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FREE WOMEN

REVOLUTION THROUGH ART

ART THROUGH REVOLUTION

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STAFF

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EDITORIAL

Those are brave words on our cover, and for the moment they represent an aspiration rather than an actuality. The contents of this issue are nowhere near as revolutionary as we would want. We live in a patriarchal culture, and our minds have been shaped by it. One doesn't realize just how devastating our education has to be until one starts looking around. My attention was caught by a recent excerpt from the Erik Erikson book on Gandhi in which Erikson said, "Man begets the child, and woman bears him." That is, man—active—begets; woman—passive—bears. But how beastly unfair, I thought. Sure woman bears the child, but she also contributes 50 percent of the genes. One might say that she does 75 percent of the work of creation. Resentful man wants to arrogate her part for himself. (The Adam and Eve story, Minerva plucked from Jove's brow, and other mythologies are in point here.) Still, I looked up beget in the dictionary, and by God! Mr. Erikson, though logically wrong, is not wrong in terms of the 1962 Random House American College Dictionary. "Beget...To procreate or generate; used chiefly of the male."

No wonder that the more formal education a woman has, the more likely she is to have been indoctrinated with her physical and mental inferiority. It is common for valuable seminal (why not ovarian?) works by women to have female-derogating components. To be "normal" is to acquiesce in a second-class role. Centuries-old conditioning of woman as the inferior being who exists merely for the servicing of mate and child does not disappear in a moment or even a half-century.

And yet it is, of course, education which gives us the tools to break our bondage, tools of thought, of criticism, of comparative vision. But we must not lose sight of the kind of staying power and resistance so often found in proletarian and peasant women, the instinctive strength of humanity pushed to the wall which was celebrated by Brecht in *Mother Courage* when he said that for the poor just to live from one day to the next is a victory. Women who are at the bottom do have a kind of relation to their bodies; they can't be fooled into feeling inferior to men. But they are too busy working to do much about it. In this respect past literature has often held up women as examples of the survival strength of humanity.

Today the whole child-bearing function is fast becoming obsolete. We don't need men now for reproduction. Sperm banks and artificial insemination can easily accomplish their task. Soon women, also, will be partially freed of their reproductive role. An obstetrician described to me that in a few years the foetus will be taken from the amniotic fluid at four and a half or five months; malformed ones will be weeded out, and the others placed in a more propitious environment than the human womb for the rest of the gestation period.

We cannot go back—we have to get on with civilization. We have already gone beyond the mindless waste of nature. If the population is not curbed, civilization will be starved out of existence. In advanced societies, childbearing is a very small part of a woman's life—given two or three children, say twenty years out of the normal span of seventy. If you happen to think, as I do, that man was goaded by his insignificance, in comparison with woman's visible role in reproduction, to produce art and culture, putting down woman in the meantime, it is clear that in the domination of nature and the universe produced chiefly by man we have reached a crossroads. Destruction threatens from many directions: pollution, overpopulation and other forms of ecological imbalance, nuclear warfare, dehumanization.

As man created himself in defiance of woman's actual role, so woman must create herself in defiance of man's imposed distortions of history and knowledge. It is up to all of us to produce a new kind of civilization, one which does not necessarily throw out the other but incorporates it. Our language, religions, and mythologies lag far behind our state of scientific development. Women are still

being womb-washed. A recent advertisement for a book named *Modern Motherhood* described childbearing as "the greatest experience in a woman's life." No wonder we turn out neurotic children if they must bear the weight of this unrealistic expectation. Clearly the nuclear family, outmoded relic of the old patriarchal family, does not fill the economic and emotional needs of an industrialized culture.

Man still builds himself up by putting woman down. In this country there has been a backlash these past thirty years against the progress of women which began in the nineteenth century. Beleaguered males, desperately hanging on to a manhood threatened by automation, advertising, the general passivity of industrialized culture, shore up their failing strength by turning on those even lower on the scale. In addition there has been the entry into the American stream of cultures more backward than the English and French traditions which shaped our early years. Eastern European Jews (who have played a major role in writing and entertainment fields), Italians and others from Central and Southern Europe, the jump imperfectly mastered, turned their neuroses on their women, and on women in general, who threaten their all too shaky sense of self.

There has also been the complicating factor of the development of Freudian psychology and the so-called sexual liberation. Not only that Freud, a radical in some areas, was a reactionary where women are concerned, but in addition his ideas have been misused by current practitioners, upholding the status quo for their own aggrandizement. Even the area of sexual liberty so boldly pioneered by people like Havelock Ellis, Wilhelm Reich, and Freud himself, has proved something of a boomerang. The concept of sexual enjoyment as a rightful prerogative for women as well as men was born in the twentieth century, facilitated by birth control, through there have always been private and special exceptions. The feminist of the nineteenth century did not expect sexual enjoyment; therefore her feminist principles involved a limited sacrifice and a large gain. One might oversimplify by saying that in our time women are encouraged to sacrifice autonomy for orgasm as an aim in life. It is an aim which all too often proves illusory since you can't legislate orgasm—produce it by fiat, despite all the promises which seem to say, "Let there be orgasm!"

In a time of prosperity women are tempted to sell their independence for

sex and comfort, victims of a commercial system which functions by depriving both men and women of their humanity, viewing them as consuming objects whose existence keeps industry going. So we have had the internalization in women of outer concepts constantly harping on woman as sex object and/or mother, the adoption of imposed values creating them in the molds cast upon them by advertising and entertainment, by writers wounded but arrogant in their egos.

Feminist literary criticism which would enable us to enlarge our prospective is still barely at the beginning. Basic to the concept is Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, which speculated on why women had, till that moment, produced such a small amount of the world's literature. In *Adam's Rib* Ruth Herschberger pointed out the distortions of our education, the way biological studies are slanted to downgrade women and elevate men in contravention of nature, and how the language itself has been made an instrument of emotional judgment. Simone de Beauvoir's sweeping investigation, *The Second Sex*, contributes to the field. And Mary Ellmann's *Thinking About Women* is the first book almost wholly devoted to the subject, pointing the way for an ongoing study. She and De Beauvoir both had more formal education than the first two named, and possibly we can look to this for certain ambivalences in their work. In future issues we shall be discussing these writers as well as new works produced by the Women's Liberation Movement.

It is, of course, an awesome task that faces us. We must find our own language, a fresh voice, shape new myths out of old. One is consoled by the fact that cultures have always borrowed from each other; we won't be the first to incorporate the past into the present in an attempt to make a more representative culture. Certainly there will be a great deal of overreacting and overcompensating in the beginning.

But women are strong, strong enough to have resisted the fantastic pressures put on them over the centuries and to have come out fighting for more equal participation in society. We must look back at our strengths, at our hidden subculture, our humor, our friendships, our secret lives.

"How do you know," I once asked a museum director, "that the cave paintings weren't made by women?" "Oh, we know from the subjects that they

must have been made by men," he answered confidently. But of course we don't know about prehistory. We don't know who first found voice around the campfire to recount tales. Certainly in folklore there have been men and women storytellers, and men and women singers and composers. But man has long bent woman to his purpose, all too often using her intelligence and capacity and taking the credit for himself.

In consequence, much of the work that comes in to APHRA today is heavily laced with complaints about the maltreatments and inadequacies of women. There is, of course, too much acceptance of a male's-eye view of women. We must clear our minds and eyes, think out, strike out, go forward. We have learned from the blacks about improving our self-image, about the ego strength that comes from courage and confrontation and independent action. "I squeezed the serf out of my blood, drop by drop," Chekhov said. To some extent, since we have all been house niggers in the mansion of man, we are engaged in a similar task. We are creating our own culture, from past and present sources, learning to be ourselves, not sycophants to men. This is what APHRA is all about.

COMING OF AGE IN PECTORAL

ISABEL MILLER

When Gertrude was twenty-one, she and Earl ran a little grocery for Earl's dad down south, in Pectoral, Florida. They had three babies and another on the way, and Gertrude was a baby, too, in her heart, although in her body she felt very old.

So tired all the time. Legs aching. Bones aching. Breasts like boils, so tender. And even though they had a colored lady named Julia to do the diaper washing and all that, there was still a lot for Gertrude to do with so many young children, and when she didn't feel good it was hard. What made it even harder was so many mistakes at the store that even patient Earl couldn't help getting cross with her, and on top of that she was lonesome and friendless.

Living in Pectoral was like being a new kid in a school where everybody knows everybody else and doesn't need you for a friend. Gertrude wasn't used to having friends, exactly, but she was used to having people around who were a little bit pleasant. The Pectoral people treated Earl and Gertrude like an army of occupation, like foreclosers on widows and orphans. Earl said he didn't mind, that the ignorant crackers meant nothing whatever to him, so Gertrude tried and tried not to mind either, but she couldn't help herself.

O the long days at the store. Earl said she shouldn't mind. There was, after all, no business to speak of. What was so hard about just being there? And

O the long nights when Earl was away, as he so often was, trying to find business opportunities, trying to better himself, and never getting discouraged or believing that it was impossible for a Northerner to better himself in Florida as it was in those days. A lesser man would have given up, but Earl was out night after night looking for opportunities. She admired him for it and tried not to mind being alone, but sometimes when the children were asleep at last, and the house was quiet, in spite of knowing better she felt—lonesome. She even missed, of all people, her mother, and all the little brothers and sisters, and had to keep reminding herself that when she was with them she didn't really like them much.

And she felt, also, on those lonely nights, warm, or, as Earl in his funny way said it, horny. Earl said she didn't understand, that like all women she was forever cut off from understanding, though it should have been plain enough, that in surrendering to the lusts of women men actually lost a part of themselves, an actual physical substance was taken away from them, while women didn't have to give anything at all, but only take. She could understand that. Of course she could. He was always a gentleman and he never said it was selfish of her to want so much, but she could see it for herself, and she tried to learn to wait.

She certainly was a selfish brat there for a while, and Julia only made her worse, but of course Gertrude didn't realize that at first. All she thought about at first was that she was lonesome and needed kindness—plenty of people never do get over thinking about what they personally need—and she was no better than the rest at that time. Yes, she selfishly thought only of her own need for kindness, and Julia in her way seemed kind for a while.

She was never very prompt, Julia. She'd come strolling in late half the time, and that would make Gertrude late opening the store, but luckily Earl slept later and didn't know about that. There'd come Julia strolling, half an hour, an hour late. Sometimes she'd bring her own children with her and the house would end up messier instead of better, and Gertrude would have to clean it herself after she got home from the store, so Earl wouldn't find out and make her fire Julia. She just didn't want to fire Julia. There was just something comfortable about her, and the babies loved her. She never seemed to be working—always rocking somebody—but somehow the housework usually got done.

As that fourth pregnancy went along, Gertrude felt worse and worse. All the bones in her pelvis seemed to come apart. In fact, according to the doctor, they did loosen up. They were supposed to. "But are they supposed to feel like they've been run over with a truck?" she asked, and the doctor laughed. He thought she was witty, and she was so pleased about that that she didn't realize until she got home that he hadn't answered.

But the fact was, she could feel, and practically even hear, her pelvic bones grinding against each other when she walked, and nobody would believe it except Julia. And there were two spots of pain low in Gertrude's belly, like ruptures, that went away only if she stayed very quiet on her back with a pillow under her knees. If she got tired, which got to be almost always, the spots of pain would join together and form a big wide blade of pain all the way across her. At first she just went ahead and worked no matter what, but later—beginning at about the seventh month—she gave up. She told herself she couldn't open the store if she had to be whipped or killed for not, and she stayed in bed.

Earl couldn't understand. He didn't like her behavior one bit. She was puzzled, too—the other pregnancies hadn't been like that. She had always felt all right before. And here she was with the fourth one, having such a strangely hard time. Her legs swollen, her ankles puffing out over her shoe tops. Back aching. Belly splitting. She couldn't blame Earl for thinking she was trying to put one over on him. Everybody knew that having babies got easier and easier, and that the Chinese women worked in the fields up until the last minute and then went over behind a rice bush and popped the baby out like a puppy or a calf and cut the cord themselves and that was that—back to work. Gertrude felt so guilty for not being woman enough, and she tried and tried, but for the last two months she just couldn't anymore. With the best intentions in the world, she just couldn't. And Earl had to open the store. He hated it so. He wasn't meant for things like that. His dad never should have expected him to do it.

So Earl opened the store, and Gertrude stayed in bed, dozing and dreaming, listening to Julia putter around the house. It was peaceful. "You'd feel better if you'd get up and around," everybody said, and sometimes Gertrude would try but it didn't work. She felt worse. She felt best staying in bed. Even Julia told her to get up sometimes, because Julia was more like the Chinese women and

couldn't really understand either how Gertrude felt. The doctor told her. Earl told her. She didn't mind that, because how could a man understand? But when Julia told her, she couldn't help it, she cried.

"You just bring it on yourself, Miss Sunup," Julia said, and Gertrude's heart broke and she didn't know why or what to do or how to hide it and she turned her face so Julia wouldn't see and held her breath and tried to control herself, but she didn't have any strength anymore. She couldn't stand turning face-down with the baby so big, so the only way she could hide was to grab Earl's pillow and cover her face with it. She took a big bite, a big mouthful of the pillow, and sobbed away quietly and then there was Julia lifting the pillow away and gathering her up and saying, "Don't, honey, don't, don't."

And every morning after that, when Earl was gone and the children were busy in the sand box or somewhere, Julia would come in and make much of Gertrude a little—tuck her hair behind her ears, give her a hug, say, "How my two babies this morning?" meaning Gertrude and the baby inside. Then Julia would sit on the corner of the bed, by Gertrude's feet, and tell her news.

It didn't have to be world-shaking news. It didn't even have to be interesting. For instance, Julia told her a lot about flowers—which ones were budded, which were blossoming—and Gertrude at that time didn't care one single bit about flowers, but she racked her brain for questions so she could keep Julia sitting there, telling her.

One day Julia brought some thread and a crochet hook. "You just go out of your mind, you don't get something to do," she said.

Gertrude was all thumbs at first, learning to crochet, but Julia was patient with her. "You doing just fine, honey baby, just fine." And her beautiful pink-palmed brown hands would take the thread and hook again. "Now, watch, see here, watch, honey, you almost got it, just watch how I do this part." The warmth of Julia, the smell of her. No wonder Gertrude was all thumbs. Smell of leather, sweat, pomade, perfume, smell like hands that have been committing that sin that God despises, smell of food and baby powder and sun-warmed attics. Gertrude didn't like Julia's smell, and then she liked it, but liking or disliking she couldn't pay close attention of learning to crochet.

But she did learn, of course—anybody could, that wanted to—and pretty

soon she was making so many beautiful things—doilies, pot holders, head-rests for the chairs, open-work sweaters for the children to wear on coolish mornings.

Such happy days, peaceful in bed, crocheting, listening to Julia sweep or sing or rock the babies at naptime. Creak, creak went the rocking chair, until the babies were all asleep, and Gertrude was too.

That's how little it took to make her happy. Maybe, she thought, maybe I'm not unhappy by nature after all, when fifteen minutes a day of having someone baby me can make me so happy. What she didn't know then was that we are not born to be happy, but to do our duty. She shirked her duties every one, and went aching after happiness, which, to a baby like herself at twenty-one, meant being babied. If only Earl would baby her. If only Earl would give her that fifteen minutes a day. She didn't really want it from Julia. She wanted it from Earl.

She hoped he'd notice the change in her and ask about the cause, but of course he had more important things to do than study out every little thing about her moods. It was childish of her to expect it.

She realized she'd have to mention it herself, and after a while she found the chance. It was evening. The children were playing in the long, after-supper twilight. Gertrude was on the bed, resting, gathering strength to put the children to bed. Earl was in the bedroom putting on a clean shirt, getting ready to go out. The first shirt he took was all right—no buttons missing, no wrinkles ironed in—so he wasn't forced to lose his temper. The moment seemed perfect for talking about happiness.

"Earl, honey?"

"Umm?"

"Talk to me."

"There's nothing to say."

"Call me 'Baby'."

"*Baby?*"

"Not like that. Say it like Julia does. Say, 'How my baby today?' "

"For God's sake, what are you two *up* to?"

"Why nothing. She gives me a little hug and calls me baby."

"And that's nothing?"

Foolishly, she tried to bluff. "What's wrong with that?"

"What's wrong? If I said Cooper gave me a little hug and called me baby," (Earl's voice went way up high and he wet his finger and smoothed his eyebrow down) "you'd know damned good and well what's wrong with that."

"But—"

"But nothing. You think just because you're a woman you can get away with anything."

"But women don't—do they?"

"Oh, don't they?"

She felt shame so horrible, such waves and waves of horror and shame, O rocks hide me, O earth open and swallow me, O death accept me.

Unbearably, he kept talking. Standing beside the bed, tall above her, jingling his keys in his pocket, talking nicely, without anger. "I don't care if you take a lover, but pay me the compliment of taking a man, white if possible."

"Oh, no, no, I only love you."

"And treat your next servant like a servant. You know, it's not necessary to have everybody like you. I suppose you have a natural sympathy for the servant classes, but do me the compliment of remembering you're a Sunup now."

He was as unpitying as a baby being born. Her sobs didn't make him stop. He was so right, and she knew it. She only wished he'd see that he'd said enough, that she understood, that she would end all that, that it was ended already. The thought of Julia made her sick. Earl didn't have to say what she now saw for herself—that Julia was using her, honeying her up to get out of doing a good job, and then, undoubtedly, going back to her people and laughing. Gertrude didn't doubt for a minute that Julia was saying, "Juss hug Miss Sunup and she don't care if you sweep the floor or not." Gertrude didn't need Earl to tell her, but he wouldn't stop telling her, and he said that she was just trying to pull a fast one on him, staying in bed, playing sick.

"You're just trying to make a chronic invalid out of yourself. You have to learn to do what you're supposed to whether you feel like it or not. Do you think I go to that damned store every day because I *want* to? I do my part, and I want you to do yours."

"Yes, Earl."

"Will you fire her or will I?"

"I will."

And Gertrude did, the very next morning. It was one of the hardest things she ever did. She couldn't have done it except that she hated the sight of Julia, and the hatred made her feel strong enough to work and work, forever, alone, to death.

"I'm much stronger now and I won't need you after today," she said. She couldn't quite forget just yet what Julia had seemed for a while to mean, and that's why she said it that way instead of the way her better self knew she should: "You're lazy and immoral and get out."

Julia was certainly surprised. She didn't say anything for a minute and then she said "Okay," and went sauntering off, leaving a tub full of diapers. Gertrude had no washing machine because while Julia did the washing it wasn't necessary. Gertrude cried, but Julia was gone by then and didn't know. Gertrude stood over the tub and scrubbed the diapers on the scrub board and rinsed them with her tears.

Earl was right. She wasn't as sick as she thought. If she kept one hand pushed hard against the pain, she could do everything she was supposed to. Her skin didn't split and let her insides pour out. It was all just her imagination that it was going to. Maybe her work took a lot longer than as if she'd had two hands free, but what did she need to save time for? She couldn't chase the children, but she solved that problem too, by shutting them in one room and not caring how messy they made it during the day, and then cleaning it after they were asleep.

It was not easy, and yet there was a satisfaction in that struggle to grow up. Earl was right. You can do what you know you have to. Earl certainly made a woman of her. She was grateful. Anything's hard until you face up to it. It got to be a point of pride with Gertrude, not to give in no matter how she felt. She wouldn't care to be soft and self-indulgent like other women. They didn't even deserve the name of women, because they couldn't do what Gertrude could. And she couldn't have done it either if it hadn't been for Earl. God bless Earl.

LA BELLA DRUSOLINA

HELEN NEVILLE

Prince, duke and baron
mastered my thighs,
got drunk on my youth.
I give thanks for their lust
that kept me alive,
like a cut flower
in a porcelain vase.

Now they are dead.
I'm a dried-up pod
the bones of a meal,
the stains in the glass,
a cracked fingernail, a skin
shattered with lines.

I that was meat, drink and flower
what else should I be?

EPITHALAMION

HELEN NEVILLE

I lie in my enemy's arms,
alone as an unborn child;
our brief and total war
brought to its usual truce
in kisses milder than sleep
braving the marble of
our Elizabethan death.

His gun cocked in my womb
released its folded miles
in a blaze of bullets aimed
at a red and primal wound,
prudently gloved against
such an incontinent raid.
(I could not bear to bear
any child of his making.
Let his semen rage like hate,
but leave no trace of its raging—
no leaf to brand a furrow,
or dance to waken the dead.)

If he were my father or brother,
I could not hate him more—
this enemy, this other
who builds his flight in me.

Spread like a Nazi gauleiter
over my rivers and towns;
locking me up in the skin
of a merry-go-round regime;
smalling me down to the size
of my metaphysical thighs.
I could not love him more,
if he were my murderer.

Like a six-year-old he lies,
naked as innocence;
his small and semen-drained prick
sleeping against his thigh
as a toy sleeps in the dark.
It is I who have done this thing—
I'm as much of a killer as he!
My womb's a castration-machine.
And simple is my love
for a ruin so complete,
a prince become a frog
in the Endor of my guts,
I forgive him for everything:
he's as much of a child as I,
as dear to me as my skin.

I could hold him against my skin,
or hide like Mrs. Tom Thumb
in the palace of his thumb—
if I didn't know that tomorrow
he'd be new again as the sun,
creating in his blindness
that brief insurgent summer,
beneath whose falling leaves
I lie in all my graves.

DESIGN IS ALL

SYLVIA BERKMAN

Gabriella appeared in the doorway of the terrace, flashing toward her brother a look of melancholy joy. "Renato, think!" she cried. "I have lost three pounds! This morning! On the scales!"

Renato half lifted his heavy lids. In his crimson silk-faced bathrobe falling in ample curves he sat like an old Tintoretto cardinal, the full lips sensuous, the domed forehead stern. He raised one hand in tribute. "It is an event of historical importance," he proclaimed.

Gabriella gave a mordant smile; but she began to flutter and fuss, as she always did when she was pleased. "Renato! What you think! Get yourself dressed! Today the signorina comes at nine! You eat breakfast out here?"

At his stately nod she vanished, neat hurrying footsteps tapping toward the kitchen hard. She managed his household with efficient zeal. That was her vocation, to cherish and serve, as it had been his vocation to express his art. The tall white house in which they lived, off Brattle Street on the rise of the hill, maintained a sober New England appearance outside: low picket fence edging the pavement; brick walk rimmed at the splices with tendrils of grass; green shutters; narrow-paned windows; a big level yard, almost a field, behind. But within, Gabriella's spirit prevailed—no object flimsy, aluminum, or synthetic allowed. The fine lace curtains hung ceremonious, flanked by rich velvet drapes; at every ornamental boss the massive furniture gleamed; strong colors glowed vivid in cushions and scarves. This was her achievement, grateful to Renato. It brought to the heart of this present world that other world he had renounced: in his

youth, in the nineteen twenties, when principle and passion had robbed him of his heritage.

He sat now thoughtful, watching the sunlight cast an arabesque of shadow leaves upon the floor. The warm air brushed his face like softest balm. From the great terracotta tubs bordering the plate-glass walls a pungent fragrance drifted: the first bold roses were in flower; later came the season of those more delicate, tinted ivory and golden cream. He breathed profoundly, expanding the flared nostrils of his fierce archaic nose. Not a subtle odor perhaps; but strong, invigorating, true. Reaching forward, he touched a blossom lightly; a shower of bright petals fell. He caught a pinch between his fingers, savoring one after the other with judicious care. The taste was faintly acrid, faintly sweet.

What did one harvest, at the last? He could visualize his life, like a small compact image of the globe marked with continents and seas upon which he now endeavored to trace the voyage of a tiny figure, thrusting in the colored pins here and here and here. The graph was false of course.

Yet the record was important, or it seemed to be. He had no wish to make public the story of his life, though it was interesting he believed as a reflection of the decades he had survived; but the story of his press, his little Nemi Press, which he had founded in a miserable garret beyond the Back Bay railroad yard—that story belonged to the annals of typography, and should be honorably preserved. The trouble was, the two stories interlocked at so many vital points. The very founding of the Nemi was rooted in pain; but old pain grows thin, and disintegrates.

Suppose she had not died, Christine? He could not now imagine any other arrangement than Gabriella's companionship. That marriage had held the seeds of discord from the start. Christine was secret, intent; fixed on the axis of her own desires. She could not understand the natural attitude a woman should harbor toward a man. Gabriella knew, with a knowledge running deep within her blood. But she—she had had whims and fancies of her own, at what hour they would dine, what habits he must drop, what persons he must cultivate. She objected to Gabriella's presence in the house; she did not recognize the sacred bonds of kin. Gabriella, seventeen years old, subdued and frightened in a strange land; and very useful, a willing courier to them both. More—Christine had dared to oppose his Press. It had no future she said. She had dared, in her blind pride, to oppose his

destiny. Renato brushed the last rose petals from his lap. All that violent strife converted to a little heap of ashes in the end.

Writing was hard—biting his lips, biting the pencil, the house utterly silent under Gabriella's command, transferring from his brain to clean white paper the stark residue of experience. Two years ago he had dissolved the Press. He wanted no successors: hackneyed imitators, cheap exhibitionists. His full lips curled, showing the strong white teeth. Let the glory of the Nemi start and end with him. Medals, testimonials, certificates, inscriptions—the drawers of his desk were stuffed full of those. What mattered was the making, the shaping; the problem to be met and overcome; the balance struck between type-character and space. That was the heart of it—the perilous equilibrium between substance and space. It was the same with this terrace he had built; it was the same with every human act. The distracting, the irrelevant, must be stripped away. Design is all, he thought with a smile.

The smile quickened as Gabriella tapped through the doorway carrying a tray held high. He raised himself on his elbows to look: immaculate cloth, thin shining dishes, a smooth brown egg in a china cup, gleaming silver pitchers of coffee and hot milk, rolls in a wicker basket, a chip of amber marmalade in a tiny shell.

"Beautiful," he said, rubbing his hands together, as though he had never in his life set eyes on one of Gabriella's breakfast trays.

"Eat! Eat, Renato!" Gabriella cried. "At nine, the signorina comes!" She stood poised for a moment on her brisk little legs, her mournful gaze fixed on the open door of the terrace and the stretch of yard beyond. "Is time," she observed with dark significance.

Renato did not answer. Time to cut the grass or prune the hedge or weed the flower plots—those were Gabriella's concerns. She could always find an impecunious boy. But he looked up idly, following her glance. "Ha!" he exclaimed.

Since the morning before, the copper beech tree standing at the farthest boundary of the yard had changed. Yesterday the leaves had clustered like a flock of crinkled garnet butterflies, delicate and dense. When the wind blew, a thin red ripple stirred. He had examined the leaves, marveling at the perfect order of the

veins raying out to each oval tip. The big trunk rose noble in its smooth smoky coat marked with crepuscular signs, smudged crescents, smudged hieroglyphs; but the young leaves fluttered jocund like a woodsy covenant. Now they had come into green, a somber mysterious tone still holding a glint of bronze along the underside.

"Gabriella, look," Renato said. "The beech. In one night, a miracle."

Gabriella turned upon him, jerking her shoulders high. Under the dark puffs of hair piled above her forehead her melancholy eyes flashed. "Renato, eat!" she begged. "At nine, at nine, she comes. Never mind trees."

Renato shook out his napkin with a courtly flip. "For each thing, there exists a predestined shape," he began, rapping the firm brown egg. "Well, you have lost some pounds you say. Tell me, you think this alters your predestined shape?" No smile in the world more beatific than Renato's teasing smile.

Gabriella merely tipped her scornful nose aloft. He had picked up his spoon; she could leave him now.

But this morning the current signorina—the Radcliffe graduate student employed to scrutinize Renato's prose—was late. His English was sound enough; he preferred his own flavor; but in matters of idiom and punctuation he must also be correct. He paid well for this service; of willing signorinas there was never any lack, in spite of the rigid rules he imposed. The student must be superlatively recommended; she must always appear in skirts; no scrap of his writing might be taken from the house; all questions and suggestions must be reserved for a twenty-minute period at the beginning of each day. For the rest, she must perform her duties mute, secreted in a distant room.

It was an excellent scheme, when it did not break down. Already in the past sixteen months three girls had departed, "for natural causes" as Renato put it to himself. This pale attenuated successor—Miss Church, Ariadne Church—was still strange: a tall thin-boned girl with straight blond hair which she wore sometimes severely coiled, sometimes hanging loose. Beautiful eyebrows, long and clear above the long gray eyes; a rather short nose, as though the sculptor's chisel had drawn its stroke just a pulsebeat too soon—a Michelangelo face, modeled broad at the cheekbones and brow, tapering to the chin. A quality of the statue invested her whole bearing as well, a containment, a removal. Renato found her cold.

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Renato gave a benevolent smile. Not a beautiful woman, Miss Cruett, but a treasure of absolute loyalty. And skinny Albert the foreman through the whole duration of the Nemi, never graying by a single hair from year to year, standing by the clattering presses pulling his acrid grin, as the sheets piled up, piled up, in

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Gabriella believed she did not eat enough.

He disliked these times of change. He thought tenderly of the others who had gone—the little rolypoly one with the amusing waggle of the hips; the stalwart one in burly sweaters; the nervous one peering hard from behind big spectacles. He had never paid them much attention to be sure; but when each went—to be married, to teach in Wyoming or Kentucky—he felt offended and bereft. This new Miss Church was the prettiest, and he took pleasure in a pretty face. Nevertheless, she must be punctual.

Sitting at the desk in his study an hour later, brushed and ample in his soft easy clothes, Renato scowled, tapping his tortoiseshell ruler against lips. The girl's defection had angered him. She had not come at all; she had not even telephoned. Who was she, that white-faced little chit, to take liberties with his time? Locked in her own concerns, indifferent to his! Let her be warned! He scratched a message to Gabriella, driving the penpoint hard. But in a moment he crumpled the paper and picked up the ruler again.

He was subject to rage, the crack, the blast, that made him stammer and clutch. They had always known at the Press when to scuttle out of his path or rush pellmell to pull the fresh proof sheets he required. He was not actually ferocious, as the workmen realized; but in that critical moment of judgment, when type font, size, the disposition of space, all must be beaten into perfect harmony—if only he could pierce through to perfect harmony—he could brook no irrelevance.

The workmen understood. They shared his triumphs. That had contributed its part: so that the Press had survived even the bleak thirties and the war years afterward; that, and the fact that he had never refused to undertake the humblest job. Whatever the material craft was craft. "Pies like mothers"—he remembered that copy from the little corner cafe' that had almost immediately failed. Miss Cruett the proofreader had raised a terrible fuss, with her lips drawn wide and her irregular upper tooth aglint. She could suffer tortures over a missing apostrophe. Renato gave a benevolent smile. Not a beautiful woman, Miss Cruett, but a treasure of absolute loyalty. And skinny Albert the foreman through the whole duration of the Nemi, never graying by a single hair from year to year, standing by the clattering presses pulling his acrid grin, as the sheets piled up, piled up, in

immaculate array. "Well, there she is. That'll make 'em sit up and take notice I bet."

Those were the best hours of existence, when the clear imprinted sheets fell from beneath the moving plates. Mechanism operated now; but before that he, Miss Cruett, Albert, the workmen, all were fused, a single living organism focused on a single goal. Though the controlling intellect was his, they participated in the making too. Between them they had wrought a firm enduring fabric of shared experience.

Renato flung the ruler on his desk and thrust back his chair. This act of recollection was painful—dredging the bucket deep deep into the mossy well shaft of the past to bring up troubled waters thick with sentiment. Who would realize when his history of the Nemi was complete that each notation was a skeleton, extracted from the web of sodden flowers and weeds? At the window, puckering his lips to an irritable line, he stared at the copper beech tree in the yard. The full fresh verdure shimmered mocking in the sun.

He did not feel old. His step was sure, the contour of his jawbone strong. Brain and eye stayed keen. The pleasures of good food and wine had not dimmed. When he took his place at the head of the table the delicate blended odor of Gabriella's sauces and roasts sent a fillip of delight throughout his flesh. "Again a masterpiece." Gabriella would raise her hands to push her combs into place. "Is not too dry, Renato? Come, take this better part." For almost forty years she had been cajoling him to "take this better part." And had insulated him against the urge toward marriage again, he thought. The thought was unjust he knew. No: he had been singed, singed and cauterized for life in eighteen months, through Christine. Then suddenly, she was snuffed out.

The photographs meant nothing to him now; he could look at them unmoved, though he seldom did—a slender girl smiling or grave, a careful lock of hair brushed low across one eye, in a jacket and pleated skirt, a short flounced dress, a sequined evening gown. But still, even today, if he took from the shelves any of the books he had designed in that winter he caught a whiff of complicated pain.

Extinction of the adversary—that stuns a man. For the adversary must be vanquished, the adversary must yield. In the whirlpool of confusion he had suffered he had more than once glimpsed the quick black coiling worm of a terrible doubt. Logic rejected the thought; it rejected it now. Christine was

measured and cool; persistent; deliberate. Hysteria formed no part of her character. She was capable of an extremity of vengeance, yes; but never at her own cost. Yet if occult powers should be presumed, the will—his will—in a moment of rage might invoke the deed. She had died instantly in the automobile crash.

Renato looped the cord of the windowshade tight around his wrist, staring fiercely across the yard. One made. . .one made. . .out of guilt, out of grief, out of failure, out of all the dark submerged experience one did not often confront, one made, one tried to make—something shapely, something unassailable. That was the year, the year of the accident, in which he had finally established his distinctive style. Probably very few people in the world would ever realize that Caslon type for example, in its clear unadorned dignity, of just this size, in its relationship to just this micrometric appointment of space, constituted pure essence, pure balance, and therefore art—just these two naked elements wrought into a perfect unity. Design is all, he thought again; but this time he did not smile.

So—Christine had been removed, and he had continued his predestined work. The figure in the photograph was merely a figure in a photograph now. But sometimes as he sat on the terrace of late, he was troubled by the thought that a difference in forty years of moldering was after all not much, that between older and younger bones there was little to choose. And nobody won. He pulled the sinewy cord tighter about his wrist, then flung it off. The little rap against the windowpane made him start. The sound was echoed by a rap at the door. "Well?" he cried, relieved.

Gabriella peered in, pressing urgently through the narrow slit she allowed herself. "The signorina, Miss Church. At half past ten, she can come. What you say, Renato? She waits." She clasped her hands as though in prayer. "Is a pay telephone."

Renato considered. He could be lofty and stern; or, since his morning was already broken, he could receive the girl. What excuse would she offer, if she deigned to offer an excuse at all? He smiled unworthily, imagining those marble eyelids fluttering in distress. "Well, let her come," he answered. "On the terrace. Knock when she arrives."

He heard the click of her heels diminish, restored to benevolence. Gabriella never overstepped the boundaries of her own domain, though occasionally she

shot oblique arrows across. She was entitled to her allotment of feminine guile. He respected her rights completely, as she respected his. They quarreled often, shouting, clawing the air, reverting to the old childhood dialect; but the crackle soon expended itself. Gabriella would readily set her neck under the butcher's cleaver for his sake Renato knew.

From the time she could stagger on her own two feet she had followed him about, she the final little maiden after the string of boys, pensively keeping her distance lest he order her home. It had angered him to think that as he left the house, leaping down the steep stone steps of the alley—cats, chickens, pigeons flying off in fright—he must keep looking back until he had reached the safe harbor of the square. She should be chained up like a dog, he raged. But one morning she had trailed him halfway round the circuit of Lake Nemi, his crystalline blue Nemi, clumping along unnoticed in her thick laced shoes and long flapping dress. Early springtime that day, a soft pale golden radiance showering the path, a taste of moisture in the air, bouncing at the horizon the sound of wood being chopped. He had turned to beckon her near once he caught sight of her, unwillingly amused at the bobbing little figure, unwillingly touched, and she came stumbling forward at a run beaming like a tawny piece of fruit. She trudged beside him, circumspect with bliss. Later she spied a cluster of wild cyclamens pushing up from their bed of damp old leaves. "Renato! Ecco!" she screamed. Together they knelt to look. The fringy petals, faint pink with a dark velvet rim, hung poised like gossamer moths. Gabriella breathed hard in noisy gulps. Her big eyes searched his face. "Ecco!" she said again. Then she rose, brushing off her dress.

Crossing back to the study window, Renato stared out vaguely at the copper beech. What a clutter the attic storerooms of the mind retained, to tumble helterskelter from the shelves—and how much crushed to rubble underfoot, piling to a new level the substructure of one's life. One made camp, actually, on one's own burial ground. He gave a dry appreciative snort: he must repeat that to Gabriella. How she would bridle and flush!

Still. . . Still. . . Poor Miss Cruett, almost blind and bald, living in her tiny apartment perched under the eaves, forever fiddling with some dreadful concoction in a saucepan on the stove. He must force himself to visit her again. In fact

as well as memory he cherished the idea of Miss Cruett; but the dense moldy smell of her garments, the clots of food encrusted on the floor, the slippery film coating her teacups and plates always made him cringe. And that avalanche of garrulity shot through with pointless mirth— Albert had died, the year after the Press was dissolved.

With a vicious shrug Renato strode toward his desk. Tap, tap, tap of the ruler against his palm. Why should he dwell upon decay? He was rational, he was hale; he had years of work ahead. If life appeared disorderly and drifting, one must curb life to one's control, extract the pattern with one's fists, with one's intelligence, from the crass material. Had he not done so with the books he had shaped? They remained, guarded in collections throughout the world. All this brooding because the schedule of his morning had been disturbed. Pah! He would warn that girl when she came. He would crack that icy sheath, he would make those cheeks burn red, he would kindle a spark in the cool blank eyes!

He stiffened at the sudden flash of rage exploding in his chest. That particular quality of rage belonged to Christine—the constriction, the suffocation, the angry shaking of the mouth, the need to clutch and choke, to hammer, to destroy; while Christine stood smooth and obdurate as an ivory fish.

Instantly the seizure passed. He sat at his desk dismayed; then to his astonishment his spirits began to rise. As he leaned back in his chair a subtle sardonic smile glimmered about his lips. Elated, was he? that the ancient coals still blazed. Of the cardinal human failings vanity ranked first and last. He swept one hand through the air, an inconclusive brushing motion, and let it fall. At Gabriella's knock he answered humorously.

Miss Church was waiting at the open door of the terrace, in a dark gray sweater and skirt, looking out. The slender neck, the thin straight line of the shoulders, the pale blond hair scooped high, gave her an aspect both vulnerable and very bleak against the bright scarlet of the roses in their tubs. When she turned to face him Renato was startled at the heavy sunken rings about her eyes, the dazed bearing of the head.

In a rapid voice she explained: she was terribly sorry; she was leaving the University, giving up graduate work, pulling out for good. Tomorrow at the latest; today if possible.

"So if you could settle up the account," she went on, holding the thumb of each hand tight against the gathered fingers. "If you could make it in cash. I'd be terribly grateful."

"Well, of course," Renato said. "Naturally. Consult my sister Gabriella as you leave."

He lingered a moment in silence. The long fine stroke of her eyebrows, the tender modeling of the chin, stirred a nagging impulse in his heart to speak to her out of his wisdom. She appeared now merely a pitiable waif, numb and hurt too soon. Importantly, he was roused to make her notice him before she went. He stepped beside her to the open door.

"You see that tree over there?" he began, touching her arm, with a flourish toward the copper beech. She did not even nod. "Well, that is my tree. I could go out and cut him down. But I could not any more go out and cut him down than I could go out and kill a man." Was she listening? Renato became more genial, talking as one talks to a stubborn child. "But at some times I think—when I am gone, he will be here, fifty, a hundred, two hundred years after, and—I abominate my tree."

"I could go out and cut it down," the girl said. "I could go out and kill a man too."

"No, no," Renato told her quickly, pleased that she had spoken. "You believe so only, in this moment, now." He tried to draw her gaze through the magnetic power of his voice. "You see, there is a pattern to events, a predestined shape. To find this pattern, to remove distraction, to create a balance—that is the principle. You will come to understand in time. Design, design is all."

But as she turned away, wrapped in her icy solitude, the words seemed to echo meaningless within his brain.

MAN/MANKIND

KATHLEEN ERNST

I mean sometimes I just get tired.
Just tired.
I have to stop
sit down.

You know,
I want to be with you
but the effort is too much.
The games you play—
the rules
the rules. . . .

THE BUTCHER SHOP

MYRNA LAMB

Time: Now.

Place: A butcher shop. Some carcasses. Some big hooks. Some knives and cleavers.

At Rise: The boss sits on a bench and the man sits at the other end of it. The man functions as a kind of mirror or echo. The cigar in the boss's mouth is lit. The cigar in the man's mouth is dead.

THE BOSS: It's immoral.

THE MAN: What is?

THE BOSS: I say it's immoral.

THE MAN: Is it?

THE BOSS: It's you.

THE MAN: Me.

THE BOSS: You. Or something to do with you.

THE MAN: Is it my . . . ?

THE BOSS: It's your failure.

THE MAN: It's my . . . ?

THE BOSS: Failure. You've worked thirty years. Thirty years.

THE MAN: Thirty years.

THE BOSS: Yes. How can you face me? Yourself? Your wife?

THE MAN: My wife?

THE BOSS: Your wife. Immoral.

THE MAN: Immoral?

THE BOSS: Immoral.

THE MAN: My wife?

THE BOSS: Yes. That's it. You dwell on it so.

THE MAN: I . . . ?

THE BOSS: Yes. You. You think about her all the time. You can't concentrate on your work.

THE MAN: My work?

THE BOSS: Your work, you think about . . . I know what you think about.

THE MAN: About?

THE BOSS: About can-can stockings.

THE MAN: Stockings?

THE BOSS: How much they cost . . .

THE MAN: They cost?

THE BOSS: Yes, they cost. Women like that.

THE MAN: Like that?

THE BOSS: I don't like that in you. In her. It's a crime.

THE MAN: A crime?

THE BOSS: When she bends over you . . . you can see her breasts.

THE MAN: Her breasts?

THE BOSS: They don't look much different today then they did when she was sixteen.

THE MAN: Sixteen?

THE BOSS: When you were sixteen you were very handsome.

THE MAN: Handsome?

THE BOSS: You had a magnificent body. Your hair was black. Your eyes so green, your mouth turned down a bit at the corners . . .

THE MAN: My body? My hair? My eyes? My mouth?

THE BOSS: It's indecent.

THE MAN: Indecent?

THE BOSS: Your age is no excuse.

THE MAN: No excuse?

THE BOSS: You should have kept yourself in condition.

THE MAN: Condition?

THE BOSS: Exercise. Clean living. Good food. Lots of rest. At night.

THE MAN: At night?

THE BOSS: At night. I suppose she's there sometimes. That incredible skin. I'd like to manufacture it. What quality! Skin.

THE MAN: Skin?

THE BOSS: You dwell on it so. That is your main problem.

THE MAN: Your main problem?

THE BOSS: No! Not mine. I haven't time. There's a new building going up tomorrow. My name will be seventy feet high. How high will your name be?

THE MAN: My name?

THE BOSS: Your name. Her name. Does she know it? Does she look at you? What does she see?

THE MAN: Does she see?

THE BOSS: She sees what's left of you. No hair. Cataracts. A grayness on your skin. A slackness in your flesh. Your lips sunken in, almost gone. No woman would want to kiss that mouth. No woman.

THE MAN: No woman?

THE BOSS: Never mind about women. Take insurance companies . . .

THE MAN: Insurance companies?

THE BOSS: Are they objective enough for you? You can't consider it my prejudice. Or hers. Can you? You can't get a policy, can you? On your life? And whenever they can, they cancel, don't they? Bad risk. Ask them? They know.

THE MAN: They know?

THE BOSS: They know. Everybody knows. Your car. Just stands there, doesn't it? Legally parked. A woman sees it. She knows. She backs into it. "Didn't know it was there." Didn't she though! She knew. Or sideswipes it. Just missed you, sitting there innocently. "What were you doing there?" she yells. Well, don't worry. She knew what you were doing there. And if you stop at a red light on the way home from your father's funeral, the chief mourner knows enough to ram you from behind. They all know. But the insurance companies are objective. You can rely upon what they know. What they know, you can rely upon. And they know that you are a bad risk. Tainted. With your immorality.

THE MAN: My immorality?

THE BOSS: Look at you. You're dying, aren't you? Well, do you think it's proper to do it in that public way, in front of everyone? Dragging everyone, everything around you into your private gravepit? Decomposing before everyone's eyes? Is it right?

THE MAN: It isn't right.

THE BOSS: Darned right it isn't right.

THE MAN: No, it isn't right.

THE BOSS: I'm glad you're beginning to see the light.

THE MAN: I shouldn't be dying here in front of everybody.

THE BOSS: No, you shouldn't.

THE MAN: I shouldn't have been impotent in front of men.

THE BOSS: Never.

THE MAN: I shouldn't have disappointed women.

THE BOSS: Not that woman.

THE MAN: I shouldn't have felt or looked the way I did. When I was young.

THE BOSS: It was unfair.

THE MAN: I shouldn't have promised so much.

THE BOSS: There was your sidelong look. There was your uncompromising silence. An attenuated anticipation.

THE MAN: I didn't have to talk. They looked at me and promised themselves.

THE BOSS: But remember. It was your fault. Remember that.

THE MAN: I am remembering.

THE BOSS: Well, just don't forget it. Remember it.

THE MAN: I am remembering.

THE BOSS: Yes.

THE MAN: I am remembering.

THE BOSS: (Silence.)

THE MAN: I am remembering.

(Impales himself on meat hook.)

THE BOSS: (Scratches a match absentmindedly on his carcass as he lights a fresh cigar.)

THE NEW LOST FEMINIST

RITA MAE BROWN

"A case of jam tomorrow and never jam today."
Alice in Wonderland

In the twilight of the Supreme Court
Wrinkled robed children
Passed judgment on whistling lollipops
And women.
Goliath staggers, his briefcase hemorrhaging with deals,
The Court hears the last appeal
For a land where means do not devour ends.

The underground railway smuggles giant blacks
And glistening women to hidden empires
Beneath the polar caps.

America's rotting rib cage frames the gallows
Of her putrid goals,
Now the nation rolls to stand on its feet
An upturned crab as decayed as its prey.
The young vomit and turn away.

Underground stations fill with blacks,
Women and the young
Fleeing a Troy that has built its own horse
America becomes a bloated corpse.

TRAPS

SASHA DAVIS

As the Orient Express lumbers slowly into the sub-freezing Munich Hauptbahnhof (and I fresh from Cadiz!) to spew me onto the platform into the arms of my waiting husband, I am the mistress of no grand schemes. I know only that I have slightly under two minutes in which to bundle myself up, gather my dictionaries and belongings, fish out my ticket, and find the precise and perfect English words with which to shed my spouse. I know he will be waiting, smiling at the end of the platform, just one step beyond the ticket puncher, perhaps already holding out to me one of those sausages for which Munich station is so famous and which—damn him—he knows I love. There won't be a moment to experiment with attitude or wording. By now I know that to wait and see is really to hesitate, and to hesitate is to lose. I have already in my three long years of bondage to Frank wasted too many chances of getting free by taking aim at him. This time I must get him square between the eyes on the first shot or he will get me. He has all the advantages of age and sex and power. But all the disadvantages too. If I speak out the truth I am free. Simple as that.

The letdown of getting settled into a pair of glum furnished rooms in this dreary northern European city that lacks even the distinction of being a capital catapulted me south. Frank had his work; I had my nothing. Munich is certainly no place to spend a winter cooped up with a possessive husband in one of those postwar windowless houses six blocks beyond the last stop of the streetcar line; a house with endless locks and keys, a spying landlady, and no telephone. Only Fulbrights for friends in a foreign land. A waste of my youth!

"Go on to Spain, then; enjoy yourself," he had said reluctantly when I showed him my ticket. "Get it out of your system. Try to pick up a little Spanish while you're there; I'll bring some books for you from the library." But if I should really enjoy myself, how would I ever get it out of my system? I enjoyed myself too much to answer the letters he sent me care of every American Express office south of here. I would have had to answer them with lies, and I want to live open and clean.

Well, my chance to prove it is coming up fast. If he will only give me half the money I'll clear clean out of his life. He can keep the apartment and the furniture, no alimony, finish out the year here, and wait till New York for the lawyers. Simply reroute. I will go to . . . Paris. Let him decide what to tell our friends; let him think of a story for the family. Let him save his face any way he can. Mine will take care of itself.

As the train screeches to a stop, I take a final look into my mirror. Not bad, not good. I am losing my power to judge, now that I am twenty-three. I smooth my bangs over my eyes, fluff up my hair at the crown, flex my smile. Looking good makes everything easier. But I feel old—twenty-three and married and old; a has-been like last year's Miss America. Please God, let me be beautiful at least until after my money runs out.

The rosy-cheeked clergyman with whom I have shared this compartment is saying *"Auf Wiedersehn, Fraulein"* and extending his pudgy hand. These hand-shaking Germans. "Bye-bye," I say. They love it when you say bye-bye. His chattering away at me in German since just past Nancy has chased the Spanish rhythms from my ears and has made me postpone my preparations until the last possible moment. And now he is insisting that I leave the compartment first, when I need every extra second. *"Bitte,"* he says holding the door for me and waiting. *"Danke,"* I say. And abandoning the last possibility of flight, I walk onto the platform into the lion's lair.

There is the lion himself, just as I expected him, a step beyond the ticket puncher, grinning now that he has spotted me, and carrying an armful of anemones. As though I were returning from a short trip exactly on schedule.

Get him! But my words are not ready.

Achtung! Achtung! blasts the loudspeaker, as Frank glides up to me and

gains the advantage by speaking first. Well, let him. I'll have the last word: bye-bye.

"Hi, baby. Welcome back. Did you have a good time?" He is all smiles. He holds out the flowers to me. Flowers! They are the first flowers he has ever bought me; he is pulling something. Once when I was his student he got out of the car to pick a fistful of buttercups to turn our chins yellow. But that was different. These flowers are premeditated. How hateful of him to bring anemones that I love, that open and close and grow taller so gaudily right before your eyes, like a time-lapse film. It is as though he *knows* . . . But suddenly it strikes me that of course he doesn't know. In this moment I know everything and Professor knows nothing. It is I who will act, I who have the advantage. I am ready to exert my power—the only kind of power a woman may have. Until last night when I wired him from the station of my imminent arrival on the Orient Express, he must have considered me one of the missing or departed; now he thinks I am his wife come home from a little trip. He doesn't even suspect that I intend to leave him forever. He thinks I will let him correct my spelling and teach me German, that I will cook him weisswurst and entertain his friends and explore Bavarian churches while he does his work, and be flattered to belong to him. He doesn't even suspect the truth. I avoid his kiss by thrusting my suitcase at him. He puts it down. With one arm around my back he squeezes my shoulders and places a husbandly kiss on my cheek. "Welcome home," he says tenderly with the joy of possession, each syllable visible as a puff of steam in the freezing air of the station.

His words are visible objects in the air. And where are my words?

It is all I can do to keep my knees from trembling. Can he not have noticed how rotten I look? It should be so easy for me simply to blurt out the truth. Then why does it seem to be such a dirty business instead? Maybe because I know Frank believes exactly what he wants to believe, no more, no less. His cup of tea does not include the dregs, though the dregs are the tea. His brew is nothing but vapor.

"God, I missed you. Why didn't you write?" he asks. But of course he doesn't allow me to answer such a dangerous question. Quickly he asks instead, "What happened to you?" switching me over in that single phrase from active to passive agent.

How I wish I could tell him that nothing happens to me, that it is I who happen to them, true or not. How I wish I could tell him . . . "A lot happened," I say. *Now. Tell him now.* But the loudspeaker interrupts with its *Achtungs* and I lose my nerve.

"I was worried about you. Didn't you get my letters? I wrote you everywhere I could think of. Well. Now you've traveled. I hope *that's* finished? I hope it's all out of your system. Now that you're back, I'll never let you out of my sight again. God, I missed you." A train starting up drowns him out. He squeezes my arm and yells, "Come on. Let's get some sausages and you can tell me all about your adventure. Here, take these." He succeeds this time in handing me the flowers; then he picks up my suitcase. Why is everything nice he does for me a bribe or a favor, while my kindnesses to him are my duty? Now he is going to try to stall off my revelations with sausages, buy my silence with anemones. Out of the corner of my eye, I watch him bouncing too jovially along through the station carrying my bag, his long legs rushing ahead of him as though they had some place important to take him, and I know it is only a matter of moments until the right words will come to me, the words with which to tell him the truth. I will use his words, his vaporous vocabulary—all the words he has taught me and imposed upon me.

"Frank. Wait. Before we go for sausages there's something I have to tell you."

"What?" he asks smiling at me. Always smiling. He doesn't even put down my suitcase or slow his walking to hear what I have to say. He doesn't seem to remember that all the while I was away I didn't write him a single letter. *Not one letter!*

"I was unfaithful to you, Frank." Casually I brush the bangs out of my eyes. "In Cadiz."

He doesn't alter a muscle, not even to drop the smile. But I know I have struck him. I can proceed, knowing the words will come easily. How much better to tell the truth than to try to hide it. Now only the formalities can keep me here and for only a little while, like the waiting around after a funeral, and then I shall be free to go.

But I take no chances. Solemnly, officially, I say, "I know how you feel

about it. I know that's the end of us." His turn now.

Yes he has heard me. He begins to slow down. Finally he stops walking entirely. He stands looking at me, picking up my suitcase and putting it down again, like a twitch. His mouth hangs open a little, letting the truth seep in. He wipes a hand on his overcoat. Then out he comes with it, his simple, all-purpose, eager, automatic response: "No!" Softly at first, then increasing in volume in minute increments of decibels. "No! No! No!" I know him well enough to recognize each one of them. What a variety of *no's*, relieved now and then by a synonym or a paraphrase: "You didn't," "I don't believe you," "It isn't true," "You couldn't have." A barrage of negatives. The *no's* allow me for another instant to hate him. *Listen to him!* I say to myself triumphantly, justifying. But there is really no time for that, and besides, justifying is a trap. No, I must simply press my advantage and be gone.

"Yes" I whisper to him, unsure of its effect. "Yes," I repeat softly between bites at the sausage stand, gently, trying to suppress the note of triumph. But there it is on the counter between us, gaudy as the anemones, our basic matrimonial dispute: "No!" "Yes!" "I won't let you!" "I shall!" "It's a lie!" "It's the truth!" "You didn't!" "Oh, but I did!"

Unfaithful! It is a word he can understand, a concept which he can manipulate. It is a clean, abstract, intelligible word, implying order. Order violated, but order all the same. Though he holds his face in his hands while I finish my last bite of sausage, I know he will be all right when I leave. He will wring his hands and say to our friends, "She was unfaithful," and he will believe in my corruption and his purity, and then he will get himself another wife.

"You leave me no choice at all. That's it, you know," he says threateningly.

"I know," I say, accepting the gambit.

He looks at me hard, frowning and biting his lower lip the way he does when he is working, and then he risks asking me, "Don't you *care*?" Desperate question. What can I say to him? Poor guy, I know, but it's him or me. "I guess I don't love you any more. I don't belong to you any more." Well, it's the truth, anyway. I look down into my beer. After a suitable number of seconds have elapsed I take a swallow. (Any sooner and he would be able to say, *Put down your mug and listen to me!*)

"Haven't I allowed you everything? Everything? How could you do it to me? Why?"

To him. I shrug.

"Why did you feel you had to do it?"

Do it. He is slippery as sperm. No, no—I will not defend! "I didn't 'have to' do it. I felt like it."

"But why?"

"I don't know, I guess because there wasn't any reason *not* to."

"I'm the reason not to. Because you're married to me. Because you made a commitment. You promised me you wouldn't," he says puffing up. Puff. Puff.

Technically I did promise. But under protest. Now he will lose me on a technicality. I had promised only because he insisted, to calm him. Lies.

"But I didn't have to tell you about Cadiz, did I?" I say honestly. "So the promise wasn't really a reason not to *do* it, was it? It was only a reason not to *tell* you."

"Quite right. Yes. You promised at least not to tell me. But now you've told me. And now it's too late. Why did you have to tell me? I wish we could wipe it out and forget about it." He holds his face in his hands.

Would it be unkind of me to point out to him how often he had read my letters over my shoulder trying to find out? Does he want to know or doesn't he? Generously, I point out nothing. I try to get another drop of beer out of my stein, but there's nothing in it. Empty. Like Frank's cup of honesty.

"I told you because I know it will happen again. Because you won't let me breathe. It will happen again and you'll find out. I hate lies!"

He blows his nose, snorting loudly like an old man. I am embarrassed. It will make red veins on his nostrils and raise blue veins on his neck. Is he going to carry on in the railroad station? On the radio someone is singing a Deitrich song:

Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuss aus Leibe eingestelt,
Und das ist meine Welt, und sohns garnichts.

"If it's okay with you I'd like to go home now," I say, getting out my mirror. "I have a lot to do. I feel as though I haven't had a bath in a month.

I'll try to be out of here in a day or two, three at the most. That sound all right to you?" I look worse than I should; I've got to see a doctor. I put away the mirror and stand up.

"We'll need to talk a bit first," he says trying to compose himself.

"Okay. We can talk if you want." It's the least I can offer.

He gazes through to the back of my head, out of focus, saying nothing. I start to walk toward the exit. I know he will follow me. He leaves some money on the counter and catches up, lugging my suitcase with one hand, the anemones, which I had forgotten, in the other. He slides up in time to hand me back the flowers and open the door. At the curb he takes my elbow commandingly and guides me through the insane Munich traffic to the narrow island in the street in front of the station where the trolleys stop. Never forgets his place or mine. The same old promise: he'll open all my doors if I promise not to open any for myself. Oh, well, I am too weary to mind; let him protect me from the traffic, Munich is such a cold and hostile city.

On the island Frank gathers up his wits. "You don't *look* changed," he musters with a faint smile.

"Please. Let's not talk about how I look. I've been sick. One of the things I have to do before I leave is see a good German doctor."

"What's the matter?"

"I don't really know. I saw a doctor in Madrid, but he didn't help. These Catholic doctors. . ."

"What did he say?"

"Something about hormones. And he gave me some pills. But I'm afraid to take them. I think it's crazy to play around with hormones, don't you. I just hope I'm not pregnant," I say laughing and pushing my hair off my forehead.

"Pregnant?" He blinks.

"It's really very unlikely; I always used my diaphragm. It's just that I missed my last period. But that could be for a lot of reasons. They say it happens to lots of girls in Europe. They run around a lot and then they miss their periods."

He looks around to see if anyone is listening to our conversation. "How could you?" he whispers. As if anyone here could understand us or would care. All the people squeezed onto the narrow concrete island are straining to see what

number trolley is approaching or trying to keep the wind out of their faces. No one pays the slightest attention to us.

A number five trolley pulls up behind a number six and stops, bells clanging. We walk back to board the five. Frank puts down my suitcase and gets out a sufficient number of *pfennigs*. The conductor tears two tickets out of his book, punches each of them methodically in several secret places, exchanges them for Frank's coins and waves us on, giving the suitcase a shove.

Settled in the back of the car, Frank looks hard at me. "You planned it," he says.

"What?"

"You took your diaphragm with you. You planned to be unfaithful."

Oh, Christ. "I did not."

"Of course you did. Don't lie."

This time I refuse to answer. I am still saving my last word. It is not true that I "planned" it in the way that he means. But when you come right down to it, what difference does it make whether I left him two months ago or am leaving him now? Poor Professor, out of focus, worrying the wrong question.

"I never go anywhere without it—like you and your spare glasses. We have to look out for ourselves. But that's not 'planning' to use them." He doesn't answer. Perhaps he hasn't even heard me.

The trolley lurches to a stop, throwing me momentarily against Frank. For an instant our eyes meet and I see that his are filled with hate. Is it the hatred of the lion facing his tamer or his prey? Something has gone wrong. Quickly he focuses away. For the rest of the ride he sits absently in a pool of silence until we reach the end of the line. Not one word. But his silence doesn't fool me. I have already seen the hate. I know I may not let down my guard for an instant or he will spring. I suddenly feel afraid.

When the trolley stops at the end of the line we begin our six-block trudge through the snow-piled streets to the dreary house we live in. I carry the anemones; Frank carries my suitcase, his head bent in accusation. How infuriating! How dare he accuse me?

"What did you expect?" I shout. But the only reply I get is the thump-

thump of my suitcase against his leg.

Why am I afraid? Am I not free? I must get out of here. Fast.

Too late I realize I ought to have gone to a hotel; too late I see that the distance between the beds is not enough. Even in a separate bed I will be trapped under his ego.

I try to keep the conversation calm, but Frank will not stay calm. First he will talk about principles and then he will call me names. Oh, I know. If the argument doesn't go his way he will shift the grounds and Latinize, he will exaggerate his consonants and patronize. He will whisper *Quiet! Do you want Frau Werner to know what you are?* and I will lose my own control and shout:

"I don't give a shit what Frau Werner thinks! Or what you think either! I care what I think! And what I think is I'm leaving this house and this country and you and Frau Werner!"

"Shut up, you whore! You bitch! You selfish, castrating bitch!"

The names they use! My God, I think, how did I get into this? I had expected it to be so easy. Hadn't he threatened a thousand times to leave me if I were "unfaithful"? Talk about deceit! It is *his* word that is worthless. Always insisting that a bargain is a bargain—what about *his* side of the bargain? There should be nothing to it: my confession and punishment, a quick D-and-C, pack up, back on the Orient Express, and out of here. Otherwise time will go by and money will be wasted. I have little enough money and time to waste any more of either of them on him. I must not listen to his names! I must not let him manipulate me with assaults and arguments.

"You are trying to make me kick you out, but I won't," he threatens. "I'm still your husband. I have rights. If you want to leave me, you'll have to do the leaving. I can't stop you, bitch. But I'm not going to help you. Not one cent! You can whore your way around Europe!"

I decide not to answer. I don't need his permission, of course, but why point it out? Perhaps after a night's sleep he'll be calm and more sensible. I ask Frau Werner about getting a bath tonight, though it isn't our night to use the tub. She says of course, she will run my water. As I slip out of my clothes and reach for a towel she has placed on the door knob, Frank comes up behind me, yanks

the towel out of reach, almost knocks over the anemones, and unfastens my bra. The lion bares his teeth. As the bra hangs loose from my shoulders he slips his hands underneath and starts to fondle my breasts. "What are you doing?" I want to swat at his mosquito fingers and get on to my bath, but I hesitate. There is something desperate in his fast breath on the back of my neck, and I am afraid to fight. "You belong to me. You're my wife," he mumbles into my neck. If my nipples stiffen it is not by my design.

"Stop it," I say, trying to shake him off my shoulders. But he hangs on, squeezing my nipples in his fingertips. I begin to struggle in earnest. His breath on my neck excites me. I laugh nervously. "Please, Frank. No fair."

" 'Please, Frank, no fair,' " he mimics and adds, "bitch!"

I try not to answer him. He is very angry. Daddy. As I hesitate to use my nails on his wrists he pushes me onto one of the beds and deftly pins my wrists over my head. With a wrench of his head he shakes his glasses off; they drop to the floor. I have a picture of myself as a comicbook victim, strangling on my own bra, which is flopping around my throat, and I feel an almost uncontrollable urge to laugh. But Frank looks so helpless without his glasses, dewy-eyed and unfocussed, that, bitch or no, I struggle not to laugh at him. I will control my own impulse to be cruel. "Scream, then," he mumbles. And transferring both my wrists to one of his hands for an instant he prepares with a minimum of undressing to rape me. I can hardly suppress the laughter now. I try to think of other things. I wonder if Frau Werner is listening at the door and if the bath will overflow. "Don't! You'll be sorry!" I cry mainly for the record hoping not to smile, and then finally, as Frank ignores my wants and his kisses begin to tickle unbearably, "For God's sake, Frank, at least let me take the bra off and put in my diaphragm!" But nothing doing. "Forget the diaphragm," he says wryly, and to the accompaniment of my finally unsuppressable laughter, off we go on our last trip together.

Well, perhaps not quite our last. But what do I care? I'll be leaving soon enough. Let him do what he wants: I've still got the last word in reserve.

The last petal has fallen off the last anemone, and two weeks have passed since I came back to Munich. Every day at two o'clock the Orient Express pulls out of the station—without me. Why?

Why do I stay? Because I am trapped here, I guess; I'm caught in the old trap, a network of traps. It's so hard to explain. My nerve has deserted me; I'm afraid. I look so rotten. Where will I go that it won't be the same thing again? Where can I go? For what? On what? Escape is an illusion, like busywork, like buying things, like rearranging the furniture. All our bargains are one-sided. Why bother to jump from one frying pan into another frying pan? In two short weeks I have all but forgotten the face of my Spaniard. Here memories vanish as fast as Travelers' Checks. I have still not got my period. Are my breasts larger? I cannot tell: sometimes I think yes, sometimes no. I am frantic. I look terrible. Do my eyes peer out through the mask of pregnancy or do I simply have a case of the nerves or the clap? It should be easy to find out, but not here, not alone, not for me.

Frank will help me. He says I am his responsibility. He will escort me to the doctors; take the cure with me; if there's a baby, keep it with me. Lacking money and vocabulary, how can I get a D-and-C by myself? How can I even find out, by myself, how to find out?

Sometimes I think my life is just beginning; sometimes I think it's over. From Frank's viewpoint, of course, I'm very young. And just as beautiful, he says, as ever. He laughs when I tell him how old I feel, that twenty-three for me is impossibly, irreversibly old. Frank's opinion is tempting, but I don't know if it is correct. Must my idea of myself always be reflected through a man's? If only I knew whether I am young or old, ugly or beautiful. But I can't tell, and I am afraid that looks are everything. Past a certain age we can get no man at all. Better to be good; better, as a friend of mine says, to shut up and fuck. If I protest I am laughed at. If I explain I am laughed at. If I primp in the mirror I am laughed at. Taken seriously, I am called a bitch. If I try to get money with which to escape, I am called a whore.

Being in this ugly city depresses me. But how will I ever manage to leave, alone?

After doctors and agonies my periods have returned to normal. But Frank and I are reconciled. Oh, I suppose I knew it would happen. Frank says he knew all along. He's smug, as though *he* were doing *me* the kindness. Perhaps he has a

right to be smug: / am the defeated one here in Munich. We visit the Bavarian churches and taste the wines, and like a gentleman Frank tries to pretend nothing ever happened. But sometimes he will still ask me why I "did it," and why I told him. Can he have forgotten so quickly? "Don't you want to know the truth?" I ask in reply.

But the truth is he doesn't want to know the truth. He would rather make up some version of his own and stare at me silently with one of those accusing or self-pitying glances that are worse than his *no's*. And then screw his face into a tight little knot, red veins on his nose and blue ones on his neck, and say in a knotted hateful voice, "Sometimes I think you are really crazy!"

And why? Because I don't love him. A man thinks you're crazy if you don't love him your whole life long!

Perhaps one of these days, if I can only get up the money and the nerve, I'll chuck the whole thing, fill a suitcase with drip-dries and a bottle of Joy, and take the Orient Express out of here. If not to France then to Italy. Is twenty-three really so terribly old?

OCTOBER

ADELINE NAIMAN

All this gorgeous dying color
Is hunger stain, a matron's cry
Over spilt youth.

Spring needed no cosmetic—
Skin like new lettuce begged for nibbling,
Hair was a young lawn too pretty to mow,
Eyes danced bright as chickadees,
And woodland preceded parterre
In passion's protocol.

(Spring had forever to lavish.)

O Autumn, peacock and parrot,
Cold cream and corset me,
Burnish this unwilling leafage against white winter,
Blazon me with lipstick, and keep your damned apples—
I hunger for fruits long past their right season:
Asparagus, innocence, rhubarb, love. . . .

YAWN, HO!

JANE MAYHALL

Having flattered her, he doesn't have to
listen to her. "My god, are you beautiful!
You have the dimples of a Druid." Saddened,
after five or six years of listening to his
conceited compliments, she stitches up his
ego by not contesting assault. The next
moment, he's reading the paper. "Say, did you
come on this?" and he proceeds to enlighten
on a subject she knows so well, it would be
hard to excel on a *post-grad* efficiency card.
But, she never acts bored. Once, she tried to
tell it like it was; but he interrupted, and without
even having to raise his voice. Looking deep in
her eyes, the man did gently say: "What I like
about you is you never talk enough. A true woman,
I think, is a creature of mystery."

APHRA-ISMS

Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it, even as an accomplishment and recreation.

— Robert Southey (poet laureate of England), letter to Charlotte Bronte, 1837

"Take a *copia,* Miss Bronte."

— Advertisement for Olivetti Copying Machines, *New York Times,* 1969

I'll play dead like Skippy does when Ben says, "Roll over on your back, Skippy, and play dead." And Skippy rolls over and lies dead still. Until Ben says: "O.K. Good dog. O.K., Skippy. Now live." And Skippy jumps up. Alive and waiting for his doggy biscuit. O.K. Harriet. Play dead.

— Lila Karp, *The Queen Is in the Garbage,* 1969

It is Joyce in Dublin, for example, who chose "silence, exile and cunning," all conventional attributes of the defendant or the woman. (These are precisely the techniques, for example of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park,* the means by which

Fanny Price . . . saves herself. Submitted to emotional exile, she exerts silence and, in the narrow sense of knowing how to wait, cunning.)

— Mary Ellmann, *Thinking about Women,* 1968

Considering the length of time that women have been dependent, is it surprising that some of them hunger in chains, and fawn like the spaniel?

— Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Rights of Women,* 1795

Men, in their youth, are prepared for professions, and marriage is not considered as the grand feature in their lives; whilst women, on the contrary, have no other scheme to sharpen their faculties . . . To rise in the world, and have the liberty of running from pleasure to pleasure, they must marry advantageously, and to this object their time is sacrificed, and their person often legally prostituted.

— Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Rights of Woman,* 1795

"Oh, I think most women want to be married."
"So do most men, but they don't make it their prime aim in life."

— Cocktail party conversation, 1969

Mama [Jolie Gabor] said Zsa Zsa isn't planning to marry as far as she knows. "Zsa Zsa is already a millionaire and doesn't have to get married any more," explained Mama.

— Earl Wilson, syndicated column, 1969

It is acknowledged that they spend many of the first years of their lives in acquiring a smattering of accomplishments; meanwhile strength and beauty of mind are sacrificed to libertine notions of beauty, to the desire of establishing themselves—the only way women can rise in the world—by marriage.

— Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Rights of Woman,* 1795

He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief. Certainly the best

works, and of greatest merit for the public, have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men.

— Roger Bacon, *Essays,* 1597 (quoted by both Mary Wollstonecraft and Elizabeth Cady Stanton with regard to women.)

Stay single, young lady. Better to be Miss Somebody than Mrs. Nobody.

— Abigail Van Buren, *Dear Abby,* syndicated column, 1969

I agree . . . that man, too, suffers in a false marriage relation, yet what can his suffering be compared with what every woman experiences whether happy or unhappy? I do not know that the laws and religion of our country even now are behind the public sentiment that makes woman the mere tool of man. He has made the laws and proclaimed the religion; so we have his exact idea of the niche he thinks God intended woman to fill. A man in marrying gives up no right; but a woman, every right, even the most sacred of all — the right to her own person. There will be no response among women to our demands until we have first aroused in them a sense of dignity and independence; and so long as our present false marriage relation continues, which in most cases is nothing more nor less than legalized prostitution, woman can have no self-respect, and of course man will have none for her, for the world estimates us according to the value we put upon ourselves. Personal freedom is the first right to be proclaimed, and that does not and cannot belong to the relation of wife, to the mistress of the isolated home, to the financial dependent.

— Elizabeth Cady Stanton, letter, 1857

The concept of "conjugal rights" turns the act of love into legalized rape.

— Brigid Brophy, "The Immorality of Marriage," *Don't Never Forget,* 1967

I cannot discover why . . . females should always be degraded by being made subservient to love or lust. . . . To speak disrespectfully against love is, I know, high treason against sentiment and fine feelings; but I wish to speak the simple language of truth, and rather to address the head than the heart. To endeavour to reason love out of the world would be to out-Quixote Cervantes, and equally

offend against common sense; but an endeavour to restrain this tumultuous passion appears less wild.

— Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Rights of Woman,* 1795

. . . tell me Brutus,
Is it expected I should know no secrets
That appertain to you? Am I yourself
But as it were in sort of limitation
To keep with you at meals, comfort your bed,
And talk to you sometimes; Dwell I but in the suburbs
Of your good pleasure? If it be no more
Portia is Brutus' harlot, and not his wife . . .

— William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar,* 1599

Rousseau declares that a woman should never for a moment feel herself independent, that she should be governed by fear to exercise her *natural* cunning, and made a coquettish slave in order to render her a more alluring object of desire, a *sweeter* companion to man, whenever he chooses to relax himself. He carries the arguments, which he pretends to draw from the indications of nature, still further, and insinuates that truth and fortitude, the corner-stones of human virtue, should be cultivated with certain restrictions, because, with respect to the female character, obedience is the grand lesson which ought to be impressed with unrelenting rigour.

What nonsense!

— Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Rights of Woman,* 1795

And perhaps the sexes are more related than we think, and the great renewal of the world will perhaps consist in this, that man and maid, freed of all false feelings and reluctances, will seek each other not as opposites, but as brother and sister, as neighbors, and will come together *as human beings,* in order simply, seriously and patiently to bear in common the difficult sex that has been laid upon them.

— Rainer Marie Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet* written 1903, published 1929

Men, for whom we are told women were made, have too much occupied the thoughts of women; and this association has so entangled love with all their

motives of action; and . . . having been solely employed either to prepare themselves to excite love, or actually putting their lessons in practice, they cannot live without love.

— Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Rights of Woman,* 1795

Women are not human. . . . They are far above man to inspire him, far beneath him to corrupt him; they have feminine minds and feminine natures, but their mind is not one with their nature like the minds of men; they have no human mind and no human nature. "Blessed be God," says the Jew, "that hath not made me a woman."

— Dorothy Sayers, *"The Human-Not-Quite-Human,"* 1947

Man is willing to accept woman as an equal, as a man in skirts, as an angel, a devil, a baby-face, a machine, an instrument, a bosom, a bomb, a pair of legs, a servant, an encyclopaedia, an ideal or an obscenity; the one thing he won't accept her as is a human being, a really human being of the feminine sex.

— D. H. Lawrence, *Assorted Articles,* 1930

In the Guarani language, widely spoken in Central South America, the word for "wife" means "the person who serves me."

— David Belnap, *New York Post,* 1969

The servant is the kitchen version of all sexual myths involving the human female and the divine male, the mundane rendering of the idyllic "gentle acceptance," cowlike and dazed, which is recently revived in Robert Lowell's *Prometheus Bound* — in its conception of Io's affair with Zeus.

— Mary Ellmann, *Thinking About Women,* 1968

Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, *outward* obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for at least twenty years of their lives.

— Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Rights of Woman,* 1795

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— Mary Wollstonecraft,
Woman, 1795

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— Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Rights of Woman,* 1795

As meet it is that the husband obeys the wife, as the wife the husband . . . for women have souls as well as men, they have wit as well as men.

— Edmund Tilney, "Brief and Pleasant Discourse of Duties in Marriage," 1568

. . . made ridiculous and useless when the short-lived bloom of beauty is over. (A lively writer, I cannot recollect his name, asks what business women turned of forty have to do in the world?)

— Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Rights of Woman,* 1795

Mr. Barua, socialist member of the Indian parliament, quoted President Soekarno of Indonesia as having said that women after thirty were useless. He said rubber trees were also useless after thirty and asked if the Indian government was taking proper steps to replace aging rubber trees.

— AP dispatch, *New York Times,* 1968

She: "I'm not sure that all this sexual freedom has been such a good thing."
He: "It's been very good for men."

— Dialogue at a printshop, 1969

The time has come to reconstruct the image of women. We were let out of the kitchen, but the "new morality" places us in the bedroom. We want equality in the living room of society.

— New York N.O.W. (National Organization for Women) Newsletter, 1969

Taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round in its gilt cage, only seeks to adore its prison. Men have various employment and pursuits which engage their attention, and give a character to the opening mind; but women, confined to one, and having their thoughts constantly directed to the most insignificant part of themselves, seldom extend their view beyond the triumph of the hour. But were their understanding once emancipated from the slavery to which the pride and sensuality of man, and their short-sighted desire, like that of dominion in tyrants, of present sway, has subjected them, we should probably read of their weaknesses with surprise.

— Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Rights of Woman,* 1795

It is, after all, Freud who described, simultaneously, the duty of the mother to sacrifice herself to the children and her demand that they sacrifice their wishes to her . . . women are at once the child makers and breakers; no idea is more commonly fixed than that of the filocidal influence of the mother . . . we pass now from the exhausted generalizations of "Momism" and "womanization" to the specific attribution, by Daniel Moynihan, of the urban Negro's social problems to the domination of the Negro mother. Or to the causes of infantile autism, which being still uncertain are conveniently (if loosely) associated, by Bruno Bettelheim, with maternal deficiencies. Obviously it is impossible for women either to give or to withhold attention without risking the injury of their children.

— Mary Ellmann, *Thinking About Women,* 1968

Freud's daughter is said to have become a Lesbian. Wouldn't you refuse to be a woman, if you had to accept as a definition of yourself the one imposed by her father?

— Ellen Carl, letter, 1969

"Educate women like men," says Rousseau, "and the more they resemble our sex the less power will they have over us." This is the very point I aim at. I do not wish them to have power over men; but over themselves.

— Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Rights of Woman* 1795

When men get together it's "men in groups." When women get together it's "suppressed lesbianism."

— Ellen Carl, letter, 1969

With women as the inferiors of men, even practicing heterosexuality, they were long accustomed to finding affection among their own sex. We have heard about the passionate friendships of the harem. In most repressive societies women have turned to children and other women, as I have seen in Calabria and Sicily where it is common for women to meet their men silently in bed but receive companionship, warmth and friendship from each other.

— Elizabeth Fisher, "The Politics of Orgasm," 1968

Traditionally, magic was divided between men and women, exactly as the professions and the trades continue to be divided. Male magic was intellectual, female magic was manual. The men pored over portentous charts and symbols and were visited by high-ranking devils. The women cackled and mixed vile broths in pots. This arrangement was felicitous: the double standard rarely furnished such lively parts to both performers.

— Mary Ellmann, *Thinking About Women* 1968

There has never been any question but that the women of the poor should toil alongside their men. No angry, and no compassionate, voice has been raised to say that women should not break their backs with harvest work, or soil their hands with blacking grates and peeling potatoes. The objection is only to work that is pleasant, exciting, or profitable — the work that any human being might think it worth while to do. The boast, "My wife doesn't need to soil her hands with work," first became general when the commercial middle classes acquired the plutocratic and aristocratic notion that the keeping of an idle woman was a badge of superior social status. Man must work, and woman must exploit his labour. What else are they for? And if the woman submits, she can be cursed for her exploitation; and if she rebels, she can be cursed for competing with the male: whatever she does will be wrong, and that is a great satisfaction.

— Dorothy Sayers, "The Human-Not-Quite-Human," 1947

With the disappearance of domestic help, women are the only servants left . . . the middle-class woman's position has in many ways worsened in the past fifty years. This is not true of working-class women. They were used to laboring, and machines have improved their lot. They were also used to less considerate treatment from their men, who, suffering more themselves, visited more punishment on those nearest them, except for the rare cases where man and woman made common cause in shared labor. Still a vague unease and hunger exist in them also. Love is oversold for commercial purposes. Things they are daily promised on television, radio, in films and women's magazines — ideal love, family happiness, physical joy — prove missing all the same. And they are vitally affected by economic discrimination. A vast reservoir of discontent lies waiting.

— Elizabeth Fisher, *Saturday Review* Questionnaire, 1969

Why are girls to be told that they resemble angels; but to sink them below women? . . . I wish to see women neither heroines nor brutes; but reasonable creatures.

— Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Rights of Women*, 1795

APHRA-isms in this issue were contributed by Robert Baylor, Edith Fowler, Ruth Herschberger, Jane Mayhall, members of the staff, and the ever-helpful Anon.

Come into the act. Send us any APHRA-isms you can think of, your own, friends', quotations from authors, past or present. Please give source and date. Send to APHRA-isms, Box 355, Springtown, Pennsylvania, 18081.

BIRTHDAY POEM

BARBARA HARR

December 13

My saint, Lucia of the beautiful eyes
(recently busted from sainthood)
ever watchful of evil, tore out her own eyes,
that crazy broad. But then she was healed.
Let my eyes see clearly.
Give me light. Light.

I visit my friend Lucia (named for our day):
feminist, artist, counselor of resistance.
We read our horoscope
and laugh. What, this for us both?
Let our eyes see clearly.
Give us light. Light.

I buy her painting and smile.
It looks from my wall.
Light!

SCENE FROM ELIJAH NEVER COMES

ELIZABETH FISHER

Summary: Naomi is a woman of about forty; Diane, her friend, is a little older. Naomi has just moved into a small apartment in New York's Greenwich Village to try to work out a new kind of relationship with George, her husband of twenty some years, who teaches at a college in Connecticut. Whether by accident or design, her former lover, Jack Schweitzer, has suddenly turned up in an apartment two floors down from hers. She has written him a letter asking him to leave and has just informed her husband of the situation. The scene is her top-floor apartment. There is a garret look, Bohemian charm, fireplace, bed visible in alcove, India-print bedspread, etc. Naomi and Diane are seated around a bridge table, a whiskey bottle in center, glasses and a plate of crackers handy.

DIANE: So George went back to Connecticut. What are you going to do now? Don't go. For the honor of womankind. Besides, I don't want to lose you.

NAOMI: (dispirited) I don't know what to do. Damn that bastard. He should have answered my letter. He could have had the courtesy at least to do that.

DIANE: Maybe he didn't know what to say. He's waiting for you to break down and come to him.

NAOMI: (shrugs) He just doesn't give a damn. It seemed flattering at first, but now it doesn't. He just wants to make trouble. Or he's so insensitive that it

doesn't bother him. After all, if he'd wanted to reach me, he could have done it the usual way, via the telephone. And if he just wanted a convenient apartment – it's pretty crass.

DIANE: Oh, you'll fall. You'll be beating on his door before long. I remember him; he's a tease.

NAOMI: It's horrible. Every time I go past his door – the walls are paper thin here – I hear his voice. I ran into him again – twice – one time I snubbed him – then he snubbed me.

DIANE: Flirtation, flirtation.

NAOMI: I don't sleep nights. I'm furious half the time, shaking the other half. I'm distracted; only half my energies are available. That's why I took the indexing job – it's something I can do even when I'm in a state.

DIANE: And George – what does he say?

NAOMI: Oh, he was darling. He reacted beautifully. Very male. He'd kill him – beat him up. Only when he heard I'd written the letter, he got furious at me. Said I'd spoiled everything, if he did take care of him, they'd trace it to him, because of my letter. So now he refuses to come here any more – just leaves it up to me. I don't know. I hate men!

DIANE: Yes, you do, about as much as I do. Which means that you're absolutely helpless when it comes to individuals. You're a pushover. It's people like Doris who are indifferent. She can take them or leave them. And mostly she leaves them. She doesn't quiver and tremble over them. If anything, it's women that bother her.

NAOMI: But she was married for almost ten years. And she lived with some man after that, for almost another ten years. They both adored her – and wanted her back. Her first husband never married again. He still carries a torch for her. They still see each other.

DIANE: She only discovered her vocation in the last few years. Or dared to give way to it, is more likely.

NAOMI: Maybe. At any rate, by the time I met her she was going with women. I don't think she knows anything about love. She'd like to know. It isn't only that men leave her indifferent. She's not really a lesbian. She's feminine and charming. And genuinely sweet. I just think she never got beyond the prison

of herself. There are lots of people like that. She sucks up other people's love like a cactus plant storing water. Then it makes her itchy when they make claims on her. Once she came out to the country wanting to get away from Elena. She was more human than I'd ever seen her. She talked about Elena with real appreciation. I was glad she had some feeling for her.

DIANE: She's pretty alcohol-sodden most of the time now, isn't she? But I like her. Is she still with Elena? Or is Peggy the new one?

NAOMI: I don't know. She's probably using Peggy against Elena. Although she seems very taken with her. She's been calling me about getting her an apartment, and she keeps asking me if I don't think she's charming. Poor Elena.

DIANE: Poor Elena! That's what she wants, to suffer, or she wouldn't have devoted herself to Doris. She's probably having a marvelous time — they all three are.

NAOMI: Don't be silly. No one wants to suffer. They just find themselves in intolerable situations. Doris is a charmer — and an eternal child. She must have been very glamorous to Elena — all that background, the famous people she's introduced her to, the life at her apartment. She can have a sense of fun, you know. And Elena came from some little upstate town, worked in a hospital. They traveled to Europe together; Doris probably introduced her to books — to the idea of culture, even if not anything in depth.

DIANE: You see — she got a great deal out of it. You're always feeling sorry for people. I believe in suffering. It's good for people.

NAOMI: (shrugs) Good or not, you don't have to go looking for it. It comes looking for you.

DIANE: Well, I like Doris. And I don't trust Elena. But don't go telling either of them about me and Leo. I don't want to be ridiculed.

NAOMI: Why should either of them make fun of you? They're not in such great respectable shape themselves.

DIANE: Yes, I know. But still a forty-eight-year-old woman with a twenty-two-year-old boy.

NAOMI: Well — he's European, that makes him older. And there's more of a

tradition for that sort of thing there. Think of Colette, Simone de Beauvoir, Ninon de l'Enclos.

DIANE: I do, all the time. But he's here now. It isn't so easy. Oh, we're very close. He's brilliant and that helps. It's true, he's been through so much, it makes him older than an American would be. But he may be ashamed of me. We don't exactly look like mother and son when we're out together. Which we almost never are. And he did know Doris before he knew me. I don't know whether he sees her or not. He's such a liar. I hear him lie to other people on my telephone. There isn't anything between them like what we have, I know. But still . . .

NAOMI: He couldn't be ashamed of you. Besides you're much younger than your age. We're all little girls inside, aren't we? When things go wrong, you still say, "I want my mummy." We all do. Only who's going to mother the mothers? We just have to go around mothering each other. God knows you can't get it from a man. They talk to us, and we talk to each other. I don't tell George my troubles. He tells me his. And I tell mine to you, or to other women friends. Oh, once in a while, when it's unavoidable — like this about Jack. But I had no choice. I once asked my mother. She never told my father anything either.

DIANE: Well, you don't expect that from a man. Women are the comforters. That's how it is from time immemorial. But I can tell Leo some things. And some things I don't want to tell him. You know, at first I couldn't believe it was true. Of course, I don't expect it to last. But it's over a year now. And we're so alike. We like the same things. We laugh together. Sometimes I think it's as though we were married. I think we'll get married. Then I think I'm mad. But it is wonderful for as long as it's there.

NAOMI: I envy you.

DIANE: Why don't you do likewise? Get yourself a nice young man — not one of these selfish old creatures.

NAOMI: Like us? I think I'd find him a little young. (She gets up and pours another drink for each of them.) About thirty is where I like them. Old enough to know what they're doing, and not old enough to be selfish and twisted and hard. But they're the toughest to get.

DIANE: You don't want a man. You like it the way you have it with George.

Lots of room around you. If you wanted a man, you could have Jack Schweitzer.

NAOMI: Don't mention that bastard. I do and I don't. I've had it, I guess. Love isn't the answer. Women have been pilloried in the name of love for too long. Only mostly they can't help loving. It's like breathing, a natural process. Let the men worry about loving, they do it so badly, and let women be a little ambitious for a change. I've gone through stages of thinking. First I used to be bitter, because I was always loving and feeling not enough came back. Then I decided that it may not be better to love than to be loved, but if it's what comes naturally, you might just as well let yourself feel, not deprive yourself and be frozen, neither loved nor loving. But now I've decided a little will power is needed, too. Let my love go into work, or into the garden, or some place where it will bear fruit.

DIANE: But what about the children? That's where most women put it.

NAOMI: In the first place the children are too important to be left to the women alone. In the second place there are too many children in this world anyway. And in the third place, parental love is nature's con game — to perpetuate the race. Then they grow up and you're on your own. You have to be noble and let them go.

DIANE: And in the fourth place, you love your daughter, and you did a fine job.

NAOMI: I don't think so. I did what I could, not so bad as some, not so good as others. After all, she had both her mother and her father, which is more than can be said for many people these days. But she's gone, as we both know she should be. And I don't feel ready to be a grandmother, or like making that my career. One child isn't enough to fill your life, even two aren't. But it's enough to keep you occupied and to overload them with emotion. And where are you at forty, when the children are gone, the marriage is tired, and you've nothing but your desire to love and be loved. All that goddam souping up we've had for centuries. Love, love, love — the hell with love. Love is a sellout.

DIANE: Oh, no! That's what everything is all about. You know that.

NAOMI: Well, I don't want to be in love. I don't want any more of that agony. Who'd go looking for it. Of course, it's like being dead without it. But I don't care. Courage, courage, courage! If we were brought up on that, life

would be more manageable. Besides I still love the bastard. Only I love him in the past.

DIANE: Jack Schweitzer?

NAOMI: Do you know, he's still trying to write that same damn book.

DIANE: What book is that?

NAOMI: Something about communities and saving the world. Neighborhoods and self-activation. Sort of simplistic. He's very great on love and all together now. He's either a genius or a charlatan. A little bit of both I suppose. I heard the sound of typing when I passed his door. And then a girl's voice saying, "Oh, I correct those things as I go along." I never knew back then whether he loved me or whether he wanted me to write his book for him. Both I suppose.

DIANE: He saw what a good job you'd done for George.

NAOMI: Maybe. He had admired George, you know — that was how I met him. And he asked me about a very fine lecture George had given — had I worked on it? I had of course. He loved me, but I didn't exist for him either. He was so excited about his own emotion. It was as if he were saying, "Look, Ma, I'm loving." But it was beautiful for a while. (She is beginning to look dreamy, pulls herself up.) George has been too damned decent. I can't have him hurt over this. But I don't want to move out either. I feel like writing, "Jack Schweitzer Go Home," on his door.

DIANE: Don't move out. You found the place. Whatever his motive, he had no right to come here if he knew you were here. And as you say, your name is on the mailbox right next to his. He couldn't help knowing even if it was a coincidence — which I doubt. (Holds out her glass.) May I have a refill. (Naomi fills her glass and replenishes her own.) Listen, I've just had a brilliant idea. Why don't you do just what you said? Start a campaign. Put up protest signs on his door.

NAOMI: (Begins to light up — they are both a bit drunk by now.) What do you mean?

DIANE: It's fiendish. Look, you have the advantage over him. You're above him — you have to pass his door every time you go up and down stairs, but he doesn't pass yours.

NAOMI: That's just what makes it so dreadful. How can I possibly screen him out, make myself insensitive?

DIANE: Don't try. But what you can do is drive him out.

NAOMI: I can't. He wouldn't have done it if I were a man. He would have been afraid of me. And I think . . . well, I told you I had a conversation with a friend of George's. I asked about him, and I may have given the friend the impression that I was half-separated from George. Or what he already knew — that as a relationship, it's something less than perfect.

DIANE: So you feel guilty, that it's your fault?

NAOMI: I guess so. He knows, anyway, that I won't use violence on him. I can't beat him up.

DIANE: Well, if you're really sure you don't want him, this isn't violence, but it might get him out. You'll have to be patient and persistent. Don't expect it to work right away. Just be brief. Write a one-word protest every day. But only if you're sure. Because this will kill it forever.

NAOMI: I know I don't want him. Not after this. And it might just work.

DIANE: Yes, only you'll have to be tough.

NAOMI: I'll have to get him where it hurts. Operator! Clod! Phoney!

DIANE: That's the sort of thing. Coward! (They are both quite drunk now.) Quick, get a piece of paper. Let's start writing them down.

NAOMI: When you go downstairs tonight, you can paste the first one on. It's marvelous, nonviolent aggression. Brain Picker!

DIANE: Bully! (Naomi has gotten paper and pencil.)

NAOMI: Here's some white paper and red pencil. (She rummages.) And I've got scotch tape to put it on with.

DIANE: People will think you're nuts.

NAOMI: Nobody will know I did it. Who would suspect me, a respectable middle-aged lady? (Diane looks at her quizzically.)

NAOMI: (defensively) Or an aging Bohemian. Here, let's start. I'll make a record (she is ruling the paper) so I can keep track. But you've got to help me, Diane. I can't hold out alone.

DIANE: For God's sake, don't tell George. He'll never understand.

NAOMI: Look, I've got the dates down — it's a chart. For tonight, I'll put down operator. Tomorrow clod. Then sellout, climber —

DIANE: Fink, creep — I have it — Jonny Mop. (Breaks up at her own wit.) What about your first — J.S. Go Home?

NAOMI: I want to start with the ones that will most unnerve him, what he suspects he really is.

DIANE: (admiringly) It's wicked, wicked.

NAOMI: As long as it works. (She holds up the sign — bright red crayon on large white paper.) You've got to help me.

DIANE: I'm frightened.

NAOMI: You suggested it. Anyway what can he do? There's nothing illegal about it, that I can think of. I'm just exercising my right to protest. Free speech.

DIANE: It's slander or libel or something isn't it?

NAOMI: Not if you can prove it's true. And who's to know who did it. Here — you put this on his door when you're ready to go home — unless you want me to do it.

DIANE: No, I'll do it. But supposing he catches me?

NAOMI: I'll telephone — see if there's anyone home. And you'll go down very quietly. (She goes over to phone while Diane puts on her coat and hat.)

DIANE: You know the number, eh?

NAOMI: In the beginning I had to check to make sure it was he. I just dialed and listened to the voice, then quietly put the phone down.

DIANE: I'll bet he knew who was doing it.

NAOMI: Let him. (Shrugs — she has dialed the number, holds out the telephone receiver.) It's his telephone-answering service. (Depresses receiver.) Look, you call me when you get home and tell me how it went.

DIANE: (admiring and very drunk) It's terribly exciting. At last we're taking action ourselves. This is a blow for freedom and women. Up the sex. (Naomi puts her finger to her lips as she opens the door. Diane tiptoes out and Naomi goes back to the table, the chart and the signmaking.)

NAOMI: (repeats) He should have answered my letter.

THE WOMAN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT: 3 VIEWS

NORA HARLOW

Century of Struggle by Eleanor Flexner, New York: Atheneum, 1968 (first published by Harvard University Press, 1959).

The Emancipation of the American Woman by Andrew Sinclair. New York: Harper Colophon edition, 1966 (published as *The Better Half* by Harper and Row, 1965).

Everyone Was Brave by William L. O'Neill. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969.

Three books concerning women's struggle for equality in American society provide excruciating contrasts. Eleanor Flexner's *Century of Struggle* is a straightforward hard-hitting account of the fight for suffrage. Andrew Sinclair's *The Emancipation of the American Woman* (previously published as *The Better Half*) is inane. William L. O'Neill's *Everyone Was Brave* is the account of a roaring sexist.

Having been educated like other American women by teachers and textbooks who either completely omit women as a factor in the society or dismiss their contributions in a couple of sentences (usually consisting of the social assets

or beauty of some president's wife), I find it difficult not to overpraise Miss Flexner's book just because she is honest and accurate and doesn't consider women inherently inferior. It is interesting to note that *Century of Struggle* received little attention when it first came out and has been circulated chiefly by word of mouth; Sinclair's book was generously reviewed; and O'Neill's book is being pushed in large advertisements and reviewed favorably by women, whose sex he completely discredits. In a totally sexist society there is no room for a nonsexist book.

Flexner gives a broad but concise picture of 100 years of battle. The reader is left with an impression of the enormity and scope of the struggle, the courage and strength of the women involved, and a clear definition of which factions fought for what and why. She deals specifically with the issues at hand, why women refused to accept the secondary position society had set up for them, their concept of the total society, and what they did toward changing that society. She does not, as is common with both male writers, go into long discussions of the biological definitions of these humans: details of their mating, or failing to mate, details of how many children in their families, whether they were boys or girls, how they felt subconsciously about the opposite sex, teen-age infatuations with in-laws as really the basis for their life's work, whether they were short, tall, fat, thin, pretty, ugly—whether they thought sexual intercourse was proper during menstruation.

To calm my rage at the continual degradation of my sex, I can only advise you to buy a copy of Eleanor Flexner's book, which is an essential reference work. She writes about hundreds of women whose names rarely appear in print and includes invaluable source material related to the history of the movement for women's rights in America. *Century of Struggle* is an honest historic document. This honesty is to be valued in a time when few such works exist.

Andrew Sinclair's writing speaks best for itself:

> *Continual pregnancies gave wives no respite from the ills of the flesh. They aged early and suffered much pain, but their simple diet and dress gave them good health for the time.*

Tell that to the sisters in Appalachia, Mr. Sinclair.

It is noticeable that in California, where drugs are available to take people to the land of beatific vision, it is housewives who usually apply to use them. Of course, the drug is the easy way to free the spirit, as psychoanalysis is the easy way to find an understanding friend; anyone can buy either.

Tell that to a Harlem sister on heroin, Mr. Sinclair.

Negro women, like all women, tend to conservatism and opposition to violence.

Tell that to the sisters in Vietnam, Israel, and South Africa, Mr. Sinclair. In what world do you live, Mr. Sinclair?

William L. O'Neill's *Everyone Was Brave,* hot out of the enthusiastic ads in the *New York Times*, is pure sexism. He takes half of humanity and lumps them into an explicitly and implicitly inferior group. The whole basis of his book is sexist. His aims as stated in the introduction:

This book, then, is first of all an inquiry into the failure of feminism.

I have made several other decisions which the reader will want to know about. To begin with, I have avoided the question of whether or not women ought to have full parity with men. Such a state of affairs obtains nowhere in the modern world, and so, since we do not know what genuine equality would mean in practice, its desirability cannot fairly be assessed. . . . What I have tried to do here is show why the feminists' analysis of their position was generally shallow and inadequate. . . . and to demonstrate how they contributed to their own downfall. This is not the whole story of women in America, but it is, I hope, that part of their story which most needs telling.

O'Neill is speaking of a group that includes more than half the humans in America. This type of strait-jacketed illogic is commonly used to prove the inferior status of a group. If he were speaking of a racial group it would appear thus:

This book, then, is first of all an inquiry into the failure of the black movement.

I have made several other decisions which the reader will want to know about. To begin with, I have avoided the question of whether or not blacks ought to have full parity with whites. Such a state of affairs obtains nowhere in the modern world, and so since we do not know what genuine equality would mean in practice, its desirability cannot fairly be assessed. . . . What I have tried to do here is show why the blacks' analysis of their position was generally shallow and inadequate. . . . and to demonstrate how they contributed to their own downfall. This is not the whole story of blacks in America, but it is, I hope, that part of their story which most needs telling.

Aggggggghhhhh!!!!!!!! Of course, no publisher of merit would publish such racism, no newspaper of merit would review it with serious attention. And yet, when the very same ideas are applied to that human group known as female a respectable publisher publishes it, serious periodicals pay it heed, and a reputable female writer, Elizabeth Janeway, endorses it. I know what world Mr. O'Neill lives in. In what world do you live, Miss Janeway?

Neither O'Neill nor Sinclair can conceive of women as truly creative intellectual humans dedicated to a life's work. To describe intense working relationships between women, O'Neill repeatedly uses the intriguing term "spouse surrogate":

Jane Addams . . . seems not to have appreciated the extent to which her companions . . . were spouse surrogates who gave her the devotion and affection most women expect from their husbands.

The contrast between Flexner and O'Neill on the subject of female education is overpowering. Flexner writes:

Bryn Mawr . . . bore the imprint of the creative imagination and inflexibly high standards of M. Carey Thomas. . . . She wished not only to meet Harvard standards . . . but to compel other colleges to raise their sights in emulation. She succeeded so well that for decades, entrance to, let alone graduation from, Bryn Mawr was a mark of intellectual distinction.

President Thomas was also the first successfully to fight through the issue of graduate work in a woman's college; the resident fellowships offered

by Bryn Mawr were the earliest available to women who wished to pursue graduate studies . . . she justified women's ability to carry on higher research work by making it possible for them to do so.

Mr. O'Neill simply panics at the idea of an educated woman:

As an educator Miss Thomas was determined to win the badges of success, but pedagogically she was imitative, and once she had her doctorate she abandoned research entirely. Hence she reinforced the tendency of women to favor grade-getting and degree-winning over creative or scholarly work, to focus on the symbols of achievement rather than its substance, and thus help fix the "good-student" syndrome . . . they become such "good" students, their intellectual docility so firmly established, that most can never be anything more than students.

His conclusion to a chapter entitled "Ten Who Led the Woman Movement" is a microcosm of the book's content. Woman is a biological being only. According to Mr. O'Neill a woman who has a strong image of herself as fully human is deranged both mentally and sexually.

Feminism attracted many different kinds of women; Miss Thomas, Miss Paul, and Dr. Shaw [M. Carey Thomas, president of Bryn Mawr; Alice Paul, first reformer to picket the White House as a tactic, she and hundreds of other radical feminists were jailed repeatedly and went on hunger strikes to protest their brutal treatment; Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, graduate of both a divinity school and a medical school, lecturer, president of the National-American Women's Suffrage Association] *conformed in many respects to the sharp-tongued man-haters depicted by generations of anti-feminists. Eminent women, feminists among them, often drew comfort and inspiration mainly from one another, and their sororital impulses doubtless passed over into lesbianism . . . On the fringes of the movement there were always free spirits like the Claflin sisters* [Victoria Claflin Woodhull, first woman presidential candidate] *although few advertised their sex lives so widely . . . Of our sample three women, Jane Addams, Mrs. Gilman, and Vida Scudder* [Charlotte Perkins Gilman, one of the foremost intellectuals of her day,

author of *Women and Economics,* 20 additional books, and her own magazine *Forerunner;* Vida Scudder, graduate of Smith, scholar at Oxford, teacher at Wellesley] *experienced severe emotional disorders. Carey Thomas was scarred in mind and body by her* [childhood] *accident. Alice Paul's passionate career as martyr and charismatic folk hero was hardly normal . . . those women who rejected domesticity almost had to be neurotic . . . the more narrowly preoccupied with women's rights was an individual, the more likely she was to seem odd . . . But the radical suffragists did not merely appear to be deviant, they actually were . . .* [they] *wanted it* [the vote] *for its own sake.*

This is 359 pages of material about a group of human beings by a human from another group who sees the first group in terms of their physical function. Everything relates to the physical. The writer lives in intimate contact with members of the group of which he writes so he couldn't really view them that way, or could he. From the page of acknowledgments:

My wife Carol did not help me write this book. Instead she gave me love, happiness, and two beautiful daughters, for all of which I am grateful beyond words.

The evidence stands. I know in what kind of world I live. There is a new generation of women ready for the struggle. Our daughters will live in the new world.

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STORIES PLAYS POEMS BOOK REVIEW

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aphra

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FREE WOMEN MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS

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Front Cover: Adaptation of Nancy Colin's design for APHRA's first issue.

aphra

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APHRA is named for Aphra Behn (1640-89), first woman to earn her living by writing.

Circle of Women

Rosellen Brown

The doctor bent in an artisan's silence
her head bound up
a seamstress arranging scissors and needle

(a hundred laughing men were showing
knife-wounds to the orderlies)

the nurse and her shadow
moving in barefoot silence
slowly revolving smoothing folding

luminous
pale in undersea light
four alone with one body touching
sighing like mourners

(hard words on the open lips of wounds)

Then one long unnameable vowel.
The circle of women opened
and she became my daughter
and the circle closed.

Mothers and Daughters

Elizabeth Fisher

What about mothers and daughters? Mothers and sons—there's a subject hallowed by myth, institutionalized by religion, and memorialized by sons. From the Catholic church's reverence for Mary, mother of Christ, down through Abraham Lincoln's "Everything I ever am or will be I owe to my angel mother," who would have thought that sacred theme could ever be attacked? Small wonder that the recent spate of anti-mother novels, whatever psychological validities they may incorporate, should, by their very novelty, have captured the popular imagination. Didn't Oedipus' love for his mother—sexual if unknowing in the original myth—provide the basis for an intellectual current that revolutionized twentieth-century thinking? And antithesis to Oedipus, wasn't it Electra's love and respect for her father and resentment of her mother which supplied the other leg for the same theory of human sexual relations? Freud, himself, did not make much of the Electra story. He usually cites Oedipus and then dusts off daughters with "and likewise for girls." Clytemnestra, after all, betrayed and murdered Agamemnon because he had sacrificed another daughter, Electra's sister Iphigenia, to further his wars—not the best of evidence for a natural conflict between daughters and mothers.

In truth, however, the mother-daughter combination is rare in legend and literature. Generally speaking there are only sons, despite the incontrovertible fact that every mother was once a daughter. When it does appear,

the assumption is that women naturally hate their mothers while sons love them. Certainly, it's in the interest of the male establishment to separate women from women, and above all daughters from mothers, on the principle of divide and rule. And in a society where the rewards for women are so small, there is a very real competition between women for the crumbs of power tossed out by the dominant males. But there is another side to the story.

One of the earliest of the Greek myths is that of Demeter, who so loved her daughter Persephone that when Hades stole her away she withheld her gifts of fruitfulness from the world. Robert Graves says this refers to the patriarchal religion's victory over the matriarchy. For him, Demeter and Persephone are two personifications of the corn goddess. In typically male reasoning, a daughter is but an incarnation of the mother because there are no daughters, there is only Woman. Still it *is* a tale of the love and closeness between mother and daughter, a love which has always seemed ominous to men, who fear the natural intimacy of women as excluding them. In the rare instances of record, it usually comes to us accompanied by sneers and value judgments. Madame de Sévigné's love for her daughter gave rise to one of the most famous correspondences in history, but it roused criticism and revulsion among her contemporaries and on down to the present; the Encyclopaedia Britannica characterizes it as "an insane love." In modern times, it was the editor of a recent book about Colette who said in conversation, after mentioning the thousands of letters Colette's mother, Sido, wrote her, "Of course, you realize the mother was Lesbian." The only evidence he adduced, besides the unpublished letters to which he had not had access, was the fact that Colette herself did not have a child until after her mother died. A warm devoted love between mother and child is now considered unnatural. A perverse twisting of Freud's theory of the unconscious and infant sexuality has brought about a new kind of philistinism. We no longer permit the existence of love without sex, seeking always to explain every friendship or relation in terms of sexual motivation. Love must be justified, it cannot be disinterested.

Mothers are the original love objects for male and female babies—and when Freud based his theories on this he was stymied over what to do with the daughters, the patriarchal mind being inclined to think of women chiefly

in relation to men. Consequently, he came up with the rather feeble theory of the clitoral orgasm maturing into the "true, deep" vaginal orgasm to explain the fact that while male babies fixated on females through their mothers, female ones had no natural equivalent, no biological reason to direct them toward the male sex. Masters and Johnson threw out that distinction, noting that vaginal and clitoral orgasm registered with equal intensity on their meters and sensors. If we stay within the framework of Freudian terms and logic then, merely discarding his hierarchy of orgasms, we can argue, as Jill Johnston and others do, that Lesbianism is the basic and natural condition for women, heterosexuality a male perversion. When we realize that Freud's theories refer to power relationships and have relevance only within the framework of the bourgeois patriarchal family, we are freed from this bind. Looking to evolution, it is clear that humankind would hardly have survived and grown from its primitive beginnings were there no biological basis for heterosexuality.

Still there does seem to be some deep fear in males that heterosexuality is not natural, or that women will band together and exclude them from that so-needed source of affection and physical satisfaction, which leads them to insist vehemently on the natural hatred of women for women, and above all for their mothers.

There are, of course, realistic sources of friction between mothers and daughters. Oscar Wilde's remark, "The only person a girl hates more than her mother is her older sister," reflects the auction-block marriage market of late nineteenth-century English society. In our time where the chief identity for a woman is still through marriage, the mother will be likely to want her daughter to marry so as not to be a misfit, and the daughter will resent this as an effort to get rid of her or a rejection of her as a person. Since mothers of families are expected to live vicariously through the achievements of husbands and children, they are subject to much anxiety. Gratifications must come second-hand, and as any driver knows, there is far less anxiety when you have your hands on the steering wheel than when you sit in the seat next to it. This anxiety, and the dissatisfaction, often unvoiced even to herself, with her own status, is transmitted to the daughter as a lack of confidence, sometimes a hidden rage or hostility, and becomes a focal sore in

the rapport between them.

Fathers encourage this division. The uncritical admiration of a daughter makes the ego expand more than the rather jaundiced view of a wife. People are attracted to strength. Daughters recognize power as strength, and they know who has it in our culture. Sometimes, when you get a self-effacing mother, the child doesn't even know she's there: both Simone de Beauvoir and Lillian Hellman didn't begin to appreciate their mothers till late in their own lives, when age and maturity had taught them a little about the suffering of women.

Our merchandising culture has exploited and accentuated the conflict between older and younger women. Early in the sixties the concept of the Generation Gap was made into an advertising device. "We bring you the youth market" meant we bring you those who are young and ingenuous, who part easily with their money.

This contempt for age and worship of youth later expanded the market among the older women. By the time the daughters were becoming disenchanted with being treated as consuming objects, their mothers were a natural mark for the advertisers' promises of eternal youth. By the late sixties and early seventies merchandisers had discovered that while youth may part with its money more readily, middle age has more of it, and they play it both ways, working on everyone's insecurities and, not altogether incidentally, increasing the divisions between age groups.

These advertising techniques have been effective because they are based on a phenomenon particularly American, though recently the pace of change has sharpened the division between age and youth all over the world. In the United States, it was the immigrant pattern which first divided the young so sharply from the old. Margaret Mead has pointed out that this was the first country where, because the children were more American than their parents, the parental role was taken over by the schools and the experts. Mothers were obsolete; teachers and one's peers knew more about the socially approved ways of doing things. We no longer turn to tradition but rather to articles with titles like "Things Your Mother Didn't Tell You." Television commercials commonly show a mother or mother-in-law being informed, put to shame or otherwise bested by a young woman using a new product.

But despite all the outside pressures of society to keep them apart, the actual competition between women, and the changing mores which make the experiences of a young woman today so different from those of her mother, there is still a long tradition of mother-daughter intimacy. Before the professionals took over, it was the women who gathered together to help each other in childbirth and nursing and care of the sick. Women relate intensely, to one another as well as to men; mothers and daughters identify and sympathize with each other's troubles, and they maintain communication long after that between mothers and sons has broken down.

In older, traditional cultures, women, including mothers and daughters, were more often in league against male power, despite individual interests. Mothers and daughters are more inclined to live in the same or in companion households than are mothers and sons. The hateful mother-in-law is the butt of comedians; she goads her daughter into rebelling or demanding more privileges from the husband. The wives and their mothers are rarely heard from. We suspect that when the new feminist mythology enters the cultural stream there will be tales of women leaguing themselves against the male oppressors, and mothers and daughters will be among them.

In the past, mothers were not always around long enough to help their daughters, even if they had had the power to do so. It is a bitter irony that Mary Wollstonecraft, the early advocate of freedom for women, should herself have died of childbirth. One feels that if she had lived her daughter Fanny Imlay might not have committed suicide while Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin's life, with or without Shelley, would certainly have been a happier one. "The only place in the world where she felt herself at peace was by her mother's tomb in the churchyard of old Saint Pancras. She went there every fine day to read and meditate," Maurois describes her in his biography of Shelley. Whatever author's liberty he may have permitted himself, it is clear from a letter of Godwin that her friendship with Shelley had its inception in long conversations at her mother's graveside.

In the nineteenth century there is much evidence of mothers and daughters making common cause against social injustice. Many of the noted feminists were drawn into the movement through their mothers: Lucy Stone by her feeling for her mother, Susan B. Anthony when her mother and sister

attended a feminist meeting and told her about it. In *A Century of Struggle* Eleanor Flexner mentions the Shulers, a mother-daughter team, as among the most effective speakers for the women's rights movement.

Flexner, herself, is the daughter of a suffragist, Helen Flexner, to whom she dedicates her book. Elizabeth Cady Stanton's daughter, Harriot Stanton Blatch, came back to the United States in 1907 to work actively in the women's movement. She brought with her the methods of civil disobedience and militancy which were just being introduced into England by another mother-daughter team—the Pankhursts. The oldest daughter, Christabel, conceived the strategy of the militant campaign which the English suffragettes used to revive a movement till then not taken seriously. She drew her mother Emmeline into an active role as speaker and leader, while hers was the legal and tactical mind. She and her sister Sylvia both dedicated their lives to the suffrage movement, though Sylvia, who became a socialist, was broader in her interest, working with the poor women of London's East End and seeing beyond the immediate goal of women's suffrage. In 1914 Sylvia wrote to her mother from prison, "I am fighting, fighting, fighting. I have four, five and six wardresses every day as well as the two doctors. I am fed by stomach tube twice a day. I resist all the time." Not only did she and her mother, as well as the other English militants, go on hunger strikes, they refused to sleep or drink water, and they often had to be carried out of prison.

These are isolated instances that come to us through the blackout of history. Most of what we know about women has been filtered through the biassed eye of man. We know little enough about them and even less about mothers and daughters. *To the Lighthouse,* the book which many consider Virginia Woolf's masterpiece, was in essence a memorial to her mother. In her diary, Woolf reports that her sister Vanessa found it "a sublime, almost upsetting spectacle. She says it is an amazing portrait of mother; a supreme portrait painter; has lived in it; found the rising of the dead almost painful."

Here on APHRA there are a mother and daughter among us, and the grandmother comes down occasionally to help out. It was the daughter who suggested the theme for this issue—a first, tentative look at a relationship too often veiled by sterotypes and distorted by male self-interest.

Titty Titty Bang Bang

Claire Woock

This show is a put-on and a take-off, a strip-off and a rip-off.

A woman stands before you made up and dressed up like a voluptuous teenybopper, age forty-five.

Attractive. Yes. Sex appeal. Well yes. Underneath it all.

Talking to her mirror, full length, concave and convex. Retracing the voices to work it all out, now or never.

Every false enhancement in the direction of feminine charm and loveliness is being worn by **Our Lady** *from blond wig to mink eyelashes to shapely shanks to rounded hips to fuller breasts to lipstick-rouge-and-powder to capped teeth to electric smooth gams to bleached armhairs to enameled fingernails to deodorant for under the shaven arms and for down there you know where to perfumed ear lobes to manicured toenails to sweetened breath it is all in place she is faithful down to her violet contact lenses.*

Our Lady: When I was no bigger than a button, sugar and spice everything nice that's what little girls are made of; there was a little girl with a little curl right in the middle of her pube. Mother, mother, what about? How come . . . ?

Takes on her **Mother's Voice**

Horrors! Don't ask about down there between your legs. That's a place out of which when you're a grown lady will come a ray of light a sunbeam a

baby born emerging from the dark deep cavern of no-no don't touch. My darling baby is growing up to an attractive young woman, but stand up straight. You'll never attract a man with round shoulders. Babies? Well, look. That place there down between your legs: that's where you wee-wee number one, and pooh-pooh, number two. Then when you're a grown lady a big man will come along and make another opening right in the middle for you to bring a baby through, a tiny baby, darling, it won't hurt a bit. Depending upon your husband's finesse and technique of course. God help you ever being born a girl child. Baby darling, it's a man's world. You're going to have to cater cater cater all your life. When he says frog, you jump, girl, JUMP. The curse? Oh, my young pubescent blooming beauty of a girl. Cursed *yes* you are. All women are damned from the moment of their birth. Cursed to serve—man must be served. You will major in Home Economics in college. Learn how to be an efficient A-1 top-drawer homemaker. Believe you me with that under your belt, life will be a whole lot simpler. Learn to be a listener. Men love need to have their egos built up and it's a smart wife who knows how to get her husband ahead of the game in this world. They're all little boys who never grew up. Little boys forever looking for big sexy mommies to care for them the rest of their lives. Thank God they die off younger than the female of the species. Don't look sad. That's what it is, the world, darling. Make the best of it. Mother them, but never never try to compete with your mother-in-law or you'll be shot down so fast you won't know what hit you. Mummy love is their first love. I know what I'm talking about from first-hand experience . . . mine was a pro.

Taking on her **Daughter's Voice**, *plaintively*

Mother it doesn't have to be that way. Mommy Mommy Momma Mia.

Taking on her **Mother's Voice**

Honey, I'm sorry to see you're out of luck in the breast market but they make 'em fit and swell up to any size your frame can take. And the bigger the better honey. With falsies you can turn on those headlights to the brightest beam. Be proud as though they're really your own flesh and fatty tissue. 'Cuz that's all boobs are, darling, is fat. Big deal. I don't have 'em either. But ask the sponge rubber man—they'll tell you D cups are a bonus plus in the husband market. Just one word of advice: honey, a man will never marry a ruined woman, so what's with this contraceptive talk? He will take you and pierce you and have his way with you but he'll never never marry you. He'll choose a virgin and dump you aside when he thinks it's time to settle down. Go the limit and you can kiss marriage goodbye. Old

maids are a dime a dozen. Just one mistake you can forget about your figure, goodbye, that's it. Forever. Men never marry what they can sleep with—an easy mark is a lost cause. Enjoy it? Haah! You lie there and let them have their fun. You breathe heavy and whisper encouraging four-letter words so they can get it over with as quick as possible. The faster they come the sooner they pull off you, roll over and fall asleep, leaving you alone for another few days.

Taking on her **Daughter's Voice**, *plaintively*

Mother it doesn't have to be that way. Mommy Mommy Momma Mia.

Taking on her **Mother's Voice**

But you've got to encourage them. Behind every great man there's a woman who's been up to her neck in it. Your hair's thin and fine. No body. You need a wig. They go for blondes. The ads tell 'em blondes boost the morale like no brunette or redhead ever dreamed of. So blonde youself up to a faretheewell. Get those hairs on your arms bleached and buy a Lady Schick for those legs. And stop frowning. Here. Paste this between your eyes and keep expressionless. You want to age up your face before you get in there and fight for the man of your choice? Just one word of advice: It's as easy to fall in love and marry a rich man as a poor man. Provide. Provide. Love—what is love? Somebody show it to me. Can you see it? Market it? Sell it, buy it, take it and wrap it around your bod on a cold winter's night? Love. Don't pussyfoot with me about love. It's all a matter of convenience. You can learn to love anything that walks and talks. You're getting married?

Our Lady's *own voice*

Yes, Mother, wait till you meet him. Well, he is handsome, yes, but no, he's not as poor as Job's turkey. No, he's not rich, but he's promising and bright and I love him till death do us part, Mother, please. Let me be happy and stop planning our divorce with the wedding just twenty minutes away. He's perfect for me. I'm not flatchested and he loves me just as I am. We communicate and have similar interests and values and we both like the smell of roses in spring down the old country lane till the cows come home, mother. Won't you believe me?

Pause

Mother! I've been married five years now with two kids down and one on the way and you're still nagging about my marriage. Will you stop twisting me shapeless senseless and numb about my life my husband how to raise the

children? I'm holding on by my fingernails and you're pushing me off the edge!

Taking on her **Daughter's Voice** *plaintively*

Mother it doesn't have to be that way. Mommy Mommy Momma Mia.

Our Lady *again*

Didn't marry rich, Mother said. Married for love, Mother said. Hah! No such thing as love, Mother said. I have everything a normal healthy woman could want. A hard-working husband. Three kids and a television set I can flick on when I need some neutral adult voices bouncing off the walls of my auricles and ventricles.

Taking on the **TV Voices**

Consume, lady. Consume. The real you is a washout, a failure, a dull dish left to dry out on the drainboard while life passes you by. Be some body. Not a person but a decorated body. A titillating Tilly who makes HIM happy. No boobs, no hips, no curves, no calves. Don't worry, stay-at-homes. We got something for everything. Control. Control's the gilt-edged word for now. Step right up and control your hair with heavy lacquer spray designed to kill the wild impulses of your slutty soul. Make the hideous flora and fauna in your mouth drop dead with this pink plastic mouthwash. Bury that ugly urge to think for yourself—instead lie before the afternoon soaps like a beached whale and see what it's like to really live. *And while you're at it* don't forget feminine deodorants are made just for women like you, stay-at-homes, who never get a good enough airing what with all the laundry, dishes, dusting, vacuuming, mopping, and moping. Control for a look young, youthful, beautiful and true. For him. For h—i—m. HIM—Hmmmmm

Turns into a quiet sobbing

Taking on her **Daughter's Voice**, *plaintively*

Mother it doesn't have to be that way. Mommy Mommy Momma Mia.

Our Lady *again*

Husband, oh husband, dear. Mirror mirror in your hand, my eyes are cracked, fading, afraid to look. I think, I think it's just slightly possible husband dear, that I'm a little tiny bit unhappy, bored? being home all day

now that the children are in school I thought I might possibly if it's all right with you that is, you know, I mean, could I, would it offend you if I were—to—get a part-time job for a while, feel my oats as it were, run to the sun to the world outside—part-time only of course. Husband, dear? My perfect marriage of a mate against my mommy's wishes?

Taking on her **Husband's Voice**

I make enough money so that no wife of mine has to work.

Our Lady *again*

Husband, catch as catch can. Love me for me . . . me, me, me. Happy wives make happy husbands, make happy children, make love not war.

Taking on her **Husband's Voice**

No zing and swing. No razz ma tazz. Wife, what will a job do to you? Already you're looking dull like an old married matron. Caught your man and let yourself go. Like my mom said, once you got that handle on your pitcher you'd drop the charm school act, park in front of the TV all day, and resent birthing my babies, cooking my potatoes, running my bath to a rub a dub dub, sewing on fly buttons, they pop off, how they pop, I'm a man to contend with pop goes the weasel; lacing my shoes. You want to do something? Get yourself together. That's what you can do. A job! A part-time job! Want to run out of my house and figure eight behind my back! Baby I got your work cut out for you full time at that. Let's have some good clean titillation in the form of a sexy wife made to order. You've been living high off the hog with me—how about earning your keep, huh? They get younger every year around the office parties and Christmas comes whenever and wherever. I'm only telling you this 'cuz I love that little slip of a girl I married, that tender bud who threatens to blossom into an old crow and don't use three kids as an excuse. I've been meaning to talk to you about this for a long time, honey, but you got to shave your legs every day. Just like a man's chin that stubble gets me. I like smooth sleek gams rubbing up and down my backside and while we're on the subject of you wanting a job, have you ever thought of surprising me once in bed by trying something new? See what you can come up with. It's my birthday soon. But nothing aggressive like last time. Something sweet and gentle like the real live walking talking doll you are. My sexeytery must shave every day. I try not to notice with those short skirts and "hot pants." A little excess meat but she knows how to contain it so it comes out looking—of course, she's younger than you, like twenty-two maybe twenty-three. Honey, I wish you'd stop crying. You

know I love the real you, the essence of you. Next time while I'm sitting in my roll-back chair I want you to sneak up on me like a young girl might do and quietly take off my left shoe and sock, almost so you won't think I notice, then just like a young girl might do, lick between my baby toe and the one next to it for one minute or until you get some reaction from me. Whimper a few times if I'm slow to respond, go like this (*whimpers*), after you put the kids to bed—make it late so they're good and asleep. No glasses of water or daddy I'm afraid of the dark. And get the dishes done right after dinner so you won't be complaining about all you have to do. I'll put the garbage out if I'll help at all. Now make sure it's the left foot and the baby toe and the little toe next to it. Honey, where are you going? Honey, you can't be too tired. Honey, if you love me you'll pay a little more attention to my needs I'm out working all day so you can live in the lap of luxury. Darling, if you're too tired now, think what good you'd be after working! I got you a color set, what more do you want? Your teenage daughter doesn't need a run-around but a mom-at-home setting the weaker sex a good example. Think of the children!

Our Lady *again*

Daughter dear, I *am* happy. I don't know what you're talking about. You see before you a happily married completely fulfilled housewife mother moron of a matron. Your father's right. My place is in the home setting you onto the straight and narrow. Now quick. What's on your mind. I've gotta get dinner. (*pause*) *You* think *you're* in love? You want a contraceptive? You want to pierce your ears? You want to live a little? Hah. All I can say is girly watch your step. Like my mother said to me, A man never marries a ruined woman. Just one mistake—it's as easy to marry a rich man as—

Taking on her **Daughter's Voice**, *plaintively*

Mother it doesn't have to be that way. Mommy Mommy Momma Mia.

Our Lady *again*

Kiddo, you're lacking my age and experience. This is the way it does have to be. This is the way it is. I'm the fulfillment of my mama's fondest hopes. I got me a husband who's succeeded 'cuz I worked my ass off to put him where he is today. No. No buts ands or ifs. I'm the idol of my appledaddy's eye—the man I married always fell like a ton of bricks for a sexy blond and here I am, not a minute too soon. A living advertisement for the joy of life—joie de vivre as the parfum says. Take a sniff, honeybaby, and be advised by Mama about men and the way of the world. You've got to get

armed for the long fight ahead. Enjoy it? You just lie there and— (*pause*) Oh, don't listen to me, baby. It's no good. I'm a flop and a sop. Who do I think I'm kidding? You should have been born a boy. They can diddle around and get away with—Jumping Jesus, child, what are you doing? Karate? You'll scare 'em all away. They'll run, they'll flee, they'll scream bloody murder. Your father'll have a fit and blame it on me if we end up with an old maid on our hands.

Taking on her bristling **Daughter's Voice**

Mother it doesn't have to be that way. Mommy Mommy Momma Mia. You got your own self on your own hands. Encrusted with layers of other people's shit! Be the subject not the object of your world. No, listen to me. Mother! How does it feel to be a forty-five-year-old sexy virgin with three kids? My mommy. The family's emotional service center—fill us all up please with high test. Mother that hippity hop wham bam thank you ma'am is nowhere near the center. "Take back your mink. Take back your pearls, what made you think that you were one of those girls." One a two a three kick chop—one a two a three kick chop—one a two a three kick chop—one a two a three kick chop:

Our Lady *again*

You're crazy—coo-coo in the head, child.

Taking on her **Daughter's Voice**

Come on, Momma Mia. Come on!

Our Lady's *voice*

You can't teach an old dog new—tricks? What? How?

Our Lady *repeats the one a two a three kick chop as though she is discovering her voice and body for the first time. Her movements shart off awkwardly but she gradually becomes more certain and the lines sharpen until she is doing formalized karate positions. With each chop she "strips" off a false eyelash, wig, plastic fingernail, falsies, false hips, calves, etc. flinging them off stage with determination.*

We are the girls you used to know
From the flora dora show.
We can sing and we can dance
We've got ruffles on our pants.
Ta ra ra boom — tee — chop chop chop

With strength and pleasure, she intones the following on a high note, standing still and relaxed with herself.

OHHHHHHHHH!
Bereft of my depilatories and fake accoutrements —
Seig Heil is a not too distant memory —
Look ye upon my flesh —
And see what there is to see —
Take it or leave it but wake up, Mother.
Take it or leave it but choose now, Husband.
Take it or leave it, but right on, Daughter.
Chop chop chop

BLACKOUT

Two Poems

Carol Lopate

WASN'T IT LAST WEEK YOU SAID YOU WERE COMING

Wasn't It Last Week You Said You Were Coming

The mother said, I am all alone. Since my husband is gone no one comes to visit me. Our old friends find it dull here. I thought one would come yesterday, but it seems there had been a misunderstanding. She said to the daughter, You haven't come home for so long. There is a fast train now, you could make it in nearly three hours. Your sister, who lives almost two days away, is planning to come. The mother said, Your little sister and I have not seen you for a long time, since before Christmas. We will lose contact.

Going Home at Last

The mother stood at the train in a new hat. She said, I was here already half an hour. We must rush I think the parking meter is running out. Did you have lunch? I have sandwiches which I made lying in the front seat of the car. It's so nice to see you.

Dinner Time

The mother said to them, I have made this turkey especially for you. We never eat it when you aren't here. And you, I know you like asparagus, which I have

made for you. I have also baked your favorite cake for dessert. It costs so much money to have company, but it is worth it. Your little sister has been waiting for you to come.

In the Evening

In the evening when the dishes were washed, the mother came into the living room and sat down. She looked at her children as they talked to each other. It's so good to have you home. Now we have life in the house. She said also, You must tell me what you are doing so we can have contact.

Contact

One daughter began to tell about her job. The mother said, You have to talk slower so that I can understand what you are saying. The daughter explained in a new way what her job entailed. The mother listened, looking up worriedly now and then. After twenty minutes she asked if they would like hot chocolate.

The First Night

The first night was all first nights and like the second night also. The children took over the mother's double bed and she moved onto the couch in the living room. The mother excused herself twice as they were undressing to get all her clothes out of the room. When she said goodnight she asked them to look out of the window at the lovely country view.

MY MOTHER IS SCREAMING INSIDE MY MOUTH

My mother sits inside scraping the walls of my stomach
my mother washes my nose daily
my mother twitches from the depth of my lust
my mother would lock my anus if she could
she's cleaning, cleaning, so much to clean
and each day new dirt. My god!
the lot of a woman
my mother is screaming inside my mouth
my mother's loneliness is beyond endurance
is shameful inside the belly of my mind
tapping my brain to give it the message:
you're a lunatic. You won't get better.

New Boots

Mary Rouse

"Mama," I said, "look at my shoe."

She was ironing in the kitchen and I stood there, sniffing the clean burnt smell steaming up from the ironing board. Her thin arm moved the iron back and forth, back and forth, over a white tablecloth which had a small hole where my dad left a cigarette and a pale lavender stain where I once spilled some grape juice. My dad's shirts and my blouses and two dresses of my mother's and my dad's handkerchiefs, all crisp and warm, hung over the backs of chairs or on hangers in the doorway or stacked on the kitchen table. Mama rested the iron and stooped down to look at my shoe. The sole had come loose and flapped open like a wide leather mouth, showing my soggy wool sock.

"Those shoes are ruined," she said. "Take them off right now and put on your slippers before you catch cold. No, wait. You're tracking up the floor." She went into the bedroom, came back with my red slippers, and watched me peel off the socks, frowning. Not a real frown. Just her usual frown.

"I don't know how you can go to school on Monday," she said. "It'll be a dollar to get these re-soled and they won't last a week in this weather. Are you sure you can't get into your boots?"

"Certain." I had grown so much in one year that no amount of pushing and pulling could get the boots over my shoes.

"You'll just have to have new boots." She wet her finger on her tongue

and touched the iron's hot surface lightly, quickly, making a little hissing sound. "We won't eat till your father gets home. Eat an apple to tide you over."

I bit into a nice tart Northern Spy, sitting at the kitchen table. My toes were warm now, and I wasn't worried about shoes. My mother would figure something out.

"We won't have any more money for two weeks," she said. "Not till your father gets paid again." She finished the tablecloth, looked at the alarm clock sitting on the window sill, and began on a pair of my dad's work pants. Then she set the iron down again and looked absent-mindedly around the kitchen.

"I wonder what we could sell."

We sold things every once in a while. Like a guitar that belonged to my grandfather and my grandmother's silver tea set and my dad's fraternity pin and the gold frames of my old glasses.

I crunched my apple and Mama frowned and ironed. After a while she said, "There's nothing but my wedding ring or your father's gun." She looked at the gold band and turned it around. It was loose on her finger. "I won't sell the ring," she said. "No one should sell their wedding ring. It will have to be the gun."

I thought about the gun, in its black case, the dangerous-looking black barrel and the mellow brown wood at the top.

"Well," I said, "he wouldn't care. He never goes deer hunting any more."

She gave me an impatient look. "You don't understand at all what your father would think. His father gave him that gun."

"He never goes hunting," I repeated.

She got up without answering, put the iron on the stove to cool, and told me to help put away clothes.

The next day Mama took me down the street to the shoeman and I sat in a little wooden box while he sewed up my shoe. Then we went back home and got the gun. Mama wrapped it in brown paper so no one would know what we were carrying, and we took the bus downtown. I waited outside the second-hand store while she went in. I could see her unwrap the gun and

hand it over to the tall thin man with glasses sitting far down on his nose. Then I got interested in the things in the window. Watches and jewelry and a clarinet and a picture of Jesus in a curly golden frame. There was a fat silver pocket watch like one my dad had. He sold it to make a payment on the car, when we had a car, and I wondered if the watch in the window was the same one. Mama came out and said, "Come on, well come *on,*" and hurried me down the street so that I was almost running to keep up.

It was nice in the shoe store. I got new-smelling red boots and the man gave me a comic book. Everyone who bought boots or shoes got a free comic book. Mama didn't say much. Just, "Do they feel like they fit?" And she felt to make sure there was plenty of space between my toe and the end of the boot. Then she said to the clerk, "She'll wear them home."

My feet made a nice clumping sound as we walked back down the street. Mama stopped in front of the Epicure and we looked at the candy in the window.

"That white candy is called seafoam," she said. "My mother used to buy it when I was a girl." Then she smiled at me. "I'm hungry for ice cream, aren't you? Let's go in and have a sundae."

I was always hungry, especially for sundaes. Beautiful word. Sundae.

The Epicure had high wooden booths with little globes like silver moons on the tops of the partitions. I followed Mama down the aisle of moons, into a booth half-way down. Over the door leading to the kitchen was a stained-glass window like in church. Pretty soon a waiter in a white apron came out and we ordered banana splits. They were gigantic. Mama couldn't finish hers, so I ate mine and most of hers too.

I was almost asleep that night when my dad came home. I heard the back door slam, and the rumble of his voice, and my mother saying something, and then I was awake.

I leaned over the side of the bed and looked at my boots. They reminded me of drum majorette boots, standing there tall and red. Mama had opened my window a little, and the cold sharp winter air came in, with the sound from the drop forge plant across town. A faraway beat beat beat, like a heart, which you only noticed at night.

I heard Mama moving around in the kitchen, warming up food for my dad. Then they came into the dining room, outside my door, and sat down at the table.

"No," said Mama, with sort of a moan. "No. How could you lose your overcoat? How could you possibly . . . "

My dad said, "Well, I hung it on the rack and when I went to get it, it was gone. How could I know? I've hung my coat there every time and nobody took it." His voice was loud and angry. Not true anger but the blustery kind. I had to sympathize because I remembered when I broke my glasses and had to tell Mama.

"That's what happens when you drink," Mama said. "People take advantage and steal from you. They take your hat, remember that good hat? Or your coat or your billfold or anything else they can get their hands on. Or they see you don't know what you're doing and get you to buy all the drinks. And what happens when you run out of money? Do you think any of those leeches would lend you a dollar or buy you a drink?"

"You think everybody who goes to a bar is some kind of bum," my dad said. "Let me tell you, there aren't any two nicer fellows than Charlie and Max. They're down on their luck and you think just because—"

Mama interrupted, her voice soaring up high. "Matt, everybody steals from you. Charlie and Max haven't got a dime and all they care about is someone to buy them a drink. Everybody takes advantage of you, and that's what I can't stand." She choked, and then said in a quieter voice, "Wilcox takes advantage of you too. You're a registered surveyor and should be making twice as much, but everybody knows you drink. So Wilcox gets you at half price. You drink and sometimes you don't show up, but for him it's a good deal. Who else could he get for so little, and he knows it. I hate him. I hate him and all . . . "

There was a rattle of silverwear and dishes. "Quit nagging me, Harriet! Quit chipping at me and listen for a change. Al Wilcox is all right. He's stood by me, and that's what counts. That's what really counts!"

"Sure," said Mama. "That's what counts." Then she said, quietly, "Matt, I sold your gun today."

I felt I could hear my dad staring. He said, blankly, "You sold my rifle?"

She said, "Evelyn needed boots. She was going around in this cold weather with soaking wet shoes and broken soles. I sold the gun this morning and bought boots."

"My rifle," Dad said. "Without even telling me you went out and sold it. My father gave me that rifle. They don't even make guns like that anymore." I heard him get up and walk around. "By God, Harriet. You knew how I'd feel and you sold it anyway. You did it for spite. Don't tell me you didn't. I would have gotten the boots. I could have got some money somewhere!"

"Matt," Mama said, and I thought she was about to cry. "Matt, I didn't want to. I just couldn't think of anything else."

"How much did you get for it?"

"Twenty-five dollars."

"Twenty-five dollars!" He slapped his hand down on the table, shouting. "Harriet, you're out of your mind! That rifle was worth twice that, maybe more. That man robbed you. He robbed you blind!"

Mama wailed, "How could I know? All I knew was Evelyn needed boots. And you needed gloves. You lost your gloves. I was going to buy you gloves . . . " Her voice trailed off to a sad sound.

"Well," said Dad, "I don't want gloves. What I wanted was the rifle, and now it's gone. For twenty-five dollars." He paused and then said coldly, "You can give me the two or three dollars you would have spent on gloves and we'll call it square."

Mama got up and I knew she was going into the bedroom for her purse. She came back to the dining room and said, "Here. Take it. Take all of it and drink it up." Her voice was a knife.

"That's just what I mean to do!"

The door slammed and his feet stamped on the porch steps. I stayed quiet in my bed for a few minutes, then sat up and put my feet in my slippers. It was just another quarrel, and I was used to quarrels. But sometimes when he went off, my mother liked to see me. Sometimes she came into my room afterward and sat in the chair by my bed and when I opened my eyes she'd touch my forehead and say, "Go back to sleep. Go back to sleep." And I would, feeling happy she was there.

This time I opened the door a little and looked out into the dining room.

Mama was sitting at the table, looking at her purse. Not even crying. I looked at her back, stiff and straight, and the thick sweater she wore because our house was cold. She must have heard the door open but she didn't even turn around. I stood there a minute, then I shut the door and got back into bed. I turned my face to the wall and shut my eyes and tried to go to sleep because I knew she wouldn't come in.

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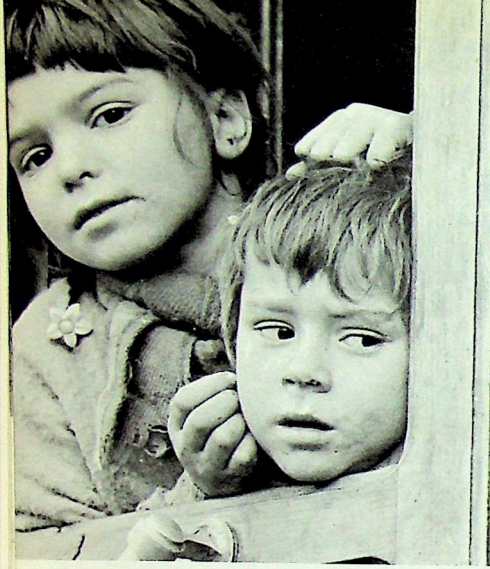
Tracing Back

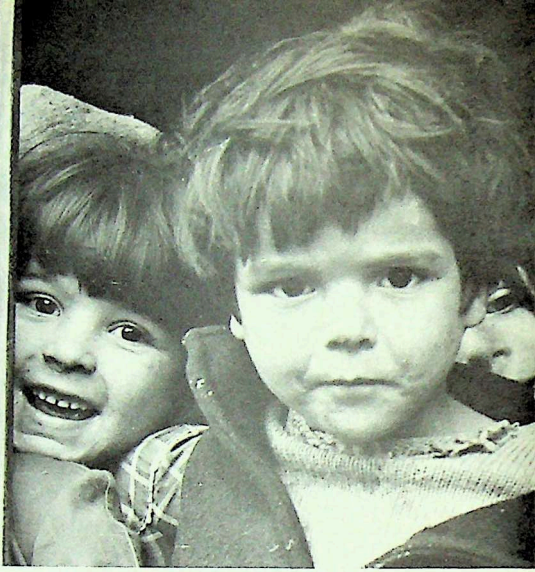
Jane Mayhall

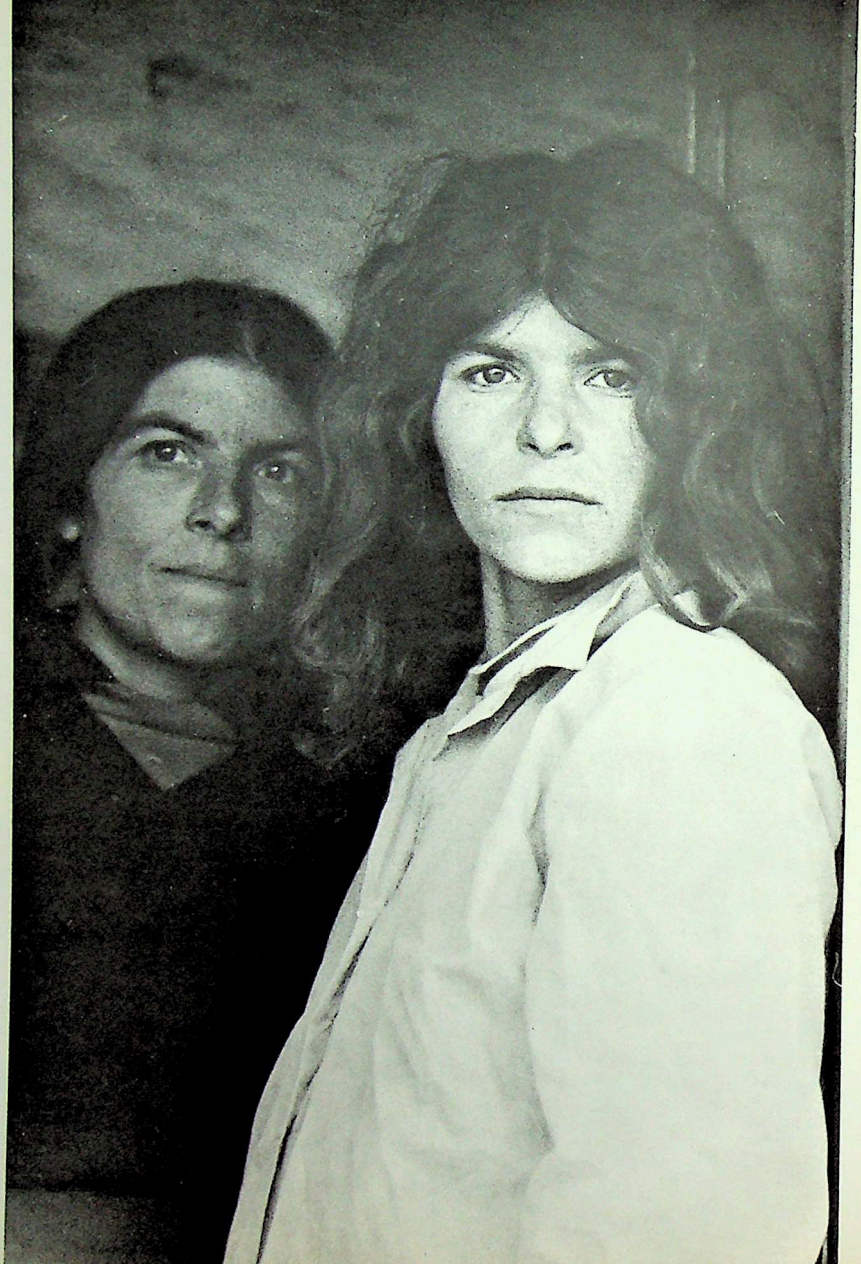
My mother took care of my father's shirts;
he did not take care of her cotton dresses.
I think he would have been ashamed,
not of the labor, but of a peculiar
sense of squalor, a man wasting his time,
winding his arms around the soiled garments,
the daily plethora, and humble sheddings.
What grim, unpresiding angel, drooped and dull?
Both of them, a part of the aboriginal pool.

Gypsies

Mariette Ollier







Her Daughter Was Her Muse

Ellen Harold and Ann Snitow

Mme de Sévigné (1626-1696) was a part of the brilliant world that surrounded Louis the Fourteenth. It was a violent and brutal time, yet it was also the time when the French language as we know it was being born. This was the age of Corneille and of Racine, of Pascal and Descartes, La Fontaine and Moliere. La Rochefoucauld was Mme de Sévigné's intimate friend, as was Mme de La Fayette, author of what has been called the first modern novel. With all these, Mme de Sévigné stands as an equal, but she did not consider herself an artist when she wrote. This freed her from some of the limiting conventions of the age. She poured out fourteen volumes which are considered models of French prose. To read her is to open a window on seventeenth-century France.

Mme de Sévigné's grandmother decided while she still had small children to renounce her family and all the world and enter a cloister. Her young son, later Mme de Sévigné's father, is supposed to have flung himself down upon the threshold, saying that to abandon him for God she would have to step over his prostrate body, which she did, apparently with little hesitation. After her death, she was made a saint.

The daughter of this abandoned son, Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, later the Marquise de Sévigné, was to reverse her grandmother's choice. Her name will always be associated with passionate motherly devotion.

For her son Charles, this love was tender, mixed with a slightly mocking

disrespect for his irresponsibility. But for her daughter Françoise Marguerite, her feelings were of a different kind. She seems almost to have felt her to be a stranger, a blessed guest in the house.

Why did she turn to this daughter instead of to her son, the more usual Freudian choice? Somerset Maugham remarks rather petulantly, "It seems hard that she should have loved him so much less than she loved her daughter." Her son was a charming and undisciplined rake. Her daughter was one of the great beauties of the age. La Fontaine wrote poems to her; she was considered a Cartesian and a great intellect. Mme de Sévigné had grown up an orphan and an only child and later married a man who was cold and unfaithful. Perhaps she was astonished at finding in Françoise Marguerite a human being who could understand her—to whom she could open her heart. Intellectual communication is rare in any age.

When her daughter was forced to follow her husband, the Comte de Grignan, to Provence, Mme de Sévigné underwent a deep and shattering depression. This was the beginning of her great letter-writing period:

> I assure you, my dear, that I think about you continually, and every day I am alive to the truth of what you said one day—that we must not dwell on these thoughts. If one did . . . one would be for ever weeping—at least I should. Every part of this house strikes at my heart. Everything in your room is enough to kill me: I have had a screen put across the middle of it to hide a little the view one has from one window of the step from which I saw you get into D'Hacqueville's carriage and from which I called you back. I get frightened when I think how near I was then to jumping out of the window, for I am quite mad sometimes. That little room where I kissed you without knowing what I was doing. The . . . chapel, where I went to hear Mass. The tears that fell from my eyes to the ground as though water had been spilt . . . And your first letter and all the others, and then every day, every conversation with those who understand my feelings. . . . That is what I hark back to: we must slip over all that and see that we do not give in to our thoughts and the impulses of our hearts. I prefer to turn my attention to your present mode of life; it distracts me, but without banishing me from my subject and object, who is what is poetically called the object of my love.
>
> [March 3, 1671]

Sometimes she wrote of being naked without her daughter, that to receive her letters was like being born anew. Yet in her imagination she could always be with her.

> I should be very happy in these woods, if only a leaf would sing. Oh! what a lovely thing is a leaf that sings! And what a sad place to dwell in is a wood where the leaves say not a word, and where the owls speak! I am ungrateful—that is only in the evenings: I hear thousands of birds every morning. There are none where you are, and, as you were saying the other day, you only see which way the wind blows. Your terrace must be very fine. I am often with you all, and my imagination knows where to find you in that fine, great principality.
>
> [June 26, 1680]

Her daughter was her muse, but she was not a distant figure like Dante's Beatrice. They wrote each other twice a week and often visited for long periods, once for as long as eight years. Like all truly involving relationships this one was filled with quarrels and reconciliations. It was after one stormy visit that Sévigné wrote:

> It is in your hands, dear child, that my letters turn to gold. When they leave mine, I find them so long and wordy that I say: "My daughter will not have time to read all that." But you reassure me only too well, and I do not in all conscience think that I ought to believe all you say about them. Be careful, now: such praise and approval is dangerous, but I do at least assure you that I prefer yours to everyone else's.
>
> [January 8, 1690]

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that the letters contain nothing but what the French call *effusions maternelles,* for Mme de Sévigné loved life as much as she loved her daughter. In the seventeenth century newspapers did not exist and Sévigné, in Paris, was in a position to relate the latest happenings to her daughter in faraway Provence. News of the King's mistresses, of the latest play by Racine, of a battle in Holland, an execution, of whatever she was reading at the moment, are woven through the letters. Nothing shocked her, in fact, she seems to have had a relish for gory details.

"How," writes Virginia Woolf, "does she contrive to make us follow every word of the story of the cook who killed himself because the fish failed to come in on time for the Royal dinner party; or the scene of the haymaking; or the anecdote of the servant whom she dismissed in a sudden rage; how does she achieve this order, this perfection of composition? . . . There is no record of any painstaking or effort. . . . There is nothing naive about her. She is by no means a simple spectator. Maxims fall from her pen. She sums up; she judges. But it is done effortlessly."

Proust also was an admirer of her art. He and his mother agreed that Proust's grandmother, Adèle Weil, was more Sévigné than Sévigné herself. In the second book of *Remembrance of Things Past, Within a Budding Grove,* the narrator's grandmother hands him a volume of the letters.

> As I read I felt my admiration for Madame de Sévigné grow . . . my grandmother, who had approached that lady from within, attracted to her by her own love of kinsfolk and of nature, had taught me to enjoy the real beauties of her correspondence. . . . They were presently to strike me all the more forcibly inasmuch as Madame de Sévigné is a great artist of the same school as a painter whom I was to meet at Balbec, where his influence on my way of seeing things was immense. I realized that it was in the same way as he that she presented things to her readers, in the order of our perception of them, instead of first having to explain them in relation to their several causes. But already that afternoon in the railway carriage, as I read over again that letter in which the moonlight comes: "I cannot resist the temptation: I put on all my bonnets and veils, though there is no need of them, I walk along this mall, where the air is as sweet as in my chamber; I find a thousand phantasms, monks white and black, sisters grey and white, linen cast here and there on the ground, men enshrouded upright against the treetrunks," I was enraptured by what, a little later I should have described (for does she not draw landscapes in the same way as he draws characters?) as the Dostoievsky side of Madame de Sévigné's Letters.

Sévigné was an inveterate and ominivorous reader—historical tales and battle scenes were her special favorites. In an age that ignored nature she wished for a painter to capture the snow-covered mountains with their *excès*

d'horreur. Engagingly Gallic was her love of food. At the age of sixty-four she was writing her daughter:

> We eat very well here. We have no River Sorgue, but we have the sea; we have plenty of fish, and I like that lovely butter from La Prevalaie—we get it every week. I like it and eat it as though I were a Breton. We cut endless slices of bread and butter, sometimes using cobs. We always think of you when we eat them. My son still leaves the marks of a complete set of teeth in them, and so I am glad to say, do I. We shall soon be putting little bits of fine herbs and violets on them. In the evenings we have soup with a little butter, as they do round here, some good prunes, and spinach. In a word, it cannot be called fasting, and it is with some embarrassment that we say:
>
> How hard it is Holy Church to serve.
>
> As for you, my dear, I hope that if you were not in a fit state to keep Lent you would not be so cruel as to try.
>
> [February 19, 1690]

And what of Françoise Marguerite's feelings? She remains a shadowy figure. Her half of the twenty-five-year correspondence is gone. Mme de Sévigné's friends found her unworthy of her mother's love, and she has come down to us as cold and ungrateful. Certainly Sévigné's passion was mysterious in its intensity, approaching that of a lover for a mistress: "Do you wonder if I cannot refrain from kissing your lovely face and bosom?" "Had I wept for my sins as much as I have wept for you . . . I should indeed be in a state of grace." This profane idolatry was a sin and Mme de Sévigné knew it. Her confessor once refused her absolution because she loved her daughter more than God.

To Mme de Sévigné heaven could offer nothing comparable. Her love was her own creation; it gave meaning to her existence and animated her art. What mortal could have been worthy of such a love? Some sympathy must go to her daughter. Surely her mother's correspondence, which fills several volumes, must have wearied her, her mother's constant inquiries seemed close to nagging. But do we judge a passion more severely when it is between a mother and a daughter? Do we ask whether Laura was bored with Petrarch? Years later when the woman Leopardi had pined for had grown old, and the

hunchback poet himself had been dead for many years, she was asked how she could have refused so great an artist: "My dear, he stank," she replied. But Leopardi's poems have immortalized them both. Whatever Françoise Marguerite may have been and whatever Mme de Sévigné may have been, the letters remain, becoming a transcendent symbol of mother love—of love itself.

> Lastly, in our mourning for our dead we pay an idolatrous worship to the things they liked. Not only could not my mother bear to be parted from my grandmother's bag, become more precious than if it had been studded with sapphires and diamonds, from her muff, from all those garments which served to enhance their personal resemblance, but even from the volumes of Mme de Sévigné which my grandmother took with her everywhere, copies which my mother would not have exchanged for the original manuscript of the letters . . . when, in reading the *Letters,* she came upon the words: "my daughter," she seemed to be listening to her mother's voice.
>
> —Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past, Cities of the Plain.*

A note about translations: All long quotations in this essay are from *Selected Letters of Madame de Sévigné,* translated and edited by H. T. Barnwell (E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1960). *Letters from Madame la Marquise de Sévigné,* translated by Violet Hammersley (Harcourt Brace and Company, 1956), was also consulted. The authors found this translation stilted and idiosyncratic. It has a preface by Somerset Maugham.

Two Poems

Anita Barrows

RAPUNZEL TO THE MUSE

Old witch, barren
mother, spidery hollow
of breast that I sucked at,
tell me you've left me here
for good.

Tell me
you're jealous
of my hair. Tell me
you're going to
shave it, and hang it
around the forest
like Spanish moss. Tell me
you're going to starve me;
tell me my fingers
will spindle to knotted vines.

I

was the daughter
you waited for. I
was the child
of the thorns, of the
green pulpy juices.

Swallow me
back now, mother; whistle
my body to worms; or tell me
my bones

will be wild as birds;
tell me that princes
will straddle the tower
of my hair, and babies
will bloom from my belly
like tiny pears;

tell me
the moonwhite potions
are all used up. Tell me
I'm too pretty, tell me
I'm too old for your stories.

THE MUTANT

Was this what you bargained for,
a daughter with teeth for an eye?
What kind of prayers do they answer
for mothers in January coats,

for fathers with dovetail hands?
What a loaf to bake in your oven!
What a paycheck! What a corsage!

The neighbors kept theirs in
a closet, the idiot boy
whose head grew like fungus
from broomstick legs. But yours—

what could you do with it?
Outside, she devoured everything.
She ate you out of house
and home—everything—

pennies, gingerbread, bone.
What's more, you said, you loved her.
You would sell your clothes, sell
your business for her. The rabbis

you brought her to lowered their heads:
she siphoned their beards like licorice.
The doctors said, operate: Like a rat
she made off with their instruments.

And what an embarrassment she was!
If you brought her to a lake,
she drank it. If she looked out
the window, the landscape

was stubbled and charred.
The relatives were sympathetic:
Naturally she would never marry
And what would you do

with all the strange digestion?

The Saffron Boat

Sylvia Berkman

Deborah Adrian sat quietly in the big wicker chair on the sun deck, watching the first glintings of seawater slip along the mudflats as the tide turned. She was thankful to be able to watch. After the accident (as she always called it) that had cracked her bones and scarred her face she was thankful merely to be able to move, to breathe, to look. She must move very slowly; but she could look deep and hard. She could spend half an hour studying the stark convulsed bulges of rock on which the cottage was set, drifted in the crevices with dry leaves, dry needles, and empty acorn cups, or the stiff juniper bushes hung with pale green berries thrusting through the intervals of grass; not for any occult message; simply because the act of looking had become a nourishment.

She liked this cottage she had rented for the summer months, in East Helmsport, Maine, a small lobster-fishing village tucked into a crinkled fold of coast. On one side the windows faced the stubby bluff dropping to the wide ellipse of cove below, with a dense dark row of trees rimming the opposite shore. On the other side, the front, the windows of the galley kitchen faced the road and the only neighboring house visible, a long lean mustard-colored house topping the slope of a hill. Here, it was not difficult to lend oneself to the unhurried rhythm of the tide, in brilliant sun or shrouding fog. She could follow the shape of the saffron sailboat anchored in the cove, entering the arc of color which changed as the light changed, now

ruddy gold, now terracotta, now hollow bronze, without once worrying that at the end of August she would reach the age of forty-two, and that in September she must grapple with a host of anxieties: insurance, bills, her job at the Busch-Reisinger, her apartment on Linnaean Street, all precipitately left.

Deborah kept chiefly to the sheltered cove side of the cottage, on the sun deck as much as possible. It pleased her to be solitary. But as she went about the slow preparation of her meals or other kitchen work she felt an affiliating human linkage through the activities of the family across the road. They were a husband and wife, Hubbard and Laura Platt, and three wiry boys, Arthur, Kim, and Ralph. Deborah did not know the family, beyond the names which came ringing through the air. They seemed to be often at a distance from one another, striving to make something heard. Without intention, she absorbed a knowledge of the external pattern of their lives.

At eight in the morning, as she sat at the table with her coffee, trying to define the exact color of the sailboat in the early light, she would hear Mr. Platt's recalcitrant little car come coughing down the hill, to shoot off at the road with a blast and roar. He returned each day at half past six. Weekends, he busied himself in a shed, hammering, planing, running a buzzsaw that gave out a pained intensifying shriek. He paid scant attention to the children; he did not care for the water, it seemed—he never frequented the cove. He was a square muscular man of about forty, with a harsh nose and a flattened look about his head, as though one of his own mallets had swung up and given it a clap. From the glimpses of his profile as he drove by Deborah formed a notion of dark grooved wood.

Arthur, Kim, and Ralph, apparently identical in size and age, ten or eleven, throbbed with vitality. They were always pounding, churning on bicycles or galloping down the road to the narrow neck of the cove where their interests seemed to concentrate. At times Deborah quailed at the thought of the mountains of food they must consume, the rivers of sweat they must exude, the piles of soiled sneakers they must wear out. She felt friendly toward them, as she would toward a trio of energetic colts. They never trespassed on the cottage property; nor did they seem to like their own marshy water strip as a place to play. From a distance, filtered through oaks

and pines, their excited voices reached her in laconic cries:

"No! No! You nut!"

"Come on! Pull!"

"You quit that! Stop!"

"Here! Here! Now!"

"Grab it! Quick!"

"Oh boy! What a dope!"

Every day at noon Laura Platt would fly from the house to shout: "Ar-thur! *Kim*! RALPH!" with a rise in volume that ultimately brought the boys pounding down the road.

Of all the family, Laura Platt soon established herself as a constant if variable element in Deborah's life. She was a quick limber woman, tidily built, who seemed to be in her late twenties (was that possible, given Arthur, Kim, and Ralph?). Everything about her was urgent. Her fine blonde hair, cut close to her head in boyish peaks, never looked tousled or blown, as though an electric emanation kept every lock in place. Her gait was swift, almost a run. Dressed in shorts and a skimpy blouse, or a big pullover and slacks, she would fling herself into the yard, race to her car (more frenzied in its sputter than Mr. Platt's), hurtle off on errands, hurtle back; or she would seize the lawnmower and mow the patchy grass as though she were in a competition with doomsday itself.

She appeared aloof. She had never stopped at the cottage to call, and did not even wave on the rare occasions when the two might have interchanged a smile. To Deborah, rather, she seemed eternally striving not to lose ground, lest she be smothered by a banked accretion of things undone.

Yet Laura managed to do what she wanted most to do. She found time to raise flowers, great splashes of yellow, salmon, orange, flame, in a bed on the crest of the hill, and overcrowding smaller flowers brimming at the base of the porch. One morning when Deborah had arisen very early, she saw Laura come flying from the house, in a billowy old-fashioned nightgown, and race to water her flowers. The full sleeves ruffling, the full skirts floating, the blonde hair pale, she looked pictorial and poignant in the disembodied light, like an engraving from an eighteenth-century novel about orphanhood and loss.

Or, almost every day as Deborah sat in the wicker chair watching the tide mount higher to cover another rung of the ladder leading from the cottage pier, farther down the shore at the spur of marshland Laura would dart into sight. Capable, taut, with a kind of leashed zeal, she would propel her little dory to the sailboat and hop aboard. Then she seemed to split apart into two or three furious beings, bailing out water with a flash of tin, loosening the creaky ropes, bending, hauling, yanking, until the white sail stood clear and true.

Off she would skim! To Deborah not even the high poised circular flight of the gulls against the vaulted sky was more beautiful.

This August afternoon as she sat watching the tide trickle into the cove, the tall grasses rising feathery at the edge of the bluff, the spears of goldenrod springing out of rock, Deborah tried to comprehend why vision, the simple exercise of vision, should nourish her strength.

The accident the winter before had left her shattered not only in body. That she should be seized, without warning, without reason, on her own Linnaean Street, by an unknown brutal enemy—not even an enemy, a featureless assailant—kicked, hammered, gouged, and slashed: this had stunned the whole fabric of her being. She groped through blinding sand. She did not move in fear, threatened by monstrous images. She moved through a bleak pallid desert which rained upon her incessant blinding sand. Why? Why? Why? the particles of sand rained upon her limbs. She was muffled in sand, during the months in the hospital.

Now as she gazed at the anchored sailboat tilted on its keel Deborah's mind skittered off. Some days there was wreckage in the cove—long uprooted algae, broken lobster pots, broken branches, splintered planks— swept in with the tide, swept out again, or lodged to disintegrate in salt and mud. The juniper bushes protruded barren rusty spikes. Tough matted dead patches clogged the grass. Blight attacked the oaks. Big anthills consumed the earth.

"It's a . . . process," Deborah thought; but she was not satisfied. She had not searched far enough. What was it that had strengthened her, here during these solitary months? One is not nourished by the element of reduction and decay.

She looked down at her hands lying in her lap. She herself was damaged now, bony legs brittle, a sharp thin scar cutting her right cheek. She had never been beautiful: tall, flat, lean, with a stoop to her shoulders, a slightly curved nose, ordinary brown eyes, ordinary brown hair. But that self had grown familiar, even valued. It was natural to shrink from the impairment of one's flesh. Still . . . she was forever thankful to be undivided, whole.

When she had first struggled into consciousness after the accident, she

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When she had first struggled into consciousness, after the accident, she had emerged split. On the bed lay a heavy barely sentient bulk—a box, a cask—and flickering somewhere above a keen quiver of entity. Both knew, both quiver and bulk, that they must fuse, that quiver must be forced to enter bulk. This knowledge surged into an iron wheel: it thundered and crashed, creating a magnetic whirlwind vortex. Into that vortex the quiver of entity was sucked, while it fought and screamed. Then she heard her own screaming voice, and painful tears gushed down her face.

"Ar-thur! *Kim*! RALPH!"

What healthy lungs Laura had! Deborah glanced at her watch. Twelve-thirty. The tide would be high then about six. That was the hour she liked best to watch the water gleaming in the cove, on calm fair days especially. The morning light never steeped the world to the same brilliant concentrate: so that the trees on the opposite shore stood darker, with another fringe of dark mysterious trees mirrored below, and the reflection of the saffron boat swayed more crystalline, more lucid in color than the color of the actual boat. Deborah sat forward, fingers interlocked. Almost, she grasped what she had been trying to grasp. Could the idea be phrased?—that while it was important to apprehend the actual, to glimpse the actual purified was more important still.

She shook her head, letting her hands drop. She no longer could follow what she thought she had seen.

That night Deborah broke out of sleep gasping and convulsed. She lay in the bedroom in the dark, the shades undrawn. To her left, a cluster of sturdy pines nodded toward the windowpanes; before her two long windows faced the deck: it was an open rustic room. Lying quiet as she knew she must, she watched the polished pine needle fronds springing clean. She had been foolish, earlier in the day, to dwell upon the accident, though she was able to·

consider it more objectively now, not so much as a personal outrage as part of the general blight of destruction afloat—through which one must persist. Gradually, she had come to think of that terrible fusion of entity and bulk as the most harrowing point in the whole ordeal. To be outcast, whirled screaming in space, sucked into the racketing black funnel, wedged, constricted, converged, electric shreds and ribbons flying—that was agony. Into that vortex the nightmare had swept her again.

Two strokes from the church steeple across the cove, clang humming into clang. Deborah traced the illuminated figures of the clock dial as she checked the time. Her breath came more regularly now; her pulse had steadied; but her eyelids stretched gritty and waxed. Perhaps it would be best to get up, to make herself a bowl of warm milk.

In the kitchen she was surprised to see the upper front-room windows of the Platts' house suffused with light. Something was wrong: she hoped no one was ill. On a tactful caprice she snapped off her own light. The little glow from the gas ring would enable her to watch the milk. Hovering beside the stove, she peered at the strip of beaten road that ended in a tangle of huckleberry bushes, juniper, and scrubby pine. How strange and dispersed the world looked!—as though vast ethereal wings were fluffed.

Suddenly the lower front-room windows of the Platts' house sprang alight. Laura leaped into view, poised against the glass, one hand upraised. She seemed to be talking very rapidly, beating her fist against the air. In her long floating robe, the ashen hair sleek, she appeared fragile. Then Mr. Platt lunged forward, menacing against the glass; Laura backed quickly out of sight. Deborah froze; but Mr. Platt swerved and stopped, giving the window curtains a vicious yank. Stiffened, Deborah heard a faint high scream. The black sockets of the windows loomed ominous.

Deborah extinguished the gas and groped her way to a chair. She was not in any terms empowered to cross that road. She lacked the strength. With justice they would drive her out if she should. Bunched up in fright, she felt the silence congeal within her limbs. Her legs and shoulders ached. But she wanted urgently to know the time. She raised herself to hobble to the shelf where the kitchen clock stood, above the stove. Twenty-five minutes after two. She was careful to avert her glance from the windows; yet what was

there to see? Only the tall blank house of strangers across the road. At the crash of a door slamming shut she jumped. She heard the sputter of Mr. Platt's car lurching down the hill.

The car returned, jarring her from uneasy sleep, just as the first glitter of sunlight touched the cove.

The day was customary nevertheless. Mr. Platt blasted down the road at eight; Arthur, Kim, and Ralph noisily pounded off to their regular pursuits; Laura summoned the boys at noon. Doors and windows of the Platts' house stood open, untroubled. The only thread of difference Deborah remarked was that Laura kept herself hidden. She did not appear in the yard, flying out to tend her garden, pull a bundle of vegetables, or mow the lawn. Deborah had not realized before how centrally the scurrying quick figure had lent a note of animation to her own passive hours. A vacancy prevailed.

She felt languid, after the broken night. She sewed a little, read a little, napped. Late in the afternoon she took a walk along the path that circled down the shelving bluffside to the cottage pier. She liked the flick of the huckleberry bushes against her ankles; she liked the snaring briers, some already tipped with red. Most of all, it soothed her to stand on the pier, braced against the weathered rail, able to look far out into the limitless blue pavilion of sky and sea. No quirky coastline; no granite rock; just an unencumbered universe of changing blue.

By this time Deborah had almost convinced herself that she had been fanciful, overwrought, in thinking she had observed a sinister clash between those two. She could invent a dozen valid explanations. She could not truthfully say now that she had heard Laura scream. Perhaps she had heard instead her own silent scream. The boys had shown no sign of worry as they clattered down the road breaking into their stark cries: "Quit it!" "Shut up!" "Come *on*!" Yet the image remained: the hard blunt body lunging, the other shrinking back, out of knowledge, out of sight.

As she moved between kitchen and table, putting shirred eggs in the oven, making a salad, laying her place beside the window overlooking the cove, Deborah resolved simply to deal with what she could know: to enjoy what she could enjoy. She always liked the sense of being shipbound as she ate a meal when the tide was swelling high. She could almost reach through the

window, across the shaggy little bluff, and trail her fingers in the waves.

She set her plate on the table, with the crisp salad near by, and hitched forward her chair. Today the color of the water was . . . turquoise glinting buried green. Suddenly a flash of white streaked through the marsh strip beyond the pier. Laura sprang into her dory. Rowing hard, she reached the sailboat and flung herself aboard. Arms and legs whirling, in a tornado of speed, she hoisted the sail. Deftly she maneuvered the ropes, standing firm in white shirt and white ducks. The sail curved out, the hull swung round. Away she sped!—a dwindling saffron arrow racing toward the sea.

Again Deborah resolved to draw no meaning from the surface aspect of an event. She finished her meal, watching the tide climb to the highest rung of the ladder at the pier. She heard the cough of Mr. Platt's car laboring up the hill. Soon after she heard the voices of the boys wheeling into the rattle of bicycles.

Nevertheless, when she had dried the dishes she went back to her chair at the table. Over the still, empty cove the churchbell clanged out seven slow strokes. Now the tide had turned. Imperceptibly at first the water would ebb, leaving a wet bracelet on the shafts of the pier, below the first rung of the ladder, the second, until with accumulated power it rapidly decreased.

It was not evening yet. This was the hour, in the late transparent sunlight, when the features of the world, intensified, shadowless, attained the crystal overshadow of significance. The trees, poised, foreboding, stood guard on the opposite shore. Filing along the cottage pier, not talking, Arthur, Kim, and Ralph slipped into sight. They stood in a row, apart from one another, like fledgling herring gulls fixed in waiting, staring beyond the shoreline out to sea.

With surprise Deborah realized that she did not know which name applied to which one of them. They looked smaller, standing alone at the barrier of the pier. How frail seemed the neck stems supporting the solid round heads! Had they eaten? she wondered. But she had nothing she could offer; nor would she have dared. One scraped a foot against the planks; another scratched his leg; one of them sneezed. For the rest they waited, motionless, wordless, shoulders disconsolate.

She could see, now that they were untangled, that they differed in size.

The youngest was perhaps seven. He wore heavy workman's shoes, so that the thin drooping body seemed like a tendril anchored to a pair of wooden blocks. The middle one, barefoot in ragged bluejeans, had a plaintive vagabond air, lacking only the bundle hitched to the end of a rod. The tallest like an ancient had cupped his hands behind his ears, as though his vision extended farther with two senses employed. How long would they wait staring out?

Now the cove was like a glassy bell hung in crystal light, the fractional moment when time came to a halt, gathered attentive before the shredding evening light crept in. Already the tide had ebbed to the second rung of the ladder leaving its watery mark. The three boys stood like a statue of waiting boys doomed to a blind stare.

Suddenly they jerked erect. They strained forward. They did not speak, they did not exchange a sign. The youngest rose up taller in his heavy shoes; the second gripped his elbows; the eldest scrubbed his head. They merged into a single animal tense and coiled. In a moment they slackened; and yes yes yes!—far out at the outer rim of the cove a rosy blur scudded fast, nearer nearer! It enlarged, it took shape. Then, without a word, the three boys turned and ran, pounding across the road, up the hill.

For a while Deborah remained beside the window. The cove sank dim, the steady current glimmering. The trees bunched vague on the opposite shore. The sailboat was tethered dark. Finally she snapped on a light. At once the cove was crazily beset with borrowed furnishing, cushions, hassocks, chairs, a pitcher of flowers. These were wild reflections cast by the cottage furnishings, easy to dismiss. But the lucid image of the sailboat mirrored, cryptic, transcending the common boat—in that she believed she believed.

From Electra

Marilyn Hacker

Growing older, I descend November.
The asymptotic cycle of the year
plummets to now. In crystal reveries
I pass between a fixed white line of trees
where dry leaves lie for footsteps to dismember.
They crackle with a muted sound like fear.
That, and the wind, is all that I can hear.
I ask cold air, "What is the word that frees?"
The wind says, "Change," and the white sun, "Remember."

Born, I come to this: Who is my mother
that I am winter-isolate, alloyed with choice,
tethered to the circle of the sky,
new and aging each year, afraid to die,
unique and hesitant, like any other?
I have cast stones, read entrails, but the voice
that speaks to me of knives is not my voice.
A red child pummels my lungs and cries
between my ears, still cries, "Who is my mother?"

When I was five, I thought she was too tall
to come through doorways keeping her head high.
Only official archways let her pass
level with men's heads helmeted in brass.
When she first brought me to the council hall
my palms were cold and sweaty. Hers were dry.
When I was twelve, she was shorter than I,
her hair in angry wisps like withered grass,
bent out of habit, too thin, and too small.

A trumpet threaded morning with brass notes.
Massed pigeons wheeled white bellies toward the sun.
I pressed my back against the wall and tried
to hold my breath and make the pain subside.
Rocked in the harbor, crimson-masted boats
darkened the sky. I saw somebody run
across the slag-heap, shouting, "It is done!"
I broke my nails on stone, and could not hide
or choke the anguish bubbling in my throat

I never learned to like being alone
and never was alone enough, from fear,
and was alone in company, while you
wanted no one to speak your silence to
and fled an audience of trees and stones.
Now I wait for you, alone, not clear
why I am waiting, or for what; somewhere,
movement, and multitudes you travel through,
and I, make even exile not your own.

The eagle's raucous wrath sounds on the tower.
The proper offerings have not been made.
My tutor left. She would not tell me why
the serpent oracle makes no reply.

Death strews the halls of order, and I cower
in corners since his yellow corpse was laid
drained on the open walls. I am afraid.
Mirror in action my bound spirit's cry
and bring revenge, like a symmetric flower.

Now it is spring. My father died in spring.
The river shudders. Slabs of melting ice
shimmer in a trembling white noon.
I walked all morning. I should turn back soon.
Leaves clatter. With a sudden dart of wings,
a long-necked fisher screeches, spirals twice.
Is that an augur for a sacrifice?
The sun stands small and silver as the moon,
A girl in the next field begins to sing.

To Susan: Written in Grass

Jody Aliesan

Soft in the breathing, you lie knees loose,
Breasts slide each down a rib to the floor.
Tucked into an egg, I roll where you reach me;
Your reaping fingers glide through my hairs,
Blades in a grainfield, each stalk
Bending and returning, in the moving
Making patterns with the others.
I wonder, with what's left of thinking,
If the earth feels her fields sway
And trembles with the living roots
In her thin scalp, when the wind touches.

APHRA-isms

We're all lesbians, we all loved our mothers first.

I suspect that the more male dominance characterizes a western society, the greater is the disassociation between sexuality and maternalism. It is to men's sexual advantage to restrict women's sexual gratification to heterosexual coitus, though the price for the woman and child may be a less psychologically and physically rewarding relationship. Cultural insistence that the breast is more publicly acceptable as a *sexual* display than in a *maternal* display of nursing may be accepted by women who then refuse to try nursing their infants or discontinue it upon discovering that it involves a physiological blend of the sexual and the maternal.

—Alice Rossi, "Maternalism, Sexuality and the New Feminism," 1970

October 12, 1811

My Dear Mother,

You will think that I entirely forgot you, but I assure you that you are greatly mistaken. I think of you always and often sigh to think of the distance between us two loving creatures of nature. We have regular hours for all our occupations, first at 7 o'clock we go to the dancing and come home at 8, we then read our Bible and get our repeating and then play till ten then we get our music till 11 when we get our writing and accounts we sew from 12 till 1, after which I get my grammar and then work till five. At 7 we come and knit till 8 when we don't go to the dancing. This is an exact

description. I must take a hasty farewell to her whom I love, reverence and doat on, and who I hope thinks the same of

Marjory Fleming

P.S.—An old pack of cards would be very exeptible.

—Margaret Fleming, 1803-1811

A son's a son till he gets him a wife
But a daughter's a daughter all the days of your life.

—folk saying

Cleis

I have a little daughter rare
That's like the golden flowers fair,
    My Cleis;
I would not take all Lydia wide
No, nor lovely Greece beside
    For Cleis.

—Sappho, about 600 B.C.

Whenever I feel myself inferior to everything about me, threatened by my own mediocrity, frightened by the discovery that a muscle is losing its strength, a desire its power, or a pain the keen edge of its bite, I can still hold up my head and say to myself, "I am the daughter of . . . a woman who, in a mean, close-fisted, confined little place, opened her village home to stray cats, tramps, and pregnant servant girls. I am the daughter of a woman who many a time when she was in despair at not having enough money for others, ran through the wind-whipped snow to cry from door to door, at the houses of the rich, that a child had just been born in a poverty-stricken home to parents whose feeble, empty hands had no swaddling clothes for it. Let me not forget that I am the daughter of a woman who bent her head, trembling, between the blades of a cactus, her wrinkled face full of ecstasy over the promise of a flower, a woman who herself never ceased to flower, untiringly, during three quarters of a century.

—Colette, *Break of Day,* 1928

I am at length the happy mother of a daughter. Rejoice with me all Womanhood, for lo! a champion of the cause is born. I never felt such sacredness in carrying a child as I have this one, feeling all the time strongly impressed

with the belief that I was cherishing the embryo of a mighty female martyr—Glorious hope! May she wear the crown of Martyrdom bravely and patiently, and leave her impress on the world for goodness and truth.

—Elizabeth Cady Stanton
on the birth of her first daughter, 1852

Oh, dear, I'm sorry it's another girl. A woman's life is so hard.

—Mrs. Stone, on the birth of Lucy, 1814

Oh, God! What is this frantic desire to torment each other, which possesses human beings? This frantic desire to reprove each other's faults bitterly, to condemn pitilessly, everyone who is not cut upon our pattern.

You, dear *Maman,* have suffered much from the intolerance and false virtues of high-principled people. How terribly at one time they blackened your beauty, your youth, your independence, your happy facile character! What bitterness poisoned your brilliant destiny! If you had had a tender indulgent mother who opened her arms to you at each fresh sorrow and said to you: "Men may condemn you but I absolve! Let them curse . . . for I bless you! what a comfort it would have been to you in all the disgustingness and littleness of life!

So someone has been telling you *that it is I who wear the breeches.* It is not a bit true . . . The fact is that my husband does just as he likes. He has mistresses or does not have them . . . according to his desire at the moment . . . it is only fair that my husband's absolute liberty should be reciprocal; if that were not the case he would become hateful and contemptible to me, and that he does not wish! I therefore live quite independently . . . I come in at midnight, or at six in the morning. It is entirely my own business. Please judge anyone who criticizes me for it with the head and the heart of a mother, for both ought to be on my side.

—George Sand, letter, 1831

We all have to be mothers to our mothers—nobody gets enough mothering.

After a good night in the theater, I feel like a woman must feel after she's just had a baby—completely fulfilled.

—Austin Pendleton (actor)
quoted by Lindsy Van Gelder, New York *Post*, 1970

Strangely enough, it is the over-idealization of the maternal instinct which accounts for the thousands of neglected children among us.

—Ruth Herschberger, *Adam's Rib,* 1948

Why not take over all the R.O.T.C. buildings on college campuses and turn them into child-care centers?

—Kimberley H. M. S. Snow, 1970

The hand that rocks the cradle, rocks the cradle, rocks the cradle, rocks the cradle, rocks the cradle, rocks the cradle, rocks the cradle . . .

—Lee Churchill, 1971

The absurd thing is that men go into pediatrics and obstetrics because they find them interesting and creative, and American women shun childbearing and child-rearing because they don't.

—Dr. Spock, *New York Times* interview, 1970

Throughout a day when a suburban woman has chauffeured kids to and from school and music lessons, scrubbed bathtubs, washed windows, carted 50 pounds of assorted groceries from the garage to the kitchen, and distributed them among basement, main floor and attic closets—surely it must be a great comfort for her to remember that at the next cocktail party some chivalrous gentleman will spare her the labor of lighting a cigarette.

—Mara Vamos, 1970

In earlier times, and in cultures all over the world, mothers have shared caretaking with relatives, older children, or hired help. In fact, it has probably been the exception throughout human history rather than the rule for the biological mother to be the child's sole caretaker during his first six years.

—Jerome Kagan and Phillip Whitten
in *Psychology Today,* 1970

Women, who constitute the majority of both health care "consumers" and workers, but who are especially victimized by the current system, are beginning to press for changes. (Pregnancy and childbirth are now treated by male doctors as routine diseases; the medical hierarchy is exclusively male-dominated; many hysterectomies and even mastectomies are performed without sound medical reasons; labor is too often induced, especially in the

case of poor and black women, by exytocin—an unsafe procedure when unnecessarily done—so that the women will deliver at the doctor's convenience.)

—Michael G. Michaelson, M.D., "The Coming Medical War"
New York Review of Books, July 1971

The myth that men do everything better has now seeped down to raising the baby.

—Karen De Crow
The Young Woman's Guide to Liberation, 1971

A doctor developed a method of delivering babies in a standing-up position. He demonstrated the apparatus and said that this is the natural position for childbirth, the one used by peasant women, who often give birth painlessly in the field. Doctors, however, reject this position for delivery because it leaves them crouching below the woman to deliver the baby and they psychologically resent and reject this bottom position. The male need for psychological control deprives women of an easy childbirth where they would not need an aesthesia, and they are deprived as well of what some describe as a peak experience of feeling their baby being born.

—Betty Jeffries Demby, 1971

I would put some hard questions to the medical and nursing professions: How *dare* you strap us down as unthinking animals on a delivery room table? How dare you claim you "deliver" us . . . The whole paraphernalia of medicine—anaesthesia, strapping, the abyss below the delivery table—serve the function of retaining the dominant status of the attending physician, and thus prevent women from seeing that a physician is her "aide" while she gives birth, and not her lordly "deliverer."

—Alice Rossi
"Maternalism, Sexuality and the New Feminism," 1970

Speaking from a biological point of view, which ought to be the most logical point of view, it seems to me that since the male doesn't have to bear the children his role should be that of a veritable little mother's aid. . . .

—Viva, *Mademoiselle,* 1971

He: I love cats and I hate mothers.
She: Yes, but where would we be without them?

—two young people in a bookstore, 1971

The great shocker of *Brave New World* was mother as a dirty word—which it now is.

"Despite all that women have contributed to literature, I don't believe that a woman could ever bring anything really great into being."
"It's easy to see that your mother was a woman."

—*Sputnik,* 1970

The eagerness with which mothers are chosen as the cause of regrettable effects is a psychological fact in itself, an independent fixation, predictable in the discussion of all social problems.

—Mary Ellmann, *Thinking About Women,* 1968

The thirteen-year-old girls in my son's car pool knew that I was the poet Lee Z. When they saw a friend reading my poem, they said, "Do you know who wrote that? Andy's mother." The response was, "Someone's *mother* wrote that?"

—Lee Churchill, 1971

Madame de Sévigné's muse was her daughter.

—Cynthia Ozick, *Woman in Sexist Society,* 1971

She's much sweeter than she used to be. Her children are growing up and that's always a humbling experience.

—overheard at a cocktail party, 1971

I have no child and the woman in me has so craved this experience, that it seemed the want of it must paralyze me. But now as I look on these lovely children of a human birth, what slow and neutralizing cares they bring with them to the mother! The children of the muse come quicker, with less pain and disgust, rest more lightly on the bosom. . .

—Margaret Fuller [1810-1850], undated fragment

I would by no means wish a daughter of mine to be a progeny of learning; I don't think so much learning becomes a young woman.

—Mrs. Malaprop, in Sheridan's *The Rivals,* 1775

Many of us will have mothers who do not "want" to break out of the cage. My suggestion is to leave them alone. What they need is the love and

understanding and compassion of other women, especially their own daughters. . . . In the final analysis, the best thing we can do for our mothers is not to try to change them, but to liberate ourselves.

—Karen De Crow
The Young Woman's Guide to Liberation, 1971

Where was Mrs. Lear when King Lear was making all those demands on his daughters? Dead in childbirth?

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Aphra-isms, an exercise in writing with the found object, are delved by readers and put together by the staff. Send us your quotations, thoughts, overheard remarks et al. Plans for coming issues include one on religion, and pertinent Aphra-isms would be especially welcome. *Please give source and date.* Keep coming into the act! Send to: Box 273, Village Station, New York, N.Y. 10014.

Colette and Sido: An Imaginary Dialogue

Vivien Leone

Colette/ *I have always been in touch with "Sido." My happiness as a child with little money or comfort had a secret ingredient: the presence of her who, instead of receding from me at the gates of death, has revealed herself more vividly to me as I grow older.*

Sido/ *A ghost must be a wonderful thing to see. I only wish I could see one. I should call you at once if I did. Unfortunately, they don't exist. But if I could become a ghost after my death, I certainly should, to please you and myself too.*

1913/ *A jungle in mid-air, on the outskirts of the beginning of the beginning. A sturdy old woman in a red cashmere shawl grips her loins, spins round and stamps in the wake of the thin birth cry, long drawn out and muffled by distance, of her last granddaughter. In due time, her youngest daughter, a barefoot dryad of forty, is at her side. Let it be 4 am for them both.*

S: Be still. There's a squirrel near your ankle. Only July and he's hoarding walnuts already.

C: It will be a hard winter.

S: Squirrels know everything.

C: It was not at all like the scene in Zola that made me faint when I was little.

S: Of course not. The suffering is quickly forgotten. And the proof that women forget is that it is only men—and what business was it of Zola's, anyway—who write stories about it.

C: It was always hard for me to look at birth, even though it was happening all around me. I would turn my eyes away. I seemed to know at the same time too much and too little about it.

S: What is it you needed to know? Intelligent cats make bad mothers. They are the ones who work so hard at it—weighing, planning, scheming. They wear themselves out under the imagined weight of a thousand decisions. You are like that. You'll never be anything but a writer who has produced a child.

C: When I came into the world you suffered for three days and two nights.

S: The beasts put us to shame, we women who can no longer bear our children joyfully. But they do say that children like you, who've been carried so high and have taken so long to come down, are the most loved, because they have lain so near their mother's heart and have been so unwilling to leave her.

C: My heart went out to poor Henri. They sent him away during the delivery. She is also his daughter, after all. Where could he go?

S: To the cafe, the casino, the bordello—wherever his role as father takes him.

C: Relentless one! You still haven't forgiven the divorce.

S: It's not so much the divorce I mind, it's the marriage. I notice you waited for me to die first. It seems to me that anything would be better than marriage.

C: Then why—

S: I had to. After all, I belong to my village. But what do you need with so many husbands? It's a habit that grows, and soon you won't be able to manage without it.

C: Would you have had me marry instead a very large cat?

S: No, because you should strive to shine in the cat's eyes, and that would spoil things.

C: What would you have done in my place?

S: I would have carried my burden—not far from my mother, but far from that man, and never seen him again! Or if by chance the evil desire still had me in its grip, seek him at night, hiding my shameful enjoyment. But, no. It is probably nearer to the truth to say I should have done something silly. Didn't I marry your father?

C: He adored you . . .

S: What frivolity! It was his love for me that annihilated, one by one, the fine faculties that might have inclined him toward literature and science. He chose to keep dreaming of me instead, tormenting himself about me. It was inexcusable.

C: The choice to love is not an entirely free one.

S: So. This Tom, this Dick, means a lot to you?

C: You know very well his name is Henri, that I love him and that we are happy.

S: I am not. I preferred the other—

C: That dunce?

S: —with whom you could write such beautiful things. This way, you'll pass your life giving away all of your most precious gifts. To this person with so few gifts of his own.

C: The most unforgettable gifts can sometimes come from those with no talent for giving.

S: It is more than likely he will also make you unhappy.

C: Cassandra!

S: So be it. And if I were to reveal all that I foresee . . . fortunately, you're not in too much danger . . . because you've already survived the greatest danger in a woman's life: you shall not die of love.

C: For twenty years love has been my greatest woe.

S: Your woes are ordinary, female, and curable. Your first is the only one you die of. Afterward, married life, or what passes for it, becomes a career. I have always thought women ought to be allowed to choose the father of their children. But we're so poorly educated, do we really know? I was one of those, alas, who knew less than nothing about marriage.

C: Mother, why were you "faithful"?

S: Out of pride. Duty . . . tenderness. I waited for the first to die before marrying the second . . .

C: You dig once again with your hard gardener's nail.

S: . . . and then there was the sadness. There is something about a very beautiful body that makes me sad. When I see great beauty I am overcome with an admiration that somehow disturbs me.

C: That is because you are what is known as a great lover—

S: It would've been news to my two husbands!

C: —who has lived out her life in a very small space. Mine has been larger. Still, I've had to work very hard to overcome the monogamous blood you put in my veins.

S: What misleading perfumes you Parisians wear! Time was when a woman of refinement never used anything but essence of violet. I believe you use it to put people off your scent.

C: I have none of my own, not like you. You've always had your own intoxicating scent. I think of it as a blond scent—chaste and feminine, having nothing to do with Eros. It used to leave me speechless, almost senseless.

S: Sometimes I fear you lack true elegance. A feeling for things that come when they should and are what they ought to be.

C: Can this be my fiery mother, with her taste for combat, her violent passion for forbidden fruit? She speaks to me of decorum and violets as though I were a flower?

S: But you *are* a flower, my flower that I nurtured from a seed, my beautiful bud . . .

C: But I was a bud that was determined to be forced open and trampled.

S: What are you sewing there?

C: Nothing, Mother. I am only sending secrets to myself.

S: I was never fond of you sewing. Reading brought color to your cheeks, drawing made you sing. But the child who sews is hiding. There's an evil about it.

C: For centuries women have been plotting their murders and their escapes

over a silent needle. Dreams of abductions dance in our heads. What would you have done if I had been abducted? Married me off on the spot?

S: Never! Ruin begins from the moment you consent to be the wife of a knave. Your fault lies in hoping that the man who has stolen you away from your hearth has a hearth of his own to offer you.

C: Unless a hearth is not what you're after. Remember what you said when the mother cat's daughter began fighting her? You said, "The time for that has come, what can we do, it is written;" and I asked where, and you said—

S: Everywhere.

C: But / never fought you.

S: Not openly, at least. When your time came I was already too old. But you left me. That was necessary. Then you cut off all your magnificent hair. That was not.

C: Oh, that barbaric adornment, how it weighed me down, suffocated me, drained my energies, blighted my existence. Only two moments can make it worthwhile—when the pins come out at night and on awakening, when the shy face peeps out of the waterfall. But all those cruel mornings I was condemned to rise half an hour earlier than other children while you brushed and combed my groggy head before the fire. My hair!

S: It was not your own. It was mine, the work of twenty years of care and attention. I always suspected it was your husband who had urged you to cut it, out of jealousy. In one stroke you annihilated my masterpiece.

C: You used to call me that—my whole person, I thought, not just my hair—"My Masterpiece—" and when it came time for me to leave, my leaving did not turn you pale or send you to bed. Like Madam T.

S: That harpy! Old horror, detestable fake—criminal! Capable of every sort of blackmail to get her daughter back. It was from her that I learned everything a mother should take care *not* to do . . . I'm worried about Achille. How will he manage without me?

C: And I? Sons get mothering all their lives, but daughters? Who is to see that / get my glass of red-currant syrup and a rose to carry off between my teeth?

S: But you're a girl, a female creature of my own species, my rival. In Achille's heart I never had a rival.

C: You did not seem so sure of that when he had his first mistress . . . Poor, overloved sons! Preening under female glances, wantonly nuzzled by she who bore you, favorites from the deep night of the womb. . . . Here's a new tie, a cup of hot milk, a shred of my own live flesh, a packet of cigarettes, a word of advice, the shelter of my arms, an idea. Take! If you refuse I shall burst, I can give you no less! Beautiful, cherished young males, whatever you do you cannot avoid betrayal as you pass from one to another of us. . . . You are wrong, Mother. It was in *my* heart that you never had a rival.

S: Not even Adrienne?

C: I did not understand it for so many years.

S: You used to become so agitated whenever we told you the story about how she had once suckled you as an infant, while I suckled her son. For fun, we said. But it was something deeper than that.

C: The gypsy quality of her. Yellow eyes by turns alert and dreamy. She made me feel like a cat in the presence of a supercat. My fascination was mixed with fear. I was tormented by a vision of her swarthy breast and its hard, purple knob. Years later I realized that it had been my first seduction, although she took great pains never to entice or detain me.

S: To erase such a friendship—after almost two decades! But I had to. It was too much for your eleven years. It was necessary to protect you from parasites, to prune the unnatural shoot . . .

C: Unnatural?

S: Well, there's no denying that you thrive.

C: My eyes, praise be, were always bigger than my belly. I fear no evil.

S: Evil and good can be equally resplendent and fruitful. . . . Oh, how late it is! Seven o'clock!

C: No demon can resist the dawn.

S: The stream is glistening. It's time to dabble with the washing. And then the firewood. This morning I plan to saw six fine little bundles.

C: Are you out of your mind?

S: No, only of my body. Don't be alarmed. We are like the living. Why not? Like the living—except we are dead, and death does not gravely interest me, not even my own. For a time comes to a woman when, instead of clinging to beautiful feet impatient to roam the world, emitting soothing words, boring tears, burning sighs, a time comes when the only thing left is to enrich her own self. To escape, to soar to some high place where only she herself is central. I do so in the clear glittering water, sailing, soaping linens, scolding the swallows. Or tackling a cluster of logs with a saw in my hand.

C: Then you have all your old weapons with you? You know, the clothes-brush, the hedgeclippers, the pocket knife, the rugbeater . . . oh, and two pairs of glasses.

S: In a way. Before I arrived they had all begun to turn on me. From servants they became adversaries. Here it is reversed. How can I explain it? That there is no deprivation out here. I want for nothing. There are old friends, animals, the four winds, the moon. Sounds and whispers and omens. And dreams . . .

C: Euphoria, beatitude, banal magnificence, sweet animal innocence. My pregnancy now seems to have been one long festival. It took me back to the first twenty years of my life, to a world of mothers and children, bitches and puppies, cats and kittens, cows and calves, swallows, mice and their offspring, all fertile in their turn. I was surrounded by motherhood, in a blissful world of feeding, sleeping, suckling. No half-grown males anywhere, no sign of man. Mothers. Children still ignorant of their sex. The deep peace of a harem. . . . An hour before my time I watered the garden, since I wouldn't be able to do it for some time afterward. Then I went inside and produced a singular specimen: thirty-one thirty-seconds French, and the remaining thirty-second—

S: African! Did you love the child at once?

C: I hesitate to say so. Dangerous—a writer promoted to motherhood. Tempted by visible rewards, material growth . . . the cult of children, of plants, of breeding. I have a certain virility, and I call upon it to save me from temptation . . . A first child at forty . . . The physical aspects do not trouble me. But shall I be able at this age to give my daughter the proper care and devotion? You ask me did I love her at first sight, and I have no answer. I have been absorbed in the most meticulous in-

spection, contemplation, admiration. The nurse has such authority, but I—my touch is tentative.

S: Have patience. Wait for the pride to swell. The pride of shaping a new life. Perhaps it will come.

C: Perhaps?

S: And perhaps not.

The foregoing, based on translations of the works of Colette and the available letters of her mother, Sidonie, has been assembled largely from *My Mother's House, Sido* and *Break of Day*, and from Robert Phelps' *Earthly Paradise*, all published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux. While every effort has been made, in the course of extracting dialogue from what are essentially narrative works, to preserve content—the original wording has been retained wherever possible—many liberties have been taken with context and emphasis, in order to make room for some fresh thinking about a relationship that is unique in the history of letters.

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Elizabeth Fisher/Mothers and Daughters

Claire Woock/Titty Titty Bang Bang (a play)

Mary Rouse/New Boots (a story)

Mariette Ollier/Gypsies (a photo-essay)

E. Harold & A. Snitow/Her Daughter Was Her Muse

Sylvia Berkman/The Saffron Boat (a story)

Vivien Leone/Colette and Sido (a dialogue)

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