

THE LADDER

DECEMBER/JANUARY, 1971/1972

\$1.25



THE LADDER

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.)

ADVERTISING RATES

Half Page	\$45	Back Cover	\$100
Quarter Page	\$25	Full Page	\$ 80

Repeated Advertisements at Reduced Rates

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE. WRITE FOR COST.

Published bi-monthly at Box 5025, Washington Station, Reno, Nevada, 89503. All rights reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the written consent of 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, Jan Watson, King Kelly, Ann Brady, Phyllis Eakin, Robin Jordan
Staff Cartoonist	Ev Kunstler
Art Columnist	Sarah Whitworth
Cross Currents Editor	Gladys Irma
Staff Artist	Adele A. Chatelin

CONTENTS:

Editorial: What Can You Do? by Gene Damon	4
Cousin Shirley's Complaint by Mickie Burns	5
Victory at Los Angeles (A Report on the NOW Convention)	14
Woman in Sexist Society, A Review by Hope Thompson	17
Warning . . . May Be Dangerous to Your Health! by Carol Dwyer	27
Poetry by Rochelle Holt; Jane Kogan; Adele A. Chatelin; Lynn Strongin; Alicia Langtree; and Nathaniel Jane Harrington	28
Journeys in Art by Sarah Whitworth	32
The First Sex, A Review by Hope Thompson	36
Ladies of Llangollen by Ellen Gold	38
Games, Short Story by F. Ellen Isaacs	39
Letter to a Friend by Anita Cornwell	42
Cross Currents	45
Lesbiana by Gene Damon	49
Readers Respond	53

COVER: Audrey Flack. *Self Portrait*. 1958. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Artist. See Journeys in Art, page 33.

Unless otherwise credited all illustrations are by staff artist Adele A. Chatelin and all cartoons are by staff cartoonist Ev Kunstler.

THIRD CLASS MAIL IS NOT FORWARDABLE.

When moving send us your old address and ZIP as well as new address and ZIP.

EDITORIAL:

What Can You Do?

By GENE DAMON

Many of you reading this are new readers of THE LADDER. You haven't, perhaps, heard our prior pleas for help in various areas.

We are always in need of writers. As THE LADDER improves in quality there is a tendency to assume that we have "enough" of all the talents any good magazine needs to survive. We do not; we are always in need of good non-fiction articles on Lesbians and on women's liberation. We would prefer that these articles deal with all women since the battle to be won must be won by all women. We also need short fiction, cartoon ideas, clippings from everywhere about anything connected with women's liberation and Lesbian rights.

When we took the step of removing THE LADDER from newsstands, many criticized us for doing so. The reason was simple survival . . . this magazine costs us so much to produce that we cannot afford to sell it at the newsstand rates. Since then, we have run into a curious phenomenon: a few bookstores are buying us at our regular subscription rates and selling us at the regular \$1.25 cover price, therefore making no profit themselves at all. We feel this means there is a pretty large demand in these areas for THE LADDER. If you are one of the women who is buying THE LADDER in this way, won't you please subscribe instead? We need your direct support.

We still receive letters from women asking how they can help, feeling they lack special skill. We always need typists . . . many of our best workers are now tied up in the indexing project which is an enormous task (THE LADDER is now into its 16th year and indexing 15 years of publication is the sort of undertaking that normally requires thousands of dollars and a well-paid staff . . . we are doing this without money and with an unpaid staff). We need new subscribers . . . if you have any friend anywhere who might be interested, tell them about us and get them to subscribe or at least to buy a sample issue . . . we can

sell ourselves when we are seen, but we haven't the money to provide the kind of publicity we need. You must be our "word-of-mouth" campaign.

Help us by being careful about sending in your address change the instant you have a new address . . . we must use 3rd class mail and this is a dubious means of circulation at best . . . you can help us by making sure we know WHERE YOU ARE. Another simple thing is RENEWING YOUR SUBSCRIPTION RAPIDLY. We provide you with a "first notice" and a final notice. If you can possibly afford to do so, resubscribe with the first notice . . . and if not, then the instant you receive your "final" copy and last notice . . . Every issue we get a lot of "late" renewals which means we must go to the expense of cutting your subscription off and then putting it back on. This costs money and time.

Many of our skilled workers simply came to us, came asking to help, and we are delighted to have them. Most of them are worked to death. Can you draw . . . could you help staff artist Adele A. Chatelin? If so, won't you let us know . . .? Do you know of any art work about Lesbians or with strong feminist overtones? If you do, Sarah Whitworth would love to know about this . . . won't you write and tell us? Do you have an idea for an art column for Sarah? Tell us this, too. Have you any cartoon ideas? You don't have to draw . . . just have a funny idea . . . and describe it to us . . . Ev Kunstler can turn your idea into everyone's fun.

We welcome and encourage letters to the editor and in the last couple of years have had more of these than ever before in LADDER history. Write to us about the magazine . . . what pleases and displeases you, and why. Make it concise and clear and we can share it with everyone.

And last, but never least, have you a few spare dollars in the till? We always need money. To make THE LADDER as lovely as it is takes all our time and energy and the extra worry over money is always there, so if you can donate a little without hurting yourself . . . do it. You won't give any more worthy a cause support in the foreseeable future.

Your turn . . . got any ideas I forgot to ask about?

Gene Damon
EDITOR, THE LADDER

Cousin Shirley's Complaint

By
MICKIE
BURNS

"Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime."

"Come on you groupie — piece of trash!"

"An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze."

"She's not the kind of chick you can like
stay with — a good shag and that's it."

"The grave's a fine and private place
But none, I think, do there embrace."

"He took me into the toilet. 'Baby, I'd
like to make love to you,' he said. I didn't
know he meant right then, right there."

"Let us roll all our strength, and all
Our sweetness, up into one ball:
And tear our pleasure with rough strife,
Through the iron gates of life.
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run."

"Come here with your va-gina, Di-ana."

*-Random selections from
"To His Coy Mistress"
by Andrew Marvell, 1681;
and from the film "Groupies," 1970.*

And they came, this year, last year, the year before that, huddled masses of groovy chicks to the south of Fourteenth Street, New York City, U.S.A., yearning to be anything but like their mothers were, yearning to be free. For although their estimable predecessors lived really quite commendable lives, one must in fairness admit they presented a colorless image with which to fire the imaginations of their young and vivid daughters. But now, now that they are where it is at, what on earth have they got? What do the adventurous daughters, these vivacious offspring, do that dear old, but a trifle dowdy, mom does not? Well, there's fellatio and anally and up the brain and frigidity all the same. Otherwise they cook (groove food) and clean (groove pads) and get knocked up (also a groove) regularly just like dear old moms.

I believe *Mademoiselle* and *Glamour* magazines make titillating claims that the big city is chock full of exciting new lifestyles for our young lady neophytes. There are, in fact, two. One can choose to be either a Lower East Side Chick or an Upper East Side Swinging Single. If you live in New York and seem to fit neither category, you are probably Lesbian and can't really be considered wholly female. Both lifestyles are equally, cheaply, and drearily subsidized through a hasty post-grad acquisition of typing and shorthand skills and through shoplifting, the distinction being that Upper East Side Swinging Singles live with five other airline stewardesses in a luxury high rise and the Lower East Side Groovy Chicks live relatively alone in a five floor walk-up tenement. Under the Lower East Side category there are a number of interchangeable subdivisions. There are acid-rock groupies, radical-revolutionary groupies, and psycho-encounter Reichian analysis groupies. The male counterpart of a groupie is called a guru. The gurus therefore are rock stars, revolutionary leaders and psychoanalysts. It would be an amusing experiment if the maternal antecedents of all Swinging Singles and Groovy Chicks came to live a few months, invisibly perhaps, with their daughters — to see how well their provincial or suburban philosophies apply. They would all contract laryngitis from saying, "I told you so," so often.

But as for me, I prefer to leave New York City for a while and briefly visit the provinces, to briefly return for Christmas or Thanksgiving or for a summer vacation to Obensburg, to the suburbs.

It was there I learned of an old wives' tale, an anecdote of recent psychiatric and social advances. Although some of the events to follow took place as long as eleven years ago, you must remember that nineteen-sixty was a very contemporary and highly-thought-of year.

I wish now I had never seen her again. I wish now I had not seen her like that. Will I never learn that life is not as Cecil B. DeMille would have imagined? The ex-Obensburg High (Class of '63) Football-Queen-Third-Runner-Up did not turn out to be even remotely similar to Catherine the Great or to Cleopatra. Egregious and diversified drugstores, as much as I admire and frequent them, produce few heroines of epic stature. I pulled up even with her station wagon hoping to look as ostenta-



tiously tanned and as ostentatiously ensconced in my sports car as I casually could. The point was to show her how well I had survived, to show her that I had returned nearly up to her standards. But when she looked around I saw. Her eyes as I knew them were gone. Her eyes were now soft, fragile, punctured, put out, — feminine. What had become of my old-time idol, the most unrepentant creature I had ever known? That wild child had been broken in, beaten, tamed, domesticated. There was a baby and a small child beside her on the front seat. It was like seeing the certain evidence of someone's having been irreversibly brain damaged after an automobile crash: the physical presence was the same but the person seemed to have been taken out. A zombie. I tried to make up for it by saying, "How are you, Joan? Do you remember me?" as kindly and as quietly and as humbly as I possibly could. The gasoline station attendant kept interrupting whatever else we tried to say to each other, wanting to know if we wanted our windshields wiped or if we saved stamps. When I pulled back into our driveway, Mother, in spiffy madras Bermuda shorts and rhinestone sunglasses, was lustily supervising a

balky neighbor boy in his oiling and starting of her little red tractor lawn mower. Over the starting whirr, Mother continued in an even more strident tone her berating and bawling at the unfortunate and sulky youth regarding innumerable but nonetheless crucial shrubs and plants. The poor sweaty fellow seemed grateful when my arrival provided him with a brief recess from his forewoman's scrutiny.

"Did you see anybody interesting when you were driving around, dear?" Mother inquired.

Old dormant instinct, the old habit of lying about Joan even after ten years' disuse almost made me say, "No, mamma, no one really," until I momentarily remembered that I was over twenty-one and Joan was no longer the little girl across the street that I was not supposed to play with. "No one special really, Mother," I replied in sly compromise, "But do you happen to remember Joan Carson? I saw her at the gasoline station. She had her two babies with her."

Mother needed no further prompting: "It's really amazing how fine that girl is turning out after all. You know she married that Buddy Carl Penrod, Carl Junior's youngest boy. They are really making a decent young couple: both of those children were baptized at our church and she and Buddy Carl are right down there in the fourth pew every Sunday. It's no wonder that girl got off to a bad start with that mother of hers running around with men and drinking the way those people did and leaving those children with just any old colored woman who came along. I always say a girl can never feel right about herself when her marriage is one of those have-to things; but that little Joan seems to be making as fine a little wife and mother as she can be, and that Buddy Carl really showed himself to be a man taking on all that responsibility, the way he did."

"Yes, Mother, she did turn out nice."

PART TWO

This is what I learned in Psychology 101: In the First Experiment, if the rat chooses the correct path through the maze, the hungry rat will be rewarded (reinforced) with food; if the rat chooses the wrong path the rat will be given an electric shock. This experiment compares positive versus negative reinforcement in the learning process.

Actually I had seen the newspaper clipping but had forgotten about it. And still in Obensburg for that week's visit, I was walking through the only large department store in town. Anderson's only competitors are the three brand new large shopping centers on the outskirts of town, nearer the newer subdivisions. No return to Obensburg would be complete without a drive to the river to look at the bridge or a stroll through Anderson's. Farmwives from the country, and women whose husbands have steady jobs at the factory, and, in recent years, even colored folks shop at Anderson's as well as the doctors' and lawyers' wives whom the clerks are more likely to know by name. In the china department, on the third floor, engaged girls' photographs are clipped from the society column of the local newspaper and placed on placards near a place setting of china and silver that the engaged girl has selected. I do not recall of any betrothed girl whose picture has appeared in the local paper not having her china pattern on display at Anderson's. There is, however, one way of avoiding all this democracy. The wealthier girls also have their patterns on view at Christine Ford's Gift Shop. Some teenage girls twitched and flopped, giggling and squirming (in that gesture known as flirting) past me in the aisle. The young ladies very much resembled amputated frog specimens from their own biology classes, reacting, though dismembered, to electric and invigorating stimuli. The source of their self-conscious manipulations, I began to discern, emanated from a blander-mannered male duo who sauntered past me, cockily attired in Obensburg High's black and red letter jackets. The fellows grunted at the young ladies in disdainful recognition, athletically massaging their chewing gum. The kids that age always look familiar whenever I go back and I was then as I always am, tempted to say hello, until I realize that they are probably the younger brothers and sisters of my own high school classmates and that the young manager in the credit partition, or that young housewife with a scarf over her curlers and the baby in the stroller I saw looking at the dishwashers on the fifth floor are more likely people I ought to have known. I have been out of college a couple of years now and out of high school a long, long time.

When I came to the shoe department, I thought I saw my cousin Shirley going back behind a curtain affair where shoe clerks

disappear to hunt the correct color and size. I waited for her to come out again so I could say hello when she finished with her customer. It was a civility. Cousin Shirley had never occupied much time and space in my thoughts. We were, on my mother's side, from a large country family of modestly self-sufficient Baptist farmers, an intellectually and imaginatively mediocre race that nevertheless reproduces itself frequently and fondly. Shirley was somewhat more typical of our generation of cousins than my brother and I were, coming from a more thrifty rural prosperity than ours, that indulged itself only in plastic doilies for the living room furniture to save the trouble of starching the old-fashioned crocheted antimacassars, and vast deepfreezers filled with whole butchered steers and hogs. Our other female cousins, like Shirley, habitually worked during school and immediately following graduation from County High as factory girls, or as clerks, or as waitresses in town until their marriages to young farmers or fellows from the steel mill. My brother and I, by contrast, were the only grandchildren who had always lived in Obensburg and who had been sent to college. I knew I would see Shirley and all the other relations at my grandmother's house when we went out there on Sunday, but I would not have wanted to omit stopping to speak to Shirley at Anderson's. Shirley was very proud of her position there. She had started out at the dime store and then at Walgreen's fountain, then at a second-rate shoe store, and now, as a matron with a five year old son, she had the classiest clerking job in town almost. The whole family felt proud and secretly not a little relieved about her because Shirley, even in a family that still put little stock in books, had a reputation for not being too bright and "nervous." I myself was once surprised at the halting way my cousin read her romance comic book aloud to me when I was still in grammar school and she was at least a sophomore in high school. Shirley as an adolescent had always been a lank-haired, washed-out, poor-white looking puddle of stammering inefficiency. She was a jerky, scurrying creature who made the customers ill at ease in spite of her obsequiousness, always making dressy ladies fret their clothes out of range of Shirley's soup plate deliveries, and gentlemen clutch their ties to the side. In addition to these defects, Shirley was "just plain silly as she could be about men" as my mother frequently obser-

ved. Everyone was surprised and proud Shirley had, at last, done so well. Now, although she was even at her best a non-descript young woman, Shirley had left off looking so shry-eyed and limp about things. My mother explained this phenomenon by pronouncing my cousin to have "matured late." The other aunts and uncles assented to their elder sister's verdict.

I myself observed that Shirley had even acquired that grinning syndrome of behaviour Obensburg and some of the major airline stewardess training schools refer to as "poise and personality." Shirley's husband, significantly, had even gone to college for a brief period where he had completed a few business courses and now worked at a white collar job. Shirley had accordingly learned to dress in the beige three-piece knits suits that Obensburg considers the height of discreet good taste in its salespeople, complete with scatter pin to the left of the throat and a prefabricated hairdo I can account for only by understanding that many of the town's hairdressers worked on assembly lines before going to beauty school. The last time I had been home and had seen Shirley clerking at Anderson's she had looked dignified and composed, hands clasped before her as she said, "May I help you, Ma'am?" to Anderson's patrons — just like any other responsible young matron of the town. That was why I was mistaken when I thought I saw her go behind the curtains to bring out shoe boxes. When the clerk came back out, she asked if she could help me and I said no thank you. She had her hair just like Shirley's and wore a beige suit. I started to ask the strange clerk if Shirley were out to lunch and then I remembered Shirley had had most of her head shot off and didn't work there anymore. I had even sent flowers a couple of months ago to my aunt for Shirley's funeral. Mother said the undertaker had fixed her so the casket could be open and if you hadn't known her, hadn't realized how she had died, you wouldn't have noticed anything amiss. "If you had known her," Mother said, "she just didn't look anything at all like herself." It was in the papers and very embarrassing for the whole family. According to Mother it was a trashy incident. Some man, a neighbor, had shot first Shirley and then himself. In just what the relationship between Shirley and the man had consisted was the subject of morbid and popular local speculation.

What would I have done without the lessons learned at my mother's knee? Without her perfect tutelage I might have persisted in the asexual idealism, in the confidence of childhood and learned nothing of the world. I might have gone on forever thinking I could come and go as I pleased or as my abilities would permit. But mother pointed out beforehand all possible directions I might choose to take and let me in on what would confront me at the end of each of them. Mother's religious faith led her to believe that whatever is (whether created by God, nature, or man), is for the best, a philosophy with which I have never learned to agree, and against which I have frequently rebelled. Even so, Mother predicted just what those insurrections would get me as well as where more conventional paths would lead. Nothing Mother ever taught about the way of the world missed the truth. Mother was even more horribly right than perhaps she knew. Don't ask my mother about "romance," she knows a knocked-up chick when she sees one.

When I was near puberty and having been soundly and graphically instructed in the use and function of those squarish boxes and ugly pink elastic "belts" waiting ominously for me on the bathroom shelf, Mother decided it was time for lesson number one on the Opposite Sex. At the time, I didn't want to hear another bloody disgusting part of it. All right, I sympathized, I knew Mother was only trying to do (as tactfully as possible) her duty to me, telling me all that clotty sex stuff because her mother had been too humiliated to tell her about it, but I was quite busy at the time, busy doing stuff like writing long passionate letters to the Hungarian Information Service, imploring them to let me join up with their revolution, imagining myself stringing dynamite along significant bridges at midnight, and charging enemy tanks with Molotov cocktails. Puberty could wait. I had to prepare myself with rugged training, I had to memorize codes and nitro-glycerine formulas, and perfect hanging by my knees, a skill I judged to be essential in counter-intelligence activity. I was a person of moment. I had importance of an international (however unsung and underground) significance that summer. But then it happened to me too and the only act of guerrilla warfare I ever engaged in was to sneak Tampax into the house. By autumn I had learned to curse God, nature, and the

Kotex Napkin Company in one and the same breath, and in a litany of hatred that I have not stopped.

Cousin Shirley was as good an example of "what men think of girls that kiss them a lot" as Mother could possibly have located — so went the gist of lesson number one. I was, I think, about eight years Shirley's junior when she came by the house as an elderly teenager wearing a white sailor hat that I admired. Shirley was wanting to show off her new boyfriend. He was some third-rate lingerie salesman or used car dealer she had picked up at Walgreen's, a bit too slickly groomed and distinctly too old for her. But he boasted a narrow moustache and a red finny convertible that had quite turned Shirley's head but not my mother's. After the glamorous couple left, Mother made a point to impress upon me that the man was probably married and that Shirley was a little country fool and was about to disgrace herself in some sleazy Ban-Ion way, and ought to have more common sense. And, I had to admit, that the man had leered at Shirley when her back was turned toward him with much the same contempt for her as my mother had expressed. So much for lesson number one: Men don't respect girls who do "what comes naturally."

PART THREE

In the Second Experiment, the hungry rat is rewarded with food whether or not the rat chooses the correct path through the maze. This experiment tests the effects of positive versus positive reinforcement.

Sometimes in the recent years before Shirley was killed, I used to wonder if she realized what all us other cousins, worse than that, what all the aunts and uncles and even our grandparents knew about her. Because we all knew in intimate and debasing detail about her history. That, I am certain, is the most outstanding thing any of us remember about Shirley except the extraordinary way she met her end. And I am sure she knew that we all knew about a certain little episode in her early adolescence. We are not a family that cherishes secrets and therefore, for all us girl cousins in particular, Shirley served as a livid example. Each of us found out at different times as we came of age, but we all knew and we all learned. But whenever I would be back home and see Shirley at a family gathering, I always wondered how my

hesitant and insecure cousin managed any shred of dignity before us all, caught as she had been, how she managed to face any of us much less become a reasonably calm shoe clerk. After all, she knew we all knew.

I remember how I found out. When Shirley was about to get married and arrangements seemed secure and final, my mother took me (I was thirteen and Shirley had bagged a man of more stable tendencies than last year's red convertible owner) — Mother took me aside to breathe her sighs of relief about my cousin's getting settled with someone "halfway decent" before she went out and got herself "in trouble." Mother and I were sitting at the breakfast table together looking at Shirley's engagement picture in that morning's paper. I was about to get lesson number two.

"Your cousin Shirley has really caused your Aunt Nila a lot of worry," Mother commented. I thought Mother was alluding to last year's slick-haired apparition with the red convertible or perhaps to some shadowy things I remembered about Shirley's being put back in school when she was supposed to start at County because she was having nightmares or something funny like that. But Mother had assumed the air of a person in possession of a lot more specific information than my general knowledge of my cousin could account for. Before Mother could proceed with her tale, she had to do moral weighty battle. Mother looked down at her hands and I knew this meant I was supposed to cut out munching my jelly and marmalade toast and show reverence for the moral weighty battle. How much more elevating conversations with my father always were, how noble and high-minded.

At length Mother hit upon her rationalization with such enthusiasm and inventiveness, she could have made me bet it was really the first time I ever heard malicious gossip in parable form. "Dear, you are growing up fast and have matured early (a euphemism for my bra size, I gathered) and there are some things I reckon your mother can tell you, that your mother ought to tell you. Now I am going to tell you something and I want your promise on the word of the Lord that you won't ever let this slip, not even to your cousin Sara Jane when she comes to stay with us next week. Your Aunt Nila, you must never let on now, your Aunt Nila (poor hardworking woman) had to take your cousin Shirley once up to Louisville, to their big mental hospital

they've got up there."

I was stunned. Bustling checked farm women with electric milking machines like my Aunt Nila were not the sort of sophisticates that habitually seek out the aid of group psychotherapy in the raising of their children. If my Aunt Nila even knew how to pronounce the word "psychiatrist," it was only because she had heard it on a television soap opera. My own mother was somewhat more knowledgeable, being of the class that would routinely consult a psychiatrist any time someone in the family did anything really far out, abnormal or bizarre, such as thinking of divorce.

"Cousin Shirley has been in an insane asylum?" I asked both incredulous and proud of having such a romantic adventure befall our prosaic family. I was exhilarated enough to thoroughly forget my jelly toast.

Mother continued, pleased with her effect. "It started when Shirley was having those nightmares she used to have, and your Aunt Nila didn't understand why she went to getting them so bad and then too she started to do so poorly in school. Poor Nila had gone to the school to speak to the teachers and the teachers said Shirley just couldn't seem to apply herself and was flirting with the boys all the time and not getting along well at all with her books. Then, one night your Aunt Nila was trying to calm Shirley down after one of her bad dreams and Shirley started crying and Nila told me she could just tell there was guilt written all over Shirley's face. Nila said she asked Shirley if there was something she ought to tell her mother and Shirley kept along bawling and finally she said, 'Oh, ma, I been playing with myself.'" As she quoted my cousin, my mother looked at me sharply, measuring just how well I understood. "She was just about the age then that you are now." Mother interjected. I knew what "playing with yourself" meant. I used to hear the boys in my class catcalling and casually accusing each other of it after school when the kids were hanging around waiting for their pals to get their books together and bang their lockers to. "Hey, hurry up and quit beating your meat," they would yell. The popular boys in our class used to buy *Playboy* magazines and my brother said that they would look at the naked pictures and play with each other's things.

There was more to Mother's story, "Why, your Aunt Nila brought Shirley over here that very night and I called our minister

and we all got down on our knees with Shirley and helped her pray. I told Nila that Shirley ought to see Dr. Breast, that nice new psychiatrist out at the hospital, and he advised us to get her into Lady of Peace. They did right well by Shirley up there; they are a lot more thorough than that old state asylum down at Hopkinsville. Leastways, I believe, I do truly believe, your cousin Shirley has learned her lesson." I wonder now if Shirley also learned from the learned Freudians at Lady of Peace that she was masturbating in the wrong place as well.

"Girls do not have strong sex desires like boys do," Mother once explained to me lying. "Ugh, no, of course not, Mother." I had prissily and promptly lied back. The difference between my mother and my cousin Shirley was that my mother had not been caught. Women teach their daughters as Spartans once taught their young. Spartan children were taught to be thieves — to be very skilled thieves — for it was at time of war a great necessity, but when caught, the children were punished by their own parents even more severely and mercilessly than would the enemy. That is the nature of the relationship between a woman and her daughter. It is the mother's duty to teach her daughter how to survive, to never get caught.

PART FOUR

In the Third Experiment, the rat is rewarded or punished erratically with no relation to whether or not the rat has learned the correct path through the maze. The result is confusion and sometimes schizophrenia in the rat.

I was still thirteen and on Shirley's wedding day I came home from the reception, eager to take off my organdy dress with scratchy seams. I put on my bathing suit and roller skates and went back out into the heat. For reasons attributable to the licentious holiday atmosphere of the wedding and to my mother's being heavily involved in helping my aunt with the preparations and the cleaning up after the wedding, I was not going to be very strictly supervised that evening. Mother was staying the weekend at my aunt's house in the country, my brother was gone off to play ball somewhere in the neighborhood, Father was away, and I was left in the charge of my mother's youngest sister who was still a teenager and who was going to have her boyfriend over to help her babysit

with me. I knew this meant she didn't want me hanging around inside the house and therefore could be trusted not to see anything unusual when I asked permission to spend the night just across the street with one of my little classmates.

I saw Joan sitting on her front steps drinking a Coke. She seemed to flourish on exotic meals of bar-b-que potato chips and soft drinks and was rumored to drink up the dregs from her mother's cocktail parties and eat up the olives. She once did a striptease for our brothers that I watched too. The boys sniggered about it over their Indian bead collection, but Joan seemed incapable and insensible of sexual guilt. She wore lipstick in the sixth grade and stained her lips red with popsicles in the fifth. All the girls in the seventh grade said Joan wore can-can petticoats under a straight skirt to resemble (although I must say this sounds far-fetched) a voluptuous Brigitte Bardot behind. Joan Nix had inscrutable, almond, coal-black eyes. I never saw Joan Nix smile at a boy even though *Seventeen* magazine highly recommended it. She never looked nervous or flurry-eyed in her life. She was nothing at all like my stupid cousin Shirley and her dumb wedding. Other girls in our class were afraid they would get a bad reputation if they were friends with her, but I saw in Joan a fellow victim of precocious puberty, a comrade.

My brother and I were strictly forbidden to enter the Carson house. I imagined it therefore to be an oriental den of iniquity. There were heavy shrubs in front and it was a stucco hacienda with dark casements. It seemed dark, secret, and exciting. Mother also discouraged our associating with Joan and her brother unless they were unavoidably included in the activities of the whole neighborhood pack of kids. When Joan was only six, Mother had caught her reaching into my brother's diaper.

I invited Joan to skate in and out of the lawn sprinklers up and down the block. We must have been beautiful little girls, we both tanned easily, and we both had on yellow bathing suits with bare stomachs. At sunset we clanked onto the Carson kitchen linoleum on our skates and turned up levis all the way.

"If I can see you, I'll let you see me."

"You have to do it too, you have to promise."

"You have to go first."

"No, you thought of it first, you said it."

"Will you tell?"

"I won't tell."

"Promise not to tell."

"I won't tell. I promise. I promise."

"Come on, you said you will."

"Don't tell, don't tell."

"I won't tell, I won't tell, I won't tell."

There was some trouble; we went our separate ways at school after the summer. She continued her career as the school whore. But I never stopped admiring her or her unflinching eyes. When she was in the yearbook as one of the football queen's court, I knew she was really the most beautiful of them all. She wore an eyeliner put on not with any hand that was ever destined to rock any cradles but with a hand more fitted for a stiletto. She looked out from the school annual photo unsmiling, scimitar-eyed, and I fancied, cruelly beautiful, so much superior to the wholesome blondes surrounding her. But then I always romanticize girls like Joan; I always unjustifiably expect them to know their way around.

PART FIVE

In the Fourth Experiment, the rat is rewarded at regular intervals regardless of the skill the rat may exhibit in learning the maze. This experiment resembles the situation in which a factory worker is paid the same amount weekly irrespective of quantity or quality of work performed as opposed to the piece work, incentive, or merit system.

I was myself a senior in high school, much wiser, sufficiently learned in sexual matters to tease and banter (and bait) with my mother about my good looking brother and the girls. I said, "Oh, Mother, I bet Michael isn't a virgin. Don't you bet he's not? You said yourself that boys have awfully strong sex drives and Michael is over sixteen already. He even has to shave." Mother was most unappreciative of my light treatment of the tender subject of her son's purity. Mother likes to pretend to a moral consistency that would prohibit a double standard. She knows better though. "I would be just as hurt," she declared, "to find out my little boy has gotten some nasty old girl in trouble as I would if my little girl came home disgraced."

"Oh, now, Mother, don't you think Michael has ever at least been to a whore-

house even once or done it with some fast girl?"

Mother cut me off, "Men have other ways of taking care of themselves without having to do with women." Oh, yes, Mother, I understand perfectly and they don't go to Lady of Peace when they are caught doing it either.

So that's what happened to slightly shopworn Joan. Fity she hadn't the advantage of my mother's subtle training. She grew up doing whatever she felt like doing. It was left up to the boys themselves to tell her just what they thought of her, to teach her just where she stood, to snicker when she had to get married to good old unlucky Buddy Carl. An intimate understanding of local custom is helpful in understanding the significance of being elected third-runner-up by the school's lettermen. The Queen, the first chosen, is very wealthy, pretty and a technical virgin, the first and second runners-up are slightly less pretty than the Queen but decreasingly wealthy and inversely virginal. Therefore, the second runner-up is from a rather shabby home but she makes up for it by having "high moral standards" and "being friendly to just everyone." The third runner-up is a special award, accorded the girl who really puts out and the lettermen are all grateful but they wouldn't want to go steady with her exactly. It is a tribute of specific implications, accorded to young ladies who are a bit scorched for having tried to outdistance the sun.

PART SIX

In the Fifth Experiment, the rat is punished no matter how well the rat learns the way out of the maze or no matter which path the rat chooses. The result is insanity in the rat.

But then, one can always escape the tedium of these provincial customs, one can always go to New York where everything, as they say, goes. It was there that I, two years ago, conducted a terminal interview with a Lower East Side Chick. Below Fourteenth Street is no place for a Lesbian. It is an uncomfortable place to even try to walk; the men on the street address the women who pass by as "holes" and if you don't consider yourself a "hole" you will not be welcomed there. I believe this is a semantic derivation of the word "whore," but since Lower East Side Chicks are not encouraged to be capitalistic, a more appro-

priate form of address came to be devised. I didn't, therefore, at all want to go down there but I was perversely determined to outline for Eleanor my objections to her "hole" role.

Here are the things in which Eleanor believed: the zodiac, mysticism, psychoanalysis, violent revolution, pacifism, boutiques, non-materialism, the legalization of drugs, the purity of food, and anything ever printed in the *East Village Other*. She was under the impression that these tastes made her an individual. They did not. In addition to those opinions listed above, Eleanor can be counted on to adopt any cause however self-contradictory that anyone who lives below Fourteenth Street is likely, at any future time, to think up. I haven't seen her since our last chat two years ago but I am sure that today she and her man-that-she-is-living-with are up-front zealots in the Gay Liberation Front. Eleanor is Jane Fonda, she is Mia Farrow, she is the collective consciousness, although I am not certain what Marcuse meant. She too will harness an out-of-wedlock and preferably interracial baby to her back and drag around a Greek shoulder bag. Eleanor is tie-dyed and tied-down. She would describe her activities as "getting her thing together."

I think even Obensburg will never be antithetical to the notion of a free woman as the alternate culture. It is curious how Eleanor's mother's homely maxims which always begin with "Boys won't respect . . ." fence off Eleanor's boundaries as definitely and as finally as they have Eleanor's mother's own. At least Eleanor's mother and my mother have quite a collection of electrical appliances to show for a service they have not performed with very much enthusiasm for twenty years.

Why did I like Eleanor in the first place and why was I messing around with a straight chick anyhow? Well, I had just moved and it was New Year's Eve and we were both bored. And she told me she had worked her way through college and I was very impressed and interpreted that piece of information to mean that she was aggressive and tough and therefore we had identical personalities.

And now, now, she was busy baking bread and her analyst had said I was not a good influence and Summerhill has never turned out one single queer, and just every girl there wears "hot pants" like she is supposed to. Bread baking was something

her psychiatrist approved of as being very womanly and a uterine activity. If there's anything I really hate, it's seeing another woman bake bread. And Eleanor knew I was coming over and she was doing it deliberately to provoke me. It was her little way of letting me know that anything two women have to say to each other is not important and furthermore anything two women have to say to each other can be said in the kitchen and not anywhere big deal like a conference table. Usually if another person is about to say something important, you sit down with them and look them in the eye. "You're nothing but another woman" was what the bread gesture implied. So there she was, damn her, during our severing conversation, baking bread and carrying on about her inner space and accepting her femininity and talking so ethereally I could barely hear her. I was annoyed.

"Well," I began, "how is the psychosexually mature female coming along in learning to perceive her orgasm in the armpit? Come on, Eleanor baby, tell me just what a bang-up job your groove can't decide just how long he's going to grow his sideburns this year psychiatrist is doing on you. I really want to hear all about it." Now, I knew I was not really starting off with the most ameliorating tone. But I knew Eleanor's new "unstructured" self too well to have any hope of altering her present views through either additional information or logical argumentation. Besides, as a veteran encounter therapy groupier Eleanor ought to have really been turned on by the mindless violence I had selected for my mode of expression; but encounter groups don't operate that way either. Encounter groups instructed amorphous felices that they, nevertheless, have an etiquette that is as elaborate as a Japanese tea ceremony. One of the rules is that only the opinion of the people in one's group matters; what one's friends, family or business partners say does not have any validity because others can never be as enlightened as groupers are, and frankness is a franchise of group therapy and no outsider has a right to employ it. Any outsider who raises any kind of objection is dismissed as being a Threatened Person. No encounter group or group therapy session is considered a success unless someone is reduced to tears at which point the rules say everyone else has to come forward and embrace each other. If

there are any black men in the group, the blondest woman in the group has to admit (weeping) that she is a racist and make it with the black man after the session, if not during. Lesbians are unwelcome unless they claim to bisexual tendencies and then do something very bisexual and very un-Lesbian right then and there to prove it. Humor is taboo because it is considered a cop-out. You've got to go around looking intense at all times. People who are not very bright enjoy group therapy very much because they can consider themselves to be superior in sensitivity to merely intelligent people, and they will tell you they get these tremendous insights. When you ask them what the insights are, they will say that they are non-verbal insights. Intelligence is another cop-out. And since Eleanor had been in all sorts of therapy groups, all of her sense of humor and all evidence of her rather superior intelligence had been obliterated. She was one wiped-out chick. Women have never been much encouraged to exercise their powers of rational thought anyway, and encounter therapy reassures them that they have none. Encounter groups as well as more conventional therapy groups are, although no one openly admits it, the ultimate in singles mixers. Someone noticed that women tend to fall in love with their psychoanalysts and out of this need group therapy and finally larger more casually organized encounter groups were formed to supply a more equal ratio of men. Just as in singles mixers, man is the predator and woman is the victim.

"Look, Eleanor, did you at least get the birth control pills yet?"

"I have had bad vibes all week and just couldn't make it."

"What kind of vibes are you going to have when you get pregnant? Can any of your fellow groupers get themselves together long enough to lay any bread on you for an abortion, or child support maybe?"

"My analyst feels the men in the group respect the integrity of my libido."

"You bet they do; they have had about ten penises up your twat in the past two months. Are you beginning to feel anything yet or are you just plain raw?"

"You are uptight, unaccepting, clitoral, immature."

"You are a free fuck."

"Why are you so threatened by my analysis, jealous?"

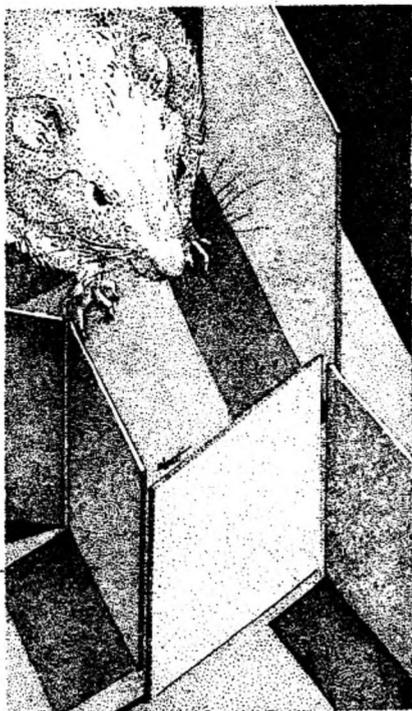
"I just don't like being lied about, like

how is it that whenever psychiatrists get to talking about women the uterus is considered useful and natural and the clitoris is not? My kidneys strike me as being at least as titillating as a goddam uterus. You know, *sweetie*, I wonder how men would feel if a female Freud came along and told men that they had not made a satisfactory sexual adjustment until they learned to achieve coitus by having their left ball tweaked twice and salt put on their tails."

Eleanor was not listening anymore if she had been before. I said goodbye.

How odd, I thought, walking down the stairs, I had been huge-bosomed enough to have been the object of pornographic speculation at 13 but at 23 was not woman enough for another woman to credit me with any knowledge on the subject. Eleanor had been to the best male authorities in New York. I hope they will some day find a cure for what they refer to as her frigidity. I wondered if cousin Shirley's psychiatrist ever taught her to accept her femininity before her brains were blown out. I got to the bottom of the stairs and saw that all exits were blocked.

In the Fifth Experiment, the hungry rat is punished regardless of the direction taken; the result is insanity in the rat. The fifth method is that most frequently used on us.



VICTORY at Los Angeles

(A Report on the NOW Convention)

The National Organization for Women (NOW), at its fifth national convention held in Los Angeles over the Labor Day weekend, took an historic stand on Lesbianism. Among the large volume of resolutions up for consideration by this pioneering women's liberation group was one submitted by the Los Angeles chapter that NOW officially recognize the oppression of Lesbians as a legitimate concern of feminism. It was submitted fast to the Workshop on Lesbianism, Human Sexuality and Feminism by Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, two of the founders of Daughters of Bilitis, together with a position paper. Though naturally this supercharged subject engendered some objections, it was amazing to see a number of straight people, identified as such, testify in its favor, including one board member who had recently been active in Lesbian-baiting. The workshop concluded by approving the resolution by a large majority. When presented the next

day before the general membership, attempts were made to dilute some of the substance of the resolution, notably that part referring to NOW's own bad record of Lesbian-baiting within the organization. However, this move to whitewash a bad record was pointed out as being a political ploy and thus not up to NOW standards. Once again, the final outcome was that the resolution was heartily endorsed.

That this resolution was submitted at all is one of the minor miracles in the series that lead to its ultimate and glorious passage. One Sunday in spring a gay/straight workshop, dealing with the relation of gays and straights to one another, as well as the relation of gays to each other, was held at the Los Angeles NOW Center. The real threat posed to the feminist movement by fear of Lesbianism, acting as a force for internal dissention, can be seen by noting the situation out of which this event emerged. This was the first formal confrontation

of the subject by this chapter in spite of two seemingly predisposing factors. First, the Los Angeles chapter has a large Lesbian membership. And secondly, quite recently there had been trouble in the chapter, provoked by alleged Lesbian-baiting within NOW; the chapter had been divided on political — not gay/straight — lines as to how best to cope with the crisis. Equally interesting is the fact that other feminist groups in Los Angeles, more open to radical issues in general than NOW, had also shown more open concern with the matter of Lesbianism. Undoubtedly all these factors played a significant part in the determination of the workshop to try to get a resolution on the subject adopted by the entire chapter. This was accomplished at the next business meeting. Some of the conservative members were absent and a few new members who were also radical feminists were present. Nevertheless, it passed by only three votes. Along with the subsequent decision to further submit it to the NOW National Conference was the formulation of a committee to write an accompanying position paper. This group, composed of both straights and gays, worked for many months to produce a truly outstanding document.

Though there was general optimism among the resolution's backers at the convention, there was also a realistic recognition of probable significant opposition to it on the part of some members. After all, a few chapters had experienced crises because of the purported "lavendar menace", and others had simply kept the whole matter carefully suppressed. But the most dramatic threat potential seemed to lie in the person of NOW's founder and inspiring genius, Betty Friedan, slated for appearance at the convention. At least that's the way the press, so prone to smell out and highlight issues seen by the public as controversial, saw it. Thus this opening sentence in Friday's (Sept. 3) LOS ANGELES TIMES article on the NOW conference:

Betty Friedan will be one side voicing her position on Lesbianism as it relates to the National Organization for Women, the organization which she founded. "It's a divisive, irrelevant issue and the red herring of the women's movement".

But the press did not go unchallenged. Clearly the response of outgoing president Aileen Hernandez in her resounding opening speech to the conference was a coura-

geous declaration of unanimity and undoubtedly contributed to the final passage of the resolution:

"The issue of Lesbianism has been raised by the press in a way in which this movement will not tolerate . . . We are in support of all our sisters and we expect all our sisters to keep their eyes on the targets of our movement and not be diverted by issues as defined by the press."

She went on to reiterate that the goal of the feminist movement is full equality for all women, and, importantly, full personhood for every individual in our society.

Because it is such an excellent exposition of the argument that Lesbianism is indeed a major concern of feminism, and because it must therefore have been instrumental in moving many to vote for passage of the resolution, I would like to summarize the main points of the position paper. It begins by noting that both the original feminists and the National Organization for Women a century later recognized as "the most sacred right of all — a woman's right to her own person." However, though NOW has been courageous in agitating for dissemination of contraceptives and birth control information and for repeal of all abortion laws, it has stopped short of clarifying its position on a woman's right to define her sexuality as she chooses. Specifically NOW has said nothing about Lesbianism. Yet the Lesbian is doubly oppressed — as a woman, and as homosexual. And the additional legal, social and psychological harassment to which the woman as homosexual is subject is directly related to her choice of a life style which excludes men.

Just as the false and demeaning image of all women provides the rationale to keep them subjugated, so does the distorted stereotype of the Lesbian sanction her persecution. Not only is she assumed to be unstable or sick or immoral; but because she defines herself independently of men, the Lesbian is considered unnatural, incomplete, not quite a woman — as though the essence of womanhood were to be identified with men. Obviously, this Playboy image of the Lesbian reduces her to an abject sexual object, deprived of the most basic civil and human rights due every person.

The paper continues by pointing out that many Lesbians joined NOW and worked for

Women in Sexist Society

A REVIEW BY HOPE THOMPSON

its goals. Yet while they were thereby brought to an acute consciousness of society's condemnation of their sexual preference, they also discovered many of these same prejudices among their own sisters.

Lesbians were never excluded from NOW, but we have been evasive or apologetic about their presence within the organization. Afraid of alienating public support, we have often treated Lesbians as the stepsisters of the movement, allowed to work with us, but then expected to hide in the upstairs closet when company comes. Lesbians are now telling us that this attitude is no longer acceptable. Asking women to disguise their identities so they will not "embarrass" the group is an intolerable form of oppression, like asking black women to join us in white face.

To the argument that the Lesbian question is too controversial to confront at the moment, it is pointed out that after all NOW is a reform movement, a stance not always compatible with "respectability". Susan B. Anthony's feeling on the matter is quoted:

"Cautious, careful people always casting about to preserve their reputation or social standards, can never bring about a reform . . ."

Also NOW's bold stand on abortion a few years ago, when such a stand was seen by the public as distinctly heretical, is also noted; it didn't weaken the movement then, and so it would not seem likely that a stand on Lesbianism would endanger it now. The final point, and perhaps the most persuasive one for the pragmatists, is the political argument.

We are affected by society's prejudices against the Lesbian, whether we acknowledge it or not. As feminists we are all subject to "Lesbian-baiting" by opponents who use the tactic of labeling us the worst thing they can think of, "Lesbians", in order to divide and discredit the movement and bring women to heel. Even within NOW, regrettably, this tactic is employed by some members who conjure up the sexist image of Lesbians and shout "lavendar menace" at anyone who opposes their views. NOW is inevitably weakened by these attempts to undermine the spirit and efforts of its members; we can no longer afford to ignore the problem.

The paper concludes by stating that the resolution does not mean that NOW's emphasis is changing, that it will hereafter concentrate on specifically Lesbian issues. Rather the resolution itself is designed to be an action — "the first step toward breaking down the barriers between women that have kept them weak and suppressed."

The whole of this paper was included in the resolution as finally passed as "Whereas" clauses. The resolutions themselves in their finally adopted form read as follows:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:
THAT NOW RECOGNIZES THE
DOUBLE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN
WHO ARE LESBIANS; AND,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:
THAT A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO HER
OWN PERSON INCLUDES THE
RIGHT TO DEFINE AND EXPRESS
HER OWN SEXUALITY AND TO
CHOOSE HER OWN LIFE STYLE;
AND,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED
THAT NOW ACKNOWLEDGES THE
OPPRESSION OF LESBIANS AS A
LEGITIMATE CONCERN OF FEMINISM.

Surely the endorsement of this document by the 1971 NOW National Conference is nothing short of a magnificent victory for feminism against the irrational fears of a sexist and surprisingly Puritan society. And it will long resound to the credit of NOW — that strange hybrid among feminist organizations, a "middle class/radical" group.

(Editor's Note: This anonymous report was done for us by a LADDER supporter and a member of NOW.)



WELL, DON'T YOU AGREE THE
NUCLEAR FAMILY IS DEAD?

WOMAN IN SEXIST SOCIETY, Studies in Power and Powerlessness, edited by Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran, Basic Books, Inc., New York and London, 1971, (\$12.50, 515 pp).

Despite the high pricetag, this book is worth every penny. It marks a turning point in women's liberation literature in that it is utterly serious — neither flamboyant nor outrageous. The 30-odd articles are intelligent and well written and cover such topics as: prostitution; women in literature; marital (heterosexual) and menopausal myths; beauty; psychology and psychotherapy; natural law; orgasms; advertising; textbooks; language; cross-cultural studies; women artists and executives; voluntarism; social work; the woman's college; women's liberation and blacks; consumerism; and, yes! an excellent article on Lesbianism. The only topic left out is women and religion. Some readers will complain that the book is too middle class, an objection that confuses articulately stated intelligent thought with middle class bias. Why intelligence should be equated with a bourgeois outlook and then damned as bigotted decadence I fail to see. There is no article specifically on class, probably because the authors feel, as I do, that class as traditionally defined has little to do with women and particularly with feminists, who see the oppression of women as swallowing up other oppressions. Women, taken separate from their men, are hard to put into male-defined classes and why should we bother to when class pigeon-holing leads to divisiveness — what the men of the Left like to glorify as war — class war?

I cannot say that every article is tops. One, "Women in Other Cultures," is naive in the extreme. The author, Ruby R. Leavitt, tells us that Burma has no women's movement for "in Burma rights for women are an integral part of traditional Buddhism . . ." The king and the headman . . . well, well, where are the queen and headwoman? Better still, read George Orwell's BURMESE DAYS for the truth about the status of women in Burma. More likely the reason there is no women's movement in Burma is that the oppression of women is too drastic for one to have emerged. Leavitt approves of Hopi society because it "is a democratic unit resembling

the ancient Greek city state" and "each sex has its place in a well balanced society." Where have women been worse off than in ancient Greece? And what self-respecting Lesbian wants to be put in her female place? Leavitt also assumes it was "man [who] began to domesticate the animals he hunted." It is more likely woman who took care of the cubs and pups left motherless by the hunters, but whichever way it was, why assume it was men who discovered animal husbandry? She does at least credit women with inventing agriculture, "a revolution of the greatest significance because it radically altered the way human beings had lived since they were proto-men." Proto-men? I have become very sensitive to this kind of male chauvinist language.

Some of the articles read as though the authors had never heard of the vast number of Lesbians and homosexuals in the population, but, encouragingly, others are not afraid of us. And, even where Lesbians are totally ignored, it is interesting to the Lesbian reader to note how often the institution of heterosexuality is at the bottom of society's and particularly women's difficulties. The articles do not say so in so many words, but it is hard to avoid this conclusion. I will point out these instances as I discuss individual articles in more detail. It occurred to me, since reading and pondering the book, that perhaps the authors were not unaware of the cupidity of heterosexuality but stopped short of saying so on purpose. While a book on sexism published in 1971 and intended for a general readership should, as the better part of discretion, avoid anything so drastic as a general criticism of heterosexuality, THE LADDER need not be so careful.

Kate Milletts has a very moving article on prostitution wherein two prostitutes speak in their own words, along with Kate and a woman who has worked in the courts where prostitutes are arraigned and sentenced and incarcerated. The impact of this article is altogether different from the usual antiseptic discussions of "the problem" by males concerned, in their lofty detachment, with regulating this profession and minimizing its health hazards, or with analysing the psychology of the prostitute as though she were a specimen apart from humanity.

One of the prostitutes sees herself as

better off than the married woman in that she is not dependent upon any one man and is hence freer. She thinks it is "compulsive marriage and compulsive families" that support prostitution. I am inclined to put the blame upon compulsive heterosexuality, and much of it is compulsive, as any Lesbian knows. The article offers no agreement as to a solution, but Kate's suggestion that the whole matter be removed from the criminal code strikes me as a step in the right direction. This would end the exploitation of prostitutes by police and pimps alike. The question left unanswered, even unasked in the article, is how can prostitution be eliminated as long as the male sexual urge demands it.

Kate tells of her experience in being forced to lie to her relatives: their ultimatum to her was to give up the woman she loved or they would deny her the money to go to Oxford. A sale in effect. The rich relatives were horrified — "a pervert in the family." Our funny heterosexuals! No matter how true and beautiful and steadfast one's love may be, if it is Lesbian it is worse than the most degenerate of heterosexual behavior. In the heterosexual ethic even monogamous love may be more horrible than perverted sex. Kate tells of recognizing a pimp at the Constitutional Convention of Revolutionary Peoples in Philadelphia. He was "resplendent in black beret, black leather jacket, complete with Panther badges. . . . but the pimp as revolutionary is a repellent image. Yet not all that surprising either during the nightmare Philadelphia weekend when Panther swagger reached a fever pitch of macho bully." Kate takes a poke at those movement women whose class guilt sends them "into frenzies of divisiveness" and poisons "the hopes of unity with a self-righteous missionary trip, which maunders on about the Third World and proletarian woman, using it as an opportunity for endless recriminations among former friends, all of them middle-class. . . . This sort of meddling folly would delight in converting the prostitute into flag and symbol, a movement idol." I too think it is fine that middle-class women, whatever that really means, simply accepted their past as neither here nor there for one cannot alter one's past and it is the present and future that count. It seems a terrible waste of effort to try to change classes, to pretend, for example, that one never got one's PhD and that one was somehow spiritually born in a ghetto. Those

who really were born there are far better qualified to tackle the specific oppressions ghettos inflict upon women.

Vivian Gornick's article, WOMAN AS OUTSIDER, in contrast to Kate Millett's, betrays a lack of integration between academic learning and personal experience. Perhaps it takes time to mesh one's formal learning with one's inner life and to discard what is spurious in the former to the female experience, what is true only for males in a male world. Despite this criticism, the article is interesting in its analysis of women in literature. "Women go mad. Men shoot themselves bravely, but women go mad. Hamlet dies, but Ophelia goes mad. Macbeth dies, but Lady Macbeth goes mad." I would have been happier with this article if it had clearly stated it was about heterosexual women. I cannot identify with this: "In woman the myth of violence takes form through the fantasy of rape. Women . . . shiver in excited fear over the prospect — real or imagined — of rape. . . . Rape is the ultimate death wish. It is the death wish operating at a level of self-sealing internalization." (This sounds magnificent, but not all of us even accept Freud's Thanatos or death wish and anyway, what does it really mean?) "The woman's dream of rape is that of being pierced, torn, violated, challenged for her very existence by man, her enemy; man, her brother; man, her lover; man, her other self." Is this really true for the heterosexual woman, or is it man's fantasy of the truth for heterosexual women? To me it all sounds slightly ridiculous and overblown. ". . . there isn't a woman alive who is not obsessed with her sexual desirability. Not her sexual desire. Her sexual desirability. Her inner life — no matter who she is — is, in many senses, ruled by the continual measure she is taking of her ability . . . to attract men." Well, I for one am not so obsessed and I am hardly unique. Gornick may be referring only to fictional women, though this is not clear, and I am not an authority on fiction. Yet I question that even fictional women are all so obsessed. Gornick's discussion of the character, Miriam, in D.H. Lawrence's SONS AND LOVERS, does not seem to me to be the only possibility. She says Miriam's mother, with her anti-sexual preachings, led to Miriam's being "arrested nearly in pre-puberty, worshipping and spiritual, repulsed by the carnal, displacing her erotic impulses onto nature, never growing to feel the force of sexuality fusing in her own self." This is

the story of many a repressed Lesbian. And many an unrepressed Lesbian is repulsed by male carnality. Miriam's warping may be a false suppression of heterosexuality, or it may be a suppression of Lesbian sexuality.

"The Paradox of the Happy [Heterosexual] Marriage" ends with "Could it be that marriage itself is 'sick'?" My penciled note to that reads "You bet!" . . . "It may come to seem increasingly anomalous that we must make women sick in order to fit them for marriage." This is indeed a momentous switch: the proper heterosexual woman is now the sick one — not the Lesbian as heretofore.

The article following this, "Depression in Middle-Aged Women," by Pauline B. Bart continues this general theme. The proper heterosexual woman may make it into middle-age only to fall apart then. Male MD's like to see this in their own sexual terms, imagining that the menopause somehow means the disappearance of sexual "potency" — their usual confusion of pregnancy with sexuality. This article, when it appeared in somewhat different form in TRANSACTION, Nov./Dec. 1970, was titled "Portnoy's Mother's Complaint" because "you do not have to be Jewish to be a Jewish mother, but it helps. . . . Since in the traditional Jewish family the most important tie is between the mother and the children . . . , the higher rate of depression among Jewish women in middle age when their children leave is not surprising." On a role ranking questionnaire, "No woman listed 'being a sexual partner to my husband' first, and only one woman listed it second. . . . they do not consider as important the roles that could be expanded at this time: the sexual partner role, the occupational role, and the organizational role." Pauline Bart's view of the role of 'sexual partner' as so desirable strikes me as terribly heterosexual. It would never occur to me that my primary importance to my spouse was as her sexual partner. I like to fancy that my importance to her is as the one person in the world whom she totally loves and who totally loves her. All our activities, including sex, are secondary to this fundamental union in love. Nor do I care to degrade this profound aspect of my life to that of a mere role. Bart concludes by pointing out that it is the "feminine women, the ones who play the traditional roles, not the career women, who are likely to dominate their husbands and children. . . . If, however, a woman does not

assume the traditional female role and does not expect her needs for achievement . . . to be met vicariously through the accomplishments of her husband and children, then she has no need to dominate them . . ." But then, I wonder, what need would she have for a heterosexual marriage? (One should not even ask this question, of course, but I find myself asking it over and over.)

Una Stannard tells us at the outset of her article, "The Mask of Beauty": "Whatever else is denied women, no one denies that they are better looking than men." Well, only millions of male homosexuals deny it. "A man's love is beauty deep. Beauty is man's only and sufficient reason for lust, loving, and marrying a woman. . . . Is it therefore surprising that even the great beauty fears a man's love will not survive her looks, and the average woman is convinced that no man can really love her?" I must be an 'average woman' then, except that a man's inability to love me bothers me not at all. ". . . every woman is pleased and secretly believes a man when he tells her she is beautiful." Hmmm. I'm afraid I've fallen for this sort of thing when a woman tells me I'm beautiful. Vanity is hard to escape.

Stannard sounds a bit upset that the culture, "far from conditioning women to be heterosexual by holding up for their admiration images of handsome men. . . . keeps women looking constantly at other women." This would be fine with me if the women held up to my view were not such simpy idiots. Stannard continues: "The culture, however, likes to think that women don't look at women in the same way that men do." As a Lesbian I know this to be true, but this is not quite what Stannard means. She means that women could be conditioned to be aroused sexually by voyeurism, as men are, or, in other words, that women have the same kind of desire for pornography as men, provided only it were turned around. (I suggest, if this be so, that heterosexual women subscribe to some male homosexual publications — plenty of nude males there for their delectation.) In this same paragraph Stannard makes the statement that "identification is one of the most potent forms of love; one wants to merge, with what one identifies with, become one with the beloved." Again, I find the statement true, but in a different way from what Stannard has in mind. I see this as a heterosexual

female type of love; this is the vicarious aspect of a wife's love. She marries, "falls in love with", the kind of man she would like to be. Not that she wants to be a man, but she would like to be that sort of person. The statement reminded me of my movie-going days of the 30's, when I delighted in identifying with Cary Cooper (no problem despite the fact that I was nothing like him) and the identification was complete. I fell for the woman right along with him. I did not fall in love with Gary - I was Gary.

"Perhaps the only women in the culture who do not despise themselves because they are women, are the active lesbians - at least those who don't imitate men - the many lesbians who look and act intensely feminine. They [these 'intensely feminine' lesbians] want to continue to live in the one-sexed world of infancy, in the cocoon of their mother's or their own unconditional love. Lesbians are merely more unadulterated narcissists than heterosexual women." Rather than grow about this bit of nonsense, I suggest "The *Butch/Femme* Question" in the June/July 1971 issue of THE LADDER, and leave Una to find her fulfillment in identification with some male. As she says, "Woman's mask of beauty is the face of the child, a revelation of the tragic sexual immaturity of both sexes in our culture." This is what heterosexuality hath wrought; can it do better?

"Psychology Constructs the Female" by Naomi Weisstein is an expanded version of "Kinder, Küche, Kirche as Scientific Law" first published in 1968. It is excellent and one "expansion" is a happy footnote: "It should be noted that psychologists have been as quick to assert absolute truths about the nature of homosexuality as they have about the nature of women . . . there is no more evidence for the 'naturalness' of heterosexuality than for the 'naturalness' of homosexuality. Psychology has functioned . . . as a buttress for patriarchal ideology and patriarchal social organization . . ." This article too cannot bring itself to see anything amiss in heterosexuality, but the implications are there. ". . . the fundamentalist myth of sex-organ causality has strangled and deflected psychology so that it is relatively useless . . . It then goes without saying that present psychology is less than worthless in contributing to a vision that could truly liberate - men as well as women." "Sex-organ causality" is a reproductive matter and who is to say it is anything more?

20

Maybe heterosexual "love" is a fabrication and the Lesbian is the human prototype.

Weisstein has a charming sense of reality. For example: "The most general and serious problem [in reasoning from primate to human behavior] is that there are no grounds to assume that anything primates do is necessary, natural, or desirable in humans, for the simple reason that humans are not nonhumans. [If so] it would be as reasonable to conclude that it is quite useless to teach human infants to speak since it has been tried with chimpanzees and it does not work." I have the gall to apply this reasoning to heterosexuality itself - why not?

An article on the socialization of women is part standard text and part suggestive of the hazards and pains of heterosexuality. The authors detail the standard upbringing heterosexuals inflict upon children, so that generally little girls become women and little boys become men and no one becomes a human being. "This all means that if the socialization demands made upon boys and girls were actually the same, girls would be in a better position to cope with the world than boys." Unfortunately, this statement is not followed up. Most girls conform and, during their teens "personal qualities, such as independence, aggression, and competitive achievement, that might threaten success in heterosexual relationships are largely given up." This does not speak well of heterosexuality. "In their relationships with their father and later with their boy friends or husbands, girls do not threaten the important and frequently precarious heterosexual sources of love." (Italics mine). "But sometime in adolescence the message becomes clear that one had better not do too well, that competition is aggressive and unfeminine, that deviating threatens the heterosexual relationship." One might question the value of a relationship that required so drastic a sacrifice from women and one might wish to see it threatened more often.

Heterosexual women seem to be caught either in conflict or in ambivalence. The authors define 'conflict' as the simultaneous desire to achieve a rewarding heterosexual relationship and to participate in competitive achievement. Ambivalence is the "simultaneous enjoyment of one's [heterosexual] feminine identity, qualities, goals, and achievements and the perception of them as less important, meaningful, or satisfying than those of men." "Most girls

effect a compromise, recognizing the hierarchy of their motivations and the appropriateness of their heterosexual desires." I can only conclude that the absence of heterosexual desires is God's greatest gift to women. The article ends with: "During a period of transition one can expect to see increasing numbers of women quelling anxiety by fleeing into a unidimensional, stereotyped femininity. . . . Role freedom is a burden when choice is available but criteria are unclear; under these circumstances it is very difficult to know whether one has achieved womanhood or has dangerously jeopardized it." We Lesbians, who are not directly involved in this transition, for Lesbianism is at least as old as Sappho, must expect a sizable number of women to flee us in fear and trembling and to form an anti-Lesbian backlash. As long as women are bent upon 'achieving womanhood' rather than personhood, they are in trouble.

"Natural Law Language and Women" by Christine Pierce is a most necessary basic analysis that points with humor to the myopic male vision of philosophy. What are the meanings of "natural" and of "good"? "The unusual . . . cannot be ruled out as bad; it can be alternatively described as 'deviant' or 'original,' depending on whether or not we like it." Good may refer to efficiency or to morality or sometimes to both, but sloppy thought often mixes them up. One might argue that heterosexuality is efficient, efficient for men, that is: it provides for unpaid breeders and child raisers. Whether it is morally good is another question. "We can no longer assume that fulfilling a function or role is necessarily good in any moral sense."

Pierce makes fun of Lionel Tiger, author of MEN IN GROUPS, (as did Naomi Weisstein). "Surely, however," she says, "Tiger cannot be saying that the male's propensity for bonding makes him better at political management." (When I read the book I thought this was just what he was saying.) "If the contemporary political scene is the result of our allowing unchecked biological propensities to assert themselves, perhaps what is needed is a more cerebral approach, more distant from the 'biological flow' of things. Perhaps women are needed to rescue men from being caught up in their anatomical destiny." Amen. What we must reexamine is "whether 'natural' values are good values. . . . a good bomb is one that goes

off, but is a good bomb good?"

Nancy Chodorow's "cross-cultural" article is less successful than most in this book. She, like most heterosexuals, is stuck on the necessity to grow up into either a male or a female, stopping short of growing into an adult human being. She uses the term 'bisexuality' as meaning that all people have traits of both sexes and she confuses male with masculine. The truth is simpler, but apparently upsets anthropologists: all traits that are found in both men and women are simply human traits. Making so much of the fact that homo sapiens comes in two sexes is (for me) evidence that homo sapiens is, evolutionarily speaking, still in adolescence. Most people lose sight of human beings, seeing only women and men, and, when a trait is common to both, get all involved in bisexual complications, in trying to explain how it can be that creatures so different as women and men can share some qualities.

Chodorow feels terribly sorry for men, "of the threats of bisexuality or femininity to boys and men . . . of fear of that womanly power which has remained within men - the bisexual components of any man's personality." "What it means, according to Mead, is that 'the recurrent problem of civilization is to define the male role satisfactorily enough,' both for societies and for individuals who must live up to these undefined roles." My penciled comment to this is: Oh, grow up! This kind of thinking about men and women leads me to question whether there is not something basically immature about heterosexuality.

"Organs and Orgasms" sweeps away much genital confusion with its common sense approach, but manages to avoid the taboo of Lesbianism. "Men, who have benefited greatly from both orgasms and babies, have had no reason to question the traditional definition of penis and vagina as true genital counterparts. . . . If people considered that the purpose of the female sex organs is to bring pleasure to women, then female sex would be defined by, and focused on, a different organ." True, but the trouble is that this gets dangerously close to the female sex also focusing on a different sex. I expect this is why we have women like Mrs. Hobbes (Cf. THE LADDER, April/May 1971, p 21) and Ms. Greer (Cf. THE LADDER, Aug./Sept. 1971, p 22) to reassure us that a full vagina during orgasm is after all very important. On the one hand, "Women know from

personal experience that there is only one kind of orgasm, no matter what name it is given, vaginal, clitoral, psychological:" on the other hand, ladies, "The clitoris may be stimulated to climax by a hand, by a tongue, or, particularly if the woman is free to move or to control the man's movements, by intercourse." (Italics mine). Heterosexuality is saved by the skin of the clitoris!

"Our Sexist Language" by Ethel Strainchamps is an excellent article and most interesting. "Several of our distinguished linguists - all male - have examined dozens of languages to see how their speakers' minds worked, but it has never occurred to any of them to compare the languages from the standpoint of their sexist quotient." More and more I am impressed with the fact that absolutely every area of knowledge, every academic discipline, must be restudied by women. We dare not take anything from the male body of knowledge as final. Otto Jespersen, a multilingual Dane, is a great admirer of the English language: "the most positively and expressly masculine [and] the language of a grown-up man, with very little childish or feminine about it." Strainchamps informs us that "the word *man* originally meant human being, but males appropriated it", as they have the word *homosexual* and now the word *gay*. "Later they came up with the word *wif-man* (now woman) for the other half of the race." This is why I for one like the word *Lesbian*. It cannot be taken over by males and it is not in any way derivative of a word for man.

Strainchamps says in a parenthesis that "there seems to be a fraternal bond among males that cuts across even class and race lines." No males have yet insulted other males by calling them females. This is going too far, even when maligning homosexuals, for whom the word of insult is *effeminate*. I find this bit of language analysis very important. As yet not enough feminists are aware that all men will stand together against women before they will admit "defeat," as they call it. In the interests of brevity, I will let the reader discover for herself what the article has to say about male embarrassment over the centuries with words like *suck* and *twat*. Amazing and enlightening. *Condom*, whose etymology is unclear, "was omitted from Webster's Seventh Collegiate Dictionary, an abridgement of the Third for college students, though, as the editor once boasted in a

letter to PLAYBOY, it does include *fellatio*, *cunnilingus*, and *soixante-neuf*. The choice of entries was obviously the result of masculine decision-making; males may find graphic descriptions of exotic forms of sexual connection more fun to write (and read) but females - the childbearers - would give priority to informing college students about more practical methods of contraception. . . . Everywhere you turn, even to the dictionary, you can learn about men. Finally, "Female homosexuality is looked upon as nothing more than an odd bent that isolates those so afflicted from normal social life and denies them the blessings of housewifery. The linguistically significant result of this less censorious attitude toward them is that *homosexual* is now understood to refer only to the nominally male. The common practice now is to speak of homosexuals and lesbians." We are almost there! I always speak of Lesbians and homosexuals.

"Patient and Patriarch" by Phyllis Chesler points to the striking similarities between marriage and psychotherapy. The article deals only with heterosexual women - perhaps Chesler is unaware of the existence of Lesbians? She recognizes the evils of patriarchy, but not those of heterosexuality for the many women whose problem is either how to cope with their Lesbianism or how to keep it from surfacing. I fail to see how even a non-patriarchal therapist who is ignorant of Lesbianism and its pervasiveness can help more than a fraction of her patients. Chesler cites a study that found that "white women who were never married reported fewer symptoms than white married or separated women." What should one conclude from this? that unmarried heterosexual women are better off than married ones, or that Lesbians are happier than heterosexual women, or a bit of both? I wonder when it will occur to such statistics gatherers that groups labelled women without further ado will consist of Lesbians as well as heterosexual women. It is unscientific to study a large number of women on the tacit assumption that its members are all heterosexual. In theorizing from such statistics it must be born in mind that they are "contaminated", so to speak, by an unknown number of Lesbians.

Aside from this assumption that all single women are heterosexual, the article is hard-hitting and fun. ". . . some clinicians, especially psychiatrists, prefer

female patients. . . . A male therapist may receive a real psychological 'service' from his female patient: namely, the experience of controlling and feeling superior to a female being upon whom he has projected many of his own forbidden longings for dependency, emotionality, and subjectivity and from whom, as a superior expert, as a doctor, he is protected as he cannot be from his mother, wife, or girl friend. And he earns money to boot!" In a footnote to this article I was surprised to find this comment by Konrad Lorenz, the noted student of animal behavior: "there's only one kind of people at a social disadvantage nowadays - a whole class of people who are treated as slaves and who are exploited shamelessly - and that's the young wives."

"Women and Creativity: The Demise of the Dancing Dog" by Cynthia Ozick first appeared in the now famous March/April 1969 issue of MOTIVE. For this not very logical reason I will not review it here except to say that it is delightful in its quiet humor. I sometimes wonder if the male of the human species is not the funniest creature on earth. Or is it that the most oppressed creature, i.e., woman, develops the finest sense of humor? Freud, that poor old battered bastard, himself said that a sense of humor, as opposed to wit, was the most mature way of coping with a harsh world. A woman can hardly cope without a well developed one. And, really, men are so funny. What other creature takes himself so seriously?

Elaine Showalter discusses "Women Writers and the Double Standard" as though all of them were heterosexual. The Lesbian who is aware of how many female authors were (and are) Lesbian will be angered. It is time we ceased to allow heterosexual women to preempt, to their own glory, our Lesbian artists. Showalter quotes with apparent approval a remark by John Fiske about George Eliot, "I never saw such a woman. There is nothing a bit masculine about her; she is so thoroughly feminine and looks and acts as if she were made for nothing but to mother babies." This is a compliment! (That interjection, a combination question mark and exclamation point !, is our newest punctuation mark in 300 years and is called an interabang. I find it very useful on occasion.) About the book, *Jane Eyre*, "many critics bluntly admitted that they thought the book was a masterpiece if

written by a man, shocking or disgusting if written by a woman." What would Showalter say of *Jane Eyre* if: (1) it was written by a femme, or (2) it was written by a butch?

The next article, "Why Are There No Great Women Artists" by Linda Nochlin suffers from this same difficulty. That is, the analysis of the obstacles facing the woman artist is entirely in terms of male/masculine versus female/feminine, whereas a large part of the problem is better seen in terms of Lesbian versus male homosexual. Why is it that Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo are accepted as homosexual artists while Rosa Bonheur, for example, must be discussed as though all her difficulties with society stemmed merely from her being a woman? Nochlin discusses Rosa Bonheur (1822-1899) in detail, all the while tiptoeing around the fact that she was a thoroughly masculine Lesbian. "What is particularly interesting from the modern feminist viewpoint is Rosa Bonheur's ability to combine the most vigorous and unapologetic masculine protest with unabashedly self-contradictory assertions of 'basic' femininity." I was born almost 100 years later and, until not so long ago, played this same game myself. Gertrude Stein, who was born in 1874, left her unmistakably Lesbian writings unpublished during her life. "While remaining cool to offers of marriage, she [Rosa] joined in a seemingly cloudless, apparently completely platonic, lifelong union with a fellow woman artist. . . . Obviously, the presence of this sympathetic friend did not demand the same sacrifice of genuine commitment to her profession which marriage would have entailed." And Nochlin continues, as a complete non-sequitur, it seems to me, with: "the advantages of such an arrangement for women who wished to avoid the distraction of children in the days before reliable contraception are obvious." What does the availability or not of contraception have to do with being a Lesbian? No. Rosa's worst problem was being a masculine Lesbian. Unlike George Eliot, she could not or would not be "thoroughly feminine [and look] as if she were made for nothing but to mother babies". And when will we get away from that asinine "masculine protest" stuff? We cannot hope to understand women artists while insisting upon forcing them into heterosexual male/female patterns. Too many are Lesbians, some more masculine, some more feminine. While I

have come down hard on this aspect of the article, it is in all other respects an excellent one.

Nochlin is not the least fooled, as are many so-called feminists, by hopes that men will welcome the liberation of women because it will liberate them too. "It is only the extraordinarily enlightened or altruistic man who can really want to grant — the term itself is revealing — equality to women, and he will certainly not offer to switch places with one under present circumstances . . . While some of the more enlightened slaveowners may have granted freedom to their slaves, certainly none of them in their right minds could have ever suggested in anything but a spirit of black humor that he might prefer the carefree, irresponsible, watermelon-eating, spiritual-singing life of the darky to his own burdensome superiority." . . . The article proceeds to debunk the theory that genius is some kind of inner substance a very few persons (generally only males) are born with. Genius is at least as much a social phenomenon. "What if Picasso had been born a girl? Would Senor Ruiz have paid as much attention or stimulated as much ambition for achievement in a little Pablita?"

Roslyn S. Willott's article on the woman executive is fine as long as it stays with what she really knows — women executives; it is weaker when she turns to the question of biological and behavioral differences between women and men. If, as apparently most women and men agree, men are more given to aggression and fantasy, "the combination . . . may be useful for developing ambitious plans and elaborating abstract systems and structures. [Like our Viet Nam venture?] But ambitious plans and abstract systems are ineffectual without the counter-balance of a sensitive perception of what is really happening in the real world and a sustained interest in getting a real job done." (Italics mine.) "Most working women perceive very clearly that their (male) bosses are not particularly bright." "When I was asked how I could continue work with such a massive handicap [9 months pregnant], the answer was easy: a big belly only interferes with tying your shoelaces; it does not impair your intelligence. Ask any man with one."

A paragraph under the biological differences section of the article disturbs me anew. If we grant that the differences between men and women are only minor

ones, why have men dominated for so long? One reason is that though "most women know that relationships are skewed, they also know that men have been taught to relate their ego needs to their mythical superiority. Destroying the myths would be destructive of many men. Few women are willing to undertake a destructive program even for their own advantage . . . With their emotional affiliations to particular men, they cannot lightly countenance the possibility of damage to them." I fear that this assessment of the situation is correct; that few heterosexual women can be counted on to go the whole way in the total liberation of women. Perhaps the women's movement must ultimately be carried on the backs of today's very young women and out-of-closest Lesbians of all ages.

I learned something I did not know from the article on voluntarism: that women excel at collecting money. What I wonder is, do they so excel only when they collect it for men? Or is the women's movement richer than I think? "Voluntarism is clearly exploitative" and is "more closely linked to 'occupational therapy' than to work." The author tells how "women helped maintain the stagecoach era in suburbia" by organizing many social services; "women organized themselves to plug every hole in the community dike." This struck me as terribly funny — that poor community dike!

Perhaps the most profound article (omitting from comparison only the article on Lesbianism — we have yet to reach the stage where Lesbianism is treated as it should be, as part of every discussion about women) is "The Compassion Trap" by Margaret Adams. The domestic paradigm of the family is present in the professional world; "Both family and professional commitments incorporate the insidious notion that the needs, demands, and difficulties of other people should be woman's major, if not exclusive, concern . . . The title of this essay was chosen to convey the idea that overemphasis on certain qualities and the social overenforcement of functions associated with them have trapped women into a false and basically untenable position." The social worker is a kind of housewife to society.

Adams analyses our exploitative society in a manner mercifully free from Marxist cant and hence all the more persuasive. "First, our society is primarily committed to destruction, of both obvious and subtle

kinds . . . Second, almost every human relationship operates from a baseline of exploitation and self-interest rather than mutual trust . . . Third, the time-honored function of reciprocal assistance . . . cannot be appropriately fulfilled today because it depends on a social cohesiveness and stability that are missing from today's scene . . . women's function within the family, and also its derivatives, the helping professions, are being plundered, not in order to keep a basically healthy society in shape, but to prolong the moribund life of a corrupt and decaying social order." In her quiet and reasoned manner, Adams lays bare the terrifying degree to which our society has putrefied. It will take time even for feminists to comprehend the degree of danger that now threatens humanity and, until the threat is thoroughly felt and articulated by millions of women everywhere, we will continue merely to cover over the festering sores with little bandages. (As I write this two men are tooling around on the moon in their little dune buggy. What fun!)

The stance of revolutionary protest, popular with so many Women's Libbers today, is not the answer. "Women who are currently the spokeswomen for their exploited sex must try to understand attitudes and aspirations that are at variance with their own. Otherwise, one brand of doctrinaire tyranny will be exchanged for another, alienating a substantial portion of women who are not yet ready for total separation from the symbiotic relationship with the 'dominant' male sex . . ." This is a tall order. We must practice patience and understanding in the face of our rage. "Two attributes particular to women have an increasingly important place in today's society: flexibility of operation and the capacity for intuitive awareness of personal and social phenomena . . . one of the outstanding contributions that the women's liberation movement can make to the overall revolutionary trend in this country is to set a model for non-doctrinaire policies and flexible goals . . . in a social setting that is unstable and unpredictable, men's power tactics tend to be outmoded and lack the capacity for adroit maneuvering, rather like the Spanish Armada when naval warfare took on a new style." And this is putting it mildly, it seems to me.

The last section of the book is about education, homosexuality (sic), race and radicalism. The sudden inclusion of a male

topic, homosexuality, under Social Issues and Feminism, angered me. The article, however, is titled "Is Women's Liberation a Lesbian Plot?" and is must reading for every Lesbian who still suffers from guilt and an apologetic attitude and for every woman who considers herself a feminist while smugly congratulating herself on her heterosexuality. I must resist the temptation to discuss this article in view of the length of this review, but I wish to quote the following:

"Lesbians are women who survive without men financially and emotionally, representing the ultimate in an independent life style. Lesbians are the women who battle day by day to show that women are valid human beings, not just appendages to men . . . Lesbians are the women who are penalized for their sexuality more than any other women on earth. Thus, it is no wonder that Lesbians are attracted to the women's liberation movement, are active in it, and feel that they are in the vanguard of it. If women's liberation does mean liberation from the dominance of men, Lesbians' opinions should be actively sought out, for in many ways the Lesbian has freed herself from male domination."

The question in my mind is whether heterosexual feminists have the courage to inquire into the relation, if any, between their oppression as women and heterosexuality. If they do not, if they must insist frantically and compulsively, that a man is necessary to their fulfilment and not merely a possible choice freely made, a choice that is questionable today when male supremacy is still firmly entrenched, then I fear that the women's movement of this century will go the way of the women's movement of the 19th century, after some amelioration of our slave status is accomplished. I find this prospect depressing, but I know that nothing short of a total annihilation of the human species will destroy Lesbianism and that once more Lesbians will revive the women's movement in the 21st century.

The article on education by Liz Schneider, "Our Failures only Marry: Bryn Mawr and the Failure of Feminism," is a good example of missing the point. Schneider sees the failure of women's colleges today as caused by their elitist approach and not because their female presidents, deans, and faculty must stay firmly lodged in their closets and vigorously foster

the heterosexual party line. The growth of women's colleges in the last century was a mecca for the Lesbian, but, as the last women's movement closed down, and particularly after World War II, when women hastened back to marriage and breeding, the many Lesbians on the faculty of women's colleges had to bend over backwards into a show of "femininity" to safeguard their very livelihood. The bind was on: educate women as well as any men were being educated, but without any real purpose. I fail to see what elitism has to do with it. Liz Schneider is herself letting her "elitism" show by publishing this well written and interesting article about educated women. Are we to cease educating women in order to avoid the charge of "elitism"?

"A woman's college that does not relate to the needs of its students and pretends that its education will solve the 'inequalities' of women within the society is dishonest." No college "relates to the needs of its [Lesbian] students." It may be that, if Bryn Mawr goes coed, its Lesbian students and faculty will be slightly better off in that they will be less noticed among the men on campus. My ambition in 1939 was to go to Vassar (why not Bryn Mawr I don't remember) where I would have been one year behind Mary McCarthy's THE GROUP. [Bryn Mawr has yet to subscribe to THE LADDER, though a number of coed colleges have. I predict that Bryn Mawr will be one of the last holdouts - THE LADDER in the Bryn Mawr library is just too dangerous.]

The last article I will review is the one on Women's Liberation and Black Civil Rights by Catharine Stimpson. I remain terribly puzzled by the oft-used phrase, blacks and women. Does it mean black men and all women, male and female blacks and white (or other) women, or does it ignore black women altogether? I wonder where a black woman puts herself in that phrase, blacks and women. She can, as often happens, be counted twice. One black woman elevated to a supervisory position accomplishes the same result statistically that the elevation of one black man and one white woman does for a company trying to prove its anti-sexism and anti-racism. This semantic confusion is of very long standing. In the last century Sarah M. Halleck thought a resolution unfair to blacks, saying "The negroes have suffered more than the women, and the women, perhaps, can afford to give them the preference . . ." If I

were black, I'd choose to consider myself a negro first in this statement. But, since I am white, I don't like the statement. To me it is reverse racism to put black men ahead of women. I see the fundamental division within humanity as sexual, not racial, and, not being racist either rightside up or upside down, I cannot include any male group as part of the feminist struggle.

"However", writes Stimpson, "I believe that women's liberation would be much stronger, much more honest, and ultimately more secure if it stopped comparing white women to blacks so freely. . . Intellectually sloppy, it implies that both blacks and white women can be seriously discussed as amorphous, classless, blobby masses. . . It also helps to limit women's protest to the American landscape. The plight of woman is planetary, not provincial; historical, not immediate." To speak of "both blacks and white women" is to leave out most of the human race, and even in the United States, to leave out Mexican Americans, Indians, Puerto Ricans, Oriental, Hawaiians, Samoans, and maybe more. I fear for a women's movement that feels it must include and labor for certain select males. This could lead to endless arguments: for example, should women fight for the rights of black homosexuals only or all homosexuals, i.e., for a percentage of white males, those who can establish their homosexual credentials. And where would we put men who say they are bisexual? That feminists should feel obliged to work for the rights of some classes of males distresses me. Let us work for all women first and, when sexism is a thing of the past, let us turn to other injustices.

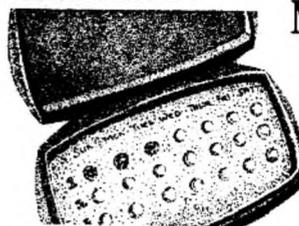
BACK ISSUES OF
THE LADDER
ARE AVAILABLE

Prior to October/November 1968, THE LADDER was issued monthly for the most part; we now issue six magazines a year. THE LADDER year begins with the October/November issue each year.

Where available, copies of each issue in Volumes 13 and 14 (Oct./Nov. 1968 through April/May 1970) cost \$1.25. Individual issues before that time are \$1.00 per magazine.

EVERY MAGAZINE IS NEW UNTIL
YOU'VE READ IT!

WARNING:



May Be Dangerous to Your Health!

By CAROL DWYER

comparison with about 1 in every 20,000 women not using them . . . it is concluded that oral contraceptives are a cause of this disease." From other studies reported here they concluded that cerebrovascular insufficiency can also be caused by oral contraceptives.

Although Vessey and Doll claim that smoking is not a factor in association between use of oral contraceptives and the development of thromboembolism, Frederiksen and Ravenholt, of the U.S. Department of State's Population Service, dispute this⁴. Their findings suggest that heavy smoking might be a reason not to prescribe oral contraceptives.

A more recent British study⁵ states that oral contraceptives have been shown to have aggravating effects on at least four conditions which, if present, do increase the risk of development of myocardial infarction at an early age.

A published American study⁶ we can turn to presents conclusions just as disquieting. The cases were 175 women aged 15 to 44 who were discharged alive from 43 hospitals. Diagnoses were idiopathic thrombophlebitis, pulmonary embolism, or cerebral thrombosis or embolism. Twenty-five per cent of the cases were attributable to oral contraceptives.

Every female should find it curious that recently the Food and Drug Administration, as a result of objections by the American Medical Association and drug manufacturers, abandoned a plan to insert into every package of oral contraceptives literature presenting "a detailed resume of the side effects and hazards, both known and possible, associated with the pill."⁷

The AMAGrams section of the Journal of the American Medical Association, August 3, 1970⁸, notes that the House of Delegates of the AMA objects to the insertion because it would mean a federal agency's "coming between a physician and his patient, and stressed the importance of making certain that such interjections are not extended to other prescription drugs."

In the very same issue of the JAMA, a few pages later⁹, is a one-page article titled

Why have we not seen more about the serious side effects of the oral contraceptive pill in women's liberation publications? This may not be of great interest to the majority of LADDER readers, but let us hope that the 7,000,000 American women who are taking the pill¹ are aware of the possible physical hazards.

Virtually all drugs, including commonly used ones like aspirin, have side effects for some users. What is alarming about the pill, which tampers with the body's powerful hormonal system, is the serious nature of the adverse reactions.

The occurrence of thrombosis and embolism is an area of principal concern and investigation. Thrombosis is the formation of a thrombus, or blood clot, within the heart or blood vessels. Embolism is the obstruction of a blood vessel by an embolus, which may be a blood clot or clots, air or gas bubbles, tissue fragments, bacteria, or other matter foreign to the blood stream.

Two British studies reported in 1968 provided some of the first disturbing statistics. Inman and Vessey² concluded from their study that "a strong association between the use of oral contraceptives and death from pulmonary embolism in previously healthy women has been established." The subjects of this report were married women aged 20 to 44 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Their estimates show that users of oral contraceptives are seven times more likely than non-users to be subject to risk of death from pulmonary embolism or cerebral thrombosis.

Vessey and Doll's study³ of British women aged 16 to 40 indicates that "the risk of hospital admission for venous thromboembolism is about nine times greater in women who use oral contraceptives than in those who do not." They estimate from their various data that "about 1 in every 2,000 women using oral contraceptives are admitted to the hospital each year with 'idiopathic' venous thromboembolism in

"Neurological problems linked to 'Pill' in 3 women." This is the opening paragraph: "Although the public furor over oral contraceptives seems to have cooled a bit, another scientific report linking 'the Pill' to development of serious neurological complications was presented at the American College of Angiology meeting in New York City."

Other adverse reactions of oral contraceptives are myriad and include nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, breakthrough bleeding, breast tenderness, abdominal cramps, bloating, nervousness, irritability, and change in weight (increase or decrease). Let us hope that women everywhere who are using the pill are being fully informed of these known adverse reactions along with the additional possible ones, and that they are getting thorough periodic physical examinations. One does tend to wonder why, as an alternative, more vasectomies are not performed on the male of the species. It is a simple operation with no side effects. The biggest scar it leaves is on the male ego.

REFERENCES

1. *Time Magazine*. December 7, 1970. p. 97.
2. Inman, W.H.W., and M.P. Vessey. *British Medical Journal*, 1968, 2, 193-199.
3. Vessey, M.P., and R. Doll. *British Medical Journal*, 1968, 2, 199-205.

4. Frederiksen, H., and R.T. Ravenholt. *British Medical Journal*, 1968, 4, 770.
5. Oliver, M.F., *British Medical Journal*, 1970, 2, 210-213.
6. Sartwell, P.E., A.T. Masi, F.G. Arthes, G.R. Greene, and H.E. Smith. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 1969, 90, 365-380.
7. Anon. *American Druggist*, 1970, 162, 39.
8. Anon. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, August 3, 1970, 213, No. 5, 682.
9. Anon. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, August 3, 1970, 213, No. 5, 699.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Indeed, those of you who are blessedly married to women or single may well wonder why a LADDER reader wrote this and why we are running it. Main point is that there are thousands of Lesbians who are married and in situations where because of children they cannot leave their husbands. In desperation most of them would resort to anything, including black magic, to avoid further pregnancies. The increasing use of oral contraceptives in the face of terrible certainty of its dangers seems important knowledge for these women to have.)

Poetry

Suicide was your suitor

in the gentleness of the city's autumns
in the quickness of your words
that day we met/opened your heart
for the last time

An invisible hand slapped a tambourine
the hour was yours

Still breathing the air you left behind
I light a solemn candle
and watch the flickering tongue
speak the words of a dead girl

O Anne
untie me from your roots

Adele A. Chatelin

how did you weather
the Christmas,
little one? —once
we promised
wherever we went
my thoughts flew off to Australia—
we could count on what
we knew we felt,
yes:
"If you need me wherever,
just call—I'll come."
yes.
we said that A long time ago
and meant it then, before
in the scramble
of His and Hers
children
ripped into Christmas
their laughing eyes
focus on Now
and what was us was sometime
packed away,
decorations too strange
for the present to view
Nathaniel Jane Harrington

I loved you once.

Just six years ago we met:
It seems like a lifetime.
Your flesh was the first I ever desired,
Your body an amazing continent awaiting discovery,
And I trembled to possess you.

But you, boldly offering
Then coyly withholding,
Spent our days like timid pennies
While I was longing to fling away a lifetime.
Night after night
You teased my lust
Until I wept.

Then I fell out of love
Out of frustration,
And suddenly you begged and railed
Wildly, with a despair
That almost won me back,
When you saw me leaving.

But I hardened myself,
Told you not to call,
That I had nothing to say.

You clung for three years
While I hated you for making
That simple thing that was my love
Long, difficult, and ugly,
And fell in love with you
All over again
Many different times.

But I left at last
And bade you go,
Wishing you luck.

The night before your wedding
You offered me your body
And vowed it was I
Who drove you into his arms,
Intimating that it was not yet
Too late to call it off,
And inviting me to witness the ceremony.
Both I refused.
Perhaps you counted on that.

A month later, on your honeymoon,
You followed me to a little town
At the edge where land meets sea.
Leaving your new husband in a rented room
You came searching me out.
We walked an hour in the fog
Talking, talking.
It was unreal.
Then we parted
With a brief clasping of hands.
And have never met again.

You sent me the birth announcement
A year ago.
I didn't know what to reply
So wrote nothing.
But now I am thinking of
Your Abigail,
Of what you wrote: "The name means
Father's beloved. I am
Beginning to like my baby; but
Michael is much better with her.
Dearest, if you want me
I could still get out of this.
I love you
As I have always loved you."

I loved you once my dear
And might have been your little girl
To hold and caress
— an idea you found charming
At the time.
But now you live with him,
He spreads your thighs and
Hears your moan: Hypocrite!
You have never loved men, but
Only pretended both
Desire and satisfaction.
And now you have a child,
A little girl of your own.

Abigail, I knew your mother well
And the fierceness of her desire
When, dreaming the world away,
We loved,
And she called me Darling.

Jane Kogan

Eulogy

Who is to speak of loyalty?
In the end,
she was probably the one who loved me best.

Her breasts are little,
are like very slim pears;
her memory

like the moon:
Now crescent,
now is eclipse,

Now—
trembling,
full!

Lynn Strongin

MOOD PIECE

This is bump weather.
Nevermind the heart's affections.

Colors are the colors of scooped clay:
brusque, burned, brunt, and bruise.

Soul recounts the cards
but nevermind the beat, relax:
nor the chimneys slumped
against the sky:

here's sundown:
slate color shouldering
the whole lump of a town.

This is bump weather, plain.

Just as that's a something cat
slinking across sleet street

in the rain.
Lynn Strongin

QUESTION

Emily,
was it for love
of a woman
you folded yourself away?
Did Higginson do to you
what my friends would do
to me?
Going through the poems—
changing every "she" to "he?"

Now the streets of Amherst
are frozen
in new frost;
the word of love
is lost
on my tongue.
At table, I bow my head down
in native modesty—
knowing not which way to turn
but only that the fire in the blood
will rage,
will burn.

Lynn Strongin

On the Beach

I was a fish
away from the sea.
I was awash on the shore,
absent from me.
Until a seashell woman caught Pisces
and balanced myth-shadow
with artistry.
Like the shell
who sings its knell
on the lonely no-print sand.
Like the waves
who wash the graves
where tall castles used to stand.
So too the soul
who seeks its shoal
on the isle where star-scrolls are bound.
When a single mind
can read strange runes
and understand
the cryptograms buried by drowning poets
in search of land and the love of her sister,
all on the same variation—

with her I am
woman
I am.

Rochelle Holt

Lost at 33

You wore your brother's pants and cried when
Daddy said you couldn't go, "girls play house."
Then you were six and she was pretty
(the friend called teacher), you ran and fell
to skin the knee so she would kiss it
"better?"

At ten you never cried, but rose from the
gravel cuts with a tom-boy grin—
Daddy was proud of his "boy".
But then it began—
some days were blood,
straps where free had been
"don't run wild-it tears your dress."

18 summers-black with rain-winters
cold and sickening like his hands
you ran wildly
shaking from the smell.
No longer seen you hid inside
a shell of musty libraries and
ivy halls and lonely nights of
pills and dreams of ending—
But, now you've come to me,
drawn to the understanding
in my eyes — your're right,
I know, and maybe-just maybe,
I can build again what "they've" destroyed
and give you pride in

What You Are

Alicia Langtree

The night ran out
of room for us,
as did your hand
of countries for my
kisses, so I trailed
them down
until your fingers
traced tranced
miracles upon
the walls of darkness;
even as they faded
giving way to day,
impatience and
the scolding birds
against the stubborn
closedness of our
curtains.

Alicia Langtree

In the morning, when the many
jeweled night wraps the velvet dawn
about her knees,

against the eyes of men,
and all the dark musicians have crept off
to lie in the cool shadows—Then
I love you best.
Then in the peace between madness
I can untangle me from your
rose-tipped snow and count
the rhythms of your sleeping (so
different from those of love)
in the first gold the dark mist
on my pillow is from black to iridescent
shining like black diamonds or hard coal—
shining too are your eyes in waking.

Then I must quickly hide you from the
growing light and the eyes of Our
Lady of the crescent shield—
for surely, surely She would take you
from me, binding each tiny foot with a
silver rose.

Alicia Langtree

You

fall upon me like the misting tears
that rain down from autumn's
ancient waiting trees.

I lean to you,
taking fully the need of
of your desire

aware

that because of my love
I, like the trees, will be torn by
winter's cold, biting claws.

to the trees—the claws of nature,
to us (and to our sisters)
the self-righteous claws
of society.

Alicia Langtree

AUDREY FLACK:
THREE VIEWS

Audrey Flack has achieved a certain renown for her paintings of protest and civil rights. *Two Women Grieving Over Kennedy Outside a Dallas Hospital* is one of this series and is especially relevant as it depicts two black women. The question of the black woman in art has yet to be raised seriously. For the most part, it is the stereotype of "Aunt Jemima" that has consistently been the most disparaging and this is not limited merely to American Art. Edouard Manet's 1863 *Olympia* is an early example, contrasting the white flesh of a female nude, (who appears the very epitome of the woman as sex and art object ideal) against the blackness of a negro in the background, (who is painted in an equally superficial manner as the prototype of an ignorant servant).

Romare Bearden, a black artist, writes in the introduction to the exhibition, "The Black Experience", Lincoln University: "Whatever increases the self-awareness of black people will therefore enlarge the opinion they have of themselves — as well as the opinion other people have of them." But this can operate in reverse when the mirror of self-awareness is one which distorts or maligns a self-image and art certainly has provided much of the propaganda that devalues the opinion of black women rather than enlarging it. In Flack's painting, however, the two women can very definitely be identified with the elevating way which Bearden defines, especially since the work also contains within it the idea of a black solidarity which, in this case, is the result of a unifying grief over the death of a leader who presented some hope for the black race in America.

But the beauty of the black experience is only half the value of *Two Women Grieving*. On a second level, there is a broader theme of friendship between women which speaks to us all. Although the figures are expressing grief in different ways, one crying visibly, while the other suffers silently, the hand clasp is a joining of the two in an act of mutual support and need at a time when both women are being attacked by the setback of a dream.

Whereas the concept of an heroic friendship between men has been consistently popularized in drama, art and literature, the experience of such a friendship between women is so repugnant to a male dominant society, that it is almost never acknowledged in art. But *Two Women Grieving* is more than a simple acknowledgement. The friendship depicted has real grounds for its existence. Unlike the usual portrayal of a purely sentimental attachment between women, this is a friendship of understanding and reinforcement that is a vital necessity to both individuals.

Ms. Flack's departure from old established cannons in subject matter is felt again in two of her paintings of women in old age. To quote the artist, the lady in *Tante Elke* is 88 years old, has worked every day of her life and kills chickens on a farm in upstate New York. How remarkable it is to see in art a woman of considerable years whose beauty does not depend on her youth, wealth or high breeding. We have always had "masterpieces" of dignified, elderly gentlemen, but in what painting, old or new, does the average woman, who has passed the age, defined by men, as sexually available, appear with any sense of personal power or vitality. We all know that such women exist more often as the rule than not, but even in their most outrageous attempts to present something extraordinary, artists have rarely seen fit to discard the perpetual glorification of youth. It is not uncommon for women of prominence to be honored in portraiture in old age but this too has its chauvinist beginnings. For, it is only when a woman is old and therefore considered undesirable by male standards, that she is willingly conceded a position of relative esteem.

Stylistically, Flack's insight is due, in part, to the fact that she works directly from unposed photographs which have a way of presenting life as it is and not as the artist might have it be. But her choice of photographs is the result of her particular interest in human form which concerns itself with the emotional complexity of a personality rather than with a more superficial vision of the characteristics of the figure's gender.



Audrey Flack. *Two Women Grieving Over Kennedy Outside a Dallas Hospital*. 1964. Oil on canvas. Collection, Edward Lamb, Toledo, Ohio.



Audrey Flack. *Tante Elke*. 1967. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Artist.

The traditional concentration on the curves of the breast and thigh, (essential in a more sexist representation of a woman), has been foregone in *Tante Elke*. In its place, there is an interest in the beauty of the network of lines formed by the wrinkles about the face, neck and hands. The face, squinting in the glare of the sun, is that of a human being whose personality is as complex as the creases in her face. The clothing and stature of the figure denote a woman who is her own person. Here sits a lady who might not hesitate to use a shotgun to ward off unwanted intruders, a woman who meets us on her own terms. Most importantly, *Tante Elke* is a confrontation of age and womanhood wherein the two are mutually enhancing and not mutually exclusive.

Mexican Woman, the second of Flack's works to deal with age, is a painting of an old woman selling oranges whom the artist happened to meet while visiting Oaxaca, Mexico. It seems fascinating that a person, who has lived her life in total anonymity, who, by the expression in her eyes and pursed mouth, is aware only of her own vicinity, may be portrayed in a painting that will be seen and felt by a great many people without her ever being affected by it. But of course, that is one of the possibilities of realist paintings that are derived from photographs, and *Mexican Woman* has utilized this potential fully and effectively.

Perhaps, it is the innocence in the

expression of the face that, played against the aging of its flesh, seems to present a paradox. And, behind the old woman, to the left, there is a young girl in braids who looks out at us skeptically from the corner of her eye with a knowing glance that alludes to an opposing idea of sophistication in youth. But both women, oddly, share a kind of belonging to their situation and environment that is so often absent in the perplexed faces of the masses going to and fro in our urban cities.

There is a striking consistency to be understood in all three paintings, when it is realized that Flack has carefully side-stepped, in each work, the necessity of painting a woman in terms of a definition of her sex. The focus of the work lies in the connection of the human being with her particular world or life-style without nebulous allusions to sexuality and without having to place her on some imaginary scale of "femininity".

Audrey Flack, as well as many other contemporary female artists, has not settled for an acclaim that may be labeled derivative of this or that male forerunner. These older works, as well as the recent paintings to be shown in her one-woman exhibition at French & Co., New York, New York (February 19 through March 16, 1972), underline her ability from the start to quietly and determinedly create a style and use of subject matter that is truly her own.



Audrey Flack. *Mexican Woman*. 1966. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Artist.

THE FIRST SEX

A REVIEW BY HOPE THOMPSON

Elizabeth Gould Davis has written that most rare of books, a book that stretches the mind and alters one's outlook upon the history of "man." In 339 pages of careful research into archeology, myth, the writings of the ancients, and obscure books from the dark, middle, and modern ages she has indeed made a case for the female sex as the first sex. It is a wonder the book has been published at all and G.P. Putnam's Sons (New York, 1971) is to be congratulated. I imagine that the men involved must be torn between desire to profit by the book and the horrifying thought that too many women may read it and take courage. THE FIRST SEX is a must for every women's studies course and for every feminist and makes fascinating reading for all people with even the slightest interest in human history. For me there is one somewhat unfortunate side effect - I have long enjoyed reading history and now realize that I have been reading a very distorted view of it. Davis gives a number of examples of the deliberate downgrading or omission of women in order to enhance the male sex (which needs it!). A most interesting omission, carefully documented, is Pope Joan (853-855). "Whatever happened, however, the name of 'John VIII a Woman from England' graced the papal list from 855 to 1601. In that year, Pope Clement VIII officially declared Joan mythical and ordered all effigies, busts, statues, shrines, and records of her utterly demolished and her name erased from the papal rolls." The Catholic Church had hoped to do the same with Joan of Arc, but the records of her trial turned up and spoiled that exercise in 1984, Orwellian "Gynikomnemonikothanasia", which means, "the zeal of masculine historians and encyclopedists in destroying even the memory of great women."

Before discussing some of the ideas and findings put forth by Davis, I wish to mention what I consider to be shortcomings. This is far easier to do than to bring together a welter of bits and pieces of truth men have not been able to destroy and to make of them a coherent whole that only the intellectually blind could ignore. Davis is ruthless in her account of the patriarchal distortions perpetrated first

by the ancient Hebrews and then by Christianity as it took over the Old Testament. If, as she seems to be saying, the plight of Western Woman is the direct result of Judeo-Christian religion and philosophy, what of the equally terrible oppression of Arab and Oriental women? It seems to me that, in the dim past when the peaceful world-wide matriarchy was gradually destroyed by the rise of patriarchy, that something must have preceded all modern (that is patriarchal) religions and that Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, etc., are merely reflections of this. Something occurred some 3000 or more years ago (Davis is not clear about such dates and cannot be until if archeology makes further discoveries) that led to the overthrow of the Goddess by the God. Her book will be most disturbing to orthodox believers of whatever religion.

Like even the best of the current books about women, this one suffers from the old heterosexual bias. While male chauvinism is deplored and exposed for the myth it is, heterosexual bias continues unabated. Davis's bias is accomplished by silence on the subject of Lesbianism. The word *Lesbians* appears once, in connection with their being burned alive during the middle ages. (Burning alive was reserved for women. Men were always killed first). The book assumes without fanfare that all women were, of course, heterosexual, despite the fact that known Lesbians are named. Much is made of the early Goddess's cult of the bull and it is assumed that the bulls' horns found in ancient tombs of great queens are phallic symbols. No evidence for such an assumption is given and I do not feel like accepting such statements without further proof. Freud told us that church steeples are phallic symbols. Not even a telephone pole can be planted without its being penile. A church steeple may be a means of announcing a town to the weary traveller or a means of surveying a vast expanse of territory. And a bull's horn may be a symbol of plenty to take with one into the afterlife. Or it may well be a phallic symbol and the explanation for the demise of matriarchy. As more and more women came to worship the penis - turned to heterosexuality, that is - they sealed their doom.

Was there ever a world-wide matriarchy dispensing peace and justice, where war was unknown and life, good? For

those, like this reviewer, who have always taken it for granted that women are superior to men, the evidence Davis amasses for such a Golden Age, the truth of the myth of Atlantis and the overthrow of a peaceful, world-wide civilization of the highest order by bands of marauding, barbaric males is convincing. For those - virtually all males and many females - who fear to question the superiority of the male, or even his equality with the female, will be able to find Davis's evidence unconvincing. There is something of a paradox here. If one accepts Davis's summary of woman and man, that "man is by nature a pragmatic materialist, a mechanic, a lover of gadgets and gadgetry"; that "man is the enemy of nature: to kill, to root up, to level off, to pollute, to destroy are his instinctive reactions to the unmanufactured phenomena of nature, which he basically fears and distrusts" and that woman "is the natural leader of society and of civilization," and patriarchy brings about "the uncoordinated chaos that is leading the human race inexorably back to barbarism," then it is not vital to prove the existence some 50,000 or more years ago of a golden age of matriarchy. Those of us who already know that women are the only hope of humankind, do not need the knowledge of this Golden Age of the past, while those who must cling to the belief in male superiority for reasons for personal psychology, will close their eyes to Davis's disturbing evidence.

One startling piece of evidence for some kind of great, pre-historic civilization is that "on seals dug up at ancient sites in what was Sumer, our sun is shown with all nine planets revolving around it." Pluto, the ninth planet, was not rediscovered until 1930. This sort of evidence from astronomy is not subject to much controversy, but another archeological finding "that startled its excavators in the early 1960's were the many pairs of female breasts that adorned the walls of the goddess shrines." How is one to interpret their meaning? This seems to depend upon whether one is heterosexual or Lesbian - or perhaps merely patriarchal, for it is often difficult to separate patriarchal from heterosexual bias. Davis says, "Ever since modern history began, men have been bemused by the mammary glands. . . . Breasts have been favorite subjects of poets, sculptors, and artists of all

stripes ever since masculine art was born." Hmmm. What about Lesbian lyric poetry? Davis states as unquestionable fact that "women revered both breast and penis as instruments of *motherhood*." (Italics mine). The fact is, we just do not know what those breast adorned walls meant. Perhaps the ancient matriarchs were Lesbians all. Why should we conclude without question that, since our present civilization is heavily heterosexual and is heading "inexorably back to barbarism", to use Davis's own words, that the Golden Age of matriarchy was also heterosexual?

Davis tells us that "maternal love was not only the first kind of love. For many millennia it was the only kind." How can she be so sure? Perhaps Lesbian love existed during all those many millennia. She continues:

"When woman, after she had tamed man, extended her love for her children to include their father, then perhaps man began to learn for the first time what love was. At least he learned to appreciate and be grateful for woman's love, even though he was [sic] not emotionally equipped to return it in kind. Eventually he came to depend on woman's love as one of the basic necessities of life. Yet she is still trying to teach him what love really is. For, as Reik points out, when men speak of 'love' they are really talking about 'scrotal frenzy.'"

Davis completely ignores, as though quite unknown to her, male homosexual love. Something seems out of kilter here. Women are still trying to teach men what love is and to men it is still just scrotal frenzy. Is this heterosexuality? If so, it is not a very tempting alternative to Lesbianism and homosexuality.



NOT 'TIL YOU SAY "AUNTIE"

Ladies of Llangollen

Mavor, Elizabeth. *The Ladies of Llangollen, A Study in Romantic Friendship*. London: Michael Joseph, 1971.

Reviewed by ELLEN GOLD

The romantic friendship was a relationship primarily shared between women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The two "ladies of Llangollen," Eleanor Butler (1739-1829) and Sarah Ponsonby (1755-1831) are considered by Ms. Mavor the embodiment of the concept. She explains the romantic friendship as a "relationship produced by the emergency of a cultivated and leisured body of middle and upper-class women in a society in which . . . the sexes were traditionally and culturally divided." It consisted usually of a withdrawal from society and a return to nature coupled with a devotion to intellectual pursuits. Sarah and Eleanor had just such a relationship. Fleeing from their Irish homes until their escapes were finally successful, they sought out a place to suit their purpose and found it in Llangollen, Wales where they set up their home.

There were other possible ingredients in romantic friendships. One was the inclusion of sexual love. Ms. Mavor suggests that the "tenderness, sensibility, shared tastes, coquetry" which manifested themselves in the journals and correspondence issuing from romantic friendships, are "what we would now associate solely with a sexual relationship." Yet the author was not able to say that the Ladies were Lesbians because there simply was not enough evidence either way. She does state that entries into the journals which she studied for this book "could be read as a code, as the only permissible expression of a yet more intimate relationship; or as the unconscious expression of the desire for such a relationship." She concludes that while the two were obviously Lesbians, a more technical investigation would be impossible because of their discretion, which was in itself another clue to the nature of their relationship.

The book, then, becomes both an important document in Lesbian herstory and a love story paralleled today, in its romanticism, only by Isabelle Miller's *A Place For Us*. It is fascinating to read the detailed description of the life of a Lesbian couple

in Great Britain in that time. Ms. Mavor has put into this book an exhaustive investigation of the journals, correspondence, geography, and herstory of everything and everyone concerned with the Ladies.

Their days were filled with country walks, work on their small farm, study of languages, and their nights with reading aloud to each other and talking at the kitchen fire. The two were also a strange, distant intellectual center for men and women from all over Great Britain. There are fascinating accounts throughout the book of visits from notables and a story of the Queen asking for a plan of the famous site. Their attraction for the public lasted long after their deaths as the house and grounds continued to be a tourist attraction. Personalities later than the Ladies continue to be attracted to them. Dr. Mary Gordon, one of the first women doctors to be trained in England and an author, began to have dreams about the geographical area the Ladies had occupied. This occurred in the 1930's and the Doctor wrote a book called *The Flight of the Wild Goose* describing her meeting with Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby in their spirit forms. Colette and Simone deBeauvoir have also written about them.

Ms. Mavor does not dwell on Sarah's personality, except to say she was apparently overshadowed by Eleanor while still wielding a strong, quiet influence on both their lives. She was their bridge with reality, attending to practical matters while Eleanor rampaged and offended other people at will. Sarah wrote verses like the following answer to a friend's warning of the "dangers of Poetry and Love:"

'By Vulgar Eros long misled
I call'd the Tyrant, mighty love!
With idle fears my fancy fled
Nor ev'ne thy pleasures wish'd to prove.

Condem'd at length to wear thy chains
Trembling I felt and ow'd thy might
But soon I found my fears were vain
Soon hugg'd my chain, and thought
it light.'

Eleanor Butler is described by one Lady Lonsdale as "very clever, very odd . . ." and the author describes her as having a sharp wit, but a "Gothic" mind. Her interests included "fossils; makers of Aeolian harps; geology; underground passages; the choice of a new Lama; witchcraft; ghosts;" etc. The one single portrait of Eleanor (included in a good section of illustrations)

shows a shorthaired young woman in riding habit and looking very cocksure and impudent, both attitudes being unthinkable in a lady of quality then. Eleanor does appear closer to the societal stereotype of a Lesbian than her lover and it was Sarah's relatives and friends, during their unsuccessful attempts to be together, who expressed doubts about Eleanor's character. She was also seventeen years older than Sarah and had a reputation of being "masculine and satirical."

The relationship of the two women to each other seems no different from those patterns evolved in relationships now. Eleanor Butler is surfacely the more outgoing, making decisions and doing most of the talking and is stronger and more active. Sarah, though, dealt with the "reality" mentioned before. An example given of this confusion of expected roles was of a time when the fireplace was threatening to set the whole house on fire. Sarah burned herself to stop its congestion and save them. Another involves Eleanor's fear (hatred?) of men. Sarah had to deal with them for, "in the pages of the journal strange men lurk as in nightmares." Theirs seemed to become the sort of relationship which naturally grows between two women unburdened by an attempt to keep to stereotyped roles: a fairly equal, give-and-take situation.

Besides the romantic, myth-like story of their "elopement" and the attempt to draw their characters, Ms. Mavor's book offers us

a much welcome exploration of some Lesbian herstory. Chapter Five, titled, "Impossibilities . . . whenever two Ladies live too much together." Beginning in 1789 the press of the day seemed to wage a minor campaign against "the latest unnatural vice" of women loving one another. Attacks were made on the Queen of France and the "sapphists" around her, on Mrs. Damer (a sculptor) and her constant companion Miss Farren (a comedienne), a Miss Weston, Anna Seward (later a friend of the Ladies), Eleanor and Sarah themselves and many others. The period is covered fairly well throughout the book and leads the reader to realize that there should be no doubts that Lesbianism was as well established then as now. Hopefully the historical sketch may inspire women to study further the period of romantic friendships.

Ms. Mavor is to be commended for her diligent study of the Ladies and their time. She has made them very real people and gives us the most accurate study of these two famous Lesbians. The book is very well written and will hold the interest of those not inclined to reading herstory or biography normally. It is an extended love story based encouragingly on reality. No one can dispute its happy ending. Sarah Ponsonby and Eleanor Butler were a Lesbian couple who rose above society's harassment to build and enjoy a happy and productive life together.

GAMES . . .

By F. ELLEN ISAACS

All the lights were out when she finally straggled into the house. Inside the hall, the darkness was oppressive, almost solid, cut only by three thin bars of light from a street lamp outside. She stood on the doorstep, hesitant, playing absentmindedly with the doorknob, turning it back and forth. The lines of light in the hallway amazed her, as if they made a real barrier, made of something solid like metal.

"Oh, I'm a gyp, gyp, gypsy. Been out a-wandering. And nobody's locked the door, oh."

She felt self-conscious in the dark, and sang silly jingles of thoughts under her breath to dispel the watchful silence.

"Nobody's locked the door. And anyone could get in. Anyone could get in."

Then, in her silliness, a fear of some-

thing going wrong, of something unpredictable, leaped into her imagination. A faceless anxiety jumped about inside her head, growing bigger. She frowned, and turned the frown into an exaggeration, making her face grotesque.

"We're just a bunch of irresponsible hippies." She giggled at her conscious clowning. The fear dispersed.

She stepped into the living room, aware of making an effort to move quietly, cautiously. She sing-songed her jingles of thoughts softly in the darkness, as if to soothe someone, to suppress the feeling that loomed up in the back of her mind, that filled the room with a presence, a watching presence.

"Oh, it's a good old house. And it's full of good people. Though we ain't got no money. And I'm the only one up."

She stopped halfway across the room, suddenly overwhelmed with a feeling of being alone. It was so dark and silent, it



seemed there was nobody in the house. She felt completely alone.

"I wonder if Tom got to his late shift on time. Poor old sorrowful Tom. And here's the gyp, gypsy back from her lonely wanderings. And nobody's up to meet her. Nobody's up. Nobody's even snoring."

She felt sad at the stillness now, awkward. The living room seemed unfamiliar, like another room she didn't know. She walked towards the doorway. There was a thin crease of light under the bathroom door. "Aha. There is someone up after all. See?" The heaviness of the night lifted. Behind the door the tap was running, steadily, sanely. She let the sound drown out her loneliness, fill her with a small, almost whimpering comfort, a connection with another being. She turned and quietly opened the door to the attic stairs.

"And now I'm on the first step." She felt the Wall with her hands, climbing up the steep stairs, narrow and closed in, turning at a right angle. The closeness of the staircase brought back the oppressive feeling. She held down a persistent thought nagging at her. The obsessive little whisper rose in the back of her mind.

"Will she be asleep? Shall I wake her up?"

What if she's not there? Stop it. Don't think about it."

She tripped on the stair. The sharp edge jarred her ankle. She caught herself with her hands, feeling foolish.

"Oh, our Gypsy's a real wanderer, alright." The mockery wasn't funny this time. It wasn't hers. It had been real, someone else's. Rudy had been sitting, sprawled comfortably, at the table in the pub. He was acting very sure of himself in front of the two young girls he'd picked up.

She had been angry at his easy powerful stance, and had tried to ignore him, acting bored, looking around the pub. One girl had turned to her, smiling, trying to make conversation.

"Do you live at the same house too? As Rudy?"

"Yeh. There's a bunch of us."

"And your name's Gyp?"

Rudy had interrupted. "Yeh, this one here we call our resident gypsy 'cause she wanders about so much. Now, get it straight. The one that she sleeps with is the household witch."

The two girls had giggled, cooly, at this. And Rudy had smiled, glowing at the attention, unaware of her frown. She had felt powerless to say something, to be angry.

"Why did I let that hurt me? Why did I give him that power to hurt me?"

At the top of the stairs, she felt along the ledge in the darkness.

"Goddamn, where are those candles? Nothing works in this place. No lights. Not even any goddamn candles."

She squinted into the dark at the far end of the room. She thought she heard a faint breathing through the buzz of the silence in her ears. The blackness was dense, almost liquid.

"Cass?" Her voice broke. She had whispered the name, fearful to make waves in the silence.

"Cass? Cassandra? Light me a match, will you?" There was no answer.

She felt suddenly sharply angry, not wanting to venture out across the floor.

"She's only pretending to be asleep." Quickly she stifled the malicious muttering in her mind, ashamed. She felt like shouting, like kicking the ledge, to make a noisy show of her anger, to wake up the house. She stepped out onto the floor, cautious against the creaking of the floor-boards, tense against an expected touch. Her attention was focused at the dark end of the

room, trying to find the source of the breathing she thought she had heard. She tripped on the edge of the mattress. In sudden relief, she knelt down, anticipating the connection with warmth.

"Cass?"

There was nothing there. She felt overwhelmed by the nothingness, tricked. Her throat grew tight, the buzz of the silence grew steadily to a high, thin whine.

"There's no one here. She's not here. And I called out to her."

The presence she had felt in the living room filled the space around her. She heard herself half-choke, half-gasp a whispered, "She's not here." She wished desperately for some light, looking into the darkness at the top of the stairs. She tried to be calm, to sound calmly irritated.

"Dammit. She's not here. Where the hell is she?"

She was straining to hear better in the dark. There were too many sounds now, creaks and whispers from the walls. Then downstairs, she heard a thump, like a door closing. She could hear her own heart thumping, feel the pulse under her skin. There was the faint click of a light switch. Somebody was humming softly, far away, in the kitchen. She felt her stomach tightening. She pulled off her clothes and hurriedly lay down on the mattress, quickly straightening the tangled blankets and sheets, holding her body quiet, tense for more comforting far-off noises.

"What the hell is she doing? She must be brushing her teeth. That's what's taking her so long. She's torturing me with this waiting."

She was alert to the sounds in the room. The house seemed to be breathing. There was a noise on the stair. The attic door opened at the bottom of the staircase. She could feel excitement bubbling up inside her, almost painfully. She held her body rigid.

She heard a match struck. A tuneless humming came phantom-like up the stair. Dust from the mattress tickled her nose. The vague round light of a candle flickered on the wall, the shadows swaying. The round light mounted the top of the stairs. She closed her eyes swiftly.

"I'm asleep. Where did she find the candles? I must be asleep. She'll be able to tell I'm not asleep."

She could hear the soft swish of clothes being thrown in the corner. Something made of glass fell on the rug, the sound

muted. She heard a whispered "damn".

Relieved, she rolled over, feigning a groggy waking-up, one hand over her eyes.

"Cass? Is that you?"

There was no answer.

"Have you got a cigarette?"

Unsmiling in the candlelight, Cass turned around. The shadows twitched about her face. Without a word she tossed a cigarette onto the blankets.

"You got a match too? Thanks. Wow, I am really stoned."

"Where were you?"

"Out drinking."

"Who with?"

"Rudy and Tom, and two girls they'd picked up. I didn't know them."

"Mmm-hmm."

"Tom left for his job. I was bored. I walked around the beach for awhile. It was nice. Too bad you didn't come with us."

"Yeh." Cass turned sharply, her voice was sharp. "Yeh, I know."

"It was nice." She put out her cigarette. "I didn't really want that."

There was silence. She laughed. Her voice broke.

"Hey you. Hey Cass, I'm really stoned. You gonna come to bed soon?"

There was no answer.

"Hey, you gonna put out the light and come to bed with me?"

"Yeh. Just a minute, Gyp."

She turned over on her side, noisily, trying to sleep, to keep still. Her head spun. She closed her eyes. She had walked on the beach earlier. The waves had glittered, small and petulantly. The water had been oily with the sickly shimmer of reflected street-lights. She had wanted to come home to bed, but had wanted to stay alone on the beach, torn between the two places. It had been cold.

"You're a crazy kid, Gyp." Cass lay down on the mattress. It creaked with the movement.

"Good night."

Gyp turned over on her side, electrified at the touch of the warm body.

"Cass? I really do love you. Let me love you."

There was no answer. Gyp threw the blankets to the bottom of the bed, and kneeled on the mattress. She marveled at the light that surrounded Cassandra's thighs, as if that was the source of light in the room.

"Do you know? I live for you." Gyp put her hands on Cassandra's shoulders, mold-

ing them, feeling the strength something to hold on to. All her anguish evaporated. Her back felt cold. She gently touched Cassandra's hair, stroking it back, as a mother soothes a child. Cassandra rolled over violently, noisily. She lighted the candle, found a cigarette and lighted it from the candle, lying back, breathing out the smoke with a sigh.

"It's no good, Gyp. I can't feel it. Not now."

Gyp felt her leave her hands, felt the absence. She shivered, wanting to touch, to silence, angry, not daring to be violent.

"You drive me crazy. First you want me. Then you don't want me. What the hell do you want?"

Cassandra turned her head away.

"It's just no use, Gyp."

"Who is it?"

"It's nobody."

"Why are you torturing me this way?"

"Jesus Christ! Torture! That's your game, Gyp. I never said I loved you."

"You said you wanted me."

"Oh, just leave me alone."

"Cassandra, please?" She was amazed at her anger exploding so quickly, at the whine in her voice.

"Cass, I don't want to fight with you."

"Look, just leave me alone."

"Why are you so cruel to me? Why do you play around with me? I love you. Don't you understand?"

"C'mon Gyp. Stop being so melodramatic. I'm not in love with you. I can't love you. I've told you. You're in love with some other person. It's not me you're in love with. I've told you. I just can't love. That's all."

"No. You hate me. That's what it is."

"Gyp? Go to sleep, O.K.?" She blew out the candle and turned over in the dark. "Just go to sleep."

Gyp turned over. Her mind was burning. She couldn't think. Some unconsciousness was filling up her mind.

She heard herself muttering spitefully.

"That's all you'll ever say. Go to sleep, Gyp."

She breathed out an exasperated sigh, very conscious of the act. She knew it was like this. She was amazed that she could play her part so well knowing that it was always like this. The room began to hum loudly in her ears. Then it subsided. She felt herself falling to sleep, bound into her despair, her certain and predictable despair. A small, sing-song whisper crept into her head. She knew the voice. It was hers.

"Hey, Gyp. Hey, Gyp. When are you gonna let her go?"



encountered, namely: Why in the name of hell do so many of our Sisters continue to let men use and abuse them to death?

Point number one: You claim to be "horrified" that I have sunk so low as to reside in a commune for women!

Sister, I *still* think you're putting me on for it would be one of the best comedy lines ever written, if you were *actually kidding*. But from the tone of the rest of your letter, I realize you are all too serious. And that knowledge is unbearable for now I am positive the brutalized existence that you've led these past seven years has finally destroyed the beautiful mind we both were once so proud of.

My dear beloved Sister, can't you see the innate horror of your saying that women horrify you? If you are horrified of being you, then what else is there left for you to be? And how can you be horrified of yourself and not of the forces that have destroyed you?

But then I suppose my question is absurd because if you are destroyed, you

can no longer cope with anything, let alone problems of being and non-being.

However, few things on this throttled earth are all inclusive and I refuse to believe that every shred of your once fine mind has been obliterated. So, to answer your question as concisely as possible, let me say that the smartest move I ever made was the day I finally realized the sheer absurdity of wasting my life energies trying to adjust to a male-dominated society which denies my very existence and came to this commune for women.

No, I am not trying to pretend your world no longer exists, for I know all too well that it still does with all of its sordid evils intact. And your letter certainly confirmed this as few other things have done so vividly recently.

Point number two: You wonder if *they* have corrupted me into turning into a Lesbian, and I say to you that not only is that a terrible sentence, grammatically speaking, but psychologically it's from way out in left field.

I suppose what you're really wanting to know is, am I sleeping with a woman? And the answer, dear Sister, is you can damn sure bet your last dollar I am. And life has *never* been sweeter!

However, I don't suppose there's any use in trying to use psychology to explain much of anything since, in the first place, psychology is no different from all other fields and sciences; it has been fucked over by men too long and turned into simply another vehicle for the destruction of womanhood.

But, if you think being a Lesbian is a form of corruption, then once again you are denying your own being. Because, my dear, you are a Lesbian whether you sleep with a woman or not. The mere fact that *your* society tells you that your sleeping with a man makes you a "straight" woman and not a Lesbian is about as valid as the crap that same society puts out when it says that because you are black you must live in the ghetto and/or because you are female you should remain chained to the bedroom and the scrub bucket for all your natural life.

Of course, since obviously you have swallowed society's dictum, you see nothing wrong with women being tied to the mop and the kitchen sink. In fact, you are proud of the fact that you spend three-quarters of your life doing shitwork because it "proves" that you are a woman. But how you ever managed to reconcile

slavery with womanhood is beyond my comprehension. True, we have always been slaves, but that only proves that men are slavemakers and we should be fighting like hell to break our bonds, not licking the boots that stomp on us.

I realize all too painfully that your condition is now so wretched that your using me to spew off steam is only a diversionary tactic. But what will you do once you've exhausted me as your scapegoat? Find another, in all likelihood. But why not start at the root of your disease? For the longer you ignore the problem, the more malignant it becomes.

Yes, I know I've said you have been "destroyed" and I am not backtracking one step. But as long as you are able to breath and write such long, unwieldy letters, you should also be able to either set up a plan of action which says you are no longer going to be the Chief Flunky and Doormat or else, walk the hell out and stay out.

And yes, I know, what about the children? Well, whose children are they? Society says they are his, so shouldn't they be *his* problem? At least as much as yours?

I suppose there's little value now in going over past history as to how you ever let yourself get stuck with seven children in the first place, when you knew almost from the day you said, "I do" that you were married to a sewer rat. Charming, handsome and witty (usually at your expense), but still a sewer rat who grew rattier as the years dragged on. So I won't go into *that*.

Point number three: Your marvel that I can manage to be so serene surrounded by white people when our people need me.

Well, now shit, let's not go back and do a re-run of the goddamn Civil War. And why do you find it so disconcerting that I should associate with white women when you are forever bragging about his many white friends. Male, of course.

And who the hell are *our* people anyway? Dammit, I am our people too, and where were the rest of them when I needed bread, was too ill to work and about to set up residence in Fairmount Park? I'll tell you where the hell they were. They were somewhere minding *their* business which is what I am doing now, minding *my* business which is what you had better be getting a head start on, minding *your* business before they carry you out feet first and arms wrapped in a straight jacket.

Let me say here and now, if my sleeping with a woman will mean the damnation of



LETTER TO A FRIEND

By ANITA CORNWELL

Dear Sister: To say that I found your last letter almost beyond belief would be an understatement.

However, I am happy to see that you've set your ideas down in a neat ten-point program, so to speak, because there's nothing I like better than clarity, brevity and order. I will try to deal with your *assumptions* in the order of your presentation. Then, if time and paper permit, perhaps I'll be able to set up my own program and I will try to shed some light on the darkest, damndest subject I've ever

our people, then *Hail to the Holocaust!* Because, honey pie, never again will I sleep with any man of any color. Men have fucked me over for the absolute last time. And I can say without reservation that any woman sleeping with any man on a fairly regular basis is prostituting her mind, her body and her spirit no matter what the relationship is called — i.e., marriage, living together, shacking up or what the hell — the situation is still the same, she is the slave and he is the king. And any time she refused to lick his ass, then he splits the scene or kicks her out or beats the shit out of her as he has so often done to you.

And, baby, don't try to tell me otherwise. You know damned well I've seen your busted jaw and blackened eyes and bruised body. Did you for one moment think I believed the lies you told about falling down the steps (except the times he's kicked you down those two steep flights)? And you have the unmitigated nerve to tell me I am living a *perverted* life?

Sister, let me tell you something. You are living in hell; and what's more, you know damn well that you are. And if that's not a perversion then there is no meaning for the word.

I have a person who loves me, who treats me as an equal human being, who respects me and makes every effort to try to understand me. And, needless to say, I am with her every step of the way. We have a genuine fifty-fifty relationship except that each of us is usually in there trying to give more than enough. Whereas you give fifty and he takes a hundred and fifty and you are forever left holding the bag.

You attempt to console yourself by saying society "approves" of your life style. Well, hell, of course it does; society is run by males, for males.

If you weren't so filled with the horror of your true situation, you would never have had the need to rake me over the coals. Aren't you ever going to start examining yourself as to just why you are so fascinated with my life? I must confess, it puzzled me for a long while since, obviously, we've had almost nothing in common since you married him.

It was tempting to believe that you simply envied me my freedom and my apparent lack of serious responsibilities. And that is what I thought for quite some time. (Of course, now is not the time to go into the fact that in my way, my responsibilities are as serious as yours, moreso, I do

believe. But that is not important to this discussion at the moment.) Then one day, the truth came to me in all of its blinding terror. You weren't just envying my life, you were living your life through me.

Which is why you are so disturbed by my living with women now and loving them the way I used to love men. I am doing what you would like to do but are too terrified to even think clearly about in any form or fashion. In other words, I am a threat to you. Or rather, my life style is; but I hadn't realized just how threatening until your letter came this morning. Nor had I fully understood why my relationship should concern you so deeply.

Then came the light. With this final step that I have taken, that of living with women (of a different race, and this too is crucial, and I may get around to discussing it one day with you), and sleeping with one of them, and enjoying it to the utmost, you are left in the position of either following me vicariously as you've done from the time your life style became a coffin, or, and this is your ultimate horror, you are forced to look down and find a way of your own.

But you cannot look down for you are standing at the abyss. You cannot retreat — except in your mind and we know what that means — and you cannot go forward unless you are able to construct your own viable bridge.

Revolution is your only bridge at this stage of your devastated life. But like all creative acts, revolution begins within the mind, and yours is so fucked over until, at the moment, nothing but chaos lives there. So stop wasting time writing me long complaining letters and getting stoned when you know you are only compounding the burdens that overwhelm you.

Mentally, you must break with your past seven years. If you can accompany that with a physical break, then so much the better for you.

Right now you are obsessed with me and my life-style, but as I've already pointed out, that is only an evasion of your reality. You are being pushed through the wall, and whether you want to or not, you have to do something. But the longer you postpone your action, the more fucked up you'll become, and finally there simply will be no more you. And that, I know, is the horror that walks with you at all times. I know because I have seen the depths of your terror in your glazed eyes when you thought no one was looking and have heard

the unguarded note of desperation in your voice when the horror welled up too suddenly within you.

And I have been driven to the point of madness, and murder, when witnessing such human degradation.

Indeed, you are correct, I was running from something when I fled to this commune. I was fleeing the terrors of desecrated womanhood that I saw on every hand. Our Sisters are casualties of a war they can never win so long as they attempt to fight it on the terms of the enemy.

For revolution is the only thing that can save us and it is really a state of mind. As long as our oppressors control our minds we are doomed. Until you are obsessed with the need to be free, you may as well continue in your same old rut which is really a bottomless pit.

For the sake of all those silent nameless Sisters who have been sacrificed on the altar of male supremacy throughout history, don't let your life be added to the list. If reality is too stark, close your eyes and take a giant step in the dark. Trust your inner self. Listen to the hidden voice that he tried to smother so long ago. It is still there,

otherwise you would not still be here.

But while only you can save yourself, we can give you that all-important support that your shattered ego so desperately needs. We can help sustain you with pride and with joy in our hearts for nothing else on earth is quite so intoxicating as freedom. So never listen to anyone who tries to con you into believing that your freedom must wait until such and such a thing has come to pass. Or that it is your "duty" to help so and so get their freedom first.

As long as we are enslaved, all of the other problems of this world will not only remain with us, but will become progressively worse. One slave can never free another slave. If charity begins at home, then freedom had damned sure better start there too!

If you would be free, you must first believe with all of your guts that *nothing* else on earth is more important than your freedom. And, of utmost importance, stop looking for a savior. Ultimately, you must save yourself. We Sisters must save ourselves. The Sisterhood is Powerful. So Power to the Sisterhood. You need us and we need you.

— Cross Currents —

WHAT NIXON DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT WOMEN: NEW YORK (magazine) July 26, 1971. In a line drive editorial, Gloria Steinem singles into center field using Nixon's head as the baseball. Along the way she handles many of his staff, including Kissinger, Rogers, et al. Fine fun reading.

A SMALL WORD IN PRAISE ALLOWED? SEX DISCRIMINATION ON CAMPUS: Special to THE LADDER. We are so used to damning the U.S. government for its failure, it is nice to note its efforts in a good direction. HEW (Department of Health, Education and Welfare) is looking into more than 250 colleges and universities in the U.S. for wage and hiring inequities in regard to women. This represents about 12 per cent of the total colleges and universities. That there is real muscle in the threats is covered in the July, 1971, issue of SCIENCE where the troubles of the University of Michigan are discussed. That school will either play fair or be put out of business.

SHIRLEY OR BELLA FOR PRESIDENT: VARIOUS SOURCES, August,

1971. Many articles sent to us cite the real possibility of Shirley Chisholm (D-N.Y.) running for President and the possibility of Bella Abzug (also D-N.Y.) doing so. Speaking of Bella Abzug, on August 3, 1971, she introduced a bill to authorize the performance of abortions and sterilization in military facilities without regard to the law of the state in which the facility is located. This won't pass, but it's a nice slap at Nixon. Also, on July 28, 1971, she introduced a bill to prohibit the use of any prefix that designates marital status or any title that indicates marital status.

NOW STILL ZAPPING THE ADVERTISERS: New York, August, 1971. The N.Y. Chapter of the National Organization for Women is campaigning for a more realistic image of women in commercials (a more realistic one of men wouldn't be bad either). They list LYSOL, REVLON, CRISCO, DODGE and MATTEL TOYS as prime offenders. We could list a lot of others and hope soon to bring you some cartoons based on attentive TV "watching with hatred". (This chapter of NOW is also responsible for an hilarious take-off on the

NEW YORK TIMES, called THE NOW YORK TIMES. One reading and you know pretty well just where women are in the world.)

MORE AND MORE PRESSURE FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT MEDIA: ALL OVER, August, September, October, 1971. In addition to the proliferation of clippings about women trying to get into baseball, umpiring, the FBI service, etc., there is also a lot of editorial space being given to the view that failing to grant equal rights to women is simply hurting all of us (yes, males included). A good one is the **WOMEN, LITTLE LEAGUERS AND THE FBI** in the WASHINGTON POST, August 8, 1971, which points out that women are people, that all women are not equally qualified for all jobs, that all men are not equally qualified for all jobs, and that restricting jobs by sex is stupidity rather than simple prejudice.

PATIENCE, PATIENCE - YOU, TOO, MAY SOMEDAY BE PRESIDENT: GALLUP POLL, August 8, 1971. Latest Gallup Poll Figures show that 66% of the queried in a recent sampling would vote for a qualified woman for President, 29% would not and 5% had no opinion. We suspect that before Patience gets to be President, her opposing candidate might have to be Faith, Hope or Charity.

POLITICS IS WHERE IT'S AT: ALL OVER, August and September, 1971. Clippings from everywhere show that the new women's political caucus, along with NOW and WEAL (National Organization for Women and Women's Equity Action League) is attracting both attention and support. Women with political power will be noticed, we predict. Along this line we note the case of Allison Palmer, a Foreign Service Officer for the State Department for 10 years. Allison repeatedly was kept from Embassy posts for which she was the most qualified person (she is THE expert on Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research) and she has now gone to court and won. She considers the victory annoying, though, since it is the law that you cannot discriminate against women, and insists that this is not some great thing. On being asked about posting women to the above listed countries in view of the extreme sexism in them, she advised calling "the State Department expert on these matters, and that's me".

WHY NOT BEAUTY AND SUCCESS?

NEWSWEEK, August 16, 1971. A not too bright male (and a very unsympathetic one) did a fair article on Gloria Steinem. In an effort to make her appear less than what she is, he left tell-tale tracks, but if you are used to reading around media distortion, this is a good look at a dynamic woman who has been sought by the spotlight rather than seeking it.

WOMEN MARCH ON WOMEN'S DAY, August 26, 1971. In N.Y.C. some 10,000 women marched and/or conducted sit-ins, walk-ins and harassments on this 51st anniversary of our obtaining the right to vote. At Central Park's 72nd Street Mall some 7,000 to 8,000 women listened to 16 speakers. Unlike last year when the Socialist Worker's Party was the most dominant organizing group, this year's dominant women's political caucuses. Four Lesbians spoke, though there is evidence they were not "planned" speakers. Smaller groups ranging downward from 500 women in Chicago (and lesser in San Francisco, Los Angeles, etc.) held rallies in other cities in the U.S. Many women have commented that their attention is wholly absorbed by the splintering groups working on abortion reform (abolition of all laws).

HAIL TO THE WOMEN! NEW YORK POST, August 27, 1971. An anonymous helper sent us this fine editorial from the Post, urging passage of the equal rights amendment and more importantly urging the movement to recruit the "faint hearted" women in small towns and rural areas to insure success of the women's liberation movement particularly in economic, political and job arenas. We do not get much from the NEW YORK POST and would welcome more from the woman who sent this to us, assuming she reads it regularly.

A WOMAN'S NIGHTMARE: THE FEAR OF RAPE: WASHINGTON POST, August 27, 1971. Nicholas von Hoffman, author of the above-titled article, may well have put himself on the side of the angels. Beginning with a good look at the constant daily oppression of women he soon rolls into a vitriolic blast at the male sex in general for the overwhelming incidence of rape. It is becoming a major national problem of such magnitude that even MEN are concerned. Fancy that.

THE SERIOUS BATTLE OVER LANGUAGE: NEW YORK TIMES, August 29, 1971. Columnist Israel Shenker, in an article called "Is It Possible for a Woman to

Manhandle the King's English?", discusses Varda One (of EVERYWOMAN) and her battle to change the language into one not demeaning to all women. The article is excellent, despite the title. Read it - all libraries carry NEW YORK TIMES on microfilm these days.

DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL ENEMIES: Columnist Sidney Callahan, who works for NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER, has been flexing her muscles rather viciously about women's liberation this past year, and worse, she flatly lies about the "stance" of various groups. While we are, of course, trying for sisterhood, there ought to be no question that there will always be women like Sidney Callahan (until after the revolution, of course).

BETTY FRIEDAN CALLS LESBIANS "ENEMIES" OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT: L.A. TIMES, September 1, 1971. In a telephone interview held before the National NOW conference in Los Angeles, Ms. Friedan, in her usual manner, spoke out against Lesbians. She was on her way into hostile territory, though, for the Los Angeles Chapter of NOW adopted a pro-Lesbian resolution on May 18, 1971. Very brave.

BACKWARD TURN BACKWARD OH TIME . . . OKLAHOMA CITY, September 2, 1971. Sexual relations between two females are a violation of Oklahoma law, the State Court of Criminal Appeals ruled in the first ruling on the law since statehood. Judge Hez Bussey said such an act was a "crime against nature" under Oklahoma statutes. The ruling was used to keep a woman in jail for four years. Think about that.

UNDERPAID A MERE \$3,473 LESS THAN EQUALLY QUALIFIED MALES. September 5, 1971. The average working girl gets \$3,500 less per year than she is worth. The average equally qualified working boy gets \$27 less per year than he is entitled to. So says a study prepared for the American Psychological Association. Dr. Teresa Levitin of the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan said that while they had expected a sexual discrepancy heavily favoring males, they did not expect anything so outrageously discriminatory. The women hit hardest are, as you might expect, women who are in professions, technical work, managerial, clerical, and sales, along with non union women and women who work for firms with less than 500 total employees.

IS WOMEN'S LIBERATION NOW A MEDIA PLOT? WE DO NOT THINK SO. We receive in the neighborhood of 1500 separate clippings each 60 days from newspapers all over the U.S. and most major magazines (we do not get enough from the middle west, any small town publications and we get almost nothing from the south-east block of states) and it is clear that women and their concerns are, for the very first time, off the women's page and often on the front page or at least in the first section. Many of the articles are stinging indictments of vicious and unfair treatment, ranging from the HOUSTON CHRONICLE's discovering to its astonishment that discrimination in Houston on the basis of sex may be stronger than discrimination on the basis of race to an increasing deluge of clippings about young females trying to be allowed to do things boys take for granted (race model cars, play baseball, swim in meets, play tennis against boys, etc.) The overall tone is usually pleasant, or surprise at the evidence. We are not positive, but we believe that this cannot help but affect discrimination slowly but surely.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S POLITICAL CAUCUS WELCOMES LESBIANS. ADVOCATE, September 15-28, 1971. In an undated story from New York City, ADVOCATE (a male homosexual west coast publication) announced that Bella Abzug (D-N.Y.), prominent feminist and editor, Gloria Steinem, and Brenda Fasteau, an officer in NOW and a spokeswoman for the National Women's Political Caucus, all welcomed Lesbians to join the caucus, which is a loosely formed national group to get women the actual political power needed to ensure equal rights.

MISCELLANY: Good and bad news comes to us. Only a handful of the items can be used, but please, please do keep sending all women's liberation, women's rights, Lesbian rights material to us. In Wadley, Georgia, Lorena Weeks, who has been fighting since 1966 has finally become a "switchman" for the Southern Bell Telephone Co. More to the point, she has also been awarded \$30,000 to make up for money she would have earned had she received the job when she first applied for it. On the bad side, Mrs. Gale Aldrich, a Detroit policewoman who refused to act as a decoy in prostitution entrapment has been fired. Her case has been pending since May, 1970, but this decision will be appealed. In Rome, where women have never

been very well treated (re the Catholic Church anyway), an American nun has been appointed to the second highest post ever held by a woman in the Vatican. Sister Thaddeak Kelly, 54, of San Francisco, has been named a department head in the Sacred Congregation for Religious Orders. The only higher ranking woman is Ms. Rosemary Goldie, an Australian laywoman who was appointed four years ago as a vice-secretary of the Council for the Laity.

TI-GRACE ATKINSON SAD AT LACK OF PROGRESS IN WOMEN'S LIBERATION: UPI, September 15, 1971. Ti-Grace expressed disillusionment with both right and left wings of the women's movement in an interview with Patricia McCormack, commenting that little has been actually accomplished except for some progress in abortion reform and "public awareness" of the problem.

THE RIGHT TO CONTROL YOUR OWN BODY . . . IN EVERY WAY: Three separate groups of east coast women are now working on "abortion action". A blatant attempt at take-over (reported in part in the last LADDER) by the two socialist groups YSA/SWP (YOUNG SOCIALISTS ALLIANCE/SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY) and control of the abortion battle has driven the majority of the active women away. However, both YSA and SWP are very well financed (since they are run by men) and because fanatical, they are well organized. A New York group calling itself FOCAS is attempting to rally the women who have dropped away from the WOMEN'S NATIONAL ABORTION CONFERENCE group. One of the most serious aspects of this hassle is that the denial of the large numbers of Lesbians and Lesbian groups who have worked for so long threatens serious splits in women's liberation and adds fuel to the growing fire for separatism (which is suicide for women's liberation and for Lesbians and it must not happen). The demands the women list are these: FREE QUALITY ABORTION ON DEMAND; REPEAL OF ALL ABORTION LAWS; NO FORCED STERILIZATION; NO RESTRICTIONS ON CONTRACEPTIVES; FREEDOM OF SEXUAL EXPRESSION.

ON THE WATERFRONT (WITHOUT MARLON BRANDO): Providence, R.I., September 17, 1971. Two women, Angelina Watkins and Anna Tavares, both 37, have been hired by the John J. Orr Freight Co. as longshorewomen. This is the first time

women have been used to unload ships, though in view of the equipment used there are no physical strength reasons why they ought not to be so employed.

WOMEN IN NEW HAVEN WORKING ON NON-FICTION LESBIAN ANTHOLOGY: September 22, 1971. Contact Susan Murphy, 267 Orange Street, New Haven, Conn., 06511, if you are interested in submitting an article to a proposed anthology of non-fiction done entirely by Lesbians as Lesbians. These can be any style, any approach. No fiction, please, and no poetry.

NOW CONVENTION SUCCESSFUL AND PRODUCTIVE: LOS ANGELES, September, 1971. The fifth National Convention of NOW (National Organization for Women) passed resolutions calling for alliances with minority group women, poor women (seen as victims of a sexist society), an end to war, and a resolution calling for freedom of sexual choice. A detailed report of the portion of the convention dealing with Lesbianism appears elsewhere in this issue. The new National President is Wilma Scott Heide.

For those interested in obtaining information about women artists, slides and addresses may be viewed by writing to the Women's Art Registry, 138 Prince Street, New York, New York, 10012, or telephoning 212-672-0691. The purpose of the Registry is to enable curators and writers in the arts to locate and visit the studios of women artists both in their own vicinity and when travelling to other cities. Similar files are being compiled in the major cities of the United States and several other countries by an international liaison called WEB (West-East Bag) whose focus is to inform, combine and support women's actions in the art world.

Artists who wish to be included in the Women's Art Registry should send two to four slides which will not be returned, their address, phone number and any selected information about their work which will fit on a 3" x 5" card. It should be noted that the Registry is a circulating reference file and not a publication.

Note: There is a new women's newspaper out (there are many of course) of some substantial interest. **WOMAN'S WORLD**, available for \$2 for a 6 month subscription from P.O. Box 694, Stuyvesant Station, New York, N.Y., 10009. This is different from most . . . try it.



Well, we start off with three reviews from one of our helpers. She covers first a series of missed Lesbian titles (minor but delightful fun) and then two recent English novels.

Jane Marple with an umbrella instead of a cloak? Heron Carvic creates Miss Seeton, old lady insurmountable, inadvertent daughter of criminals, solver of crimes, whom the newspapers call "the battling broly." In **PICTURE MISS SEETON**, N.Y., Harper and Row, 1968, Miss Seeton inherits a small house in the little village of Plummergen. The murder she is witness to in London just before her move leads to a huge dope operation solvable only through her talents as a cartoonist. Her subtle sketches reveal character and act as clues to Scotland Yard. In **MISS SEETON DRAWS THE LINE**, N.Y., Harper and Row, 1970, Scotland Yard hires her to sketch some murdered children for them, and again Miss Seeton is the heroine of the day. **WITCH MISS SEETON**, N.Y., Harper and Row, 1971, has her again retained by the Yard to join a quasi-religious sect, draw sketches of her impressions, and act as the naive little old lady which in fact she is. Her innocence has a charm and her observations are filled with hidden truths, though in orthodox detective terms she seems unperceptive and hardly curious. Plummergen has only 500 inhabitants, and two of them are the most gossipy, oftentimes malicious, funny "old English dykes" (all very repressed) you ever wanted to meet . . . Miss Erica Nuttel, "Eric" to Mrs. Norah "Bunny" Blaine, known jointly as "the nuts," not only because they are vegetarians but because their fertile imaginations and extraordinary nosiness lead them to all sorts of fantastic unsupported conclusions. They have lived together for eleven years dissecting the townsfolk to bits, the object of very little gossip themselves though. Actually, all the characters in the books are fun and amusing, and it's great to have a new mystery heroine.

Two recent English novels about the publishing industry have minor Lesbian

characters. **THE PUBLISHER**, by Alexander Fullerton, London, Cassell, 1970, is a straightforward, hard punching novel about a young editor whose father committed suicide. He sets out to avenge his death and reclaim the family name. There is a sufficient amount of sex and dirty dealings to attract readers. The Lesbian wife of one of the bad guys is literate but married to "escape the truth." She ends up divulging the coup to keep her affair with a photographer from becoming public . . . moral act done for the wrong reason. The publishing industry probably is this cut throat, but this novel needs more to succeed.

The other, **A BOWL OF EGGS**, by David Thomson, London, Macmillan, 1970, is a first novel which tries hard and shows some promise amidst the confusion. Thomson attempts to write a novel within a novel with the two coming together at the end. Needless to say, the technique is difficult to handle and succeeds to varying degrees. Each story is less interesting than the process of the author intervening in the novel and trying to deal with the characters and situations he has created. The Lesbians are actually bisexual, having met as girl friends of the same man, whom they continue to sleep with. One dies of asthma; the other gets a job at a girls' school, where she is adored by the young. The only good thing about it is that the casual handling leaves little room for moralizing. Thomson tries very hard to be hip.

There is an American/Danish movie called **THREESOME** circulating. This is a misleading title, for it's certainly not the run-of-the-mill pornographic menage a trois that this implies. As a whole, **THREESOME** presents a good picture of a young woman discovering her Lesbianism. Another bonus is that despite the expected explicit sex, there is a good sequence showing the development of a genuine love affair between the female leads with an emphasis on their daily life together. There is a tacked-on unhappy ending . . . but it's clearly a censorship sop sort of thing. The acting of Judy Brown (alas, the only American in the film) is terrible . . . everyone else is quite good.

For a time (in order, we feel, to keep the movement "pure") many anthologies of women's liberation material failed to list **THE LADDER**. Now they are beginning to, and we are pleased. **LIBERATION NOW!**, edited by Deborah Babcox and Madeline

Belkin, is a paperback from Dell, 1971. This is a basic book with many reprints familiar to all of you. At \$1.25, though, this is a fine primer; and if you know someone who needs a good beginning look at where the action is, this is a starter.

Two readers have written about the movie, *THE HOUSE THAT SCREAMED*. This stars Lilli Palmer and is apparently in the *WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?* genre . . . with an old hat plot. Lilli Palmer is headmistress of a school for rebellious young women . . . complete with obligatory lesbians, some of them not very good propaganda. Much sick business to the ending . . . though the ending is fitting and just and not to do with lesbians at all. One reader recommends it by saying: "A really good horror film . . . not at all run of the mill and not pornography." The other reader says it "is fairly good as Gothic horror but, unfortunately, presents the secret cult image of Lesbianism. The film is rated GP and many pre-teens and early teens attend, and thus the movie helps plant or reinforce mistaken ideas and attitudes." I haven't seen the movie, but will wait instead for the umpteenth performance on TV of Bette Davis and Geraldine Fitzgerald in *DARK VICTORY* . . . done way back in 1939, and still one of the very few movies to capture just what *LOVE* between women is about.

There is a press called *SHAMELESS HUSSY PRESS*, P.O. Box 424, San Lorenzo, California 94580. I have already reviewed a poetry book by this press and now have three others . . . *LETTERS TO WOMEN*, by Alta, *FREEDOM'S IN SIGHT*, by Alta, and *DEAR SKY*, by Susan Griffin. All three are of interest here . . . Susan's the least apparent and Alta's the most inflammatory. All are recommended, though, and are well worth their modest cost of 60c each. Send postage too, at least 20c per volume. Some of Alta's work has appeared in past *LADDER* issues, and a couple of Susan's will be in a future issue.

San Diego State College has possibly the most active women's program in the country. Their center for Women's Studies and Services has presented a Women's Festival of the Arts and various other events and has published *A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WOMEN WRITERS* (1970) and *RAINBOW SNAKE*, a fine poetry anthology, 1971. The bibliography is going to be redone and annotated. I enjoyed going through it and discovering that these

"selected" feminist writers run better than 45% lesbians . . . the bibliography doesn't say so . . . but I was pleased anyway. I also note that this was so despite the fact that in some cases there were whole countries represented where I wasn't sufficiently familiar with the writers to mark the sections . . . if I were, the proportions might well be even higher. *RAINBOW SNAKE* contains good poetry . . . mainly feminist . . . but some lesbian material as well. Poets who will be familiar include Lynn Lonidier, Joyce Nower, Diane Wakoski, Alta, and Anne Sexton. Cost is \$1.50 plus 25c postage. Well worth it.

Every so often someone finds a pure gift . . . a gem story in an unlikely place. A reader and supporter sent us a story, "May Dance-On-The-Green," by Patricia Robins, from a magazine called *YANKEE*, the May, 1971, issue. *YANKEE* is a New Hampshire based eastern geographical periodical . . . around since 1935, selling for the modest sum of \$3 per year . . . and it comes out monthly. I'd be mildly surprised if five of you have heard of it . . . but in any case, the story is marvelous . . . subtle, lesbian, and a must. It's one of those stories where you believe in both women's and children's liberation, as you watch the wide-eyed child (the author, perhaps?) torn by the conflict between two women teachers (lovers? We don't really know, but it's a goodie.).

And, under the heading of "I don't believe it" . . . the University of Alabama Press has issued August Stringberg's misogynistic masterpiece, *A MADMAN'S MANIFESTO*, 1971. The faithful will already know, but this is the record of his miserably unhappy marriage to Siri von Essen, whose lesbianism unsettled him a wee bit. Last appearance of this was in England in 1968, but it's been around in one circumscribed translation or another in English since 1925, when it was first issued as *THE CONFESSION OF A FOOL*. I don't know which title I like best, since both are so true . . .

Graham Greene's memoir about early life with his aunt, *TRAVELS WITH MY AUNT*, has been brought out here (first appeared in England in 1969) with the title changed to *A SORT OF LIFE*, N.Y., Simon and Schuster, 1971. This has minor and funny lesbian episodes which explain, to some extent, his various inclusions of well drawn (not necessarily sympathetic) lesbians in his fictional career.

In the August/September, 1970, issue of *THE LADDER*, I mentioned the appearance in France of a major lesbian and women's liberation novel, *LES GUERRILLERES*, by Monique Wittig. I predicted it would come out over here . . . and sure enough, it has been issued by Viking, 1971. We have written for a review copy and will, after all, get to review it for you. Ms. Wittig is, privately, said to be one of the leaders of a French group of women patterned on the various women's groups in the U.S. known collectively as "radicales- bians."

A reader has also sent us a very very brief bit from the not so long ago best-seller by John Fowles, *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN*, Boston, Little, Brown, 1969, and pbr, Signet, 1971. The lesbian portion is no reason to read the book, albeit slight and noncommittal, but the book itself is good. It amuses me to note that I read it and didn't even notice the lesbian portion. I am getting old, or careless, or both . . .

We are getting more and more help and we are properly grateful. I am especially so, for time to find books is rare for me these days . . . anything you read of interest in terms of lesbian literature, feminist literature, or women's liberation material, I need to hear about. The next two reviews are provided by a reader and helper.

Charity Blackstock, writer of good mysteries and poor "women's" novels, has included a lesbian episode in her latest novel, *THE ENCOUNTER*, N.Y., Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1971. Alex, a writer of women's romances, goes on a trip to avoid a lover (male). Then she meets another man, Mirek, and tells him of an early lesbian affair, which she describes as the "realist thing that ever happened to me." Given the dimensions of the characters involved, it very well probably was the most real thing . . .

In *SUCH GOOD FRIENDS*, by Lois Gould, N.Y., Random House, 1970, Julie, whose husband is dying, thinks about her unhappy sex life and enjoys various sexual fantasies as she waits for him to die. Among these "past friends" is an old roommate with whom she had an unhappy, albeit satisfying, affair. Not recommended.

From time to time a male author does a very credible job of portraying a woman . . . women's liberation notwithstanding . . . it is not an impossibility, though it is rare. Colin Gibson (and we believe this to be a male author), in the

novel *THE LOVE-KEEPER*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1970, charts the life of Jill Maltby. Jill goes to Rome with no money, no job, and vague aspirations for a film career. She has a brief ugly affair with Gian-Carlo Soldati, described very much from the viewpoint of the woman. She turns for help to Charlotte Lutwyche, a lesbian. Charlotte is in love with Jill but doesn't push it . . . and when it is found that Charlotte is dying, and rapidly, Jill nurses her to the end. The author puts some of the most convincing feminist and liberation dialogue into Charlotte's lines . . . and it is a good book, though very sad in spots. You come away convinced Jill will survive and well . . . all to the good.

I have nothing more concrete to go on than a confused and confusing review in *GREAT SPECKLED BIRD*, but the movie, "Les Stances a Sophie," directed by Moshe Mizrahi, which appeared in something called the "Atlanta Film Festival" in June, 1971, sounds like a very serious movie about feminism, lesbianism, and how chauvinism touches and destroys all women. What particularly interests me here is that the author of the original story is Christiane Rochefort, and "Les Stances a Sophie" came out in the U.S. in 1965 from Doubleday as *CATS DON'T CARE FOR MONEY*. In novel form it's very substantially lesbian. Not having seen the movie, we do not know . . . but the reviewer in the periodical cited says "it talks about women's oppression in a way I've never seen in any other film." This says nothing without our knowing what the reviewer has seen, but it at least indicates you ought to try to see it if it appears in your area.

Would you believe that *REDBOOK* would publish a serious and excellent short story dealing with women's liberation? I wouldn't, but it did. The August *REDBOOK* has a story called "Where the Birds Live" by Irene Foster . . . read it for a microcosm view of what the world would be like if women ran it. Nice.

Your larger public libraries and almost all college and university libraries will have this, and it's recommended: *REDISCOVERIES*, by David Madden, N.Y., Crown, 1971. This is a collection of loving essays by various famous authors about various "obscure" books, works of fiction. Our interest here is the most intelligent essay I've seen about Gertrude Stein's classic lesbian novel, *THINGS AS THEY ARE*. The author doing the essay is Jane

Mayhall, herself a minor contributor to Lesbian literature. It's an excellent reading experience. Try it.

Falling in the department of "nobody is going to believe it until it is too late," we have received (without asking) a review copy of a book called THE GIRLS IN THE BAND. Note the intentional use of the parody on the title THE BOYS IN THE BAND, the vicious stereotyped view of male homosexuals at their worst. THE GIRLS IN THE BAND is written by a man using the pseudonym Isabel Bluefield. It is a paperback original from Belmont Books, 1971. The cover features four disturbed looking young women sitting on a bed and yelling at the viewer. It is described on the cover as a "funny, sexy, true novel of women's lib" . . . and it is the kind of shit treatment that Lesbians have received so often at the hands of paperback publishers. There is no point in discussing the book, which is filth, simply that . . . but there is some point in warning women . . . this is really the way men look at women, with hatred, loathing and no little amount of fear.

An older title, FIVE TO TWELVE, by Edmund Cooper, N.Y., Putnam's 1969, for some reason is just now being made available (no explanation) and again, this is a science fiction view of a world where women rule . . . and well, and without problems . . . which for some reason is not suitable, so the book (these are always male authored) sets out to show why the world "rule" should be returned to male hands. In the end it seems likely to happen because the hero is a super stud who can produce nothing but males . . . little is said about the "used" women . . . as the happy aging hero meets his "sons."

A sister in England, writing to the Women's History Library in Berkeley, has informed us of the existence of a feminist and Lesbian poet. We would like to know more about this woman and ask your help. The poet is Edith Sodergran, 1892-1923. She was Finnish but wrote in the Swedish language. She is untranslated as far as we can determine (and we have checked very well), and she produced at least six volumes of verse. From 1908 until the end of her life she lived with her mother in great poverty. She was tubercular and died of this disease. A very respectable reference tool describes her in this way: "Her verse occupies a central position in the whole of modern Scandinavian literature, and exer-

cises a profound and growing influence on north European literary life." The English informant speaks of her as "Lesbian and proud of it." We have been able to find only one poem in translation and can make nothing of it in terms of her views. If you can help, let us know.

An esoteric periodic anthology, MATRIX, which began life planned as a magazine, has appeared twice, with a total of four issues in all planned. Volume One was about the "female/male spirit" and Volume Two strictly about women. There is poetry by known and unknown, ranging from very good to very bad. If you have never read THE PSYCHOANALYSIS OF EDWARD THE DYKE, the anonymous and often reprinted parody of "therapy" as seen by the Lesbian, Volume Two of this is worth buying for it alone. Each volume is \$2. Order from MATRIX, Box 46067, Los Angeles, California 90046.

A very big treat for the naked lovers . . . Phyllis Webb, whose POKED POEMS a few years ago were so terribly popular with our readers, has been anthologized in SELECTED POEMS, 1954-1965, edited by John Hulcoop, Vancouver, British Columbia, Talonbooks, 1971. This is available in a \$5 paperback, an \$8 hardback, and a \$1.50 textbook edition. Included in it are the most pertinent poems from NAKED POEMS . . . and if you haven't read them, you want to. This is major material and very highly recommended. Talonbooks is at 1911 Arcadia Road, Vancouver 8, British Columbia. Unless you have access to a store carrying Canadian poetry (hardly likely), best to order direct.

BEST FRIENDS, a collection of women's poetry from BEST FRIENDS COLLECTIVE in Albuquerque, New Mexico (through the English department of the University of New Mexico at Albuquerque), is a general anthology with the usual range from good to terrible poetry. One particular poem, "Gay Nightmare," is an example of poor taste. It is lousy poetry to begin with . . . but more, it is a vicious and vituperative slap at Lesbians . . . and it is commented on here to make it very clear that this will not be tolerated. It is enough to have to deal with the sexism of males . . . we will not stand for it from our sisters, who should know better. By way of amelioration, we noticed a number of good Lesbian poems in the same anthol-

(Continued on Page 53)

ogy, including "A Night at Jacques" by Rosy Dakota.

(Editor's Note: We have just learned that the author of THE PSYCHOANALYSIS OF EDWARD THE DYKE is poet Judy Grahn. It is also available in MANROOT No. 5, edited by Paul Mariah, an excellent esoteric anthology series of poetry and prose, available for \$3.50 per four issues, P.O. Box 982, South San Francisco, California 94080.

Readers Respond

Dear Gene

I have just returned from the American Psychological Association convention in Washington, D.C. (September 3-7, 1971), and there were some good events. Over 10 symposia or paper sessions of relevance to women's liberation were presented. These were jointly sponsored by the Association for Women in Psychology (A.W.P.), Psychologists for Social Action (P.S.A.), and the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (S.P.S.S.I.). AWP handed out a circular describing some of the symposia . . . Last year's convention included only three such symposia, so we are clearly beginning to make some dent.

M.L.S.
New Jersey

CHANGING YOUR ADDRESS?

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

Now, a word from our sponsor...



THE FEMINIST PRESS
Distribution
10920 Battersea Lane
Columbia, Maryland 21043

Dear Sisters,

The Feminist Press now has two children's books ready for distribution - THE DRAGON AND THE DOCTOR by Barbara Danish, a fantasy picture and story book for 3 to 7 year olds, and CHALLENGE TO BECOME A DOCTOR: THE STORY OF ELIZABETH BLACKWELL by Leah Heyn, a dramatic biography of the first woman doctor in the United States who pioneered in the sciences of hygiene and preventive medicine, for 9 to 13 year olds. We are very excited about the publication of these two books because of the lack of non-sexist literature available for children.

The Feminist Press has been working on these and other books (a biography series and a reprint series) for over a year and we are very anxious to get these books circulating. It would be a great help if you could make the women who read your publication aware of these books by printing a small piece about our work. Besides these two books, which are ready, we will have, in the near future, two biographical pamphlets, ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING by Mary Jane Lupton and ELIZABETH CADY STANTON by Mary Anne Oakley; and two reprints, THE YELLOW WALLPAPER by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and LIFE IN THE IRON MILLS by Rebecca Harding Davis.

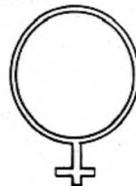
Because of our awareness of the need for non-sexist books, a small group started the Press in Baltimore last year. We now have active groups working in Seattle, the San Francisco Bay Area and New York City. Some groups work collectively on writing and editing and others handle the business and technical responsibilities. We are hoping to produce good quality, low cost books and we want to encourage women to write and to develop the talents and skills which our society has denied us.

Again we ask for your help in publicizing these books and The Feminist Press. We will be happy to supply any further information you might need and will gladly send you copies of the books, if you would like to review them. We look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours truly,
Denise Madaras
Judy Markowitz

P.S. Books can be ordered from the above address.

WOMEN... WOMEN
READ



Arena three

A SPECIAL MONTHLY
PUBLICATION FOR WOMEN.
25p (U.S. subscribers send \$9.60 for one
year. Sea Mail delivery).

address: bcm seahorse London WC1 England



The struggle in this country has taken so many twists and bends that many people (people who should know better) have concluded that it's going around in circles. That's one reason why the ruling class still rules.

The lessons of the past have indicated that commitment and action must be coupled with a profound awareness and clear analysis of the real issues at hand. Rather than trying to piece together an accurate picture of the movement both nationally and internationally by reading the bourgeois press why not try the Guardian, an independent radical newsweekly with an independent line. The Guardian's long-standing dedication to people's struggles and opposition to ruling class exploitation have made it the largest (some consider it the best) movement weekly in the country.

Stop reading between the lies.

Read the Guardian.

mail to:
Guardian, 32 W. 22nd St., New York, New York 10011

Enclosed is:	1100
<input type="checkbox"/> \$10. for a regular one year sub.	(for Canada and Latin America, add \$2. per sub; elsewhere U.S. add \$5.)
<input type="checkbox"/> \$5. for a one year student sub.	
<input type="checkbox"/> \$1. for a ten-week trial sub.	
<input type="checkbox"/> \$1. for a one year G.I. or Prisoner sub.	
Name _____	
Address _____	
City _____	
State _____	
Zip _____	

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.

M
O
T
H
E
R

THE GAY WOMAN'S LINK
TO LESBIAN NEWS, IDEAS,
EVENTS AND COMMENTARY
FROM ACROSS THE U.S.

PUBLISHED MONTHLY AND
MAILED IN PLAIN ENVELOPE

\$ 3.50 PER YEAR, REGULAR
\$ 5.00 PER YEAR, AIR MAIL
\$25.00 PER YEAR, SPONSOR

mother
dept. L2
p.o. box 8507
stanford, ca.
94305

SISTERS
A MONTHLY MAGAZINE
BY AND FOR LESBIANS
Poetry-Graphics-News-Events
FROM SAN FRANCISCO DOB
\$5.00 per year

1005 Market Street, Room 208
San Francisco, California 94103



LES GUÉRILLÈRES

a novel by Monique Wittig

"The first epic celebration of women ever written. . . . What she has almost miraculously achieved, at one throw, is the first novel (or hymn, for this book is close to epic poetry) of Women's Liberation . . . the first imaginative work of fiction in which the battle between the sexes is fought in Women's Liberation terms."

—The New York Times Book Review \$4.95

THE VIKING PRESS



THE LADDER

P.O. Box 5025, Washington Station, Reno, Nevada 89503.

Please send THE LADDER for year(s) to the address below.
Subscription rates: U.S. 1 year, \$7.50; Canada 1 year, \$8.50 (U.S. currency); all other countries, \$9.00 payable in U.S. currency.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY State Zip

ALL CHECKS MUST BE MADE PAYABLE TO THE LADDER