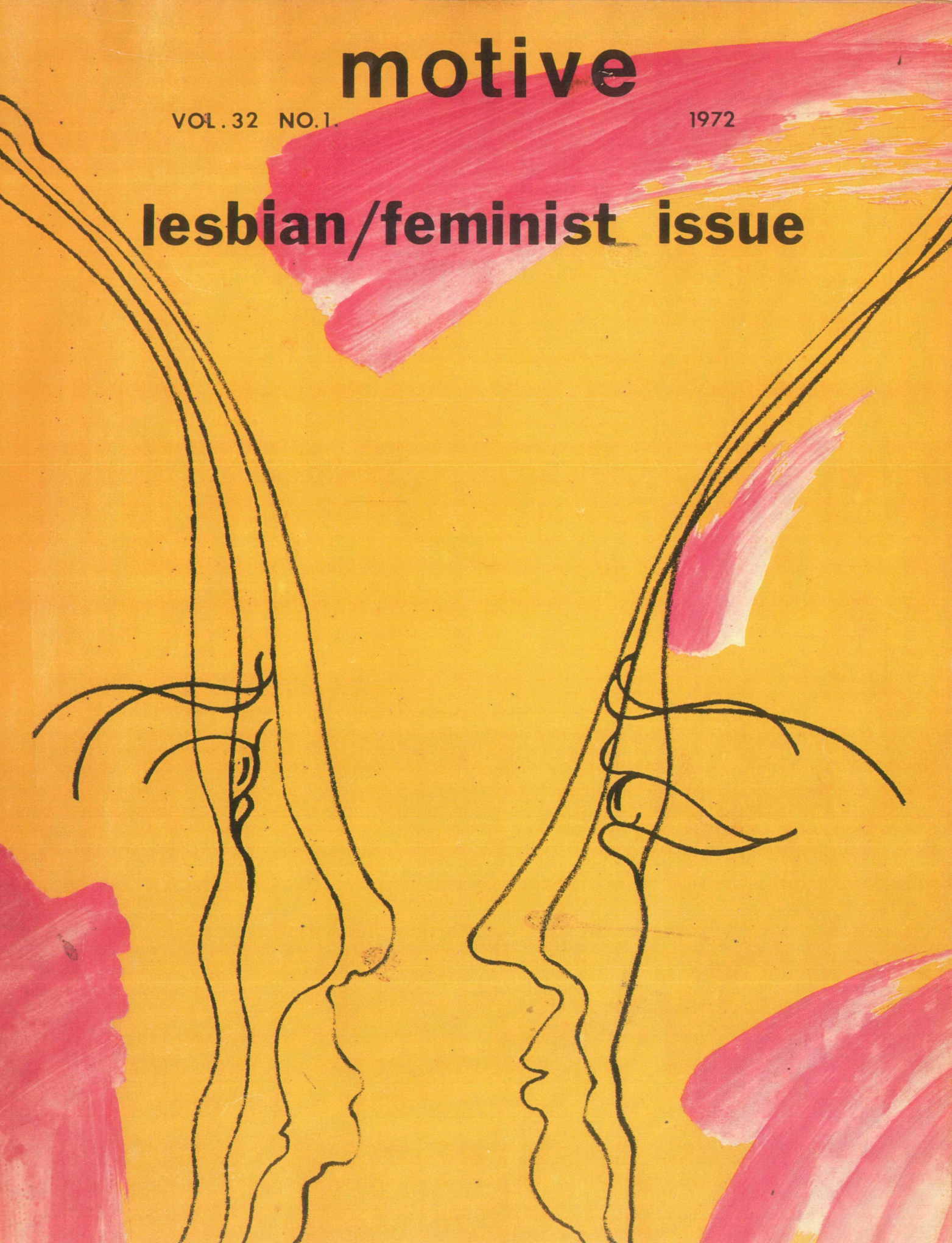


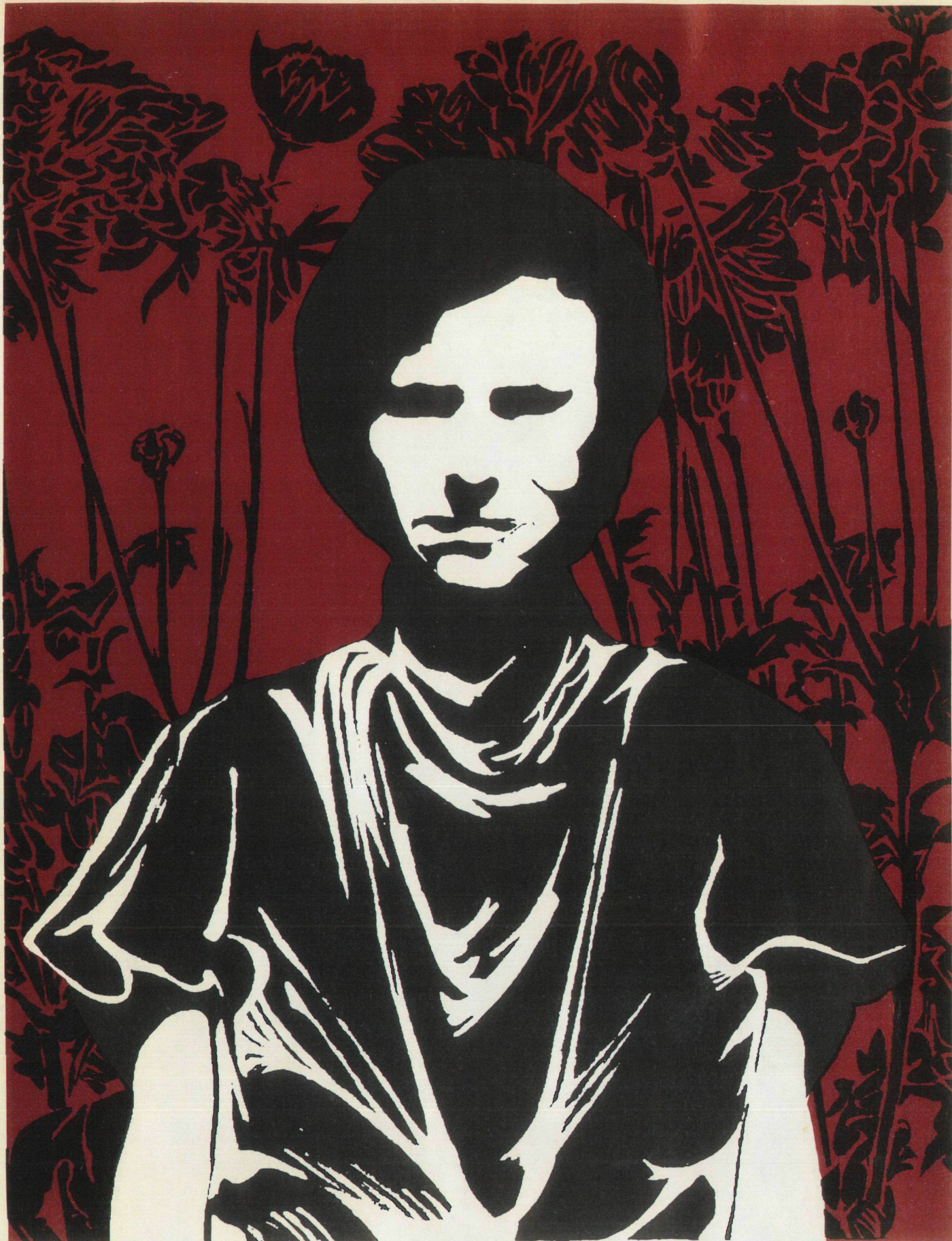
motive

VOL. 32 NO. 1.

1972

lesbian/feminist issue





SILK SCREEN by JOYCE SILLS, NEW YORK

front cover by GINGER LEGATO, CORNWALL

editorial: MOTIVE COMES OUT!

Feminist Theory / Lesbian
Arts & Culture / Feminism
Arts & Culture / Literature
Visual Arts
M in file

Women are moving. We are moving out of passivity, out of the closets; we are moving toward control of our own lives and the overthrow of male supremacy. The aim of this magazine is to express this motion and to move you by sharing the ideas, experiences and feelings of many lesbians. Today, lesbian/feminist politics are taking shape; our analysis is crystallizing and we are starting on the path to effective action. Some of the women contributing to this magazine were "happy" heterosexual housewives not long ago. Some were homosexuals in hiding, either from their "friends" or their own self-hate. Starting from these different places, we have all become lesbian-feminists. Lesbian feminism is the ideology that unites us. It is the way of thinking that enables us to understand our past and chart our future. Only if we understand how and why we have been oppressed can we successfully fight for our freedom.

You are part of that past and in the belief that you will want to shape that future, we have put together a magazine of lesbian-feminist writing, art, and poetry. Some of the work here is reprinted but most was created especially for this issue.

Motive, a monthly magazine published by the United Methodist Church for over twenty years, is no more. This is its final issue. Throughout *Motive's* history, radical dissension within limits was tolerated with a few slaps on the wrist, but the church fathers really squirmed when the special issue on women appeared in March-April, 1969. In the aftermath of the controversy over the women's issue, the church began to reduce its support of *Motive* and *Motive* decided it could no longer function under the church. *Motive* could not survive without church money so the staff and editorial board decided to close up shop—using the remaining resources of the magazine to put out one final *gay* issue. The Furies, a collective of twelve lesbians in Washington, D.C., which included a member of the old *Motive* editorial board, assumed editorial responsibility for the lesbian issue. Within the collective, four of us took major responsibility for this project but everyone has contributed to it.

We are not professional publishers or editors. We are political lesbians who wanted to create a magazine that would communicate our ideas to you. It was exciting to have the resources for our own magazine. We were determined that from start to finish lesbians would do it all. A publication produced with meq could not proclaim the strength and promote the independence of women in the way we hoped to.

In the process of putting this issue together we built bonds with lesbians around the country who sent in articles, graphics, and poetry in response to our requests. In order for lesbians to complete the entire production we gained many new skills. Lesbians from several cities produced the design and layout. The Sojourner Truth Press in Atlanta printed the whole issue. Where things were needed, we did them ourselves. Lesbians who could never write articles before wrote. Lesbians who never typeset before learned composing. Women who never published a magazine before did it.

We are proud that this issue was put out by women. Gay men have also produced their issue of *Motive*. Although originally scheduled as one gay issue, we made a political decision to do separate women's and men's issues. At this time, we are separatists who do not work with men, straight or gay, because men are not working to end male supremacy. Sexism oppresses men, especially gay men, by suppressing the 'female' in them and amputating their self-development. But all men still receive concrete benefits, privileges, and power from that system. Male supremacy subordinates women in every way. Ending gay oppression will not automatically end woman oppression. Only a complete destruction of the whole male supremacist system can free women. When men renounce the power and privilege they gain through the domination and subordination of women and join the struggle to end all male supremacy, they will be allies of the strong and independent lesbian-feminist movement we are building. Those men, straight or gay, who cling to male power and privilege continue to oppress us and stand in the way of a women's revolution.

We hope you will read the magazine, pass it on, talk about it with women you know and women you are getting to know, keep in touch with us and join the struggle.

Joan E. Biren
Rita Mae Brown
Charlotte Bunch
Coletta Reid

This issue was printed by Sojourner Truth Printing Collective, 432 Moreland Ave. N.E., Atlanta, Georgia 30307, an all women's press. Sojourner Truth wants to print newspapers, pamphlets, posters, and leaflets from women all across the country. In addition to printing this issue, they have printed the FURIES, "Sleeping Beauty", a lesbian fairy tale, posters, and lesbian stationery. Call 404-688-6222 to have your women's literature printed.

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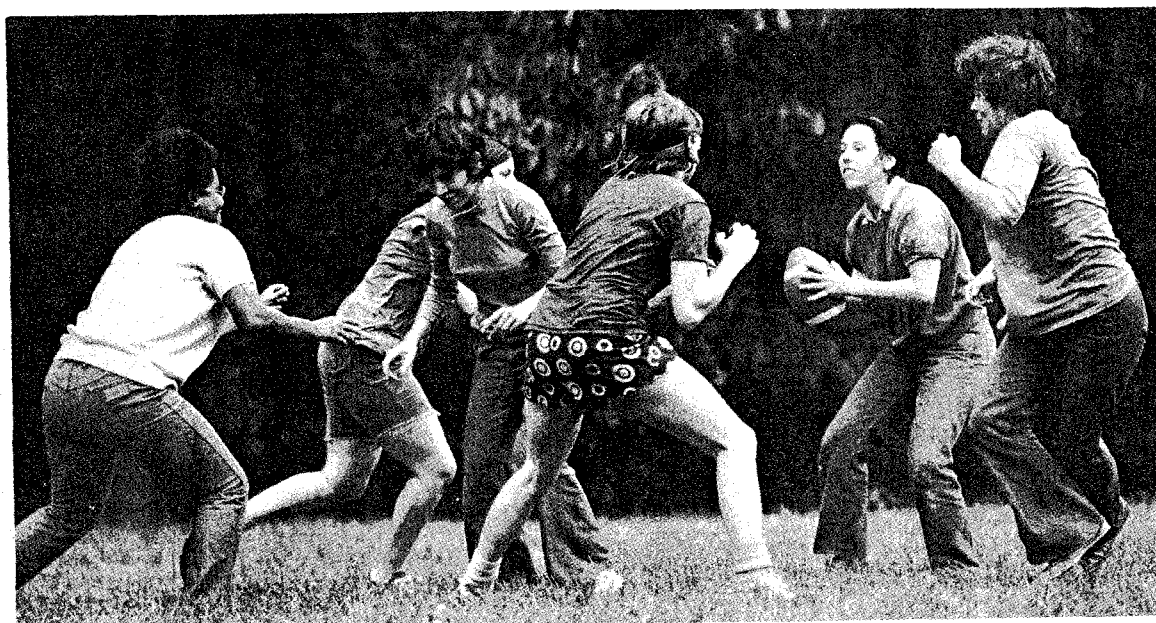
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PHOTOGRAPH by JEB, WASHINGTON D.C.

What Every Lesbian Should Know

by Charlotte Bunch and Rita Mae Brown, Washington, D.C.

In our society which defines all people and institutions for the benefit of the rich, white male, the lesbian is in revolt. In revolt because she defines herself in terms of women and rejects male definitions of how she should feel, act, look and live. To be a lesbian is to love oneself, woman, in a culture that denigrates and despises women. The lesbian rejects male sexual/political domination, and defies his work, his social organization, his ideology, and his definition of her as inferior. Lesbianism puts women first while the society declares the male supreme. Lesbianism threatens male supremacy at its core. When politically conscious and organized, it is central to destroying our sexist, racist, capitalist, imperialist system.

LESBIANISM IS A POLITICAL CHOICE

Male society defines lesbianism as a sexual act which reflects men's limited view of women: they think of us only in terms of sex. They also say lesbians are not real women, so a real woman is one who gets fucked by men. We say that a lesbian is a woman whose sense of self and energies, including sexual energies, center around women—she is woman identified. The woman-identified-woman commits herself to other women for political, emotional, physical, and economic support. Women are important to her; she is important to herself. Our society demands that commitment from women be reserved for men.

The lesbian, woman-identified-woman, commits herself to women not only as an alternative to oppressive male/female relationships but primarily because she *loves* women. Whether consciously or not, by her action, the lesbian has recognized that giving support and love to men over women perpetuates the system that oppresses her. If women do not make a commitment to each other, which includes sexual love, we deny ourselves the love and value traditionally given to men. Lesbians' energy and love flows to women because we do not accept our second class status, we see women as serious persons worthy of total commitment and capable of changing the world. When women give primary energies to other women, it is possible to concentrate fully on building a movement for our liberation.

As women who have rejected the identity that men have built for us, we now face the reality of women's oppression and what it has done to us, without the buffer of male privilege or the security of predetermined roles. We see the damage done to us by a sexist society. We see the strengths gained in fighting to survive in an anti-woman world. We find that we are not failures, that we do not have to hate ourselves, but that we are fighters who understand that society is wrong. And so, we can begin to construct new selves.

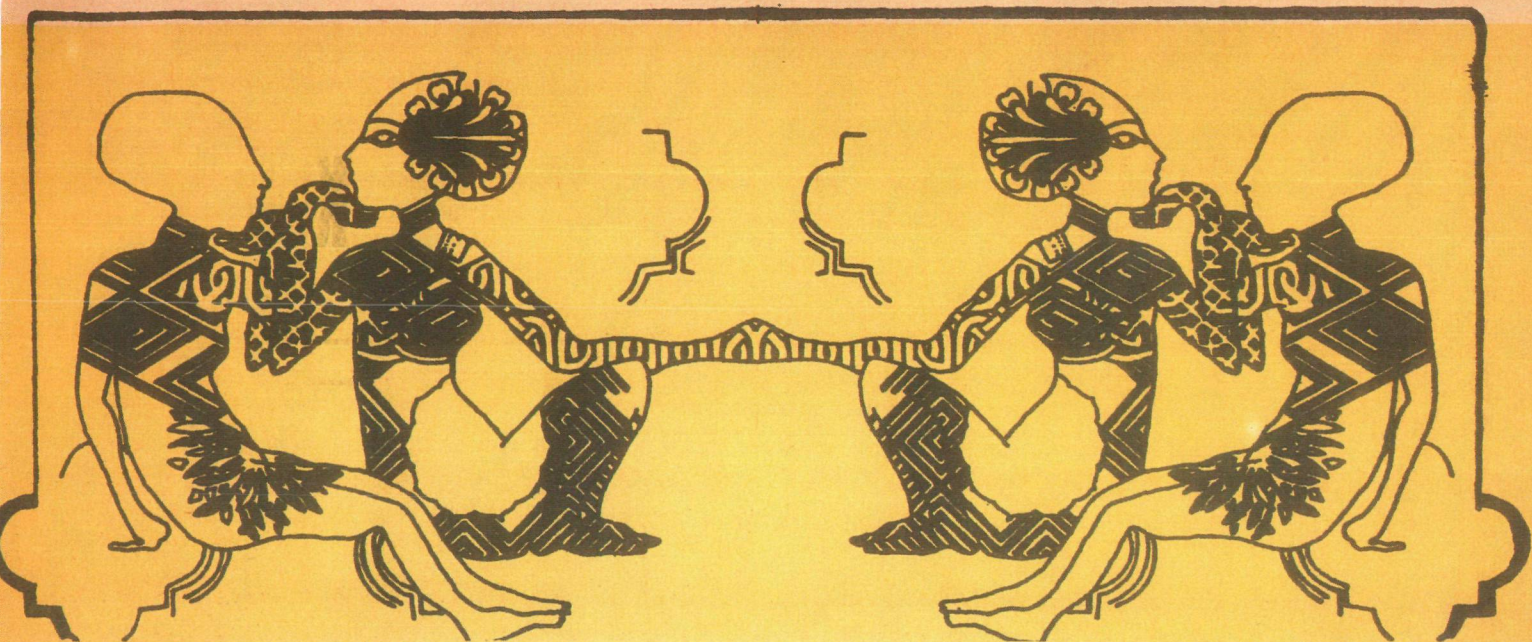
Woman-identified lesbianism is, then, more than a sexual preference, it is a political choice. It is political because relationships between men and women are essentially political, they involve power and dominance. Since the lesbian actively rejects that relationship and chooses women, she defies the established political system.

LESBIANISM, BY ITSELF, IS NOT ENOUGH

Of course, not all lesbians are consciously woman-identified, nor are all committed to finding common solutions to the oppression they suffer as women and lesbians. Being a lesbian is part of challenging male supremacy, but not the end. For the lesbian or heterosexual woman, there is no individual solution to oppression.

The lesbian may think that she is free since she escapes the personal oppression of the individual male/female relationship. But to the society she is still a woman, or worse, a visible lesbian. On the street, at the job, in the schools, she is treated as an inferior and is at the mercy of men's power and whims. (I've never heard of a rapist who stopped because his victim was a lesbian.) This society hates women who love women, and so, the lesbian, who escapes male dominance in her private home receives it doubly at the hands of male society; she is harassed, outcast, and shuttled to the bottom. Lesbians must become feminists and fight against woman oppression, just as feminists must become lesbians if they hope to end male supremacy.

U.S. society encourages individual solutions, apolitical attitudes, and reformism to keep us from political revolt and out of power. Men who rule, and male leftists who seek to rule, try to depoliticize sex and the relations between



DRAWING by WENDY CADDEN, OAKLAND

men and women in order to prevent us from acting to end our oppression and challenging their power. As the question of homosexuality has become public, reformists define it as a private question of who you sleep with in order to sidetrack our understanding of the politics of sex. For the lesbian/feminist, it is not private; it is a political question of oppression, domination, and power. Reformists offer solutions which make no basic changes in the system which oppresses us, solutions which keep power in the hands of the oppressor. The only way oppressed people end their oppression is by seizing power: people whose rule depends on the subordination of others do not voluntarily stop oppressing others. Our subordination is the basis of male power.

SEXISM IS THE ROOT OF ALL OTHER OPPRESSIONS

The first division of labor, in pre-history, was based on sex: men hunted, women built the villages, took care of children, and farmed. Women collectively controlled the land, language, culture, and the communities. Men conquered women with the weapons that they developed for hunting as it became clear that women were leading a more stable, peaceful, and desirable existence. We do not yet know exactly how this conquest took place, but it is clear that the original imperialism was male over female: the male claiming the female body and her services as his territory (or property).

Having secured the domination of women, men continued this pattern of suppressing people, now on the basis of tribe, race, and class.

Although there have been numerous battles over class, race and nation during the past 3000 years, none of them has brought the liberation of women. While these other forms of oppression must also be ended, there is no reason to believe that our liberation will come with the smashing of capitalism, racism, or

imperialism today. Women will be free only when we concentrate on fighting male supremacy.

Our war against male supremacy does, however, involve attacking the later day dominations based on class, race, and nation. As lesbians who are outcasts from every group, it would be suicidal to perpetuate these man-made divisions among ourselves. We have no heterosexual privileges, and when we publicly assert our lesbianism, those of us who had them, lose many of our class and race privileges. Most of women's privileges are granted to us by our relationships to ruling men (fathers, husbands, boyfriends) whom we now reject. This does not mean that there is no racism or class chauvinism within us: we must destroy those divisive remnants of privileged behavior among ourselves as the first step toward their destruction in the society. Race, class, and national oppressions come from men, serve ruling class white men's interests, and have no place in a woman-identified revolution.

LESBIANISM IS THE BASIC THREAT TO MALE SUPREMACY

Lesbianism is a threat to the ideological, political, personal, and economic basis of male supremacy. We threaten the ideology of male supremacy by destroying its lies about female inferiority, weakness, passivity, and by denying women's 'innate' need for men. We don't need men to tell us who we are. Lesbians define our own selves and literally do not need men (even for procreation if the science of cloning is developed).

The lesbian's independence and refusal to support one man undermines the personal power that men exercise over women. Our rejection of heterosexual sex challenges male domination in its most individual and common form. Our rejection of heterosexuality as an institution challenges collective male power. We offer all women something better than submission to personal oppression. We offer the

beginning of the end of collective and individual male supremacy. Since men in all races and classes are dependent on female support and submission for practical tasks and feeling superior, our refusal to submit will force some to examine their sexist behavior, to break down their own destructive privileges over other humans, and to fight against those privileges in other men. They will have to build new selves that do not depend on oppressing women and learn to live in social structures that do not give them power over anyone.

Heterosexuality separates women from each other; it makes women define themselves through men; it forces women to compete against each other for men and the privilege which comes through men and their social standing. Heterosexual society offers women a few privileges as compensations for giving up their freedom: for example, mothers are respected and 'honored', wives or lovers are socially accepted and given some economic and emotional security, a woman gets physical protection on the street when she stays with her man, etc. These privileges give heterosexual women a personal and political stake in maintaining the status quo.

The lesbian receives none of these heterosexual privileges or compensations since she does not accept male demands on her. She has little vested interest in maintaining the present political system since all of its institutions --church, state, media, health, schools--work to keep her down. If she understands her oppression, she has nothing to gain by supporting white rich male America and much to gain from fighting to change it. She is less prone to accept reformist solutions to women's oppression.

Economics is a crucial part of woman oppression, but our analysis of the relationship between capitalism and sexism has just begun. We know that Marxist economic theory does not sufficiently consider the role of women or lesbians, and we are presently working in this area.

However, as a beginning, some of the ways that lesbians threaten the economic system are clear. In this country, women work for men in order to survive, on the job and in the home. The lesbian rejects this division of labor at its roots; she refuses to be a man's property, to submit to the unpaid labor system of housework and childcare. She rejects the nuclear family as the basic unit of production and consumption in capitalist society.

The lesbian is also a threat in the job because she is not the passive/part-time woman worker that capitalism counts on to do boring work and be a part of surplus labor pool. Her identity and economic support do not come through men, so her job is crucial and she cares about job conditions, wages, promotion, and status. Capitalism cannot absorb large numbers of women demanding stable employment, decent salaries, and refusing to accept their traditional job exploitation. We do not understand yet the total effect that this increased job dissatisfaction will have. It is clear however that as women become more intent upon taking control of their lives, they will seek more control over their jobs, thus increasing the strains on capitalism and

enhancing the power of women to change the economic system.

LESBIANS MUST FORM OUR OWN MOVEMENT TO FIGHT MALE SUPREMACY

Feminist-lesbianism, as the most basic threat to male supremacy, picks up part of the Women's Liberation analysis of sexism and gives it force and direction. Women's Liberation lacks direction now because it has failed to understand the importance of heterosexuality in maintaining male supremacy and because it has failed to face class and race as real differences in women's behavior and political needs. As long as straight women see lesbianism as a bedroom issue, they hold back the development of politics and strategies which would put an end to male supremacy, and they give men an excuse for not dealing with their sexism.

Being a lesbian means ending your identification with, allegiance to, dependence on, and support of heterosexuality. It means ending your personal stage in the male world, so that you join women, individually and collectively, in the struggle to end your oppression. Lesbianism is the key to liberation and only women who cut their ties to male privilege can be trusted to remain serious in the struggle against male dominance. Those who remain tied to men, individually or in political theory, cannot always put women first. It is not that heterosexual women are evil or don't care about their sisters. It is because the very essence, definition, and nature of heterosexuality is men first. Every woman has experienced that desolation when her sister puts her man first in the final crunch: heterosexuality demands that she do this. As long as women still benefit from heterosexuality, receive its



PHOTOGRAPH by LIN STEPHAN, NEW YORK

privileges and security, they will at some point have to betray their sisters, especially lesbian sisters who do not receive those benefits.

Naturally many women are afraid to relinquish the privileges and security of heterosexuality. (Straight women remain with men and lesbians don't come out publicly.) Such fear is understandable since giving up privileges brings more oppression. Many women also fear the unknown and cling to a familiar if limiting identity rather than face the struggle to build a new non-sexist self. This refusal to identify as a lesbian is at the expense of the public lesbian and ultimately all women because it helps to keep us in line. Bisexuality is often used to avoid giving up heterosexual privileges. Some women want to have their cake and eat it too. They stick to men and don't lose security and acceptance in the male world but still groove on their sisters—avoiding the political issue of choosing the oppressed over the oppressor.

Other women talk loftily of their concern for 'all humanity' implying that lesbians are selfish. We *are* primarily concerned with women—with that 53% of the population that has been oppressed for over 10,000 years. To offer hope and new directions through struggle for half

the people can hardly be selfish. We do care about 'all humanity' (a euphemism for men), however, and we believe that men and women can never be free until women stop complying with male supremacy. When men see that we are serious about ending our oppression and that they will be left behind, then they will change. When they move to help us eliminate male supremacy in the world and to build a non-sexist, non-racist, non-capitalist world, then and only then can we talk again about relationships between the new woman and the new man.

Women in women's liberation have understood the importance of having meetings and other events for women only. It has been clear that dealing with men divides us and saps our energies and that it is not the job of the oppressed to explain our oppression to the oppressor. Women also have seen, that collectively, men will not deal with their sexism until they are forced to do so. Yet, many of these same women continue to have primary relationships with men individually, and do not understand why lesbians find this oppressive. Lesbians cannot grow politically or personally in a situation which denies the basis of our politics: that lesbianism is political, that heterosexuality is crucial to

maintaining male supremacy.

Lesbians must form our own political movement. Changes which will have more than token effects on our lives will be led by woman-identified lesbians who understand the nature of our oppression and are therefore in a position to end it.

LESBIANS MUST DEVELOP AN IDEOLOGY AND PROGRAM

Women must gain political power in order to reorganize our society, eliminating domination by sex, race, class, and nation. The world's survival depends on these changes and we cannot trust men, who have drug us through centuries of war and disaster, to lead in making real changes. Building

A woman's ideology is essential to our success. Without such an ideology, we float from project to project with no direction and little motion forward. We can learn from previous revolutions and ideologies, but we cannot blindly copy their ideas and experiences. Developing an ideology requires systematic study and analysis, accompanied by trial and error in practice throughout the country. Crucial to this development is a strong women's media. We will, of course, also have to create institutions to meet women's basic needs and to support ourselves as we change: economic cooperatives, childcare centers, food coops, health clinics, halfway houses, skills centers, etc. But such institutions will survive only if we are



PEN AND INK by WENDY CADDEN, OAKLAND

a mass movement for political power among women is a long process; but we can suggest some ways to start.

We must begin to change ourselves into new people, woman-identified women intent upon gaining control of the systems that have power over our lives. As we see how heterosexual, class, race and national privileges separate us, we have no alternative but to change so that we do not damage each other by privileged behavior and can build a cohesive women's force. Lesbianism is the starting place because it is central to building an ideology and it touches all women. Every woman has the potential to be a lesbian and can rid herself of heterosexual privilege. Middle class and white women must use and share our class and race privileges with working class and black women. We must also rid ourselves of classist and racist behavior which keeps working class and black women oppressed. Only if we change ourselves and stop oppressing other lesbians can we unite to stop male domination.

already united around an ideology and specific political goals.

As we take these initial steps--changing ourselves, developing an ideology, and creating supportive institutions-- we will discover how we must further change and what we must do next. Ultimately, women must be prepared to take over the power of the state and reorganize society. As long as power remains in the hands of men, we are at their whims and our lives will not be free.

This article is an outline of the ideology that we are beginning to develop in our collective. To be in touch with us and our developing thought and program, see

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WOODCUT by MARIA, NEW MEXICO

edward the dyke

by Judy Grahn, Oakland, California



DRAWING by LYNDA KOOLISH, BERKELEY

Behind the brown door which bore the gilt letters of Dr. Merlin Knox's name, Edward the Dyke was lying on the doctor's couch which was so luxurious and long that her feet did not even hang over the edge.

"Dr. Knox," Edward began, "my problem this week is chiefly concerning restrooms."

"Ahh," the good doctor sighed. Gravely he drew a quick sketch of a restroom in his notebook.

"Naturally I can't go into men's restrooms without feeling like an interloper, but on the other hand every time I try to use the ladies room I get into trouble."

"Umm," said Dr. Knox, drawing a quick sketch of a door marked 'Ladies'.

"Four days ago I went into the powder room of a department store and three middle-aged housewives came in and thought I was a man. As soon as I explained to them that I was really only a harmless dyke, the trouble began..."

"You compulsively attacked them."

"Oh heavens no, indeed not. One of them turned on the water faucet and tried to drown me with wet paper towels, but the other two began screaming something about how well did I know Gertrude Stein and what sort of underwear

did I have on, and they took my new cuff links and socks for souvenirs. They had my head in the trash can and were cutting off pieces of my shirttail when luckily a policeman heard my calls for help and rushed in. He was able to divert their attention by shooting at me, thus giving me a chance to escape through the window."

Carefully Dr. Knox noted in his notebook: 'Apparent suicide attempt after accosting girls in restroom.' "My child," he murmured in fatherly tones, "have no fear. You must trust us. We will cure you of this deadly affliction, and before you know it you'll be all fluffy and wonderful with dear babies and a bridge club of your very own." He drew a quick sketch of a bridge club. "Now let me see. I believe we estimated that after only four years of intensive therapy, plus a few minor physical changes you'll be exactly the little girl we've always wanted you to be." Rapidly Dr. Knox thumbed through an index on his desk. "Yes yes. This year the normal cup size is 56 inches. And waist 12 and 1/2. Nothing a few well-placed hormones can't accomplish in these advanced times. How tall did you tell me you were?"

"Six feet, four inches," replied Edward.

"Oh, tsk tsk." Dr. Knox did some figuring. "Yes, I'm

motive

afraid that will definitely entail extracting approximately 8 inches from each leg, including the knee-cap--standing a lot doesn't bother you, does it my dear?"

"Uh," said Edward, who couldn't decide.

"I assure you the surgeon I have in mind for you is remarkably successful." He leaned far back in his chair. "Now tell me, briefly, what the word 'homosexuality' means to you, in your own words."

"Love flowers pearl, of delighted arms. Warm and water. Melting of vanilla wafer in the pants. Pink petal roses trembling overdew on the lips, soft of juicy fruit. No teeth. No nasty spit. Lips chewing oysters without grimy sand or whiskers. Pastry. Gingerbread. Warm, sweet bread. Cinnamon toast poetry. Justice equality higher wages. Independent angel song. It means I can do what I want."

"Now my dear," Dr. Knox said, "Your disease has gotten completely out of control. We scientists know of course that it's a highly pleasurable experience to take someone's penis or vagina into your mouth--it's pleasurable and enjoyable. Everyone knows that. But after you've taken a thousand pleasurable penises or vaginas into your mouth and had a thousand people take your pleasurable penis or vagina in their mouth, what have you accomplished? What do you have to show for it? Do you have a wife or children or a husband or a home or a trip to Europe? Do you have a bridge club to show for it? No! You have only a thousand pleasurable experiences to show for it. Do you see how you're missing the meaning of life? How sordid and depraved are these clandestine sexual escapades in parks and restrooms? I ask you."

"But sir but sir," said Edward, "I'm a woman. I don't have sexual escapades in parks or restrooms. I don't have a thousand lovers--I have one lover."

"Yes yes." Dr. Knox flicked the ashes from his cigar onto the floor. "stick to the subject, my dear."

"We were in college then," Edward said. "She came to me out of the silky midnight mist, her slips rustling like cow thieves, her hair blowing in the wind like Gabriel. Lying in my arms harps played soft in the dry fire-light, Oh Bach. Oh Brahms. Oh Buxtehude. How sweetly we got along how well we got the woods pregnant with canaries and parakeets, barefoot in the grass alas pigeons, but it only lasted ten years and she was gone, poof! like a puff of wheat."

"This oral eroticism of yours is definitely rooted in Penis Envy."

Edward moaned. "But strawberries. But lemon cream pie."

"Narcissism," Dr. Knox droned, "masochism, sadism." Admit you want to kill your mother."

"Marshmellow bluebird," Edward groaned, eyes softly rolling. "Looking at the stars. April in May."

"Admit you want to possess your father. Mother substitute. Breast suckle."

"Graham cracker subway," Edward writhed, slobbering. "Pussy willow summer."

"Admit you have a smegmatic personality," Dr. Knox intoned.

Edward rolled to the floor. "I am vile! I am vile!"

Dr. Knox flipped a switch at his elbow and immediately a picture of a beautiful woman appeared on the screen over Edward's head. The doctor pressed another switch and electrical shocks jolted through her spine. Edward screamed. He pressed another switch stopping the flow of electricity. Another switch and a photo of a male organ flashed on the screen, coated in powdered sugar. Dr. Knox gave Edward a lollipop.

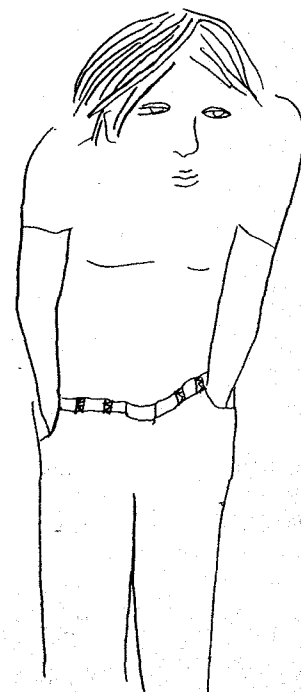
She sat up. "I'm saved," she said, tonguing the lollipop.

"Your time is up," Dr. Knox said. "Your check please. Come back next week."

"Yes sir yes sir," said Edward as she went out the brown door. In his notebook, Dr. Knox made a quick sketch of his bank.

Condensed and reprinted from *Lesbians Speak Out*, 1971.

PEN AND INK by NANCY ADAIR, ALBUQUERQUE



ON THE TOMB OF MONTEZUMA

On the tomb of Montezuma

Lesbians, dancing, laughed like gods

And turned their shining eyes

To silent Aztec pyramids where

History, Priestess of the Dead

Holds up this pounding prize:

A beating, bleeding rapist's heart.

Oh quiver, yes, your marble eyes

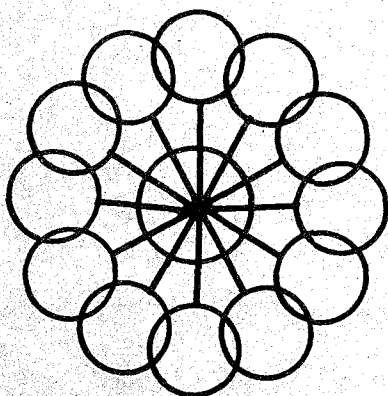
Triumphant on remorseless death --

Hippoloyta's Revenge.

Rita Mae Brown, Washington, D.C.

The Hand That Cradles the Rock
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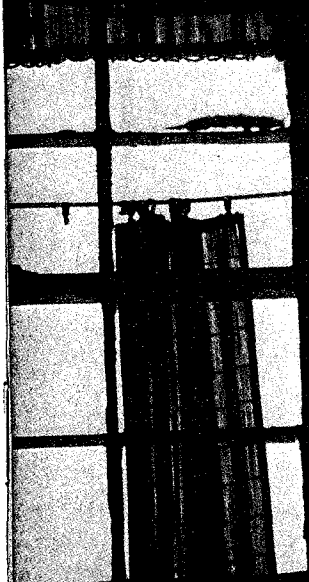
FOR JOAN

sometimes when I am exhausted
I half-wish for a serene and steady love
without the pain
without the struggle
when I was ordinary
I could love and be loved like that
and be satisfied

but that was before
women began to make a revolution
before we saw we had to fight --
to change, to love, even to survive

I have told myself that loving you
is like living on top of a volcano
but that is wrong
it is like, and is
living in the midst of the revolution
raging, hurting, fighting fury
whirling, dancing, laughing joy
without the rage we cannot
destroy the past
without the joy we cannot
build the future
you are the rage and the joy
the anger and laughter
you have freed me from
an ordinary half-life
of plastic Amerikan serenity
because of you
because of us
I am a revolutionary woman

Sharon Deevey, Washington, D.C.



PHOTOGRAPH by SELINA MARTIN, ATLANTA

Baby Don't Live Here Anymore

By Helaine Harris, Washington, D.C.

The summer between twelve and thirteen years old can be the most traumatic and destructive three months in a young woman's life. It's the summer that girls change into young ladies. Up to this summer you might have gotten away with being smart, strong, relating only to other girls, and even hating boys. But come that summer and one pays her due.

That was the summer that I started wearing make-up, worrying about the size of my breasts, noticing underarm smell, and looking at those pimply-faced, often shorter-than-me creatures which were quite suddenly young men. It never consciously occurred to me to change that summer. But what can one do with a subscription to Seventeen Magazine and a mother? Not to mention a T.V., radio, friends' mothers, and the sixteen year-old cheerleader next door.

And so I became a young lady and went to an all-girl Catholic high school because my best friends were going there. I had two social lives—one was the friendships with women that I went to school with. The other was go-to-dances-try-to-find-a-boyfriend. I

was a success in the first, an utter failure in the second. The girls from my school dated boys from the all-boy Catholic school in town. Every Saturday night there was a dance and every Saturday night I would put on make-up, a bra one size too large, an extra shot of ice-blue Secret, and become nauseous with worry that I would be a wallflower. I attended the dances all year. Not once did one of those pimply-faced creatures ask me to dance.

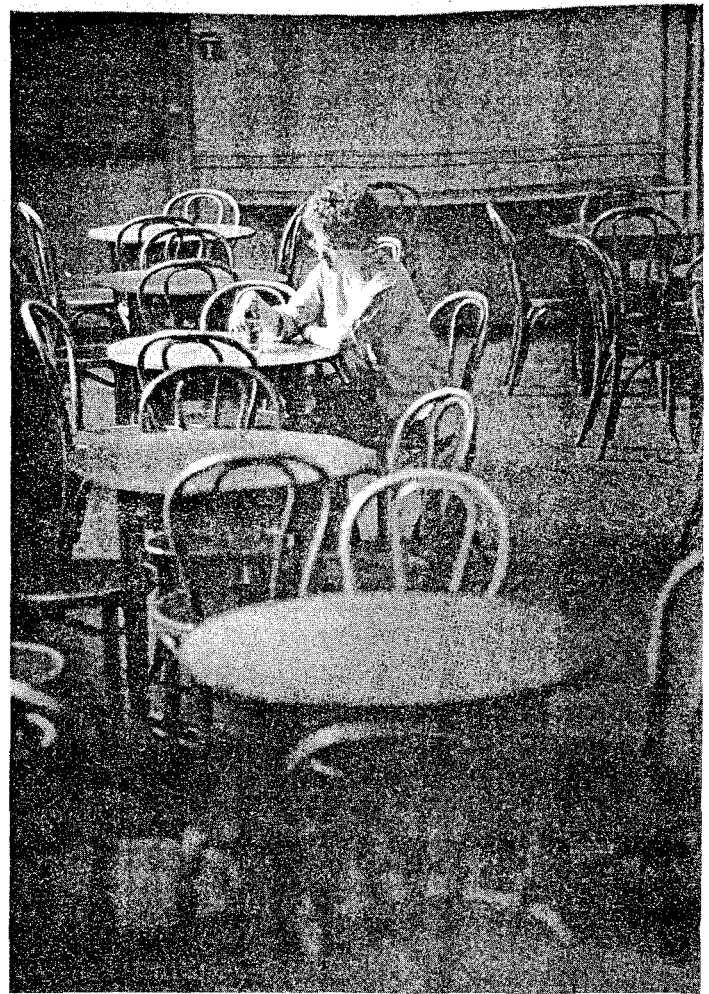
Near the end of the year I finally got into a conversation with a girlfriend of mine and two boys that she had met. When I walked into the conversation the boys were speaking pig-latin to each other. They were completely ignoring us and thought each other hilarious. Every time I said something in English they gave me a quizzical look and burst out laughing. I soon got bored and started to walk away. At that moment one of the boys decided to take interest in me (he was losing his prey and audience) and made, what is known in polite circles, as a pass at me. I was repulsed, took his hand off me and went home. I cried for hours. What was wrong with

me? That hand on my ass was what I had been waiting for all year, wasn't it?

I didn't go to any more dances. I began to smoke dope, drop acid, and become a hippy. I finally concluded that I didn't like the boys at the dances because they were too straight and too young for me and that I needed a nice, gentle hip man. I began to hang out at the park every Sunday—Catholic boys hung out at dances; hip, gentle men hung out at the park and finally I met him. Tall, skinny, with shoulder length red hair; a beard, and mustache-hip. And playing a recorder—gentle. Later I found out that he was eight years older than I was. He met all the requirements. Being a member of the new life style and not conforming to those rigid old social rules (he didn't have to ask me to dance), I went up and sat next to him playing my recorder. Wonder of wonders he asked my girlfriend and me if we would like to see his apartment. We went over, listened to a few records, and went home.

The next day at school I casually mentioned to my friends that I had

motive



PHOTOGRAPH by VIRGINIA BLAISDELL, NEW HAVEN

met this groovy guy at the park and that I had gone home with him. Having a boyfriend and going home with him moved me from hip to superhip. I was no longer without a boyfriend and had one with hip status besides.

Every Sunday I would lie to get out of my house to see this guy. He never asked to see me but every Sunday I would go looking for him. Most of the time he wouldn't even say hello to me but I would follow him around and the next day tell my friends what "we" had done the day before. He never even took enough interest in me to fuck me, but I could talk about him when the other women talked about their boyfriends. I never had to prove to anyone that he was my boyfriend since everyone knew that we had to meet on the sly because he was a hippy and no one's parents liked nice, gentle, hip men. I had an excuse for not going to the prom because he was the only one I would think of going with and he wasn't straight enough, or so I told everyone. I stopped seeking out other males. My hip man was the answer to all my problems.

My mother, of course, didn't know about him and she began to worry about boys not liking me and thought it was my fault. I knew that she was right—they didn't like me but I couldn't understand why. I did everything I could against my nature to get a date. I never thought about why I didn't like them, why they always seemed stupid to me, why I had the most fun with women friends. Nor did I think about why all my sexual dreams were about women. I disregarded these dreams thinking that they came from my subconscious and that I had no control over them. Those dreams meant nothing. Why I had a nice gentle hip boyfriend, didn't I?

During this period I became more and more masochistic. I started dropping acid by myself once or twice a week. I smoked grass before school and during it in the bathroom. I stopped facing almost all reality. And then I started going to women's liberation meetings; it was the first time that I faced how I felt about other women and myself. I met only one woman at these meetings who was my age, and had been through dope and gentle hip men. Chris and I soon became best friends. Suddenly I wasn't alone; someone like me actually admitted to liking women. My head began to clear and for the first time I realized that I

had been trying to destroy myself. It had been impossible for me to become that young lady because the core of me always rebelled. It became clear that I had two choices—to remain where I was and sooner or later start the cycle again or in some way take control over my life.

I chose the second and ran away from home. I decided to become myself, to accept all those feelings that I had tried to dismiss. I went to another state and changed my identity—sort of an all around rebirth for me. I moved into a house with two other women. It was summer and I began to gain strength physically and psychologically.

All my friends were in the Women's Liberation Movement and most were married or had boyfriends. By this time I had realized that my hippy man hadn't cared a bit for me. I decided that I would find a good man—one who would continually struggle with his chauvinism. Unfortunately this type of man is hard to find—impossible in fact. I ended up with another hip, gentle man—not overtly oppressive. He wanted to fuck me and I decided that it was about time that I wasn't a virgin anymore. But somehow I felt I couldn't be fucked sober and so I got smashed on wine and grass. I also couldn't stand the thought of fucking in my bed. We went to the roof of my garage. Even drunk I was repulsed and before he could get it in I told him to leave, that I couldn't get into it and that we were wasting each others time. I took a warm bath and went to bed feeling nauseous. From that day forward I've seen every man as a waste of my time.

Soon after I realized that I was turned on to Vera, one of the women I was living with. I think that she knew it and led me on. She would put her hand on my knees and thighs, sit next to me on my bed, and ask me to wash her back when she bathed. But every time we had a date to go somewhere together, she broke it because her boyfriend had asked her to go somewhere with him at the last minute. She knew I would understand, wouldn't I? I didn't, but I thought she couldn't possibly fuck me over. A month went by and Chris came out to visit. One of the first things she asked was if I was a lesbian. I was astounded that it showed. A few weeks later the house broke up. Kate and Vera went to Cuba on the Venceremos Brigade and I went to the East Coast. Kate came out in Cuba. I, unknowingly, had

been living with a lesbian for three months.

During the next few months I started to think of myself as a lesbian although I had never had a physical relationship with a woman. Kate came back from Cuba and I went to my first bar with her and met other gay friends of hers. I moved into a women's commune, and the next time I was turned on to a woman I told her so. We made love in my bed—I being neither drunk nor nauseous.

For the first time in my life I felt that I was acting on real feelings. It was possible for me to love myself, to put all my strengths and knowledge back into women, to not worry about how I should be in order to win approval from society or a man. I felt that I had stopped playing the game because I realized that for me and for all women it's a losing one. To become a young lady would have been a slow suicide.

I have written this article to women who are in high school, who scramble for dates but don't know why since everything inside tells them they're fools and lying to themselves. I wanted to talk to women who don't know why boys don't like them and end up thinking that they're doing something wrong or that they're ugly or just fucked up in some way. I wanted to write this to a friend I had in school who didn't date, didn't go to the prom, never liked a boy she met, but is still waiting.

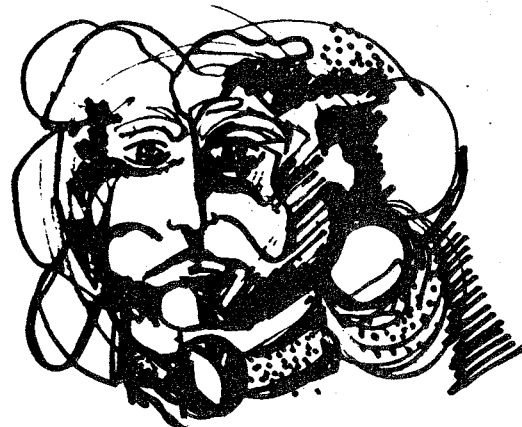


DRAWINGS by WENDY CADDEN, OAKLAND



notes of an old gay

From Los Angeles



There probably was a time when the world lay open to me, when all things were possible. I remember that at about four years of age I asked my mother whether two girls could grow up and marry each other. I don't think I had a crush on any particular woman at the time; just asking. She said, "No." So that was that. There were lots of things "young ladies" couldn't do. They couldn't become airplane pilots. They couldn't wear overalls to church, or even put them on after church because people were coming to Sunday dinner. They couldn't go down to the swimming hole when the older boys were there because they might see something they shouldn't.

Two things seemed chronically to come down hardest on me. One was the restriction on "adventure." I was raised in the country and was inevitably drawn to roaming the woods, hunting, climbing, camping and relishing the thrill of stepping into unexplored areas—the hidden waterfall, the abandoned farmhouse, the place where the log lay across the river. But when my imagination leapt from simple back-yard explorations to exciting careers of the future—sailor, pilot, adventurer, hunter—I was made aware of the fact that these pursuits were inappropriate to a woman. "Adventure" (in all its meanings) is the domain of the male.

The other hardship was clothing. I can never recall an occasion when I enjoyed wearing a dress. Never. Even the simplest childhood dress was binding under the arms, or in the waist, impossible to get into (the buttons were always in the back), and invariably carried with it a new code of how one was to sit and use one's legs, where one was not to go for fear of getting it dirty, and some mysterious injunction against rowdy, cross, or ill-tempered behavior.

I don't remember being told in positive terms what I could do. All that I picked up was that there was a certain premium on quietness, agreeableness, and manners. "Ladylike behavior" was a nebulous concept. My mother and grandmother must have been almost subversively intent on showing me what a lousy lot was the female role because I rejected it as soon as I was old enough to string two thoughts together. When my sister and I paired up to play games and assume make-believe identities, I was always the male. (She was sometimes female, sometimes male, quite often we were adventures together.) The fantasy set in that if I worked diligently at it night and day, prayed to God, thought the right thoughts, kissed my elbow or what-have-you, I would change into a boy. It still wasn't too late: I would be saved from what otherwise would be a lifetime of incredible dreariness.

It almost worked. Working in rough concert, my sister and I won concessions. We were allowed to wear blue-jeans to school and to roam the woods and local construction sites. At our insistence, we got boys bikes, baseball bats and gloves, and cap pistols. I got into fights with the neighborhood boys and nobody said a word. The two of us wrote adventure stories and illustrated them with action-packed cartoons.

This indulgence went on until I was about ten. Then I found that the family had only been fighting a delaying action. I guess they just thought that since sex role is a law of nature then pretty soon nature would take its course and change me back into a girl. When it didn't, and puberty loomed near, they suddenly started trundling out the myths. I was assured that it wasn't that I couldn't do certain things or that I must do certain others, it was more that as I got older, ahem, I *wouldn't want* to do these things but instead *would want* to do others.

Then I started experiencing some real downers just on my own: the neighborhood boys started winning

the fights I picked with them; my male cousins who had been adventure buddies for years began to go off on adventures of their own that I wasn't invited to. Most crushing of all, my sister, chief supporter of the "boyhood" fantasy, began to desert over to the "feminine" side. I asked her didn't she want to be a boy anymore. She said, "No...I don't like all the roughness. I can't be that way." "Well, but do you want to be a girl?" "Well, I dunno, I just don't care so much anymore. You'll get over it." One day, in an orgy of "roughness" I laid into my brother with a rawhide whip. That was the first and only time my father stepped in. He took the whip and turned it on me while the rest of the family watched in silent, embarrassed approval. After that something went click inside me and I withdrew, beaten, from the game. A depression set in that didn't lift for years.

Oddly enough my fantasies of "boyhood" and my early crushes on women, which also started at about age four or five, were two quite separate issues. In my dreams I was Robin Hood, but I never courted Maid Marion. I was much more apt to have courted,



DRAWING by WENDY CADDEN, OAKLAND

(in fantasy) another woman dressed up as Robin Hood. I had rejected femininity not just in myself but in other women too. It was the silly, blushing, dim-witted helplessness of it that disgusted me.

Heterosexuality eluded me as a concept. (Not to say that I didn't experience some personal attraction to men.) I failed to see why women would want to make such dismal failures of themselves in front of men, or why men, having witnessed the dismal failure, would respond to it with love. My own attractions—to either sex—always involved admiration and a longing to be admired. In either sex I fell for competence, self-assurance, and kindness; and my response, in either case, was a wish to appear “impressive” enough to win the other's love. I had been adequately warned, of course, by the culture, all my girl friends, and not a few of the dates in whom I had no interest, that “impressive” behavior does not impress men.

The women were a lot easier because, to begin with, the stakes were different. No one, least of all me, expected a woman to fall in love with me in the conventional sense. Nor was my interest in her apt to be interpreted in this light. The upshot was that there was a lot more freedom for getting to know her and developing a mutual admiration. Had lesbianism been considered legitimate then or had I not been so acutely sensitive to the stigma of “unnaturalness” (I lived in fear that my forbidden aspirations to “manhood” would be exposed), I probably would have had my first affair when I was fourteen or fifteen. As it was, I avoided it, by skillful self-deceptions, until I was twenty-four.

I became actively gay back in the “old days” when all it meant was you were queer and everybody was seeing a psychiatrist. The only social support I had for the first few months was my lover and her rather apologetic explanation of her own case. All that I remember being able to formulate in the way of rationale was, “Well, I don't seem to be getting it on with men very well so I may as well give a woman a try.” After that I never bothered with men again, but I can't say I didn't sweat the decision.

I read all the usual psychiatric shit and found deviance writ large in my personal history; inadequate identification with same-sexparent, penis-envy, penis-fear, body-shame, fear of adult intimacy (read heterosexual intimacy), degradation fantasies, equation of sex with dirt, etc. I took all the bits and pieces to my psychiatrist. Typically, he didn't object to my lesbianism, just to my rejection of males. We worked a lot on my “self-respect” and my “distorted” view of male-female relations.

I think his line of reasoning was that it was either my lack of confidence in my “feminine powers” or my persistence in seeing the male as out to subordinate and humiliate me that was preventing the old heterosexual chemistry from working. Not a bad theory, substantially correct, in fact. But then neither I, nor certainly he, was able to see the inherent paradoxes. (What kind of powers are “feminine powers?” Wherein lies the “distortion” in my view of male-female relations?) What emerged from my two-and-a-half years of psychotherapy was an appreciation of the depth of my determination to stay gay. When I quit therapy, the apologetic, self-pitying stance I had been

chronically adopting towards my shrink, towards all men, and towards people in general suddenly lifted and I haven't been bothered with it since.

I see now that I, in line with the society around me, my psychotherapist, and all my friends (gay and straight), was firmly resisting any interpretation of lesbianism that would bring into question the essential rightness of the male sexist ethic, or suggest the kind of drastic overhaul our society really needs. Nowadays, Women's Liberation has made it a lot easier to be a lesbian. Feminist reasoning has given lesbians a better way of understanding, on a head level and not just a “gut” level, their rejection of males as lovers, their departure from the restrictive male-defined ideals of “femininity,” and their heretofore rather mysterious admiration of their own sex.

The new view of lesbianism holds that because she (the lesbian) is a woman, because she has been subjected to the humanly intolerable pressures of a sexist world, she has turned to lesbianism not only in a gesture of defiance but also as the only life-style that grants her a means of sexual and emotional expression without exacting from her the price of her dignity and self-respect. It is no coincidence that a society run on the male ethic takes an even dimmer view of her than it does of the conventional female—she's not just a slave but an insurrectionist as well. The correctional device usually prescribed for her is the sexist lynch-rope of a “good Fuck.” Where once there was only stigma, confusion, and apology, there now exists an argument for lesbianism, one that converts the lesbian's sexual preference from a source of shame into a source of pride.

When I review my childhood again, as I did so many times before in a desperate search for the thing that “went wrong,” I find that the facts have not changed, but my reading of them has changed dramatically. What seemed before to have been a perverse tendency to view my situation in a “distorted” manner and to adopt “immature” solutions, seems now to have been an essentially accurate comprehension of what lay in store for me as a woman and a willful resistance along the only route that lay open to me.

Condensed and reprinted from *Everywoman*, July 9, 1971.

BRINGING HER OUT

It was the first time

She'd ever been with

a woman.

She'd read a lot of books,

You know the kind,

but--well--they never tell you

what THEY do,

(not so you'd REALLY know)

And so she laughed

To hide her nervousness

As they climbed into bed.

(She was afraid

she wouldn't know HOW, you know?)

But when the time came,

She just ad libbed

And did what

came

Naturally.

Harriette Frances, San Rafael, California

Sappho '71
95 Sunny Oak Drive
San Rafael, Calif. 94903



RONDELET

When you have gone I'll know you meant

Enough to make me want what's past.

When you have gone

I'll see the shadows being cast

And wonder why I'm not content

To watch the seasons being spent --

When you have gone.

Pat Ouellette, New Haven

Quiet Times
Advocate Press
New Haven, Conn.

Carol, in the park, chewing on straws

She has taken a woman lover
whatever shall we do
she has taken a woman lover
how lucky it wasn't you

And all the day through she smiles and lies
and grits her teeth and pretends to be shy,
or weak, or busy. Then she goes home
and pounds her own nails, makes her own
bets, and fixes her own car, with her friend.
She goes as far
as women can go without protection
from men.

On weekends, she dreams of becoming a tree;
a tree that dreams it is ground up
and sent to the paper factory, where it
lies helpless in sheets, until it dreams
of becoming a paper airplane, and rises
on its own current; where it turns into a
bird, a great coasting bird that dreams of becoming
more free, even than that -- a feather, finally, or
a piece of air with lightning in it.

She has taken a woman lover
whatever can we say

She walks around all day
quietly, but underneath it
she's electric;
angry energy inside a passive form.
The common woman is as common
as a thunderstorm.

Judy Grah, Oakland, California

Edward The Dyke
and other poems
4205 Terrace St.
Oakland, Calif. 94611
\$1.25 each



PHOTO OF ROMAINE BROOKS

romaine brooks: Thief of Souls

by Michela Griffio, New York, New York



SELF-PORTRAIT

I saw an exhibit of Romaine's paintings on Tuesday night. I was alone in the gallery except for the guard who spent most of his time trying to figure out whether or not I was a Lesbian. There were two rooms that resembled a funeral parlour, heavily carpeted floors, dark paneled wood walls, and no windows. Coupled with Romaine's grey, black, and white paintings, this environment gave the entire gallery a somber mood.

The show was such a personal vision that I felt like an intruder, a voyeur. The exhibit was called, "Thief of souls", but I felt like someone stole Romaine Brook's soul and plastered it up on those walls. The Director of the National Collection of Fine Arts in Washington said of her:

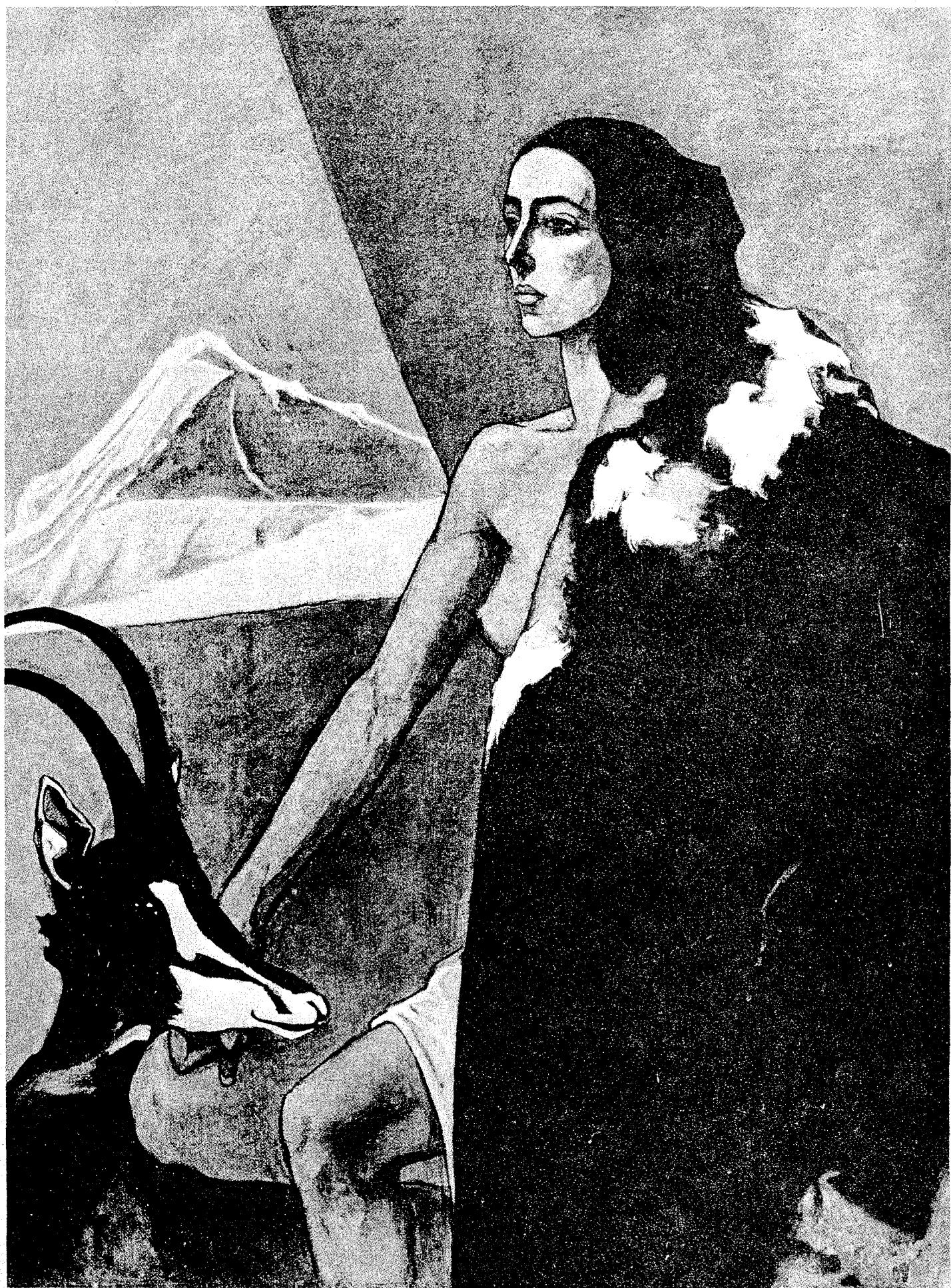
If Romaine Brooks were less truly aware of her own aloneness and the role art played in her life, she might be counted a surrealist or fitted with some useful title.

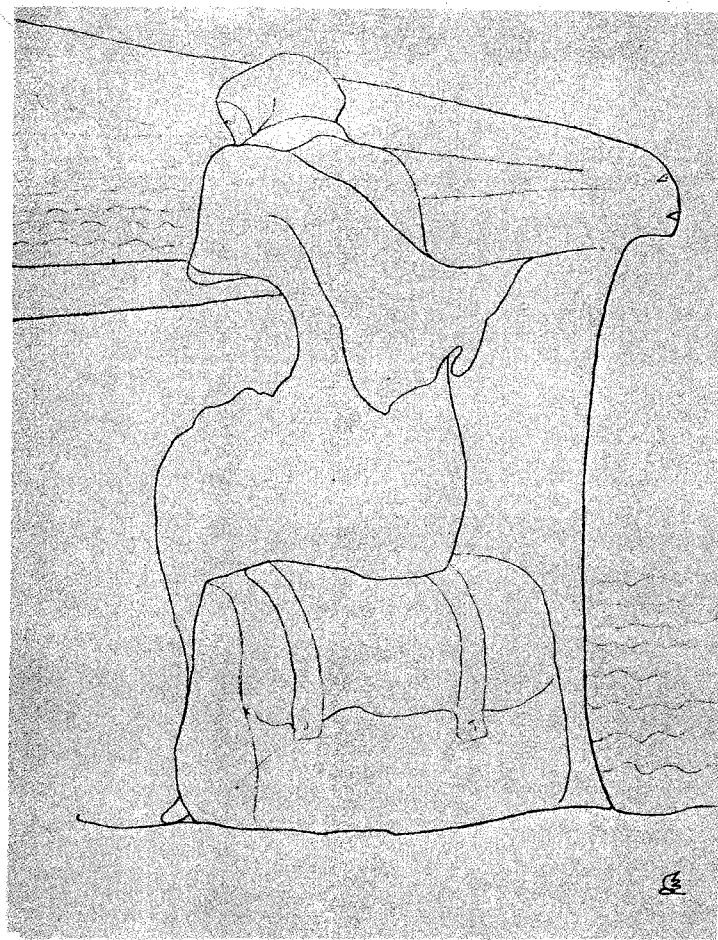
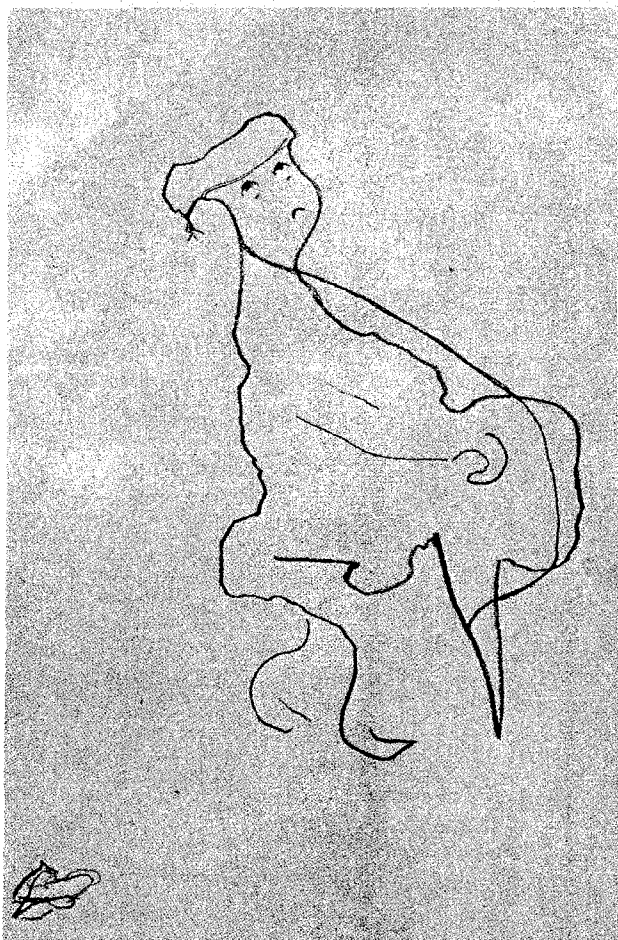
Art historians have always related to art in stiff academic terms, but Romaine defies the art world; she challenges them to define her as she has clearly defined her existence, as a Lesbian. She forces you to relate to the content and message of her work. Men cannot relate to female consciousness. They either ignore our work or try to categorize it in the same stale elitist terms that they have used to classify male art. Romaine's autobiography *No Pleasant Memories*, probably aims at those patrons and art historians who were so helpful in defining and thus destroying the meaning of her work for everyone. Her vision is very private but it is one with which Lesbians can identify.

Romaine's works prior to 1915 were not shown in the exhibit. They are paintings of young girls, their faces glowing with youthful innocence, the colors bright in comparison to her later works. Romaine tried to convey in these paintings the calm she had been denied. "It was an eloquent reminder of youth with its fragile innocence that I was fated never to enjoy."

Romaine, abandoned by her mother at the age of six, was left with a laundress on New York's Lower East Side. Her father had deserted the family before she was born. The mother, a woman of considerable wealth, promised the laundress that a family lawyer would send regular payments for Romaine's care; but the payments never arrived and Romaine sold newspapers on the street to help meet expenses. Later an aunt put her in a church school and conveniently forgot about her. Romaine rejoined her mother in Europe when she was 12 and lived there the rest of her life. After many years in boarding schools, she struck out on her own and studied art. She supported herself, through the sale of her paintings. When she was 28 her mother died and Romaine inherited the family coal mining fortune.

At 34, Romaine did her first commissioned portrait of a lady, Madame Errazuris, known to be a great social climber. Romaine's sarcasm and hatred of the upper class is first seen in this portrait. The face of the woman is buried amidst a flurry of feathers and tassels. Romaine's wit can also be seen in the portrait of Elsie de Wolfe. This painting, "The White Goat", takes its name from a ceramic figure at the left of Elsie de Wolfe. The painting is described as "...a very strange portrait of a woman in black and white with a little white goat which she resembles as if she were its





daughter."

My favorite of the commissioned portraits is Emile d'Erlanger, Romaine's patron. She arranged a showing of Romaine's work for London society, featuring her own portrait. The paint for this picture must have been mixed with pure bile. It shows her looking like a Valkyrie. Next to her is a wildcat which, according to Romaine, was painted to resemble Emile's husband. The only one of Romaine's paintings that Emile excluded from the exhibit was "The Lady Troubridge", a portrait of Una Vincenzo, Radclyffe Hall's lover. Radclyffe Hall, who wrote *The Well of Loneliness*, an account of her Lesbian relationship with Una Vincenzo, was a close friend of Romaine's.

Romaine's most poignant paintings of this period are those of working class women, most notably, "Peter, a Young Girl" and "The Charwoman" who reminded Romaine of Mrs. Hickey, the laundress who took care of her as a child.

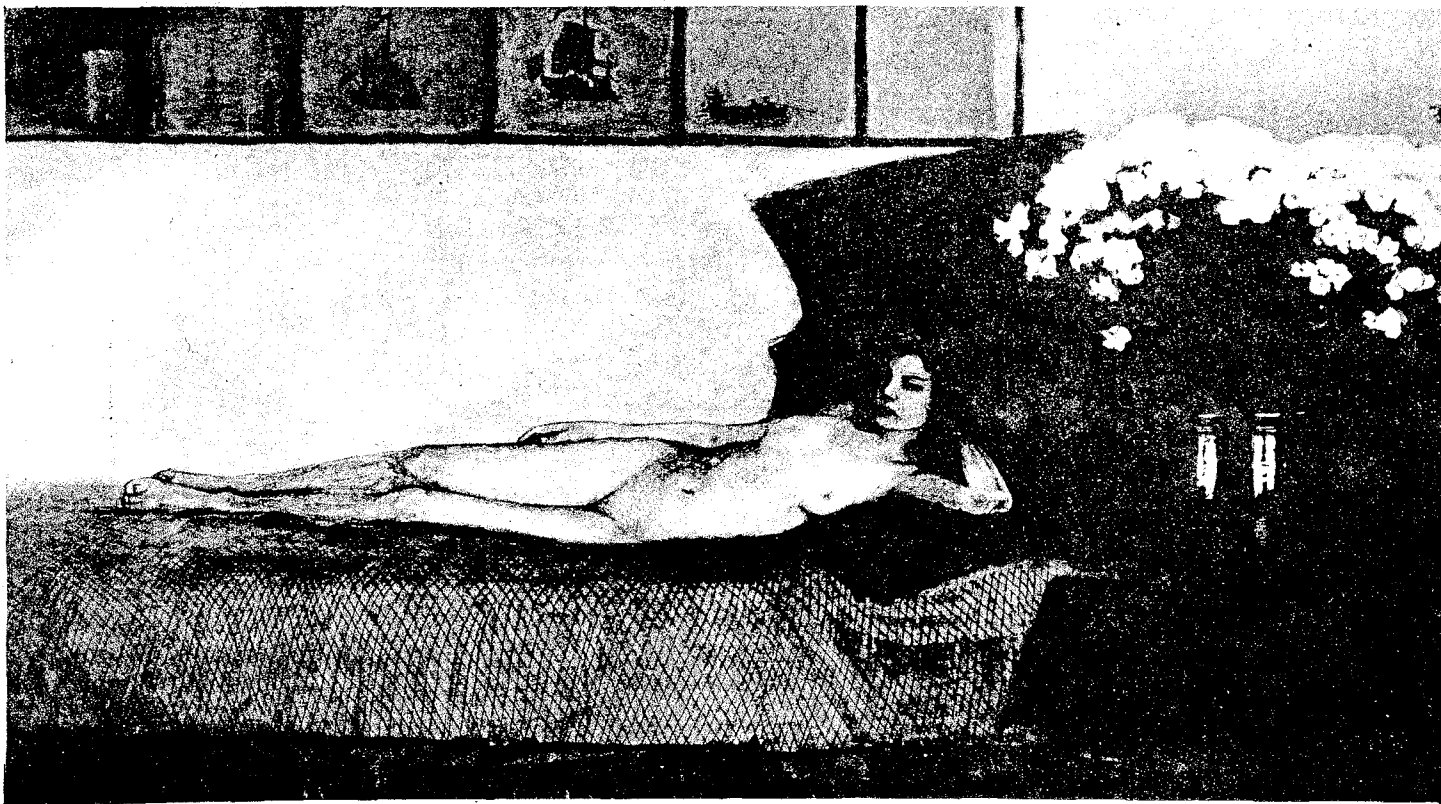
The paintings I have described so far filled one room of the gallery. The second room had an entirely different aura—a strong feeling of isolation. One of the paintings reproduced here is an example of that aura. "The White Azaleas" dominated the room, taking up an entire wall. No matter where you stood you felt like a voyeur, creeping up on this woman who stares out into space. There is nothing really sexual about the nude. The model is completely relaxed, but one gets the overwhelming sensation that the artist was inhibited and afraid to look directly at her. It seems that the artist herself is behind the plant and is the primary focal point. Hanging

directly across from "The White Azaleas" is the painting "The Piano". Here Romaine seems to be looking down a long corridor so as not to disturb the lady.

In 1915, Romaine met Natalie Barney the poet, who remained her closest friend until Romaine died in 1970. At that time, Natalie's poetry readings were the only social event that drew Romaine away from her work and out of her studio. Miss Barney (also an American ex-patriot) was one of the most talented and intellectual writers in France at that time. Her salons were frequented by Proust, Gide, Colette, and of course, Radclyffe Hall and Una Vincenzo. Later Natalie Barney brought Romaine's work to the U.S. as a gift to the Smithsonian.

The "Portrait of Natalie Barney" stands out for its depth of expression and softness when contrasted with the stark blacks, greys, and white of the other paintings. This painting and the "Portrait of Ida Rubenstein" never left Romaine's studio (except for exhibits) until after her death.

The portrait of Ida Rubenstein a well-known dancer with the Russian ballet, conveys a feeling of distance and withdrawal. Romaine may have been afraid to paint another sensuous nude of Ida since her first one was placed on the index by the Pope. Romaine considered Ida the living incarnation of her artistic ideal and used her body type in almost all of the nudes done between 1910 and 1920. Romaine's studio was filled with full-size drawings of Ida, and she is the subject of several paintings including "Le Trajet" a reflection in Death. But in the formal "Portrait of Ida", Ida is not nude, far from it, her entire body is covered by flowing dark



WHITE AZALEAS

robes and her head is tied in "Garboesque" scarves. Ida looks painfully into the distance and behind her looms great storm clouds. Even Ida, Romaine's lover for years, does not look directly at us; and her beautiful body, the source of inspiration for all of Romaine's nudes, is buried under dark drapery. In 1912, Romaine painted a portrait of herself almost identical to the one of Ida.

Romaine's eyes followed me around the entire exhibit. Not the eyes of her 1912 self-portrait, but her eyes in the portrait of herself at 49. The first painting you see as you come in the door. It is the only portrait of anyone in which the eyes look directly at you. Romaine stands on the balcony, very tall, very lean, and dressed in formal riding attire. The hat on her head casts a shadow on her eyes. It is through this shadow that Romaine's eyes follow you around the exhibit. Her face is expressionless. You cannot see her really, but her eyes look right through you... Romaine Brooks... "Thief of Souls."

For people who would like further information about Romaine Brooks, there is a catalogue about her including reproductions of her paintings and drawings:

"Romaine Brooks, Thief of Souls"
published by the Collection of Fine Arts,
Smithsonian Institution Press
Washington, D.C., 20002



PORTRAIT OF PETER

“

*... at least
you could
act like
ladies!”*

by Katz, Boston, Massachusetts

*This article was compiled and revised by the MOTIVE
staff from several articles written by Katz.*

One day I ran into an old friend of mine who had come out that summer and who told me that a Gay Women's Liberation group was being formed and would I like to come to the first meeting? It was the most uptight meeting I had ever been to. We didn't know how or where to start, what this group should be, or even exactly what we had in common. But we kept meeting and at each weekly meeting Gay Women's Liberation grew and grew. Our first action was the August 26, 1970, Women's Day March, on which, for the first time in Boston, we women marched together under a lesbian banner.

For many of us it was our political "coming out", our public declaration as lesbians, our initial sign of political existence as a feminist gay movement. We knew that we would run into resistance from other women on the march. After all, it was being organized by NOW (National Organization for Women) and their president Betty Friedan had just made some rather hysterical anti-gay attacks in New York City at the Conference to Unite Women (to unite straight women I guess!).

The march passed a lot of construction sites where the workmen yelled the usual obscenities. We shouted back; "Off the Prick!" or "Man-hating Dykes Unite!" A woman marshal came up to us and said: "Why don't you girls stop provoking those men?" We answered: "Those swines? We're not provoking them! We thought this was a women's liberation march, not a parade for men's pleasure."

Then the truth came out. Right out of this "sister's" mouth. Looking at our sign she said: "You know, girls, we have a long road to march toward freedom, and you're not doing anything to help us. In fact you have hindered us right along. At least you could act like ladies!" I was really wrecked by knowing that this was just a hint of the kind of oppression we could expect from our straight "sisters" for a long time to come.

By the time we arrived at Government Center, where the rally was to be held, we felt pretty wiped out. There were so many men around that it was not clear to anyone that this was a women's day. The speeches started and one after the other they were about equality *with* men, as if what we wanted was to be rapists and fathers and butchers and soldiers and pricks. At the last minute they squeezed in a lesbian speaker but hardly gave her enough time to assert our existence let alone describe our anger and energy.

To avoid total demoralization, we decided to go play in a nearby fountain. We yelled: "Queers to the fountain!" and took off down into the deep concrete pit where the pool was. A couple of our sisters jumped into the water, their pants rolled up above their knees, playing and frolicking and trying to feel good in a way that the march didn't let us.

A lot of men started drifting down near the fountain. The crowd watching us grew bigger. There were, a dozen women trying to relax, and just doing that was enough to draw a grandstand group. Some of these cocks tried to provoke us either into arguments and fights or into their beds, but we just ignored them. Suddenly a hired pig in uniform turned up. He was a young guy very swollen with importance because of the star on his tit. He was also a nervous wreck. He told the girls in the fountain to get out or he would arrest them. We surrounded him immediately and told him we didn't think that was wise. I guess he felt fairly freaked at being confronted and he left. A while later I caught sight of him dragging Eve, handcuffed to him, away from the pool. Carol ran right up to the pig and started fast talking him.

"Young man, where is this ordinance against swimming in the fountains?...Is it posted?...False arrest is a serious crime...Is this within your jurisdiction?...Where is your identification?" The poor chump was totally befuddled. We all began to barrage him with double talk, threats and warnings. It was a zoo. The boy relented, unlocked Eve, and stomped away insisting that he would return with enough police to take us all in.

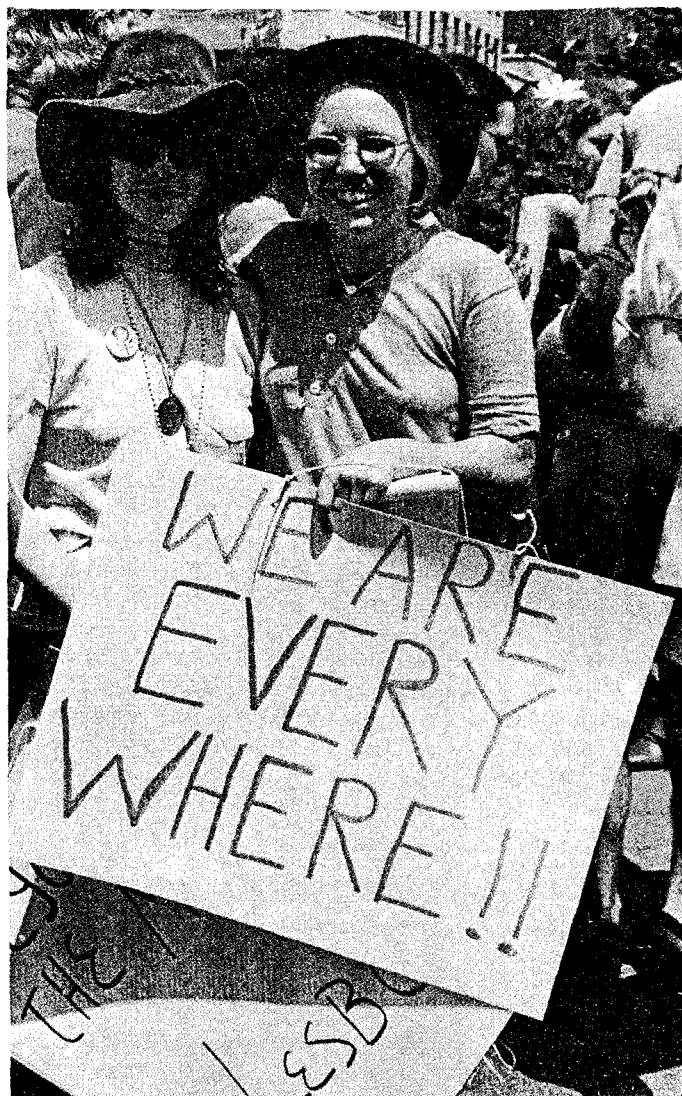
We were all about to rejoice in our relief when suddenly it sounded like an earthquake was happening around our heads. "Boo! Boo! Take her in. Drag the dyke off! Don't let them go! Fuck those ugly broads! They shouldn't be allowed on the streets free!" We looked around. We were surrounded. What seemed like thousands and thousands of grey-puffy-faced-old-young repulsive men were screaming for our blood. The whole area was jammed with blood-thirsty angry piglets, pushing forward, waving their fists, calling out obscenities. I thought it was going to be the biggest gang rape in the history of Boston.

We steeled ourselves. We formed a wedge-shaped group. We slowly walked through that mass of anti-woman, anti-lesbian ugliness. Miraculously, it opened to let us through. One fight, one mistake, one hesitation, one taunt from us, and it would have been all over. Several men tried to grab one or the other of us. We refused to fight, knowing what would happen if anything broke loose. We got through to freedom, but a lot of things flashed through my mind on the way.

I thought: I'll never come to Government Center again. I didn't know there were so many men in the world. Men really do hate women. Men especially hate lesbians. Isn't it ironic that, just a few hundred yards away, there are a couple thousand women's liberationists having their little rally while we are at death's door.

In the following months, Gay Women's Liberation grew and we had little contact with the straight Women's Liberation Movement until International Women's Day in March, 1971. On that day, Boston women liberated a building for a women's center. The action was planned by a variety of women: radical lesbians, ex-weatherwomen, straight feminists, women's rights types and so-called anti-imperialist women. The building was an ex-factory owned by Harvard and rarely used. Our new address: 888 Memorial Drive. Those first days after the take-over were days of total joy. There was infinite work to do and the taste of victory was too delightful for any conflicts to disrupt. Harvard turned off the heat in the sub-freezing weather. But supporters from all over the city brought us sleeping bags, blankets and electric heaters. Harvard turned off the electricity, but we turned it back on. We fixed the plumbing and started rebuilding the whole place.

The media, unwittingly, gave us great coverage. It was wondrous to watch them print what they considered their most insidious attacks on us, only to aid us in getting across the truth. One of our biggest concerns was to make it clear that radical lesbianism had become a serious political force in Boston. At least half the women at the Women's Center were gay. We wanted the public to know that to a large extent Women's Liberation is a lesbian plot. We were not some isolated separate group in the Women's Center, but an integral energy force. So in all our press releases we were very upfront about who we were. We need not have worried about lesbianism being mentioned--the press could talk about practically nothing else. Even when the straight



PHOTOGRAPH by MARIAN THACHER, BUFFALO

women at the center tried to avoid the "issue" of lesbians, even when they "accidentally" omitted our existence, the press only had eyes for us. They loved to insist that we at the women's center were a pack of hardened-manhaters, lustful lezies. Each reporter told tales of personally seeing women leaving the center *hand in hand!* This time the press had no time for the straight women.

There was, though, one article that was insufferable. It was in the *Harvard Crimson*, written by a woman descended from the ruling class. No one found it odd that she should try to sabotage our struggle, but the low way in which she did it angered us.

She told of the many parties we had in the nights at the Center. She said that she personally talked to at least four or five women (we assume they were straight, although somehow she hadn't found it necessary to specify) who were forced to leave the party because the lesbians there kept pushing themselves upon the poor women and kept asking them to dance and making overt sexual advances towards them.

The thing that pissed us off was the totally heterosexual way in which this was reported. It could be very possible that straight women left some Center party because they felt sexual pressure from us lesbians. That's nothing new. We in gay women's liberation have repeatedly pointed out that in general sexual tension between gays and straights does not come from the lesbians involved, but is projection from all the ridiculous anti-gay hogwash that straights carry in their heads.

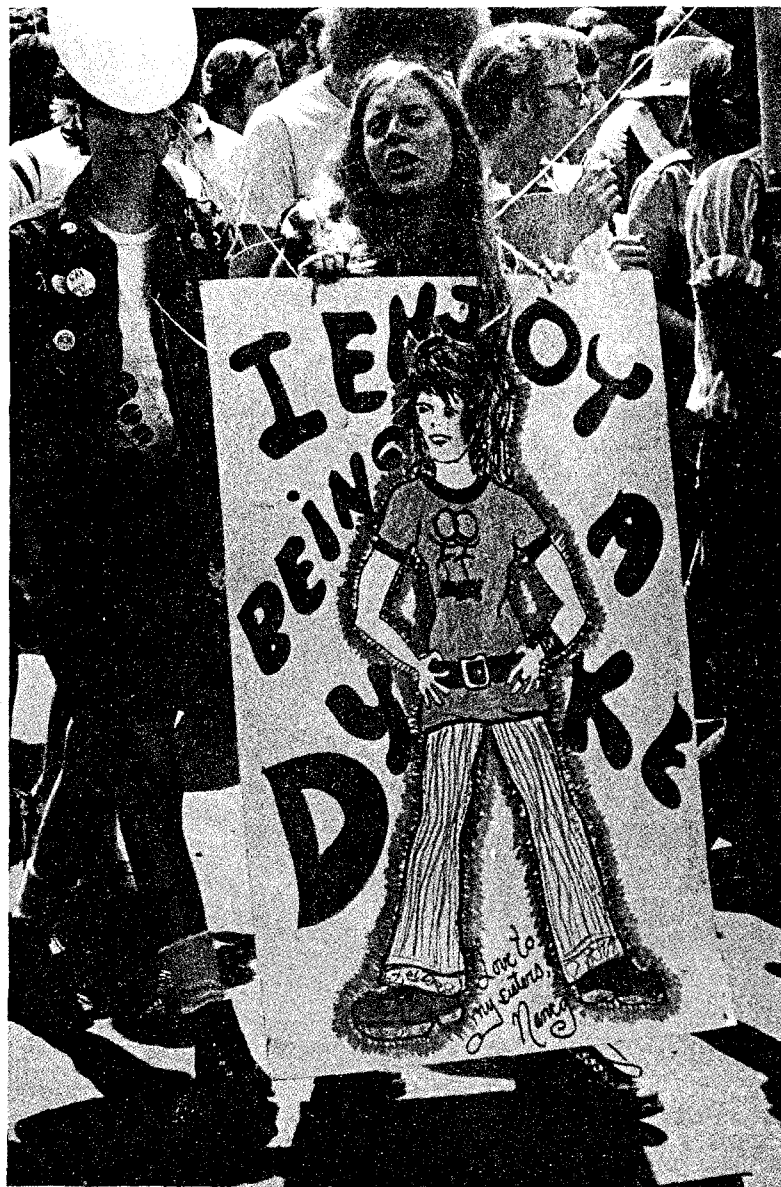
It's like how straight friends react when you tell them you're gay. They immediately assume that you're real hot for them, that you can hardly control your lust when they walk into the room. They assume that like straight men, we feel that every woman is a target for our desires. I know it's true for me and many of my gay girlfriends that we find ourselves perfectly able to control our erotic impulses around other women. In fact, for many of us, we have no interest whatsoever in getting physically involved with straight women. The straight women leave us for men, or they project manhood upon us and expect us to act like men. I don't want to be someone's man. I am a woman and I love women. When straight women return to their men we get left feeling rejected and incompetent at building a good relationship. We either go back to our closets or we repress any strong feeling in order to avoid getting hurt again. So I've got no desires for straight women. But straight women who see themselves as sex objects (because they've been taught to—for men—all through life) find it hard to believe that lesbians don't see them that way. These straight women who may or may not have left on account of us, were just assuming or hoping that our every attempt at friendship and at making them comfortable in the Center was a sexual come-on.

A lot of the straight women at the Center assumed that we must be some kind of she-men, since we were gay. Seeing themselves as sexual objects for us, some were anxious to get our erotic approval. Being in the women's movement, they probably didn't relate to men too much and probably really missed the ego-building complimentary feelings women get from being thought appealing. Since we from gay women's liberation were among the most energetic women at the Center, many people were attracted to us both as a group and as individuals. It became quite the fad to have "gay feelings" and more than one lesbian reported that straight women were coming on to them in very coy, seductive ways. The straight women who were feeling like they wanted to come out demanded that we spend our energies and time dealing with their feelings and helping them with the changes they were going through. I don't mean to discount the fact that a lot of women were impressed with how we related to each other and did start to feel that they were gay. But no one left us space together to talk about our lives as lesbians.

These women would come to our gay meetings and corner groups of us so that they could talk about how they didn't like men, or tell us about their battles with their husbands and boyfriends, or to tell how they preferred masturbation to fucking. I myself was insulted and bored by these stories. I was insulted because they assumed that the basis of my gayness was rejection of men. They refused to comprehend or face up to the reality of my enjoyment of sex with women, that women's bodies turned me on, that Wendy and I are involved in passion and love, not in a mutual distaste for pricks.

The other main fuck-up of the straight women, especially those "confused about their own sexuality," those playing with the idea of coming out, was that they thought of being gay as this wonderful vanguard action, this big life-time party. In some very real sense, that is true. It's the best thing that ever happened to me. But the point of our having a movement is to fight our oppression. If being gay were just a lark, then a lot more people would be gay.

I resented these radical women who understood so well the oppression of black people, of straight women, but who were blind to the agony of our lives, who were not interested in our meetings to hear how I got fired from my job for being gay, who basically related to us as racists relate to black people who they believe are always laughing, humming, dancing and eating watermelon. They would



PHOTOGRAPH BY ELLEN SHUMSKY, NEW YORK

never deal seriously with our oppression, especially our oppression at their hands.

As the days progressed, it became more and more clear that the Center had serious internal contradictions. Of course we all knew that before we took over the building; questions of gay/straight, black/white, poor/rich, young/old. But for a few days I guess we were all anxious to be just women together. Finally, after one bust warning too many, the women at the Center decided to leave before the state police could arrive.

Leaving was called a victory march opened up negotiations with the black residents of the area about low cost housing (which had been one of our demands), because we had held the place for ten days and nights, and because we had made \$5,000 in contributions towards the purchase of a women's center.

The last few days of the Women's Center Wendy and I weren't around much. It was beginning to take too much energy. The games of the straight women, the boring length of the meetings, and the millions of different chores that demanded our time kept most of us in the old gay women's liberation community sticking together. About the seventh day, when the gay women finally got together to talk, most of us said that we had spent most of our time with our one or two closest gay friends instead of expanding our community. We were divided and dispersed...it was almost as if we had never had a movement. It was very hard even to define who "us" was. Before the Women's Center that had been very easy: there was a group of twenty to forty of us who related in some regular manner to gay women's liberation activities and inside that there were overlapping circles of ten or twelve who spent lots and lots of time together.

Now in the Center there were these other groups: there were gay women who we knew before but who mostly related to other women's liberation groups and had never before identified with gay women's liberation. Before they had felt that we were unpolitical, or liberal or just that they had other "priorities". Now with gay women being such a large segment of the Center, these women were anxious to be in our meetings and decisions.

Then there were the gay women we didn't know who had just come down to dig the Women's Center. These are women who had before been easily included in gay women's liberation. But in the hectic mess of the Center, it was hard to find these sisters, especially since we had no space of our own. Then there were the straight women's liberationists who thought they were coming out and didn't care that our group already had a herstory and some old business to attend to, but demanded, at the threat of intense criticism and accusations of elitism, that we spend lots of time helping them "deal" with their sexuality. Finally, there were the straight women, women we knew to be with men, who came to our meetings as voyeurs, who found gay liberation "interesting and fascinating" and wanted "to hear what we had to say."

All these women with their different motives did not help our getting together. We spent so much time at the beginning of every meeting we called hassling out who the meeting was for, that nothing but increased hostility was ever accomplished. We finally resorted to calling meetings at our own apartments again. Nice to have a women's center! Again, lesbians were pushed out of space we had fought to create for our sisters and ourselves.

A lot of these straight women came to our bars for about three months after the Center. Every time we went to one of the bars, it seemed like a whole hoard of these women followed us. They always came by truckloads so that they could avoid any contact with the "bar women" (i.e.:lesbians). For us the bars are the only place we have to go. For some straight women it's just a lark, another groovy way to pass the evening. This is traditional territorial imperialism. They take the last miserable little Mafia dives and make them into the new hip joints defined by them. Instead of quietly trying to figure out what the bars are about, they criticize us for our 'monogamies' and for our role-playing (they mean butch/femme stuff).

Many women in the women's movement criticize butch or macho women a lot, and spend lots of energy avoiding "taking on the characteristics of men." But just rejecting macho as inherently bad doesn't deal with the real problem which is that men have always used strength against us, and it is the misuse of strength which leads to domination, not the existence or style of strength. So if we reject as 'male' every characteristic assigned to men by pig society, then we're accepting sexist categories and I don't understand how we intend to win our war.

Another piece of dogma started in the straight women's movement is smash monogamy. Some straight women feel very freaked out that two women can actually love each other with so much intensity. They are really uptight, because they criticize us on the basis of "correct" ideas they got from their heterosexual experiences, as if those ideas could possibly relate to our Lavender Vision. It's not the intensity, the monogamy of a relationship that makes or breaks it-it's the content of the relationship. What we really want to smash is domination, stifling possessiveness, manipulation, brutality, etc. and those things turn up all the time in all kinds of relationships from the most casual to the most intense. Dogma is a way not to deal with the actualities of our lives. When your main concern is either dogmatically smashing or dogmatically defending monogamy itself, that leaves a lot of things in many other kinds of relationships that don't get scrutinized or criticized at all.

That's why I get pissed when straight women come into the bars "smashing monogamy" by playing only fast records and doing aggressive circle dances. They also think they are the only political freaks in the bar, ignoring the incredibly political acts any lesbian (especially those who exist outside the relatively secure context of a movement) has made all her life.

I'll stick with my own people. And my people are lesbians. And with those women I'll protect myself against anyone who tries to mess with our community, whether they are pig men or fucked-up straight women.



PHOTOGRAPH by ELLEN SHUMSKY, NEW YORK

My hair is not the soft and curly
Badge of femininity it used to be;
It's a shaggy mane now,
Unkempt with anger.

And my body never has to be again
The soft and curvy, pretty pussie
That I once wished it was;
It's become a tool--
Hands capable with use
(In fixing cars and making books)
Practical feet that run and stomp;
I like my body now;
I like to feel its strength
And know that it can serve me well
As a weapon,
And a tool for loving.

For my psyche's not the frail and fragile
Closet queer it used to be,
I'm a proud dyke now,
Self loving and sure.

Heather, Berkeley, California

Watch Out, Brother, I'm Here!
Heather
P.O. Box 3062
Berkeley, Calif. 94703
\$.80/copy



PEN AND INK by NANCY MYRON, WASHINGTON D.C.

THE VOW for Anne Hutchinson

sister,
your name is not a household word.
maybe you had a 2 line description
in 8th grade history.
more likely you were left out,
as I am when men converse in my presence.

Anne Hutchinson:

“a woman of haughty & fierce carriage.”

my shoulders straighten.
you are dead, but not as dead as you
have been, we will avenge you.

you and all the nameless brave spirits,
my mother, my grandmothers,
great grandmothers (Breen Northcott, butcher's wife,
the others forgotten.) who bore me?
generations of denial & misuse
who bore those years of waste? sisters & mothers
it is too late for all of you. waste
& waste again, life after life,
shot to hell. it will take more
than a husband with a nation behind him
to stop me now.

Alta, San Lorenzo, California

Letters to Women
Shameless Hussy Press
P.O. Box 424
San Lorenzo, Calif. 94580

Good evening!
Welcome to the
Virginia Grim
Show! We have
here today

Mr. & Mrs. So.

Strangelove

a practising heterosexual
couple...



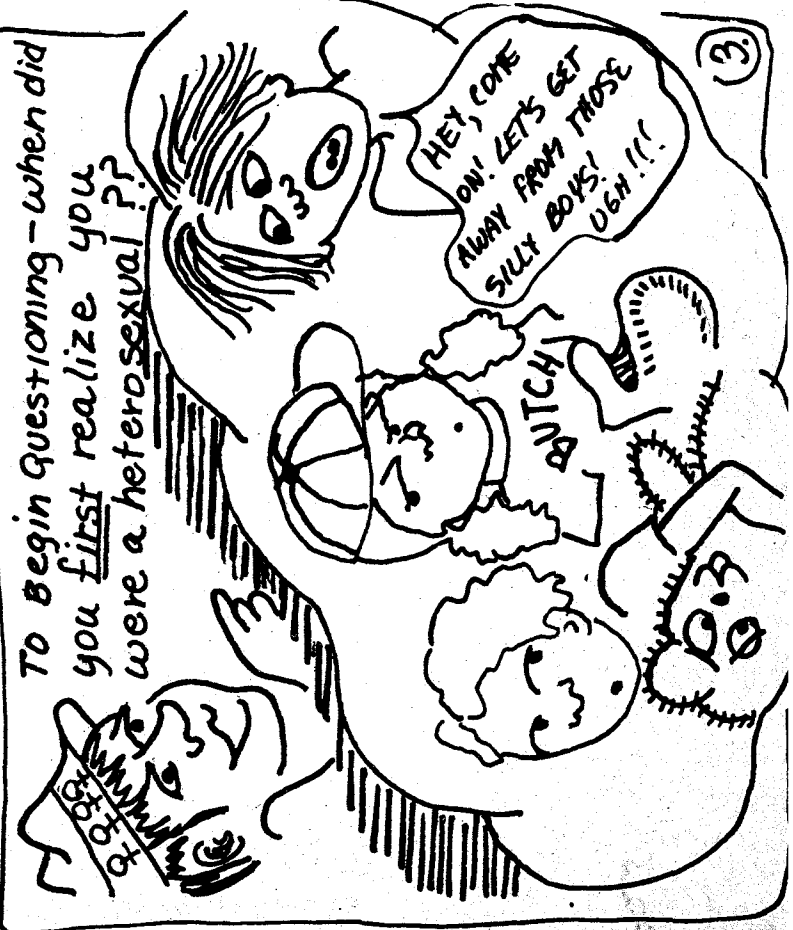
PANEL - 1

and our disting-
wished panel of
women to question
them...

JUST KEEP YOUR MOUTH
SHUT DEAR - I WEAR THE
PANTS AND I'LL
TALK TO THESE DYKES!

UH...
YES DEAR
(HAMM)

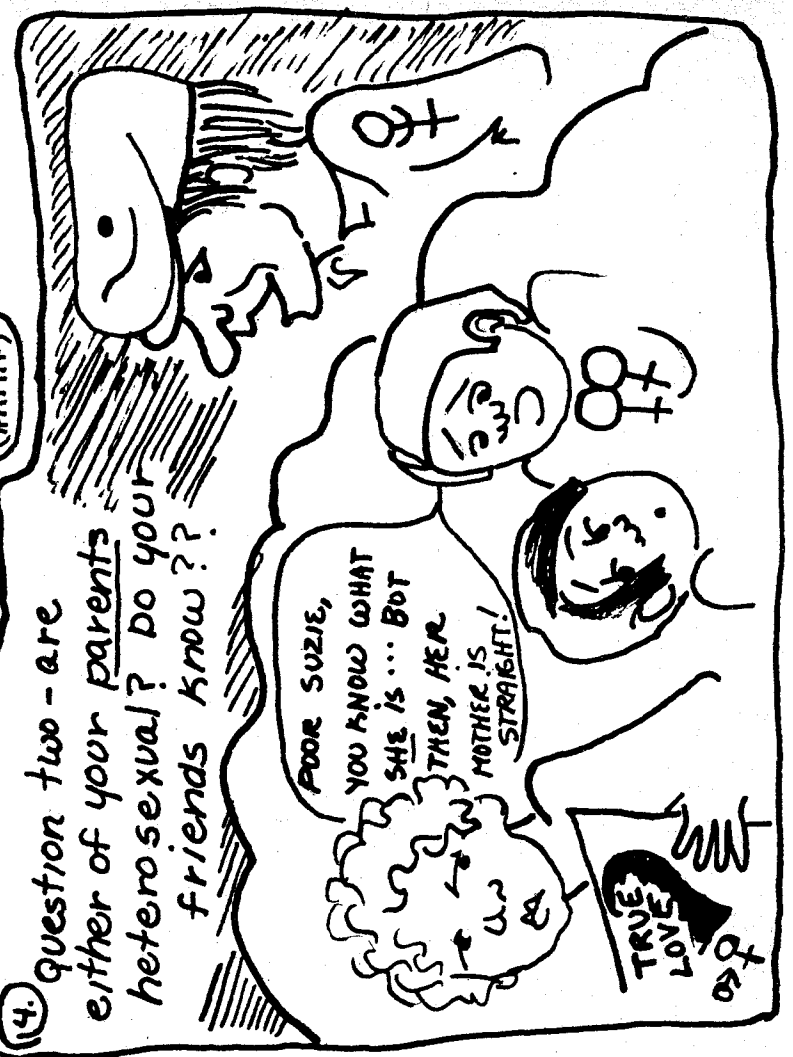
To begin questioning - when did
you first realize you
were a heterosexual??



HEY, COME
ON! LET'S GET
AWAY FROM THOSE
SILLY BOYS!
UGH!!!

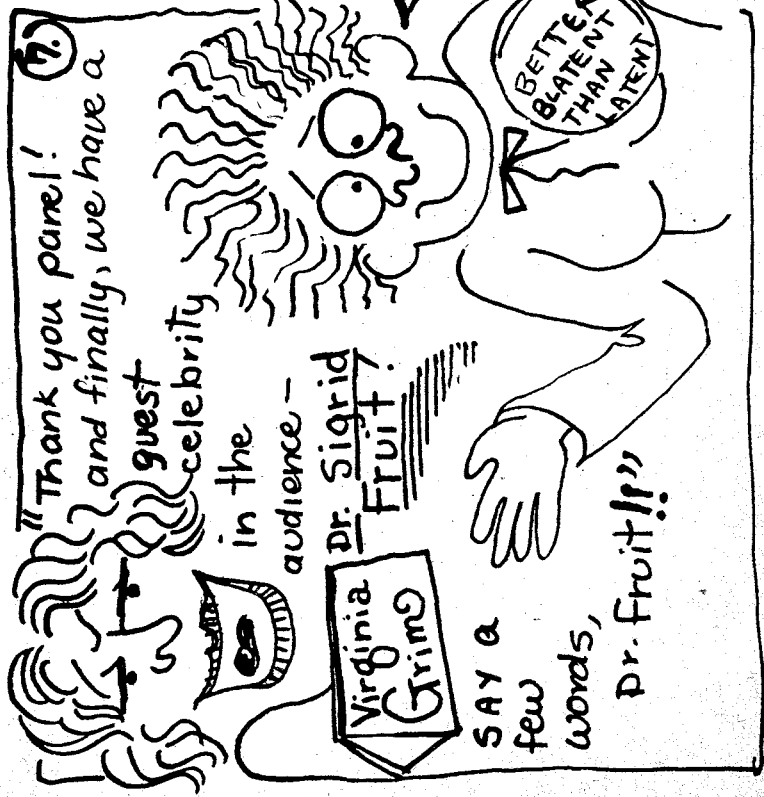
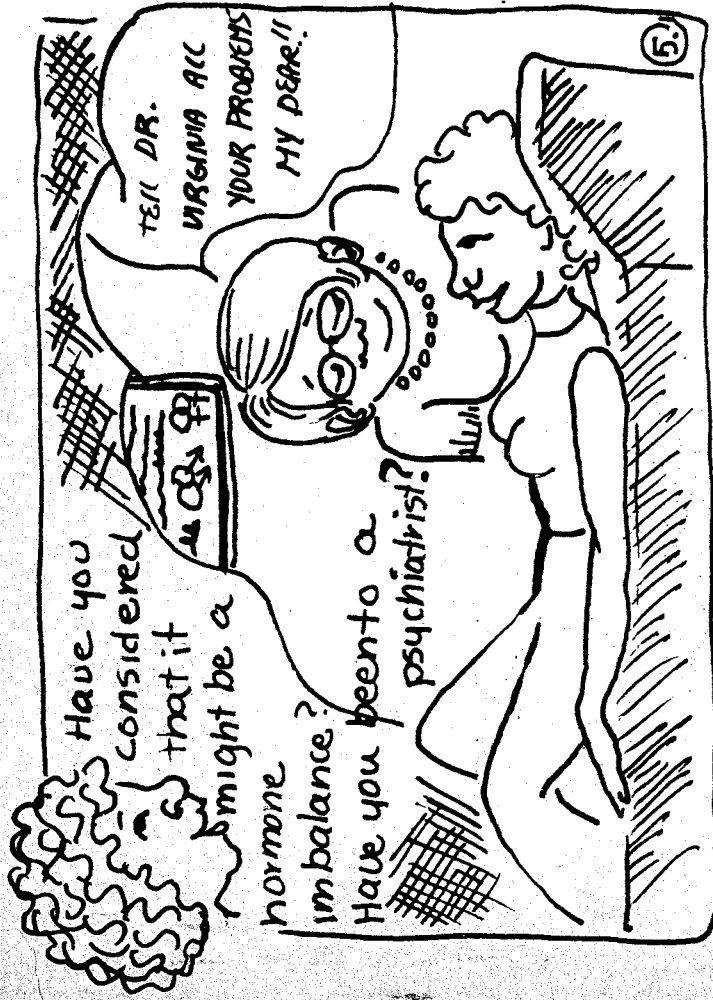
SWITCH!

Question two - are
either of your parents
heterosexual? Do your
friends know??



POOR SUZIE,
YOU KNOW WHAT
SHE IS ... BUT
THEN, HER
MOTHER IS
STRAIGHT!

TRUE
LOVE



LACE CURTAINS

AND

A PLASTIC JESUS

by Nancy Myron, Washington, D.C.

I was one of ten children in a poor Irish Catholic working-class family. We lived in a South Boston housing project and both my parents had to work full time to support us. So unlike a middle-class daughter who is indoctrinated into feminine behavior from an early age, I was left on my own to develop. I chose my own games and friends and was called a tomboy--the name society gives a girl who doesn't play with dolls, wear dacron dresses and mary janes, and already begin to act her future role of wife and mother.

At age twelve I moved to a middle class village in rural New York where my family was the dredges. My life before had been exciting in comparison--joy riding on the subway and stealing in department stores--but now I began to feel social pressure to act like the other girls. They were crisp, nice, clean Protestants who by their very possessions--spacious comfortable homes, gracious parents, and beautiful clothes--told me there was something wrong with me and my family. My home was cluttered with chalk statues of the Infant of Prague, plastic reliefs of the Virgin Mary and American flags that glowed in the dark. Disagreements among the ten of us were settled with fistfights, and communication from my father was dominated by his warnings that if we didn't start to pray the rosary every night we would burn in hell.

I discovered that the person I had become by following my own inclinations wasn't the person I was expected to be now that I had "come of age." The realization that a transition was expected was both painful and repulsive to me. When I dressed up for dances I felt totally unnatural. But I, like the other young women, was ripped out of my own self-development and forced to develop all the ladylike ways that would attract a male and service his ego. The effect of social pressure was internally disastrous: I hated myself for not being able to make it, and I hated my family for what they were. I spent hours drawing and copying old painters and reading Baudelaire, Rimbaud et al. to prove to my middle class friends that I was just as good as they were.

At fifteen I realized I had strong feelings towards women. Through high school those feelings grew to encompass not only strong emotional attachments but also specifically sexual feelings. I had not made it class-wise, was a failure at femininity, and now I was feeling something that was both sinful and socially abnormal. When you're a Catholic, you don't even admit to heterosexual feelings; sexual contact is only for making other little Catholics. There was a whole fantasy world of feelings going on inside of me that I could admit to no one. As a defense I developed a witty sarcasm that attracted people but kept them from seeing inside of me. I was saved from further self-destruction by my platonic relationship with a close male friend who served as a heterosexual cover. (Years later I found out that he was gay too.)

Although I had great difficulty reconciling my feelings for women with my religious upbringing and social expectations, deep down I knew that they were positive. I couldn't subject myself to relationships in which I had to appear weaker than the other person. Similarly I was only attracted to women who were never really into the simpering feminine role. With my girlfriends I felt equal and was able to be myself, except for expressing my sexual feelings.

I told my counselor how much I wanted to go to art school but I was never encouraged because I had no money and my other marks were atrocious. Even the worst middle-class students were expected to go to some college, whereas I was expected to work and contribute to the family income. My teachers' lack of confidence in me confirmed my class inferiority. So I went to work, still knowing I was gay but without even the close emotional relationships with other women that had been possible in the high school sub-culture. I was set adrift with no models or cultural institutions to help me.

During my next two years as a nurse's aide I met two gay women, but we did not help each other deal with lesbian oppression. I found gay women turning the disgust society has for

motive

them in on themselves and against each other. Self-contempt came out in cutting humor and the imitation of heterosexual role relationships. Some women tried to act and dress like men while others epitomized the feminine. It seemed like a cruel irony that these women should adopt the same oppressive system of behavior that originally denied them any growth. They not only denied themselves as women but also looked on other women as inferiors, just as men do. They were twice as alienated from their own identity.

The sub-culture of bar life was a microcosm of heterosexual society. Class oppression was acted out in the high premium put on sophisticated, glib language and sharp (butch) and elegant (femme) clothes. There were working class bars and middle class bars. Middle class gay women only went to working class bars on "slumming" expeditions and working class gay women felt intimidated and

inadequate if they ventured away from their kind.

The relationships that developed from bars were desperate attempts at achieving emotional security. They were doomed to failure because they were based on superficial heterosexual patterns of security, dominance, status, and romanticism. Because gay women are brutalized by society, their only relief comes from being sexually desirable to as many women as possible—the number of one night stands becomes the measure of your worth. I didn't become a part of bar life because that culture never helped me to affirm myself.

I then drifted into a series of "safe" but stagnant relationships with straight women. It's obvious to me now that they were defensive relationships that protected me from having to commit myself to another woman. Because the straight women always made their relationships with men their first priority, I was constantly undermined. Like



LINOLEUM CUT by GLENDA JONES, EAST PALO ALTO

many in the women's movement, they were not able to give up the privileges that heterosexuality brings. As bad as their relationships with men were, those relationships gave them the little status they had.

I began to get some political consciousness which first developed out of empathy for black people's oppression. I felt that a horrible injustice had been done which had to be righted (basic liberal motivation). By trying to fight the injustice of racism, I was fighting for myself, but by proxy. The connection between racism and my oppression never occurred to me, however, in the abstract middle-class political movements. During the four years that I worked in civil rights and the peace movement it became clear that they were dominated by middle-class white men who were political primarily to fulfill their own ego needs. Most people in the movement were not fighting to end the shittiness of their own lives, so their politics remained abstract. The movement had a missionary stance towards politics—helping out those less fortunate (Blacks and Vietnamese). Although the rhetoric was about liberation, it offered me no help as an oppressed working-class lesbian.

Feeling totally discouraged with politics I took the first opportunity that arose to remove myself. I spent two years working and traveling in Europe. I was relatively lonely and found relief only in brief relationships with women. Because of lack of money and loneliness I reluctantly returned to the states.

I had heard about women's liberation while I was away and started to think and talk about it as soon as I returned. I devoured every piece of literature and became incredibly excited at becoming aware of myself as a woman. I saw how I had been forced to feel bad about myself most of my life. I started going to gay liberation meetings; my self hatred and shame began to dissolve as I gained a lesbian feminist understanding of my life. I saw that the male society that had set up sex and class systems was wrong and not me. My past political understandings about race and the economic system were integrated into a politics that was meaningful to me and my oppression. I spent more time with gay women; my relationships became more positive and I began to act more from my real self. I began to realize that my past relationships with women in the left who still had connections to men had been destructive. Although we all considered ourselves political, we had no basis on which to communicate about my lesbianism. Their liberal tolerance of my "personal problem" did not help me fight out of my oppression.

Because of my positive feelings about myself, I was able to have a long and working relationship with another lesbian with political consciousness. We struggled with problems of the gay society so it didn't have a destructive effect on us. We wanted to live with other gay political women and moved into a collective, a short-lived and disastrous experiment.

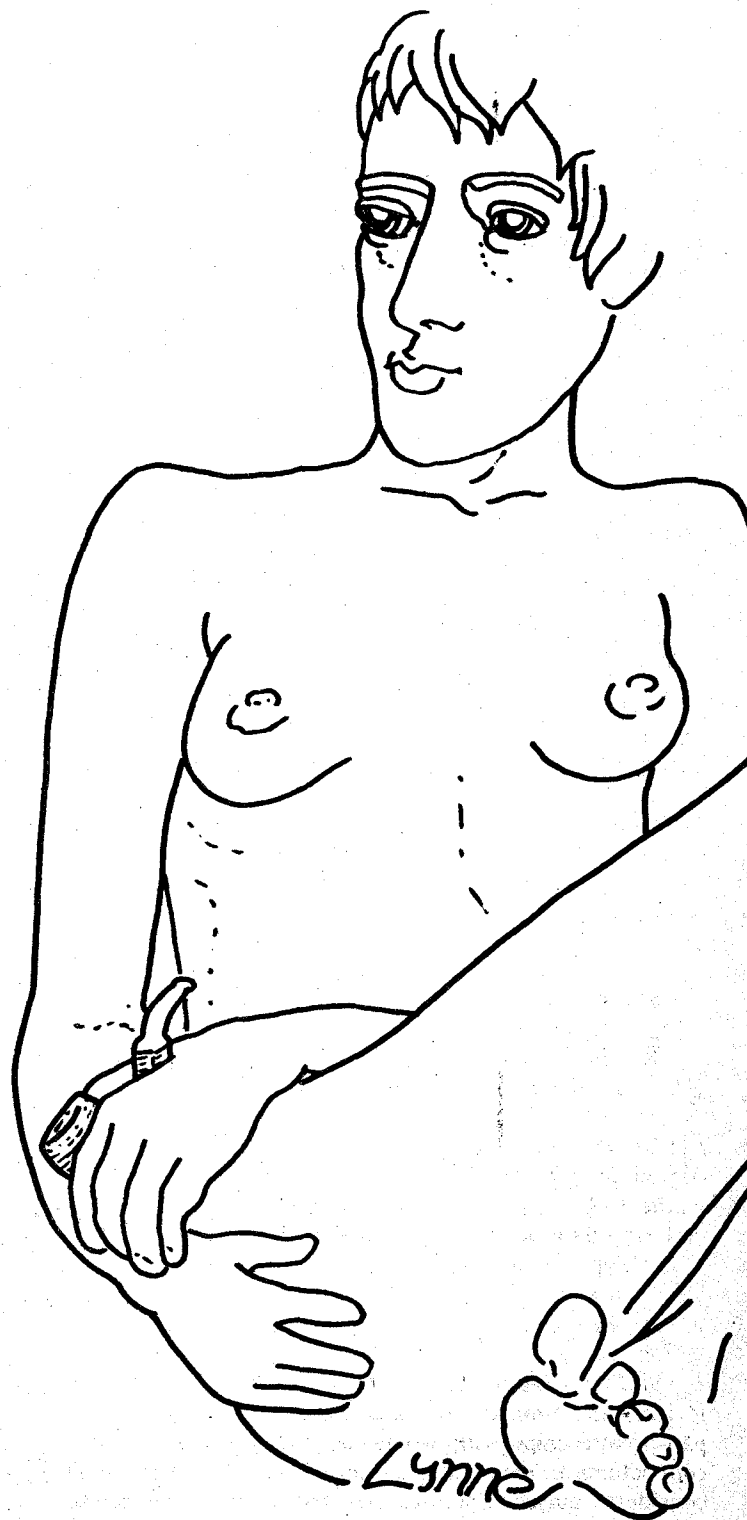
The reasons for failure were many but primary among them was class. We came together out of emotional need and thought that because we were all lesbians with some political consciousness living together would magically work. But we had no clear-cut political goals or priorities, so the major problems that we encountered were taken personally. As it was, class was the first and last problem.

Once again it became the job of the oppressed—the working class women—to make the middle class women aware of the system of privilege that had been handed down to them by their husbands and fathers and how that system worked to intimidate working-class women. The class system carries with it money, education and the development of political abstractions, all of which make it difficult for middle-class women to see the destructiveness of their own class behavior. No one, even a woman, easily gives up the tools acquired to maintain that privilege. Because these were the few measly privileges allowed them as gay women, they held onto them even more tightly, especially their false sense of superiority. Politics for them had been a luxury, an abstraction, so they had never realized that becoming political means you have to change your own life. Now they were told that the system of class was carried in every middle-class woman, in them, and to change the class system they had to first change themselves. And they wouldn't.

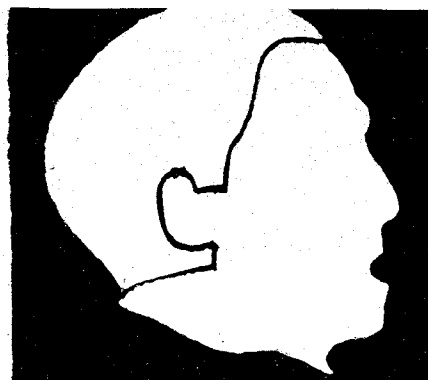
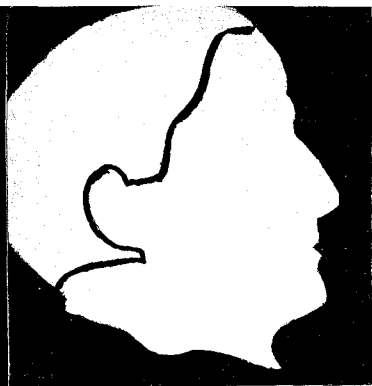
A group of us left the collective to start another lesbian house. I began to immerse myself in lesbian feminist projects—a poetry book and a press. I wasted good energy on these isolated projects that even when successful didn't seem to help our group grow politically. We believed in the "do your own thing" theory of revolution and never tried to develop a plan that would put us in control of our own lives, let alone spread that control to existing political systems.

Our bad experience in the last political collective caused us to resist any attempt at developing an ideology. Politics had always been middle-class abstractions and it was hard to see that it was possible to develop an ideology from my own personal experience. Yet, without an ideology and goals, we couldn't develop priorities that would give direction to our work. My energies were dissipated and I became hopeless and cynical about a "women's revolution." Our lack of direction caused us to retreat into romantic relationships and individual work. Political problems began to arise in the house and we found ourselves in the same situation as before: we had definite political problems but no way to work them out since we still didn't have a women's analysis of those problems.

I am now with a group of lesbians who at least have a running start on these problems. We assume that we must develop an on-going women's ideology and are therefore better able to work out a system of time and project priorities. My experience in collectives the last year has taught me that unity cannot be based solely on good feelings about each other but must be based on a shared agreement about political goals. These goals include women taking control of their own lives and replacing the systems that keep all oppressed peoples in the service of the white ruling-class males and their middle-class policemen.



DRAWING by LYNNE PANICO, VERMONT



DRAWING by NANCY ADAIR, ALBUQUERQUE

My thinking with Gertrude Stein with my thinking

by Nancy Adair, Albuquerque, New Mexico

The following is excerpted from a longer article about Gertrude Stein.

The first time of a week or more spent in the works and spirit of Gertrude Stein. The first words of what to say. I will write as you come into my brain. As I write a letter to a lover I will write about you.

I bought *Lucy Church Amiably* and took it to the front yard of the house where I was living, and I sat on the grass the dry yellow grass. I sat to read it and I thought that I was not reading it at all. I thought my mind was singing and it was and I thought you were making me lovely crazy and you were and I fell in love with *Lucy Church Amiably*. Amiably I fell in love.

As I sat on the grass I thought of your head in the lap of Alice B. Toklas. Why is it always Alice B. I like just Alice. I think of your head on the lap of Alice. Of your very large and heavy head on the lap of secret Alice. She is smoothing out your short cropped hair and your eyes are covered with your eyelids your very dark eyes are resting. I think of your giving her a quick smiling glance a bit of a snicker when Hemingway just said something stupid about women or life. A glance that says in an instant we know and he never will he never can know what we know. We know that and he never will. This moment happens when you are all sitting around a table eating some of Alice's fancy french or not so fancy or not so french cooking not when you have your head in the lap of Alice. I do not suppose that you ever put your head in the lap of Alice in the vicinity of Ernest Hemingway. And smiling glances are a language suited only for upright positions.

When people talk about you they always connect you with them. When people talk about them they talk about them. Picasso Matisse F. Scott Fitzgerald Hemingway. When people talk about them they do not talk about you. They do not say did you know that he was a friend of Gertrude Stein. A genius ahead of her time will have a place in time and now the time has come. I celebrate you as a character as a woman as a lesbian as a genius.

Someone once said to you—why don't you write the way you talk and you answered—why don't you read the way I write? Now I am beginning to talk the way you write and write the way I talk and write the way I read and think the way I talk and write and read. It is like graduating to another language that I knew part of before. It is like going crazy which I did once so I know how it feels.

I think about Alice and I think about lesbians and wonder why you never talked about it. Maybe you did just not to not-friends just not to everybody. Oh I can understand that. All lesbians understand that. I think about how I am a Lesbian and what that has to do with my mind and what my mind has to do with that. I have been reading your lectures. I always think about lesbianism if a lesbian is lecturing. I do not always think about women if a woman is lecturing although I do more than I ever think about men if a man is lecturing. I do not think about men or much about men.

I think that you sometimes express the essence of the delight of the way women think. You think strongly like a woman thinks strongly and women think strongly like you think strongly. Women just don't always say it or write it. And the women that you write about think very strongly like the good Anna thinks in *Three Lives* and Melengtha thinks in *Three Lives* and the gentle Lena thinks in *Three Lives* and Ida thinks in *Ida* and the American woman whose name I cannot think of thinks in *Yes is For a Very Young Man*. *Yes is For a Very Young Man* is a play you wrote during the war when you left Paris for the country. You took a chance with your life because you were a jew and then it was not safe to be a jew and a homosexual and it was not safe to be a homosexual and a weirdo. But you thought strongly and you stayed and you wrote.

I went to the library and I got *Wars I Have Seen* and *Narration* and *Four in America* and they had many more books listed in the card catalogue. But they did not have the biographies of you and Alice's *What is Remembered* which I wanted to learn about your life and hers. So I had a person go to the library at the college and bring me more books. I got *The Making of Americans* and I think there is probably no one in the history of reading your books who has actually finished that book which some call the greatest American novel ever written. That is quite something to write the greatest American novel that none can finish but everyone can recognize what it is that they have not finished. A peculiar thing happens sometimes when I read your books. I stop breathing so I get very tired. This did not happen with *Three Lives* or so much with *Ida* but with others it does happen. So I can only read them for short sections of time so that I can breathe again.

At the library the card for *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* said "The autobiography of Gertrude Stein written by herself as though it were the Autobiography of her secretary Alice B. Toklas." That astounded me. The word secretary to describe your relationship with Alice is very interesting. Because of how we live it could not say lover. And also I guess she was your secretary. She did all your typing she did all the typing of the 900 pages in *The Making of Americans* she is probably the only one beside you who has ever read all of it, and she was also your cook a lot and your housekeeper a lot and your head straightener out a lot but most of all she was your lover. That is what everybody assumes I suppose that it is possible that you never made love with her but highly unlikely.

I just got a record of your voice reading some of the sentences and paragraphs that you wrote. I listened to it but I only heard the music of your voice. Alice was right your voice does sound like two voices a very deep voice and a regular voice. It is very good to hear how you read what you have written. It is good to hear what words you say louder and stronger and what words you say not so loud and not so strong. You hardly take any breaths when you read. I wonder if you wrote that way also if you really were breathless when you wrote and that is why I am breathless when I read what you wrote. Reading you and listening to you, is like drowning like so much water coming in and no air.

I saw the "impressive" collection of "impressive" paintings that you and your family collected and hung in your homes in Paris. Paintings that I have seen often in books but never on walls. I saw a lesbian there actually I saw two lesbians. One often sees two lesbians not just one. I looked at them and I was impressed but we never did look at each other. We did not let each other know that we were looking at each other and we passed by your pictures looking at them and at each other but never in the eyes. I wanted to talk to them but I know that you do not go up to lesbians in art museums if you do not know them. You simply do not talk to strange lesbians in art museums and they do not talk to you. You talk to them in a bar but not in art museums. I saw a lesbian in the library but I did not go and talk to her. There is the same rule of not doing for lesbians in libraries but not for bars not for home not for bed not for the woods not for cars not for parties not for telephones but those are the only nots and it depends on who else you are with not with your boss not with your sister not with your mother not with your father your aunt your cousin your neighbor your teacher unless you are very good friends or lesbians or gay anyway. So that is what I did not do in the Art Museum as well as what I did do. It is fine to think about lesbians in art museums. So I do that.

I have all your books around me on the desk but I am not opening them now. I have too many thoughts and I cannot have them any more. I am not as dedicated as Alice. I am not as dedicated as you for you but I am for me.



THIS IS A COLOR PHOTO



PHOTOGRAPH by VALENTINE, SAN FRANCISCO

This is a color photo
two old women stand in the waters of Lake So-and-So
which is the headwaters of the whole Mississippi-Missouri system
green reeds gather behind them
the waters are blue
the sky wide
they have waded out from the balcony of the historical point
in the advertisement scenery they look like refugees
or tall, swollen birds
their dark, gathered skirts are holding them down
in the waters of Lake So-and-So

If they had been pioneers they would have known what to do
with their lives
as it was nobody wanted that many children
store bread was cheaper
they never played bridge well enough for their men
who have died, with insurance
or their children, who have driven the grandchildren away

They giggle and elbow each other, wading out from the photo
two long-toed widows left to themselves
splashing a trail through the bottom of waters
whooping and dipping like Injuns got loose
their shouts lay claim to the calendar scenery

This is a color photo
of two old women wading in the waters of Lake So-and-So
they will show it to the neighbors, real proud
they have been somewhere

Judith McCombs, Detroit

"Mr., I'd rather do it myself!"

by J.N. Winsett, Washington, D.C.

with photographs and captions
by JEB, Washington, D.C.

Women should not have to go through the torture of working at straight jobs. My partner, Leslie, and I are silversmiths, self-taught. Perhaps everyone is not cut out for that, but there is something for each of us, if we care enough to look for it.

After having a nervous breakdown because of being fucked over by men in straight jobs, I decided I wanted nothing more to do with being oppressed by super pricks. I do not want to be subjected to men in any way, shape or form. Anyone who feels as strongly as I do about straight jobs can find a way out, especially by joining with other women who feel the same way.

Leslie and I get a lot of strength from each other. When things get rough for us in our business, we keep each other going. It's taken a long time, and a lot of work, but now we're beginning to see the results of all the energy we've

spent. We now have other women working with us, which means we're helping to free other women from the oppression of working for chauvinist pigs.

Ideally we want a whole community made up of women we respect and agree with politically. If our skills as silversmiths can help support such a community, then we're all for it. I cannot be trapped in a cocoon spun by male supremacists and I refuse to be controlled by them. What we all have to do to stop or prevent this control is to want to badly enough, and damn well stand up and fight for what we want.

I want to see women free to love other women. Joni Mitchell sings: "All I really want our love to do is bring out the best in me and in you!" I can't imagine it means anything other than lesbian love. Lesbians loving each other and working together is making the best come out.

WOMEN ARE 38.3% OF ALL WORKERS.

These figures, for March, 1971, are from the Women's Bureau of the US Labor Department. They are for year-round, full-time workers only. Four out of ten women work at such jobs. For the 60% of women working at temporary/part-time jobs, the comparisons would be even worse. In addition, far more women than men can't get jobs at all; 5.9% compared to 4.4% in 1970

41.5% OF WOMEN WORKING ARE SINGLE
WIDOWED, DIVORCED OR SEPARATED.
THAT MEANS 16% OF THE LABOR FORCE
ARE WOMEN WHO DO NOT LIVE WITH MEN.

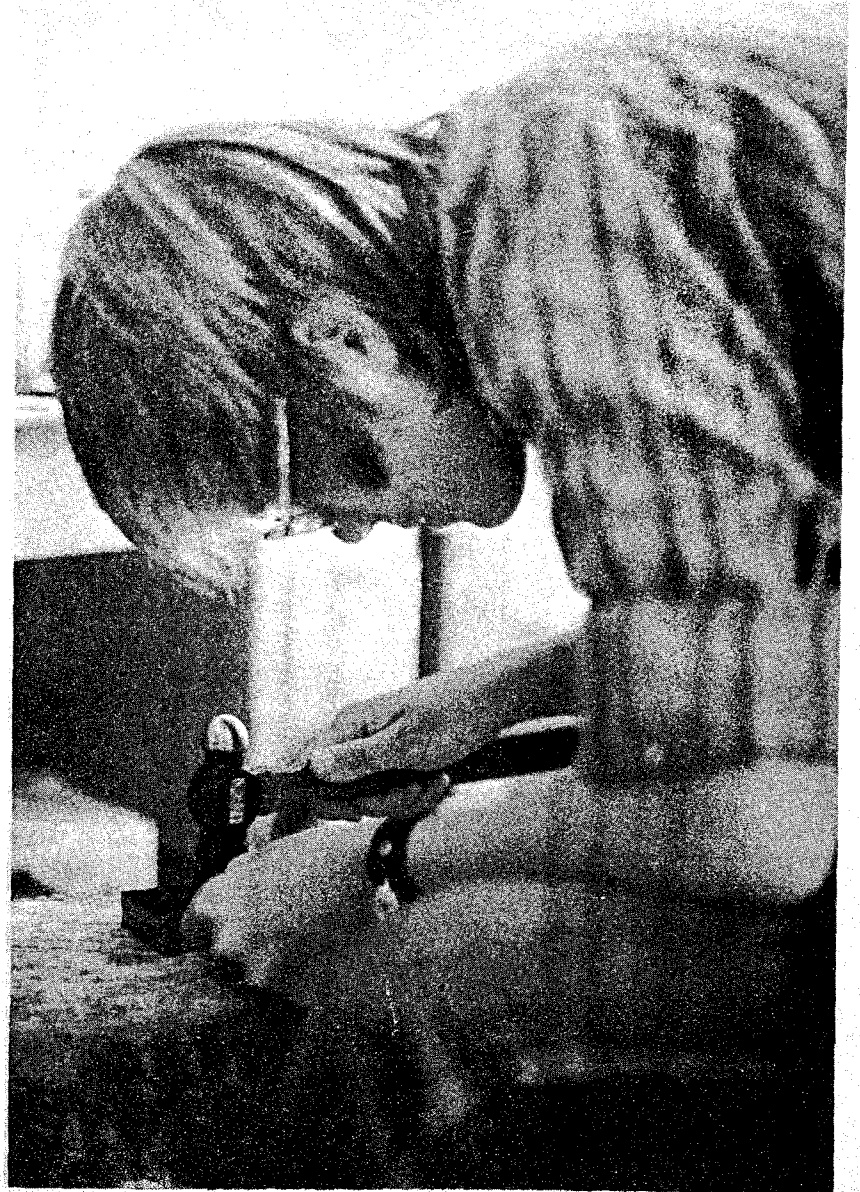


WOMEN EARN LESS THAN \$.60 FOR EVERY DOLLAR A MAN MAKES, AT EVERY
INCOME LEVEL, THIS GAP HAS BEEN INCREASING FOR AT LEAST 15 YEARS.

A WOMAN COLLEGE GRADUATE (4 YRS) EARNS THE SAME AS A BOY WHO DROPPED OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL.
1972

Leslie worked as a waitress and typist and couldn't stand being treated like a cross between a trained animal and an untrained child. One day she announced to a friend that she was learning how to make jewelry. Then she went out and did it with books from the library. But everything melted so she took soldering lessons from a jeweler. Judy worked as the only woman technician in a lab where everyone else was afraid of the rats. After three years of being expected to sweetie-pie the men she trained to become her superiors, she quit and swore never to work for men again. After a slow start in leatherwork, she teamed up with Leslie and their jewelry business started to grow.

You have something made of yourself and silver. An experience you enjoy and understand. I like the feel of silver—it's cool, subtle, female. We make mostly feminine rings. We like rings. Women wear jewelry because they like it. I always wondered if I made pretty jewelry to attract women.

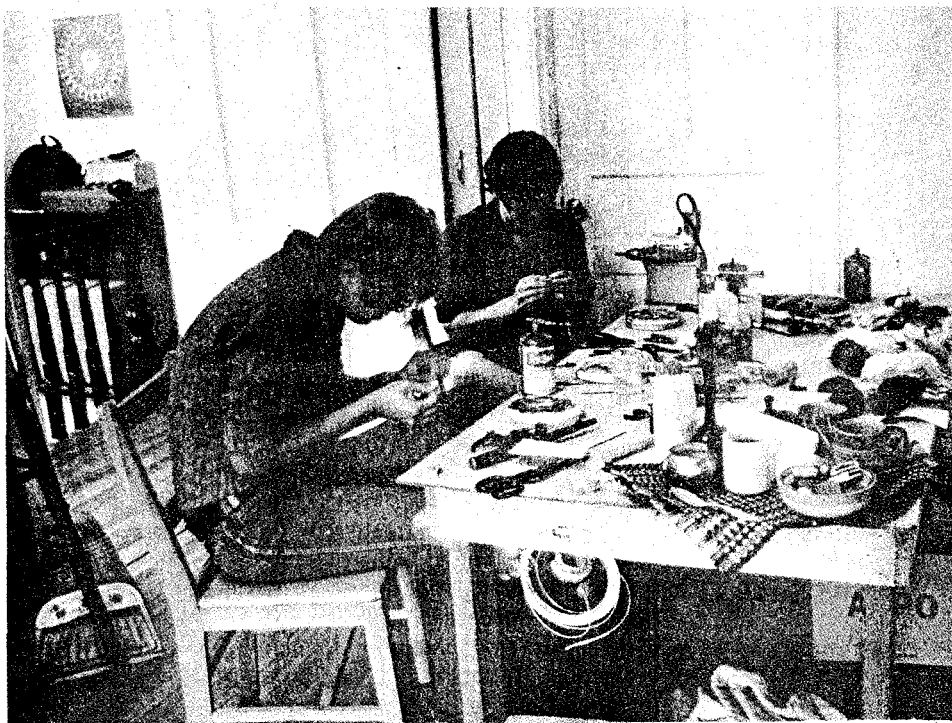




When we started two years ago, we thought we'd stick with it as long as we had enough to eat. Now we make much more and live very comfortably. We work about fifty hours a week—maybe two hours one day and twelve the next. But it's not like real working, because we love it and it's fun. Being your own boss makes a big difference. Mostly we have more confidence in ourselves. Since we don't take shit from anyone our whole self-image is changed. We know our stuff is the best in the area. Perfecting a ring is a careful skill and we command respect.

Women appreciate our skill. But men always argue and say "aw, come on, you didn't make it yourself, did you?" We can't be bothered hassling with men. So when we're vending or selling to shop owners, we'd rather lose a sale than put up with any shit. That's what the women who vend for us do too—tell obnoxious men to fuck off. Most people can tell we're gay. We have a great time vending—laugh and touch a lot. We never hide it, hell, we're proud of it!





We are still part of a capitalist economy. But we're also beginning to build alternatives. We only work with women we really care about, who are our friends, so there is respect and love in our business. We want to make lots of money so we can buy land. With a garden, a lot of women could be supported on the land. I've been evicted so many times. We want land for a lesbian haven—to build houses, domes, yurts; enough land for football fields and motorcycle tracks and horses. We'll get it soon.

We're good business partners because we're good friends. If we worked alone, we wouldn't push ourselves as much, it would be easy to get isolated and depressed. Together we don't get so discouraged even when things are hard—we tell each other we'll make it. We keep each other amused. We only have to satisfy each other. Working at home, without shirts if it gets too warm, we take breaks when we want them.



These are some of the things Judy and Leslie make. They are all sterling silver. To order them, send your ring size (check at the local jewelry store) or buckle width (measure your belt) with a check or money order and the number of the ring you want. Postage included. Send your orders to:

No. 1	No. 2	No. 3	No. 4	No. 5
\$8.50	\$6.50	\$6.50	\$12.50	\$18.50

LAMMAS Handcrafted Silver
115 8th St. S.E.
Washington D.C. 20003

IF THAT'S ALL THERE IS

by Del Martin

San Francisco, California

After fifteen years of working for the homophile movement--of meditating, counselling, appeasing, of working for coalition and unity--I am facing a very real identity crisis. I am bereft. For through the struggles between the men and the women, the conservatives and the Gay Liberationists at a conference this week, I have been forced to the realization that I have no brothers in the homophile movement.

Oh yes, when six of my sisters from the Daughters of Bilitis, Nova, and Gay Women's Liberation stood with me to confront the North American Council of Homophile Organizations (NACHO) meeting on August 26, 1971, the day of the National Women's strike about the relevance of the homophile movement to the women within it, the delegates passed a resolution in support of the women's liberation movement. They rationalized that all of their organizations were open to women, but the women didn't join in numbers and they just didn't know what else they could do to relate to their lesbian sisters. We suggested that their programs and their publications were not inclusive of or relevant to women. They decried the segregationist organizations which we represented, but would not address themselves to the underlying reason for the existence of separate women's organizations--that the female homosexual faces sex discrimination not only in the heterosexual world, but within the homophile community.

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

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

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

Goodbye to all that. Goodbye, not just to SIR, but all those homophile organizations across the country with an open door policy for women. It's only window dressing for the public, and in the small towns of suburbia, for mutual protection. It doesn't mean anything and smacks of paternalism. Goodbye, too, (temporarily, I trust) to my sisters who demean themselves by accepting "women's status" in these groups--making and serving the coffee, doing the secretarial work, soothing the brows of the policymakers who tell them, "We're doing it all for you, too." Don't believe it sisters, for you are only an

afterthought that never took place.

Goodbye to the "Police Beat"--the defense of washroom sex and pornographic movies. That was never my bag anyway. Goodbye to the Women's Page and the NACHO delegate who admitted that's how he regarded my column in VECTOR, professing all the while of course, that he considered it most worthwhile reading. He meant it as a compliment.

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

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

Goodbye to the Halloween Balls, the drag shows and the parties. It was fun while it lasted. But the humor has gone out of the game. The exaggerations of the switching (or swishing) of sex roles has become the norm in the public eye. While we were laughing at ourselves we became the laughing stock and lost the personhood we were seeking. It is time to stop mimicking the heterosexual society we've been trying to escape. It is time to get our heads together to find out who we really are.

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

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

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

Goodbye to the male homophile community. "Gay is good!" but not good enough--so long as it is limited to white males only. We joined with you in what we mistakenly thought was a common cause. A few of you tried, we admit. But you are still too few, and even you fall short of the mark. You, too, are victims of our culture. Fifteen years of masochism is enough. None of us is getting any younger or any closer to where it's really at. So, regretfully, I must say goodbye to you, too. It's been nice and all that but I



PEN AND INK by NANCY MYRON, WASHINGTON D.C.

have work to do. My friends neither look up to me nor down at me. They face me as equals, and we interact reciprocally with respect and love.

There is no hate in this goodbye-- only the bitter sting of disappointment. Somehow I expected more of you. I had hoped that you were my brothers and would grow up, to recognize that freedom is not self contained. You cannot be free until you free me-- *and all women* until you become aware that, in all the roles and games you play, *you* are always *IT*.

I refuse to be your scapegoat. By removing the target, you may no longer mock me. I will not be your "nigger" any longer. Nor was I ever your mother. Those stultifying roles you laid on me, and I shall no longer concern myself with your toilet training. You're in the big leagues now, and we're both playing for big stakes. They didn't turn out to be the same.

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

INVOCATION TO SAPPHO

Sappho

souled, fire-hearted

Sister/Mother

free-

souled, fire-hearted

Psappha of Mitylene on

sea-lapped Lesbos

miracle of a woman

(Strabo wrote)

now now

let me declare

devotion.

Not light years love years

on how many love years

across fields of the dead

does your fragrance

travel to me?

Since maidenhood in brain blood

by you haunted

in my own armpits I have breathed

sweat of your passion

in the burning crotch of the lover

tasted your honey

heard

felt in my pulse

day-long

night-through

lure of your song's beat

insistently echo.

By dust of five-and-twenty centuries

not smothered

by book-consuming flames of

the hate-filled churchmen

unsilenced

your fame only haloed made

more splendid.

Sappho, little and dark,

the Beautiful, Plato called you

(though his Republic had

grudging use for poets)

Sappho, whose veins ran fire

whose nerves

quivered to loves illicit now

in your day

honored by the noblest

Sappho, all roses,

do we not touch

across the censorious years?

Elsa Gidlow

Moods of Eros

Druid Heights Press

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Mill Valley, Calif. 94941

\$2.00 + \$.25 handling

REFORMISM:

Every liberation movement has its reformists: those people and organizations whose politics fall short of liberation because they fail to analyze correctly the conditions which oppress them. Within the gay movement there are two brands of reformism, one an extension of the other. The first is the liberal line, similar to the NAACP. Its main tenets are that homosexuals are normal people, that we are just as good as heterosexuals, that if given the chance we can be just as productive members of society as anyone else, that we are an oppressed minority and should get a piece of the pie. The radical reformists say essentially the same thing, only instead of demanding a piece of the capitalist pie, they want to help make a new socialist pie and then take a piece of that. The radicals denounce capitalism as the main evil and foresee the end of homosexual oppression with the establishment of democratic socialism.

Similar assumptions run through both lines. First, homosexuality is just a question of sexual preference; it is natural to some and not to others. Second, homosexuals must be accepted by heterosexuals in order to achieve their liberation. The second follows from the first: if not everyone can be homosexual and the dominant culture is heterosexual, then homosexuals are the outcasts and the pie belongs to the straights who decide who gets the pieces. This gets worked out in a number of ways: the liberals wear their best clothes and hand out leaflets saying, "The man who gave you this is a homosexual—see? He looks just like you, and he did not try to seduce you." Or they write defensive articles which "explode the myths" about lesbian perversity in and out of bed.

The radicals gain acceptance by being the best organized at everybody else's demonstrations (e.g. Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention, Gay MayDay). Then they can say, "See, we're homosexuals but it's ok because we're also right on revolutionaries." The RPCC and MayDay had nothing to do with gay liberation because they did not deal with the reason for gay oppression: sexism. And the politics of the reformists, both radical and liberal, will not achieve liberation because they do not deal with sexism either.

Homosexuality is more than sexual preference; it is a political choice. We are all born capable of loving people of both sexes, but the constant anti-gay, pro-heterosexual socialization we receive from birth forces us to repress the homosexual in us. Heterosexuality is the bastion of male supremacy: it separates women from each other; it forces women to compete against each other for men and the privilege which comes through men and their social standing; it makes women define themselves through men. And it forces men to compete with each other to gain personal power and prove their masculinity. In some future society it may be possible for men and women to love each other as equals, but few, if any, men raised in this society can rid themselves of the sexism which is reinforced every day by a society which rewards men simply because they are men.

Lesbian oppression is rooted in male supremacy: the lesbian is the greatest threat there is to male supremacy because she denies the need for men. The lesbian does not want his prick, his privilege, or his protection. She is a woman who defines herself through women, which means that she does not accept the male definition of her as a pervert—a pervert precisely because she does not choose men. The lesbian is not a pervert—she is a strong self-identified woman who dares to stand up to male definitions and say **NO. I DEFINE MYSELF. I CHOOSE WOMEN.** Lesbians who say "gay is just as good as straight"

The Politics of Ostriches

by Ginny Berson, Washington, D.C.

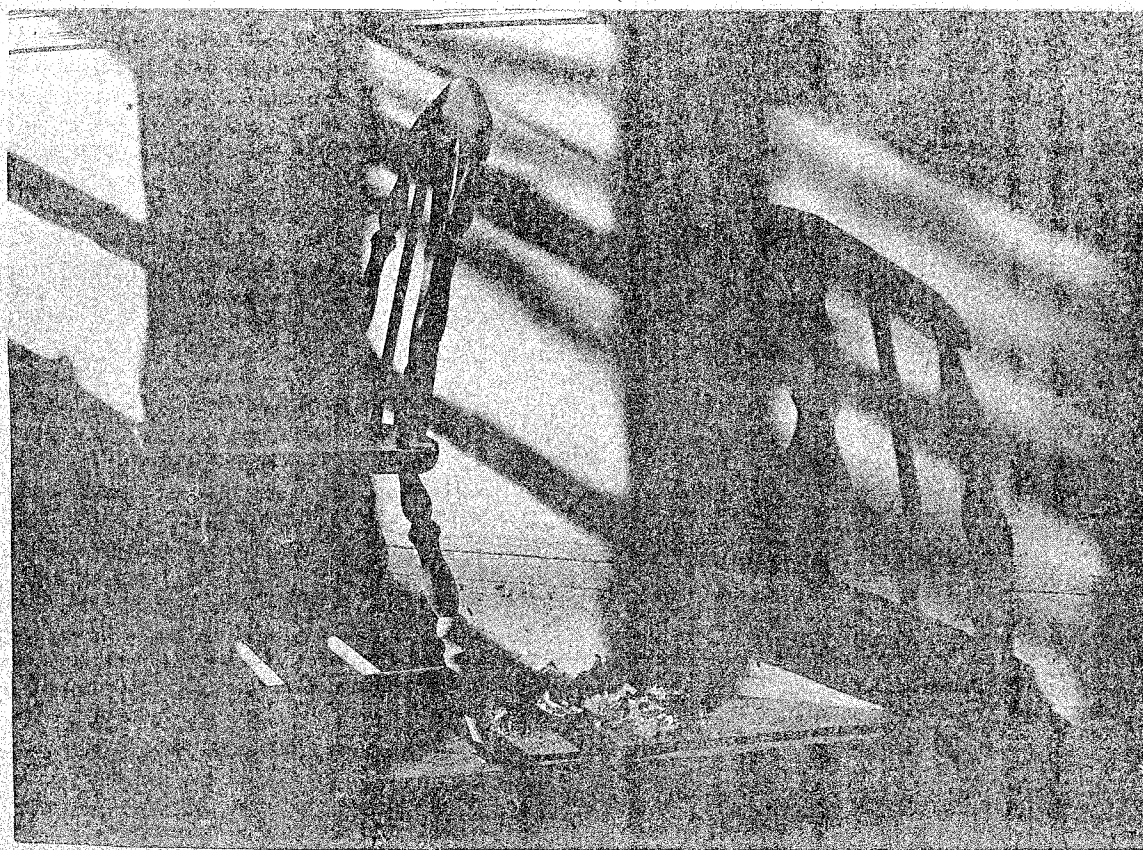
are cutting their own throats and stabbing their straight sisters in the back by condoning at its roots the system which keeps all women down. A culture which is based on the domination of men over women, which defines male as good and female only as good as the man you're with, is not likely to accept lesbians. Acceptance comes only if you keep your mouths shut. In other words, do your own thing as long as you don't threaten ours. But this is impossible because lesbian oppression will never cease as long as men rule the world and heterosexuality is the basic institution by which they rule.

The "revolutionary" youth culture of which the radical gay reformists are a part is not substantially different from the straight culture: it is male dominated and heterosexual. The Movement has "accepted" homosexuals in its liberal "do your own thing" manner, because it has meant more bodies at more demonstrations, but it has not accepted homosexuality as of itself political. For Movement men to do so would involve their becoming homosexuals and giving up much of their male privilege. The Cuban revolutionaries whom they emulate have just promulgated blatant anti-homosexual decrees which are a good example of what can be expected from the Movement. Why not? They are just as threatened by homosexuality as the Establishment, for their power is also based on the subservience of women: who are the shit-workers and who are the stars? They fight racism (sometimes) and they fight imperialism and they

fight capitalism, but fighting sexism is still primarily women's work. Their fight against imperialism is only superficial for they do not fight the most basic form: the imperialism of men over women.

They cannot fight sexism unless they are willing to give up their male privilege—the assumptions made about them because they are men, the advantages they have because they are men, the power they have because they are men, particularly when they are straight men. Gay men who ask for a piece of the "revolutionary" pie are also asking to keep their male privilege—to be men first, and homosexuals if it's ok with everyone else (we won't seduce you and we won't force you to deal with your own homosexuality).

Lesbians cannot be free until all women are free, and women cannot be free until lesbians are free. This means that male supremacy must end. Gay reformism sells out lesbians by legitimizing male supremacy and therefore downgrading women. Lesbians must stop subverting their own cause; gay is not just as good as straight. Gay is better.



PHOTOGRAPH BY SELINA MARTIN, ATLANTA

LOOKING AT WOMEN

Not knowing where to rest my eyes
Where to hide my glance
If I didn't see the men on the streets
or the man behind the grocery counter
or the man in the drug store
I would not have to feel
them leering at me
their hatred mowing me down
their curiosity their triumph
at being able to threaten a woman
insult her
and still sell her something
so I learned
to look at the sidewalk
to look at the air
to look into the distance
to look away
to look at my companion
a woman
and talk about anything
so we could look at each other
I learned to opaque my face
and peek
around corners of my inattention
watching for sudden moves
waiting to be attacked openly
instead of in secret
with mumbled words
and looks that could be denied
My companion was a woman
People asked if we were sisters
They asked us
in order to force us to lie
about our relationship
because we were constantly together
because we were lovers
because we could not protect each other
We could not protect each other
We stood by our apartment door
and listened to the neighbors
talk about us in the hall
"They'll never get married
Do you think that's right
They'll never get married"
We didn't want to go out
We wanted to stay home
all our lives
with the roaches
and the window gates
waiting for our parents to come
and drag us away
or kill us on the spot
waiting for the heterosexual gestapo
we tried to cook beautiful meals
and talk all night
and heal each other with trust

we painted the floors
and patched the plaster
that cracked again every month
we painted paintings no one saw
and wrote poems and plays
only for ourselves
we deluded ourselves that we were artists
passing through a terrible time
we went to work
in clothes we did not want to wear
and to school
where we became minds to be trained
in ancient mythology
we never learned
how to protect our bodies
how to survive and be proud
At work I thought a lot
about being a lesbian
I made love with a woman
but could never mention it
I loved a woman
but could not mention it
I lived with a woman
but I always said I lived alone
I went to the movies and the zoo
with a woman
I developed opinions together
with a woman
but I always said "I went--"
"I think--"
while the heterosexuals bragged
about their big dates
their plans for marriage
or how they hated being married
Everyone asked
"Do you have a boyfriend"
I answered
"Sure I have several"
At school I tried to make friends
with my two male homosexual teachers
but they hated women
if there were no women
all men would be homosexual
and no one would have to be homosexual
besides they were still men
and had the right to look down on me
even if the world hated them
for loving other men
and being part-woman themselves
I walked the streets thinking
All these people hate me
All these men
and the women attached to them
hate me
All these people that make me lie
that make me not exist
don't want me to exist
they want to kill me
and therefore I want to kill them
I want to kill all these people
all these men and women because
if you gave any one of them a gun
and lined up a row of people
in front of them
and told them which one was homosexual
and told them they could shoot one person
they would shoot the homosexual
so I want a lineup and a gun
and I want to know
which one of those people is heterosexual
I had read the penalties
for "deviant sex"
in every state in america
but I still wanted to know
what my crime was
Was my crime
touching a woman's genitals
with my hand or mouth or body
was my crime

having another woman
 touch my genitals
 with her hand or mouth or body
 was my crime
 two women doing these things
 together at the same time
 My crime was
 not doing these things with a man
 and this crime was to be
 my identity
 my label
 my secret
 my non-existence
 and the only time
 I could be completely myself
 I was not expected to go insane
 I was not expected to complain
 I was expected
 to see a psychiatrist
 if I had difficulty functioning
 I could not expect my family
 to try not to destroy my life
 if I TOLD them
 I had stopped
 seeing my heterosexual friends
 because they couldn't stop
 telling me to stop
 being a lesbian
 My lesbian friends kept saying
 I like my job
 no one bothers me
 I'm happy
 my private life is my own business
 I don't look like a lesbian
 although some people suspect
 I keep them guessing

Womens Liberation/ Gay Liberation/
 The Movement

I am told
 my life-style will destroy Capitalism
 Women are talking to each other
 admitting what they denied
 It is hard to be a woman
 hard to be a lesbian
 hard to be a heterosexual
 hard to lie
 about important things
 almost impossible
 to respect yourself
 For a year I hardly write or speak
 I join consciousness raising
 go to all the gay actions
 and have my face
 in a thousand photographs
 go to women's liberation meetings
 I am told
 we will work in groups
 not as individuals
 I am told
 there are no leaders
 our strength is in numbers
 But I don't feel in control of my life
 I see leaders everywhere
 I ask them if they are leaders
 and they tell me no
 its my imagination
 why do I keep seeing leaders
 is it because
 I'm bitter about something
 I know each of my sisters has sat
 locked in a still room
 with a mirror and a desk and a window
 dreaming Someday I'll go out
 and save that world
 make it a place where I can be honest
 where I can be happy
 happily struggling

I understand how long
 each of us was locked up with herself
 how each self became goddesslike
 in dreams
 compared to our real powerlessness
 A woman looks into my face
 and sees herself
 I look into her face
 but I do not see myself
 I see her
 looking into other women's faces
 and seeing herself
 I ask her if what I see is true
 and she tells me no
 Now I'm looking for myself
 and I get frightened because
 I didn't know it would be so hard
 to call myself back to reality
 I thought I might be
 The person I saw when I was alone
 I thought I might be
 the person a woman said she loved
 I thought I might be
 the rage that wanted to turn
 and kill my murderers
 I thought I might be
 the shout and the explosion
 that would destroy society
 (not Capitalism but all societies
 in the world today)
 for making
 honest love between women
 a crime
 But I am suspicious of
 any woman who tells me
 she has seen her own face
 knows what her voice sounds like
 the shape of her body
 or how her hands feel to themselves
 We must all look at each other
 I must look at you
 We must stare our eyes out at each other
 I must stare my eyes out
 at you

Fran Winant

Looking At Women
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Motherhood Is Powerless

by Coletta Reid, Washington, D.C.

In a male supremacist world, a woman's life is supposed to revolve around her husband and children. Men keep women oppressed by insuring that women put their energy into men, not into themselves and other women. Children are used by men to keep women in their place. Women are both tied down by children and rewarded for having them.

Children become, in a male supremacist world, a heterosexual privilege and a primary agent of woman oppression. They are a privilege because women are accorded status and privilege for having them. motherhood is practically sacred. The woman who cannot bear children is pitied. Women who choose not to bear children, who express no desire to have a child, are thought unnatural.

Children are the primary agent of oppression because they keep women physically and emotionally tied to the home and away from the public arena. Motherhood holds a woman back from finding out who she is, from having to develop an identity of her own through her work. Because she doesn't really know herself, she rarely develops her real strengths and at forty finds herself one of the army of grey housewives. Once a woman has a child, that child is her ultimate responsibility for the next twenty years. Because children are born dependent and have to grow into self-sufficiency, they take a tremendous amount of time and energy. Raising a child literally takes years out of a woman's life. Give every woman three children to raise and women will never be able to challenge the world men have made. No wonder motherhood is sacred!

I have come to this analysis through my experience with having and raising two children. When I became pregnant my parents and parents-in-law were delighted. For five years they had been waiting for me to produce and fulfill their expectations of a good wife. As soon as I came through, their basic attitude toward me changed. Letters became more frequent and more solicitous. The birth itself was welcomed by both families and their friends with telephone calls, cards, and gifts--and, of course, a shower as soon as I went home with the baby. Not since my wedding had I received so much attention. Everyone fluttered about me helpful and pleased, praising me for something with which I as a person had nothing to do.

Not only did I notice a change in the attitude of my family toward me, but I found myself treated differently on the street. Little old ladies scurried over to goggle at the little bundle, grasping at their own former usefulness. Women and men beamed benignly. Verbal harassment by men decreased markedly. The message came through clear and strong: mothers are more valuable and respected than childless women. It wasn't long however before I became aware that motherhood was a mixed blessing. Due to hospital bills and the difficulty of finding a babysitter, I had to quit graduate school. My days were dominated by a totally dependent creature's needs. Everywhere I went I had to take him along. The stores didn't have anywhere you could drop off a child; playgrounds weren't supervised. Not only was I responsible for meeting his physical needs at all times, but I was also responsible for how he acted. If he cried in the library, it was my fault. His behavior was a direct reflection on my person.

Soon I found myself going mad. I had no time alone, no time for myself, and no energy when at night there was time. I took out a school loan, found another mother to trade babysitting with and escaped for a few hours each day. Little by little, I adjusted my life trying to balance the demands of motherhood with my own pursuits, but at every step the society worked against me.

When I became a lesbian, I found that male supremacy also had the right to declare me (via the courts) an unfit mother--to be a fit mother you have to put men first in your life. If a woman doesn't put men first, then she can't really fill the job of a mother, that is, socializing her children into accepting male supremacy as a normal part of life. Her job is to make sure that little boys know they are boys, act like boys, and treat girls like girls. And vice versa for little girls.

After having been a lesbian for six months I had to decide whether to fight for the right to raise my son. I was furious that men again had the power to determine my life. I could hardly stand the thought of his being raised in a heterosexual situation where women are the ones you fuck. I wanted to save him from being raised a sexist. But I also knew that when I became a lesbian, I had decided against putting more time and energy into men. I saw that women would never change their position in society by trying to change individual men. Regardless of how non-sexist a boy is raised, he is going to be treated like a male by society. He will always have privilege and power over women until male supremacy is overthrown. Our position will not be basically changed by a handful of less sexist men in the next generation. We will have a share in power only when we take it.

Now I again wanted to change a man—just a younger one who was emotionally related to me because I had given birth to him. I certainly wouldn't choose to raise any little boy off the street, so it made no sense that I had so much investment in how my son turned out.

Lesbians are wasting time and energy raising little boys; we should be putting that time and energy back into women: into ourselves, each other and a political movement that will free all women and men collectively. If lesbians can't get ex-husbands to raise their sons (many will be glad to save their sons from man-hating dykes), they should look for mixed communes, communal farms, male homosexuals or if you are rich a boarding school.

I know women who have turned back from becoming lesbians because they couldn't give up their heterosexual privileges one of which was their sons. In the novel, *The Feminists* by Parley J. Cooper, the mayor of New York sacrifices feminist rule of the U.S. in order to save her son. "When she had to face the choice, the mayor discovered that she possessed the major feminine weakness she despised in others. Before she was a Feminist, she was a mother!" Don't men wish that were the case. Men make us mothers; but we make ourselves feminists.



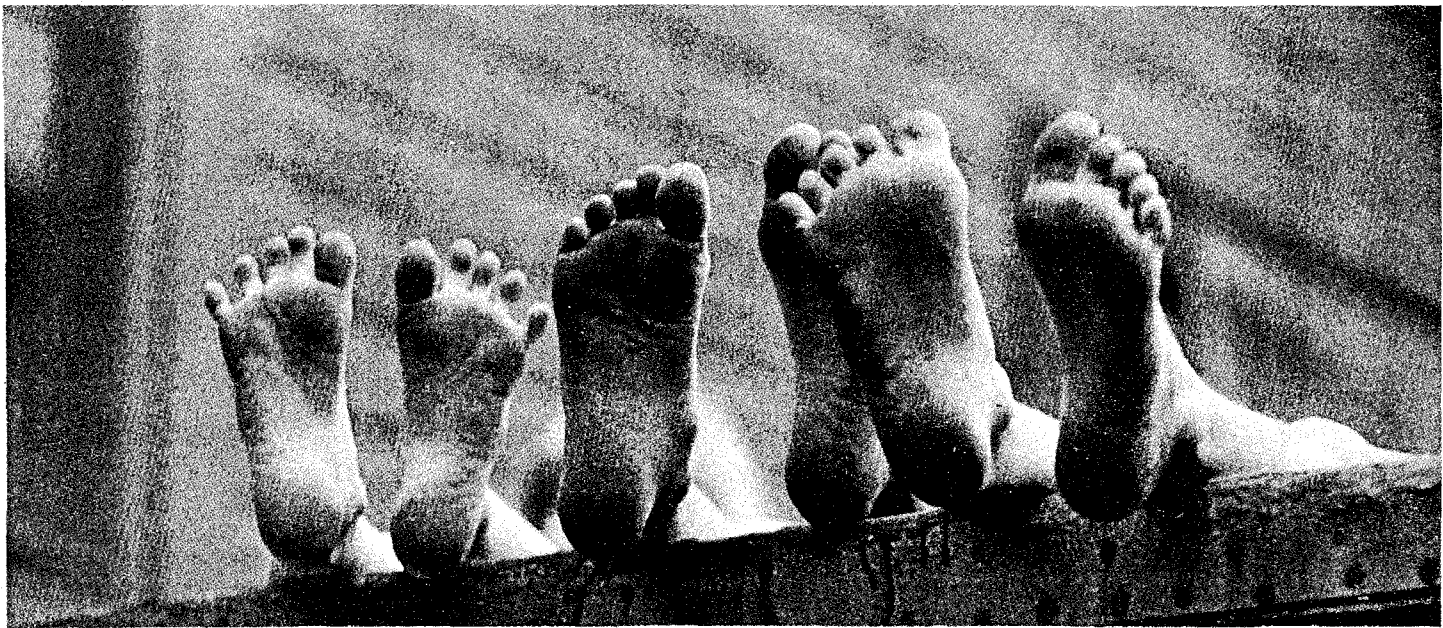
PHOTOGRAPH by JEB, WASHINGTON, D.C.

I have just recently had to deal with how I am going to raise my daughter. I feel that I need as much time as possible to do political work and to support myself. I was unable to find a babysitter I could afford and there are no free full-time daycare centers. The best situation for her would have been a lesbian children's farm, but none exist and we are not able to create one because of lack of time and money.

The male supremacist society doesn't take any responsibility for raising children and so I was forced to choose between being able to raise her myself and doing political work. Since there were no collective solutions available, I had to find an individual solution and give her to someone else to raise. The Lesbian Movement needs to create children's communities. There must be thousands of lesbians who want to put major time and energy into the Lesbian Movement but find themselves drained by the money and time childrearing takes.

I know it will be difficult for lesbian mothers to share with other lesbians the final responsibility for what will happen to their daughters. In a male supremacist world, the labor of raising children is one of the few labors for which women are rewarded. We are put in a position where we have to find primary satisfaction in raising a child, so it makes sense that we get some satisfaction out of motherhood. But the price we pay for that satisfaction is giving up our own lives and freedom; the price our children pay is dependency and bondage to us. In return for sacrificing much of her life for the child, the mother is given a great deal of control over her. I fought giving up the control I had over my daughter as well as our "special" emotional relationship. I wanted her to be raised under my influence; I wanted to be able to fall back on that mother-daughter relationship. I personally wanted the power to make decisions about her life. The unhealthiness of mother-child relationships in our society is not the mother's fault but stems from men having made women and children their property—forcing mothers to live out their aspirations through children.

Lesbian children's communities will have a different basis than the heterosexual family. Women won't be there because of biological motherhood and its attendant emotional identification. They will have chosen to be part of the creation of a children's community as their personal and political work. Children will be freer to depend on each other, rather than on one or more adults, to meet their needs. Such communities should be able to free most of us from daily childcare duties and will raise strong young women who are able to love themselves, love each other, and change the world.



PHOTOGRAPH by VIRGINIA BLAISDELL, NEW HAVEN

Bringing Up Children in the Gay Community

From the South

I think that loving a woman is a good thing. I really value our way of life. I think that it is important to kids that the parents like themselves; otherwise the kids respond to the parents' self-destructiveness. I like myself a lot more as a lesbian than I ever did when I was a heterosexual. Then I was caught in a bind between trying to be a woman relating to a man who imposed his concept of who I should be on me and trying to be myself. Therefore, I feel that my being a lesbian is more positive for my children.

This article is edited from a discussion between two families. Sandra and Linda are a lesbian couple who have been together for five years and are raising Sandra's children, Jeff, 10, and Judy, 12. They are white middle class professionals who own their home and have a stable living arrangement. The other family is a political commune of six lesbians and an eight year old, Jane, whose biological mother does not live in the commune. Three of them, all referred to as women's commune, are present here.

Sandra: People often ask us if our children are being pushed toward being gay, whether they will have a 'choice' when they grow up. A little bit of positive reinforcement towards gayness from us is counteracted by so much pressure by the culture towards heterosexuality that it seems to me to be only a drop in the bucket. At least, our relationship opens up the possibility to them that you don't have to be heterosexual. What do you think?

Women's commune: I don't think there's any way that living with gay women can make kids less able to choose than in heterosexual families where there is no choice whatsoever. In a family, there's no question in anybody's mind as to what you're supposed to do when you grow up.

Commune: It's hard to know exactly how Jane is reacting to living with us. We've never talked specifically to her about what it means to be homosexual. But we know she understands that there's a difference between home and what she's taught at school.

Commune: That's not to say that we haven't dealt with the situation. Once a neighborhood kid who was playing outside the house happened to look in a window and see two women kissing. He came tearing around the back of the house and said, "Listen, Peggy and Ruth are in there kissing. Like lovers!" I said that's usually what people do when they love each other. And he accepted it. That's generally how we've dealt with the same situation with Jane. Have you talked to Judy and Jeff, had long discussions with them?

Sandra: We've just circled around it. Once I had a conversation with Judy about women loving other women. Not us. Her reaction then was, "Oh well, of course!" But she was only responding to their right to do it.

Linda: But that isn't the whole picture, because we are open about loving each other. They do know that we love each other.

Sandra: Yes, once or twice she has made comments--and Jeff has too--about our doing something that's not just 'loving,' but has some sexual meaning. They've said things like, "Hmmm, that's fine but you're the wrong sex."

Commune: Sometimes, it's difficult for Jane because she has six different relationships with adults who are in some ways authority figures but who exercise that authority in different ways.

Commune: I think that having different people around is positive and offers her different kinds of choices, even if it

seems like too many choices at times.

Commune: Also, in a commune there is a level of analysis going on that doesn't just say, "Here are the rules, this is the way things are." We allow questioning that doesn't happen in heterosexual nuclear families where there's a mother and a father and the world is flat.

Commune: We should talk about how the outside world comes in on gay women and their children, oppressing them in many ways including legally. We know a woman who had her children taken away because, as a lesbian, the courts considered her sick and unfit to raise them. And she is no exception. Many gay women have had their children taken away, not to mention all the other ways we are oppressed.

Linda: I remember sunbathing at a pool once, next to some teenage girls who were talking about a classmate. They called her "queer" in the way we would call somebody a dog or stupid; it was teenage cruelty to the nth degree. It really chilled me, especially when I thought if that's what kids are like when Judy and Jeff get older, it will be hard.

Sandra: What impression do you think Jane will have of men, living with all gay women?

Commune: Well, we've all made statements about how men oppress us.

Commune: I've had conversations with Jane, talking about how people love different people...that some men love women and some women love other women. But maybe it is hard for her to understand our relationships with individual men and how they are affected by the reality of male supremacy. When I make critical comments about men's attitudes and the ways they subordinate women, I'll have to be more clear that I'm not condemning all men who are struggling within themselves against the attitudes they were socialized to have.

Commune: I don't think it's bad to make negative statements about men, because those statements are true. No man can help but be sexist in our society.

Sandra: Well, I think that the climate we are providing for our kids is good, because it's basically honest. Certainly it's much better than they had when I was with a man.

Linda: That's true. We may have concerns to work out but we feel positive about our living arrangement as a place for kids.

Sandra: Yes, our children have had a stable life with us and can cope with more than they ever could before. That's more than you can say for most heterosexual relationships.



THE LAST STRAW

By Rita Mae Brown, Washington, D.C.



Now that lesbians are building a separate movement, class is a critical issue among us. Working class lesbians are determined that class will be the first issue resolved within our movement; otherwise the working class lesbians will be unable to work with middle class lesbians. Since class is so misunderstood, since it evokes such wild emotional responses, I will try to explain class in a concrete way, in terms of ideas and behavior. It would be repetitious to explain class in terms of the economy—Marx has already done that for us.

America is a country reluctant to recognize class differences. The American myth crystallized is: This is the land of equal opportunity; work hard, stay in line, you'll get ahead. (Getting ahead always means money.) All public school children are fed this myth. It gives poor people hope and it reinforces middle class people's belief in their own superiority. To prove that this is the land of golden opportunity, elastic capitalism has been able to create enough tokens on many levels to keep the myth alive, i.e. the late Whitney Young, Diana Ross, Margaret Mead, etc. Visually parading the tokens promises working class people, Blacks, Chicanos, and women the chance to get ahead and channels them into the establishment where they will cut each others' throats to be capitalism's newest token. Tokenism also creates a smug security for middle class whites. It allows them to be blind to class differences by showing them the people who have "made it". The middle class person then assumes that with extra effort a "disadvantaged" person can get ahead, ahead, she just has to work harder. Since middle class people don't socialize or have close job relationships with workers there are no clashing experiences to challenge their false assumptions.

Due to America's peculiar blurring of class distinctions, middle class people do not think in class terms except for those who have become Marxist intellectuals. Middle class people often don't recognize that they are middle class. Even in the various political movements, they may recognize class intellectually but they don't understand how their personal behavior, shot through with middle class assumptions and ideas, is destructive to those of us from the working class. Even those who buy capitalism's line and want to "make it" know they are "inferior" due to class background

and they work twice as hard to "overcome" it.

Class is much more than Marx's definition of relationship to the means of production. Class involves your behavior, your basic assumptions about life, your experiences (determined by your class) validate those assumptions, how you are taught to behave, what you expect from yourself and from others, your concept of a future, how you understand problems and solve them, how you think, feel, act. (For another look at this aspect of class behavior see Nancy Myron's article, on page 35.) It is these behavioral patterns cemented in childhood that cause class conflicts in the various movements. It is these behavioral patterns that middle class women resist recognizing although they may be perfectly willing to accept class in Marxist terms, a neat trick that helps them avoid really dealing with class behavior and changing that behavior in themselves. It is these behavioral patterns which must be recognized, understood and changed.

As lesbians it is crucial that we make these changes immediately. We have few privileges in male society if we come out because we threaten male supremacy at its core. Does that mean that because we have few class/race privileges in male society that we have no class/race differences among ourselves? No. While lesbians have little power to enforce their privileges once they *come out* they still continue to behave in the ways of their class/race. It is that behavior which infuriates those of us who are not middle class and who are not white. Our anger confuses the white, middle class lesbian because she can't understand what she is doing wrong—her behavior seems natural to her.

As examples, I have singled out two ideas and their consequent behavior current in the Lesbian Movement which are harmful to working class lesbians. All too often these mistakes are deliberate stalls on the part of the middle class lesbians to keep from changing themselves. Rather than hear us, they resist us with accusations and theories to negate our demand that they change oppressive behavior.

I. THE IDEA THAT A WORKING CLASS WOMAN WITH A COLLEGE EDUCATION ESCAPES HER CLASS BACKGROUND

Middle class women theorize that if you are working class but have a college degree then you must have just as much class privilege as they do so you are no longer working class. This idea is sheer arrogant blindness. Just because many of us fought our way out of inadequate schools into the universities and became "educated" in no way removes the entire experience of our childhood and youth—working class life. A degree does not erase all that went before it. A degree simply means that you have submitted to white, male, heterosexual, middle class educational standards and passed. It doesn't mean you accept those standards. If you have a college degree you can get a better job than if you don't have one. (Unless you are a lesbian who has come out.) None of us working class women are trying to pretend we can't get better jobs with degrees than without degrees...but a job is a way to earn money in adulthood, our pasts remain the same and our ways can remain intact.

A white, middle class woman wouldn't dream of telling a Black lesbian with a college degree that she is no longer Black, yet she feels perfectly justified in telling a working class woman with a degree that she is no longer working class! There is a reason for this double think. Working class lesbians with degrees push middle class lesbians very hard. We aren't intimidated by their high tone raps and we can talk "their" language only with "our" ideas. This scares the shit out of them, many of them want to believe the class stereotype: working class people are inarticulate, shy, passive, uninterested in ideas, etc. Those of us who fight back destroy those illusions and we also destroy the middle class person's class power by doing so. The

women who are the most hostile to "educated" working class women are very often, middle class women who want to cling to class behavior and the power it gives them over other women. The other middle class women usually aren't hostile, just conveniently confused, so confused that it takes them a good long time before they believe us and change their own behavior. And disbelief of a working class woman's analysis of her class oppression is one more way to undermine us—we don't "know enough" to analyze our own goddamn oppression, we need a middle class woman to do it for us in fancy sociological language. Christ.

College was culture shock to many of us from the working class. College is middle class and reinforces the white middle class woman in her class ways. College for the working class woman challenges her entire life experience. The snobism rampant in humanities departments, the enforced practice of saying in three polysyllabic paragraphs what could be said in two short sentences are counter to working class ways. There are literally hundreds of slaps in the face that a working class woman endures. Middle class women endure the sexism of college but not the classism. Working class women get both, Third World women get it three ways. For us, college was a journey through a hostile environment, an environment where we were forced to deny our class background in order to get our degree.

College caused some working class women to reject their early lives, adopt middle class values, become upwardly mobile (or if they joined a political movement, downwardly mobile) and fight their own working class sisters to be accepted into the middle class world. Others of us endured college because we didn't want to repeat the lives of drudgery and misery our parents had, but we did not adopt middle class ways. For many of us college was the last straw that pushed us into open class resistance.

Perhaps the most outrageous aspect of the middle class women's views on education and the working class women is their unspoken assumption that we went to college because we were upwardly mobile—in other words, we wanted to be like them. Only a woman far removed from bread and butter reality could harbor such an assumption. We watched our parents slave for nothing. School seemed the answer to our economic plight if we

could just get there. So we studied, got scholarships, took out loans that kept us in hock for years--to avoid that same futile labor of our parents, to survive economically rather than subsist. And in this pursuit working class women suffered more than working class men because of sex discrimination in admission and scholarships. (Plus you had to hide being a lesbian or you'd get thrown out.) In spite of all these difficulties, this generation of working class lesbians and women from 22-35 has many college graduates, a testament of grit if ever there was one. For many of us school was the first opportunity we had to have *time* to think politically. When you work all day, every day there is little time to think and no time to politically organize. Yes we have college degrees, no we don't work in factories like our parents did and we learned from the rape of our parents--we want to make a revolution because of it.

II. DOWNWARD MOBILITY AS THE ROAD TO REMOVING CLASS DIFFERENCES

Youth/drug culture, the New Left, the Women's Movement and unfortunately, the Lesbian Movement are all choking on this idea. Downward mobility is a mockery of working class life. It is poverty made fashionable. Behavior remains the same: Those who don't comply with this "hip" lifestyle are looked down upon. It is in the establishment of hierarchies that the middle class betrays itself--they always have to look down on somebody, a habitual attitude of power.

I don't want to live with mattresses on the floor, ragged clothes, dirt and spaghetti for supper every night. How anyone can imitate poverty and give it the flavor of "inness" is so alien to me that it is disgusting. I don't want to be above anybody but I do want decent housing, nice clothes and good food.

Downward mobility is the greatest insult yet devised by middle class people against the working class. If that alone isn't enough, downward mobility is married to the mistrust of the mind and a worship of the emotional. First of all, I don't understand intellect/emotional divisions yet millions of people seemed chained to that separation. A woman who thinks and analyzes is accused of being a power-hungry 'heavy' in the movement while a woman who cries at every meeting is

embraced as a true sister. Many middle class women, fearing that intellect will be mistaken for middle class behavior and remembering *their* college experience, bury their brains in a morass of "vibes," "gut feelings," and outright hysteria. This is dogmatically declared "true woman" behavior since men don't express their feelings. Serious organizing to end our oppression is suspect, ideological struggle is heresy; feelings are the way, the light and the truth--even when they result in political stagnation. Such an idea spells death to real political change if people cling to it.

It isn't intellect that working class women mistrust in middle class women, it is how middle class women use their intellect to rationalize holding onto class behavior that hurts us. Or simply, we mistrust bullshit, not brains.

Difficult as it is for middle class women to realize how downward mobility strikes us, they must open themselves and see what they are doing to us. I know that for many middle class women, downward mobility was a first attempt at trying to change their ways. However, those women must realize that the irony of downward mobility, its fatal flaw, is that they could *afford* to become downwardly mobile. Their class privilege enabled them to reject materialism. For those of us who grew up without material advantages downward mobility is infuriating--here are women rejecting what we never had and can't get! Valid as that emotional reaction is on our part, we working class women are being taught a lesson by the middle class women. That lesson is: lots of capitalistic possessions and social status do not bring happiness--another American myth shattered.

One good idea behind downward mobility is non-consumerism. The problem is not the idea but how it has become part of a new middle class "hip" lifestyle, an inverse snobbism that hits working class people both ways: Before downward mobility we were invisible or when visible, we were trash; with downward mobility we are "counterrevolutionaries" because we don't comply with the "hip" lifestyle. It's the same old shit--middle class people develop their values and measure us by their standards and have the effrontery to be enraged if we measure them by *our* standards. Downward mobility is the other side of the capitalist coin, or to put it more bluntly, the East Village is second generation Scarsdale.

Political working class lesbians are obviously going to practice non-consumerism but we aren't creating a behavioral code out of it. We aren't trucking around in patched pants mumbling about "gettin in touch with our feelins". (Another downward mobility insult, middle class women parody our speech to prove how they are no longer middle class. This is as unforgivable as a white person putting on a broad Black "accent").

Downward mobility also has one other dangerous effect upon those of us from the working classes—it prevents us from benefiting from the material privileges of white, middle class women. If you have money, sister, don't deny it, *share* it. If you have advanced skills don't make pottery in your loft, teach us those skills. If you have good clothes don't walk around in rags, give us some of your clothes. Downward mobility is a way to deny your material privileges to prove how "right on" you are. We know that anytime you get tired of poverty you can go right back to them (unless of course, you have publicly come out).

Downward mobility assumes that material benefits are bad. That's a mistake. Material benefits aren't bad, what's bad is that everyone doesn't have them. Downward mobility insures that working class women still won't have material benefits—we have more trouble getting them than the middle class woman and she won't share her privileges with us, she's too busy living in a dump. *Share* your material benefits.

Downward mobility and ideas centering around education are just two examples of how class can shatter

alliances, make people hate each other, weaken us politically. Those examples are critical of middle class women and they deserve criticism but I'm not saying that middle class women are inevitably horrible. All I'm saying is that they have to change those ways. I am also not saying that being working class is wonderful and makes you an instant lesbian revolutionary. The fact is that there are class/race differences between lesbians and those differences have to be wiped out because they keep us apart and keep us at each others' throats. Behavior born of privilege granted from white, upper class, male heterosexuals is destructive to women and must be ended. The more privileged you were in that old world, the more you must work to free yourself from that destructiveness so that you can build the new world. But we have all lived in Amerika and in some ways we all have to change.

In the past those of us from working class backgrounds tried to make this clear to straight sisters. We are now making it crystal clear to our middle class lesbian sisters. It is not our job to explain our oppression to you, you must work to find out how class hurts other women. Don't waste our time by trying to prove you are an

exception because your father was working class and your mother was middle class. All that means is that you have a mixture of class ways; stop trying to wriggle out of those middle class ways that you *do* have. Change them. You are your own responsibility. It is your job to examine yourself and change just as it is my job to examine myself and change. Our collective responsibility as lesbians is to annihilate, smash, destroy male supremacy and build a New World.

The real question is not whether you are middle class and white but whether you are serious about destroying male supremacy, about changing the world. If you are serious you will begin by changing yourself.



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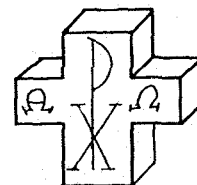
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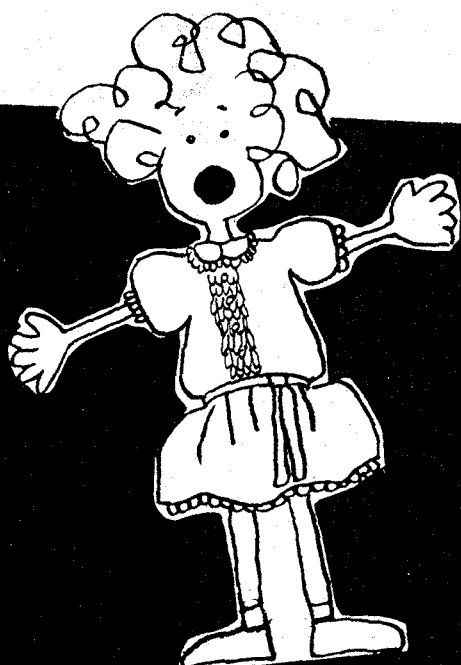
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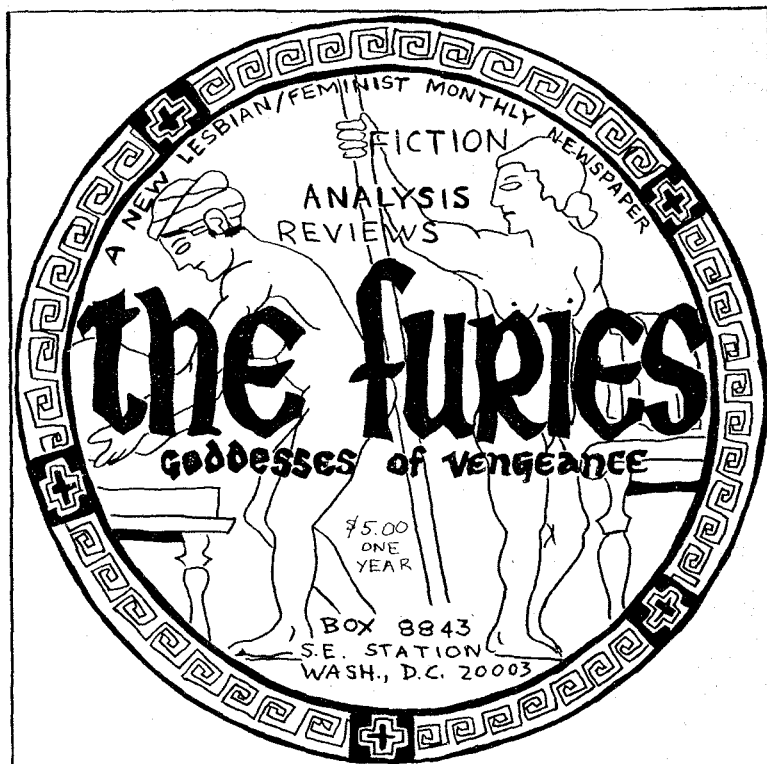
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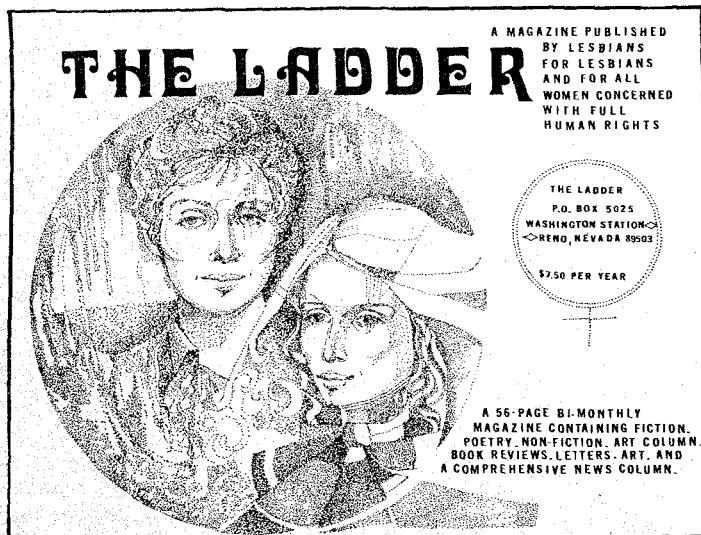
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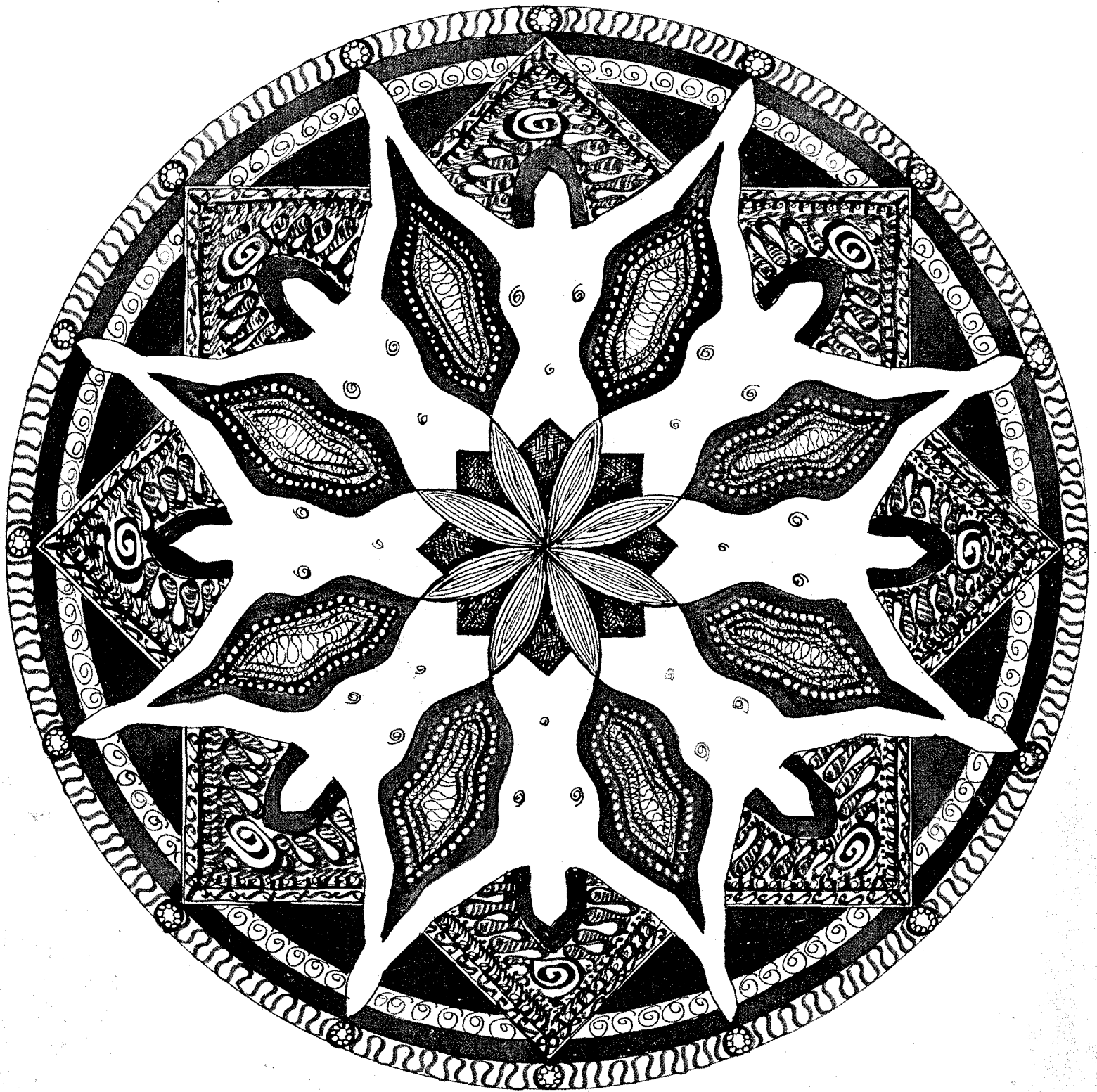
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