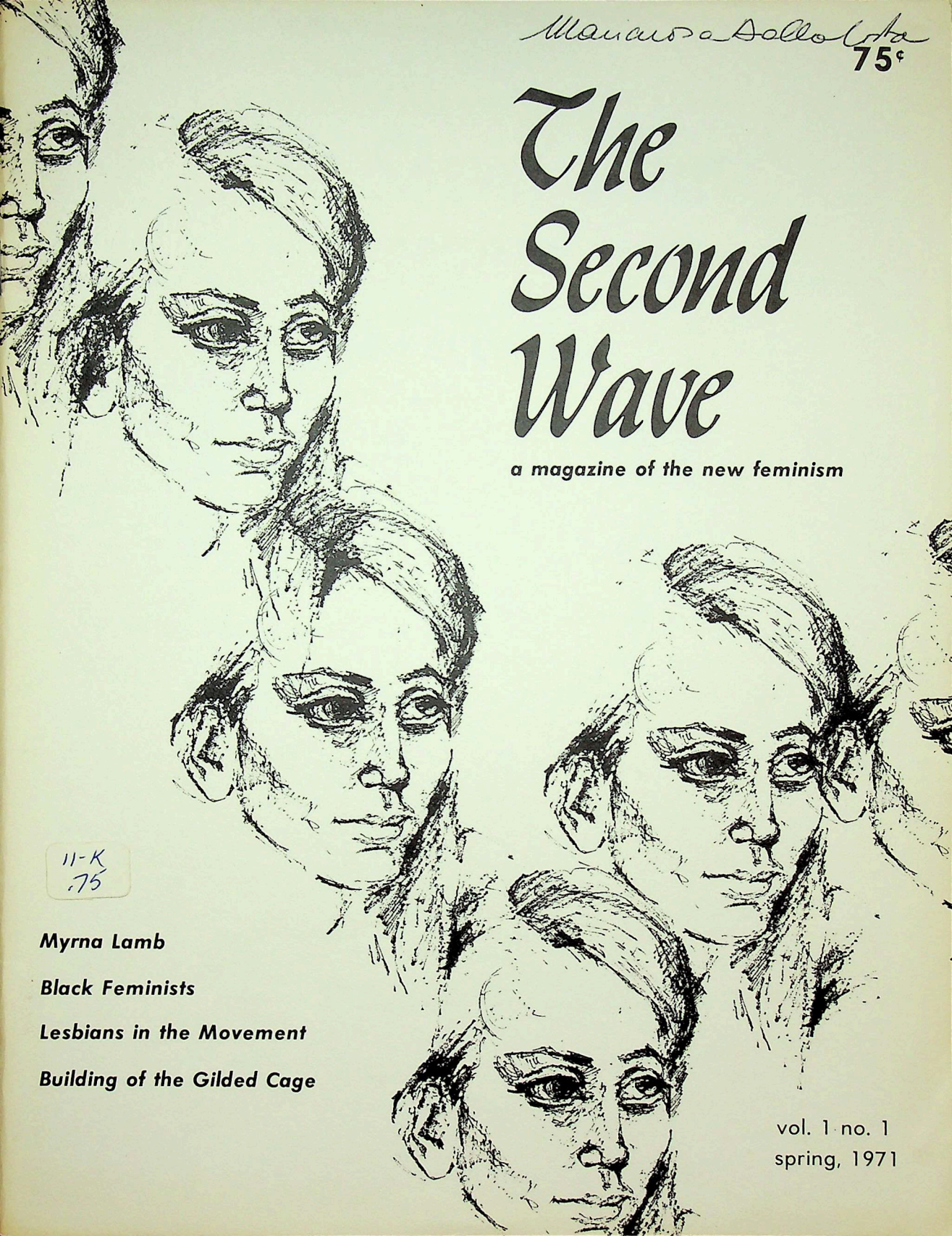


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# The Second Wave

a magazine of the new feminism



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**Myrna Lamb**

**Black Feminists**

**Lesbians in the Movement**

**Building of the Gilded Cage**

vol. 1 no. 1  
spring, 1971

# The Second Wave

A MAGAZINE OF THE NEW FEMINISM

Volume One, Number One

Spring 1971

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Cover drawing by Joan Scida

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"It may be that a second wave of sexual revolution might at last accomplish its aim of freeing half the race from its immemorial subordination and in the process bring us all a great deal closer to humanity."

Kate Millet  
Sexual Politics

*The Second Wave* is published by *Female Liberation* in Boston, Massachusetts. The title was chosen to remind us that our movement started well over a century ago and that we are the second wave of feminists in an ongoing struggle.

*The Second Wave* will include political and personal articles, news and information exchange, suggestions for directions we might pursue in our research and activities, book and movie reviews, poetry, and graphics. When we began to discuss plans for the magazine our idea was to provide a forum for feminist ideas. We conceived of a publication that would present a variety of opinion from women within and without the movement on all topics that concern women. All readers are invited to submit contributions and letters.

For the first year, while we learn about editing, layout, and the printing business, the magazine will be a quarterly. As we get steadier on our feet, the magazine will come out more frequently. Subscriptions are now available for the first four issues. Plans for the next issue include "Angry Notes from a Black Feminist."

#### MAGAZINE COMMITTEE

Liza Bingham, Meg Bursaw, Evelyn Clark, Pat Galligan, Pat Putnam, Eileen Steinberg, Carol Somer, Anne Schwartz, Robin Taylor, Linda Thurston, Nancy Williamson

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## A Statement

### About Female Liberation

Social attitudes toward women exist as the overt expression of centuries of female subjugation. The subordination of women is a real phenomenon which can be pointed out in every institution and structure in society. These institutions and structures through which women are oppressed constitute a system we define as sexism which is so deeply ingrained in every person's consciousness that most of it is not noticed or is accepted as normal. This system of sexism has also created a category of oppressed people comprising 53 percent of the human population.

Women have begun to voice their discontent with society. We have begun to talk about new alternatives. We are demanding complete control over our own lives and are beginning to act on these ideas and decisions. It is in this period of general awakening that women have come out wholly in favor of the basic rights long denied them. This insistence on the rights of women goes beyond simple legislative corrections (although we support and work for any legislation that improves our conditions here and now) and poses the question of woman's control of her life.

The nature of female oppression is such that we must question every aspect of our lives. There is nothing that we do or experience that can be separated from the fact that we are female. When we go out on the street, apply for a job, engage in any kind of social exchange or relations, society dictates that we are female first and human beings second (if at all). All women are subject to this degradation and this is the source of our unity.

We are beginning to question every basic institution of society, including the nuclear family, because of the roles these institutions play in perpetuating our oppression.

We realize that we know nothing of female potential since all the energy, genius, strength and dignity of woman is refracted through the prism of sexism which distorts and limits our possibilities in every conceivable way.

In this emerging period of feminism we have come to understand the legitimacy of our grievances. We have insisted on the right to determine the character of our movement, and will not be turned back by those who feel that the oppression of females is of minor consequence. We are independent of and not a sub-category of other groups and movements.

*Female Liberation* is an organization which encompasses all aspects of the feminist struggle, including education, consciousness-raising activities, and action around such basic demands of the movement as childcare, abortion and equal pay. No woman is excluded from *Female Liberation* who is interested in the development of a strong, autonomous women's movement capable of bringing about change on every level.

It is becoming clear that this movement is reaching into every layer of the female population. We want to help mobilize the energies and power of these masses of women to fight for nothing less than our total liberation.

# EXTERIORS

compiled by Chris Hildebrand & Evelyn Clark

## Is The Family Obsolete?

The growth of feminist consciousness has called into question some of the most basic and deep-seated concepts people have about themselves and their social relationships. For some, the exposure of the oppressive nature of the family is the most difficult to accept.

But accept it or not the family is falling apart before our very eyes.

One out of four U. S. marriages ends in divorce. In some areas the rate is as high as 70%. And I'm sure we all know people who should be divorced but aren't because of inertia or lack of any real alternative. Half a million teenagers run away from home every year. The suburbs as well as the ghettos are breeding alcoholics and junkies. Statistics on battered children are appalling.

The situation is such that it warrants public attention. *Time Magazine* December 28, 1970--the front cover reads "The American Family: Help." *Look Magazine* devotes an entire issue, January 26, 1971, to "The American Family" raising the question 'Is the Family Obsolete?'. Here is one accurate view on the problem. "Put very simply," says Cornell Political Sociologist Andrew Hacker, "the major change in the family in recent years and the problems of the future are both summed up in one word: women. In the past and until very recently, wives were simply supplementary to their husbands, and not expected to be full human beings." (*Time Magazine*, 12-28-70, p. 35.)

\* \* \*

The Feminist Movement lives in Sydney, Australia, and it looks a lot like our American experience. Women are oppressed everywhere--as we suspected--and in the same ways. Our sisters in Australia have launched campaigns for "Abortion on Request," have called for an "end to discrimination in pubs and clubs," and are fighting against job discrimination in factories and offices. They publish a bi-monthly *Women's Liberation Newsletter*. If you want to receive the newsletter (\$2.00 per year) or correspond with the *Women's Liberation Movement* in Sydney, write to: Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter, 67 Glebe Point Road, Glebe NSW 2037, Australia.

\* \* \*

Last summer *Boston Women United*, *Female Liberation*, *Media Women*, *National Organization for Women* and the *Young Socialist Alliance* organized the *Boston Women's Rights Day* demonstration for August 26. This August 26 coalition has recently extended an invitation to 70 other groups including women's caucuses of labor unions, church groups, the YWCA, suburban collectives, Gay Liberation groups, high school committees, etc., to come into the coalition. Any group that supports the *Women's Movement* and can unite around the demands for Equal Pay for Equal Work and Job Opportunities, Free 24 Hour Child-Care and Free Abortion on Demand is welcome. Only women will be

making the decisions of this new, extended coalition but groups that include men were invited and any support they are willing to lend will be accepted. These groups met all day January 23 to outline some general proposals for actions in the spring and many other activities the coalition wants to undertake. These proposals will be taken up in a mass meeting where all the women in the movement in Boston will decide what will be done this spring.

The December 14 issue of *Time Magazine* in an attempt to slander Kate Millett and through her the *Women's Liberation Movement* as a whole, may have inadvertently done a great service to two liberation movements by forcing them to recognize their common struggle. The Behavior section of *Time* said that Kate Millett, author of *Sexual Politics* and one of the chief theoreticians of the movement had probably "discredited herself as a spokeswoman for her cause" because she disclosed at a recent meeting that she was bisexual.

In an unprecedented display of solidarity, the *Women's Liberation* and *Gay Liberation* movements took this *Lesbian Baiting* head on for the first time in a very open and public way. A press conference was called and Kate herself read a statement prepared by thirty women from many organizations such as N.O.W., *Radical Lesbians*, *Columbia University Women's Liberation*, *Daughters of Bilitis*. The statement read in part:

*"Women's liberation and homosexual liberation are both struggling towards a common goal: A society free from defining and categorizing people by virtue of gender and/or sexual preference. Lesbian is a label used as a psychic weapon to keep women locked into their male-defined feminine role. The essence of that role is that a woman is defined in terms of her relationship to men. A woman is called a Lesbian when she functions autonomously. Women's autonomy is what women's liberation is all about."*

Appearing with Kate at the press conference were many leading New York feminists, among them Gloria Steinem, journalist; Ivy Bottini and Ti-Grace Atkinson, N.O.W.; Florence Kennedy, lawyer; Barbara Love, *Gay Liberation Front*. Support statements were sent by others including Bella Abzug, Rep. 19th Congressional District.

At the December 12 march and rally for free abortion and child-care organized by the *New York Women's Strike Coalition*, all the sisters wore lavender armbands in solidarity with Kate. This type of response will be extremely effective in countering the media's attempt to discredit and isolate our movement.

\* \* \*

I am restless. Adventure is pulling me out. When a man feels this it is no crime, but let a woman feel this and there is an outcry. Everywhere I look I am living in a world made by man as he wants it, and I am being what man wants.

**The Diary of Anais Nin,  
Vol. 2, 1934-1939**

# Nixon Child Care Plan A Disaster

by Linda Thurston

A significant part of the Nixon administration's new welfare reform proposal, the Family Assistance Plan (FAP), is a child care program. But what about children who are not on welfare? Why is child care part of a welfare package anyway?

All children and parents would benefit from child care, many need it desperately. Children should be able to play with their peers and to receive professional, educational and medical care. Children and parents should both be able to be away from each other some of the time.

Working mothers, in "regular" jobs or as housewives, need reliable child care where both men and women can be seen in a nurturing role. Poor and working people just over the welfare line are often those that need child care the most.

In 1969, 30,500,000 working women had 11,600,000 children under sixteen and nearly half of those children were under six years old. At most, 12 percent of these children were cared for in licensed homes or centers. Child care programs limited to the welfare poor do not provide for the needs of these people.

In addition, any child care centers set up exclusively for the poor will only continue separatist treatment whereas a good center would have children from all backgrounds and races. Programs for the poor are notoriously inadequate and continue a patronizing attitude towards them. Income limitation tests are demeaning to the poor and absurd for a social service needed by everyone.

Thus, the only adequate child care program that makes sense in light of these needs is a universal system of tax-funded, community-controlled centers freely available to all children, somewhat similar to a public school system. So why is it that child care is part of a welfare package?

One reason may be that child care is combined in this plan with a forced work program. All adult welfare recipients must register for work and accept any job or their funds will be cut off. Mothers of pre-school children are exempt from this, but the standard existence under FAP will put strong pressure on all welfare mothers to work or starve. (1) A minimal child care program attached to FAP will help to channel women with children (the largest category of welfare recipients) into jobs that no one else would take.

Job discrimination against women will undoubtedly not cease with FAP; welfare women, particularly black and brown women, can expect to be channeled into the lowest paying jobs, devoid of benefits, without regard to the woman's skill-level or the distance of the job from her home. The Social Administration Research Institute's report on child care points out that "an employer may be able to tap a new source of workers particularly if his production process involves repetitive or manipulative procedures of the type which can be serviced best by females." FAP recipients can also be

forced to work as field hands or domestic cleaners regardless of pay or working conditions. Such forced work may seriously damage efforts of these types of workers to organize into unions to improve their condition.

Forced work is not the only benefit to industry at the expense of women and children. FAP is the first child care program in which public funds will subsidize private companies. One argument against private business taking care of children is that profit and good care are incompatible. Comparing figures for good child care (about \$2,000 per child per year) with franchise and private centers now running (which charge from \$20 to \$40 per week), we find that these centers can at best only break even if they are giving first-rate care. What will be sacrificed for profits? Good food? Good teachers? Good equipment?

It is not only that private interests want to get into the child care business. Part of the idea is that companies can set up facilities at their place of work, presumably at the places where the welfare mothers will be forced to work. This plan has many disadvantages. For one thing it is in direct opposition to the principle of universal child care. In this case care would only be provided for the children of people working in particular industrial plants.

This plan also has disadvantages to the working parents who would leave their children in company centers. If child care is dependent upon working for a particular company it could inhibit workers from leaving the company for other jobs elsewhere. Workers could be inhibited from strike action when it meant loss of facilities for the child. Parents could be inhibited from agitating at the center for improvements in its service if



cartoon by: Tarbi

it would make the worker/parents vulnerable in their jobs. Vicki Breibart in "Child Care - Who Cares" (2) sums it up: "Now, as in the past, the programs being planned by government and industry are an attempt to increase business profits, to find new sources of cheap labor, and to extend their control over the lives of working people."

Even aside from the interests of industry, government is not thinking of child care much beyond the welfare level. While we look upon child care as necessary to the liberation of women and as a great social benefit to all children, others, including most in government, look upon child care as a last resort. The standard social image of ideal motherhood requires that a mother be guiding, loving, watching over her child twenty-four hours a day. Only in cases of poverty or neglect would a mother leave her child in another's care. Certainly no middle-class mother would want to place her child in a center.

Actually, if one cannot imagine more than child care centers of the type currently sponsored by the government, it is true that she wouldn't want to place her child in such. One program, the Family Day Care program, provides for a "mother" (not just anybody, but a mother) to be licensed to take in up to five children a day. A study of centers by Mary Keyserling, former head of the Women's Bureau of the Labor Department, discovered widespread cases of abuse. In one case a single "mother" had taken in forty-six children. The report said, "Eight infants were tied to cribs. Toddlers were tied to chairs; and three, four, and five-year-olds coped as best they could." Who would want to leave their child in such a place except as a last resort?

The centers under Nixon's proposal cannot hope to be much better than what now exists. Under FAP, the child care program will be funded with \$386 million. How thin will this money have to be spread? Last December the White House Conference on Children agreed that child care programs would cost "at least \$2,000 per child". Other estimates range from \$1,600, the current federal estimate, to \$3,000 per child. To care for the 3 million children on welfare (not even figuring here for other children) at \$2,000 each per year, the cost would be \$6 billion, \$5.6 billion more than Nixon's plan provides.

Clearly the Family Assistance Plan will not come anywhere near providing a good child care program. And it is just as clear that that is not its intent. Rather it is intended to get the poor off welfare rolls and to enlarge the lowest echelon of the labor force. Clearly, FAP is more of a problem than a solution.

#### NOTES

1. FAP provides \$500 per year per adult and \$300 per year per child. A family of two adults and two children would receive \$1,600 per year. The Bureau of Labor Statistics says a family of four needs \$6,567 to "maintain a low-cost living standard." HEW sets the poverty level at \$3,720. The National Welfare Rights Organization calls for \$5,500. Even with food stamps the \$1,600 income under FAP would be grossly insufficient.

2. "Child Care - Who Cares" is highly recommended. It is available for 5¢ (13¢ if mailed) from Female Liberation in Boston.

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# New England Women's Coalition

by Chris Hildebrand

Here in Boston, as in other parts of the country, feminist organizations are beginning to form coalitions for the purpose of uniting around actions aimed at winning demands. In the few months since August 26, the New England Women's Coalition has grown from five to seventeen organizations. Some of the groups in the Coalition didn't even exist prior to August 26.

Those of us working in NEWCO felt a need to give powerful, organizational expression to our growing movement. We believe that female oppression is so profound and all-encompassing that it will take the combined energies of every sister to win total liberation.

We do not propose that this coalition take the place of any woman's organization. Each group has its own specific interests and projects; many are working to develop their own analysis of the society and the feminist movement. Some are campus-based, some suburban collectives. Some are multi-issue groups, while others work strictly on feminist issues. The bond which unites us is a commitment to work together on the issues on which we can all agree in order to utilize most effectively the strength and power of the women's movement of which each group is a vital part.

We see the New England Women's Coalition and others like it as vehicles to involve ever-larger numbers of women in struggle. The coalition provides a structure to which women in small groups as well as women who have not been involved directly in the women's movement but have been fighting for feminist demands can relate. For example, we have been contacted by women who are organizing in their place of work. This is something we expect to happen more and more. Women make up forty per cent of the work force in this country; as they begin to organize, they bring tremendous power into the women's liberation movement. Similarly, black and brown women are beginning to fight together against the very special forms of oppression that they suffer as women and as national minorities. Through the coalition we are able to unite many groups in actions without cutting across the independence and autonomy of each individual group.

We are writing this with the hope that sisters around the country may be able to benefit from some of our experiences here in Boston in building our coalition. We established certain principles from the beginning which we would like to share with other women who may be forming their own coalitions.

1. The coalition is open to all women from women's organizations or organizations which support the women's movement and to all independent feminists (women who do not belong to any group).

2. The coalition's purpose is to build united actions around the specific demands of the women's movement and not to substitute itself for any group in the coalition.

If we have serious disagreement on certain activities, groups and individuals are free to participate in them but not in the name of the coalition.

3. All major political decisions are discussed and voted on in publicly advertised mass meetings, open to all women. We believe that this is the most democratic way to function as well as a good way to involve new women in coalition activities.

4. Out of the mass meetings, work committees are formed to carry out the decisions. Some of these committees, which are open to all women who wish to work on a specific project and meet as often as necessary, are: mass action, Congress to Unite Women, press and publicity, fund raising, child care, abortion, and reachout.

5. In between mass meetings, a steering committee functions to coordinate work. This is an implementation body and is not a substitute for mass meetings. Each organization has a representative on the steering committee. All steering committee meetings are open and all interested women can participate. Minutes are made available to all groups.

Women from various organizations have many political differences, but we have found more areas of agreement than we at first thought possible. At the mass meetings we have political discussion around such questions as: Are mass actions effective? Should we demand that child care and abortion be "free"? Should we demand freedom for Angela Davis? How can we win equal work and equal pay in a period of recession? This type of discussion and conflict of ideas is very helpful in educating ourselves. A lot of the ideas generated are brought back to the separate organizations for further discussion and research, thereby helping each group to further define itself in terms of political goals and strategies.

We hope in future issues of *The Second Wave* to have articles on activities from other parts of the country, and we will write more about what is going on here in New England. Please send us information from your areas.

WRITE: FEMALE LIBERATION, P.O. BOX 303  
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FEMINISM LIVES, Sketch of Valerie Solanas, black on white. \$ .75

# The Building Of The Gilded Cage

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Hidden somewhere in the byways of social science is an occasionally discussed, seldom studied, frequently employed and rarely questioned field generally referred to as social control. We have so thoroughly absorbed our national ideology about living in a "free society" that whatever else we may question, as radicals or academics, we are reluctant to admit that all societies, ours included, do an awful lot of controlling of everyone's lives. We are even more reluctant to face the often subtle ways that our own attitude and our own lives are being controlled by that same society.

This is why it has been so difficult for materially well-off, educated whites -- women as well as men -- to accept the idea that women are oppressed. "Women can have a career (or do something else) if they really want to" is the oft-heard refrain. "Women are where they are because they like it" is another. There are many more. "Women are their own worse enemies", "Women prefer to be wives and mothers rather than compete in the hard, aggressive male world." "Women enjoy being feminine. They like to be treated like ladies." These are just variations on the same "freedom of choice" argument which maintains that women are free (don't forget, we are living in a free society) to do what they want and never question why they think they want what they say they want.

But what people think they want is precisely what society must control if it is to maintain the *status quo*. As the Bems put it, "We overlook the fact that the society that has spent twenty years carefully marking the woman's ballot for her has nothing to lose in that twenty-first year by pretending to let her cast it for the alternative of her choice. Society has controlled not her alternatives but her motivation to choose any but one of those alternatives." (1)

There are many mechanisms of social control and some are more subtle than others. The socialization process, the climate of opinion in which people live, the group ideology (political or religious) the kind of social structures available, the legal system, and the police are just some of the means society has at its disposal to channel people into the roles it finds necessary for its maintenance. They are all worthy of study, but here we are only going to look at two of them -- one overt and one covert -- to see what they can tell us about women.

The easiest place to start when trying to determine the position of any group of people is with the legal system. This may strike us as a little strange since our national ideology also says that "all men are equal under the law" until we remember that the ideology is absolutely correct in its restriction of this promise to "men". Now there are three groups who have never been accorded the status and the rights of manhood -- blacks, children (minors) and women. Children at least are considered to be in their inferior, dependent status only temporarily because some of them (white males) eventually

graduate to become men. Blacks (the 47% who are male) have "been denied their manhood" since they were kidnapped from Africa and are currently demanding it back. But women (51% of the population, black and white) -- how can a woman have manhood?

**...most women  
were slaves and most slaves  
were women...Unlike slaves,  
women could not be  
emancipated."**

This paradox illustrates the problem very well; because there is a long standing legal tradition, reaching back to early Roman law, which says that women are perpetual children and the only adults are men. This tradition, known as the "Perpetual Tutelage of Women" (2) has had its ups and downs, been more or less enforced, but the definition of women as minors who never grow up, who therefore must always be under the guidance of a male (father, brother, husband or son), has been carried down in modified form to the present day and vestiges of it can still be seen in our legal system.

Even Roman law was an improvement over Greek society. In that cradle of democracy only men could be citizens in the polis. In fact most women were slaves, and most slaves were women. (3) In ancient Rome both the status of women and slaves improved slightly as they were incorporated into the family under the rule of *Patria potestas* or Power of the Father. This term designated not so much a familial relationship as a property relationship. All land was owned by families, not individuals, and was under the control of the oldest male. Women and slaves could not assume proprietorship and in fact frequently were considered to be forms of property. The woman in particular had to turn any income she might receive over to the head of the household and had no rights to her own children, to divorce, or to any life outside the family. The relationship of woman to man was designated by the concept of *manus* (hand) under which the woman stood. Women had no rights under law -- not even legal recognition. In any civil or criminal case she had to be represented by the *Pater* who accepted legal judgment on himself and in turn judged her according to his whims. Unlike slaves, women could not be emancipated (removed from under the hand). She could only go from under one hand to another. This was the nature of the marital relationship. (From which comes our modern practice "to ask a woman's father for her hand in marriage). At marriage women were "born again" into the household of the bridegroom's family and became the "daughter of her husband." (4)

Although later practice of Roman Law was much less severe than the ancient rules, some of the most stringent



aspects were incorporated into Canon Law and from there passed to the English Common Law. Interpretation and spread of the Roman law varied throughout Europe, but it was through the English Common Law that it was brought to this country and made part of our own legal tradition.

Even here history played tricks on women. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries tremendous liberalizations were taking place in the Common Law attitude toward women. This was particularly true in the American colonies where rapidly accelerating commercial expansion often made it profitable to ignore the old social rules. In particular, the development of property other than land facilitated this process as women had always been held to have some right in movable property while only male heirs could inherit the family lands. (5)

But when Blackstone wrote his soon-to-be-famous *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, he chose to ignore these new trends in favor of codifying the old Common Law rules. Published in 1765, his work was used in Britain as a textbook. But in the Colonies and new Republic it became a legal Bible. Concise and readable, it was frequently the only book to be found in most law libraries in the United States up until the middle of the nineteenth century, and incipient lawyers rarely delved past its pages when seeking the roots of legal tradition. (6) Thus when Edward Mansfield wrote the first major analysis of *The Legal Rights, Liabilities and Duties of Women* in 1845, he still found it necessary to pay homage to the Blackstone doctrine that "the husband and wife are as one and that one is the husband." As he saw it three years before the Seneca Falls Convention would write the *Woman's Declaration of Independence*, "it appears that the husband's control over the person of his wife is so complete that he may claim her society altogether; that he may reclaim her if she goes away or is detained by others; that he may use constraint upon her liberty to prevent her going away, or to prevent improper conduct; that he may maintain suits for injuries to her person; that she cannot sue alone; and that she cannot execute a deed or valid conveyance without the concurrence of her husband. In most respects she loses the power of personal independence, and altogether that of separate action in legal matters." (7) The husband also had almost total control over all the wife's real and personal property or income.

Legal traditions die hard even when they are mythical ones. So the bulk of the activities of feminists in the nineteenth century were spent chipping away at the legal nonexistence that Blackstone had defined for married women. Despite the passage of Married Women's Property Acts and much other legislative relief during the nineteenth century, the core idea of the Common Law that husbands and wives have reciprocal -- not equal -- rights and duties remains. The husband must support the wife and children, and she in return must render services to the husband. Thus the woman is legally required to do the domestic chores, to provide marital companionship and sexual consortium. Her first obligation is to him. If he moves out of town, she cannot get unemployment compensation if she quits her job to follow him, but he can divorce her on grounds of

desertion if she doesn't. Likewise, unless there has been a legal separation, she cannot deny him access to their house even if she has good reason to believe that his entry on a particular occasion would result in physical abuse to her and her children. He must maintain her, but the amount of support beyond subsistence is at his discretion. She has no claim for direct compensation for any of the services rendered. (8)

Crozier commented on this distribution of obligations: "clearly, that economic relationship between A and B whereby A has an original ownership of B's labor, with the consequent necessity of providing B's maintenance, is the economic relationship between an owner and his property rather than that between two free persons. It was the economic relationship between a person and his domesticated animal. In the English Common Law the wife was, in economic relationship to the husband, his property. The financial plan of marriage law was founded upon the economic relationship of owner and property." (9)

This basic relationship still remains in force today. The "domesticated animal" has acquired a longer leash, but the legal chains have yet to be broken. Common Law practices, assumptions and attitudes still dominate the law. The property, real and personal, brought by the woman to the marriage now remains her separate estate, but such is not always the case for that acquired during the marriage.

There are two types of property systems in the United States -- common law and community. In the nine community property states (Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Louisiana, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas and Washington) all property or income acquired by either husband or wife is community property and is equally divided upon divorce. However "the general rule is that the husband is the head of the 'community' and the duty is his to manage the property for the benefit of his wife and family. Usually, as long as the husband is capable of managing the community, the wife has no power of control over it and acting alone, cannot contract debts chargeable against it." (10) In two of the states (Texas and Nevada) the husband can even dispose of the property without his wife's consent. Included in the property is the income of a working wife which, under the law, is managed by the husband with the wife having no legal right to a say in how it shall be spent.

In common law states each spouse has a right to manage his own income and property. However, unlike community property states, this principle does not recognize the contribution made by a wife who works only in the home. Although the wife generally contributes domestic labor to the maintenance of the home far in excess of that of her husband she has no right to an allowance, wages or an income of any sort. Nor can she claim joint ownership upon divorce. (11)

Marriage incurs a few other disabilities as well. A married woman cannot contract on the same basis as her husband or a single woman in most states. In only five states does she have the same right to her own domicile. In many states a married woman can now live separately from her husband but his domicile is still her address for purposes of taxation, voting, jury service, etc. (12)

Along with the domicile regulations, those concerning names are most symbolic of the theory of the husband's and wife's legal unity. Legally, every married woman's surname is that of her husband and no court will uphold her right to go by a different name. Pragmatically, she can use another name only so long as her husband does not object. If he were legally to change his name, hers would automatically change too, though such would not necessarily be the case for the children. "In a very real sense, the loss of a woman's surname represents the destruction of an important part of her personality and its submersion in that of her husband." (13)

When we move out of the common law and into the statutory law we find an area in which, until recently, the dual legal status of women has increased in the last seventy years. This assault was particularly intense around the turn of the century, but has solidified considerably since then. Some of the earliest sex discriminatory legislation was against prostitutes; but this didn't so much prohibit the practice of their profession as regulate their hours and place of work. The big crackdown against prostitutes didn't come until World War I when there was fear that the soldiers would contract venereal disease. (14)

There was also a rise in the abortion laws. Originally abortion was illegal only when performed without the husband's consent and the only crime was a "wrong to the husband in depriving him of children." (15) Prior to passage of the 19th Century laws which made it a criminal offense it was largely regarded as a Church offense punishable by religious penalties. (16)

The most frequent new laws were sex specific labor legislation. Under common law and in the early years of this country there was very little restrictive legislation on the employment of women. It was not needed. Custom and prejudice alone sufficed to keep the occupations in which women might be gainfully employed limited to domestic servant, factory worker, governess and prostitute. As women acquired education and professional skills in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, they increasingly sought employment in fields which put them in competition with men. In some instances men gave way totally and the field became dominated by women, losing prestige, opportunities for advancement and pay in the process. The occupation of secretary is the most notable. In most cases men fought back and were quick to make use of economic, ideological and legal weapons to reduce or eliminate their competition. "They excluded women from trade unions, made contracts with employers to prevent their hiring women, passed laws restricting the employment of married women, caricatured working women, and carried on ceaseless propaganda to return women to the home or keep them there." (17)

The restrictive labor laws were the main weapon. Among the earliest were those prohibiting women from practicing certain professions, such as law and medicine. But most were directed toward regulating work conditions in factories. Initially such laws were aimed at protecting both men and women workers from the sweatshop conditions that prevailed during the nineteenth century. The extent to which women, and children, were protected more than men varied from

state to state, but in 1905 the heated struggle to get the state to assume responsibility for the welfare of workers received a major setback. The Supreme Court invalidated a New York law that no male or female worker could be required or permitted to work in bakeries more than sixty hours a week and in so doing made all such protective laws unconstitutional. (18)

Three years later the Court upheld an almost identical Oregon statute that applied to females only, on the grounds that their physical inferiority and their function as "mothers to the race" justified special class legislation. (19) With this decision as a precedent, the drive for protective legislation became distorted into a push for laws that applied to women only. It made some strange allies, who had totally opposing reasons for supporting such laws. On the one hand social reformers and many feminists were in favor of them on the principle that half a loaf was better than none and the hope that at some time in the future the laws would apply to men as well. (20) many male union leaders were also in favor of them, but not because they would protect women. As President Strasser of the International Cigarmakers Union expressed it "We cannot drive the females out of the trade but we can restrict this daily quota of labor through factory laws." (21)

Strasser soon proved to be right, as the primary use of "protective" laws has been to protect the jobs of men by denying overtime pay, promotions and employment opportunities to women. The Supreme Court has long since rejected its ruling that prevented protective legislation from applying to men yet there has been no move by male workers to have the laws extended to them. Most of the real benefits made available by such laws have been obtained through federal law or collective bargaining, while the state restrictive laws have been quoted by unions and employers alike to keep women in an inferior competitive position. The dislike of these laws felt by the women they affect can be seen in the numerous cases challenging their legitimacy that have been filed since Title VII of the Civil Rights Act was passed (prohibiting sex discrimination in employment).

These laws do more than restrict the hours which women may work. An examination of the state labor laws reveals a complex, confusing inconsistent chaos. Thirteen states have minimum wage laws which apply only to women and minors, and two which apply only to women. Adult women are prohibited from working in specified occupations or under certain working conditions considered hazardous in twenty-six states; in ten of these women cannot work in bars. (22)

Laws restricting the number of hours a woman may work -- generally to eight per day and forty-eight per week -- are found in forty-one states and the District of Columbia. Twenty states prohibit night work and limitations are made in twelve on the amount of weight that can be lifted by a woman. These maximums range from fifteen to thirty-five pounds (the weight of a small child). (23)

The "weight and hours" laws have proved to be the most onerous and are the ones usually challenged in the courts. In *Mengelkoch et. al. v. the Industrial Welfare Commission of California and North American Aviation,*

# The Case For Studied Ugliness

by Nancy Williamson

Recently a group of about 300 women attending a female liberation conference were described by a reporter as presenting an air of "studied ugliness." It was stated further that there was only one pretty girl in the group. Pretty by whose standards, I questioned. Women in the movement are frequently accused of being ugly (as if it were some crime that invalidates everything else we do), of defeminizing ourselves (femininity being directly proportional to the shape, size and amount of breasts and legs showing), of having an uncouth appearance (i.e. short hair, shiny noses, unshaved legs and armpits). Frequently at public forums, orientation meetings, and in personal contacts, we are questioned about our appearance. Why do you wear "men's clothes" is a frequent query. (Anything that is comfortable seems to be classified as "men's clothes.") Why don't you want to look attractive? (It seems we can't be attractive if we don't wear makeup and dresses.)

In consciously deviating from the Hollywood-Madison Avenue-Playboy norm, we have indeed affected a studied ugliness. Many of us have cut our hair and chosen to wear loosefitting pants, shirts with high necks, sturdy shoes rather than tight, short skirts and dresses and flimsy, fall-apart shoes for several reasons: It is more comfortable, it causes less attention on the streets, it is less abasing, it is less expensive, less time-consuming.

Any woman who has walked down the street in a miniskirt and a lowcut blouse and high-heeled sandals knows that this attire is not only less comfortable than bluejeans and an ordinary shirt but that it attracts far more catcalls, hooting and leers. Leering and catcalls, though humiliating, are sometimes interpreted as flattery. If they look at me that way, I must really look beautiful today, we often think. Though this degrading behavior on the part of men is physically harmless, it is humiliating and psychologically damaging to women to be subjected to it day after day wherever we go. We become public property with no privacy and no recourse but to hang our heads and mince by. Furthermore, it becomes more and more difficult to dismiss verbal harassment as harmless as the crimes against women in this country spiral higher and higher. For every group of men who stand around on street corners and leer at women, there is a least one rapist lurking nearby. For every successful rape there are many thwarted ones. We can no longer afford to provoke men by the way we dress. This constant threat of physical violence is a primary reason for our being careful in choosing the clothes we wear when going out alone.

And as for going out alone, which we are often advised not to do, it is humiliating to feel that we are not capable of taking care of ourselves, that we have to have some man there by our side to defend us from the lurking masses. Clothes present an image; we can perhaps ward off men by not provoking them with sexy clothes. But no

matter what we wear any woman is subject to harassment and attack on any street in any city or rural area in this country in the daytime or at night. Clothes are not the answer to the threat of physical violence. A society that does not tolerate sexual oppression and frees all people from the threat of violence is the only solution. Yet clothes are one means of preserving dignity at this time in history.

aida



Our style of dress is less expensive, less time-consuming than the more traditional feminine attire. Curlers, cosmetics, girdles, high heels, and other stifling female gear has hampered our physical freedom and kept us from developing healthy bodies as well as consumed hours of our time. The closet full of dresses that is necessary when one has to have a different dress every day and for every occasion requires money and time to acquire and maintain. The time spent in shaving legs and arms three or four times a week, curling, washing, and pampering long hair alone amounts to the time it takes to read a book, go to a movie, or just sit and think. Which is more important? And why should hair on a man be virile, while hair on a woman (other than long silky tresses on her head) is repulsive? All the other time-consuming beautifiers--plucking eyebrows, making up faces, sitting in beauty salons--that have come to define our identities and consume our lives are not just irrelevant to us, they are detrimental to our mental health. We are being used by the image-makers and profit-takers of this country to promote their own interests. Cosmetics alone are a multi-million dollar industry. Why do we think we need these things? Because we've been told for so long in so many subtle ways that we do. It was not in obeisance to

beauty alone that Helena Rubenstein founded her famous salon or that all the contemporary male fashionmakers have successfully fostered the image of the powdered, perfumed female animal. Our pockets as well as our minds have been picked.

There are strong pressures in the society for women to conform to the accepted standards of fashion. Women who work must continue to dress traditionally. Secretaries cannot go to work in bluejeans or slacks without arousing hostility and often dismissal. Waitresses, restaurant hostesses, airline stewardesses have to wear uniforms which are sometimes degrading. Many women in these positions resent being told what they have to wear; they do not like having to spend a large portion of their already too meagre salaries (What employer ever gives a secretary a clothes allowance?) for uncomfortable, sexist dresses, stockings that run the first time they are worn, shoes that cause callouses and backaches. As more and more women begin to chafe at the degradation of having to dress up like china dolls on

display for the male population there will be pressure on employers to allow us to dress as we choose. Determining one's mode of dress is a constitutional right upheld by a Supreme Court Decision. Employers can no longer legally require women to wear certain kinds of clothes (or men to have certain hairstyles). In rejecting the popularized image of the beautiful female, we should constantly demand the right of all women to create their own physical images.

In dressing contrary to social standards, we are rejecting the image of the bejeweled, bedecked woman; we are not only refusing to fritter away our time, energy, and money noncreatively supporting a coterie of male fashion pimps who have created a false and humiliating image of femaleness we are actively discrediting that image; we are asserting our human dignity and our right to control our lives. Ugliness, whether studied or real, is in the eye of the beholder and for us the values of the male beholder in this society are totally irrelevant at this time.

## Pass the Word by Jeanne Lafferty

Many people seem to avoid using the word female out of a sense of propriety, as if it were not quite polite. Some people wince when it is used. It is true that the word female has been used against us in the past by people whose imperfect perceptions told them that to strip away the social trappings that constitute the finished product known as "woman" would be to leave only a weak and sniveling creature, the embodiment of evil, a blot on the face of humanity (men).

Since we disagree with this analysis our acceptance of the term comes from a different starting point. We found that the words male and female had separate origins. (This can be seen in the Latin roots *femina* and *masculus*.) We used the word female at first for the obvious purpose of differentiating between ourselves and the so-called opposite sex. But we also discovered that female easily becomes an adjective, as in female people, female children, female doctor, etc., thereby implying that one's genital arrangement is not necessarily what best describes one at all times. It is more scientific to be able to distinguish between instances when one's femaleness is essential and when it is auxiliary. This is not so easily done with the word woman, although there have been reported attempts made in this direction by people who cling to their blind distrust of so naked a concept as female.

It might be more sensible to question the word woman, which has more social implications and innuendos. It often implies that to fulfill the requirements of one's sex is an achievement rather than a given biological fact. Somewhere in the process of striving for the rewards offered to "good women" we became aware of our humiliating role as men's willing victims, and that to be a woman meant to dress and act the part of a clown. How then could the simple biological designation of female be more embarrassing than the social definition of woman?

It should be borne in mind that it wasn't until a few

years after the inception of the civil rights movement that black people discarded the term "Negro" as a suitable definition for themselves. But this rejection, when it came, was a powerful expression of the radical changes that Blacks had begun to bring about in all aspects of their lives.

It is becoming painfully clear that the word liberation in reference to our movement is rapidly being replaced by a small, enigmatic three-letter invention—lib— which makes its way into headlines, articles, leaflets, speeches and into our everyday language. An explanation of this annoying practice is long past due. Those who have thought once about it present this usage in terms of economy and convenience. What is difficult however, is an explanation of why these efficiency experts waited so long to save on the word liberation. Perhaps the National Liberation Front is more easily converted to the NLF, but what about the Black Liberation movement? And certainly Third World Liberation is enough of a mouthful to warrant modification. It would appear that the substitution of lib for liberation is more an attempt at diminution rather than abbreviation, a lessening rather than a shortening. Such was the case with the predominant use of suffragette in place of the traditional (respected) suffragist. It could be that those who favor such reductions feel that it makes the concept easier to swallow. This depends entirely on who is doing the swallowing.

The word liberation signifies to us freedom from oppressive social relations, sexual humiliation, fear and daily outrages and indignities which are our lives. The word liberation, because of its reference to all oppressed peoples, Blacks, Orientals, Third World and Working Class people, constantly relates our movement to these others. It shows lack of respect and seriousness about the Female Movement not to use this word in all its strength and dignity.

## An Interview With...

# MYRNA LAMB

by Linda Thurston

Myrna Lamb is the author of the feminist plays, *The Mod Donna* and *Scyklon Z*. *The Mod Donna*, "a space age musical soap opera with breaks for commercials," has been performed by the New York Shakespeare Festival, among other companies. It provoked a furious controversy among critics and stimulated support and enjoyment from the women's movement. *Scyklon Z* is a series of interrelated one-act plays, including "But What Have You Done For Me Lately" a play that finds a pregnant male in search of an abortion.

Both the *Mod Donna* and *Scyklon Z* have recently been published in one volume by Pathfinder Press, available in hard cover and paperback. Paperback copies can be obtained from Boston Female Liberation.

**SECOND WAVE:** How did you get interested in feminism, and how long ago was that?

**MYRNA:** Well, I'm 40 years old, and I would say that I was interested in feminism when I was seven or eight, when I began to see that there were marked differences...I really should predate that. I was about three when I found that boys were terribly interested in my genital area and wanted to examine it, and it made me feel very self-conscious, and quite annoyed. I was never that interested in theirs and I felt quite oppressed by it and by other manifestations of this male involvement with the penis, you know, and my lack of it. Also the whole idea that I was limited, that I was being shepherded into one area or another.

When I was a teen-ager, I wanted to be a writer and I thought that to be a writer I had to affect male dress. I saw a picture of myself wearing it and I felt confusion and shame because of the way I looked because, of course, there was always that kind of under-tone of being unnatural. I had a girl friend I liked very much and my father accused me of being a lesbian. When I was interested in boys, he called me "hot pants". I couldn't

have it either way. I had a very oppressive father, a guy who believed that the family was a dictatorship and he was the dictator, and a mother who made capital of her quite deliberate play at inferiority. She would insist on mispronouncing words, and she and my father would get a kind of kick out of it. It always made me suffer, and the thing is that that's the game: The game was there for me to follow. Woman was supposed to be inferior and man was supposed to be superior, and that was the only way they could get any enjoyment out of life.

**SECOND WAVE:** What made you decide that that wasn't how things should be and that it wasn't for you?

**MYRNA:** I couldn't stand it. My pride, my soul, my sense of self was very afflicted by it. If that's what being a woman was, I didn't want to be a woman. For a long time I simply identified with my father, but that was difficult because I could see that my mother had a kind of intelligence and sensitivity that my father lacked. So, I felt different. It wasn't a pleasant way to feel because I couldn't conform, I couldn't belong, I couldn't do what the other people thought was right. I knew that I had a brain, I knew I was intelligent and I knew that it wasn't exactly an advantage. People let me see that all the time. I was accused of being both too immature because I liked to run and play and do physical things, and of having swallowed a dictionary. So I played parts. When I had to deal with adults, I made myself into a ladylike young girl and spoke gently to them.

**SECOND WAVE:** So you feel your feminism has been with you all along.

**MYRNA:** Oh yes!

**SECOND WAVE:** Did it ever grow to become more political at any times in your life?

**MYRNA:** Well, one needs awareness. You see the trouble is most of us when we were feminists at that level, although aware of what feminism was, we felt unique, different, freakish, and so there was really no political aspect to it. Early on I was a political person. I



Photos by Jackie Kirby

was anti-war very early: I was anti-war during World War II. Before I was anti-war, I was trying to conform to the government picture of what a young girl of that time was supposed to be. I was trying to be a girl who wrote letters to servicemen. I was trying to be a girl who made servicemen happy when they were home on leave. I actually used to pick up servicemen. I never had sexual intercourse with them because I was terrified of it. My father saw to it that I was terrified of sex, but I knew that my function at the age of 14 or so was to make men happy because they were heroes.

Right about the time that the war ended I realized that war was really a dreadful thing, that these men were sad, sick people, that I didn't want any part of it, that I never wanted another war as long as I lived and beyond that. So I became anti-war and I joined a lot of anti-war movements, which were not very widespread at that time. The first thing that I really did was join the Henry Wallace campaign in 1948, a progressive campaign, and I wrote anti-war things. To my mind, civil defense shelter announcements were obscene and words about sex were not. That's where I was then.

As far as the latest commitment to feminism, my plays were virtually all written before there was this large feminist movement. However, "But What Have You Done for Me Lately" was written after I was a conscious and a belonging feminist. Some people claimed that my plays were anti-male. I think that what you'll find they are is anti-erotic in the usual sense of the word. It's anti-rampant male phallic image, but it's certainly not anti-male. In fact, I'm pretty tough on women in my plays, as well. In "Serving Girl and the Lady," you know, I take off on what women do to other women.

**SECOND WAVE:** Could you talk about being a writer -- have you ever had any problems about being a woman and a writer at the same time?

**MYRNA:** Dreadful! I don't know how to tell you. I was always a writer. I always wanted to be a writer. But, as I've explained to you, I conceived of being a writer as a male image and so the opposite of being a writer, in my life, was being an actress. It was as though I had to choose between being a female and being a male. My mother had evidently always wanted to be an actress and she imposed her desire to be an actress on me. I used to dream of winning approval by being the puppet on the stage rather than the person who put the words in the puppet's mouth. So I went into acting rather than writing. That was always the conflict for me.

**SECOND WAVE:** You mean you didn't like acting?

**MYRNA:** There were things about acting I despised. The game was to be the vessel, the "clear vessel" that Elia Kazan talks about, letting the director shine through you, being manipulated by male directors. I never met a female director. And there is a kind of sex game they play with you where you submit to their direction and they evoke things in you almost against your will. They evidently derive great satisfaction from this and sometimes you do a good job because of it. But I couldn't stand being weighed like meat, measured whether I was this type or that type or should I lose weight or gain weight. I couldn't take it. It offended my spirit just as most of the female roles had offended my spirit. Female roles in the theatre offend my spirit just as much.

**SECOND WAVE:** So, could we talk about your playwriting then since you're more interested in that. Could you, first of all, tell me what "Scyklon Z" means, the title?

**MYRNA:** There are references within the title to World War II which was a great traumatic experience of my life -- the fact that these things happened in Germany where people were simply killed, put away in the most convenient efficient manner possible and then burned down to ashes and so forth. That had taken possession of my mind. There was a gas they used called Scyklon B. This is a reference both to that gas -- in my transformation I interpret it as being the way we live, the brainwashing we get, our lives that are committed to the artifacts of death rather than to life itself. And Scyklon, meaning "cycle", too, the cycle from death to death rather than from birth to death. There are six plays in it, as you know, including "But What Have You Done for Me Lately," which was added to the original later.

**SECOND WAVE:** Would you say that your connecting theme was this cycle of despair?

**MYRNA:** Cycle, yes, of murder, of self-murder, of murder by others, murder of the spirit, which I talk about a good deal. People don't live full lives, they live half lives. And I see us all as living, potentially, in a gas chamber. Are we not after all? Look at the air. We're living in a gas chamber and waiting for the final cremation to come from the sky. The sky is our crematorium now. And that, of course, reflects my anti-war position as well as my anti-pollution position. Mostly, the fact is that I'm trying to reflect the society in which we live which is anti-human and anti-life.

**SECOND WAVE:** Which of the plays meant the most to you?

**MYRNA:** Well, ultimately, "Mod Donna" had to mean the most to me in a certain way because it took me four or five years to get it finished and there was a great living through that you can't really equal with the short plays. But the play that I really like very much is "In the Shadow of the Crematoria" because that's Supermale confronting Superfemale and I think it's an intelligent concept and I like it. You see, it's hard for me to say. It's like saying to me if I had seven children, which of my children do I like best. Actually, there are reasons--I can tell you that "Monologia" which is only five minutes long, leaves me feeling sometimes that it needs work. I think sometimes of cutting or adding to or changing "But What Have You Done for Me Lately?" but I don't want to change "In the Shadow of the Crematoria." Does that answer your question?

**SECOND WAVE:** So you feel most satisfied with that? That it says what you wanted to say?

**MYRNA:** Yes. That feels more perfect.

**SECOND WAVE:** Are you planning any more plays?

**MYRNA:** I'm writing a libretto for an opera right now, a revolutionary opera called "Apple Pie." It takes place in north New Jersey and it involves a white woman and a black man, and the political situation that is unique to Newark.

**SECOND WAVE:** Do you see yourself primarily as an artist or as a political activist?

**MYRNA:** Another conflict, you remember I said between writer and fe...I almost said between writer

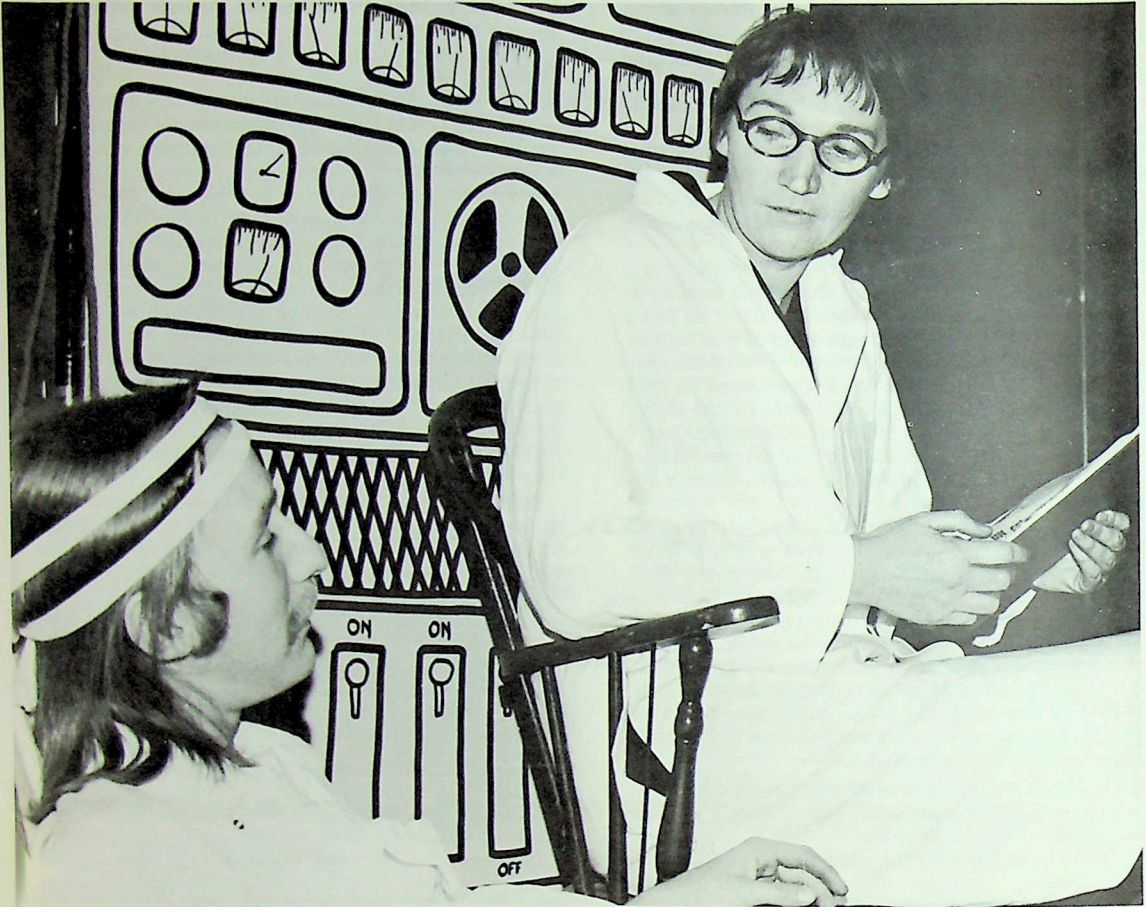


photo by: Jackie Kirby

Gloria Albee and Alexis Swan in Boston Feminist Repertory Theatre's production of Myrna Lamb's "But What Have You Done For Me Lately?"

and female, get that?...between writer and actress and the other thing was between artist and political activist. Somehow I must have been very lucky, because I must be a political activist in order to feel that I'm observing, - that I'm responsible as a citizen, and I still feel that tremendous need to be an artist. If I can combine the two, I've done everything I've ever wanted to do.

**SECOND WAVE:** Do you think all art should serve social change?

**MYRNA:** Well, I'm afraid that I feel very strongly that my art should serve social change. I wouldn't like to tell anybody else what to do, but I need to do it. I'm very hurt when people interpret my work as purely personal and psychological and don't see the political and economic substructure. It really disturbs me. And yet, I wouldn't want to be an artist. Some people object to expressionistic styles yet I feel that's what makes me perhaps better than when I was simply a political activist.

**SECOND WAVE:** I was wondering if you had any comments on how art and politics can be fused suc-

cessfully. You seem to have done it in your plays.

**MYRNA:** Well, my feeling is that every work of art should serve a human purpose in order for it to be truly a work of art. It should be pro-human. I disagree with the Marxists, that is to say the Communists, who believe that some art is alienated and some art is not alienated. They believe that any reflection of the despair and destruction we find in society, unless there is some redeeming social influence, is alienated art and therefore destructive. I disagree. I think some art has to merely reflect the situation we find ourselves in so that form imposed upon chaos and presented to the human view will somehow teach. If in "The Butcher Shop" I had the man kill the boss I would have been giving a false picture of what his position really is in the society. But if I show the possibility that he might have killed the boss and show him killing himself instead, I think I'm doing a better job. I'm showing the way things really are and not giving people a false sense of triumph.

**SECOND WAVE:** Do you see any significant art coming out of the movement now? Feminist, or otherwise?

MYRNA: I don't see how it can be otherwise. When we talk about liberation we're talking about liberation of the human spirit of these women. The daring to take risks that will come now -- seeing themselves differently, seeing themselves as potential artists, not merely cooks and bottle-washers. We're going to have a renaissance of a rather magnificent nature, in my opinion. And I'm looking forward to it.

I'm also looking forward to my continued life as an artist. I'm very happy doing what I'm doing. I've never been so happy in all my life. And it doesn't mean that I'm successful in capitalist terms. I'm not. I don't have the acclaim of the world and nobody came to my autograph party. What makes me happy is that I think I'm doing something that really is reaching some people. Yesterday in the motel office women that you wouldn't expect to be informed, or even approving, said, "We're with you. Keep up the good work." So obviously we're reaching a very, very common and prevalent chord in female human beings. And that makes me happy.

SECOND WAVE: What issues do you think are most important in the feminist movement?

MYRNA: I think I want women to see themselves as human beings before they see themselves as females. I think I want their consciousness to be raised so that they see the many ways in which they are oppressed. I do not want women to submit to men anymore, or to male ideas of what women should be. I don't want women to feel that they have to be married or mothers or have orgasm in a prescribed way in order to approve of themselves. I just want them to realize their full potential as human beings and that's something. You know, you pick up your "Free Press" and look at the personal ads and look what men

are advertising for in terms of companions. Some of them are even advertising for wives. But they all say "I want a woman who can make me feel good," you know, "who can recognize my qualities."

SECOND WAVE: How do you see the feminist movement in relation to other movements and changes, like the war and pollution and the other things you mentioned?

MYRNA: My earnest desire is that the feminist movement will be the most radical movement because it ultimately incorporates not only this tremendous 51 to 53 percent of the population, but also because, if you radicalize women and you radicalize the whole idea of the family, you do away with the whole idea of nuclear family, ownership of children, ownership of lives. You get at the core and the root of capitalism and you do away with the whole concept of sex roles -- the idea of sending males to war to prove they are males, and women to the hospitals to prove that they are females by turning out more soldiers. Women cooperating for a better society is the vision that I have.

SECOND WAVE: Is there anything else that you'd like to talk about?

MYRNA: The thing that offended me and hurt me at Boston University was someone who claimed that I was evincing as much hatred in "But What Have You Done for Me Lately" as the capitalists in their turn. I really don't think so. For one thing, we do let the man off. We don't make him go through having the baby. For another thing, I don't think that rage ventilated qualifies as hatred. And most of all I want to say that I do, very much, want to express my love and my esteem for all my sisters in this country and in the world.

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# Mod Donna & Scyklon Z. Myrna Lamb

*Plays of Women's Liberation* by Myrna Lamb

*This collection of six one-acts, and the full length "musical soap opera" The Mod Donna, does not simply echo the themes of the women's liberation movement, but dramatizes its very rage. The plays attack the romantic myths of women as mother, wife, housekeeper and play-bunny that form the foundation-stone of American culture. The playwright's introduction is a soliloquy in its own right. An essay on marriage, it is one of the most scathing indictments of that institution to come out of the women's liberation movement. 200 pp., \$5.95*

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You did not want me  
(To be me?)  
Whatever I do—  
Write poems  
Cry. Smile.  
Die—Is not enough  
For I am still me.  
And not your image  
Of me.

I wanted a lover  
With hands like yours.  
Curious.  
(Hands that played  
With me as they might  
A deck of cards, left me  
Shuffled and disarrayed.)

I wanted a lover  
With eyes like yours.  
Curious.  
(Eyes that read me  
As they might a book,  
Left me, dogeared, ragged.)

You wanted me graven,  
In bronze perhaps.  
Stone. Or oil on canvas  
But I am me. My Self  
And not your image  
Of me.

Nancy Williamson



-scida

**What I would say if I were**

## I. Martha

Your wet mouth  
put out my words  
like slime on a candlelight.

Here!  
Take your mouth back  
It's all yours.

## II. Sara

Surprise!  
Vacant consuming  
person I used to call friend,  
Look at me.

Didn't you see all along  
how much I knew?

Didn't you suspect  
my plans,  
my kid dreams,  
and pranks?

I never bothered to tell you,  
in between the dishes and the kids and  
getting it in bed.

I've got THINGS bursting to do!  
Tough feats with my hands and mind—  
like Handsprings OUT this door,  
and diving whole into the world  
and knowing it  
and being ALIVE in it  
and making it  
better than you ever could.

Bye-bye, half-alive—  
you'll see me moving by,  
happy with paint on my hands  
and ideas in my brain  
and places to be.

It's too late to take you now—  
you're nowhere ready, but  
you'll know about me:  
tracks where I've been  
on the news  
strong women in the streets  
anger and life in your children.

Or maybe I'll see you at a table,  
somewhere,  
should you ever learn to come  
vulnerable and unarmed.

**Gail Murray**

In anger, frustrated,  
I let my energies  
collapse  
around you.  
I hope you trip and fail in them.  
When you do not let me succeed  
you can be sure I will not let you.

**Gail Murray**

I could walk through summer  
Evenings. Whispering.  
Cry to country music  
In your darkened rooms.  
Listening. To you  
Into the two o'clock hours.  
Talking pop and Zen.  
Macrobiotics. McLuhan.  
Kesey's bus. Whatever  
You would to impress me most.  
I could do those things.  
And more. I could kiss you  
When you wanted. Only  
Let you say when next  
To meet. Neglect to speak  
Of permanence. The future.  
Us. Me. We. Any of the  
Things that make you nervous.  
I could do those things for you.  
But can I?

**Nancy Williamson****the gypsy rover**

if you were to tap at my door this night  
o my fey my gypsy lover  
and tempt me to forfeit hearth and home  
and consign to the death-wound of lonely men  
the circle of arm that my flesh has worn  
but to trip the meadow over  
on the cool grass shivering wet with dew  
with the dancer's silver toe  
and your laughter as wild as the moon and as free  
as amoral as wind  
would i go

**Joan Scida**

A Female Liberation Conference to Unite Women was held at Boston University, November 13-14, 1970. Speakers at the Friday evening session were Dana Densmore, Maxine Williams, and Barbara Zilber. Diana Gerrity gave a skit. On Saturday there were fourteen workshops, a Tae Kwon Do (Korean self-defense) demonstration, and a film. Following is Williams' speech.



photo by Petrick

Maxine Williams

## Women's Liberation And Nationalism

by Maxine Williams

In the black community women's liberation is generally referred to as the "white women's movement."

In the September 5 issue of *Black News*, a Brooklyn based periodical with a wide circulation in the black community, there is an article on "the White Woman's Liberation." The article states:

*"Women's Liberation, properly defined, means freedom for the one and only Miss Ann; White Ladies, Incorporated. The word white, implied or written, excludes all 'sun kissed' maidens. Women's Lib is the white woman's quest for power. Although some 5th Avenue Africans have joined the lib movement, it is clearly understood and displayed by Anna that this particular movement has no intention of liberating Sapphire and Company.*

*"This movement will use black, brown, red and yellow as a means necessary. Colored women add to its numerical strength; a strength which is presently one of the strongest bloc votes in the country. Struggling for equal grabs in the power structure, colored women are used to give the impression that Women's Lib is liberal. Liberal, in this case, meaning Higher Tolerance Level.*

*"Women's Lib has built a platform around the exploitation of white women.... Denied equal time, equal paychecks, and equal power by the white power structure, Miss Ann strips herself of Maybelline eyelashes, false tits and Miss Clairol. She arms herself with birth control pills, abortion laws, charge-a-plates and black stupid women "All or nothing" motivates her movement. A movement that is desperately reaching for the white man's power. A power which the women of Women's Lib have screwed, carried nine months, delivered, and nursed on bigotry and hate.*

*"Although Blacks have similar platform arguments and demands for their liberation, the two platforms are in no way related.*

The article goes on and on, but I believe this is enough to give you some idea of the author's attitude toward women's liberation.

Now one of the many things which are worrying some white women in the movement is how to win more black women to women's liberation. Some just cannot understand why the most oppressed and exploited women in the country are seemingly unconcerned about their oppression as women. Many women have stated that black women would not come into a supposedly racist movement and have indicated that women's liberation must become anti-racist and anti-imperialist in order to attract black women. Others both men and women, both black and white, have put women's liberation down as a movement of sexually frustrated suburban housewives. Some black women have responded saying that the black woman does not need liberation and that her task is to give assurance to "her man."

Cellestine Ware in her book *Woman Power* stated that, "poor black women are too occupied struggling for essentials: shelter, food and clothing to organize themselves around the issue of women's rights." That black women or all oppressed and poor working people are busy fighting for essentials is obvious. But this does not explain the black woman's supposed lack of concern on feminist issues. We know that the Chinese women were also struggling for the three essentials, and they were even more oppressed. Yet they enthusiastically formed organizations which dealt specifically with the oppression of women. And it is just not true that black women are unconcerned with women's issues.

During the 1950's a Harlem women's group, angered by a slur against black women, started a protest at the Apollo Theater. A white ventriloquist had his dummy mention that he had a difficult time obtaining women. The ventriloquist replied that women were a dime a dozen around the corner. Now 125th Street in Harlem is somewhat known as the street for prostitutes. Black women sitting in the audience while this so-called joke was being told correctly took it as a personal slander and demanded an apology.

Welfare mothers, although they do not do so in the name of women's liberation, have also organized to fight for child care centers and more money in order to be able to feed their children. They recognize how oppressive and authoritarian patriarchal institutions can become. Threatened with a bill that wants to kick

welfare mothers off the roll, Beulah Sanders of the National Welfare Rights Organization states: "Those congressmen think they're going to push us all off welfare and make us take jobs as maids. They think their wives are finally going to get some cheap servants. Well, I used to work for a woman cleaning house and I'll tell you this, we ain't going to clean anybody else's house...."

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## **"The Last Hired The First Fired"**

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Black women are traditionally confined to the most menial, lowest-paid, degrading jobs. Our outside employment is generally only an extension of the type of work we must perform in the home without pay. Black women are in the labor force more than white women, but we have periods of longer unemployment, and many of the jobs that we do obtain are not even covered by the Minimum Wage Law. As Government statistics have shown, the majority of married women who work do so not to have extra spending change for so-called leisure, but to supplement their husband's income or, in the case of female heads of households, to provide a minimum living standard for themselves and their offspring.

Some black women who work part time do so not voluntarily, but because we are unable to obtain full-time employment. Particularly in the field of private household workers--a job which is very menial, fatiguing and mentally stifling--it can become both physically and mentally impossible to perform this type of work on a full-time basis. Those women in this field, particularly women with children, have it quite difficult since their wages are so that they are often unable to afford the costs of child care. The Human Rights Commission has declared that domestic workers are the most exploited workers in the country. Full-time household workers tend to work longer hours than other working women. Thirty-seven percent of the private household workers employed on a full time basis in 1967 worked 41 hours or more. Sixty-four percent of the women who are employed as private household workers are black. In 1968, 82 percent had incomes of less than \$2,000 a year.

Women in this country constitute a reserve labor force. We are called in to slave when the male labor power has been exhausted. Of course black women have it more difficult, since a skin tax is subtracted from our meagre wage, a sex tariff is imposed for being a woman, and the boss's profits are taken out to invest in new exploitative ventures. We are the last hired and the first fired. Women, particularly black women, are forced to sell our labor power for a minimal wage. Those of us who are now looking for employment may find that it is no longer enough to type 100 wpm, to be punctual or be competent as an "errand girl" in getting the boss's coffee. It is not just enough to be able to smile when we don't want to and say, "Good morning, Mr. Smith" and be able to jump up and answer the phone and then run in to give him the message. Some occupations require that we also be attractive. That we sustain Revlon and Co. and come made up as clowns. A recent ad in the *Village Voice* (Nov. 12, 1970) was looking to employ a receptionist at \$100 a week. The ad stated: "Are you capable, responsible and attractive. VIP Studio needs someone

who can handle phones, speak to clients, etc." Now in order to obtain this job one would have to go to an agency. In New York I believe the amount you pay depends on your monthly salary. And this is one extreme example of the exploitation of workers under this system. Not only are we forced to sell our labor power, but in some cases we have the "honor" of paying in order to be exploited.

So who says black women do not need to be liberated? Black men who feel that their "masculinity" might be threatened, or men who feel that an assertion of their so-called manhood entails keeping the black woman in a position of subservience. Black women who fear that black men will run over en masse to white women if we become "uppity" will strike against the women's liberation movement and state that nationhood should be our first order of business. Then there are others who call themselves "revolutionaries" who state that women's liberation is reactionary because it is not anti-capitalist and that black women should therefore not relate to it.

Now on August 26, it is estimated that 40,000 women in New York alone felt so strongly about our oppression as women that we were willing to participate in mass action against our oppression. A significant number of women there were black women.

The demands: free abortion on demand, free 24 hour community controlled child care centers and equal opportunity in education and employment were labeled by some people as being reformist.

Reformist demands are those which can be accomplished under the existing economic system. While none of these demands in and of themselves will bring about socialism, these are demands which challenge the racist, capitalist system in this country. We must continually wage a struggle in order to win and maintain these demands.

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## **"Give A Woman The Option Of Deciding For Herself."**

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The setback in the so-called liberal abortion law in New York is a perfect example. Some Third World people and patronizing whites have referred to free legal abortion as a form of genocide. However, free legalized abortion will give a woman the option of deciding for herself whether she wants to have a child or not. The struggle of radical women is not to attack the abortion law as a form of genocide, since in New York 80 percent of the women who die from illegal botched abortions are Third World. The task is to wage an unceasing struggle for community control of all hospitals which will also entail fighting against forced sterilization. The demand for equal opportunity in employment I do not think can be won under this system simply because it will not be profitable. The struggle for free 24 hour child care centers is also one which challenges the system and is relevant to a majority of women, particularly black women.

At Hunter College in New York City one of the demands of the People's Coalition last term (Spring 1970) was the institution of a day care center for students and workers. The Third World Women's Coalition at Hunter is playing a key role in struggling to have this center remain

permanent. They have correctly related the struggle for a child care center on campus with the struggle for free 24 hour community controlled child care centers outside of the campus.

It is important to keep in mind that every gain won has not been given, nor will gains ever be given, to us because of any benevolence on the part of those who rule. Our demands for free abortion, community controlled child care centers, and equal employment opportunity will only come about through struggle. The demands that we win and the militant struggles that we wage will provide an impetus for going even further. And the majority of women will soon come to see that our demand for the elimination of all forms of domination and elitism will not be won under this system.

So where are the black and Third World women? We're struggling too. On campus for day care centers. In Brooklyn, there's a group called *Nat's Women*. In Harlem there's *Black Sisters United*, and in Manhattan the *Third World Women's Alliance*. We are also organizing within broader Black, Puerto Rican and Chicano organizations to fight for our liberation as women.

Third World women are organizing against our oppression as women, but we will be organizing independently of other women due to the nature of our triple oppression which is different from the experience of other women. Third World women will also be uniting with other women on the basis of concrete fights such as child care which affects all women.

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## **Nationalism And Feminism: Simultaneous Struggles.**

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Now earlier I quoted from a black periodical which stated that the platforms of women's liberation and of the black liberation struggles are in no way related. Well, how true is this? Nationalism and feminism are two of the most dynamic forces confronting the ruling class today. In both movements we are fighting for the right to control our own lives. Of course the establishment will always try to co-opt these movements just as they will try to co-opt the student, anti-war, labor or any other movement which seeks radically to assert itself. However, we do not give up our demands simply because the ruling class seeks to co-opt them. We expose what they are trying to do and build our own independent movement which will be able to answer them.

Those who rule will always try to distort our demands and our movement because they want to divide us. And some have already fallen into this trap by claiming that women's liberation will take jobs away from black people. The tactic for nationalists is not to oppose women's liberation, but to support it and all struggles of oppressed people fighting for liberation. Since this system is not designed for full employment, all women who wish to work are not able to obtain jobs. Our position should be, as was mentioned earlier, that we do not accept a system which prevents anyone from having a job.

We should not see feminism and nationalism as

counterposing one another but rather as complementing each other. On specific demands such as community controlled care centers, free abortion or the struggle against forced overtime, white and black women can form alliances.

On the criticism that women's liberation is not anti-capitalist, I will say that blacks were not mobilized on the basis of an anti-capitalist ideology. We rebelled and struggled against our oppression as blacks. It was only when it became clear that the ruling class had practically exhausted itself in giving significant concessions that we recognized that every gain in the struggle showed the necessity of going even further. And through this process, more and more black nationalists became anti-capitalist.

When the *Third World Women's Alliance* was formed in New York, some people charged that we were dividing the nationalist liberation movement. However, black women must always be fighting against and exposing their triple exploitation in their society.

Spokespeople for the establishment are always proudly boasting of the fact that black women are not interested in women's liberation because they know damn well that a black women's group could potentially be the most revolutionary movement confronting the U.S. ruling circle. They understand that black women consciously aware of the depth of their oppression and willing to fight against it would never give up until all forms of racist, sexist, and economic exploitation are eliminated. An independent black women's organization rather than divide the national liberation struggle would actually enhance that struggle. Thus, our brothers who tell us not to get involved in women's liberation fail to realize that this idea if carried out would tend to contain rather than expand the revolutionary fervor of black women and harm the liberation struggle as a whole. An independent black women's organization would give us the opportunity to reach women who would not ordinarily be reached by male-female organizations, and thus heighten the political consciousness of black women. Also, an independent women's group would create an atmosphere whereby women who are overly shy about speaking in a mixed group about "women's problems" would feel free to talk. It would help her gain confidence in her own abilities and help to break down the image of what is "feminine" and "masculine."

It must be understood that we are not just for civil rights for women or civil rights for Third World people, but for the elimination of all forms of sexist and racist oppression-liberation for women and the Third World. We understand that national liberation can only come about through a socialist revolution and will not be achieved under this system. We understand that the elimination of our oppression as women can only be achieved by women struggling to establish a society which is not based on the exploitation of the many by the few.

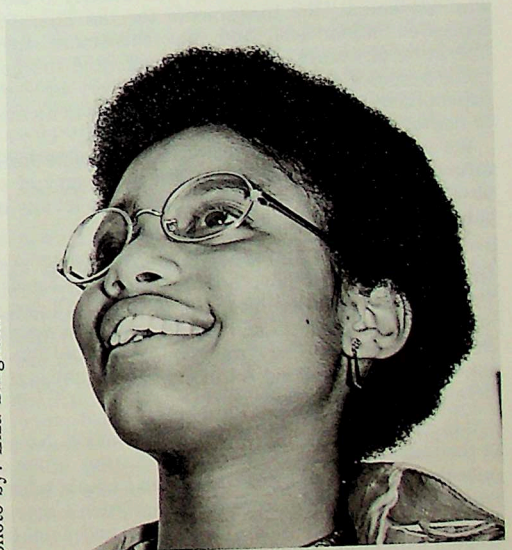
It should be our position as Third World women that the struggle against racism must be waged simultaneously with the struggle for women's liberation, and only a strong independent women's movement can insure that this will come about.



photo by: Jackie Kirby



photo by: Liza Bingham



# In Defense of Angela

*The following presentation was made by Pat Putnam of Female Liberation when Fania Davis Jordan spoke in behalf of Angela Davis at Boston University.*

Female Liberation supports Angela Davis, as we support all people fighting for their liberation. Angela Davis is being held without evidence. She has committed no crime and there can be no evidence. Angela Davis is being held because she is a black, a communist, and a revolutionary. She is a political prisoner and is being asked to die for her beliefs -- beliefs which are shared by more and more people in this country as the movements for liberation grow.

Angela's arrest is neither a beginning nor an end. Thus far, the atrocities of the government include Fred Hampton, Bobby Seale, and scores of members of the Black Panther Party who have been mutilated, murdered, imprisoned, or forced into exile; Ruben Salezar; Angel Gilberto, Diaz, and Lynn Wells, who were gunned down when police attacked the Chicano Moratorium in Los Angeles; Jackson, Kent State -- the list of people shot down or prosecuted for their beliefs goes on and on.

As the various movements in this country -- the anti-war movement, the movements for the liberation of oppressed minorities, and the movement for the liberation of women -- grow stronger, and the government becomes more afraid of our power, we can only expect them to try to victimize individuals in an attempt to demoralize and frighten the rest of us.

We must be prepared. The time has come for commitment. We can no longer afford the luxury of straddling the fence. We can no longer afford to let any of our ranks be captured or shot.

This must be a time when all people gather together in her defense. This must be a time for unity within the movement as we seek out the broadest possible base of support. Even the National Board of the YWAC -- newly involved in the women's movement -- which has never taken a stand to defend an individual, has come out in defense of Angela Davis.

It is not the time for elitism or factionalism. No section of the movement can afford to be sectarian. When one is attacked, we are all attacked. We in *Female Liberation* call on our sister groups within the women's movement to join us in donating time, money and facilities to Angela's defense. Angela Davis is our sister, and we join hands with her in the struggle for the liberation of all oppressed peoples.

*Fania Jordan is Angela Davis' sister. Following are excerpts from speeches given in Boston on her recent tour to raise money for Angela's defense.*

Angela is very important to every group that is talking about making changes in this country. . . I notice an overwhelming majority of women in the audience. I'd like to know where all the brothers are. It's right that the sisters come out and defend Angela -- she is a black woman. But we've got to have everybody defending her.

Angela is innocent. Let there be no doubt about this. . . She is the victim of a continuous persecution that has been unleashed by Ronald Reagan and the state of California from the fall of 1969 when they tried to take her job, to the present when they are trying to take her life. She has been persecuted because of her political beliefs, because she has consistently challenged and consistently organized against the racism and the exploitation that is so firmly built into our society.

In the fall of 1969 they tried to take her job away. She was an assistant professor at U.C.L.A. and the Regents tried to fire her because of her political affiliations and beliefs. When the Regents asked her if she were indeed a member of the Communist Party she replied, "Yes, I am a member of the Communist Party and I refuse to take the Fifth Amendment because my beliefs do not incriminate me; they incriminate the Nixons, the Reagans, the Mitchells, and the Rockefellers.

When this decision of the Regents to fire her because of her political beliefs was overturned in the courts because of its unconstitutionality, they tried to fire her again. This time the reason they gave was that she was working in the black community, she was making speeches that they couldn't dig. She was working around the defense of the Black Panthers, she was working around the Soledad brothers, and she was working around the conditions of the black community in Los Angeles. The Regents couldn't dig it so they fired her again.

Now the second decision met with much disfavor and protest in California. The U.C.L.A. faculty voted to retain her and to pay her salary out of their own. So the state of California could not succeed in silencing this woman. So they seized upon the San Rafael event to forever silence this beautiful black revolutionary sister.

She was placed on the ten - most - wanted list, a woman with no prior arrest record! This began what was probably the most intensive manhunt (sic) that has been unleashed by the repressive agencies of this government ever before. Placing her on the ten - most - wanted list served as a pretext to raid and invade people's homes, people who were involved in the movement. It served as a pretext to invade movement centers and offices all across this country. Furthermore, they must have harassed at least a thousand black women in this country and held some of them on suspicion of being Angela Davis.

She is a political prisoner. She is being held on trumped up charges because of her political beliefs and actions, much in the same way that Bobby Seale and Erica Huggins are now being held. The actions that are being taken against her are part and parcel of the long history of brutally repressive actions that have been leveled against the black leadership from the assassination of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Bobby Huggins, Fred

Hampton, and on and on and on. Furthermore there is a national conspiracy to murder Angela. As soon as she was captured on October 13, Nixon got on nationwide television and congratulated J. Edgar Hoover for the fine job that he had done. He did this on nationwide TV with everybody in this country watching and listening to him. He also said that Angela would be dealt with as an example to all would-be terrorists in this country. He pronounced her guilty right there on the spot. When he did the same thing to Manson in California just a little bit before that there was a big uproar in the press about it saying that he had jeopardized Manson's right to a fair trial. When he did the same thing to Angela there was nothing -- silence. That's what racist responses are all about. So when you talk about fair trials, you've got to think. People tell me that she can get a fair trial in this country, but it is so clear that she cannot. The press has convicted her; Nixon has convicted her. Plus when you're black in this country the odds are that you're already convicted. We've got to talk about bringing justice to that courtroom because we cannot depend on the legal system in this country.

Since Angela's arrest her persecution has been continued. When she was first arrested in N.Y. she was placed into a ward for the mentally and emotionally disturbed women. For ten days she could not sleep because of the rantings and screams of the emotionally disturbed women. For ten days she could not communicate on any level with anybody. And when her lawyers protested this in the courts they moved her into solitary confinement where she had a 24-hour guard outside of her door. Every 30 minutes this guard would look into her cell, check out what she was doing, and write it down in the log book. The guard would come in and search her cell, looking for I - don't - know - what, every day. When she took showers they made sure that everyone else cleared out so she would not be in contact with any of the other sisters in the prison. She had her meals alone inside of her cell. When it was time to go for 2-hour recreation on the roof where there are volleyball courts and Ping-Pong tables, she went there all alone! Her visiting privileges were restricted. She had no library privileges. She could not even have books inside of her solitary cell. These are just some of the restrictions that were placed on her. And she hasn't even been tried yet. She is innocent.

She went on a hunger strike of 13 days protesting this and protesting the conditions of all political prisoners in this country. On November 5 there was a court order forcing the prison authorities to move her into the general inmate population where she is now.

#### On the Charges and "Evidence"

Angela is being charged with murder, kidnapping, conspiracy to commit murder, conspiracy to commit kidnapping, and conspiracy to aid in the illegal release of prisoners. It should be noted that in the indictment against Angela they cite "participation in a rally to free the Soledad brothers" as evidence which proves conspiracy to murder. They are using nowadays participation in a rally to "prove" that you've committed murder. That's where things are at right now in this

country. And that's why the fight to save Angela's life is everybody's fight.

She has been charged with all this madness because she is alleged to be the registered owner of the guns that were used in the event. This is all the evidence they have produced against her. But they cannot substantially charge her because there is no substantial evidence. They haven't proved criminal intent. All they say is that she is the owner of the guns. There are many crimes committed in this country in which guns are used and these guns are owned by somebody else, but how many times do they trace the owners back and charge them with the crime? Guns are being used every day to shoot down people in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos. Who buys those guns? Taxpayers. We do. We buy those guns.

#### On Press Coverage

I'd like to say something about the press coverage that she's been getting, that she got especially before her arrest on October 13. They have not been talking about Angela in *Life*, in the *Newsweek* articles, in *Time*. They have not been talking about Angela the black woman, the black communist revolutionary. They have been talking about an exceptional woman of the intelligentsia, a black woman who has received all sorts of scholastic awards and degrees, a black woman who was exceptionally gifted, and a black woman who all of a sudden went wrong. No. They can't explain her now, because they highlight her background so much. They don't know what she's all about. They present her life as the life of a good girl gone wrong. They see her life as a personal tragedy; her political position is seen as a tragic deviation from the rest of her life. Now they obviously do not understand Angela.

Many people said, "Well, the *Life* article was really not that bad." That's the way I felt about it when I first read it, but when I started thinking about it I realized that this was an attempt to isolate Angela from the masses of people in this country. An attempt to isolate her -- to make her somebody unique and exceptional and different. And this is precisely the opposite of what Angela really is. She represents the strivings and desires of all oppressed people and she is fighting for the liberation of all oppressed people in this country.

#### On the Background of the Soledad Case

(ed. note - The Soledad case was the one being tried in the San Marin county court where the shootout that killed Jonathan Jackson, two black prisoners, and Judge Haley occurred. This is the incident which Angela is accused of creating on the basis of alleged ownership of some guns used and for making a speech at a rally about the injustice of the Soledad case.)

Almost half of all the prisoners in this country are black while blacks constitute only 12% of the national population. This immediately tells you something about the judicial system in this country -- it's racist. The likelihood of a black man or woman being charged with and convicted of a crime is four times greater than that of a white man or woman. That's how much jeopardy we're in.

Ten years ago George Jackson, one of the three Soledad brothers, was charged with the robbery of \$70



from a gas station. Now at the pre-trial hearing the eyewitness who was present at the time of the alleged crime couldn't even identify George Jackson as the guilty one. Nevertheless, George's attorney, who was a court-appointed lawyer paid by the state, persuaded George to plead guilty to the charge because he had worked out some kind of parole deal with the D.A. Now, George pleaded guilty and he was sentenced at the age of 18 to from one year to life. He's been in prison 10 years now, 7 of those years in solitary confinement. He's been in prison ten years for a crime for which most whites spend, on the average, from one to two years. And that's the nature of the legal system in this country.

Every year when George went before the parole board they spouted empty promises that he would be released if only he had a clean disciplinary record. And every year George wrote home to his parents saying, "Well, I'm certain to be released next year because I haven't done anything". Every year he returned before the board and every year he was denied parole. In one instance they accused him of having defended himself when he was under attack by somebody with a weapon.

Now he's being tried on trumped up charges of the murder of a prison guard in Soledad prison. He's charged along with two other brothers -- Fleeta Drumgo and John Cluchette. They are not being charged because there is any substantial evidence against them, but because of their political beliefs, because of their many political discussions with the other inmates about the necessity of revolution in this country and the need for radical change inside the prisons.

George's experience with the judicial system is typical of the experience that black people meet most of the time. Two weeks passed before the brothers were able to get word outside that they were being charged with murder. The only way that they were able to contact their parents was by smuggling a note out two weeks after they were charged. When they finally did get lawyers, the lawyers weren't even allowed to visit the scene of the alleged crime. Finally when a court order was handed down, they were allowed to visit the prison, but when they got there, the wing in which the alleged crime was committed had been completely remodeled. All of the witnesses that the state said they had, had been shipped out to other prisons throughout the country. When the brothers came into the court for hearings they were completely chained and shackled -- manacles around their wrists, around their waists, through their crotches and around their legs. You would have thought that they were slaves. They had a racist judge, Judge Campbell, who just sentenced Cesare Chavez to prison. When the proceedings first started there were a lot of black people out in the audience and Judge Campbell said "We hope you spectators will behave properly, not like you're at some barbecue". And this is just an incomplete list of the many, many harassments that George Jackson met at every phase of his encounter with the legal system, not to even mention the brutal and inhuman conditions that he lived under for ten years inside of Soledad prison.

This is the backdrop of Johnathan Jackson's actions on Aug. 7 at San Raphael. This is what Johnathan was going through. He went to every one of those hearings where he

heard Judge Campbell deny every motion made by the defense. Johnathan's brother's life was in jeopardy and Johnathan saw every attempt to defend his brother completely blocked, deliberately thwarted by the authorities. He saw no legal alternative. He took the situation into his own hands. Johnathan went into the courtroom that day with freedom on his mind, not with murder. Angela was subsequently charged with murder and all the rest of that madness.

#### On the Question of the Communist Party

Now there's this question of the Communist party that seems to be getting a lot of attention. Angela was in SNCC, the Panther Party, and then she joined the Communist Party. Now even if many of us do not agree with that particular choice, I think we are obligated to defend her right to make such a choice, to defend anybody's right to choose to participate in any political organization. We've got to defend that because that right is in jeopardy. Nixon, Agnew, Reagan, Mitchell and all the rest of them have put that right in jeopardy and we've got to be defending that right now.



I have the pictures here  
Four views.  
You as you were  
Last Friday afternoon.  
You joked I'd never get you  
Naturally. But there you are.  
In color. The blue striped  
Pants. The sky behind.  
The grass beneath. Your face:  
Four moods. You as you are:  
For I cannot touch you.

**Nancy Williamson**

# August 26 And Beyond

by Barbara Zilber

On August 26, the feminist movement in Boston came into its own. At last we were a political and social force. Five thousand strong, we had a voice. Other cities might only have been celebrating Strike Day or Embargo Day. We were celebrating the fact that we had a movement.

There are perhaps a few thousand committed women's liberationists in Boston. There are hundreds of thousands of women who are un-committed or terribly antagonistic towards our goals. Our task as feminists today makes August 26 appear like child's play. We have so much to change, so many to educate. Only through solidarity can we ever see the abortion law in Massachusetts repealed. The opposition is fierce. Religion, morality, culture are all working to keep from a woman her right to control her body, to determine whether and when she bears a child. The church as well as individual men and women must come to see that our bodies are our own. We will not be dictated to by male law makers. And yet, especially in Massachusetts, the job is formidable.

Every woman has a right to be employed. It's almost trite at this point to say we demand equal pay for our work. Yet, earning 58¢ for every dollar a man earns is not only financially disastrous, but psychologically demeaning. And yet, labor unions, corporations and the business world in general sees fit to keep women economically inferior. We can not attack the tremendous forces that seek to keep us in our place by taking individual pot shots at the system. Only in unity can we succeed.

Once employed, the working woman must no longer be forced to carry the full burdens of child care, home and job. We've got to work together to make free 24-hour child care reality. Through a unified educational effort, we can help both men and women to view a uterus as no special qualification for pushing a vacuum cleaner, or wiping a drippy nose. As a matter of fact once men start co-chairing the home executive committee, they will begin to demand that some money be diverted from war to research for a more efficient system of housekeeping. Perhaps the government might even begin to be persuaded to take on the responsibility of providing free cleaning services.

I was speaking to a group of women the other night who all but said, "It's too late for us - it's the young school children whom you must reach." There's another fantastic job that is too large for N.O.W. or Female Liberation or Bread and Roses to embark upon alone. There is room for all sorts of approaches to the education of children so that they may see themselves as complete human beings.

Children, adults, male, female—everyone must be able to enjoy the full range of human emotions and the full range of human potential. But there's so much brain washing to undo, so many stereotypes to erase. We can continue to work in an uncoordinated effort—duplicating studies and programs—or we can get together, decide where each of us can work most effectively and then move out into the state to lecture, to revise text books, to



demand that television, movies and theater present women as reasonable, rational human beings rather than as childlike dependent incompetents.

This brings me to another argument for unity. We must become the writers who will write the books, plays and movies which will portray women and men fulfilling all their potential. Sure women have always written. Yet the number of serious female writers influencing the next generation must increase. But first we have to change our feelings about ourselves. Then we can begin to change the image of ourselves as portrayed in books and through the media. Some of you might feel that small consciousness raising groups are the answer. While these groups are indispensable, they are not the total answer. As we think we can begin to act. But only as we wed thought with action will we become.

## INTERIORS

### MEN'S LIBERATION

On TV today I saw four men who are starting a group for Men's Liberation. I ached for them as they stumbled to express their feelings.

I remember how I started my struggle for a way to express all my hidden feelings. All sisters had the same hesitations, stumblings, and at first so many inconsistencies of logic. I want to offer my love to any male who makes a real effort to free himself. He may think he looks foolish or even unmanly, but I can only applaud his courage. I have a lot to gain from men liberating themselves. I can liberate myself, but I am still cut off intellectually and emotionally from half the human race. Now we women will have company on the road to human liberation.

Ellen O'Donnell

\* \* \*

I remember my mother telling me that the role of a woman was to build the ego of a man, for all men need a woman to keep their egos strong. It sounds pretty awful to me now. All people need genuine ego reinforcement, but women think mainly in terms of giving it to men and men think mainly in terms of their own and, sometimes, in shattering those around them, especially women's. Women with strong egos are rare because everyone has ignored building female egos. Most women carry around tiny, broken birds of egos which are now beginning to be strengthened through women's liberation.

\* \* \*

My husband asked me in the course of a casual conversation why I looked so mean.

"I don't feel mean," I said.

I remember my mother telling me she always felt pretty until one time she looked in a three-way mirror and saw her profile. In one moment her sense of her own beauty was devastated.

I looked at myself in a three-way mirror when I lived with my Aunt Edith, my mother's sister, who said to me, as she watched me arrange my hair before the mirror, "You're really much prettier than your reflection."

Aunt Edith is better than any mirror.

Hilary Rozovsky Salk

I see us all working together to achieve academic equality, employment equality, for all women. A joint effort will enable us to see all sex discrimination laws erased with the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment and with further implementation in the individual states.

As I stand here thinking of all the action-oriented programs needed to give women full equality, it occurs to me that not all of us are action oriented. This is where a true division of labor fits in. Those of us who believe in action can make sure the rest of the movement are eating a little better. At the same time, those who wish to talk and write can feed others souls with the feminist thoughts which go beyond the day-to-day drudgery of making a living. There's room for us all. August 26 showed us we could work together. We must continue to do so to achieve our goals.

... when I'm with him I'm always following, following, following. I'm not going to follow. He keeps me out at arms' length holding my head under water and I can never seem to get out from under and swim. I don't want to be kept in a cage, so I'm going to get out. What am I responsible to? To me first. I can write and write to myself, dear A, but I can't get rid of him. I shall go ahead without him and not expect to have him sharing my sense of exhilaration. I shall demand that we make some kind of system that works better. What does it mean? It means that I cannot even demand my rights. I must take them. I have a responsibility to.

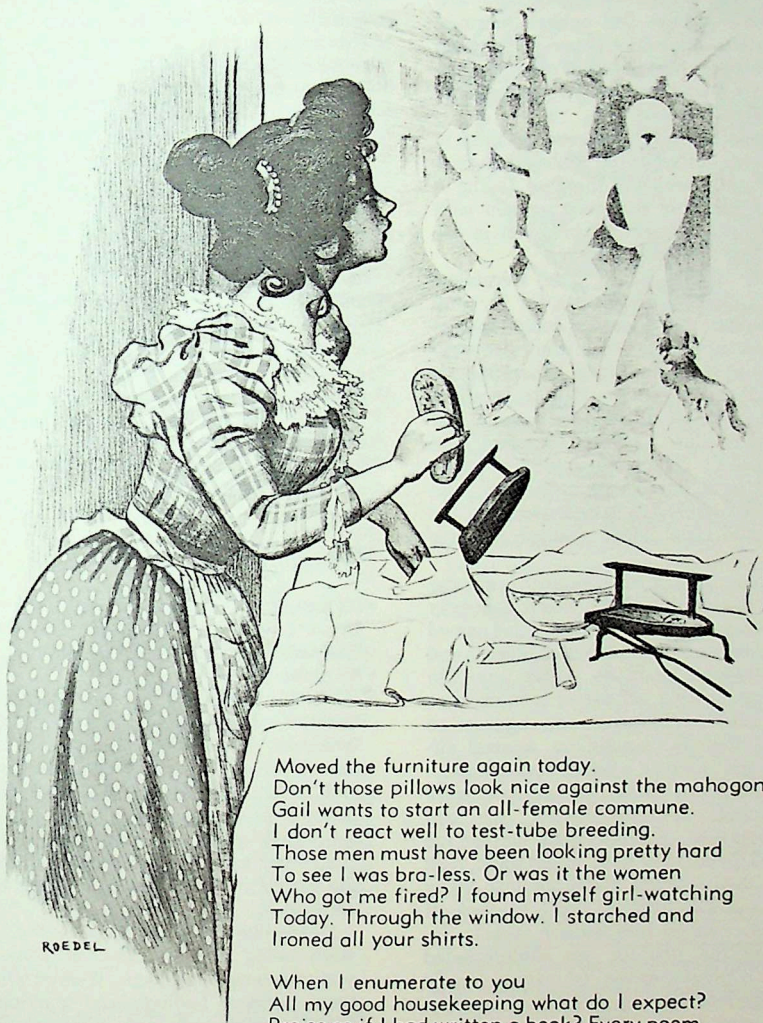
A.W.W.

\* \* \*

I looked up and sitting directly across from me, one leg up on the seat of the chair, arm loosely clasped around it, was my friend whom I had seen almost daily for many weeks but tonight, bathed in the glow of my strange new affection, she seemed a different person. She moved slightly in the chair, her eyes behind the gold-rimmed glasses caught mine, stared, dropped. Her dark loose pants, light turtle-neck sweater and the angle at which her body slouched in the chair reminded me of the young Garbo whom we were both too young to remember from anything more than art theatre marquees and classic film books. I continued to stare at her throughout the evening, my mind closing out all the business around me. I had never wanted to kiss a woman before, but I wanted to kiss her.

These frightening new thoughts accompanied me home, haunted my dreams, and were still with me the next day. For many days after, I rushed around like a girl in love being where she was going to be whether I need be there or not. To what end, I asked myself? I was there for her as I had always been: a comrade, a sister, a friend. We came and went, talked and parted, and all remained the same. I was incapable of removing the barrier between us, of intimating that I loved her in a different way. Had she been a man, I would have known how to approach her. I would have tried and won or lost, but she was not a man, thank God. She was a woman, and so was I. I knew that we had to learn to begin to deal with these new emotions and I was afraid.

-Anonymous



ROEDEL

Moved the furniture again today.  
 Don't those pillows look nice against the mahogany?  
 Gail wants to start an all-female commune.  
 I don't react well to test-tube breeding.  
 Those men must have been looking pretty hard  
 To see I was bra-less. Or was it the women  
 Who got me fired? I found myself girl-watching  
 Today. Through the window. I starched and  
 Ironed all your shirts.

When I enumerate to you  
 All my good housekeeping what do I expect?  
 Praise as if I had written a book? Every poem,  
 It seems, since we've been together, has been  
 Written while you were away and ended with  
 When you came back. And somehow the lilt  
 And the rhyme disappeared  
 And the poem turned prose.  
 Not that there were that many.

Carol Somer

# Lesbians In The Women's Liberation Movement

by Martha Shelley

Lesbians are an intrinsic part of the women's liberation movement. We helped found it, and are helping to staff women's centers and publish feminist writings all over the nation. The consciousness of women whose most intimate relationships are with other women is as vital as that of women who are still struggling with men.

From the outset, men knew that there were Lesbians in the movement, and they said so in the male chauvinist press. Of course, everyone denied it at the time, trying to prove to whoever was listening that nice women with nice husbands and nice kids could be involved in the movement without being man-hating dykes.

The movement had its origin in *The Feminine Mystique* which was a fairly radical work for its time (1963). It attempted to show that a woman could manage a career, keep a house in apple-pie order, and raise well-adjusted (??) children at the same time. Essentially, it attacked the myth that nice women and good mothers couldn't have careers; and all of the nice women just happened to be middle-class, college-educated and white. Those who weren't college-educated obviously didn't have the brains to be bored with housework, and those who weren't white would have to be grateful for the extra income they could earn cleaning house for nice career women.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the spectrum were the usual crew of exploited prostitutes who would hopefully be driven out of business as the nice wives experienced more and better Orgasms and became better lovers; and of course, the unmentionable Lesbians. At the time *The Feminine Mystique* was written, all career women were supposedly tainted with Lesbianism and aggressive tendencies. Betty Friedan was struggling, against difficult odds, to make the working woman respectable.

But the men knew we were there. We Lesbians were the subversive element, the communists, the bad niggers, the total opposite of what men defined as feminine. We were independent of men, hated them, took away their jobs and their women, fixed our own leaky faucets and changed our own tires. At night, we took off our tailored suits and changed into leather jackets. Instead of worshipping the phallus, we contemplated hunting it down with a meat cleaver. Of course, hardly any Lesbians managed to live up to this stereotype, though a few tried very hard -- but then, how many heterosexual women fit into the myths that men created for them? So we had to be the agitators behind the women's movement, and all women in the movement had to have Lesbian tendencies.

Whatever behavior in a woman doesn't suit the interests of men is a Lesbian tendency, just as all behavior that doesn't suit the Pentagon is communist-inspired.

Men knew we were in the movement even before we did.

From the outset, those Lesbians who were involved with the movement experienced considerable prejudice.

They fought for abortion repeal and child care centers. On the one hand, they demanded equal rights for all women; on the other, they denied their own existence. This arrangement, while convenient for straight women, could not last forever. Many Lesbians were not inclined to make sacrifices for a movement which gave them the same warm welcome that Spiro Agnew might extend to Mao Tse Tung. These women stayed home with their lovers and watched the whole thing on television.

Of course, denying the existence of Lesbians in women's liberation did very little to convince Middle America that we weren't there. Perhaps it allowed a woman to justify her Thursday night women's meeting to her husband: "They're all nice married women, dear, and anyway, women's liberation is going to liberate men, too." It has been easier for people to tolerate the notion of a nice girl who Made a Mistake and needs an abortion, or a woman factory worker who wants to make as much money as the next guy on the assembly line, than to deal with the image of a woman whose ultimate aims **do not** include marriage and children. The newly-converted feminist is still very often trying to live up to someone's conception of her, and is not prepared to lose her job or be ostracized for defending the rights of Lesbians.

## Coming Out in the Women's Movement

Coming out, in gay parlance, means either becoming gay or letting it be known publicly that one is gay. The Lesbians in the movement decided to upset the applecart by going public.

Incensed at being publicly insulted, about a dozen Lesbians showed up at the Second Congress to Unite Women in New York, and insisted on being reunited with their sisters. They wore lavender menace sweatshirts and took over the microphone, turning a carefully planned program of speakers into an open forum on oppressed groups within the women's movement. (Lavender is the unofficial gay color; **lavender menace** the phrase coined by Betty Friedan to describe us subversives.)

Meanwhile, all over the country, deep attachments were being formed between some women in consciousness-raising groups. Women who had been sharing their deepest feelings and participating in actions together came to love each other as human beings and unlike men, who find it easy to separate sex and love, they sometimes expressed their love for each other in physical terms. For many women, this was traumatic; some were even expelled from their groups by more terrified sisters.

The two trends in the movement were coming together; one, the dissatisfaction of the Lesbians who were no longer content with being skeletons in the closet; and two, the development of bonds of sisterly love which forced formerly straight women to examine the nature of Lesbianism in their own minds and bodies. This has

created serious problems within the movement, and in relation to women outside the movement. It has also brought down the wrath of the male chauvinist press.

### The Propaganda Attack

As the Lesbian issue has been discussed more openly in women's liberation, the male press has been preparing a counterattack. We have given them the evidence they were looking for.

The first blow which came to my attention was struck by Harriet Van Horne, a female defender of male supremacy in the *New York Post*. She castigated the women's movement for taking up the Lesbian issue, and suggested that Lesbians should go somewhere else and let the Nice Women fight for the "legitimate" aims of the movement -- which she defines as equal pay for equal work and abortion for those who can afford it. She also suggested, indirectly, that the women's movement should purge itself of Lesbians, kooks and sex-starved spinsters, and that all some of us needed was A Good Man. She ended up with a call for "equality for women in a man's world."

The tenants are never equal to the landlords.

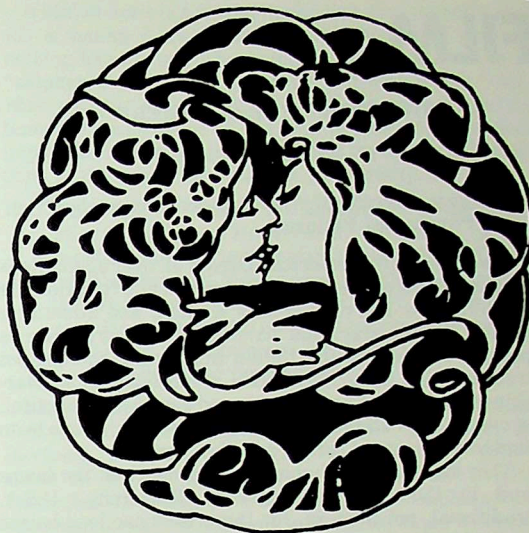
New York's Lesbian community was outraged, and a few of its representatives went down to the *New York Post* office with the suggestion that a reply be printed "or else." "Or else" was never clearly defined, but a few days later, a letter appeared, one which demolished the premises of Miss Van Horne's argument. It was signed, "Emma Goldwoman, Lesbian Anti-Defamation League." A week later, Miss Van Horne attacked the movement again, on the same grounds. Apparently, she has attacked the women's movement since its inception, and will continue to do so.

The spark which set off this particular barrage was the public declaration by some "leaders" in women's liberation that they are Lesbian or bisexual. We are left with the choice of "purging" them from the movement, or closing ranks behind them and all other feminists.

It seems obvious to me that if we allow ourselves to be frightened off by the press, we will have allowed men and their agents to divide the movement. Instead of dealing with Lesbianism on our terms and defining it in the context of our personal and political relationships, we will be allowing men to decide who can be in women's liberation and what demands and needs of ours are legitimate.

### Relating to Other Women

I personally think it a waste of energy to put any major effort into trying to reach men, particularly through the overground press. Our efforts must be directed at women, in order to build a strong power base from which we can negotiate out of strength. To negotiate from a position of weakness is to ask for favors from a class of people who have no incentive to grant them. The history of the human race is a sufficient indication of the degree to which men will listen to reason, be moved by humanitarian considerations. The history of the oppression of women is a better measure of the love men bear women than the amount of money they spend on Valentine's Day cards.



In recruiting women, in explaining our actions or lack of actions, we must honestly state that the movement is attempting to relate to the needs of all women, not just women who fit a particular image -- and this statement must be repeated as often as necessary. If a particular group of women feels that they are being ignored or betrayed by the movement, it is our duty to find out why and how and to attempt to correct it; and it is their duty to get into the movement and fight for their own rights, not to sit on the sidelines and complain about how we are not fighting hard enough for their cause.

Any woman has a greater right to complain about the U.S. Government than she does about the women's movement. She is paying taxes to the government. For the most part, she is denied an opportunity to participate in the affairs of government to an even greater extent than the average man is denied. The women's movement does not tax women, nor is it controlled by special interest groups and large power blocs and corporations. Any woman can get into it, and start agitating for what she wants, together with other women who feel the same way she does.

Some of us have really alienated a lot of women by trying to organize them into somebody else's revolution, or by trying to lay down a party line. A woman with three children whose husband has skipped town is not going to appreciate being told to "pick up the gun" and go get the Panthers out of jail.

Very often we tend to judge people in the movement by their dress and use of makeup, or by their life style or lack of the proper rhetoric, particularly on issues far removed from our daily lives. Or we let other people judge us this way, without attempting to talk to them as individuals. Putting down a middle-aged housewife because she really feels weird in construction boots is as destructive as letting her put us down for wearing them.

One morning, on the way to work, I was handed a two-page newspaper called *People's America Daily News* which told me to follow the thought of Chairman Mao and

(Continued on Page 32)

# FILM

## A 'LOVE STORY' FOR ALL AMERICANS

By Evelyn Clark

*Love Story*, directed by Arthur Hiller; written by Erich Segal. Paramount Pictures.

*Love Story* is the American Dream all over again. He is rich, a Barrett of the American aristocratic tradition. He is brilliant, a Harvard honors student, and athletic, a varsity hockey star, and handsome, of course. She is poor, a Cavileri of the Italian immigrant, melting-pot tradition. She is also brilliant -- a musician on scholarship at Radcliffe. She is artistic and clever and beautiful, of course, plus all the other things a 'woman' has to be to find herself in a red, white, and blue classic.

They fall in love, of course. They court on the lawns and in the halls of Harvard University, U.S.A. traditional, not modern, for there isn't one long-haired radical or hip-looking person in all of Harvard Square. She goes to hockey games and sees him at his manly best. He goes to drawing room concerts to watch her perform, so prim and talented as she plays the harpsichord 'just okay' in velvet with ribbons in her hair. She can be rough and energetic as they play football in the snow. He can be sensitive and gentle as they listen to music and read in his dormitory room.

She is offered a scholarship to study in Paris. She wants to go. She plays at being independent to tease him. "It's just a passing thing." He is firm. The relationship is the priority and, of course, within that relationship his law career is the priority. She surrenders.

He takes her home to his father's estate with servants and acres of land to present her to the patriarch for approval. They reject her, of course. She's charming but of such common background, not the proper mate for an aristocrat. She takes him home to her father's bakery in Rhode Island. Her father approves -- only in America could such good fortune come to his family. Barrett -- a perfect mate for his daughter.

They get married, of course. A 'modern marriage,' excuse the contradiction, where they perform the ceremony for each other because they truly are in love and everyone can tell. He is disowned by the Barrett patriarch for his so-called rebellion, rather mild in this day and age. She goes to work, of course, to support him and his law career. He carries her over the threshold of their cozy, cheap flat in Cambridge where they pinch pennies and live simply for several years. They are so happy.

He graduates from Harvard Law School, third in his class, and is offered a job with a very fancy law firm. Instant success, of course. They move to New York. She has expensive clothes and her own baby grand. She feeds him breakfast and sends him off to work every morning.

Now they want to have babies. A boy, of course. But instead she contracts a fatal disease and dies in his arms bravely and as beautiful as ever. Only death could end this *Love Story* without marring its perfection and total unreality.

# BOOKS

## SLOUCHING TOWARDS BETHLEHEM

BY JOAN DIDION

reviewed by Liza Bingham

Joan Didion took the title for her book, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, from a poem by William Butler Yeats. The poem is called "The Second Coming," and into it Yeats burned images of the turmoil of living in a time when traditions break down. "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold," Yeats wrote some fifty years ago. This is the theme that binds Didion's collection of essays and articles on contemporary life.

Her subjects are broad and varied, but beneath them all lies a shattered and fragmenting "center." In one way or another, these essays are all chronicles of seekers with troubled visions; of the scramble to find some solid ground in the weak and tenuous footing of a society at odds with itself. Didion writes of the Las Vegas marriage mills and a suburban murder trial, seeing the snares that lurk behind dreams of "the good life." She explores Haight-Ashbury in its waning romanticism; she returns with painful little parables about social refugees who reflect, unconsciously, the world from which they so desperately sought escape. She profiles an empty, decayed Alcatraz Island, to find there, quiet and peace: a moment on solid ground. "I could tell you that I came back because I had promises to keep," she wrote in the essay on Alcatraz, "but maybe it was because no one asked me to stay."

The essays in this collection were all written in the 1960's and one might think they would be dated. Journalism is, after all, notoriously "of the moment"; its meaning, except as historical artifact, is supposed to fade along with the immediate importance of the events it records. The immediacy of these pieces, however, remains; it is there in the urgency of Joan Didion's presence, which vibrates through every line. This is journalism, yes, but it is journalism of an extraordinary and transcendent sort. Didion's style is highly personal, yet charged with acute perception, and concern for her subjects. She holds her own thoughts as filters, tinting the scene with unique insights and compassionate, unsettling honesty. Her special gift as a writer, is the accuracy with which she can stop, in time and space, the swift, passing vision that gives a moment its meaning.

Didion is an original and sensitive interpreter of contemporary life. Women would do well to read these essays carefully; not because they deal specifically with women (most of them don't), rather because Didion's pointed observations expose many of the little ambiguities -- and the larger ones -- that we face day by day. She notices things like the tone of the household relationship between a "hip" couple: "Barbara is on what is called the woman's trip." She takes the time to tell us that a runaway girl still worries about chipped nail-polish; and that a girl who once dreamed of becoming a veterinarian is now "more or less working in the vein of being an artist, or a model, or a cosmetologist. Or something." Perhaps in part because she is a woman, Didion is keyed to notice details that a male reporter

might pass by. And it is because she is a woman that she can take her readers on a sad, delicate journey to the hollow center of a particularly tragic suburban life ("Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream").

While women are not necessarily the central theme, there is much in these essays that should concern us; particularly in the most personal pieces, for which Didion reached deep into her own conscience and experience. In an essay titled "On Self-Respect," she writes, "To do without self-respect ... is to be an unwilling audience of one to an interminable documentary that details one's failings, both real and imagined, with fresh footage spliced in at every screening." Her exposition of one woman's growing awareness must touch, I think, the experience of most women; these personal essays can be taken as guide posts by those of us seeking our own identity.

What gives Joan Didion's prose its special edge is her readiness to see herself as a relation to the people and places she writes about. She is not merely an observer of human fancy and anguish; she has been a participant as well. She leaves her readers with a rich and sometimes painful record of experience, by one who cared enough to mention how it felt.

## Witches, Hurricanes...

*this column will be dedicated to the females in history who have been beaten, burned, banished, and ostracized as scapegoats for sexism's sins; who, prohibited from either accepting or having an outlet for their sexuality, confessed that they were "possessed by the devil;" who, given no power over their lives, sought a measure of control and respect through "magical powers;" who, wanting to be creative, independent adults, were forced to remain "spinsters;" i.e., all females who couldn't or wouldn't "stay in their place;" and for the females who didn't know they were feminists and whom "history" has so far refused to recognize as such.*

*Send us information on hitherto unknown historical females and new interpretations of the handful of "heroines" we have been allotted, e.g. Joan of Arc, The Virgin Mary, and Queen Elizabeth.*

## ...And Other Feminists

A Review of 'The Witches'  
by Francoise Mallet-Joris  
reviewed by Carol Somer

Even today, though outright persecution of "witches" is rare (1) we burn women all the time with words such as "evil bitch" and "black magic woman" (2) expressions we may think are meaningless but which actually perpetuate in us harmful feelings about our own natures and our relationship to men. We've been fooled into thinking the word 'bewitching' a compliment. The only time a man's sexuality is bewitching is in a homosexual context. Because of these prevailing attitudes towards the nature of woman, I think we should start seriously studying who these so-called witches were.

If Mallet-Joris is a feminist, she has done a pretty good job of hiding it. Nevertheless, this historical novel is nothing like the publisher's blurbs which claim it to be "sulphurous, evil, and fantastic." There is no "evil" here, only the miseries of the poor, the outcast, and the female. Though not at all political in tone, the book does implicate the economic, social, and psychosexual conditions of the time. "The causes were many.

Thorndike. . . traces the beginnings to the great misery of the Fourteenth Century, when populations were decimated by the Black Death and the Hundred Years' War. Rural poverty and the great class differences certainly played their part. It should also be noted that sorcery developed notably in mountainous localities, among particularly deprived populations." (3)

Divided into three parts, *The Witches* deals with the lives of Anne de Chantraine (d. 1620), Elizabeth de Ranfaing (d. 1592), and Jeanne Harvilliers, (d. 1578), based on original accounts of their lives and trials. Throughout the book, there are plenty of examples about what men thought of ordinary women, let alone witches.

The mire of that world of menstruating females, a world of burdens and suffering. (Anne's father)

Women: inferior creatures except when they knew their place. . . Try to make a woman understand that! He had always come up against that feminine density in Francoise, as in all women. As he had come against it with that cursed witch. Detached, objective reasoning was inaccessible to women. Fundamentally they were all rebels. Rebels against the order of the world, temporal and spiritual. . . She whom he had married because of her perfect acceptance of her role as woman. (Jeanne's judge)

She was a good housewife, economical, and she ate very little. . . He had thought when she began to cough that it was perhaps to avenge herself on him. It was as if she tacitly proclaimed with that cough that he was making her unhappy. A kind of blackmail. Women do that sort of thing. Why marry a younger woman if she wore out so quickly! (the court clerk at Jeanne's trial)

Ann, Elizabeth and Jeanne may have had different upbringings (peasant father who left his village to be an itinerant drunken peddler, hypocritically religious aristocratic parents, and a gypsy mother, respectively) but being female they had one thing in common; very little control over their own lives. Anne, being both child and poor, probably had the least control of them all.

Anne's story is that of a person, moved from place to place by outside forces (her father, the nuns, the judges, an old man) and deposited in each new "home" as a thing "with no money, no social position, no existence, barely a name," each place being a step lower. It is the story of her struggle in each of her homes to become visible, at first by childish fabrications and playacting (the common feeling of being well-sheltered in the lie of being a good child while actually observing everyone and thinking you have them in your power) and later by "witchcraft".



"Anne, by spying upon Christiane and leaping through her hidden books and adding a few innovations, perfected her formulas. She did not really believe she was a witch, but played the part, accepting the risk, always hoping that she might trigger something: the Other one might respond. . .

Now, when she went out into the town, people looked at her, it seemed, in a different way. . . She threw back her shoulders. . . (She) was no longer a shade that passed unnoticed. . . She had paid the price."

Finally arrested, she was judged insane and saved from the stake, i.e., condemned to banishment.

"She had to return to her father - if he could be found. . . - to her loneliness. . . her insignificance. Crazy and simple-minded, motherless, poor, and on top of everything uprooted, for she had never really lived in her village, she was thus no longer anything. . . So they asked her no more either to confess or repent, they threatened her no more, they loved her no more. She was less than an animal."

Saved, to starve in the house her father had abandoned.

As proof of her banishment from life, a man comes to the empty house, "to take possession of her." He took her for his servant-girl and kept her tied up in the stable even though he knew she had no where to run. "Sometimes - but rarely, for he was an old man - he possessed her in the stable. . . He could have satisfied himself thus with an animal." The village considered him within his rights. With the approach of winter, heavy rainfalls, poor crops, deaths, and wolves hit the village. The people remembered Anne. They came to her, with presents, whispering "Do something!". All this enchanted Anne. Ever since she had returned to the village she had been ignored - now she was tempted to exist again. She accepted the gifts. . . from then on she was doomed, for the very next day the rain stopped" and Anne. . . was a witch.

She was arrested again and condemned to be burned.

They still brought baskets of food to her in prison.

#### NOTES

1. As recently as May 1966, however (reports *Time* magazine, of Feb. 7, 1969) a "pretty 17-year-old was beaten to death "after months of piecemeal punishment" by a small religious group in a Swiss mountain retreat. They believed her guilty of "Teufelsbuhlschaft," or coupling with the devil, and were trying to exorcise said gentleman from her body. In the confessions extorted from her by one of the torturers, the promises made by the devil are described: "she could have 10 sexually diverse husbands and rule the world with Satan", etc. *Time* reports this outrage as a grotesque left-over from medieval times (Mallet-Joris points out, however, that it was primarily a Renaissance phenomenon) without ever reflecting on why such things happen only to women, children, small animals, and Jews. (One of the reasons Hitler gave for his extermination of the Jews was that they were "an effeminate race-- , ergo, not fit to live.)

2. Santana, "Black Magic Woman". Got a black magic woman-. . . Got me so blind I can't see That she's a black magic woman-She's trying to make a devil out of me-. . . Got your spell on me baby-. . . Turning my heart into

stone - I need you so bad, magic woman, I can't leave you alone.

3.a( From the author's notes at the end. Throughout the rest of the book, however, analysis of the conditions that gave rise to witchcraft is more novelistic, and therefore, dependent upon the interpretation of the reader.

b) It is interesting that the conditions that gave rise to witch-burning are strikingly similar to those that have given rise to pogroms.

\* \* \*

We didn't know ourselves nor where nor why,  
But we heard the cry and were incensed,  
We cried out for the revolution of the oppressed  
And we saw ourselves an equal people.

Meg Bursaw

\* \* \*

## Lesbians...

(Continued from Page 29)

Comrade Stalin, and which claimed that all good working people would see through the deceptions and revisionism of Brezhnev, Liu Shao Chih, and company. I wonder what kind of impact this paper had on the factory workers who live in my neighborhood and who take the same subway.

We can deal with the issue of Lesbianism, and with the other issues that confront the women's movement, as they affect us on a daily basis. If we try to avoid the necessity of having to deal with women on an individual basis, we will end up listening to nobody and spouting abstract theories about "the masses." It's too easy to forego the necessity for intelligent thought and install a tape recorder that plays back the "party line" in the place where our brains should be. I'm not putting down mass action -- 50,000,000 women on the march is not a force to be discounted -- but those 50,000,000 women aren't going to be there, except as individuals who feel that their individual needs can be met through the movement.

I personally don't care who other women are sleeping with, as long as someone I like is sleeping with me; but I do care about women being loyal to the movement when the going gets rough. We have to deal with Lesbianism, just as we have to deal with race and class privilege and pregnancy; but let's do it on our terms and not on The Man's.

## THE STATUS OF WOMEN

### AT

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## BOSTON UNIVERSITY

lois j frankel

## Gilded Cage...

(Continued from Page 9)

Inc. the defending corporation has admitted that the women were denied overtime and promotions to positions requiring overtime, justifying their actions by the California maximum hours law. In *Roig v. Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Co.*, the plaintiffs are protesting that their current job is exempt from the Louisiana maximum hours but that the higher paying job to which they were denied promotion is not. One major case which challenged the Georgia weight-lifting law is *Weeks v. Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph*. It received a favorable ruling from the Fifth Circuit Court but the plaintiff has yet to be given the promotion for which she sued.

### **'protective' legislation protects women out of equal jobs.**

But perhaps most illustrative of all is an Indiana case, (24) in which the company tried to establish maximum weightlifting restrictions even though its plant and the plaintiffs were located in a state which did not have such laws. By company policy, women were restricted to jobs whose highest pay rate was identical with the lowest pay rate for men. Many of the women, including the defendants, were laid off while men with less seniority were kept on, on the grounds that the women could not lift over 35 pounds. This policy resulted in such anomalies as women having to lift seventeen and one-half tons of products a day in separate ten-pound loads while the male supervisors sat at the head of the assembly line handling the controls and lifting one forty-pound box of caps each hour. "In a number of other instances, women were doing hard manual labor until the operations were automated; then they were relieved of their duties, and men were employed to perform the easier and more pleasant jobs." (25) In its defense, the company claimed it reached this policy in accordance with the union's wishes but the Seventh Circuit Court unanimously ruled against it anyway. This is only one of many instances in which corporations and male-run unions have taken advantage of "protective" legislation in order to protect themselves from giving women equal job opportunities and equal pay.

With the passage of Title VII the restrictive labor legislation is slowly being dissolved by the courts. But these laws are just vestiges of what has been an entirely separate legal system applicable particularly to women.

At their base lies the fact that the position of women under the Constitution is not the same as that of men. The Supreme Court has ruled several times that the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits any arbitrary class legislation, except that based on sex. The last case was decided in 1961, but the most important was in 1874. In *Minor v. Happerset* (88 U.S. 21 Wall. 162 1873). the Court first defined the concept of "second-class citizenship" by saying that some citizens could be denied rights which others had. The "equal protection" clause of the Fourteenth Amendment did not give women equal rights with men.

Other groups in society have also had special bodies of

law created for them as a means of social control. Thus an examination of the statutes can clearly delineate those groups which society feels it necessary to control.

The statutes do not necessarily indicate all of the groups which a particular society excludes from full participation, but they do show those which it most adamantly excludes. In virtually every society that has existed, the caste cleavages, as distinct from the class lines, have been imbedded in the law. Differentiating between class and caste is often difficult as the two differ in degree that only at the extremes is seen as a difference in kind. It is made more difficult by our refusal to acknowledge that castes exist in our society. Here too we have allowed our thinking to be subverted by our national ideology. Our belief in the potentiality, if not the current existence, of high social mobility determined only by the individual's talents, leads us to believe that mobility is hampered by one's socio-economic origins but not that it is made impossible if one comes from the wrong caste. Only recently have we reluctantly begun to face the reality of the "color-line" as a caste boundary. Our consciousness of the caste nature of the other boundaries, particularly that of sex, is not yet this high.

The law not only shows the caste boundaries, it also gives a fairly good history of the changes in boundaries. If the rigidity of caste lines fades into more permeable class lines, the legislation usually changes with it. The Middle Ages saw separate application of the law to the separate estates. In the early years of this country certain rights were reserved to those possessing a minimum amount of property. Today, nobility of birth or amount of income may affect the treatment one receives

### **"..everyone but 'women, minors, convicts, and idiots'.."**

from the courts, but it is not expressed in the law itself. For the past 150 years, the major caste divisions have been along the lines of age, sex and ethnic origin; these have been the categories for which special legislation has existed.

The law further indicates when restricted castes are seen to be most threatening and the ways in which they are felt to be threatening. If members of a group will restrict their own activities, or these activities are inconsequential, law is unnecessary. No law need be made to keep people out of places they never considered going. It is when certain prerogatives are threatened by an outgroup that it must be made illegal to violate them. Thus Jim Crow laws were not necessary during slavery and restrictive labor legislation was not extensively sought for until women entered the job market in rapidly accelerating numbers at the end of the nineteenth century.

Frequently, members of the lower castes are lumped together and the same body of special law applied to all. Most of the labor legislation discussed earlier applies to "women and minors." The state of New York once worded its franchise law to include everyone but "women, minors, convicts and idiots." When a legal status had to be found for Negro slaves in the Seventeenth Century, the "nearest and most natural analogy was the status of women." (26) But the clearest analogy of all was stated by the Southern slave-owning class

when trying to defend the system prior to the Civil War. One of the most widely read rationalizations was that of George Fitzhugh who wrote in his 1854 *Sociology for the South* that "The kind of slavery is adapted to the men enslaved. Wives and apprentices are slaves, not in theory only, but often in fact. Children are slaves to their parents, guardians and teachers. Imprisoned culprits are slaves. Lunatics and idiots are slaves also. (27)

The progress of "out castes," particularly those of the wrong race and sex, also has been parallel. The language of the Nineteenth Amendment was borrowed directly from that of the Fifteenth. The "sex" provision of Title VII (only the second piece of corrective legislation pertaining to women that has been passed)(28) was stuck into the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as a joke by octogenarian representative Howard W. Smith of Virginia. (29)

Many of the same people were involved in both movements as well. Sojourner Truth and Douglass were staunch feminists. Douglass urged the first Convention at Seneca Falls in 1848 to demand the franchise when many of the women were reluctant to do so. Similarly, the early feminists were ardent abolitionists. The consciousness of two of the most active is dated from the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840 when Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were compelled to sit in the galleries rather than participate in the convention. (30) Many of today's new feminists also come out of an active background in the civil rights and other social movements. (31) Almost without exception, when one of the lower castes in our society begins to revolt, the others quickly perceive the similarities to their own condition and start the battle on their own grounds.

Thus it is not surprising that these groups quickly find that they have more in common than having a similar legal situation. All of them, when comparing themselves to the culture of the middle-aged white male, (32) find that they are distinctly in the minority position. This minority position involves a good deal more than laws and a good deal more than economic and social discrimination. Discrimination per se is only one aspect of oppression and not always the most significant one. There are many other social and psychological aspects. Likewise, being subject to separate laws and poorer access to the socio-economic system are only some of the characteristics of being in a minority group. This point has been well explored by Hacker and the chart she developed to sum up the similarities between women and blacks is reproduced at the end of this article. (33)

The Negro analogy has been challenged many times on the grounds that women do not suffer from the same overt segregation as blacks. This point is well noted. But it is important to realize that blatant discrimination is just one mechanism of social control. There are many more subtle ones employed long before such coercion becomes necessary. It is only when these other methods fail to keep a minority group in its place that harsher means must be found. Given that a particular society needs the subservience of several different groups of people it will use its techniques to a different degree with each of them depending on what is available and what they are most susceptible to. It is a measure of the blacks' resistance to the definition which white society

has tried to impose on them that such violent extremes have had to be used to keep the caste lines intact.

Women, however, have not needed such stringent social chains. Their bodies can be left free because their minds are chained long before they became functioning adults. Most women have so thoroughly internalized the social definitions that their only significant role is to serve men as wives and raise the next generation of men and their servants that no laws are necessary to enforce this.

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**"no group is so oppressed as  
one which will not recognize  
its own oppression."**

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The result is that women, even more than other minority groups, have their identities derived first as members of a group and only second, if at all, as unique persons. "Consider the following -- When a boy is born, it is difficult to predict what he will be doing twenty-five years later. We cannot say whether he will be an artist or a doctor or a college professor because he will be permitted to develop and fulfill his own identity. But if the newborn child is a girl, we can predict with almost complete certainty how she will be spending her time twenty-five years later. Her individuality does not have to be considered; it is irrelevant." (34)

Yet until very recently, most women have refused to recognize their own oppression. They have openly accepted the social definition of who and what they are. They have refused to be conscious of the fact that they are seen and treated, before anything else, as women. Many still do. This very refusal is significant because no group is so oppressed as one which will not recognize its own oppression. Women's denial that they must deal with their oppression is a reflection of just how far they still have to go.

There are many reasons why covert mechanisms of social control have been so much more successful with women than with most other minority groups. More than most they have been denied any history. Their tradition of subjection is long and even this history is purged from the books so women cannot compare the similarities of their current condition with that of the past. In a not-so-subtle way both men and women are told that only men make history and women are not important enough to study.

Further, the agents of social control are much nearer to hand than those of any other group. No other minority lives in the same household with its master, separated totally from its peers and urged to compete with them for the privilege of serving the majority group. No other minority so thoroughly accepts the standards of the dominant group as its own and interprets any deviance from those values as a sign of degeneracy. No other minority so readily argues for the maintenance of its own position as one that is merely "different" without questioning whether one must be the "same" to be equal.

Women reach this condition, this acceptance of their secondary role as right and just, through the most insidious mechanism of social control yet devised -- the socialization process. That is the mechanism that we want to analyze now.

To understand how most women are socialized we must first understand how they see themselves and are seen by others. Several studies have been done on this. Quoting one of them, McClelland stated that "the female image is characterized as small, weak, soft and light. In the United States it is also dull, peaceful, relaxed, cold, rounded, passive and slow." (35) A more thorough study which asked men and women to choose out of a long list of adjectives those which most clearly applied to themselves showed that women strongly felt themselves to be such things as uncertain, anxious, nervous, hasty, careless, fearful, full, childish, helpless, sorry, timid, clumsy, stupid, silly, and domestic. On a more positive side women felt they were: understanding, tender, sympathetic, pure, generous, affectionate, loving, moral, kind, grateful and patient. (36)

This is not a very favorable self-image but it does correspond fairly well with the social myths about what women are like. The image has some nice qualities, but they are not the ones normally required for that kind of achievement to which society gives its highest social rewards. Now one can justifiably question both the idea of achievement and the qualities necessary for it, but this is not the place to do so. Rather, because the current standards are the ones which women have been told they do not meet, the purpose here will be to look at the socialization process as a mechanism to keep them from doing so. We will also need to analyze some of the social expectations about women and about what they define as a successful woman (not a successful person) because they are inextricably bound up with the socialization process. All people are socialized to meet the social expectations held for them and it is only when this process fails to do so (as is currently happening on several fronts) that it is at all questioned.

First, let us further examine the effects on women of minority group status. Here, another interesting parallel emerges, but it is one fraught with more heresy than any previously observed. When we look at the results of female socialization we find a strong similarity between what our society labels, even extols, as the typical "feminine" character structure and that of oppressed peoples in this country and elsewhere.

In his classic study *The Nature of Prejudice* Allport devotes a chapter to "Traits Due to Victimization." Included are such personality characteristics as sensitivity, submission, fantasies of power, desire for protection, indirectness, ingratiation, petty revenge and sabotage, sympathy, extremes of both self and group hatred and self and group glorification, display of flashy status symbols, compassion for the underprivileged, identification with the dominant groups norms, and passivity. (37) Allport was primarily concerned with Jews and Negroes but compare his characterization with the very thorough review of the literature on sex differences among young children made by Terman and Tyler. For girls, they listed such traits as: sensitivity, conformity to social pressures, response to environment, ease of social control, ingratiation, sympathy, low levels of aspiration, compassion for the underprivileged, and anxiety. They found that girls compared to boys were more nervous, unstable, neurotic, socially dependent, submissive, had less self-confidence, lower opinions of

themselves and of girls in general, and were more timid, emotional, ministrative, fearful and passive. (38) These are also the kinds of traits found in the Indians when under British rule, (39) in the Algerians under the French (40) and elsewhere.

Two of the most essential aspects of this "minority group character structure" are the extent to which one's perceptions are distorted and one's group is denigrated. These two things in and of themselves are very effective means of social control. If one can be led to believe in one's own inferiority then one is much less likely to resist the status that goes with that inferiority.

When we look at women's opinions of women we find the notion that they are inferior prevalent just about everywhere. Young girls get off to a very good start. They begin speaking, reading and counting sooner. They articulate more clearly and put words into sentences earlier. They have fewer reading and stuttering problems. Girls are even better in math in the early school years. They also make a lot better grades than boys do until late high school. But when they are asked to compare their achievements with those of boys, they rate boys higher in virtually every respect. Despite factual evidence to the contrary, girls' opinion of girls grows progressively worse with age while their opinion of boys and boys' abilities grows better. Boys, likewise, have an increasingly better opinion of themselves and worse opinion of girls as they grow older. (41)

These distortions become so gross that, according to Goldberg, by the time girls reach college they have become prejudiced against women. He gave college girls sets of booklets containing six identical professional articles in traditional male, female and neutral fields. The articles were identical, but the names of the authors were not. For example, an article in one set would bear the name "John T. McKay" and in another set the same article would be authored by "Joan T. McKay." Questions at the end of each article asked the students to rate the articles on value, persuasiveness and profundity and the authors for writing style and competence. The male authors fared better in every field, even in such "feminine" areas as Art History and Dietetics. Goldberg concluded that "Women are prejudiced against female professionals and, regardless of the actual accomplishments of these professionals, will firmly refuse to recognize them as the equals of their male colleagues." (42)

But these unconscious assumptions about women can be very subtle and cannot help but to support the myth that women do not produce high-quality professional work. If the Goldberg findings hold in other situations, and the likelihood is great that they do, it explains why women's work must be of a much higher quality than that of men to be acknowledged as merely equal. People in our society simply refuse to believe that a woman can cross the caste lines and be competent in a "man's world."

However, most women rarely get to the point of writing professional articles or doing other things which put them in competition with men. They seem to lack what psychologists call the "Achievement Motive." (43) When we look at the little research that has been done we can see why this is the case. Horner's recent study of undergraduates at the University of Michigan showed that 65%

## TRYING

I tried to sing  
 They told me I had no voice  
 I tried to play  
 They told me I had no music  
 I tried to write  
 They told me I had no poetry  
 I tried to paint  
 They told me I had no art  
 I tried to teach  
 They told me what to say  
 I tried to be —  
 They told me — "You're wasting away."

I became a mother-to-be  
 They said, "Very good, don't you agree?"

Hilary Rozovsky Salk

photo by: Jackie Kirby



painted eyes  
 peering out beyond  
 "mascared" lines  
 tired expressions  
 of bored cosmetic  
 no longer are unable  
 to ask  
 why  
 therefore a woman?

washerwoman wonder  
 supermarket soubrette  
 child chaperone  
 compulsive cleaner  
 claustrophobic cook  
 therefore a woman . . .

Sue Hayward

of the women but only 10% of the men associated academic success with having negative consequences. Further research showed that these college women had what Horner termed a "motive to avoid success" because they perceived it as leading to social rejection and role conflict with their concept of "femininity." (44) Lipinski has also shown that women students associate success in the usual sense as something which is achieved by men, but not by women. (45) Pierce suggested that girls did in fact have achievement motivation but that they had different criteria for achievement than did boys. He went on to show that high achievement motivation in high school women correlates much more strongly with early marriage than it does with success in school. (46)

Some immediate precedents for the idea that women should not achieve too much academically can be seen in high school for it is here that the performance of girls begins to drop drastically. It is also at this time that peer group pressures on sex role behavior increase and conceptions of what is "properly feminine" or "masculine" become more narrow. (47) One need only recall Asch's experiments to see how peer group pressures, coupled with our rigid ideas about "femininity" and "masculinity," could lead to the results found by Horner, Lipinski and Pierce. Asch found that some 33 percent of his subjects would go contrary to the evidence of their own senses about something as tangible as the comparative length of two lines when their judgements were at variance with those made by the other group members. (48) All but a handful of the other 67 per cent experienced tremendous trauma in trying to stick to their correct perceptions.

These experiments are suggestive of how powerful a group can be in imposing its own definition of a situation and suppressing the resistance of individual deviants. When we move to something as intangible as sex role behavior and to social sanctions far greater than simply the displeasure of a group of unknown experimental

stooges, we can get an idea of how stifling social expectations can be. It is not surprising, in light of our cultural norm that a girl should not appear too smart or surpass boys in anything, that those pressures to conform, so prevalent in adolescence, prompt girls to believe that the development of their minds will have only negative results.

But this process begins long before puberty. It begins with the kind of toys young children are given to play with, with the roles they see their parents in, with the stories in their early reading books, and the kind of ambitions they express or actions they engage in that receive rewards from their parents and other adults. Some of the early differentiation along these lines is obvious to us from looking at young children and reminiscing about our own lives. But some of it is not so obvious, even when we engage in it ourselves. It consists of little actions which parents and teachers do every day that are not even noticed but can profoundly affect the style and quality of a child's developing mind.

Adequate research has not yet been done which irrefutably links up child-rearing practices with the eventual adult mind, but there is evidence to support some hypotheses. Let us take a look at one area where strong sex differences show up relatively early -- mathematical reasoning ability. No one has been able to define exactly what this ability is, but it has been linked up with number ability and special perception or the ability to visualize objects out of their context. As on other tests, girls score higher on number ability until late high school, but such is not the case with analytic and special perception tests. These tests indicate that boys perceive more analytically while girls are more contextual -- although the ability to "break set" or be "field independent" also does not seem to appear until after the fourth or fifth year. (49)

According to Maccoby, this contextual mode of perception common to women is a distinct disadvantage for scientific production. "Girls on the average develop a

somewhat different way of handling incoming information -- their thinking is less analytic, more global, and more perseverative- and this kind of thinking may serve very well for many kinds of functioning but it is not the kind of thinking most conducive to high-level intellectual productivity, especially in science." (50)

Several social psychologists have postulated that the key developmental characteristic of analytic thinking is what is called early "independence and mastery training," or "whether and how soon a child is encouraged to assume initiative, to take responsibility for himself, and to solve problems by himself, rather than rely on others for the direction of his activities." (51) In other words, analytically inclined children are those who have not been subject to what Brofenbrenner calls "oversocialization," (52) and there is a good deal of indirect evidence that such is the case. Levy has observed that "overprotected" boys tend to develop intellectually like girls. (53) Bing found that those girls who were good at special tasks were those whose mothers left them alone to solve the problems by themselves while the mothers of verbally inclined daughters insisted on helping them. (54) Witkin similarly found that mothers of analytic children had encouraged their initiative while mothers of non-analytic children had encouraged dependence and discouraged self-assertion. (55) One writer commented on these studies that "this is to be expected, for the independent child is less likely to accept superficial appearances of objects without exploring them for himself, while the dependent child will be afraid to reach out on his own and will accept appearances without question. In other words, the independent child is likely to be more active, not only psychologically but physically, and the physically active child will naturally have more kinesthetic experience with spatial relationships in his environment. (55)

When we turn to specific child-rearing practices we find that the pattern repeats itself according to the sex of the child. Although comparative studies of parental treatment of boys and girls are not extensive, those that have been made indicate that the traditional practices applied to girls are very different from those applied to boys. Girls receive more affection, more protectiveness, more control and more restrictions. Boys are subjected to more achievement demands and higher expectations. (57) In short, while girls are not always encouraged to be dependent *per se*, they are usually not encouraged to be independent and physically active. "Such findings indicate that the differential treatment of the two sexes reflects in part a difference in goals. With sons, socialization seems to focus primarily on directing and constraining the boys' impact on the environment. With daughters, the aim is rather to protect the girl from the impact of environment. The boy is being prepared to mold his world, the girl to be molded by it." (58)

This relationship holds true cross-culturally even more than it does in our own society. In studying child socialization in 110 non-literate cultures, Barry, Bacon and Child found that "Pressure toward nurturance, obedience, and responsibility is most often stronger for girls, whereas pressure toward achievement and self-reliance is most often stronger for boys." (59) They also found that strong differences in socialization practices

were consistent with highly differentiated adult sex roles.

These cross-cultural studies, show that dependency training for women is widespread and has results beyond simply curtailing analytic ability. In all these cultures women were in a relatively inferior status position compared to males. In fact, there was a correlation with the degree of rigidity of sex-role socialization, and the subservience of women to men.

In our society also, analytic abilities are not the only ones valued. Being person-oriented and contextual in perception are very valuable attributes for many fields where, nevertheless, very few women are found. Such characteristics are valuable in the arts and the social sciences where women are found more than in the natural sciences -- yet even here their achievement is still not deemed equivalent to that of men. One explanation of this, of course, is the repressive effect of role conflict and peer group pressures discussed earlier. But when one looks further it appears that there is an earlier cause here as well.

As several studies have shown, the very same early independence and mastery training which has such a beneficial effect on analytic thinking also determines the extent of one's achievement orientation--(60) that drive which pushes one to excel beyond the need of survival. And it is precisely this kind of training that women fail to receive. They are encouraged to be dependent and passive -- to be "feminine." In that process the shape of their mind is altered and their ambitions are dulled or channelled into the only socially rewarded achievement for a woman -- marriage.

Now we have come almost full circle and can begin to see the vicious nature of the trap in which our society places women. When we become conscious of the many subtle mechanisms of social control -- peer group pressures, cultural norms, parental training, teachers, role expectations, and negative self concept -- it is not hard to see why girls who are better at most everything in childhood do not excel at much of anything as adults.

Only one link remains and that requires taking a brief look at those few women who do manage to slip through a chance loophole. Maccoby provided the best commentary on this when she noted that the girl who does not succumb to overprotection and develop the appropriate personality and behavior for her sex has a major price to pay: the anxiety that comes from crossing the caste lines. She feels that "it is this anxiety which helps to account for the lack of productivity among those women who do make intellectual careers -- because (anxiety) is especially damaging to creative thinking." The combination of all these factors together tell "something of a horror story." It would appear that even when a woman is suitably endowed intellectually and develops the right temperament and habits of thought to make use of her endowment, she must be fleet of foot indeed to scale the hurdles society has erected for her and to remain a whole and happy person while continuing to follow her intellectual bent. (61)

The plot behind this horror story should by now be clearly evident. There is more to oppression than discrimination and more to the condition of women than whether or not they want to be free of the home. All societies have many ways to keep people in their places,

and we have only discussed a few of the ones used to keep women in theirs. Women have been striving to break free of these bonds for many hundreds of years and once again are gathering their strength for another try. It will take more than a few changes in the legal system to significantly change the condition of women, although those changes will be reflective of more profound changes taking place in society. Unlike blacks, the women's liberation movement does not have the thicket of Jim Crow laws to cut through. This is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, the women's liberation movement lacks the simple handholds of oppression which the early civil rights movement had; but at the same time it does not have to waste time wading through legal segregation before realizing that the real nature of oppression lies much deeper. It is the more basic means of social control that will have to be attacked as women and men look into their lives and dissect the many factors that made them what they are. The dam of social control now has many cracks in it. It has held women back for years but it is about to break under the strain.

#### NOTES

1. Sandra and Daryl Bem, "We're All Non-Conscious Sexists," *Psychology Today*, Nov. 1970, p. 26.
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## Castelike Status Of Women & Negroes

### NEGROES

### WOMEN

#### 1. HIGH SOCIAL VISIBILITY

a. Skin color, other "racial" characteristics  
b. (Sometimes) distinctive dress -- bandana, flashy clothes

a. Secondary sex characteristics  
b. Distinctive dress, skirts, etc.

#### 2. ASCRIBED ATTRIBUTES

a. Inferior intelligence, smaller brain, less convoluted, scarcity of geniuses  
b. More free in instinctual gratifications. More emotional, "primitive" and childlike. Imagined sexual prowess envied.  
c. Common stereotype "inferior"

a. Ditto  
b. Irresponsible, inconsistent, emotionally unstable. Lack strong super-ego. Women as "temptresses."  
c. "Weaker"

#### 3. RATIONALIZATIONS OF STATUS

a. Thought all right in his place  
b. Myth of contented Negro

a. Woman's place is in the home  
b. Myth of contented woman -- "feminine" woman is happy in subordinate role

#### 4. ACCOMMODATION ATTITUDES

A. Supplicatory whining intonation of voice  
b. Deferential manner  
c. Concealment of real feelings  
d. Outwit "white folks"  
e. Careful study of points at which dominant group is susceptible to influence  
f. Fake appeals for directives; show of ignorance

a. Rising inflection, smiles, laughs, downward glances  
b. Flattering manner  
c. "Feminine wiles"  
d. Outwit "menfolk"  
e. Ditto  
f. Appearance of helplessness

#### 5. DISCRIMINATIONS

a. Limitations on education -- should fit "place" in society  
b. Confined to traditional jobs -- barred from supervisory positions. Their competition feared. No family precedents for new aspirations.

a. Ditto  
b. Ditto  
c. Ditto  
d. Ditto  
e. e.g. conduct in bars

c. Deprived of political importance  
d. Social and professional segregation  
e. More vulnerable to criticism

#### 6. SIMILAR PROBLEMS

Roles not clearly defined, but in flux as result of social change. Conflict between achieved status and ascribed status.



## Notes On Contributors

Liza Bingham is a student at Boston University and a member of **Female Liberation**.

Meg Bursaw is a member of **Female Liberation**.

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Jo Freeman organized one of the first women's liberation groups in the country in Chicago in 1967, and she was editor of the first national newsletter, "Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement". Her writings include "The Bitch Manifesto" in **Notes from the Second Year**; "The New Feminists" in **The Nation**, February 1969; and "Growing Up Girlish" in the December 1970 issue of **Transaction**.

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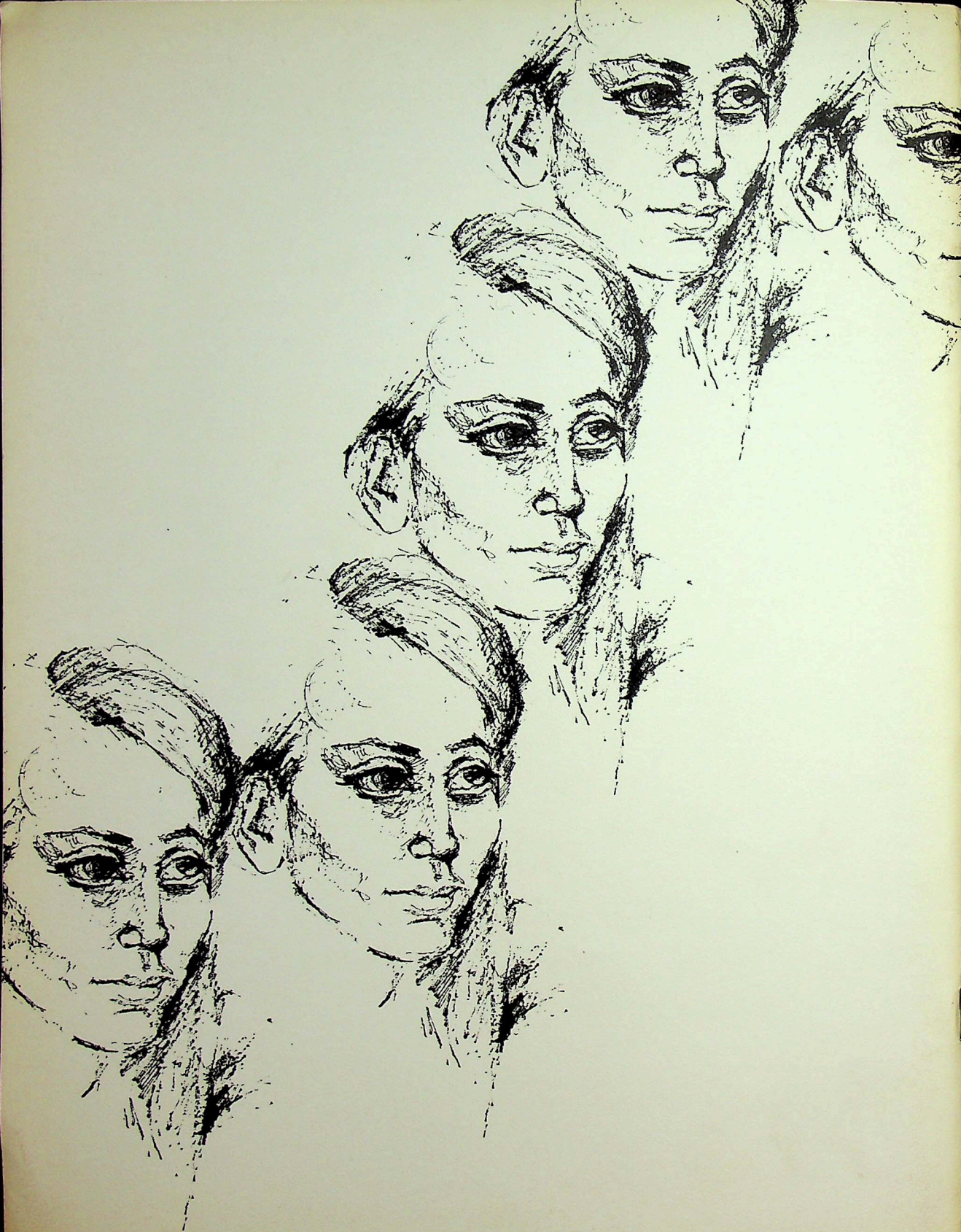
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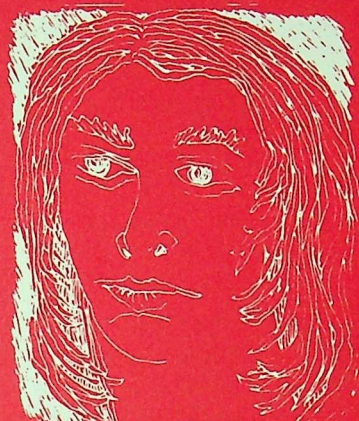
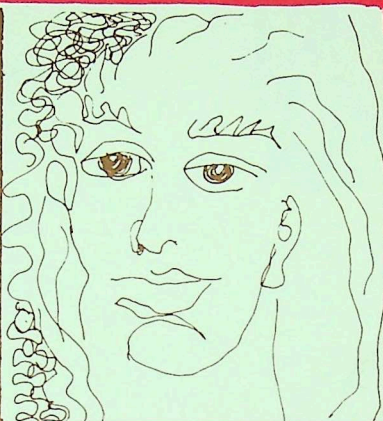
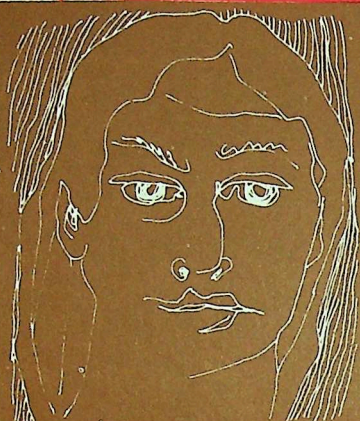
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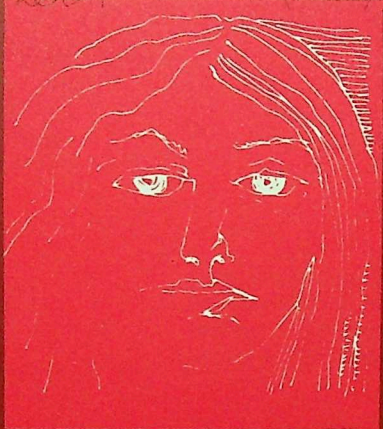
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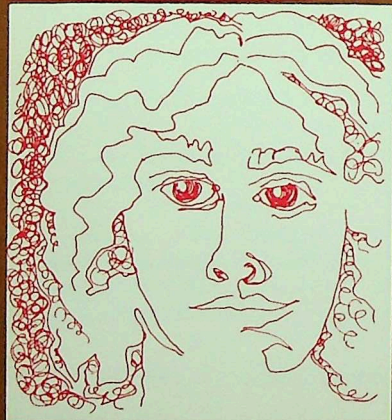


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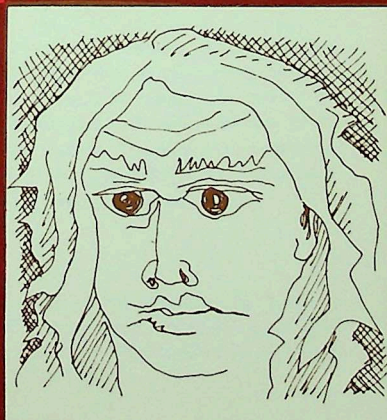
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A  
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REVIEW OF THE  
ELECTIONS





# the second wave

a magazine of the new feminism

Volume 2, Number 2



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front cover by Gina; design by Beth, Carol  
and Linda

back cover design by Bonnie L. Carpenter  
MAGAZINE STAFF

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Ristau, Deborah Rose, Carol Somer, Fran Taylor, Linda  
Thurston, Peggy Waletzky.

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Sisters:

The drawings are my work.  
Cut them apart, rearrange them,  
use whatever you can. They  
are images of women I love or  
remember or may know someday,  
women I have been or will become.  
I trace my growing strength in  
these lines every day and I hope  
other women can put on the faces  
and identify.

Gina

"It may be that a second wave of sexual revolution might at last accomplish its aim of freeing half the race from its immemorial subordination and in the process bring us all a great deal closer to humanity."

Kate Millett — Sexual Politics

The Second Wave is published by Female Liberation in Boston, Massachusetts. The title was chosen to remind us that our movement started over a century ago and that we are in the second wave of feminists in an ongoing struggle. The Second Wave is intended to present a variety of opinion from women within and without the movement on all topics of concern to women. The views expressed are not necessarily those of Female Liberation. Advertisers should write for a rate card and printing schedule.

This publication is on file at the International Women's History Archive, 2325 Oak Street, Berkeley, California 94708 and is available on microfilm through Bell & Howell, Drawer "E," Wooster, Ohio 44691.

# From Us

*The Second Wave* is one of many magazines that have grown out of the women's liberation movement and the growing feminist awareness of the past several years. Unlike other publications, however, we are rooted in a larger feminist organization, Female Liberation. While not all of the magazine staff are members of Female Liberation, the roots in the organization are crucial; they keep us in the midst of feminist activity and growth, keep us from becoming lost in theory and disconnected from the realities of what is happening in the movement. The link between *The Second Wave* and Female Liberation has sometimes seemed tenuous; at times we have appeared to function autonomously, to our own loss and to the annoyance of other Female Liberation members who have felt left out of an essential part of the organization. In the last editorial we talked about the magazine committee being disconnected from the content of the magazine. We now want to put more of the organization into the magazine as well.

Why didn't we want to share more of our group and our experiences in the magazine? For one thing, we were divided — a split self. The presence of members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) within Female Liberation for two years marked us deeply. The rest of us were negatively defined as "not SWP/YSA," but then what were we? Not knowing ourselves, it was difficult to express ourselves in *The Second Wave*. Being oppressed by the party-line politics of the SWP, torn, embittered, and angry, but unwilling to confront that in ourselves, we had little of ourselves to present and so held to a line of "no line."

Our root difference was our insistence on the importance of process-consciousness contrasted with the SWP/YSA emphasis on the end product. SWP/YSA women never wanted to discuss the destructiveness of a group (SWP/YSA) operating within a group. Interpersonal/intergroup dynamics were not important to them. While they contend that so-called "personal" change must wait until

"after the revolution," we contend that if we are not developing new ways of relating along the way that there will be no revolution. If we have not developed new forms, the same types of structures will supplant the old with only a change in content. That is no revolution. Power must be shared, not controlled by a few at the top of the pyramid. And we must begin to learn how to do that now.

To date the women's movement has specialized in powerlessness. We are afraid of power because we have been so deeply hurt by people wielding power over us. At a recent Female Liberation meeting when the word — simply the word — "power" was mentioned, a half-dozen sisters turned off to the speaker and the whole discussion went amok. We have been afraid of confronting power within ourselves and of dealing with it within the group. But we are learning to develop our power in responsible ways, as we must if our movement is to succeed.

In the half-year since the SWP/YSA women have left the organization, we have intensified the painful struggle to integrate personal reality and political action. As women we have been conditioned to be receptive to each other's needs and feelings, and we must *not* lose this quality. Earlier our politics were still floundering in an office mentality. We would come in, do our work efficiently, and go home bitterly complaining because we were allowing resentments and hostilities towards one another and towards the

group to build up unconfronted. Our personal needs were largely unmet and indeed barely perceived. In our zeal to spread the gospel of sisterhood, we were losing touch with the basic fact that struggle, like charity, begins at home.

The high point to date of our struggle as an organization was the "Awareness Weekend." We spent an entire weekend together confronting our political failures in not communicating our needs to one another. Four women from New Hampshire, self-trained in group process, helped us out. The anger that we had been harboring against one another came out. We cried a lot. We also realized the great amount of love and responsibility that we feel towards one another. And we have been dealing with power within the group. It hasn't been and won't be easy. Breaking down the false personal/political dichotomy means fighting years of conditioning; opening up to each other has meant having to accept a sometimes painful vulnerability.

Finally, there is the simple reality of time to cope with: we are very often overworked, but we don't want the magazine, the newsletter, the radio show, the orientation discussions, the abortion and child care work to suffer. We cannot afford to ignore the needs of unknown sisters in dealing with our own needs. Both the "work" and the "personal relating" take time. But more and more we are coming to have faith in ourselves and in the realization that work on our interpersonal relations and our projects go hand in hand, the one enhancing the other.

Through our growth together in Female Liberation we are coming to terms with understanding who we are and with helping each other in the process of this understanding. Our shared gut experience can no longer be kept out of the magazine. We feel that our new mood of introspection is reflected in this issue of *The Second Wave*. We have political analysis, but we also have more poetry and for the first time we include a portfolio of photographs. We feel that the two emphases complement each other in the magazine as we know they have in Female Liberation.

for Stanley

## *The Women are Dancing*

Come Dolphins sing!  
Birds come play!  
Cats arch up  
up against the sky!  
Frogs laugh now now!  
Horses fly fly on the wind!  
The Women  
The Women are dancing!

—Miriam Palmer

Sisters of *The Second Wave*,

I have read your magazine today for the first time and was impressed with the quality of the articles.

In appreciation of the work you are doing I would like to contribute this gift of an etching to your magazine and staff. [The etching is on our back cover.] My art has always had the tendency to spell things out for me visually and it was inevitable that I would soon be seeking a more complex self-awareness as a woman among other women within the liberation movement. Since I've become involved I have discovered a greater sensitivity and feeling of kinship with other women. It is beautiful to be of a positive, sisterly attitude towards other women instead of suspicious, cutting and alien. I offer my best wishes for the continued success of your magazine in its working with the movement towards a better world.

A sister,  
Bonnie L. Carpenter  
San Francisco, California

Sisters,

Topless dancers make me sad. The article, *Dancing Alone*, in the last issue was one I truly enjoyed (and was not saddened by). The brassy world of the topless dancer and stripper has always commanded my fascination and sympathy... Ms. Reeves aptly revealed many insights into the life and she made it out in apparently good form. What I mean is that she seems to be together. I'd like to see similar articles by prostitutes. The numbers of women who still find this their profession are astounding.

Velleda  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

To *The Second Wave*:

I am not interested in renewing my subscription. [Your magazine] delivers a lot of lip service to philosophy, abstracts, and art, which is fine, but that's not what I'm interested in. I thought it would tell about what you people are doing, like what do you do if someone comes to your office and they want an abortion? Or how do you handle rape cases and job discrimination? Another thing that interests me is why Women's Liberation isn't organized throughout the country. I agree with your philosophy, but just reading about it isn't that satisfying.

Nancy Bonell  
Reno, Nevada

# Letters



photo: Elsa Dorfman

Sisters,

Congratulations to your magazine *The Second Wave*. It is one of the better feminist publications and I have enjoyed reading and re-reading the one issue I have. I personally appreciate the diversity you offer and hope you continue to cover all topics of interest to and relating to women. In this sexist society you offer insight into all the current and past life-denying stereotypes of masculinity and femininity—not just for those in “the movement,” but for others also, by the mastery of your featured articles and your obvious commitment to the liberation of women. Thank you for your magazine.

Sunny Swick  
Annandale, Virginia

Dear Sisters,

Just read my first copy of *The Second Wave* and I'm very impressed. I was especially interested in Barbara Roberts' article on psychosurgery. It is really a joy to read so many talented and creative women after being told for so many years (centuries?) that we just don't have the creative urges, etc.,

etc. My own initiation into feminism just about a year ago brought with it an almost aching urge to write which I guess I had been repressing for many years. It has been a struggle—I've begun to write poetry, but I am timid with it. Or I should say I have been—enclosed with this letter you will find a small poem. The sending is a victory in itself.

Ellen Emmert  
Cooksville, Maryland

Dear Sisters,

Thank for your article on Love Comics. I am twelve and I know people who actually try to identify with the girls in those books. I hope they don't stay like that. There is nothing so bad as a girl who talks like she grew out of a comic book. Your whole magazine is really fine.

A Sister

Dear Karen,

Your new poem is full of riches, but I am especially knocked out by the penultimate quatrain about Adam being the first woman. I know it's terrible, but I can't resist making an ideological carp about small cocks. They're the only kind worth having anything to do with these days, don't you think?

Vivien Leone  
New York City

Dear Beautiful Sisters,

Thank you, thank you for the recent issue of *The Second Wave*. [Karen Lindsey's poem is] a haunting, enticing, complex syntax-snapper of a poem (with a story, yet!) Really fine.

Natalie Petesch  
Pittsburg, Pennsylvania

Dear *Second Wave*,

I found your magazine... very refreshing. Among the feminist publications I have seen, it seems the most open in terms of allowing women from various backgrounds and points of view expression.

Griselda Steiner  
New York City

Dear Sisters,

Congratulations on your recent issue of *The Second Wave*. Each issue does seem to be better than the last. It's refreshing to find such good writing in a feminist publication.

Judy Fry  
San Diego, California



## I The Democratic Convention: Feminist Flashes

by Roberta Benjamin

I am not a politician nor am I even particularly fascinated by the political process. Two years ago I would have been hard pressed to tell you the front from the back of a ward committee, and candidly I still have problems with the front. My interest in the political scene began some three years ago, when I attended what has become an annual ritual at the State House (de rigeur for emerging feminists), the Abortion Law Repeal Hearings. To watch the parade of smug, white, middle-class, middle-aged male legislators deliver orations and moralistic tarradiddle about women's bodies has *got* to be a radicalizing experience for any vaguely conscious woman. One state rep that day, a seedy looking little fellow I wouldn't trust to walk my dog around the corner, assured me self-righteously that once impregnated, my uterus became his sacred responsibility. I gagged . . . but also became firmly convinced that politics was a part of my life and a part with which I had to deal. If I could not obtain an abortion, walk into any public accomodation, love whom and how I chose (and believe it or not, sisters, there are laws about *how* to love in this state), or be admitted to a school which I supported with my taxes because a political body had made or perpetuated laws discriminating against women . . . well, that political body was going to hear about it. So, I've been getting migraines for the last few years lobbying, letter-writing, shouting, and throwing figurative stones at the existing political system. The success rate of these measures has been underwhelming.

Thus, it was with a certain sense of unreality that I sat, midst the steamy tinsel vulgarity of Miami Beach in July, as an at-large delegate to the Democratic National Convention.

It began simply enough when I was asked, as a feminist, to endorse certain of George McGovern's stands on women's issues. I went on to endorse his candidacy for the Presidency. At that point, Chisholm had not yet announced, and while McGovern is nobody's idea of a flaming feminist, he was better than anything else around. As a candidate whose chances were roughly akin to a snowball's in a heatwave, many of McGovern's stands were excellent. Regrettably they have weakened over the months (although he is still head and shoulders above Nixon, whose feminist plus points can be summarized by the statement, "He had a mother"). At any rate, from the endorsement, I was then asked to be an "issue-oriented" delegate (my issue was women, other delegates had blacks, cities, peace, amnesty, and environment), and of course, the rest is history. McGovern's slightly radical slate ("the biggest bunch of nobodys ever assembled," noted one prominent Democrat) beat out the party regulars and we were off to Miami . . . knapsacks, brown paper bags, hard hats, and all.

What happened to women at the Convention has been a bit distorted by the popular press. If you watched television, you probably saw Gloria Steinem and Bella Abzug roaring around telling all and sundry that women were being had. To be honest, the closest I ever got to Gloria was when a T.V. camera following her around

Convention Hall ran over my toe. So, my perceptions of what was happening are different from hers. The first significant difference is that while the movement heavies were wheeling and dealing with the political heavies, I was talking to my fellow and sister nobodies. Further, while it is true that McGovern's staff was dealing with women's issues as if they were irrelevant shit, the delegates, both male and female, were becoming increasingly sensitive to the significance of those issues.

The human reproduction (or abortion) minority report and what happened to it is a good example of this process at work. The Democratic Party Platform this year has an excellent women's rights plank, as well as a vague but reasonably comprehensive plank on family planning. It does not, however, have any specific statement on abortion. After battles in the platform committee on the issue, a minority plank was submitted which read, "In matters relating to human reproduction, each person's right to privacy, freedom of choice, and individual conscience should be fully respected, consistent with relevant Supreme Court decisions." Now this is hardly a statement which would send feminists out ready to fight and die, particularly with that ringer about the Supreme Court. Nevertheless, in the context of the Convention, this became THE women's issue. While so-called "Right to Life" types were testifying against it and McGovern staffers were on the floor arm-twisting to stop it (as it was felt that a pro-abortion stand would be embarrassing), a coalition of feminists, newly radicalized women, and a surprising number of men began to do a slow burn. A counter lobby sprang up almost spontaneously, and when one of our delegates who was also doing floor work approached me about abstaining rather than voting no, I exploded. So did several men and women standing near me. The fellow apologized, stopped working against the plank, contrary to orders sent down from above, sat down, and ultimately voted for it. Although McGovern forces defeated the plank, it would have passed had there not been desperate floor intervention, and THAT, I think, is significant. Curiously enough, the plank won in the Massachusetts delegation . . . a moral victory of a sort for a state whose legislators had recently passed a rights-of-the-foetus bill.

As the Convention progressed, while women were consistently foisted off at the "top levels," women and their fellow delegates were increasingly getting together on the grass-roots level. At one point, women delegates angered by the South Carolina challenge (a challenge on credentials specifically regarding women which was sacrificed by the McGovern staff for a positive victory in California) and the clumsy floor handling of the abortion issue, called for a meeting with top McGovern staff people. Gary Hart and Frank Mankiewicz, pooh bahs from the operation, promised to come to a meeting, but never showed up (ironically, they were busy selecting Eagleton for vice president). By this time, the now-furious women delegates pulled together some resolutions, sent several representatives over to sit in at Hart's office, and promptly went out to drum up support for the candidacy of Frances Farenthold as vice president. Farenthold, a woman legislator from Texas, was not widely known, and the fact that she received 500+ votes, coming in second to Eagleton, indicated a vigorous women's protest which involved men as well as women. One of the more unlikely sights at the convention was an almost seven foot tall Ken Galbraith, the

Harvard economist and former ambassador to India, standing atop his chair waving a "Sissy" Farenthold poster.

The dusk-to-dawn sessions undoubtedly produced in all of us, men and women alike, a certain compassion for each other. However, beyond that, there was a certain androgynous comradery among delegates to that Convention, perhaps best summed up by Jimmy Breslin who noted:

Bella's talking irritated some of us more than usual because of the striking thing that has been going on around the convention. The New York delegation has 408 members. One hundred and seventy five of them are women. When men in politics are around women anywhere, a man usually acts as if he belongs not in judge's robes but in a sweater with a letter on it. But all week here in Miami, the New York delegation, and other delegations report the same thing, has been conducting its business as if women were the same as anybody else.\* And women have regarded men in the same way.

It is so noticeable that one of the women . . . brought it up while we were sitting on the floor . . . "This is the first time in my life that I feel I am being accepted as a person and not the usual target."

Business was not, of course, conducted quite as usual within the delegations. Because of the McGovern-Frazier guidelines, forty-one percent of the delegates were women.

\*read for "anybody else," "men," but otherwise, not a bad passage.

## II Shirley Chisholm Campaign

By Barbara Schram

To the query "Should women participate (and invest their energies) in electoral politics?", my answer is an equivocating, "Yes, but . . .!"

Essentially I believe women should actively involve themselves in the political process, *but* they should use it as a consciousness-raising activity as well as (and perhaps even more than) an effort to win a space in the political bureaucracy. It is naive and even dangerous for us to believe that women's liberation will be advanced simply by having large numbers of women in key decision-making positions. While it is a source of comfort for me to have Bella Abzug and Shirley Chisholm in Congress, it is not simply because they are women but because they are a certain type of women with a certain type of constituency. Their understanding of the social and political forces of oppression is pretty clear, and they have sought out and worked to build alliances with the liberation-movement groups. It is just as possible, however, that this is not and will not be the case with many other woman politicians. I believe it is obvious that the election of a woman who has a low level of consciousness by a constituency whose consciousness is in an equally rudimentary state can do little to help the movement and can even set it back. The appearance of women on the floor of Congress or at the polling places can give the illusion of political equality but can in fact be a further buttress to our current system of sexual, racial, and economic oppression. A "native" whose head is still controlled by the "master" is a potent weapon that can be

Here in Massachusetts, fifty percent were women. The sheer numbers of women present had a tremendous impact on the climate and process of the convention—which was significantly transformed.

So, this McGovern-Fraziered, black, white, old, young, male, female, rich, poor, Mexican, Irish, Jewish, Indian, Wasp Convention, billed as the most diverse group of people ever assembled under one roof, managed to make a success, at least in my terms, of the largest experiment in group process ever devised. It left me, finally, with hope—hope for the emergence of a just society, hope that people can, despite barriers in age, sex, color, and background, work together, be together, with affection, humor, understanding.

The message of the Convention was, for me, quite clear. The grass roots of this country are, in many ways, light years ahead of its leadership, infinitely more susceptible to reason than its leadership, and most probably more compassionate and humane than its leadership. Politics has turned in upon itself, and even its best figures operate in isolated little vacuums. It is astounding that when three separate public-opinion polls show sixty-five percent of the people in this country *for* abortion reform, the leadership is reluctant to take a position for fear of being embarrassed. I have no magic formulas or pat answers about what to do, but it does strike me that if as feminists we are truly serious about revolutionizing our society, we must, by the strength of our numbers and dedication, transform the political process into something akin to that which evolved on the grass roots level in Miami, and it would seem by our numbers alone, we *can* do just that.

used for the continued oppression of other "natives."

Because I believe in the primacy of internal liberation as a pre-condition for real political liberation, I entered into Shirley Chisholm's presidential campaign with a pretty clear agenda. Knowing that she did not have a chance of winning the nomination (and not even being absolutely convinced that it would be good if she did get it), I saw the campaign as an ongoing, open-ended, consciousness raising session. As we handed out flyers on streets, conducted rallies and discussion groups, we constantly talked about the nature of the weapons that were being mustered against this woman who had the audacity to attempt to enter the male (white) confines of the presidency. We carefully compared the press coverage given to all the candidates, noting that ours was virtually "whited-out"\* of the establishment papers. We collected the few news items that did appear and the people we showed them to could not help but see that they were all of a light, "human interest" nature, depicting our candidate in a generally patronizing way. The single largest item we found in any Boston daily was one that discussed at length (and out of its original context) Chisholm's future plans for retirement to the West Indies and her "rocking chair."

We prodded people to monitor her T.V. coverage and many saw that here too she was virtually invisible. On primary night in Massachusetts—where she made a

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\* a term coined by Flo Kennedy.

# III Women and the Elections

by Kathie Sarachild



Women suffragists put a tremendous amount of time, effort, and heartache into the hope that with the vote woman would be able to free herself and have the power to reorder the world in her own best interests and those of humanity as a whole. Countless feminists spent countless years tramping through the wilderness, collecting petitions, giving speeches, marching, enduring jailings, police beatings, and hunger strikes. They hoped not only to win a principle when they won the vote for women and to extend the cause of human rights and liberty for all into another former male supremacist preserve. They hoped to win a new means of *power* for women, the power with which to guarantee respect, freedom, and dignity for our sex.

By now, however, it is sadly clear that the vote has done no such thing. As a matter of fact, it turns out, historically, that except for establishing a principle, having the vote has borne no relation at all to women's advancement. All of the legal progress we associate with the nineteenth century feminist movement occurred *before* women got the vote—as a result of agitation, organization, and direct action. After women *did* get the vote, despite this new alleged power to affect law of the land, nothing much happened by way of winning legal rights for women for a half a century until the black civil-rights movement was in full swing and a new feminist movement was just beginning to stir again. We got our first big legal victory since the vote—the federal equal hiring clause—not because of any power from our vote, but as a reaction against the black movement, as a “joke” stuck into the Civil Rights Act of 1965 by some racist senators. Before that, what economic progress there has been for women—the opening up of new jobs—occurred because of the exigencies of war and depression—not through the power of the vote. In education, the same percentage of women receive advanced degrees (Ph.D.'s) today as did in 1920, the year we got the vote, a half century ago. And the recent progress made for women in New York State, for instance, in the liberalization of the laws forbidding abortion, the bills in Congress now for childcare centers, etc., came only after the new militant women's rights movement was going strong, through the agitation of the radical feminists and the publicity their actions received in the media, which had made women's liberation a household term.

## An Illusion

Unfortunately, the only role the vote has played so far in the progress of women's rights has been, at best, to provide

a symbol before we actually won it, a good issue for women to rally around in the *general* feminist struggle. At worst, the vote has been used to create an illusion, the illusion that we were “liberated” because we had won it, the illusion that we had power because of it, the illusion that it was no longer necessary for women to put their own rights first, that feminism was no longer necessary. These were terrible illusions, indeed, because, as we have seen, it has been organized, militant feminism in every area of women's lives, not the vote, which has brought us our gains, now and in the past.

Nevertheless, a group of women has again appeared that is proposing that women can win what they call “political power” and our freedom, too, by *voting* and electing other women to office. This group, which has named itself the Women's Political Caucus (henceforth referred to here as the W.P.C.) isn't just calling women's use of the ballot a possible means of *pressure*, a way of forcing the men who rule America to make some urgently needed *concessions* to women's demands for justice. They are analyzing the elections as a means to *POWER* itself and full liberation for women, and a peaceful “womanly” means, at that. And they explain the failure of the vote so far to make any meaningful changes for women as a failure of *women*.

“Women just didn't *use* the vote, that was the trouble,” goes the explanation of what they're doing. By distorting the valuable idea of female class consciousness, they attribute the “failure” of women to “use” the vote to “low consciousness.” Psychological low self-image, they say, caused women to prefer men as candidates instead of their own sex (it's almost the popular myth that women vote according to sex appeal). They neglect to explain, of course, why 50% of women of voting age don't vote at all and why these women say it's because “voting doesn't do any good.” Their so-called analysis is a parroting of the male supremacist lie that women obviously don't *want* freedom, otherwise they would *vote* for it, a lie which cloaks and covers up the tremendous structure of male power arrayed against women in every area of life—from love to work—a pervasive and pernicious structure against which our much beleaguered sex could muster neither the time nor inspiration to fight through such a slow, limited, and indirect means as elections.

## A Slow and Indirect Method

Having the right to vote failed to free women, *not* because *women* failed to “use” this right, *not* because of “low self-image” or, as Kate Millet, for one, would have it, because “the socialization process of temperamental role differentiation”—whatever that means—“remained intact.” Winning the vote failed to free women because the ballot is an insufficient weapon of power, and women knew it would not get them as much of what they wanted as going about things more directly.

There is nothing wrong, of course, with members of the W.P.C. urging women to vote feminists into office, or even with urging us to vote for women candidates just because they are women where there is nothing to be lost by doing

so. (In most elections the candidates are so alike anyway.) There is, after all, always *something* to be gained for women's rights by getting more women into areas of life previously barred to them, "politics" not excluded. Of course, it probably isn't necessary to *urge* us to do it. I know that ever since the women's liberation movement blossomed in recent years, I have been automatically voting for The Woman when I have no other information about the candidates involved in a particular election—when I have bothered to vote at all, that is. And enough of the women I know have been doing the same, whether actively involved in organized women's liberation or not, to make it appear like a definite, spontaneous trend. It's also really exciting now to have a few strong feminists telling it (almost) in the halls of Congress, even if that's all they can do.

The pressure from an electorate voting along lines *inspired by the feminist movement* will, no doubt, also induce or allow, whichever the case may be, many legislators—male and female—to pass some much-needed reforms for women, as did the men in the nineteenth century when similar "pressures" arose, even before women got the vote or held political office.

### Only a Supplement to the Fight

At best, however, as we have seen, the vote can only be a *supplement* to the feminist fight as a whole, and it can become dangerous and reactionary the minute our enemies (in male and female form) start using the vote as a *diversion* from militant feminism. It is almost inevitable, though, that an *emphasis* on voting will have the effect of a retreat from radicalism. The "political" wheeling and dealing by which reforms get passed is always done on the basis of averting "worse things to come" from the radicals . . . usually, as an attack on radical feminists, in other words.

### The Danger of Diversion

Already the hullaballo about working for women candidates has shifted the emphasis in the National Organization for Women (N.O.W.) away from more *direct* action for women's rights. And both N.O.W. and the W.P.C. are now promising their concern for "humanity as a whole," rather than the so-called narrower, women's issues (who else is there in humanity besides women . . . and men).

If the N.O.W. and W.P.C. women want to get themselves some jobs in politics, fine. If they do it right, they can even

really help the feminist cause. But they must not lie. They must not say things like "now we women are getting 'political,' now we're moving 'beyond' issues like sex and housework, *out* of consciousness-raising cells and zap-action groups, and even mass marches, class action suits and strikes to POWER." Going into "politics" (running for elections) will bring us no closer to power than karate, consciousness-raising, class action suits, etc., although all can help *if done right*. And you can bet your bottom dollar that women, unlike what the W.P.C. implies, look forward to the day when we can move beyond all these things *and* beyond "politicking" to POWER. But voting is not going to give us the means to do *that*.



### Other Oppressed Groups

Men in general, and the men who rule America in particular, are not going to hand over their unfair advantages just because we manage to win the elections. It's about time that we face up to this. Too many oppressed groups have already exhausted too much of their own energy and spilled too much of their own blood over the right to vote. Groups of men, as well as the entire female sex, had to fight terrible battles just to share the right to vote with the white men of property who founded this country. Several bloody rebellions were necessary just to get "our founding fathers" to extend the vote to other white males—the working men and poor farmers of the nineteenth century. It took a civil war for black men to get this right. And it took all women seventy more years of struggle after that. Even recently, all through the 1960s, as a matter of fact, black people in the South were still marching, still going to jail and still dying in order to vote, because even though the "right" had already been won, the whites in power had been able to prevent them from exercising it by a combination of legal maneuvers, economic control, and outright terror.

Winning the right to vote and then "using" it hasn't even gotten *men* power in this country. Even the men who set up America, as we have seen, had to use force to do it. And when they gave the vote (!) to more and more other groups, they weren't giving away their power, not much of it anyway. They weren't giving away the land and property they own and we women live on. They weren't giving away the industries that they own and we women work in (for terrible wages), or the goods that they sell and we produce and then have to buy at higher and higher prices. For women in particular the vote in no way even touched on the male supremacy we face in our homes, on our jobs, and



even on the streets.

Having power means not only "taking part" in the government, "taking part" in the economy—we're already doing that—but taking *control* of the government, the economy, and the society as a whole . . . seeing that things go *your way*, in the way *you* (really) want them.

We don't want just "to take part in the decisions that affect our lives." With regard to women, after all, that would mean our only having "part" of the right to decide whether we have an abortion or not.

For either women, blacks, or white working men to be free, there has to be not only a change in government and administration but a change in ownership, a change in total control of the society. This, of course would amount to a revolution.

Women are smart, however, to be wary of talk of revolution. We have been as hoodwinked before by putting our hopes in "the revolutionary process" as we have been by putting our hopes in "the democratic (election) process." Even white working men got taken for a ride in the last American "revolution."

In order to make sure that our rights and freedoms get *secured*, that power for ourselves—for the female sex—is won this time, we must work out an analysis and plan of our own and method of staying abreast at all times of our interests in the face of the *new* lies, evasions, and other tricks which the enemies of feminism will keep devising. Consciousness-raising has been one such method used so far to analyze the particularity of our situation and needs, but in its old form it has proved vulnerable to subversion of various kinds.

We must also maintain militant feminist organizations that, whatever form these organizations take, from coffee klatches to women's unions to "political" caucuses within male parties to a revolutionary feminist party itself, are committed to winning and insuring justice for women by *any and every means necessary*.

### Beyond Feminism?

As women fighting for our full liberation, we must resist the ever present exhortations to us to disband—to opt for humanity at large instead of for women *first*. Even now sections of the Women's Political Caucus and even the National Organization for Women are spreading the lie that "there are no such things as women's issues." And on the so-called Left, more and more women who used to pass themselves off as radical or revolutionary feminists are now saying that feminism is no longer necessary, that we're in a new "stage" now, that we're beyond and above all that now . . . into "communism."

It's one of the oldest tricks in the book for men to try to convince women that a fight for our freedom, or even freedom itself, isn't necessary . . . for *us* . . . or is "no longer" necessary, that women aren't oppressed in a particular way *solely* because they are women in a world (still) run by men. That was one of the ways giving women the vote was used by men—to try to convince us that now

that we had the ballot our rights were won and any further feminist activity was just needless fanaticism. The *women* who represent this false notion and help to propagate it receive benefits from men for their "humanist" stand. Right after the vote was won, for instance, the women who had fought so hard for it and continued still to be feminists found it extremely difficult to find work even in agencies concerned with women's problems. It was the social reformer types, the female "humanitarians," who were rewarded with the few new jobs available in unions, government, and "radical" politics—and they kept the feminists out.

We look forward to the day when there is no such thing as a women's issue, when there is no need for there to be things done especially for women because we are no longer the oppressed sex, when *men* can be relied on to defend human rights regardless of sex, when *we* don't have to put women's rights first, when, at long last, we can let down our guard. When "male rights" no longer exist, then a special movement for women's (human) rights will no longer be necessary.

But that won't happen until we've really won. Until then, we're not "trusting" anyone. This time we're not putting our hope in the vote. We're not putting our hope in an election victory. This time we're going straight for power itself. THIS TIME WE'RE GOING ALL THE WAY!

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### CHISHOLM

(continued from p. 5)

surprisingly good showing—her tallies were listed last after several other minor candidates, defying alphabetical order or any other logical or objective system.

In addition to the more obvious weapons used by the daily media, we encouraged people to analyze the insidious tyranny of language which always links the male pronoun with the role of political officeholder. We found these subtle judgements being made in our own speech and thought as well as in publications ranging from a League of Women Voters pamphlet to children's books. One particularly virulent example in literature was found in cartoonist Whitney Darrow Jr.'s *Boys Are, Girls Are*, which tells its pre-school readers (with appropriate pictures to match), "*Boys are Presidents and Girls are First Ladies.*"

In addition to learning more about the shape and form of oppression, it was also important to us to act against it with letters, phone calls, protests, and the like. And, of course, most importantly, we encouraged women to talk to each other about how the barriers erected against Shirley's attempt to breach the walls of privilege had parallels in their own lives and aspirations. For many of these women—*young and old, black and white*—it was a first opportunity to engage in this kind of discussion.

On the people to people, head-clearing level, the campaign was, I think, an enormous success. So, yes, we should use the electoral process to show how women are discriminated against and to broadcast our ideas about women's liberation. ♀

# WOMEN OF THE SOUTH:

## An Interview with Vietnamese Women

by Marsha Steinberg

Marsha Steinberg: This is *Women of the South*, an interview with women of the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) of South Vietnam, which was founded in June 1969 and includes both the People's Liberation Armed Forces of South Vietnam and governmental structures of liberated areas of the South. The PRG is also one of the parties that prepares peace talks representing anti-American forces in the South. This interview was done in mid-July when I was in Paris meeting with representatives of the PRG and the North Vietnamese, as well as representatives of other Vietnamese groups in Paris. I spoke with two of the women from the PRG, Madame Nguyen Ngoc Dung and Madame Van.

Madame Dung: Under the feudal way of living, women are considered to be inferior beings. The myths say that if a woman has one son then she has a family, but if she bears ten girls she has no family at all. A woman was not allowed to have an education because a woman did not matter, therefore time would be wasted on education. So a woman's only duty was to do the cleaning, do the washing, and raise her children. The pressure was not only from the feudal regime but also from the colonial regime of France, so that we had to bear two burdens. Man has only to bear one.

Madame Van: Economically, a woman had no right whatsoever to anything handed down. Everything that was worth anything went to the sons.

A very common thing in our society is early marriage—we say arranged, precocious. For example, a little boy ten years old will marry a girl 16 years old because the family needs some kind of labor for work in the fields. It's just a trade for the manpower of the girl. The young girl can't have any happiness in such a marriage, and it often ends very tragically for her.

We are five girls in our family. When I grew up, I wanted to work as a militant with the NLF. Though my parents were also patriotic, they said

that the work of the revolution was for men, not for girls. So I had to break with my family at one time because of their thought that girls cannot do anything for the revolution. But later they heard news that I was indeed doing something good and well . . . pretty well. So they accepted and forgave me because I left the house. I wrote to them afterwards and they admitted that indeed girls can do things as well as boys.

**Madame Dung:** Despite the beginning of a revolution of thought—mostly in the cities where things are more advanced, in terms of education especially—a family that could not afford to send all their children to school always gave priority to the men; the men they knew would have to go out and face the world. That type of thing has a very bad effect



photo: Vietnam no. 164, 1972.

on the whole spirit of women: they start thinking, "Well, maybe it's true; maybe I am inferior." It's very difficult. The work of education is not separate from the overall struggle, which demands a great, great number of people, and as many women as men. Together there is a lot of sharing and learning. Not only in the struggle against colonialism, but also in the struggle of the people's lives. When you go into the village the women will go up to other women and say, "Come on; we really need you, right now." And they say, "But, oh, I can't do it; I'm so feeble; I just can't do anything. I know I can't." And we say, "Well, yes you can do it. You must do it!"

Women before never had education, could not read, could not write. But when it was given to women to do specific tasks and to learn a certain thing, even the oldest women struggled at trying to write things and learn things, and they did. [We know] an older grandmother trying to accomplish her task the best way possible. To make her report, she had, in fact, to learn to read and write.

More difficult was the feeling of men. They didn't want women to come up to their level and take positions in the towns and districts, especially women who had done clandestine type work—the very difficult work. The women were actually much better at it than men in many cases. With both men and women doing this type of work, the men began to think that these women are doing it better, and maybe they have some good ideas, and maybe they are thinking and should be asked to share their ideas. This type of thing very much helped in raising the level of consciousness of the men.

**Madame Dung:** I have a brother, and, for example, in something as simple as eating a meal his wife always had to take the bones out of the fish for him. If she didn't do that, then he just wouldn't eat anything. Then my brother went away to work with the Liberation Forces, and when he came back after about a year, I was really surprised to see that he didn't complain about anything. He helped his wife and was a completely changed person.

**Marsha:** At this point, I asked if there were compulsory education for men in the NLF on the question of equality for women. Lee Mai, our [male] host and translator for meetings with the PRG, was asked to answer.

**Lee Mai:** Every cadre of the NLF and every person in the liberated zone in South Vietnam has to study the question of the equality of women. Women account for at least one half of the nation; and we cannot say that we want to liberate our people without liberating the wives and the mothers who are living together with us, who are working very hard for us, and who are suffering most in this war and in the feudalism (futilism) of the colonial regime. That is why every man in South Vietnam or in Vietnam as a whole understands the significance of the question of the equality of women.

What do we study? We study the tradition of women, the heroism of women in our country—the story of women—to understand the capacity of women. We also have to study the limitations to the women's power in the colonial regime, in the feudalist regime, so that in the Revolution when we get rid of these, then we can uphold the capacity of women—develop the capacity, the ability, of women. That becomes fairly true now because in South Vietnam, women can do every-

thing that men do, can do; and sometimes do it even better, I have to admit.

Madame Van: I welcome very much what brother Lee Mai has just said, which proved that he's pretty poetic minded, like every man in the liberated zone. But I have to tell that there are many cadres in the NLF who indeed, in courses, in big meetings, on big forums, when they take the floor, make very beautiful speeches about the equality of women. Beautiful, marvelous speeches. But in reality, at home, he is behaving with his wife like a feudal lord: giving orders and asking to be served like a lord, a feudal lord. So his colleagues have to practice criticism to remind him that he should bring together his words with his deeds, and also the women in the organization of women have to wage battle against them. It's not a very easy job.

Madame Dung: It's always difficult to struggle against hundreds of years of myth and culture that always has to be struggled with and is at the very base of our problem. Our horizons have been basically our house, and it is more necessary for us to learn new things, and for that education that usually goes to men to go to women more than to men. In the cadres, in schooling for example, the regulations or the specifications are more lenient for women in order that women may continue that struggle upwards. So there are two things — not only must we think in terms of broadening our struggle and keeping that very much in the limelight in the revolutionary life, but also we must continue to build ourselves, to learn, and to overcome the difficulties ourselves. In some cases, when the families were very, very conservative, women would get together and help another woman—make sure that everything was clean and spotless—so that she'd have time to do the militant work that she was doing. On the other hand, of course, there are families who are totally devoted—who do everything in their power to aid the struggle, and whose children are encouraged to join the Liberation Forces. This type of a family is very much an example for the rest of the people.

Madame Van: The Vietnamese are an agricultural people and mostly peasants. The peasant is extremely attached to his land which is given to him by his ancestors who won it inch by inch from the sea and from the natural calamities. But now, with Vietnamization, which means bombing to the ground all vestiges of the land, all vestiges of the villages, the peasant is uprooted from his own family. Nothing is left to him to bring to the tombs of his ancestors. Traditionally the Vietnamese peasant is very attached to the remains of his ancestors. I can tell you, for example, after a bombing, the Vietnamese peasant looks for the remains of his ancestors because it is a very sacred

thing. But now with the wicked plan of Vietnamization, there is nothing left to the peasant. And all the countryside, his native village, is changed; he cannot recognize his home. He has to flee to towns or to so-called refugee camps where he's kept in virtual cages—big places surrounded by barbed wire, with no trees and no plot of land which he can till. And he can't bear it; just the nostalgia of his own village makes him want to die. So it is a tragedy for the peasant—without much cause [brought] by the American government and Nixon to mentally and physically damage our people. The mental and physical damage can be repaired if peace comes one day. It can be repaired with the help of other friends in other countries. But the moral damages and the spiritual damages to the fabric of life, of society—it is a very long-range damage. It's for generations to come. For our people it's an unforgivable crime caused by President Nixon's policy of Vietnamization in our country.

In every family in Vietnam, there's a tragedy of division—one child goes with the Liberation Army, the other has to be compelled at gunpoint to enroll in the Saigon puppet army, and the mother is torn apart between her two children. In her inner feelings she is for the Revolution—she is for the child who has gone to the Liberation Forces. One day she has to mourn for the death of her second child who has been driven to a faraway battlefield in Laos or Cambodia. It is a tragedy in every Vietnamese woman's heart.

The dignity of Vietnamese women has also suffered tremendously during these five, six years since the arrival of the American troops. The women who have been driven from the countryside because of the heavy bombing have to flock into the towns, can't find any jobs, and so have to prostitute themselves. It's the only way left to them—they are sold as sex objects. The families with daughters who have gone to that point suffer. Even the husbands have to shut their eyes when their wives have to prostitute themselves in order to feed the children. And it's moral torture for the

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husbands. There are cases where women who have been dragged time and again by GI's are found. And the Saigon papers publish such news: One morning the naked corpse of a Vietnamese woman is found in big garbage pits, on the side of a sidewalk, in a silent street. And it's a quite terrible thing for our people.

Marsha: It's time to talk about the women within the PRG—how they work in maintaining and in helping people live, especially among the women and children.

Madame Van: When there are bombings in our towns there is always a problem of having enough food and shelter, since our homes are destroyed many times. The first and primary victims of these actions are the children, and we have several ways of dealing with the bombardments and destruction of our society. One of the first tasks that we have is to make sure that if there is bombardment and destruction, women do not become panicky.

We make trenches, for example, from our house to the rice field or from our house to where we gather water. The trenches are not only for people but also for the things we need: our clothes, our food, our supplies. We are an agricultural country and a lot of our plowing is done by big water buffalo, so we have to make giant trenches for the poor water buffalo. It goes to a point now that when the water buffalo hear the sound of a plane, they don't have to be pushed into the trenches, they go for them.

Just as in the winter we wear a coat and in the spring we wear a sweater or something, for us it's a part of our everyday life to camouflage ourselves. The people who work in the rice fields, for example, make themselves look like the rice field from the air. We have to realize now that many times the Americans send reconnaissance planes over. Sometimes they are B-52's, but they are reconnaissance planes, and we have to know that after them soon will follow B-52's bombing.

One cannot stay in the trenches all the time; one has to go out to work in the field and carry out one's everyday life. We have our schools held underground in the trenches. A lot of times, and especially for schools, the trenches are open in order to have air. To be safe with the children at various points along the trench, there will be little entryways of covered trench that the children can escape into. In an alert, the children can all disappear within these trenches. Much education has to be done around the use of toxic chemicals. We have to teach the people not to eat the vegetables and fruits that have been contaminated, and the water we use to cook with and to drink should always be covered fairly well; we have to teach that one should not go down to the river and

just pull out water to drink. The sanitary service—the health service—of the PRG has organized so that in every town there are people who know medicine comparable to a doctor and to a nurse or a nurse's aide. In case of an emergency there are people there who can help in every village. The three elements of aiding oneself—preparing oneself, the help of the PRG, and helping each other with the various organizations, the women's unions, the soldiers of the militia units—those three things are a way of helping that we are able to continue. In terms of the politics of it, after a bombing, for example, the people go with demonstrations to the chief of the village and they say, "How could you do this? You represent the government of the people. What are you going to do for us? We have children that are hurt, and people that are killed and our houses are down." This is a way of getting the aid from the Saigon government; of getting as much aid from them as possible.

We Vietnamese women have no higher desire than to be able to live in peace and beside our loved ones, among our families, our husbands and children, like any other women in the world. We do not want to continue that war which has caused countless suffering to our people, especially to women. We want to be friends with the American people. ♀

---

Mwa Ton Ta—  
just turned twenty,  
leader of 300 struggles,  
one leg left,  
you stand erect,  
a beautiful flag wrapping your body.

Nwin Ti Dinh—  
in the assault  
you command 100 squads.  
Night returns,  
you sit mending fighters' clothes.  
Woman-general of the South,  
descended from Troc and Ni,  
you've shaken the brass and steel  
of the White House.

Ta Ti Ku—  
with a beautiful name from ancient times,  
you're a faithful niece of Uncle Ho.  
Striking the enemy, you're strong as a tiger.  
Speaking of it, you smile like a flower.

DAPHNE

once, i might have dreamed of this  
to be loved by a god  
to run together through green places,  
and the glint of sun-gold hair,  
to make love in the arms of forests.  
once, in a time of softness,  
i might have dreamed of you.  
now  
i have run too often  
past the cold perimeters of dreams:  
now, at the sight of you  
my body grows rigid and harsh,  
locks into itself;  
i forget how to breathe.  
go away, go back where you came from,  
leave me alone.  
only with you gone  
can i turn to flesh again,  
can i grow my body back.

—Karen Lindsey

WHO HELP THEMSELVES

You made it, love that is,  
and handed it to me  
like some tremendous porcelain flower.  
It looms up in my lap  
so fragile I am afraid  
to touch it, so heavy  
my legs feel like breaking.  
I can't remember how I came  
to deserve it.

I feel I should have said  
something sooner  
about wanting to go home,  
about having slept through the end  
of your last act.  
I'm not sure how to account  
for the time I spent  
while you were up there flying,  
I'm not sure you would help me  
find the place where I got lost.

I stand at your side  
like a stoned ballerina,  
an amnesiac,  
the Ecstatic Mother  
growing numb.  
I have been such a willing Galatea,  
there is no blame,  
but I  
will have to learn to walk  
and this, not your love itself,  
but just your way of making it  
is in my way.

—Miriam Palmer

the

## phenomenology

### of anger

1. The freedom of the wholly mad  
to smear & play with her madness  
write with her fingers dipped in it  
the length of a room

which is not, of course, the freedom  
you have, walking on Broadway  
to stop & turn back or go on  
10 blocks; 20 blocks

but feels enviable maybe  
to the compromised

curled in the placenta of the real  
which was to feed & which is strangling her.

2. Trying to light a log that's lain in the damp  
as long as this house has stood:  
even with dry sticks I can't get started  
even with thorns.  
I twist last year into a knot of old headlines  
— this rose won't bloom.

How does a pile of rags the machinist wiped his hands on  
feel in its cupboard, hour upon hour?  
Each day during the heatwave  
they took the temperature of the haymow.  
I huddled fugitive  
in the warm sweet simmer of the hay

muttering: Come.

3. Flat heartland of winter.  
The moonmen come back from the moon  
the firemen come out of the fire.  
Time without a taste: time without decisions.

Self-hatred, a monotone in the mind.  
The shallowness of a life lived in exile  
even in the hot countries.  
Cleaver, staring into a window full of knives.

4. White light splits the room.  
Table. Window. Lampshade. You.

My hands, sticky in a new way.  
Menstrual blood  
seeming to leak from your side.

Will the judges try to tell me  
which was the blood of whom?

5. Madness. Suicide. Murder.  
Is there no way out but these?  
The enemy, always just out of sight  
snow-shoeing the next forest, shrouded  
in a snowy blur, abominable snowman  
— at one and the same time the most destructive  
and the most elusive being  
gunning down the babies at My Lai  
vanishing in the face of confrontation.

The prince of air and darkness  
computing body counts, masturbating  
in the factory of facts.

6. Fantasies of murder: not enough:  
to kill is to cut off from pain  
but the killer goes on hurting

Not enough. When I dream of meeting  
the enemy, this is my dream:

white acetylene  
ripples from my body  
effortlessly released  
perfectly trained  
on the true enemy

raking his body down to the thread  
of existence  
burning away his lie  
leaving him in a new  
world; a changed  
man

7. I suddenly see the world  
as no longer viable:  
you are out there burning the crops  
with some new subliminate  
This morning you left the bed  
we still share  
and went out to spread impotence  
upon the world

I hate you.

I hate the mask you wear, your eyes  
assuming a depth  
they do not possess, drawing me  
into the grotto of your skull  
the landscape of bone  
I hate your words  
they make me think of fake  
revolutionary bills  
crisp imitation parchment  
they sell at battlefields.

Last night, in this room, weeping  
I asked you: what are you feeling?  
do you feel anything?  
Now in the torsion of your body  
as you defoliate the fields we lived from  
I have your answer.

8. Dogeared earth. Wormeaten moon.  
A pale cross-hatching of silver  
lies like a wire screen on the black  
water. All these phenomena  
are temporary.

I would have loved to live in a world  
of women and men gaily  
in collusion with green leaves, stalks,  
building mineral cities, transparent domes  
little huts of woven grass  
each with its own pattern —  
a conspiracy to co-exist  
with the Crab Nebula, the exploding  
universe, the Mind —

9. "The only real love I have ever felt  
was for children and other women.  
Everything else was lust, pity,  
self-hatred, pity, lust."  
This is a woman's confession.  
Now, look again at the face  
of Botticelli's Venus, Kali,  
the Judith of Chartres  
with her so-called smile.

10. how we are burning up our lives

testimony:

the subway  
hurtling to Brooklyn  
her head on her knees  
asleep or drugged

la via del tren subterraneo  
es peligrosa

many sleep  
the whole way

others sit  
staring holes of fire into the air

others plan rebellion:  
night after night  
awake in prison, my mind  
licked at the mattress like a flame  
till the cellblock went up roaring

Thoreau setting fire to the woods

Every act of becoming conscious  
(it says here in this book)  
is an unnatural act

—Adrienne Rich

# Broken Shell

by Nancy Means Wright

All stories these days seem to end with some woman driving blindly, passionately, out onto the highway, fevered foot pressing down on the accelerator—and I'm no different. My story, too, ends on the highway, on a cool, leaf-wet night in a late New England autumn when the sky is a swamp of moist stars like a genesis . . .

I should say at the outset that there is little resemblance to the girl I once was: at thirty-four I'm not one of those who tries to crawl backward through time, recapture the wedding night (I'm not even married), the first love, a fleshly aberration here or there, a father's touch on the young girl's shoulder . . . I haven't been back to my only real school, the Sherman Avenue Elementary in the little New Jersey town I was born in. Once I passed by on the Parkway, glimpsed the A & W that had sprung up on the site of my old playground, saw through the dusty window glass a small crippled girl seated there, watching the other children tumble and frolic on the soft grass; then turned my head away and drove swiftly into a future that was unknown, and therefore, hopeful.

I had begun to change even before the time my story begins: this is why I protested when my father left the New York Thruway, drove fifty miles into the country to pay a business call—and, as long as we were there, his salesman's instinct for making mileage count double, thirty miles deeper into country growing strangely familiar, pulling up finally in front of an old white building with clipped, symmetrical bushes and an American flag over a sign that announced the FORT GEORGE MILITARY ACADEMY FOR BOYS.

"No, Dad, let's not stop—it's been twenty years. Who would be left?"

He never listened to me. He was hyper-social, if that's the word; if he wasn't selling Bronson gloves he was selling himself, reaching out for people like a grapevine, tangling his vines round their limbs, surrendering them to his stronger identity. I was his first victim. Even before Mother's death I had been his. I revolved around his sun.

So we stopped. There was a secretary in the front office, an elderly woman who knew Dad (not me of course, I told you I had changed). "Emily McFadden!" he said, holding both her hands. I saw her frozen old face melt as she remembered.

"The only ones left now are the Harleys—all the old guard have gone." She kept wagging her gray head from side to side, sadly, like Eeyore when he had lost his tail; "and they're not on campus anymore. He's retired now, you know. Spends all his time with his shells—and with her, of course."



"She's still alive?" my father said softly. "The way she was going I didn't think she'd make it this far."

"If you call it that," the woman said.

Her face quivered when my father kissed her goodbye.

We went to see them. They had a small colonial house just off the campus (anything in that village was just "off the campus"), to be part of things forever—death to cut the umbilical cord completely, I suppose, after forty years as Assistant Major-Domo, or whatever the official Academy title was. The bushes in front of the house were clipped to the bone like the haircuts of the cadets (I wondered about the current cadets), and the lawn razed pale green, yellow leaves crushed in the corners ready for burning, rows of rust-colored chrysanthemums gathered stiffly beneath gray shuttered windows. The shades were drawn. We stood in the shadow of a poplar at the bottom of the flagstone steps. A cold wind cut through my thin stockings, exposing the crooked bones of my legs.

"They're not home," I said. "See? The shades are drawn. My appointment is at 9:30 in the morning, you know—Boston is miles from here. You know what this means to me!"

"They always kept the shades down. She was so sensitive to sunlight. Watch the step now, love." He took my wrist; it gave him greater control. When he had my arm I could not take an outside job; I could only cook and type for him, organize the house, write my stories. This is the first story I have taken out of myself, though—you will see why. My wrist was hurting a little, although I know he didn't mean to hurt. He loved me, and we both knew it.

"I can make it on my own, Dad. You won't accept that."

"You never know," he said. "It takes one fall." He gripper harder. I wrenched away from him. My foot caught in a crack in the flagstone.

"You see?" he said, catching me. His hands felt good, strong on my shoulders. Whenever he touched me—even when no one was looking—my bones went soft. "All right," I said.

The bell aroused a cacophony of yapping dogs. Dogs opened the door—or seemed to. For a moment the darkness behind their white faces peered out at us as we stood there blind in the sun. Then something screamed, threw itself at my father.

"Nel-son Barringer—Can' believe it!" The voice was slurred, shrill; it reached out and possessed him; dogs were silenced, they had been trained to obey. "An' I can' believe it—no, it coun' be, it coun'—don' tell me this is—is—"

"Sheila," my father said. "My little Sheila." He was oddly awkward with her, dispossessed. But she didn't seem to notice: "Oh my God, that was years ago, that was—lemme see now—"

"Twenty. Sheila was thirteen when we left."

She shrieked again. "Twenny—twenny years!" She leered at me. Her face was all angles and hollows, skin tight and pale over curved bones, falling loose and wrinkled in the cheek pockets. She must have been beautiful once, but she had been old as long as I could remember. Perhaps the alcohol was responsible: "Old Lady Harley's bombed again," I remembered the boys saying at the table, but I felt now there was more to it. She took our coats, then returned to put her arm through mine, giving me all her weight as we moved into the shadows of the living room. I didn't mind, really. I could hardly feel her; only the perfume was strong.

"Bil-ly, come see who's here!" she screeched. Fingernails dug into the thin flesh of my arm. She steered me into a lemon yellow couch. I lost my balance a moment and Father hurried from behind to support me. The dogs barked and were shushed and ushered outdoors.

"Sheila's never been strong—you remember," he said to her when she came back in the room. I winced.

"So sorry—jus' forgot. O I 'member now, poor lil thing—all those awful braces . . ."

"I'm fine now," I said, looking directly at her, "I don't need them any more. I'll have a job. Tomorrow I—"

"A-mazing! How did you ever do it?"

"Will," I said. "I willed it. It's not easy to will it. One keeps weakening. One day I'd be fine and the next—I couldn't walk at all. I'm really a weak-willed person, it doesn't take much discouragement . . ." I stopped. I was talking too much; she was looking at me, confused. "Ab-solutely a-mazing," she said again. And it was. What did she know about the "will?" ". . . a job?" she was saying.

"We'll see," my father said. He laughed, sat beside me possessively, patted my arm. "Bill is home?" he asked. His voice was a little hoarse and I wondered if he were coming down with a cold.

The woman teetered over to the stair bannister. I remembered the boys commenting on her shape. I could see that it had once been very nice, but now her legs were sticks, the flesh bunched at her knees. We were a pair, I thought, the ludicrous leg twins. "Bill—ll—darling—you'll never guess who's here! Father is shelling," she explained to us. I didn't know why she called him "Father" when they had no children. I didn't recall her being so thin, either. The illness, I suppose. It had happened the last year my parents

were teaching here, the year my mother died — although the illness of the Major's wife took precedence over my mother's. They had almost lost her, told her never to touch alcohol again. He had been at her bedside continuously—it was quite beautiful, my mother had said out of her quiet pain. He had nursed her back to health. That was when they flew to the Caribbean for a whole school term and he began to collect shells. There was a lot of talk about the recovery, and the story appeared in the alumni bulletin and the newspaper. Even the President of the United States sent a letter saying how touched he was, and how it showed that the military had a warm heart. My father was one of the ones who ran the school in his absence. He always liked the military bit, and he put all his time into the job. My mother died the end of the same year. Cancer had been eating her away inside, and no one knew it. The same night the cat had kittens on my bed, and that event was more real to me than her death.

My father was looking at me. He cupped his hand around an imaginary drink and shook his head. His eyes were sad. We watched her wobble back to us on absurdly high heels and I knew he remembered her legs. "It's new," she said. "Billy gave it to me. Do you li-ke it?"

"Do I like it? Try me," Father said, holding out his arms. He was louder now, more the gallant I knew.

But her feathers were still fluttering about her, held up by her audience. "A birthday dress?" my father said.

"Oh you adorable thing—how did you know!" She lurched at him, arms wide as though she would fly. He half rose, caught her, laughing.

Just then Major Harley came downstairs. For a moment the three of us froze there like a Rodin statue: the lovers, and the pariah. I blinked, and the tableau had altered: she clung to her husband, was being dragged forward with him.

"Well, well," he boomed. "Nelson Barringer." His free hand pumped my father's. I had forgotten how big he was, how awesome. "You 'member lil Sheila, don't you, Daddy? the lil girl on crutches?" I grimaced, stood up quickly. I would show him my strength. She minced over to me, put her arms about my neck. The whiskey fumes dominated even the perfume. I felt weaker, I was their prisoner, my hand locked in his grip.

He released me then, turned to my father. I fell back into the couch. The cushion billowed up around me and I was grateful.

Drinks were being pushed into our hands. I took mine greedily. Afterward I felt better and ready for the siege. Now my father was talking, filling in the twenty years, describing them with his hands. The Major's entrance had affected him; his whole manner had altered when the man walked into the room. The years explained easily: the decision to leave the Academy after my mother's death, the job as salesman while I went to school for the handicapped; a managership for the same company while I stayed home to keep house, do his secretarial work, begin to write mornings out of desperation, exercise my useless legs; then wait eagerly for his homecoming to hear what he had done that day, to live through him. He had had affairs, I knew

that, but he had never remarried—he had made that obvious, and I could not let him live alone. A little dizzy from the scotch, I tried to push away from the soft pillows, and couldn't. He was right. My spine was crooked, my legs still weak. To take a job in a great impersonal city like Boston where the weak had to do for themselves, where there was no one to lean on crossing the crowded streets — absurd.

Major Harley—I could never think of him without his title—was talking about his shells. His face was pink, gray hair clipped short and spiky around his large forehead. My father appeared fascinated; he always gave the impression that the subject under discussion was his secret dream: if he could drop everything and go shelling, he would be fulfilled in his deepest soul: "If I could just quit, throw it over, the rat race, be a beachcomber, Sheil and I—how about it, Sheil? Imagine the beach, shells gleaming in the sun, nothing to do all day but—"

But pick up empty shells, make ornaments of them you had no reason to wear, put them to your ear and imagine the stories that took the place of living . . . My soul was made for the excitement of people, the exchange of ideas, I wanted to run, dance, go go and go . . . But some still vague accident of fate had made my body for stumbling in soft sand, for seeking empty shells . . .

"Father adores it," his wife was saying. "He absolutely adores it—we've been going down there every winter for twenty years now." She looked at me, and laughed. "That's funny—twenty years," she said.

"And what do you do," I asked, "while he shells?"

She looked at me blankly . . . Then clapped her hands like a little girl. "Don' you want to see the house?" she said. "You got to see the house. Father, let's take them on a tour of the house. They've never seen it. You should always see a house before you sleep in it, 'specially an old house. Then the ghosts won't creep out an' 'sprise you!"

"Sleep in it?" I said quickly. "Oh no, we definitely can't. We have to be in Boston, early tomorrow—I—"

"Pulcase Billy," she teased. She went to her husband, perched on the edge of his chair. "Tell them they've gotta spend the night. It's my birth-day—"

"Of course," the Major said. He was looking at her, but I couldn't see his expression.

"Plenny of room," she said, raising her hand to stop my father's protest. "There's the guest room upstairs, and the den . . . Please stay, pul-case." Her eyes pleaded with my father. He was watching her closely.

"We'd love to," he said, his voice soft again. "Wouldn't we, Sheil? A birthday should be celebrated."

"My appointment!" I said; but she was up, pulling the Major out of his chair. He was heavy as she was thin, his eyes black bullets inside the puffy skin of his face. "The house," she said, and turned to me. "Don' you wanto see it?"

"I'd love to," I said. "And I'd love to see your shell collection, Major Harley." I don't know why I wanted to take out my irritation on the Major. I sensed he wanted us to stay the night even less than I wanted to. I enjoyed his

discomfort.

"What fun, what fun!" She clapped her hands again and pulled at the Major's sleeve. He gripped her wrist. "Ow," she said. He smiled: "I don't want you falling." He turned his head to my father. "Milicent has poor balance."

She put her arm around his waist. I looked away. I did not want to stare at them, but I needed to understand. It seemed important, even that early in the evening. I didn't know why, then.

"First the kitchen," she said. "You know why? Nelson's glass is empty, thas why."

The Major laughed too. "The kitchen it is," he said. He had changed roles, as though he were entering into a game he had played before. He was jolly now, the jolly fat grandpa. "And on your left, the liquor cabinet," he announced, opening it wide.

"Lovely kitchen," I said. And it was. I had never thought about kitchens before. Everything in ours was bare, utilitarian like a butcher's knife. This one was pretty, with frilly bows on the toaster cover. The Major's *derriere* was large and plump as he bent into the cabinet. I remembered that his wife had always had a maid. I wondered what she would have done without one, or without her husband to do things for her. One grew dependent somehow, a limb on another person, until soon the other couldn't do without the limb either, even though he hated it, felt maimed by it, wanted to slice it off . . .

"Do you really like it?" she said, looking into my eyes wistfully, mouth trembling.

"Yes, oh yes. I've always wanted a bright shining kitchen like this."

The Major mixed my father's scotch so deftly, with such smooth flicking of the fingers, he might have been a bartender all his life—or a surgeon. He had been in many wars; I wondered how many people he had killed. His wife held out her glass, cooly. Looking straight ahead as he took it, mixed her a bourbon on the rocks. Company I suppose, or surely he would have cut her off. They had said it would kill her . . .

"You're not joining us?" my father asked, watching him put away the bottles.

"Doctor's orders. Little blood sugar," he replied. "Believe me, it's not easy." And laughed heartily.

"Poor father," his wife said. "I have to drink alone," she confided to me in a whisper. "It's terrible. You don't know how terrible it is."

"I know," I said.

"An' this is the dining room." She pushed ahead, managed to greet us at the entrance, face grimacing horribly like an aged actress. There was a long trestle table with a bowl of artificial flowers in the center. I imagined the pair seated at either end, dining in elegant silence.

"You'll have dinner with us tonight!" She snatched her husband's sleeve. "Oh Billy, tonight we can celebrate. We'll all sit together. Tonight's my birthday you know. Isn't it nice the way everybody has a birthday?" she said to my father.

"Something to be thankful for," my father said, looking

at her. She turned to me, pecked into the face of the crippled child. "And when is your birthday, dear?" she asked.

"In October, like yours," father said before I could answer. "You remember—" But she looked confused.

"October! When?" She grabbed my hands, face trembling an inch from mine.

"The 30th.—What a lovely tray," I said, wanting the subject done; I did not want to talk about birthdays. She was still pumping my hands as though we were blood sisters. The whiskey was becoming oppressive.

"We'll certainly have a party," the Major said. "We'll celebrate both birthdays."

"Oh Father darling, I love you!" She pivoted away from me, threw herself at him—or had she lost her balance. . . "All right, all right," he said. "Come along. If you insist on taking a tour of the house, we'd best be on with it."

"My room," he announced as we entered the inevitable den: pine panelling, expensive desk with wooden boxes, holders, shelves, wooden gadgets for everything. I could imagine Milicent after an exhausting day in the gift shops, taking the things one by one out of the bags: "Do you like it?" . . . The room was in impeccable order, the chair pushed carefully under the desk, pillows plumped on the daybed. Without knowing why, I decided I would sleep here, downstairs.

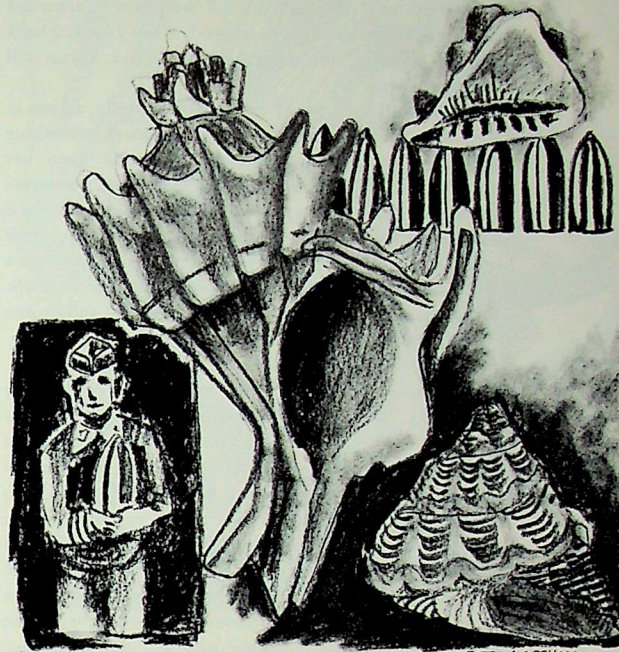
"I'm afraid of this room," Milicent said to me at the doorway. "I don't go in any more if I can help it." She was looking at the walls: guns and knives everywhere, in frames, on shelves, hanging from the ceiling. Already my father was examining them. I wanted to run to him, tell him not to touch—something might go off, hurt him; but he was holding a large bronze shell in his hand, turning it, rubbing it gently. "World War I," he said reverently. "Marne," the Major confirmed. "The one in the photograph here. I was seventeen. I lied to get in the Army." He chuckled.

The boy was a shadow of himself: tall and thin, in baggy Army pants, the only resemblance to the Major a stiff little smile as he stood there possessing the shell like a boy with a shining fish. Yet there was a kind of beauty to it I could almost understand.

"She wanted to put flowers in it," he said, pointing to his wife.

He was right. Flowers would destroy its beauty: I sided with the men, but she pressed against me, her confederate, and I realized I had not spoken. "The family room next," she said, holding my sleeve tight as we passed through the narrow hall. We clung together in the shadows, two cripples; it somehow strengthened me. I despised her weakness and pitied it. I tucked her arm under mine and we stood swaying in the darkened doorway. Behind us somewhere the men's voices rumbled like canon. She reached behind the door and the room sprang with light.

"We live here," she said, "this is our little nest." Lurching away from me, she stood in the middle of the room, held her head high, breathed in deeply. Then, holding the edge of her skirt, she took a few steps like the beginning of a pirouette—and stumbled. I went to catch



her. "I used to be such a good dancer," she said. "God, could I dance—you don't believe me, comen' see."

The walls were thick with pictures; she was in every one of them, running, leaping, dancing, stretching. "I got a scholarship," she said, "but we got married." She had been lovely. But she had had her youth. I had never danced. I looked at her coldly while she stood rapt in the photographs. The flesh of her upper arm wobbled under the nylon sleeve, the breasts hung low, a heavy bra could not hide the nipples that hung verticle and useless. The waist was thick, on a straight line with narrow hips that had never known the passage of a baby. She could have had a child. Her spine had been straight, her legs slender and shapely. Someone had said once that she had had been afraid of losing her figure.

"Do you like it?" she said.

"What?"

"The room, our room—our love nest."

"It's a very nice room."

"You really think so?"

"Oh I do, I do. You must enjoy it so much."

"It isn't done though. The rug isn't down yet. They promis' to come and they never do. It's terr'ble the way they put us off—jus' terr'ble."

She dropped into a small wingback chair facing a massive red leather one. Lovingly, her hands stroked the bright cloth of the chair arms, and she looked at me triumphantly, as though to approve the fabric she had chosen was to accept her inner self. . .

"If you ladies are coming, the tour is on its way



upstairs."

We had been left behind.

"You go on," she sighed. "I'll wait here. Father's a wonderful tour guide." I was relieved. When I looked back from the stairway, she was gazing into space, hands still caressing the chair.

We saw it all: he opened every door dutifully, all was in order, the feminine touch everywhere, though something indefinable declared it was a man's house. Even her bedroom, with its lavender flowered wallpaper, was somehow neuter. The bride in the room's only photograph must be she, yet I kept seeing her propped up in the wing chair like an ancient doll that had come unwound. There was a connecting door between the bedrooms. I wondered if she was ever lonely, or cold, and crept into her husband's room as I had crawled into my father's after my mother's death. No, a fleshly embrace between the two was unimaginable. When I saw his room, I knew she would never enter. If she was afraid of the photographs in his den, she would not survive these. Every phase of his military life was here: the athletic teams he had played on or coached, the wars he had collected: machines, tanks, trucks, guns from two World Wars, a Revolution somewhere in Europe, the Korean War... only Vietnam was missing; nor could I imagine him crawling through the primeval damp of the Vietnam Jungle. His was the organized war, the defensive war, the war he created and believed in as he believed in the football teams of the Academy who lost only to squads that were bigger, or who bought their players as the Academy never did. He played not to win, my father once said, but to maintain honor, the integrity of his boys, to teach them to be "men."

"— You remember they gave you a silver plate at the Sports Banquet that year. They loved you," my father was saying, always building up, flattering, dramatizing, projecting over the footlights, as it were.

The Major's face purpled, he rubbed his fingers together. I wondered if the Major had wanted to have people "love" him. His face gave no answers. Could you love someone you were afraid of, I wondered... someone who was — it had to be said — someone who was trying to kill you! Yes, he was killing her slowly, deliberately; he would hold her hand at her bedside, stand solemn and grieving at her graveside, while inside... How could I warn her? Should I warn her... My head began to ache with the responsibility of it. If I was wrong...

The man was standing in front of the dresser with something in his hand; I saw it was an ashtray. The Major turned, handed me the shell, acknowledging my presence for the first time since our perfunctory handshake. A young girl's fear rushed back into me: a massive man who ignored me, then turned on me suddenly as if I were atonement for his sins: here's a pinecone, a piece of candy—if you'll only stay out of my way, not remind me of those hideous braces that root out of your thighs.

"Thank you," I said, "it's very nice." I wanted to appreciate it, to please him; all my life I had tried to placate, not to give offense, even knowing that afterward I

would loathe this ingratiating self. And he shrugged, the shadow of a smile pudging his face; it was nothing, I was still the crippled faculty child. Father took my arm as we left the room and I pushed him away.

And suddenly remorseful, squeezed his hand. He returned the pressure as I knew he would.

We were in a narrow stairway. It was damp, uneven, dark. "You'd better wait downstairs with Milicent," my father said. "I never let her come up here," the Major agreed, "these old houses weren't built for the modern woman with her clacking heels."

"I'm not the modern woman," I said. I would not be fitted into a category, pinned, labeled, given — crutches, made into an ashtray. I started up behind my father, pressing my hands into the crumbling surface of the walls, imagining myself the unfortunate Fortunato, being led to an absurd and horrible fate, sealed up forever in an ancient wall for the unwitting insult of not being the modern woman—or the old-fashioned, hobbled one; for following my will...

It was a tiny attic room filled with shells: tables, chairs, benches, crates of shells, all shapes, sizes, hues; a desk with tools, glues, work in progress: ashtrays, frames, bracelets, keyrings, cufflinks... The only reminders of a life beyond this room were two portraits on the desk: one, his wife, painted decades earlier—flattering, yet unmistakably she, with ash-blond hair and skin the translucent pearl of the frame; the other, a plain wood frame of a woman I did not recognize: dark hair, large soft eyes, a child in her lap—I was reminded a moment of my mother, but only in the expression of compassion on the face. Some earlier love, perhaps, who had since died or was entangled in a helpless alliance. I tried to pity the huge frame that was bent over a box, and couldn't. I kept seeing the young soldier in the photograph downstairs, eyes glowing with hard fire as loving fingers stroked the bronze.

My eyes met the Major's as he straightened, and he handed me a pair of earrings.

We went down then; she was still sitting in the wing chair, rattling her empty glass. She started when we came in.

"They've had the full tour, Millie," her husband called from the hallway.

"Did you like it?" she said, looking up as I preceded the men into the room, eyes blinking, one hand stretched out as though she would draw strength from me. The hand dropped into her lap as I nodded, yessed her mechanically, while inside I screamed no—no I hated it, hated the weak ruffles of her bedroom, hated the guns, the football team, the male cache of shells. Something crunched in my fist and I remembered the earrings.

"Well, here they are!" she cried out as they entered the room, "here are those darling men." Sheilan! I need 'nother drink, Daddy." The spaniels were curled at her feet, huge pink bows tied to their collars, and I understood the "Daddy." "Now," she said, "let's all sit down 'n' talk—there's so much to talk about... there's twenny years to talk 'bout!"

There was a silence, then a hustling as the men gathered glasses, made noises in their throats. "What are you drinking," the Major asked his wife—eagerly, I thought.

"You know ver' well what I'm drinking," she said. "Cute thing!" she turned to me. "They say I shouldn't drink, but what'm I suppos' to do? Drink milk like a baby?" She poked a long red fingernail at my father as he passed in front of her. "You wouldn't like it now, would you, darling?"

"Are you kidding? Me without my evening cocktail? It makes a man of me." He took her hand a moment, then dropped it quickly, went to his chair.

"Right! Eg-xactly. It makes a woman of me!" She had become the gay hostess, the center of attention, the Major's beautiful wife. She got up and shimmied in front of my father. He laughed and applauded. The dogs barked, and she got down on her hands and knees, talked baby talk to them. The Major smiled briefly, took her glass into the kitchen. I saw her grotesquerie though his eyes, imagined him as he measured the whiskey, poured a doubled shot into her glass. A painless, patient way to kill. Perhaps he called it—*euthanasia*.

"Now," she said as I settled into my chair. "Tell me all 'bout yourself."

I looked up blankly, returned her vacant stare.

For twenty years there are twenty yearbooks. After a birthday dinner dominated by Milicent and my father (beef bourguignon and oyster plant patties unfrozen by the Major and reheated) in an effort to "have fun"—"Didn't we have fun!" she kept repeating—we went through the books, the men sharing one, Milicent and I another. Millie was very loud, she seemed to have reached her peak. "There you are!" she shrieked suddenly. "You see? There you are on the fire engine!"

Her fingernail was scratching the warped body of a girl who had been lifted onto the hood by an attractive man. He was holding her hand, and she was looking down at him, adoringly. Her dark hair was in long braids, her legs laid out in front of her in shapeless slabs. For a second there was the funny feeling in my stomach I had always known when my father touched me . . .

"Ooh you poor thing—how *did* you get those awful braces?"

My legs turned to stone in the silence.

"That's none of our business, Mil," the Major said.

But she was too drunk. "So she hasn't got 'm any more, has she? Nelson'll tell me. Some of 'em said it was polio. Some of 'em said it was an ax-cident. Was it an ax-cident Nelson?"

I could not speak. My lips shut, stone on stone.

"Yes it was an ax-cident, Nel— you know, you 'member! you were skiing, you 'member?"

"Yes," he said finally, from far away. "She was in a pack, on my back. We had always skied like that before then. I was Captain of my college team! Someone cut in front of me. I couldn't help it, I—fell, there was a tree . . ."

"No, no, that's not true!" I heard the words come out



BETH MARSHALL

slurred, like a drunken woman. "I was in my carriage — I was over active for my age. I would've been an athlete, Mother always told me — I tried to climb out, I fell. Mother told me that. You had nothing to do with it, nothing at all!"

He wouldn't look at me. His face was pale and weak.

"And look at you now," the Major said. "You're sturdy and strong as—Mil here. Sturdier."

"Oh-h, I li-ke that!" she howled. "I'm strong as anything —You jus' watch!" She lunged out of her chair, struck a pose in the middle of the floor, glass held high like a tambourine; then, with little jerking movements of her stick legs she pirouetted. Liquor splashed out of her glass, and bubbled in the lamplight. She leaped and dipped and shimmied, low, embracing the floor, and up again, throwing kisses at the men and the yapping dogs, mouth round, gasping fishlike for air . . . wilder, faster she jerked while my father clapped, and the dogs yowled. Both men were standing now, closing in on her, waiting for—the kill . . .

"Stop!" I cried. "For God's sake, stop it! Stop it!"

She collapsed then, crashed to the floor, lay there sprawled on her face, arms flung wide, legs apart, the high-heeled shoes she had kicked off facing each other as though they were dancing still . . .

The Major waited a long time, until the twitching stopped and she lay there motionless. Then, while we watched, helpless, unbelieving, he picked her up in his arms; and her legs danced again as he carried her out of the room.

I felt my father's presence heavy across from me. We listened to the water rush in the bathroom beyond the wall,

to her retching and moaning . . .

"She's destroying herself," my father whispered.

Chilled, I looked again at the young girl stretching and dancing on the walls; and then I looked, really looked, at my father. He would not meet my eyes, his hands lay gripped together in his lap. I saw him as he had been, his jaw square and carnal, distant eyes chips of blue flint, heard my mother pleading with him: "Don't take the child on your back—you know it's risky—if you should fall—" And my father, indignant; flat incontrovertible words dropping between them on the table: "I never fall."

He sat there now, hunched in the chair, a fallen god. You killed her, I said to the god, you killed her; and before I could stop it, aloud: "You killed—"

The door banged. "She's all right. A little dizzy, that's all. She'll be out in a minute." The Major's fingertips were swollen red where he was pushing them together.

"Aren't you going to call a doctor?" Father's voice was hardly recognizable.

She appeared in the doorway then, her face glazed and white. "Here we are," the Major said loudly. "You all right now?" He helped her back to her chair, settled her into it, pushing and patting. I was confused, the scotch was catching up with me. I needed to be sober, in control; I did not want to be caught off balance . . . I would leave the room, consider what to do. "Could I make some coffee?" I said, "if you have instant—"

"Cof-fee?" Milicent made a movement as if to rise.

"Would you mind?" the Major said to me quickly. "Stay there now," he ordered his wife. "None for me." He said there, sober, in full command.

"I'll fix you some coffee, you'll feel better," I said to Milicent. It was small and stupid; it was all I could think of to say.

"No—no," she murmured, "no coffee, can't sleep with coffee . . ."

"That's right," the Major said. "She needs the sleep more than the coffee."

I left the three of them sitting there; I could hear the men resuming their conversation, tentatively at first, then animatedly, as if the accident had not happened. My father had a gift for quick recovery. I fumbled among the pans, found one, turned on the stove. I had to think, make decisions, sort out fact from fiction. If he was trying to kill her, why, then—why—My head was whirling . . . the only assumption I had to go on was the fact of my own sanity—if . . . One thing I knew, I would not sleep overnight in this house of Usher . . . There was a small ivy plant growing in front of the coffee jar. Its leaves were glossy and green. I stroked them, and they gave me comfort.

I could have escaped then; I wasn't missed. They were thick in talk of a faculty party, a surprise birthday they had had twenty-one years ago for Milicent. She seemed to revive as I observed, as though the deeper she moved into the past the more alive she was. I resented it, I was out of it; an eleven-year-old child, I had been on the periphery, alone, ignored. As they talked I began to see the men revolve around her, spoil her, play with her, use her as the Major's

wife, rape her with a slow gaze in dim corners of the living room; then drop her, uncaring that she rocked pale and hollow in the shoals of the next morning when her husband left her alone for a long day. The women envied and despised her. She ignored them in the night, they left her alone by day.

"Wasn't it beau'ful—wasn't it beau'ful, so beau'ful—everybody loving everybody else—don't you 'member how we danced? Nelson, we danced, din'we?" She looked at him, the loose skin of her cheeks quivering.

"Yes," he said, "we danced." Father was watching her, his eyes pained. Mother would not have been at the party . . . The coffee had not yet cleared my head . . .

"Remember old Charlie Cutwell?" my father said all at once. "He was there. Just about to retire. Couldn't hear, you remember. Boys were cruel, called him names right out in class. He'd smile back, thinking they were giving him the French verb . . ."

"He should have been let go," the Major agreed.

"He went to Har-vard," Milicent said. "He always wore that love-ly red hood at grajuation, 'member?" She turned to me as if I would remember. "Yes," I said, from habit.

"Whatever became of him?"

"Dead," the Major said, "Retired one year, and—bango."

"Oh no—oh no, Billy, he died?" Her face contorted; she might have been watching her own funeral. A tear smudged her powder, making her clownlike.

"Come on Mil, he'd be ninety now. Would you want to be a walking ghost of ninety? I want to live now, while I still can—" He stopped, his eyes knitting our faces.

She looked down at herself, passed shaking hands over the low sloping breasts, held up the hands in a gesture of resignation. "No," she moaned, "no, don't wanto get old—promise you'll kill me b'fore I get old . . . I'm not old yet, am I Nelson?"

My father's words came hard and low: "No," he said, "you're still lovely." And then, "You always were lovely." His face trembled. I had not realized he had aged so. He turned to the Major. "You were lucky," he said.

The men looked hard at each other.

"I like to think so," the Major said.

She laughed deliciously, drunkenly.

"Remember the spring maneuvers back in '51," Father said, plunging blindly into the silence, "the time Mackie and his gang got lost in the swamp and we had to go in and dig them out? You were out of your mind, parents calling up, panicking . . ."

"And somehow the newspaper got wind of it," the Major said eagerly. "That's what hurt us. Never sweated anything the way I did that one. No one realized, but—"

The phone rang. Milicent shrieked. "Who's that at this hour!"

It rang again, three staccato squawks.

"Shall I answer?" I said.

"No, no," Millicent bawled, "I'll get it—you all go on talking—Oh we're having such fun! Ol' phone always spoils it—" Shoving her body up out of the chair she moved in

tiny tottering steps across the floor.

It rang again.

"Ring ring—" she hollered, "ring ring—I'm coming—" She started to run in crazy little diagonals, weaving in and out of the furniture and around the corner.

"You were the one that found them," Father said. "I've forgotten where—"

There was a tremendous crashing. A terrible silence. The phone shrilled and died.

The Major rushed out of the room. Father and I were left, like a jury, to make judgment. "Why does he let her drink, he knows it will kill her!" His face was purple with anger. "She was lovely. He never appreciated her, never spent time with her, understood her. I know. That night, after the party, she told me."

"The heart has reasons, reason knows nothing of," I quoted, knowing it wasn't enough, was too simplistic, knowing only that I knew nothing, never would know, not until I ceased feeding on other people's lives and lived my own . . .

"Let's go," I said to him. "Now."

He paled. "We can't—she may need help, she—"

There were little thumping noises in the bathroom, and the sound of the Major's voice, crooning, keening, soothing . . .

"He doesn't want our help," I said. "Things change. When will you ever learn, old man?" I stood up. "I'm going, Father. Now. You can stay if you want to."

"He can't love her now," he said. "He didn't love her then."

I went into the hall, groped for my coat. The phone dangled off its hook, like a puppet, buzzing senselessly. Father was standing behind me: "We have to say something—we can't go without saying something."

"You stay, Father. You loved her."

"It was afterward, after your mother's death," he said, his eyes begging me. "But she doesn't remember—she didn't give a sign of remembering . . ."

I buttoned my coat. "If you take the bus," I said, "I'll meet you wherever you say."

The bathroom door was flung open. There they were, framed in the doorway, clinging together like a pair that had crawled out of some great depth. Her head lolled on his shoulder, her eyes gazed inward at some unseen point, a little smile danced on her lips. His arms supported her, pressed against her flesh, delicately, as though he were holding a fragile shell. On his face was the same look of boylike pride.

"We'll be going, Sheila and I," my father said.

The Major nodded, his eyes blinking.

"Thank you," I said. "Thank you—very much."

He didn't even look at us now, so absorbed was he in what he was carrying upstairs.

I reached the car first, got into the driver's seat.

"It's dark," my father said, "and late. Let me take us to a motel."

"Get in, Father," I said. "I'm driving." I was strangely exhilarated, strong, resilient, as though—were I dropped, I

would not break.

"All right. All right."

I pulled the car out onto the road. There was little traffic. The sky exploded with a million stars. We drove through the town, an hour later swung out onto the highway.

"This is mad," he said. "It's almost midnight. We'll never find an accomodation this late."

"It's never too late." Oh I was full of aphorisms today! I laughed out loud.

"You're going 70," he said, peering at the speedometer.

"I can handle it. Put your head back, go to sleep if you can. We've a ways to go yet."

I pressed the accelerator. I had never dared to go 75 before. The wind vibrated the window. There was no one in front of me. It felt good, clean, as though, somehow, Milicent's bondage had set me free.

"It was her birthday," my father said, leaning back into the seat. "Poor kid."

My lights flashed onto a road sign. "Boston: 190 miles," it read.

I would watch the dawn come up over the city. ♀



# succumbing to RAPE?

Seven women gathered in a small Cambridge living room had been listening to Judy telling how a man had broken into her apartment and raped her. Susan had been very quiet. And then Susan began to talk . . .

"You know I've been raped, too. It happened a long time ago. Over ten years. I don't know that I can speak about it because I just haven't talked about it to anyone since. Like Judy, I kept it inside me. But it's still part of me — every detail. Now I want to try and tell you about it.

"I had just come up here to go to graduate school. I was feeling very independent because I had lived in a dormitory all through college; then you had housemothers and you signed in and out. This was the first time I was on my own. I not only had my own place to live, but I was earning just enough by part-time teaching to get by and pay my own way. At least I was no longer floating. It felt good.

"One night I was walking home from an evening seminar. It was a bit later than usual because a bunch of us had stayed on, talking. It was about 11:30 when I started to walk down the main street of Cambridge to get from Harvard Square to Central Square where I lived. I wasn't paying attention to anything, just daydreaming and in my own world. Never again.

"Suddenly, I realized that there was a man on each side of me, and each one had hold of one of my arms. To this day I can't say how it all happened, but I was simply whisked into a car that must have been pulled up to the curb. I was in the middle of the front seat surrounded by the two of them. The motor must have been running because we drove off immediately.

"I felt no fear at all. I thought the whole thing was some enormous joke. I didn't like the men, but only because they weren't what I was used to. They had on flashy and expensive clothes, and everything about them was too smooth — their hair, their skin, their nails, and their car. They were laughing and joking and said they were a volunteer taxi service to drive poor girls home. I gave them my address and said, 'Okay then, drive me home.'

"I first began to feel uneasy when they careened off the main street and headed away from where I lived. But I was not really scared. I knew I could handle the situation. I kept repeating that I wanted to go home, and they kept telling me not to be a spoilsport, we were just taking a short ride first.

"There were some red lights and we did pass others on the street and in cars. I could have shouted or screamed or grabbed the wheel. But I was confident that I could reason with these men. They seemed normal. I knew I was intelligent. I knew I could talk them out of anything they might have in mind. Furthermore, I didn't want to do anything embarrassing. I didn't want to create a scene. How did I know they weren't just going to drive me home?

"And then we were nowhere. There were no lights and no people and no buildings. They stopped the car in what appeared to be a dead-end street. The atmosphere in the car changed immediately. The wisecracking banter stopped. One of them took off his jacket and zipped down his fly. The other told me to play along and undress and nobody would get hurt. I began to talk, and talk, and talk. I used every argument and persuasion to make them see that what they wanted was not what I wanted, and could not be. No one listened to me. Instead I was grabbed by one and undressed by the other with threats that if I made a sound they would kill me. I knew they could do just that. I knew I could never overpower one of them, certainly not two. Suddenly I was terrified. They were now icy cold rapists — not normal, not predictable. I only thought of newspaper articles about women found dead, always without pants, always molested. I suddenly saw my body lying at the end of this dead-end street. Those hard faces, that lack of concern or compassion. I wanted to live.

How I wanted to live. My mind was speeding. One man was on top of me, and one was holding me. Suddenly all that mattered was that I lived. Almost immediately I found myself laughing and playing the part of a female who wanted to be raped. I heard myself tell the men that there was no need for all this roughness. Why didn't we all relax and have a good time. I pretended that I was having a good time. When one of them said, 'Are you loving this?', you can be sure I said 'Yes.'

"Somehow I carried this out until they had both finished with me, and somehow I did it until they dropped me off a few blocks from where I lived. I remember thanking them! I could no more have screamed for help, looked back to get their license, or even called the police, than I could have overpowered them. I was terrified. I only wanted to get home. I showered and showered and I cried a lot.

"The next day I decided I'd better see a doctor. This was not easy. For some reason I was terribly embarrassed by what had happened, and terribly ashamed. I didn't want anyone to know that this had happened to me. At the same time I was still breaking down in tears, and I knew I might have caught a venereal disease from these men, and worse, I might be pregnant. Abortions were hard to come by then. I knew no doctors in this area, but I went to one I had heard was very nice and good. I guess what I really wanted more than anything was someone to reassure me, to sympathize with me, and to understand the horror and terror of what I had been through. I was afraid the man I was close to would see me as less attractive if I told him. I remember thinking how crazy that sounded even as I was thinking it.

"The doctor looked at me with kindly eyes as I tearfully told my story, and I was so glad that I had gotten up the courage to seek him out. Then he asked me if I was a virgin. I said that I was not. I saw the kindness in his eyes replaced by a certain wariness. He asked me if I was there because I was already pregnant. I said no, and defensively and somewhat bleakly tried to re-establish my reputation by pointing out that I was through college, that I was now having my very first affair, that I was not promiscuous, I really wasn't.

"The doctor then examined me. He called in a colleague and together they discussed how untorn and unbruised I was down there, and how it didn't look as if I had fought at all. They also said they didn't know what else I expected if I insisted upon wandering around at night alone. They were surprised I was a graduate student and asked me why I didn't marry this man I was in love with. They finally dismissed me saying that they didn't see anything wrong with me. They didn't suggest that I check back in to see if I had caught any disease nor did they offer any abortion should I find myself pregnant.

"I snuck out of that office feeling worse than I have ever felt before. I felt shame. I felt unclean. I felt that I was not believed. I no longer felt nice. I knew that I would not get sympathy and understanding, but that I would be blamed. And so I never talked about it. Not for over ten years. But I didn't forget it. As I think back upon the whole experience now, I think I could more easily forgive those guys who raped me than I could forgive those two doctors. I see one of them every so often in the Square — always looking so good, so upright, and I want to go up to him and shake him and say, 'Do you know what you did to me?'"

Rape occasionally hits the headlines, and more frequently it is the subject of fiction, but seldom is it discussed as an event in the life of a woman. No one seems to care about the woman who is raped. The raped woman is also strangely silent about her experiences. So silent that we have no knowledge of

"Forcible rape is the most frequently committed violent crime in America today . . . In 1968, 31,060 rapes were reported. According to the FBI . . . this figure must be multiplied by at least a factor of ten to compensate for the fact that most rapes are not reported; when these compensatory mathematics are used, there are more rapes committed than aggravated assaults and homicides."

—Susan Griffin, "Rape: the All-American Crime," *Ram-parts*

the true incident of rape. Recently, the supportive and friendly atmosphere of women's groups has encouraged women like Susan and Judy to share their experiences of being raped with other women.

I have now talked to 62 such women, women who have been raped by strangers.\* The details of rape vary, but the pattern of nearly all rapes is remarkably the same, and our society treats the victims in a consistent way.

Susan's case is typical. Rape occurs late at night: the woman is alone, and the setting is urban. Frequently, the man will have either a knife or gun, but whether he has a weapon or not he will threaten to kill the woman if she screams or fights back. About one-fourth of the women I talked to were raped in their apartments by a man who broke in or gained entrance by posing as a repairman or salesman. Some women were attacked in broad daylight when they were walking in an out-of-the-way place. Many rapes were committed by two or more men. The details may differ, but women threatened with rape almost never scream or fight back, nearly always succumb, and rarely report the crime or talk to their friends about it. The rapist's job is easy. He is almost never convicted.

Like Susan, most of the women first tried to be logical and to reason with this stranger trying to rape them. When they realized they were dealing with someone who was irrational, they became terrified—terrified for their lives. As one said, "I wanted to live for myself — for me!" Another said, "I had no confidence in my ability to defend myself. I knew I'd miss. Then I *knew* he'd kill me." These women were struggling for their lives, and they did it in the only way they knew—not by being aggressive and fighting back, but by playing make-believe and trying to make the aggressor feel good. Their experience in our society had trained them well to subdue their own desires and adjust to the wishes of a man. Now it was their very life that was at stake, and almost all of them automatically took on the role of the good sport. Some even pretended to set up future dates and meeting places with the stranger who was raping them.

The terror didn't leave them once they were home or alone again. They all feared that in some way they had not been convincing enough and that their lives were still in danger.

Three of the women I talked to did avoid being raped. Two of them had just been through personal disasters. One had been sick and it was her first day out of the hospital, and two of her closest friends had just died. The other had also just left the hospital, where she had been since a mentally disturbed close relative had tried to kill her. Both of them had just had their lives in jeopardy. Both of them felt so many bad things had happened to them that they just couldn't stand anything more. No one was going to rape them, no matter what! Nothing else could go wrong in their lives. One of them just screamed and screamed, and the man who caught her in an alley in daylight did finally flee. The other fought and ended up being knifed, but not raped. The third case was a woman who woke up with a man on top of her in her bedroom. He had broken through her window. But her little brother had always awakened her by jumping on top of her when she was a kid. So, awakening from a sound sleep, she thought this was her brother and playfully flipped him onto the floor. This man too ran off, but not before giving her a knife wound.

Most of the women said they were afraid to fight back because they felt they had only one chance, and if that didn't knock the man out, they were done for. Most of them had experienced the anger brought on by rebuff in men they knew and liked. If they had ever slapped or hit a man, they knew the enormous control he needed to keep from socking back. They did not think the rapists would show such restraint, and the rapists had weapons. A number of women

\*The women I talked to were educated, almost all over 20 years old, urban, independent, even middle class. They were not a random sample. Rape is probably even more damaging to the young, the poor, and the less educated.

When a bill was proposed last year in the Israeli Knesset which would put a curfew on women to protect them from the rising incidence of rape, Prime Minister Golda Meir protested that such an act would be punishing the victim instead of the criminal and instead suggested that a curfew be placed on men.

said that they knew they should kick them in the groin, but most said they just couldn't do that. They would involuntarily cover their mouths with their hands in revulsion when they contemplated doing such a violent act. Women are simply not brought up to hurt others violently. They are brought up to feel fear and terror when attempting to cope with an aggressive male who is clearly bigger and stronger than they are. They are brought up to accommodate themselves to others, especially to men and especially in sexual relations. They are brought up not to be rude or to create a scene.

Almost all the women I talked to went to a doctor after being raped, for the same reasons that Susan went. The doctor's first question was inevitably "Are you a virgin?" If she was not, it was implied that she should expect this kind of thing to happen if she led that kind of life. Whether she was a virgin or not, however, the doctors made it quite clear that rape could not happen unless the woman had cooperated. Doctors said that women should not be walking home from late classes or work, that they shouldn't live in that kind of neighborhood or alone. The women were criticized for being independent, not the rapist for making it impossible for them to have any independence.

The doctors did not sympathize with the woman's role of playing along, nor did they understand it. Rather they made the woman feel guilt and shame by acting as though it really couldn't happen unless she wanted it to. The "moral" doctors' attitude combined all too readily with the guilt the woman already felt because she knew she had cooperated. Living was more important. Often the woman was not a virgin, but it was degrading to find herself judged for her personal behavior when she had suffered from a criminal attack.

No wonder that these women were so incredibly silent about having been raped. One had been in therapy for two years without mentioning having been raped; others had been raped years and years ago and had never told anyone but a doctor; only one had told her mother; only a handful had told close friends or boyfriends. Only two reported it to the police. Those who had contracted a venereal disease discovered it long afterward. Doctors' attitudes did not make it easy for them to return for a checkup. The system worked so well that even the women blamed themselves, and somehow they, not the rapist, became dirtied.

Later discussions with men concerning these findings have shown the doctors' attitudes to be common in our society. Men go through intellectual gyrations when it comes to rape. Many have denied our data that rape is a prevalent crime; others say that if it is so prevalent there should be no penalty! "You can't rape a woman" is a typical response. "Look at those short skirts they wear; they invite it," is another. Another man suggested that all we found was that women who had been raped joined women's groups. Others go so far as to imply that women secretly enjoy it and ask for it.

These prejudices are absurd; of the women we talked to not one had been raped twice. Once a woman has been raped she lives more or less permanently with the fear of rape in the back of her mind. Rape changes the way she feels about the world . . . She no longer goes to out-of-the-way places. She doesn't walk on the streets alone at night, even if she must give up many activities. She is suspicious of all strangers whether at her front door or on the street. By living with the fear of rape, she avoids it.

What she loses forever is a belief in the goodness of people and a trust in others. She loses faith in the power of reason and reasonableness. She pays the final, most brutal price for being a woman in a world ruled by men. ♀

"A lot of officers, especially the old-timers, believe that unless a woman comes in bruised, there's no rape. They also say, 'Unless a woman's a virgin, what's the big deal?' But I wonder: If one of these guys was suddenly jumped and forced to commit sodomy at gunpoint, wouldn't he be pretty upset? Wouldn't he submit?"

—Detective Al Simon, Central Park Precinct, *New York Times Magazine*, 1/30/72



# Aspects of Rape

by Karen Lindsey, Holly Newman, Fran Taylor

Rape is the paradigm of a woman's experience in a sexist society, the ultimate act of aggression which binds the victim still closer to her oppressors. Rape is both a symbolic and an actual means of keeping woman in her place; for every rape that *does* take place there are thousands of possible rapes in the back of a woman's mind every time she walks down the street. The controls exerted by this fear effectively limit the freedom of all women, and in fact encourage women to seek out men as protectors from other men. Rape functions to reinforce those institutions, like marriage, which contribute to woman's oppression. It is in the interest of the patriarchal system to condone rape while appearing to condemn it, for it is through rape that the anxieties which make women dependent on men physically, emotionally, morally, and legally, are reinforced.

Psychologically, rape is linked to the opposite kinds of conditioning males and females receive. Psychiatric studies, including those conducted by Naomi Weisstein, author of "Psychology Constructs the Female," support the hypothesis that people become what others expect them to be. In a society that defines them as the achievers, men feel compelled to live up to artificial standards of strength and forcefulness, and women learn to think of themselves as helpless and fragile. The resultant sexuality of both becomes confined to the roles of either aggressor or receptacle. This creates an emotional situation in which rape becomes an excellent possibility, even in so-called "normal" sexual relations.

The obverse of the belief that women are sexually passive is the equally misleading and disgusting myth that the use of force will bring out a woman's latent sexuality, and hence that women secretly like being raped. Violence seems to be differently perceived by men and women. Since men are used to being confident and forceful in their dealings with the world, and do not expect women to be so, a woman's "no" is perceived as "yes" or "maybe," and the ensuing violence may be seen by the man as persuasion. And the spectre of force in a woman's mind often acts as effectively as actual violence to pacify her. When the distinctions blur in respect to when persuasion becomes force, feminists insist that the person upon whom the attention, wanted or not, is being focused should be credited with the intelligence to determine when force actually occurred. The laws

concerning rape deny this intelligence. For the conviction of rape, there must be "corroborating" evidence such as bruises and cuts—signs that the woman has actively resisted. In other words, if a woman, under threats of violence or death, submits to her assailant, she is not being raped. This puts rape in a special category of crime: if a man is mugged at knifepoint and gives the assailant his money, he is still mugged and the mugger still subject to arrest and conviction. The victim does not have to prove resistance. Obviously, the rape victim is being punished for her failure to choose death-before-dishonor.

For rape is "dishonor" in a male-dominated society. It is not the violation of a woman's person; it is the violation of a man's property. Rape is viewed not primarily in terms of the terror, pain, and indignity suffered by the victim, but in terms of the devaluation of damaged goods. This is true not only socially but legally as well. In several states, for example, an accused rapist's previous rape record cannot be used as evidence against him, but the victim's past sexual experiences can be used to discredit her "morality"; if she has lived with a man, or had provable sexual involvements outside of marriage, the defense can use this as proof that she was "asking for it." Even the *Yale Law Review* acknowledged in 1952 that rape laws exist not to protect women, but to provide a means for a man to avenge the violation of his property.

Nor is rape an uncommon crime. The statistics are high, and getting higher. According to *The New York Times*, the number of *reported* rapes in New York City alone has doubled in the past two years, while only a small fraction of arrests, and a smaller fraction of convictions, have resulted. Under existing "liberal" New York laws, for a rapist to be convicted a witness is required. Most rapists don't wait for an audience: rape conviction is nearly impossible. In every aspect of rape, the onus is placed on the woman: first, not to get herself in any situation where rape might occur—i.e., she should not be walking out alone at night; she should not hitchhike; she should not live alone. Further, she should not dress in such a way as to "invite" rape, despite the fact that society demands that she dress enticingly in order to attract a husband, or get a job, or achieve popularity.

Even when a rapist is convicted, sentenced, and removed from the streets, a woman's freedom has not been protected. Her value as property may be restored, but the restraints on her ability to move freely in society have not been removed, and her rights to self-determination have not been recognized. A woman's observations of these conventions, however subtle or unconscious, drives her into the relationships set up by society ostensibly

for her protection. When rape is an everyday fact of life, marriage becomes a comforting solution (but not all that comforting, since in most states a husband *cannot* be accused of raping his wife). It is the sexual respectability conferred by the institution of marriage that is so desirable, that is so much more secure than the personal freedom and self-determination women may enjoy outside it. So far the solutions offered vary only in degree, and not in approach: If some have begun to realize that rape is not a woman's fault, they still think it is her problem, her responsibility. Conservatives may argue that women should stay home if they don't want to be raped, and radicals may urge women to take up karate to "disarm" rapists, but neither solution deals with the fundamental socialization which takes place in every child and fills our streets with aggressors and victims. If we continue to raise our children to conform to social expectations, if we wear our boys on John Wayne and our girls on Marilyn Monroe, rape will continue to be, as Susan Griffin terms it in her brilliant *Ramparts* article, "The All-American crime."

Our society glamorizes rape by calling it a crime of passion. It is not. It is a crime of hate, a crime akin to lynching. It is the most ugly, brutal manifestation of man's power over woman. Until our bodies are truly our own, until men can no longer assert ownership over us, rape will continue. We will always be "asking for it"; we will always be "bringing it on ourselves." Because if male society really admits the crime of rape, it admits the crime it has perpetrated against us since the beginning of recorded history. And that is not a crime mankind is willing to face, or to stop.

A bibliography on rape will be sent on request to anybody who is interested.

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## Rape in Literature

by Carol Ann Douglas

Are male novelists more sensitive than other men in their reactions to rape? Can we find rape scenes in literature that clearly portray assault as women experience it, and help us to understand the nature of the crime, or is it treated lightly and its implications ignored? Do male writers tend to take a masculine, not a human, perspective on rape?

In John Barth's bawdy and complex picaresque novel, *The Sot-Weed Factor*, rape is just part of the comedy, a happy little domestic incident recounted by the prostitute Joan Toast to show the virginal male hero that sex can be fun. Joan tells how when she was 13 she had told her family that she was bleeding and asked for something to stop the blood. Her young bachelor Uncle Harold told her to come to his room, where there was a great tom leech that would cure her.

"But e'en as Harold promised the pain soon flew, and his great leech took bite after bite till near sunup, by which time, though I was by no means weary o' the leeching, my poor Harold had no more leech to leech with, but only a poor cockroach . . ." The whole experience was delightful. Being raped by her uncle was so satisfying, so joyful and untraumatic, that Joan couldn't get enough. In fact, rape is just a natural sexual act, Joan explains to the naive young hero, because women are constantly craving intercourse. No woman minds a little gentle rape.

*The Sot-Weed Factor* is a humorous novel which treats everything it touches irreverently, so it might be argued that women should not take seriously its little laugh at rape—except that there are other "funny" rapes in the book, some of them mass rapes. Also, it is significant that most men I know who have read the book think that "The Great Tom Leech" episode is the funniest section in 819 pages of satire.

In William Faulkner's classic *Sanctuary*, his tale of the violation of Southern womanhood (the heroine is called Temple, lest we miss the point), rape is seen as horrible, but is justified as an appropriate punishment for a woman trying to be independent without "paying the price." Another character—a woman—constantly berates Temple: "Why did you come here?" "You shouldn't have come here" (here being a poor farm with several men on it). But Temple hasn't chosen to come there, she's been driven there by a drunken "boyfriend" and is desperately trying to persuade him—or anyone—to drive her away. The other

woman keeps telling her how contemptible she is to be going out with men without "going all the way." Even in the midst of her terror, she looks at the ugly, violent men "with a grimace of taut, toothed coquetry"; she should have stayed in her college dorm, because all her expressions are bound to seem coquettish, and when you look at "real men" that way you get in trouble.

Temple gets her punishment: for the sin of independence, Temple is pawed by several men and raped by a cornucop in the hand of the impotent Popeye. (Presumably Faulkner thought the story would not be grim enough if she were raped only by a penis.) Her will is so completely destroyed that she becomes apathetic and submissive; she stops trying to escape and lets Popeye take her to a brothel. In the end she is rescued by the honorable men of her father's social circle, but the point is clear that she should have stayed at home in the first place and that she has deserved her suffering.

Unfortunately, female novelists do not necessarily portray rape accurately either. Ayn Rand describes Dominique Francon in *The Fountainhead* as feeling "joy in her revulsion, in her terror and his strength. That was the degradation she had wanted . . ." Dominique is an unusual woman: watching construction workers arouses her passions. When one of the workmen (whom she has, of course, "led on") breaks in through her bedroom window at night, she is thrilled even though she fights back. "One gesture of tenderness from him—and she would have remained cold, untouched by the thing done to her body. But the act of a master taking shameful, contemptuous possession of her was the kind of rapture she had wanted." The belief that a "superior" woman will despise the ordinary concept of romance unfortunately leads Rand to assume that the only alternative for an unsentimental woman is being possessed contemptuously. But what Rand does is simply to transfer the old idea of romance from courtship to rape—hardly a step forward.

In Saul Bellow's *Herzog*, there is at last a description of the ugliness of rape from the victim's point of view, a scene in which the victim is never blamed, treated lightly, or considered responsible for the rape. The victim is a boy, Herzog as a child. And his rape is the most painful secret of Herzog's life. It makes him deeply sensitive to the sufferings of children—but has not made him feel any kinship with women. In fact, his wife, Madeleine, was raped when she was young, too, but *her* rape is presented in a much different light.

"My childhood was a grotesque nightmare," she went on. "I was bullied, assaulted, ab-ab-ab . . ." she stammered.

"Abused."

She nodded . . .

"It happens to many, many people," he said. "Can't base a whole life on that. It doesn't mean that much."

"What — a whole year of amnesia not mean much? My fourteenth year is blacked out."

She couldn't accept this broad-minded consolation from Herzog. Perhaps it seemed to her a kind of indifference.

Of course she doesn't accept his "broad-minded consolation." Herzog—and Bellow—is telling her that her rape is nothing compared to the rape of a male child. She can't be violated in the significant place, in the spirit, because she's a woman and doesn't have any spirit to be violated. Raping a male is more serious because it can threaten his manhood, threaten him with the possibility of identifying himself with women and homosexuals.

Madeleine is incapable in Herzog's (and Bellow's) eyes of reacting as profoundly as Herzog does. When he recalls his rape, it reminds him of the Death of God, but when she remembers hers the memory makes her "vengeful" and "sullen." Her rape must be less profound because she is able to tell Herzog, then her lover and fiance, about it; his suffering must be greater because he'll never reveal it to anyone—another standard male value. Still, he keeps prying, because he wants to pin her down; he can't believe anything she says because she's so "vicious."

Although these writers are very different in their styles and points of view, they all seem to define proper responses to rape. A woman who has been raped should be light and breezy if the subject of rape is discussed (like Joan Toast or like Herzog's casual public statement about rape); she should emerge from the rape brave and spunky, with her moral standards intact, rather than letting herself flounder into a world of sin like Temple. Above all, she must be like Joan Toast (or like Herzog) in not letting rape make her afraid or reluctant to have a healthy, exciting sex life. (Of course, Herzog is not supposed to make love with people of the same sex as his assailant, so perhaps he would have little reason to be afraid of sex.) One must not be slightly bitter towards men, like Madeleine, but smile, forgive "Poor Harold" like Joan Toast, and wait eagerly for the next leech to bite.

There are not a great many American novels that deal with rape in detail. Among those that do, I know of not one in which the woman is not judged in some way responsible for the assault. There seems to be a discrepancy between rape as it is described by women who have experienced it and rape as it is described in literature. I do not believe that it is the women who lack artistic sensibility or broad perspectives.

portfolio by  
**Elsa  
Dorfman**



*Winnie Lawrence, Somerville, Mass.; March 22, 1972*



*Kate Olson, 28 Fort Square, Gloucester; January 13, 1970.*



*Gertrude Silvering Silvergate, Wantagh, Long Island; June 19, 1970.*

*These five women end up together because Carol Somer sees the nantasket Levine sisters and paragon park Norma Bell at deCordova summer bazaar. She likes them. Can she have them for the second wave. Sure. Debby Rose sits in my kitchen with pile of prints on lap. I say here a favorite oh no, THAT ONE? yes yes, and she goes away with stack to show sisters.*

*What would it be like to have these five women in the room together? Now, or in mindroom each at moment I take picture. Winnie in kitchen winter bill somerville skids planning political action, serving tea and sanko raisin cookies, showing dazzling op art bridget riley wallpaper she hung it herself. Me on burry assignment for boston after dark.*

*Kate Olson hours after she buries Charles in hard gloucester snow. My friend's daughter. Charles calls me special from gloucester to take Kate's picture at cambridge school in weston. Calls her Kate Bunker, name of mother's second husband. Still have coop book message, call Bunker, Twinbrook 8-3180. No picture until now sad day.*

*Gertrude Silvering Silverglate before or just after she goes into long island hospital for radical surgery and five-year wait draining secret swollen sores while sons at school. Lived at home in brooklyn, quitting job at revlon to nurse invalid mother, marry Barney Silverglate at thirty-nine and have quick sons Spencer and Scotty. "When he was a baby I was so glad to have him, I never let his crib out of my sight."*

*See Eva Thurman on harvard street saturday night. She cheers that picture of her and jessie in second wave. It's nice that something's come of it, she says, since you didn't make any money on it. That picture from 1966 after Creeley's bighonor Morris Grey poetry reading in Boylston Hall. I rush onto Mass. Ave. in 5:30 light, see Eva and Jessie come from old Hayes Bick now As You Like It. (A nice circle, in 1961 Eva gives me Olson's IN COLD HELL AND THICKET sent from Kyoto by Cid Corman.) Now Eva tells me jessie in religious cast belmont nursing home. They make her pray. You know what Jessie's prayer is? GOD DAMN IT. GOD DAMN IT. When Jessie retires from Widener Library, they give her buzz saw going away present. Sitting at her table in Hayes Bick window she tells me about woodchucks at her place, that penguins are very social and affectionate with their young.*

*And me the sixth woman take four pictures 1966-1972, my six years twenty-nine to thirty-five midage between Kate and Gert. Making life with camera sacred instrument.*

*September 28, 1972  
Cambridge, Mass.*



*Jessie Whitehead and Eva Thurman, Mass. Ave., Cambridge; October 27, 1966.*

# The Goose Girl

by Ami Ingram

Sheila? Lord . . . I thought you'd never. Have a good trip? Look. If I hang up quick it means he's back from the depot. Yes . . . she came last Saturday. Okay but a little hard of hearing. He hated to see her go. Always does.

Oh, so-so. Another spat. We've patched. Don't know how long it will hold.

But don't ever tell me again a sense of humor is essential in any marriage. Because mine has just about gone and wrecked ours.

All right. But if he pops in I'll have to hang and call you later. Okay?

Well, it started Tuesday. A week ago, that is. We went to P.T.A. Brownies and instant as per usual. Came home. Paid off the sitter. Watched the ten o'clock news. Went in. Took off our clothes and put on our jammies and there he was. Sans bottom also as usual because it was Tuesday. Always Tuesday for some strange reason I've never been able to fathom. Probably something that quirked him in childhood. And he won't wear jerseys. She sends him these broadcloths every birthday. Two pair with buttons yet. They come off. Even in the dryer, Sheel. And not even permapress. Behind the times but means well. Calls him Sonny. Where was I? In bed. And you know him—no, but I've told you often enough. In strictest confidence. Can't be bothered with preliminaries. Couldn't hire him to read *What You Always Wanted to Know*. As far as he's concerned it's not *Every Woman Can* but *No Nice Woman Would Want To*. Wouldn't dream of varying. You get so you'd try it standing on your head just for variation. I mean. It gets so mechanical after ten years.

Well then—it happened.

But I didn't plan things, Sheel.

No, as God is my witness. And afterwards you ask yourself but then it's too late. And you know better than anyone I would never intentionally hurt his feelings. He's so damned sensitive.

But. Well. Right at the—you know. The peak. Just before. My mind happened to wander. No, not substituting. Not fantasizing. I could never. That was Dr. Ellis if I'm not mistaken. No. You just drift sometimes while they're

warming up. And all of a sudden it popped into my head how he'd just tried to put me down again in front of everyone at P.T.A. when they were babbling about the paper drive . . . no, next Thursday. You'll get a slip . . . so it was getting late and I'd said I thought we were supposed to discuss sex in schools and that I was all for it and if he didn't poke me in the ribs and say in that goddam supercilious way of his and loud enough for everyone to hear including Jill's homeroom teacher "sex in-*struc*-tion."

So all of a sudden it flashed through my mind and I went blah.

Right at the height.

No, I always let him finish. Even when I'm blah. Then you have it over with until next time. In our case Tuesday.

But then something happened.

No, not the 'phone. He always unplugs it.

I just happened to look over his shoulder, he was on top, and the moon was just right and I'd changed the furniture the day before because the rug was wearing and Sheel . . .

Did you ever see Gary's backside during?

Then you've missed something.

God.

I'd better not start in again. If he comes home and finds me laughing he'll kill me. Not that I think I'll ever laugh again as long as I live.

What I've been through.

Shouldn't happen to a dog.

Well, like I said.

I happened to glance up and saw . . . well I thought I'd die. Couldn't help myself.

Cracked up.

Laughed in his face.

I know I know you don't have to tell me the ultimate betrayal but I couldn't stop.

If you could have seen him. Pumping away like a good fellow . . . after all the times he's called me The Goose Girl in front of company. It's why he hates you. For bawling him out about it. And now the kids have picked it up.

Not that I was trying to get even or anything.

And I'm never malicious, Sheel.



You know that better than anyone.  
It's just my perverted sense of humor.  
Of course he couldn't.  
Stopped in midair like Nijinsky.  
Is coitus interruptus harmful?  
Lit on his heels Upsy Daisy.  
Grabbed his bottom off the bedpost.  
Pajamas, silly.

Get yourself one, Sheel. They're darling made up. No, poster beds. Then you've each got your own post. Your robe. His pants. Mr. and Ms. And that's another thing he's fussed about. *M-s*. But we'll go into that later.

So he grabbed it.  
His bottom.

Trundled off to the den. Whimpering. Tried to open the davenbed.

Couldn't. It stuck. Just use it when she comes. Always sticks. So he yelled for me to come and help. And shoulder to shoulder we got it apart.

Well, he was breathing in little huffs and puffs. Like the wolf in Red Riding Hood. Not saying a word. Looked putty-ish the way he does when he's lost face. And it's to my undying credit that I didn't ask him how it felt to be a Goose Boy. Instead I got him a pillow and a pitcher of water and I went back to bed.

## Vampire

when they found theyd given birth to a vampire  
they had her eye teeth removed.  
it was a delicate operation;  
still, they said, it was worth it.  
for her fifth birthday, they bought her a yellow dress.  
she got a nosebleed all over it, and laughed.  
they got scared.  
when she started her period,  
they bought her boxes of white things that promised  
not to impair her virginity & told her not to be frightened.  
she wasnt.  
its my blood, she said, i know what to do with it.  
in school, the nuns prayed for her, every day.  
one nun had a tiny phial, with the  
blood of a holy martyr in it.  
they found it one day under a desk, empty.  
no one said anything, but her parents  
sent her to the dentist to see  
if the teeth had grown back.  
she bit his hand, and licked her lips.  
next day, she stole a suitcase and left town.  
still, they all know shes there,  
and no one goes out after dark.  
they tuck their daughters into bed, and lock the doors.  
they say, we should have killed her back then,  
when we first knew.

and the daughters lie awake in their beds,  
and smile.

-Karen Lindsey

Alone.  
Well then.  
All hell broke loose.  
Sheel—.

I got to thinking. Trying not to concentrate on his bad points his humiliating me in front of everyone at P.T.A. especially Jill's homeroom teacher and you know I'm not one to carry a grudge but if you could have seen him performing and you remember that rhyme, *Mirror, mirror on the wall who's the fairest* and I couldn't for the life of me stop laughing it came out like vomit I couldn't hold it back I stuffed my fist in my mouth and chewed on my knuckles and tried to hold my breath and buried my head in my pillow and even tried to pray.

But I couldn't stop.  
And he heard me.  
Came on the trot.

Called me an ego rapist. Said I'd emasculated him psychologically. Called me a bitch. First time.

Other things.

But still I couldn't stop.  
Just kept on laughing.

So he slapped me hard across the mouth and I kept on laughing only now it sounded like barks and all the while I kept remembering things I'd forgot and they went way back to our wedding night I was such a greenhorn and he wasn't nice.

And I couldn't stop.  
And I started screaming at him.  
Things I'd forgot.

And I became hysterical. And then scared.  
So he pushed me in the bathroom and locked the door and told me to take a cold shower.

Which I did.  
Under an icy spray.  
And that did the trick.  
And he let me out.

But he slept in the den through Friday and then she came so we had to make up because she sleeps on it so everything's back to normal and I can highly recommend cold showers.

I haven't laughed since.  
Not once.

And you won't believe it, Sheel. But the next time we did it which was the following Tuesday when she was here and I saw afterwards he'd done it with one sock on I didn't even laugh. I just got up and went to the bathroom like always and sat on the stool and held my arms tight around myself like when you're having a hard bowel movement and I cried until I threw up.

And that's my week that was.

Oh Sheel—I have to go. He's back. Deedle-Deedle Dumpling's come home.

I'll call you when he's himself again.

We'll get together. But maybe not the four of us anymore. We'll make it lunch.

And don't call me. I'll call you.  
Soon.

# SUDAN:

## Arab Women's Struggle

by Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban

*During 1971-1972, Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban researched women's problems in Islamic Northern Sudan — problems concerning the laws of marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child support. Interviews were conducted by her in Arabic.*

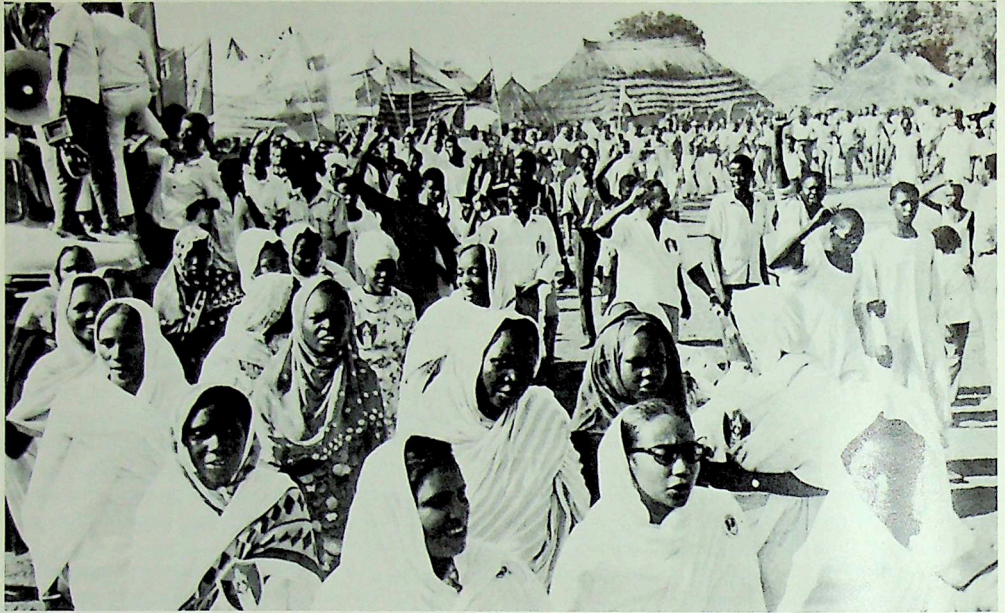
The position of the Arab woman, maintained by Islamic societal values of absolute male dominance, is usually considered to be one of the worst in the world in terms of female suppression. But little information concerning contemporary struggles of Arab women is available, and the reality of the modern woman living in Islamic countries is often obscured by the popular myths of polygamy and the harem. Rarely portrayed working, the legendary Middle Eastern woman is dressed in finery, adorned with gold awaiting the call of a man to be at his service. In fact, such Western stereotypes are based on romanticized literary accounts of the lives of bourgeois women during the period of the decline of the Ottoman Empire and these are hardly a characteristic group of women.

The reality is something quite different. First of all, Islam is not the monolith of values and social structure that it is often considered to be — Islam was overlaid on a variety of cultures. There is much variation between countries like Morocco or Tunisia and Egypt or Sudan, and a place like Pakistan. Enormous political differences in the Arab world separate reactionary countries like Saudi Arabia and Libya from places where revolutionary struggles have been fought in the past and continue to be waged, such as Algeria, Dhofar in the Arabian Gulf, Palestine and Eritrea. While Saudi Arabian women are shielded behind veils and in houses from outside corrupting influences, Dhofari women to the south fight alongside their male comrades for liberation from reactionary oil-rich sultans who are supported by British imperialist oil interests. While Gaddafi of Libya was calling for a return to the days of the Islamic sacred state, Leila Khalid became world famous for her courageous hijack attempt in the Palestinian effort to attain an independent secular state. And in Sudan, the well-to-do Muslim woman living in Khartoum leads a very different life from the peasant Muslim woman who cultivates the field and carries water long distances for use in the compound.

I am not an authority on women's movements all over the Arab world, but I am familiar with the history of the women's movement in Sudan and the contemporary state of women's lives in the city of Khartoum, and I suspect that it is not much different from patterns found throughout the rest of the Middle East and North Africa.

Women voting in elections, September 1971, Khartoum.





Women's political rally in Southern Sudan, 1971.

#### Conditions of Women in Northern Muslim Sudan

The Democratic Republic of the Sudan is an Afro-Arab state, described in this way because of its mixed population. The northern Arab Sudan became Islamicized about 400 years ago through successive waves of immigrants from Arabia across the Red Sea. These people settled and mixed with indigenous peoples, and the process of spreading Islam (a process that still continues) began. Relative to other parts of the Arab world, this area is quite traditional in religious matters.

Women, generally speaking, are under the absolute authority of men and are not usually involved in decision making. The degree of complete domination varies by class and from the rural to the urban areas. Rural peasant women and lower-class women, because of necessity, are contributors to the economy and are working to help support the family or group. Their range of experience is greater and they are more respected by men because of their contributions; they are relatively more liberated than middle class, city-dwelling women. Theoretically, however, a man considers it a disgrace for his woman or a female relative to *have* to work. Ironically, as people move from the rural areas to settle and prosper in the cities, women seem to lose the few liberties they have. In Algeria it has been shown that women *put on the veil* as they move into the cities rather than the reverse. The concept of women as property increases as men themselves prosper; poorer men need the help and labor of their women.

It is not socially acceptable for Arab women in the city of Khartoum to be employed, and typical female jobs like domestic housework are positions normally filled by "out" groups of southern Sudanese men and women or Ethiopian women. A woman who is forced to work by economic necessity will find that the community is gossiping about her moral behavior — any woman who goes out alone often is not to be trusted — she will be tempted sexually and will succumb because women are naturally weak.

Women are considered by the society to be very passionate and the repositories of evil desires. In Islamic culture it must be understood that sexual behavior and honor are inextricably bound. A large repository of honor rests with the good and chaste sexual behavior of women; its defense is placed with the men. When a woman is caught in a sexual misadventure (e.g., she is observed by the community in the company of a male who is not a relative or, worse, she gets pregnant), it is the men of the family who deeply feel the shame and disgust. Women are "protected" from such dangerous encounters through an operation which is performed on a girl while she is still young. A girl about seven years old is circumcized by the removal or excision of the clitoris, labia majora, and minora; the girl is sewn up or the wound is allowed to heal so that the vaginal opening becomes about the size of the former urethral opening.

This practice of "pharonic" circumcision is widespread and is performed as a kind of insurance that the young girl will not be involved in sexual encounters before marriage.

The circumcision scar leaves only the smallest opening for the vagina and is virtually impenetrable. When a girl gets married she must endure painful attempts at intercourse. She may be sent to a midwife to be cut open so that the couple can have sexual relations. With each delivery of a child, a woman is again sewn up so that the vaginal opening remains small. Some men say they prefer the "tightness" of a circumcized woman, but the majority of men and women say the operation must be performed to keep a woman "clean" and "pure." Most women accept the belief that they are weak and easily led astray. And so it is women as well who perpetuate the practice of circumcision as a protection against the disgrace an immoral girl would bring to her family.

With women considered as private property, the operation ensures the delivery of "pure goods" to the future husband. After a marriage a man ensures his monopoly on his property by hiding his wife away in the harem section of the house and by his reluctance to grant permission to his wife to go outside the house for visiting and shopping. The horribly painful operation of female circumcision is very slowly being replaced with clitoridectomy (the removal of only the clitoris), but it is old traditions and old women who believe the operation will make a young girl pure and clean that cause the custom to persist.

According to Islam, divorce is the unilateral privilege of the man. He may without good cause verbally divorce a woman in the presence of witnesses, while a woman seeking a divorce must go to court and prove extreme negligence, desertion or adultery (which requires two witnesses!). But women are not reluctant to go to court and, with recent reforms since the mildly progressive regime has been in power, women are becoming stronger and less shy about bringing their problems into court. In matters of inheritance women receive half of what a man gets, but the women know the laws of inheritance almost as well as their own children's names, and they make sure they get all that they are entitled to. In court the testimony of one man must be matched by that from two women, and the customary blood-wealth payments for the death of an individual allow twice as much to be paid for a man as a woman.

### The Women's Movement in Sudan

Aisha, one of the wives of the Prophet Mohammad, was politically active during the early days of Islam, but scholars and tradition have relegated her role to an unimportant place and her political activity is considered a blemish on an otherwise good conduct record. Sudanese women, for more than twenty-five years, have been standing up, speaking out, and demonstrating their determination to end the inequality of the sexes which takes its economic and psychological toll on the men and the women of the society. It must be recalled that for a woman in an Islamic society to do so is much more difficult than an American or Western sister. In fact it requires great amounts of courage to withstand the criticism and lack of

understanding which will come from her family and the public. The woman who begins to work for her freedom may be labeled a prostitute because she goes out freely and speaks frankly to men — others may simply say that she is not one of us, she is not Sudanese. In a small-scale society (even in Khartoum nearly everyone can establish some link with almost everyone else through relatives or friends) the pressure of public opinion is very great.

The first organized group of women emerged from the Communist Party. The party was formed in 1946, and in that same year so was the Sudanese Woman's League; it was the first party to open its membership to both sexes and to establish the emancipation of women as one of its goals. The Woman's League, like the party at large, began with a group of educated people but spread throughout northern Sudan to encompass working people and peasants.

In 1951 three Communist women were among the seven founding members of the Sudanese Women's Union, the successor to the Woman's League with broader membership. Four years later the Union began to publish the progressive magazine *The Woman's Voice*. The magazine took militant political stands (i.e., in opposition to colonialism and later against the neocolonialist designs of the British and Americans) as well as publishing articles which attempted to educate its female readership away from certain harmful traditions like female circumcision and the practice of facial scarification done according to ethnic background.

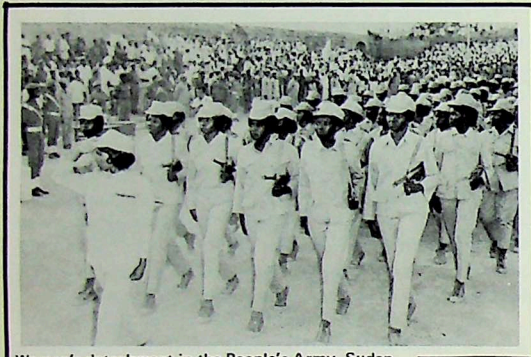
The Union at the same time took up the fight of equal pay for equal work for the small one percent of working women and fought to extend a seven-day maternity leave to

One of the founders of the women's movement in Sudan.



forty days with pay. They also attacked the Islamic divorce laws which so heavily favor men, and they began to campaign against polygamy, which some refer to as "legalized prostitution."

This progressive group of women stirred the public so that a rival group of reactionary women hastily organized a society which functioned as the Sudanese equivalent of the Ladies Tea Association. Fatma Ahmed Ibrahim, one of the founders of the Women's Union and certainly its symbolic head, reacted to the reactionary women's group by saying that "independence is not women's festivals or teas or promises from a reactionary government; independence is a really free Sudanese society both economically and politically, a socialist society, the society of a truly emancipated Sudanese woman."



Women's detachment in the People's Army, Sudan.

The Women's Union and *The Woman's Voice* rose and fell in accordance with political events in the country as a whole. During the reactionary military regime of the American-backed General Abboud, 1958-1964, the Union was officially banned and the government's own lackey women's organization was pushed up front. In October 1964 a popular revolution throughout the country overthrew the reactionary Abboud regime. For the first time Sudanese women came out into the streets and demonstrated, fought and died alongside their brothers during the days of the revolution. Fatma Ibrahim herself led the first demonstration of several hundred; when the soldiers raised their guns to fire on the demonstrators Fatma stepped forward, dropped her traditional woman's white outer garment, the *tob*, and shouted "I will be the first." No shots were fired that day. One woman was killed in the October events, and she was a Women's Union member, five other women were injured, three of whom were Union or CP members. The participation of women in the October revolution began to break down some of the ideas about women and to elevate the consciousness of both men and women. Women were shown not to be weak or timid, and with men and women working together to bring down the regime, absolute ideas about sexual segregation were brought into question. Officially the revolution brought women only the vote. The success of the revolution was unfortunately short-lived, and its aftermath brought moder-

ation and not more progressive gains.

In the years 1965-1969, the Women's Union continued to be active in the usual ways of education, and acting as a political pressure group. Fatma Ibrahim became the first woman elected to the then-functioning Sudanese Parliament.

In May 1969 a seemingly progressive military regime came to power with the support of large numbers of progressives including the Sudanese Communist Party, the Women's Union, and other democratic organizations. The story is too complicated to tell here, but within two years the regime was turned right around through coup and countercoup and became militantly anti-Communist with dizzying speed. In the fierce anti-Communist campaign which ensued, Fatma's husband, the most prominent Trade Union Leader in the country and winner of the Lenin Prize, was hanged. Thirteen other Communist and progressive leaders were executed and thousands imprisoned, including some women leaders. Suad Ibrahim, a prominent Women's Union leader, is still detained without trial in Khartoum jails and has staged several hunger strikes to obtain basic privileges like having visitors. Women from the families of jailed progressives demonstrated at the Khartoum Palace for economic support from the government while their husbands and brothers were confined. The government has since provided this.

In the early, progressive days of the present regime, some reforms to assist the condition of women were enacted, and to a degree they have been helpful. *Bat etaba*, the right of a husband to bring back by force of the police a wife who has fled his house, has been abolished. Likewise a divorced woman has the right to obtain up to one-half of an ex-husband's salary for her support and that of her children. These reforms, enlightened though they are, have not yet had their full impact on women because they are *not* things which women have had to fight for and gain themselves. They were handed down and not obtained through democratic struggle of women and are therefore less meaningful. But they are nonetheless welcome, and with time and education Sudanese women will derive full benefit from these reforms.

Meanwhile women will continue to complain to each other about their condition and to hope for better days for their daughters. Those days will come only when women stand up and demand them. Women's liberation can come only from the just struggles of women everywhere. The aims of the Sudanese women's movement remain the same as at the time of its founding: 1) the emancipation of women through the attainment of equal rights and equal duties and the full liberation of every woman from the enslavement under which she lives; 2) the struggle for international female emancipation and peace through socialism. Women of the world want freedom, and they know their destinies lie only in their own hands. ♀

*N.B. — Special recognition is to be given Fatma Babikr Mahmud for her help and for the use of her pamphlet "The History of the Women's Movement in the Sudan."*

MARCH 24, 1603

*A biographer of Elizabeth I comments that the Queen liked to stand while berating her enemies, so that her first reaction, when she sensed the approach of death, was to stand up . . .*

do not attach too much significance to the prayers  
the velvet prelates, the lute players who hung beside  
her couch during the last coma: those who droned or cried  
when, finger in mouth, the unchildlike woman died  
instead

think how it started: the shock, her useful maneuver  
of standing the courtiers rising their noisy breath  
dimming to silence, the wait, the pain astounding  
them all through the fifteen hours she stared at death

the queen  
speechless  
but seeing  
the ghosts  
they were  
surely there  
throngs of them  
the axe  
the tower  
the family  
brought  
full circle  
burdens  
of blood  
and power  
passed from  
father  
to daughter

now and tomorrow

be proud of her: she wanted to stand forever  
question forever, challenge, debate, test, gibe  
at little tyrants over-sized heroes false men  
faking their grief when the outrageous woman died



—Mary Winfrey

# Athletic Politics

by Fran Taylor

Girls also play a form of basketball, of course, as do paraplegics in wheelchairs and, for all I know, purple cows, but I do not know why. Even a culture which can usually convince itself that it would enjoy nothing more than the opportunity to observe scantily-clad young ladies closely for two or three hours seems to find something incongruous in the spectacle and to avoid it. The emotional aura seems wrong; a girls' basketball team is likely to strike an audience as unconvincing, in the same way a bad play does, even if it is technically competent. Dr. Johnson might have compared a girl playing basketball to a woman preacher.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

When I was about twelve years old I went with my father to play baseball in a nearby park. A boy my age drifted over, and he and my father played outfield while I batted the ball to them. I was quite a slugger back then, and after one particularly hard-hit line drive, the boy went over to my father and said, "Hey, are you sure she's a girl?"

\* \* \*

Ridicule and cynicism are two of the reactions the Edgar Friedenbergs and little boys of the world evince when confronted with the spectre of the athletic girl. Yesterday's caricature of the muscle-bound-grunting-Russian-woman-shotputter is the godmother of the karate-chopping-booted-swearing-women's liberationist, the darling of today's media. With such recent developments as legal decisions allowing women to participate in noncontact school sports, and the women's Lob tournament,<sup>2</sup> the feminist movement is hitting both the playing and the legal courts. But rather than simply relating figures detailing the inequality of women to men in sports, and/or whatever progress

is being made, we need to analyze the sports arena itself and the significance it has for the women's movement.

The world of sports is not only a microcosm which reflects the attitudes of society toward women and sex roles; it is also a shaper of those views, and in a country as sports-mad as ours, a major and deeply ingrained shaper. Athletics, especially organized athletics, have a number of advantages and disadvantages, but both the good and the bad consistently adhere to rigid sex-role myths.

As in other spheres from which women are excluded as a matter of course, and into which any intrusion is an exception, sports are never open to women in a fully natural way. The girl who must worry about being "feminine," not making muscles, not messing her hair, and not beating the boys, can hardly throw herself freely into play. Instead of concentrating on the game at hand, she must face distractions centering on herself. In this way, the modified sports activity she can have contributes to her conditioning into "typical" narcissism and lack of singlemindedness. Thus, sports may have a damaging influence on the young girl, while simultaneously denying her the benefits of athletic participation.

The exclusion from sports helps to mold women into accepted "feminine" roles. The feelings of competence and confidence that result from playing a game well, the sense of knowing and being at home with your own body, come more immediately from physical action than through any amount of cerebral activity. Feminists have recognized this need in the recent emphasis on karate as more than a means of self-defense. By learning karate a woman breaks out of this pattern of passivity and helplessness, and learns that she can actually rely on herself and her own body, despite what she has been told all her life.

One major learning process that many girls miss is that of teamwork. Women, especially those seeking careers, face the widely held notion that women cannot work together. Though we've seen in the women's movement that this is untrue, it is often difficult for women to accustom themselves to working in groups with other women, simply because they haven't had the long experience of playing cooperatively on teams, as men have. No wonder the male, after years of playing everything from stickball in the streets to organized school sports with his peers, finds it natural to seek out other men as companions. Lionel Tiger, my ass.

The team sports, which encompass a greater number of male players, have their drawbacks, as well as the advantages already mentioned. Rather than simply playing as hard as he might wish at the moment, and developing his skill to the best of his ability, as he could also do in solitary activity, the



boy often reaches a stage of competitiveness which pushes him on to attempt what is beyond his grasp. If an individual has a strong personal drive to better his performance through extreme effort and practice, fine, but too often this drive is initiated by outside forces, and the inauthentic stimulus can be dehumanizing. The boy who feels he has to be the *best* in order to prove his masculinity, satisfy his father, or assert his sexuality, may easily come to think of others simply in terms of people to beat.

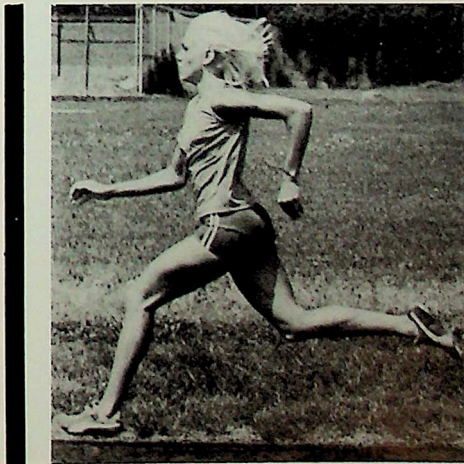
Through individual sports a girl can develop a worthwhile sense of accomplishment and physical confidence. But she misses the esprit de corps that comes from playing and working closely with a unit, and that is precisely what many women who first join the feminist movement find so exhilarating, having been denied it in their childhood and adolescence. It is no coincidence that the few sports which women can participate and even excel in without facing too much ostracism are individual activities: tennis, golf, swimming, horseback riding, skiing. These are also regarded as social sports with a rather upper-class tinge, quite proper for the well-bred young lady. The girl who plays a wicked game of football or sandlot baseball is less likely to fit the debutante image than her sister who rides in the hunt.

So much has been made of the relationship of girls and horses that I parenthetically wish to add my theory to a few previous ones. Freud states that girls love horses and riding out of penis envy; because of their own lack they use horses as a substitute, a giant penis. Germaine Greer argues that girls are crazy about horses because horses are, for once, something over which girls can have control. I tend to agree with Greer (over Freud!!), with the additional argument that, whatever its origins, the sheer acceptability of riding as a sport in which it is alright for women to become expert makes it attractive to them much more than to boys, for so often it is their sole outlet. All the energy that boys can put into baseball and football, girls channel into their passion for riding. And, though many girls never have a chance actually to ride horses, it is not surprising that, trapped in their smothering femininity, they are drawn to the untamed spirit of the wild horses of Westerns and Black Stallion books.

Another favorable aspect of sports is, quite simply, the fun. While I was stuffing mailboxes for the recent Cambridge Childcare Referendum (cf. *The Second Wave*, Vol. 1, no. 3), going from door-to-door on a Sunday afternoon, I could have concluded that no girls lived on those blocks. I saw boys playing hockey, boys playing football, boys playing basketball. But I didn't see any girls the same age as the playing boys, and I wondered what they must be doing. Of all the girls between, say,

seven and thirteen who lived in that neighborhood, some probably had other things to do, some may have wanted to go out and play and didn't have the equipment or practice themselves to get up their own game, and some, no doubt, had already internalized the knowledge that little girls don't play rough sports and didn't even give it a thought any more.

For the girl who does relish participating in the less acceptable games—the one who would rather play basketball herself than cheerlead for the boys' team—social pressure flexes its collective muscle and prepares to turn her into a freak, or at least make her feel like one. Tomboys are endured more readily than sissies, up to a certain age. A girl who enjoys masculine activities is regarded with indulgence, and her efforts to raise herself to the status of her male counterpart are seen as cute, even somewhat laudable; whereas a boy who likes "feminine" pursuits is thought of as lowering himself, thus becoming a source of humiliation. To be manly is good—the "you-think-like-a-man" form of praise is supposed to be the biggest compliment a woman can expect; to be womanish is bad—"You play like a girl" is a statement calculated to destroy any boy's self-esteem. But tolerance for the tomboy declines rapidly as she approaches her teens—her girlfriends turn to makeup, dances, and boy craziness, her male playmates seek out the pretty girls, and she becomes the odd one out. Many athletic girls overcompensate in their often-awkward attempts to be like everyone else, and try to overhaul their entire personalities, starting the lifelong voyage into role-playing and losing the very freshness and candor that may have made them attractive. Hopefully, the women's movement has begun to filter down to the junior-high-school and high-school girls who find themselves in this position, helping them accept themselves as they are.





Just as women find many aspects of sports denied to them, so boys often find themselves subjected to overdose proportions of athletics. Both situations expose the usefulness of sports as reinforcement of sex roles. First, and basic to other ill effects, is the pressure on the male and the warping action of that pressure. Little boys are expected to love sports, to play games, and to excel in them. They are subjected to the same influence, applied in reverse, as that which keeps little girls from developing their bodies, and prevents both from just being able to enjoy themselves. The person who suffers from force-fed sports most immediately is the young boy who doesn't fit the stereotype. A boy may lack interest in sports and thereby feel out of place in male society, while missing the companionship of his friends who are busy playing; another may be unable to play well, fail to live up to his and others' expectations, and develop a sense of worthlessness as a result. But even these misfortunes are mild when compared to the cruelty inflicted upon the boy labelled "sissy." Perhaps the issue of the sissy is too important to be merely tacked on to an analysis of sports, dealing as it does with severe sex stereotyping, society's attitudes about innate male superiority and female inferiority, and the fear of homosexuality. But, being an earlier influence on children than sexual conquest or war, sports acts as one of the first indicators of possible sissynood,



“separating the men from the boys” at an early age, singling out for scorn those who don't pass the test.

Much has been made of the parallel between discipline, authority-worship, and aggressive competitiveness in sports and in war. And surely a mentality which can divide people into “them” and “us” and seek to crush the “thems” into oblivion is hardly compatible with compassion for humanity. If Wellington ever did say “The Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton,”<sup>3</sup> he wasn't far from the truth. Why not try eliminating Waterloos rather than glorifying them, and why not let the “playing” fields be just that, instead of training grounds for future wars? The connection is perhaps nowhere more obvious than in the person of Richard Nixon, who declares that he won't be the first American president to be defeated in a war, and at the same time proudly proclaims himself to be the nation's number one football fan.

This ability to divide people into teams or sides leads to a more malicious chauvinism than just getting psyched up to be the old arch-foe from across town. It is also basic to racist and sexist thinking, and all stereotypic notions about other people who are “different” in some way, be it by color, sex, attending another school, or living in another city. And, as sports have become a gigantic mass-spectator industry, the aggressiveness extends from the players themselves to the fans. A Giant fan can no more understand how anybody can root for the Dodgers than a red-white-and-blue patriot can fathom how anybody can dig Chairman Mao, or a sexist can see why women want to be treated as full human beings.

I don't mean to imply that every avid sports fan is foaming at the mouth to throttle anyone who cheers for the other team. No one accused Marianne Moore of being a mean, head-busting bigot because of her love for New York baseball teams. But the perverted form of sports, incorporating the ideals of harsh masculinity and competition, carries a tremendously chauvinistic (in the military and racist, as well as the sexist sense) message to a large number of people, and acts as an important sex-role determinant to children.

I spent so much time on the disadvantages of sports for boys and men in order to point out the danger which is present in other areas of the women's rights struggle as well, of simply striving for equality with men. While I applaud the efforts of women demanding equal opportunities in athletics, and wish similar measures had been taken before I went over the hill, a much deeper restructuring is required: to offer sports to all in a form shorn of its warping qualities. A football team quarterbacked by a Jenny Unitas and receiving a phone call in the locker room from Mr.

Nixon after a victory doesn't solve anything.

So what can be done? Probably very little progress can be made in ridding sports of its sexist features while we are still living in a sexist society.

But perhaps some hope lies in a shift in upbringing brought about by a heightened awareness. Combined with efforts to rewrite textbooks in a non-sexist way, provide children with less rigid role models, and equalize the education given to girls and boys, a conscious attempt to open sports to all, free of its brutal stereotypes, could be seen as a strong positive reinforcement to this heightened

awareness rather than the negative phenomenon it is now. ♀

1. Edgar Z. Friedenberg, *The Vanishing Adolescent*, (New York: 1968), p. 28. (Dr. Johnson is remembered for his remark that it is as natural for a woman to preach as for a dog to stand on its hind legs.)

2. Several women tennis pros, including Billie Jean King and Rosemary Casals, broke with the U.S. Lawn Tennis Association over the discrepancy in prize money awarded to men and women, and have set up their own tour.

3. There is some speculation about whether he actually made the statement, and besides, he never went to Eton.

## On the Yin Side: Fall Fashions for Feminists

by Charlotte Anne Heavirapp

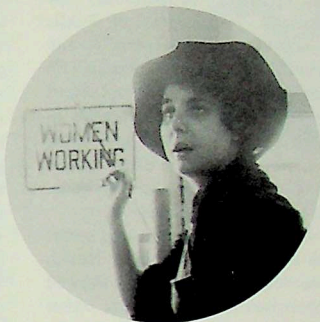


photo: Debby Rose

The look this year is you: intelligent, competent, and ever-so-slightly international.

It's still a woman's prerogative to change her mind, and fashions this fall are swinging with the vicissitudes of that oh-so-elusive sexual identity, from the butch look to the femme and everything in between.

For that autumn trip to the White House lawn, warmth and comfort are a must. Abandon that welfare check or pig tip-money to a pair of well-made hiking boots or furry calf-highs, which can be purchased at your local army-navy store. Colorful lumber jackets are still a favorite standby, as are jeans and brushed-denim or corduroy pants. Arm-band favorites this year are in paisley pastel, to protect your demonstration from enemy marshal-impersonators. Keep your leaflets, tear-gas cloth, and chap stick stylishly safe in a practical army bag, slung casually over your shoulder, or the backpack you used for summer camping. Relevant buttons and home-sewn emblems add a delightfully personal touch to your army bag. And as for that dime and lawyer's phone number, tuck them safely and discreetly away on some hidden part of your anatomy. A favorite spot for dimes this year is taped boldly over the navel.

### *Entertaining at Home: The Office Party*

Everyone needs a little rest and recreation from the daily tensions of the movement office and the

dirt and derelicts that assault it. The hostess with the mostest has given way to her less competitive alter-ego, the sister with a blister. Put yourself out and your sisters in (but don't forget to ask for support when you need it!) for a fun evening at home with good sound and conversation. Set up one room for dancing, one for confidential raps, and tell everyone to bring her favorite female vocalists. (If you have any Rolling Stones, hide them!) Raisins, nuts, and roasted soybeans make excellent munchies food; and, depending on the political circles you travel in, you will want to have plenty of alcohol or dope around.

Indulge yourself in a little pre-liberation nostalgia in a long India-print dress or skirt or wide, billowy pants. Or, parody the macho look with confidence and subtle aggression in a tailored shirt, vest, and the bold angular look of pressed woolen trousers. This is the time to fly with your fantasies, and anything goes, so long as it is distinctly and uniquely *your trip*. Play up the drag queen in you with a lavender ruffle, or censor that sensuous body in a pair of denim coveralls. Or, for the industriously feminist look, top off your outfit with a karate shirt.

The right-on woman this fall is as flagrantly impervious to traditional styles as she dares to be. Out of those kitchens and into that closet, sister, for the new, non-conformist wardrobe of 1972! Keep on truckin', and remember: You've come a long way, baby!

VD HANDBOOK

Written and Edited by Donna Cherniak and Allan Feingold  
 reviewed by Barbara Monty

Last spring, the public high school in which I teach held an afternoon assembly to inform the students about venereal disease. Because VD had reached epidemic proportions, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health sent films and lectures to any school system that would present this information. I was very excited about the prospect of educating students to deal with a real problem—something which is not done very often in our schools. I thought that, for the state, this was a significant action.

However, the repressive and sexist attitude of the Department of Health was soon very clear. The films showed only heterosexual lovemaking; either the state does not know that homosexual lovemaking can transmit VD, or they don't think minors should be exposed to that sort of sexual "deviance." (The former is unlikely.) Pictures of coy, made-up "girls" and serious, older male doctors decorated the pamphlets that were meant for student distribution. All information was very vague, and one of the points labeled "to remember" was: "To avoid gonorrhea [and syphilis], avoid casual sex relations." Hardly an attitude of sexual liberation.

Here we are, with 2 million cases of gonorrhea and 100,000 cases of syphilis in North America, and what is the state Department of Health doing? Nothing really, except perpetuating repressive, sexist attitudes towards sex. I was discouraged. Obviously the state is not to be relied on for disseminating helpful information about VD.

Montreal Women's Liberation, the same group that put together the *Birth Control Handbook*, has just come out with an equally fantastic *VD Handbook*. And in sharp contrast to the Department of Health "package," I have only praise for this handbook.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the *VD Handbook* is its attitude. For instance: "In addition to obtaining factual information about VD, we must also educate ourselves to

accept our human responsibilities to our lovers... We must create a new morality based not necessarily on premarital virginity and monogamous relationships, but rather on mutual respect and concern. We must learn to enjoy free and responsible love."

It is this tone of responsibility that echoes throughout every page of this publication. All information is thoroughly researched and clearly presented. It is assumed that the reader wants to know everything and not just look at some diagrams that look like turkey intestines (like those diagrams in our gynecologists' offices). In this handbook we are not only informed of things that we expect like VD transmission, symptoms, complications, and treatments, but also what to expect during the physical examination and the possible effects of chemical treatment so that we will be more prepared to deal with what the doctor does and says.

Having had some pretty intimidating experiences with condescending gynecologists lately, I appreciated the frequent warnings not to fall under the doctor's spell of knowledge—and power.

"Some unsympathetic doctors impose their own moral values on patients who acquire a sexually transmitted disease, and may, as a form of 'punishment,' ridicule or even hurt the patient purposely. The patient should not tolerate such treatment. It is the patient's right to interrupt a physical examination that is unkind either physically or emotionally and to demand the presence of a 'patient advocate' such as a friend or relative."

Most women go alone to the doctor and wouldn't think of challenging the "father-figure" of the doctor. Women have also been known to give false sexual history because they don't want the doctor to question their/our morality. Since we know very little about our own bodies, by lying we are giving even more control to the doctor.

The factual information in this book is consciousness-raising in itself. Knowing exactly what to expect from the doctor enables us to take a more active part in the control of our bodies, which, for women particularly, is so important.

There are no condemnations of having many sexual partners, and homosexuality is dealt with quite naturally. Although VD is not approached as being something one should be ashamed or frightened of, its possible serious complications are made quite clear.

Preventive health care for the people is just starting to get together. If we want to take more control of our bodies we have to know more. This book teaches, inspires, strengthens us as feminists, as women, as "the people"—knowledge is our responsibility. Please, read this publication.

Individual copies can be obtained by sending \$.25 to: VD Handbook, P.O. Box 1000, Station G, Montreal, 130, Quebec.

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON

by Mary Ann B. Oakley  
*The Feminist Press, \$1.50*  
 reviewed by Mary Rice

In a presidential election year, when many feminists are skeptical of voting as a means of social change, it is nonetheless fitting to consider the woman who first publicly demanded that women be able to vote. She was Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the subject of the second book in the Feminist Press Biography series.

From the original Women's Rights Convention, through five decades of close collaboration with Susan B. Anthony, to the day before her death when she wrote to admonish President Theodore Roosevelt to extend the vote to women, Stanton was an indomitable worker for women's suffrage. Yet she was also perhaps the first to see this issue as only one of many fundamental changes that needed to be made in the organization of society.

Today we speculate that the lack of a reliable means of contraception necessarily limited the scope of nineteenth century feminists' critique of their society. Because child-bearing was inevitable for most women, the institutions pertaining to it had greater authority. It is ironic therefore that a woman who bore eight children was one of the most comprehensive social

critics of her day. Stanton's views on equal opportunity for women, child care, women's sexuality, divorce, and the institutional church anticipated current feminist thought. Most radical of all was her unwillingness for women's rights to be made secondary to any other cause, no matter how worthy.

Mary Ann B. Oakley's work is thorough but fairly short and very simply written. Competently researched, it includes an annotated basic bibliography. The noticeable fault is somewhat spotty documentation. For example, William Lloyd Garrison's admirable refusal to be seated at an important anti-slavery convention from which women were excluded is quoted directly, but no source is given. However, the book is clearly not intended for scholarly disputation. Easily and quickly read, it is an excellent introduction to an important feminist we may have known embarrassingly little about.

Copies may be obtained from The Feminist Press, 10920 Battersea Lane, Columbia, Maryland 21043. The price is \$1.50 plus \$.25 postage.

## AT THE SEVENTH LEVEL

by Suzette Haden Elgin

Daw Books, \$.95

reviewed by Karen Lindsey

The genre of science fiction, which in the hands of its best writers is often brilliantly imaginative in the construction of future societies unlimited by the premises of earth-defined, twentieth-century concepts, is usually notably indifferent to the possibilities of worlds not based on the nuclear family and male superiority. Male messiahs abound; men fight sophisticated interplanetary wars while their women stay home and wring their hands; and, despite a sprinkling of token lady scientists, women weep and men suffer silently and kiddies grow up supervised by mommy's robot housemaids while daddy hops around the universe conducting business. There are some notable exceptions: Samuel Delaney has a number of brilliant heroines, and Isaac Asimov's recent *The Gods Themselves* comes as close to being nonsex-

ist as we can expect from the work of a male writer. And there is Ursula Leguin's amazing *The Left Hand of Darkness*, which takes place on an androgynous planet and explores the possibility of a society without sexual distinction. But such exceptions are rare, and that makes Suzette Hayden Elgin's *At the Seventh Level* a delightful surprise.

The book deals with the completely sexist planet Abba which, in a universe that has long ago rid itself of sexism, is despised by the other planets. The heroine, 12-year-old Jacinth, is one of the few women to break the barrier imposed on her sex. She insists on applying for the poetry examinations, the religious Profession of Poetry being the highest to which one may aspire. Women are allowed to take the poetry examinations, but the penalty for failure is a lifetime of solitary confinement—a penalty to which, of course, men are not subject. Jacinth's own aunt, sixteen years earlier, had tried and failed, and now lives alone in a room in the house, reduced to utter insanity. Jacinth takes the exam and not only passes, but achieves the Seventh Level, the highest level and one which few men and no women have ever reached. In the book's most powerful scene, Jacinth, allowed one final moment with her family before entering her new life, says only: "You will send someone at once to inform my Aunt Grace that I have been appointed to the Seventh Level of the Profession of Poetry; permission has been granted by the Council for the breaking of her solitary confinement for so long as it may take to make my aunt understand just what has happened."

The book goes on to introduce another character, the earthman, Cayote Jones, sent to Abba to investigate attempts on the life of Jacinth, by now universally loved, yet feared, and always a discomfort to the male hierarchy. Cayote is appalled by the sexism so alien to him, and between him and Jacinth a tender, fragile relationship evolves. Returning to earth, he picks a fight with his female mate, simply for the pleasure of being defeated by a woman—for the civilized earthman his stay on Abba has left

only horror and revulsion.

Finally, Jacinth ends up being the only Abban brilliant enough to solve a desperate problem involving Abba's very survival. But when this is accomplished and one of the more liberal councilmen suggests she be honored for saving the planet, the rest of the Council is appalled. She is after all only a woman, and to honor her



would be to question the foundation upon which Abba is built. The book ends here, cynically but realistically. Men centuries hence are as unlikely to relinquish their power voluntarily as they are now. Abba will survive; Jacinth will grow old and die and become a legend; women will remain the slaves of men.

Politically, my major criticism of *At the Seventh Level* is that after her first inspired act of identification with her aunt Grace (and this section is by far the book's strongest), Jacinth seems to exist in a vacuum in regard to other women. She indicates no impulse to fight for her sisters, no frustration at the status of women; she merely accepts herself and her exalted position. Her sole sense of responsibility seems to be to the men who comprise the army she must at one point lead. We are left wondering if she has any spark of recognition, beyond her adolescent compassion for Grace, of the evil of the premise on which her world is based. Further, though Jacinth's genius is evident, it is not made clear that all women are capable of achievement, that Jacinth is "exceptional" primarily in that she is accepted by men while other women have been held down. Still, it is a pleasant, well-written, extremely readable novel that doesn't force the reader to swallow insults and ignore the humiliating portrayal of women standard in literature; and that, on an earth as yet far removed from the earth of Cayote Jones, is no small accomplishment. ♀

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Roberta Benjamin** is a founder of the Free Lance Feminist Mercenary Irregular and Partisan Division, a new feminist organization with no aims, goals, or purpose. Qualifications for membership are feminist fatigue, laziness, wit, a good nature, and clean teeth. Since it is not task-directed, there has been some difficulty in organizing, but Bert has promised that once she gets her ass together the first party (*not* meeting) will be scheduled.

**Bonnie L. Carpenter** is an artist living in San Francisco (see LETTERS).

**Elsa Dorfman** is a professional photographer for whom people are especially important — as subjects, critics, and friends. She is currently a fellow at the Radcliffe Institute, and is a Taurus with her moon in Scorpio.

**Carol Ann Douglas** was active in Female Liberation and co-founder of the Feminist Revue. She has just left us to begin work on her Ph.D. in political science at Catholic University in Washington.

**Carolyn Fleuhr-Lobban** is an anthropologist who spent almost two years living and working in Khartoum, Democratic Republic of Sudan, and was active in the woman's movement there.

**Gina** is an artist living in Oakland, California. (See her letter on the title page.)

**Charlotte Anne Heavirapp** is artistic coordinator and an honorary member of the I Heta Stigma sorority, which produced the first feminist fashion show in the country. She is presently teaching a course in "Tie Dye and Gray Matter: The Final Frontier" at the Alternative School of Organic Design. Her first novel, *Something Borrowed, Something Blew*, will be released for publication shortly.

**Ami Ingram** is a writer living in St. Paul, Minn. Her credits include the *North American Review*, *New Renaissance*, and *The Humanist*.

**Karen Lindsey** is a poet, currently at work on a series of poems about the Tudor queens of England. She is co-producer of the weekly radio show *I Am Woman* on WBZ-FM in Boston.

**Beth Marshall** is a freelance illustrator and advertising artist in the Providence area.

**Barbara Monty** is an "alternative" teacher now operating in a public high school. She does speaking gigs for Female Liberation and works on child care.

**Holly Newman** is a member of Female Liberation. Currently, she and her sister Beth, and Fran Taylor, another Female Liberation stalwart, are taking a well-deserved vacation and traveling around Europe, spreading the faith and having fun.

**Miriam Palmer** loves poetry, women, and Maine.

**Mary Rice**, a graduate of Mount Holyoke College, is a new member of *The Second Wave* staff.

**Adrienne Rich** has published several volumes of poetry, among them *Necessities of Life*, *Leaflets*, and *The Will to Change*. She is currently teaching at Brandeis.

**Kathie Sarachild** is on the staff of *Woman's World*.

**Barbara Schram** is a community organizer who works for welfare rights and community control of schools. A doctoral student at Harvard, she is involved with the Educational Women's Collective there.

**Marsha Steinberg** works in the public-affairs department at WBCN radio in Boston, and is locally known as Jamaica Plain Jane.

**Mary Winfrey** has resumed writing after being fully occupied with marriage and children. She was a member of the Writer's Workshop at the Los Angeles Woman's Center.

**Nancy Wright** finds time for writing between customers at the craft-furniture shop she operates in Vermont. She has two novels awaiting publication.

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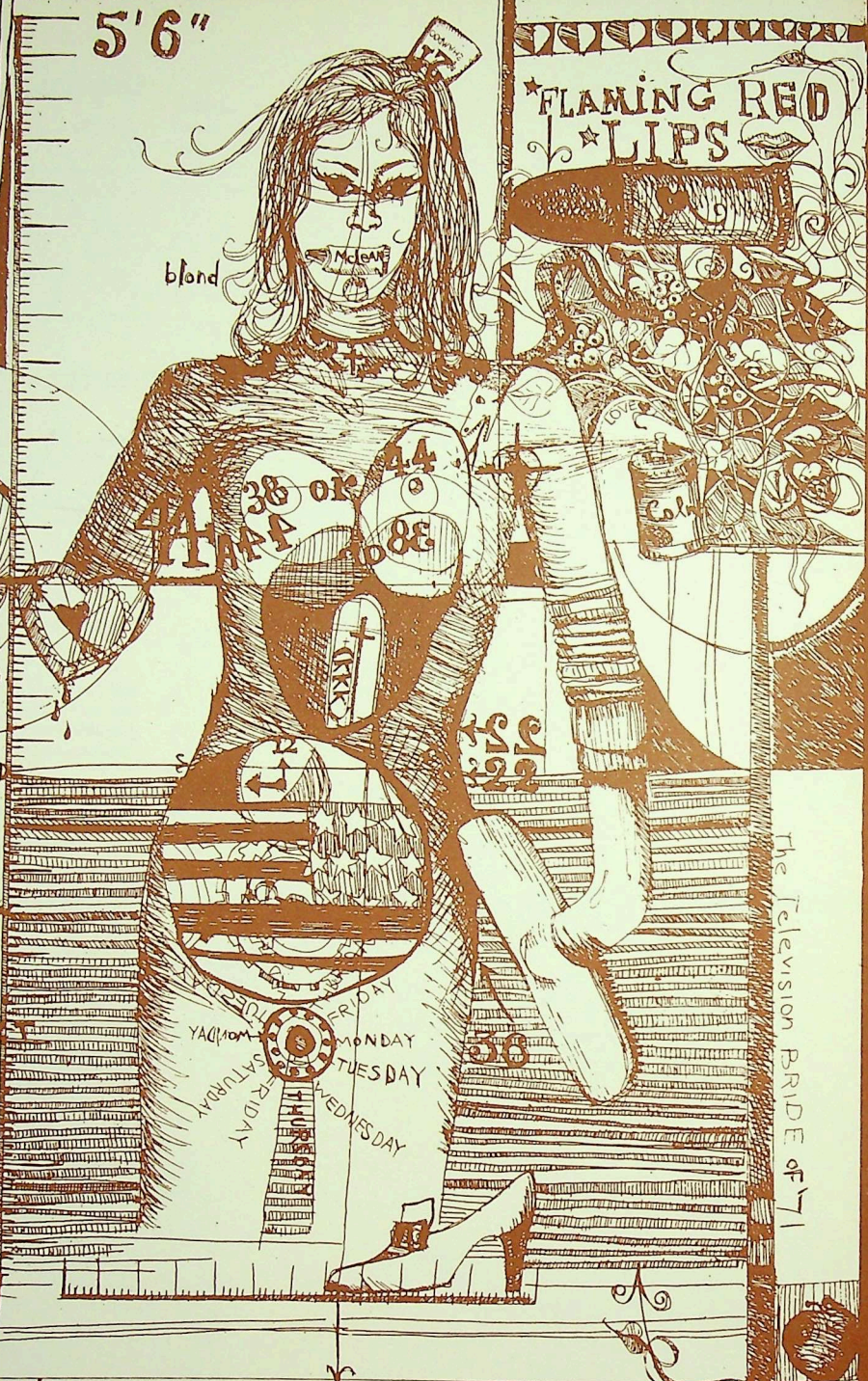
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Awh SUGAR, Awh honey, honey YOU ARE MY CANDY GIRL AND YA got me WANTING YA when I KISS you girl, I know how SWEET A KISS could be, how sweet A KISS could BE POUR A LITTLE SUGAR on me honey, POUR A LITTLE SUGAR on me BABY! Awh sugAR, Awh honey, honey, you ARE MY CANDY GIRL And you got me LOVING you. POUR A LITTLE SUGAR on me. BABY, POUR A LITTLE SUGAR on me

(now, will you Love me?)

The Television BRIDE of '71



# the second wave

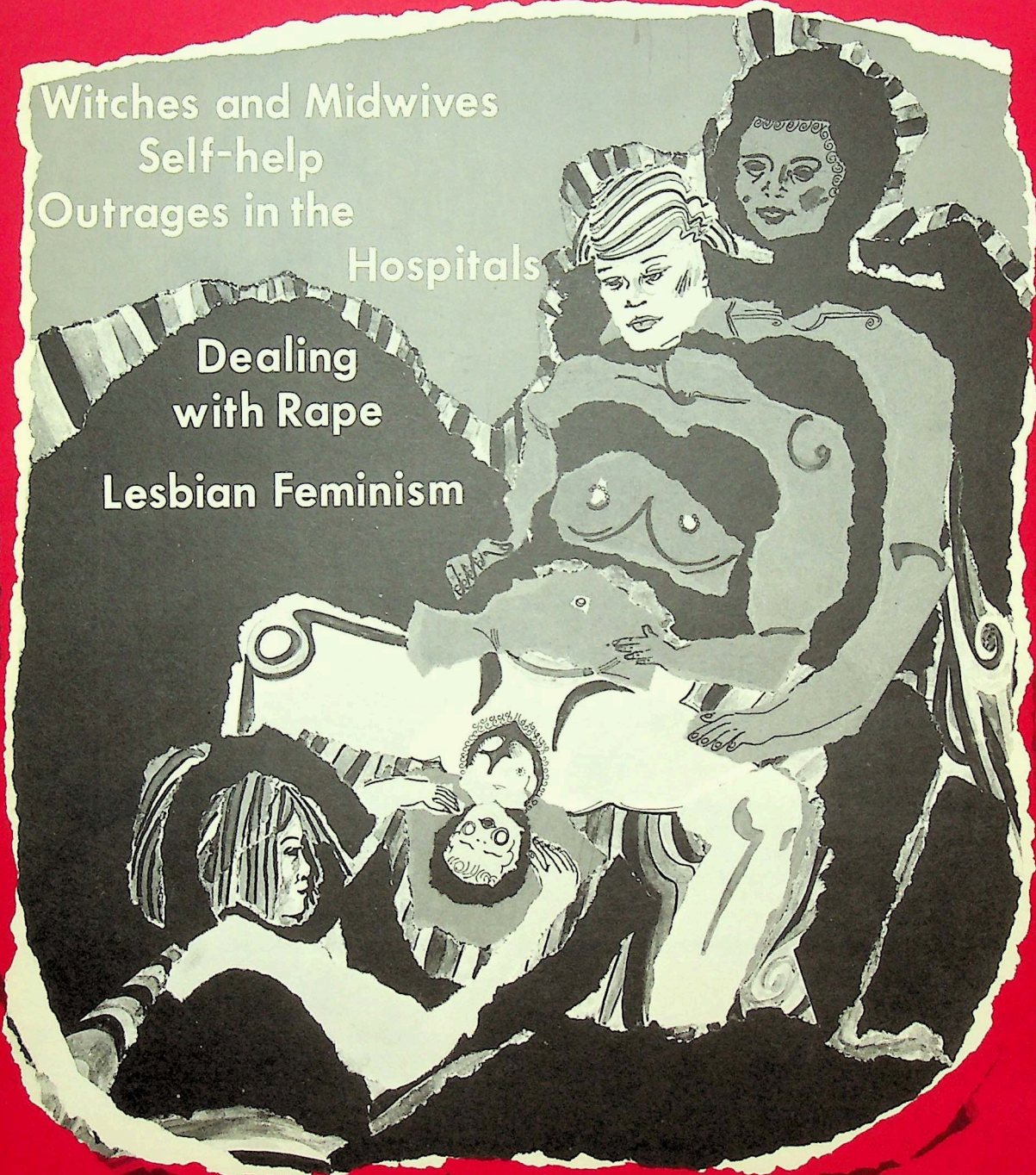
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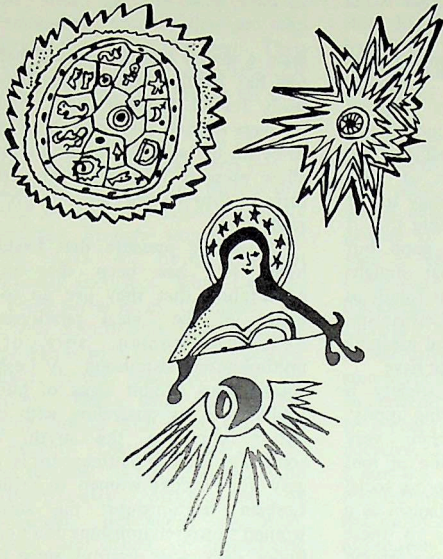
*a magazine of the new feminism*

Witches and Midwives  
Self-help  
Outrages in the  
Hospitals

Dealing  
with Rape  
Lesbian Feminism







"It may be that a second wave of sexual revolution might at last accomplish its aim of freeing half the race from its immemorial subordination and in the process bring us all a great deal closer to humanity."

Kate Millett—*Sexual Politics*

The Second Wave is published by Female Liberation in Boston, Massachusetts. The title was chosen to remind us that our movement started over a century ago and that we are in the second wave of feminists in an ongoing struggle. The Second Wave is intended to present a variety of opinion from women within and without the movement on all topics of concern to women. The views expressed are not necessarily those of Female Liberation. Advertisers should write for a rate card and printing schedule.

# Look ↴

We have a new address:

**the second wave**  
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**Cambridge, MA 02139**

This publication is on file at the International Women's History Archive, 2325 Oak Street, Berkeley, California 94708 and is available on microfilm through Bell & Howell, Drawer "E," Wooster, Ohio 44691.

## the second wave

*a magazine of the new feminism*

volume 2, number 3

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### MAGAZINE STAFF

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# From Us

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Tensions have recently re-emerged in Female Liberation around questions of sexuality: Lesbians and straight women each feeling oppressed by the other; women confused about their own sexuality and shy of labeling; women concerned about a lack of support for Lesbian issues. Conflicts about sexuality in general have been responsible for cross-intimidation of straight women and Lesbians; women who have not defined their sexuality have been lost in the shuffle.

While there had been extensive discussion of the politics of sexuality two years ago and we had undertaken some related political activity such as participation in Gay Pride Week and some public forums, in 1972 the issue gradually vanished from our activity and discussion. By last fall, indications of our need to confront the issues were becoming evident. A new group of sisters were coming out, with all the self-questioning involved in that. Entries in our Collective Journal from members and non-members alike reflected sexual confusion and intimidation; we were rightly criticized for a noticeable lack of literature about Lesbians in our bookstore and library. A new interest in vaginal self-examination had raised the issue of one's own body-awareness, and looking at other women's cervixes brought about in some sisters a direct confrontation of their feelings about sexuality. Reports and rumors of Lesbian/straight conflicts in other cities had become disturbing, as had the lack of discussion of Lesbianism in the general feminist press. Women new to the organization had not been through past discussions, and they had many questions. Informal discussions abounded. The difficulty of expressing our feelings in general aggravated the situation.

These current problems are not the same as the great gay/straight battles of a few years ago, nor are they as tension-ridden as we understand the situation to be in some other cities. The problems are more subtle now, but they are very real and there is still much to be worked out.

We have found that there has been intimidation on both sides. But it is

not enough for straight women to say "You oppress us, too." Though Lesbians may sometimes oppress straight women within the movement, the fact remains that Lesbians are oppressed in every aspect of their existence. Straight women may tire of hearing "gay is good," feeling that it implies that straight is not good, but we need to recognize that straight women are not oppressed as totally as Lesbians are and that Lesbianism, because of this, has political meaning that heterosexuality does not have.

Lesbian oppression in society is political punishment for being uppity. Laws deny Lesbians their very existence, and discrimination in jobs and housing is very real. So are social attitudes that define Lesbianism as a sickness and even back up these attitudes selectively with incarceration in mental hospitals and jails. This oppression affects Lesbians directly, straight women indirectly. No woman can be free until all Lesbians are free, for if the option of Lesbianism is closed, no one can fully know her own sexuality.

Out of the conflict between gay and straight, a third oppression has arisen. It seems that all of us, in struggling for the space and the right to be who we are sexually, have trampled on the feelings and infringed on the rights of others. In dealing with the problem of Lesbian oppression, we have learned that it is absolutely necessary to deal with the problems of being straight, bisexual, celibate, confused, in transition, and so on. Undefined women have felt mistrusted by Lesbians and straight women alike. The pressure to label one's sexuality denies a woman the right to discover her own sexuality through her own process at her own pace. This pressure does not allow for periods of transition, nor does it allow for openness to alternatives. Lesbians pressure women to declare their sexuality so they will know who is part of their community. Women without a clearcut sexual identity become politically invisible when sexual issues are discussed. Furthermore, there is an urgent need to resolve one's own confusion. The temptation becomes very strong to

seize a sexual role for oneself before one has thought it out enough or is ready for all its implications. Just as we have resisted the attempts by men to define us, we must be careful not to allow pressure from other women to force us into making choices we're not ready for.

A specific pressure that Lesbians have felt has been the unreal expectation that they live up to an image of the "ideal relationship" between women, sort of a mythologized sisterhood. A Lesbian couple who exhibit signs of human frailty such as quarreling with each other threaten the myth, and sometimes incur resentment for it. It is easy for straight women to criticize Lesbian relationships; the straight women's own relationships don't come under such close scrutiny since their lovers are outside the group's activities.

Since straight women are so burdened by sex-role expectations, they tend to be supersensitive to the issue of role-playing, and they respond negatively when they see it in Lesbian couples. Anything suspected of being either "too butch" or "too femme" is taken to be "incorrect" feminist behavior. But just as it is oppressive to have to mold one's identity to the traditional stereotypes, it is also oppressive to have to possess some mythical ideal balance of "male" and "female" qualities. Struggling out of role stereotypes doesn't mean being an exact blend of 50 percent yin and 50 percent yang. Society has lumped all human qualities into two packages labeled male or female and then assigned the female package to us. To create a third ideal, the absolute balance, legitimizes the original division and creates yet another oppressive role. Each of us needs to be free to discover which personality traits she is comfortable with, and we must respect our sisters' personalities.

Some straight women have complained that they too have felt pressure to conform to an idealized balance. But women whose personalities tend toward the traditionally "feminine" side are more readily accepted because we all understand the social pressures that

condition us to be like that. However, women who are considered "too butch" don't get the same kind of understanding, because they are seen as being too much like men. Their behavior makes us uncomfortable because it is outside the norm we were taught to find acceptable.

A problem affecting both gay and straight women here has been fear of disapproval for expressing their sexual feelings in the group either physically or verbally. Straight women describe their fears of being thought "politically incorrect" while Lesbians fear being perceived as "offensive." No one feels comfortable about bringing up problems with lovers, for instance. Straight women want to avoid the reaction, "That's what you get for hanging around with men. What did you expect?" They are aware that the "ideal feminist" is not supposed to be economically, physically, or emotionally dependent on men. Lesbians are afraid of threatening straight women, thus provoking negative, defense reactions that only reinforce the divisions.

In addition to verbal inhibitions, Lesbians in the group have felt pressured not to be overtly physical—in effect, they have been expected to compromise their Lesbian identity in deference to new straight women who might feel threatened. But there hasn't been a comparable concern that straight women might be alienating new Lesbians from the group. We have found it easier to ignore the psychological threat posed to a Lesbian by a straight woman than vice versa.

The effect of this is not only to alienate Lesbians, but to edge the Lesbian back into the closet. We recognize that we all have deeply ingrained prejudices against physical displays of affection of any kind. But we feel Female Liberation has improved significantly as a place where one can feel comfortable with physical affection among both Lesbians and straight women. This is both from a growing awareness of the importance of dealing with problems of sexuality and simply because we're getting to be more comfortable with our bodies.

It has been to our advantage that women in the group have been openly gay in the past, and we've tried to make clear our attitude that it is politically right-on to discuss sexual

problems and to be gay. By working and playing together, we've come to know each other as individuals, and this has prevented a lot of the backbiting which prevails in some organizations.

One of the problems of Lesbians relating to straight women—particularly if either is new to the Movement—is that of "signal-reading." Just what will be interpreted as a sexual advance and what is simply a gesture of friendship is unclear. In such an encounter, both women feel ill-at-ease and awkward. The difference, however, is that the Lesbian tends to err on the conservative side; she still has the stereotyped image of the Dyke-Rapist to contend with and is often likely to be accused of being macho, physically coercive, or objectifying a sister if a nonsexual expression of affection is misinterpreted. The straight woman has much greater latitude for physical expression of feelings, since it is assumed that she has no "ulterior" sexual motive for hugging a sister. She is therefore frequently not held accountable for objectifying a Lesbian sister, even if that is in fact the case. It often happens that a straight woman will (consciously or not) flirt with a Lesbian, trying to manipulate her sexually, not because she is who she is but because she is a Lesbian and therefore in a position to gratify the sexual ego of the straight woman. And so, while any woman is capable of objectifying any other woman, the tendency is to look for it among Lesbians and to ignore it in straight women.

The obverse side of this is the uncertainty of straight women who are trying to be as politically and personally considerate as possible. To define oneself immediately as straight, for instance, can be offensively assertive to a Lesbian who has been told over and over again that being straight is being right. But not to define herself leaves a straight woman open to unintentionally flirting with a Lesbian, implying a sexual interest that isn't there and thus inviting a pass which she will then rebuff.

Our discussions have also revealed political confusion of straight women as to how they could support Lesbians. "Do you find it offensive for me to be wearing a gay button?" asks a straight woman who says she does it

sometimes to show solidarity. A Lesbian present said no, that Lesbians can't always risk being openly gay in public, but it is important for people to see women wearing gay buttons, holding hands in public, and so on to show that Lesbians do exist all over. Straight women can with impunity publicize the gay movement in a way that Lesbians can't always do. But there needs to be an explicit understanding that even the most sympathetic straights cannot speak for Lesbians personally, nor make political decisions for them.

A look at ourselves reveals that most of the Lesbians in Female Liberation have come out within the group, but not before or outside the women's movement. This indicates strong support in the group for coming out. There is some sanctuary for Lesbians in Female Liberation and we want to enlarge upon that feeling. But we are also conscious of a failure to meet the needs or interests of Lesbians who have come out outside the women's movement. This situation reflects our acceptance of an ideology which recognizes the value of Lesbianism as a revolutionary concept, but fails to accept the personal realities of Lesbianism.

We've observed this lack in the women's movement at large, with the exception of exclusively Lesbian-feminist organizations, resulting in serious conflict within an organization and/or outright discrimination. We're trying to correct this on both a political and personal level. Politically, we are making a greater effort to include discussion of Lesbianism in *The Second Wave*, in our newsletter, on our radio show, and by publishing articles on the subject in local newspapers. We intend to carry more Lesbian literature in our bookstore and to co-sponsor the "freedom of sexual expression" clause in the Massachusetts Equal Rights Amendment. We are seeking participation in and/or sponsoring more extensive and direct political action concerning the issue.

On a personal level, we are making an effort to examine ourselves and the way we relate to each other in order to understand better the subtleties—conscious or unconscious—of sexual oppression within our organization. We are optimistic about our ability to resolve whatever conflicts exist among ourselves because, although we recog-

nize that a problem has existed, Lesbians in the organization have always felt free and assertive in defining themselves politically as gay. And now, in this stage of our development, that freedom and assertiveness is being extended to a personal level.

An organization which discourages dialogue about the personal aspects of Lesbianism, in addition to being oppressive to the Lesbians involved, also deprives itself of a rich source of learning. In the first place, such discussion opens up the question of sexuality itself and points out the alternatives to heterosexuality. It underscores the issue of roles in a relationship and raises questions regarding the value of defining one's sexual identity.

Also, since one of our primary commitments as feminists is to come to understand the concept of "Sisterhood"—how can we best relate to each other—the inner dynamics of a relationship between two Lesbians often brings out into the open the results of vulnerability (jealousy, hurt, insecurity, dependence, etc.) which are present, but not always as obvious, in a nonsexual relationship between women. Most of us have been socialized in such a way as to make us feel more vulnerable once sex has been introduced into a relationship; fears and needs which we can hide most of the time are not so easy to avoid in bed. Dealing with these feelings is essential to straight women as well as Lesbians if we are to be "sisters" in anything more than a superficial way.

Bringing up discussions of Lesbianism on a personal level tends to raise the question of the political implications of Lesbianism. If the atmosphere is such that non-Lesbians don't feel guilt-tripped about their sexual preference, the political advantages of alternative life-styles such as living without men or raising children in a Lesbian household can be considered without threatening individuals in the organization. Female Liberation recognizes the need for more extensive analysis of the politics of Lesbian feminism, and we hope to find out more about it in the near future. So far, we've been too busy simply working out feelings of intimidation about sexuality on the part of all members to move on to that, but the time to do so is rapidly approaching. ♀

*Female Liberation*

# Letters

Dear Sisters,

My five issues of your magazine are dog-eared with use. I am unable to find the kind of information you write about in any other magazine. Being able to read *The Second Wave* here in suburbia is like having the wall of my cell blown off so I can feel, smell, taste, and enjoy the prospects of freedom and liberation.

Pat Proctor  
Westboro, Mass.

Dear Karen and Friends,

How very good this new issue is. I don't think I've ever read an issue so quickly. I especially appreciated the section on rape, the articles on Vietnamese and Sudanese women, and your good "Daphne." But it's fine all the way through.

Barby Gale  
Allston, Mass.

Dear *Second Wave* People,

The current issue is great—the best ever. How can you go on getting better and better? More specifically:

a) I loved Roberta Benjamin's common-woman view of the Democratic National Convention.

b) Kathy Sarachild confirmed my feelings about the Women's Political Caucus.

c) Thanks so much for the rape articles. The subject has been bothering me lots lately, because when I had to comfort a crying young woman who wanted to forget all about her rape, I realized that I didn't know what to do for her. But I became aware that as feminists we cannot justifiably encourage women to report rapes until we change the way rapes are handled—by police, doctors, and counselors. Otherwise, we are asking the victim to undergo a second torture . . .

Could women who have been raped put out a guide for friends of rape victims—things friends can say and do? I would like to know what rape victims found comforting.

Mary Jane Gillespie  
Salem, Mass.

Dear *Second Wave*:

The way police, doctors, lawyers handle rapes is obscene. The emphasis on the victim's prior sex life is intended to prove that the rapist did not damage the goods because they were already damaged. This makes rape an issue with a great potential for radicalizing women who can dig the full horror . . .

Where the rapist is known and the chance of legal revenge is remote, sisters themselves (masked) can arrange a swift, private bashing in of the rapist's balls, to educate the rapist that it is no longer open season.

As I see it, the only way the situation is really going to change is for women to stand up to men in every way to let them know the day is over when they can fuck over women and get away with it. We can do this with men we know and with strangers on the street. We should protest very strongly about movies which perpetrate the *image* of the rape and murder of the totally passive woman. We should be ready to respond with a neat bit of guerrilla theater whenever a man exposes his sex organ to us—not an innocuous joke as popular culture seems to maintain, but an act of calculated aggression, contempt, and bad vibes that ruins the whole day. All sex crimes especially should be countered by strong resistance.

Terry Cronin

*Editor's note:* After the rape section in the last issue, we realized the need for a further article about action women are taking about rape, which we have in this issue.

Dear Sisters:

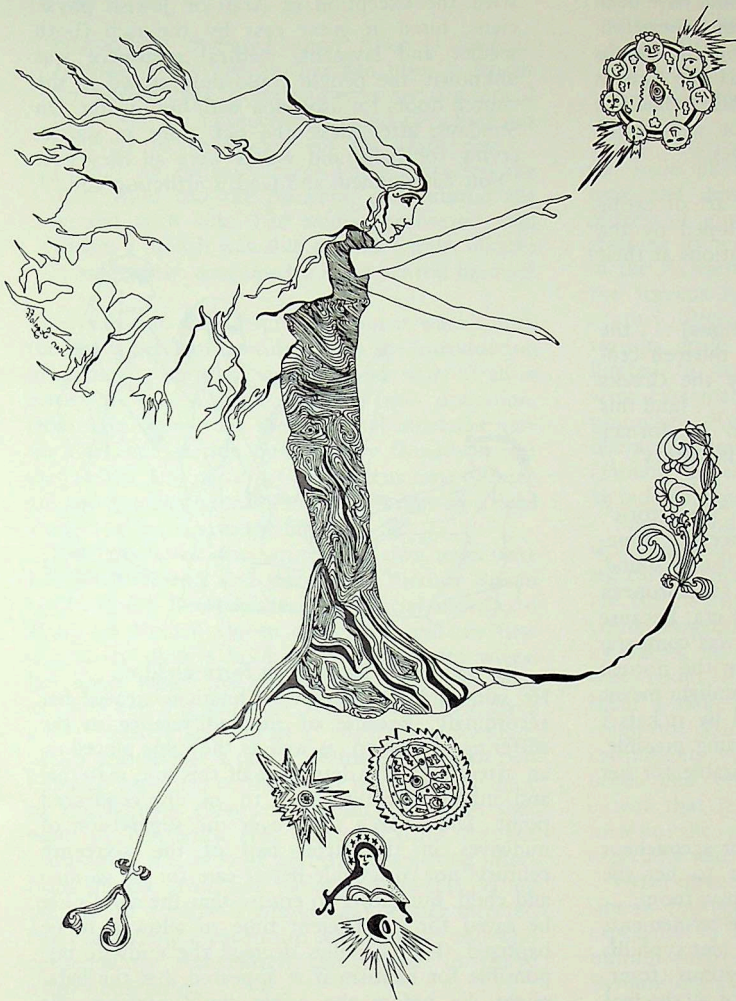
After a lengthy selection process because of severe budget limitations, our library committee has chosen *The Second Wave* for inclusion as a worthwhile resource.

Jill Grossberg  
Feminist Studies Program  
Cambridge-Goddard Graduate  
School for Social Change  
Cambridge, Mass.

Dear *Second Wavers*:

I especially want to thank Beth for her perceptive illustrations of my story.

Nancy Wright  
Middlebury, Vt.



by Carol Somer

# how women had control of their lives and lost it

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## A. Some ancient herstory of midwifery

Although "midwifery must be one of the oldest of acquired skills,"<sup>1</sup> little is definitely known about its early development. But some references do exist in ancient literature. In Genesis (XXXV: 17), a midwife is able to prophesy correctly the sex of Rachel's fetus:

And it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not: for this child also is a son for thee.

In ancient Athens, the Greek midwives were required by law to be mothers themselves, personal experience being a primary qualification. By the time of Hippocrates midwives were well organized and their duties clearly defined. In addition to giving physical aid to the woman, they were expected to direct the sacred songs during labor, show the child to the father (who could refuse to recognize it as his own), abandon the child on a hillside or temple steps if the family didn't want to keep it, act as a matchmaker, treat diseases of women, and produce abortion if desired. (At that time abortion was not ethical for physicians under the Hippocratic oath but it was still a common lawful practice.<sup>2</sup>) "With their manifold social and medical duties the Greek midwives were an institution, but their field did not extend over into that of the physician."<sup>3</sup>

There is evidence that Soranus of Ephesus, a famous Greek physician (c.90 A.D.-138 A.D.), knew how to use a speculum matricis, or vaginal speculum, and, in fact, this instrument was highly developed by Roman times.

Specimens have been excavated at Pompeii... It has been suggested that such an instrument could have been used to dilate the maternal

passages during labour, but this would have been an exceedingly painful and dangerous operation. There is no suggestion in the writings of Soranus that the speculum, or dioptré as the Greeks called it, was used for anything other than the examination of "excrescences or callosities" which obstruct the maternal passages.<sup>4</sup>

According to H. W. Haggard, the art of caring for pregnant women was well-developed by the Egyptian, Greek, and Roman civilizations at their height but:

With the decline of [these civilizations] . . . the care of women deteriorated; for thirteen centuries the practices developed by the Greeks were lost or disregarded in Europe . . . [and this care] was not brought back to its former development until the 16th or 17th century . . .<sup>5</sup>

To understand the childbearing of "prehistoric" woman, we can observe the experience of "primitive" woman today. Unbelievable as it may sound, her labor was and is much easier than for European women during most of the Christian era. Because of her active physical life, her child was comparatively small and literally shaken into the normal head-down position; better diet and sunlight meant her pelvic bones were not distorted by rickets;<sup>6</sup> commerce had not made cross-breeding possible, therefore her baby was of a size suitable for her pelvis.

The hand of no medical student or accoucheur of the pre-antiseptic age brought to her the contamination . . . [of] the autopsy room . . . The primitive woman met all these refinements of civilization later . . . she [also] met syphilis and tuberculosis, plague and typhus fever, gonorrhea and alcohol, and worst of all she met the crowding into cities and the shame taught by the Christian religion.<sup>7</sup>

1. Walter Radcliffe, *Milestones in Midwifery* (Bristol: John Wright & Sons Ltd., 1967) p.1. Also for footnotes nos. 4 and 6.  
 2. According to Soranus in his *De Morbis Mulierum*, there was disagreement even among physicians, some of whom maintained that abortion was justified "to avert danger impending to birth if the womb be (too) small . . . or have hard swellings or cracks at its mouth, or if some similar condition prevail." (Quoted by Dr. H.W. Haggard, *Devils, Drugs & Doctors* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1929) p. 24. Also for footnotes nos. 5 and 7.  
 3. Although Greek Midwives were powerful and respected, they were still operating in a society run by men, and their ideas and practices were by no means ideal. For example, one of their methods of hastening labor was to tie a woman to a coach, turn it on end and pound it against the ground!

### B. Midwifery in the Christian era Through the 18th century

The Middle Ages were the most unfortunate period in the history of womankind.<sup>1</sup>

With the exception of Arab or Jewish physicians, hired at great cost by the rich (both secular and layman), medical treatment was unknown—the people could only crowd to the church doors for aspersion with holy water. On Sundays, after Mass, the sick came in scores, crying for help—and words were all they got: "You have sinned, and God is afflicting you."<sup>2</sup>



"In pain shalt thou bring forth children . . ."<sup>3</sup> He said—and the medieval Christians treated her accordingly. Because of the indifference to the suffering of women, as well as the value placed on an afterlife to the detriment of this life, maternal and infant mortality rose to an unprecedented point. The Church took over the supervision of midwives in the latter half of the sixteenth century, not to provide better care for the woman and child, but rather to ensure that the child's life be saved for a sufficient time to allow it to be baptized. The Catholics decreed the midwife responsible for baptism if it appeared that the baby might die before the priest could perform the baptism. The Protestants, however, declared in 1577 "that no midwives, nor any other women, be suffered to minister bap[ti]sm,"<sup>4</sup> but the practice continued regardless. A striking example of the Church's misplaced priorities was the development of intrauterine baptismal tubes to save the *soul* of the child stuck in its mother's womb. The opening of the nozzle of these syringes was sometimes "made in the form of a cross to add sanctity to its use . . . But nothing was done to save [their] lives."<sup>5</sup>

In spite of the fact that most females in this period were denied an education and a voice in society, there were a few midwives whose achievements were recognized by male historians, or who were able to write their own texts. One of the former was Mary Donally, an Irish midwife, whom William Smellie (1697-1763) recorded as

having

successfully operated upon Alice O'Neale in January 1739. The mother had been in labour for twelve days, other midwives had attempted to deliver her unsuccessfully, and the child was believed to have died on the third day... [using] an ordinary razor [she] extracted the dead child and the placenta, and sutured the wound with silk. The woman recovered, and within a month was able to walk a mile, but she subsequently developed a large ventral hernia.<sup>6</sup>

This may not seem impressive, but it wasn't until the late nineteenth century (with the introduction of antiseptic surgery) that the odds were at all in favor of the woman surviving this operation. (Radcliffe states that the maternal mortality rate for Caesarian section during Mary Donally's time was almost 100 percent.) Before that time Caesarians were generally not performed except on a dead woman to try to save the fetus.

Two midwives who wrote their own texts were Louyse Bourgeois and Mary Anne Victoire Boivin (1773-1841). Bourgeois was the official midwife to Marie de Medici, Queen of France, and the first woman to write a book on midwifery for wives. Her book, which was published in English in 1680 as *The Compleat Midwives' Practice Enlarged*, gives a very detailed account of a "royal accouchement, which was almost a public performance, with two hundred members of the Court thronging the door of the lying-in chamber."<sup>7</sup> Radcliffe claims that none of her book was original except for her warning to the midwife against transmitting infectious disease from one patient to another, citing the case of a midwife whose hand became infected from delivering a prostitute with syphilis and who consequently transmitted the disease to thirty other households.

Marie Boivin wrote *Memorial de l'Art des Accouchements* (Paris: Meguignon, 1812), an up-to-date book with clear and precise instructions which, again according to Radcliffe, contained nothing very original. He does give her credit, however, for her writings on gynecology, which were much more advanced than her contemporaries, and for her use of the vaginal speculum which had been recently reintroduced, after years of disuse, for inspection of the cervix rather than for obstetrics.

Madame Boivin soon became one of the leading gynaecologists in Paris, and was undertaking surgical treatments which in other countries were the prerogative of the men. She was one of the first surgeons to amputate the cervix uteri for a cancerous growth. It is not surprising that the male professors of the faculty soon became

jealous of her successes, and she attracted their criticism, just as in the previous century in England the men-midwives had been attacked by the women for presuming to poach on what they considered to be their own preserves.<sup>8</sup>

The two main medical discoveries which gave the male physicians an edge over the midwives were the development of podalic version (the process of adjusting the unborn child's position by grasping its feet and turning it) by Ambroise Pare in the sixteenth century and the development of the forceps in the first half of the eighteenth century. Previous to the development of podalic version, male aid to the parturient woman was limited to performing Caesarian sections, which were extremely rare and not even performed by physicians. According to Haggard, podalic version liberated women "from the exclusive hands of the ignorant midwives... and laid the foundation for an independent art of medicine—obstetrics."<sup>9</sup>

Smellie and William Giffard (a "man-midwife" who practiced in the poorer quarters of London in the early eighteenth century) were mainly responsible for the widespread use of the forceps. "The young surgeons who wanted to be in the fashion by taking up midwifery... wanted to know all they could about the new forceps, which gave them a skill—and a weapon—which the midwives could not claim."<sup>10</sup> Radcliffe has no doubts "that instruments were resorted to far too readily by brash and enthusiastic men-midwives," to the extent that it became necessary for "the leading men in the profession to teach some restraint, especially with the forceps."

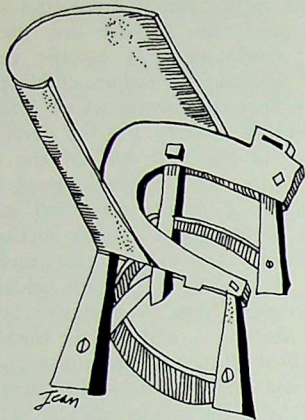
Other practices developed by the male professionals (purportedly for the benefit of women), especially in the eighteenth century, resulted in untold suffering for vast numbers of women. Symphysiotomy, an operation to enlarge the space available in the pelvis for the passage of the fetus by dividing the symphysis pubis

was adopted on the Continent (in the eighteenth century) but was not as great a success as was hoped for. About one-third of the mothers died... about two-thirds of the children died and an untold number of women were maimed for life, and unable to walk properly or had incontinence of urine.<sup>11</sup>

Bleeding was another one of these practices that ignorant and superstitious male physicians performed on pregnant women supposedly for their benefit. During the eighteenth century, doctors were sure that pregnant women had an excess of blood which needed to be drained, preferably once a month; in addition, they were also put on a restricted diet. It was not until the end of the

nineteenth century that obstetricians recognized the damage they had done.

These practices were nothing, however, compared to the outrage of puerperal fever which reached epidemic proportions concurrently with



the development of the great "lying-in" hospitals. Puerperal, or childbed, fever was spread from one parturient or post-parturient woman to another by the hands of the physician covered with the blood, mucus, and other effusions of his live patients or the contamination from the autopsy room. It was a common practice among doctors at the time to also leave their "white coats" unwashed, the better to show off their knowledge and experience by the extent of the bloodstains. Some doctors considered the fever incurable and thought the only way to deal with it was to move into new buildings; others thought "... outside influences such as unhealthy miasma from sewers and drains, or the effects of the weather" were responsible.<sup>12</sup>

It took the death of one of their male colleagues (from blood poisoning following a small injury sustained while doing a post-mortem on a puerperal fever victim) to prod doctors into determining (and acting upon) the cause of this plague. One of these was Semmelweis in Vienna who instructed all his male pupils in May 1874 to wash their hands with chloride of lime before entering the maternity wards. This chemical had already been in use at a Dublin hospital from 1826 to 1833 as a general ward disinfectant to clear away the "miasma,"

... but the students at the Vienna hospital were shocked at first when they were ordered to disinfect themselves. However, results very soon proved the value of this policy, for the maternal death-rate fell from over 11% to under 4% within the first year, and in the following year, 1848, the death-rate in the students' wards was even slightly less than ... in the midwives.<sup>13</sup>

It seems that as long as the function of the midwife was merely a helping, nurturing one, with the parturient woman still being the one who did the important "labor," men weren't interested. The changeover from the typical squatting position of the "primitive" woman and the birth stools of the medieval midwives to the reclining position of the eighteenth century and the flat-on-her-back, feet-in-stirrups position of the twentieth century epitomizes the physician's need to degrade the pregnant woman in order to perform his functions.

With the Jews delivery took place on a stool or in the lap of another woman. In the first chapter of Exodus, mention is made of the obstetrical chair, "when you do the office of the midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools . . . ." It was not until the 19th century . . . that the obstetrical chair ceased to be a necessary professional equipment of the midwife, which she trundled from patient to patient. Mauriceau of France in the 17th century started the innovation of using a bed for childbirth.<sup>14</sup>

To male physicians, it is more important that the doctors be in a comfortable position and be able to see what they're doing than that the woman have the force of gravity on her side and be able to see what she is doing.<sup>15</sup>

1. Haggard, p. 25. Also for footnotes nos. 5, 9, and 14.
2. Michelet, *Satanism and Witchcraft* (New York: Citadel Press, 1970) pp. 77-78.
3. Genesis III:16.
4. Thomas Forbes, *The Midwife and the Witch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 39.
6. Radcliffe, p. 53. Also for footnotes nos. 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

### C. The Midwife as Witch: woman in control

The word "witch" comes from the Anglo-Saxon "wicca," meaning "wise." "Sage-femme," literally "wise-woman," is the French for midwife. "Cunning women" is another name used by women who utilized herbs and extracts, charms and enchantments in their healing and midwifery.

"WITCHES were the first birth control practitioners and abortionists helping women to control their own bodies as a step toward controlling their own lives."<sup>11</sup>

"When a woman thinks alone, she thinks evil."<sup>12</sup>

There are any number of possible explanations for why witches were burnt, tortured, drowned, and hanged, and it seems that there is some truth in each of them. Witches were females (and males) who practiced "the old religion," worshipped a goddess, had "supernatural" powers, and knew



how to heal; witches were peasant women organizing rebellions; witches were "beautiful" women who "bewitched" men into loving them;<sup>3</sup> witches were "ugly" women because ugly was evil; witches were *all* women because the female sex was evil;<sup>4</sup> witches were ordinary women of the community accused by a first witch under torture to save herself; witches were women who were old and lived alone; and lastly *witches were midwives*: "No one does more harm to the Catholic Faith than midwives."<sup>5</sup> Why were midwives, seemingly the most innocent and beneficial people in the community, accused and destroyed with such vengeance?

Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, in their excellent pamphlet *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers*<sup>6</sup>, claim that "women healers were people's doctors, and their medicine was part of a people's subculture," and both the church and newly established medical profession wanted to eliminate the competition. And so rose the unlikely alliance of the priest and doctor.

In the witch-hunts, the church explicitly legitimized the doctors' professionalism, denouncing nonprofessional healing as equivalent to heresy: "If a woman dare to cure without having studied she is a witch and must die." [Of course, there wasn't any way for a woman to study.]<sup>7</sup>

It is probably true that many midwives purposefully created for themselves the reputation of witch. Their position was so low in society ("... in Bavaria these women were looked down on even by the ... executioner"), their fees so wretchedly small, and the competition so great, that they were sometimes tempted to claim powers they did not have so as to make themselves more successful bill-collectors and beggars, and to give themselves status (albeit as one to be feared) in the community.

There is also evidence that many women were forced to give some explanation for their great healing powers or skill in midwifery. The idea that they had these skills without the benefit of education was unacceptable in a society that said that women could know nothing. Midwives had obtained skills through inborn psychic gifts, generations of experimentation with herbs passed on from mother to daughter, or perhaps through being attuned to their natural instincts by living a quiet life in the woods the way "animals in various kinds of trouble can turn to plants which they know will cure them."<sup>8</sup> But they were forced to explain themselves with tales of dead male relatives returning from Elf-land bringing gifts of prescience, healing, and other "supernatural" powers.

Sir Walter Scott in his letters on *Demonology and Witchcraft*<sup>9</sup> gives many instances of women

who were convicted and burnt on the basis of these stories even though the sorcery they practiced was always for beneficial purposes (mostly curing their families and other women) and they claimed to have resisted any persuasions from the messengers (most of whom were doctors or scholars) to return to fairyland with them. One woman in Scotland by the name of Alison Pearson was "convicta et combusta" even though she cured an Archbishop of St. Andrews.

Midwifery as a profession was also suspect because of the widespread belief that witches used infants' fat as a pharmaceutical ingredient and stole newborn babes before they were baptized so as to consecrate them to the Devil. Since both infant and maternal mortality were high and both were viewed as punishment for sin or as a mystery,

... ignorant mothers might well imagine that they had been responsible for the mysterious deaths of their children (Had they been responsible for taking the child's soul-substance in dream if not by day?). Angry fathers might accuse them of murder. The fact that old women would often be midwives, and liable to suspicion if children died at birth, must also be noted ...<sup>10</sup>

The witch's reputation as poisoner came from her use of poisonous drugs such as ergot and belladonna for cures and painkillers. For example, the Hebrew word "chaushaph," from the phrase in Exodus (XXII:17) "Men shall not suffer a witch to live," used by witchhunters as justification for burning six million women, can also be translated as "poisoner" or "a user of pharmacutic enchantments; an applier of drugs, whether vegetable, mineral, or animal to magical purposes."<sup>11</sup>

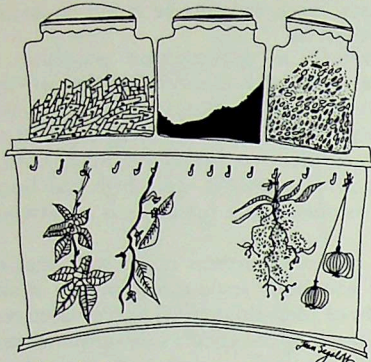
Ergot (a parasitic fungus which grows on rye), which is used today to hasten labor and, in the form of ergometrine, to reduce the incidence of post-partum hemorrhage, was used in small doses by witches to hasten prolonged labor.

The first scientific report of its use in midwifery was by Parmentier ... [in] the *Journal de Physique*, in 1774. [He] stated that Madame Depille, a midwife at Chaumont, frequently used ergot to assist her patients in prolonged and slow labours. The first doctor to make use of it was a certain M. Desgranges at Lyons, three years later, who had also found that the midwives he met were using it in childbirth.<sup>12</sup>

Another drug used was belladonna, or deadly nightshade, of the Solanaceae (herbs of consolation) family, for calming the convulsions that sometimes occur in childbirth<sup>13</sup> (and thus preventing miscarriage). It is still used today as an anti-spasmodic and in "Contac" cold capsules.

They also discovered penicillin (another fungus which grows on the hyssop leaf) and many "painkillers, digestive aids and anti-inflammatory agents" which are used today.<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, they were forced in some cases to put their knowledge of drugs and anaesthetics to their own use; many of them "were able to drug themselves (beforehand) to withstand torture, but



the practice led, on some occasions, to more prolonged and violent torments, the subsequent agony of the racked and scorched victims being unbearable."<sup>15</sup>

The history of the witch as midwife has been suppressed, but let me close this section with the stories of two whose names have not been lost: Maria Concetta Martello, the grandmother of a friend of mine, and Molly Leigh, Sybil Leek's seventeenth-century ancestress, who died in 1663 and whose name is still a household word in the Midlands of England.

My own grandmother, Maria Concetta Martello, was the town Witch in Sicily. She read the Tarot Cards, gave out herbal remedies, acted as midwife and counselor to most of the town's residents. She was bitterly opposed and resented by the town priest. The people went to church on Sunday, yet when they had a problem they went to Maria. Since she dispensed practical and workable advice the priest couldn't buck her power . . . even with his sly sermons directed at her on Sundays.<sup>16</sup>

In her days the land was nothing more than a blasted heath and Molly lived quietly, brewing herbs and making her potions for love and intrigue. She was the local midwife, doctor, psychologist to the community, but as is usual with a witch she was both loved and hated . . . Molly survived the opposition, the local clergyman (however), to die a natural death at a ripe old age.<sup>17</sup>

2. Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, translated by Rev. Montague Summers (London: The Pushkin Press, 1928), p. 66.

3. See Carl Dreyer's film *Day of Wrath*.

4. "It is not unreasonable that this scum of humanity should be chiefly drawn from the feminine sex . . . since that sex is the more susceptible to evil counsels."—Nicholas Remy, *Demonolatria* (Lyons: 1596).

5. Kramer and Sprenger, *op cit*.

6. (Oyster Bay, N.Y.: Glass Mountain Pamphlets, P.O. Box 238).

7. *Ibid.*, p. 17. Universities were closed for the most part to women and licensing laws prohibited all but the university-trained to practice.

8. Jerry Cowhig, introduction to *A Color Treasury of Herbs and other Medicinal Plants* (London: Orbis Publishing Ltd., 1972), p. 5. (New York: Bell Publishing Co., 1970)

10. Geoffrey Parrinder, *Witchcraft: European and African* (London: Faber & Faber, 1958), p.53.

11. Scott, *op cit.*, pp. 51, 393.

12. Radcliffe, *op cit.*, p. 71.

13. Michelet, *op cit.*, p. 84.

14. Ehrenrich and English, *op cit.*, p. 12.

15. C.L. Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonism* (1933), p. 78.

16. From a letter to me by Dr. Leo Louis Martello, high priest: Continental Witch Covens; founder: Witches Liberation Movement, Pagan Front, U.S.A.

17. Sybil Leek, *Diary of a Witch* (New York: New American Library, Inc., 1969), p.18.

#### D. 19th century developments/outrages

One usually thinks of the last century as "Victorian" in its sexual mores, the sexes strictly segregated; yet, increasingly, men plunged their hands and instruments in women's generative tracts.<sup>1</sup>

Benfield asserts that the "drastic gynecological surgery" which took place in the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century—the clitoridectomies, ovariectomies (removal of the ovaries), salpingectomies (removal of the Fallopian tubes), hysterectomies, and ovary transplants—was an expression of the general sexual anxieties created in the American male by a society newly and violently on the make.

During the nineteenth century, mental derangement and reproductive derangement in females were considered almost synonymous. And "the significance men attached to the body of woman increased in proportion to their devaluation of her mind. Dr. Charles Meigs advised his gynecological pupils in 1848 (the year of the first Woman's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls) that their studies necessarily should include woman's psychology, since her generative organs exercised a 'strange' influence over her heart, mind and soul."

One of man's severest anxieties was woman's sexuality, and so they defined the presence of sexual desire in women as abnormal. Some doctors even tested for the presence of this "disease" by manipulating the clitoris or breasts! thinking thereby to control woman's potential appetite which "scared [them] spermless." Where taboos and conditioning failed, they reserved the right to castrate. ("Even critics of gynecological-

1. Heidi Steffens, "W.I.T.C.H.," *Women: To, By, For, and About*, vol 1, no. 1.

(continued on p. 28)

# SPEAK OUT RAGE

In October of 1972, women in the Boston area presented SPEAKOUTRAGE, a public hearing where women testified about their experiences with abortion, birth control, forced sterilization, denial of voluntary sterilization, and pre-natal care. The testimony, which was taped and subsequently aired on radio, was a dramatic indictment of the persons and institutions responsible for denying us control over our reproductive lives. The very act of women speaking out publicly about these issues indicates how far our movement has come. *Second Wave* is presenting a sampling of the testimony.

## Diana's Story

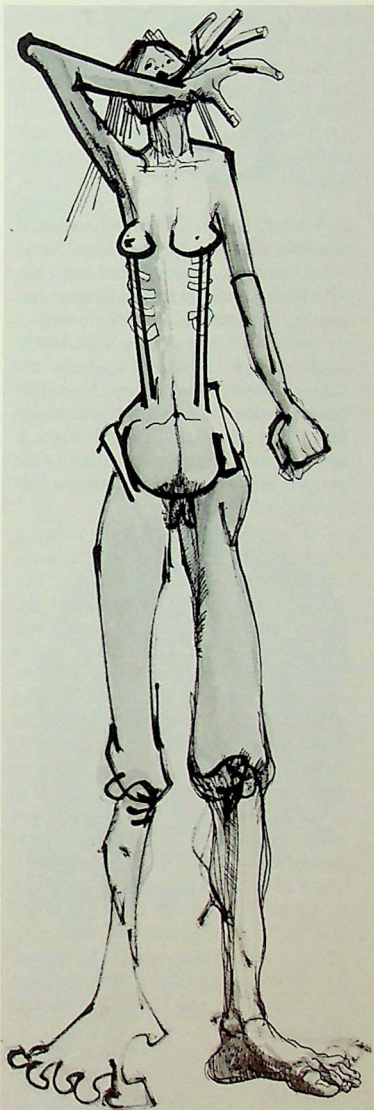
In 1966, I was going with a Harvard law student who had an impeccable character. When I got pregnant he didn't want to get married 'cause that would spoil his career, and we decided that I'd have an abortion, but then he'd marry me. I got a ring which, admittedly, I bought. I was 28 and I wanted to get married, and I thought that would be as good a way as any.

The day after the abortion, which we had done in New Jersey (we went down twice to get it. It was really a bad one, I had to get it again. It was \$400 or \$500)... The day after he decided that, no, he wasn't going to marry me. He was just glad he was out... After my fiance told me he wasn't going to marry me, I don't remember exactly the sequence of what happened. I don't remember if I took the antibiotics... I had wanted the baby.

Two months later at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital I had another D&C because they had decided things were wrong and that the abortion was still incomplete. After the sterility test I thought things were pretty awful 'cause they told me I was sterile...

I got pregnant. I couldn't believe it, but it was confirmed that I was pregnant... Of course I didn't think anything about birth control because I didn't think I could be pregnant.

I was really elated. Unconsciously, I was elated, but consciously, I really wanted to find out if I could have children, but I didn't want to have just anybody's child. Obviously—I was 30—if I wanted anyone's child I could have done it before. It isn't the right way. I really did want to do it [have the baby]; Still I knew that I probably could do it because I had had good jobs and all; I just didn't know if I wanted to set myself up for all the shit you have to take if you are in that position. If I had known how bad it



graphic: Liz Schwebel

would be I wouldn't have done it... raising a kid alone...

I lost my job at the university when I told them I was pregnant and that I would like to continue. And they said, no, for *my* sake I had better leave. And that's when the trouble started, really.

I did think that I should try and see if there were any roads that I could get a legal abortion. I knew I could conceive, but I didn't want to blow everything like I had before. I checked it out through a hospital and they said, yes, there's really a way now, things are changing.

So I saw two psychiatrists and they wrote down that she's from a very Puritanical New England family, but she's not crazy. They wrote that they thought it would be sad that I would have to be in this position at this time because it looked as though things were going good and they didn't feel that I should continue this pregnancy. In other words, they got it just like that for me...

I was in there for the operation and they were talking about tubal ligation. I'm just glad I knew—I mean, what if I had not heard the words before? They were just slipping it right by... And I said, "Do you think I'm an idiot?" My blood pressure just shot up, and I could feel myself turning purple. This guy was approaching me with one of those rubber things where they take your blood out of you. 'Cause I was admitted to the hospital to have it. And I said, no. I would have done anything to get out of there. They said, "You're in now." I got kind of scared. I couldn't believe it. I worked at the university; I had never been on welfare; it was recommended by the psychiatrists. I looked up the statistics later and out of 600 legal abortions, half of them were sterilized...

I said, "Why?" and they said, "You've had your chance," and I said, "Who gets by, then?" and they said,

"Seventeen year olds, first time, maybe."

I got out, and they said they'd let me out for one reason. Can you imagine? They'll let me out for one reason. I didn't know there was going to be sterilization . . . It really did hurt my ego that they thought I should be permanently sterilized . . .

I saw a letter afterwards from one of the psychiatrists saying that the very problem with me was being sterile and that was the most incredible thing they ever heard of. If I wanted to have an abortion otherwise I could have had one, because another man called me and he would give me a legal abortion, but it cost \$700 or \$800, and at that point I was so scared.

So I went ahead with the pregnancy . . . I went out looking for a job in the rain and I got bronchitis . . . I'd call my obstetrician and say, "I can't breathe," and he'd say, "No one can, dear, it's the flu, it's going around." This went on for a month and a half. I had a temperature every day, so then they decided they'd blow an X-ray on me . . . and the guy was looking at me and he said, "Wow, you're strong. You've got walking pneumonia." All that time . . .

They gave me three doses of tetracycline which makes the baby's teeth brown. My child, it's just now being discovered that he might be slow, which makes me so furious I can't stand it . . . He had a heart murmur . . . and he was born very yellow, as yellow as a sunflower and they called him "Yellow Belly" in the nursery, but they didn't bother to change his blood, which should be done when a baby is born like that.

### Carol's Story

I had an illegal abortion 17 years ago, and until last year, in November in New Haven, I never told anyone.

I was four-and-a-half months pregnant, a freshman in college with a year-old child. I went to friends of mine and they recommended the name of a female midwife. I was to meet her in the public toilets in the downtown section of the city, where we then went in my car to my house. I remember she boiled water, spread newspapers on the bed, and used a catheter with a wire inside of it . . .

I didn't understand. I was 18. I didn't understand the physical aspects

at all, and she didn't tell me about the pain, or what to expect, only that the next morning she would call to make sure everything was all right.

With the wire and the catheter in place, I drove her back to the public toilets . . . It wasn't until about four in the morning, after I had removed the wire and catheter, that I began to feel labor pains. I recognized them because I'd already had one child.



I went to the toilet and, as she'd advised, I had to be sure that everything came . . . the fetus and the afterbirth—and so I took a bedpan and put it underneath the toilet seat. I delivered twin boys. They were recognizable. The right-to-life people are correct about that. They look like human beings when you're four-and-a-half months along. Had I had an opportunity to have an abortion at the proper time, I wouldn't have had to go through that . . .

So at probably 6:00 in the morning I called a physician friend of mine. I asked him what to do . . . I walked to the phone with the bedpan and the twins between my legs because I was frightened to let them hang and I didn't know how else to carry them. He suggested I go back to the toilet and yank and hope that all of the afterbirth would come and that they were fraternal, not maternal twins, so there wouldn't be two. It took a long while for me to do that. I didn't even want to touch it anyway, and I was afraid. But when I did, the afterbirth came all in one lump.

I was alone all this time, and now I had to face the issue of depositing these creatures somewhere. They were too large to flush down the toilet, so I went outside, and I dug a hole and buried them.

I hope that 17 years later we are humane enough to prevent this from happening to my teenage daughter.

### Mary Ellen's Story

When I was thinking of what I was going to say today, all the anguish that I went through came back, even though it happened quite a while ago, because it was a very, very heavy trip that I went through.

Five years ago I had an illegal abortion. I was 17 and away from home for the first time to go to college in Illinois. I was two months pregnant when I left home. In my heart I knew I was pregnant, but the prospect was so awesome and so frightening that I didn't want to deal with it until it was absolutely necessary. I kept hoping that my menstrual cycle would start.

Nothing happened, so near the end of the second month I had a pregnancy test. The test was positive. The male doctor gave me a lecture, insulting and chastising me, but he offered no help. He didn't even mention pre-natal care.

Through the grapevine I found a doctor in the Chicago area who would give me an abortion for \$600. But I could never afford that sum. The whole scene was really hell. I was faced with the anguish of the abortion itself along with having to find someone who would do it for a feasible price. And then I had to get the money together.

I was spending money on long-distance phone calls to the man who was the father of the child. When I first told him I was pregnant with his child, he told me not to worry and not to do anything foolish or dangerous and he would help me financially. But he never gave me any money. I wasted precious time and added to the expense by thinking I could depend on him.

My roommate knew of a woman who had an abortion here in Somerville and paid \$300 for it. I didn't have \$300 but with a lot of hassles, which I won't repeat here, I was able to get it together. An abortionist always wants the cash before anything is done.

Time was flying by, and I had to have the abortion within a week and a half. I was sick almost every morning and I had passed out in the chemistry lab. I flew back to Boston just before mid-term exams. I stayed with different people, made arrangements with the woman in Somerville. She was a retired R.N. and performed abortions in her home.

The method she used was a high douche, which is very dangerous and painful. She introduced a saline solution through my uterus by means of a long hose attached to a douche bag. She put enough in until I started to have bad cramps. Then we sat and we rapped awhile, and she told me what to do and what to expect when it started. But of all the people I dealt with directly concerning abortion, she was the most human and the most caring. The others were men and they were all very abusive.

An abortion by the high douche method is really forced miscarriage. The uterus goes through contractions and then passes out the fetus and placenta. I went through active labor without any pain killers and no knowledge of breathing exercises.

Some friends had told me that I could stay at their apartment, but they both worked, so I went through the whole thing alone. The contractions started at 5:30 the next morning. The pain woke me up. The woman had told me to pass everything into a toilet bowl and not to flush it until the placenta had passed through. The whole thing took over 10 hours. The pain was excruciating throughout, but after it was over I felt like I could go through anything. I was really exhausted, but she told me not to lie down until it was all over. When I wasn't sitting on the toilet I was pacing around. I found a magazine article on abortion and read it, knowing just what the women were talking about.

A week later, when the bleeding stopped, I went for an internal examination, and I told the doctor what had happened. He was outraged and told me I was very stupid, but very lucky because I was all right. The next week I went to another doctor for another checkup and he acted in the same way.

Two weeks later I started having very bad cramps. They kept me awake all night. The next morning the pain was so bad I could hardly move. My friends took me back to the infirmary at school... The doctors told me I had a very bad infection which had gone all the way up to my ovaries. They said I had had the infection for weeks and if it had gotten worse there would be permanent damage to my whole reproductive system. I couldn't understand why I had had two internal checkups and the doctors hadn't found anything. I was in the hospital

for a week and on penicillin for months. And I missed final exams because I was in the hospital.

The abortion and the events relating to it occupied about three months of my life, but the mental pain and confusion lasted for a year afterwards. There's no reason for this to happen. A woman has the right to a safe, legal, inexpensive abortion as an answer to unwanted pregnancy.

### Gail's Story

When I was thirteen, that was five years ago, I was in a play. Every night I got a ride home from a friend of mine. One night, instead of taking me home, he went past my house. I thought that the reason for this might have been that he was upset. He had been sort of strange-acting. He pulled past my house and into a snowy field. Instead of telling me what his problem was, he pulled off my underwear and gave me a present.

I decided that there must have been some reason for this and I didn't think that it would be very nice to him to say anything because he was a friend of mind and because I was very stupid about this.

Two months later the Yellow Pages referred me to a gynecologist and, through a false name, I found out that I was pregnant. I told him. I also told my best friend. My best friend went out and told everyone that I knew.



By the time I was five months along, I had no idea what to do, there being no *Boston Phoenix* or hot lines around. My best friend told her mother who threatened to tell my parents unless I told them. I really wanted to take care of it myself. I

didn't want my parents to know. I was thirteen. I wanted to be independent completely. I had to tell them.

I was very lucky. They called up a friend of theirs who was a psychiatrist who referred us to a doctor in Brookline. He had a business where he would take girls and for \$300 would send them to London to have an abortion.

I was five months along. There was no way that I could get any kind of abortion in the United States. There was absolutely none. It cost me and my mother (she had to take me over) \$2,500 for this abortion. If my parents hadn't had stock to sell I would have been in bad straits, especially since they told me after I was pregnant (and they had never told me this before) that there was a 25 percent chance I would die in childbirth and a 50 percent chance that I would have a deformed child because I have cystitis.

... When I came home, all my friends had known what had happened. People in the town had known what had happened. My parents had no trust in me. My parents constantly said that there was no actual such thing as rape—that if this person had raped me it was because I had been teasing him in some way, which was totally untrue.

... I think this is totally unnecessary and I hope that no other thirteen-year-old girl ever has to go through what I went through.

### Arlene's Story

Dear Sisters for Female Liberation,

I want to take the time to let you know how much it meant to me to have someone just listen to me while I'm going through a difficult time. Feel free to use a copy of this letter I sent my doctor, without response as yet. I know you may have to omit names to be legally safe, but please use my name. Anyone who hears or reads this personal experience *please* take notes, ask questions of professional people to protect yourself or else you might end up thinking they're right and you are really dumb and imagining things.

Why in our society are women made to feel they are guilty when the mistake was made by someone else? I personally decided against abortion as I felt it morally wrong for me. I do not, and hope I never do, judge anybody for their right to decide for themselves.

Letter to the Doctor  
Dr. Joseph Phillips,

In April of this year the 14th day at 12:45 I had an office appointment with you. At this time you examined me and told me the coil I had in me was unsafe. I would become pregnant with it possibly or have it fall back and rupture my bowels or get an infection. You said the doctor was a quack for putting it in me, and you suggested I have a tubal ligation [a sterilization procedure], a D&C, and my coil removed. You said four children was plenty and I now had a little boy. The coil, incidentally, prevented pregnancy for almost three years. You never told me any percentages at this time on the tubal ligation. You said I'd be all set and fine for life. You would sever, remove a piece, and tie. All three you would do. I then went home and talked this over with my husband and



we agreed this was the best thing to do as we wanted no more children. Also you told me at the April visit that you would take just what Blue Shield would offer because I said at the time financially I couldn't do it. You also assured me the hospital would be paid by my Master Medical Plan.

Then on June 5th I was admitted to the Parkway Hospital for Women at 1:30. I admitted myself after arranging baby sitters for my family and I signed an entrance paper on my luggage and one with the anesthesiologist. They then ran urine test, blood test, EKG, and X-rays. I had had all my normal periods up to this time. On June 6th in the morning you operated on me telling me again you were doing a tubal ligation, a D&C, and removing my coil.

June the 7th you made a hospital visitation, and I asked you why the girl next to me was going home and I wasn't, as she had had the same thing done. You then said to me at this

time, "You are staying an extra day because you also had a D&C. She did not."

On June the 8th I was discharged, and a week later I started flowing heavily, so I called your office and asked the girl if it was normal to be flowing like this after a tubal ligation. She then said, "Wait a minute. I'll get your chart, Mrs. Heller." She returned to the phone and said that it was very normal to flow like this after a D&C.

On July 10th I started my normal period. On July 14th you examined me and I was all set now and everything was fine. I was flowing during this examination.

A few weeks later I received a statement saying Blue Shield paid for \$190 and also paid the anesthesiologist \$55. I then received a bill from you saying I owed you \$160, but would get a \$50 discount if I paid it immediately as you were retiring. I then paid this even though in April you told me you would take just what Blue Shield would give you. Then I received a bill from the hospital which I haven't even begun to pay. The bill is \$530.25 which Blue Shield will not pay, as they told me when I called them that a tubal ligation would only be covered if I had multiple births, which is considered to be seven.

In August, around the 5th or 6th, I waited for a period which I did not get. I thought at this time after surgery it could be normal to be late or skip a period. All of August I did not feel well, but passed it off as the flu. When the first of September came I suspected I was pregnant as my chest was sore and I was now skipping a second period.

I called your office and the girl said you were retired and to go to a nearby laboratory and have a pregnancy test. On September 7th I phoned your office and the girl said the test came back positive. All of a sudden she's telling me of course you explained to me it wasn't 100% foolproof (which you didn't). Then she said I didn't have a D&C (which I did) and I could have been pregnant before the operation (which I wasn't). And you as a female specialist knew this before and after I went to surgery.

The girl at this point was willing to say goodbye, but I asked for something to be done so she made an appointment with Dr. Kissner. My husband had to take a day off from work as I don't drive. Dr. Kissner

confirmed I was 6 weeks pregnant on September the 8th. He suggested a D&C. I asked about a hysterectomy. He told me to call a Dr. Broomfield, a psychiatrist. I asked for an explanation at this time. Dr. Kissner cut me short and said what good did it do, he didn't want to hash it all out. *Hash it all out!* You'd think it was my fault a mistake was made the way people treated me. It's only my husband's blood, sweat and tears working two jobs so our family can survive. He works half a day to pay you people what you charge for 15 minutes, and then you don't want to treat us like human beings or even be sorry.

During this week I was very upset emotionally. I called Dr. Broomfield for an appointment, but cancelled it because it is against my moral conscience to have an abortion. I don't know how I even considered doing it except I was very upset.

I've now taken a job 2 nights a week on the weekends 3 to 11 cleaning and picking up aged patients in a nursing home as an aid. I have to do this to prepare for the next child. I'm faced with wondering what to do, after the child is born, about sterility. I have insurance, but they don't pay much on the hospital. I'm faced with the new responsibilities of a child. I wouldn't trust anything outside a hysterectomy now.

I'm faced with wondering what really did happen when you operated. I guess I could understand if they had grown back together over a period of years, but two months? I feel that you should justify this. That I should be reimbursed for a service which was not rendered me and the hospital bill I refuse to pay. That doesn't take into account the running around, the phone calling, and mostly the upset of it all. I don't know if you care about this situation or not, Dr. Phillips. I have always been honest and did my part as a patient to follow your instructions. I've always paid your bills from past visits and surgery. The one thing I hope is that you will be honest and let me have some kind of an explanation. I know that this should and can be justified.

Sincerely yours,  
Mrs. Arlene Heller

I thank you again for at least listening, which the people who were responsible for this incident weren't willing to do.

## Sarah's Story

I have had two abortions, and there was a huge difference between them. I think the reason was that one was legal and one was illegal.

Three years ago . . . I had an illegal abortion in Philadelphia. When I found out that I was pregnant . . . I didn't know what to do. I felt completely alone. None of my friends knew anything about abortion and I was even afraid to tell them.

The doctor was a real doctor, and he had the proper equipment, fortunately. But when I arrived there I had to wait four or five hours again because the doctor didn't show up . . . One woman ahead of me was turned down because she didn't have the cash.

I was given a D&C with very little trouble. I paid \$500 for this abortion. I was not given any tests before the operation, like a blood test or a pregnancy test. I might not have even been pregnant, for all he knew. He didn't ask my medical history. He just gave me an abortion—that's all. It was just the money that he wanted. And I was left on my own from there. I was given no medication for after the abortion. I was expected to find a doctor on my own. And I was very afraid to tell anyone that I had had an abortion at this time. I just didn't know that it happened to so many people . . .

The reason I was pregnant the first time was because I had gone to a doctor who refused to give me any kind of birth control because I was single. I was over 21, but she said that she couldn't give it to me on a moral basis . . .

The second time I became pregnant, which was last winter, I was pregnant because an IUD did not work. It was in place; it was supposed to be working, but it didn't. But this time I was going to a clinic that was very much aware of women's problems, and they immediately gave me names of people to help me. They gave me the name of a pregnancy service, and they even helped me try to get an abortion in Massachusetts.

Unfortunately, I was not able to get one in Massachusetts, but I did go to New York. I got it within two days of when I asked for the information. I went to a clinic outside of New York City. It cost \$135. It was the most



humane medical service I have ever had. As soon as I arrived they started taking care of me. They took tests; they took my medical history; they settled the bill; they discussed birth control; they told me exactly what was going to happen to me every step of the abortion. They explained how much pain I would have, how long it would last. It was really a good experience, if you can call an abortion a "good experience" . . .

## Margaret's Story

. . . I'm an asthmatic so if I sound kind of strange, that's the reason. There are roughly nine million of us adults with a respiratory disease . . . over four million kids also have asthma and many more of these things.

I happen to have four kids. They're all pretty sick. All of them happen to be respiratory cases. I have been on steroids for 13 years. My son, who is now nine, has used steroids for two years . . . all four are really sick. They're in and out of the hospital constantly . . . as a matter of fact, I spend most of my life there also.

Oh, and incidentally, I am a Roman Catholic . . . they tell me once you are baptized, you remain one, whether you like it or not . . .

I also have gone to the hospital to try to get help from any agency or anybody who would help me. This was when the Cardinal, our beloved and dearly missed Cardinal Cushing, was on the Board of Directors at the Boston City Hospital. No way in the world could you get anything.

I happen to have gone to the Planned Parenthood. They were helpless. They were not even allowed to put up a lousy one-inch sign down at the Boston City Hospital until the

dear Cardinal passed on . . .

So the next thing was to go and see what the doctors had to say about the whole thing. Real shook-up guys, eight years ago. No way. Panicked.

. . . No pills for asthmatics. No way. When you're an asthmatic you just don't take birth-control pills . . .

As a result, four children were born. These four children are now cases for the State of Massachusetts. One child costs the state over \$9,000 a year.

These kids have to be educated and they are. The State of Massachusetts will do it for me whether they like it or not. They will also pay for disability . . . I hope they like it 'cause I like it alright.

The State cries plenty about the taxes and everything else. The Catholic schools are unable to provide any kind of education for the children without an extra \$200 per kiddo.

. . . Already me, my husband, and my four children must be costing the State anywhere from \$8-\$12,000 a year. Plus I cost Blue Cross roughly \$2-\$3,000 a year just for me alone.

Meanwhile my church (it still is my religion) says, "Say a little prayer. You'll make it." Lovely. "Ask for help," the priest says. "Go home; make a nice hot cup of tea. That works miracles." You can see what good that did. Rhythm works like hell. I've got four kids to prove it. That's the big game: Catholic Roulette . . .

I'm sick and tired of the ridiculous reasons the Catholic Church has for not granting abortions. They've got to come up with something better. That's all. I don't believe them anymore.

## Elaine's Story

I don't know about you, but I'm a little shaky after hearing all this . . . I'd like to change my original plan about what I was going to say in view of



some of what I've heard.

First of all, I'd like to congratulate Margaret Karol for being here. I'm an asthmatic also. It's a hereditary trait. I am also subject to chronic urinary disease and kidney disease. My entire family has it. My brother is very ill right now. My mother has been hospitalized several times in the past year... the rate of reproduction is rather low in my generation, and I'd like to keep it that way.

I am seeking a voluntary sterilization. I am thirty years old and childless although I've been married for eight years. Neither I nor my husband has ever particularly wanted children, but we did not consider sterilization as a birth control method until the development of the laparoscopic technique.

We decided that I should be the one to be sterilized because I am the one who can become pregnant. I was raped four years ago, and therefore I knew that a vasectomy on my husband would not necessarily protect me against pregnancy.

In seeking a voluntary sterilization, I have chosen to seek it on the grounds of my right to choose what to do with my body, because my experience of the medical profession over the past three years is that my health is sufficiently unimportant compared with the beauty of motherhood to grant me any hope of getting a sterilization on medical grounds...

On August eighteenth I had an interview with a psychiatric nurse who is about my age, is married, and has a picture of a young child prominently displayed on her desk... She began the interview by observing that my medical record was unusually thick for one so young. I agreed. She then asked if I was aware that 90 percent of the type of lung problem from which I suffered were the result of unresolved emotional conflicts... I told her that she was remarkably ignorant, and I suggested that she consult immediately with the doctor that was treating me for these problems before she tortured anyone else with this accusation.

Having begun the interview with the suggestion that I was emotionally unbalanced, she ended the interview by suggesting that we discuss my so-called problems further before even getting around to the subject of sterilization. We spent an entire hour and never mentioned the word

"sterilization." I did, but she didn't.

A second interview was scheduled and cancelled three times, once by me and twice by this nurse who explained that she was ill. I refrained from asking her whether her illnesses were symptoms of her desire to avoid speaking with me and accepted a [Harvard Community Health] Plan psychiatrist as a substitute interviewer...

We sparred verbally for about an hour... during which time she dismissed as unrealistic my statements about being unwilling to assume the obligations of time and responsibility involved in raising children... and she suggested that the world would look rosier to me when I had finished work on my Ph.D.; that I could always have household help, as she did.

Now, in the first place, note the assumption that I was depressed about my Ph.D. work and therefore emotionally unbalanced. She did not understand my moral objections to a private, personal solution, based on personal affluence, to the problem of child care...

Even more disturbing to me was her insistence that I use standard methods of birth control, and since I cannot take the pill and since all other methods can fail, that I rely upon abortion as a back-up method.

She refused to authorize the sterilization on the grounds that I was too young (I've only been fertile seventeen years), had no children (which I observed to her was the point), and did not give sufficiently full answers to her questions, which I partially interpret as her reaction to my refusal to be humble. I called myself a client, not a patient; I said I needed her signature, not her help; when she asked me my age I asked her her age. By the way, she never gave it to me, and I observed that she was very far into an authority trip and perhaps needed to discuss it with someone. Well, humility generally doesn't get anyone very far, so why not fight?

... In concluding, I have several questions about everything that I've been through. If I can vote and get married, that is, get legal permission to reproduce, at the age of eighteen, why can't I decide what to do with my body at the age of thirty? Why does every human being that has a uterus have to use it at least once? Why should doctors be able to dictate what

I do with my own body, when by their own admission, their errors in treatment made me so ill in the first place, so ill to the point of death, and one even suggested pregnancy as some sort of final solution during my hospitalization with an illness that was then believed to be terminal!

I'm white, I'm English-speaking, I'm well educated, and I have enough money to afford a relatively expensive medical insurance plan, and I cannot get a voluntary sterilization. If I were poor, black, and uneducated, would I have to fight forced sterilization? Moreover, if I succeed in being sterilized, what is my future when I go for a standard medical examination and the doctors see the scar and know what it's from?

## Christine's Story

... I chose Beth Israel Hospital. I could have broken the neck of this lady. I could not be admitted to the hospital. Why? The only thing she knew was that I had had an abortion and needed a check-up. So I ask her why. Because I have no family here, she said, but I had never told her. She just had guessed. That was only an excuse.

So I asked her what I have to do. I said, "How do you know that I cannot give you the money, cash?" She began to say, "Well, in this case..." But I just didn't want to hear what she had to say. I said, "Don't consider it. I don't have a penny in my pocket."

Believe it, that I was very scared that I might have an infection. One of my friends died after getting an abortion. Another got sterile due to an infection she got from having an abortion. And everywhere I have come through the world, women tell me the same thing, what we are going through after having an abortion.

I was very scared and depressed. Such a thing had never happened to me before—such discrimination. So I walk up and down the streets. Up and down, up and down, ready to kill this woman and all of them.

I went back and was in front of the same lady. She gave me the same crap. I explode. I ask to speak to someone else, but this time she listens... But I got what I wanted. When I walked out of the hospital she took me in the corner and told me, "Next time I want your money when you come here. I won't trust you again." ♀



# CRIMES IN THE CLINIC: A REPORT ON BOSTON CITY HOSPITAL...

In addition to the women's personal testimony, the following two reports were presented at SPEAK-OUTRAGE. They were researched and compiled by Sharon de Maehl and Linda Thurston.

*This report is about the Boston City Hospital OB/GYN Clinic and its treatment of women. The information quoted comes from legal affidavits and letters written by seven medical students who were concerned with the inhumane treatment of patients.*

*One student writes:*

Patient care is poor and often unethical. I could illustrate this with several specific instances, but I will be brief. Dr. Harvey Weil, OB/GYN Chief Resident, described the program in this manner while discussing patients with non-operative gynecological disease: "Let's not be carried away with this patient-care sentimentality, our prime concern here is to teach the residents (paraphrase)." While most of the house staff is more subtle, this is a prevalent feeling. The name of the game is surgery—bring the patient in, cut her open and practice, and move her out. While she is there, she is an object—treated coldly, patronizingly. Backs are turned on patients, questions are unanswered, operation permit forms are not explained. It is jokingly said that the only pre-requisite for a hysterectomy is to not speak English—it isn't that much of a joke.

One specific case stands out in my mind. A thirty-eight-year-old Black female with twelve or thirteen kids came in for a repeat Caesarian-section. She was asked if she wanted her tubes tied and she did. However, her husband did not and could not be convinced, although there were medical indications against further childbearing.

Post C-section, while she lay on the table, the [doctor] turned to the [consulting doctor] and said, "I think I'll get the appendix while we're in." The [consulting doctor] said, "Good, be sure to get both of them," turned his back and walked out. The lady's tubes were tied, she was not informed, and no mention of the procedure was made in the operation note in the official chart.

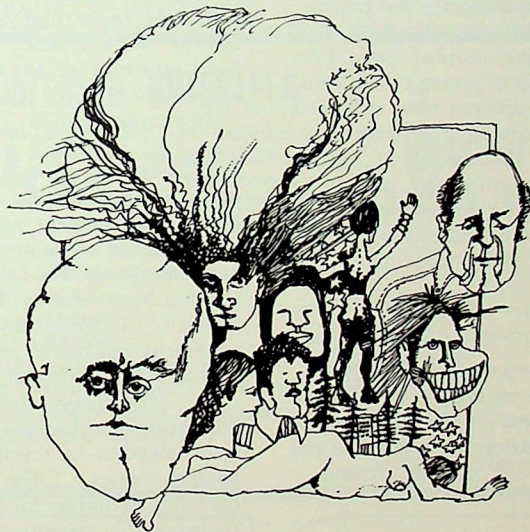
*Another student writes in a letter to Dr. Friedman, Chief of Obstetrics, in February of last year:*

The staff, aware that BCH is a teaching hospital, were interested in "good" cases. Certainly there was nothing extraordinary about that. However, I recall there was one female who wanted to be sterilized and was talked into having a vaginal hysterectomy [one performed by approaching through the vagina instead of by abdominal incision], a procedure the House Officers needed to practice, apparently. Whether vaginal hysterectomy was actually the procedure of choice in this case or not, I am not quite certain. However, the apparent self-pleasure that one or two of the House Officers exhibited after "talking the patient into

allowing this operation," I believe was representative of a poor attitude concerning patient care.

*The practice of choosing an operation for teaching reasons rather than because the woman needs it is documented repeatedly. In one case a 17-year-old black woman on welfare was admitted for an abortion in her twelfth week of pregnancy.*

The patient was told that it was too late for her to have a D&C and that a hysterotomy [an



graphic: Liz Schweber

abortion done by Caesarian section—a major operation] was necessary. She was never told of the possibility of a saline induction. This patient is 17 years old and will have to have all future children by section, since a hysterotomy was performed. She had been diagnosed as twelve weeks pregnant and on hysterotomy the fetal size was estimated at thirteen weeks . . . The choice to do a hysterotomy was made for “teaching reasons” as indicated by the following conversation:

Student: Why not a D&C?

Dr. Weil: Fifteen weeks pregnant requires a saline or hysterotomy.

Note: Patient was not fifteen weeks.

Student: Then why wasn't a saline done?

Dr. Weil: Dr. Leong wanted to do a hysterotomy. (Implied for experience)

The Birth Control/Abortion counselors in the Outpatient Department were particularly disturbed by the handling of this case.

*In another case a woman was having her left tube and ovary removed.*

At this point [in the operation], the patient, who had bled profusely into her abdomen, had received several (three, I think) units of blood. I do not remember what her blood pressure had been, but it was quite low. The resident then indicated that he would like to do a complete hysterectomy. The attending physician ok'd it and a hysterectomy was performed, exposing the patient to another half-hour of anesthesia and surgery and to further blood loss. The only indication for the hysterectomy was training for the resident.

*This surgical experience for the resident amounts to forced sterilization at a great physical risk for the woman by prolonging the operation.*

*The cases of doctors pushing for hysterectomies—the complete removal of the uterus—when it is not medically indicated are numerous. In the case of a black, 32-year-old welfare woman, a student asked*

Dr. Weil why a hysterectomy was being considered over a tubal ligation. He replied, “Well, her age and again—we like to do a hysterectomy—it's more of a challenge—you know a well-trained chimpanzee can do a tubal ligation—and it's good experience for the junior resident—good training.” [The student] interviewed the patient and asked if the Doctors had told her why a hysterectomy was necessary. She replied that they had told her, “. . . a tubal ligation would cause a lot of unnecessary bleeding later on, and that it would be better to have a hysterectomy.” I then asked if she had been informed of the relative dangers involved in the

two procedures. She stated that the doctors had told her that a hysterectomy would be safer because of the bleeding after a tubal ligation and that for that reason she had consented to a hysterectomy. She was unsure which M.D. had told her this—could not remember the name. It was not Dr. Weil as she knew him well enough to state, “I don't like to talk to Dr. Weil—He's too fresh.”

*In discussing the case of a 36-year-old Portuguese welfare mother who had come in seeking a sterilization, Dr. Weil had noted a hysterectomy as the procedure of choice. A student questioned him.*

Student: Why is a tubal ligation the last choice?

Dr. Weil: We want the teaching experience for our residents. She's 36 and doesn't need her uterus. And besides it protects her from cancer and pelvic inflammatory disease. If we do a vaginal hysterectomy, we can tighten up her vagina—her husband will like that.

*In discussing the operation with the woman through a translator, it was found that she was under the impression that she was having a tubal ligation, did not want a hysterectomy, and had not been informed of the relative danger of the two operations.*

*In another case,*

A 72-year-old woman was seen in the Outpatient Department for a vaginal itch . . . The Chief Resident's comment was, “Why wasn't she admitted? She has no right to be walking around with her uterus—we can always use the chance for another hysterectomy. It's not doing her any good anyway.” I feel justified in quoting since the statement was not in jest and I was very surprised to hear such a statement.

. . . On many other occasions other patients requesting sterilization—usually by tubal ligation—were talked to for several days until they agreed to hysterectomies . . . The interest of the Chief Resident was definitely on getting hysterectomies—not on helping the patient.

*Another student's comments indicate a clear racial bias in procedure.*

This 28-year-old Black female was admitted for a D&C plus tubal ligation. The papers she signed for sterilization authorized “Sterilization procedure” rather than “tubal ligation.” This appeared to be the case for Blacks and Puerto Ricans. I saw two cases where whites had tubal ligations and the papers specified this. It is my impression that the broader term is used at times to permit a more radical procedure than the patient desires.

Some of the most startling and disturbing information we found came from another study. It concerned medical experimentation using uninformed and unconsenting women as the subjects of dangerous and unnecessary studies. Pregnant women at Boston City were deliberately given doses of tetracycline, an antibiotic already known to result in kidney disorder and other damage to babies. The group of women, acting as controls for the study, were untreated for their infection. As you might expect, the intentionally untreated women did not improve. In the group treated with tetracycline, the expected number of children were born with abnormal appearance and conditions. The women in this study did not know that they were part of an experiment. We have no reason to think that this is an unusual situation. In the medical journals that report on these studies, we find no mention that the subjects gave their consent.

We also found extensive documentation of contempt for the women patients at the clinic. One such story is of a 21-year-old white woman with gonorrhoea, a disease known to the medical pro-

fession as gram-negative intracellular diplococci. The following conversation was noted by a medical student on the rounds:

Doctor Weil: We've found what you have.  
 Patient: What is it?  
 Dr.: Do you know what a coccus is?  
 Pt.: No.  
 Dr.: Well, do you know what a diplococcus is?  
 Pt.: No. [becoming agitated]  
 Dr.: Well, how about a gram-negative intracellular diplococcus?  
 Pt.: No, what is it? [quite agitated]  
 Dr.: Well, that's what you've got.  
 Pt.: Could I get it from a urine infection?  
 Dr.: No, you wouldn't get it from that.  
 Pt.: Could I get it from my IUD?  
 Dr.: No, we're sure you didn't get it from your IUD.  
 Pt.: Then how did I get it?  
 Dr.: Don't worry about it. We're giving you some medicine that will take care of it.

[The student commented that] this conversation with the patient was very obviously intended for the amusement of the residents and

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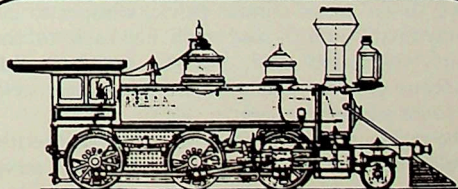
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medical students on the rounds. This was my interpretation from both the content as presented here and the tone used. The other medical student concurred with me. The patient was left in a very disturbed and agitated state with no knowledge of the nature of her disorder.

I was quite angry and asked Dr. Verlain, a senior resident, if I could tell the patient what she had. He suggested that Dr. Weil would be quite angry if I did and to wait, as Dr. Weil would probably go back and tell her himself that evening. At morning rounds the next day, the patient still had no idea as to the cause of her condition. She now had convinced herself that it was caused by her IUD and demanded that it be removed. A resident insisted to her that it was not her IUD and that medicine would cure it. She was by this time highly agitated, in my words, "freaking out." She was not however told that she had gonorrhea or VD. After rounds, I saw the patient and told her that she had gonorrhea. She was greatly relieved, as she had feared cancer, or that her IUD was causing an infection that might affect her fertility. I informed Dr. Verlain of the patient's condition and of what I had done. He later took the patient aside and explained her condition to her.

*Another student reports of an occasion where*

... a 35-year-old Black female was admitted with a chronic complaint of suprapubic pain. The resident on duty that day was demonstrating how to do a quick (maximum ten minutes, I was told), efficient [physical exam] of an acute admission. The patient was in the treatment room, in stirrups, when the resident entered. Without ever looking at the patient's face, he sat at a small desk in the room, with his *back* to the patient, and took a three-minute GYN history, in which it was discovered that the patient had never been pregnant. From her tone and expression it was obvious to me that this was a fact which was disturbing the patient, however, the brevity of the exam gave her no time to express this. The resident then proceeded to do a two-minute pelvic, whisper to me "leiomyomata uteri," and with his back to the patient (writing), said, "You have fibroids [tumorous growths] on your womb. I guess we'll have to do a hysterectomy."

The resident never noticed this (his back to her and all), but the patient was immediately crestfallen, crying profusely. The resident left the room immediately, charging the nurse to "Get her to her bed," never offering further explanation to the patient. When I suggested that this might have been just a bit crude of this resident, he countered with: "We don't have time to baby people here. Besides, we do this operation all the time, it's nothing." He

was not open to the suggestion that this patient does not have the operation performed on her "all the time" and that this might be a crucial moment in her life . . . He did say he'd talk to her (she later told me he never did). When I suggested that the operation might not be necessary, or, if necessary, perhaps a fibroidectomy might be a possible alternative to a hysterectomy, his answers were: "We need our majors" and "If she's still a nullip [had no children] at her age, she might as well have it out."

*Still another student reports:*

A woman is in labor on the delivery floor and is not progressing well. A staff consultation is requested. The staff member comes up to the patient, and without a word to her proceeds to examine her internally. He says "Section" and leaves the room.

*In another report a doctor asked a nurse if the patient intended to breastfeed her child. She replied that she didn't know, but that the doctor had already ordered medication to prevent lactation. A student questioned the doctor . . .*

. . . as to whether there was any special indication for him to order the hormones. He replied that it was really unimportant that she could not breastfeed, since she had a healthy baby.

*And again,*

The Boston City Hospital Outpatient Department maintains an office for birth control counseling. Dr. Weil entered this office and noticed among the many pamphlets on birth control one on vasectomies. He became quite angry and ordered the counselors to remove the pamphlet immediately as it would decrease his female surgery. The counselors appealed to one of the staff men and the order was rescinded.

*The litany goes on and on: cases of sterilization and experimentation without the knowledge or consent of the woman involved, cases of operations unnecessary for the woman—performed for teaching experience or for profit, and running through it all an attitude of contempt for the women—the butt of jokes, not even told what is happening to them. Yet what is most surprising of all is not these stories themselves, but the realization that we have not heard them before. These are just some of the stories of a single OB/GYN clinic in Boston. Yet the story is repeated countless times. It is time for us to demand to know, demand that doctors be accountable to us. It is they who must change. ♀*

# CAUTION: TRUSTING YOUR OBSTETRICIAN MAY BE HARMFUL TO YOUR HEALTH

All women are deliberately disadvantaged in dealing with our bodies because the medical profession takes great pains to restrict the average woman's access to accurate information. It is virtually impossible for a woman unconnected with the medical profession to use any of the local medical school libraries. For instance, we were told by the librarian at the Harvard School of Medicine's Countway Library that books were not available to the non-medical public because "they wouldn't be able to understand the first page of any of these books, and anyway, even if they could, it would scare them to death." She also commented, "We don't want them knowing all this stuff, do we?" The high cost of purchasing medical books and journals makes it impossible for most women to buy them. Physicians often flatly refuse to discuss the treatment they give with the patients who receive it. Hopefully, the information we have gathered will help to warn women of the problems, deceptions, and injustices encountered in seeking obstetrical or gynecological care.

Because lack of information can produce a passive and accepting attitude toward doctors, few women challenge the physician's authority over their lives. Few people question medical judgment when a surgical procedure is advised. Not all surgery advised and performed is necessary, however, and unnecessary surgery seems disturbingly common in gynecological and obstetrical care.

We spoke earlier of the enthusiasm with which doctors at Boston City Hospital sought women to perform hysterectomies upon. Many pathologists think that more than half of all the hysterectomies done in this country are done for no good medical reason. Some women are not even informed that the uterus has been removed. The motive for this surgery is often profit. A major operation costs a lot and surgeons' fees are high. Another motive is the surgeon's opinion that the woman should not bear more children. This can be considered forced sterilization, and a woman should be wary. She should ask, through a lawyer if necessary, to see the pathology report that must be issued any time an organ is removed. If the report shows no abnormality of the organ, action might be taken against the surgeon and the hospital for mutilation.

One very simple way that doctors insure their so-called right to operate on women is the routine

surgical and anesthesia forms signed upon admission to a pre-natal clinic, and valid for the remainder of a woman's pregnancy and for her stay in the hospital after delivery. A woman who signs these papers, usually in the first months of pregnancy, is giving the doctor her permission to perform surgery whenever he decides it is advisable. No woman should sign these forms. If surgery is necessary and the woman agrees to it, the permits can be signed at that time.

One example of a routine, but not always necessary, surgical procedure is the episiotomy, a cut made at the outlet of the birth canal to ease delivery. All surgical procedures have their risks, and should never come to be regarded as harmless and routine. Each woman should be considered individually at delivery, and the decision for or against episiotomy should be made based on the size of the baby's head and the elasticity of the mother's vaginal tissues. We know of an incident of serious hemorrhage by a local woman at a Boston hospital for women, caused by a severed artery in the course of a routine episiotomy. The doctor did not notice that he had cut the artery, and the staff refused to act on the woman's complaint that she was bleeding badly. An expensive follow-up repair was necessary, for which the doctor charged his full fee. A prepared mother can assist in her own delivery, and aid in the head-delivering, often without episiotomy, even with a first delivery.

Another routine procedure is anesthetizing the woman in the delivery. Yet every type of anesthesia involves the administration of a poisonous drug. While attempts are made to use the minimum necessary to obtain good pain relief in childbirth, the fact remains that a normal delivery without anesthesia is far safer than a medicated one. There are cases of women and babies being injured or dying from both over-anesthetization and allergic reaction.

The main danger with regional anesthetics is allergic reaction. Other problems are improper administration of the drug or misplacement of the needle, causing anything from headache to permanent paralysis or death, in extreme cases. On the other hand, the general, or inhalation, anesthetics have a depressing effect on the infant's respiration. The greatest danger to the mother is that of vomiting while under the anesthesia and choking, not at all a rare complication. Medical

clinic in a storefront. The women did not want to expend energy duplicating services that the hospital should provide, so they made their demands directly to the hospital.

*Counter-Institutions: Setting Up Women's Clinics.* Other groups of women, however, see their energy best realized by creating alternative health structures. Women that I talked to at the Somerville Women's Health Project here in Massachusetts see themselves as providing a model for good, non-male-dominated health care. It is especially important to them that they find *female* doctors to be on duty during their two free medical nights. In an attempt to personalize the health process, some of the Somerville women act as patient advocates, talking extensively with the women before and after the exam. They also want to stress preventive health care and irregularly hold classes on nutrition, drugs, and alcohol abuse.

The Somerville women realize that the medical care they can provide is woefully limited, and even if they could increase the amount of care, they would be taking pressure off the existing power structure, the hospital. They don't feel at this moment they *could* effectively attack the medical system, however. They see the need to create a model of good free health care *and* build a community base. The Somerville women want to emphasize this second goal: the Health Project is a place, an organizing center which Somerville residents can use to make demands on the larger health facilities. Right now the women are making plans to organize a city-wide campaign for comprehensive health care.

The collective that runs the Women's Night at Cambridgeport Clinic shares many of the goals of the Somerville Women's Health Project. They also want to present a model for good, free health care. In forming the collective, they, too, wanted to emphasize preventive care. But there are so many sick women in need of treatment that they have become a crisis-oriented clinic.

The women of the collective treat exclusively gynecological problems; they do pelvic exams, treat vaginitis, take Pap smears and pregnancy tests, fit diaphragms, insert IUDs, and prescribe pills. The unique feature of the clinic is that they—the women—are learning to do all of these things. With the help of two male doctors, twenty women are training as paramedics. By proving that lay women can become skillful gynecological paramedics, the Women's Night collective is challenging the sexism of American medicine in a much more active way than the Somerville Women's Health Project. It is unfortunate that one of the male doctors is still the authority of the

clinic; but the sad reality exists that only 3% of the gynecologists in this country are female. Women must learn gynecological skills from men.

Again, the women are not deluded into thinking that a counter-clinic or even training themselves as paramedics significantly changes the American health system. As soon as possible the Women's Night collective wants to open a storefront in a lower-class community which, like the Somerville women, they can use as an educational and political center for future organizing.

These two groups of women in the Boston area want to radically change the health system; they want to see women in decision-making roles; they want to see female doctors. Because these are not the realities of the present medical system, the ideal must be created to prove that it can exist before it can be effectively demanded of the health system. Half of Brooklyn's actions forced better health care, but they did not challenge the basic sexist flaw of the health system—the dominance of male doctors.

Many of the women's clinics are likewise concerned with replacing the present crisis-oriented health care with preventive care. Right now, the chief function of the doctor is to treat the already sick person, instead of teaching her how to avoid illness. Crisis-oriented care is more expensive for people and more profitable for the doctor. The emphasis of the American health system is on sickness and money, *not* health. Women's clinics are actively working to shift the focus of interest from doctor to medical consumer. Of all the clinics I have information on, the San Francisco Women's Health Center impresses me most with their vision of health care, preventive health care: the Center teaches self-help and will eventually incorporate yoga, massage, and nutrition as part of their program.

*Self-Help: Checking Out Your Own Cervix.*

Self-help is becoming the most energetic, pervasive, talked-about, controversial activity within the women's health movement. *Time* magazine says: "One extreme symptom of Women's Liberation has been the refusal of some feminists to submit to examination by male gynecologists... Do-it-yourself gynecology has spread to cities across the country." Nora Ephron in *Esquire* declares: "When I first read [of self-help] I was shocked and incredulous." Lolly Hirsch, who put together the booklet *The Witch's Os*, writes on first viewing her cervix: "I felt as the Great Goddess must have felt when she had created cosmos out of chaos, and stood back to view her marvel... I viewed eternity."

My God, you say, what is self-help? On the  
(continued next page)

# SELF-EXAMINATION TECHNIQUES by Barbara Monty

You need for self-examination: directional light (a strong flashlight)  
speculum (plastic ones are inexpensive and easier to obtain)  
long-handled mirror  
firm bed or table

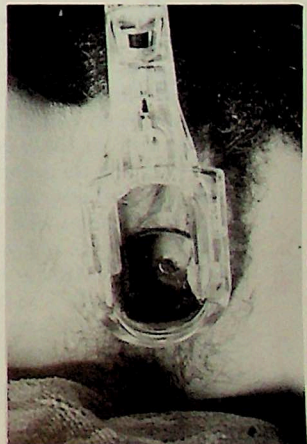
It's a good idea to have your own plastic speculum to eliminate the transfer of infection. Be sure to wash it in warm water and an antibiotic soap after each use. You should go through the motions of opening and locking the speculum before you actually examine yourself.

- 1 When you are familiar with manipulation of the speculum, position yourself comfortably on the bed or table, sitting or lying down with knees bent and feet placed far apart. You may want to prop yourself up on a pillow.
- 2 Holding the speculum closed, gently insert it sideways into your vagina, at the same angle you would hold a tampon.
- 3 When it is in all the way, slowly turn it so that the handle is pointing up.
- 4 Then grasp the handle and firmly push the shorter, outside section of the handle toward you. This will open the blades of the speculum inside you.
- 5 Now, steadily holding the part of the handle next to your pubic hair, push down the outside section until you can hear a click. The speculum is then locked open.
- 6 If you have never done this before, or are in an awkward position, your vagina may tend to reject the speculum. You can have a friend hold the handle in place while you manipulate the mirror and light.
- 7 It is often easier to have the light pointed at the mirror and the mirror held so that you can see into the tunnel that your speculum has opened up. This pink area, which looks much like the walls of your throat, is your vagina. At the end of the tunnel is a pinkish bulbous area that you'd think was surely the head of a wet penis. That is your cervix. If you don't have it in view, then gently draw out the speculum and push down on your stomach muscles. This usually causes the cervix to pop into view.

*When I first saw another woman's cervix, I thought that it was pretty gruesome, and why were all these women in the clinic getting so excited about it? Then, when I saw my own, I couldn't believe that now I actually had access to it. I could even see the string of my IUD! It was coming out of the very opening that my child would come from. It was, indeed, a passageway to life!*

*I became overwhelmingly awed, and even spiritual!*

*Recovering from the spiritual part of this pretty quickly, I realized that by regular examination I, too, could have some part in keeping myself healthy.*



photos: Women's Photography Collective

simplest level it means looking at your own cervix with a speculum, a mirror, and a flashlight. Self-help focuses on our genitals. While 95% of American doctors are male, 97% of American gynecologists are male. How can men presume to know so much about that part of the body which is uniquely female? Self-help is a direct reaction to male dominance of our reproductive organs. We want our genitals back, the self-help women are saying, we want to know what they look like, and we want to know how to take care of them.

In the spring of 1971 Carol Downer set up the first Self-Help Clinic in the back room of the Everywoman book store. She began promoting the technique of self-examination, and in a new version of consciousness-raising, Carol and her friends began learning about their bodies by sharing observations and experiences.

The Los Angeles women discovered that if a woman examines herself regularly, she can check to see if her IUD is in place, a procedure that normally requires a visit to the gynecologist and an outlay of \$15-\$35. She can detect abnormalities which might lead to tumors of the cervix, a disease that kills 13,000 women a year. Eventually she can diagnose vaginal infections and take Pap smears. And a woman can tell when she is ovulating and when she is pregnant. In Australia, self-examination is used as a means of birth control. Researchers discovered that the cervical mucus at the time of ovulation changes from being cloudy and tacky to slippery and stringy. According to a *San Francisco Examiner* article (8/12/72), "This method is so simple and effective, it is being used by blind women."(!)

Carol Downer, Lorraine Rotham, and other women set up the Los Angeles Feminist Women's Health Center. They began teaching self-help, and experimenting with period extraction and simple remedy cures for vaginitis—like applying yogurt to the vagina. Yogurt does have a scientific basis as a cure: the lactobacillus in yogurt encourages the growth of desirable bacteria in the intestine and the vagina. In fact, lactobacillus used to be sold in suppository form. It is not known, however, whether whole yogurt with its carbohydrates and fats is as effective or effective at all.

Unknown to the women of the Center, police were watching them for six months. On September 20, ten policemen broke into the Center confiscating items like a fifty-foot extension cord and, according to one word-of-mouth source, some fruit-flavored yogurt which the hungry owner finally claimed back as her lunch.

A day later Colleen Wilson and Carol Downer were arrested. Colleen ended up pleading guilty to one charge of fitting a diaphragm; she was fined \$250 and placed on a two-year probation. For

helping another woman insert a speculum, diagnose monilia, and apply yogurt, Carol Downer was charged with a misdemeanor, practicing medicine without a license. This charge was a violation of the *business* code, not the medical practice. Carol was violating the money-making interests of the business community! She pleaded not guilty.

Carol's trial ended favorably: the jury declared her not-guilty because the application of yogurt was defined as a home remedy which does not conflict with the practice of professional medicine—or business. Women in California now have the right to examine their own and each others' bodies—amazing to me that we have to win that right.

Self-help groups exist all around the country, but for different purposes. Some groups use self-help as a form of consciousness-raising—to learn about their bodies to be better able to challenge the once-sacred word of the doctor.

The Los Angeles women have been using self-help as a way of experimenting with their bodies. Using equipment that resembles, in miniature, the vacuum aspirator, twelve women have been extracting their menses every month for about two years. By being able to extract their periods in about fifteen minutes, they avoid a week-long menstrual flow. No more tampons, no more messy Kotex. These women have only glowing accounts of this procedure, which they call menstrual extraction.

If women looking at their own cervixes has caused controversy, women extracting their periods has caused an explosion. Recently I talked to Ellen Frankfort, the author of *Vaginal Politics* and health columnist for the *Village Voice*. She was very upset at the lack of information the Los Angeles women are giving out about their experiments. Apparently, the possibilities of infection and cramping have not been discussed by the Los Angeles women. Further, this claim of being able to extract the menses completely in a short period of time has not been confirmed in New York. Ellen knows a gynecologist, Dr. Stimm of the Albert Einstein Medical College, who has performed 200 cases of "menstrual extraction." In 95 percent of these cases, the doctor was not able to extract the menses completely. Rather, this procedure *initiated* a menstrual flow lasting from two to six days. According to Ellen Frankfort and her sources, then, "menstrual extraction" is a misnomer. She prefers to call this technique endometrial aspiration.

I don't know what to think. No one in Boston is experimenting with endometrial extraction, so I have no first-hand accounts. A friend who recently came from San Francisco tells me that four of her friends had their periods successfully extracted.

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*For those of us who are not directly involved in health groups there are many things that we can do. The first thing, of course, is to educate ourselves. In the past few years several excellent publications have come out to help women know more about our bodies: THE WITCH'S OS, THE MONTHLY EXTRACT—AN IRREGULAR PERIODICAL, THE BIRTH CONTROL HANDBOOK and THE VD HANDBOOK, and OUR BODIES OUR SELVES. Once we know what to expect, we can start making the gynecologist accountable to us.*

*It was because of reading these publications that I decided to take a less passive role in dealing with my doctor. Having gone to see him to get an IUD string cut, I took off my underpants, pulled up a long woolen skirt, and sat, booted, in the stirrups.*

*The nurse then came in and covered me with a cotton drape. Because I had read that this practice is archaic and I had always bated it, I took it off, and told her that I wanted to watch. She was horrified! I was immodest and very weird. I tried to explain to her the ridiculousness of the drape since I was fully clothed and the doctor would see just as much either way.*

*"What if someone should walk in?" she whispered. Sure enough, in came the doctor, who put the drape back on and to whom I repeated what I said to the nurse. He then raised his eyebrows and said he'd never heard of anything so silly. When I told him that the area around my os was inflamed, he stopped, looked up, and said, "How do you know?", as though I had intruded on one of his most guarded secrets.*

*Telling him that I had been examining myself for some time with a plastic speculum, I explained that that was why I wanted to watch. Incredulous, he then looked at me as if I were a rare species of caterpillar. Like a little boy whose toy had been taken away, he said, "You have no business doing that!" It really was scary to see what happened when his "omnipotence" was threatened.*

*Well, I got the string cut, didn't have to wear the drape, but I didn't get to watch him either. Two weeks of pain and bleeding later I had to have the IUD removed (at a women's clinic this time). It seems that the early redness around my os was an indication of an inflamed uterus caused by the IUD he had put in and subsequently cut.*

*Perhaps he had ignored my observation because he was so shocked that I had spoken up . . . I don't know, but I'll never go back to him.*

*On another occasion, I read that some women have a friend come into the doctor's office with them as a "patient advocate." "Great idea," I thought. I had been going to a doctor who was unwilling to answer my questions and who was becoming increasingly condescending. He had, however, recently performed major surgery on me, so, of course, I thought him to be a divinity.*

*On my next visit, Deb came with me. When I introduced her and told the doctor that she wanted to watch the examination, he said that it was totally against his ethics. When we questioned him further as to what he meant, he said, "Look, dear, I just won't do it." I was stunned.*

*Why was he so threatened? Why must everything always be on his terms? Why are women's needs not considered?*

*The result? Deb and I walked out on him. I later wrote a letter telling him how insensitive he'd been and then sent copies to the hospital that he's associated with.*

*You may say that I wasn't very successful. Well, not yet . . . but it's a beginning, and my experiences have made me better equipped to deal with future doctors, and I have a greater sense of power over my own body.*

*Even if we cannot be pioneers in self-help or work in women's clinics, we can all at least learn more and be less passive in our dealings with doctors.*

*We should no longer be afraid to challenge them. It is they who must serve us.*

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The controversy remains. Can endometrial aspiration be used to extract a woman's menses completely without subsequent bleeding?

Endometrial aspiration is being used successfully as an early abortion method. If a woman has missed her period, suspects pregnancy, and is still fewer than 14 days late, she can have her endometrial lining extracted by this simpler, cheaper form of abortion. But at two weeks late, there is no way to tell if a woman is indeed pregnant, even by histological examination of the removed lining. The results of Dr. Stimm's study show that 40 percent of the aborted women were pregnant and 15 percent were not; in 45 percent of the cases, the results were equivocal. At this early stage there is no method to determine whether the endometrial contents contain a fetus. It is this statistic which can be a boon in those states with restrictive abortion laws—abortion laws could be circumvented by performing endometrial aspiration. However, with the high undeterminacy figure, many women could undergo the procedure unnecessarily.

The other controversy that has been generated by self-help and endometrial aspiration is one of

political perspective. By learning how to be their own doctors, by exercising their middle-class privilege in creating a "personal solution," the Los Angeles women are criticized for retreating from the larger struggle to change the total health system. But according to the statements that came from Carol's trial, this criticism is unjustified. She is now saying: "The Self-Help Clinics teach first-hand knowledge of our bodies so that we can ultimately provide better health care for ourselves as well as become better medical consumers." There is a new stress on medical consumption, on acquiring knowledge to deal better with the health system.

I see self-help in terms of self-knowledge. I want to learn about my own cycle and watch my cervix for abnormalities. Self-help will probably become a regular health habit: every woman will check her cervix just as she examines her breasts or brushes her teeth. Self-help is a form of preventive care, not an end in itself. It does give us more power in dealing with the gynecologist. Knowledge gives power, and with that power we no longer have to act as passive, ignorant recipients of a health-care system that is not in our interests.

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(continued from p.10)

## 19th Century Outrages

surgical excesses reserved the right to castrate 'nymphomaniacs'.")

Until I read Benfield's article I had thought that clitoridectomy was a barbaric and unusual practice limited to a few countries in Africa.<sup>2</sup> In fact, clitoridectomies were "performed in the United States from 1867 (or earlier) until at least 1904, and perhaps until 1925. Circumcision of females co-existed with clitoridectomy in the 1890's, and was widely advocated in response to what was gauged to be a growing incidence of masturbation and other dangerous unappeasable irritations of the clitoris. The operation removed a piece of skin, the 'hood' above the clitoris. Circumcision of both girls and adult women continued to be performed in the United States at least until 1937, its fundamental rationale the curbing of woman's masturbation and the unappeasable erithism (abnormal responsiveness to stimulation) induced by unsatisfactory intercourse."

The third operation invented in that period to deal with women's problems was "normal ovariectomy, so called because its indications were non-ovarian conditions—"neurosis, insanity... troublesomeness, eating like a ploughman, masturbation, attempted suicide, erotic tendencies, per-

secution mania"—in short, "anything untoward in female behavior." This operation was far more frequently performed than clitoridectomy and by the early 1890's had reached the proportion of an "epidemic." "Doctors competed with each other in the number of ovaries they extirpated, and handed them around at medical society meetings on plates like trophies."

These operations (and others like them) were not the only expression of sexist backlash in this period. Another serious outcome was the almost total elimination of women from the field of obstetrics by the first two decades of the twentieth century. By 1968, 99 percent of all pregnant women were delivered by men.<sup>3</sup>

By carrying out a propaganda campaign "to persuade women that 'normal' pregnancy and parturition were the exception, and childbirth a 'wound' that only the expertise of males would master"—and using legislative means to implement their take-over—male physicians were finally able to win "their hundred years' war against midwives."

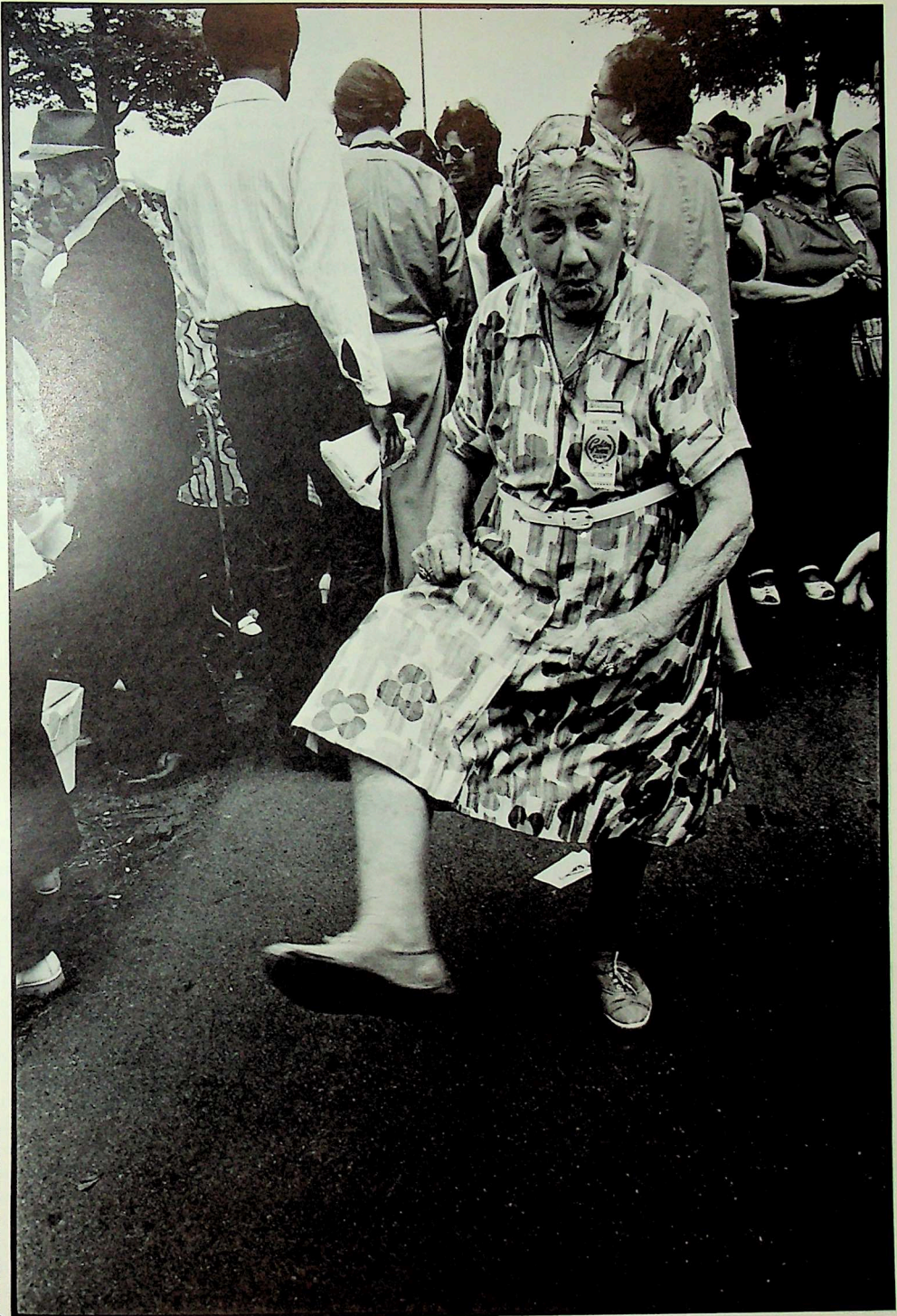
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1. Most of the material in this section is based on an amazing article by Ben Barker-Benfield, "The Spermatic Economy: A Nineteenth Century View of Sexuality," *Feminist Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, which should be out by now in book form, under the title *The Horrors of the Halfknown Life*. Unless another source is specifically stated, all quotes are from this article.

2. cf. Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, "Sudan: Arab Women's Struggle," *The Second Wave*, vol. 2, no. 2; and Robert Ruark's novel of Kenya, *Uhuru*.

3. "Sweden, where women go to midwives early in their pregnancies, has the lowest maternal and infant mortality rate in the world, but the United States ranks 13th." (Pam Kalishman, "Midwifery," *Off Our Backs*, Nov., 1972).

photo: Roz Gerstein



*Golden Age Party*

## FOR JUDY

For the love you bear women  
which I do not understand but  
know as brave

I took your hand  
in mine one night in Maine  
when we walked out on the men,  
the house, the sleeping children.

Our excuse, night blindness.

Fog rolled in, leveling hills.  
We lay on our backs feeling the earth  
rise, breathing,

dark over/against dark  
everything opening  
into the primal field.

I didn't care if you liked me.  
You didn't judge the possibilities.

We were free. We were nowhere  
but there in the burnt-over blueberry  
field in the sky & the twin tractor ruts  
that lead to the house had vanished.

Stones: fallen stars.  
Ferns white froth in moonlight.  
I smelled the sea. I felt my way.

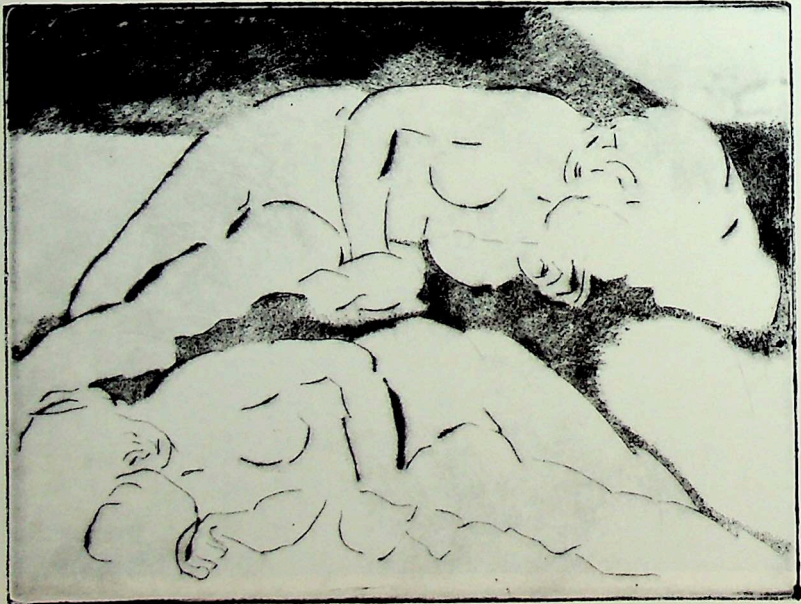
—Susan Wilkins

## JO ANN

knowing it is useful to have a hobby,  
you have become a weaver of rainbows.  
you collect old clouds,  
bits of sea-foam clinging to wet sand,  
wisps of fur that fall into your hand  
when you caress a passing kitten.  
gently, you scrape the scabs of tears  
from the faces of sleeping friends.  
at night you weave them into rainbows,  
to be used as gifts for christmases and weddings,  
and amulets against madness.  
when you prick your fingers  
blood flows into the rainbows,  
and smiles, and thoughts, and terrors.

men do not believe you are a rainbow weaver,  
because you say words like cocksucker,  
and once tried out  
for the college football team.

—Karen Lindsey



# Film makers

The following interview was aired on August 16, 1972, on WBUR, Boston University's radio station. The narrator, Maureen McCue, is a Boston filmmaker who co-directed *Genesis 3:16*, a 1971 documentary on the woman's movement and *Fine Times at Our House*, a documentary on old time mountain music made in 1972.

Maureen McCue: Today's program is about women filmmakers in the Boston area. I have with me here Liane Brandon, director of *Anything You Want To Be*, *Sometimes I Wonder Who I Am*, and *Betty Tells Her Story*. Liane teaches film at North Quincy High School and is vice president of the New England Screen Education Association. Secondly, I have with me Diana Rabenold, script-writer for *The Class of '75*, who manages the Orson Welles Cinema and is a graduate student at Boston University School of Public Communication and Film; and Miriam Weinstein, graduate of the School of Public Communication Film School, who worked for Polymore Films and has made two films, *How To Make A Woman* and *Not Me Alone*. Miriam is now working on two films, one on her father and one on day care. Miriam, you worked for a film company for a while. What sort of problems did you find?

Miriam: I found the obvious problems that you expect to find. It varied with the kind of people you were working with: with people who tended to be more radical and loose, it didn't make that much difference. As soon as you went into anything that was close to the business world or government, though, suddenly people started looking up your skirt and down your dress and not expecting you to be important. It was always a shock to see that it really still held true. Things are changing rapidly, but it's still very much a man's field, and you're usually the only woman around: it's easy to be not taken seriously.

Maureen: What about you, Liane?

Liane: The problems that I encounter now? The problems that I feel are difficult are being a woman filmmaker and being recognized as such—but also being labeled "feminist filmmaker." In some ways it almost feels like a putdown to be labeled woman filmmaker, which somehow, I feel, tends to set you apart, even though your films may be about a

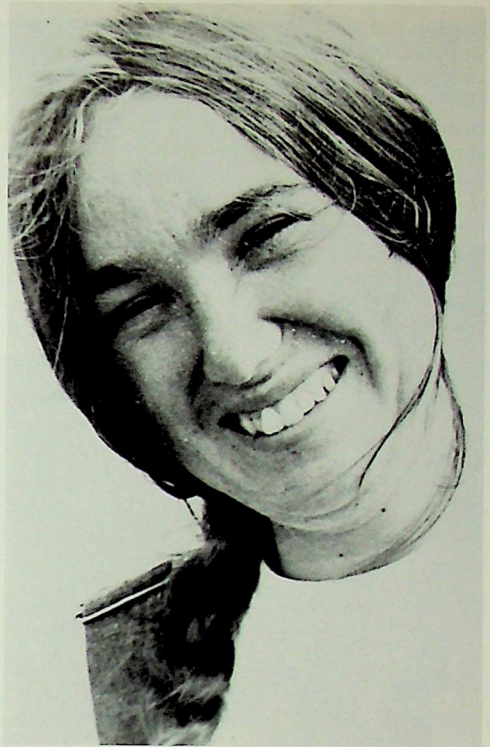


photo: Patty Beth McCue

Maureen McCue

question or problem that is fairly universal, and you want to be accepted as a filmmaker even though you are coming from your own perspective, which happens to be a woman's point of view but is also quite broad. The other thing is that people ask me what I do in films, and they say "Oh, you're a script girl?", or "What do you do, the editing?" "No, I do my camera work . . ." "Oh, what about sound, do you do your own mixing?" And if a man were to come across with those things, it wouldn't be surprising at all, but to have to always repeat yourself and to say, "Yes, I do those things; I am a filmmaker"—it gets to be a pain in the ass!

Maureen: What do you think, Diana?

Diana: Well, I'm not in a position to have some of those problems. I'm not out there making any productions right now. But I don't mind being called a feminist filmmaker because I know that having become a feminist has changed me a great deal and has changed the kinds of films I'm going to make. I don't want to become a propaganda feminist filmmaker or have anyone assume that all my subject is going to be is a kind of newsreel footage for the movement. I think that's a distinction.

Liane: That's what I meant; I agree.

Miriam: On the other side of that, sometimes it's an easy opening I feel I might as well take advantage of when I can. Now people are especially looking for women.

Diane: I feel a little bit exploited by that. It's almost as if we're hot items right now because the women's movement is going, and you just happen to be a woman filmmaker and it's the vogue to have women filmmakers, and we want you now, but after this thing passes, well, go back to doing your weaving, or pottery, or whatever women do.

Liane: Yeah, exactly. We're going to have to be very, very careful. Distribution companies are now

panies in New York are controlled by men; I went to a videotape network that was very interested in a feminist film that I had worked on and they didn't want it, because "it would unbalance their feminist package." So I began to wonder what was in the feminist package.

Liane: I remember when I first started showing my film: there was nobody; there were no women running distribution groups or TV stations or anything, and they also looked at my films with, "Well, what exactly are you trying to say?" I finally began showing it to women and there was no question about what I was trying to say. Now people seem to understand a little bit. They might not like what I'm trying to say, but at least it's being shown.

Maureen: Don't you find that your audience is mostly women anyway?

Liane: I thought it would be, but right now it's not. *Anything You Want To Be* is used a tremendous amount by high-school classes dealing with social issues, with contemporary problems in American society. *Betty*, which is a more psychological film, is being used by people interested in mental health—not just women's mental health, but the mental health of families of which women are an integral part. They're not as limited as I thought they were.

Maureen: Miriam, what sort of distribution have you gotten for *How To Make A Woman*?

Miriam: Well, nothing yet on *How To Make A Woman*, because we just finished it. Probably we're going to have a road show, going around to different colleges. The other films so far we've distributed ourselves. We've found that the kinds of problems that come up with women's films come up with any kind of film that isn't geared toward a big market. Lots of people have started distributing films themselves because large companies can't see the value of what you're doing. Another thing is that there still is a really basic fear on the part of a lot of women about technology and about mechanics and gadgets; that stops a lot of women from doing things like becoming filmmakers. If at all possible, you should just try to get over those things as quickly as you can. You should be able to ask questions and try not to be intimidated. Most women still are, and in schools and colleges it's still mostly men who are taking photography and film courses.

Liane: An analogy I use when I teach filmmaking courses is the idea of using a sewing machine. If you can thread a sewing machine, you can thread a projector, and if you can follow a recipe, you can do still photography developing.

Miriam: You can be intimidated by a lot of guys who hang around saying, "Oh, boy, we got a double system, four track, quadruple head," some-



photo: Gillie Terry

Liane Brandon

asking for feminist films, and TV is looking for little spots they can use, and we might be terribly exploited. When they're tired of the issue—not that it will disappear, but when *they've* tired of it—we'll be right back where we started. Or even worse off, 'cause they've done their thing with us. In fact, one distributor didn't want to sign a contract with me for more than three years because he thought the women's issue would die.

Maureen: Well, in distribution you're always up against those problems, especially if you have "touchy subjects" in your films. What I've found with distribution is that all the distribution com-

thing like that, and you don't need to know about any of that. There are all kinds of fantastic professional and nonprofessional filmmakers who can't thread cameras from one week to the next, and who don't know about light meters and who still manage to make film. The important thing is if you want to do something, just figure out a way to do it; you don't have to know a tenth of what they tell you that you have to know.

Liane: People ask me what kind of film I use, and I don't have a clue. I read the thing and pick out: well, this looks like the right thing, and I do a test. If it works, it works. I think that men are much more into the gadgetry, and that intimidates people. It's the "language"—I don't want it.

Diana: I think that film schools can be very intimidating in this way. All film schools should have an affirmative action program in regard to women. It's fine for us to tell women how to approach these men who are going to try and intimidate them, but I think that the schools should go out of their way to make certain that they don't discourage women, who are so vulnerable to criticism about mechanical things, and who are so open to the charge that they are innately unable to handle it. You really have to handle women much more gently than men. I think that there should be a dual treatment in the very beginning, until confidence is established. The faculty should be educated in dealing with women who are so very insecure about these things. It goes back to age one and the kind of toys they played with. One little lecture on how they really can do it isn't going to overcome that kind of insecurity; it's a lot of work.

Miriam: The problem is that most of the kind of people who teach in film schools are the kind of people who really dig the gadgets, who aren't making films, who are just in there explaining what the newest gadget is.

Diana: Right. My experience was that even after being in film school for a year, having worked on a film for four or five months, I was doing screening for professors in the department, threading up the projector, and was asked whether I knew what I was doing. I just wanted to kick somebody. The problems are really very enormous. It's very discouraging at first, and a lot of women at film school drop out. It almost looks like a planned program on the part of the department, because you face enormous amounts of hassles. You go in to get equipment and they say, "We don't want you to take it out of the school," "You can't take it out of the city," "You can't do such and such . . . You can't carry it." You can't carry it: that was the whole thing before we started to work on this women's film. Not only did they think we couldn't use the equipment, they didn't think we



photo: Marsha Feldman

*Diana Rabenold*

could carry it out of the building. They were very surprised. They'll ask you to carry in the groceries, and the laundry, right? Forty pounds.

Liane: I never went to film school. It's funny, because my films are doing pretty well. They're getting fairly wide showing, and almost everyone who sees my films says, "You would never have made that film if you had been to film school." You break all the rules, and they're unconventional in terms of what film schools ask for. I think that a lot of the women's films I've seen are much more personal and seem a lot more intuitive in some ways and deal with more of the things that make up our lives, rather than these grand action films of chase scenes and violence and things like that. They deal with relationships between people and the things that are vitally important to living an emotionally satisfying life, and many people just aren't ready to accept films that don't provide either an escape or excitement.

Diana: I think that there's a women's audience that's ready for those films. The action films are really specifically for a male audience, as are most films that are produced today. You see, as soon as *their* action starts—male action—the fighting and running, the gunfights, to me, the action is stopped. I mean, the action of relationships, the vibrations between people. They've totally ignored the women's audience. They used to think that there was such a thing as the "women's film,"

which to them meant a film scripted by a man, directed by a man, that moved people to tears just because it was so maudlin and so sentimental; that's what they thought got to women. Well, it did, on one level. It was so much more personal than the fighting all over the barroom, with which women can't relate, but it still isn't the perspective. Liane: So they're waiting for us to take them on. But that's another false expectation. I remember someone wanted a woman filmmaker to speak; they talked to me, and they rejected me because I wasn't militant enough. I wasn't angry, I wasn't a Man Hater—they really wanted their stereotype. They want to put you into cubbyholes, and it's so hard to fight to stay out of it.

Maureen: Have any of you ever worked or do you work very frequently with men on crew doing films?

Liane: I have a lot, and I find that my biggest problem is in having enough confidence in myself. I think the situations I worked in have been with fairly understanding and nice men. I haven't worked for big networks or for slick advertising people directly, only indirectly, thank god, and with those people I think that things are different. I think that my problem and the problem that I see in most other women I know is just not having the confidence that you can do it. It is obvious that I can do as much as anyone else can, and sometimes if I feel that something is too heavy, then I ask for

help when I need it. That is also important. There's no point in trying to be a superwoman. There are some times when something is heavy, and you're an idiot to pretend it's not. The average cameraman is at least 50 to 75 pounds heavier than you are, and you don't have to run around saying that you can do everything.

Miriam: I've found that my first priority, and the priority of lots of the men filmmakers that I know and respect, is not the technical competence. There are ten million people out there who can do whatever it is with their eyes closed. You don't need that. You need somebody you can get along with and a whole group of people that can get along with each other and not be unreasonable or narcissistic. You're in it to enjoy yourself and to do something worthwhile, something that you'll be happy that you've done. You just try to find people that you work well with. Women tend to place that value ahead of men, but just because you're making films doesn't mean that you have to ignore that. You should keep all the considerations at hand. It's usually possible to work out some kind of deal so that you have somebody who might not be your best friend but is a nice person: someone with whom you can feel comfortable working hard, having crises and all kinds of problems, and who is a competent enough person. Maureen: Diana, when you work on film, do you generally work with women filmmakers?

Diana: Well, not so far. In the past, all men, with maybe one exception. The first time was disastrous for me. In film school the rule was that if you wrote the script that was accepted for a crew film, you directed it. I wrote the script that was accepted, and was going ahead to direct it, and first of all, I felt a great reluctance on the part of the faculty to have me do that. Nothing that was said to me—rules are rules—but there was surprise that I was going to do this. There was a very strong male personality who had worked closely with me on another script idea, and he wanted to co-direct. Finally I thought that would be a good idea, and I was being very weak about it. I thought, well, let him get some experience too; I've done the script and I'll get some direction. As we worked along, of course, it was impossible for two people to tell the actors on the set what to do, and he had a better voice for that kind of thing. He was telling the actors what to do, and pretty soon I was doing nothing. Nothing. I don't blame him entirely for this. I'm very unhappy about the film as it came out, and I vowed that it would never happen again. The second time, I was asked to do some script work on a childcare film. Those men, when we talked about things, were very open to my problem. That was a very good experience, but it wasn't a big one; I wasn't a full member of the crew. Now

photo: Terry Seymour



Miriam Weinstein



I'm working with a script group to do a film, and it's all women. That's because it's a women's picture, more or less. It's something I want to do with all women specifically.

**Maureen:** I've had very limited experience in working with men on films. When we started off in film school we had a crew film that we did at the beginning of the year. I saw the light immediately. You knew that you'd become the script girl, or you took notes on the set. When second semester rolled around, it became very obvious that the only way that I would really learn how to use the equipment was to work with other women. Choosing a feminist topic sort of eliminated the problem of having men work on the crew. Working in the women's movement, they didn't want to have men around because they wanted to see women working on the film. At first it wasn't going to be accepted because it was to be only four women working on this crew, and finally it did go through and we did the film. Since then, I've just worked with another woman on a film, and I much prefer it. You talked before about the slick network routine, and when I worked in New York the problems were terrible. There was a woman directing the video project, and the man in the control room wouldn't pay any attention to her. It was a very difficult situation. There was a tremendous amount of tension, and I was doing camera work at that time and ran into enormous hassles. Guys were constantly running out and grabbing the equipment until finally there were two women doing camera work and we just told the men to beat it. You always have to be aware of those kinds of situations, so I'm very leery of working with men. You initially have so many problems if you're not working with the right people. I would avoid it.

**Miriam:** For me, being an independent filmmaker has a lot of the same connotations as being a woman filmmaker. It stems from the same needs: I've found that it's a terrific relief to figure out you're just going to go ahead and do something by yourself. Whether there's some big network out there that's not letting you do it, or it's men not letting you do it, or it's some kind of standards that you're supposed to comply with, it just makes you feel terrific just to say FORGET IT, I'M JUST GOING TO DO WHAT I WANT TO DO. The surprising thing is when you get around to doing it, people usually like it a lot, and it's usually a much more meaningful thing than when you're playing it safe and trying to just do something that you think that everyone will like, but you just feel kind of wishy-washy about. So for me being independent means trusting your impulses more and taking more risks, and just pulling yourself together, which is the most difficult part.

**Liane:** I've found the same thing. Being independent does present a lot more problems because you're putting a lot more of yourself on the line. The thing that surprises me more about filmmaking than almost anything else was that I thought, well, you made a film, and somehow it got shown, and I never realized that half the work comes after you make the film. How do you get it shown? The incredible amount of work that just goes into pushing it: that's where you have to do your negotiating with the big people. That's where it's difficult even though we're a hot subject right now.

**Diana:** The first feature film that's being made about the women's liberation movement, a dramatic script, was written and produced, the whole thing, by men. Barry Nelson, the actor, is putting it out. I saw a clip from it and I was appalled, not because it said something contrary to the movement, but because it was so stereotyped. Why weren't the women the first to do that kind of thing? I'm sure that there are plenty of scripts submitted, and plenty of women ready to direct a project.

**Miriam:** No, I disagree. I don't know that there were plenty of scripts and plenty of women ready. My experience has been that women are just waking up, and are just learning to write scripts, and are just learning how to direct, and are just getting to do it. That's been the problem all along, that there just haven't been enough women who have been really ready. Now it's happening more and more.

**Liane:** I think they were ready, Miriam, but I don't think they're given very much encouragement.

**Miriam:** It's the same thing.

**Liane:** Okay, they weren't willing to fight for it, and that was the problem. Some of them have been writing scripts all along, but their scripts haven't been accepted, and so you don't get a lot of experience.

**Maureen:** I think that the whole problem really in the past has been that women filmmakers were independent filmmakers. I know of women who tried to get fundings for feature films through Hollywood, or the big companies, and were never able to get that kind of money. You had, for instance, Maya Deren. Maybe there were fewer women in the past who could get the money to do it.

**Miriam:** It's a vicious cycle, a vicious cycle altogether, because there were three women in my class when I entered film school, and that's a very small number. More women now are doing more and more things.

**Maureen:** Last year there were four, next year there are ten.

I'd like to thank everybody for coming and talking about this. ♀

# dealing with RAPE

by Holly Newman

"Rapists Beware" is the warning scrawled in dripping painted letters on a large rock in New York's Central Park, a traditional haven for rapists. Posters and calling cards about a rape crisis center appear all over Washington, D.C. Rumors circulate around the country that women in New York and Berkeley are carrying out "extralegal retaliation."

The word is out—forcible rape occurs every 14 minutes, according to FBI statistics, and women in at least twelve cities are acting to stop it. In Boston, Detroit, Los Angeles, Hollywood, Minneapolis, Berkeley, New York, Tampa, Cleveland, St. Louis, Washington, and Venice (California), women are searching for ways to eliminate the humiliation that rape victims meet at the hands of police, hospitals, and courts. Women defying the myths of our passivity are evolving a whole range of ways to help rape victims, educate the public, and teach women how to avoid sexual assault.

Possible tactics break down into crisis aid, prevention, and education-outreach.

Right now, one of the most effective methods of dealing with rape is a rape crisis center, open 24 hours a day, or as long as the staff can manage. Women in Washington, D.C., have been running a 24-hour-a-day crisis center since June 1, 1972. Much of this article comes from the ideas in their August 1972 paper. While they emphasize that these ideas reflect collective personal experience in a particular community, the guidelines are useful for starting a center anywhere.

Preparation needed before a rape crisis center can be opened includes research into the medical and legal procedures that are used in the community, as well as planning for methods of counseling rape victims. A questionnaire delivered to emergency rooms of area hospitals will help determine the most positive medical aid available to raped women, although attitudes of personnel vary from shift to shift. It's useful to know a hos-

pital's policy on: a) VD treatment and information; b) pregnancy tests; c) by whom and how soon a rape victim is treated; d) methods of followup; e) method of payment; f) giving of sedatives; and g) possibilities for psychiatric aid (referrals or in-house clinic). It is useful to be aware of developments in abortion legislation in the state and nearby states, as well as the usual cost of an abortion, and to know what legal restrictions there may be on contraceptive devices, including the morning-after pill.

Organizers of centers have found it

transcripts where available also provide valuable information. Concrete information about rape laws and statistics is helpful in counseling and in answering questions about the center.

Preparation for both short- and long-term counseling can take the form of intense project-group meetings at which processes of counseling are explored. Women who have been raped and are able to discuss their feelings and needs give realistic dimensions to such discussions. Sessions with a trained therapist are useful for learning counseling approaches. Mock

graphic: Beth Marshall



crucial to have a lawyer available to the center to give women information about rape prosecution procedures, legal counseling, and police questioning. Getting such information from the police themselves has proven to be difficult, but the Washington center is hoping to establish liaisons with policewomen in order to determine how and in what areas change might be made. Speaking with women who have been through police rape procedures and examining rape trial

telephone conversations between "rape victim" and "counselor" are useful; initially women may find it awkward to discuss the intimate details of a rape experience, and such embarrassment should be worked through before actual conversations take place.

Follow-up discussion groups for rape victims provide long-term emotional help, but experience with victims themselves will show how these can best be structured. The Washing-

ton women have found that small discussion groups in which women share their experiences work better than large ones. These small groups are followed by seminars for raped women and any interested friends on the basic theme: "Rape: The Victim's Perspective."

The following is a hypothetical rundown of what a rape center can do when a rape victim calls. The woman speaking to the victim offers first to call a cab to bring her to the center. (It is ideal to set up a 24-hour transportation service, but this requires more money and staff.) Information is given about hospitals, police, and the center's counseling facilities. The Washington group suggests that a woman from the center accompany the victim to the hospital. She is informed that the hospital will call the police, and is given information about police procedures, evidence requirements, and the likelihood of conviction to help her decide about going to the police. The decision should be hers; if she wants to go to the police, a woman will accompany her. If not, she may be referred to a clinic for medical help.

If the woman needs company for the night, facilities are provided for her to sleep and eat at the center. If she needs information, and will not be at the center, she is asked to call the center later if she has medical questions or wants further counseling. She is urged to talk about her experience, both with her first phone contact and later at a regular discussion group with other women who have been raped or attacked.

Rape hotlines also encourage calls from women who were raped in the past but have been unable to talk about it. Getting her to talk over the phone or involving her in a discussion group may provide the first outlet for the burden of guilt and fear that a rape victim may have carried with her for years.

The philosophy behind rape counseling, as the Washington women see it, is self-help—getting the woman to re-direct the guilt and anger she may feel at herself toward the institutions which perpetuate rape—and helping regain the control over her life which the rape has effectively curtailed. Having women talk to other victims makes them feel less isolated and more aware of the political implications of

their victimization.

If it happens that a woman is experiencing larger psychological problems than untrained counselors can handle, they will suggest that she see her own doctor; if she doesn't wish to do this, professional referrals are made to either a known feminist therapist or community mental-health resources.

To institute a rape-prevention program, a center can provide a place for self-defense classes, or refer women to classes at schools, or YWCA's, or wherever such classes exist. A campaign should be waged to make self-defense a required subject at junior high or high schools. Dangerous areas need patrolling at night: it has been observed that a man who harasses a lone woman will slink past four or five women. An alternative is an escort service for night hours, available by phone to any woman. But many rapes take place in the home, and self-defense should be part of every woman's physical and emotional resources.

Most other prevention tactics are long-term—educational. Women need to be aware of our ability to defend ourselves, to know we *can* punch, kick, yell. The Women Against Rape of Detroit in their *Stop Rape* pamphlet strongly advise women to learn a few basic techniques (mainly punching, kicking, and blocking) and then to continually practice them mentally. Women can distribute copies of this pamphlet or write a local one; write articles for the local press, or letters to the editor, emphasizing how women can defend against assault whether trained or not; share any solid information to tell other women that rape is a reality in their own lives and help them deal with it.

A group lacking a center, facilities, or numbers can educate about the feminist perspective on rape and try to attract new women to work at forming a center. Various centers across the country contributed to the ideas

below, which can change or expand to answer the needs of the community.

**Conferences**—Take presentations on self-defense, politics of rape, police and hospital procedures, and legal aspects of rape to colleges, N.O.W. groups, political caucuses, or high-school assemblies. These are good fundraisers, as well as educational devices.

**Media**—Compile a Women's Rape Record, as the New York group has done, to exert pressure on legislature, courts, and police. This group also organizes weekly Rape Speak-Outs to give help and support to women who have been raped. Start a bumper-sticker campaign to encourage women to pick up other women who are hitchhiking. Paste posters up wherever possible to spread information on rape prevention. Start a guerrilla theater group.

**Publications**—Write a pamphlet about what to do if you're raped, what to expect from police and hospitals, and what the rape laws are in your state.

**Research**—Collect a bibliography of articles and books; make a file of newspaper coverage. The Venice, California, rape squad, by meeting women at the time of crisis, is trying to assemble information on known rapists in the area to circulate.

**Outreach**—Tell other women's groups, area clinics, medical centers, counseling groups, and schools at all levels about your existence, and specify whatever services you provide. Establish a speakers' bureau on rape. Posters, bumper stickers, and radio public-service announcements are good tools, too.

More detailed information on all these points is available from:

The Rape Center  
P.O. Box 21005  
Kalorama St. Station  
Washington, D.C. 20009


Women Against Rape: *Stop Rape*  
Women's Liberation of Michigan  
Rm. 516 2230 Witherell  
Detroit, Mich. 48201 (\$25)

New York Anti-Rape Group  
243 W. 20th St.  
New York, N.Y. 10011

In the Boston area, the group to contact is Women Against Rape at the Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge, Mass. 02139; telephone: 354-8807. ♀

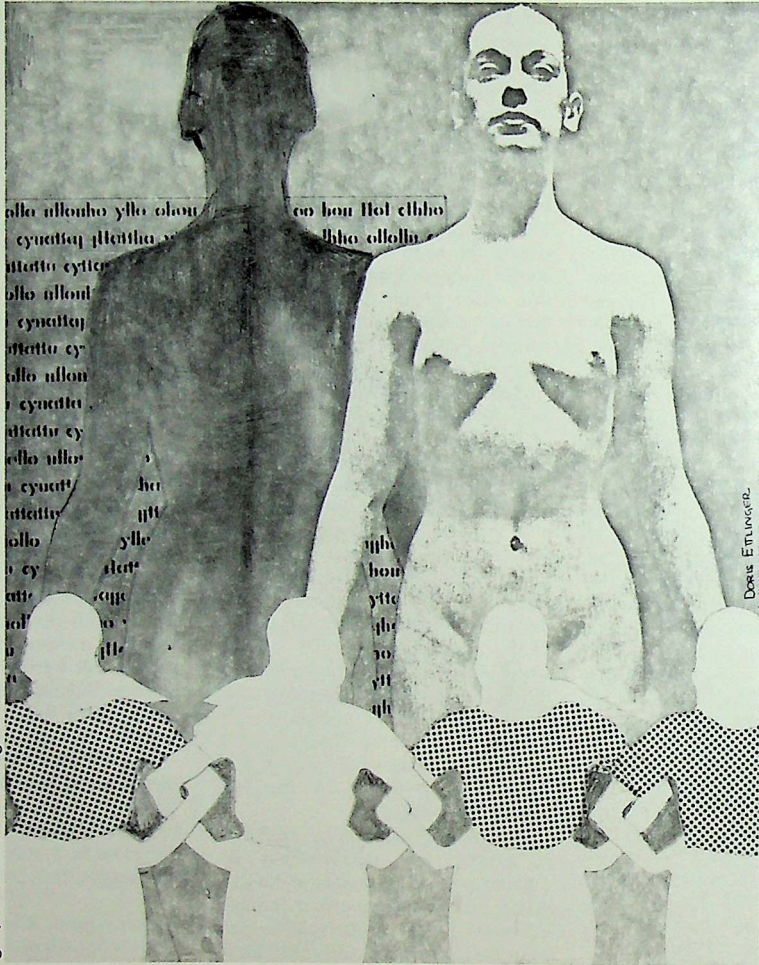
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graphic: Doris Ettlinger

I am a woman; I am a Lesbian; I am a feminist. A simple enough statement to make in 1973, a statement acceptable and even praiseworthy in some quarters. To make it so simply, to declare it so publicly now belies the pain, fear, rejection, and humiliation attached to that statement for the past four years. As I sat down to write this article about my own evolution from affirmation of my sexual preference to gay activism to involvement in the women's movement, remembrances, people forgotten, small incidents, pain, and hope flooded back to me so vividly that for a time I was unable to write, or even to talk.

My "coming out" . . . 1968, and there I was, girl wonder. Advertising executive . . . well-coiffed, well-dressed, well-fed—and well-hidden. Hypertense, creative, on a manic high when I wasn't on a manic low, wondering, fearing, having doubts and anxieties about my self-worth, life style, validity. Hearing snide little jokes about dykes and biting my lips, fuming with anger, frustration, and shame. But I had it made . . . right? Chic apartment, woman that I cared about, business trips, expense account. All I had to do was pretend to be straight for 8 to 10 hours a day. The mind might have been willing, but the body ultimately rebelled, and I ended up in the emergency ward with a case of bleeding ulcers. The weeks I spent in the hospital were a period of intense soul-searching . . . could I live the rest of my life as girl wonder, or, just possibly, could I work out a lifestyle in which I could honestly be me, whatever the hell that was. The decision to be me, and take my chances on whatever that was, cost me my job, my lover, and at least for a time, a certain portion of sanity.

And so there I was, a self-defined Lesbian with little real understanding of what that meant or how it would effect my life. "Coming out"—acceptance and affirmation of the fact that one prefers to relate emotionally and sexually to members of one's own sex. And initially, the most devastating responses I got were from other Lesbians, still in the closet. I threatened them. To be seen with me, to live with me, to go to the god-damned movies with me threatened them with public recognition. Friends that I had known, women with whom I had shared intimately, avoided me; and I was alone, isolated, and frightened.

At that time there seemed to be only two options for gay women—to keep one's sexual preference confined to the bedroom and appear

# looking in

by Elaine Noble

"straight," or to do the bar scene with its heavy butch/femme role playing, degradation, sense of isolation . . . the meat rack. Daughters of Bilitis was formed in Boston in the late '60s as a option to the bar scene, and it was through D.O.B., which I investigated only as a last resort to alleviate my own alienation and paranoia, that I began to move tentatively toward gay activism.

D.O.B. had its own difficulties organizing in Boston (one of the radical underground newspapers which prided itself on its avant-garde approach refused to accept notices of meetings), but eventually, the few brave souls who cared pulled together by-laws, elected officers, and became legitimized. Somehow those formal mechanics meant a great deal to us not only because they established a D.O.B. chapter, but in some way they also established our own validity as people. If our initial activities centered around softball games and business meetings, nevertheless the sense of solidarity and communality I felt gave me a temporary lease on sanity.

And here I must digress, overwhelmed with memories I thought I had hidden away forever. I remember Gail King, a gentle and fearless woman who was then president of D.O.B., whom I would call late at night overwhelmed with terror. Gail, whose compassion held me and countless others together in times of crisis. Dear Gail, and Diana, and Aggie, Andy, Ellen, Laura. Few of us remain in D.O.B. or even in Boston. Some retreated to New Hampshire and Vermont, broken-hearted, bitter. Others have gone, vanished without a call or a note. A few remain, and some feel it is easier now. But I remember and weep for us all.

Just writing this small article makes me remember so much, and I am crying for the strong ones who had to hide, the less-than-strong who could endure no more, and for those who disappeared utterly. I am crying for Gail, whose health failed, for both of us lost women we loved because they could take no more. And I am shaking with the pain of watching blank, uncomprehending, hostile faces in an audience as I expose the deepest parts of myself trying to make

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*An intimate thank-you to my most dear friend Berta Benjamin, for lending her editing talents as well as emotional support, without which this article would not have been realized.*

them understand, shaking with the horror of seeing myself as they saw me . . . a freak, a tattooed lady. And the humiliation of those soft male voices calling in the night to whisper obscene horrible things, and of the dirty words written on the car and the punctured tires. If all that has ended now, the scars have not quite healed. And during that whole troubled time, we had only each other.

As I sit here, I wonder, if we knew the cost, would we still have done it? I guess we would have, for our speaking out came of a desperation which admitted no other alternative. We could not go back; we could only hold each other and murmur words of comfort as we went forward into god only knew what.

If initially my feelings of identification were with the gay movement, it became rapidly apparent that Lesbians, like women in every other situation, were the brownie baking, coffee making ladies' auxiliary of the gay movement. Gay men had the same hangups that straight men did about dykey broads, and only after the most militant of confrontations did they accede to minimal demands. When the Homophile Community Health Service opened in Boston, only the extraordinary tenacity of D.O.B. women enabled us to use the facility for counseling one night a week (the slow night). Gay men, when looking for a token female or two to take along for a confrontation, invariably asked for "feminine looking" Lesbians (who were then ignored). At one confrontation at the Mayor's Office of Human Rights, an assembled group of 10 men and two women were told that certainly the office "understands your plight . . . it is important for men to be able to hold their heads high and walk proud." Outcasts? You'd better believe it.

Feeling so isolated, so cut off as women, the logical place to look for understanding was in the feminist movement. After all, many Lesbians, even if they were closeted, had worked long and hard in the women's movement. The issues being raised by feminists were certainly issues gay women knew on a gut level; and to some extent, oppression of Lesbians was and is, in a very deep way, related to the oppression of women in a male-dominated patriarchal society.

Over the course of several months of intensive reading and discussion, my own feminist consciousness was raised to a fever pitch. As I read and discussed points with other gay women and feminists, my own ideas came into sharper focus. I heard, I believed, I was saved . . . almost. When I began to discuss Lesbianism and its feminist implications, I was confronted by outrage. Gay and straight feminists alike told me that the issue would destroy the women's movement, that we had to go one step at a time, that people just weren't ready for it yet . . . but sometime,

sometime. The feminists who supported a positive stand, as the N.O.W. people who wanted everyone to wear purple arm bands in the August 26 celebration, were few and far between. And so there I was, with other D.O.B. women, having experienced so much pain and wanting to work in the women's movement, and being told that I was acceptable only if I could play it "straight." Wasn't this where I had come in?

Well, feminists just needed a little information—they needed to know that we were people who had integrity, people who were kind and honest and decent, people who had mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers. We were, after all, people just like a lot of other people . . . we went to the supermarket, started diets, and sent out Christmas cards. Concerned about the hostility we had heard about from California and New York, we decided that D.O.B. would try to formulate an education policy which would be non-threatening but firm and straightforward, and that its major thrust would be to feminist organizations and women. Gail did a presentation for N.O.W., where the response, if not hostile, was certainly not enthusiastic. I decided to establish contact with Female Liberation and went over to the old office on Boylston Street. I knocked at the door, received no answer, went down the street, called the office, and was told I could come up. An indifferent sleepy woman who kept wiping back her tangled red hair let me in reluctantly and showed me where the literature was. She then dialed a phone number and remained on the phone until I left. There was

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no literature on Lesbians, no material on women relating to women, and apparently vast indifference to the subject if this woman was any measure. Sisterhood? Hardly. I went back to the Female Liberation office two years later to visit some new friends, and one of the women remarked that they had recently held several intense meetings on Lesbianism. I felt I hadn't missed too much in the two years.

In the spring of '71 we held a series of forums on gay and straight women in the faculty lounge of a local college, an environment we felt convenient and non-threatening. It was our hope that we could air some of the hostility and create understanding amongst women as feminists. Female Liberation, N.O.W., and several other organizations were contacted; they sent representatives, and the forums got under way as weekly rap sessions. The series ran for almost two months and was an exciting process to observe as well as participate in. It might have lasted longer, but for one woman brought by a friend. We were all into the stage of feminist consciousness where God forbid we should dump on another woman even if she was acting oppressive, and when this woman began dominating the discussion and coming down on everyone, gay and straight alike, we were afraid to react. When I finally got together sufficiently to confront her, it was too late. The evening had been ugly, and the group was demoralized. I was the only Lesbian to attend the next meeting, for my sisters had felt ripped off and didn't want to come back. Both gay and straight women learned a great deal from these forums, some attitude changes were effected, and those gay women, including myself, who were willing to continue working with straight women learned that for better or worse, it was *our* responsibility to articulate our needs clearly. In general, Lesbians who attended those forums were so much more vulnerable than the straight women (after all, accepting homosexuality is a totally different thing from understanding heterosexuality, which is the cultural norm) that they were also much more easily discouraged. I understood their feelings but continued to be committed to the concept that we must confront straight feminists with information, facts, and ourselves.

It was during a business meeting of D.O.B. in January of '72 that we first began to formulate political strategy. The Women's Political Caucus was having its first plenary session, and Gail felt that it would be important to send as many D.O.B. women as possible. We assigned at least two members per workshop and planned that each of us who entered a workshop would go armed with as much material and information as possible. Each workshop would come out with a segment of the

platform of the Caucus, and we were determined that Lesbianism be dealt with. I was assigned "Women and the Law," and I must have looked very intense coming into the room with books, papers, and pamphlets under my arm as if I meant to teach a seminar. It paid off; that workshop, as did all the others, came out with a strong statement on Lesbianism. We really kept it together those two intensive days at Boston College. We forced ourselves into conversations with the more condescending straight women. One black female lawyer (whom I later found out was gay!) asked me if I knew what I was doing. She was about to go into the "jeopardizing the women's movement" harangue. I stopped her by saying, amidst gasps of horror, "I don't tell you to keep quiet because of the color of your face; please understand that I won't be quiet because of my sexual preference." She looked as if she wanted to hit me, and said I was like a Black Panther coming before a Baptist congregation demanding equality now. I told her I wasn't demanding anything, just asking that my positions, situation, and issues be treated with respect, and if that made her uncomfortable, well that was where the hostility was coming from and I was sorry.

By the end of the two days, those of us from D.O.B. were confident enough to put two candidates up for steering committee of M.W.P.C. I was one of the candidates. We didn't seriously think that either of us would win, but as the returns came in, it was obvious that the women there had taken our presentation seriously enough to elect me. The M.W.P.C. had a token Lesbian to deal with, and that token Lesbian was scared shitless. What the hell did I know about politics? The last thing one of my Lesbian sisters said to me as we left the plenary session was, "Volunteer, woman, volunteer for every fuckin' thing. Now that you're in the same room with them, don't let 'em forget us." So, at the first steering committee meeting, I allowed my name to go in to nomination for one of the three directors' slots. When the votes were counted, Ann Lewis from the Mayor's Office, Lena Saunders, a black woman who heads up "My Friend the Policeman," and I had been elected. The shock on some faces around the room was obvious.

The steering committee met monthly, and after the initial awkwardness, the "political" women dealt with the issue straightforwardly and emphatically. Although I was the first live Lesbian many had ever met, once they realized that I was not going to attack, they began to realize that we had many more things in common than differences. One of the more sincere memories I have is that of three steering-committee members standing shoulder-to-shoulder with me at a fund-

raising party as we backed John Kerry into a corner asking him his stand on gay rights. The hostess of the party, also a steering-committee member, felt a little awkward as her candidate turned down a request to appear on the "Gay Way" radio show, but she too remained stalwart.


Another humorous moment occurred when one of the same three women, who has repeatedly told others she was "very close to me," attended a small planning meeting for a possible fund-raising with Bella Abzug. As we were sitting around informally drinking coffee, this same "close" friend turned to me and said, "I've always wondered, Elaine, what do Lesbians do? They just feel each other up, right?" As I sat trying to refrain from giggling, one of the other women there began to chide my "close" friend for the paucity of her fantasy life and the limitations of her sensual imagination. Gently and in a right-on way, the second woman made it perfectly apparent that women who hadn't had Lesbian fantasies were a little odd. I sat silently while a consciousness-raising session on Lesbianism went on, feeling that at last things were beginning to move in the right direction.

Things have not been all rosy, however, for I've had my share of flak both from gay and straight women. Some of my more militant Lesbian sisters felt that at times I was selling out or overidentifying with straight women, and on one occasion, I experienced an emotional ripoff by a straight woman which still leaves me shaking. One young liberal woman decided to befriend me, and meetings for lunches, dinners, drinks ensued. I was being pursued and was amused by it to a point. One evening she offered me a smoke—a joint which must have been treated in nitroglycerin. My own paranoia level rose at least 75 points as she began

to get warmer and more affectionate. I thought I must be imagining things. I wasn't, and when we woke in the morning, I was almost about to apologize . . . until I heard her saying she wanted me to meet her black boyfriend. Christ. I had been taken by a collector of oddfolks and now she wanted to get her collection together. I was flabbergasted. She has since managed to manipulate situations so that I have met her black boyfriend, as well as her new wizard married boyfriend, and the whole experience and its aftermath have left me feeling sick, used, and dirty. She calls occasionally to ask when we can get together, and I am still so ashamed I cannot simply tell her to Fuck Off. I plead busyness, hang up, and let her believe that I am into a million different things now instead of telling her the truth . . . that I am a million light years removed.

In 1973, straight women in the movement are slowly coming to a gradual, if sometimes uneasy, acceptance of Lesbianism as a valid lifestyle. But then, it really doesn't cost them too much to pay lip service to an idea; in fact, it's really liberal of them. It is still the Lesbian whose life and self are on the line every day. The straight woman has nothing to lose if she can bring herself to some kind of acceptance, but it is *me* she is giving acceptance to, me and my sisters, and we are so much more vulnerable than she. If straight feminists can understand, if the gay feminists in the closet can come out and be counted, we have gained much, my sisters and I, and perhaps the pain has been worth the result. But I must end by asking, "When will we have finished proving and paying and trying? When will the desperation end?" ♀

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# POEM

Daddy, what is it about me that attracts only men with meat cleavers for hands. O Daddy I've been pared to a slender bone—I am in peaches and cream shavings all over the ground. O Daddy he was so neat and so careful—he measured me right and took his time—placing the blade exactly where he had figured. Daddy, an expert. I've been with an expert. Someone just asked me where my freckles are. He's put them in a clear jar to sell them as acid tabs. Daddy, a merchant. I've been with a merchant. At first his shelves were fascinating—the myriad of eyes! Rows of gleaming teeth! My spine has been tapped and drained—he has converted the fluid to recyclable gasoline for his Lotus. Daddy, he's a racing driver. And my skin! He has taken the finest flush of my flesh and

stretched it taut over his tablas and dholaks. Daddy, I've been with a drummer—my face is a treble tala. My breasts he has placed on his window sill, trophies with my initials carved in them so he'll remember. I will. Daddy, I wish he could have cleaved off fifteen years to let me come crawling back to you—I can't seem to learn the ropes. I can't learn to be a woman. The same cards are always pulled from the deck. I'm no poker player with style. I should cash in my chips and quit the table. I should go back to Monopoly, where all I risk is pink and blue money. I am all over the world, Daddy. Wherever you go, look for scraps of me—decorating a plate, shielding a bulb, holding up someone's trousers. O Daddy, look I'm everywhere. I'm as universal as rain, as frequent as nightfall. These experts have no trouble with me. They laugh and snip off my tongue.

Daddy, I know this isn't what you

wanted for me. But you knew it would be. So, couldn't you talk to someone, use your influence? They'll listen to you. They always listen to you. Tell them my ankles are bleeding. Tell them my hands are limp and my elbows creak. Have them peer in my ears. I'm almost deaf. Tell them anything. Show me you're not one of them. I need to get thrown out of the running; disqualify me from the board. Let me get under the covers while you make the calls. The shadows are drawing close. I always believed in shadows, but now they all lie. The shadows are smirking. Zakir has shown them my neck—full, intact, throat still working. He's labelled it op art and put it on display in downtown San Francisco. Daddy, I've been with an artist, an artist of the first degree who has robbed my colors and left me blank and white, my stomach a canvas for his next masterpiece.

Daddy, I've been with a man. A man. A real man.

—Linda Sloss

**Combat in the Erogenous Zone**

by Ingrid Bengis

Alfred E. Knopf, \$6.95

reviewed by Ilene Kantrov

In the Introduction to *Combat in the Erogenous Zone*, Ingrid Bengis explains why she chose not to add her own set of generalizations to the accumulating volumes of women's literature: "It was against those generalizations that I had reacted so strongly, since they always seemed to violate my experience . . . Wasn't it the failure of those generalizations to take into account the intricacies and ambiguities of lives and loves that had provoked me to begin articulating my own thoughts in the first place?" So she has decided to write about herself, and she realizes the enormity of that task: "There was no hope then, for telling the truth. In order to do so, I would have to say everything simultaneously, say a thing and its opposite in a single phrase." Ironically, in writing about herself she has, I think, come closer to the truth. Since generalizations are only possible if we ignore part of the picture, if we focus on just one aspect of it, one dot, and tell as much as possible about it, we can perhaps say more about the whole. In choosing the

perspective she does, in acknowledging its limitations (" . . . admittedly I am unable to see the back of my own head"), Bengis starts out ahead. And goes on from there.

That explains part of what is so exciting about this book: it is personal. It is also very, very honest. And by not posing generalizations with which the reader tries to identify (poking, prodding, manipulating her own feelings to do so), but instead analyzing her own experience, Bengis offers a host of ideas and feelings with which many women can readily identify.

The book begins with a discussion of "man-hating." Ugly, as the author says. Something, if admitted at all, to be pushed to the outer edges of your consciousness. But Bengis traces its genesis and development in herself—toward the anonymous men on the subway, with their roving hands, making every subway ride excruciating; toward the construction workers, with roving eyes and humiliating tongues; toward acquaintances and friends, who "understand" but do not experience, who are therefore resented because no matter how much they understand they are still men; and toward lovers—and this gets a bit more complicated. How, after all, can

you hate and love at the same time? Bengis evokes the pain of loving someone and at the same time repressing tremendous hostility, rage—hate. A hatred composed of a lifetime of experiences, from the most impersonal and casual to the deepest and most shattering.

A large segment of experience is sexual, and Bengis considers an aspect of that realm which is usually glossed over. It is easy to say that women can enjoy sex as casually as men, that it is socialization that produces guilt, or discomfort, that makes many women "feel some form of inner split after having sex which satisfies just physical needs." Whether "natural" or learned, these feelings exist. And, if male and female needs are truly incompatible, if they are looking for different things in each other, then "Thinking about such differences in needs and orientation can be a very painful thing . . . It is all well and good to say down with the double standard, women can screw as much as they want to, can have as many love affairs as men. But what happens when a woman doesn't *want* to have love affairs, as many women don't, and their husbands or boy-friends say, "But you have a perfect right to if I'm going to.'" (Aha, I thought as I read this, at last someone

photo: Roz Gerstein



Self Portrait

is admitting that that *does* happen sometimes.) Bengis discusses this, without arriving at a neat solution, although she does indicate what she sees for herself as the potential for reconciling differing needs: "What I wanted was to discover men who were passionate but also understood restraint... men who realized from something within themselves... that mind, body, and spirit need to be integrated before body can involve itself deeply; men who could say yes and no; men for whom such a choice really exists." Well, she didn't find anyone who fit the bill. Many questions remained (and still do). And she still found herself man-hating.

In the second section of the book, Bengis deals with Lesbianism. She talks about the qualities common in friendships between women—particularly tenderness—which she found so difficult to get from men. She notes that adolescent girls rarely consider modeling their relationships with boys on their close friendships with other girls. Although she found herself "acting" with boys, but "being" with girls, "boys... were the ones who really counted." For a long time, as a result of some homosexual experiences as a child and as a teenager, she repressed the potential to love another woman, and the more she repressed it, the more she feared it. She points out the common willingness of women in the movement to accept the idea of Lesbianism in the abstract, as someone else's right to her own sexual preferences. But what about yourself? What are you? Bengis herself finally bridged the gap between her beliefs and her fears, and found that loving another woman, although in some ways easier than loving a man (loving yourself as a woman in another woman, recognizing certain needs, feeling the same things), also entailed similar problems. There were still roles and rules which prevented closeness, set up barriers to true feeling.

The final section of *Combat in the Erogenous Zone* is called "Love." In the same straightforward, thoughtful way, Bengis explores the paradoxes of love in her life and the lives of her friends. How be free and committed at the same time? How cope with growing attachments and the pain of separation—parts of loving never planned on? How deal with the dilemma of wanting "to love people who are

good for us" and finding that "sometimes we love people who are not"? What about the real need for security that many of us have? We often turn against our needs because of the fear of being hurt, yet we "cannot surrender those moments with a man that seem, in an instant, to be capable of redeeming all the rest." Finally, is it possible or desirable to develop deep, open, significant relationships, which require large doses of time and energy as well as love, with a succession of people, or with several people at one time?

I catalogue these questions in the hope of evoking something of the scope of this book. The heart of what Bengis is confronting is the profound problem of meshing our feelings with our ideas or beliefs. She says at one point that "we are too real to bear the weight of our own theories." We too often find ourselves compromising our needs for the sake of our ideology, or vice versa. The question of how to reconcile the two, and whether it is possible, is the most difficult aspect of real-life liberation. In the end, we are all struggling with ourselves as much as or more than with men or with society. We can help each other by sharing our experiences, our insight, our support. One of the most valuable qualities of this book is the undercurrent of sympathy and understanding out of which it was written. I could point out that it has a middle-class perspective, which it certainly does. I could quibble with certain points. But in writing out of her own experience, in delving so deeply into her own psyche, Bengis not only offers much of substance to others of similar backgrounds (whether you agree with everything she says or not), but provides a model of analysis for women with very different lives.

**VAGINAL POLITICS**  
by Ellen Frankfort  
*Quadrangle Books, \$6.95*  
reviewed by Barbara Monty

We are now in a time of outrage! Women are realizing that we have the right to knowledge about, and control over, our own bodies. The image of the gynecologist as father-protector-confessor and the image of the medical world as unquestionably trustworthy

have been appreciably weakened by women publicly exposing the inequalities—in fact the real atrocities—of the obstetric/gynecological profession.

It seems that protest is most effective when we can clearly identify the enemy. Ellen Frankfort's *Vaginal Politics* helps us do just this. Ms. Frankfort helps us see, through concrete examples of medical practices, that in this capitalist system doctors are increasingly concerned more with becoming Salks or Curies. I'll bet that you didn't know about the new journal for doctors that's recently been published—it tells them how to invest some of their extra \$\$\$ and avoid taxes.

Ms. Frankfort also shows us that we face not only a capitalist but a sexist problem. It is women who are in the hands of male gynecologists (97 percent of all gynecologists in the United States are male). This, in a country where the majority of medical care is consumed by women. Women make 25 percent more visits to the doctor than do men, 100 percent more if pediatrics is counted; women also consume 50 percent more prescription drugs than do men.

Throughout *Vaginal Politics*, we are given countless examples—abortion clinics, self-help groups, patient advocates—of how important it is for women to minister to women.

Besides the fact that, medically, women must deal almost exclusively with male doctors, another problem identified in *Vaginal Politics* is that so much medical information about what's happening to women is kept from us. Not that this isn't true to some extent for men, but it is women who have the unnecessary hysterectomies and radical mastectomies. In the latter operation, the entire breast and surrounding lymph nodes and major chest muscle are removed. For years, doctors have been doing this more radical operation, instead of removing just the lump. They say it is because when there is a lump in the breast, they cannot be sure that it won't spread. The result, however, is permanently limited arm movement for the woman, as well as disfigurement. And according to Dr. George Crile, Jr., at a meeting of the American College of Surgeons in 1970, his results with the simple removal of the

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Doris Ettliger** recently graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design and is a freelance artist in the Boston area.

**Marsha Feldman** has resumed writing and photography and is studying auto mechanics.

**Roz Gerstein** teaches photography at the Massachusetts College of Art and is working with the Boston Women's Collective Inc. on the second edition of the Women's Yellow Pages.

**Ilene Kantrov** is a freelance writer and editor. She has worked for the *Boston Review of the Arts*, is presently unemployed, and lives in the Green Machine.

**Leslie Lieberman** received her M.F.A. in printmaking at Drake University in Iowa. She lives in New York City and has displayed her work in several shows.

**Karen Lindsey** is currently working on a book of poems, *A Company of Queens*, about the Tudor queens of England. She teaches a poetry workshop at the Women's Center in Cambridge and coordinates an ongoing series of women's poetry readings at Female Liberation.

**Sharon Wallace de Maehl** works with the new Costa Rican Women's Movement and is president of Quebrada Honda Coffee Company, Costa Rica. She is a freelance writer, has worked as a nurse at Shriners' Burns Institute, and lives with a husband and two children.

**Beth Marshall** is a Boston artist just arriving as a freelancer.

**Patty Beth McCue** is a student who recently organized a women's day at her high school. She's been a peace marcher since age three and plays the guitar and writes.

**Barbara Monty** has recently started the first women's medical self-help group in Boston. She's now getting it together to leave her security teaching position to do feminist work and perhaps train to become a midwife.

**Holly Newman** is a feminist who is tired of moving around and hopes to stay at her Somerville apartment for a good long time.

**Elaine Noble** is a director of the Mass. Women's Political Caucus, a board member of the Homophile Community Health Service, and producer/moderator of *The Gay Way* radio show on WBUR-FM. She is a member of D.O.B. and N.O.W. and is co-founder of the Free Lance Feminist Mercenaries, an organization which has elicited great enthusiasm in the Boston area after it was announced in the last issue of *The Second Wave*. "Our membership has swelled to 5. We had more, but we had to get rid of them because they kept wanting to meet and do something," notes Ms. Noble.

**Deborah Rose** says her interest in women's health came about quite accidentally. "I searched and searched last winter for ways to get inside Framingham Prison for Women. The only in I found was to help teach a Woman and Her Body Course which I knew nothing about. I learned. I'm still learning."

**Liz Schweber** is a freelance artist in Cambridge who studied at Art Students' League in N.Y., likes figure drawing, studies karate, and has green eyes.

**Jean Segaloff** teaches children with learning disabilities in Newton, Mass. She is also studying art and education at the University Without Walls and is very involved in her drawing.

**Terry Seymour** is a freelance photographer from Little Rock, Ark.

**Linda Sloss** is a graduate in creative writing from Queens College in New York.

**Carol Somer** describes herself as having no degree and no profession. "I work parttime to get \$\$\$, parttime to convince other people to balance their yin-yang (F.L.), and parttime to balance my own. I love witches, black rooms, and purple sweaters."

**Jane Tavarelli** is a Boston poet whose works have appeared in *Boston Review of the Arts*, *Moonstone*, *Arion's Dolphin*, and *Works Magazine*. She is teaching in a suburban high school and "trying to leave as many options as I can for myself."

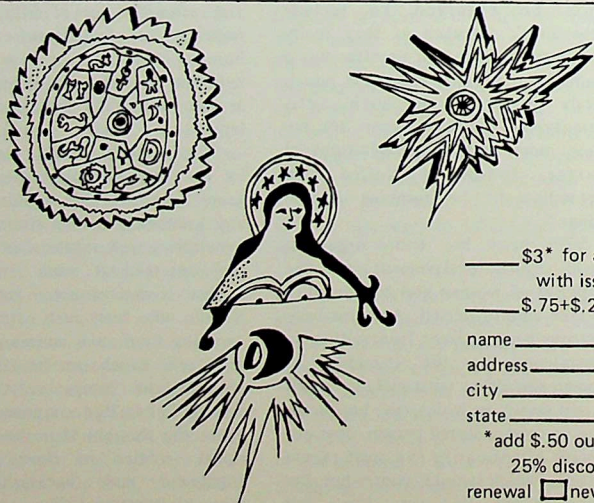
**Fran Taylor** is a member of Female Liberation who wishes that *Second Wave* had the money and circulation of *Playboy*, and that *Playboy* had the money and circulation of *Second Wave*.

**Gillie Terry** is an urban planner and photographer who lives in Cambridge, Mass.

**Linda Thurston**, as office manager of Female Liberation, was too busy to write herself a good note. She likes green plants and cats.

**Susan Wilkins** is a poet whose works have appeared in *Caterpillar*, *Boston Quarterly*, *Quarterly Review of Books*, and other publications. She is currently working with a war-tax resistance project in Cambridge, Mass.

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CHARLES L. MULLER PINXT.

ALPHONSE LANOTTE SCULPT.

### CHARLOTTE CORDAY IN PRISON

C'est demain à huit heures que l'on me juge: probablement à midi j'aurai dit  
adieu à l'Europe je me recommande au bien de mes vrais amis de la patrie.

Mardi 18 à huit heures du jour  
Corday