a matter for confession. He stressed to me that this is an individual pronouncement ONLY — that it in no way reflects a blanket exemption for other Lesbians, as each person must be taken on an individual basis in such matters (what a break-through in Catholicism!). Nor is this a blanket exemption for me — should I ever, God forbid, fall into temptation and be unfaithful to my "better half", then that

would be a matter for confession.

That night, right there in Father's study, sitting on the couch under full lights and looking him in the eye, rather than in a little dimly lighted cubbyhole confessional box, I made my first confession in seven years. I confessed those things I believed to be sinful. I did not confess my love.

And when my love came to pick me up, I motioned her to park the car and eagerly led her inside where Father was waiting. She had been very anxious about these sessions, fearing they might adversely affect our marriage or (and more likely) my personal feeling of security with my God.

It was about 9:30 on the night of November 18 when the three of us together entered the deserted sanctuary, darkened except for myriad flickering votive lights and the outside lights playing through the stained-glass windows. My love and I knelt in silent, grateful prayer as Father made the necessary preparations, then approaching the altar where we received our Lord in Holy Communion — together for the first time.

Later we walked down the aisle hand in hand, followed by a priest smiling the smile of one who knows he has helped — really helped — draw a soul nearer to God. Outside he placed a hand on each of our shoulders. None of us spoke — words were so inadequate when we shared such a tremendous and obviously mutual joy. Then he said, simply and eloquently, "Shalom". (Shalom is a Hebrew word coming more and more into popular usage now. Literally it means "peace" — but it carries a far richer, deeper concept than the literal translation).

My love and I talked later of how this experience was almost like being married in the Church, so rich was its depth and feeling of togetherness with God and with each other. Our first reaction to the pronouncement that our love is no longer a matter for confession was that it meant the Church recognized our marriage. Later it dawned on us that perhaps the tribunal of priests had rather decided we were far too emotionally disturbed to be able to cooperate with God's grace and therefore could not be held responsible. We didn't ask Father about that, though! We're content as is!

We approve wholeheartedly of those Churches ministering to predominantly homosexual congregations — they reach out to so many of us who are beyond the reach

of most Churches, either as a result of having had too many doors shut in our faces or because these other Churches aren't trying to reach very far. We approve — yet somehow we are thankful our experience was in a heterosexually-oriented Church — a Roman Catholic Church, OUR Church, rather than some other rite or denomination.

The Church is changing. There is hope for us, as Lesbians, even within the confines of ritualism and legalism which will fade only slowly into the pages of Roman Catholic history.

Let us pray earnestly that the Church continues to change — perhaps accelerates the pace of change, listening to the pleas of her people. As Fr. James Kavanaugh puts it in the introduction to his beautiful, profound expression of concern and love for the Church: "It (his book) is the story of a suffering people witnessed in confession and private consultation. It is the story of a suffering Church which often reflects a dishonest theology far more than a divine imperative. It is the soul-searching plea of a Christian for an evaluation of what is Christian, and what is simply tired and imperious tradition. I want to be a Christian, but I will not be terrorized into believing that the present structure of the Church is an adequate representation on the Christ of Gospel and history."

"I will not give up my faith. Nor will I accept the travesty, born of another age, which caricatures the Christian ideal. Catholicism offers so much that is good and true that its faithful adherents cannot sit by passively and watch it settle into structured idealism. It has so much to say, so much to offer, if only it can recognize the growing and positive drive for personalism in the world. A religion which expects men to march in identical step and to chant a univocal doctrine ceases to draw the atomic man to the holy God."

A few words here about Fr. Kavanaugh's book — I feel sure it must have been condemned by the Church, but frankly I've not bothered to find out. In doing some research for this article I reviewed a few points in some dust-covered volumes in the public library concerning the list of censored books; I'd forgotten that one can be excommunicated for publishing, selling, lending or keeping any of the forbidden books! The same source told me any book critical of the Catholic faith is to be considered condemned, even though it

might not officially be on "the list" yet. In fact, perhaps the legalistic end of the Church has already excommunicated me again for the "crime" of "publishing without permission notes and comments on the Holy Scriptures" (PRIMER ON ROMAN CATHOLICISM FOR PROTESTANTS, page 103), even if it overlooks my well-worn copy of Fr. Kavanaugh's classic work!

A MODERN PRIEST LOOKS AT HIS OUTDATED CHURCH should, in my opinion, be required reading for Catholics. I would particularly recommend it to Catholic Lesbians struggling, as I, with the legalism in the Church which blocks the love hidden behind canons. It is the kind of book that is so poignant, so close to my own beliefs, that I wept that I had not written it.

Fr. Kavanaugh's closing paragraph is far better than anything I could say: "I shall be a Catholic, a vocal and honest one, even if my superiors forbid me to be a priest. I shall be a Catholic who follows his conscience, demands meaning and relevance from his Church, and will not permit his God to be reduced to empty ritual and all-absorbing law. I shall be a Catholic until one day, perhaps sooner than I think, I shall return to ashes and to God. He will judge me as He must, but I can say to Him as honestly as I say to you: 'I have tried to be a man!'"

Shalom.

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*(Kim Stabinski is 30 and lives in a New England town not far from Boston, Massachusetts, with her beloved as celebrated in this essay. Raised a Protestant, Kim became a Catholic convert in her early twenties, and after graduation from college, entered a convent for one year. After leaving the convent she added a business college education to her academic training (useful for women!) and worked in the business world until her marriage. She now works with her friend in a family business. Kim's article, "What the Bible Does and Does Not Say About Homosexuality" was in the June/July, 1969 LADDER. She has been a member of the magazine's staff for two years and over.)*

## Our Forgetful Male Scientists

By A. FOX

"As the brightest of the big apes, the chimpanzee may be man's nearest intellectual neighbor." So begins a report in Time, September 21, 1970, taken from an article in Psychology Today. It is all about how chimps may, after all, have the mental equipment for speech, lacking only the technique or means for vocalization. I suppose this is very interesting in itself, but what astounded me was that the chimp's teacher, a male human, chose Sarah, a girl chimp! Is it that girl chimps are brought up to be docile and obedient, hence, like girl humans, are easier to manage and only

appear to be more intelligent in grammar school than boy chimps, er, humans? Or is it that our male psychologist forgot all about the superiority of the male since presumably he found it difficult to relate to Sarah as a sex object? And has he no concern for Sarah's inevitable loss of femininity that such advanced education will cause? Doesn't he want her to find a husband?

This story of a rewarding female-male intellectual relationship set me to musing about other instances of forgetfulness on the part of male humans, scientists or not.

Arabs over the centuries have traced the lineage of their magnificent horses through the female and valued her far above the male. [Male Arabs are also noted for their oppression of female Arabs.] Male American dog breeders knowingly assert that the bitch accounts for about 80% of the quality of her pups. 40% is accounted for by the genetic makeup of the pup, of which half comes from the male. The other 60% comes from mother. Dog mushers, whether Eskimo, Indian, or plain white, almost always have a bitch as lead dog — more intelligent.

Falconers choose peregrine falcons because of these birds' immense courage and consider the sport of falconry far too 'masculine' for women. They manage somehow to forget that all peregrine falcons are females. The male of the species just does not have what it takes. It is the falcon, like the lioness, who makes the kill. And the other night on television the male narrator of a film about elephants stated that the male was the more cowardly and was far too emotional to make a good worker. TOO EMOTIONAL? It was obvious from the narrator's tone that he too had forgotten.

Konrad Lorenz, noted student of animal behavior, did not allow himself such forgetfulness, but none the less ran into trouble. He discovered that some male geese form

homosexual relationships. This is bad for male superiority. Effeminate geese? Never! Lorenz tells us that All gay ganders are very masculine — nothing "nelly" about them. He did forget, however, that he had said earlier that it was very difficult to tell a goose from a gander. So maybe even girl geese are masculine?

Beginning with the fundamental, God given TRUTH that women are inferior to men, we can appreciate these boys' troubles. What DOES one do with those emotional male elephants? Or dear Sarah, who proved to be so intelligent? Men, we know, are descended from the great apes or from some hominid offshoot. Perhaps we women never were a part of evolution and this explains why a sudden reversal took place between the sexes when Man and his helpmeet appeared on earth. Perhaps after all we women did descend from something stupid like a male rib.

*(Editor's Note: A. Fox, a newcomer to THE LADDER, grew up on a southern plantation, went away to boarding school up north in Virginia where she became an expert equestrian, and is now studying to become a veterinarian.)*

## Getting Ripped Off

ANONYMOUS

When living in New York, among other living expenses that you must take into account are those incurred (once every five years at the current rate) when (1) your apartment, even though you have purchased a police lock and window gates for the fire escape and have a doorman, is burglarized; when (2) your car is stolen or vandalized; or when (3) you are mugged. In the latter case, if you are a man you will lose your money. If you are a woman you will also be raped and rather imaginatively mutilated. All three of the above have happened to me (and to nearly everyone else I know). The first two are income tax deductible.

Happily for me, I was ripped off (number 3 above) in the daytime and in the line of duty and in circumstances of unimpeachable propriety. Consider the dubious plight of my Lesbian friend who carelessly assumed she had the right to sally forth to her special bar after ten o'clock in the evening (a prerogative properly and proudly male) and who ventured forth without the

benefit of contraceptive protection. Clearly, my darlings, we are a class of women for whom muggers represent a particular hazard. Fancy my foolhardy friend telling the nice-man-policeman that somebody mugged and (in the deal) raped her as she was returning home from a bar. The nice-man-policeman gave a damn. My friend, you see, was obviously behaving provocatively. Everybody knows nice women don't go around unescorted. Gentlemen of the jury, relax, chuckle and leer. (In New York juries are predominately male, since it is assumed the women would prefer to stay home and mind the babies.) In short, a woman after 10:00 p.m. and one Scotch will be singularly poor in civil rights.

As for me, I live and work in Manhattan. I came here to join the police force and meet a nice girl. My myopia prevented me from making the force, but not the girls. Instead I became a caseworker for the Department of Social Services in the Bureau of Public Assistance. For the past several



years I have been assigned to approximately 75 welfare families whom I am expected to visit at least once a month and rehabilitate. Get that. I am supposed to visit once a month and purge the poor of lice, roaches, heroin, deprivation dwarfism, and congenital syphilis. Except for a few single derelicts, most of the families are women with varying assortments of children and with husbands in Riker's Island prison or Puerto Rico, the last they heard.

After two years of invading every human privacy, I made a number of miscellaneous observations:

(1) Since I dealt mostly with women, I observed that I had never seen so many women in need of what is now called women's liberation. In Puerto Rican women it was the fact that after six children, varicose veins, hemorrhoids, and near death, the somewhat estranged but still legal husband refused to sign for a tubal ligation. The massive submissiveness of Puerto Rican women appalled and confounded me.

In black women it was what the social work books consider an unattractive and obnoxious matriarchal strength and a stubborn intelligence, sold out to the first Pea-Cock wearing green iridescent pants and fake alligator shoes.

Conjointly it was women kept on welfare by pregnancy, pregnancy, pregnancy. I can imagine no more effective physical and mental slavery. In short, I never met so many women with no more identity than a subway toilet.

(2) I learned the meaning of the word "machismo" and observed its practices. Supposed to mean pride in masculine power, "machismo" is a Spanish notion that has been picked up enthusiastically by Eldridge Cleaver and Stokely Carmichael. In practice, "machismo" consists in standing on the street corner rather slimily and greasily hissing "Pussy, pussy" all day. The diligence and energy expended in allowing no female — be she fat or lame — to pass

unmolested by this compliment is indeed a remarkable and astounding example of masculine effort. "Machismo" is also manifest in heroin mainlining and sadistic behavior towards one's wife and children.

(3) I observed that the amount of sexual pornographic literature purchased in Harlem eclipses 42nd Street. Erotic periodicals, along with heroin, appear to be the contemporary opiate of the poor.

(4) I observed that if you take the IRT Lexington Avenue subway uptown to Harlem, a bit early or late for work, the train will be nearly deserted except for you and a man who will sit down in front of you and begin adjusting the front of his trousers — or so you will think at first. He will not be carrying an attache case and wearing a London Fog. He will have on iridescent green pants.

All of these impressions had been delicately infused into my consciousness by the time my own rip-off day arrived.

It was a lovely spring day and I was dressed in my usual field visiting costume. I wore brown horn-rimmed glasses, a beige man's trenchcoat, long-hemmed dress, no jewelry, no pocketbook (left prudently at the office). I was a one-woman prurient appetite depressant. I had my black notebook and Bic pen and that was all.

I was scheduled to make a visit in a New York City Housing Authority Project where many of my own clients have been mugged et cetera many a time. I was supposed to go in the morning, but my client called when she received my appointment letter and said that her daughter would not be home from school until 3:00 and, since I had to interview the daughter, I went at that less secure hour. But it was a lovely day and I was accompanied even into the project foyer by little children merrily returning from school. I was standing waiting for the elevator with a group of people (one of whom I was to meet again) and looked down at my carbon copy of the appoint-

ment letter I had sent my client, Mrs. R., and noticed she lived one flight up. I decided to take the stair since project stairs generally are safer. (You can run in the stair; in the elevator you are trapped and have to smell the urine besides.) When I was at the landing and in the process of opening the fire door onto the corridor, I heard a click and slither and noticed a knife in front of my throat and felt a masculine hand reaching over my mouth from behind. Then I heard some illiterate gangster-movie intoning about not making a sound and where is your money and so forth. I sighed. One of the iridescent hisses has got me at last, I thought. Then I pointed out that I wasn't carrying any money or pocketbook and showed my pockets. I turned and faced him, noticing that he was both partly black and Puerto Rican — the best of both worlds, I thought. I was comforted at the moment by a line from *La Vida* by Oscar Lewis: "In Mexico, although the men were more controlled, their quarrels more often led to killings, usually by shooting or stabbing. In Puerto Rico, the men were more explosive but they generally limited themselves to cutting the face of their opponent with a Gem razor. The intention was to disfigure and to demean." And I, I am vain. I figured the knife he had in front of my face could do as handy a job as a Gem razor and I remembered seeing Angela Rodriguez's scarred face in my office earlier that day. Better not to antagonize, I decided.

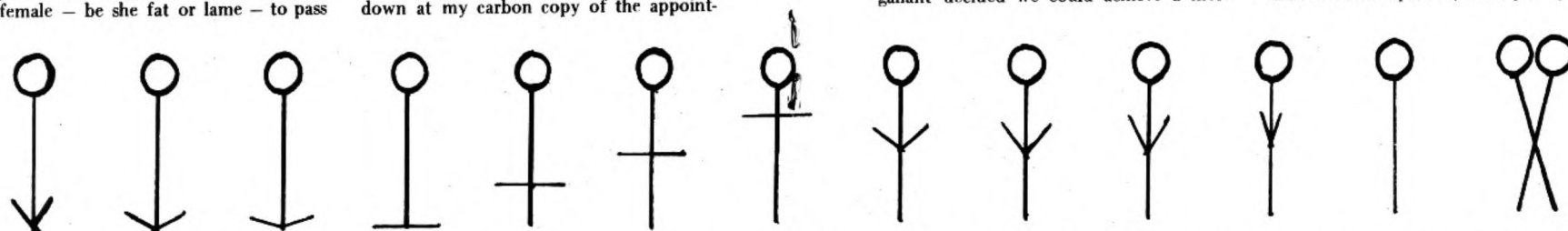
So he backed me up against the wall of the first floor landing and started pulling my dress up and my pants down. The inevitable agenda. Now I know why straight women wear those mean-looking girdles. I thought of kneeling him as mama wisely taught, but the knife was in front of my eyes and it didn't seem a practical moment. Children could be heard coming home from school somewhere in the building, and my gallant decided we could achieve a more

comfortably intimate ambience on the roof. Rip-Off on the Roof — What could be more New York, I thought. I might make the Daily News.

So we go upstairs, me, him, and the omnipresent knife. I was sorely repentant that I had wasted my evenings taking courses in English Lit. Karate would have been infinitely more useful. I also regretted that a co-worker had convinced me to dispose of my illegal tear gas pen. He said I would get into more trouble using one than not. And besides, it is not a good social work attitude to carry one, he said.

I considered making a grab for one of the fire doors as we passed floor by floor, but I knew if I screamed for help while inside the corridor and while holding the fire door shut on my suitor, I would exchange (more likely than not) a rape scene for a gang bang, or at least for that famous New York apathy. Finally we arrived at the top and I begged off going out on the roof, saying I had a cold or something probably. I was told to lie down on the sexy concrete landing. He pulled my pants down with the hand that didn't have the knife and got his prick out. I was thereby confronted with the quintessence of male sexuality. Fancy this, my adored, adored women, a man will kill, will mutilate, will torture while getting his nuts off. It made me in fact angry enough to say leave me alone, leave me alone, I am a Lesbian. You don't turn me on.

All things considered, and with apologies to Eldridge Cleaver, he was a remarkably inadequate lover. Perhaps he had not read the myth of the vaginal orgasm. (By the way, I have always felt rather sorry for Kathleen Cleaver, since her husband has publicly stated that women who are excited clitorally are all Lesbians and he himself of course never touches that part of the female anatomy with his ten foot prick. Hmmm, that means poor Kathleen must have rather limited sexual options.) Well, perhaps I was



VARIATIONS ON AN EVOLUTIONARY THEME (Idea by Carol Lynk, Drawing by Barbara Smith)



a remarkably unsatisfactory rapee: I didn't bother to remove my glasses for the occasion.

It transpired that my Don Juan was not thoroughly aroused. He got his cock in but it sort of kept deflating or something. Then he gave up on that and put it between my thighs instead. I cooperated with this arrangement enthusiastically. You can't get pregnant with the semen on the concrete. At any rate, it was a more hygienic way to get raped. But, oh god, what if he kills me even afterward? They do that sometimes. He was dripping smelly perspiration on me. He was probably about 19 and looked pretty dull-normal on the Stanford-Binet. I had an inspiration. Cooingly I said, "Baby, you don't know what you do to me. I've got to see you again. Maybe we could have a real good time at my place. I never had a man before, and I never knew a man could be so groovy and so on." He bought it and removed his sweating semi-impotent member from between my legs in favor of a better day. But he still looked a bit dubious and I anxiously informed him, "See, I'm on the level. Here is where I work," and I handed him my carbon copy of the interrupted appointment that was on Department stationery and contained my work telephone number in the letterhead.

Convinced, he let me go down the stairs while he busied himself zipping up his pants, I reckoned, or jerking off maybe. I saw some children in the hallway down a couple of floors and asked them to let me in their apartment. Their mother let me use the telephone to call my supervisor and the police, and I remained there until they all arrived. I told the cops quite casually what had preceded. They seemed quite annoyed that I wasn't acting more girlish about it.

I realized then and there that a rapee (the rape-ist being more or less exempt) has very definite patterns of etiquette that she is expected to follow. My worst breach of that salacious formality was not being dead by this time. That is usually what happens to properly hysterical young ladies. But, being a dyke, I had a rather unsocial way of handling the whole thing.

I instructed my coworkers and supervisor the next day at work to not answer that particular office telephone. (I was not, you see, at home languishing on my bed of shame.) Nor did I go home to mother as all the other young lady social workers who have been involved in similar "incidents" (as my euphemistically-minded director al-

ways calls them) do. No, I support myself, and I was not in the mood to waste money on a psychiatrist either. Enough men were going to have to hear my story as it was: a lot of men, the N.Y.C.H.A. police, the precinct police, the detectives, the lawyers, the judge, the probation officer, over and over, and over, and all of them men and all of them gloating. It quite puts a young lady in her place. Who does she think she is, having a man's job? She ought to get herself a nice fellow.

And he called. As Eldridge Cleaver pointed out, he would have crawled on broken glass just to fuck dowdy me. It has a certain heroism, don't you think?

I repeated my cooing and maidenly mewling, entreating him to rendezvous at my place, as the nice detective suggested I do if he should ever be so bold or so stupid as to attempt to contact me. I then called the police and told them when the meeting was scheduled (for that evening at 8:00).

Here things got a bit cloak and dagger-ish. (And I hope you are aware of another breach of rape decorum. The rapist, unless the victim is dead, is rarely caught.) Well, we had an honest-to-goodness stake-out. A couple of friends and two plainclothes detectives and I kept company inside my apartment, while two undercover detectives waited outside. With a great flash and dazzle of handcuffs and badges and advising of rights, my suitor arrived, complete with exact description, knife and marijuana. Subsequent descriptions of the dirty blankets, roaches, etc., in the Men's House of Detention fail to move me as they used to.

And then, my darlings, we had trials, hearings and things. And there I was, surrounded by gentlemen of the bar, bench and jury, all about to jerk off over my titillating tale. The defendant's counsel was fond of referring to the Rip-Off as "When you were making love to the defendant . . ." Get that, my dears. Rape, in legal jargon, is an act of love. In an attempt to disqualify me from compassion by placing some slur on my moral character, the defending attorney asked me, "Did you tell the defendant that you are a Lesbian?"

"Yes, I did and I am."

I have never, never before been so proud of that fact and never will again be so proud of anything I have publically done or said. I had said, look at me, gentlemen. I am unique. I am no man's wife, daughter, or mother. I belong to myself.

In inquiring of my personal attorney

and of the Department of Social Service attorney so nervously assigned to my defense, (The DDS man was very busy at the time with a number of other hastily hushed-up caseworkers, hushed-up not so much out of considerations of delicacy, but because, if known, there might be some kind of pressure to send caseworkers out in teams like the NYC postmen and policemen, and that would be expensive.) Anyway, in inquiring as to some of the legal particulars of my case, I gleaned from these gentlemen the following items of information:

- (1) If I had gotten pregnant in New York City under the then current abortion law, I would not in any circumstances be permitted an abortion. Not with psychiatrists' certificates, not with a letter from the judge, not unless it could be medically proved that I would die if I carried the parasite to term.
- (2) If I had gotten pregnant, the Department of Social Services would of course not provide me with money to go to Japan for a legal abortion, and, being a government agency under God and all, would not provide funds for an illegal one.
- (3) If I had gotten pregnant, (a condition I have always found unequivocally loathesome) I would not be eligible, as an unmarried person, for maternity leave.
- (4) If I had gotten pregnant, I would not have been eligible for workmen's compensation, since pregnancy is not considered detrimental to one's health.
- (5) However, I would have been eligible to enter the Department of Social Service-run home for unwed mothers and/or go on welfare.

The hypothetical quality of these questions may bore some of you, but I happen to be of a metaphysical turn of mind.

I was the spread-eagled heroine of that gynecological fantasy gentlemen find so appealing in a "womanly" woman. The sadistic pleasure a man feels seeing a child gnawing its mother's distorted tit, the sadistic sensation of childbirth all men adore . . . I was all these things and more.

In the gossipy aftermath, I got the following flack and feedback: First, my white male co-workers and union delegates are so enamored of black and Puerto Rican men and their mythical cocks that it is positively *queer*. And if a few of their own chicks have to be sacrificed on the altar of machismo . . . well, they just think that's groovy. The white boys are forever trying

to change their Radcliffe-educated girlfriends into sort of communal papoose-toting squaw women anyway.

Second, my well-brainwashed Columbia School of Social Work female colleagues suggested that my youthful and presumably underprivileged co-workers (Hell, I wasn't so damn old or over-privileged myself) needed their tender counseling and intensive psychotherapy. (I regretted they couldn't have taken my place in the Rip-Off as well.) The ladies did not seem to understand that rape is as normal as hissing pussy, pussy, and in fact is merely an acting-out of the most everyday sentiments. Undoubtedly, my young man bragged about his success with me to his buddies and earned a good deal of social esteem thereby.

That is that, but when my mind chances to stray on the subject nowadays (you know the newspapers daily contain a story of some female body considerably more mangled than mine — "Girl Found Raped and Mutilated in BMT Subway" — the subway is a favorite trysting place of ardent males), I have a very different way of remembering the incident that I find quite satisfactory and fulfilling.

It really happened this way: I dragged him down the stairs, kicking him in the crotch and the eyes and he was vomiting in pain. I then got his knife from him and punctured each of the balls and removed the skin from the penis. I nailed this trophy over my toilet. Later I went to a trial and when I was asked whether I responded to the defendant's advances, I levelled a revolver and one by one shot off the genitals of every man in the room.

*(Editor's Note: This article is wholly true and presented anonymously, for obvious reasons. The author is a friend of the editor, who vouches for its authenticity.)*

#### CHANGING YOUR ADDRESS?

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

# From THE ROSE POEMS

Thou who art a thorn!  
 Thou who art a thorn!  
 blown against the night  
 brightly /  
 borne

and borne again:  
 willfully.  
 Without thee,  
 there would be no rose to my heart at all.

Heaven was for me  
 when — taken in your arms —  
 all singing stopped:  
 I lay beyond.

## PROMISE

... when the prize is  
 given me,  
 I will give it to  
 the poorest among you:  
 I will go up to the hunchback,  
 and lay the gold  
 upon  
 his hump —  
 bless his dark pain  
 as the gold were  
 the sun:  
 the one I have to give,  
 the only one.



## GWYNETH, LOVER!

Gwyneth, lover!  
 Come to Wales with me.  
 I'm strong enough.

There'll be  
 fire by evening  
 and cello ...  
 and a hundred old songs of the sea.  
 (That would be choice for you and me.)

There's the restlessness of the sea in your eyes,  
 and in me all its fall and rise.

(Ah! the water  
 is a priest ...)

We're too tough and private not to be  
 where there's green of wind wave and sea.

Rock, darling ... sweet ... see?  
 I sense there's a life to be lived together.  
 ... And a love strong as ours needs a seaweather.

## Triptych: III DREAM

I dream we are Medieval Russian monks,  
 some Capuchin and Nikolai  
 — you a Christian, I a Jew —  
 wandering the frozen north,  
 minstreling:  
 I borne on your back.

It is eternal winter and we wear  
 burlap cloaks and red stockings  
 (and tiny Russian icons round our necks ...)

The thousand lights in peasant huts gleam  
 where we receive welcome  
 for both of us are orphans — but each is king.

And then, alone, at night  
 the unstrapping:  
 me from your back;  
 off with the woolens;  
 off with our boots.

A light in the fire,  
 our faces radiant as saints  
 in the flickering coals ...

So strange a dream as to call up in my throat  
 the very songs we would sing then;  
 and I heard the beating of our prayers.

O my Joseph-Ben!  
 It was a new Jerusalem!



## THE LION LOOKS

at his form in the stream ...  
 He is shedding  
 golden tears.  
 The lion kneels  
 ... the goddess appears!  
 (O caballos!  
 O bright charioteers!)

The kneeling lion  
 cries ...  
 his tears reflect in the goddess' eyes.

There is now what is ...  
 There was then what was ...

\*\*\*

The falling tears of the lion are flame:  
 in his falling tears  
 I am.

I HAVE BORNE MY GREEN HEART  
 through the battle:  
 It is the still, consuming heat  
 of unrequited love  
 that's fatal.

MY HUMAN HEART DENIED,  
 all I seek to be ...  
 is part of the eternal  
 mystery:  
 the feather of a bird,  
 a petal on a peachtree ...

THE ROSE IS IN LOVE WITH THE SEA  
 her petals are like  
 the unfurling of the waves.

But where wave breaks upon land,  
 my petals break  
 open  
 upon the touch  
 of your hand.

"Lynn Strongin's poetry has been included in three anthologies: 31 NEW AMERICAN POETS; THE AMERICAN LITERARY ANTHOLOGY 3; and SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL. THE ROSE POEMS: A TRILOGY will be published by Oyez, Berkeley, in March, 1971. Her poetry has appeared in many periodicals, most recently in MAN-ROOT, TRACE, SUMAC, GALLEY SAIL REVIEW, as well as in the feature TODAY'S POETS, in the CHICAGO SUNDAY TRIBUNE." (Editor's Note: At press time we learned that Lynn's poetry will also be included in the forthcoming anthology, 71 POETS; Portraits and Poetry, San Francisco, Glide.)

## THE BALLAD OF THE ROSE

The rose loved the sea  
passionately;  
the rose who was  
inland.

The sea, she,  
was infinite:  
lonely,  
uncontained.

The rose loved the sea  
patiently:  
solitary  
stands:

The sea, she,  
moves restlessly  
over  
the thousand sands.

The sea is drawn  
far from shore  
by the pale  
moon:

The rose, she,  
silently  
bends  
toward her thorn.

The sea is tossed  
relentlessly:  
breaks,  
and blinds:

The rose, she,  
her petals torn  
is scattered  
to the winds.



### LADY, I WAS IN YOUR KEEPING

Lady, I was in your keeping;  
but I have broken free  
where you may never break me again.

I shall return  
to my own  
kingdom:  
It is a kingdom of the mind,  
"my dear forgotten lady" of the heart.

It is a piecemeal kingdom — mine:  
pieced together of steel  
fragments of will:  
braced by clerestories — stone.  
In its heart I shall lay me down  
and dream:

there was a rose  
so sweet . . .  
all sorrows  
would dissolve . . .

"O Rozel Reyne des Fleurs!"  
fairest in creation

in the kingdom of my mind  
you will bloom again  
unbroken by rust, moth, or rain.

### IT SEEMS OUR ROSE WAS BROKEN AT FULL BLOOM.

You flew from me at our joy's height.  
Why? Were you afraid of happiness so complete?

Or was it to deliver me?

I do not know. But there is no one.

Our joy — it was full blown.

I turn . . . to take the wind in my arms.  
And go (I must go on) alone.

Or was it you were not brave enough  
to sustain that tenderness so unique,  
so world-alien?

(O my beloved, my Lesbian!)

## Patriarchal Attitudes

A Review By  
HOPE THOMPSON

"The harsh fact of the matter is that the institution of marriage which we are now trying to reform so unsuccessfully is based, not on love, sentiment, or compatibility, but on economic necessity . . . In a wealthy society . . . marriage becomes a form of legalized prostitution . . . Either one goes on gradually liberalizing the divorce laws, until marriage stands exposed as a hollow sham in which no one would wish to engage, or one takes a short cut and abolishes marriage . . . But as long as we have an institution as anachronistic as marriage, I am afraid we shall go on having a large body of anachronistic women."

These quotations (pp 176, 87, 179, 181) from *PATRIARCHAL ATTITUDES* by Eva Figs, N.Y. Stein and Day, 1970 came as something of a surprise to me in view of the care Ms. Figs took to be determinedly heterosexual and to accept that patriarchal attitude that condemns Lesbianism and homosexuality. She ridicules Freud's analysis of the family, "that bastion of social conservatism," and the family's supposed indispensibility to children. "The motive behind this argument," she states, "is a dreadful suspicion that the father . . . may not be necessary at all." (p 172). This is why psychologists tell us, in their desperate

efforts to preserve the family, that cornerstone of patriarchy, that a father is a must to prevent homosexuality and delinquency. Ms. Figs swallows this one whole but gets around it by pointing out that it is pretty hard for kids to avoid seeing and identifying with men. The world is full of father figures. Boys will find their heroes, as always, among football players, etc. And, no doubt, though here she ignores little girls, Lesbians will continue to discover Joan of Arc and Queen Elizabeth I . . . It is interesting to find heterosexual women damning heterosexual marriage while Lesbians are beginning to gain the courage to seek state and church sanction for their Lesbian marriages. It makes one wonder about the heterosexual life.

Though "reassuringly" heterosexual, Ms. Figs' little book (185 pages) is packed with interesting material and well written — not a word wasted. She traces women's oppression from ancient Hebrew times, through the relatively less oppressive Middle Ages (toward the end of which a number of male midwives appeared on the scene!) to the Industrial Revolution that set women back again. [Being English Ms. Figs describes conditions in England and Europe, mentioning America, "where the traditional role



of womanhood is more strongly upheld than anywhere else," only in passing.] The rise of Capitalism, though by no means the cause of women's oppression, did greatly aggravate it. This was not the result of the replacement of muscles by machines, as Marx thought, but due to the cheapness of female labor. There were whole communities of unemployed men, only the women being hired. That left the men to tend the children and to keep house. While this was happening in the working classes, the capitalists' wives were becoming mere idle playthings.

Ms. Figs' discussion of Rousseau and the French Revolution contains warnings for us today that we had better heed. Rousseau's espousal of *Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite* deliberately did not include Sororite. His revolutionary SOCIAL CONTRACT says nothing of his inhuman opinion of women — this is detailed in his other books — and speaks of 'men' and 'mankind' in such a way that gullible women — and few are not gullible — could assume he meant to include them. And assume they did. French women were very active in revolutionary circles right up to the day the revolutionaries won. "Because Rousseau carefully avoids the topic of female subordination in the SOCIAL CONTRACT, because his attitude would have made utter nonsense of his view that government should always strive to redress the balance of equality . . . one can say that the women of revolutionary France were thoroughly conned, and once the Revolution was firmly established this proved to be the case . . . in 1793 the National Convention suppressed all women's clubs and societies, closed the salons, and denied women all political rights." (pp 99-100). Elsewhere Ms. Figs warns that "the last citadel that a man will ever concede is the idea of his own superiority." (p 22). This section on Rousseau and the French Revolution should be read and digested by those women who wish to link the women's revolution with revolutionary men's movements, e.g., the Black Panthers and various student movements.

I have mentioned somewhat at length what in PATRIARCHAL ATTITUDES particularly interested me. There is much more: writings on the nature of woman by Darwin, Milton (the great poet and misogynist), Otto Weininger (especially his linking of anti-semitism with anti-feminism), Hegel, Schopenhauer ('women exist solely for the

propagation of the race', a view that fits better the other way around if one wishes to think in a "male" fashion about men), Nietzsche (whose "emphasis on domination and superiority betrays fear and a profound insecurity"), Fichte, and Tolstoy; and among women, Mrs. Tolstoy, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, George Sand, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Florence Nightingale, an example of the successful and anti-feminist woman.

I will end this review with a statement taken from the introduction and a comment thereon. "Thus the psychologist tends to come up with the amazing discovery that original thinking, creativity and a high level of general intelligence are associated with more 'feminine' men and more 'masculine' women . . ." Ms. Figs rejects these psychologists' explanations, like mumbo-jumbo about bisexuality. The explanation is much closer to home. It is simply that sex roles impose severe limitations upon human possibilities. It takes a person of some intelligence, creativity, and courage (especially if she is heterosexual) to see through the artificiality of these roles and to partake of interests and activities arbitrarily assigned to the opposite sex. It is a shame Ms. Figs cannot go one step further and see that this includes the legitimacy of women loving women, men loving men.

(Editor's Note: Hope Thompson returned to the halls of Academe in her 50's for a PhD in Psychology and found, to her amusement, that she felt no older than all those thousands of students with young, unwrinkled faces. After a year and half of male chauvinist psychology professors, of studying unbelievably puerile material, she gave up this misguided ambition. Her interest in the study of human nature continues unabated however. As a Lesbian she has a perspective on the heterosexual bias without which any "radical" feminist philosophy is not radical. As a Catholic convert (from atheism) she is interested in integrating human spiritual values into an intellectual atmosphere dehumanized by the worship of science. And as a feminist since the age of four, she knows there can be no future for humanity until all women all over the world discover and assume their rightful place as fully human beings. She is currently The Ladder's Production Editor.)

## Poetry

### THE FEMALE FREEWAY

There are no markets for women's feelings They asked was she  
a good lay laughed before she could answer To get her to  
cry strength was an entertainment an amusement They knew  
she never would

Someone in the room mentioned Women's Rights and if it weren't that  
cobwebs were holding the cupboard china would've shattered and  
Father Clock Face broke and quaint furniture creaked with the stir  
of men's throat-clearings

Someone mentioned Women's Rights but her dress was short her  
hair long and up on her head like two swollen lakes The ultimate  
female impersonators are women their faces mirrored in the  
middle of their blackening their wooden bodies' mystic coals  
fetching and fingering the boldest offering to rub them into ash

Take the breast and thigh of a "chick" and chomp In turn offer  
foreskins to her Sir: Imagine your penis skinned lying raw  
on a slaughterhouse floor Don't open car doors for me nor  
shift me to the insides of streets We may murder each other  
now that I know where I'm going

Women's Rights were mentioned in a car driven by a man so incensed  
he didn't see the freeway We'd die unless I apologized for  
mentioning Women's Rights and turn my talk to baby talk heed  
his fantasies of The Cave We were on our way to Tijuana where  
male shopkeepers bow and scrape and hate us

LYNN LONIDIER

## Strange Victory of Sara Teasdale

By CAROL LYNK

There are so many ways to love  
And each way has its own delight —  
Then be content to come to me  
Only as spray the beating sea  
Drives inland through the night.

Sara Teasdale from "Spray" in her  
book *FLAME AND SHADOW*

Sara Teasdale shared herself with us  
through her still living poetry more honest-  
ly than she ever could in her unhappy years  
of life. She was a frightened, shy and  
confused woman who had a need for love  
often expressed in her poetry, but never,  
until her final years, realistically directed to  
the right objects.

Born in 1884 to parents almost beyond  
the age of childbearing, Teasdale retained  
the mark of their upbringing all her life. She  
had, in the words of Louis Untermeyer,  
". . . a neurotic attachment to and discon-  
tent with her family." She was never able  
". . . to adjust to the demands of matur-  
ity." Untermeyer's tone reminds one of the  
righteous psychiatrist who has defined matur-  
ity and family relationships to his own  
satisfaction and condemned the patterns of  
lives which, by his definition, belong to  
certain categories of people. It was, in other  
words, a nice way of suggesting that Sara  
Teasdale was something it was not polite to  
say.

We see this unwillingness, again, of the  
biographer, the critic, to speak plainly in

Marya Zaturenska, who introduces the most recent edition of Teasdale's COLLECTED POEMS. In that introduction Zaturenska calls Teasdale "a Sappho" twice, once using the very lovely, almost inoffensive phrase, "... a Sappho in modest draperies." She also writes that the poet was "extraordinarily virginal" and "spinsteryish." Zaturenska goes so far as to say that Teasdale "... found the realities of marriage difficult ...". From these two pictures alone — one drawn by a friend, Untermeyer; the other by a great admirer — one dares to suggest that the chaste and solitary Sara Teasdale had a depth her poems suggest, but barely substantiate without the second glance recommended by these hints.

The first plunge into Teasdale's poetry is heartening. It is early proven that she has within her the ability to love, to adore without restraint, a woman. Her first book of poems, published in 1901, was called SONNETS TO DUSE. It was just that. Her appreciation of Elenora Duse, despite and because of the actress's sex, indicates a freedom from conventional affectional expression. Her ability and probable need to express this appreciation goes beyond a freedom from and into a will to love and to declare those unusually strong feelings of a woman caught by surprise in her own passions.

Considering the implications of Teasdale's aversion to marriage and of her first book, her love poetry is puzzling. She may have been a frustrated woman, always finding male objects for her love and never bridging the gap between the creation of her love and his reality. In HELEN OF TROY, 1911, her second book, there is more than one small verse that bemoans her silence. In "I Love You" she instructs, "When I am fast asleep, / Then tell my love the secret / That I have died to keep". The repetitions of this theme suggest the reason for her reticence was more than maidenly shyness. The pronoun "he" in so many of her poems may have been a ruse. If not, then she tells us it may as well have been. In "The Kiss" from the same book: "His kiss was not so wonderful / As all the dreams I had". Untermeyer wrote of the love poems in HELEN OF TROY, "... they seem written in a mood of predetermined and too picturesque romance ... unemotional kisses for unreal [men]".

Teasdale did not find, in that first indication of a relationship, what she thought she was looking for. The series of

three poems after "The Kiss" emphasizes her disillusionment: "November", where, young as she was she found, "The world is tired, the year is old ...". "The Wind", "There is no peace for me on earth / Even with you"; "A Winter Night", "My heart is crying in the cold". If we accept the use of the male pronoun, her first journey into love was an early sign of her inability to deal with men romantically.

In RIVERS TO THE SEA (1915) there are a slew of love poems, obviously poems of experience and not literary exercises in distant adoration. They are all addressed to some "he" and cease suddenly, distinctly, with "Loving". Her love was not consummated or was not physically appeased. "I am not sorry for my soul, / But oh, my body that must go / Back to a little drift of dust / Without the joy it longed to know". In the later book, LOVE SONGS, this is confirmed: "And since the body's maidenhood / Alone was neither rare nor good / Unless with it I gave to you ...". This was written when she married. The poem that follows "Loving" is "Pity" and Teasdale tells us "... our love was brief". Again she may have tried, and this time not in fantasy, to have a relationship with a man. She may have wanted such a relationship as much as her poems say, but something in her fought that surface desire.

Marriage, in 1914, did not, as had been noted, change Teasdale's life very much. In LOVE SONGS, 1917, there is a strange mixture of love poems and poems of a tired and disappointed person. Teasdale speaks of poetry as her refuge in the poem of that name, "Refuge": "For with my singing I can make / A refuge for my spirit's sake ...". The same thought appears in "The Dreams of My Heart" from FLAME AND SHADOW. Despite all that has gone from her of dreams she has "The deep solace of song ...". One wonders from what she sought shelter in the years of her marriage. She shows us something of the nature of her marriage, of herself and of the man, Ernst Filsinger, that she married in "Because". "... Because you never tried / To bow my will or break my pride, / ... Take me, for I love you more / Than I ever loved before". The first poem of this book, "To E." calls Filsinger "... the rarest soul I ever knew, / Lover of beauty, knightliest and best ...". The man is described as Teasdale must have wanted him to be, a non-aggressive, gentle person who made it possible for her to attempt love with a man

again. She was looking for the sort of love a woman is best at giving. Their divorce would indicate that the man, finally, did not succeed as the lover Teasdale sought.

In the midst of marriage Teasdale wrote FLAME AND SHADOW (1920). In "The Broken Field" she must have known what she said symbolically: "My soul is a dark ploughed field / ... The field lies broken now / For another sowing. / Great Sower when you tread / My field again, / Scatter the furrows there / With better grain". Did she recognize herself as a fallow thing, a woman fertile with love who had been "ploughed" for the wrong seed, man? Would "better grain" be her vision of the perfect lover she did not find in her husband — that lover whose description only fits a woman? Ostensibly she speaks of her ever present physical pain in that poem, but even if we should accept her words on that level of meaning we might have to question her illness. Untermeyer calls it "hypochondria". It may have been a psychosomatic representation of the mental pain she suffered by leading a life unnatural to herself.

Her frustration in love continues in FLAME AND SHADOW. "Spring Torrents" presents her in the agonies of spring desire. She is still "Like a rock that knows the cry of the waters / And cannot answer at all". In "Alone" she tells us, "I am alone, in spite of love / ... in spite of all your tenderness ...". She says to the moon in "Morning Song", "... you are lonely, / It is the same with me ...".

There is a new tone set by the 1926 book DARK OF THE MOON. Teasdale was often not with her husband, who was too absorbed in his business, according to Margaret Haley Carpenter, the biographer of the poet. She seems to regret, throughout this book of poems, the failure of her husband and herself to create the love she wanted. In "When I Am Not With You" Teasdale becomes sentimental and we see that there is something, if not romantic love, between her and her husband. She has, at least, grown to depend on him. This changes with the arrival of Margaret Conklin in her life.

In 1926, when we see Teasdale mellow in her poetry, accepting age and the kind of love she has been able to achieve, a college girl named Margaret Conklin wrote a letter to one of Teasdale's friends. In it she wrote of her admiration for the poet. The two were introduced and, according to Margaret

Carpenter, Sara Teasdale found the "friend" she had never had and became, with the young woman, happier and more free than she had ever been before.

Conklin's first reply to a letter from Teasdale was a box of wild flowers. They visited one another continually through Conklin's last two years of school; Teasdale even journeying by herself to stay at inns near the school. They travelled together, leaving in the spring of 1927, without Teasdale's husband, for Europe. In 1929 the poet went with a friend of Conklin's to Reno to obtain a divorce from her husband.

STRANGE VICTORY was Teasdale's last volume of poetry. It is a lovely declaration, forced from a suppressed heart by a courage only desperation can inspire. Since we see that Teasdale's thoughts, especially in this last book, were much taken up with death, it is easy to understand her desperation and her final, almost reckless, drive for a fulfilling love. "Since Death Brushed Past Me" describes a crucial moment in all our lives, the experience of SAYING IT, perhaps for the first time, perhaps every time, exposing oneself, facing the possibility of the desired's revulsion. The imagery of the poem is the imagery of the speaker ("cold with song") in the act of speaking ("the plummet of your thought"). Three lines are her most outspoken: "Let me say quickly what I must say: / Take without shame the love I give you ... / ... My words are said, my way is clear."

There is no mystery about the subject of the poem. "To M" is also obvious and demonstrates the great force that wrung these words from Teasdale. "I shall find no better thing upon the earth / Than the wilful, noble, faulty thing which is you. / ... but if you too should fail me ... / ... I shall go, in some sort, a victor, down to my rest."

Perhaps "There Will Be Rest" should not be the last, but the first poem of STRANGE VICTORY. It has been assumed that this is a picture of death, but the poem says more of life and the goals of the living than it does of death. Certainly death could not be "... this world of my devising / Out of a dream in my lonely mind." It sounds as if the poet dreamt more of some peace in life than of the rest of nothingness. She did view death as nothingness, as we see in "Sappho" from RIVERS TO THE SEA, "... the sea of death, the strangling sea / Of night and nothingness." She describes physical scenes that she would have com-



pose her rest, wherein she is on the earth, looking up at snowy roofs and stars. The wintry image leads to the phrase "crystal peace." This is not death, but love as she describes love in "Sappho": "there is a quiet at the heart of love, / And I have pierced the pain and come to peace." The whole dream could have been mouthed in a warm place to a lover, in admiration of the season which has driven them together and out of which they can derive peace. "This world" which she dreamed was the one she created with Margaret Conklin.

Teasdale writes again of that life force in "Advice to a Girl", addressed to Conklin, her "young angry dear . . ." We see once more the ultimate crystal, this time called not peace, but truth. The poet shows it to the girl for use in lieu of herself. It was life she gave the girl she loved, even while planning her own death. What tragic thoughts or acts caused her finally to choose death over love probably only Margaret Conklin knows.

Whether or not Teasdale and Conklin allowed themselves to be fully lovers is hardly of consequence. We can see in Teasdale's life and in her poetry that her first strong emotional stirrings were for a woman and that the only successful love relationship she experienced was with a woman. She was very fortunate that in her

last years her nature allowed her that strange victory described in the poem of that title:

To this, after my hope was lost,  
To this strange victory;  
To find you with the living, not the dead,  
To find you glad of me . . .

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*(Carol Lynk is 25 years old . . . lives in the East. Is happily married to another woman and describes herself as a "public servant" which in her case means a type of social work. She is a poet, and poetry lover, researcher, essayist. She has showered the editorial desk with invaluable clippings, shared books, magazines and provided dozens of "clues" to further material.)*

## LESBIANA By GENE DAMON

A TERRIBLE THING HAS HAPPENED TO MISS DUPONT. Yes, indeed, Miss Dupont is dead . . . she is seated in the students' john, and she has a knife in her heart, in Polly Hobson's delightful murder mystery, out from McCall Publishing Co., N.Y., 1970. This was originally published in 1968 in England, under the homey, cozy title of TATTY'S DEAD. Following the tradition of not telling you who killed who and why certainly limits the reviewer of such books. This one is billed as a "suspense novel," which is pure poppycock, since any mystery reader is going to spot this one from about the third chapter; but it's a lovely book. I haven't had the fun of recommending a mystery so fervently since Ruth Rendell's 1964 novel, FROM DOON WITH DEATH (and if you haven't read that yet . . . treat yourself).

As egotistical as most reviewers, I seldom quote or notice another reviewer's remarks; but Thomas Lask, writing in the New York Times about A TERRIBLE



POLLY HOBSON author of A Terrible Thing Has Happened to Miss Dupont; The McCall Publishing Company. Photo: G. Ivan Barnett, M.B.K.S.

THING HAS HAPPENED TO MISS DUPONT, citing the girls' school setting (English), says that, among other plot facets, "the love affairs between two teachers and a teacher and one of the girls are the only decent activities in the school." He is harsh re the rest of the school, which is no better and no worse and surely not far different from any sexually segregated institution. Proponents of the separate gender education institutions cite the fact that males from such turn out better than not. It is equally true, one suspects, of females, perhaps even more so. It is worth noting that opponents oppose on one ground only . . . the obvious fact that boys and girls educated with their own sex will, if homosexual or Lesbian to begin with, manifest it early. Having viewed thousands of lives wrecked where the wreckage was caused solely because the manifestation waited until later life, it seems more than clear that it is a blessing, not a curse, for the young to find their direction early. And, if after all that editorializing you are still reading, don't miss this mystery . . . it's excellent. Highly recommended.

Noel B. Gerson is billed, briefly, on the blurb of his novel, MIRROR, MIRROR, N.Y., Morrow, 1970, as the author of 100 novels. No doubt some are under a multitude of pseudonyms. This is a polite, even awestruck, way of saying that he is that ultimate in the competent hack . . . he can really turn out the potboilers, and his boilers have made it in hardcover too. This is fine, except he is not a competent writer at all in this entertaining, readable novel. It is about that world of women as cattle . . . flesh on the runways . . . not strippers but models . . . not whores, but maybe. It is also about high fashion, and big department stores, and deals and wheels, and sex. Most of the sex is the voyeur kind. Would you believe either of these things . . . that (A) a top figure in N.Y. modeling necks in a posh restaurant with his black top model . . . and that they stagger out glassy-eyed under the astonished gaze of the patrons . . . or (B) that the magnate of magnificent department stores has a Rudolph Valentino type male in his employ whose sole job is to bed down women he sets up for the show, while he watches? There is the obligatory predatory Lesbian with the obligatory shudders about fates worse than death (worse than the men in this book??). There is also the occasional hilarious gaff in the writing that makes you realize no, it ain't true at all, as

when a restaurant is described in this way: "The sawdust on the floor helped give the place a homelike atmosphere . . ." Whose home?

MADRIGAL, by Samuel B. Harrison, L.A., Nash, 1969, 1970, is a mistake. That is, I saw that it was supposed to have a Lesbian character, and it does, so I asked for a review copy, and I got it. It is really a terribly funny terrible novel, about a girl named Cynthia who runs into all those bad things (i.e., men) waiting for her out there in the big bad world and escapes most of the way with her cherry intact, until she meets the man of her dreams . . . who promptly takes that valuable fruit away and slaps her in chains for life, or the duration of . . . I almost forgot: there is, among the things she faces in the world, a Lesbian nurse, who compromises her to use the blurb writer's term. Fortunately for the sake of the plot, not to say the hapless Lesbian, Cynthia survives . . .

Anthony Burgess, who is frequently reviewed in this column, is becoming a bore. He can be the best of writers; he can also be bad. He suffers from this in much the same way as Iris Murdoch does, but he isn't at his best in her class at all. THE EVE OF SAINT VENUS, his 12th novel to be published in the U.S., came out in England in 1964. It is a drawing room comedy, and Norton's persistence in publishing him, good, bad, indifferent, is to be admired. Good publishers are always to be lauded. Beyond that, THE EVE OF SAINT VENUS (1970, U.S.) is not good Burgess but fun. He draws his people well, and his Lesbian is accurate enough, but it's all a joke.

BLUE MOVIE, by Terry Southern, N.Y., World, New American Library, 1970, is a sallow follow-up to CANDY, which really was funny, however distasteful. The Lesbian in it is what you would expect and quite possibly have seen if you are in the habit of attending BLUE MOVIE movies. It's all about a man who intends to invest erotica with meaning and comes out with filth . . . which we might have told the man if he'd asked to begin with. It will probably end up as a movie and they won't even have to change the title.

HUNGER TRACE, N.Y., Morrow, 1970, by Canadian Adrienne Clarkson, is cited by two friends as being mildly pertinent. I didn't catch on to it early enough to ask for a review copy and my local libraries seem to have missed it. It is definitely pertinent . . . how much so or to what



value I do not know. Anyone willing to provide a review?

Artist and poet Jane Kogan (who through the years has been of substantial help to THE LADDER) wrote to mention that one of the women in the article, "Masquerade," by Dorothy Lyle, in the April/May, 1970, issue, the "Gentleman Painter" Charley Wilson, has been memorialized by another famous writer, George Moore. It was mentioned in the article that Charles Reade, author of the famous THE CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH, had written a story about Catherine Wretford Tozer, who posed as Charley Wilson most or all of her adult life. George Moore's story, "Albert Nobbs," is a part of his collection, CELIBATE LIVES, London, Chatto and Windus, 1927, 1968. This has interesting use of historical events and is primarily for the collector. If anyone else knows of fictional use of Catherine Tozer's life, I'd be interested in learning about it.

As this column is being written it seems certain that Robin Morgan's book, which has been in the works since April, 1969, will be out from Random House before you read this issue. The final title (after some four changes) is SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL, and it is to be available in both hardback (at the nearly prohibitive cost of \$8.95) and in paperback (at \$2.45). Having written one of the articles due to be in it (albeit now hopelessly outdated), I can hardly review the collection in this column. Hope Thompson will be reviewing it, probably for the next issue. It is fair to note, though, that both PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY and KIRKUS gave the collection rave reviews. No media publication is noted for its "fondness" for women's liberation material, so it is safe to assume that the book is excellent or else it would get ignored. Kate Millett, Mary Daly, Marge Pierce, Martha Shelley and Lynn Strongin are among the many many contributors of essays, poetry, and graphics.

THE GREEN MAN is a ghost who lives in an inn and bugs the narrator-hero of Kingsley Amis's most unusual novel, N.Y., Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1970. Modern day jade Maurice Allington, keeper of the inn in question (which dates back to medieval times), finds the appearance of the "green man" disquieting. And well he might, for this ghostly resurrection of 17th century Dr. Thomas Underhill leads him into paths he wishes he hadn't taken by the end of the novel. Among other things, Mr.

Allington is blessed with a lovely wife and a willing mistress. He is determined to bring them together in a sexual ménage à trois. He manages to do so, with hilarious and very fitting results. It is enough to mention that he has neither wife nor mistress at the book's end, and that in leaving him his wife delivers a short speech which might well have been written by Roxanne Dunbar. Lovely . . . highly recommended, but not for reasons Mr. Amis would appreciate.

WALK AWAY SLOWLY, by Seamus Cullen, N.Y., Crown, 1970, features a heroine universal to fiction, the beautiful woman without mercy. In today's newly sensitive world, it simply means she is winning the game at the expense of those who fall in love with her. That the means Jen chooses to win her game bring her as much or more unhappiness as the male narrator is beside the point. Jen walks through his life, able easily to walk out, and he is unable to walk away slowly. Along the way Jen uses a few dozen men and one young girl to torment the narrator . . . in the eyes of the narrator. Somewhere along the way it dawns on the reader that Jen does not care enough about the narrator for him to have written the book . . . which may well be what is bothering the man. Mr. Cullen is a boring writer, and this is too bad, for the plot has potential interest . . . just as it has had for the last few hundred years of its use. The Lesbian section is depressing and poorly done.

Next issue we will have a review of a biography of actress Charlotte Cushman. The book, BRIGHT PARTICULAR STAR, by Joseph Leach, Yale University, 1970, is highly recommended, and we will cover it at length. With the exception of the fact that Mr. Leach does not fully comprehend (apparently) the limitations and directions of Miss Cushman's friendship with sculptor Harriet Hosmer, it is excellent.

Women in the Berkeley, California, area are most fortunate in having a library set up for their needs. WOMEN'S HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER, INC., 2325 OAK, BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA, is open and doing business. Described as a research, lending, corresponding, and selling library of women's literature, books, periodicals, pamphlets, bibliographies, articles, clippings, tapes and pictures, they include Lesbian material and welcome additions to their collection and data. Write to them for a more complete description. We are frankly plugging them because we dig libraries.

## Cross Currents

HEAVY COMBAT IN THE EROGENOUS ZONE: VILLAGE VOICE: August 13, 1970: Someone may already have brought this to your attention. I say this because seven people thought I'd want to read it and kindly clipped and sent it to me. All seven of the women are, to my immediate knowledge, Lesbians. So, since HEAVY COMBAT IN THE EROGENOUS ZONE by Ingrid Bengis is about a heterosexual woman talking about the need for a language of sexual intimacy that is relevant for women, that has something to say to and about and for women, and a kind of loving that will somehow have meaning for women — why seven Lesbians sending it to me? I'd like you all to read it; it's a lovely "personal testament," as this special section of VILLAGE VOICE is called. Its pathos and sadness are deepened for any Lesbian reading it, by the sudden realization that this woman is asking for what we Lesbians take for granted: asking that she be "loved" and not simply "made." Very special reading.

EUROPE ALSO ON THE MARCH: NEW YORK TIMES: August 24, 1970. Women's liberation groups are growing up in every European country and England, most very similar to those in the United States, with the exception of the emphasis on the labor situation, since working conditions are far worse for women in these areas than in the U.S., if that is possible to imagine.

CHRISTIANNE ROCHEFORT AND MONIQUE WITTIG and a handful of other French women tried to lay a wreath at the Arc de Triomphe war memorial in Paris on August 26, 1970, in honor of the wife of the unknown soldier. They were arrested. They were acting in sympathy to the U.S. movement. The story was carried by AP and appeared in many U.S. papers. Both Miss Rochefort and Miss Wittig are called "well-known French women writers." We cannot resist adding how much pleasure we have had in reviewing their novels in past Lesbiana columns, and we look forward to having the pleasure again in the future. (Editor's note: Miss Wittig's name is variously shown as "Vittig" and "Wittig." U.S. editions of her books show her name as "Wittig.")

AUGUST 26, 1970: WOMEN'S LIBERATION — MUSIC WITH CLASHING

SYMBOLS. Literally tens of thousands of women took part in the activities of women's liberation day, 50th anniversary of the passage of the right-to-vote amendment. What the demonstrations proved was not, however, the size of the movement but its diversity. There are few points of total agreement, and the city-to-city gatherings emphasized the differences.

In New York City where the greatest lack of solidarity actually exists, the largest group gathered, with about 50,000 women marching united down Fifth Avenue. Billed nationwide as a women's strike for equality, very few working women actually went on strike. It is interesting to note that thousands have publicly stated they would have skipped their working day except for the fact that they would have been fired. The irony here is telling: you cannot liberate yourself from an oppressor who controls your food intake — unless, of course, you are serious enough to not care whether you live or die. There are many movements in the U.S. today sharing that drawback, members not quite yet willing to die.

In Bryant Park the leading lights of the movement addressed the crowd that had marched down Fifth Avenue. Speakers included Betty Friedan, Kate Millett, Gloria Steinem and Nora Sayre. The unwelcome feeling that Lesbians often get in such gatherings (unless they are "passin'" in the crowd) was emphasized when an unidentified Lesbian took the microphone during the Bryant Park rally and made a strong plea for solidarity with the "straight" women.

Washington, D.C. women's groups marched 1,000 strong down Connecticut Avenue to Farragut Square, many carrying "Women Demand Equality" signs in support of the equal rights amendment. Several hundred federally employed women were included in this group, asking for better

### IT AIN'T ME BABE

Published every three weeks by the Women's Liberation Basement Press Collective. Business office is located at 1126 Addison, Berkeley, Calif. Annual subscription price is \$6.00 — \$10 for supporting subscribers. Letters, articles, graphics, and other relevant material may be sent to P.O. Box 6323, Albany, Calif. 94706 for consideration.

civil service grading, where it has long been a fact that equally trained men and women doing equal work are "graded" differently so that the men can be paid much more.

Boston, Massachusetts: Over 2,500 women marched and rallied at noon at Center Plaza and conducted "teach-ins" around the city.

St. Louis: A group marched for women's rights and an opposite group marched against women's rights. One sign commented that in addition to coming a long way, women could: (1) Be a housewife; (2) Be a sexpot; (3) Have your own cigarette, and (4) Type. This group posted a sign on Christ Church Cathedral, calling for the acceptance of women in the church's all-male hierarchies, and other signs on various business establishments, protesting unfair practices and unequal pay. They also confronted Mayor Alfonso Cervantes, who did not appear to understand what was going on.

Kansas City: Less than 100 women took part in the gathering at City Hall during the lunch hour, and more males gathered to take part watching than did females. News media locally gave them the rough-on-rats treatment, except for one station. However, 100 people in a very unpopular cause in Kansas City is a mob scene on either coast. One downtown employer went about boasting, "If any of my girls went to something like that, I wouldn't fire them, I'd kick their ass out of the window." Very funny, except that the offices are on the tenth floor of a downtown building.

Wichita, Kansas: A group of thirty women spent the day ogling men, whistling at them and making them very nervous. They also passed out several hundred leaflets to downtown crowds. Again, for a small midwestern city, brave activity.

Detroit, Michigan: Very little activity reported in media press, and our one eyewitness reporter said that men outnumbered women and were mainly attending to heckle. However, there are reports that women picketed the Michigan Civil Rights Commission offices.

New Haven, Connecticut: This area is eloquently reported on in a letter in this issue.

Salt Lake city, Utah: About fifty women took part in marching, demonstrations and public speaking, including some openly Lesbian women with signs asking for equal rights.

Miami, Florida: About 300 women gath-

ered to speak and talk to passers-by. Some of them brought and broke coffee cups, symbolizing women's refusal to make coffee while men sat and drank it.

Adams, Massachusetts: A crowd of over 10,000 people gathered on August 23, three days before Liberation Day, to watch a parade honoring Susan B. Anthony and to start a four-day festival. The special commemorative stamp was issued on August 26.

Hartford, Connecticut: A fair-sized group heard speakers, but reports indicate the speeches were political and activist and had little to do with women's rights.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: We cannot say how many women gathered in Rittenhouse Square at noon for the speeches and the karate demonstration, because the reports vary from 2,000 to 6,000. It is safe to say that since media press was carrying the low estimates, probably at least 3,000 were present. Some sort of mock Miss America contest was held. We had no reporter in this area — sorry.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Reports vary, but apparently the activities were politically based and not necessarily public. Some of the demands apparently presented by the women to the mayor had little to do with women's rights and more or less sounded like someone carrying someone else's battles.

Houston, Texas: In a very well organized gathering, some 300 women leafletted the downtown area and then liberated a men's grill. Afterwards the players of the Harriet Tubman Brigade staged a guerrilla theatre presentation of the suffragist movement, featuring a white supremacist male as villain. He was vigorously, vigorously hissed.

Los Angeles: The City Council gave the ladies an hour in which to talk, but the male members of the Council spent the hour walking up and down the aisles, yawning and looking at their watches. Meanwhile, some 600 women marched from the Department of Human Resources to the Federal Building, a two-mile walk. Over 1,000 rallied at the Federal Building meeting to listen to speeches and guerrilla theatre. An evening meeting brought out several hundred to hear a large group of feminists speak.

San Francisco: Curiously, national television acted as if San Francisco had not had a demonstration that day, and I was delighted to receive reports from both onlookers and local media to the contrary. Well over 1,000 women and about 300 men gathered

at Union Square for a noon rally, with more than a few groups represented, including Latin, black and other special interest groups. One male spectator carrying a sign saying "Nuts to Radical Lesbians" was quickly, cleanly and simply knocked to the ground by a simple right to the jaw. One on the scene said the crowd simply sighed with pleasure at the sight of a woman actually refusing to take lip from a man. Many speakers were featured, including NOW's National President, Aileen Hernandez. A Gay Women's Liberationist, identified only as "Linda," spoke for a long time on the necessity of sisterhood between Lesbians and heterosexual women. Both women who wrote this up for me, and the SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE agree on one item of interest: Linda drew "the loudest applause" at the rally. Knowing from personal experience how very, very difficult it is to make meaningful contact with the various women's groups who are shy of Lesbians, I find this applause interesting and am reminded that the same sort of greeting was proffered to another gay woman speaking earlier in San Francisco at a large women's group meeting. It might well be guilt at their individual failure. The point, though, is not how to publicly assuage your private insecurities, but to recognize that without the 20,000,000 of us Lesbians, more than a little trained in dealing in worlds filled with hatred and prejudice, you have less chance of achieving your own goals.

Bay Area, California: The various cities of the Bay Area each had demonstrations and marches, leafletting and plays, and participation in confrontations with public officials. Reports of the events in Palo Alto all feature the comment, "Mrs. Linus Pauling, wife of the Nobel Prize-winning scientist, related the history of the women's suffrage movement" to the crowd of 500 women. YOU are missing the point: doesn't Mrs. Linus Pauling have a NAME?

Few noticed Aileen Hernandez' quiet, affirming, "We are serving notice that women want in, not to a corrupt society, but to a society we'll make more humane."

I've missed some, and some of you will write, hopefully, to tell me what happened where you were, but public media has indicated that almost every city of any size in the South had some kind of demonstration. We have few reporters in the area and could use more. We know that a consumer boycott was held in Hawaii — we presume Honolulu. We know that Governor Marin

Mandel of Maryland was rather vigorously harassed for refusing to sign a liberal abortion bill recently passed by the state legislature. We know that women in many of the towns of upper New York State held various kinds of public meetings.

And I know that women's liberation day — strike day — began for me with the TODAY SHOW — primarily Kate Millett — Dr. Margaret Mead, the all-female guest cast and three women reporters, all miserable. Kate and Dr. Mead were happy enough, but everyone else was plenty nervous, right down to the final coughed good-bye and the reassurance that "Tomorrow everything will be back to normal." By which that woman meant: an all-male cast. Did she hear her words ringing in her ears? I bet she didn't, but I wonder how things will be ten years from today.

DR. BERMAN'S CONTINUING DEATH RATTLE: NEW YORK TIMES: August 26, 1970. Displaying his inability to stop doing damage to himself in public, Dr. Berman is this day quoted by the TIMES as saying, "The irrational libs are trying to lure housewives away from the home. This will result in the breakup of the basis of our society." Not necessarily, Dr. B. — possibly some housemen can help replace them.

NACHO ZAPPED BY THE LESBIANS: SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE: August 27, 1970 (and other sources). Led by Del Martin, seven Lesbians confronted the almost all-male NACHO delegation (one woman delegate — we don't know but are betting she was from HAL of Philadelphia) and accused them of being unfair to women. (Sec: "If That's All There Is" in this issue.)

CAN YOU TRACK DOWN THIS INFORMATION SOURCE? SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE AND EXAMINER, Sunday, August 30, 1970. Writing in a column called "The Grab Bag," L.M. Boyd comments, "Among men who love men, murder is most common. Among women who love women, it's almost unheard of . . ." To which we add, yes, except in murder mysteries where it's almost a cliché. We would like to know where Mr. Boyd (Miss Boyd?) got his information, sufficiently documented at least to present thusly.

GLORIA STEINEM: TIME MAGAZINE: August 31, 1970. This issue, which is being called THE KATE MILLETT TIME MAGAZINE, actually features something more important in terms of potential value to the general public. The editorial essay,



"What Would It Be Like If Women Win," by writer Gloria Steinem is one of the finest low-keyed, straight to the point, what-it's-all-about discussions of the women's liberation movement. Not to be missed. And a special thank-you, Gloria, for "Lesbians and homosexuals will no longer be denied legally binding marriages, complete with mutual support agreements and inheritance rights."

**WOMEN'S LIBERATION SERIES: LOS ANGELES TIMES:** September 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Writer Arlene Van Breems, in a relatively low-keyed but generally popular media oriented series, covered the basic demands, right on the heels of women's strike day. Some say the media saturation is bad; we know otherwise from years of working to get some of it. Two days before women's strike day, the NEW YORK TIMES devoted its front page to an article on gay liberation. A number of Lesbians were quoted extensively in the article, and they emphasized the fact that male homosexuals are more chauvinistic than heterosexual males; but the important point here is that suddenly, on the heels of women's liberation, a lot of doors that have been closed in the media are opening. **VILLAGE VOICE** — that was so insulting following the Christopher Street revolution just a bit over one year ago — has now modified its language and sounds, if anything, pro-gay. The September 3, 1970 issue devotes its front cover to women's liberation (two-thirds of the page) and gay liberation. Incidentally, those of you who wrote to complain vigorously about Kate Millett's caricature on the cover of TIME MAGAZINE, August 31, 1970, are right: Kate is very attractive, as her television appearances and many face front photos in VILLAGE VOICE and others show.

**LIFE MAGAZINE:** September 4, 1970. A qualified recommendation for the women's liberation coverage in this issue. The Kate Millett story here is rather bad, but the rest of it is o.k. And no, I do not know why people shake hands while kissing. Cover is a reprint of the October 28, 1970 LIFE — nostalgic and pleasing.

**WOMEN AT WAR WITH PSYCHOLOGISTS:** Miami Beach, September 5, 1970. Some 52 resolutions and demands were made by a large group of women psychologists before the American Psychological Association on September 4, 1970, at its 78th annual convention. Charging that modern psychotherapy has perpetuated

male supremacy and contributed to mental illness among women, the group asked for one million dollars in reparations to be used to release women from institutions and bring them back into society. Dr. Phyllis Chesler of the City University of New York, speaking for the Association for Women Psychologists, said, "Both psychotherapy and marriage function as vehicles for keeping a woman in her place. The ethic of mental health as defined by research and clinical psychologists, most of whom are middle-class, middle aged white men, is a masculine one in our culture. Women are perceived as childlike, childish, emotional and intuitive, and as alien to most psychologists." She later said in an interview, "I feel women should stop seeing male therapists or female therapists who do not believe in female liberation."

**DETROIT FREE PRESS:** September 6, 1970. Writing about Nancy Charboneau's new business, NANCY'S COMPATIBLES, Tom Riche quotes her as having solved the problem of making sure homosexuals and Lesbians are compatible roommates by asking people if they would mind sharing quarters with a homosexual or Lesbian. Compatibles is designed to find roommates, not lovers, and is a thriving business in the Detroit area. "We make sure," she said, "not to match the yes's with the no's. We have no more problems."

**TENNIS, ANYONE? NEW YORK TIMES:** September 8, 1970. Some of the world's leading female tennis players are threatening to boycott future tournaments because men get the vast majority of the prize money. A major tournament, the Pacific Southwest, for example, offers a top male prize of \$12,500 and \$1,500 for women. The women protesting are also angry, and rightly so, at the news media which covers the male matches much more thoroughly. (Any TV tennis watcher can confirm this, as she angrily thinks of putting her foot through the boob tube. Margaret Court of Australia, who just took the U.S. OPEN, was accorded about one-tenth the time on national TV as the men involved. Significantly, Margaret is one of the leaders of the women protesting.)

**GETTING THE RITA HAUSER STORY "STRAIGHT":** September 10, 1970. We have been provided with the verbatim text of Rita Hauser's speech delivered August 10, 1970 in St. Louis, Missouri before the meeting of the American Bar Association that got her into hot water with

the administration and made a temporary heroine out of her to the little people. No matter what you read in the media now, she DID come out for the right of people to marry, whether they were or were not couples made up of one man and one woman. She used the logical grounds that it is NOT constitutional to deny this right. If you are interested, I'd be happy to send you a copy.

**FEMALE STUDIES NOW A FORMAL PROGRAM AT CORNELL: CORNELL DAILY SUN,** September 11, 1970. Last year's experiment in teaching women's courses from the human and not the housefrau standpoint has resulted in a number of courses being offered this year with the idea that the Female Studies Program will develop into a full-fledged department. Currently, only San Diego State University has established such a major.

**TARGET: ANTI-RIGHTS CONGRESSMEN: DETROIT FREE PRESS:** September 13, 1970. Columnist Betty Beale reports that a large group of wealthy and prominent women, led more or less by Perle Mesta, are waging a well-handled war against all politicians in Washington who are not overtly championing women's rights. Most of them are uninterested in women's liberation in the terms many groups are demanding, but they recognize that there is a very valuable amount of ground to be gained by forcing equal education and equal rights down the throats of the ruling class.

**PENELOPE PITSTOP ISN'T ENOUGH: NEW YORK TIMES:** September 13, 1970. Marion Meade, writing about the growing clamor of criticism about the rotten image of women on the prize-winning series, "Sesame Street," TV show for children, points out that the whole TV scene stinks in this field. Women are treated as less than human — or objects — from cartoons to series. (This entire excellent short article may appear in a future issue of The LADDER.)

**POSSIBLE EMPLOYMENT LANDMARK DECISION:** Minneapolis: September 19, 1970. Federal District Judge Philip Neville ruled that the University of Minnesota may not refuse to hire a person merely because he is an avowed homosexual. The principal in the case, James McConnell, a Kansas City librarian who moved to the Minneapolis area to marry his boyfriend, and in so filing for marriage license became the first widely publicized such case, was hired by the University of Minnesota to be

head of the cataloging department (which, in a university of this size, is an enormously responsible position). The university is going to appeal this, and James has already been turned down in his initial stages to force the right to legal marriage between himself and Jack Baker, who is a University of Minnesota student. It is expected that James and Jack will fight their case all the way up the court ladder. It is unwise to predict how legal battles will go, but it is clear that the day is coming when the self-avowed homosexual will be able to force legal rights. This will still do precisely nothing for the Lesbian who will not, for the most part, be in a position to undertake that kind of universal hatred by all around her. But the brave are to be commended for their bravery, and that, in this case, includes Jack and James.

**MEN NOT LIKELY TO TAKE IT LIGHTLY: NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE:** September 20, 1970. An example of how vicious men feel on the subject of equal rights can be found in this article, "The Equal Rights Amendment — What, Exactly, Does It Mean?" by Robert Sherrill. One thing is sure: it means Mr. Sherrill is running scared.

**EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT IN THE SENATE:** September 1970. As we close this issue's column, the general media is awash with news items as the various factions fight to push the equal rights amendment through the Senate or defeat it. Three days were devoted to opponents and one to proponents. All of the major women's rights political action groups got their licks in and found some surprising allies. It had been feared the women's unionists would not like the amendment because of the possibility of its ending protective legislation for the most underprivileged of worker, the unskilled female labor force in factory and industry. However, since the fact that males are males has not kept an elaborate network of protective legislation to be built up around their holy hides, that premise is not valid. On September 14, 1970, a number of women representing United Automobile Workers, International Union of Electrical Workers, Butchers and Meat Cutters Union and the American Federation of Government Employees all endorsed the amendment. In addition to the various militant and political action women's groups, most of the so-called conservative and church-allied women's organizations have vociferously endorsed the



amendment. By the time you read this, hopefully, we will all know the news regarding the passage of the amendment.

**SOME INTERESTING STATISTICS FROM UNESCO:** September 1970. In 1960, 44 percent of the world's population was illiterate. In 1970 this had dropped to 34 percent, which says a good deal favorable about education all over the world. However, over 800 million men and women cannot read and write their own language. **MORE THAN 70 PERCENT OF THE WORLD'S ILLITERATES ARE WOMEN. THE DROPOUT RATE FOR WOMEN IS**

**HIGHER THAN FOR MEN, EVEN IN GRADE SCHOOL. DOMESTIC OBLIGATIONS COMBINE WITH TRADITIONAL MALE INDIFFERENCE TO STIFLE WOMEN'S LITERACY, AND MOTHERHOOD AND FAMILY ROUTINE FREQUENTLY RETARD WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN IN EARLIER YEARS, RUDIMENTARY ABILITY TO READ AND WRITE. THE ILLITERACY RATE IN MANY DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IS 86 PERCENT FOR WOMEN AGAINST 51 PERCENT FOR MEN. WHO? WHERE? HAS COME A LONG WAY . . . . .BABY?**

## Readers Respond

Dear Gene:

On Women's Strike Day, August 26, I braved the wrath of my male boss and struck out on my own to a day of women's liberation activities in New Haven, Connecticut. I'd been hearing so much about the day in the media that I figured it'd be really big and decided to head for the demonstration nearest to me. There was one other thing I hoped for — that this would bring a few of the Connecticut gay women out of the walls or wherever they were hiding, inaccessible to me.

At 11 A.M. there was to be the beginning of all day rap sessions at the Exit Coffee House. On my way there I ran into several costumed women who were leaf-letting the day's schedule and purpose. Their smiles and greetings on noting my women's lib button were heartening. Inside the Exit I found no one but a few freaky men.

Another part of the schedule directed me to the Upper Green where an information booth was set up. I passed a large crowd of people listening to William Kunstler orate on the local Black Panther trial and caught a glimpse of that fiery lady, Kathleen Cleaver, who, it appeared, felt that the main source of her oppression was not her womanhood. She would have been more than welcome over at the Women's Lib corner of the Green. There was not much happening there.

Piles of Women's Lib literature were offered for sale or for free. Buttons were being sold. Economic statistics were on display. A few busy children were on exhibit at the child care center on the grass. Some equally busy women were cutting up

magazines for an exploitation display which seemed to have been abandoned when I returned hours later. There was a table of homemade baked goods made by men (they weren't selling very well). The most concrete evidences of liberation that I saw were a policewoman in a practical pair of pants and a Good Humorwoman selling lots of ice cream (she did not have a truck, of course, just a cart).

The largest part of the crowd was comprised of men who were having a great deal of fun not taking the women's efforts seriously. Some male dialogue:

(male just arriving): "How's the circus?"

(laughing male): "There's more men there than women!"

(laughing arrival): "They're all doing what you and I are doing!"

(annoyed older male on reading labor department statistics showing exploitation of women): "That's because they're good for nothing. All of them."

(his wife): "Yeah. Good for nothings."

At that I took a break from the green, fed up with being on exhibit for the amused males. A lot of women were playing right along with them, laughing at themselves. A few, like myself, chose to ignore them.

Thus far no sign of any interest in gay women or even in single women with no sexual orientation. We obviously had no part in women's lib. No sign, either, of any gay women. We were there, but we dared not drop our invisibility.

I headed back toward the Exit through the Lower Green. Feeling trepidation at passing the workmen lunching on benches, I was ready when a man, possibly a drunk, possibly not, tried to get my attention. I ignored him, feeling guilty — after all, a human being needing help — then I realized for the first time that there was no need to

feel guilt. I had no responsibility to the male who was one of the sex which has made us weak and dependent on themselves! Asking for my help? No, mister, you did it to yourself; you're not going to make me suffer the slime of your failure. And I walked on feeling proud and strong that I was not like mister failure and that it might be just our differences which would enable women to do it all better.

When I reached the Exit I was excited by a sign outside calling for all gay people to demonstrate — until I saw with disappointment that the demonstration would be in New York, that the notice had no name, organization or even referral to a place for further information. Inside the Exit my depression was complete when I saw three tight little rap sessions going. One on abortion, one on child care and one on divorce. I had expected that there might be *someone* wishing to discuss woman's self-image and her relationships with other women. But all of the topics were man-based, just like all the women I could see.

Later, though, I did go back and saw a dancer do her own dance composition based on the suffering of women as the primary consumers in America. I also saw a Karate demonstration which said a lot more than the rest of the day put together. The women present reacted with laughter to cover, it seemed, the incredulity they felt when the demonstrator said again and again: "It should be possible for it to occur to women that you do have a chance against an attacking or annoying male even if he is much bigger than you." She said that it is part of the sickness of being a woman that when we are victimized we feel guilt if we defend ourselves, especially by hurting a man. It is hard to accept the idea that we have a right to defend ourselves when we have been taught that we are too weak to do so and that we are the non-aggressive half of "mankind" which cannot wish to hurt, even in self-defense.

And the gay women? Possibly one, who knew enough to leave as soon as informal discussions began again. I followed her outside, but she didn't hang around. Just hopped on her bike and sped off someplace where, I hope, she could be comfortable.

The feeling you get, as a gay woman, with these women's lib people, is that you're okay as long as you play it their way. I did not dare start talking to any of them because I could not speak freely. I'm the one with whom they do not wish to be

associated. Any honesty they might show could turn to gossip and ultimately endanger the economic security I have fought to achieve. This may not be true for many committed women in women's lib, but they sure aren't anywhere around New Haven (or Hartford, where the other Connecticut strike demonstration hardly happened). The few times I have experienced those interminable, depthless rap sessions there would always be someone who would make a timid reference to "queers" and affirm her own or the group's sexuality. Women's strike day was no different.

It is so lonely in a realm where the people you want and must turn to fear you, not understanding that you share the same oppression. Radclyffe Hall in *THE WELL OF LONELINESS* wrote of Stephen: "... she had not yet learnt that the loneliest place in this world is the no-man's land of sex." Whatever Hall's precise meaning, I felt that phrase over and over on women's strike day in Middlecity, U.S.A.

L.F.  
Connecticut

Dear Editor:

I know of no successful female communal society in history, and have often wondered if there ever was such a group. Some of my friends are talking of forming such a group. I have serious doubts it could work. Do you know of any such group today, or in the past? I am not, precisely, referring to Lesbian groups, simply self-contained groups of women. There are eleven of us, three of us are Lesbians, but there are no conflicts over this matter. My doubts stem from the way women are raised to believe that, at least in some areas, they are dependent on male assistance.

Name Withheld  
Ithaca, New York

*(Editor's Note: Yes, there was a wholly successful female communal society in U.S. history, and not so long ago at that. A large number of women were involved, 50 or more at the height of the colony and the group existed from 1866 till 1904. Indeed, in terms of numbers of persons, relative peacefulness and longevity, this was one of the most successful communal experiments in American history. An article about the group, "And the Ladies Gathered" by Lennox Strong*

appeared in the December, 1967 issue of THE LADDER. Back copies are available for \$1.00.)

Dear Gene:

I'm tremendously excited about the new transformation of THE LADDER. It's a most important development for all of us — Lesbians, "bisexuals", and straight women, that the magazine will now relate consciously to ALL women, and to the women's revolution for human rights. Wow! Congratulations. It's very exciting.

Enclosed is my check for a year's subscription — YES, I certainly want to receive THE LADDER regularly; how could I miss it?? Also could you send me another of those lovely subscription applications? I had to tear mine up to enclose it herewith.

Again, I want to send all my support and warm affection to you all on the new LADDER. It's just so beautiful to see women really uniting and beginning to work together across all our own barriers. You're beautiful.

With love and in sisterhood,  
Robin Morgan

*(Editor's Note: The bit of poesy following was sent to be used in THE LADDER as poetry . . . which it is not . . . but we felt you might enjoy the sentiment expressed as much as we did.)*

"THE LADDER" IS A LADDER

A ladder is a framework.  
Its usefulness depends  
On the strength of its supporters,  
And the balance of both ends.

A ladder standing upright  
Is a means by which one climbs  
For some constructive purpose,  
Or a better view at times.

A ladder is used to rescue.  
There are those who will admit  
If it wasn't for a ladder  
They would still be in the pit.

The name of this publication  
Has a meaning clear to tell  
THE LADDER is a ladder.  
Whoever named it, named it well.

GLORIA NICHOLSEN  
ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

Dear Gene Damon:


The changes which were made involving THE LADDER at the 1970 DOB Convention as reported in the New York DOB Newsletter aroused my curiosity. I hoped that they indicated a broader direction for THE LADDER. On receipt of the August/September issue of THE LADDER I was excited to find the changes I had anticipated.

THE LADDER's importance to Lesbians has always been unquestioned. It is now an important publication for all women. It will continue to serve the needs of the Lesbian and will serve us better for its identification with our straight sisters and for the lines of communication it will strengthen between the two groups. It has begun to have an important function for heterosexual women by, first, becoming available to them in its new and probably more palatable role, and, second, by adopting the educational task of exploring the common grounds shared by Lesbian and straight women. For any women whose interests are literary, THE LADDER has always been the best continuing resource for information about Lesbian literature. Now we can look to THE LADDER for coverage of literature relevant to all women.

In the August/September issue Rita Mae Brown's "The Woman-Identified Woman" is certainly the best article I have read about the relationship between gay and straight women. She has amazing insight and couples it with a clear, rhetoric-free writing style we need. The steps taken in your cover story and Rita Laporte's editorial have done as much, of not more, to unite women, to demonstrate the rightful pride of gay people as those germinal actions by women at the Miss America Pageant and by homosexuals on Christopher Street.

As a Lesbian, a women's liberationist and as a person interested in literature, I thank THE LADDER for changing as its readers change and for opening itself to all the women who need it. I thank THE LADDER further for making it possible for more women, straight and gay, to feel freer about contributing to as well as reading the magazine. Finally, I thank THE LADDER for lessening the division between women by weakening one more barrier created by senseless classification and thereby strengthening us all.

Victoria Pettway  
New York State



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to another generation"*

—John F. Kennedy

*The 'Hips Voice*, primarily a non-political,  
independent publication composed of articles  
sent in by its readers and sometimes reporters,  
is published bi-monthly in Santa Fe, New  
Mexico. It has been called a hippie newspaper.  
It is an underground magazine appealing to  
hard-core dissidents, effete intellectuals, im-  
pudent snobs, thinking people of all sorts,  
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and other assorted cool individuals.



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