

QUEST

a feminist quarterly

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FUTURE VISIONS

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a feminist quarterly FUTURE VISIONS and FANTASIES

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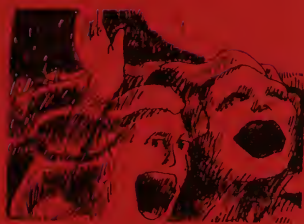
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Quest: a feminist quarterly is seeking long-term, in-depth feminist political analysis and ideological development. Quest is not an end in itself, but a process leading to new directions for the women's movement possibly including such concrete forms as regional or national conferences, a national organization or a political party. We, the editors, are all women who have been in the movement for several years and have reached a point where each answer leads us to more questions. We have been through various ideological and activist metamorphoses and end up feeling that our overall perspective is still not adequate. Where has the struggle brought us? Closer to real economic, political, and social power for women? Closer to an end of the exploitation of and violence against women? Closer to self-determination for all women? We do not have all the answers ourselves and expect that feminists across the country and the world will contribute to this process of seeking.

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"Images from a Past Life"

photograph by Caroline Vaughan

Feminist Visions of the Future

by Jane Dolkart and Nancy Hartsock

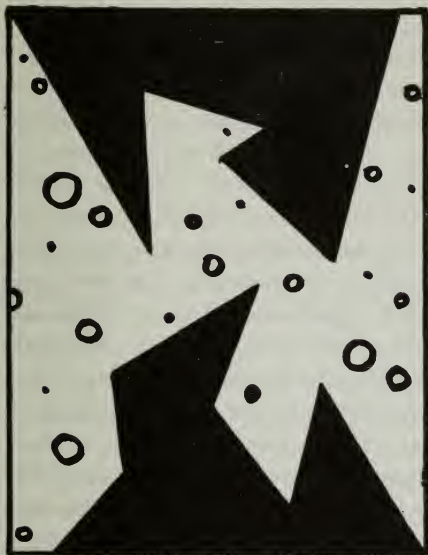
The development of feminist ideology requires a clear sense of the future: a sense of where we are going and what we want. Feminists have attacked capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy as institutions which oppress women. Now that we are trying to build a new society, we need a different kind of energy—energy grounded in our visions of the future. The relationship between vision and struggle is at the core of the Movement's development. Visions can structure our priorities, provide a measure of our successes, hold a source of energy for change. The white male power elite has recognized the need to plan for the future and has generated much material on futurism.* It is important to understand the elite vision to show why, as feminists, we must reject it and create our own visions of the future.

*The work of Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, Alain Touraine, *The Post-Industrial Society*, Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, are a few of the most influential sources for ideas about the post-industrial society. Others who have been concerned with similar problems are: Theodore Roszak, *The Making of the Counter Culture*, Andre Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, and Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*.

Definitions of the kind of change feminists seek, the structure of our organizations and strategies, questions of leadership—all these must be placed within the context of our visions, within the context of a world where women have power. What will this world look like? This is the question our visions and fantasies must respond to. We need to think not only in concrete terms; we also need to dream. Dreams are an act of faith in ourselves, an impetus to continued struggle.

This issue of *Quest* can only begin the task of envisioning a "new society." Our future visions and fantasies are constantly evolving, changing, and growing as we learn from our experiences, our struggles to reformulate theory and build the organizations and structures of a movement. When we ask specific questions about what we want society to be like, we develop a better sense of the kind of changes feminists need to create. It is easy to state that we want an end to oppression, class distinctions, capitalism, racism, heterosexism, and sexism. It is much harder to lay down in concrete terms the implications of those changes.

The Elite Vision



The Technological intellectuals who work for and represent those in power are particularly important for us to analyze.** They do not challenge the existence of a capitalist society but only attempt to explain where it is at present, and where it can go. They take as their premise that we in the United States are entering a phase of social organization they call post-industrial society. Those who have tried to see into the future of the U.S. have almost totally disregarded the concerns of feminists. Their work may be challenged on two grounds: 1) their failure to include the interests of women, minorities, and lower and working class people in their analysis, and 2) a more fundamental failure, their acceptance of political, economic, and social institutions as they exist today.

The theorists of the post-industrial society assume that the major question to be addressed is how technology will change social life within an advanced capitalist society. They recognize that the development of science and technology led to an enormous increase in productivity in this century. This, they argue, has changed social life in important ways: First, the increase in productivity has freed numbers of workers from the necessity to produce goods and made them available for other work (mostly in service industries). Second, they argue that the demand for services, particularly health and education, has grown in part because the increase in productivity is tied to an increasing affluence. People, they claim, now have enough income to spend on personal services. Third, in part as a result of the increasing affluence and increased importance of service (consumption) industries, social conflicts increasingly occur in the realm of consumption. Finally, because of the centrality of science and technology, the role of the professional, the expert, is greatly expanded. Let us look at what all this means for women.

The post-industrial society is a society in which services are very important. Daniel Bell and others have pointed out the growth of service industries relative to manufacturing, in

**Most of the members of the American Academy's Commission on the Year 2000 fall into this category. See Daniel Bell, ed., *Toward the Year 2000: Work in Progress* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).

that the percentage of workers employed in service industries has risen from about 30% of the work force in 1900 to 60% in 1968 to a projected 70% in 1980.***

The futurists ignore the special problems women will face in such a society. Women now predominate in service work, and expansion of this area has meant increased employment of women. At the same time, most women work in a sex segregated labor market--female jobs tend to have low wages, poor working conditions, low status, few prospects for advancement, and require the employer to make only a minimal investment in on-the-job training. If a service-oriented economy means more of these kinds of jobs for women, what future can we see for women's employment?

The theorists of post-industrial society claim that we are a society increasingly centered on consumption rather than production, and that in the area of production and work, we are moving from an era of exploitation of labor to a time when alienation of labor is a larger problem. Only a few of those who work for wages now can be equated with the poor (most of them concentrated in service industries); a worker's problems are more related to the size and complexity of industry and bureaucratization of society generally. Poverty, they argue, has become a problem only for families headed by the aged, the handicapped, women, and minority group men, and therefore poverty is now unimportant in the United States. Thus, although an

affluent society is predicted for the very near future, many women and minority people are overlooked in that prediction. Moreover, the argument that we live in an affluent society ignores the way that capitalism dominates the world. The populations of third-world countries are not simply alienated but exploited as workers.

Post-industrial society is not simply a matter of economics, but has to do with political structures, forms of bureaucratic organization, and with psychological orientations as well. For centuries, women have been defined by our role in the family rather than as wage workers. This has meant that women have been given a major share of responsibility for family consumption. If conflicts shift from issues of production to issues of consumption and distribution in post-industrial society, what impact will this have on women's power in society? Can this give women in their traditional roles more leverage to affect the distribution of wealth in advanced capitalist society?

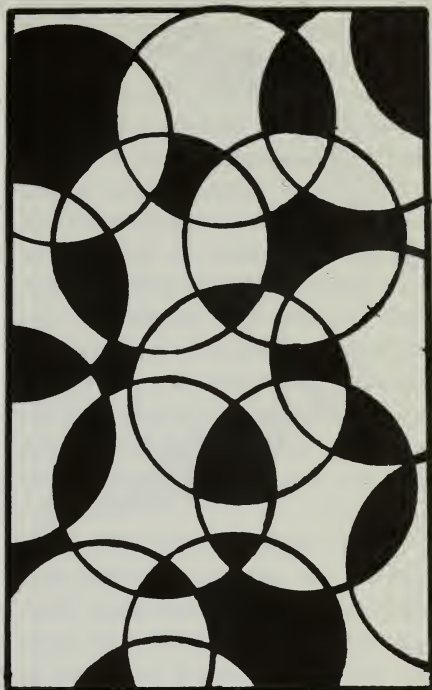
Those who write about post-industrial society also have argued that knowledge and information rather than production of goods have become fundamental sources of power. Post-industrial society depends on the expert, and the individual must grant the expert power to make decisions about her own life. Post-industrial society is technocratic and bureaucratic, a society of red tape and information. Women traditionally have been excluded from access to high levels of

information, and from developing experience in dealing with bureaucracy. Women's education has discouraged familiarity with science and technology. As it is now defined, women's participation in the technological society would allow us little power.

The theorists of post-industrial society have recognized important issues. As an advanced capitalist society, the United States is indeed undergoing tremendously important changes. The continually expanded technical control over nature and human beings, the interlocking relationship of science, technology, industry, and government, the increased importance of knowledge and information as a factor in producing social life, the changing structure of the work force—all these factors make it possible to ask fundamental questions about possibilities for social change, about changes in the role of women and the family, and about possibilities for a different political and economic system.

But the futurists have considered these possibilities primarily in terms of the interests of the white male ruling class. The human side of these question usually has been neglected. When social change is addressed it is treated as a problem to be controlled by creating institutions to manage these changes. Moreover, while the theorists recognize that prediction of technological change is subject to unexpected discoveries, changes of direction, etc., they treat predictions of social change simply as extensions into the future of our capitalist, racist, patriarchal society.

Feminist Visions



Feminist visions of the future oppose those of the theorists of the post-industrial society not only for their failure to address the problems of women but also for their acceptance of societal institutions as they exist today. The futurists project certain dislocations within existing institutions, and and raise a new set of questions and problems; but they do not build a new society. They are blinded by their admiration for what is technically possible. Even social relations among

***Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 129.

people become something to be manipulated through new techniques of behavior control, "managed" with the latest advertising techniques.

Women's exclusion from technological expertise, as well as from political and economic power is evident in the kind of visions women usually have. Feminists have concentrated our fantasies and visions on people. The major questions we take up in this issue center on the way people will live together. The focus is on human rather than technical problems, on changes in social structures and the quality of life. Technical questions related to the economic and political structures remain hazy.

In our visions, feminists seek to eliminate the present patriarchal definition of power as domination. However, to realize our visions we must also gain some control or power in society. What are the political implications of a world in which women have power? We do not wish merely to substitute a female elite for the present male elite, retaining oppression of men and most women. What kind of organizations must we develop to support a different kind of power and decision-making? Must women dominate or might it be possible to share power with men once we have obtained it? Will a feminist society have leaders at all? If so, how will they be chosen? Is it possible to envision a society in which there is no power, where there are no leaders? Are women ready to work collectively? With men?

Questions about power cannot be separated from the economic and social system as a whole. We must examine how to restructure work and the economy, and particularly how these structures will affect women. Can the work place revolve around decentralized industrial units? Can small autonomous communities provide the basic support systems for growing and distributing food, health care, education, and entertainment? Can we create a society in which women are free to engage in a variety of living arrangements and in which there is group responsibility for child care? How can we utilize technology and science to expand our visions of the future?

Feminists cannot ignore the theorists of post-industrial society. We cannot, as they do, celebrate the growth of advanced capitalist society. But we must recognize the importance and usefulness of technology and science, while retaining a humanistic approach to the future. The futurists project a capitalist society ruled by middle and upper class white males. Feminists project a world which is not patriarchal, not capitalist, not dominated by an elite. . . a fundamentally changed world.

Jane Dolkart is an assistant professor at Catholic University Law School.

Nancy Hartsock is an assistant professor at Johns Hopkins University.

graphics by Alexa Freeman

a woman built environment constructive fantasies

by

Noel Phyllis Birkby

and

Leslie Kanés Weisman

The process [of a women's revolution] involves the creation of new space, in which women are free to become who we are, and in which there are real and significant alternatives to the prefabricated identities provided within the enclosed spaces of patriarchal institutions.¹

On New Year's Eve of 1971, seventy-five women took over an abandoned building on Fifth Street owned

by the City of New York. They understood that architecture and physical environments are a political issue for women and the Women's Movement:

Because we want to redevelop our own culture. . .

Because we want to overcome stereotypes. . .

Because we refuse to have 'equal rights' in a corrupt society. . .

Because we want to survive, grow, be ourselves. . .

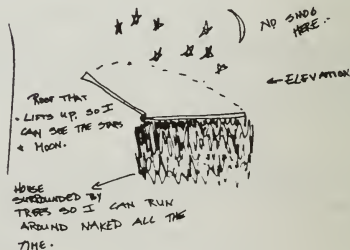
*We took over a building to put into action with women those things essential to women: health care, child care, food conspiracy, clothing and book exchange, gimme women's shelter, a lesbian rights center, interarts center, feminist school, drug rehabilitation. We know the city does not provide for us. Now we also know the city will not allow us to provide for ourselves. For this reason we were busted. We were busted because we are women acting independently of men, independently of the system...in other words, we are women being revolutionary.*²

These women were being political in acting out their environmental fantasy which directly incorporated their personal and social needs not being met by reality. The reality of the situation was described by a woman passer-by: "Anyone who wants to stop women from having a child care center, from having a building not in use—what kind of selfishness, what kind of sickness is that?"³

It is the sickness of environmental oppression, an architecture which incorporates values that are male, white, middle class and based upon the structure of the nuclear family. Although, the patriarchal power structure may slowly be nodding yes to the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion reform, if it continues to perpetuate the architectural status quo, the facts will contradict the words. Consequently, we must begin by evaluating our *man-made* environment from a feminist perspective. Our physical environment, whether it is buildings, communities or

cities, reflects the nature of our institutions and the priorities of the decision makers. Our present and future communities are the living archeology through which we can extract the actual values held by society.

At the very foundation of the Women's Movement lies the analysis and exposition of values oppressive to women. In our continuing search for origins and expressions of sexism, we must develop and project our own imagery and values into environmental forms. What are women's architectural and environmental priorities? What are women's needs? How are they oppressed by our *man-made* environment? What kinds of forms would validate women's experience? In an attempt to discover the perceptions women have about the design of their environments we have tried to cut through sexist conditioning by going deeply into the origin of the creative process—fantasy. We feel that this process will increase our awareness of the powerful nexus between fantasy and reality. In this way our dreams and visions can become tools for the creation of actual change.



Environmental Oppression

The study and expression of women's experience within the *man-made* environment will be most credible if it is defined by us ourselves. Architecture is also a physical language and can be used in the same way as the spoken language to condition us to sexism. It communicates a limitless range of metaphorical messages about one's experiences of self and self in relation to others. Expressions such as the "master" bedroom, the "family" room and the "powder" room reinforce role stereotyping and teach us about ourselves. To quote a woman who recently reminded us of this oppressive conditioning in a sentiment similarly expressed by Virginia Woolf: "Give me my space! I want it to look a certain way but in the end after all it's space in which to exist freely."

As little girls, we are conditioned to our inferiority to men through environmental discrimination. Another woman states: "What I really always wanted from my childhood was my brother's space. He always seemed to get the priority spaces, his own room, his own choices." By high school age, we often find fully equipped gymnasium and wood shop facilities for boys, while at the same time, girls are not permitted or encouraged to have equal access. Boys and men use many supportive environments which enhance their potential at the expense of girls and women who are allowed to relate to a much narrower range of directed environments. We need to research a wide

range of environmental settings related to women in order to change this process.

Another example of our environmental oppression is the degree to which we are dependent upon rented or borrowed space for meetings and activities in the Women's Movement (frequently patriarchal churches)! We can see the effect of this stereotyping in the kinds of spaces we are "supposed" to occupy within the male spatial hierarchy which expresses our second class status and powerlessness. Men own the streets and sit at the head of tables. We may appropriately be seen in grocery stores but less so in engineering buildings. Even the women who make up the approximately four percent of all architects in this country have been conditioned to male-defined processes and criteria in the traditional male dominated schools of architecture. Although there is a slowly increasing advocacy and feminist consciousness among women architects, four percent is hardly enough to topple the male power base.

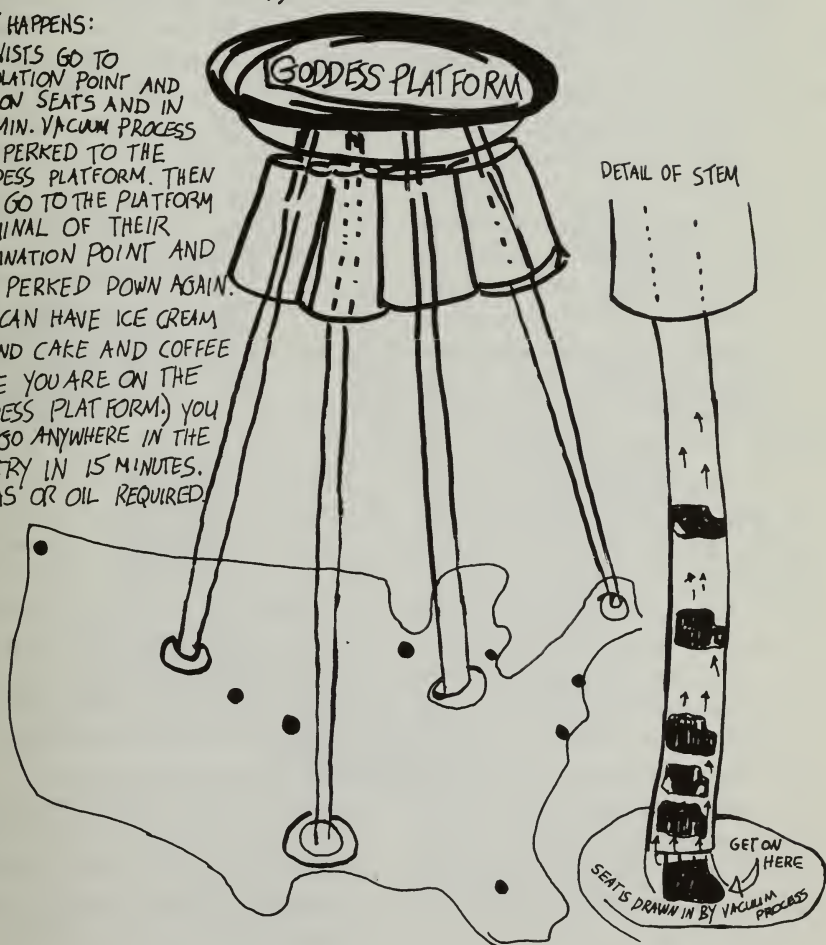
Lack of input is another form of environmental oppression. Women constitute over fifty percent of the users of our environment, yet we have had a negligible input into the architectural forms our environments express. For example, we must demand our right to design women-owned-and-operated abortion clinics that do not necessarily adhere to the male defined standardized programs for abortion facilities. These standardized criteria often are inappropriate, depersonalized, and unrelat-



G.G.P.S.Y. (GREAT GODDESS PERCOLATION SYSTEM)

WHAT HAPPENS:

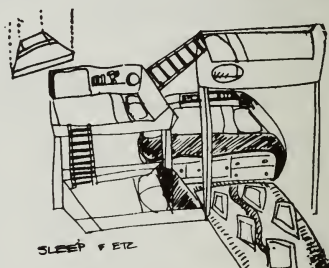
FEMINISTS GO TO
PERCOLATION POINT AND
GET ON SEATS AND IN
A 7 MIN. VACUUM PROCESS
GET PERKED TO THE
GODDESS PLATFORM. THEN
THEY GO TO THE PLATFORM
TERMINAL OF THEIR
DESTINATION POINT AND
ARE PERKED DOWN AGAIN.
(YOU CAN HAVE ICE CREAM
OR /AND CAKE AND COFFEE
WHILE YOU ARE ON THE
GODDESS PLATFORM.) YOU
CAN GO ANYWHERE IN THE
COUNTRY IN 15 MINUTES.
NO GAS OR OIL REQUIRED.



ed to the intimacy of the experience. The structure and plumbing codes which usually increase costs often are beyond what is necessary to operate a physically safe facility. These high costs make it impossible for individuals or groups with low budgets (usually women) to operate abortion facilities. This perpetuates the domination of the male establishment over women's health care needs.

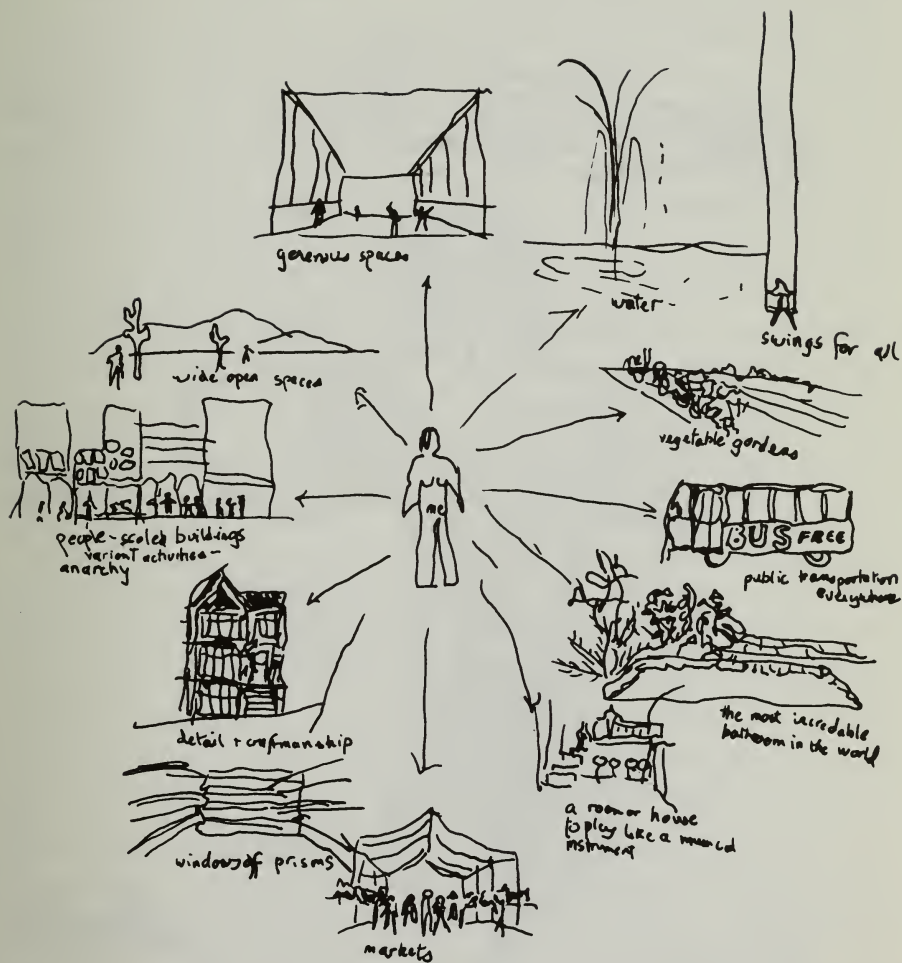
A specific case arose in Detroit at the Feminist Women's Health Center. There the women had created a psychologically supportive environment (personal, cheerful, clean) out of what was a dreary, abandoned house which had been used previously as a doctor's office. A representative from the Health Department inspected the facility in order to determine how well it met the guidelines for on-site abortion clinics. The changes he recommended were physically and psychologically impossible. They included enlarging the door openings and corridors to six feet wide for the transportation of hospital beds, changing the diameter of the plumbing, expanding the size of procedure rooms and converting the lounge which included a fireplace, shag carpeting and sofas into a sterile recovery room. None of these were required for a simple first trimester abortion. These criteria expressed an attitude toward abortion which denied its relative simplicity and relationship to the lives of women. Instead, it assumed women would best be aborted in a surgical, onerous, mystified and impersonal environment.

The abortion case underlined again the extricable relationship between power and territory and between physical space and self concept which is the core of environmental oppression. As we change and expand our roles, work identities and life styles, we will require new architectural forms which support these choices and activities. As women, we cannot fully actualize ourselves without environments which free us from limited expectations of ourselves. We need spaces which support our creativity and productivity and provide us with a wider range of personal and communal options. We need spaces for self-help health clinics,

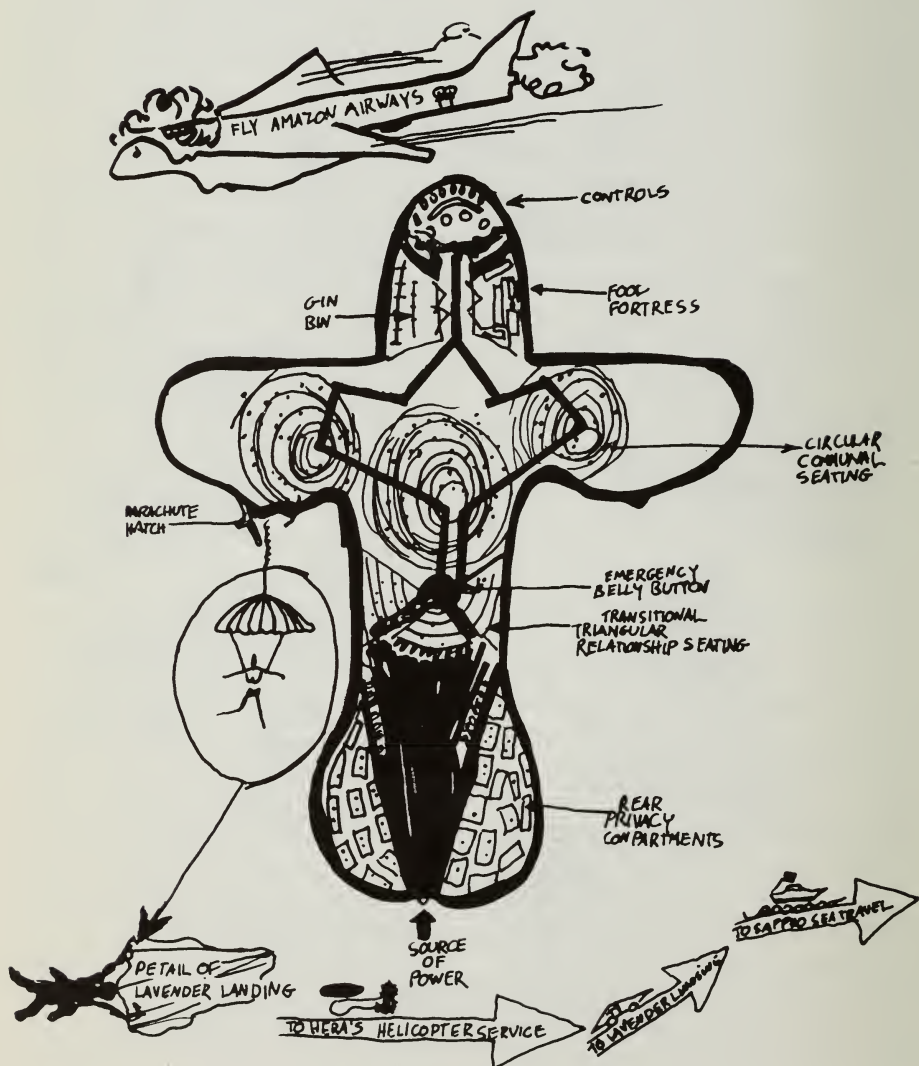


feminist credit unions, women's resource centers, women's presses, lesbian centers, child care centers, feminist schools, women's coffee houses, restaurants, record companies and women's workspaces. Their existence means political and social spaces for women which are critical for the longevity and growth of the Women's Movement and cohesiveness among women.

If the future vision for the built environment is to be one in which the totality of women's needs are environmentally supported, then each woman must become her own architect, that



FEMINIST TRANSIT SYSTEMS INC.



is, she must become aware of her ability to exercise environmental judgment and make decisions about the nature of the spaces in which she lives and works.

Environmental Fantasy

What would happen then if we began to fantasize about environmental solutions which were nonsexist, personally and socially supportive of women's needs, nurturant, humane, harmonious, unobtrusive if necessary? What if we overcame the cultural blocks to using fantasy, and asserted it as *positive*, just as we have with so many other attributes associated negatively with the image of women? What if we began to share our fantasies? What if we let our minds run wild? What if we realized the true creative power of our dreams and visions as a real force for change?

We believe that fantasy is the basis for creativity and the foundation for reality. It is a way of dealing *with* reality and problem solving, not an escape from it. It is a productive and useful method for creating change. However, we are conditioned to believe that fantasy and reflection are a waste of time, lazy, even crazy. Our culture values reason, logic and practicality. "Daydreaming" is considered unproductive and impractical. Children fantasize quite freely and many psychologists believe them to be more creative than adults. Our ability to fantasize, be playful and reflective are trained out of us as we grow up. We are made

to feel guilty and embarrassed about our fantasies for they are seen as childish and immature.

Usually women's sexual fantasies are repeatedly emphasized in the external world as though we had no others. Fantasy dwells within us all and this preoccupation with women's sexual fantasies has only served to reinforce women's present sexually defined role in this society. Women have fantasies and dreams about things like power, color, cities, space, textures, transitions, order and disorder, revelations of a purely spiritual nature, mathematics, structure, systems of all kinds. Most of these fantasies have been consigned to internalized, unspoken images with little or no outlet. One of the most oppressive aspects of today's actual built environment is that it is a totally male fantasy, a projection of their monumental egos in concrete and curtain wall, each building shouting for individual recognition. This male vision has been based largely upon right-handed thinking, determined by the left brain hemisphere, which is linked with law, order, reason, control, logic and mathematics. Whereas women whose conditioning has encouraged left-handed thinking (right brain hemisphere usage) encourage sensitivity, playfulness, feeling, openness, subjectivity and imagery in problem solving. Primary creativity or "the creativeness which comes out of the unconsciousness and which is the source of new discovery," is a result of left-handed thinking.⁴ Right-handed thinking represents secondary creativity which is

based upon what already exists. We believe that although in actual creative problem-solving there is a synthesis of primary and secondary process, a truly feminist solution for future environment will require an emphasis on primary creativeness to accomplish a completely fresh vision rather than a mere re-ordering of the "givens" of the past and present. As women, we may well represent the richest and most immediate potential source for incorporating primary creativity in problem solving. Every effort that can be made to validate women as creative and whole human beings is urgent in a patriarchal society that continues to obscure the essential nature of women.

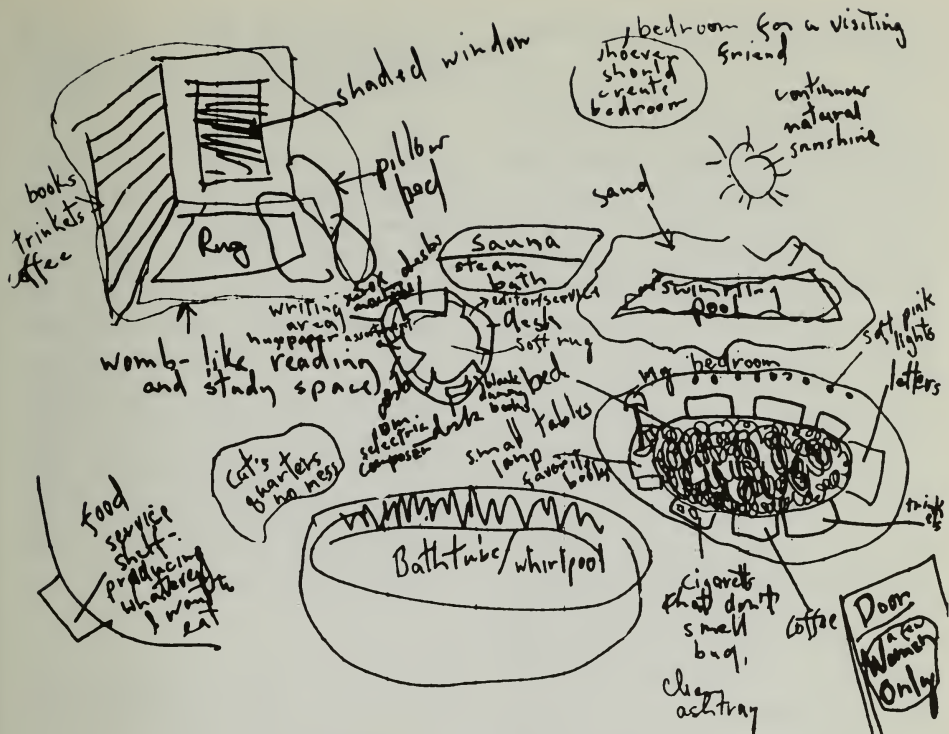
Why do we berate this primary source of creativity? Authority after authority has described the fact that most men in the dominant white male culture are severely threatened by anything they regard as "feminine" within themselves for fear of being called homosexual. Softness, fantasy, childishness, emotion, poetry, imagination, tenderness are all repressed in the "normal" male adjustment. Women also are victims of the repression of this innate creative potential. A feminist photographer described her own environmental fantasy:

I chose in my fantasy elements of bullshit spanish southern California 'architecture' that I felt nostalgically at home with—I look for the sense of home and familiarity and something that won't be uprooted—it is interesting to me that this is also nostalgic. I have

no fantasy of a living space for myself that could be in any sense 'modern' or designed solely for use. I imagine only apartments to which we must conform. Flexible spaces make me feel lost—not solid enough. I adapt myself to what I can afford—even in my fantasies. I cannot "imagine"—I take photographs of what is there, I do not think of altering it or putting there what I could want. The failure of the imagination is a result of a kind of acceptance, or a lack of hope or despair, in conjunction with the discipline of straight black and white photography. It is strange to imagine a beautiful world. I have become flexible? I have no idea of what I could want—not even the perfect darkroom—I can only imagine adapting to inappropriate space.

Thus, although it is more permissible for women to fantasize, many women's fantasies reflect conditioning to the values of the dominant culture.

We believe that environmental fantasies can provide an alternative for the conditioned need to "adapt to inappropriate space." By thinking about ideal environments, our fantasies, we can raise our expectations of what supportive environments might and should be. This will help develop our imagination which is a major source from which we can generate new visions and concepts which go beyond our current ones. Rising expectations is one of the first stages in the process of change. The more that we understand our environmental needs, the more we will be able to determine and demand solutions.



Women's fantasy drawings are a tool for us to use in creating our own imagery. Doodles and drawings are a form of communicating to yourself and others. We have used the spoken language in consciousness raising groups as a way of expressing, analyzing and gaining fresh insights into the nature of our experiences in the social world. Drawing, as a physical and visual language, is a useful mode for understanding, sharing perceptions and increasing our consciousness about the physical world. One woman expresses it this way: *Underlying the fantasies is a common kind of understanding. I know the sources from which these needs arise. I feel them too. I can relate to the messages in these draw-*

ings because I've experienced so many of the same frustrations or needs or daydreams. They seem to reflect me in them too. It makes me feel really connected to other women.

Drawing "skills" are not necessary to use environmental fantasies as a means of raising consciousness. As one woman emphasizes, it is the participation in the drawing that is important rather than the ability to articulate graphically:

If it's your fantasy and you're given permission to fantasize as much as you want, if you're given approval for doing it, it doesn't have to conform to anything. That kind of opportunity for freedom really lets people unleash and get at their true feelings and needs.

It's non-judgmental. It's non-intellectual.

This freedom to fantasize is crucial when we are constantly bombarded by images of the male fantasy in our daily lives. Fantasy drawings represent a graphic expression of our fears, hopes, values, humor and rage as we project them into environmental forms. We as women need to see our own imagery in the visible, external world as a mirror for validating and affirming these internalized experiences.

In conclusion, we suggest adopting insights from these environmental fantasies into a re-ordering of architectural form for creating our future environments that are generated from women's processes and priorities. Women must have input into the creation of physical environments because environments intimately influence the ways in which we interact with others, with whom we interact with, and how we experience ourselves. Controlling our own lives and creating our own modes of expression is an important part of the Women's Movement. We must project our own images into environmental forms so that we might begin to experience and create the woman-identified environment.

Footnotes

¹Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), p. 40.

²"The Militant," January 29, 1971.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Abraham Maslow, "Emotional Blocks to Creativity," in [Parnes and Harding, eds.,] *A Source Book for Creative Thinking*, (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1962).

We have been asking women of all ages and backgrounds to describe their environment fantasies both verbally and graphically. The drawings, quotes and text in this article are part of a book on *Women's Environmental Fantasies*. Please share with us, as other women have done, your insights and dreams about the environment for inclusion in our book. Send your fantasy drawings, written comments, ideas, or any other information about woman defined spaces. We will be traveling to talk with as many women as possible; let us know if we can include a visit with you and women in your area. Write us at 51 Market St., New York, New York, 10002.

Noel Phyllis Birkby, registered architect in New York, has been a design critic at Pratt Institute, C.U.N.Y., and the University of Detroit.

Leslie Kanes Weisman, architectural consultant, is Professor of Architecture and Environmental Studies at the University of Detroit. Both are long-time feminist activists.

New Women

We embark on a strange uncharted voyage
Masses of us, and for the first time in history.
No need to read Ulysses with envy
His terror will be, is, ours.
Temptations, treasures, giddiness beyond belief
And horrors.
But our quest is the opposite of his.
Not home and hearth after death, pillage and destruction.
But continual quest, continual struggle, continual voyage
For an unmapped perhaps nonexistent territory
A free land inside and outside our heads.

by June Namias

Visions

Utopia? Isn't that a subway stop in Queens?
A barrio on an island in the Philippines?
Didn't they make a movie of the book with Ronald Colman?
I know. It's a new Parker Bros. Game.
A new substitute for hamburger?
Norell's putting it out as a line of men's toiletries?
What do you mean, a state of mind after the revolution?
Whose revolution?
When?
Revolution, smevolution. I don't have enough to eat.
I can't afford to go to the dentist.
Got no time to think about tomorrow. Gotta survive today.
You got time?
You think about it.

by Janet Haight

Freestanding: Jacqua's Story

by Sally Gearhart

graphics by Scarlet Cheng



Jacqua stood gazing at the high meadow. Far below her, anger was being spoken but she could grasp no words—only intentions. She heard in her head the clang of armor. How did she know it was armor? Who in the world wore armor anymore? It sounded as if the wearer walked at a good pace. With each step the armor sighed and creaked, rattling a bit. In the background were the spring forest noises. She listened harder. It was two, perhaps three, miles away. No mind invitation. She attempted to move to visual. No luck. Too far for taste and smell, still so comparatively underdeveloped anyway in her and among all her sisters. All she could do was listen. The armor seemed to be moving faster now, the squeaks coming more frequently.

Then suddenly, nothing. Silence. She checked her listen-spread and found it still operating. The forest noises continued. The person had stopped—not sat down or fallen, but stopped short. Could the person have heard her hearing her? No chance. Was her own breathing too loud? Was the armor-wearer breathing? If so, why couldn't she hear her?

Still she waited. Minutes went by. Silence. Then it seemed an hour. Jacqua grew impatient. She was only beginning to train herself. Perhaps she was making some mistake.

"No. You're doing fine." The thought slipped into her body by way of her chest, it seemed.

"Diana?" she asked.

"Yes. I've been worry-reading you.

I ask your forgiveness for seeping in. But what you're hearing is happening."

"In your covenant with me is forgiveness," Jacqua chanted. Then, "Can you hear it, too?"

"I did. I don't now. I'd call up a waiting ear and pay attention elsewhere. A person can stand still only so long. Particularly in regalia like that." Diana passed off and away.

Jacqua was relieved. Gingerly she summoned her waiting ear—not like the more deliberate fanlike spread, but nevertheless a field sensitive to unusual noises. She opened it toward the armor's sounds. Still the silence. Now she was free to revisit her own thoughts. Could it be that it wasn't a woman at all, but a man? One from the men's nation, standing stock still there at the fringes of their wanderground? She tried to recall the lessons from the memoryroom, the stories, the mind pictures, the pain of some not-so-ancient days when the men's nation was not sick and dying. "It is too simple," she recited dutifully to herself, "to condemn them all or to praise all of us. But for the sake of earth and all she holds, that simplicity must be our creed."

She dropped back into her first-tellings, when she was only a girlchild and sat at gatherings with her mothers. Even in the singing and the playing of the tales of men there ran the thread, "We once had hope for them, but even that hope they snuffed out." Rage. Sadness. All mixed with gentleness and love. Love men? The idea did not fit. It was cranky and backwards in her mind. She tried it on from every angle

but it would not adjust; some of its bulk stuck out over the sides while other parts of it were too short to approach the edges. Yet somehow once it had been so. "Maybe it was a different kind of love," she mused.

She remembered, too, the visits with the gentles of the men's nation, those who had come to them to die. They had lived with life-loving for a short time at the edge of the forest. But they were no longer strong. Like their wilder brothers they fought the sickness in vain. They cried for the ministrations of the women. "Minister to yourselves," they were told. Yet always the women stood by, friends from a distance, the midwives of death who would ease their passing.

"Why can't we help them?" Jacqua had asked.

"They must help themselves," her mothers answered.

"But they're dying!"

"Yes. They are dying. That is the most important thing. That is exactly what they must help themselves to do. When they touch their own bodies they know that. Only when they disconnect do they cry out for help and curse our hardness."

Jacqua had seen them die there. Four of them. One by one over the days while she and the other women talked with them and sang with them but never touched them either with mind or hand. They had been unable to sustain their man-ness, unable to grasp



their woman-ness. It was too late for them to reach down and lift themselves up. And these were the gentles of the men. What were the others like?

"They are driven," Wenadi would say. "Driven in their own madness to destroy themselves and us and any living thing."

"Their madness. Is it like Clea's?"

"No. Hers was the madness of too full a vessel. Theirs is the madness of power."

Jacqua pondered all that. The meadow below her was brown from the winter. Yet there were signs of life. Briefly she checked her extended ear. Still no sound. It must have been minutes now. How can a person stand so still? She turned toward the ensconcement from which the anger and the pain had come from earlier. The rhythms were quieter there. It had been a hard matter of overvisit, she knew. Two older sisters had spent too many days together without speaking their hearts to the rest. She knew the pattern, as young as she was. In fact, probably because she was so young. It was one of the first lessons for them all. Lightly in her memory she touched her longago warm soft days with Ursula, Ursula who had been her learn-together. She had not forgotten the feeling of needing for life itself Ursula's simple presence. They did not speak their warmth beyond each other to their sisters. They had become hidden with it. It began to eat away at their freestanding selves. Hence the saying, "There are no words more obscene than 'I can't live without you.' Count

them the deepest affront to the person." Jacqua had not forgotten. In the end she had understood the importance of never feeling that way again.

The present matter was all the more difficult, though, because the two women were of the first years, of the time of the purge. They had fled together, been separated, and for more than a year now had been reunited. Among many of the sisters there was the feeling that they held too hard to each other and to the old ways of trying to love. Jacqua would be anxious to know how the talking had come out.

A clank disturbed her. The person was moving now. Jacqua turned her listening to the resumption of sound. There was someone else there, too. Again she tried other senses and mind-stretches. No avail. She turned as Diana came up behind her.

"Look with me," said Diana.

They locked minds, Diana's eye-seeing pushing outward and away, expanding her power. As always, Jacqua was astonished and exhilarated.

"I'll never be able to do it alone!" She squeezed in the thought before Diana could stop her. Diana chastised her sharply, calling her up short. Jacqua took her deserts and began to focus with Diana to the scene some miles away.

There was the source of the squeak: a metal headpiece whose raised visor jiggled with the slightest motion. Beneath the armor and the headpiece there was a woman. Fear tensed in her eyes as she sighted a figure familiar to Jacqua: Seja, from the high nests of



the western ensconcement. Seja was looking squarely at the stranger. The sudden noise of the helmet had been caused by the woman drawing her arm—and a smooth stick—across her chest. Seja stood only inches from her.

“You are not open,” Seja said.

The woman’s eyes blazed.

“You do not need that armor. Or those weapons,” Seja said.

There was no word from the

stranger and her eyes were hard. It was clear to Jacqua that the woman had been walking fast, as if fleeing, when she encountered Seja. The two were very different: Seja with her shortened hair, cotton shirt, soft trousers and sandals, her frank face and large hands open and reaching out to the newcomer; the stranger, larger in stature, ludicrously garbed in the costume of a range of eras, as if she had robbed some

museum. She was guarded and burdened by the weighty chain mail that clung to her torso and by the old-fashioned helm. Her heavy pants were pulled tight behind leather greaves. At her waist was a hunting knife and in her hand a polished stick which she now held as if to strike Seja.

Slowly Seja moved. She sank before the other woman, knelt before her and bowed her head. The stranger stared.

"If you do not understand my words or my mind, then understand my body. I do not wish to harm you. You may kill me if you like. I trust that you will not."

Still the strange woman stared. Quietly Seja raised her head, looking up into the other's face. Then her hands and head turned to the leather on the stranger's legs. She reached out to untie one of the thongs that held the shin protection in place. The woman let out a cry, stepped back and raised the stick above her head. Seja stopped. Then she pointed to the stranger's knife. The woman's eyes narrowed and her head turned a bit to the left. She seemed to understand something. Still holding the club above Seja's head, she drew the knife from her belt.

Jacqua gasped. Diana held her and with shortstretch urged her to silence. Now Seja was lying on the ground on her back. She forced a piece of an old log beneath her head. Jacqua was incredulous. "She must be crazy," she whispered. Seja, in the face of danger and even death, was lying down as if to sleep. In silence Seja looked at the

woman with the weapons, then with deliberate calm she closed her eyes and pushed her head back over the wood so that her neck was fully exposed.

How long they stayed there—the armored woman and the vulnerable hillwoman—Jacqua could not tell. She dared not breathe lest the stranger leap forward and slash Seja's waiting throat. She held fast to Diana.

Then it happened. There was a change in the eyes of the larger woman. She lowered her hands—the knife to one side, the club to the other. Seja opened her eyes. At that, the standing woman looked to each of the weapons and with intentional slowness dropped each upon the ground.

Seja rose to a kneeling position. The woman did not move. It seemed to Jacqua that they looked at each other for an eternity. Then, very deliberately, the stranger thrust forward her leg toward Seja. With like slowness, Seja untied the thong. The unburdening began. Piece by heavy piece, Seja took the armor from the body of the stranger: the greaves, the thick belt, the monstrous helmet—so the long hair flew in the wind—then with some difficulty the chest mail. The woman moved only to straighten her arms so that Seja could remove that vest. Seeing that she wore nothing beneath her chestpiece, Seja immediately removed her own shirt, baring her breasts in equal fashion.

They stood looking at each other for a long moment. Then the face of the strange woman broke into an amazing smile. It leapt from her face

to Seja's and back again. They stood grinning at each other. Then both began picking up the armor and weapons from the ground. Seja extended her hand. The woman took it. Together they plowed through the underbrush toward the ensconcement.

Jacqua was breathless. She had never seen so vividly or feared so deeply. Her relief slid into exhaustion. She sank to her knees and then curled

up on the brown grass.

"I may sleep a bit," she said to Diana.

"May your dreams ease your wakefulness," said Diana. She kissed the cheek, passed her hands over the young body and rose to descend the path.

Sally Gearhart is Professor of Speech Communication at San Francisco State.



Prime Time: Art and Politics



by Alexa Freeman & Jackie MacMillan

Art Today

Art is generally viewed as a divine performance, only remotely connected to society. It is an activity carried out by predestined Geniuses who are designated by God to produce Art. The process is personal and unanalyzable. This is not only a static view of art, but pure myth. The Artist is not sent from God but is hand picked and processed by art dealers. Fine Art is big business in this society.¹

However, most of us are not Fine Artists or Fine Art Consumers. We come into contact with the visual arts primarily as consumers of goods and services. Commercial art sells us products. Many of these products are things we don't really need or neces-

sarily want, so we must be persuaded to spend our money. Sophisticated technology and artistic ideas are used to convince us of our new "needs". It is now common knowledge that some advertising campaigns have used subliminal suggestion.² Madison Avenue men talk about the "Soft Sell" vs. the "Hard Sell". As women, we see our bodies used as primary visual images to sell products. Music is used in much the same way on T.V. and radio. Drink coke and the world will sing in perfect harmony.

Thus, our major contact with art is our exploitation, through art, as consumers. Our senses are constantly stimulated, not for our own gratification, but for profit in a consumer economy.

Just as we are exploited through art

*photograph by Shirl Smith
courtesy of Feminist Radio Network*

as consumers, we are excluded from creative activity as producers. Our work and what we produce are not part of an active, life-supporting process. Instead, the process of production alienates us from the products of our labor: what is produced, for whom, and why is out of our control. This lack of control exists even on a management level, where creativity is entirely directed toward developing clever selling schemes.

Rather than working to develop our human and societal potential, we work to make a profit for someone else. Our time and energy are depleted in meaningless work, producing goods and services which will sell, but which are not necessarily socially beneficial. The result is a proliferation of unnecessary consumer items rather than improved quality of life.

In the Women's Movement, self-determination as a goal has meant control of our bodies and our lives. Issues such as health and abortion, sexuality, and self-defense have been explored as part of this goal. The right to self-determination must also include control of our senses. Exploited as they are in a consumer economy, our senses offer us the potential for great joy and creative satisfaction in our lives. They are our body's outlets to the world. But like a plant that is kept in the dark, we are not allowed the means of exploring our own sensations.

Art is one means of exploring our sensual potential, but the opportunity to produce and to enjoy art is available only to a few privileged individuals.

Fine Art is an activity isolated from the mainstream in our society.* Why should art be relegated to a handful when we all have sense organs?

Art in the twentieth century has been primarily concerned with the development of form with little attention to content. There have been few attempts to connect meaningful ideas or values with the formal innovations. In fact, art has been largely a reflection of society, rather than a forum for new ideas or a social force. Decadence in our society is mirrored in various artistic "movements" such as minimal art, body art and conceptual art. One example of this decadence is the recent earth art movement in which a wealthy person buys a mountain for the artist to either bulldoze, or drape with huge sheets, or to use as a dumping ground for deliberately smashed automobiles. Consider another example—a conceptual art work consisting of several bound volumes. On each page was typed (no doubt by a woman) a year; from page to page, year by year, beginning with the year one, up to 1973. Its purpose, apparently, was to have the viewer reflect on the magnitude of it all. Other "innovative" art forms have been equally purposeless and wasteful.

Because of the severe deprivation of many people, it is necessary now to focus on survival needs. But our long range goal should go beyond survival

*Folk arts, an "unrecognized" art form, have been integral to the lives of people of different regional and ethnic cultures.

to include an improved, real quality of life. The solution is not for the individual to step outside society and become an artist, but to struggle for a society where we can all develop our human potential.

Art As A Means For Revolution

While it is easy to see that art in our culture is largely a bourgeois institution, activists have been too quick to react against art *per se*, and have overlooked its revolutionary potential and the possibilities for art in a future society. In order to use art as a means toward revolution, certain basic elements need to be included. This is not to say that every work of political art has to include all components. In fact, an art work that achieves *one* feminist goal is something to be proud of!

It is first necessary to begin to redefine art within a political context. What goals can feminism achieve through art? (How can art help feminists to achieve our goals?) What kind of content do we want our art to have?

What art forms can best facilitate our goals? How can we make art accessible? How could art contribute to a better quality of life for all people?

Content and Politics

Our most immediate problem in developing political art is to determine the content it will have. What do we want to say? It is easy to identify negative images of women in the arts and media; it is much more difficult to develop images of women that satisfy us, that change us, that convince us we can fight and win. It is even more of a challenge to develop future visions of a society that serves the interests of its people. By providing us with a positive vision of the future, art can inspire us to struggle for that future. By providing us with a positive image of our selves, art can help us develop the strength to struggle. Feminist art, by definition, must be a force for change, rather than a reflection of society as it is.

Our art must have meaningful content. Meaningful content could be



photograph by Charlotte Bunch

achieved by helping women develop a sense of identity with each other, rather than with the oppressor. Women's history has begun to serve this function. Drawing from our past to develop a women's culture can provide a real sense of identity today. However, it is essential to keep in mind that women's history is embedded in every culture and every class and is not only American and European, but African, Asian, Native, Latin, and South American. Feminist culture has potential as a force for change, but only as it incorporates the cultural heritages of all women. Art should give us a sense of our potential as human beings, as women. We need strong role models. We need new images of ourselves as individuals and as revolutionaries.³ Art can encourage strengths and skills, as well as provide positive reinforcement for our successes.

Another area in which meaningful content can be incorporated into art is portrayal of revolutionary struggle. Processes of change, including concrete victories, should be emphasized. (No more movies like "Chinatown" where women always lose in the end).

In short, content in our art must be positive. We must be able to depict our oppression without being overwhelmed by it. By advocating positive art, we are not calling for Pollyannas, but politics. Nor does this mean rejecting the traditional modes of drama and tragedy; tragedy *can* be used as an impetus to struggle. Positive art *does* mean rejecting "death wish" art, art which can only encourage a

sense of hopelessness and despair. It means embracing art which supports and inspires change.

Humor in various forms can serve as a mechanism for social criticism. At its best it can be used to promote radical ideas. Humor can soften a hard line. Lily Tomlin is a feminist who has managed to incorporate class and sexual politics into her art, as well as get media exposure.

Finally, feminist art should develop visionary content. What are we struggling for? (We know what we're struggling against!) Our visions of a future society that is non-oppressive, and life-supporting can give sense and direction to our movement. Just as it is important to have a sense of identity and know where we're coming from, so we must know where we're going. Feminist art can stimulate new energy, breathe in excitement and give us hope.

Science fiction, the major mode of looking into or fantasizing the future, is often fatalistic and negative, and lacks real vision.⁴ A majority of science fiction portrays society becoming inevitably more intolerable, and shows people either resigning themselves to despair, or reacting against technology (back to the earth movements). Most science fiction is incubated in and reflects a society totally preoccupied with technology as an end in itself. In our experience, we have seen technology used to oppress and control people. Many science fiction writers have been unable to free themselves of that association: while they dream up the most



photograph by Lynn Miller

amazing technical possibilities, they fail to develop parallel social changes.**

We need to develop feminist future fiction. We must understand that the growth of technology and the social change we seek must grow together. We need to begin to examine how technology could be used to liberate people. Feminist future fiction would be an art form that offers us models, hope for the future, and provides an incentive to work for change.

Technology and Feminism

Developing content in art demands incredible invention and creative ingenuity. But developing new forms in art, and new ways to use them, may be even more difficult. Rather than rejecting technology and other sophisticated forms as tools of the enemy, we must use these tools to achieve political goals.

Human perceptions are changing with advanced media technology. We are becoming more responsive to more sophisticated art forms. This is true not only in the areas of commercial art where techniques such as subliminal suggestion are employed, but in the popular arts as well. Television, for example, has advanced enormously since its beginnings. We now have more channels, color, even instant play-back (on special models). The increased stimulation and input to our senses adds dimensions to our lives that did not exist in the past. The technical

advances made in television and the change in our senses were highlighted when producers brought back the old "Mickey Mouse Show". Many reviewers noted that the show was too simple and one-dimensional, that it would not sell with children today.

Our reality is, then, expanded and changed by media technology. This change in perception deeply affects how we receive information. If color makes T.V. more "real", then the content, too, becomes more "real". George Orwell, in 1984, portrayed a movie house with "feelies". The medium replaces life. Although Orwell's book is an extreme example, the truth in it is clear in our own everyday experience. We are accustomed to multiple images, stereo, and quadriphonic sound, to three-dimensional movie screens. Think of the box office sales with the special effects and "sensurround" in "Earthquake." Or consider what modern dance would be like without elaborate lighting.

If feminists are serious about reaching the majority of women, we must be concerned about form. We no longer can afford to put our energies into obsolete and ineffectual forms. We must learn to use media technology. To do this, feminists will have to acquire new skills: technical, administrative and artistic. We must also employ psychology and learn to use symbolism in our work.

As feminists learn to use technological forms, it is important to evaluate ways to use existing forms. Printed media reaches vast numbers of women.

**Although this is changing. See the interview with Joanna Russ in this issue.

Why not write politicizing stories for *True Confessions*? Or work to get a feminist comic strip run in the daily newspapers? Doonesbury is overwhelmingly successful. Imagine turning on A.M. radio and hearing women singing about group struggle instead of broken hearts!

Accessibility

A crucial criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of feminist art is knowing who it reaches. Without exposure, art is useless and becomes merely an individual exercise. The problem of accessibility in art is manifested both in terms of content (is it convincing?) and exposure (what kind of distribution will it get?).

In order to create convincing political art, art that moves us, it is essential to understand and utilize the creative process itself. This process begins with a set of rules that an artist defines for herself, either individually or in affiliation with a school of art. For example, cubism, surrealism, impressionism, etc. are schools. Many of these schools have manifestos, acknowledged leadership, and a philosophy. The specific rules used for a work or series of works are referred to as a "problem". Thus, the first step is to determine the nature of the "problem." In the process of defining the problem, the artist will choose the elements she will work with. These may be colors, materials, characters, etc. In the case of music, time, range, and variety of sound (instruments) are basic elements. An unlimited number of problems and

elements are available to the artist. The problem can be general or specific: How will a given set of colors interact with each other? How will a particular character respond to a given situation? How will she interact with other characters?

Art, then, is a process whereby the artist explores her own responses to the elements as they relate to one another within a given context. This process involves intuitive responses to a situation which the artist has consciously established. It involves the interaction of the conscious with the subconscious. In choosing what to produce, whether consciously or unconsciously, the subject matter must have political potential. A still life or an abstract expressionist painting obviously would have very limited possibilities. This is not to say that either of these is necessarily bad or wrong, but merely irrelevant. In addition, art that is based on philosophical principles (such as cubism) has an appeal that is largely academic. Very few people will be aware of the conceptual premises, and therefore these forms cannot be used for politicization.

"Protest Art" also should be distinguished from the art we are advocating. It serves individual functions for the artist rather than a political function for a group. Merely to protest is to deny the reality and importance of power. To protest is to display disapproval about something without attempting to change it. Protest is fundamentally passive. No demands are made on the participant, nor does



it offer her anything: hope, ideas, inspiration. Protest art can be a personal act of purging one's guilt. A well-known show, for example, which toured the U.S. at the height of the Vietnam war, was an indulgence in day-glo violence and phallic symbolism. It was a personal rather than a political statement, in which the artist explored his own feelings about his manhood and Vietnam. At its worst, protest art revels in the same violence or decadence it presumes to criticize. At its best it is apolitical art.

Thus, our consciousness, or overall perception of the world, is a critical element in our art. Most art is apolitical because it is approached with an

apolitical worldview. We must be involved in political struggle in order to create political art.

The other aspect of art and its ability to reach people is the problem of exposure. This is a critical dilemma for feminists working in media and the arts. When we try to retain control over the content of our art, we find that often our work is not shown or released. On the other hand, if we want our work to get maximum exposure, we are forced to compromise if not to completely delete our politics.

Making art accessible, both in terms of exposure to a mass audience and control of content, requires long term changes in society. Short term possi-

bilities include efforts to gain access to UHF and cable television and radio. Pressure could be brought on the FCC to change regulations prohibiting certain types of programming. Television networks, both local and national, could be pressured to use feminist and minority group consultants. Organized groups could demand previewing privileges. Lawsuits could be filed against networks for offensive programs, and equal time could be demanded. As we work towards the goal of control, we must be realistic in recognizing the value of using existing structures.

At the same time, it is *essential* that we develop an alternative feminist media.⁵ Feminist media and art enterprises are the only way we can assert uncompromising control. The establishment of feminist businesses, such as radio and television networks and stations, film distribution companies, theaters, and publishing houses are all strategic. In addition to enabling women to control production and distribution, feminist media and art enterprises could become political pressure groups against the male-controlled industry.

The struggle for power in the media requires long term visions and goals. Feminist activity needs to be critically evaluated with the goal of radical change in mind.⁶ In addition, there is a need to establish a structure of accountability to specifically feminist *political* organizations.^{***} One aspect of accountability that could be built into a structure is feminist criticism. Feminist art critics would provide a

means of clarifying for the artist what she is doing and what she needs to do, as well as holding her responsible to the movement as a whole. Feminist criticism can help make artistic and political connections: intellectual with sensual, emotional with external reality, and vision with ideology.

Several well-known art works contain some of the elements we have discussed. While these works are not feminist, nor exclusively about women, they do deal with political struggle and/or change. "State of Siege" and "Burn" are films depicting the process of revolutionary struggle. In "Burn," a slave uprising is successfully put down by a European mercenary. However, at the conclusion of the film, he is assassinated and the audience is left with a sense of hope. The assassination is symbolic. It implies that the struggle will continue and the people will eventually win. The oppressed are battered, but unlike a lot of art about oppression, they are not defeated. "State of Siege" also depicts struggle, which, in spite of defeats, leaves the audience with a sense of hope for continuing struggle. The individuals involved operated as a team. Empathy for them comes primarily from identification with their political struggle rather than their individual personalities. Women are presented as strong, courageous characters. However, they do

***This is another, fundamentally important subject. Suffice it to say that the Movement must work to develop and implement organization and party structures.

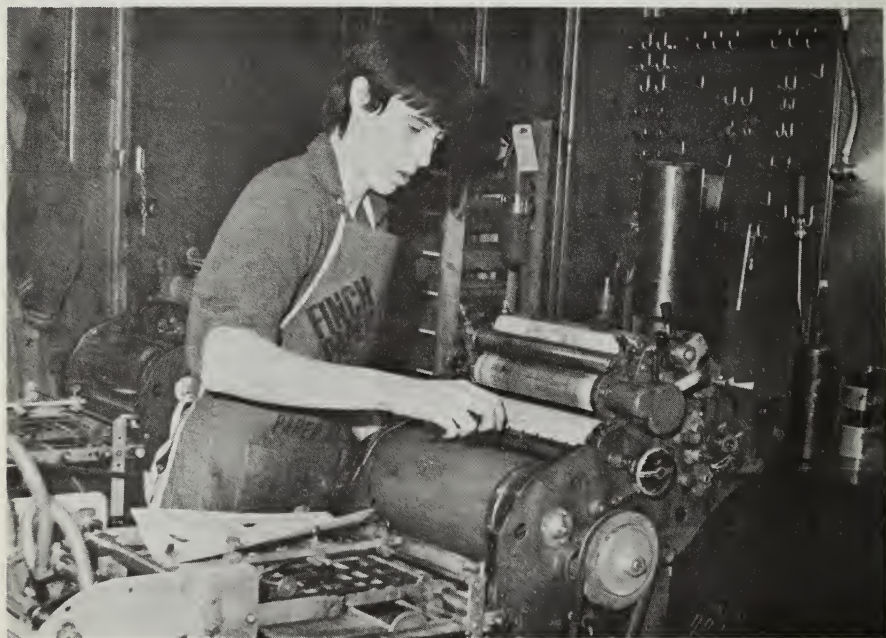
not occupy primary leadership roles in either of these films.

"Hearts and Minds" uses a different mode—the documentary. It is one of the few revolutionary artworks distributed on a national level to exploit the potential of this form. Since documentaries usually are propaganda pieces made by and for the ruling classes, this Hollywood film was a slip-up. The film addresses the struggle of the Vietnamese people against American imperialism. It asserts by implication that the Vietnamese will not be conquered and that this is precisely the reason for American "withdrawal" (a people's victory).

Not all change-oriented art has to address itself to direct political action.

Consciousness-raising art that reinforces group identification while destroying negative stereotypes is equally crucial. "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pitman" on television is an example of such a work. It is the story of a freed black slave and her struggle to survive. A woman of incredible strength Jane Pitman was a role model, both to others in her life and to the audience.

While we are emphasizing film and television because they *are* the public media, other examples of political art should be mentioned. A group of two working class women, called "Hazel and Alice", have travelled cross-country singing their music. It is strong and gutsy, providing not only a moving portrayal of the lives of miners but



*photograph by Evelyn Pugh
courtesy of Diana Press*

also advocating change. They succeed in incorporating political analysis without compromising the aesthetic quality of their music. Music and marching tunes have been deeply rooted in the U.S. labor movement. The lyrics of the "Bread and Roses" marching song sung by women strikers at Lowell is a powerful example of women's collective strength and visions for a better life.

Art In A Revolutionary Society

The idea that unlimited opportunity exists under capitalism is absurd. The *most* that society offers us now is the ability to accumulate material wealth at the expense of others. Material wealth is the gauge for measuring our human value. Even the wealthy rarely find it possible to develop their own potential, because they are so immersed in developing the potential of their capital. Artists are not immune to this problem. Fine Arts is a highly competitive field. Rather than judge themselves and their art in their own terms, artists constantly measure themselves against each other. Personal "recognition" is very important. By contrast, art, in a future society, would be part of life, not a remote, mysterious activity for the elite. A reinterpretation of art as part of life calls for a new concept of what the "artist" is.

Under a new economy, production would exist for the self and others equally. Rather than our senses/ourselves being drained, producing/putting "out" work would be a constant pro-

cess of revitalization. With a new sense of mutuality, the fusion of self with society as a whole (all for one and one for all), the concept of abuse would be absurd. Work that creates new modes of life, that is mutually supportive and gratifying, must be seen as "artistic". In this sense, everyone would be an "artist". Some people may choose to develop art as a discipline, but everyone will be involved in revitalization.

We envision a society where the education process would no longer be isolated from the community. Work, health, education, art, science, politics, etc. would be integrated aspects of the whole, and would operate in the interest of society as a whole. We envision a society where everyone would have the means to develop talents for herself and society. No individual would develop herself at the expense of others. Time consumed by survival tasks could be shortened in a technologically advanced society. With the elimination of the profit motive, the need for ever-increasing production and sales would be eliminated. Work could become creative and exciting in a society where production existed for the people, and where work itself met the needs of individuals. People would have more chance to explore and develop new interests: status no longer would be a determinant in choosing those activities. Material consumption would cease to be a major pastime.

Under a restructured economic system, art supplies would be available to those who wished to make art.

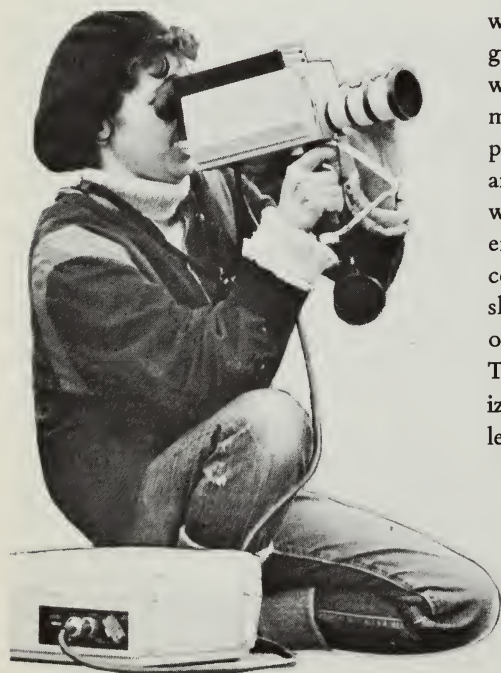
Video equipment, cameras, printing presses, etc., could be made accessible to people through community centers, which would also provide workspace. The centers could provide performance space for dance and theatrical productions, concerts, and films as well. Artistic skills and technical skills could be taught at the centers, or shared through training and information exchange workshops.

Education would no longer create and perpetuate false ideas of isolated disciplines. Rather than the competitive divisions which exist today, various disciplines would complement each other. Artists, educators and health workers would work together,

for example, in designing a happy, healthy and stimulating environment for school children.

Through the conscious merging of art with other aspects of society, we envision a greatly improved quality of life. Cities would be redesigned with priority placed on human needs. Using art and psychology, architects could develop environments which would enhance feelings of freedom and comfort. Health, safety hazards, and crime could be discouraged by new forms of building design. The idea of Muzak could be turned around by playing real music in public places and work environments.

Athletics would emphasize development of physical beauty and health over the fiercely competitive sports which are now popular. Sports such as gymnastics, skating, or swimming would be more prominent, and would make it possible for every person to participate without having to qualify and compete. Everyone has a body which she or he should be allowed and encouraged to develop. Those who excelled would be appreciated for their skill and beauty and ability to teach others, but no one would be excluded. Team sports would not be characterized by competition and physical violence but by cooperation. Yoga and



photograph by Jeb

similar disciplines could enhance our ability to work creatively and increase our sense of well-being.

Crafts, as objects of beauty and function, could be used in the home to renew a sense of contact with the products of our labor which we lost with the advent of industrial capitalism. It is not necessary, desirable, or even possible to revert to pre-industrial technology in order to experience the joy of making something for ourselves or a friend.

In a future society, art can be used as an ongoing tool to maintain and strengthen our successes. By providing us with a historical and cultural sense of continuity, a sense of connecting the past with the present with the future, it can remind us that history is a dynamic process of change. The past will remind us that we must continue to struggle for the present and the future.

Art, as part of life, will bring new dimensions to our world. It will be a celebration of our victories. Our new shared existence will be applauded through art, as it will provide a means for group and individual strength and pride. It will be a source of joy and gratification and reward. It will be a source of respect for life.



Errata:

Quest regrets the error which appeared in the response by Thelma P. Catalano, in *Critique and Commentary* (vol. I, no. 3), p. 19, last paragraph, which should read: Just as Feminist Psychotherapy can become as irrelevant for women as traditional and classi-

Footnotes

¹See Sophie Burnham, *The Art Crowd* (New York: McKay, 1973).

²See Wilson Bryan Key, *Subliminal Seduction* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973).

³Karen Kollias, "Class Realities: Create a New Power Base," *Quest*, Vol. I, No. 3, Winter, 1975 discusses this issue.

⁴See for example, Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1953) or Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1932).

⁵Groups such as Olivia Records or the Feminist Radio Network are important examples.

⁶See Charlotte Bunch, "The Reform Tool Kit," *Quest*, Vol. I, No. 1, Summer, 1974 for some criteria.

Alexa Freeman has been an activist in the Women's Movement in Washington, D.C. and is presently Design Editor of Quest.

Jackie MacMillan is a co-founder of the Feminist Alliance Against Rape and former member of the D.C. Rape Crisis Center.

cal treatment forms, without collective Feminist action, so too is it not possible to correct individual pathology without adequate professional assistance whereby women can unlearn male-defined oppressive behavior patterns, and relearn "woman-identified-woman" behavior patterns.

REFLECTIONS ON SCIENCE FICTION

AN INTERVIEW WITH

JOANNA
RUSS

The following is a Quest interview with Joanna Russ who has written three science fiction novels: Picnic on Paradise (1968), And Chaos Died (1970), and The Female Man (1975, Bantam). She has also written short fiction—both science fiction and other fiction. She has won the Science Fiction Writers of America 1972 Nebula Award for the best short story for her story, "When It Changed." She recently won the Florence Howe Criticism Award for an essay entitled "What Can A Heroine Do?" She is currently teaching creative writing and science fiction at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

Q *How did you begin writing science fiction?*

A I started writing science fiction in my last year of graduate school after three years of doing nothing but play writing for an M.F.A. from Yale Drama School. I had never written any science fiction before, but had read it since I was twelve and loved it.

Q *Why did you choose this particu-*

lar form? Did you see it as having political, social, or moral implications for contemporary life?

A. First of all, science fiction is a mode rather than a form (a form would be something like the sonnet, the short story, etc.). It is, basically, anything that is about conditions of life or existence different from either what typically is, or what typically was, or whatever was or is. It is allied to fantasy (which I also write) but is not fantasy—which incorporates as part of its pleasure the impossibility of its material. Science fiction is about the possible-but-not-real. Secondly, I do not believe that any artist (as opposed to hack) chooses a form; the form chooses the artist, if anything. I did not “choose” s.f. because I saw it as having “political, social, or moral implications for contemporary life.” I did not choose s.f. at all. I had always loved it. I read it because horror stories and s.f. seemed to me, from the age of 11-12 on, to be about real life in a way that the Classics we were assigned at school were not. Both horror stories and s.f. seem to me in many ways freer and more imaginative than “straight” fiction (although most *avant-garde* fiction has abolished the distinction between realism and fantasy, something nobody taught us in high school). Does s.f. have “moral implications? Good Lord, is there *anything* that doesn’t have moral implications? I don’t want to go into the old, idiot song-and-dance routine about s.f. being prophetic (it

isn’t) or wonderful for developing the imagination (it rarely succeeds after the first addiction wears off). . . yet I’m still addicted to it. Possibly it’s the appeal of the utterly impossible, for a truly first-rate s.f. novel would have to be a great novel, period, and in addition have to surmount the most extraordinary technical difficulties. Forty years ago those who cried out that s.f. was Good were voices crying in the wilderness. Now there are ghastly textbooks put out by Prentice-Hall.

Q *Have your ideas about the role and importance of science fiction changed?*

A. What has changed in my feelings about s.f. is the result of reading it for 25 years. So little of it really reaches the potential of the mode that reading most of it is becoming a chore. Let’s say that like a great many critics and readers I remain faithful to the ideal, but deplore most of the practice. Now that s.f. is beginning to be academically respectable, my feelings about its “role” (whatever that is) are mixed. S.f. should *ideally* be able to say more about more than other fiction.

Q *Do you view your science fiction writing as feminist? How do your feminist views affect the science fiction you write?*

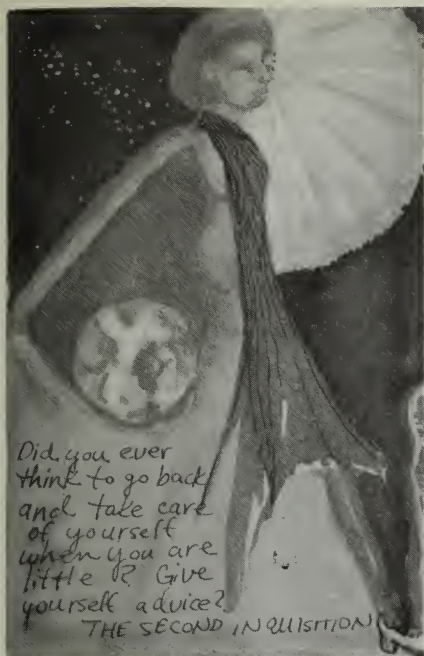
A. I am a feminist. Therefore all my writing comes from a *gestalt* or ground-of-being which includes my feminism. I say “feminism” as if it were a set of

explicable beliefs, which in part it is, but there is also a kind of basic experience of which I was aware most of my life but which did not find political expression or a vocabulary until about seven years ago. If you want to call both of these "feminist," then yes, of course my writing (all of it, including non-s.f. fiction) is feminist. And it affects what I write, just as everything else I am or have been or have experienced affects what I write. I am currently being beaten over the head in an s.f. magazine by a reviewer of *The Female Man* for just this reason. The novel has a great deal of rage in it, which discomforts not only this one reviewer, but some women who read and write s.f. The novel is even treated as a blueprint for the future, despite the fact that none of the conditions I describe in the novel exist now or probably ever will. But of course the real target is the taboo against rage, specifically rage against men. Long before I became a feminist in any explicit way, (my first reaction upon hearing Kate Millet speak in 1968 was that of course every woman *knew* that but if you ever dared to formulate it to yourself, let alone say it out loud, God would kill you with a lightning bolt) I had turned from writing love stories about women in which women were losers, and adventure stories about men in which the men were winners, to writing adventure stories about a woman in which the woman won. It was one of the hardest things I ever did in my life. These are stories about a sword-and-sorcery heroine called Alyx, and be-

fore writing the first I spent about two weeks in front of my typewriter shaking, and thinking of how I'd be stoned in the streets, accused of penis envy, and so on (after that it is obligatory to commit suicide, of course).

It was shifting my center of gravity from Him to Me and I think it's the most difficult thing an artist can do—a woman artist, that is. It's OK to write about artist-female with feet in center of own stage as long as she suffers a lot and is defeated and is wrong (the last is optional). But to win, and to express the anger that's in all of us, is a taboo almost as powerful as the taboo against being indifferent to The Man. Some criticisms I've heard about my latest novel are, for example, that there are no sympathetic male characters in it. Actually the people in it (of both sexes) are not a choice lot, objectively considered, but then I do not think it any artist's business to pretend to a false objectivity. Objectivity is for God and She's not telling. Actually the book is somewhat more complex, inasmuch as the women in it (except for Laur) are really parts of one woman, and the two men (leaving out the spear-carriers) are the extremes of sexism *as it impinges on women's lives*. The shift of sympathy is what's being complained about. There are no men portrayed sympathetically because when you are writing about what amounts to a sex war, it is *tempo rubato* to get all misty-eyed about the poor oppressor, as well as uneconomical, aesthetically speaking.

As you can see, I respond to criticism as every writer I know does: by



screaming blue murder. But it is hard to convey a distinction that I think very important: that *The Female Man* and "When It Changed" are explicitly feminist because that's what they are about, but that everything else I write must of necessity bear the imprint of the consciousness and sensibility it came from, and that is, of course feminist. I spent three years after *The Female Man* trying to get together some theory of propaganda or persuasion or social analysis in art and haven't managed yet; I only hope I built some of the difficulties and ambiguities into the novel itself, as I had tried to do.

Mind you, writing what I call propaganda is no different from writing anything else. But the specific problems (for example, the unconscious picture

writers have of the reader) are different.

In the end, *The Female Man* came over as possibly the only kind of propaganda there can be: either a celebration (to those who agree) or a construct which forces you through a certain cluster of experiences and states of mind. If you do not agree with the assumptions underlying the "portrait" of this experience, reading the book will be torture and it will make you very angry, but perhaps the only propaganda there can be for a forbidden feeling or belief or existence is simply to present it, as Rita Mae Brown and Jean Genet do. Social analysis or argument (as in Brecht, Ibsen, Shaw) is infinitely more difficult in narrative, and may do much better on stage, where the dialectic of argument is live and much easier to make compelling, or comic, or at least interesting.

To be blunt, I wrote my explicitly feminist work in the same way and out of the same motives and ground I write everything. I did not "decide" to do it. It's an attempt to get my head together—literally, in the novel, where there are at least four women with one head apiece, none of whom is a whole woman until they finally do get together...for Thanksgiving dinner. I still think that was a witty bit, you know, Thanksgiving. Hm. Anyway.

Q How important is it to emphasize female characters as strong and independent?

A The crucial question about the

feminism of a work is not whether the women in it are strong and independent (though I understand your concern perfectly, having been subjected to generations of Supersimps myself in literature) but whether the assumptions underlying the entire narrative are feminist. A sexist story can exist in which all the characters are crystalline life forms living on a planet of Betelgeuse—yes, and a racist one, too—because although the characters aren't human, the writer and readers are. What's important is who wins and who loses; a remake of *Madam Butterfly*, with lots of tears, is not a feminist piece of art, no matter who's written it and no matter what sympathy is extended to the poor victim. Many women are guilty of this kind of thing as writers. (I like to call it the Joan Didion Syndrome.) Whatever its worth as art (and I think its sentimentality inevitably vitiates it) feminism it ain't. Art is not simple.

Q. Does the women's movement need science fiction and fantasy? Do you think the women's movement has had difficulties in fantasizing, has suffered from an inability to dream?

A. May the Heavenly Couple bless me, I don't know enough about "the women's movement" *per se* to know if we should be dreaming more. The inability to dream is just what s.f. is supposed to remedy—and not like pure fantasy. No, I shouldn't say that about fantasy; fantasy is inner space. Most of what publishers call "fantasy" has been

written either by men or by women simply imitating the tradition of what already existed. There have always been some women writing s.f. but now that Marge Piercy is doing it, and there is the novel about Ishtar returning as a Bronx housewife, it does seem to be thriving. Fantasy is extremely difficult in another way, though; there is in it (as Ursula LeGuin points out, at least in the heroic-romance form) *nothing but words*.

Inability to dream—well, everybody needs to dream. It is our spiritual and moral guide. Politics certainly can't be divorced from ultimate goals or ideas about possibilities. The only difficulty I ever encountered with feminists over s.f. was several years ago in the Labyrinth Bookstore, into which I barged cheerfully (a perfect stranger) and proposed to give the woman there a list of s.f. titles. She seemed rather suspicious and probably with reason—I would imagine they'd had considerable hassling in their existence—yet I learned later they simply could not keep LeGuin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* in stock. It always sold out. I say very angry things about Ursula LeGuin quite often, but it's the anger of disappointed adoration; in some daughterly part of me I feel she's capable of writing something like *War and Peace* about women, damn it, and I keep nipping her feet to get her to do so. But *The Left Hand of Darkness* is the nearest thing we have to an androgynous vision. I would like to think that *The Female Man* is a gynandrous vision, so if you put the two into a blender (that is, into your head)

and mix well, you may end up with something. To return to your question, some of the distrust some feminists *may* have for s.f. is quite reasonable, since a great deal of s.f. is a kind of misogynist power-tripping of a very absurd and adolescent kind. And since it is s.f. and not realism, this shows far more baldly than in realistic fiction. The mode contains perhaps 100 serious, full-time writers and altogether perhaps 300 from neophyte aspirants to old professionals, so that every range of quality and content is there. A feminist who goes to the novel rack (under "s.f.") and picks at random is likely to be not only bored but genuinely insulted. I can only account for my early addiction by adducing the other, mind-expanding quality of the



s.f. works available to me, then, and the fact that, whatever its faults, s.f. does present possibilities *per se*.

Q *How do you see the relationship between the visions you have described and possibilities for political change, for example, in the different worlds you see in *The Female Man*?*

A Impossible question! Books are not blueprints. They are experiences. The worlds in *The Female Man* are not futures; they are here and now writ large. One man just wrote me a lovely fan letter in which he not only described the structure of the book with a precision that astonished me ("an inward descending spiral"); he also mentioned casually that Manland/Womanland was *here-and-now*. A flat statement of it would be that Jeannine's world is the past (but still very much present); that Janet's world is a kind of ideal (into which I put all sorts of quirky things I happen to like, like public comic statuary); and that Jael's world is here-and-now carried out to its logical extreme. Joanna keeps running from one to the other. Janet's world is the potential one, not Jael's. I've been asked why there are no men in Whileaway, and my only answer is that I tried but the Whileawayans wouldn't let me.

I can't imagine a two-sexed egalitarian society and I don't believe anyone else can, either, though Samuel Delany comes closer in *Trouble on Triton* than anything else I've ever read. Well, here you have the whole thing about s.f. Where else could one even try out such



Here is Janet from the far future, but not my
future, or yours, here are the two of you
from almost the same moment of time
(but not as you see it). —THE FEMALE MAN

visions? Yet in the end we will have to have models for the real thing and I can find none yet, and that is why Whileaway is single-sexed. So is Gethen in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, really.

Q. *What should women science fiction writers be doing?*


A. Why, writing s.f., of course. Obviously work which deals with sexism and feminism will have an effect on feminism, on anti-feminism, and (one would think) on all its readers. The effect could easily be reactionary; there seems to have been a mini-upsurge in anti-feminist s.f., some quite naive—for example, John Boyd's "Pollinators of Eden" in which a frigid female biologist is converted to love and orgasm by making it with a giant sentient orchid. She later gives birth to a pod. (I have never been able to figure out quite how serious Boyd's work is, by the way. Yes, I know it's intended to be funny, but *how* funny?) Or even his *Sex and the High Command*, an extremely sexist book in which women win the sex war and exterminate men. That's what I mean about carefully watching a book's *assumptions*, not just its obvious statements. You don't have to "mean" sexism; all you have to do is remain comfortable and unthinking, if you're male.

By the way, James Blish says he invented the words "hard science" to mean *correct* science, as in "hard copy." Popular usage—"hard" means the masculine range of physics, chemistry, astronomy, engineering, and "soft"

means the social sciences—is as neat an example of sexist language as I have ever heard. Phallus worship invades the domain of Sacred Reason. Even "hard" to indicate "correct" or "precise" suggests the same thing. (I prefer "winged" myself.)

To be female or feminine or inaccurate or sloppy is to be "soft". Sexual excitement makes women physically mushy and probably does the same to their minds, if they ever had any. All of Western history (and probably Asiatic, too) is in that pair of words! The horrors of the swamp, the split between mind and body, between power and emotion. Oh dear.

This is the effect of reading sex war books written by men. In one of them God invents a specific form of syphilis (which doesn't show up on a Wasser-



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mann test) to give 5000 insurgent American businesswomen (who have masculinized themselves via androgens because they can't get raises and promotions any other way, and who immediately do take over American business, since they are far more intelligent than their male colleagues) terminal paresis. Well, *that* one dates back to the 'teens.' The frequency with which these books drag in God or "love" (woman falls on knees, melts—see, "soft"—confesses sins, licks toesies, is converted) suggests to me that men are very uneasy about being able even to hold their own without divine intervention.

Q. What has been the role of women and feminism in science fiction writing?

A. Women have been in the minority in s.f. from the beginning (if you characterize the beginning as the 1920's or as the Wells/Verne period). This is hardly surprising. The only literary genre in which women have reached anything like a substantial number of writers working is in the detective story. I don't know why. Perhaps 1920's s.f., with its emphasis on pulp, he-man adventure and (later) on the "hard" sciences which were assumed to be a closed book to women, simply did not attract women writers. There were always some, though to my sloppy historical memory, they wrote either (generally) adventure stories about he-men or sexless stories about phenomena in engineering or strange gim-

micks/inventions, just as the men did. There have been a few sentimental ladies' magazine story writers and stories. Pulp fiction was not a place for any artist; the assumption was that the product was (within limits) standard and that one ought not to be able to tell a man's work from a woman's. . . as if Dickens ought to sound like Thackeray and both of them be indistinguishable from Tolstoy, on the grounds that little things like a writer's era or nationality ought not to "show"! This commercial attitude still persists. After all, you can't tell from the kleenex box whether the assembly line was staffed by women or men, so why should a story be different?

Women are still in the minority. In 1973 the membership of the Science Fiction Writers of America was, roughly, two women to eleven men. However, the women have been winning a disproportionate number of the prizes given in the field. This suggests to me that (as in many other fields) women s.f. writers are more rigorously self-selected than the men.

Q. Can women science fiction writers play a political role in the field of science fiction and within the women's movement?

A. Of course they can have a political role within science fiction—if you mean by this, the internal politics of the field. It is happening now. One young man has started "The Pig Runner's Digest" to flout and attack sexism (and its more easily-spottable symp-

tom, misogyny) in s.f. Equal pay is another matter—*everybody* is poor and publishers generally print any novel that holds together (as long as they can underpay you for it). On the other hand, I have heard stories of “Oh, we can’t print that; women s.f. writers don’t sell,” and so on. As in any free-lance field where the machines are always hungry for cotton to be woven, nobody cares who picks it. At least I hope so. If things get much more lucrative, they may change. Then again I am in no position to be told to my face that X won’t print my novel because I’m female. Or because the novel is feminist. Or it scared the hell out of the senior editor.

Within the women’s movement, certainly women s.f. writers can provide spiritual nutriment and visions and (probably) annoyance and everything else to women’s movement readers. That is, as writers. As private citizens they can do all sorts of things, obviously. Some women s.f. writers will undoubtedly continue to write about Superduperman (but even there he will be more likely to have a stubborn “girl side-kick”) and some won’t. The new-generation of s.f. writers of both sexes is largely a generation trained primarily in literature, not science (or science only secondarily), and since the concerns of science fiction are shifting from “hard” science to social structures and psychology/anthropology, it is easier for women (since most women are not trained in science) to enter s.f. What I would like to see, for the health of feminism and the health

of s.f., is an influx of new women writers.

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witch is to womon as womb is to birth

by Z. Budapest

graphics by Carol Clement

Edited by Annie Doczi

Feminist witches are wimmin* who search within themselves for the female principle of the universe and who relate as daughters to the Creatrix.

We believe that just as it is time to fight for the right to control our bodies, it is also time to fight for our sweet womon souls.

We believe that in order to fight and win a revolution that will stretch for generations into the future, we must find reliable ways to replenish our energies. We believe that without a secure grounding in womon's spiritual strength

there will be no victory for us.

We believe that we are part of a changing universal consciousness that has long been feared and prophesized by the patriarchs.

We believe that Goddess-consciousness gave humanity a workable, long-lasting, peaceful period during which the Earth was treated as Mother and wimmin were treated as Her priestesses. This was the mythical Golden Age of Matriarchy.

We believe that wimmin lost supremacy through the aggressions of males who were exiled from the matriarchies and formed the patriarchal hordes responsible for the invention of rape and

**The word "women" has been spelled differently to separate it from the male derivative, wo - men.*

the subjugation of wimmin.

We believe that female control of the death (male) principle yields hummin evolution.

We are committed to living life lovingly towards ourselves and our sisters. We are committed to joy, self-love, and life-affirmation.

We are committed to defending our interests and those of our sisters through the knowledge of witchcraft: to blessing, to cursing, to healing, and to binding with power rooted in womon-identified wisdom.

We are opposed to attacking the innocent.

We are equally committed to communal and personal solutions.

We are committed to teaching wimmin how to organize themselves as witches and to sharing our traditions with wimmin.

We are opposed to teaching our magic and our craft to men.

Our immediate goal is to congregate with each other according to our ancient womon-made laws and remember our past, renew our powers and affirm our Goddess of the Ten-thousand Names.

Wimmin's Religion

What people believe (faith-religion) is political because it influences their actions and because it is the vehicle by which a religion perpetuates a social system.

Every new social structure strives to come up with some kind of mythology of divine origin for its values and

aims. The mythology is passed on for generations, and often, its validity goes unquestioned for centuries. For example, a self-created male god who has no mother is a totally unsupportable concept. It is, to say the least, not supernatural but merely unnatural. Nothing in nature parallels, let alone substantiates, such an absurdity. Everything, even a star, originates somewhere—every creature in the world has a mother force. To deny motherhood is to deny wimmin. Patriarchal religion is built on this denial which is, curiously, its only original thought—the rest of the edifice being ripped-off stone by stone from the Old Faith.

Once patriarchal christianity became the dominant western religion, witches sugar-coated their magic with token christianity and, safely disguised (if seriously oppressed), continued to worship according to their ancient ways. Who absorbs whose culture is a crucial issue on the cultural battlefield.

In the time of the matriarchies, the Craft of Wimmin was common knowledge. It was rich in knowledge of how to live on this planet, of how to love and fight and stay healthy, and especially, of how to learn to learn. The remnants of the wisdom of that Golden Age constitute the body of what we call 'witchcraft' today. The massive remainder of that knowledge is buried within ourselves, in our deep minds, in our genes. In order to recall this knowledge, we have to open ourselves to psychic experiences in the safety of feminist witches covens. Completing the process of reclamation will take



years and probably several more waves of feminism. But we have begun.

Wimmin's religion will not, in any way, be similar to patriarchal churches. There will be no separation of clergy

from people. There will be no separation of body and soul. The individual groves of witches will decide their own governing processes in council. We will be able to satisfy our needs for rituals

without having to turn to male institutions. For example, we have already resurrected a woman-identified ritual called 'holy tryst' as a substitute for marriage. Recognizing that people will always need to ritualize deep feelings, we 'tryst' women who want to get married. The word 'tryst' means 'trust' and the lovers are pronounced 'lovers in trust.' We also do 'naming festivals' instead of *christenings*, and this ritual, like the tryst, is based on knowledge that pre-dates the patriarchy.

We are learning a different attitude towards death. Witches view death as a journey into another life. We wear white at death (not black), symbolizing the white light of the soul. The priestesses of Hecate (death aspect of the Goddess) bury the bodies of beloveds by land or by fire without causing the departing soul the agony of leaving her loved ones behind in a state of lonely grief. The departed soul is assured safety and unutterable peace in the Goddess.

New trust is the most important contribution women's spirituality can make to the women's movement. We learned we can trust our bodies when we learned we had a right to control them. We are learning we can trust our souls through learning that our right to have them is rooted in our recognition of the Goddess, of the female principle within the universe.

The World Of The Occult And The Feminist Witch

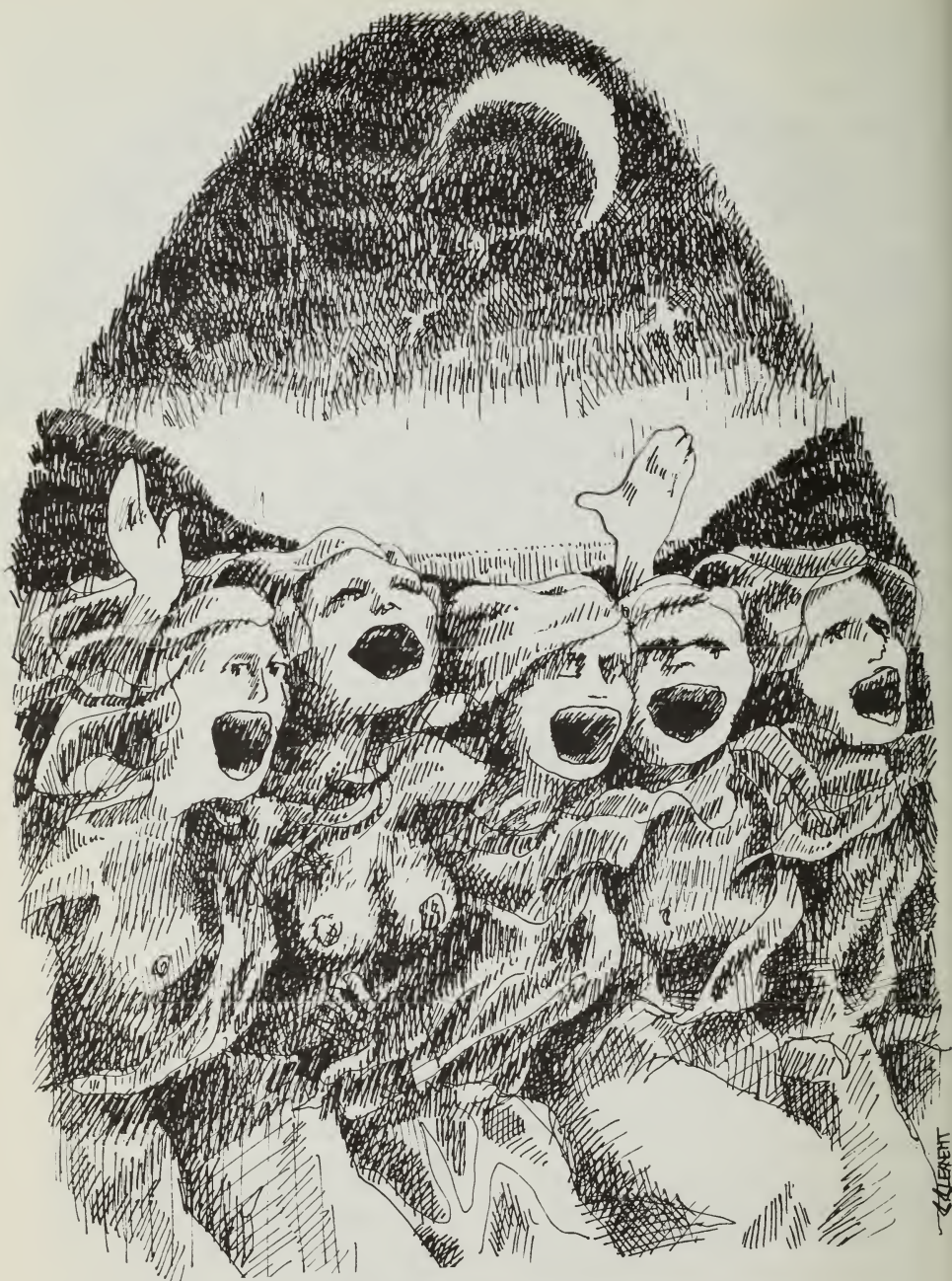
One would think that witches are a

different breed altogether—the old-time subversives and rebels. Yet it is interesting, although sad, that many witches are threatened by this new brand of the craft-political feminist witchcraft. Traditional witches, like their citizen counterparts, fall victim to the illusion that they can exist within this sexist, racist society and escape it. They think politics should be different from religion; they don't have the sense of history and the far-sightedness to see that politics and religion are inter-related to the point of being inter-dependent.

When we opened our store, "The Feminist Wicca," witches showed up just to heckle, or at least debate, how we could possibly envision ourselves as truly practicing witchcraft since we didn't involve any males. One woman in black traditional robes and an 'ank' as large as a fist, announced at the Annual Witches and Warlocks Convention in Los Angeles, "I don't want to have anything to do with politics, and especially not with feminism."

Naturally, the feminist witch is not at all welcome in the male-dominated multi-million dollar business that constitutes the occult world of the 20th century.

"The movement is using the Goddess," accused one high priestess. Our response is that the Great Goddess is using the movement to bring back Her worship and the memory of Her daughters—the witches and the amazons. This is indicated by the way many separate groves relating to the Goddess are springing up without any formal or-



Available as a poster. Write in care of the Feminist Wicca.

ganizational effort. This organic spread of the Old Faith is precisely what we pray for at Sabbats and it seems the Lady is getting into organizing because we're all coming out of the spiritual closet to find our spiritual sisters.

The Susan B. Anthony Coven No. 1

The Coven started in 1971 on December 21st, Lucina's night—time of the celebration of the borning light. The six like-minded sisters gathered together in a small Hollywood apartment never dreamed that within five years the largest grove on the West Coast would grow out of their meeting.

The structure for which we are striving was suggested by the Amazon nations (for whom it worked rather well). A trinity of wimmin coordinate the coven—they volunteer, or are elected, or are selected, or some combination of the above. The Mother of the Coven is in charge of the political direction of the Coven and is responsible for upholding high feminist ethics and being a friend to all in the Coven. The Maiden of the Coven is responsible for the protection of the Coveners; all spells concerning attack and self-defense are discussed with her; and she holds the list of spells to be worked on during ceremonies. The Nymph of the Coven insures that the Coven plays—she gathers the entertainment, makes sure the cakes and wine get to the altar and that a good time is had by all. In this way, all the power and responsibility does not rest on one woman, but is shared.

We have healers, seers, and prophetic dreamers among us. Some of us can knock out electricity within five blocks, others can shatter glass, others can pick up messages from afar. All these talents lay repressed and dormant until consciousness was raised about wimmin as the natural psychics of the world. We don't know quite where all this is leading, but we seem to be doing something (if not everything) right.

The essence of the Craft is the celebration of Woman, and sexuality is considered the prime expression of the life force.

We are in the process of organizing a sect of Aphrodite. We envision it as being a closed circle of 13 wimmin who would attempt to follow in the footsteps of the ancient wimmin who created the Great Fite. The energy raised in this circle could be used to request important favors from the Goddess—revolutionary or personal. It also simply could be considered a fine time shared with the life force.

Potentially, circles like this could help to feed wimmin whose lives are sexually and/or spiritually starved—without a contingent stigma or strain of coupledness or sexual commitment. Within the circle we will transcend and unite with each other and the Goddess. After the ritual, wimmin would return to the world re-energized. Presumably, shared pleasure will enrich rather than diminish sisterhood and wimmin will relate to each other better after this experience.

Underlying this Great Rite is the hope of alleviating the jealousies and

horizontal hostilities that have already crippled many activists *and* the belief that sexuality and sensuality are instincts that we will cut our revolutionary throats on, if they are not satisfied.

Survival

Resurrecting the spirituality of wimmin means recreating jobs we used to have, as well as creating new jobs. When the energy crunch hit us in Los Angeles, we stopped going halfway across the city for our herbs and incenses and opened our own store where we hoped to serve the wimmin and witches of our part of town. This store (the Feminist Wicca) has developed into a modest source of income that allows the four wimmin in the F.W. Collective to develop their talents and get paid for it. Ideally, there could be Feminist Wicca stores across the country.

There are many potential jobs related to the Craft. We need more herb-wimmin to heal our bodies naturally. Just looking around, we know wimmin who can cure by touch, by astral massage, by foot reflexology, by healing massage—and just looking around, we can see that there is a need for more of these wimmin. Soul-healers, like radical feminist therapists, belong in the witchcraft category because they help mend wimmin's souls. Priestessing itself will have to become a full-time, self-supporting occupation, as it was in the old days. Developing covensteads (land owned by witches) could be yet


another source of some economic stability—the land could be used for both recreation and sustenance—in any case. it is not unlikely that wimmin owning land will become crucial in the near future.

By developing our spirituality, our mythology, and our rituals, we are going to give birth to new kinds of jobs, needs, inspirations, arts, and inventions. We gave birth to today's society long ago and we can re-make tomorrow's society by re-making ourselves. Bold witches are needed to experiment with their powers and share what they find. Wimmin seers, uppity wimmin, wimmin with a sense of heritage and political analysis are needed to change the image of witches and re-energize the male-dominated masses of wimmin.

We were advised and supported by our sister witches in the Feminist Book of Lights and Shadows Collective.

Z. Budapest is a Hungarian born feminist and witch who in January, 1975, helped to found the first present day feminist church to the Goddess and for women only. Z. was arrested in Los Angeles on Feb. 10 for fortune-telling and found guilty of divination. She is now appealing her case and plans, if need be, to take it to the Supreme Court. Donations toward her legal fight or to the church can be sent to: Woman Soul Defense Fund, 442 Lincoln Blvd. Venice, Ca. 90291.

the illusion of androgyny



by Janice Raymond

graphics by Bethia Stone

Those of us who have written about androgyny—in an attempt to talk about the depths of the feminist vision or to get at what it is that lies beyond the superficial lingo of, for example, “equal pay for equal work,” have had very serious second thoughts on the matter. Not that the vision we were and are

trying to talk about is any less real, but that the use of a word like androgyny to describe the process and the end in view adequately describes neither. Etymologically, historically, and philosophically, androgyny presents many problems that were not so evident at first glance.



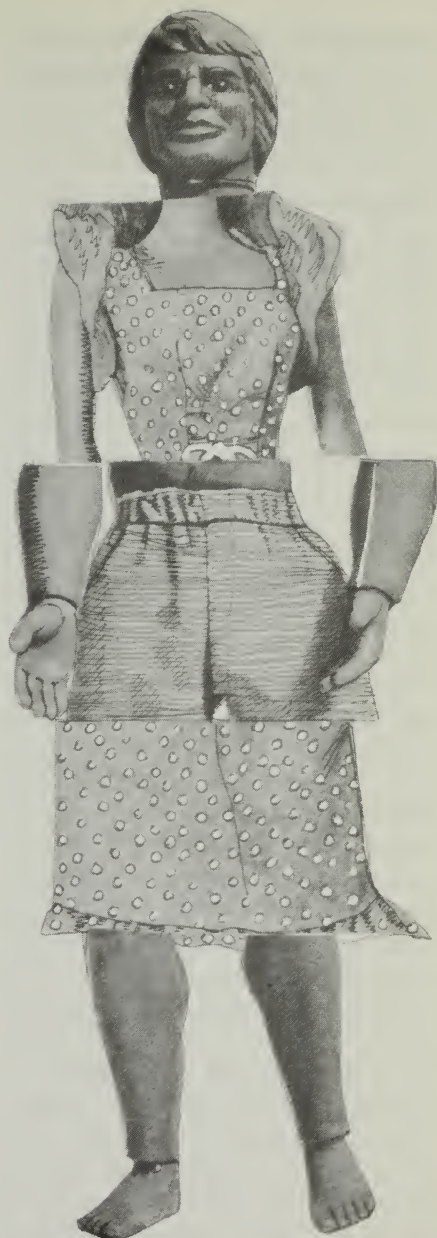
The etymology of the word, coming from the Greek *aner* and *gyne* (with the masculine classically coming first), gives the impression that if you put the archetypal masculine and feminine together, you will somehow arrive at an adequate whole which just happens to be formed from two inadequate halves. As Mary Daly has phrased it, androgyny connotes "scotch-taping John Wayne and Brigitte Bardot together." Further evidence of this pseudo-organicism can be noted when perusing dictionary definitions of androgyny. Some dictionaries talk about the meaning of androgyny in terms of plant hybrids or in terms of human hybrids.¹ In the latter case, androgyny becomes synonymous with physical hermaphroditism. Nor is the term gynandry adequate. Although the female root comes first here, the primary image is one of the sexual sphinx.

In appearance, the words androgyny and androgen are quite similar. In fact, androgyny is sometimes spelled as androgeny. Thus to speak of androgynizing humanity comes dangerously close to literally androgenizing humanity. An androgenous humanity is no mere pun in light of some of the more recent works on sex dif-

ferences that have unfortunately enjoyed wide acceptance among feminists. I refer here specifically to the writings of John Money. In their most recent work, *Man & Woman, Boy & Girl*, John Money and Anke Ehrhardt talk about what they call "fetal androgenization," making connections between fetal androgenization and "tomboyism," the latter being "a sequel to a masculinizing effect on the fetal brain."² Fetally androgenized females not only develop physical male characteristics (perhaps an enlarged clitoris or excessive body hair) but also have the propensity to develop psycho-social conditioned masculine behavior.

*The most likely hypothesis to explain the various features of tomboyism is a sequel to a masculinizing effect on the fetal brain. This masculinization may apply specifically to pathways, most probably in the limbic system or paleocortex, that mediate dominance assertion (possibly in association with assertion of exploratory and territorial rights) and, therefore, manifests itself in competitive energy expenditure.*³

Androgenization is seen to cause not only biological androgynization (hermaphroditism) but also psycho-social androgynization (tomboyism, etc.).



Money and Ehrhardt are quick to point out that no corresponding *estrogenization* is responsible for a normal biological female differentiation, much less for a so-called "feminized" male, biologically or psycho-socially speaking. "...the antithesis of androgen is not estrogen, but nothing. . .feminine differentiation requires only the absence of androgen. It does not require the presence of a feminizing substance."⁴ What Money and Ehrhardt are actually re-iterating here, in more sophisticated pseudo-scientific terminology, is Aristotelian/Thomistic biology. Once more, the male comes to be seen as the active power of generation and the female as the passive power, or worse, as the totally non-effecting power (read, non-power). And once more the female comes to be seen as a "defective male," this time not due to a moisture in the south wind at the time of conception,⁵ but due to the absence of androgen. Furthermore, it is the presence or absence of androgen in Money and Ehrhardt that becomes directive for both physical and psycho-social androgyny. Androgen becomes normative for androgyny.

Similar androgenizing processes have functioned on a mytho-metaphorical level in the historical and theological/philosophical literature that has dealt with androgynous themes. For example, much of the Gnostic literature stresses androgyny as a salvation theme. In the Gospel of Thomas especially, only when the "two become one," "when you make the male and the female (not) be female,"⁶ will salvation and

the Kingdom of God be attained. In order for androgyny to be attained in the woman, she must first make herself male. "For every woman who makes herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven."⁷ No such comparable process is necessary for men to attain androgynous actualization.

Thus the male has a direct route to androgynous being; the female must first of all become male. This hierarchical androgenization of woman is not peculiar to the Gnostic literature alone. It also forms part of the androgynous theme in Plato, the Kabbalah, and in the Renaissance mystics.

The split-level hybrid model of androgyny also prevails in current literature on the topic. The prevailing notion of androgyny in Carolyn Heilbrun's work, *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* is, as the book jacket acknowledges, that of "...the realization of man in woman and woman in man. . ." Heilbrun is in good company here. Unfortunately even the brilliant Virginia Woolf had a similar notion of androgyny in *A Room of One's Own*. She wrote:

And I went on amateurishly to sketch a plan of the soul so that in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man's brain, the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain, the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating. If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must

have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. . . It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its facilities.⁸

Likewise, Betty Roszak has a hybrid model of androgyny. In an essay entitled "The Human Continuum" which takes great pains to stress that if we even "think of ourselves as 'a woman' or 'a man' we are already participating in a fantasy of language,"⁹ Roszak concludes with these words: "Perhaps with the overcoming of women's oppression, the woman in man will be allowed to emerge."¹⁰

Obviously, Heilbrun, Woolf, and Roszak are each attempting to describe a future vision that will push us beyond stereotyped definitions and requirements of masculinity and femininity. Yet it also ought to be obvious that if this is the desired goal, then we cannot use the language of oppression nor incorporate oppressive definitions of the self into a non-oppressive ideal of the same self. For in reality the language and imagery of androgyny is the language of dominance and servitude combined. One would not put master and slave language or imagery together to define a free person. Therefore, any serious effort to describe an androgynous ideal must take issue with Heilbrun's assertion that "...so wedded are we to the conventional definitions of 'masculine' and 'feminine' that it is impossible to write about androgyny without using these terms in their accepted, received sense."¹¹ Heilbrun

fails to perceive here the eminent co-optability of this kind of language.

Androgyny as Co-optation

Co-optation forms another critical theme in the discussion of androgyny. It is not only a word that lends itself to co-optation but the vision it attempts to describe is equally susceptible to co-optation. The grossest example of this kind of co-optation appeared in *Ramparts*, December, 1973. Here androgyny was identified with what was called "The Third Sex." This "new androgyny" was supposedly freed by the technological culture. This freeing, together with "the deep exploration of our psyches by acid and meditation," gave us entrance into exploring "our true and androgynous natures, the anima and animus, both of which we all possess. Men are coming to realize their feminine side and women are "excavating their masculine identities."¹² As models for the "new androgyny," James Nolan gives us the "pansexual rock images" of David Bowie, Janis Joplin, Mick Jagger and Bette Midler. "David and Mick and Janis and Bette: consider the possibilities."

A fuller notion of the "Third Sex" emerges, "fertilized" by Women's and Gay Liberation, "both of which began with strains of either man-hating or woman-hating," according to the author, James Nolan.

It seemed for a while that Women's Liberation, for all the deep-seated misanthropy it generated, was becoming

with a lot of pushy verbalizing and hard-edged power struggling, a caricature of the very masculine traits which the woman despised. Gay Liberationation, with its indigenous misogyny, had taken to playing house in the superficial deco-parlor on narcissism and taste, a realm traditionally ruled over by the very women the gay mentality found so ludicrous. But perhaps these two militant liberation movements were just awkward and adolescent phases we all had to pass through, pimply and self-conscious and blatantly extreme, to arrive at a more whole type of sexual identity: a way of seeing how the other half (of ourselves) lives.¹³

So here we have the ultimate co-optation of the Women's Movement as an "adolescent stage," which we have already passed through. Androgyny becomes the great leap forward, a synonym for an easily accessible human liberation that turns out to be sexual liberation—a state of being that men can enter as easily as women through the "cheap grace" of the "wider" countercultural revolution. What androgyny comes to mean here, in fact, is sexual revolution, phrased in the language of "The Third Sex." Here women are handed a "mess of porridge for our birthright." Sex (fucking), not power, becomes the basic foundation of liberation.

Given the difficulties with the word, its eminent susceptibility to being co-opted, and what we might call the prematurity of it as a vision, is it valid to even try to talk about whatever it is

we want to mean when we use the word androgyny? I would answer in the affirmative here, but only if one is fully aware of the afore-mentioned dangers and corruptions.

A Vision of "Integrity"

It is difficult to know what else to call this vision, if we discard the unsatisfactory term androgyny. However, perhaps we have tried to *name* it prematurely. Therefore, as a transition word, and lacking a better term at the moment, I will hereinafter refer to whatever it is we want to mean when we use the word androgyny by the term "integrity." My choice of the word integrity is a deliberately cautious one and needs some explanation. First of all, it is an attempt to choose a word which avoids the pitfalls of pseudo-organic connotation. Originally, I thought of using "wholeness" or even "integration." But both connote putting something together to achieve a desired transformation. There are, however, various and subtle meanings of the word "integrity" which render it a more adequate term to express a meaningful vision of what many of us previously wanted androgyny to convey.

In comparison to the word "integration," which is defined as "the making up or composition of a whole by *adding together* or *combining* the *separate parts* or elements. . ." and in comparison to the word "integrate," which is defined as to *complete* or *perfect* (*what is imperfect*) by the addition of the necessary parts" (italics



mine), integrity is defined primarily in the following way: "The condition of having no part or element taken away or wanting; undivided or unbroken state. . . something undivided; an integral whole. . . The condition of not being marred or violated; unimpaired or uncorrupted condition; original perfect state; soundness." Integration gives a certain validity to the parts themselves and to an addition process of putting these parts together. In contrast, integrity reverses this connotation and validates an original unity from which no part may be taken. Integrity gives us a warrant for laying claim to a wholeness that is rightfully ours to begin with and from which centuries of patriarchal socialization to sexual roles and stereotyping has detracted. An intuition of integrity in this sense is characteristic of the texture of being (becoming) and prior to cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity. It is an "original" state of being before the "fall" of patriarchy, an original state that does not reside in a static historical past as original or primal conditions are prone to do, but which resides rather in the intuitive wanderings of a mytho-historical past which has the potentiality of generating for all of us a future vision of becoming, beyond a gender-defined society.

A Process Towards the Future

Finally, I think it is only valid to talk about a vision of integrity if one talks about how one gets there, given our present point in history. Here I

take Cynthia Secor's point very seriously when she states: "...my objection to the term androgyny is a goal without any blueprint for getting there; a kind of moral imperative without any strategic direction."¹⁴ What follows is certainly not a blueprint, but it is at least an intimation of a process which is presently on-going; for "the future is now."

First of all, we cannot talk about integrity without talking about what Emily Culpepper has termed "gynergy." Gynergy is the woman power/spirit/strength that is building up in "women identified women." There is no shortcut to integrity without what I would want to call a prior intuition of gynergy. In a previous article, I wrote about an intuition of androgyny.¹⁵ I see more clearly now that what I was more adequately describing was an intuition of gynergy. Various philosophers, most notably Jacques Maritain, have written about the intuition of being, and what I am now calling an intuition of gynergy takes its starting point in this ontological process. Gynergy, at its depth, is a question of the power of being.

When discussing the intuition of being, Maritain emphasized that modern existentialism had cut off the more primary concept of being (*ens*, or that which exists or whose act is to exist) from the concept of existence. That is, it had isolated the concept of being from that of existence. When this intuition occurs, one suddenly realizes that a given entity exists and exercises its highest activity of being in its own

way which is total and totally self-assertive.

In a critical sense, Maritain's conception of the intuition of being is too individualized and thus loses its social impact and minimizes the issue of power. In contrast I would say that the intuition of gynergy that is being described here takes *power* very seriously and has a definite social emphasis. In origin, it proceeds not only from an individual woman's realization of her own power of being but from a collective consciousness, i.e., a feminist collective consciousness of nonbeing and of being. It therefore has a fundamental social, as well as individual direction. Being is partly known from nonbeing, and women are now beginning to realize and act on the nonbeing we have been conditioned to. At its most destructive level (which paradoxically is the beginning point of liberation), oppression is an inundative intuition of nonbeing. As Tillich has stated, "The question of being is produced by the shock of our stunted personhood and lack of power.

Women have been first to recognize this basic stunting and sexual alienation, because we have felt most heavily the weight of its oppression. Sexual alienation has also been destructive to men but there are profound differences in our respective degrees and manifestations of oppression. Few, if any, men have had the shock of nonbeing that women have experienced in coming to realize a consciousness of sexual oppression. And, until men perceive the basic nonbeing that an oppressor is im-

mersed in, they will continue to enjoy the benefits of sexual oppression and alienation. If and when this realization for men ever occurs, it will "complete" the intuition of gynergy, *not* in the sense of "balancing" gynergy of the "andergy" (Goddess knows we have enough male negative energy dominating the planet), but in the sense of men becoming woman-identified. Thus an authentic andergy would be *rooted* in *gynergy* or have its source in *gynergy*. If and when this identification occurs, we might well begin to talk about an intuition of integrity. Obviously this means very different things for men than for women. It would probably mean relinquishing male-privileged power, prestige, status, and goods. It would mean a lot of other things also, but it is up to men who think they have a glimpse of gynergy to figure out what this can mean for their own lives.

One thing it would definitely mean would be the acceptance of some form of separatism. Thus, we cannot talk about integrity without talking about separation. There is no way to move toward integrity without political polarization between women and men, a polarization that may separate us in every sphere of human activity from the conference room to the bedroom. To deny this would be to say you can have meaningful integrity and transformation without conflict and vindication. As stated before, integrity without polarization would be just another form of "cheap grace." Integrity is not simply a matter of men and women coming together (no pun in-

tended). It is not simply a matter of powerless women and powerful men "dialoguing" about the possibilities of the intuition of integrity. This kind of answer trivializes the whole issue of power and short-circuits the necessity for gynergy to manifest itself among women. It is this notion of integrity that enables people like James Nolan to brand feminism as an "awkward and adolescent phase we all had to pass through, pimply and self-conscious and blatantly extreme, to arrive at a more whole type of sexual identity." It is this notion of integrity which sees pseudo-organism as the essence of liberation, and polarized struggle as its aberration. It is this notion of integrity which directs women once again to others instead of to ourselves. And it is this notion of integrity which makes men the ultimate beneficiaries of feminist struggle without really having to struggle themselves. Women need this integrity discovered separately. We have little sense of ourselves as selves, much less as a people who have named who we are and who we want to be. Gynergy resulting from separatism is calling us into existence.

In the final analysis, gynergy is a process opening us to an, as yet, unknown future. It is an open teleology. Goal-talk seems to have an inability to grasp the notion of infinity and at some point insists upon closing the circle. Integrity is an unfolding process of becoming. It contains within itself an insatiable generativeness, that is, a compulsion to reproduce itself in ever-diverse fashion. Its generativeness is

that of insufficiency striving consciously for richer and more varied being, the fullness of which is always the quest. Ultimately, integrity is perhaps best described as a quest for transcendence.

Footnotes

¹See for example, the listings "Androgynous," and "Androgyny" in *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*.

²John Money and Anke Ehrhardt, *Man & Woman, Boy & Girl*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), p. 103.

³*Idem*.

⁴*Ibid*, pp. 60, 63-64.

⁵*Summa Theologiae*, I, 92, I, ad I.

⁶*Logion* 22: pl. 85, vs. 20-31.

⁷*Logion* 114, pl. 99, vs. 18-26.

⁸Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1929), p. 102.

⁹Betty Roszak, "The Human Continuum" in Betty Roszak and Theodore Roszak, *Masculine/Feminine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 304.

¹⁰*Ibid*, p. 306.

¹¹Carolyn Heilburn, *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1973), p. xv.

¹²James Nolan, "The Third Sex." *Ramparts*, December, 1973, p. 24.

¹³*Ibid*, p. 25.

¹⁴Cynthia Secor, Address to the Modern Language Association Forum, December, 1973.

¹⁵cf. Janice Raymond, "Beyond Male Morality" in *Women and Religion*, Revised Edition ed. by Judith Plaskow and Joan Arnold Romero (Missoula, Montana: The Scholars' Press, 1974) pp. 115-25.

Janice Raymond will soon hold a women's studies/Medical Ethics position in the Women's Studies Program of the five college consortium in Amherst, Mass.

Matriarchy and Power

by
*Esther Newton
and
Paula Webster*

This article is excerpted from "Matriarchy: As Women See It" by Esther Newton and Paula Webster, published by Aphra Magazine (Vol. IV, No. 3), a feminist literary publication. It is available in its entirety from Aphra Magazine, Box 893, Ansonia Station, New York, New York, 10023, for \$1.50 per copy. A one year subscription is \$4.50.

Why bring up the matriarchy controversy at all? Isn't the notion of a matriarchal stage in social history dead and buried with the nineteenth century? Both of us had accepted without question that males had always been dominant, that even in matrilineal systems this was so.

The only literature within anthropology which questions the existence of universal male domination, and therefore implicitly assumes the possibility of a different kind of society, is the nineteenth century work of Engels and Bachofen which claimed that matriarchies had preceded the patriarchies at some period of prehistory. Although the evidence of prehistory does not rule out matriarchal societies, it certainly does not demonstrate that they existed, and in the face of world-wide patriarchies of today, there is no strong reason to suppose that things were ever different. Nor has the claim held up that matrilineal societies (in which kin groups, property holding, and inherit-

ance are organized around or through) women represent vestiges of ancient matriarchal societies.

Feminists have already begun to re-view Bachofen and Engels: a number of papers and books have come out recently. Some of these reassert the existence of matriarchy, modify the original theories or build on them, and forward new evidence. From this literature of claims and disclaims, all by women, certain key issues emerge. The most interesting of these is that feminists who were claiming the existence of a golden age in which women had power and/or were not oppressed (we say golden age because not all of them accept the term matriarchy) did not visualize it as the mirror opposite of patriarchy. We had been thinking of patriarchy as a social system in which men, as a class or group, were dominant over women as a class or group. That is, what we have today in America, and what we see in all present day societies, whether or not they are patrilineal. In other words, for us, patriarchy = male dominance. We expected that matriarchy = female dominance. But even where the author unequivocally postulated a system based on female dominance, the system was seen based on different *principles* from the male dominated systems we know. In other words, there was no general agreement on what the word matriarchy meant, while at the same time it was often used to mean something quite different from the reverse of patriarchy.

For us, the matriarchy controversy raises some very essential issues about our present condition and our future in a way that cannot be easily dismissed because it is visionary. The controversy goes far beyond a narrow academic haggle over the origins of social institutions into the very pressing problems that feminists are facing today. Whatever else the idea of matriarchy is, it is most compellingly an idea about what a society would look like in which women would truly be free. We have been so powerless that the effort to imagine ourselves *with* power is a critical exercise.

Five of our authors, none of whom are anthropologists, assert that matriarchy once existed (de Beauvoir, Reed, Firestone, Davis and Diner). The three anthropologists deny that matriarchy *ever* existed. What kind of society are they talking about? When we boiled down the various definitions we found there were two types, a dominance matriarchy and an equality matriarchy.

Logically, we thought, matriarchy should mean the power of women, as a group, over men, i.e., female dominance. But only two of the authors claim that women were dominant in matriarchy (Davis and Diner). The other three who use the term—Reed, Firestone, and de Beauvoir—do not describe a society in which women had power over men, but rather a social order in which women's *position* or *status* was "more equal," where women were "highly esteemed." In many

cases we couldn't even tell whether the author meant "more equal/influential/esteemed than they are now" or "more equal/influential/esteemed than men." To add to the difficulty, nearly all authors see the matriarchy as influence or power of *mothers*, while patriarchy has come to mean power of *men*. We think the definitional vagueness comes not only from basic theoretical disagreements, but also from anxiety about saying that woman might have had power (much less that they had power *over* men).

One of the authors, Leacock, defines matriarchy as a society in which women would hold power over men, and denies that such a society ever existed. Nevertheless, she believes that under prehistoric conditions of hunting/gathering and horticulture, there existed egalitarian societies: *The significant point for women's status is that the household was communal, and the division of labor between the sexes reciprocal; the economy did not involve the dependence of the wife and child-*

ren on the husband. . .since in primitive communal society decisions were made by those who would be carrying them out, the participation of women in a major share of socially necessary labor did not reduce them to virtual slavery, as is the case in class society, but accorded them decision-making powers commensurate with their contribution.

Leacock speculates that these primitive communal societies were very likely matrilineal, so that Engels' matriarchy should be read as matrilineal. Leacock never says that women held power as a group, or that they had authority and legitimacy even equal to men. Presumably in the communal society they had no need for them.

Evelyn Reed, whose thought is based on Engels, with some anthropological data mixed in, vigorously defends the notion that matriarchies existed. When you examine her argument she is describing almost exactly the same primitive communal society (which was matrilineal) as Leacock. So



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actually the same claim is being made, although Leacock denies and Reed affirms the existence of primitive matriarchy.

Therefore, of our eight authors, two affirm matriarchy defined as class power (Davis and Diner), while four accept matriarchy only if defined as a stage of equality with harmony between the sexes, some kind of classless authority-reciprocity (although Leacock explicitly rejects the word matriarchy because for her it means power over men). Two of the anthropologist authors doubt the existence not only of matriarchy but of primitive egalitarianism (the KNOW group and Gough). According to the first, hereinafter referred to by an acronym of their last names, BMOPS: *In no society at any point in time, or in any place in the world, are women's activities, no matter how economically productive, considered by the society to be as important as the activities in which men engage. Further, women as a group have never been in the position to make political decisions which affect the wider society. . . individual women hold power; women as a class do not.*

Davis and Diner are the two authors who accept the definition of matriarchy as class power and do in fact defend its past existence. Their matriarchy was not an egalitarian society. Women as a group were more powerful than men and dominated them in both the private and public spheres.

For those who hold the vision of

the golden age or some time when women's position was better, it serves as a model to imagine a liberated society, and as a statement about how problems currently facing women might be dealt with, particularly the problem of power and hierarchy. For those who reject the matriarchy, the problem is not one of return, but of changing what has always been, in order to bring about liberation of women for the first time. In neither group is the vision of the new society really as specific as a blueprint, and more problems are raised than are answered.

Each author wants to see an end to the oppression of women and a new society in which technology will be used for human ends. Whether one will almost automatically bring about the other or whether both must be done at the same time is a subject of disagreement which partially results from a fundamental unclarity about what liberation for women would mean. There seem to us to be two logical possibilities. The central tendency among our authors is to hope that men and women will be equal. But what does this mean? Does this mean that sex distinctions including roles will be eliminated, so that men and women would be in some sense the same? This solution is proposed by Firestone, as the source of women's oppression has always been childbearing and child-rearing, sex distinction could be eliminated by ending the biologically unequal division of labor via population reduction and test-tube babies, and by fully shared and socialized child care. At the same

time, she argues, as an integral part of the change, we need a socialist revolution. Ultimately all forms of hierarchy and power are based on the sex distinction, and should be done away with, including finally, culture itself. The end goal is "cosmic consciousness." How are women to make sure that revolutionary change proceeds in our interests? Firestone assumes that those in power after the socialist revolution will have "good intentions."


On the other hand, if equal does not mean the same, does it mean a balance of power? This problem is nowhere worked out by Leacock, Reed, De Beauvoir or Gough, all of whom advocate a socialist revolution as more or less sufficient to bring about equality between men and women if it includes the socialization of child care and an end to monogamous marriage. For Leacock and Reed, this answer is logically consistent with what they see as the source of women's oppression. But who is to guarantee that future socialist revolutions will do away with monogamous marriage? Women are clearly still oppressed in socialist countries. And what if these changes, even if realized, are not enough to free women? None of the authors goes further than the suggestion of some kind of women's caucus within the socialist revolution to push for women's interests. Gough avoids the problem of how to reverse men's ultimate monopoly of force, which she sees as a likely source of women's oppression from hunting and gathering times.

BMOPS do explicitly recommend

the elimination of sex oppression through a balance of power. For them, male dominance was adaptive under primitive conditions, but is now leading us toward destruction and must be eliminated. As an antidote to man's aggressive tendencies, they propose a "partly female dominated polity" and equal control over technology. Everyone shies away from the possible implications of a balance-of-power situation. Isn't a balance of power notoriously unstable and conflict-ridden, rather than harmonious and co-operative, as these authors assume? Why should the sex antagonism pointed to by De Beauvoir, Diner, Davis, and Firestone disappear?

A basic problem is the failure to


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spell out the relationship of power to women's freedom. For the previous writers, somehow women's oppression as a group will be ended *without* their holding power as a group. Why should men give up their power simply because male dominance is no longer adaptive? How can we count on men agreeing that their dominance is no longer in the interests of the human race?

On the other hand, Davis and (perhaps only implicitly) Diner reject the equality or the balance-of-power models, and propose instead a *female-dominated* society. Since women were originally overthrown by force, you would expect Davis to call for a new Amazon army to redress the situation, but she avoids this by claiming that patriarchy is bringing about its own destruction. For her, female dominance will bring about equality and harmony between the sexes, and end all the evils she sees as caused by the current dominance of men and "masculist" principle: violence, chaos, injustice, overemphasis on materialism and property rights as against spirituality and human rights.

Once again the fundamental problem revolves around power. If women are to be supreme, won't men necessarily be subordinate? If women are to rule, won't men be the subjects? Why should they agree to this state of affairs? How could this society be better than what we have now? (However, if sex oppression cannot be eliminated, why not say frankly we would rather be rulers than the ruled?)

Finally, whether one believes or disbelieves in the existence of primitive matriarchy, the controversy does push women (and men) into the future by challenging us to envision a society where women would be liberated, free and (perhaps for the first time) powerful.

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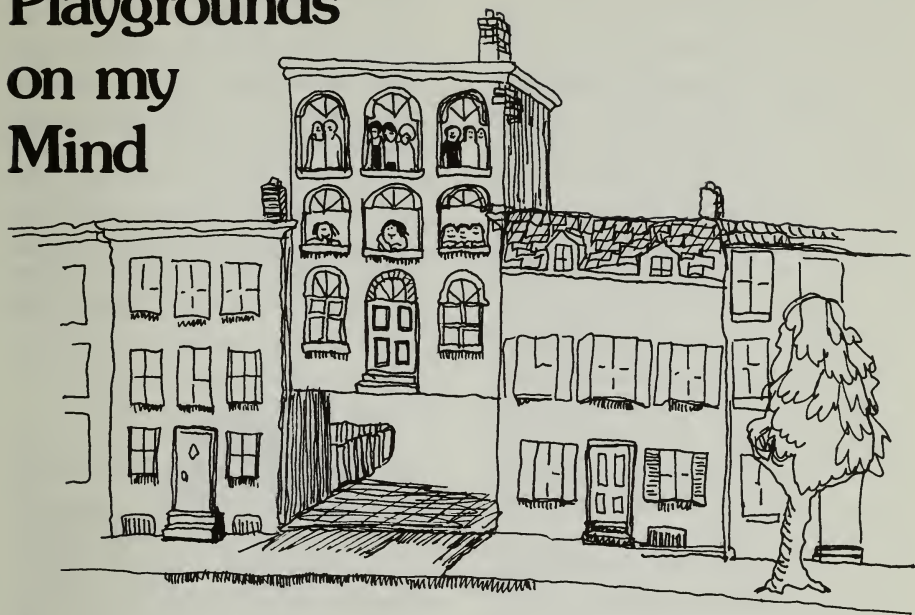
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Esther Newton, anthropologist, author of Mother Camp: A Cultural Analysis of Female Impersonators in the U.S.A., is presently in Paris.

Paula Webster, anthropologist at Queens College C.U.N.Y. (SEEK) is researching the physical abuse of women in primitive "egalitarian" societies.

Concrete Playgrounds on my Mind



by Cynthia Washington

graphics by Jacky English

What is a fantasy but the synthesis of all our experiences projected into the future, free of the constraints and sanctions of our day to day existence. Fantasies are based on our real cognitive experience. They are not revelations, visions, or messages from out of nowhere and without basis in our own lives. Because fantasies, dreams, visions don't come out of a vacuum, I have divided this article into two sections: background and vision.

Background is important, because the development of women as a whole

is fragmented and uneven. Not only are assumptions about women diverse, but so are our real material conditions. As illustration, let me describe briefly my own experience.

When I was in engineering school, I discovered that indeed, those people were serious about their racism, and they weren't too fond of women either. I didn't believe it; I had read about such things, but it seemed too illogical, and happened in the deep South somewhere. But it was real, and active. In the entire school, there were

two blacks and two women—I was one of each. It meant no one to study with, and my social life at school was zilch. Later, in the “good ole” movement days, I directed my own project, drove a truck, supervised a staff which happened to be men, and had a certain amount of autonomy. At the time, I thought that the school experience had been exceptional and it seemed that things had returned to normal. Therefore, when I encountered the women’s movement or it me, I had no idea what those ladies were complaining about.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, I got married and had one son. I had been self-supporting for about three years. When I married, I was hit by all the realities that most women face every day. The thought never had occurred to me that someone seriously would think that my role in life was that of cook, maid, servant, what have you. At first, I thought it was him, but I soon found out that his notions about my role were universal. After about three years of that, when I finally figured out how serious these folk were about the role of women, I left.

At that point, I began struggling with the fact of womanhood. Until then it had not been a particular problem, or so I thought. There I was, free, black, over 21, with son in tow. Like fantasies, struggles don’t exist in a void either, so it’s important to figure out what you’re struggling against. Were all those funky things happening to me because I was black, a woman, a divorcee, a single parent, a draftsman, had a bad personality, all of the above, none

of the above. The details of what I faced are not important here, but two leading examples are both being refused credit and a place to live.

After wading around in that morass, I began to understand that while some of it probably had to do with me personally, most of it didn’t. Nevertheless, I must say the impact was and *is* personal. I began to realize that these generalized beliefs, hatreds, abuses, exclusions, etc., are expressed actively through rules, institutional policy, and indeed through an entire system of socio-economic arrangements that affect and often control one’s life.

In the course of all that, you get tired and really don’t want to struggle about anything anymore. You reach the point where it is more important to struggle *for* something than *against* something. But what? At that point, women were struggling to be liberated from their dependence on and oppression by men. I didn’t have a man and had been supporting my son and myself for some time, as well as working and going to school. I thought they were nuts. I’d been there, and if I needed additional independence, it was to be independently wealthy. But in trying to answer the question, “struggle for what?”, I realized that the single most hassling problem is my son.

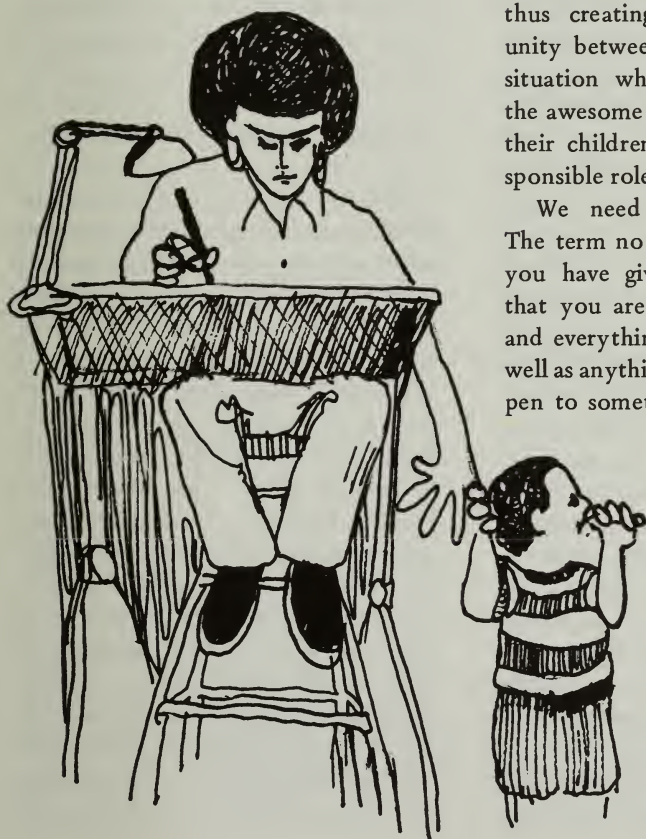
He’s not a problem in terms of our relationship, but the logistics of what to do with him are. Most working mothers have this problem; single mothers have a greater problem. Mothers who don’t work, with or without partner, who like to do something in

life other than play with, and care for, their children also have this problem. As far as I know, child rearing and new systems for child care (as distinguished from 24-hour baby sitting services and other warehousing arrangements), have not been a priority of the women's movement. But for women who want to be mothers and people too, it is crucial to develop visions of socio-economic structures which don't force us to choose between motherhood and personhood.

Motherhood and Personhood

To date, women are the only ones who can bear children (although I understand that some mad scientist is working to change this situation). Because only women bear children, and motherhood has such a permanent impact on the lives of women, dividing us into two distinct groups, my primary fantasy is to develop alternative social and economic arrangements for rearing children. These arrangements hopefully would lessen the distinction between mothers and non-mothers, thus creating a basis for a greater unity between the two groups, and a situation where mothers, relieved of the awesome primary relationship with their children, could assume other responsible roles within society.

We need to redefine "mother". The term no longer means simply that you have given birth to others, but that you are responsible for the child and everything that happens to her, as well as anything that she causes to happen to something or to someone else.



This functional definition is spelled out in the law and reinforced by social sanction. It means that you take the weight for everything. Even if the kid is at school, which is also required by law, if anything goes wrong, it's still your problem, your responsibility, obviously an impossible task. As Lucia Valeska states in "If All Else Fails, I'm Still a Mother", (*Quest*, Vol. I, no. 3) the failure is built in, systemic, avoidable only by fluke, or substantial monetary privilege. If you won sole custody you have my sympathy, which of course is not enough.

Mothers have not always been defined this way. There are historical and anthropological accounts of communal societies where the land and the socially necessary work, such as food gathering and preparation, child rearing, etc. were shared by the group. In places where communalism still exists, there were, and are, various divisions of labor and roles, but the outstanding feature is that individual mothers did not have the exclusive responsibility for their offspring. The children were members of, and therefore the responsibility of, the entire group. The theories of why there was a transition from communal ownership to private ownership or how private property developed are many and varied. But the thing we do know is that a transition occurred and one result has been the relative isolation of women with young children. The immediate picture that comes to mind is that of a middle income housewife somewhere in suburbia, but we must remember

that welfare mothers also are at home with young children.

Motherhood is a functionally defined role, and the only way we can change it is to change the function. Suppose in our future society we declared that all adults had equal responsibility for children? Suppose that mothers were no different from others, therefore they would be expected to participate fully in socially necessary work, production, cultural development, education, and so on? This would establish a political right for mothers as well as a group responsibility for children. Such a re-definition would necessitate changes throughout the entire system.

Motherhood and the Economy

Basic to my fantasy is the need to develop an economic system that provides women with optimal income, through meaningful employment. Suppose our economy provided women with sufficient and independent means to be able to create communities where they could live as people and mothers. These would be classless communities in the economic sense, where each member owned the entire community equally with other members—the land, the buildings, businesses, factories, everything. There would not be a group who owned sources of wealth and those things necessary to produce goods and services, because resources would be owned equally by all. Suppose further, that within this community, wages and income distribution

were set up to greatly reduce class distinctions based on income. Ownership and income level as a means of separating "us" from them would thereby be eliminated. This would not immediately do away with the social differences which people would bring into such a community, but it would do away with the economic basis of class. The other criteria used to distinguish classes or groups, such as family, educational level and background, as well as racism and sexism, (if there are to be men in this community) are much more difficult to deal with. Some aspects of these problems might be diminished by the use of assembly government as the governing mechanism of such a community.

The assembly would be comprised of all the members of the community, each having a single vote. The rules governing the community and its development would be decided in the assembly, as well as all decisions con-



cerning revenues and expenditures. The administrative functions could be carried out by persons selected by lot to serve for a short period of time. The fact that everyone has equal voice through their one vote, would mean political equality for all members. By selecting officers at random, the power that tends to accrue to organizations built to win elections, and in offices held too long by one person, would be evenly dispersed among the group. Power would reside within each individual, rather than in political offices or organizations.

Let us suppose further, that in such a community the ground rules were designed to create the greatest possible individual liberty, but held each member responsible for the socially necessary work, including the care and rearing of children. We could then choose life style: extended family, commune, with or without men (individually or en group), hermit, single, what have you, but mostly without the singular responsibility for children.

Back in the here and now, such communities are possible, particularly if started on a small scale. Developing an alternative economic system within the U.S. is difficult to imagine. After all, it is the largest, most "developed" country. However, these communities could be begun both as ends in themselves, as well as transitional tools toward overall changes in the whole society. What I do not have in mind is a group of people with money going off to play survival in the hinterlands of North America.

A community could begin as a single apartment building in the heart of the metropolis. The co-op is not to be confused with its modern perversion, the condominium, which is owned and managed by the developer until the mortgage is paid off. The important thing about a cooperative apartment is that it reduces costs to residents, and gives them control of the space where they live. The same could be true on a larger scale—an entire city block or neighborhood for instance. Obviously there are necessary relationships with the city and other neighborhoods, but it is the beginning of real control. Further, if the area contained commercial property, that property, through rental at prevailing rates, would generate funds which could be used either to further reduce the housing costs of the group, or to reinvest in the development of the community and the services it provides.

Despite the quantity of money needed for such a project, there are ways to raise it. Ideally, there would be a women's or people's bank, or a revolving fund which would loan money for such a venture at low or no interest. However, even without a bank, it seems possible to raise enough money through a "friendly bond issue", that is, selling bonds to sympathetic friends who could afford such a thing. This would not make them owners; it is simply an I.O.U. There also is federal and local legislation making funds available for renovation and acquisition of existing dwellings, and for the development of "new towns", and

new housing developments. A last resort is the standard financial institutions: banks, and savings & loans. In the case of mortgage borrowing from a standard institution, if an apartment building were purchased as the first step toward community, simply removing all, or a portion of the profit made by the landlord, would reduce costs for tenants.

This excess then could become beginning capital for an internal economy in the community. To go a step further, suppose that the citizens of this community also owned a factory which then produced some of the needed goods consumed both within and outside the community. By producing needed goods and services, the community would not be totally dependent on others for its survival. It could then work to build an economy which would not only sustain that community, but also generate income to make funds available to others to start similar ventures or other projects, as they are determined by the assembly.

Owning our own turf is about the only defense we have against the state and society. Owning the place where you work means that you are self-employed, as a group. Thus, there would be political citizenship at the assembly and at the work-place. Once we have control over our dwellings, public spaces and work places, it would then be possible to work out ways to reintegrate children into the social and cultural life of the community. Children who are involved in the socially productive and necessary work of the

community can learn to take on responsibility for various aspects of community life and work. There is almost no area where children cannot perform meaningful tasks, whether at the community waste disposal plant, the community art gallery, or in its financial institutions. Some may say that these tasks, or at least some of them, are idiot work, meaningless, not using the full creative potential of children. But, when tasks are performed in the context of a community such as the one described above, they are no longer alienating, but directly affect our personal survival as well as that of the community, and through the community hopefully our struggle against oppression, racism, sexism and all other injustices. The work also could be arranged so that no one was stuck forever with the same boring tasks, or perhaps the most mundane tasks could be done collectively. In this way, we would be learning necessary skills and also creating more free time for all to pursue various forms of self-development. The extent to which we are not actively involved in producing and doing the things which sustain us—all producing food or cooking, repairing our houses and tools, as well as writing the great new theoretical piece or becoming a great artist—is the extent to which these tasks get passed along to someone else. We must be certain that we don't simply gain power for ourselves and then pass our oppression on to others.

Ownership also means that the fragmentation of our lives, a result of the

physical layout of our communities, can be changed. For example, markets, parks, schools, etc. could be located within walking distance, so that no one would have to commute to shop, work, and do other errands unless they wanted to. Also, the community could be made physically safe for children, as well as esthetically attractive. The development of such a community implies a public social life rather than a private one. Children could be active because there would be many to supervise them, and the area would be physically conducive to child participation without parents being two steps away.

Do I really expect this to work? Do I really expect people to take an active role in rearing other people's children? Sure I do. It seems more possible with other hassles taken care of within the community. For instance, someone who commutes two hours a day to work, discovers that the landlord has raised the rent, is totally responsible for her own show, will be less likely to want to add to all this, as compared with someone who works walking distance away, owns the place where she lives, and shares meal-making, laundry, etc. Also, because children would be accepted anywhere within the community, it wouldn't be a matter of being stuck at home with someone else's kid. Children are unacceptable in the current context because they have no productive role, and almost all public space is structured for, and occupied by, adults: How many places have you been lately where there were

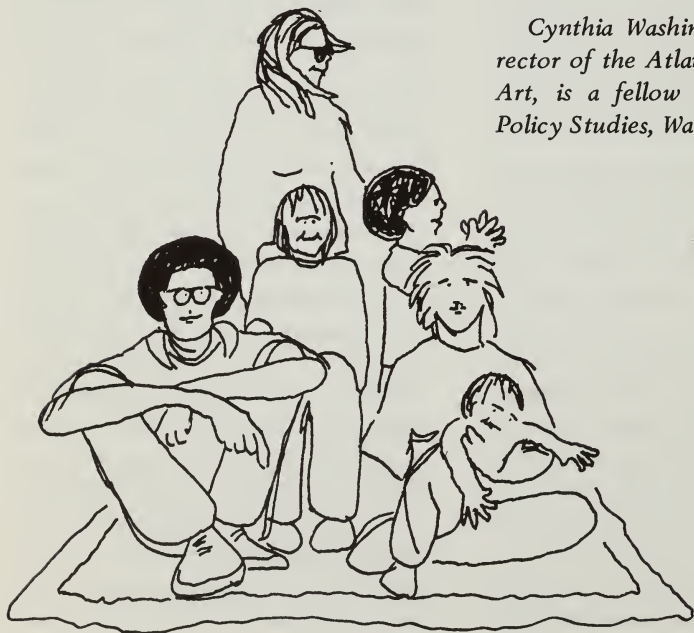
water fountains or toilets that the average 2-3 year old potty trained child could use? Or handicapped people for that matter.

Taking an active role in rearing other people's children is neither as awesome or as difficult as it sounds. All of us have some skill, some insight, some knowledge, values and resources which would enrich the life of a child. Think of how broad and culturally rich a child's life would be if she could develop independent relationships with adults in addition to mother or parents by doing things and learning things with other adults, one to one, or at least in casual, rather than structured ways. For example: swimming with Sally, bookkeeping and management with Bev, how to fix the hi-fi set with Mary, visiting an art gallery

or playing with Ruth, etc. It really isn't that difficult, particularly if we concede that children are people too, that they come in all sizes and various ages, and they converse about many things other than Johnnie who-ever's flying robot, if given the opportunity.

Once we get it firmly fixed in our minds that children are structured out because they have no productive role to perform, that rearing children is no longer considered a productive role for women or anyone else, we can move forward by developing productive roles for women (mothers included) as well as for children. Visions begin to be realities by developing social alternatives for the mundane things in life, changing the function of mothers and developing a system of rearing children.

Cynthia Washington, previously director of the Atlanta Center for Black Art, is a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, Washington, D.C.



Notes for prospective contributors

We would like to describe our processes for handling material for each issue. About 9 months before an issue comes off the presses, a small development committee prepares a list of questions and ideas which we hope that particular issue will cover. This list is available to anyone who is considering submitting ideas for the issue, outlines for potential articles, manuscripts, poetry, graphics, etc. We accept unsolicited material and seek out writers and artists known to have definitive political perspectives on issues related to the theme.

All material is reviewed by several staff members. If it is not appropriate for Quest purposes the manuscript or graphic will be returned to the author. If a manuscript is to be considered, it is then assigned to one Quest editor. This editor is responsible for working with the author through whatever processes of rewriting and editing required. This process includes soliciting comments and suggestions from various Quest staff and Advisory Committee members. Authors will receive final edited manuscripts for review before printing.

Manuscripts should be double spaced on 8½ by 11 paper, using a black ribbon, submitted in duplicate (original plus one copy). Length of submissions should be from 2,500 words (10 typewritten pages) for reviews, responses and short articles, to, at most, 7,500 words (25 pages) for longer articles. Where appropriate, bibliographic footnotes should be collected and typed at the end of the paper in numerical order. All manuscripts, poems, and graphic material must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Only original, unpublished manuscripts and graphics are acceptable.

Graphics, cartoons, photographs are requested. For information concerning graphic specifications, please address all correspondence to the attention of Alexa Freeman.

future issues

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vol. II no. 2

How do we get what we want?—will we need a revolution to achieve new political and economic systems, new cultural and spiritual forms, and if so, what kind of revolution. Areas for articles include: definitions of revolution; what ingredients are required for revolution in different societies; what is the role of leaders and political parties in change; what are the steps necessary and obstacles to women taking power to change society.

Copy Deadline: June 1, 1975

ORGANIZATIONS and STRATEGIES

vol. II no. 3

Organizations and Strategies picks up where Theories of Revolution left off—on the relationships between our priorities, needs and ideology and our actions. Areas for articles include: how to measure success and effectiveness of an organization; how to build coalitions; what is the role of political parties, national groups, community organizing and other forms of networks, how will feminist programming deal with race and economic conditions?

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LEADERSHIP

vol. II no. 4

Leadership is vital to achieving social change but we need to examine the role and function of leaders in a feminist movement. Areas for articles include: concepts, types and problems of leadership; how to achieve collectivity and accountability without destroying initiative and imagination; problems of fame and public recognition; the process of training, sharing and developing skills that create more and stronger leaders.

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vol. III no. 1

Are we connecting our lives to our ideas? This issue will be an open forum for substantive response to our first two years of publication and for your input to help chart our future. We seek discussion of topics and ideas that you consider vital, as well as commentary on previous articles.

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