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 yet unaware of their oppression. The Lesbian knew. And she wondered silently when her sisters would realize that they too share many of the Lesbian's handicaps, those that pertained to being a woman.

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the BUCH/FEMME question

BY RITA LAPORTE

Whenever a group of Lesbians gathers together over a period of time, this question invariably comes up and, for some of us, it has become probably the most boring question of all time. Nevertheless, the question is very much alive today, in fact become more pertinent again in view of women's liberation. The answers given to the question range from: it is a pseudo-question, a matter of aping heterosexual relationships, to the conviction that it is a delightful reality. Why is it that this question is still so much alive today and no nearer solution among Lesbians themselves?

Lesbians are born into the heterosexual world of sex stereotypes just as are heterosexuals. As they mature and gradually surmount the first big hurdle, that of acknowledging and accepting their nature, they are, for the most part, quite without Lesbian models on the one hand, while imbued with heterosexual stereotyping, on the other. Some Lesbians fall in with that stereotyping easily and thoughtlessly, imagining themselves to be essentially male; others toss it out completely, settling for an oversimplified female to female relationship. Many of us, however, have experienced a real meaning to that miserable, slang phrase, butch/femme. But this is hardly the end of it. The anti-butch/femme contingent tries to make our lives miserable by making fun of what to them is a ridiculous copy-cat existence. Many young Lesbians therefore find that their own kind can be as vicious an heterosexual society.

Among those Lesbians who try to think sanely and without rancor about the problem, little progress has been made because they uncritically accept heterosexual male psychologists' pronouncements. One strange theory is that masculine Lesbians, i.e., butches, are really men born into a female body and that feminine Lesbians, i.e., femmes, learn or are conditioned to fall in love with butches rather than heterosexual males. We have all been thoroughly conditioned to think the adjectives, male and masculine, are interchangeable, as are female and feminine. This is a mental straightjacket under which not only Lesbians but all of society suffers. Before going further into this matter, let us look more closely at the butch/femme phenomenon with a sociologist's eye. This is the eye of the heterosexual male, who sees himself as the center of humanity as once he saw the earth the center of the universe. (There may be other "centers" equally valid, e.g., women, Lesbians, etc.)

Most Lesbians live in great isolation, whether alone or married to a woman, but there are many small pockets of Lesbians, usually gathered together around a big city gay or Lesbian bar, that may be designated Lesbian subcultures. The "bar scene" tends to have considerable consistency from city to city. It's habitues come for the most part from the lower socio-economic stratum and it is here that the butch/femme phenomenon is played out in its crudest form. It is here also that most of the "research" on Lesbianism takes place for the 90% or so of Lesbians who do not care for this milieu are invisible to the researchers. It is here that one encounters a genuine copying of heterosexual sexual roles. The butches are not simply more masculine women, they imitate more masculine men, they imitate males at their worst. No male has spoken more derogatorily of his "chicks" than some of these butches. And the femmes manage to outdo the sexiest of sex bunnies. An elaborate game is played where, if a strange butch happens to smile or say hello to another's chick, she is apt to get slugged in the best barroom brawl tradition. Chicks are strictly property. Being small of stature myself, I would prefer the relative safety of a waterfront sailor's bar to the toughest of Lesbian bars. But fortunately most Lesbian bars offer no such danger, but they do exhibit much of the less brutal male-female, dominance-submission behavior, exactly that kind of behavior feminists loathe.

Many, if not most, Lesbians, including those belonging to the upper socio-economic stratum, do at one time frequent these bars, knowing nowhere else to meet with their own kind, or what they hope will be their own kind. Many of these Lesbians are appalled by what they see and sense the unnaturalness of it. In their revulsion they throw the baby out with the bath water, throw out the whole butch/femme phenomenon. What they are left with is: "We are all women, aren't we? Therefore we are all feminine and must not deny our femininity." Yet many Lesbians know a middle ground, though it may have taken them many years to find it, to accept it, and to be thoroughly comfortable about it. This is the true butch/femme phenomenon.

I would like to digress here for a moment to point out a common error of sociology: to discover what should be, just find out what is. This sort of thinking is particularly misleading where Lesbianism is concerned. We Lesbians have a very difficult time of it for we have no models other than the, for us, irrelevant heterosexual models. Even if heterosexual sex roles were right for all heterosexual women, they could hardly be right for Lesbians. And this brings us back to the straightjackets of female equals male feminine and male equals masculine. Since many Lesbians, about 50%, are simply not "feminine" as interpreted by heterosexual society, that leaves them nothing to be except "masculine" which means "male."

As yet there is no reliable sociological study on the behavior of Lesbians, let alone their inner life. A study that is based upon a true, statistical sampling does not exist because most Lesbians hide too well for such a study to be possible. But, even if such a study were possible, what would it prove? Such a study would include all those confused Lesbians who were trying either to imitate heterosexual behavior patterns or to deny them altogether. It is quite probable that the reality of Lesbianism is known to a minority, and that minority consisting of Lesbians over 30. Truth is hardly a matter of a vote. The Lesbian can arrive at her own truth, if she ever does, only by much soul searching and experience of life. It is not easy for any human being to achieve an authentic inner life. Women's liberation has taught many a heterosexual woman this, but one still finds studies that "prove" the female to be passive and all those other attributes that add up to a creature no one would care to be, least of the Lesbian.

How are we Lesbians to escape or resolve the butch/femme controversy? Let us once and for all separate female from feminine and male from masculine. All Lesbians are female, but most assuredly not all Lesbians are feminine, no matter how one defines that elusive word. It might be wise to discard altogether the words, masculine and feminine, for heterosexual men have so loaded them in their own favor. All sorts of desirable qualities such as courage, strength, ambition, leadership, aggressiveness, and mental brilliance are said to be masculine, which means attributes pertaining to the male only. The Lesbian is living proof that these qualities can just as well belong to the female, that they are in short, human qualities. And yet the persistence of the butch/femme controversy points to a residue of meaning to the words, feminine and masculine. The words have a real, relational meaning. They refer to qualities that exert a mutual attraction, analogous to the attraction between the north and south poles of magnets, to use an inanimate example. Here we get down to the bedrock level of experience, the level not covered by sociological investigation. A butch, however "feminine" she may appear to the relational meaning, is inclined to label "masculine" and that impels her toward a more feminine Lesbian. She may form a strong friendship with another butch or a femme, for she is not confused between "falling in love" with a woman and forming a deep friendship with a woman. A femme will find herself attracted to the public, masculine appearing woman (again, it may be a woman who "passes" as feminine" to society at large, but whose masculinity is sensed by the femme).

A danger here is that the reader will think there are two and only two kinds of Lesbians, the butch and the femme. This is merely a shorthand way of labeling. The qualities, femininity and masculinity, are distributed in varying proportions in all Lesbians (in all human beings, but we are
here dealing only with Lesbians). A butch is simply a Lesbian who finds herself attracted to and complemented by a Lesbian more feminine than she, whether this butch be very or only slightly more masculine than feminine. Fortunately for all of us, there are all kinds of us. Some females prefer a very masculine butch, many do not. No doubt there are some women, confused and brainwashed by heterosexual sex roles, who think they want a butch chauvinist Lesbian, the Lesbian who outmasculines a male. I say "no doubt" for every kind of human being exists, but in my experience females have soon turned away from such types.

Having hypothesized the four separate qualities or traits: femaleness, maleness, femininity, and masculinity, I am left with the problem of defining them. This is an almost impossible task, in view of centuries of cultural overlay and ones of wishful thinking on the part of men. I can define femaleness and maleness only as those aspects of personality that derive from the biology and physiology that distinguish the sexes. But what these aspects are is largely unknown, though I suspect they pertain to differences in the sexuality of female and male. My conception of maleness is a negative one—a quality that precludes any erotic feeling. Whatever may be learned eventually about these two qualities, it is not germane to this discussion as all Lesbians are female. And whatever femaleness is, it is a constant when considering Lesbians.

A tougher problem is defining femininity and masculinity. It would indeed simplify matters if butch/femme were no more than the imitation of male/female. Then we could dispense with those two traits as nothing more than cultural convention. The scientific principal of parsimony, that the simplest theory is the best, will seldom work where human nature is concerned. Human nature is more complicated than we are able to conceive in theoretical terms. Since females and butches are meaningful categories, so too are the adjectives, feminine and masculine. This is so despite the fact that much if not most of what is today designated masculine or feminine is neither simply human. Take aggression, for example. The male loves to think that this is a virtue of his alone and, in its cruder aspects, perhaps, such as war and street fighting, it is. But there is a wealth of aggressiveness in the female also—how would the hardy women's liberation movement or take grief. Though the man is not supposed to cry, which is very similar to enforcing a taboo against laughing when something is funny, he can feel grief and should be permitted to cry since this is a human expression of feeling.

Let me begin with the assumption that masculinity and femininity are essences of some sort that have ontological reality. But a mental essence cannot be seen; it is a concept, rather like the concept of an electron, that has an explanatory value. Masculinity can be felt or observed only as it expresses itself—body, in behavior, however subtle. We posit something we call intelligence, but we can become aware of it only in a live, awake, and acting person. One could determine the intelligence of someone in a catatonic state. Measuring intelligence is full of pitfalls for it can be measured only in and through a particular culture. We have the same problem with femininity and masculinity. No one can express these qualities in a cultureless vacuum. A child of decided masculine nature, whether male or female makes no difference, will tend to express this nature by engaging in activities that the culture, however arbitrarily, has designated masculine. The little tomboy, if her immediate cultural environment (parents and kindergarten) is not too restrictive, will play husband to another little girl's wife and mother role. These girls may or may not be Lesbians, but the little butch is apt to persist longer than the little heterosexual tomboy because her inner masculinity insists more strongly that she flaunt convention. We all have, not only a generalized urge to live, but to live as our inner nature directs. Too often cultural straightjackets distort us beyond recognition, as would be apparent if we could see into souls. We all know now that Helen Keller was a very intelligent woman, but the average person would not have thought so, seeing her as a young child. The means for her expressing her intelligence were blocked until her teacher opened up the way through touch. Few of us are blocked in this physical manner, but all women are blocked in cultural ways. But, just as Helen Keller found a way around her terrible physical handicaps, some women find ways to pierce through the heavy veil of cultural distortion. Butches and femmes who have found each other in love and marriage are such women, however much they hide their true selves from society.

Those Lesbians who persist in denying any meaning to butch/femme are simply those who either have no experience of this attraction or who are denying it in their fear of being accused of copying heterosexuals. In either case their denial means nothing, for those of us who know the difference between a true male, one who is like us and yet different, stand witness to the reality of butch/femme. As for copying heterosexuals: as someone has said, there is no worse butch/femme relationship than the male/female one of the heterosexual world. But, though all heterosexual relationships are butch/femme, they vary tremendously. Many of us cannot out of hand condemn all heterosexual relationships. What is so bad about most of them is not their butch/femme quality but their inequality. It is the dominance/submission or master/slave quality of the relationship that is outrageous. A Lesbian marriage that tries to imitate this aspect of the heterosexual marriage is equally rotten. There is nothing inherently wrong with a division of labor in a marriage, so long as it is freely chosen and the labor of the wife is as worthy as the labor of the husband. While most heterosexuals are hopelessly caught up in a sliding scale of values imposed on the everyday activities of living—what the male does is important, what the female does amounts to little or nothing, we Lesbians need pay no attention to this. Housework is a bore and nothing more. It is neither femme nor butch activity. What wrecks heterosexual marriages is not so much the kind of work the woman is expected to do, but the underlying implication that she must do it because she is the inferior. The butch/femme Lesbian marriage that has no place for male or butch chauvinism, that in no way attempts to copy male/female relationships, is that a positive union of two authentic women, one more masculine and one more feminine, is a model of marital happiness that heterosexuals would do well to study.

This is what Lesbians should try to do in the difficult search for their own truth. They should neither copy heterosexual life nor react against it. They must find their own way, unconcerned about how much or how little it turns out to resemble aspects of heterosexual life. We cannot say out of hand that everything heterosexual is bad. We may find that some heterosexual pronouncements about life and love are happy ones. This should hardly be cause for surprise in view of the fact that heterosexuals are human too. We Lesbians, unlike male homosexuals, know that the basic heterosexual distortion is the myth of male supremacy. In theory Lesbians should be free of this and growing up Lesbian should be easier. Perhaps it would be if Lesbians grew up with each other in a Lesbian world. But Lesbians, unlike heterosexual women, grow up in total psychological isolation from each other. All we see is the heterosexual world and we must cope alone with our inner emotions as they gradually make their way into consciousness. Many of us fall by the wayside, some going through life in a completely heterosexual fashion, others finding only partial and unhappy solutions, and numbers of us finding fulfillment in a marriage of two persons who complete each other in equality and difference. What are some of the hazards awaiting the growing Lesbian?

Let us begin with the "tomboy." She is not as damned as the "sissy" boy, destined to become a more feminine homosexual, for females are not so important, and, anyway, she will outgrow it. I was a tomboy and will never forget, when in my 20's and upon meeting a grownup who had known me as a child, being complimented upon turning into a fine, i.e., feminine woman. I was at the time playing the heterosexual to the hilt, dressed in a skirt, wearing lipstick, and acting like a lady rather in the fashion of an accomplished drag queen. That "compliment" had the flavor of an insult, though it was meant well and it did at least compliment my acting ability. I cannot say that all tomboys are butch Lesbians, but many are. There is a wide range of butchiness to begin with and the outward aspects of butchness are variably modified by upbringing. The more "privileged" tomboy is apt to be far more pressured into learning to "act like a lady" than her freer, less "privileged", sister. The story of a friend of mine illustrates how tomboys or butch Lesbians are born, not made.

There are today a number of young women who, in the course of "consciousness raising" sessions in women's liberation, have come to realize they are Lesbians (have "come out", as the expression goes) or are wondering whether they might be. These are women who have, at least before joining women's liberation, experimented with heterosexual sex relations. In their
new-found Lesbianism they proclaim that butch/femme must go. They are hopelessly confusing the heterosexual relationship per se with its almost universal tendency to be a master/slave relationship and then to transfer this irresponsible aspect of heterosexuality over into Lesbianism. This ignores the fact that there are heterosexual marriages whereas the male/female attraction does not entail any master/slave, dominance/submission, superi or inferior connotations (albeit such marriages are hard to find). For the real Lesbian, however, even such a fine heterosexual relationship is out of the question. Her inner nature makes impossible the enjoyment of sexual relations with a man. It does not follow that a polarity of attraction, whether male/female or butch/femme, must go. What these women seem to be seeking is “friendship plus sex” or an erotized friendship. This is a far cry from a true marriage between a feminine and a masculine Lesbian.

The heterosexual, in her limited view of human relationships, imagines that it is biological sexual differentiation that determines the attraction of erotic love, that, if one woman is attracted to another woman, it must be an attraction of same to same — hence the word, homo-(Greek for same) sexual. But human beings are a good deal more complex and blindness to the very real differences which might be called a psychosexual one, between butch and femme cannot make it go away. The persistent need to do as proper only that man Lesbians are still infected with heterosexual stereotyping, still confuse heterosexuality per se with femaleness — and this we now ignore the heterosexual world and its problems and try to look at the Lesbian world as if it were the only one, or, like the sociologist, place the Lesbian at the “center.”

This woman, during her childhood, would have made me look like a sissy. In her late teens she fell into the error of thinking herself to be essentially male, having, like all of us, only the models of male and female sex roles to go by. She dressed like a man and held her own with the “males” of them. This woman, unlike me, grew up virtually free of parental control and, while I went into a phase of trying desperately to be properly feminine, that is, typical female, she erred in the opposite direction. Then, around the age of 17, she came under the guidance of an older Lesbian who pointed out to her the folly of her course. My friend tossed away her male costume and tried to be a woman. A few years later, dressed in a feminine suit, nylonos and girdle, a frilly blouse, and a coquetish hat, she sat on a park bench waiting for her friend. Some minutes later a policeman tapped her on the shoulder and said, “Don’t you know you can be arrested for impersonating a woman?” Amusing as this story is, it contains considerable truth. My friend was impersonating. When I met this woman she was in her 30’s, dressed comfortably, made no fuss one way or the other about being female, and was simply butch.

The essence of butchiness is interior, psychological, emotional — a form of psychosexuality as fundamental as heterosexual male, heterosexual female, or femme. Some butches are easily recognizable by outward manner and gesture by even the most naive heterosexual, but most have picked up from the prevailing culture outward behavior that makes “passing” easy. Only the experienced eye of another Lesbian can spot the little telltale gestures. A factor of consequence in this matter of behavior is the butch’s own attitude toward herself. If early on she has fully accepted herself, she ceases to be concerned with every little gesture that might give her away. She presents a naturalness that offends no one despite her being thought of as a masculine woman. In contrast, the butch who fears herself, who is overly sensitive to the ridicule generally heaped upon the masculine woman, may suffer the torments of hell. Day in and day out she tries to disguise her inner masculinity, she may even manage to hid it from herself. To others she appears strange and unnatural. Though she has thoroughly accepted her Lesbianism, she knows not what to do with this tendency masculinity hidden within her. In some instances this leads to her taking the role of the femme. This is a curious inversion of the true self one that points out the reciprocity or mirroring (and only so as defined by butch/femme). For the qualities of butch and femme are not opaque to each other — the butch senses the nature of the femme by what it is she seeks in another, and vice versa. An analogy might be the right and left hands. These two hands, though the same in most ways, are also the exact reversals of each other.

An interesting side light in this connection is the masculine, apparently hetero-
taking, but we can do this in total freedom. Once we have set aside heterosexual models as irrelevant. It is a bit ironic that the total condemnation of Lesbianism by a work that also proceeds as though we did not exist should, at the same time, provides us with total freedom, but so it is.

"The institution we call marriage can’t hold two full human beings — it was only designed for one and a half." So says sociologist Andrew Hacker. He was, of course, referring to heterosexual marriage. The Lesbian butch/femme marriage can and usually does hold two full human beings. And this is not because it is a friendship arrangement wherein each partner respects the other as a person and agrees to play at sex from time to time, where each goes her own way but provides warmth and affection for the other, where both carefully divide the chores so that neither one gets stuck doing more of the menial. There is nothing wrong with such friendships. Anyone who has achieved so fine a relationship is fortunate indeed. But such a relationship is not a marriage. Nor can one say that a marriage, based on love and entered into for life on a monogamous basis is for everyone. What is so terrible today, among Lesbians and among women’s liberationists, is the attempt to deny the beauty and authenticity of such lifelong, monogamous Lesbian marriages. Those of us who seek such a love or who have found it are supposed to be uptight, ensnared in the Judeo-Christian mythology of the "sanctity" of marriage (perverted from the heterosexual reality), unliberated spirits afraid of our sexuality. It is good that many women today are thinking about and experimenting with new patterns of living and loving. It is very bad that they are assuming that all old patterns of living and loving are wrong. The mutual love of a butch and femme is a very old pattern, and for some of us, the happiest.

A ‘whole person’ is yet not whole. Each of us seeks someone or some idea or God to complete us. The phrase ‘whole person’ does not mean an individual who has need of nothing and no one. Each of us needs more than herself, though we do not all need or want the same thing. A butch needs and seeks a femme for her completion. A heterosexual woman needs and seeks a man, but, because of the oppression of women, finds that she must become that half person in the heterosexual marriage of one and a half. In her rage at so horrible a fate, she thinks that making her husband do the dishes while she tinkers with the car will somehow change things. Such solutions attack only the behavior, the symptoms, and not the disease. In a butch/femme relationship the butch will work on the car while the femme washes the dishes. Why does this in no way strain the relationship? Because neither the butch nor the femme has attached any inferior-superior significance to these activities. They are both chores necessary to the maintenance of the household. The butch does express her masculinity in car-mending activity, since that activity has a masculine connotation in our society and we all need to express ourselves in behavior. However, it may happen that the butch does not even drive, let alone know anything about a car. It may be the femme who has a knack with things mechanical. Sensible grownups will not quibble over who does what, for one’s masculinity or femininity may be expressed in thousands of bits of behavior. Each Lesbian couple is free to decide upon its division of labor. Behavior itself is of secondary importance. If the butch has delusions of superiority, no amount of juggling will change anything.

There is something immature about heterosexual marriages and those butch/femme marriages that imitate them. How can there be a fulfilling love between a master and a slave, however subtle these distinctions may be? I think all of us can understand the pleasure there is in lording it over someone else. We can all fall into this human (not male or female) foible. But it is a far smaller pleasure that the joy of love, and one cannot have both at the same time with the same person. But love, the kind I am speaking of here, is not easy and there is no reason why it should be right for everyone. Any time one embarks upon a particular course, one at the same time foregoes many other courses. The truly monogamous Lesbian, butch or femme, is so generally picked up from the church or elsewhere, but out of a deep desire to dedicate herself to one particular other person. She simply does not enjoy promiscuity, or changing partners. Like the monothest, who prefers one God to many, she prefers to be faithful to one person for life. And this in no way restricts her in friendship.

On the contrary, being happily married, her freedom to choose friends is unlimited. She can choose as friend someone she could not stand to be married to. She need not worry about whether she should proceed to a sexual liaison of temporary or more permanent character, for her whole sexual life revolves around the person she loves. She may or may not have made this decision consciously, but in either case it frees her. She is made whole by her love, her marriage, and this wholeness gives her the freedom to grow into the fullness of her humanity. The femme is made whole in union with the butch she loves as the butch/femme and her femme, a wholeness no amount of friendship can give them. I do not know how to put into words the difference between this Lesbian love and a friendship that includes sex. There is a kind of feeling between a butch and a femme in love with each other that is neither purely erotic nor purely friendly, though these feelings are present too. There is a total and liberating kind of possession, each of the other and each by the other.

*Also included are male homosexuals, but I do not care to go into their problems with butch and femme, itself an interesting morass of confusion with the culturally assumed inferiority of women.*
The Politics of Di Prima

By CAROL LYNN

Diane Di Prima is a contemporary revolutionary poet who has written a series of poems called "Revolutionary Letters." There are forty of them and they are all beautiful, necessary poems. None of them was written for beauty's sake only, as each has a message that must be heard and learned by every revolutionary and by those of us still undergoing radicalization. No poem breaks the poetic system created before Diane Di Prima or since. Except for that simple, statement-like style of her own. Her rhythm moves along as she would have the revolution move, although Diane Di Prima is not unknown of either the ways of the existing civilization or its poetic production, having written several books of prose and poetry. Here are other poetry titles: This Kind of Bird Flies Backward (1959), The New Handbook of Heaven (1963), Earthsong (1957-59), and Haiku (1966).

The only place where I have found the forty "Letters" fully assembled is in The Whites of Their Eyes, subtitled Revolutionary Poems (Seattle, Wash.: Craft Associates, 1970). These poems begin right after the title page of the anthology and continue for twenty pages. As this would indicate, the poems average half a page a piece. Some are quick, instructional near-chants which ask to be memorized for future use in revolutionary emergencies like number fourteen's "are you prepared/ to hide someone in your home indefinitely, say, two to six weeks, you going out / for food, etc.

Others are descriptions and predictions of the situation thus far and fast approaching against which the poet feels we must revolt: "... the New York Times / takes a forest, every Sunday" (No. 16). And a few are songs of a revolutionary singing her emotions, or singing to evoke a revolutionary emotion in the reader. One of these ends, "better we should all have homemade flutes / and practice exercising upon them, one hundred years / till we learn to / make our own music" (No. 31).

There is one tragedy in these poems. Perhaps Diane Di Prima has outgrown this tragic flaw since "Revolutionary Letters." In them we see a strong, revolutionary spirit, strong with her goals, almost a person, expressing herself by examining the content of her poetry, though, we can see how she fails herself and the revolutionary changes she desires through both sins of omission and commission. In "Revolutionary Letters" number two, Diane Di Prima predicts that, "... thousands of sons / will see to it when you fall, you will grow / a thousand times in the bellies of your sisters." She here describes a division of labor, so to speak, wherein the sons provide the strength to keep everyone going. The sisters can only provide the multitudes of needed strong sons. And the sisters themselves will not initiate equally and coincidentally with men the continuance of their population. The men will "see to it."

Number six suggests that movement people "avoid the folk who . . . want us to practice birth control". I cringe to hear her condemn herself to pregnancy after pregnancy; to a shortsightedness more than she could use; to a diminished ability to fight. It seems that she, whom I hear calling "genocide" at "the folk," cries "suicide" to herself.

Instructions in number eight indicate that, in a demonstration, "earrings for pierced ears are especially hazardous." This first appeared to be the only advice she would give to her sisters to protect themselves from their objectification through self-decoration. And even this message is confused by the new dress of the male. She may have been addressing herself to both sexes after all.

"& no one 'owns' the land / it can be held / for use, no man holding more / than he can work, himself and family working". In this poem, number nine, it is good that she tells us man can only hold land, but so bad that only man can hold land. He and that extension of himself, his family and its size, define the amount he can hold. She could not see that the family as a whole should hold the land, if family has anything to do with it at all. Her sight was even more limited than this, for she did not see the obsolescence of the family in the revolution. In number four she spoke of how "people left to themselves" had no trouble sharing children, but we have seen by her acceptance of the family as the primary unit in terms of possession, or, in the projected society, non-possession, of material wealth, that this sharing situation would not be on a basic level, but would occur perhaps temporarily or only on special occasions (she specifies a community gathering).

Number fourteen is subtitled "especially for chicks." I wonder if Diane Di Prima ever thought of herself as a "chick." I wonder if all the depth of her poetry is some sort of illusion, because I really just cannot see someone that strong and beautiful in her mind having "chick" as a self-image. Perhaps she lumped movement women together as chicks and believes that she is different, not realizing that all women are different. That would be easy to see. A woman so blind to her captivity would suppress the strength that she is a "chick" to compensate for feeling superior, that is, farther from the "chick" image and closer to that of movement men. If that is the case, then I can see that number fourteen is an exercise in the role she sees she has been given, especially in the line, including upper case letters, which instructs women to "KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT." It may have been a coincidence that she chose such an appropriate instruction to give her sisters and herself in this self-effacing exercise, an instruction for which men are infamous. She assumed that her sisters would be stereotypically more inclined toward dangerous verbosity than would her brothers.

"I will not bear a child/ . . . till the young women / come into their own, honored and fearless, birthing strong sons / loving & dancing / till the young men can at last / lose some of their sternness, return / to young men's thoughts." She reinforces her view of sex-differentiated roles in number twenty. Everyone must be free, but free to fulfill some own function. The men must be free to think, while the women must be free to birth and love and dance. And the young women must be honored, something women's liberation also seeks, but this poet wants us honored for our procreative powers. Not only must we breed to be honored, but we must breed sons. These sons are the promised us in this age, when has an acceptable place in a revolutionary society. I cannot resist mentioning here exactly where this comes from. "Lesbians in the new world. Spurned, again, forced into hiding by another male dominated culture where women have one function and that function is parasitic to men."

In Letter number twenty-two Poet asks/ what do you want / your kids to learn / do you care / if he learns to eat / off the woods . . . Again we find that assumption of greater worthiness of the male in a revolutionary state. Her reference changes from "kids" to "he." With that sort of consciousness creating the revolution, women will not be expected to "learn to cut off the woods:" they will, as always, be able, to be expected to, rely on men to gather food and other necessities for them. And the whole pattern of the weaker, dependent sex will grow again. Diane Di Prima is ready to make that most basic mistake in a civilization again, setting up the same pattern for a divisive system of thinking. When that system is set, it blossoms, as we have seen and experienced. We have watched the pattern develop once first between sexes, then between other groups. It has been this fragmentation of society that has from the beginning put people against people. The poet's dream of a free and united world is self-defeating without a recognition of this first deterrent to that state. She has not realized that her line from number four, "left to themselves," has more depth than she can define.

Number twenty-seven includes the line, "... It is better / to lose & win, than win / & be / defeated" said Gertrude Stein. Diane Di Prima does know some worth in women.

Were I to read what I would expect from a movement woman, I would have seen the version of number twenty-eight as I have taken the liberty of rewriting it. The original first verse reads:

O my brothers
busted for pot, for looting, for loving
young beautiful brothers & sisters,
for holding out hope
in both hands to the Man, enraging him
O my brothers, freeing out this moment
this beautiful summer evening
in all the cages of America

The rewrite reads:

O my sisters
busted by tricks, or shoplifting, learning
love for young beautiful sisters,
holding out hope
through your bodies from men, enraging them
O my sisters, freeing out this moment
this beautiful summer evening
in the beds & kitchens of America

"we are not alone . . ." asserts number
twenty-nine. "...they are waiting for us...
/good morning sister, let me work
with you /good morning brother, let me /
fight by your side". Whatever the intent
of the poet, she disavows. She might be
seeking to correct the division, but I cannot
trust her enough, because of the rest of her
poetry, to assume that is what she is
attempting. I must assume it is a poem of
brother greeting brother to "fight," the
active, superior activity, and sister greeting
sister to "work," in their passive, sedentary
toil. I am suspicious: what is outlined in
this poem is the way I was taught is the
right way in middle class America.

Number thirty-four made me angrier
than the other poems when I read, "... let's /
teach the chicks /how to heal with herbs...". It sounded as if Diane Di
Prima was speaking to the whole movement
until the "teach line. "Let's", is, of course,
the core of the poem. In the poem there is an additional implied con-
traction of "Let's men." There is no way I
can see to read the poem except as some-
thing written by a thoroughly conditioned,
unquestioning woman who has accepted her
place in a male-oriented society.

On one occasion, in number thirty-nine,
she tells us, "...then I / went home and
made lemonade. /like my flowers opening /
to each other, the jewel in the lotus". It seems impossible that this
woman, who has shown us how the move-
ment men think of their women, who has
abdicated her full humanity for the place
allotted to her in the revolution, should be
able to feel so equal to a partner in love
making. Could she have experienced a man,
in all the powerful majesty with which she
endows men, opening to her? Could she
ever have experienced something so equal
and trusting with a fellow slavish woman?
Or was she hallucinating (she was tripping)
and being led to a truth: that it was the
equal opening of one person to another that
she sought. Could she have experienced a man,
imagine that she wrote at the writing of
"Revolutionary Letters," blind to the greatest boundary she
had been set behind. Her role in the
revolution of which she was so full, and
which gave her so much strength and joy,
was defined by the same rules which set up
roles in the status quo world she would
destroy.

Her aims were pure, her expression
simple and commanding, but she did not
protect herself from those less pure and less
simple. She and the men she calls brothers
had not finished exploring the bonds they
sought to break. Probably she and those
brothers would consider my criticisms
counter-revolutionary and divisive in them-
se. The woman, though, was talking in
terms of laying her life on the line. If a
woman is to cast her lot in with male
revolutionaries, she should at least be cer-
tain that the life she is offering is worth
something as a revolutionary force now and
that it will be granted its full human value
in the new society.

Should I be wrong about Diane Di
Prima, or if she should have changed since
the writing of these poems, I wait for her
answer. My lone challenge has not the
significance itself to spark a reaction from
her, but if she wants her poetry to mean
what it could to those women who, like
myself, discredit it through the faults in its
content, she must answer somehow. My
great hope for the poet Diane Di Prima
and one of my greatest hopes for the
literature of women's liberation, is that she
possibly the best of the revolutionary poets
and certainly one of the best of all con-
temporary poets, will put the revolution of
all women into poetry as powerful as that
she has made for the whole liberation
movement.

Why I Want a Wife

By JUDY SYFERS

I belong to that classification of people
known as wives. I am A Wife. And, not
altogether incidentally, I am a mother.

Not too long ago a male friend of mine
appeared on the scene from the Midwest
fresh from a recent divorce. He had one
child, who is, of course, with his ex-wife. As
I thought about him while I was ironing one
evening, it suddenly occurred to me that I,
too, would like to have a wife. Why do I
want a wife?

I would like to go back to school so that
I can become economically independent,
support myself, and, if need be, support
dependent upon me. I want a wife who
will work and send me to school. And
while I am going to school I want a wife to
take care of my children. I want a wife to
keep track of the children's doctor and
dentist appointments. And to keep track of
mine, too. I want a wife to make sure that
my children eat properly and are kept
clean. I want a wife who will wash the
children's clothes and keep them mended.
I want a wife who is a good nurturant
attendant to my children, arranges for their
schooling, makes sure that they have an
adequate social life with their peers, takes
them to the park, the zoo, etc. I want a
wife who will take care of the children
when they are sick, who arranges to be
around when the children need special care.
because, of course, I cannot miss classes at
school. My wife must arrange to lose time
at work and not lose the job. It may mean a
small cut in my wife's income from time to
time, but I guess I can tolerate that.

Needless to say, my wife will arrange and
pay for the care of the children while my
wife is working.

I want a wife who will take care of my
physical needs. I want a wife who will keep

*The Whites of Their Eyes is available by
sending $1.00 to Consumption, 1208 8th
N.E. Seattle, Wash. 98105.

(Carol Lynk, poet, critic, short story
writer, and frequent contributor to
The Ladder is married to another
woman and happily bridges the worlds
of her generation with those before
her time and looks forward to our
better futures.)
wife who takes care of the needs of my guests so that they feel comfortable, who sees that they have an aftertaste that they are passed. She discovers that they are offered a second helping of the food, that their wine glasses are replenished when necessary, that their coffee is served to them: as they like it. And I want a wife who knows that sometimes I need a night out by myself.

I want a wife who is sensitive to my sexual needs, a wife who makes love passionately and eagerly when I feel like it, a wife who makes sure that I am satisfied. And, of course, I want a wife who will not demand sexual attention when I am not in the mood for it. I want a wife who assumes the complete responsibility for birth-control, because I do not want more children. I want a wife who will remain sexually faithful to me so that I do not have to clutter up my intellectual life with jealousies. And I want a wife who understands that my sexual needs may entail more than strict adherence to monogamy. I must, after all, be able to relate to people as fully as possible.

If, by chance, I find another person more suitable as a wife than the wife I already have, I want the liberty to replace my present wife with another one. Naturally, I will expect a fresh, new life; my wife will take the children and be solely responsible for them so that I am left free.

When I am through with school and have acquired a job, I want my wife to quit working and remain at home so that my wife can more fully and completely take care of a wife's duties.

My God, who wouldn't want a wife?

(Editor's Note: Reprinted by permission of the author from MOTHER LODGE, a San Francisco feminist publication. Lesbians who have made for themselves a female-centric world at least in their own personal living are sometimes not aware of the price heterosexual women pay. We are used to assuming we are special in our underprivileged status. This personal essay shows another facet in women's mutual struggle for human rights.)

A Hard Row to Hoe

By LYNN FLOOD

Bike locked to a young tree outside the big stone house, Madeline met the old college Sadie and walked along the flagstones to the doctor's home. "I feel good, Sadie, together, you knew?" she told the dog silently as she hung the bell. Inside the window to the kitchen she could see movement, thought the doctor must be finishing his dinner, and reached down to pat Sadie's clean fur again.

The door opened and the doctor's skinny blonde wife, permanent nearly faded, face tired, smiled Madeline and the dog inside. "Go ahead, the doctor will be there in a minute."

"Thank you," Madeline answered nervously, glad of the comfort Sadie lent her to the worn-down chair. She sat with Sadie at her feet and wondered, as she always did, if she was in the right chair, if the doctor always sat in the wooden rocker and the patient in the softer, yet not comfortable chair and if that meant anything.

"Hello, hello. It walked down the step to the little sun lightly, loosely, as it would to shake her bone. Instead it went to the fireplace and poked a iron at the small glowing log. "A little chilly in here."

Madeline thought she must be the last patient of the day if he had not kept the fire going more. He sat down, smiling with the reassuring masculine grimace that made her suspect that he felt nothing at all and wonder if he was supposed to care, if she was supposed to care.

"Well, I think last time you were telling me about your creative writing course," he started.

"Yes. She paused, wondering what else to tell him about the course. She had told him everything, that the teacher was her friend now, that she wrote very freely for him, that he made literature more relevant to her than any other teacher ever had before. It wasn't any of his business that the teacher was gay, yet she felt she was supposed to tell him that. That's what's important, she thought. He taught me just as well before I knew he was gay as now. All it means is that I can write gay stories now. I guess that makes it significant.

She offered, "I feel freer to write about real experiences since we got friendly."

"You and the teacher?"

"Yes."

"You like him as a person?"

"Yes. He's very charming."

"Charming?"

"Yes. You know, he brings you out."

"Oh shit, she thought, that does it. He knows it's on my mind. "He said I had a lot of violence in me. It shows in the writing."

"Well, I imagine you do. You see, Madeline, most people who hold back their natural impulses as much as you can do feel their frustration in one form or another. Violence is one of those forms. That is possibly what the man sees in your writing."

"I know. I feel it. I like to write it. And it, like, makes me feel like I don't want you, get violent."

"I noticed you said that he makes you feel freer in writing about actual experiences."

She froze inside. "Yes."

"Madeline, you don't really know much about this man."

"No."

"Sometimes we should be more careful than we would like to be in telling people, in any manner, about ourselves."

"Yes."

"He could, unintentionally of course, be very harmful to you if certain facts about yourself were in the open."

"It's okay, he's gay."

"I thought he might be," the doctor smiled, nodding. "Why were you so hesitant to tell me?"

"Because it's no big thing. He is, I am, that's all. It just means that I can say what I want to say more openly. It all doesn't have to hide behind symbols. That's all. I didn't want to make anything of it. He's my teacher. It doesn't make any difference what we are."

"Of course. The teacher-student relationship is all-important in this case. I see what you are driving at. To you he's just a man."

"No. He's not that either. He's a person."

"Excuse me, I meant man in the sense of 'person,' mankind, as it were."

"I'm sorry, I didn't realize that's what you meant."

"It's an easy mistake to make."

They sat in silence for a while. Madeline, most people who hold back their violent impulses as much as you can do feel their frustration in one form or another. Violence is one of those forms. That is possibly what the man sees in your writing."

"Have you seen Jim this week, Madeline?"

"Yeah, between classes."

"No long phone calls?"

"No. I've been writing too much."

"You asked him not to call?"

"No, he just knows I'm really doing writing."

"He's very understanding."

"He's got his own things to do. His experiments. They've named the lab rats. I think he's getting very involved with them."

"It's okay, he's gay."

"The doctor laughed in his 'ho-ho-ho' fashion. "But you haven't had a chance to be with him for any long period of time."

"No."

"You don't mind?"

"I don't care. I'm busy."

"Are you? Do you spend much time with your teacher?"

Madeline did not answer. I stop seeing any girls except platonic ones and now he's going to tell me I shouldn't hang around with a man because he's gay.

"It would be a shame, Mad-line, to invest too much of your time in a superficial relationship with someone not of your age or even, probably, your interests when there is a boy with whom we have seen you develop very deep feelings."

But what about writing, Mad-line thought. What if my teacher can make me learn all the stuff I want to know but don't even know enough to ask him a scientist. I'll see him, damn it, but I don't want to see him all the time. Or, am I avoiding him cause I'm scared of a relationship? Am I hanging around the English department cause I want to get back with gay things? I'm not supposed to do that.
"Well, Madeline, I see our time is up for today. I'll see you next week?"
"Yes."
"Is the same time all right with you?"
"Yes. Thank you." Sadie got up to go out with Madeline, but the doctor ordered her to sit down. He walked Madeline to the door and let her out formally.

Always, she thought, it feels like he's teaching me how to have a door opened for me. Oh, poor dorky inside, I don't feel so strong now. Maybe I should cut creative writing tonight and see Jim. Maybe he's right. I'm supposed to work on it harder with him. Maybe he's right.

"Maddy, it's fear you." "Tell him I'll be right down."
"Hey, Jim, she's coming. Okay. Where're you going Mad?"
"Why the Sweetheart Ball, darling thing."
"Come on. I don't know who it'd be harder to get there, you or Jim."
"Me."
"Probably." Kathy was just a dormitory hang-around type. She watched people come and go and made sure they had someone to hold their heads when they got drunk. She seemed to love to get Madeline off, possibly because it offered such a great opportunity for criticism. "Don't you think Jim'd like you a little better in makeup, Mad?" she would ask at times. Tonight she pried her victim with a series of questions.

"Why don't you shock him and wear a dress this time? You've got such a good figure, except you're too skinny. I guess he thinks you look good in anything. But isn't it easier in a skirt?"
"Shut up, Kathy."
"I can't believe you never did it with him."
"He's shy."
"Why don't you seduce him?"
"I don't want to."
"You must."
"Listen, Kathy, I got to find a book of poems for him. You look on my roommate's shelf, okay? It's called the Imagist Poem or something and it's got swans on the front."
"Is he a fag, Mad? I mean all this poetry and not screwing and everything."

Madeline felt herself redden. "Here it is. No, he's not a fag, I like poetry. I'm just trying to teach him to like it. He likes rats and we go watch them run through mazes, so he's got to read some poetry. Bye. Hope your blind date is nice."

"That doesn't matter, long as he's a guy! See you later!"

Madeline escaped to the stairs but slowed to go down them. I couldn't wear a skirt with him, she thought. I'd feel too vulnerable. But he hadn't tried too hard. The doctor kept talking about "affectional, "warm" relationships. I guess he figures me and Jim have one. Shit, I'm not even aggressively physically with girls. How could I be with guys?"

She signed out, left the dorm and ran up the hill to Jim's '54 Ford. He opened the door from the inside for her, only because it didn't open from the outside. Without greeting each other they both started pushing from inside the doors until the car started rolling down the hill. Then they jumped in and Jim got the ignition going while Madeline slammed her door until it shut. When Jim got his shut, he said "Hi."

"Hullo. I think my doctor thinks we should be affectionate.

"Why didn't you tell me that before we got the car started?"

"Guess I didn't want to do anything about it. Nothing personal. But you can't just have a relationship by the book. Which reminds me. I have that book for you -- the one with the short poetry I told you about."

"Uh huh. Want to go see George and Hilda first?"

"Can you get in the lab now?"

"Yep. Got my key today."

"Wow. Jim's getting to be very important to the psych department. Okay, I want to be formally introduced."

In the lab Madeline watched Jim put George and Hilda through their paces. He wasn't a bad looking guy. But his lips are so big. And his cheeks scratch. I don't want to, she thought. It's his business who I make love to. He could just be the wrong guy. Or I could be stalling. It's not fair. I just went to the damned doctor to find out why I am who I am. Not to change what I am. But, damn it, he has to think that's why I'm having trouble. Why I keep getting in trouble. Cause I don't want to be who I am. Probably just thinking of Jim's needs anyway. Identifying with him. I just don't want to do it."

"What's next, Madeline?"

"Everything."

"Should we go over to the Grandview?"

"I guess. It's kind of early to get drunk, though."

"That's all right. We'll go for a ride later so we don't stay there all night."

"Yeah, okay. They often went for "rides" after. If it were not for Jim's considerate tactics, that would have finished their relationship long ago. He's offensive, she thought. Harmless . . ."

They left the Grandview early. Madeline's tension had made her drink more quickly than usual. She was feeling good, just this side of sick drunkenness. Jim would not let her help push the car though, afraid she would stumble and end up under the wheels.

"You think I'm drunk."

"No, Madeline. If you were drunk I'd take advantage of you."

"But you're gallant, so you'll take care of me instead."

"Right. Come to my pad and we'll make coffee for you."

"Why? I feel good. I don't want to get sober."

"What the hell. It's cold out anyway."

"Unexciting, she decided it was okay. Jim wouldn't. I've been there before and he didn't. It's okay.

They pulled up to his slum apartment and parked in the junk strewn yard. The air was very clear. The stars moved around them.

"Jim, you really expect me to make it up all those steps?" He lived at the top of a rickety tenement whose stairs crisscrossed above them in the dark against the windows shaded by tattered colorful curtains. Jim put his arms around her where she leaned against the car.

"I'll catch you if you fall."

"Uh-uh. You'll help me fall." He was just holding her and she still felt good. A little dizzy, but aware of the beautiful night. She felt intense and full of energy.

They all sat in the same ceremonious fashion and were silent for a long while.

"Well, Madeline, did you have a pleasant weekend?"

"I guess. I wrote most of it. I saw Jim Friday night. I don't want to see him any more."

"Why is that, Madeline?"

She concentrated once more on how to say it. "I don't know. I guess I'm just not stayed at the stove for a few minutes of thawing. Then Jim went to the refrigerator and took out two cans of beer.

"This is it, Madeline."

"Guess we can't just let them sit there."

They moved to the long narrow living room with their coats still on. Madeline sat on a ragged chair whose springs she could feel as she sat. They had two hours before curfew.

Jim stood over her, drinking his beer.

"I feel so full. Why do you make me drink this stuff?" He just smiled and sat at her feet. After a while he put his head even closer and her mind was numbed from the new beer and very aware of her body. It felt good to have someone touching her. She made the effort to reach out and touch the back of Jim's neck. He didn't move. She let her fingers move up the back of his head into his slightly long hair. I'm forgetting this Jim, his hair feels like a girl's. I've got to be careful. He could get excited or whatever they do. But I feel it. If he could be a girl.

Jim turned, putting down his beer can, and pulled Madeline to him. She fell into his lips and accepted their touch. It was still exciting, not like being with Jim, but she wasn't thinking anymore, just feeling, forgetting who and how. She kept her eyes closed, did not want to see him, pretended enjoyment when their final union commenced. By that time, though, she was completely numb and had to keep awake to simulate response. Her only thoughts were wonder that this was supposed to be the way. How could a man make love to a woman? How could they be expected to know what to do, what women really liked. And had she wanted to increase his pleasure she did not know how, either. Two women can be strangers, she thought, but they have a common base of knowledge. This is ridiculous. What has it got to do with me? Why am I supposed to want it?"

This time the doctor opened the door himself and showed Madeline and Sadie in. They all sat in the same ceremonious fashion and were silent for a long while.

"Well, Madeline, did you have a pleasant weekend?"

"I guess. I wrote most of it. I saw Jim Friday night. I don't want to see him any more."

"Why is that, Madeline?"

"I don't know. I guess I'm just not
They were going to a bar called The Territorial on 125th Street. It was a long subway ride with many stops into the drizzling night to pick up members of the party. Finally all assembled there were only five — Harve and Joshua, Toni and her current lover Cassidy and Madeline. They stood waiting for admittance outside a prohibition-type door. The four Madeline was with were regulars and the forbidding door opened almost immediately for them. They paid the fee that would cover ice and mixers and were shown to their reserved table where they set up the bottles they had brought.

The Territorial was nearly empty that early in the evening, and the sat trying to be funny for one another. Toni was dividing her time between placating Cassidy and talking to Madeline while the boys continued their affected routines. Madeline was fascinated by Joshua, a beautiful black man with the grace of a respectable fairy and the sensibility of an untrained poet. Later, he promised, he would show her his poetry.

"He's so talented," Harve boasted.

"It's all for you, baby," Joshua answered, kissing Harve's broad hand. Harve was a nice Jewish boy from the Bronx, heterosexual before he met Toni, but on meeting and falling in love with her, he had somehow confused her sexual predilections with his own desires and ended up with Joshua. They were a beautiful hopeful couple who had not merely passed in the night but were held together by each other's determination: Joshua's to become what he called respectable through his clerical job and to escape from Harlem, Harve's to get out of his mother's house in the Bronx and to become a successful salesman. They were a happy background for the convoluted conversation of the other three.

"Okay, children, here's the ice," Cassidy announced. "Anybody for a drink?"

Madeline had been waiting for her escape to what she hoped would be relaxation and watched Cassidy mix her a strong screwdriver.

"Essential to a happy evening," Madeline announced, drinking largely and trying to ignore the taste.

"College kid, big words, right?" Cassidy asked.

"Yeah. More real, it feels like, than kids at school. First of all, they're not gay."

"I see your problem," Cassidy sympathized.

"So I don't have much to talk to them about really. I mean all we can talk about is school. The life they're really living is just different from mine." Madeline was refilling her drink.

Toni asked, "You still seeing that guy? Can't you talk girl talk, little femme?"

"Shit, I don't know how. Besides, that's different. I'm not a very interesting one. He just doesn't seem to be attracted to me."

"Okay. Is he right? Do I want to change? "But I get a break this weekend, anyway. An old friend asked me down to New York and I can get an overnight out of the dorm. I really want to see her because she's been going through some things too and we've always helped each other in the past."

"The decision is yours. I am not sure that this is the most advantageous time to return to 'old friends' and old environments but if you feel you must help her, I will not interfere with your sense of responsibility. As a matter of fact, I am pleased to see that you are acting out of just that sense."

"Christ. "I feel I should go."

"What have you told Jim?"

"Nothing."

"You haven't talked to him?"

"I didn't want to say anything to hurt his feelings until I could think of how to say it best."

"Well, that is good. Very good. Perhaps your hesitation over words reveals a reluctance to act out your hasty decision."

"Your hasty decision. Sadie got up and began to lick Madeline's hand. Madeline patted her.

"Down, Sadie. Sit," the doctor ordered in as deep and calm a tone as he used with Madeline. "Sit, girl. That's good, stay down. No? Then come over here. That's right."

"He patted her somewhat roughly and she stayed. "Good Sadie. Good Sadie."

"I've been reading a lot of sociology," Madeline tried to begin again.

"Yes, I remember you were taking two courses in it."

"We've been doing the looking glass theory in one class. It really makes sense. I mean, puts things together. I can see how people relate to each other in some cases."

"Yes, I hope we can continue to talk on that line next time we meet. I see our time is up for today. I would warn you, however, not to put too much faith in one sociological view of things."

"No, no. Of course not. I just meant I never saw things that way before."

"Good, good. " he led her to the door. "Goodnight, Madeline."

"Goodnight. " She walked slowly to her bicycle and unlocked it. Is he right? Am I just doing things blindly? What's going to happen with Toni? Is he away? Maybe I shouldn't, though. I'd just be comparing Jim unfavorably. Would that be fair to him? To whom? Why should I be fair? I know what I want. But the doctor says I want something different. Does he know me better than I do? She got on her bike and started back to school. Shit, shit, shit.

"Oh, right. you got your boy to take care of you, taunted Cassidy."

"Hey, Cass, honey, they started the jukebox! Dance with me? Do you mind staying here with the boys, Mad?"

"No, no."

"Listen," interjected Joshua, "i haven't been with my lover here for two weeks now, so we're going to jump in now. You sit this one out, Madeline, and I'll show you how a real lady dances. Okay?"

"I need to learn, Joshua. Go ahead."

Madeline was left with the end of her
second drink alone in what seemed then to be the only empty space in the bar. The dance floor was not crowded at that point and she watched the couples in these, the preliminary lovers’ bouts of the evening. Wow, they’re all so beautiful together. Aware of each other. Fraternity dances.

What a difference. A whole different morality. Must make us freer in some way to be gay. Not date, dance, try to make. Just a continuum of lovemaking. Wrapped in each other because that’s all they want. The whole place moving to one rhythm. No wasting time on other things. A kind of communality of the soul. What real marriage is supposed to be.

She finished her second drink and mixed another one. Then she looked around. Weird place. Got to remember this for a story. The dance floor was huge with beams from the floor to the ceiling. There was a balcony around the room so that the ceiling was two stories high. Small tables were around the balconies and beginning to fill up with the overflow from downstairs. Be nice up there, watching all the lovers. Oh god, this is my life. I’m happy here. I don’t want to think why. But I have to because it messes up the happiness thinking the doctor would say . . . What would he say?

“Madeline, you are happy there because you are protected from your own inclinations. All those people reinforce the war you wage against yourself.” Is that true? Is that? Toni and Cassidy came back to the table. Madeline looked for Joshua, but he and Harve did not look as if they were going to miss the slow song that was going to make us freer in some way to be gay. Not date, dance, try to make. Just a continuum of lovemaking. Wrapped in each other because that’s all they want. The whole place moving to one rhythm. No wasting time on other things. A kind of communality of the soul. What real marriage is supposed to be.

“Toni? I thought, I mean, you look like you’re really enjoying each other.”

“Mad, Mad, I don’t know. Maybe I should’ve gone to college, too. This scene down here is so different. Cass is just plain dumb. All the girls are dumb. I know there’s got to be different people somewhere. I was hoping you’d meet some at college.”

“Well, I did meet one guy, a teacher, but he’s older.”

“Toni? I thought, I mean, you look like you’re really enjoying each other.”

“Toni?”

“Toni?”

“Toni?”

That was all right. It’ll be closer than anyone else’s place except Joshua’s. But I’m not sure you’d be welcome there.

“Right. And Toni’s mother would kill her if she brought me home again.”

“How do you feel?”

“Better, Harve, thanks. I got to thank all of you.” Something was running through her head. “But the pain in here . . .” Bob Dylan. He knew it. “But the pain in here . . .” – no – “And it was raining from the first and I was dying there of thirst, so I came in here. And your long time curse hurts, but what’s worse is this pain in here. I can’t stay in here . . . She takes just like a woman. Yes, she does. She makes love just like a woman. She aches just like a woman, but she breaks just like a little girl.”

“We’ll go back up. Okay, Mad?”

It was unprecedented having the doctor come to the dormitory. But her friends did not know what else to do. She had not moved nor spoken in hours. No one had to know he was a psychologist.

He sat on her bed. She panicked. Stopped willing herself dead. Everyone else who had tried to make her hear was just a buzz, like flies. She was frightened now.

“Madeline, I’ve come to help you.”

She began to cry. He took her in his arms. He had broken the dam. “What is wrong, Madeline?”

She shook her head. She wanted to die. But she broke just like a little girl.

“We’ll go back up. Okay, Mad?”

“Hey, Toni, let her sit between us.”

“You don’t sit up.”

“Okay, lie on my lap.”

“I’m sorry, sorry.”

“Okay, lie on my lap.”

“Toni? I thought, I mean, you look like you’re really enjoying each other.”

“Toni?”

“Toni?”
Madeline nodded. He left her. Her friends came back in one at a time and she tried to stay strong enough to reassure them. Then they left her to sleep. She dreamed of a room where two walls were closing toward her. Each had a door that was open. She had to choose. Someone was exposing her to这两 walls, not letting her walk straight ahead, not helping her out. The walls came closer to her. She knew the right wall, but someone was yelling at her not to touch it, it would burn her, it was hot. He was wearing a dark suit. She tried the other wall and it, too, exuded heat. She turned her back to him and walked between the walls toward the other end.

(Editor's Note: The story is true... and nothing has been changed to protect the guilty. Therapy in this country all too often means “adjust to fit the system.” This woman was lucky. Today she is an adult happy Lesbian, married to another Lesbian, and well established in her working world. How many others walk this corridor and do not come back to life?)

Harriette Frances was born in San Francisco and now lives in San Rafael, California. She received her art education at California School of Fine Arts and the San Francisco Art Institute. Known primarily as an artist, having exhibited since 1960 and having won 51 awards including the James D. Phelan Award in Art (1965), it is especially delightful to present her work as a poet. Since 1960 she has had 27 one-woman shows in California, Nevada and Texas. Her most recent show opened at the Contemporary Gallery in Dallas, Texas, in May 1971.

Her drawings have been featured in half a dozen U.S. and Canadian magazines and she has given art shows on TV and also read her poetry on educational TV in Sacramento, California.

Her poetry has appeared in NEW ATHENEUM, CARAVAN and VECTOR. These poems are from her first poetry collection, SAPPHO ’71, San Francisco, Donahue-Arlington, 1971. The book is illustrated by the author, combining her talents. SAPPHO ’71 can be purchased from SAPPHO ’71, 95 Sunny Oak Drive, San Rafael, California 94903, for $2.50.

S.O.S.
(Save Our Soapboxes)

She slicks her hair back, pulls the zipper
On her fly-front pants and goes to work
In a factory, where no one gives a damn
What she wears, so long’s she does her job.
She’s been there twenty years, has a position of
Responsibility and trust, well-liked by everyone.
She cares about them all, who need her care;
They seek her out to tell their grievance to.
The women all relate to her, the men take her to lunch.
They are all half-in-love with her
And couldn’t tell you why; but it’s because
She PUBLICLY and PRIVATELY and VOCALLY
And ACTIVELY GIVES A DAMN, about everything
That makes this country sick:
Poverty
Pollution and
Power-politics,
Prejudice
Perniciousness,
Injustice, racism and
WAR;
Her eyes reflect her caring, her talents are bent
To it, and yet.
At night, in the privacy of our room, when she comes
Into my so willing arms, and bends to meet
My needing and her own she then becomes
A
MENACE
TO
ALL
DECENT
PEOPLE,
EVERYWHERE!
PHANTOM MAN
What happened, see,
Was that you kicked those words around
Like the can
in that game kids played
When I was young.

Shit, man, I got tired
Of being "It"
Always looking
and looking, and finding
Only the goddam words.

Where were you hiding?
All those years? It doesn't matter now
Where,
Or from what,
Or from whom.

I got me a woman now
And her vocabulary's in her guts;
She never hides
And we
Do not play games.

IT TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE
You did not choose to stand
Naked before me
At that awful reception
In that hot crowded room.

You did not choose to be
All that I saw
In that one glance that stripped you
Of your need for pretense.

I did not choose to prove
The truth of that adage
It was not my intention
To live a cliche.

But god how I know you!
Naked before me
In the arms of our loving
Where you also know me.

NOT WHO I AM
Because the nine-to-five scene
Insists on my deception
Wants only the
Myth of me
And not who I am,
Because my nine-to-five friends
Insist on my meeting
The men who will
Think I am
Not who I am,
I carry my hidden self
Heavy, from nine-to-five
And in your six-o-clock
Arms I can
Lay my self down.

ULTIMATUM
This is the last time that
I'll ever race to you,
Forcing your unwilling arms,
Breathing the word “beloved”
In your unhearing ear,
Thrusting my thin cold hands
In the torn pockets of your love
Tearing the shirt your heart wears,
Clawing the nakedness beneath
To touch your full, unyielding breasts
And consummate these years of caring
That climaxes in poetry
And digs its nails into your silences
But leaves no scar on your unfeeling flesh.

FOREST FIRE
I touch you and your eyelids glow
And fire spills down from both your eyes
To the twin lips I kiss, below
The tangled forest at your thighs.

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Where you also know me.

PARADOX
It was a really heavy affair;
I dug him — but there was always something.
I didn't know what, dividing us. We live
In the same world, spoke the same language.

Until I met her, I never made comparisons
But, looking back, when I took my problems to him
He'd say, "Honey, I understand" and she
Says, "Baby I know where your head is at;"
And he'd say, "Let me love you" while she
Smiles and says "Let's fuck", but the paradox
Is, that HE always fucked me — and SHE and I make love.

DAWN AND DUSK
She turns, her thigh moves from my own;
Her hands, slowly,
Leaving my breasts, become
Busy with covers, clothes
And coffee;
And I, sleepily, await
Her scrubbed six a.m. face,
Pepsodent mouth,
Her sitting-beside-me smell
Holding the hot coffee-cup
While her eyes hold mine and say
I love you.

I busy myself, while she is gone.
With paints and poetry
Until tonight
When she returns, tired
And hungry. And the miracle is,
I can revive her
With a poem
And feed her with a painting
And when she is surfeited,
We will lift forks
With orange fingers,
And full hearts,
And eat our dinner for dessert.
We will talk
About everything, and mean
I love you.

I wonder how many
other fools
sit up at four-o-five a.m.
in beds ninety-nine & 1/100ths per cent
pure loneliness
and one one-hundredths wrinkled sheets,
Half-crazed with poetry
and needing only
a small miracle of words
to make love scan
and sleep
certain.

CRUISING
In the dim light, half indigo,
I say, "Buy you a drink?"
And mean, my god I miss her, but
You'll do,
At least until the morning catches us,
Naked around our needs.
interview, LESBIANS ARE SISTERS, featuring a bisexual and a female transsexual (?) who thinks about "balling another woman."

Sally Medora Wood, in A GUIDE TO WOMEN WHO DARE TO SPEAK PUBLICLY, combines excellent advice with quiet humor. For example:

Q: It says in the Bible that "Man was created for the glory of God, and woman for the glory of man." What do you think of that?
A: It proves to me beyond a doubt that men (and not women) wrote the Bible.

Robin Morgan's article, GOODBYE TO ALL THAT, avoids the fuzzy male chauvinist analysis of the society's ills, the analysis that says men are as oppressed as women by The System and that "automatic freedom for women — or non-white peoples — will come about ZAP! with the advent of a socialist revolution." "The oppressors are indeed fucked up by being masters . . . but those masters are not oppressed. Any master has the alternative of divesting himself of sexism", but women, the oppressed, have no choice but to fight.

What I found most inspiring in the whole book was a lengthy radio interview of three high school women. The next generation of feminists, if these three are a sign, may avoid the pitfalls of male political analysis that says men are as oppressed as women by The System and that "automatic freedom for women — or non-white peoples — will come about ZAP! with the advent of a socialist revolution." "The oppressors are indeed fucked up by being masters . . . but those masters are not oppressed. Any master has the alternative of divesting himself of sexism", but women, the oppressed, have no choice but to fight.

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The alternatives to the male-chauvinist-nudes presented in the previous issue are as many as there are unprejudiced artists. However, the female painter should logically be best qualified to portray herself truthfully and in fact, if she is a figure painter, has almost an obligation to do so. Women, who have from the beginning played only the passive role of modelling for art, are now, both actively and symbolically, beginning to reject this relegation and seriously take over an effective role in the more vital act of making art.

For this reason, Suzanne Valadon is gaining greater status in the minds of artists (who are also concerned with their own liberation as women) because she played out in actuality the belief that women must remove themselves from the model's sexual-art-object position. Valadon was born in Besançon, France, in 1868 and grew up in the artist's district of Montmartre. She worked for a time as a model to Edgar Degas, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and other artists lesser known: but after seeing her image continually portrayed as the anonymous object of art, she felt finally a greater need to personally affect the world around her and so decided to become a painter herself. Unfortunately, much of Valadon's figure drawing is derivative of Degas' idealized male-chauvinist style which depicts women who are supposedly in the act of some "everyday" motion but whose bodies are painted more like the perfectly proportioned nudes of the Renaissance than like those of average, "everyday" people.

In disparity with her drawings, however, Valadon's paintings reflect the fire and independence of the true Valadon person.
Isabel Bishop. At the Noon Hour. Tempera and pencil on composition board. 1935. 25”x18”. Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Massachusetts.

Isabel Bishop was born in 1902 in Cincinnati, Ohio. She has lived most of her life in New York City and has spent that time recreating in her art the small scenes of urban life around her. At the Noon Hour is one of many drawings and prints which depict two women talking, laughing or strolling together. The male-chauvinist female figure is not permitted such liberties. If a second person is allowed to enter the male-chauvinist painting at all, it is almost always a man, child or female relative but never an unrelated female peer with whom the main figure might possibly have a non-rivaling relationship, or worse, with whom she might conceivably have a sensual/sexual relationship. It is important, therefore, to note that much of the art of Isabel Bishop breaks with this tradition and presents, again with honesty, the fact that women can and do enjoy the company of their own sex, sometimes to the point of excluding the opposite sex altogether from the picture.

American Artist, June 1953) Miss Bishop states: “‘Genre’ drawings are never heroic, never in the ‘grand manner’ and never large. Also they are never ‘compositions’. In them form and content seem united by magic or at least by accident... In this particular kind of artist expression the subject must seem unmanipulated— as though a piece of life had been sneaked up on, seized and somehow became art, without anything having been done to it. This is the way it seems, which is part of the content.”

Nude, by Bishop, is firstly a moment of life. The figure is in no way “posed” nor is it designed to fulfill pre-existing canons. A woman looking at this work knows instantly that this is her honest self and because the painting is honest to life, it offers the best possible alternative to the male-chauvinist-nude. Bishop is a woman and knows how to paint what she knows— being a woman. Throughout her work, there is a constant sensitivity and verity in the way she translates the world in which she lives.

Isabel Bishop Discusses ‘Genre’ Drawings. American Art, June 1953) Miss Bishop states: “‘Genre’ drawings are never heroic, never in the ‘grand manner’ and never large. Also they are never ‘compositions’. In them form and content seem united by magic or at least by accident... In this particular kind of artist expression the subject must seem unmanipulated— as though a piece of life had been sneaked up on, seized and somehow became art, without anything having been done to it. This is the way it seems, which is part of the content.”

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Odalisque — is a French word meaning harem woman or female slave derived from the Turkish, odahlig (chambermaid). The odalisque in French painting usually reclines on a couch and is surrounded by exotic drapery. Notable examples may be found in the work of Ingres, Delacroix, Matisse and Renoir.
her ink and dye drawings at the Memorial Union Art Gallery, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona. Sarah attended Rutgers University in Newark and graduated with a double major in Art History and Studio. She is on the staff of a prominent art museum in New York City and lives in New Jersey with her companion of eight years.)

Angela Davis: Some Questions

Note: I was originally going to sign this article and take personal responsibility for its contents, but I have been advised by an expert in these matters that such a move would be extremely foolish. Since I am not making judgments but only asking questions, I feel that I am justified in withholding my name.

It seems like all of my friends in the movement have been following the call to duty as usual. Anyone on the left is our friend. Anyone the pigs don't like is our friend. Seems to me that there is too much emotionalism and not enough intelligent thought on the radical scene, so I have prepared a list of questions concerning the latest martyr around whom we are all supposed to rally, and I give my word that I will rally to her side as soon as someone comes up with satisfactory answers to these questions.

1. Why did a supposedly intelligent black revolutionary buy guns in her own name?

2. Members of the Communist Party are not permitted to own guns. Why did she violate party discipline?

3. The Communist Party of the USA has often denounced "terrorist violence." Are they defending Angela Davis on the grounds that she would never knowingly become involved in a courthouse shootout? They have been silent on that question.

4. Numerous men and women have been able to go underground by hiding in their own communities -- black ghettos, communes, campuses, etc. Why was a black woman caught in the whitest area of Manhattan, in a Howard Johnson's motel?

5. Who is Ralph Poindexter, and how did he get hauled out so fast?

6. Angela Davis claims that during the months she was hiding, she was too confused to make adequate plans for escape to another country. This is an intelligent revolutionary?

7. Other explanations for her capture include the statement that the Communist Party is infiltrated by pigs. If so, why did she join it, and why does she continue to recommend it as a viable alternative for black people? And why was she able to remain underground for two months?

8. Angela Davis claims that she stayed in a boarding house in Florida, but left because pigs were living there. How did she know they were pigs, and why didn't they capture her then?

9. The Communist Party, which has steadily lost support for the last thirty years and has been shunned by blacks as irrelevant, and by women as male supremacist, now has a black woman martyr. Is this a coincidence?

10. The Communist Party has been staging demonstrations in behalf of Angela Davis all over the country, and has carefully excluded the banners of groups which support Angela Davis but do not completely support the Communist Party. Communist Party members have beaten up members of Gay Liberation Front, in an effort to exclude "queers" from the picket lines, which the C.P. has been treating as their own private property. Communist Party officials have threatened to call the police to keep unwanted groups from "trespassing" on their private property -- picket lines for Angela Davis. After struggling to overcome oppression from the right, do we need it from the left?

11. After the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party split, during the 1930's, the Socialist Workers derided the Communists because the Communist Party insisted that all its members dress conservatively and that homosexuals be excluded from the Party. Over the years, the Socialist Workers Party has adopted the same policies as the Communist Party, clothed in a Trotskyist rhetoric instead of the straight Moscow line. Who owns the Socialist Worker's Party? They may run female candidates, but who chairs the board?

12. Isn't it time feminists got together and got themselves a political education which would include the history and methods of left-wing groups?

13. If the Communist Party is as heavily infiltrated by F.B.I. agents as is commonly believed, who is making policy for the C.P. -- Moscow or Washington? Hadn't an honest revolutionary better think twice before jumping on a Party-made bandwagon?

14. Throughout the 1930's, the Communist Party Created scores of martyrs, set up committees to defend them, and collected fortunes for this purpose. Most of those martyrs -- blacks, Chicanos and others -- died or rotted in jail. No accounting for the money was ever given. Is this whole episode just another fund-raisign scheme for the Party? Who the hell is running it?

AGAINT THE SEASON

"If they had no more than five years, no more than six months, why should they live even a moment not worrying much, not mattering much to each other, when from that center flowed

JANE RULE

Photo By Lynn Vardeman

ALL THE COMMITTEES TO DEFEND ANGELA DAVIS?

Finally, I would like to say that some of my friends have advised me not to raise these questions and not to destroy confidence in the Left. My reply is that false confidence, trust based on idealism instead of reality, will lead us straight into the arms of pig agents, into a hail of bullets; or even worse, into the creation of a post-revolutionary government more fascist than the one we now enjoy.

A Sister
have been involved with Beatrice in their youth, debates marriage with a man like herself in his seventies while there is still time to share their feelings. The daughter of an old family in the town, Rosemary Hopwood, allows herself to love and pursue a young woman, Dina Pyros, whose Lesbianism is almost universally tolerated primarily, it seems, because she lives as unobtrusively in the community as she does in her own consciousness.

Other couples include Cole and an unwed mother who also lives with Amelia as a domestic. Maud is the town's nineteenth century morality figure married to an invalid husband who is no more than an appendage to herself, yet who is her reason for living. There are others, each a study in learning to care for other human beings.

There is little plot to the novel aside from the overall development of each of these relationships, the slow burning of love among all the characters against all the seasons of life. Reaction to death becomes as much an act of love as the various physical intimacies in the relationships. Birth of an unwanted child is not a grim season of life. Reaction to death becomes as much an act of love as the various physical intimacies in the relationships. Birth of an unwanted child is not a grim season of life. Reaction to death becomes as much an act of love as the various physical intimacies in the relationships. Birth of an unwanted child is not a grim season of life. Reaction to death becomes as much an act of love as the various physical intimacies in the relationships.

One misses the intense romance of DESSERT OF THE HEART and the concentrated introspection of Ms. Rule's second novel, THIS IS NOT FOR YOU, IN AGAINST THE SEASON. Both elements are distributed among the many characters of this new book as if to show the reader the universality of life and is an otherwise successful business woman. Jane Rule's "Chapter From An Untitled Novel In Progress", which appeared in THE LADDER (October/November, 1969), is chapter two of the novel and describes Dina almost thoroughly. We watch Dina shed the cocoon of clothing and fears through the book as Rosemary Hopwood coaxes her out of both.

Women Composers

BY PAULINE OLIVEROS

Why have there been no "great" women composers? The question is often asked. The answer is no mystery. In the past, talent, education, ability, interests, motivation were irrelevant because being female was a unique qualification for domestic work and for continual obedience to and dependence upon men.

This is no less true today. Women have been taught to despise activity outside of the domestic realm as unfeininen, just as men have been taught to despise domestic duties. For men, independence, mobility, and creative action are imperative. Society has perpetuated an unnatural atmosphere which encourages distortions such as "girl" used as a bad word by little boys from the age of 9 or 10. From infancy, boys are wrapped in blue blankets and continually told their sex is anathema to many self-respecting women composers. It effectively separates women's efforts from the mainstream. According to the Dictionary of American Slang, "lady" used in such a context is almost always insulting or sarcastic. What critic today speaks of a "gentleman composer"?

It is still true that unless she is super-excellent, the woman in music will always be subjugated, while men of the same or lesser talent will find places for themselves. It is not enough that a woman chooses to be a composer, conductor or to play instruments formerly played exclusively by men; she cannot escape being judged by her efforts -- if not directly, then by subtle and insidious exclusions by her male counterparts.

And yet some women do break through. The current Schwann Catalog lists over 1,000 different composers. Clara Schumann of the Romantic Period and Elizabeth J. de la Guerre of the Baroque are the two representatives for women composers of the past. But on the positive side, over 75 percent of the almost 1,000 are composers of the present and 24 of these are women. These approximate statistics point to two happy trends: 1) that composers of our time are no longer ignored, and 2) that women could be emerging from musical subjugation. (It is significant that in a biography of Schumann that I have read, Clara is always talked about as a pianist, not a composer, and she is quoted as saying, "I'd give my life for Robert.")

The first of the two trends is developing even though the majority of performers do...
not include contemporary music in their repertoire and private teachers seldom encourage their students to try new music or even to become acquainted with their local composers. Agendas such as the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations have helped establish centers for new music in universities across the country and independent organizations such as the Ounce Group of Ann Arbor and the San Francisco Tape Music Center promoted lively programs of new music throughout the 1960’s. Isolated individual efforts throughout the country have gradually created an active, new music network.

At last, the dying symphony and opera organizations may have to wake up to the fact that music of our time is necessary to draw audiences from the people under 30. The mass media, radio, TV and the press could have greater influence in encouraging American music by bridging the competition between music of the past and music of the present.

Many composers today are not interested in the criteria applied by critics to their work and it is up to the critic to discern new criteria by going to the composer. With more performances of new works at which the composers are present, and with the greater mobility of our society, critics have a unique opportunity – a duty – to converse directly with the composer. Since performers are often irresponsible with new works because of disrespect or lack of established models, works with which the critics have familiarized themselves would escape some scathing judgments due to poor performances. The ideal critic could not only interpret technically and encourage an atmosphere which is sympathetic to the phenomenon of new music, but present the composer as a real and reasonable person to audiences. Certainly, no “great” composer, especially a woman, has a chance to emerge in a society which believes that all “great” music has been written by those long dormant.

The second trend is, of course, dependent on the first because of the cultural deprivation of women in the past. Critics do a great deal of damage by wishing to discover “greatness.” It does not matter that not all composers are great composers; it matters that this activity be encouraged among all the population, that we communicate with each other in non-destructive ways. Women composers are often dismissed as minor or light-weight talents on the basis of one work by critics who have never examined their scores or waited for later developments.

Men do not have to commit sexual suicide in order to encourage their sisters in music. Since they have been on top for so long, they could seek out women and encourage them in all professional fields. Libraries of women’s music should be established. Women need to know what they can achieve. Critics can quit being cute and start studying scores. (The National Federation of Music Clubs has prepared a Directory of Women Composers. It can be obtained by writing to Julia Smith, 1105 West Mulberry Street, Denton, Texas 76201. A complete discography of recorded music by women composers as listed in the Schwann Catalog, accompanies this article.)

Near the beginning of this century, Nikola Tesla, electrical engineer and inventor of A.C. power, predicted that women would some day unleash their enormous creative potential and for a time will excel men in all fields because they have been so long dormant. Certainly the greatest problems of society will never be solved until an equalitarian atmosphere utilizing their total creative energies exists among all men and women.

WORKS BY WOMEN COMPOSERS AVAILABLE ON RECORDS


Beach, Mrs. H.H.A. – Improvisations for Piano. Rogers, Dorian 1006.


Suite for Wind Quintet. Lark Quartet. CRI S-249.


Concertante for Piano and Orchestra (1944). Honsho, Watanabe, Japan Philharmonic. CRI 135.


Howe, Mary – Castellana for Two Pianos (1935). Dougherty, Rumitz, Stickland, Vienna Orchestra. CRI 124.


Toccata for Orchestra (1944). Strickland, Tokyo Imperial Philharmonic. CRI 145.


(Pauline Oliveros is Professor of Electronic Music at University of California at San Diego. Before taking that position four years ago, she was a...
“struggling composer” in the San Francisco Bay Area for fifteen years. Her latest composition, “For Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation,” was premiered earlier this year at the New Music Ensemble Concert at Grace Cathedral. Famous now for her electronic music compositions, her original instrument, the accordian, was nearly as unusual in classical music terms.

Cross Currents

BRIEF BITS OF NEWS . . . FROM EVERYWHERE: January, February, March and April, 1971. Not one in 25 clippings can actually be used in this column, but it is very important that we see them, for this is our only way to test the climate coast to coast and in other countries. One thing is clear . . . very, very slowly some areas are opening up for women, and even anti-women writers are careful about what they say in articles about women . . . they are developing that marvelous nervousness that used to characterize writing about black when black was a new word and “Negro” much easier. A clipping from Seattle tells of the first woman to become a major radio station manager via some other route than becoming the widow of the former manager. A clipping from the east gives a detailed account of the women’s tennis circuit, with vastly increased purses for women and increased interest in their game. This last mentioned was clearly a women’s matter. A story in Philadelphia is about the contract the Philadelphia Orchestra made with a cellist, composer and student at University of California at San Diego, last July 4, was turned into national news by columnist Jill Johnstone of VILLAGE VOICE. In her January 14, 1971 column, “Detective Journal”, Jill described the entire sunrise ceremony performed by a minister of the Universal Life Church on the cliffs near Leucadia, California.)

**Her Lesbian marriage to Lin Barron, a cellist, composer and student at University of California at San Diego, last July 4, was turned into national news by columnist Jill Johnstone of VILLAGE VOICE. In her January 14, 1971 column, “Detective Journal”, Jill described the entire sunrise ceremony performed by a minister of the Universal Life Church on the cliffs near Leucadia, California.**

**“Why Men Kick Women Around”, dated summer of 1970, Mr. Von Hoffman managed to write a reasonably fair view of the contempt men hold most women in without consciously realizing it. He gets in a nasty slap at Lesbians, but we will even forgive him that, for his remarks in general show that men are taught by literally everything around them from the cradle up that women are subservient and that it is hardly surprising that they grow up believing it. After all, some women still do too.**

**LANDMARK DECISION — MAYBE: January 25, 1971. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of Ms. Ida Phillips against the Martin Marietta Corp. of Orlando, Florida, saying that “an employer may not refuse to hire a woman because she has children UNLESS the same ruling applies to men”. This was the first such case that the Court has heard in 22 years, and is the most famous women’s rights case in terms of publicity.**

**JOBS FOR COLLEGE EDUCATED WOMEN SCARCE: The Occupational Outlook Quarterly, put out by the U.S. Dept. of Labor, commented in its Fall, 1970, issue that jobs for college educated women are becoming scarce. We already know that, and their predictions for the future, say in 1980, sound a lot gloomier.**

**CORNELL UNIVERSITY IS UNUSUAL, WE THINK MAYBE: In a little booklet called “The Cornell Coed”, put out by the Coordinating Council of Cornell in 1970, we find an anonymous (all articles are unsigned) down-to-earth little introduction to life at Cornell if you are a Lesbian. It is called prosaically, “The Lesbian at Cornell”. In it you find all the little details of what to do, where to go, etc . . . that dot all the other articles. How very, very different today is from yesterday. May every college and university follow suit soon.**

**CONNECTICUT LABOR DEPARTMENT BULLETIN: January, 1971. An article extracted from U.S. Labor Department figures comments that “By 1980 the number of women working will be double the 1950 figure, reflecting a major change in American life style”. The article goes on to say that a majority of these women will have children and their increase in the labor market in part depends upon “how well and how soon the need for day care is met”. We agree, but wonder how well and how soon too.**

**BOARD OF EDUCATION ZAPPED: New York City, January 7, 1971. Carter Burden, a City Councilman, has accused the Board of Education and two major corporations, IBM and CBS, of discriminatory practices in the hiring of homosexuals. Both industries accused denied the charge, and the Board of Education was “unavailable for comment”.**

HARRIET VAN HORN: There is an old saying, supposedly Hungarian in origin, that if you have “someone like this for a friend, you will never need an enemy”. That certainly applies to Ms. Van Home. In her January 14, 1971, column in the PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER, she writes: “One of the good things in women’s liberation. But she closes her column thus: “My own feeling is that the Lesbians, armed with the justice of their special quarrel, should now regroup and wage their own battle for liberation. Then the rest of us could get back to the real issue: equal opportunity for women in a man’s world. Who knows? We might now find the men ready to ‘cooperate’. We wonder if she means they might cooperate if we all promise to be "good" and non-Lesbians. If your paper carries her column, you might consider complaining to the newspaper office formally.

**NEWS FROM ENGLAND VIA AUSTRALIA: SYDNEY (Australia) Daily Telegraph, January 14, 1971. No legal action is to be taken in England in the case of the marriage of Terry Floyd and Carol Lord, two women who married last August in Southend. Terry Floyd’s full legal name is Mavis Tracey Floyd. Carol, contacted at their apartment, commented: “I can hardly wait to tell her. We can begin living normally now. We hope so, brave girls. This is 25, Carol 24.”**

**CHILDREN’S BOOKS: LIBRARY JOURNAL, January 15, 1971. The SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL section of this issue contains an excellent article entitled “A Feminist Look at Children’s Books”. The “author” is the collective known as “The Feminists On Children’s Literature”. There is also a good editorial, same issue, same subject. No matter what you THINK you read as a child, you didn’t. Read this and weep at the high price of being “born female” in this world in terms of your human rights.**

**WEST GERMAN WISDOM: NEW YORK TIMES, January 15, 1971. West
Germany classifies hausfrau as a legitimate occupation and is seriously considering instituting a pension to more equitably treat women who keep house.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION COALITION IN IMPORTANT SUIT: Report by Betty Thomas Mayen, March 71. On January 16, 1971, a suit was filed in U.S. District Court in Michigan by four women against Automatic Retailers of America, Great Lakes Steel Division in Ecorse, Michigan, plus a number of smaller firms and several unions. Legal work is being handled by attorneys and members of the Women's Liberation Coalition without charge. The suit charges the various defendants with "freezing" women in jobs to avoid promoting them and paying them equally with men.

DRESS MAKES A MAN? PANTS MAY ALL IN SOME VIEWS. On January 24, 1971, the SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE reported that women can now wear pants in Contra Costa County Courts (California), though the right to do so was recently questioned in Nevada's courts. This particular idiocy came about because a female judge had ruled that a jilted driver, Ada Rea M. Abala, who came to court in pants, had to come to court in a dress. Ms. Abala quite reasonably explained that she had no dresses. A male Superior Judge, Thomas F. McBridge, overturned the ruling.

MORE IDIOCY: Los Angeles, February 24, 1971. Judge Wilbur Dettnor ordered trial lawyer, Marguerite Buckley, to go home and change into a dress. Ms. Buckley said she had been wearing pants suits in L.A. courts for three months and no one had worried about it before. The case was moved to another court, where Ms. Buckley continued her work in PANTS.

AUDACIOUS LADY? TIME Magazine. January 25, 1971. Françoise Partrier, 51 year old novelist, essayist and feminist, applied for election to the all-male Académie Francaise. The application was rejected as one night's work. Ms. Partrier received only one vote... but she tried.

EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT FOR WOMEN: January, February, 1971. On January 25 and January 28, 1971, Senate Joint Resolutions 3 and 9 were introduced in the proceedings and debates of the 92nd Congress of the U.S. for the overwhelming (apparent) task of giving women the same rights each and every man takes for granted from birth. Chances of passage are no better and no worse than in any of the preceding congresses where such resolutions have been introduced in vain since 1923. Watch your papers... write your congressMAN and hope. If you live in a state where both of your senators are opposed, blast hell out of both of them by mail and by telegram. And while you are doing this, think about this... if every woman in the U.S. at the same time simply said: "OK, I quit... you either give us our rights or we stop functioning in any capacity..." HOW LONG WOULD THAT TAKE TO WIN?

UPON A BRIEF AD CAMPAIGN PRODUCES FEEDBACK: VILLAGE VOICE, January 28, 1971. Minda Bikman, in "Virginia Slims in Feminist Country", reports on a meeting held by major tobacco interests with various prominent women in New York City. Obvious intention of the tobacco groups: cooperation. Results nil. It is interesting to note, though, that the very small minority of women who are actively working in women's liberation are accomplishing much. Think what would happen if twice as many were working.

SUSAN STRUCK "STRUCK DOWN": THE SEATTLE TIMES, January 30, 1971. Susan Struck, a captain in the Air Force who has been fighting discharge from the Air Force because of her pregnancy, has lost a legal battle. U.S. District Judge William Goodwin found against Susan. Her attorney will, of course, appeal.

FRANKLIN KAMENY FOR CONGRESS: Washington, D.C., February, 1971. Dr. Franklin E. Kameny, long a campaigner for male homosexual rights, announced his intention to run for the non-voting congressional seat from the District of Columbia. This required 5000 signatures on a petition, but it was easy to raise that and more as his helpers wound up with 7700 names. Dr. Kameny is 45 a physicist and an astronaut. He had actively worked in forcing cases through the Federal Government's legal system on the behalf of male homosexuals (and in a case or two on the behalf of Lesbians in the armed forces). Reports from the area indicate that he is receiving wide local TV, radio and newspaper coverage, but as we go to press no wire service attention apparently outside the capital area. Dr. Kameny is not expecting to win the seat, but wishes simply to use the resultant publicity to focus attention on the status of the male homosexual.

EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

CHANGE: January, February, March and April, 1971. Cappings from all over the U.S. tell of small victories for women in various companies where one would not have believed progress was possible. Notably, some of the publishing industry has, without much fanfare, given, or promised to give, equal employment opportunities to women, married or single, in the future. TIME, Inc. is a good example. On February 7, 1971, it was announced that TIME had come to terms with some 140 women employed by four of their many magazines, and that equal opportunity was to be the rule in the future. A detailed history of how women at TIME, NEWSWEEK, FORTUNE AND SPORTS ILLUSTRATED took on the bastioned industry, and won, a little anyway, is told in detail in THE MARCH OF TIME'S WOMEN, by Lilla Lyon in the February 22, 1971, issue of NEW YORK MAGAZINE. Fascinating.

MARYLAND MOTTO SCORNS WOMEN: NEW YORK TIMES, February 7, 1971. Delegate Lucille Maurer, Democrat of Montgomery, Maryland, has introduced a resolution into the House to change the motto on the Great Seal of Maryland from "FAITI MASCHI, PAROLE FEMINE" to "FAITI FATTI, NON PAROLE." The former means literally DEEDS ARE MASculINE, WORDS ARE FEMININE. It is more often interpreted to mean "Let women talk, men act". The suggested new motto is "DEEDS DEEDS NOT WORDS".

NEW BILL WILL PARTLY HELP LESBIANS: New York City, February 9, 1971. Three bills introduced in the State Legislature by three different Assemblymen, are all directed at equal rights for homosexuals. One part of the bill deals with the repeal of the sodomy laws, which obvioulsy cannot affect Lesbians; but the other portion would amend 296-A of the New York State law and make it illegal for employers or landlords to discriminate against anyone on the basis of sexual orientation. That could conceivably be useful to Lesbians, but we do not advise holding your breath up there in New York.

FESTIVAL AT CORNELL: SPECIAL TO THE LADDER, February, 1971. A casual article in the ITHACA JOURNAL for February 13, 1971, announced the 3-day women's festival at Cornell, which was to begin (and did) February 19, 1971. Among other things, it listed the workshop topics... ranging from abortion and contraception, monogamy, black women and the men's movement to women's centers, women in China, women in Cuba, and the law, radical lesbianism, women in education and on and on. Venerable Florence Luscomb, 84 and still very active, related the history of feminism in the U.S. in the opening address, and the three days were under way. Reading the marvelous reports in the CORNELL DAILY SUN, Ithaca's only morning newspaper (university produced of course), makes you wish you could have been a part of the fun. Apparently every item on the agenda was covered (and from some of the photos, everyone was tired), and at the all-women's dance a few gatecrashing males were tossed out. We won't report like this often for lack of space, but it is so good to see these changes at this level.

WOMEN STRIKE IN POLAND: Warsaw, February 15, 1971. Thousands of women textile workers in Lodz, Poland's second largest city, have gone on strike for better working conditions and higher wages. Estimates of the number involved run as high as 10,000 women.

NICE GIRLS DON'T GET IN TROUBLE, by Sheehy. NEW YORK MAGAZINE, February 15, 1971. An ironic and civilized angry look at the rape assault situation in New York City (and any other major U.S. city). Some of this is even more horrifying than GETTING RIPPED OFF (article in December/January, 1970-71, THE LADDER) and, indeed, the successful capture of the rapist (we are sure it is the same story) is related in this article. Read it. Being a Lesbian is no guarantee that you won't be raped. It happens to every woman from 10 to 100 years of age.

MARRIAGE PETITION DENIED TWO WOMEN: LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, COURIER-JOURNAL, February 20, 1971. Circuit Court Judge Lyndon Schmid denied the request of Tracy Knight, 25, and Marjorie Jones, 39, for a license to marry. The women have been battling for this right since July 6, 1970, as has been reported in this column in the past. The case will be carried all the way to the Supreme Court by Attorney Stuart Lyon. The judge, a very enlightened fellow, intoned: "no reason why we should condone and abet a spirit of what is accepted as perverted lust any more than we should condone... thievry and chicanery."

MORE MORE: SAME SOURCE, March 1, 1971. Stuart Lyon, attorney for Tracy Knight and Marjorie Jones, announced...
today that they have filed a notice in Jefferson Circuit Court that they will take their case to the Kentucky Court of Appeals. As anticipated, they are on the way through the courts system.

JUICE NO FAITH:... THIS IS THE MESSAGE: Writing in the Letters Column of the NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE, February 21, 1971, following Merle Miller’s “coming out” article cited in last issue’s CROSS CURRENTS, Faith A. Seidenberg, Vice-President of Legal Affairs for NOW, Syracuse, New York, says: “To our homosexual brothers and sisters, I say, ‘Your Day Is Next’. ‘Right On!’”. The rest of the letter is an excellent view of why male homosexuals have to fear loss of status in our society. What Faith does not see (though her letter is a tremendous step in the direction of good intentions) is that lumping homosexual males and Lesbians into the same bag is the same terrible yoke that is heaped on heterosexual women when you insist on defining them in terms of heterosexual men. The first revolution is the women’s movement, and Faith, we Lesbians are right there with you already.

MILITARY RULES FOR WOMEN EANG: Women’s Action Program: NEW H.W. BABY: Washington, D.C., February 24, 1971. Xandra Kayden, a non-militant feminist, has been appointed head of the Women’s Action Program, an experimental department with six months’ life time granted. Official approval and blessings from Elliot L. Richardson, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, were finally granted. The primary goals of the group are to PROVE that women can advance as fast as men and to find out how the “government can help” improve this situation in case they do indeed PROVE that women are oppressed. We will be watching.

HEART SURGERY WITH A DIFFERENCE: DAILY TIMES ADVOCATE, Escondido, California, February 25, 1971. University Hospital at San Diego was the scene recently of two major operations on males actually dying at the time surgery was performed. Dr. Nina Braunwald, the chief surgeon in both operations, commented that as far as the hospital knew, the techniques used in both operations were used for the first time. In each operation, Dr. Braunwald directed a team of 40 physicians.

LET’S HEAR A BIT MORE ABOUT SANTA LIBERATA, SANCT ONCOMBER, SAINTE WILGEFORTIS, MAID UNCUMBER AND ST. UNCUMBER. All of these are presumably names of a single legendary female saint. Reference to this comes from a letter written by a man in the SATURDAY REVIEW, February 27, 1971. Would some woman please volunteer to check this out and perhaps add some information?

ALL WOMEN’S DANCE: Washington, D.C., February 27, 1971. The first Washington, D.C., all women’s dance was held, organized by Radicalesbians and women’s liberation in that city. Site was the All Souls’ Unitarian Church and over 75 women attended. In addition to dancing, liberation songs were sung. We are told a similar dance was held by Lesbians and women’s liberation members in Baltimore a week before, but we have no report on this. A long article on the first such dance (held in New York City on Friday, April 3, 1970) in the United States was in the October/November, 1970, issue of THE LADDER.

LESSONS FROM THE MEDIA: Women’s liberation is fond of bad mouthing the general media, the women’s magazines and the general trade magazines. We have done some of it in this column. However, it is wise to note that even a halfway good article on women’s liberation is better than none at all if it will reach MILLIONS more women than anything in the women’s liberation media can hope to reach. A magazine like FAMILY CIRCLE, for example, is sold in grocery stores to housewives, and thousands, possibly a million or more buy this and read it faithfully. The February, 1971, issue contains a really excellent, though very basic, article, “Are You Hurting Your Daughter Without Knowing It?”, which points out what you should and should not do in very basic terms in raising female children, and points out the errors in children’s literature. Caroline Bird, in an article in the February 27, 1971, issue of TV GUIDE, covers women in the media and women’s liberation in very cursory terms with some terrible errors of both omission and commission. But it is the most widely read magazine in the WORLD, and if half its readers read it, a few minds must have been nudged an inch or two.

ALAS, POOR NORMAN, WILL ANY-ONE SWIM SO WELL IN FUTURE: HARPER’S MAGAZINE, March, 1971. Norman Mailer, who must have being feeling very September Morn’ish over Kate Millett ever since SEXUAL POLITICS began to be talked about two years ago, finally got his blows in, in the cited HARPER’S. Columnist Myra MacPherson, writing in the WASHINGTON POST on February 19, 1971, then takes Norman apart once again. It’s rather fun; he is so bad he is funny.

VALLEY WOMEN’S CENTER: March, 1971. Located at 200 Main Street, Northampton, Mass., 01060, the VALLEY WOMEN’S CENTER promises (if it lives up to its brochure) to be a very complete center servicing most of the basic needs of the women in the area. With such an ambitious program we suspect they need workers. Area women take note.

DO YOU NEED LEGAL AID? Try asking your local women’s liberation office for referrals. Some places have places to send you to and some cities, L.A. for example, actually have staffs of women lawyers who will help you. (March, 1971, notice).

THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY: March 3, 1971. An excellent lead article, “The Church and Gay Liberation”, appeared in this issue of this most distinguished of all Protestant publications. Writer Elliott Wright makes the same error that most such writers do in addressing himself to males and their problems only while including facts that apply only to Lesbians in the article. But even with this it is an interesting view. He is particularly interested in the gay desire for monogamous marriage performed legally in terms of both state and church. The lead editorial of this issue is along the same lines and is an excellent, even militant stand for this church-oriented periodical to take.

LOIS LANE IS A LESBIAN: VILLAGE VOICE, March 4, 1971. A series of foolish articles in VILLAGE VOICE by men proclaiming themselves to be “heterosexual” and “asexual” and having, they say, as many problems as homosexuals, has brought a stinging, marvelous response from Jill Johnston in her column, “Dance Journal”. Carefully and cautiously separat-
American Civil Liberties Union. Mr. Joseph said, however, that though they recognize the difference between "legitimate grievance and illegitimate grievance," this does not mean that they "support radical Lesbianism". We wonder how any man dares presume to decide what is a legitimate or illegitimate grievance where women are concerned.

Next issue we'll have a full report on March 8 "International Women's Day" celebrations coast to coast.

Lesbiana

By GENE DAMON

A reprint from a new paperback house is one to look for as the newstands . . . FROM DOON WITH DEATH, by Ruth Rendell. This 1968 (1965 in U.S.) English mystery novel is one of the better ones to be reviewed in years past in this column. The less said about the plot the better, but this is a fine mystery and of relevance here.

Through the years a lot of people have been impressed with the size of the editor's Lesbiana collection. Credit where due brings up the book dealer and sometime publisher, Julia Neenan, who acted as my book dealer for many years sometime back. Lynn LoBer's poetry collection, THE MOD DONNA and SCYKLON Z, a collection of 6 short plays all leading to the same conclusion . . . that women have been screwed and far too often. It is available both in hardcover and quality paperback. Certainly the latter, at $2.25, is well worth its cost. These read well, incidentally, which isn't true of all plays.

ONE WOMAN'S SITUATION: A STUDY OF MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT, by Margaret George, University of Illinois Press, 1970, is very good from the standpoint of basic history of a pioneer in women's liberation. But the author makes her subject a disservice and, in the doing, all of us, by refusing to deal honestly with Mary Wollstonecraft's novel, MARY, A FICTION, which was quite specifically autobiographical and which offers our best look at the real woman. It is easy to see why this would happen, for MARY: A FICTION is substantially Lesbian . . . or, to be more accurate, variant, since nothing is spelled out. Indeed, nothing could have been in a novel published in 1788. To be sure, Ms. George does deal gingerly with Mary's many real and imaginary attachments to women, but with deliberate and accidental lack of awareness of the implications coupled with her totally unsuccessful life with men. Mary Wollstonecraft was one of the very few talented and beautiful women who were able to make themselves known as artists, a new reputation. I'll let the selections speak for themselves, but I predict you all will want the book.

THE MANUSCRIPTS OF PAULINE ARCHANGE, by Marie-Claire Blais, N.Y., Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1969, 1970, is one of those novels that Jeannette Foster would classify as variant. It concerns the pre-adolescent life of a girl who most assuredly will grow up to be a Lesbian. The standard Freudian theories (now in total disrepute) would indicate that you just cannot tell such things from pre-adolescent. We contend otherwise and know readers will much much enjoy this gloriously well written novel.

Marguerite Duras, who enjoys an odd underground reputation in the United States while already established as a major literary figure in her native France, disappoints in DESTROY, SHE SAID, N.Y., Grove Press, 1970 (also London, Hamish Hamilton, 1970). Minor and explicit Lesbian scenes are tied into a symbolic novel which defies unraveling. Four people at a hotel in France include a man, his wife and a male friend. All of them fall in love with a female stranger at the hotel, but it is the wife who is most turned on by the stranger and lusts herself into a forest which is somehow a symbol of evil (the forest, not the woman). There is a highly charged erotic near-seduction scene between the two women. In the end the stranger escapes with a "husband." Point, if

recomended and everyone needs to know a little of the life of the woman who wrote the first great work on liberation, A VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN.

Elsa Gidlow, familiar to LADDER readers as a very romantic Lesbian poet, has a new book out, MOODS OF EROS, Mill Valley, California, Druid Heights Press, 1970. For those many of you who continually crave Lesbian poetry (to judge from my mail), this is caviar. Ms. Gidlow is careful in her crafting and completely honest in her subject matter . . . no mere changing of pronouns here . . . the poetry could only have been written to a woman, by a woman. (This is available from Druid Heights Press, 685 Camino Del Cayon, Mill Woods, Mill Valley, California 94941, for $2.25 including postage and handling.)

Another new book of Lesbian poetry (see selections from it elsewhere in this issue) is SAPPHIS '71, By Harriette Frances, S.F., Donahue/Arlington, 1971. We suspect this book will make Ms. Frances, previously known as an artist, a new reputation. I'll let the selections speak for themselves, but I predict you all will want the book.

UNBOUGHT AND UNBOSSED, by Shirley Chisholm, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1970, is a clear eyed, well written autobiography by one of our very few women in Congress. Surely everyone reading this is well aware of Shirley Chisholm, black ex-school teacher from the Twelfth Congressional District of Brooklyn, who defeated James Farmer: but very possibly some of you do not know the details of her up-from-under life. Ms. Chisholm believes that women can make it via the system and presents some compelling proofs of her ideas. One interesting note . . . her district has 2.5 women voters to every man voter and she won her seat by a margin of 2:5 to 1. This should say something to all of us . . . WE OUTNUMBER THEM . . . (An excerpt of this book appeared in the February, 1971, COSMOPOLITAN MAGAZINE: but don't settle for the short article, read the book.)

Movie makers have been flirting again with vampires, and one of their horrors (for the viewer) is THE VAMPIRE LOVERS, written by Tudor Gates and directed by Roy Ward Baker. It is a male movie, for a
male audience. It is almost too silly to comment on except for the fact that several readers have brought it to my attention, many of them implying it is a "first." Not so, as I pointed out in a recent past column...!

...tying vampires and Lesbians together is an old literary game, with possibly J. Sheridan LeFane's CARMILLA the oldest example. Also, it's not new in movies since it is five or more years since the original film BLOOD AND ROSES dealt with this theme.

Monica Dickens' newest novel, THE END OF THE LINE, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1970, is a slice of life type set in an industrial city in England. The Samarians are a group of volunteers who sit on the phone with those troubled in their city, much like the hot-line operators around the major cities of the U.S. The plot, of course, is another of the endless ways to use the "telling" novel plot...a series of characters connected by a single thread. In this case the thread is the misery of their lives...and the Samarians are almost as miserable a lot as the users of their service. Of major interest here are Billie and More...an ill-matched lesbian couple consisting of bumbling but well meaning Billie and unappetizing and ill-meaning More, who, fortunately as it turns out, leaves Billie for a man. There is a sudden twist ending in this one, involving Billie and one of the Samarians, Victoria, that leaves the reader hoping...which is more than one can say about the fates of most of the characters. Very well done, for her well established fans.

TOUCHING, by Gwen Davis, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1970, is an odd book to review. It is about encounter groups...and this is a popular theme (though already all in novel terms). Why people want to gather in rooms etc. with no clothes and beat their breasts and uncover their traumas we are unsure, and this novel does little to clarify that tendency. But it is fascinating. The narrator, enraptured at least, in love to some extent possibly, with her heroine, Soothe, does a neat job of tracking down Soothe's sad life...and end...and the reader is more than willing to go along for the ride. The ending is hollow though expected. Ms. Davis is a very good writer, though, and it will keep you reading. Lesbian elements are muted, and all the more powerful for that fact. In terms of feminism, it's hardly necessary to mention the presence of the girl who is.

terrified of the male organ, the man who uses his sexuality to brutalize, and so forth.

Various previews of LOVERS ALL TRUE, by Norah Lofts, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1970, all indicated some interest in terms of women's liberation; so I took a look at this and was delighted to discover that, indeed, it is most interesting. It is a Victorian period piece...therefore, out of hard time indeed, about as much of a heavy handed bastard as one could imagine. The plot is simply too thick to go into except to say that the heroine, Marion Draper, is one of the most underprivileged of women and all because she is wanting to be independent of her husband. Murder, plots and counterplots, abound; and the novel ends with the lovely lady very much out of it in all ways. There is a very minor bit of variant interest as well...but telling about it will spoil it...so I leave it to you to find.

Kingsley Amis' TAKE A GIRL LIKE YOU has been made into a failure type play...with a brief run in N.Y.C. early this year. The Lesbian aspects are muted...oh, well...

Free-lance writer Annie Gottlieb, known to those of you who read VILLAGE VOICE, did an excellent article on recent women's liberation titles available in paperback for the "Paperback Books" section of the February 21, 1971, NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW. It is such a cohesive and intelligent covering that we highly recommend it for groups to use in building inexpensive local women's liberation libraries. All major city libraries and most small ones will have and keep NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW, so you will have easy access to this fine article.

SOMEBWHERE LIKE THIS, by Pat Arrowsmith, London, Allen, 1970, is a realistic prison novel. Ms. Arrowsmith has been a political prisoner at various times and she cuts the walls open good and shows it like it must be...and it's pretty bad. The Lesbian elements are the major plot...but the overall vicious oppression of women gives the book its horror-laden tone. Major, but very sad...recommended.

At long last, THE NEW WOMEN: A MOTIVE ANTHOLOGY ON WOMEN'S LIBERATION, edited by Joanne Cooke, Charlotte Bunch-Weeks, with Robin Morgan as poetry editor, is out. This is published by Bobbs-Merrill; and the majority of the contents are familiar to those of you who saw the now famous March/April, 1969, issue of MOTIVE MAGAZINE. The book will be very useful to libraries...and if you missed the MOTIVE issue you ought to get this. Additional material includes much good poetry, some of it Lesbian...with contributors familiar to you, Rita Mae Brown and Martha Shelley among others. The bibliography is not adequate at all, having been drawn from a very old edition of Lucinda Childer's excellent bibliographies...but be rest that is a good book. This is the book with Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon's THE REALITIES OF LESBIANISM in it...alone worth the cost of the book IF you have not previously seen it.

Lesbian poet Charlotte Mew, now almost forgotten, is the subject of a rather scurrilous article in the September, 1970, issue of BULLETIN OF THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY. The article (by a male, of course) has poor Charlotte commening author May Sinclair and chasing her around a bedroom...highly unlikely in view of the personalities and temperaments of both these ladies. FURTHERMORE, he has English novelist G.B. Stern (called Peter by her friends) and Rebecca West as the women present when May Sinclair told this weird story. Recommended reading, however, for the biographical material about May Sinclair herself. Most large public libraries and most university and college libraries will have this periodical.

Will someone who has seen the Broadway play AND MISS REARDON DRINKS A LITTLE, let us know if it is, indeed, Lesbian in part...for the reviews are very suspicious.

Remember, if we do not review a book you think we should, you should let us know about it, because we do not see every book nor every review...your help is needed.

(Please always provide an address when you write for information to THE LADDER. We cannot always take space in the magazine to reply to inquiries, but we make an effort to answer serious questions, seriously stated.)
For while their male counterparts are still raking in (usually with women younger than themselves), are indeed very much in demand, these women have simply resigned themselves to the female lifelong pattern of second best. Just as the female is not expected and encouraged to develop her vocational and personality potentials, so also is she discouraged from developing her sexual potentialities. While it is expected that adolescence is for males a time of significant sexual exploration, comparable activity for the female is much discouraged, and virginity at marriage is still deemed a desirable ideal. Likewise, it must be assumed that after she is no long marriageable (after 30?), the female conveniently loses whatever sexual desire she ever possessed as witnessed by her meek embrace of the bleak joys of celibacy. (Indeed, when feeling despondent about my own lot, I often recall these abandoned women, many of them lovely human beings; in a way it’s even sadder that age, which over-takes us all, should relegate them to a hermitic existence, than that deviance, incomprehensible to the majority as a human mode, should do so.)

Such quiet capitulation, however, is but a minor manifestation of the painful fact that whatever status women have derives primarily from their sexuality. The Nov./Dec. 1970 issue of “Transaction” has a fine article demonstrating this fact as it emerges in the differing fates meted out to aging men and women. Because male identity is strongly linked to a broad mosaic of personality, intelligence, and job status, physical deterioration does not define a man as sexually undesirable until he is in his late fifties. Indeed, because, as one shrewd observer has noted, power is a powerful aphrodisiac, the increasing job prestige of his maturity may actually increase a man’s desirability to the seraglio of young secretarys, receptionists, etc. who hover about in his working world. But for the creature whose worth is so largely a function of her appearance, each new wrinkle, each new gray hair is a frightening portent of undesirability, to be anxiously attacked with a panoply of cosmetic paraphernalia. The article dramatically illustrates these social facts with an ad in which Peter Lawford — clearly in his fifties — is shown in various situations with his Stetson hat, but always surrounded by lovely young ladies — clearly in their twenties. The caption reads, “Try to imagine a female star about Peter Lawford’s age surrounded by adoring young men.” In short, in our society, women, like the spring ephemerals, seem doomed to a brief and fragile flowering.

My point is that with reference to women with deviant proclivities similar mechanisms operate. Because for women sexual experimentation is frowned upon, and all sexual activity so severely stigmatized, true sexual identity has far less chance of emerging in the female than in the male. This is complicated by the Lesbian’s requirement of love first, sex second. Thus the chances that the latent Lesbian will break out of her cocoon are, it seems to me, much less than that the male homosexual will come to see himself as such. This, then, probably accounts for some part of the great numerical disparity between overt male and female homosexuals. But I also have a strong feeling that there are probably several million Lesbians, in the “closet”, women in business and the professions who again, because conditioned like all females to soft pedal their sexuality, are far less willing than their male counterparts to seek emotional/sexual satisfaction when it entails some risk.

For me personally, this generalized process of suppressive female conditioning has had the unhappy consequence of making me an unwary celibate, since the kind of women I find attractive and interesting are intimidated into keeping their distance from the bar scene. And if someone has figured out some other way of meeting members of the underground, few of us know about it. I’m reminded of an account of population dynamics related by an erudite naturalist. He said that given a certain number of bugs in flour, their number will increase in proportion to the amount of flour. But after a certain volume of flour, the number will decrease. Why? Very simply, when the flour environment expands too much, the bugs just can’t manage to find one another. Well, like all analogies, this is hardly an exact one. Yet, it points to a similar plight among some Lesbians. In addition to the multiple obstacles to happiness facing all Lesbians, there is the additional one of meeting that special somebody who shares your pleasure in the exercise of that faculty which places us somewhere between the beasts and the angels in the vast hierarchy of living creatures — namely, intelligence.

Donna Martin
Milwaukee, Wisc.
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