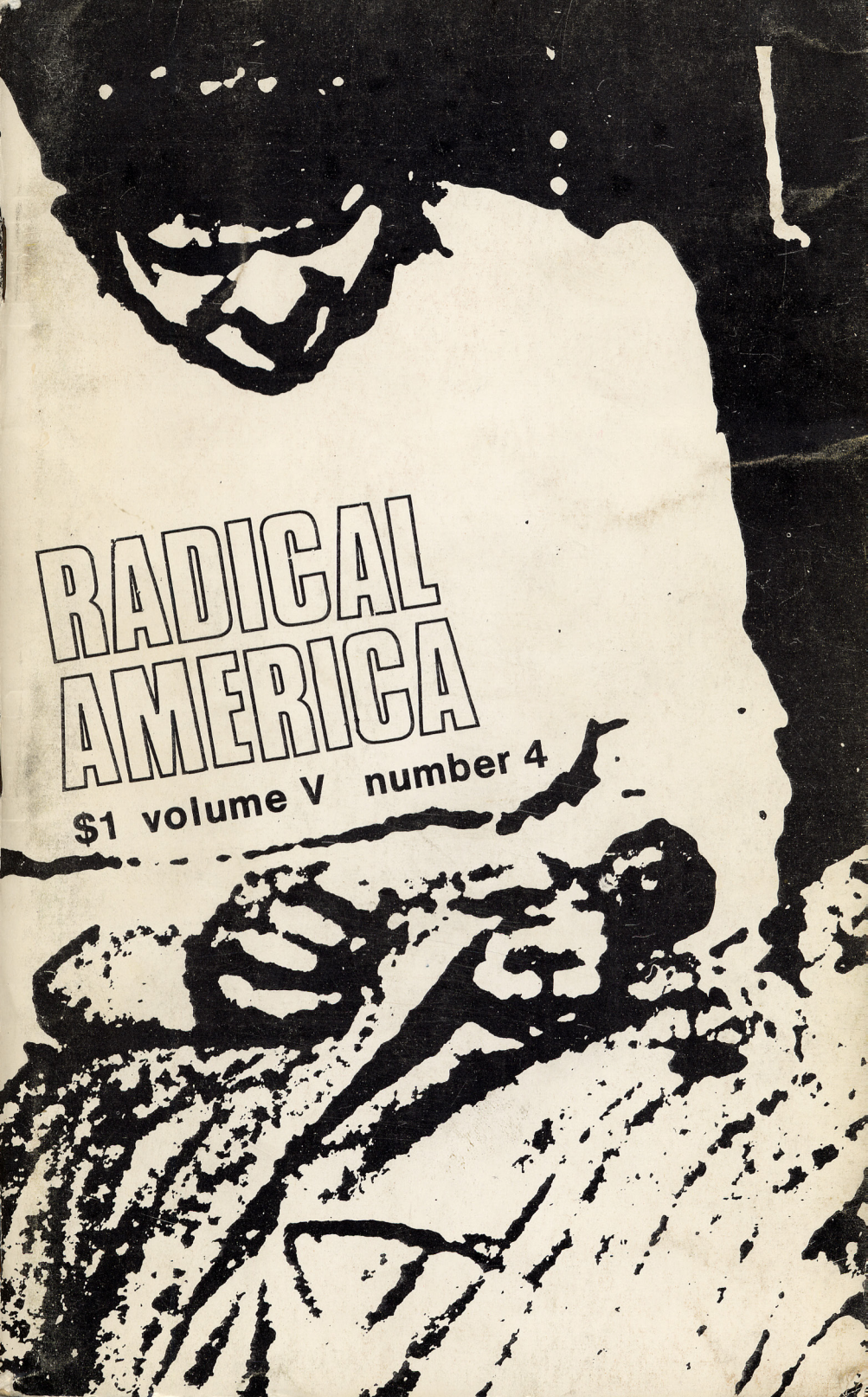
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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Through the growth of their consciousness women across the country are etching a profound criticism of daily life in modern society which traces power relations from the nursery to the schoolroom to the work place. For radicals and for feminists the most frustrating contradiction of this movement lies between the total revolutionary implications of an analysis which requires the total transformation of all social relations, and the essentially limited nature of the present demands such as child care, abortion, and equal pay for equal work. Socialist women especially find themselves making the most painfully mechanical mediations between what can be accomplished now and what must be done in the process of social revolution. Committed to the Marxist proposition that the gap between consciousness and action is crossed in history and enabled by an understanding of it, Radical America is here publishing an exploratory study of women's history.

"Women in American Society" was conceived as a response to the conceptual problems confronted by all who seek to comprehend the historically-rooted sources of today's oppression. As the authors argue, those who believe women have no history are poorly equipped to affect that struggle, and those whose alternative to a historyless past has been the exaltation of individual outstanding women are doomed to misunderstand the centrality of the lives of ordinary women upon whose destiny the fate of women as a group rests. Moreover, the most fundamental changes in society have been at all points mediated through changes in social and sexual patterns expressed by different classes, so that to misunderstand women's history is to misunderstand American history as a whole.

The radical movement which was inspired in the Sixties by a vague sense of "alienation" is now seeing its feelings documented with a staggering specificity. In the most "private" of experiences, intimate

sexual contact, one suddenly finds the glaring presence of one's family, and their families and their ethnic community, and the raucous voices of teachers, preachers, and ad-men. Lights on. Nature dissolves as the very sensations of the body are seen to be censored by sex roles. Personality itself becomes a historical phenomenon until we all appear ventriloquists speaking in the voices of those who went before us. To suggest an image: a world in a cage, and in that world another cage, and in that cage a person, and in that person yet another cage, and there all the other people who made the cage.

By raising personality as historical the women's movement raised the most total revolutionary goal, the creation of the possibility of a freed humanity. By raising the question of contradictions among men and women within the working class, the women's movement challenged all limited forms of cultural revolution. Sex came to be recognized not merely as sexuality, but as a social relationship. Women repudiated their parents only to find the patriarchal system in bed with them. So much for liberated zones, for finding the solution to personal alienation through transcendent "sex", transcendent "nature", or utopian communities.

The women's movement has revealed personal life as collective, as the proletariat had earlier revealed economic life as collective; yet the question remains how either movement will realize the totalizing potential of its collectivity to lead a social transformation. The full analysis of women's historical background will lay bare the complex interactions of forces behind present social roles, allowing a view of the interrelationship between the rise of bourgeois society and the creation of a specific culture in family, education, and all social mores. The "class question" which is now tearing at the women's movement may through this analysis cease to be a matter of moralistic castigation of "middle-class" attitudes and become, instead, the serious question of objective differentials in the working class which are the primary obstacle to social reconstruction in America. As we examine how women's class relations have been defined and have changed, we can begin to see the interaction of work place and home, and begin to face the strategic priorities for the radical movement.

The women's movement has been rebellious against all moral imperatives to revolution. Rightfully. Women have long been frozen in their compassion and are not about to displace it from their personal to their political lives. As the radical movement develops, alliances will be made around common problems and historical consciousness can emerge as we understand the common basis of those problems. When that consciousness grows fuller and more self-confident, the particularity of the women's movement will not be abolished but may be linked to the generality of the tasks ahead.

The Editors

WOMEN IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

An Historical Contribution

Ann D. Gordon

Mari Jo Buhle

Nancy E. Schrom

PART I

The rise and fall of concern for women's history has followed the intensity of organized women's movements. Not since 1920, when the suffrage movement ended, has there been the interest evident today. As women were forced back into individual lives, understood through the personal lens of psychological adjustment (a process examined in the last part of this article), history as a study of their collective experience over the centuries no longer seemed to explain their condition. Historians, always more interested in writing about the powerful, studied a history without women. Only social scientists documented the changing presence of women at fixed times in a variety of situations, but their fragmented analyses did not provide a way to understand the totality of daily life for women. Neither did these evaluations describe the overall changes in society. But today, women with renewed caste-consciousness are returning to historical questions in a search for their collective identity and for an analysis of their condition.

Within the last decade, blacks have shown the role history plays in defining a social movement. The search to understand the collective conditions and the relation of the race to the dominant society has enabled black people in America to locate their strengths, their social importance, and the sources of their oppression. Further, this process has provided the analytical framework for recognizing their unity through their experiences, rather than simply through their racial difference from the ruling caste. Similarly, feminists of the Nineteenth Cebtury looked to the past to describe their common bond as women and to explain their current situation. That inquiry supported their theoretical development.

Nineteenth Century feminist writers enlarged the perspective of their analysis by making explicit the connections between the lives of individuals and the social movement for their emancipation, thus offering women definitions of the changes necessary to alter their lives. They studied women who overstepped the boundaries of prescribed roles and made important contributions to society or to a re-definition of female possibilities; and they created the chronology and analysis of women's historical subjection to men. But this search through women's history basically described the limits on their lives without a sense of the changes which had occurred in their "sphere". They isolated a few women or the relations of women to men from the total history of civilization. These women were not aware, for example, that the current family structure was of recent historical origin. They ignored the history of what was closest to them and placed their hopes for change outside their own lives in the industrial revolution or in the inevitable progress of democracy.

This feminist definition of women's historical role was challenged by Mary Beard in her book Woman as Force in History (1). Principally she addressed herself to the emphasis on an endless history of subjection. That stress, she argued, led to a misunderstanding by women of their own strength in the past. Women had internalized the "myth" of their secondary status and enshrined it in their analysis. By emphasizing only the obstacles to their fulfillment, women were prevented from understanding the power they had held historically in other avenues of social activity.

Mary Beard went on to propose an outline of a rewritten world history capable of describing the contributions women made to world civilization. At the base of her work and the source of her concern was her acceptance of the notion that women, in 1946, were about to cast off their chains and emerge as leaders in the advance of civilization. Because she accepted the inevitability of democratic progress, she conceptualized the reconstruction of women's history as limited to their role as a civilizing force. Without accepting her faith, we believe it is important to recognize and respond to her realization that women must come to a history which does not negate

their activities in the past. Mary Beard believed that the real history of women's lives was more important than society's limitations of their activities.

Faced again with the task of defining women's history in relation to the re-emergence of women as a collective force, we find it essential to define what we understand to be our past. Through a historical critique we can begin to transcend the imposition of contemporary institutions and values on our lives. Without such a critique our view of daily life remains at the level of individual reaction to what strikes us as intolerable. Our analyses tend to document our feelings of subjection rather than the underlying historical conditions of the subjection of all women.

The forms of history familiar to the women's movement in the United States have re-appeared with the addition of histories of that earlier movement. They expand our knowledge, but their limitations also must be examined. Documentation and analysis of the women's rights movement offers a tradition of struggle: We see that women in the past not only were aware of their oppression as a sex, but also organized themselves and devoted their lives to changing the conditions they saw between themselves and freedom for their sex. The history of women who ignored social conventions and sexual restrictions serves both to probe the proscriptive roles imposed on them and to offer a sense of the possible to all women. But our advantage of hindsight over the earlier feminist assault and our overall perspective on the development of American capitalism necessitate a larger definition of our past. Our vision must mediate between the objective historical conditions and the changes in daily life. We cannot afford to locate the logic of our movement in apparently anonymous forces, such as technology, lying outside the lives of women, and measure our transcendence by our ability to respond masterfully to that external development. By doing so, we would accept the dominant ideology that the inner logic of "women's sphere" is too slight to examine and too slight to have a significant effect on the course of society.

That women have not had access to the means of social definition and have not lived and worked in the spheres of reward and recognition is obvious. They have lived in what Simone de Beauvoir has described as the historical anomaly of "the Other". The problem remains: As objects, do we have a history, properly speaking? As long as historical enquiry is constrained by equating initiative and mastery with life, the lives of women are, at best, a "situation", as Juliet Mitchell has noted. (2) The seeming timelessness of women's lives may describe one source of the lack of female consciousness through long periods; the processes affecting their lives are frequently slow and without immediate impact on their awareness. But to assume that their lives were, as a result, without time and without change, ignores the role that the subjection of women has played in world development.

Historians' chronic blindness to that fact prevents them from probing the fullest meaning of history. If we can succeed in defining the "specificity of their oppression" (3), we will as well have moved closer to realizing the dynamics of all historical development — a necessary prerequisite for changing it.

Margaret George, in her recent biography of Mary Wollstonecraft, One Woman's Situation, suggested that we are examining women's pre-history. Within that pre-history is a variety of experiences and responses, some of them initiated by women, most of them not. The experiences of women, she noted, have a time and space dimension that is subject to inquiry and capable of enlarging our understanding of the historical conditions of all women. (4) The world women have inhabited has its own history, intimately related on one hand to the changes in their lives, and on the other to the progress of world history, encompassing the lives of all people. The organization of society around age, the privatization of the family, and the emergence of a culture of motherhood around the biological function are instances of women's sphere being subject to historical analysis. As Philippe Aries demonstrated in Centuries of Childhood, the history of that intimiate world is at the root of the changes in all modern social relations (5). The disintegration of pre-industrial family relations both symbolized and mediated the transformation of all personal relations, based on changes of the means of production and the new stratification of social classes.

Historians and feminists alike have assumed that "woman" is a transhistorical creature who for purposes of discussion can be isolated from social development. Recently, some writers for the Women's Liberation Movement have appropriated this concept, designating all other class, race, and historical conditions of women as secondary and derivative. For these writers, sex becomes the primary contradiction of life, and the male/female antagonism or dichotomy is therefore transformed into the theoretical principle underlying their view of the world and history. Women's history is consequently divorced from its content and reconstructed around the peculiar bond women share. The conditions imposed by gender relegate women to a caste, that is, a group located outside itself by its visible (sexual) characteristics, applicable to all present and past forms of social organization. "Caste" in this usage is an idea imposed on women, a definition derived from their subordinate position in male-dominated culture. Caste, then, defines the negativity of women's relationships within the larger society. Within the historical and social experience in which power is denied to their sex, the caste situation contains — in this view — the inherent seed for liberation through the collective

identity of women's peculiar situation. The oppressive isolation from male culture, which defines caste, is then transformed into the positive metaphor of shared consciousness.

The major dilemma of any collective recognition of woman's peculiar situation revolves around the simple functionalism that the caste notion implies as being both the condition of woman's oppression and the source of her as yet unrecognized strength. First of all, an essentially static concept of oppression does not account for the changing degree to which women have been conscious of sharing a collective identity. Thus, Simone de Beauvoir, who made a decisive contribution in defining the usefulness of what women have shared, specifically rejected the idea that women have been a caste, because they have not reached a required consciousness of self. (6) Our history in fact must record the movement of women toward that consciousness and not assume that caste relationships necessarily define its inevitability. For example, in describing the bond between women in any particular period or across centuries, caste fails because it ignores the forms that oppression took at different times for different women. Women have been kept apart in their oppression, separated from one another; yet the notion of caste tends to presuppose a greater recognition of shared history than women have ever actually exhibited. To assert centuries of sisterhood will not explain — or help overcome — the historic reality of antagonisms and conflicting experience. It is precisely the interrelationship between women's oppression and the "rest" of history that enables us to understand why, for example, black and white women in the ante-bellum South could not unite around their "common" oppression.

An example from American colonial history illustrates the relatively recent development of women's self-identification as a caste. Some women recognized their sexual identity but did not differentiate themselves from men according to any common female experience, and therefore did not express their discontent in sexual terms. Anne Bradstreet, one of the few to articulate a sense of women's subjection, reflected on the harships of motherhood in her poetry, yet accepted these burdens as natural to woman's condition on earth. The passing of an English culture which had respected the mental capacities of women under Queen Elizabeth symbolized for her the secondary status of her sex. While she wrote her poetry in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, other women such as Anne Hutchinson and Mary Dyer gained notoriety for their pursuit of religious diversity in a male theological world. Anne Bradstreet's caste sense, if it may be called that, had distinct limitations, and her resentments against male culture were defined primarily in terms of its denial of women's reason and did not extend to include the disagreements of the mind which other women were having with men. (7)

Nineteenth Century women, for the first time in history, recognized a collective experience for members of their sex and defined that as

a position of subjugation. Their belief in an eternal, special condition of women helped provide power for their movement, for it gave them collective identification as a caste (although they did not specifically use the term) and a separate location for their history. Yet those perceptions were marred by identifying the sense of oppression they felt in their lives with the specific forms that sexual subjection had taken over the centuries. Their particular historical situation was obscured. The caste feeling blurred the reality that their own consciousness had been made possible by their class position based on the new roles of woman as producer and reproducer introduced by Nineteenth Century industrialization.

A paradoxical view of woman's proper role in society has developed out of the caste idea of women's historical condition. On the one hand, women were said to have been denied the feeling of strength and the possession of real power which defined men's control over the world. On the other hand, by virtue of powerlessness women were assumed to have retained a kind of moral superiority over aggressive, warlike men. A major argument for the introduction of women's suffrage was the public necessity for an expression of moral values that had been saved in the isolation of women's sphere, the defense of the family, and the uplifting of all humanity. Today, as Branka Magas has noted in a recent New Left Review essay, some feminists have returned to the essence of this argument by contending that women will make the Revolution. (8) Women, according to this view, will mend the world because their hands are clean from the blood, profit, and power with which men have ruled the world. Thus distance from decision-making in society is translated from a description of oppression into a virtue of transforming proportion. This argument not only accepts a view of the past in which women were outside of history, but also asserts that now, and in the future, that condition which has separated them from men will be the basis for their entrance into history.

The bond women have had and currently share is, in the caste argument, the nature of their oppression. That women have suffered oppression is not to be denied. Sexual exploitation, ego damage, the double standard, stereotyping, and discrimination are past as well as present realities. But oppression has meant different things at different times to different groups and classes of women. A historical perspective on the realization that sexual exploitation forms a core of female oppression clarifies some of the weakness in leveling historical differences. Today women explain sexual exploitation partially in terms of the repressive nature of monogamy that binds a woman to one man, depriving her of the gratification of her capacity for multiple orgasms. While men utilize women for their own gratification, they deny women the right to sexual fulfillment by specifying the forms of sexual activity. Many of the special complaints center on the denial to women of equal pleasure. For Nineteenth Century feminists, sexual exploitation was

also focused on the unnatural marriage relationship: the form which gave the husband command over his wife's body. But they accepted much of the Victorian double standard and denied feminine sexuality, expressing their grievance at the necessity of vile sex to satisfy their vulgar, sensual husbands. Liberation in practice meant chastity rather than free love. The forceful reaction of feminists to Victoria Woodhull's association with their movement reflected this tension.

Within one period of time, the conceptual confusion created by the unvarying and undifferentiated term "oppression" can be illustrated by the debate over the validity of using the same word to describe the condition of the white plantation mistress and the black slave woman. For the slave woman, oppression meant physical cruelty and sexual exploitation. For the leisured, financially comfortable plantation mistress — feminist — oppression, consciously realized or not, was not physical hardship but social and legal constriction and repressive sexuality. The limitations of focusing entirely on this one factor of their lives, this bond they shared by their sexual characters, underscore the essentially static nature of the caste/oppression framework. The concept of oppression does little to explain the dynamic of either woman's life or the historical conditions underlying it. In addition, to ignore the important differences which distinguish the lives of the two women is to do violence to the lives of black men and women under slavery.

The middle-class base of Nineteenth Century feminism is frequently noted, lamented, and rejected as a model for today's movement. To transcend that limitation we must know as much about what kept women apart as we know about what brought them together. The Women's Liberation Movement has reached sufficient consciousness of its own class background to endorse the need to include working-class and colonized women in the movement. But the expansion of view from the generality of our Nineteenth Century sisters is apparently forgotten when historical conditions are analyzed. Working-class women in the last century felt their oppression in class terms and organized around their work. Women in ethnic communities recognized the alienation and subjection they shared with men of the same nationalities more than they identified common bondage with upper-class or WASP sisters.

The rejection of class in the modern liberation movement is often based on the observation that a woman received her class (or race or nationality) through a man — father, brother, or husband — and not through her own productive relations. The historical relevance of such an assertion in a period when women increasingly enter the work force is immediately suspect. But more important, the insight explicit in that assertion, which is related to the concept of subjection, must not become a simple conceptual negation of the differences in class

experience in America. Economic well-being, social relations, life expectancy, ranges of personal choice are dependent on the changing relations among classes, and those conditions of daily life have been as real for women as for men.

The very real powerlessness felt and frequently expressed by women of the last two centuries becomes, ironically, a source of misunderstanding about the complexity of women's role throughout the history of humanity. Generalizations from specific forms of subjugation may serve only to mystify the real sources of women's strength in their historical evaluation and the specific form of their dependency on the predominantly male world. Out of a caste analysis, women, as the subject of study, are projected into a static role rather than one which allows for change. In essence, history becomes an external process, a force which presses against women's lives without a reciprocal interaction. Women become in the truest sense the objects of history, bound by their peculiar situation as victims of oppression.

Without denying what we share as women we must develop categories to fit women into history that transcend feelings of oppression. Our subjection as a philosophical description mobilizes us by articulating the alienation we feel. It can be concretized within any particular period. As an element in the history of civilization it must be clearly recognized and overcome. But that still makes oppression a truth which stands above all other historical or philosophical observations.

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DESIGN FOR A BACHELOR'S WALL PAPER

The contours of women's history have been determined in large part by the questions historical writers have been interested in exploring, the assumptions researchers have brought to their work, and the sources available for examining the lives women led in previous centuries. What quickly becomes apparent to someone interested in learning about the historical development of women's status and consciousness in the United States is the limited scope of the work which fall into the category of women's history. Most historical studies fall into one of three categories: institutional histories of women's organizations and movements; biographies of important suffragists and "token" women — First Ladies, isolated Nineteenth Century professional women, reformers, and eccentrics of one sort or another; and "prescriptive history" — that is, discussions of class or societal ideals rather than actual cultural practices. Such studies analyze articles on Nineteenth Century childrearing practices, for example, in order to gain insights into how parents actually may have raised their children.

The majority of historical studies fall into the first category: institutional history. Often, institutional studies are not women's history, but feminist history. Hence the history of women has often been conceptualized as women in organizations — women's rights, suffrage movements, and unions. These organizational studies are limited further by the fact that many historians have tended to concentrate almost exclusively on the suffrage campaign within the larger women's movement. One is led to assume through such studies as Eleanor Flexner's Century of Struggle and Mildred Adams's The Right to Be People that American feminism — or even women's history in general — is virtually synonymous with the fight for the vote. (9)

Because so much of what is called "women's history" has concentrated on the women's rights movement and the suffrage campaign, it is important to ask why historians and other writers have attributed so much importance to organized feminism to the neglect of the historical experience of women outside an organized movement. Part of the reason for such a heavy emphasis on institutional history lies in the nature of available source materials with which to work. There is a wealth of material dealing with the women's rights movement. Historians have at their disposal not only the standard memoirs and autobiographies of the leading suffragists, such as Stanton and Gage's mammoth compendium The History of the Women's Suffrage Movement and Carrie Chapman Catt's Woman Suffrage and Politics, but also the enormous quantity of correspondence, newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets that accumulated throughout the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. The early histories of the suffrage movement, written by participants, are sources in themselves, rich in personal insight and reminiscences. (10)

The abundance of sources available on the women's rights movement does not completely explain why so many historical studies of women have concentrated exclusively on organized feminism. This fact is readily attested to by the lack of historical studies dealing with women in the years after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, despite an overwhelming variety and abundance of materials: economic studies, census returns, Women's Bureau bulletins, and personal papers. Even studies which are not confined to a narrow organizational framework, such as Andrew Sinclair's The Better Half, do not deal with the years after 1920 in any depth. Institutional studies such as Flexner's Century of Struggle often conclude with a short impressionistic sketch of women's history since 1920, making reference to women's gains in education, employment, and legal status. Too often, then, women's history has been defined solely as the history of an organized movement. As such, the history of women begins in 1848 with the Seneca Falls Convention, and ends abruptly in 1920. The subjects for institutional women's history are women who were articulate, conscious, and members of organizations.

The questions which individuals concerned with women's history have brought to their research also have played a key role in determining the way in which their subject is defined. Part of the reason for the lack of interest in women's history since 1920 is the fact that there was no organized and vital feminist movement during these years. Just as the recent interest in black history was reawakened in response to the black movement, the recent resurgence of interest in women's history is due in good measure to the Women's Liberation Movement. Because interest is generated by an organized movement, it is understandable that many of the questions writers have asked of their material revolve around organizations and institutions. This was particularly true of the early historians of the suffrage movement, who, as participants in the suffrage struggle themselves, sympathetically chronicled their sisters' activities.

In addition, underlying assumptions and conceptions of women, American society, and the nature of social change have been important influences on historical writing dealing with women. The general lack of attention accorded to women outside the women's rights movement reflects the implicit assumption that it is only when women are behaving in ways usually attributed to men — that is, politically — that they deserve mention. In all other matters, these writers seem to assume, women's experience is either unimportant (that is, dismissed as women's work and therefore not the proper sphere of history, which has traditionally dealt with power relations and institutions) or identical to that of men.

Then too, underlying the emphasis on organizations is the implicit assumption that an organization in and of itself initiates social change. Although some historians have made passing bows to the forces of

industrialization, urbanization, and socio-economic changes, often these are not meaningfully integrated into the institutional narratives or seriously analyzed. Both the early suffrage studies and their recent counterparts seem unaware of the changes that the Nineteenth Century brought to women's lives. (11)

Finally, the writers who have dealt extensively with the women's right and suffrage movements have tended to share a view of American society and institutions and have held in common certain assumptions about the nature of historical change which make institutional history a natural focus for their investigations. All share a faith in American political democracy and social institutions, and a belief in the linear progression of history. For most of them, women's history is set in an evolutionary framework depicting the development of Western civilization as the unfolding progress of mankind toward democracy. In this conception, the women's movement is interpreted as "another chapter in the struggle for liberty". (12) Although recent studies have been more sophisticated in writing and research, they share the optimistic Progressive notion of historical development and change. Mildred Adams, for example, writes: "It was a remarkably selfless campaign. The women who spent their lives in it were working not for themselves, but for the common good. They were working for the better status of women in a democracy and for the better conduct of that democracy. They honestly believed that women... should have the vote because they were citizens and as a tool with which to improve not only their own legal status, but also the laws and government of the nation." (13) This Progressive approach, largely unconscious in the early writers who wrote of their own movement in terms of optimism and sincerity, obscures many important facets of the women's rights movement and of the condition of women in general throughout history. Women enlisted in the suffrage cause for a variety of reasons and motivations. A women's club member generally had far different reasons for becoming a suffragist, came from a very different background, and worked for different goals than a young factory worker, for example. This Progressive approach also obscures the fact that the altruistic concern for the common good was the dominant ideological theme of the suffrage movement only in its last years, when the Progressive reform impulse had largely overtaken the original feminist concerns of the movement. The racist aspects of the early suffrage movement, its limited middle-class concerns, and the lack of feminist ideology are neglected in institutional studies.

Aileen Kraditor's The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement and William O'Neill's Everyone Was Brave serve in some ways as correctives to the older institutional studies. (14) Kraditor traces the development of the suffragists' ideology from the natural rights arguments of the Nineteenth Century to the reform arguments of the early Twentieth Century. Her work, with its exegesis of the movement's

ideological underpinnings, sheds much-needed light on the class base of the suffragists. She emphasizes the middle-class nature of the movement and its basic failure to overcome the boundaries of class interest and outlook. William O'Neill, in Everyone Was Brave and in "Feminism as a Radical Ideology", also emphasizes the middle-class base of the suffrage movement and the suffragists' failure to formulate a radical critique of the existing social structure. He documents the heterogeneity of the movement in which feminism as an ideology disappeared in favor of broad-based political reform to be enacted by women. Both Kraditor and O'Neill, however, despite their greater sophistication in analyzing the women's movement and its ideological limitations, still are confined by the traditional emphasis on institutions and organizations. Both authors define the history of women through an organizational perspective and are primarily concerned with the thought and activities of women who participated in the movement.

Even the best of institutional studies, then, are inherently limited in the scope of their inquiry. Because the history of women is defined in these studies as the history of organizations, little opportunity is available for exploring the insights and issues raised by recent psychological, sociological, and biological findings and theories dealing with the family, childrearing practices, individual differences, and sexuality.

History of the feminist movement can and should be important, and, despite a plethora of studies already published on the early movement, many questions remain unanswered. New questions need to be asked, drawn from our experience in the present movement: Why did the first feminist movement ultimately lose sight of feminist goals? What can we learn from the suffrage movement in the way of tactics? How did the tactics of the first movement relate to its ideology? How and why did the early feminists fail to transcend class boundaries? In addition, the movement has much to tell us about the nature and development of feminist consciousness? By studying the early movement, we will hopefully learn more about when and why women began to think of themselves as women, with a distinct status and distinct problems. Future investigators should be bound less by organizational framework and should try to relate the movement to a larger social context. Although questions dealing with familial and social relationships and the effects of industrialization generally lie outside of an institutional orientation, they are central to understanding the movement itself.

Biographical history, the second major form in which women's history has been written, manifests many of the same difficulties, assumptions, and weaknesses as institutional studies. Narrative biographies of women have served as the only way to reconstruct the lives women led, for the historical sources which exist for writing about the world of men — electoral politics, institutional organization,

industry, and war — have not existed for the majority of women during most periods of history. The work of reconstructing the history of the inarticulate has just begun, and women make up the largest and probably the most silent of society's inarticulate groups. Anyone who has tried genealogical and demographic research knows that even basic facts about birth, death, and parenthood of a woman, particularly in the colonial period of American history or in any undeveloped region, are difficult to obtain.

Only a small number of women have left diaries, letters, and other sources with which to assess their role and their experience, and often these written sources prove sadly inadequate to reconstruct their history. Efforts to learn about women on the frontier, for example, are fraught with such difficulties. Although the lives of such atypical women as Cattle Kate and the San Francisco madams are well documented, finding out about the typical woman — or even defining what "typical" means — is far more difficult. The lack of feminist consciousness characteristic of a pre-industrial, organic society made it highly unusual for a woman to write of herself in letters or diaries in a self-conscious, detailed way, distinguishing her experience from that of her husband or children. For the same reasons, then, that historians have concentrated on the women's movement, biographers have concentrated on a small number of atypical women: those on whom sources are available.

Like the organizational studies, biographies are inherently limited. They tell us very little about the life style and status of the overwhelming majority of women who went to medical, law, or divinity school before the Twentieth Century, and were not members of a small elite social class, married to wealthy or famous men. The very existence of written materials on a woman tells us that she was atypical: She had the leisure and ability to write; she had the opportunity to experience something other than basic production for her household; and she lived in a family conscious enough of its heritage to preserve family records. Often the existence of sources indicates nothing in particular about the woman except the fact that she was married to a famous man. Alice Desmond's biography, Alexander Hamilton's Wife (1954) is a good case in point.

Biographies are usually narrative and anecdotal; thus characteristics singled out as quaint or eccentric are often emphasized at the expense of trying to see how the subject fit into her social environment. In essence, the woman is removed from history: The uniqueness of her life is exaggerated, because the biographer does not know the options and the expectations his subject had, or have a historical perspective on the time, place, and conditions in which the woman lived and worked. The history of women then, when confined to a biographical approach, is defined in ahistorical terms.

Biography can be a useful tool in understanding the exceptional

woman who stands out in history, such as Anne Hutchinson, the Grimke Sisters, Margaret Sanger, and Emma Goldman. Perhaps sympathetic and analytical studies which attempted to come to terms with both the inner motivational factors and the external social environment could tell us a great deal about women's consciousness. Margaret George's biography of Mary Wollstonecraft is a good example of a study which attempts to delineate its subject in a social as well as a personal context. (15)

Often, however, exceptional women have been ignored, written off as quaint (such as the much-misunderstood Amelia Bloomer), or written about not as women but as professionals or reformers. Jane Addams has been the subject of a number of special studies, but generally the focus of the works has been Jane Addams as a social reformer, and not Jane Addams as a woman interested in women's special problems. When she is written about as a woman, it is for the purpose of exploring the psychological alienation of middle-class individuals, and not really about herself. (16) At the opposite pole, as Aileen Kraditor notes, is the effort to re-introduce these "abnormal" women into the mainstream of American womanhood. Hence many suffragists and reformers have been placed in the context of their homes and families and portrayed primarily as wives and mothers in an effort to lessen the taint of deviance which surrounded a woman who did not fit the prescribed role. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, for example, is the subject of numerous biographies which stress her role as wife and mother as well as her activities in the suffrage movement. Forgotten are her elaborate theories on marriage, divorce, and religion.

The psychological assumptions about women which historical writers have brought to bear on their subjects has also been an important factor in the writing of women's history and biography. In general, it is safe to say that American historians have assumed that a woman is a passive creature. While much of their conceptualization has previously been based on Freudian constructs, the recent discussions of the validity of psychoanalytic theories have made historians more reticent in making broad generalizations. Nevertheless, comprehension and use of Freud's ideas continue at a popular level, providing norms for judging deviance, and particularly for assessing women. The frequently appearing statement that Mary Wollstonecraft (or any other feminist) refused her passive social role because of an extreme case of penis envy is the most obvious example of such usage. Further, the assumption of innate feminine passivity has led historians to explain all feminist outbreaks as a result of immensely disruptive social forces — such as industrialization, war, or atheism — which threatened the sound bases of all earlier social relations (female deference included). Initiation in her own behalf would be out of feminine character, or at best a rationalization of some individual problem.

Recently, historians have dismissed the trend of using psychoanalytic assessments as mere conjecture. However this rejection of orthodox Freudian schemas is often replaced by an unsystematized form of personality theory — that is, a common-sense reasoning used to explain the peculiarities of outstanding individuals. The historian, therefore, imagined his task as determining what unique factors forced outstanding women to step outside their "natural" role. Needless to say, this process decidedly detracts from the historical validity of distinct contributions made by exceptional women. For example Robert Reigel, in American Feminists, criticized historians for misjudging the complexities of feminists' personalities. Too often, he asserted, these women were portrayed as old maids or as simple humanitarians devoted to an essentially maternal concept of social reform. In contrast Reigel intended to assess the peculiar personality make-up of individual feminists, concluding that most shared characteristics of good health, physical vigor, good education, et cetera. Substituting this framework, Riegel arranged a series of biographical vignettes, centered on the personal lives of his subjects. While correcting some of the unfair stereotypes, Riegel's concentration on life-style detail detracted from the accomplishments of these women, and almost completely ignored the conditions under which they fought. (17)

The third form in which women's history has been written — what we have called "prescriptive history" — also has failed to tell us much about women's experience in American history. Prescriptive studies ask important and broad-based questions about the nature of social institutions such as the family and marriage. They attempt to chart changes and developments in childrearing practices, marriage and divorce customs, and sexual mores, and to relate these developments to a larger ideological framework. For example Edmund Morgan, in The Puritan Family, used sermons and Puritan writings to relate Seventeenth Century New England childrearing practices to Puritan theology. Bernard Wishy, in The Child and the Republic, attempted to put changes in attitudes toward childrearing within a context of changing intellectual conceptions of the importance of environment in shaping a child's character. (18)

Although prescriptive studies ask important questions, they are weak in the evidence they employ. From reading such studies, we are left with hazy and often inaccurate ideas about the nature of actual cultural behavior. We cannot assume, when trying to learn about women's historical experience, that the models of behavior and attitudes found in sermons, books, or magazines accurately reflected how people acted. Was a Puritan minister describing how his congregation behaved when he wrote about childrearing or woman's role, or was he describing ideals for behavior and attitudes which he held up for his congregation to emulate? Did articles in Godey's Ladies' Book and other women's

magazines describe how middle-class and upper-class parents treated their children, or were the articles largely unrelated to daily life? Hence prescriptive studies assume a relationship between ideology and attitudes and actual practice which may very well not exist. In addition, such writers seem to be talking about all families or all women without differentiating clearly between time periods and class lines. Finally, such studies presuppose a causal relationship between intellectual trends and a group's behavior. Too little attention is given to socio-economic factors in determining changes in behavior.

In conclusion, a woman today trying to understand herself in historical perspective has, despite myriad studies, precious little knowledge to rely on. Because institutional studies have defined women's history narrowly in terms of organizations, a woman today cannot get a sense of historical continuity or development outside the realm of the feminist movement. Changes in women's experiences and the nature of women's societal role during the years of the women's rights movement are left largely unexamined in the standard accounts, and questions about the patterns of familial and social relationships and the effects of industrialization on woman's role and on family structure are often left unasked. Finally, we still know very little about how women lived; how they interacted with their children, husbands, and parents; and how they began to develop a consciousness of their distinct role in society. Perhaps now, with a renewed feminist consciousness and with better, more sophisticated tools of historical analysis, we can begin to ask new questions about the actual historical experience of women, about the social and economic forces which shaped and changed women's lives, and about the nature of and factors involved in shaping feminist consciousness.

Underlying the analysis presented in this article is our belief that when history describes the totality of the female experience, it provides the essential identification for women to recognize their collective fate and to build a force that can move forward. The raw materials of the article are the books and studies which historians — mostly male — have written about the lives of women in the American colonies and the United States. At present, despite their limitations, they are the only tools we have to comprehend the historical experience of American women. We have tried to place the information contained in these works within a framework that American women can utilize to come to terms with their past. Through that history we can make personal connections previously unavailable to us. Our discomfort appears in terms of historical development rather than in terms of our personal failure or our unique perception. Our situation appears to us as a moment in history rather than as a condition of history.

PART II

The changes which took place in the lives of women during the colonial period — a span of almost two centuries — provide a valuable framework for an understanding of the relationship between greater economic and social complexity and the emergence of a distinct, and limiting, notion of femininity. At one end of the period there was the Virginia House of Burgesses describing why they granted land to wives as well as to husbands in 1619: "... in a new plantation it is not knowen (sic) whether man or woman be the most necessary." (19) At the other there was Mercy Otis Warren (1728-1814), a writer and historian, writing to a young woman that learning was useless to a lady (as useless as virtue to a gentleman). (20)

In this discussion we can point out some of the general outlines of colonial growth and some of the signs that transformations were occurring in daily life. At a minimum, the suggestions here should provide background for the more familiar tale of the Nineteenth Century, when the proscriptions on women and the definitions of their limited sphere were fully developed.

Colonial history was in part a beginning again. Each new coastal settlement and each move westward entailed a return to the simplest social organization: A family or a single man produced enough for survival and used virtually all available time for essential work. There were numerous sequences of development in different locations, and while one city may have resembled an English city, farms on the frontier were no doubt more similar to the earliest settlements. Still no one moved for long beyond the influence of colonial governments, and in most areas churches were established as rapidly as settlers moved in.

Colonial forms of increasing complexity, models for institutions and for social relations, came out of the European (primarily English) experience of the settlers. The majority of colonists, for example, accepted the logic of monogamous marriage, built single family houses, and assumed their right to own property. (21) They became members of churches with British or European counterparts, adopted elements of English common law, and organized their production and marketing along familiar lines. By the middle of the Eighteenth Century, when commerce, or reliance on commerce, created not only greater involvement with the mother country but greater similarities with it as well, colonists increasingly sought to duplicate the forms of English social life. (22)

Women throughout the period were tied to the fate of the family. Towns in New England assumed and legislated a family basis for social life, and single women were urged to live within a family household. (23) In some of the Southern colonies where settlement was initially conducted as an adventure by English investors, men were sent alone

to begin productive work. It was found that little incentive for producing a surplus existed without families, so women were imported and sold to men for the cost of their passages. (24) That brief period may express as much about the importance of women in colonial development as any time when they were more conspicuous by their presence. Throughout the colonies the sex ratio between men and women favored women — a development unique to American society. As a result a woman's chance of marrying, her economic support, were very high, and the age at which she married was significantly lower than in England. It may have been true, as well, that the scarcity of women resulted in greater social mobility for women; they were in such demand that they could afford to choose. (25)

Purchase brides for the Adventurers in Virginia, about 1621. (From the Collections of the Library of Congress)

The simplicity of economic and social organization concentrated a variety of essential activities in the family. In family production each member contributed work of equal importance to the group's survival. Two aspects of this were no doubt important in providing women with useful roles: the independence of each family's work and the immediate necessity of it. The division of work was mostly along sex lines, but within that basic division of labor there were different patterns, depending on the relative wealth of the family, the degree of participation in a cash economy, the organization of the husband's work, and the size of the household — relatives, servants or slaves, numbers of children, et cetera. Most families were farming, producing their own food, some surplus for trade, and their own clothing, soap, candles, and fuel. In this setting a large family was an asset, and thus the reproductive role of the mother, as well as her productive work, was valued. (26)

Education for the majority of colonists was something that took place in the family and consisted of teaching skills and morals. Boys and girls learned those from the work and daily life of their families. Where families were concentrated and homogeneous, as in New England towns or religious settlements, children occasionally attended schools or were traded into another family to learn skills or manners. (27) Mrs. Anna Grant, resident in New York before the Revolution, recorded in her Memoirs that among the Dutch in Albany, mothers took primary responsibility for educating children, especially for religious teaching. Janet Schaw, an Eighteenth Century traveler in North Carolina, noted that the sharp contrast in civility between men and women was a result of daughters being raised in the cultured environment of their homes while sons learned the rough and fighting ways of the woods from their fathers. Whatever its particular form, this responsibility to society, resting with the family, defined a major part of the work of both mothers and fathers. Not until education was more clearly defined as something that changed the relationship between parents and children by introducing new values into a society, and until the family unit was no longer concentrated with the work of both men and women, did learning require new structures and distinct duties of each parent. (28)

The accompanying rhetoric about marriage described a partnership between man and woman. The institution existed to produce offspring and, at least in Puritan thought, to control the natural sexual appetites by providing an outlet for their monogamous expression. In New England grounds for divorce applied equally to each sex: adultery, impotency, refusal of sexual favors, and desertion. However the Puritans, so often chided for their repressive attitudes toward sex, delimited only two major forms of deviation: Sexuality must never interfere with the ultimate relationship, that between human and God; and it must never take place outside of marriage. In practice, those restrictions may in fact have loosened during the Eighteenth Century, as records of

children born to couples after less than nine months of marriage indicate. Other colonies appear to have accepted a double standard of sexual behavior somewhat earlier, at least in the application of the law. The partnership had economic reality when the family worked the land or in a craft and so long as the wealth provided for children derived from that common work. (29)

Throughout most of the Seventeenth Century, colonial society was relatively unfragmented, either by sex or by age. (30) Individual women occasionally stepped outside the limits set for them (Anne Hutchinson's doctrinal challenge to Massachusetts leaders, Quaker missionaries asserting the necessity of religious tolerance, a Southern woman refusing to utter the word "obey" in her marriage vow); but in general, neither men nor women seemed concerned with defining what women were or what their unique contribution to society should be. (31) Similarly, studies of children's toys, books, and care reveal very little special attention to children's particularity in the society. (32) The cultural expressions of the time indicate lack of consciousness about the possible differences which later came to characterize all discussion of women and children.

The emphasis on the social necessity of women in a wilderness environment and the consequent respect given to their labor must not be mistaken for a society without discriminations against women. Distinctions were made in laws, in education, in theology and church affairs, and in political and property rights. No one asserted equality. But there was flexibility in drawing the lines around women's work and men's work. Abstract theories about the proper role of women did not stand in the way of meeting familial and social needs. There is considerable evidence that women were engaged in numerous business and professional activities in the colonial period. Their work was not simply in those jobs extending their traditional domestic work out into more complex organization, such as production of foodstuffs and clothing. Women published and printed newspapers, managed tanneries, kept taverns, and engaged in just about every occupation existing in the colonies. Many of these women, who had learned the skills of the trade while sharing the work of their husbands, were working as widows to support their families. (33)

This "unique" presence of women is frequently taken to be a sign of the liberating effect of frontier conditions on traditional roles; but this view ignores the work experience of English women. In England, women had been members of craft guilds, had worked in their husbands' jobs as widows, and had been accepted in such professional capacities as midwives and attorneys in lieu of their husbands. But by the end of the Seventeenth Century women had lost those positions. Comparison with the more carefully documented English events throws new light on the origins of the colonial freedom so often located. Nothing in English culture or production militated against utilizing the talents of men and

women in a variety of occupations as long as the economy needed their strength and numbers. When that need ended, and when women found their access to jobs limited by law or by their inability to gain the prerequisites, their presence sharply declined. However, a series of transformations in the organization of work protected the opportunities for male work (in the dying craft guilds, for example) and at the same time excluded women by edict or default. Two activities in the colonies underwent this limiting process: midwifery and the informal exercise of power of attorney. (34)

Midwifery was not only open to women; their monopoly was protected. In 1675 officials of York County, Maine presented "Captain Francis Raine for presuming to act the part of a midwife", and fined him fifty shillings. (35) But less than a century later formal learning began to replace practical experience for the job. Doctor William Shippen Junior — a leader in medical education in Philadelphia — announced a series of lectures on midwifery in 1765. He did not exclude women from training, but offered his expertise to women with "virtue enough to own their ignorance". Not only was there a serious problem about mortality rates in childbirth, but the situation was aggravated "by the unskillful old women...." (36) A similar process in the granting of powers of attorney has been documented in Maryland. Law became a career with prerequisites denied to women, and gradually the practical flexibility which had allowed women to appear in court in their own behalf if single or in behalf of their husband in his absence was abandoned. (37)

Similarly, by the middle of the Eighteenth Century the manifestations of a distinct world for upper-class women with its own standards of success and necessities were clearly emerging in the colonies. The culture was in part imported from England, but rapidly developed parallel but indigenous forms. A frequently cited instance is the interest in women's education. Special schools were opened in the major coastal towns of Boston, Newport, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston. After the Revolution, female seminaries extended further inland. (38) These schools were designed to prepare women for their roles as wives and mothers. Some academic subjects such as appeared in the schools for boys were selected as suitable, but primarily the schools concentrated on styles of ladylike qualities and skills. Some theorists of this new education particularly aimed at providing what Abigail Adams called the "groundwork...of more durable colors"; they wanted to teach women to respect the serious literature of philosophy and morality, to read history and thus to be better prepared to talk intelligently with their husbands and to introduce their children to the great works of civilization. Others were more concerned with needlework and table manners, with dancing and carriage. To attract a suitable husband, to be a credit to his success, and to keep a good house after marriage seemed the primary goal for educated girls.

Education as a means to expand experience and to enlarge the opportunities of an individual was not considered for this particular field of learning and teaching.

Benjamin Rush, the alleged truly American theorist of female education, brought home in his writing the new needs that the society had to meet. (39) In an agressive and competitive economic system some stability was needed next to each man to protect the wealth of the family; thus women needed training as stewards and guardians of their husbands' money. Without a docile servant class, American women needed special skills to manage their domestic work force. Fathers were no longer at home all the time, and the burdens of raising children fell particularly on women who had to recognize their new duty toward children and receive some training to perform the work. Education according to Rush and the other theorists would condition women to their limited sphere in the home.

Prior to the middle of the century the primary source of ideas to "define" woman in an objective way was in theology, where her secondary status was clearly established, but not without granting her equal access to the final and more important rewards in the hereafter. The change came first through imported and reprinted English essays, novels, and prescriptive books. Later educated colonial men (and, even later, colonial women) wrote their own contributions presenting their views on fashions, on what and how women thought, on the manners of courting these odd creatures and the doom of marrying one. Such manner of writing had developed earlier in England, particularly addressed to men, as the idea grew that gentility or whatever qualities were valued in society were not inherited but could be acquired. Men delighted in describing their ideal woman, an ideal which women were then expected to emulate. The Lady — stylish, learned within limits, inconspicuously managerial with her servants, and tolerant of masculine foibles — existed, in this literature, for a gentleman's pleasure and display. Everything about the feminine life turned around her ability to please her husband by standards that he established. Although it is unlikely that women lived out or up to this ideal, their self-conscious attention to an earthy, domestic ideal was assumed. The life of Nancy Shippen, an upper-class Philadelphia belle unhappily married by her father's wishes, reveals some of the practical pain of living through the literary images of female life. (40)

In the literary record the progress of femininity was not altogether smooth. Despite a few native articles, some individual reactions to the published descriptions of women and the tyrannical practice of men, and widespread knowledge of the ideas of Mary Wollstonecraft in her Vindication of the Rights of Women, no framework was established to integrate the individual responses. Women might use their learning for more than their domestic success and teach school or try to support themselves by writing, but those changes did not serve as a basis for

challenging the essential limitations of women's lives. (41)

British "sentimental" novels were more widely read than vindications and feminist dialogues. They were tales of seduction and of battles for female virtue against lustful male tempters, in which sensibility and domestic love triumphed over the temptations of flesh and passion. (42) Samuel Richardson's Pamela won readers' hearts by her heroic struggles against her employer who was, as Pamela saw it, intent on seducing her. In a later American counterpart, The Coquette, the heroine tried to rebel against decorum but died ignominiously for her efforts. In each of these stories the essential human struggle was transferred from one with abstract evil to one between the sexes. And the first victim in that transformation was healthy sex.

The morality of sentimentalism, however, defined a series of almost religious tests faced only by women and met by successfully avoiding participation in a masculine world of physical and degrading passion. Not only was the course charted highly repressive of both men and women, but it also set the central conflict of life between the sexes. The success of this formula for the upper class continued well into the Nineteenth Century, but its rules and some of its best best-sellers made their appearance before the Revolution in the colonies.

By the end of the Eighteenth Century, the development of a market economy had begun to disrupt and transform the social relations of the family. Pre-industrial labor, as Marx noted, was based on a spontaneous or natural division of work within the family, depending on tradition and differences in age and sex to determine productive roles. The labor power of each individual member was only a "definite portion of the labor power of the family" expressed in products — whether crops, livestock, or clothing. By the first decades of the Nineteenth Century, the growth of manufacturing in home industries had already challenged the basis of these relations by widening the division of labor within the family, and by widening class divisions between families. The development of a true factory system was slow during this period: As late as 1810 two-thirds of the clothing and household textiles of persons living outside the cities was produced by family manufacture. Yet for women this shift was significant. As products formerly produced at home came to be accessible on the common market, whether textiles, (several) food products, or household supplies like soap and wax, the prestige of women's labor inevitably declined. Moreover, the increasing expression of products as commodities, defined not primarily by their use value but rather by their exchange value on the market, dichotomized those produced under market conditions by socially-organized labor (that is, almost entirely by men) and those

produced privately for direct use (that is, substantially by women and children in the home). The consequent mystification of the exchange process within society was called by Marx commodity fetishism, for it apparently replaced the pre-industrial, direct relationship between producers with "material relationships between persons and social relationships between things." (43) In a society of commodities, the subordinate and secondary value of women's work and of women themselves was necessarily degraded. To replace the spontaneous and relatively egalitarian division of labor in pre-industrial society had come a mode of organization which far more than before thrust women into the role of caring for the home, while men engaged in activities to reshape the world. Furthermore women's participation in the market economy was mediated through their husbands, thus relegating their own class, status, or privilege to a social function of their husbands' work.

CUPID, AUCTIONEER.

Similarly, the development of industrial capitalism transformed the roles of the family. While previously the family structure had encompassed a variety of forms and functions, the Nineteenth Century family tended to contract into an increasingly privatized set of relations. The compartmentalization of work and home activities was accompanied by a re-evaluation of women (and especially leisured women) as the guardians of traditional moral values. Within rapid industrialization men were necessarily an increasing part of social changes while women were ironically sacrificed for the preservation of a home which had lost its functional role in the economy. The home became "woman's sphere", fixed in terms of an Ideal rather than a realistic evaluation of women's potential roles. The older traditions of feminine usefulness, strength, and duty were cast aside for moral and decorative functions, and subjugation to domesticity became the most revered feminine virtue. Men, on the other hand, commonly were expected to show the inevitable effects of materialistic and base associations of a business life: aggression, vulgarity, hardness, and rationality. (44)

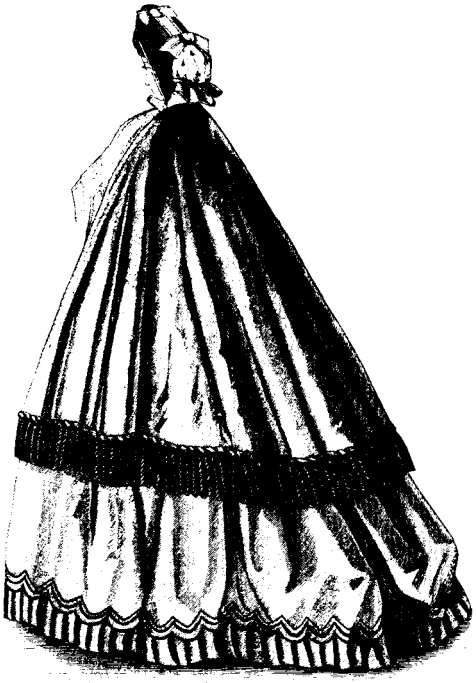
From these new definitions of men and women flowed the reappraisal of the Lady. Earlier, certain colonial imitations of British writings on manners and morals prescribed the gentility, style, limited education, and tolerance that could be expected from women of fashion; and in the South, this Imperial practice was greatly emulated. But not until the late Eighteenth Century did the Lady become the paragon for all American women. Colonial women generally, by contrast, had been respected because of the strength and sensuality of their characters, attributes which complemented their participation in the rugged family arrangement of an agricultural and frontier economy. As late as 1890, nearly half of all American women lived and worked in this immediate social environment of a farm family, providing many necessities for the home through daily hard work. Yet the farm wife lost her cultural standing to a new sector of women: the wives and daughters of the rising entrepreneurs and merchant capitalists of the urban Northeast. This new sector remained a numerical minority, while its ethos became central to the American Woman's self-definition. Because of their class position, these women gained a hegemony over female cultural patterns never attained by the Eighteenth Century elites. Taste, customs, religious and political principles, and above all morality were reshaped in the Nineteenth Century through the cultural equivalent of the economic power that capitalists themselves wielded. Thus for all women in the society, this new ideal of femininity became the model, however unrealizable it might be in their own lives. (45)

The Nineteenth Century replacement for woman's earlier role in the family was in fact idleness, expressed positively as gentility. The cultural manifestation of this ideal has been aptly called "The Cult of True Womanhood", for the rigid standards held by society amounted

to religious-like rites. The True Woman symbolized and actualized stability, expressed in her own cardinal virtues of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Religious literature and feminine novels continued and broadened a chaste idealization begun in the Eighteenth Century, and the newer women's journals emphasized the superficial and fashionable glamor of woman's new image. The functional character of household life was in effect replaced with an ornamental attraction of the Fair Lady. Since industrial ethics defined work as masculine, labor of almost any kind was deemed unsuitable for this Lady. Even gardening, a family necessity and appropriate pastime for colonial women, was perceived as a violation of the dainty image. While some contemporary journalists approved of flower cultivation (itself an apparent reflection of Victorian femininity), the usual editorial position unqualifiedly condemned the sight of a virtuous women tending an onion patch. Thus woman was in a sense transformed from a human being into a living object of art, existing for the pleasure and pride of her husband. She was a creature of solely decorative worth, possessing a beauty which rested on her frailty, delicacy, purity, and even asexuality. Woman's aesthetic contribution was herself, with her sensuality sublimated in the same sense in which Freud suggested that all Art was sublimated sexuality. Feminine culture was a highly romanticized shell, containing an apparently barren interior. (46)

The new demands on woman were expressed in a subtle but significant language of repression, reflecting and reshaping the very conceptions of its users. During this period, for instance, the substitution of "limb" for leg or arm first appeared, to the point of ruthless false consciousness where a breast of chicken was renamed "light meat". Correct table manners forbade offering a lady the chicken's leg; rather, she always received the "bosom", a common euphemism for this part. In polite company women were referred to as "ladies" or "females", in deference to the risque connotations of the womb in the more familiar generic label. In the areas of children and family, linguistic repression demanded a sheer absence of some vital discussions. Woman's newer interest in child rearing and infant care was paralleled by an accompanying secrecy involving pregnancy. Despite the rich detail in women's magazines on children's clothing, stories, and habits, pregnancy itself was proscribed even in the intimate relations of mother and daughter. Gestation was hidden as long as possible and then obscured by the retiring of the prospective mother into confinement. At last, even the term "pregnant" was replaced with the more delicate indirect suggestions like "with child" or "woman's condition". Such conditions viewed as mysterious and wonderful beyond contemplation involved a new level of Victorian myth making, such as the strange appearance of the stork. (47)

THE SPAHI.



Spring wrap, made of very rich black silk, and trimmed with a deep fringe of the same. The bonnet is composed of black Neapolitan and white silk, lined with crimson.

New cultural restrictions in Victorian fashion dictated the spread of sexual repressiveness to all aspects of social life. Feminine passivity was ensured by clothing which, through the sheer weight and number of garments, literally enclosed women from the outside world and severely limited their physical mobility. The home was transformed from functionalism to the atmosphere of the showplace, an apt surrounding for the Victorian woman. Similarly, cleanliness standards of domestic life matched the purity associated with such a feminine setting. More subtle circumscriptions were easily noticed by European travelers such as Harriet Martineau, who, in her accounts of American society, frequently remarked on the relative severity of woman's

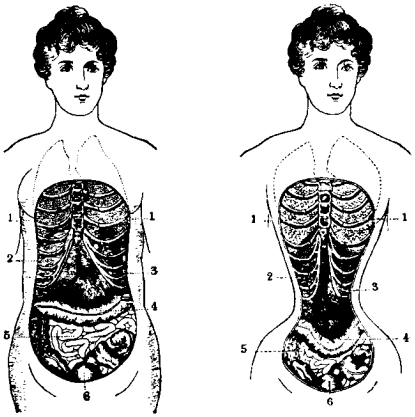
domestic subjugation. Martineau implied that the discrepancy between the self-proclaimed democratic ideals of the Republic and the actual condition of American life was best exemplified in the treatment of women. Her books, which pointed to romantic chivalry as sheer substitution for real freedom were not considered proper reading materials for American ladies. With Mary Wollstonecraft and other rebels, she was vilified as a half-woman or mental hermaphrodite. (48)

Nineteenth Century repressive sexuality was in fact only one manifestation of the total work ethic that required suppression of all social values previously associated with leisure and enjoyment. While the appearance of new wealth nominally provided new free time, the ascending capitalist norms demanded an individual sacrifice to work, especially among male members of the rising entrepreneurial classes. The accompanying social relationships altered the fundamental conditions of life for man and woman, based substantially on a sexual polarity established through the industrial revolution. This polarity took various forms of expression. While sex came to be considered dirty, base, and vile, gratification became part of masculine culture, based on the materialistic functions of male social life. Woman's superior nature depended on the absence of painful and humiliating sexual participation, save for the satisfaction of her husband and the propagation of the race. Since the relationship between husband and wife was considered based on property, the male could easily acquire added property without seriously affecting his current holdings. Consequently, promiscuity was allowed only for men, who thereby participated in the rise of prostitution. (49)

Evidence of the effectiveness of female repression may be ascertained in the decline of the birth rate from 1820 to the end of the century. For a society lacking in knowledge of contraceptive measures, such decline could only signify the moderation of sexual relations for the prescribed bearers of society's children. Simultaneously the increasing urbanization and privatization of life had enhanced the importance of family individual members. The new status within the family tended to derive from individual worth rather than from group function. Thus while the existence of many children imposed a financial hardship upon the father's income, the single child became more precious and idealized. Childhood was extended to nearly marriageable age, since the presence of few children lowered the burden of dependency. Repression thereby was provided with a new outlet, if not a resolution, through the intensified relationship of mother and child. (50)

The double standard ironically intensified the sexual connotations of all social roles. Critics of Victorian society complained of an "over sexed" concern for life, referring not to the presence of uncontrollable urges but rather to the overly obsessive consciousness of the gender

of the individual. European travelers often noted the inhibiting effects of the separation of men and women in all public affairs and attributed the low level of American intellectual culture to the stifling effect of women's segregation. Yet isolation both allowed and forced an advanced sector to search out a special identity, to comprehend and finally act on it. The very nature of Victorian society encouraged women to regard themselves as a special group, as womanhood. (51)



Above: Effects of lacing on the female body. (1-lungs, 2-liver, 3-stomach, 4-great-gut, 5-small intestine, 6-bladder).

The assertion of woman's moral superiority had some important implications. For the first time, women as a group had been attributed an independent power of moral guardianship that, however intellectually degrading, contained the potential of a hidden challenge to woman's traditional political and social passivity. In community reforms, such as sewing and literary circles, middle-class women recognized the advantages in their forced isolation. Through closer contact with each other, these women gained a new sense of sorority for their common plight and their common aspirations. (52)

These early organizational forms provided models for the later women's rights movement. Political consciousness was added through women's participation in the major reform movements of the times, most of all Temperance and Abolitionism. Women gained organizational skills and a recognition that leadership was not an exclusively male capacity. By the end of the 1840s, many activists realized that they would not be satisfied with shaping the world indirectly through their moral influence, and demanded the right to personal liberty and control of their own property. The debates on slavery attended by women especially sharpened their awareness, since many of the issues posed concerning basic human rights carried implied analogies to women's deprivation and its basis in their material possession by white men. (53)

Most American women in the relatively leisured middle classes rejected the Feminist implications in the moral-guardian theory which would extend their traditional domain to social controversy. While these women shared with the feminists an uneasiness with the ideals of gentility and idleness, they responded to a new functionalism of woman's domestic role. The growth of "domestic science" for the home, the spread of women's teachers' schools, and the rationalization of new modes of child-rearing all provided reassertions in new forms of woman's distinct contribution to society. However the attempt to shore up family life and wifeliness through further training inevitably undercut the very aim of domestication, for a few women exposed to outside influences were bound to create, as did Jane Addams and other reformers, still newer patterns for women's social guardianship.

In a popular tract written in 1885, Mrs. A. J. Graves expressed a warning against the danger inherent in over-refinement. Luxurious habits were sapping the strength of the female character, drawing women out of their true sphere. "Home is our palladium" she explained, "our post of honor and of duty, and here we must begin the work of reform." Thus practicality became the counterpart of moral greatness. But in order for women to accept this responsibility, other sources of activity had to be provided within the home. The new standards focused on women as supervisor of a renewed domestic life, responsible for quality of consumption and expanded childcare. Similarly, new standards of cleanliness arose in the Nineteenth Century, complemented by mechanical developments making housework less burdensome but not less time-consuming for the devoted housewife. Catherine Beecher, Emma Willard, and others publicized new forms of domestic science, stressing the demands of the newer business and scientific methods on woman's responsibilities. Meanwhile the influential Godey's Lady's Book mixed colorful fashions with detailed advice on domesticity. And various writers warned women against the "foreign influences" represented by the emerging servant class of Irish rather than native born women, resolving on the necessity of able women to manage

without such help. (54)

In the early years of the Nineteenth Century literature addressed to women had come increasingly to focus on their motherhood, encouraging them to raise good, Christian citizens. This literature glorified the contributions mothers made to society by careful attention to the environment and potential of each child, thereby providing a career-like responsibility to the job. Theology slowly discovered children and offered a religious experience for young people different from that of their parents: Descriptions of their experience and the expectations set for them became less strict, and the Calvinist stress on their original sin was replaced by notions of childhood innocence. The psychology of John Locke and the pedagogues following him was transferred into popular writings about children, popularizing the impressionability of the human at birth and the need to implant the best hopes for each child and to discover the individual potential for each. These ideas were sharpened and their consequences for women deepened by the growing dichotomy established between men and women. Between passion and sensibility, mind and heart, the abstract and absent father and the leisured and confined mother, the gaps grew enormously. Women came to be viewed as peculiarly suited by nature and training to care for infants and their needs in the home. Culture was considered a feminine province in the world at large, but within each family respect for culture and communication of values was directly manifested by the relations between mother and child. The biological function of motherhood became elevated into a sophisticated and future-oriented definition of woman's social impact. The growing set of ideas with a wide range of detail about home, food, health, toys, clothing, and religious training was disseminated almost universally in sermons, women's magazines, books, and newspapers. (55)

Meanwhile, special schools had been established, such as Mount Holyoke in 1837, for the purposes of domestic science and the care and teaching of children. The very existence of these schools helped to legitimatize women's education, and led to the establishment of the first true women's colleges, such as Vassar in 1867. Women who graduated from the colleges or the transformed special schools became the first professionals and many of the leading feminists of the late Nineteenth Century. Thus, the concern for rationalizing women's domestic role had at last been transformed, in part at least, to its opposite. Woman's moral guardianship was re-interpreted by such reformers as Florence Kelley and Vida Scudder to be responsibility for influencing the organic evolution of society. (56)

By mid-century, women's roles in the modern class structure of America were becoming clear. The needs of the increasingly complex society called into existence a new middle class of doctors, lawyers,

and other professionals. In the main, women attained this status vicariously through marriage; but in part, women too shared in the increase of opportunities for direct upward mobility through a variety of experiences and institutions including women's colleges. At the same time, a proletarianization process began on a wide scale for formerly rural populations, urban dwellers, and new immigrants. Here too women were for the most part wives, but with increasing frequency industrial workers for at least a portior of their lives.

At the beginning of industrial capitalism in America, women constituted a basic industrial work-force. As early as 1775, women had been employed during the first widespread use of spinning jennies. Government officials and entrepreneurs alike assumed women were the best candidates for service in this promising sector, in part because work in the developing textile industry involved no encroachment on traditional male-dominated trades or crafts. Women were similarly encouraged to enter early factories because their presence as a surplus labor force allowed men and boys to labor in agricultural production or in the exploration of the West. The first women workers were typically recruited from the town poor-roles, and for several decades thereafter orphans, widows, and unmarried women formed the ranks of the unskilled industrial laborers. (57)

New England textile mills provided the first opportunity for large numbers of women to work outside their immediate families in non-domestic labor. By the 1820s and 1830s, thousands of young women were attracted by the lure of the factory as an alternative to patriarchical farm life, and they traveled to the company towns of Massachusetts and Rhode Island searching employment. On the other hand, due to the migration of young men to the West, Eastern women between the ages of fifteen and thirty greatly outnumbered their male counterparts and were forced to provide their own living as single working girls. Thus the choice for factory labor was, for many, more apparent than real, especially when faced with the alternative of servitude in a brother's family. Moreover, the prevailing secondary value attached to woman's work restricted women from receiving an education or training to enable them to compete in professional or skilled occupations. Nevertheless, their preference for self-sufficiency obscured this discrepancy, and women competed with one another to gain entry into these new occupations. (58)

The early mills commonly operated under the Waltham system, a form of paternalism which provided the women with boarding houses and a strict code of moral conduct. Despite the lack of individual freedom, the mill environment offered a chance to live in a community of women, to accumulate a small savings from earnings, and to set a pattern for independent living. Although the hours were long, the work

was not essentially hard, involving comparatively much free time and allowing the operative a chance for conversation and companionship. The first factories had not yet systematized the work process, and therefore production — although often experimental, sporadic, and irregular — had not yet been integrated into a rational routine of labor. Consequently the discipline of the wage-earner was far from complete. The early strikes were usually spontaneous outbursts against announcements (or even rumors) of changed policies: wage-cuts, speed ups, or lengthening of hours. Most important, this semi-agricultural factory population could respond to intolerable changes in working conditions and periods of unemployment by returning to the family farm. (59)

These first mills attracted attention for their superficially idyllic conditions. European visitors who were familiar with the grim plight characteristic of British textile industries marveled over the quaint towns operated by the mill owners and over the gentility and beauty of the young operatives. They were equally fascinated with the Lowell Offering, a journal devoted to the poetry written by the mill girls. However, these European promoters often missed the subtle fact that the Offering was published and funded by the employers to advertise their enterprise rather than to popularize the cultural achievements of their operatives. Conditions in the mills were tolerable, and wages were high enough to enable these early industrial workers to set aside a small savings. After four or five years of service, most women left the industry permanently: Some moved West where women (especially teachers) were in demand; some secured an education to set themselves on a brighter path; and others retreated to a life of alleged marital bliss.

By the 1830s, industrialism was developing rapidly, introducing new social and mechanical changes that would fundamentally alter the work situation. Technological improvements in machinery allowed greater efficiency and established the contest for speeding up the work process. The new ethos of discipline destroyed the aura of gentility of earlier days, making the mill girl's position less appealing for a rising middle class of women. The depressions of the 1830s and Western competition destroyed a large number of New England family farms, forcing many daughters into a permanent factory population. Similarly, the Irish immigration beginning in the mid-1830s introduced a new class of women into the mills. Thus, while factory conditions deteriorated (more looms to tend, speeding up, more noise, dust, longer hours, et cetera) the women who entered the textile industries represented a transformed working population and took these jobs for their lives' work. Labor in the mill became a permanent experience and was no longer the first step toward a broader range of opportunities.

By mid-century, the growing work-force of women had developed an internal hierarchy. While the unskilled, industrial workers showed life styles and attitudes characteristic of the proletariat, women in the growing professions such as teaching and nursing set themselves apart from their sisters. Moreover, the dichotomy between women who worked and those who remained at home was accentuated by the culturally-defined "proper sphere" of women. Thus, while a working woman of colonial American had been considered on her own merits, by 1850-1860 her counterpart was no longer perceived as an individual attempting to earn a living; rather, she was likely to be judged as a woman who had stepped out of her place and who had thereby invited negative evaluation from her society. (60)

Middle-class women who had gained their new leisure in part from the sweat of their working-class sisters customarily returned the favor with deprecation. Although the realization of True Womanhood was possible only as an aspiration for most women, its acceptance by the influential and educated groups in society furthered the degradation of lower-class women beyond their physical exploitation. A middle-class or upper-class woman who was privileged to work in the privacy of her own home was spared from the spectacle of her indelicacy, while her laboring counterpart was easily identifiable by appearance, dress, manner, and attitude toward life.

Working-class women were inevitably marked by their participation in activities considered masculine. They shared with men a life in the world of business, a material existence which seemed inherently lacking in virtue and purity. In a Victorian culture, class stratification was culturally broadened to divide women into The Good and The Bad. Because the American ideal of femininity was so widely held, even minor deviations from the image such as dress, carriage, speech, and manners placed lower-class girls outside the pale of respectability.

For their part, working women had only one advantage: They alone retained a right to sexual fulfillment. But without birth control and general sexual freedom, this right constituted a negative differentiation. Lower-class white and black women became recognized as ideal objects of sexual exploitation, thus preserving the most precious virtue of the Fair Lady. Most lower-class women who entered prostitution did so because the way of life appealed to them, particularly as an alternative to the tedious and restrictive patterns of factory work. Meanwhile, middle-class reformers organized into social purity associations designed to "save" women from a life of degradation. Reformers were usually careful to attribute the rise of the Social Evil to the new industrial and urban order rather than to the individual wickedness of the prostitutes, but in general ascetic sexual standards were considered the appropriate alternative. Interest in prostitutes was usually limited to charity orphanages and female reform schools designed to educate lower-class children into the ethics of self-control and repressive sexuality. For the individual prostitute, "rehabilitation" was thought unlikely, for Victorian morality was based on a standard which considered the woman who had lost her virginity as "ruined". (61)

With their own particular needs and desires, working women discerned only slight significance in the demands of organized middle class women. The ballot, legal rights, and other social reform issues seemed irrelevant or secondary compared to the more pressing problems of daily life. As they expressed to social workers later, they wished the "secret" of preventing contraception, and when told it was abstinence, scoffed at such a solution as unreal. They envied the leisure of women who complained of boredom in their Victorian houses. And they viewed from afar the women's educational movement, designed for those of a privileged class.

Working women shared with their men the opportunities for earning money and participating in social production. Consequently, their first expression of feminist consciousness was determined by their status as a worker. By and large, they tended to join men in the ranks of organized labor and experienced their own sense of strength and power in trade unions. During the late 1830s, factory girls became involved in the first genuine trade-union protests against the fundamental technological changes in the industrialization process. The formation of a Factory Girls Association which soon attracted a membership of 2500 marked an organizational stage which transcended the spontaneous forms of earlier protests and strikes against employers. By the late 1840s, the Lowell Female Reform Association was strong enough to buy out the Voice of Industry, a paper which had long benefitted from female participation. The Voice projected a profound critique of True Womanhood, urging its female readers to attend the meetings of the New England Workingmen's Association "without false delicacy". Thus, in 1848, while their middle-class sisters met at Seneca Falls to discuss property rights and voting discrimination, advanced factory operatives such as Sarah Bagley and Huldah Stone directed their attention to subjects of wages and hours. They realized their wages were three to four times lower than those of men working in comparable jobs due to the inferiority ascribed to their position as workers. As working women, they pronounced a total rejection of the ideal woman which prevented their full participation and remuneration in industry. They rejected notions of feminine frailty, of weakness, of social purity and moral superiority, and of passivity. (62)

Nineteenth Century industrialization and urbanization had led to a fragmentation of social relations between classes and between men and women, transforming the form and content of women's roles. From the natural association of the family within pre-industrial farm life, American women passed to newer and more specialized relationships with each other through the situation of factory labor and the growth of political and social organizations. Gentility had become a widespread ideal, but even where realizable in middle-class and upper-class

homes, it was undermined by the activist re-definition of moral guardianship. Working-class women, a marginal force in the early decades of the century, were by its end beginning to discover their existence as a class and their own special problems. In the Twentieth Century these changes in women's conditions were to become fully developed, intensifying for a period those class and generational differences which separated women from each other.

Several major themes emerge in Twentieth Century women's history. First, because of the breakdown of the organic family unit in which men, women, and children shared productive economic functions, women (particularly middle-class women) became society's primary consumers. At the same time, structural changes in the economy and two world wars brought ever-increasing numbers of women into the labor force. Work for women, including married middle-class women, became respectable and desirable in the Twentieth Century. Despite dramatic changes in the social and economic conditions affecting women and altering their role in society, however, the ideological gestalt of assumptions and stereotypes concerning the nature of woman

and the role she was to play in society — the Cult of True Womanhood — proved remarkably adaptable to Twentieth Century conditions. Ideas about woman's sexuality have changed strikingly in the last seventy years, but the basic traditional values associated with woman as the protector of moral values and guardian of the home which developed in the ambiance of Nineteenth Century industrialism persisted into the Twentieth Century. This traditional conception of woman's role is integrally linked to women's economic function of consumption. The

[redacted]

These structural and economic changes did not, in and of themselves, transform women's historical experience. Rather, these economic developments further altered and fragmented the relationships between men and women and between middle-class women and working-class sisters. Men and working-class women, unlike middle-class women, worked outside the home in what society deemed productive occupations. As Margaret Bengston has stated, a capitalistic society honors the production of exchange value, but regards the production of use value as non-productive because it does not receive financial remuneration. Hence, because women have not been paid for the work they have done

in the home, society has judged such work to be devoid of productive value. The middle-class housewife's work has been separated further from the "productive" work of men because it is essentially unspecialized and unregimented. Whereas industrial production became increasingly specialized and routinized in the late Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, the work women did in the home underwent little structural transformation. In addition, unlike the "real" and important world of industrial production, woman's work has been geared not to clock time, but to task orientation. This fact has made housework even more of an anomaly in a society with norms based on industrial production methods. (64)

Middle-class women have been separated from their working-class sisters also in that modern technology gave middle-class women an abundance of leisure. The maturation of the corporate economy was accompanied by a growing recognition of the fact that housework no longer needed to be a full-time occupation. Many social commentators in the first decades of the Twentieth Century described the middle-class woman's "restlessness". In the early 1920s, psychotherapists and sociologists increasingly wrote about the "nervous housewife" faced with an overabundance of spare time and feelings of inadequacy,

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to manage what amounted to two jobs at once fell on the individual woman alone. This reliance on individual solutions to solve problems working women faced in managing a home and a job was evident even during the world wars, when the media and the state encouraged married women to work outside the home. During World War II, for instance, a propaganda tract urging women to work as a patriotic duty offered only individual solutions for the problems involved in combining two jobs. Women were told to budget their time better, move to smaller homes, and buy prepared food. (68)

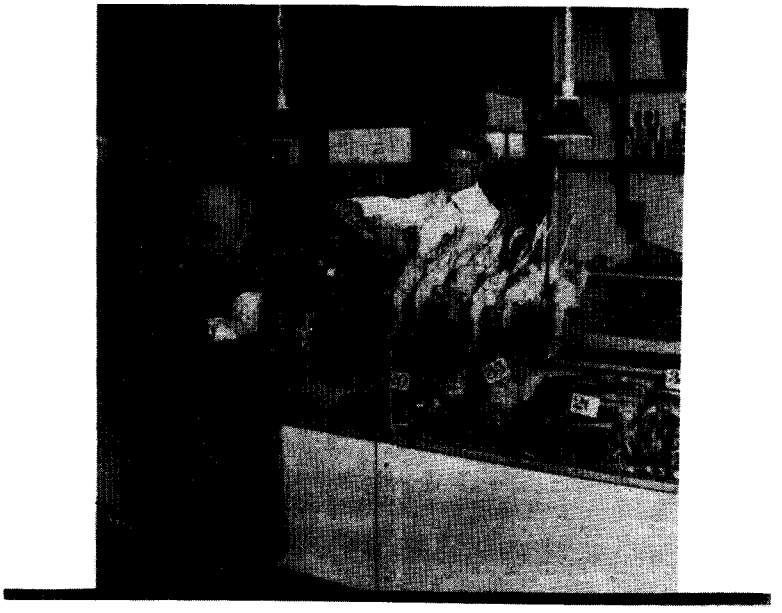
Despite the fact that many middle-class women entered the labor force during the Twentieth Century, their experience differed in many respects from that of working-class women. Whether a middle-class woman worked as a file clerk or studied to be a physician, work was a consciously-made choice and an effort to find self-fulfillment and independence, not an economic necessity. Exactly the reverse has been true of the Twentieth Century working-class woman, who has entered the industrial work force because it was the only choice open to her. With the shift from industrial home work to factory machine production in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, an ever-increasing number of women moved into industrial employment. Such factory jobs were hardly liberating: The hours were long (often well over sixty a week in the years before protective legislation), the working conditions poor, and sexist discrimination widespread. Women generally earned about half of men's wages for the same work. In addition, women, like blacks, were often assigned tasks which were considered too degrading for white men to accept, such as scrubbing the factory floor. (69) Working women's conditions were exacerbated by the scant attention paid them by the organized labor movement. Although the American Federation of Labor passed annual resolutions calling for organization of women workers, no action was taken until well into the century. Women workers in a number of industries formed their own unions, with the help of organizations like the Women's Trade Union League, but these unions affected only a small minority. Unions considered women poor risks. Despite the efforts of groups like the Working Girls' Societies and the Women's Trade Union League to show otherwise the traditional belief that women were invariably temporary workers and the notion that a woman must only be working for "pin money" or out of selfish disregard for her familial responsibilities remained strong for many years in the Twentieth Century. Most men union organizers considered unions incompatible with "femininity". "Do they not tend to unsex them and make them masculine?" an AFL official asked Agnes Nestor, president of the women glove makers' union. (70) Thus working-class women, despite the fact that they were living contradictions to the "Cult of True Womanhood" ideal of frail, passive, and delicate femininity, suffered from the imposition of the same stereotype. (71)

Not surprisingly, working-class women who have worked out of necessity throughout the Twentieth Century have generally regarded marriage as liberation from the tedium and exhaustion of industrial employment. In addition, because working-class women have viewed work as an economic necessity and not as a kind of luxury, they have been more interested in collectively organizing to change the conditions under which they have worked rather than relying totally on individual solutions. By contrast, middle-class white-collar employees are only beginning to organize around common demands and in resistance to common forms of exploitation.

The differences in economic roles and personal expectations between working-class women and middle-class women were also reflected in the feminist movement in the early part of the century. Working-class women were generally apathetic to the goals of the organized feminist

movement. They did not see the movement as furthering their collective aims of better working conditions and unionism. The National American Women's Suffrage Association, for example, was at best indifferent to the unionization of women workers, and some important suffragists were openly hostile toward organized labor. Then too, working women generally did not regard obtaining the vote as a tangible improvement in their condition, while middle-class suffragists often saw the vote as the only important goal of the movement. For them, suffrage was an end in itself. (72)

Women in the organized feminist movement accepted the economic transformation of middle-class women from co-producer to consumer and incorporated it into their thinking about their own lives and about their place in society. Some hailed woman's new role and the technological forces that had created it as the final prerequisite for the liberation of women from household drudgery. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, for example, urged that technological developments and labor saving devices be employed to liberate women from the unspecialized and inefficient ways housework was organized: Community kitchens and technological innovations would revolutionize the organization of the home and leave women free for other pursuits. Early Twentieth Century feminists combined this acceptance of consumerism with an acceptance of the Nineteenth Century ideal of woman as imbued with fixed and unchanging moral and biological characteristics and responsibilities to care for children and the home.



No longer advancing the individualistic political and legal arguments of Nineteenth Century feminism, early Twentieth Century feminists argued that women were different, morally and socially. For precisely these reasons should women be allowed to vote; the political system needed women's influence. Spokesmen in the movement constantly stressed that the home and the community were interrelated and interdependent, and that to women as buyers fell the responsibility for insuring that the work they used to perform inside the home was now performed efficiently, safely, and equitably outside it. Accordingly, women campaigned for pure food legislation and for other consumer oriented reforms. (73)

The arguments employed by organized feminism early in the Twentieth Century were not only ahistorical; they also disregarded many of the contemporary trends involving women — particularly the increasing participation of working-class women in the industrial labor force. Although some organizations within the feminist movement attempted to bridge the gap between working-class women and their middle-class counterparts, and although there was a great deal of talk about "sisterhood" within the movement, early Twentieth Century feminism remained tied to its middle-class moorings. Generally, attempts at cross-class co-operation were based on urging middle-class women to use their buying power as a way to help their working-class sisters. The consumer league movement, the union label organizations, and the women's labor groups like the Women's Trade Union League stressed that women controlled their communities' purchasing power, and thus should be knowledgeable about labor conditions. For example, middle class women were urged to insist on the waistmaker's union label when buying shirtwaists: "Now is the time for the women of New York, Philadelphia, and in fact everywhere where American shirtwaists are worn, to rise in their might and demonstrate that with them bargain hunting can be subordinated to principle and that they have said goodby to the products of the sweatshop.... Friends, let us stop talking about sisterhood and MAKE SISTERHOOD A FACT." (74) But despite some earnest efforts, serious cross-class co-operation within the feminist movement failed.

The feminist movement's emphasis on the middle-class woman's consumer role, its acceptance of the basic Nineteenth Century ideal of women as morally superior to men, and its single-minded emphasis on winning the vote help to explain not only the movement's failure to reach working-class women, but also its increasing inability to move beyond its immediate goal of the franchise. By the time the Nineteeenth Amendment was enacted into law, the vote was no longer a means to an end, it was the only end most suffragists envisioned. Most of the women who had been involved in the movement turned to non-feminist political activity in organizations such as the League of

Women Voters, a group which prided itself on its lack of "feminist consciousness".

In the years after 1920 feminism as a movement and as consciousness became increasingly isolated. The fortunes of the National Woman's Party in the 1920s tell us a great deal about why feminist consciousness and a strong, organized movement declined so radically in the years after the suffrage amendment. Early in the 1920s, the NWP began to campaign for an equal-rights amendment to the Constitution, arguing that legislation was the only way to achieve equality for women. Legislation had been successful in getting women the vote; when it was apparent that the vote was not enough, what was obviously necessary was more legislation. In this sense, the NWP was a victim of functional fixedness: It saw the solution to women's role in society solely in political terms.

The NWP's single-minded emphasis on the proposed equal-rights amendment alienated working-class women and labor organizations, who viewed the proposed amendment as destructive of their efforts for protective labor legislation. (75) In addition, the NWP and feminists such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Carrie Chapman Catt, who lived and wrote in the 1920s, were unable to appeal to young women. The Students' Council of the Woman's Party, for example, organized in 1924, had fifteen charter members. It quickly faded away. (76) Much of the reason for the lack of appeal that the feminist tradition had for young women lay in changing attitudes toward feminine sexuality. In this respect feminists accepted the "Cult of True Womanhood" stereotype of woman as devoid of sexual needs, and thus somehow more pure. Liberation for Nineteeenth Century feminists, then, included the right to abstain from sexual relations. By 1920, ideas about sexuality had changed and feminine sexuality was openly discussed. What was really "new" about the "New Woman" early in the century was not so much her desire for meaningful work outside the home as her affirmation of sexuality and her search for sexual fulfillment. In contrast, National Woman's Party members and other feminists decried the New Morality. Not surprisingly, the young women of the Twentieth Century did not respond to the traditional feminist ideology which stressed sexual repression and denial. (77)

The new ideas and attitudes about sex did not emerge suddenly. By the turn of the century, changing ideas about women's sexuality were evident in the novels of writers such as Kate Chopin, Robert Herrick, and Theodore Dreiser. The life styles of women such as Mabel Dodge Luhan and Edna Saint Vincent Millay, although their number was very small before the First World War, were indicative of social change. Freudian psychology was one of the factors which contributed to changing notions about feminine sexuality, particularly because of Freud's emphasis on the centrality of sex in human motivation. Other factors were important as well. New attitudes toward

feminine sexuality emerged in a larger social context of the dramatic transformation of marriage and the family. The contours of family relations have been changing rapidly throughout the Twentieth Century. In an industrial, urbanized society, a large number of children was no longer an economic asset. This fact may account for the relatively rapid acceptance which middle-class families gave to the birth-control movement. Although Margaret Sanger's early efforts in the years before World War I met with public indignation, by the 1920s young middle-class women approved of contraceptive use. (78)

The changes in ideas and norms surrounding feminine sexuality have generally been regarded by women and by students of women's history as totally liberating. For most of the Twentieth Century women have not had to endure the sexual repression that marked Nineteenth Century Victorian ideas. On the other hand, the new definition of woman's sexuality has divided women from each other throughout the Twentieth Century. With the reaffirmation of feminine sexuality, the traditional notion of sisterhood broke down. In the Nineteenth Century, many women, because they accepted the societal view of themselves as more moral, pure, and pious than men, often found emotional fulfillment in friendships with other women. Women in the Twentieth Century learned that they were expected to have emotional attachments only to men. In this way, because women competed on an individual basis for men's attention, the possibilities for women coming together to develop feminist consciousness and realize their own power lessened.

In addition, the new definition of feminine sexuality further divided middle-class and working-class women. In the Nineteenth Century, women had been divided in similar fashion, but with some important variations. The working-class woman in the previous century was not affected by many of the repressive aspects of Victorian sexuality. Working-class women were expected to enjoy sexual relations. In the

Twentieth Century, however, working-class women generally have not shared the personally liberating aspects of the New Morality. They were not affected by the tenets of Freudian psychology and the open discussion of sexual matters that the popularization of Freud's theories engendered. Often, because of religious sanctions or lack of knowledge, they have not had access to new, effective methods of birth control. Studies such as Mirra Komarovsky's Blue Collar Marriage document views on sexuality marked by fear of unwanted pregnancies, ignorance of contraceptive techniques, and often unfulfilling sexual relations. (79)

One is faced with an apparent paradox when studying Twentieth Century women's history. On one hand, ever increasing numbers of women, particularly married women, worked outside the home. In addition, for the middle-class woman at least, sexuality and the biological aspects of motherhood were no longer unspeakable topics. On the other hand, throughout the Twentieth Century, social theorists, psychologists, educators, advertising executives, and clergymen have told women that their "natural" place is in the home and that their "real" job is motherhood. In other words, the Twentieth Century has had its own updated version of the "Cult of True Womanhood".

The reason for perpetuating this traditional ideal in spite of its increasing incongruity with historical reality has been a simple one: As consumers, middle-class women have filled a vital and indispensable role in an economy based on mass consumption. In order to carry out this prescribed role, women had to be educated to accept their economic function.

The set of stereotypes and assumptions which has characterized most of Twentieth Century thinking on woman's nature and role might best be defined by Betty Friedan's term "the feminine mystique" to distinguish it from the Nineteenth Century "Cult of True Womanhood" ideal. (80) Twentieth Century thinking about women has differed from the previous century in several important respects. Although women were still taught that their place was primarily in the home, a new rationale had to be formulated to replace the obsolete reasons and theories behind the Nineteenth Century "Cult of True Womanhood". In addition, because historical changes had taken away any productive economic and social reasons why women should stay in the home, women needed to be invested with a contemporary sense of importance and productivity.

The Nineteenth Century ideal of woman was based in large part on biological arguments: Women were inferior biologically to men — they were weak, frail, incapable of strenuous mental and physical exertion. This biological "anatomy is destiny" argument was carried into the Twentieth Century in the writings of such theorists as Havelock Ellis. Ellis, in Man and Woman, expressed the view that biological differences were fundamental in determining the different social roles of men and

women. He stressed that women's capacities did not "limit" her, but rather especially ordained her for certain functions. Ellis bolstered his thesis with an evolutionary biological schema based on painstaking anatomical measurements. He concluded that women were infantile types and, hence, better fitted by nature to take care of children. Ellis also theorized that women's "functional periodicity" made them vulnerable to dramatic and dangerous mood changes because they always lived on the "upward or downward slope of a curve". (81) Early in the century, Alice Beal Parsons and Leta Hollingsworth made impressive refutations of Ellis's theories. Parsons pointed out that Ellis's measurements had no statistical validity. Hollingsworth, a social psychologist, brought forth experimental evidence which revealed that women did not have a period of maximum efficiency or an emotional cycle. These new theorists stressed the importance of individual differences and concluded that women varied, just as men varied, from individual to individual. Hence one could not draw conclusions about woman's pre-ordained role from biological evidence. (82)

Strictly biological arguments could no longer be used convincingly to bolster the "Cult of True Womanhood". In their place rose a new internal, psychological rationale for explaining woman's nature and justifying her traditional role in society. The Twentieth Century affirmation of feminine sexuality was essential to the psychological rationale behind the "feminine mystique". Whereas in the Nineteenth Century women were defined — and defined themselves — by careful avoidance of sexuality, in the present century women have often been defined with reference to their sexuality alone. Sexuality has been elevated above any other factor in explaining woman's nature. In one sense, this recognition of feminine sexuality has made women more similar to men: They both have been recognized as sexual beings. But because sexuality has been isolated as the only major factor necessary to explain women's motivations and behavior, women have been further separated from male-oriented society. The popular psychological construct of women as innately passive, narcissistic, and masochistic parallels the Nineteenth Century biological argument that women were innately weak and frail. Both construct a picture of woman which is fixed and eternal and bears no relation to cultural factors. Many Twentieth Century psychologists have stressed that women find fulfillment only through marriage and motherhood, and that deviation from these norms indicates psychological maladjustment. Hence, to be a feminist has meant being "maladjusted" sexually. This emphasis on individual sexual and psychological adjustment has been another important factor in the decline of feminist consciousness which has characterized the years from 1920 to the very recent present. (83)

Two societal institutions which have had a major influence on the lives of women in the Twentieth Century — advertising and education — have done much to instill the view that woman's psychological

fulfillment and "adjustment" depended on her natural role in the home. In addition, both advertising and educational institutions have attempted to stress the importance of the middle-class woman's roles as mother, housewife, and consumer in an effort to invest women with a sense of productivity. Much of the advertising directed to women in the Twentieth Century, for example, has attempted semantically to turn consumption into production. The housewife managing her home has been compared to the businessman running his firm. "Through her dealings as business manager of the home," one advertisement in the 1920s read, "the modern woman brings sound commercial sense to bear on her judgment of a Ford closed car." "Retail buying is a productive act," wrote one praiser of the new economic order. (84)

Feminists such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman had welcomed the appearance of new appliances and technological improvements as a way to help solve the dilemma of the married woman who wanted a career. Advertisements and women's colleges emphasized that women now had time to "put motherhood first", not embark on a professional career outside the home. In the Twentieth Century homemaking and motherhood became specialized professions for the first time. At the same time that technological developments made it possible for women

to spend less time at housework, cultural values demanded that they spend more time perfecting household arts.

Education for women changed in the early Twentieth Century to stress the professional aspects of woman's role in the home. Educators began to emphasize that woman's economic role was different from man's and that she should be educated accordingly. (85) Home economics and child-study courses were introduced into college curricula. It was unfortunate, thought many educators and social critics, that women's education gave the impression that homemaking required no special preparation. Preparation for homemaking as a profession was conceived to give the position dignity. Women should know how to buy and prepare food, sew, and manage a well-run, attractive home. Such thinking represented a complete shift in the original rationale for education of women, which was to give women the same education that men could obtain. Some institutions continued to emphasize educating women to break away from their traditional role, but increasingly more common in the 1920s was the philosophy that women should be educated for their traditional status rather than encouraged to change it. (86)

Hence, despite economic, technological, and social changes, the ideological assumptions affecting women have remained strikingly familiar. Throughout the Twentieth Century, society has defined women in terms of distinct and limiting stereotypes, despite those stereotypes' increasing irrelevance to changing economic and social realities. For the most part, American women in the Twentieth Century have accepted and internalized the "feminine mystique", or have reacted to it as individuals. Because women have been divided from one another on class lines, because the Twentieth Century definition of sexuality has discouraged the concept of collective sisterhood, and because in the years since the early part of the century, women, like men, have been educated to act and think in a framework of individualism, feminism has been in decline throughout most of the century. Only in very recent years has feminist consciousness re-emerged. Like the women's rights movement of the late Nineteenth Century and early Twentieth Century, contemporary feminism arose out of a larger social and political movement. Unlike the first movement, however, the present movement is attempting not only to understand and change the facts of middle class women's condition, but also to understand and surmount effects of class division and social fragmentation.

"Woman's awareness of herself," Simone de Beauvoir has noted, "is not exclusively defined by her sexuality; it reflects a situation that depends on the economic organization." In the course of three and a half centuries, that awareness was reflected through the prisms of a new and labor-scarce colonial society, a transitional Victorian industrializing society, and a commodity-rich but labor-alienated modern Capitalist society. There has been no single definition of woman, but rather a succession of definitions in which self-conscious feminism has been provoked, transformed or suppressed, and provoked again. At the epochally Last Moment of the current order, the self-consciousness has gained new heights and promises to reach still further. Yet, for this to happen, women must comprehend the interior and exterior worlds of that growth, both the heightened perceptions of self and the heightened contradictions of a society whose most basic problems remain unresolved (and, to that degree, endanger all of women's progress). It is hoped that this essay will have made some small positive contribution to that comprehension.

◆◆◆ Footnotes

1. Mary Beard: Woman as Force in History (New York, 1946).
2. Juliet Mitchell: Review of The Petticoat Rebellion, in New Statesman (August 4, 1867), as cited in Margaret George: One Woman's Situation: A Study of Mary Wollstonecraft (Urbana, Illinois, 1970).
3. Branka Magas: "Sex Politics: Class Politics", New Left Review, Number 66 (March-April, 1971), Page 89.
4. Margaret George's discussion of this point is primarily in her preface, but her conclusions underly the whole book. We have found this discussion very useful. We are indebted as well to Branka Magas: "Sex Politics: Class Politics", previously cited, and Gerda Lerner for their critiques of the oppression model as a framework for historical methodology. See especially Gerda Lerner: "New Approaches to the Study of Women in American History", Journal of Social History III (Fall 1969), Pages 53-62.
5. Philippe Aries: Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life, translated by Robert Baldick (New York, 1962).
6. Simone de Beauvoir: The Second Sex (Modern Library Edition, New York, 1969), Page 129.
7. Jeannine Hensley (editor): Works of Anne Bradstreet (Cambridge, 1967).
8. Branka Magas: "Sex Politics: Class Politics", previously cited, Pages 90-91.

9. Eleanor Flexner: Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (New York, 1968), and Mildred Adams: The Right to Be People (1967). Other studies which concentrate chiefly on the suffrage movement are Abbie Graham: Ladies in Revolt (New York, 1934), Emily Taft Douglas: Remember the Ladies (1966), and Olivia E. Coolidge: Women's Rights: The Suffrage Movement in America, 1848-1920 (1966). Over one half of Eleanor Flexner's Century of Struggle, probably the best known and most widely read general study of American women, is devoted to the suffrage campaign, and the last quarter of the book is devoted to the twelve years before the vote was won. Flexner's work is a detailed and valuable narrative study of the women's rights movement from its beginnings in the abolitionist movement through the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment. Flexner recognizes the importance of events and developments outside the scope of the movement, but, generally speaking, these aspects of women's history gain significance in her book only through their relation to the suffrage movement. The chapter on working women, for example, deals with working women's participation in the struggle for the franchise. Mildred Adams: The Right to Be People also is a narrative account of the women's rights movement, but with an even heavier emphasis on the suffrage campaign. Like Flexner, Adams gives a detailed account of factional struggles within the suffrage movement and a year-by-year account of the fight for the vote.

10. See, for example, Carrie Chapman Catt: Woman Suffrage and Politics: The Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement (New York, 1923), Harriet Robinson: Massachusetts in the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1774-1881 (1883), Molly Seawell: The Ladies' Battle (1911), and Belle Squire: The Woman Movement in America (1911).

11. There are some notable exceptions to this generalization. Carl Degler's essay on women, "Revolution Without Ideology: The Changing Place of Women in America", in Robert Jay Lifton (editor): The Woman in America (Boston, 1964), deals with women's history in a dynamic social context. There have also been a number of studies of the changes in women's employment patterns which have attempted to relate women's history to the changes in the economy. See Robert Smuts: Women and Work in America (New York, 1959), and Elizabeth Baker: Technology and Woman's Work (New York, 1964).

12. Belle Squire: The Woman Movement in America, previously cited, Page 285.

13. Mildred Adams: The Right to Be People, previously cited, Page 3.

14. Aileen Kraditor: The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement (New York, 1965), William O'Neill: Everyone Was Brave: The Rise and Fall of Feminism in America (Chicago, 1969), and William O'Neill: "Feminism as a Radical Ideology", in Alfred Young (editor): Dissent (De Kalb, Illinois, 1968).

15. Margaret George: One Woman's Situation, previously cited.

16. See, for example, Christopher Lasch: The New Radicalism in America (New York, 1965).

17. Robert Reigel: American Feminists (Lawrence, Kansas, 1963).

18. Edmund Morgan: The Puritan Family (New Haven, 1948), and Bernard Wishy: The Child and the Republic (Philadelphia, 1967).

19. Cited in Eugenie A. Leonard: The Dear-Bought Heritage (Philadelphia, 1965), Page 33.

20. Cited in Thomas Woody: A History of Women's Education in the United States (New York, 1929, 1966), Volume 1, Page 135.

21. An excellent study exists of an exception to this statement at the Moravian Brethren's settlement in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Gillian Lindt Gollin: Moravians in Two Worlds: A Study of Changing Communities (New York, 1967) describes the institutional development of the colonial community in comparison with its German counterpart. In a separate article, Gollin wrote a good study of the attempt to get rid of the family structure in the community: "Family Surrogates in Colonial America: The Moravian Experiment", Journal of Marriage and the Family XXXI (1969), Pages 650-658. This essay deals only with white women in the American colonies. Black women were rare, since most slaves imported during the period were male. And most important, they left few records which the historian may utilize. At present, no worthwhile secondary sources exist in this area.

22. Until recent years, historians concerned with long-range developments in colonial history were little concerned with social history, and those who dealt with the smaller world of women and children were oblivious to broader questions about society. Thus, throughout the books and articles available there is no integration between the home and change, between the society and individual lives. The most efficient way to begin gathering information about the period is through an extensive bibliography, The American Woman in Colonial and Revolutionary Times, 1565-1800 (Philadelphia, 1962), by Eugenie A. Leonard, Sophie H. Drinker, and Miriam Y. Holden. The breakdown of topics follows quite traditional and static lines: European background, heroic and patriotic activities, status and rights, role in religious life, education, and domain in the home, in productive life, in arts, and in charity. This arrangement is very helpful for gaining basic information but does not provide a sense of the historical dynamic during the period. Bernard Bailyn: Education in the Forming of American Society: Needs and Opportunities for Study (1960) provides a good bibliography on education in relation to the colonial family. His essay needs substantial updating in terms of research that has followed his suggestions. A more recent and similar bibliography is in Lawrence A. Cremin: American Education: The Colonial Experience (New York, 1970). Cremin lists the latest studies on English and colonial households which are useful for analyzing the forces affecting family growth in the New World.

Unfortunately all of these studies are remarkably unimaginative when it comes to piecing together the changes for women; important family changes apparently are only between fathers and sons.

23. Edmund S. Morgan: The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth Century New England (revised edition, 1966) deals primarily with the idea of, rather than the practice of, New England families, but is valuable for understanding the ideological and religious role that family played in Puritan communities.

24. Julia C. Spruill: Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies (Chapel Hill, 1938) is the most thorough documentation of the world of women for any geographical area. Her work does not pay adequate attention to the changes within the colonial period, but is a goldmine of information. Chapter 1 of her book describes the "womanless" years in the South and efforts to import women. A supplement is Walter Hart Blumenthal: Brides from Bridewell: Female Felons Sent to Colonial America (Rutland, Vermont, 1962).

25. The major study of the colonial sex ratio is Herbert Moller: "Sex Composition and Correlated Culture Patterns of Colonial America", William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series II(1945), Pages 113-153. His statistics are helpful, but the suggestions he offers about the cultural effects are so riddled with bad psychology and with elementary sexist assumptions (such as that only frustrated single women were interested in religious revivals) that they are useless. Some changes in marriage age during the Seventeenth Century can be found in John Demos: "Notes on Life in Plymouth Colony", William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series XXII (1965), Pages 264-286, and Philip J. Greven, Junior: Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts (Ithaca, 1970).

26. Alice Norse Earle: Home Life in Colonial Days (New York, 1899) still affords a concise treatment of household production (particularly its tools and processes) in the period. Further suggestions appear in the bibliography by Leonard, Drinker, and Holden: The American Woman in Colonial and Revolutionary Times.

27. Edmund S. Morgan: The Puritan Family..., previously cited, discusses the child-trading phenomenon in New England extensively, although his conclusions about parental fear of intimacy need revision since the work of Philippe Aries: Centuries of Childhood.

28. Anne Grant: Memoirs of an American Lady, With Sketches of Manners and Scenery in America (New York, 1808, 1846), and E. W. Andrews and C. M. Andrews (editors): Journal of a Lady of Quality, Being the Narrative of a Journey From Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina, and Portugal in the Years 1774 to 1776 (New Haven, 1923). Most of Mrs. Grant's observations are more telling about the early Nineteenth Century than about the Eighteenth. Her frequent digressions on the glories of home and mother do not ring true to the pre-Revolutionary time.

29. Spruill: Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies, previously cited; Morgan: The Puritan Family..., previously cited; and Morgan: Virginians at Home: Family Life in the Eighteenth Century (Williamsburg, 1952) are useful here. Puritan attitudes toward sex and the evidence of freer practice in the late Eighteenth Century are in: Charles F. Adams: "Some Phases of Sexual Morality and Church Discipline in New England", Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings, Series 2 VI (1891), Pages 477-516; Edmund S. Morgan: "Puritans and Sex", New England Quarterly XV (1942), Pages 591-607; and John Demos: "Families in Colonial Bristol, Rhode Island: An Exercise in Historical Demography", William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series XXV (1968), Pages 40-57.

30. Ironically, the social solidarity of pre-industrial American society is illustrated by the Salem witch trials. Nearly everyone in Salem was involved in the trials. While most of the accused witches were women, there were also men; while most were white, there was also a West Indian slave. Some of the accused were destitute, but others were respected and landed members of the village. The initial accusers were young girls (many of whom lived outside their own families), but their testimony was received by the authorities and their charges were echoed by adult men and women. Witchcraft was a problem for every resident of the village, and its extirpation a collective responsibility. Within that framework, the community mobilized young and old, men and women, poor and well-to-do. Marion L. Starkey: The Devil in Massachusetts: A Modern Enquiry into the Salem Witch Trials (1961) and David Levin (editor): What Happened in Salem? are standard beginnings. Starkey tells a story of adolescent energy to explain the trials. Not only do I disagree with her imposition of Twentieth Century psychology on the Seventeenth Century community, but I have tried to change the focus of the event.

31. The "outstanding" women of this period have received their share of biographies, most of them terrible, but some of them providing at least the outlines of the possible differences for women of the time. Emery Battis: Saints and Sectaries: Anne Hutchinson and the Antinomian Controversy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony (Chapel Hill, 1962) needs an article of its own to describe the psychological assumptions about women which permeate the book; Battis is simply unwilling to take seriously the possibility that Anne was dealing intelligently with a religious challenge. Mary Agnes Best: Rebel Saints (New York, 1925) is a collection of biographies of heroic Quakers, including those women who martyred themselves in Massachusetts. Sarah Harrison was the unsung heroine who refused to swear obedience. See Edmund S. Morgan: Virginians at Home..., Page 47.

32. Most writers on colonial children are agreed on this point. Alice Morse Earle: Child-Life in Colonial Days (New York, 1899, 1929), Sandford Fleming: Children and Puritanism: The Place of Children in the Life and Thought of the New England Churches, 1620-1847 (New

Haven, 1933), and Monica M. Kiefer: American Children Through Their Books, 1700-1835 (Philadelphia, 1948). None of these examine practice, but all make their judgments on the basis of the artifacts.

33. Elisabeth Anthony Dexter: Colonial Women of Affairs, Women in Business and the Professions in America Before 1776 (second edition revised, Boston, 1931). Dexter's examples, without her concluding discussion about reasons for the decline of female careers, have been picked up by most colonial historians. Her work remains one of the only histories which tries to deal with the transition into the Nineteenth Century. Her hypotheses — male codification of the law, middle-class defensiveness against immigrants, the "lady" as luxury for males with increasing wealth, and the inability of women to gain education — were suggested but not examined in relation to anything broader than the individual examples she found.

34. This discussion is based on Alice Clark's excellent study: Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century (London, 1919, New York, 1968). Unfortunately her insights and methods have been ignored by American historians.

35. Cited in Leonard: The Dear-Bought Heritage, Page 222.

36. From an advertisement in the Pennsylvania Gazette, cited in Woody: A History of Women's Education..., Volume 1, Pages 227-228. The triumph of this move is discussed by Gerda Lerner: "The Lady and the Mill Girl", Midcontinent American Studies Journal X (1969), Pages 5-15. Although a number of histories of midwifery in Europe exist, virtually every one is a history of mail contributions to the field. A good but brief account of midwives resisting control by doctors in England is in Thomas Rogers Forbes: The Midwife and the Witch (New Haven, 1969).

37. Sophie H. Drinker: "Women Attorneys of Colonial Times", Maryland Historical Magazine LVI (1961), Pages 335-351.

38. Thomas Woody: A History of Women's Education... is the most complete collection of information on women's education. However histories of education are undergoing great changes through re-defining learning to include what occurs outside of schools and analyzing what changes are going on in the relations between members of families and social classes that induce people to formalize learning in schools. Unfortunately, very little of this rethinking has been directed toward women. Cremin, cited above, for example, ignores the problem.

39. Rush's essay is difficult to obtain; it apparently has not been reprinted since the Eighteenth Century. It is available on the microprint cards of the American Antiquarian Society and in Rush's collected essays published in 1792. Lengthy discussions of these ideas are in Woody and in Jean S. Straub: "Benjamin Rush's Views on Women's Education", Pennsylvania History XXXIV (1967), Pages 147-157. Neither of these, however, discusses his ideas in relation to social history.

40. Ethel Armes (editor): Nancy Shippen: Her Journal Book... With Letters to Her and About Her (Philadelphia, 1935). This fascinating story includes her educational experience, her marriage, her divorce, and her Philadelphia social life. For a lengthy commentary by a young girl on the images and choices of women in the same period, see Elizabeth Southgate Bowne: A Girl's Life Eighty Years Ago..., with an introduction by Clarence Cook (New York, 1887). Discussions about femininity appeared with increasing regularity in American magazines and newspapers throughout the Eighteenth Century. Some of these are discussed in Bertha Monica Stearns: "Early Philadelphia Magazines for Ladies", Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography LXIV (1940), Pages 479-491.

41. The extent of feminism during and after the Revolution is a puzzle, in need of clearer categories of analysis and more detailed examination. Many individual women expressed discontent with the image. Mary Wollstonecraft was reprinted immediately in Boston and Philadelphia and was widely read. (For one girl's comments on Vindication, see Bowne: A Girl's Life Eighty Years Ago, Pages 58-62.) The novelist Charles Brockden Brown wrote two feminist dialogues in Alcuin, available in paperback. See also David Lee Clark: "Brockden Brown and the Rights of Women", Comparative Literature Series 2, University of Texas Bulletin (1922) for a summary and an assertion of his originality. Thomas Paine published a plea for enfranchisement of women, "An Occasional Letter on the Female Sex", in Conway (editor): Writings of Thomas Paine (New York, 1894), Volume 1. New Jersey "forgot" to include the word "man" in its new constitution. This sort of information is catalogued in a few articles, but is confused in vague intellectual history and in hazy definitions of feminism.

42. Herbert Brown: The Sentimental Novel in America, 1789-1860 (Durham, North Carolina, 1940). Hannah Foster: The Coquette (Boston, 1794). Memoir of Miss Hannah Adams, Written by Herself (Boston, 1832) provides one account of a woman making a career of writing. Rush and Hannah Foster and others expressed distaste for female novel-reading in their proposals for education, but seem not to have made a dent in popularity.

43. Karl Marx: Capital, Volume 1 (Modern Library Edition), Pages 89-90. For a historical overview of pre-industrial conditions and the rise of manufacturing in relation to women, see Edith Abbott: Women in Industry: A Study of American History (New York, 1910, 1969), Chapters 1-3.

44. William R. Taylor: Cavalier and Yankee (New York, 1963), Pages 96-99 and 118-119; David M. Kennedy: Birth Control in America (New Haven, 1970), Page 40; William Bridges: "Family Patterns and Special Values in America, 1825-1875", American Quarterly XVII (Spring 1965), Pages 3-11.

45. For examples of colonial definitions see Wallace Notestein: "The English Woman, 1580-1650", in J. H. Plumb: Studies in Social History: A Tribute to G. M. Trevelyan (London, 1955), Pages 69-107, describing some of the English Seventeenth Century elements of this image. Anne Firor Scott, in The Southern Lady, from Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1920 (Chicago, 1970), traces the continuation of this ideal of Southern Womanhood in the antebellum period. For counterparts of women's lives in the frontier, see William Sprague: Women and the West (Boston, 1940) and Dee Brown: The Gentle Tamers: Women of the Old Wild West (New York, 1958). Both books contain interesting contrasts with the genteel image of Northeastern urban women.

46. Barbara Welter: "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860", in the American Quarterly XVIII (Summer 1966), fully delineates this stereotype. Fuller treatment is accorded by Glenda Riley: "Changing Image of the American Woman in the Early Nineteenth Century" (unpublished PhD dussertation, Ohio State University, 1967). A rather interesting although unfairly critical analysis appears in a rarely used source, Fred Vigman's Beauty's Triumph (Boston, 1966). For one of the earliest descriptions of American Victorian women, see an early work by Mary Roberts Coolidge, Why Women Are So (New York, 1912), which traces the notion of femininity from its origins in pre-Victorian settings.

47. Many of these restrictions closely resembled and imitated the British Victorian culture. Two useful, although sexist, sources are Gordon R. Taylor: Sex in History (New York, 1954), and Walter E. Houghton: The Victorian Frame of Mind (New Haven, 1957).

48. One of the most interesting compilations and analyses of fashion can be found in Bernard Rudofshy: Are Clothes Modern? (Chicago, 1947). See also Robert Riegel: "Women's Clothes and Women's Rights", American Quarterly XV (Autumn 1963), Pages 390-401, for a survey of feminists' responses to and description of Victorian fashion. For an excellent critique of Victorian furnishings, see Siegfried Giedion: Mechanization Takes Command (Second Edition, New York, 1949), and Harriet Martineau: Society in America (Anchor Abridged Edition, Garden City, 1962). Barbara Welter: "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860", previously cited, refers to Americans' reactions to British feminists.

49. Stephen Nissenbaum: "Careful Love: Sylvester Graham and the Emergence of Victorian Sexual Theory in America, 1830-1840" (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1968) fully developed the intellectual rationales of repressive sexuality. Similarly, Sidney Ditzion: Marriage, Morals, and Sex in America (New York, 1953) contains much useful information on male attitudes and theories of sexuality. Ironically, one of the most sexist treatments, Eric Dingwall: The American Woman: A Historical Study (New York, 1956), describes at length women's denial of their own sexuality. Unfortunately Dingwall assigns to women the blame for all the ramifications of the total repressive ethic in America.

50. For a fine but early scholarly treatment, see Norman Himes: A Medical History of Contraception (Baltimore, 1936). David Kennedy: Birth Control in America, previously cited, contains a most useful second chapter: "The Nineteenth Century Heritage: The Family, Feminism, and Sex", Pages 36-76.

51. William O'Neill: Everyone Was Brave..., previously cited, Pages 4-14.

52. William R. Taylor and Christopher Lasch: "Two Kindred Spirits: Sorority and Family in New England, 1839-1946", in the New England Quarterly XXXVI (March 1963), and Keith Melder: "Beginnings of the Woman's Rights Movement in the United States, 1800-1840" (unpublished PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1965).

53. Sources on feminism and women's rights are described in Part 1. For specialized studies on women and abolitionism, see Samuel Sillen: Women Against Slavery (1955), Aileen Kraditor: Means and Ends in American Abolitionism, 1834-1850 (1969), and Helen M. Lewis: The Woman Movement and the Negro Movement — Parallel Struggles for Rights (1949).

54. Mrs. A. J. Graves: Woman in America (New York, 1855), Page 254. Catherine Beecher's best work is The American Woman's Home:

Or Principles of Domestic Science (Boston. 1869). Also, Woman's Profession as Mother and Educator (Philadelphia, 1872) is useful. Helen Papasivily: All the Happy Endings (New York, 1956) traces the glorification of the common woman in the popular domestic novels of the Nineteenth Century. Other contemporary works on domesticity include: Anonymous: The Young Lady's Own Book (Philadelphia, 1832); Lydia Maria Child: The American Frugal Housewife (Boston, 1836); Marie McIntosh: Woman in America: Her Works and Her Reward (1950); Mrs. L. Abele: Woman in Her Various Relations: Containing Practical Rules for American Females (New York, 1851).

55. Changes in theology and church practice are described in Sandford Fleming: Children and Puritanism..., previously cited. The most complete intellectual history of the motherhood literature is Ann L. Kuhn: The Mother's Role in Childhood Education: New England Concepts, 1830-1860 (New Haven, 1947). Neither book pays attention to the possible chasm between ideas and practice, but their sense of development of the ideas is quite good. The elements of the new care are discussed by Monica M. Kiefer: American Children Through Their Books..., previously cited, and in a short but provocative article by Barbara Garlitz, "The Immortality Ode: Its Cultural Progeny", Studies in English Literature VI (1966), Pages 639-649, in which the influence of Wordsworth and the haloed child is the center of discussion. Charles Strickland: "A Transcendentalist Father: The Child-Rearing Practices of Bronson Alcott", Perspectives in American History III (1969), Pages 5-73, tells an interesting tale of a male theoretician setting rules for his wife. Although his ideas were not particularly successful, more telling is the mother's failure to transcend herself and to meet the standards of idealized warmth and understanding toward her difficult daughters. She simply could not avoid hitting her children or making speedy punishments with the pressures she lived with.

56. Thomas Woody: A History of Women's Education in the United States, previously cited, Volume 1; Eleanor Thompson: Education for Ladies, 1830-1860 (New York, 1947); Helen Campbell: Household Economics (New York, 1897); and Albert H. Leake: Vocational Education of Girls and Women (New York, 1918).

57. David Montgomery: "The Working Classes of the Pre-Industrial American City, 1780-1830", Labor History IX (Winter 1968). For some information on women who were wards of the state, indentured servants, or simply trained as laborers, see Edith Abbott: Women in Industry, previously cited; Marcus W. Jernagan: Laboring and Dependent Classes in Colonial America, 1607-1783 (Chicago, 1931); Richard B. Morris: Government and Labor in Early America (New York, 1946); and A. E. Smith: Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America (Chapel Hill, 1947). Abbott is the only one of these authors who deals particularly with women, but the others provide invaluable information about landless residents of the colonies and provide the

legal history defining their lives.

58. Helen L. Sumner: History of Women in Industry in the US, IX, Report of the Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the US, US Senate Document 645, 61st Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, 1911) is an invaluable source. Alice Hyneman Rhine: "Woman in Industry", in Annie Meyer (editor): Women's Work in America (New York, 1891). Edith Abbott assessed Martineau's findings on the extent of occupations open to women: "Harriet Martineau and the Employment of Women in 1836", Journal of Political Economy XIV (December 1906). For an unusual cataloguing of the variety of jobs supposedly open to women at mid-century, see Virginia Penny: Five Hundred Employments, Adapted to Women with Average Rate of Pay in Each (Philadelphia, 1868).

59. Norman Ware: The Industrial Worker, 1840-1860 (Boston, 1924), Chapters 5-9, has much background information on industrialism and its effects on the wage earner, with special reference to the New England mills girls. Hannah Josephson: The Golden Thread: New England Mill Girls and Magnates (New York, 1949); Caroline Ware: Early New England Cotton Manufacture (1931). Lucy Larcom, an early operative, mentions her mill experience in her memoirs, A New England Girlhood (Boston, 1889), Chapters 7-11. She also composed an epic length poem about life in the mill town, An Idyll of Work (Boston, 1875).

60. Elisabeth Dexter: Career Women of America, previously cited, Pages 218-225, talks about the restrictions placed on working women after the Revolution. The best analysis of class stratification in this period is Gerda Lerner: "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson", Midcontinent American Studies Journal, Volume 10, Number 1 (1969), Pages 5-15. For a contemporary account see Helen Campbell: Prisoners of Poverty: Women Wage Workers, Their Trades and Their Lives (Boston, 1887).

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63. Ross M. Robertson: History of the American Economy (New York, 1964), Pages 336, 572. See also Carl N. Degler: "Revolution Without Ideology: The Changing Place of Women in America", in Robert Jay Lifton (editor): The Woman in America (Boston, 1964).

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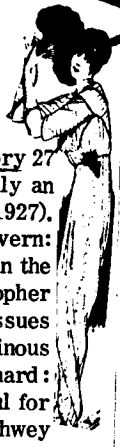

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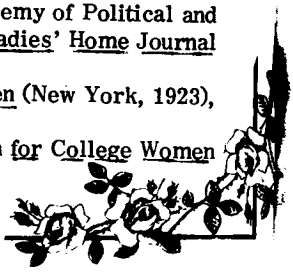

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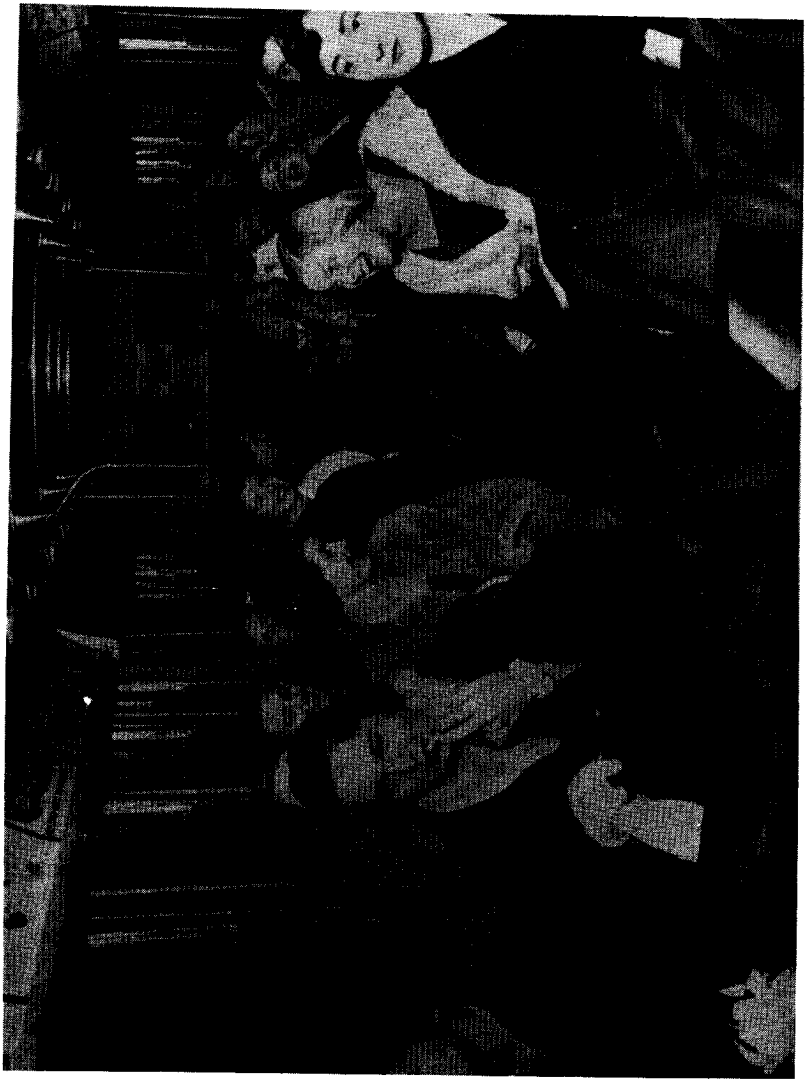


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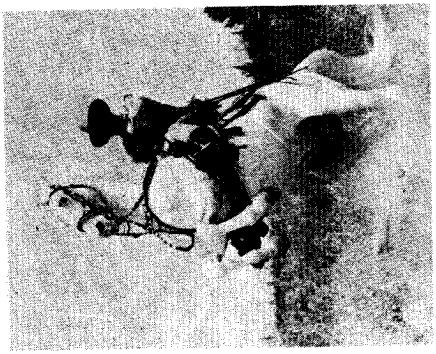


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WORK IN AMERICA, II:

The Work Community

by L. VALMERAS

Most of this is going to be about my job. I'm a clerk in an office in Detroit.

I. Work takes up a lot of time: 40 hours a week, something like one third of my waking life. I spend more time with the people I work with than with any other people. (I live alone. I figure people who either are married or have roommates may see more of their husbands, wives, or roommates than of the people they work with, but not by much.)

My free time is broken up: a couple of hours in the morning, spent getting up, getting dressed, eating, and getting to work; something like five hours in the evening, a couple of hours of which are spent getting home and getting dinner. I have one really big chunk of free time: the weekend. But work is a big, solid chunk of time in the middle of the day five days a week. It seems activities besides work and relationships with people besides the people at work have to be fit into the corners of my life.

I don't mean I work 40 hours a week, but I'm at work. In fact, I'm at work more than 40 hours a week. I get to work 10, 15 minutes early in the morning, in time to get a cup of coffee and talk to a couple of people. A lot of people come in earlier than I do. I have lunch with people from the office. Sometimes we eat in the office. A lot of people have lunch at their desks every day. I spend maybe 45 hours a week with the people at my job.

II. I work surrounded by other people. My nearest fellow workers are maybe four feet from me. What they are like — whether or not they are creeps, slobs, bums, or grouches or have bo — is important to me.

I notice that when there is somebody in the office I can really talk to I look forward to going to work. There's a big turnover where I work

(I've been there more than two years, which makes me almost ready for a retirement dinner.) and at the moment there's no one at the job I really like, so the place depresses me.

Still, because the people are there, I talk to them, hear about their problems with husbands and parents, tell them about my own problems. Without these people to talk to, I'd go up the wall. There was a study of assembly-line workers in which sociologists found out that "isolated workers disliked their jobs and gave social isolation as the principal reason". (1) Everyone who has a regular job knows it's the people you work with who make your job tolerable.

People treat the people they work with the same way they'd treat relatives, close friends, good neighbors. We tell each other the stories of our lives. When people go on vacation they send postcards to the job. When something important happens in their lives—a birthday, wedding, birth of a baby—it's celebrated on the job: People give them cards, buy them drinks at lunch, give them presents, maybe give a party. One girl at my job had never had a proper birthday cake till another girl at the office bought her one. Most people, when they leave a job, come back at least once to find out how people there are doing and to tell people how they're doing.

A lady I know works in an office where social workers are being replaced by clerks. She says at her job the clerks go in for parties and presents; the social workers didn't. The clerks decorate their desks, cover them with linoleum, put in pictures and knickknacks the social workers didn't. The clerks have made themselves more at home on the job than the social workers did.

III. I don't do a complete job from beginning to end by myself. I do one part of a job. I get papers prepared by people at other branches of the company I work for and at other companies. I make up computer sheets, working from the papers. The sheets are sent to still another company, where the information on them is punched onto IBM cards and fed into a computer, which prints up still more papers. (Sometimes I sit at my job imagining forests being lumbered flat up in Canada to provide us with all this paper.) The work connects me to other people I never see. Mostly, I'm aware of them in negative ways. If one of my invisible fellow workers goofs, I get papers that have none of the information I need on them. I can't do my work unless they've done their work correctly. The work links me to the other people in my office as well as to people in other places, either because the people in my office are doing the same work I'm doing and can understand what I'm going through, or because their work is closely connected to the work I do.

IV. I work with machines. At my work we do a lot of arithmetic. With calculators and computers, I don't have to know what two plus two is.

All I have to do is punch buttons. A couple of months ago they put in a new computer plan, so now the computer does more of the arithmetic and we do less. Sooner or later the computer will do all the arithmetic; the only thing we'll do with numbers is copy them onto the computer sheets to be punched onto IBM cards and fed into the computer.

Machines are equalizers. When a machine does the lifting, it doesn't matter how strong the machine operator is. When a machine does the arithmetic, it doesn't matter whether or not the machine operator can add. When they build a skill into a machine, there's no longer a difference between skilled and unskilled workers, between guys who've been working on the job 20 years and beginners. Factory owners in the Nineteenth Century proved that a lot of machines are so simple a child can operate them.

This is an auto worker talking about teaching guys to use machines in the auto plants: "The average worker comes into the plant, and according to the contract the foreman is supposed to spend three days showing him his operation. The average worker has the foreman with him for only three hours. It's not that long before he can do his operation. In three days he is able to do the operation as well as anyone who has been in the plant 25 or 30 years. Many workers who have been in 30 years, if sent over to the new worker, can be shown by him." (2)

As far as I can see, the only skill that makes any difference in an office is touch typing. (More and more, bosses are using dictaphones instead of using stenographers, so there's one skill that won't make a difference much longer.) If you can touch type, then you can operate a typewriter, a key-punch machine, an MT, and so on. (You can operate them even if you don't touch type, but you're likely to be a little slow.) The schools where they teach you key punching are a racket. You can learn in one day on the job. I learned when I was put on a machine. The place where I worked was short of key-punch operators, so they sat me down at a machine and showed me what to do. As I remember it, I was up to the same speed as the other operators in a week, and I'm a terrible typist. The office machines I've used are all pretty similar, and they're all simple. It takes a few hours to learn to use them and a few days to get your speed up.

What this means is that a lot of differences that used to be important — how strong you are, how old you are, what skills you have — aren't important any more, at least at work. Everyone on the job — man or woman, young or old — has the same experiences, shares the same problems. Most people try to stay away from hassles about race or sex or the generation gap on the job. A friend of mine told me at her job the men and women got into an argument about who were better drivers — men or women. People said: "I have proof at home." "My insurance booklet backs me up." And so on. They said they'd bring their proof in, but nobody ever did. My friend said they didn't want a big hassle that

would get men and women mad at each other. You leave work and all your prejudices re-appear, because outside work the differences are still important. But on the job differences in age, sex, and color aren't relevant, and making a big deal about them just makes work harder than it is already.

People on a job have problems in common: They're all in the same office or shop. If something's wrong with their physical surroundings — if it's too hot, too cold, too dark, too light, whatever — they're all affected. And they have the same bosses. Maybe they're all doing the same kind of work or maybe they're doing different parts of one job. Either way, when there are problems with the work, they're going to share them.

Several times since I started this job the bosses have gone on rule freakouts, telling us we can't do this or that. It seems every time they do this work is slow and we don't have enough to keep us busy. When there's a lot of work, the bosses want us to get the work out and they don't care how we do it. They don't try messing with the work routine until things are slow. Also the bosses who go on rule freakouts are always the ones who don't seem to have anything to do. (The devil has

work for idle hands.) It seems as if they have to post notices and send around memos to justify their titles and salaries.

Last summer we had a supervisor who kept sending around notices saying we couldn't talk to one another, couldn't make phone calls, and couldn't disappear into the john or run down to the candy and soda-pop machines. What happened was everyone got mad and spent a lot of time talking about the notices instead of working, and we kept on going to the john and drinking pop and so on. The supervisor was moved to a branch office.

According to a sociological study of one plant: "Workers defined their role in relation to the technological system, emphasizing their production obligation and their ties to an impersonal process, but they neglected to define with equal clarity their role in the plant's authority system, their place in a hierarchy of human relations. They thus indicate that they expect their obedience obligations to be of secondary importance." (3)

What this would seem to mean is: (a) There are two separate social structures on the job — the work process and the authority system. (b) The way the workers see it, it's the work process that brings them together and the work process that connects them to one another; the structure of the on-the-job community — its framework, skeleton, or whatever you want to call it — is the work process. (c) The workers don't take the authority system seriously; it isn't important to them. To me, at my job, individual bosses are real. I can see them and they can either mess me up or help me out. But the structure, the authority system, is a diagram posted on the bulletin board, not a real thing.

Supposedly, an authority system is necessary because people won't work together unless someone organizes them and supervises them. Here is the auto worker I quoted before talking about the time the foremen went out on strike and the guys in the plant worked without anyone watching over them: "A beef went out among the foremen. They wanted to be organized. After two weeks of beefing, they walked out on a Monday morning. That was the best time of my life in the shop. We got out production and the inspector didn't knock down half so many jobs. The workers in the plant and in the UAW all over the city would do other workers' work. Some would go home at 10 a.m. with all their work finished. Workers didn't come in at all other days. A man would punch his card and his wife's card, and she would stay home. The next day or so she would work and punch for both of them.

"We organized a regular routine on the line. One would do the work and punch for others. We had time for ourselves, and no one hanging over us. Some workers didn't come in, but paid other workers to punch for them. Only one guy was caught, at Ford; he was punching for six workers, and they caught him with the cards in his hand.

"After the first week some of the foremen came scabbing. We booed and cursed when they came around. If they came near us, we all sat

down. The company had to keep them in the office. When the foremen came back to work they came only because they were afraid that the company would see we could work better without them and they would lose their jobs. They would have to work like we did then." (4)

Supposedly, an authority system is necessary because bosses have know-how workers don't: Workers need bosses to plan the work and to tell them what to do. Here's that same auto worker, talking about getting the job together after the experts messed it up: "The job I do sits on a jig. The operation has always been turned toward us. We used four guns, sometimes five, on our line. We were running 125 jobs an hour, with eight men doing the work.

"The foreman, the superintendent, and the engineer came around with blueprints and changed the model. They put the operation bottom side up, put different clamps on, and set it up for 235 jobs an hour with 18 men. They put on 12 guns and the engineer came to show each man how to use his gun in a particular way on the new model. We tried the engineer's way of using the guns for two days, and the best we could get was 50 jobs an hour. We were fed up, and each of us decided to do the job in his own way. We started figuring it out for each other:

"'You try your gun there.'

"'This is what your gun should weld. You try your gun over here.'

"'What about trying it this way?'

"We found that only two of the guns were sitting correctly in order to weld the job as the engineer had shown us. After we found the best way to work, the superintendent and the engineer came back down. The superintendent could only ask questions; he didn't know anything. The engineer said nothing. They decided to let us work as we wanted." (5)

Bosses try to keep you working all the time, at top speed, like a machine. At my job, we don't even have coffee breaks. The bosses say you can get coffee whenever you like. But you're supposed to take it back to your desk and drink it while you're working. If several people stop work to talk, as they'd do if they were on a break, a boss is likely to show up and make a remark or lurk nearby till conversation stops.

Also, they have a rule that says you can't eat or drink anything an hour after work starts in the morning and an hour after you get back from lunch. This is a hassle, because getting something to eat or drink gets you up and away from your desk, and because eating and drinking make work a little less boring. Sometimes I get the impression that everyone in the office eats and drinks all the time. The taste of coffee, a doughnut, a cigarette is some kind of sensory experience; and offices are short on sensory experiences, except for unpleasant ones such as too much noise, bad lighting, and heating that is either too hot or too cold. Where I work we have blank beige walls, rows of desks with gray or brown plastic tops, a brown linoleum floor. We have windows, but we're not supposed to look out them.

One day there was a spectacular sunrise right outside our windows. I told one of the girls she ought to look at it. She said: "What'll I tell

the boss if he catches me looking out the window?" There's nothing nice to look at except for the view out the window, which is forbidden. I've been told there's a rule against putting up pictures. I've had one up for a month and nobody's told me to take it down, but it's a very small picture. (Note added while typing this: I finally got told no pictures are allowed.)

What we mainly hear is the Xerox machine, calculators, typewriters, staplers, the PA system. I've worked late a couple of times. When nobody's using the machines, when the noise stops, I can suddenly feel myself start to relax. In a situation like this, the taste of a doughnut, the experience of eating it, becomes important; and being forbidden the doughnut, especially the first hour in the morning, is aggravating. So this rule gets broken a lot.

Bosses seem to want us to act like machines; what we try to do is make work as human, as tolerable as possible. People on the job try to work slowly enough so the job won't wear them down completely, so they'll have time to take breaks, goof off, talk with their friends, sit doing nothing. In offices, women spend a lot of time in the john fixing their faces and their hair. It can be very relaxing. Where I work, all the bosses you have to worry about are men, and you don't have to worry about meeting them in the john.

The first thing I learn, the first thing anyone learns, about a job is how fast the other people are doing it. If you work too fast, you'll show the boss how fast the work can be done, you'll show up the other people. If you work too slowly, other people will get stuck with the work you aren't doing. Either way, people hassle you till you're working at their speed. When I started where I am now people kept telling me: "You're working too fast; it isn't necessary; all you'll do is tire yourself out." I finally slowed down.

In a plant, guys break machines so they can get time off: "Pressure in the shop is so great that we would rather work very fast and then get a little time off to rest or sit and talk. But if they make us work without any time off, then we wreck a gun and take a few minutes while it's being repaired. This happens all through the shop. Many times the guns could easily be repaired. A worker sees his gun going bad. He has no interest in saving it, so he'll let it go completely wrong and burn clear up before calling the repairman.

"Many times we know what is wrong, and if we feel good we'll repair it ourselves. The workers put things in their guns or break them on purpose. A white worker was fired for this not long ago. Every time he got mad he would take his knife and cut the rubber hose. He would put something on it to make it look as if it had burst. This happened twice every day. The company got the foreman to hide and watch what was happening. He saw the worker cutting hose and paid him off." (6)

In an office you aren't as likely to be tied to a machine all the time, so you aren't as likely to mess up a machine to get time off. When I want time off, I suddenly have an attack of stupidity and I can't do my work by myself. I have to check with the supervisor or with another clerk. So long as I have a piece of paper in my hand, I can wander around the office and talk to other people. If a supervisor should make a snide remark, I say I was asking a question about the paper I have in my hand.

From time to time I find out that some part of my job is being done wrong. Most of the time I figure if they want to do it that way, let them. For example, we have a book of computer code numbers for all of the company's clients, and every day we get change notices telling us to delete this number and add that number, enter information about billing clients, and so on. A lot of times there is something wrong with the notices. We're supposed to add information about some client, and I look up the client and find no such client in the book. If I'm in a good mood I'll take the notice to the woman who made it up and tell her it's wrong. If I'm in a bad mood I'll initial it and pass it on.

A lot of times, if you tell a supervisor about something that's wrong, they'll deny that it's wrong. So you get into a hassle. Most of the time it isn't worth the hassle, unless the mistake makes my job harder or I think I could get blamed for the mistake or I feel like bugging a supervisor. If I'm covered, if the mistake is handed to me by someone higher up, I let him worry about the mistake. If someone I work with, another clerk, makes a mistake, that's easy to deal with. I fix it myself or I check it out with her.

This works both ways. We don't help the supervisors and they don't help us. A lot of times, a supervisor comes over to me and tells me I've been making the same mistake again and again for a week or two. I say: "Why didn't you tell me?" She says: "I was going to, but I forgot." If there's any trouble about whatever it is I'm doing wrong, she will pass the blame on to me.

It isn't only that I let mistakes go by; I also make a lot of mistakes deliberately. I get bugged at something the bosses do, I get careless, and I mess up. I hate typing. When I have to type I waste a lot of paper and take a long time, and the final product is very ugly looking. I type all the time at home, but at work I'm not getting paid to type, so I don't see why I should type. Then there is the everyday sloppiness, when I'm not mad at the bosses; I just figure I'm not going to concentrate on this stuff. For the money they pay me, they don't get the use of my mind.

I can get away with making mistakes or letting mistakes get by me because bosses don't seem to think too highly of the people who work for them. Supervisors and foremen must have some idea of what's going on, but big bosses seem to live in Oz. They think we're stupid. Most people seem to learn how to look stupid before they leave school. As far as I can tell, schools are set up so kids will learn a few simple

skills like reading and writing and so they'll learn to show up some place every day on time, to do simple jobs over and over, and to obey rules. But what most kids learn in school is how to sneak around rules, how to do as little work as possible, and how to look stupid. By the time they graduate they're ready to take on a factory or an office.

Back in the days when every man made his own chair, working in his own house, your neighbor could mess up and it wouldn't really matter to you. Now, you work next to other people, you work with other people, and what happens to them affects you. So people on the job watch out for each other, cover up for each other, help each other out. A friend who works in one of the car plants told me this story:

"This guy was 21, but he was still a kid. He went out at lunch and got himself a bottle of whiskey and got stoned to the point where he could neither stand up nor sit up. Six guys picked him up off the floor and hid him behind a big pile of boxes and piled boxes on top of him to hide him. And a couple of us did his job for him. They tried all kinds of things to sober him up. They couldn't carry him all the way across the plant outside. They picked him up, threw him in a big crate, and had a hi-lo driver drive him outside. They took turns going outside and walking him around as soon as he could walk.

"About then, the foreman noticed that he wasn't around and started asking questions. I went up and said: 'His job is getting done, isn't it? Don't worry about it. You worry too much.' He told me as soon as the guy got back he wanted to see him. He finally came to enough to walk about 10 minutes before the bell rang. They half carried him in and sat him down, and he pretended to work. But he couldn't work. The foreman came and looked at him and shook his head and walked away. What else could he do?"

The other problem besides the bosses is the other workers. Not only do we have to watch out for one another, we have to keep each other in line. After all, we're stuck together, we have to work together, we have to deal with the bosses together. If somebody is a bum or a brown-nose or is messing up other people in some way, then something has to be done to straighten the person out. The guy who told me the story about the guy who got drunk told me another story:

"This one guy was hired in. This guy just didn't fit in. When the foreman pushed him, he moved. The other guys started needling him. Part of his job was putting glue on different parts. He had a pot of glue and the glue piled up inside the pot until it was an inch thick. He thought to save the company money he'd burn the glue out, instead of getting another pot. He mentioned this and a couple of the guys egged him on to do it and gave him the matches. He was put on the spot, so he did it. The glue is very flammable. Within a minute or two the flames were three feet high.

"The fire attracted six or eight guys. One of them yelled that the chief foreman was coming. This foreman would fire you for anything.

So the guy panicked and tried to smother the fire with cardboard. The cardboard caught fire, and it started to burn his fingers. He jumped back and turned the glue pot over. The glue spilled and there was fire spread over the floor for four or five feet. He tried to stamp it out with his foot. But the glue stuck to his foot. Everytime he lifted his foot, it burst into flame.

"At that point he really panicked. He started running down the aisle. After about 15 feet he got the fire on his foot out, but he just kept on running. By this time there were about two dozen guys standing around laughing like hell. Nobody lifted a finger to put the fire out. There was really nothing to burn. The fire continued a good five minutes before the foreman came along and put it out. Forever after, this incident was used to put him in his place."

When I started at my job, I got stepped on a couple of times. Once I got stepped on so hard that even now, a year and a half later, I don't like to think about it. One day at lunch I got into a conversation about race prejudice with a guy. Both of us were white and the group we were with was mixed. Now you don't talk about things like that on the job. You try to stay away from subjects that cause unnecessary hassles, that divide people. Anyway everyone else ignored our dialogue, starting other conversations or sitting there as if they were stuffed. But we kept on talking about race prejudice.

Finally the guy I was talking to was rapping about how people from places with lots of Indians think Indians are dirty, lazy, and so on, like people from places with lots of blacks think blacks are dirty, lazy, and so on. "Oh," one of the black women said, "is that what you think of me?" She didn't get through to this guy, but she sure got through to me. I turned bright red. So this woman said: "Look at L. She's turned red." And another black woman said: "She isn't vicious." So anyway, we changed the subject. After that, any rapping I did about hot subjects I did with one or two other people I trusted, off somewhere in private.

When I started the job I hadn't ever really been around blacks, and I didn't know anything about them, and I was full of middle-class liberal slogans. The three black women at the job gave me a six-month course on race relations, telling me a lot about what it was like to be black, some of which was (I think) true, and some of which was a put-on, stepping on me when I got out of line, and so on. The point is, the way I was, I was a hassle. I had to be educated or isolated and eliminated. If I hadn't learned, I would have ended with nobody talking to me except to needle me.

I've seen this happen twice: once with a girl who was a religious fanatic, who kept trying to convert everyone to some weird Southern sect and kept criticizing everyone, and the other time with a climber, a kid who made a big thing about how he was going to go places in the company, who got to know all the bosses and brown-nosed and who

thought he was a ladies' man and bothered a lot of the girls. After a while most people weren't talking to these two except to make snide remarks. The only thing that makes a job tolerable is the other people. If you can't get along with them, you'll soon find the job close to intolerable. You're likely to quit.

Bosses try to keep people on the job ignorant. A lot of times people right above you — supervisors or foremen — get uptight when you try to find something out. And most people on jobs aren't allowed to move around. If they show up in another department some boss always comes around to find out what they're doing there. I had one good friend who was moved to the floor below, and I almost never saw her after that. I couldn't go down one flight of stairs and stop by her desk and rap with her five or ten minutes unless I could invent a reason for being in her department.

It isn't only bosses that cause a problem here. A big plant or office is so big one person couldn't find out everything going on in it even if he could go everywhere and talk to everyone. The company I work for, which is pretty small, has its main office in two buildings and has four branch offices, three of them outside the city. It'd be difficult for one person to keep track of what everyone is doing. (Even working together we don't learn much about what's going on at the branch offices, but we can keep track of goings on in the main office.) Imagine one person trying to keep track of what was happening at one auto plant — say Dodge Main, or Chevy Gear and Axle, or Ford River Rouge.

So, unless you rap with other people and listen to what they say, there are a lot of things about your job you aren't going to know.

Every office and shop I've heard about has a grapevine. People on a job spend a lot of time talking about their job and the people they work with. This isn't simply noise, this is necessary. When that supervisor had the rule freakout, I'd talk to different people and they'd say things like: "I don't care what they do; if I have to make a phone call, I'm going to make it." After enough talking, I knew — everyone knew — how each of us felt, what people were willing to do, which rules they were going to disregard. This talking about the job, finding out how other people feel about it, goes on all the time, though there's more of it when something at work is bugging people.

In big plants and offices where it isn't possible for everyone to get together at lunch and exchange news, there are people who can move around, whose jobs take them to different parts of the office or plant. These people are important because they carry information from one part of the plant or office to another. They get to know people in different parts of the office or plant, and people get to know them and can decide whether or not they can trust them.

One office is like another office. One shop is like another shop. If you've worked with one kind of machine you can understand problems that come up with most other kinds of machines. Bosses are the same

everywhere. So when somebody tells you something about another part of the office or plant, you can check the story against your experience.

Of course this doesn't prevent some incredible stories from getting on the grapevine. For example in 1943 absenteeism among the woman workers in the war plants was so high that the FBI checked into it. And these are the stories they found going around: Welding or working with ultraviolet or infrared rays caused sterility. Riveting caused breast cancer and "riveter's ovaries". Carbon tetrachloride caused pregnancy. (7) "Riveter's ovaries" is the best reason for not showing up at work I've ever heard.

Not only are there people who know what's been going on in different shops or different parts of the office and who keep different parts of a job in touch with one another, but there are also people who keep in touch with the bosses. For example there is a woman at my job who sometimes rides to and from work with one of the bosses and is pretty friendly with him. She learns a certain amount about what's going on with the bosses from him, and she tells him a certain amount about what's going on with us. When we had the supervisor who posted rules, she told her friend that the rules were really bugging people. She told at least one of the other bosses the same thing. She's been on the job long enough so she can talk to some of the bosses and tell them when they should watch what they're doing.

This kind of communication between workers and bosses must break down in the big offices and plants. I know all the senior officers in the company I work for. There's one I like. I don't trust him and I think he's crazy, but I like him. I can kid with him a little and tell him a little of what's on my mind. (In the places I've worked, everything that's really serious is communicated by kidding.) In a big place, the bosses and the workers don't know each other. All that's left to relate bosses and workers is rules.

A woman I know who works in a warehouse says the only place she feels really safe is at work. It's the only place she's sure the people around her will stick up for her. Outside work, it seems everything has fallen apart. Everyone is talking about how the family has broken up and how there isn't any law and order any more, which is a way of saying our system of government isn't working any more. On the job, work holds us together; but once we walk out of the office or shop, every one of us is on his or her own.

As far as I can see, work is the only place there's a community that's holding together. This explains why people freak out when they get laid off or retired. What's happening to them is that they're being moved outside society, like some poor slob who gets thrown out of his home village into the jungle to live on his own among the lions and the wart hogs. Because outside work there is nothing except the bits and pieces of a broken-up society.

This is an industrial missionary (a guy who tries to convert factory workers to Christianity) talking about out-of-work automobile workers: "Although a considerable number had been out of work for a year or more and somehow had been able to survive financially, what struck me most was the sense of bewilderment, displacement, and loss of identity they seemed to share. Without places of employment these men found it hard to answer to themselves for who they were and how they fitted into the life and purpose of the community." (8) They didn't know how they fitted into the community, because they were outside of that community. The community was on the job.

This is a woman auto worker talking in a newspaper interview about getting laid off: "'We were four women on the line, and the men were polite to us and helped us sometimes during those heavy days. That's why I miss the factory so much. I was meeting people there.

"'When the layoffs started people became depressed, afraid, waiting, waiting.'

"One day the foreman came to Mrs. Suzanne. The others started to defend her, pointing out that she had two children. He passed her by.

"But her turn came a second time. A young man without a wife or children volunteered to leave instead. 'I'll find another job,' he said, 'and anyway I don't have the nerves to wait for the ax.' She was saved again....

"Then everyone was laid off.

"'After years of a terrible marriage and then loneliness, it was such a touching experience for people to want to help me. That's why I miss the factory so much. I miss those people....'" (9)

After I'm out of work a while, I do things more and more slowly; I do less and less. It isn't only that I'm short on money. I stop doing things I can afford to do. Things become more and more unreal. It's like I'm slowly drifting out of the real world. I figure if I was out of work long enough, I'd probably end up sitting still staring at a tv or maybe at a wall. There are people who can survive without a job, but they are hermit types. If you need people, if you need a community, you have to work.

A couple of sociologists studying the wildcats in Detroit in the 1940s said: "Some management and a good many union people feel that most wildcat strikes are spontaneous. From the strikes we were told about it appears that in almost all instances a wildcat presupposes some communication and a degree of informal group organization. The strike has some kind of leadership, usually from within the group, and the leaders do some kind of planning, if only but a few hours or minutes ahead." (10)

It seems likely to me that this "informal group organization" is the work community — though at my job there aren't any people I'd call leaders. In fact I've never met a leader at any place I've worked. I asked a guy who'd worked in a foundry in Detroit who these guys were

who were supposed to lead wildcats. He said: "It might be that someone who wouldn't normally be a leader reacts to something. He might explode on a boss, and the workers will tend to back him up if they think he's right, even though they might not back him up in a direct way. But if they think he's wrong, then they'll try to pull him out.

"But there are people in a plant... who are generally better known to more people and have more contact with people and are generally respected. They might not be leaders in the sense that they're telling people what to do or how to do it, but their opinions are respected. Another guy might be more intelligent or know more, but people don't know him."

These "leaders" sound like the people I was talking about before, whose jobs let them move around so they can carry information from one department to another. It isn't only being able to move around that makes them messengers. They have to be interested in what's going on — interested in other people. They have to be willing to go out of their way to find things out and tell other people about them. I feel safer when I have at least one friend who's like this, who can tell me why X was fired and I was promoted, and what's going on in bookkeeping.

The work community develops when three things happen: (a) A lot of people come together to work together. (b) Work is divided among many workers and every person does one part of a complex job, so that the work becomes co-operative. (c) Work is mechanized, so workers aren't trapped in one super-specialized activity, each worker isolated because people who don't do the same super-specialized work he or she does don't understand what he or she is going through.

Intellectual work hasn't been mechanized yet, so if you go to a university you can see what specialization does to people. There are all these scholars who've put all their time and energy into learning esoteric skills, and they can't talk to one another about their work. If your work is ancient Etruscans and you meet a guy whose work is sub-atomic particles, the chances are you won't talk about your work. At a university, work doesn't bring people together, it pushes them apart.

All this may explain why small plants have less labor trouble than big plants and why office workers are less militant than blue-collar workers. In a small plant and in most offices, there are fewer people working together than in a big plant. The work is less co-operative. Workers are more likely to do an entire job by themselves. They're isolated from one another because they're doing separate, different jobs. Work is less mechanized. Like I said before, jobs that have been mechanized are more or less alike. Pushing a button is pushing a button, no matter what kind of machine the button is on.

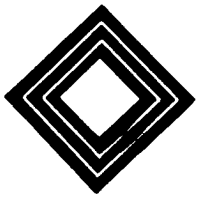
But unmechanized jobs are different, which isolates the people doing them. And if a job isn't mechanized, how strong you are, how dextrous, how skilled is still important. Workers are separated from one another

by their differing skills and abilities. They aren't likely to operate well as a group. At the places I've worked, most of the time clerks hassled with bosses as individuals, by taking a lot of time off, working badly, and quitting when the job got to be really aggravating.

FOOTNOTES

1. Charles M. Walker and Robert M. Guest: The Men on the Assembly Line (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1952), Page 76.
2. Matthew Ward: Indignant Heart (New York, New Books, 1952), Page 164.
3. Alvin W. Gouldner: Wildcat Strike (Yellow Springs, The Antioch Press, 1954), Page 24.
4. Ward, previously cited, Pages 97-98.
5. Ibid., Page 141.
6. Ibid., Page 143.
7. Bergan Evans: The Natural History of Nonsense (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), Page 100.
8. Scott I. Paradise: Detroit Industrial Mission: A Personal Narrative (New York, Harper and Row, 1968), Page 34.
9. Detroit Free Press, March 10, 1970, Page 1-C.
10. Jerome F. Scott and George C. Homans: "Reflections on the Wildcat Strikes", American Sociological Review, June 1947, Page 283.

(The theory for this article was taken from Volume 1 of Capital, by Karl Marx, from the chapters on "Co-operation", "Division of Labor and Manufacture", and "Machinery and Modern Industry", and from Facing Reality, by Grace C. Lee, Pierre Chaulieu, and CLR James (Detroit, Correspondence Publishing Committee, 1958).



POSTSCRIPT

One part of this article is no longer correct: People at my job no longer worry so much about other people's reactions to what they do and say. Now, people rap about their drug experiences and make jokes about race and the generation gap. One white girl (whose boy friend is black) has taken to wearing an afro wig to the office. Also, people are paying a lot less attention to the bosses and their rules. Now, people rap continually, have rubber-band fights, read at their desks (reading the good parts out loud), and make works of art out of office debris such as used staples. What seems to be happening is we're starting to take off our disguises and let each other see what we're really like.

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Number 6 (June 1966): an "International Issue", published in London, including "Humor or not, or less, or else!", by Penelope Rosemont; "Souvenirs of the Future", by Franklin Rosemont; "I Am Not Angry; I Am Enraged!", by Archie Shepp; and features by Peret, Patchen, Charles Radcliff, and others (20 pages, 50¢)

Number 7 (January 1966): the climactic final issue of the Rebel Worker announcing the culmination of the magazine and the dissolution of its editorial group, including works by many Surrealists, American IWWs, et cetera; two leaflets issued in 1965 by Chicago Wobblies; a great deal of fantastic calligraphy by Tor Feagre and others; and a "burning factory" cover by Feagre (52 pages, $1)

REVIEWS

Henri Lefebvre: The Explosion: Marxism and the French Upheaval, translated by Alfred Ehrenfeld (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1969, paperback, 157 pages, $2.25)

I

Henri Lefebvre is a French sociologist, a professor at Nanterre, a "recipient of various honors and citations", and the director of the "National Center for Scientific Research". All of this, from the Library Journal, while not untrue, is no doubt mentioned to make a favorable impression on the American reading public. References such as these are usually used to lend a semblance of truth and an aura of authority to whatever follows.

Lefebvre is also a Marxist, a former dissident within the French CP, and an enthusiastic supporter of the student-worker uprising of 1968. For 40 years he has been writing against French conditions and for a revolutionary transformation of society. In other words, Lefebvre is hardly the tame sociologist and philosopher some have made him out to be. This should be clear to anyone who has read his work in even a cursory way. Fortunately for the English reader a few of his books have begun to appear in translation — among them The Sociology of Marx (Vintage, New York, 1969), Dialectical Materialism (Jonathan Cape, London, 1968), and the book under review, The Explosion. And hopefully another of his most-important works, Critique de la Vie Quotidienne, also will soon be translated.

One question concerning Lefebvre's work needs to be raised at once. Since most of his practical and theoretical insights were arrived at within the context of a French milieu, how valuable can he be to the Leftist reader in this country? Can his ideas be related to American conditions, and — more importantly — are the solutions he proposes easily transferrable from French to American soil?

Marx is full of warnings about transporting such things across state lines, since straight imitation leads not only to farce, but also to many kinds of tragedy. In The Communist Manifesto Marx points out the

absurdity of the German socialists' adapting in toto the theories arising out of French conditions, and appropriate only to French conditions. "German philosophers, would-be philosophers, and beaux esprits," he writes, "eagerly seized on this (French) literature, only forgetting that when these writings immigrated from France into Germany, French social conditions had not immigrated along with them." Thus Germans railed against liberalism, representative government, and bourgeois competition, among other things, but forgot that none of these things had come into existence in Germany because the conditions necessary to produce them had still not made their appearance. Would this same danger exist if the American Left attempted to borrow from thinkers in other countries (in this case, Lefebvre)?

I think not, for two reasons. First, because it is not borrowing per se which is called into question by Marx, but only borrowing which is naive, unthinking, and uncritical. Marx never hesitated to take what he could from French socialism and English political economy, so long as he was free to make use of borrowed ideas in his own way and to creatively integrate them, as the need arose, into a specific German context. Second, there is nothing inherently wrong with transposing concepts or theories from one situation to another, providing that the general social and political background of both situations is roughly the same. If, for example, a writer like Lefebvre works out a critical theory based on his experience within an advanced capitalist society, his ideas may be valid for another society which is in the same stage

of development. (This is precisely what the German "true socialists" did not understand, and consequently Marx attacked them in the pages of the Manifesto.) It goes without saying that concept borrowing would be meaningless if there were too much disparity between one situation and another, for example between a peasant-based economy and a technological one. But since the background against which Lefebvre writes (that of a highly-industrialized, Western, capitalistic nation) is roughly the same as our own, he is valuable — at least theoretically. It would be too much for Lefebvre or anyone else to suggest specific programs for the American Left, since the experience within each country varies significantly; but forms, concepts, modes of criticism, and even praxis are generally transferrable, and for this reason he is worth reading closely for the insights he offers into the totality of his situation and ours.

II

The Explosion is an analysis of the May-June insurrection of 1968. Unlike other works on the subject, it is neither a primarily-descriptive work (in which events are just recounted) nor a primarily-speculative work (in which thought abstracts itself from experience), but something in between these two extremes. As such, it represents the best example I know of "critical theory" as it should be written — that is, theory based on immediate dialectical interchange between thought and reality.

According to Marx, thought is best viewed not as the opposite of practice, but as a different mode of the same thing. When revolutionary theory is correctly understood, it is seen to be nothing more than conscious praxis (practice aware of its own activity), while "action" is, at bottom, only the concrete expression of thought. By this definition, Lefebvre's book does exactly what critical theory is supposed to do: It makes people conscious of the meaning of their activity, and provides the basis and the possibility for a clearer, more-focused practice in the future. This is what Marx had in mind when he wrote, in the introduction to the Deutsch-Franzosische Jahrbucher, that the task of the radical was "to show the world why it actually struggles...(by making it) aware of its consciousness...(awakening it) out of its dream...(and explaining) to the world its own acts." For Marx and Lefebvre critical theory is essentially catalytic; it not only analyzes, but also sets and clarifies the pre-conditions for further action. As such, it is a crucial moment within praxis — the moment of comprehension — and its value lies in the way in which it re-interprets and re-defines practical activity — in the way it temporarily abstracts from experience only in order to return to real life more effectively. This "active side" of thought is never absent within the pages of The Explosion, just as it is never absent in the writings of Marx. For both Lefebvre and Marx, everything, even conceptual thinking, is intimately tied up with "practical critical activity".

The starting point of Lefebvre's analysis is the conditions in France up to the spring of 1968. By all appearances, they were the same as those seemingly prevalent in this country today: an apathetic populace, a quiescent working class, and a Left which has no clear direction.

And yet — everything exploded! The French State suddenly found itself on the verge of collapse, and in a matter of days some 10,000,000 workers occupied their factories. How did this happen?

The answer, for Lefebvre, can be found only by looking closely at the structure of society, especially at the differences between its decaying foundations and the facade of stability it continues to maintain. Thus he begins with a discussion of the conditions within which (and against which) the outburst occurred. This naturally leads him to a second level: the discussion of appropriate forms of radical activity once the nature and weaknesses of society are understood.

The first thing to be grasped is what Lefebvre calls "absolute politics" — a term borrowed from von Clausewitz. With the aid of this concept Lefebvre tries to describe a characteristic of the modern period which few people have perceived: the tendency for the State to become so enormous that it reacts back upon society with its own will, and even "shapes" society according to its own designs. Politics, then, in the form of the State can become disengaged from the civil society which created it; but even more than this, it can also consume or effectively reform the social relations which originally gave it birth. That is to say the political superstructure is not just a "representation" of social reality, but is, in fact, an active force which continually alters the base from which it emerged. This notion of Lefebvre's is as close to Hegel's political philosophy as it is to Marx's political sociology. Hegel argued that the State "created" civil society, and that the latter could not be sustained without the former. Marx, on the other hand, maintained that the State grew out of civil society — that in essence it was simply an instrument of the dominant class within society. Lefebvre, in attempting to describe the reality of the contemporary situation, once again finds a middle way. He agrees that the State was originally engendered by class society and still serves class interests, but observes that at the same time the modern State has become so overweening that it actually undermines bourgeois rule, because by its very nature it destroys and devours the content of social relations (thereby undermining the stability of bourgeois order). The middle class, of course, had not intended this, but it is an unwitting victim of the historical dialectic. Originally this class forged a State to protect its interests, but in time the State has become so powerful that it destroys the social foundations on which these interests rest. As far as Lefebvre is concerned this is a creative condition, since it causes the dissolution of the pre-conditions of capitalistic rule, and with such a dissolution there follows the possibility not only of a revived critical theory (based on the new transparency achieved), but also of more effective radical action focused on the rotting social structure.

But this is to jump ahead of Lefebvre's own arguments. What still needs to be explained is precisely what Lefebvre means by "absolute politics".

The answer revolves around the nature of the contemporary State. Today the State is no longer merely a political unit, as it may have been a hundred years ago. It is also a powerful economic unit — employing, as it does, several million workers and bureaucrats, and being integrally tied up with state industrial and financial capital. Similarly, the State is also an "immense ideological power" which not only controls or withholds whatever information it wishes, but also propagandizes on its own behalf as no other organization is able to do, since none control the means of communication as completely as the State.

For these reasons, the State is not simply an aspect of the overall superstructure, but rather a "totality" which extends down to the base of society and effects the content of social relations. This does not mean, however, that it is unable to act for certain "interests" in society besides its own. Though independent to a great degree, the State has not actually severed its ties with the class that produced it — which is to say that it still remains the "executive committee" of the ruling class. Today the will of the ruling class is expressed through monopoly interests, and the State, in the last analysis, is nothing but a "political system based on the monopolies". But — and this is the important point — State power cannot be looked upon as simply a "mere function" of the monopolies. The State can also initiate activity. Unlike each individual monopoly, it can improvise and carry through an overall strategy to give cohesion to society. Put simply, the State is itself a monopoly (the sole monopoly of the "public sector"), and as such can impose its own standards on the rest of society. Sometimes the State's influence on the social base can become counter-productive if the whole network of relations through which capitalism preserves itself are eroded by State action. Thus the State, working for monopoly interests in general (its own and those of the corporations), can destroy the substance of its own power by eliminating the social life surrounding it. Lefebvre summarizes this point in the following passage:

> State power can impose on every economic or social agency, and on each particular "company", the requirements of society — those of monopoly capital. In this sense, it can be defined not only as "power of the monopolies", but also, up to a point, as "power over the monopolies". Its capacity for strategic intervention is considerable; it is based on economic power (the "public sector") and on ideological power, which in turn is maintained by police and tanks.... Such a power tends to destroy the separation of powers. It undermines the social and political institutions that might act as intermediaries between

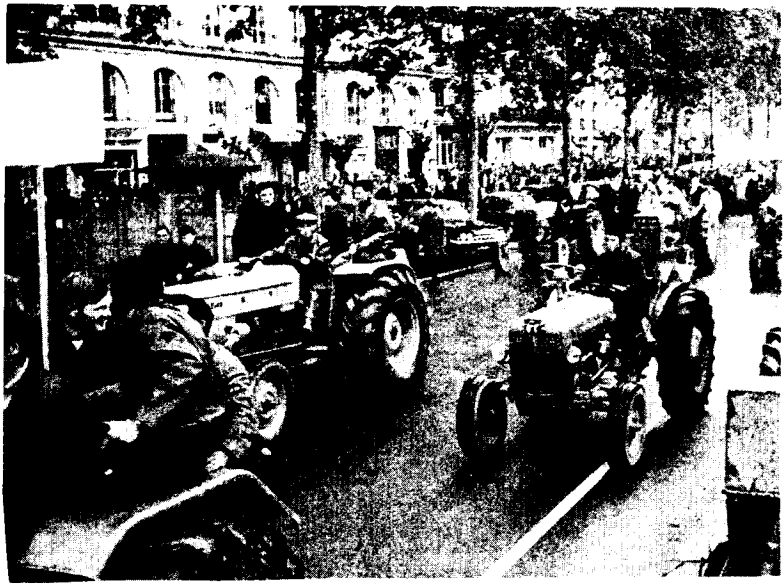
> power and society. It destroys old distinctions and gives rise to new separations and previously-unknown dissociations in society. (Pages 46-48)

The usurpation of civil society by a fiction called "political society" is what Lefebvre means by absolute politics. Social community is replaced by a mythical state community based on pure hierarchy and organization. The human, interpersonal element is missing because the form of absolute politics literally displaces its own content (that is, social relations, intermediary institutions, and so on). "Between the political level and the level of civil society, there is a void. A political void, a social and ideological void." (49) Individuals and groups are reduced to being merely passive members of society. They cease to be "political subjects" and become "subjects of power" since the ability to initiate projects is taken out of their hands. The political apparatus tends more and more to decide things unilaterally.

The discussion of absolute politics is fundamental to Lefebvre's theory of revolutionary praxis because it explains the conditions out of which radical action can develop. The most-important point is that absolute politics creates a void — a feeling of emptiness and anomie — at the very center of social life. The result is a disintegration of the sense of community and a growing awareness not only of the vacuity of contemporary forms, but also of the profound alienation which lies behind them. The State sees that it has created a "void of terror" around itself, but it is unable to re-constitute the social relations and intermediary bodies it has destroyed. It may try to reconstruct society on the basis of either raw power or pure rationality — but neither can guarantee cohesion for very long. (1)

III

When this point is reached — as it was in France in May 1968 — it becomes clear to many that there is an alternative to unconditional acceptance — and that is unconditional spontaneity. Precisely how this insight is arrived at Lefebvre does not explain. But he does indicate that those who apparently sense the abyss of absolute politics most intensely (that is, those who feel the anomie of contemporary life and are convinced it can no longer be tolerated) are the ones who will be driven to the only possible alternative: explosive spontaneity. It may not be the working class which takes this first step if it has already become too accustomed to the purposeless existence it is forced to lead. Instead, it could be a more-privileged sector of the population — students, for example — who may experience the emptiness of social life more strongly and may be more free to rebel against it without compunction. (2) Through them spontaneity, as an alternative value to passivity, begins to take shape. This is what happened at Nanterre and



in Paris in 1968. Spontaneity, as Lefebvre figuratively put it, rushed in to fill the void left by absolute politics. Old dichotomies, which the State always thrives on and tries to perpetuate (for example between private life and social life, work and leisure, knowledge and action), were re-united in the streets of France. Living began to mean more than routine existence to the extent that a vision of "wholeness" was perceived for the first time. ("It was as though many people suddenly realized they no longer believed in their own activities." is the way Lefebvre succinctly put it.) All this was made possible by the upsurge of spontaneity which began to occupy whatever space it could find. For these reasons, the forces of order tended to regard any form of self-activity as hostile and menacing. By its very nature spontaneity was a threat to organization and bureaucracy, since it overflowed institutions and spilled out into the interstices of society. The streets, for instance, were converted into free areas of spontaneity because they had not been institutionalized by absolute politics. On every hand neglected social spaces became political arenas where an entirely-new kind of battle was waged: the battle between spontaneous energy and institutionalized politics — between natural effervescence and the rationalization of life.

The development of spontaneity is very crucial to a discussion of revolutionary praxis because of the new forms of radical activity which it brings into being. This is the practical value of The Explosion; it is to some extent a handbook of methods for challenging legitimatization

of institutions by revolutionary action. Some of the actions or modes of praxis which Lefebvre discusses are applicable in this country. Three such modes of praxis which seem particularly pertinent—contestation, action-critique, and autonomy—may be worth mention in this context.

Contestation: Contestation is a form of action that emerges out of the void of absolute politics and calls into question the whole apparatus that makes such a void necessary. Its primary purpose is to transform individuals who are "objects" of political manipulation into "subjects" who resist manipulation and define themselves as enemies of the State and of the entire system of control and domination. Contestation wants to break down barriers and artificial distinctions that have always been used to fragment consciousness. It refuses to accept, for example, the difference between the citizen and the individual, or the "official" and those over whom he officiates. In reality, there are only people — potentially whole human beings; all differences of status arise for specifically-social reasons having to do with the nature of a class society and a bureaucratic state. This must become clear to everyone if true consciousness is to be achieved. Contestation is an initial step in this direction because it challenges and desanctifies everything that is false and artificially conceived. It actively engages the untruth of society by an absolute refusal to be integrated. As Lefebvre outlines it:

> Contestation is an all-inclusive, total rejection of experienced or anticipated forms of alienation. It is a deliberate refusal to be co-opted.... It derives its radical character from the fact that it originates in the depths, beneath the roots of organic, institutional life — below the "base". Contestation thus brings to light its hidden origins; and it surges up from these depths to the political summits, which it also illuminates in rejecting them. (Page 67)

The essence of contestation is its negation of the modes of life encouraged by absolute politics — such as passivity and inertness. In place of the ideology of immobility, contestation stresses activity, involvement, participation. As a consequence, it operates as a continuous challenge to all hierarchies and power structures — to "the bureaucratization which has infected the entire society". (Page 69) Contestation can take several forms, depending on what aspect of society is contested. The pursuit of "subversive" life styles; the questioning of authority in home, school, and church; the ridicule of repressive values; the de-mythologizing of institutions; the de-valuation of work and the work ethic; in short, the shaking up of all the conditions of everyday life, and the active questioning of everything, including oneself and others: These are the qualities of contestation and its characteristic modus operandi. The power of contesting practice lies precisely in its fluidity, in the fact that it cannot be suppressed or

contained. Its danger (as far as the "authorities" are concerned) lies in the refusal to sanction triviality or "abide by the rules". All that society holds sacred, contestation can threaten by showing in practice that alternatives are possible. Even humiliation and boredom, which tend to be accepted as irreducible facts of life, can be exposed as the reverse side of oppressive social conditions which need not be perpetuated.

Above all else, the object of contestation is the subversion of everyday existence through unfettered speech, spontaneous disorder, or whatever means necessary. The understanding here is that since the social order is organized around everyday existence, to disturb the matter-of-fact world would be to send shock waves through the whole social order, and perhaps rupture it irremediably. This expresses well enough the "negating" function of contestation — its ability to unsettle structures; but does it also have a positive function? If it can instigate institutional or ideological crises within society, how can it move from this point toward the attainment of effective power?

Lefebvre is not altogether clear about this. Apparently contestation could lead to counter-institutions which would delineate and congeal the gaps left in the social void. These would be not institutions in the old sense, but rather genuinely-democratic associations woven around a "network of 'base' organisms in which all interests, all aspirations, and all liberties would be actively present (instead of being merely represented)". (Page 82) However, as Lefebvre himself points out, "this raises the possibility of a restoration of social intermediaries and mediations in the vast social area that lies between the centers of absolute politics...and the social practice rooted in the base". (Page 82) It could happen, if these intermediary institutions were not truly democratic and revolutionary, that they would only help restore the existing society to health by filling the empty spaces and reviving a sense of community. In that case, the old ideologies of growth, consumption, and absolute politics would only have been shaken, and not destroyed, and the opportunity for a real historical transformation would have been missed. Although Lefebvre recognizes this as a possibility, he considers it highly unlikely so long as the movement itself does not undergo some kind of sclerosis. And even if it does, the probability is that after a certain period of regression it will be born again under different circumstances and in a different guise. Wherever revolutionary consciousness exists, the likelihood is always present that somewhere, sometime, a transforming social practice will erupt into the open and destroy any hypostatized forms or institutions which perpetuate self-alienation.

Action-critique: The term action-critique is used by Lefebvre to designate the ideal symbiosis between theory and practice. Like contestation, it refutes existing social structures through action and not simply through theory. But it differs from contestation in that it

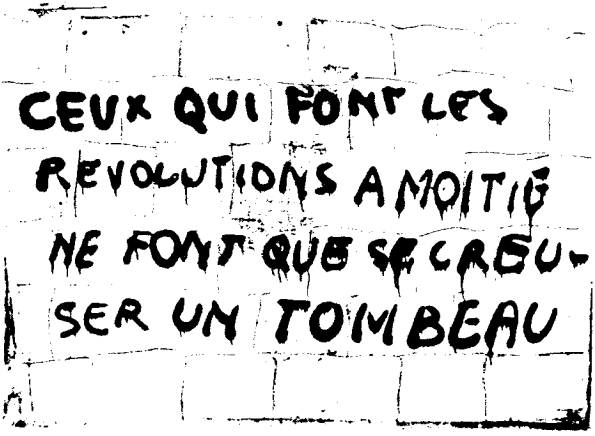
co-ordinates and channels the energies of spontaneity in such a way that the optimum amount of pressure is exerted against the whole System, from the depths of the substructure to the most fragile part of the superstructure. Action-critique, therefore, refers to the unifying and consolidating force of contestation (which, if left alone, might be purely-disruptive activity).

The importance of the action-critique can be seen in the following example. Suppose a society undergoes an economic crisis which has a profoundly upsetting effect on, say, its productive and property relations. This situation is not itself revolutionary, for as Marx has shown, economic crises can have a "purgative" function in modern capitalistic society if they help eliminate superfluous and unproductive enterprises. In fact, if crises are taken advantage of properly by entrepreneurs, they can actually streamline capitalism and stabilize it for the future. Even the worst kinds of setbacks can be turned to good effect by capitalism if it transfers its investment to other areas of profit and learns how to capitalize on new, less-depressed sectors of the market. Thus, after some disturbances, the old economic cycle is renewed and the capitalistic relations of production return healthier than before. Here is where the role of the action-critique becomes crucial. If, in the midst of the economic crisis, an action-critique can be mounted against the superstructures of society, then the economic crisis might be transformed into a general social crisis. When all levels of the society are shaken at the same time, the conditions for revolution can be said to exist. Capitalism of course realizes this and strives to compartmentalize its crises to prevent links between levels from being made. But an action-critique (which not only points out connections but also acts against the totality of the System) can create a genuinely-revolutionary situation. If an attack on existing structures can be co-ordinated in all areas, it is possible that a real social transformation can be achieved. In Lefebvre's view, an action-critique can provide such co-ordination because only a unified revolutionary praxis can create, in Marx's words, a situation "which makes all turning back impossible".

Autonomy: Given the repressive nature of contemporary society, virtually any act of self-determination is inherently political. To make a decision, to take responsibility for one's own acts, is to threaten the passivity and acquiescence which are necessary for absolute politics. Hence, from Lefebvre's perspective, the development of real autonomy wherever and whenever possible is a mode of radical praxis that has to be encouraged at every opportunity.

An excellent example of autonomy is self-management in the work situation (though this can be extended to any sector of society: the classroom, the army, the streets, and so on). If self-management is genuine — that is, if it is not "co-management" — it can not only lead to "a breach in the established network of decision-making", but also

make people aware of what it means to experience "concrete freedom". Few people know what this is because participation and real choice (where the objects to be selected are not limited or determined from above) are not encouraged in modern capitalism. Self-management initiated from below would shake up the structure of bureaucracy and centralized state management; it would introduce a "new social practice at all levels and stages" which would tend to erode the old relations between rulers and ruled, subjects and objects. In effect, actual self-management would undermine the unnatural dissociations which absolute politics has instituted. In place of bureaucratic forms backed up by force, it would be possible to have direct democracy and real autonomy. It is doubtful if authoritarian relationships sanctioned by absolute politics could long be sustained under the pressure of such "subversive" practice. Self-management, therefore, is a mode of revolutionary praxis to the extent that it actively rejects the whole chain of command which has to be accepted if absolute politics is to prevail. Furthermore, by dis-alienating individuals from the System and giving them a sense of their own autonomy, it creates a base from which to operate against the established reality (both through new methods of self-activity and by posing a set of alternative values to work with).



"Those who make revolutions half way merely dig their own graves"--Saint-Just

IV

A problem arises at this point, however: the same problem that the surrealists, among others, confronted in the 1920s. Should autonomy be individualistic or collective? Should it be premised on the notion of separating individuals from society so as to weaken the prevailing System, or on the notion of establishing forms of concerted action which will bring people together in an assault on the System? In short, what must autonomy be centered around: the absolutely free personality (with all the tendencies toward anarchism that that may imply) or "socialized man" — that is, man who defines himself in community because his human nature is intimately bound up with the whole ensemble of social relationships? The question is not far removed from the dispute which concerned Camus and Sartre in the 1950s: the difference between revolt and revolution.

At first Lefebvre seems to argue for individualistic autonomy. His emphasis on spontaneity appears to bear this out. So strongly does he advocate spontaneous action as the antipode of centralized power and hierarchy, he gives little attention to the possible forms or anti-forms it might take. Even pure anarchism and pure disorder are given their proper place in a revolutionary movement if they help to destroy the social order which makes full liberation impossible. In this Lefebvre is undoubtedly right, since anything that expresses a radically-new way of life is at least potentially a threat to the status quo. But so long as there is no co-ordinated, unified action against the institutionalized reality, all individualistic reactions are essentially impotent. Only when a collective will develops which is determined to put an end to the social causes of alienation can the existing System be fundamentally shaken. Ultimately, individual effort, no matter how provocative, can have little effect on the totality. At most it is an incapacitating force, but not a revolutionary one, because it only undermines "what is" without contributing anything to a future community which would supersede the existing reality. The individual, then, reduced to his own meager powers, can help upset the System, but he cannot offer anything substantial to replace it. For this, collective action is necessary.

The concept of "collective action" has been much maligned in liberal circles. It does not mean the end of individualism or the denial of "personality" by the group. Nor does it mean the formation of a blind mass which operates on the level of primitive impulse (as Freud and Lebon have argued). Instead, the term implies the joining together of free individuals for a common cause; and in the struggle for that cause, their most-strongly-felt emotions and characteristics are not obliterated, but rather are brought to the fore through interaction with others. One becomes more of what one potentially is, not less. Thus not only is individualism heightened through collective revolutionary praxis — as it most clearly was in Paris in 1968 — but the subjective

aspect of individualism becomes itself an objective force in history (through the emergence of spontaneity). Usually the subjective and spontaneous elements within an individual remain privatized — thanks, partly, to the atomization created by absolute politics. Only rarely do they burst onto the social level and become real forces in their own right. Collective revolutionary activity is one of these occasions. At such times, individualism not only becomes fully conscious of itself as freedom, but also has the opportunity to become an effective political and social tendency — that is, to be something more than a character trait. When confined to the solitary person (Stirner's Der Einzige), individualism tends to take the form of desire, especially the desire for fullness; when linked to collective action, however, individualism begins to work for the total realization of desires (by abolishing the conditions which make them seem "utopian" and creating new ones which can make them actual). Seen in this way, collective action does not suppress individualism; on the contrary, it liberates it and brings it to fruition.

A second liberal objection to collective activity is that it prevents genuine autonomy. To argue this way is to accept a far-too-narrow definition of the term. Autonomy is not the absolute self-possession of man in the abstract because man is not abstract, but social. Action committees, co-operative associations, revolutionary organizations, and the like can be as autonomous, and perhaps more so, vis-a-vis the State and its institutions as the absolute, self-determining individual. During the May-June events there were dozens of so-called groupuscles which were autonomous and self-managed in every sense of the word, and yet none of the individuals within them felt any of their freedom taken away. On the contrary, the groupuscles were conduits for the expression of a kind of freedom and individualism which otherwise would never have come to light. As decentralized associations of individuals engaged in action-critique, they not only made freedom possible, they made it concrete. This is the kind of autonomy Lefebvre considers most important in The Explosion: that of revolutionary groups experimenting with new modes of revolutionary praxis, rather than isolated individuals confronting the forces of society alone.

The model he suggests for such social contestation is that of the anomic group. (3) The anomic group is one which thrives on, rather than laments, its estrangement from the System. Since it develops out of, and derives its inspiration from, a marginal situation within the established reality, it is in the best position to perceive and challenge the managed society in its totality. This is precisely what makes the anomic group a threat to absolute politics. Not only is it "extra-social" (in the sense that it refuses to conform), but the anomic group actually elaborates its own representations which are the antipodes of the dominant Reality Principle. Self-conscious marginality is therefore

ideologically subversive of existing norms. It rejects "socialization" by denying that submission is in any way a positive value. But even more ominous from society's viewpoint is that is sets up transgression as a way of life. The real purpose of the anomic group is to break up traditional habits and conventions through the practice of transgressive, "abnormal" behavior. This happened in Paris, for example, when the students introduced a new and threatening lifestyle — one that oscillated "between urban celebration and violence, between playfulness and urban guerrilla warfare". (Page 117) Such a revolutionary style, however, has to be shaped collectively, in association with others. This has often happened in history, though today this fact has generally been overlooked. Ossified societies have frequently been threatened by peripheral and anomic groups who have "normalized" transgression. (4) The possibilities for this sort of activity today are virtually unlimited, though so far it has been tried on only a limited scale.

Lefebvre, then, argues for the proliferation of anomic groups which will "contribute overall representations... liquidate the past, and portend the future in symptomatic works". (Page 133) It is not enough that these groups simply "think" differently if they want to transform society; they must also act differently — that is, they must literally live their re-valuation of values through contestation, action-critique, and autonomous self-control. Marx made the same point in his fourth thesis on Feuerbach when he stressed the importance of human sensuous activity for completing the truths already arrived at in theory. "The coincidence", Marx wrote, "of the changing of circumstance and human activity can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionizing practice".

V

Where The Explosion leaves off, it is up to the reader to begin. Action, praxis, the "deed" (as Goethe put it) is the beginning of everything; not thought — not the "word". With one qualification, Lefebvre could have ended his book with the concluding sentence of Cohn-Bendit's Obsolete Communism: "C'est pour toi que tu fais la revolution." (5) Lefebvre's qualification, however, would be that the "you" (tu) referred to is not the isolated individual of anarchism, but the socially-conscious individual working in concert with others. The revolution is a collective phenomenon brought about only through the total effort of numerous groups working toward the same goal. (6) To imagine it as anything less than this is to be deceived about what it takes to transform society.

The value of Lefebvre's work is that it provides a healthy antidote to both the naivete and the dogmatism which prevail in different sectors of the American Left. Lefebvre stands beyond both undue optimism and pessimism because he sees both the enormous ability of society to

co-opt and the infinite potential of man to refuse co-optation and seek new paths toward self-realization. If anything, he stands much more firmly on the side of hope than on the side of despair, since for him even negation contains the seeds of something positive. "Every appearance contains a reality that may develop." Lefebvre wrote in The Explosion. This acknowledges that the future can go either way, but expresses a confidence that it will go the right way. It is up to men, through ever-renewed forms of action and theory, to make sure that a better reality does emerge. In the last analysis, it is only they who can shatter appearances and set free the latent truths behind them. If men reject this task (which seems unlikely to Lefebvre) it is possible that appearance could become the only acknowledged form of reality and perpetuate itself ad infinitum.

FOOTNOTES

1. Jurgen Habermas discusses similar matters in Strukturwandel der Offentlichkeit (Luchterhand, 1968). See also Trent Schroyer: "Toward a Critical Theory for Advanced Industrial Society", Radical America, Volume 4, Number 3. It is clear in Schroyer's summary of the achievements of Habermas (Page 75) that the latter's insights parallel in many ways Lefebvre's treatment of the "void" and "absolute politics" — even though their theoretical approaches are markedly different.

2. Undoubtedly the emptiness of bourgeois life, which the students experience, is objectively not as oppressive as that of the workers, but this is not necessarily the most-important point to consider when talking about revolutionary consciousness. The intensity of the subjective awareness of emptiness is also important, and in this respect the sons and daughters of the middle class seem to have arrived at a qualitative critique of their Lebenswelt sooner than the workers, who still remain caught up in the web of bourgeois forms and legitimizations. This does not mean, however, that "privileged groups" can make a revolution, or that they are the advanced consciousness of the working class. The students in France, for instance, acted on their own consciousness and with a sense of their own needs, but in doing so they catalyzed a similar awareness and desire to act on the part of the proletariat. (One could consider students as an element within the working class, but even so, they are not "producers" in the Marxian sense of the word, and their experience of alienation is different from

that of the proletariat. Both the students and the working class are "alienated laborers", and the root cause of their disaffection is the same; but nonetheless each is subject to a different kind and quality of alienation.)

3. A distinction must be made between an "anomic group" and a so-called "affinity group". Though Lefebvre does not discuss "affinity groups" per se (except as groupuscles, which are a somewhat different genre), he would probably consider them inadequate as revolutionary organizations for at least three reasons: First, they are often temporary formations which congeal around the preparation for, and participation in, street fighting, but do not so relate to the more important life problems implicit in long-term opposition to the social totality. Second, affinity groups are frequently disruptive without paying enough attention to the context of the disruption — hence opening themselves up to the dangers of putschism and anarchism. (Whatever other virtues it may possess, the "Proletarian Left" in France does seem to call for a pure action-critique without regard for the social conditions in which such actions can be most effective. "In a modern country like France", Geismar is quoted as saying, "only the tactic of the guerilla, of the partisan action — first unarmed, then armed — can shake and finally rupture bourgeois power." (Der Spiegel, June 22, Page 118) There is an emphasis here more on inflicting wounds than on laying the necessary groundwork for long-range revolutionary struggle. Third, affinity groups generally contain only an immediate and external negation of the status quo without having achieved a genuine "counter-integration". Thus, in spite of its militancy, the affinity group may be confined (in its present form at least) to being a style of confrontation rather than the prefigurement of a new and more-satisfying mode of life. On the matter of "counter-integration" see the very perceptive essay by Shierry Weber entitled "Individuation as Praxis" in Critical Interruptions: New Left Perspectives on Herbert Marcuse, edited by P. Breines (New York, 1970), Pages 22-59.

4. Lefebvre gives examples from French history: in the Seventeenth Century there were Port-Royal, the theatrical companies, the learned societies; in the Eighteenth Century, the Encyclopedists; in the Nineteenth Century, the Romantics; in the Twentieth Century, the Marxists and Surrealists, et cetera. (The Explosion, Page 133)

5. Daniel and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit: Obsolete Communism: The Left-wing Alternative, translated by A. Pomerans (New York, 1968), Page 256.

6. By "numerous groups working toward the same goal" I do not mean the mechanical subordination of subjectivity to some fixed and pre-determined end. Nor do I mean everyone "doing his own thing" with the outcome being, by the grace of some invisible hand, a revolutionary situation. What I am implying is that there must be a common imminent direction — a sense of what is wanted, even if not rigidly defined — that

runs through all the layers of the movement to give it its unity and strength, its ability to posit as well as negate. Andre Gorz defines this as "strategy", and distinguishes it from what he calls "tactics". The difference is important: "Tactics are syncretic — that is to say, they represent the attempt to unite disparate activities around a goal which is determined in advance and which does not relate to each of the activities united.... Strategy... is synthetic — that is, it represents the attempt to unite disparate activities around a goal which is found to be implicit in all of them, and of which each is a particular incarnation." (quoted from Dick Howard's analysis of Gorz in "French New Working Class Theories", Radical America, Volume 3, Number 2, Page 12)

(Introductory note: In view of the motley and informal nature of our "Reviews" section, we are pleased to present herewith a book review that conforms fully to the standards of academic journals.)

King James and Associates (editors): The Bible (The World Publishing Company, New York, undated, 761 pages, with family register portraits)

The ease with which an anthology can be put together has always made the genre a popular one among certain types of scholars. Faced with the tempting prospect of augmenting one's publication list with works of this type, instead of patiently cultivating the garden of original scholarship, how hard it is to resist. Yet of all literary vehicles, the anthology is the most-nearly worthless. Typically it lacks unity and focus, and the reader must perforce wade through wearying pages of miscellaneous detail and unsubstantiated conjecture in order to find a few scattered nuggets of scholarly insight.

The Bible, assembled by a team of ethnocentric historians and offered as a compendium of early Middle Eastern social, religious, and political history, is no exception to this general rule. Indeed, it is not surprising that this volume does not even bear the imprimatur of an academic press. Nevertheless, I urge that it be called to the attention of all our graduate students, as a poignant reminder of the perils awaiting those who attempt to rush scissors-and-paste scholarship into print.

The authors of The Bible lose no time in demonstrating their lack of familiarity with the canons of sound writing. As the first sentence of the opening chapter (The chapters are dishonestly labeled "books", but that need not detain us.), they write: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." To begin a historical account with this hackneyed

and thoroughly-discredited assertion is surely to put one's worst foot forward. The reader who is interested in learning how the world was created can easily obtain this information elsewhere. The monographic literature on this topic is not so scanty that the authors of The Bible need feel compelled to give us their own pet theories. By diverting their attention to such side-issues, the authors shirk their duty to treat in depth the problems most in need of fresh scholarly research.

Whatever may have been the case a few decades ago, present-day scholars are well aware that complex events can be explained in terms of multiple causation only. Yet many of the essays in this volume show an almost-obsessive desire to pin everything on one simple cause. The essay on Job is a case in point. It seems clear from the material presented that divine intervention was an important factor in the social and economic dislocations suffered by this hapless agriculturalist. But it is the reviewer's painful duty to report that the authors seem to have completely ignored the other salient factors. One looks in vain for evidence that the recent works on soil depletion in ancient Palestine have so much as been consulted. Similarly, there is no mention of any rainfall statistics or studies of the prevalence of skin diseases in the Middle East. The need to ferret out this kind of relevant data should have been obvious.

The reviewer does not wish to be overly hard on Job's biographers. In many ways this article — based on copious notes gleaned from Job's correspondence and conference notes — is one of the most-interesting in the book. But attention to these other facets of the problem would have enhanced its value to other scholars. It is to be hoped that a later study will give this episode the rigorous treatment which it deserves.

In contrast with The Bible's cavalier disregard for many important social-science variables is its lamentable tendency to include in the text much material that should either be excised completely or at least relegated to footnotes. In particular, there is the usual beginner's mistake of talking about, rather than from, the sources. The reader is chiefly interested, for example, not in the particular manner in which God transmitted the Ten Commandments to Moses — whether by stone tablets, scrolls, or sign language scarcely matters — but in analysis of the Commandments themselves. By the same token, the author of another of these articles, modestly entitled "Revelations", seems more intent on dazzling the reader with the breadth of his knowledge than on constructing a coherent account. One wonders, for example, whether the allusion to the beast with "seven heads and ten horns" serves any other function than to display the author's store of little-known facts.

At a time when historians are turning more and more to quantitative methodology as employed in the behavioral sciences, thus minimizing the role of the individual in history, the reviewer doubts that many readers will take seriously the near hero-worship which most of the authors of this book manifest toward God. At various times "He" is pictured as having created the entire world, as arbitrarily effecting

a disastrous flood, as raising people from the dead, as dividing the waters of the Dead Sea, and as solving almost with a snap of his fingers the knottiest problems of urban and rural planning. If the authors of The Bible have profited from recent advances in group theory or from new methods of measuring and analyzing social change, it is certainly not evident to this reviewer.

An equally-serious error, albeit one that was formerly common among historians, is the tendency to focus on the activities of small but colorful groups of extremists, rather than on society as a whole. Countless books and articles have already been written about Moses and his dramatic secession movement, and one might have hoped that the authors of The Bible would devote some attention to the viewpoint of the vast majority of loyal Egyptians who refused to countenance it. It is this reviewer's contention that these people were eager for a settlement to the dispute, and that only the actions of a few fanatics on both sides prevented an amicable solution. While recognizing the justice of many of Moses' claims, one cannot condemn too strongly his use of pestilence and infanticide against the duly-constituted government of Egypt.

Similarly, one might well question the large amount of space given toward the end of the book to the maneuverings of the Apostles. Were these people typical of Roman society of that era? The instances in which Christians were beaten or tormented with wild animals seem to me to indicate that their views were given short shrift by the bulk of the Roman populace.

Throughout the volume there are convoluted sentences and awkward constructions that make the reader wonder what happened to the old formula of Subject-Verb-Object. One example suffices. John tells us:

> As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor the will of men, but of God.

Fumbling, teutonic writing like that cries out for the blue pencil of a competent and sensitive editor. One can only regret that Mister James, the general editor of this volume, was prevented by the exigencies of either time or money from overseeing the manuscript more closely.

In sum, The Bible is a prize example of how limited vision and lack of practice with the scholar's tools can result in the beclouding of an extremely-important topic. The book's only redeeming quality, in fact, is that it contains no footnotes. Therefore it is shorter, it warns the reader that its scholarship is faulty, and it precludes the necessity for this reviewer to wax indignant at publishers who put the footnotes at the back of the book.

James P. O'Brien

Magazines & Journals

ARSENAL: Surrealist Subversion #1 (Autumn 1970) (available from Franklin Rosemont, 1858 North Howe, Chicago, Illinois 60614, $1.50 per issue, $5 for four issues)

It gives me tremendous pleasure to review the first number of a journal so long awaited, and from which so much may be expected. Some forty years since the birth of surrealism as a revolutionary political movement, and five or so years since the birth of a proto Surrealist group in Chicago, ARSENAL, the first indigenous American surrealist journal, has finally come forth.

The reader will first be struck by ARSENAL's beauty. No American Left magazine or newspaper in our generation can be said to approach the exquisiteness of the layout; only the multi-colored Incoherence of the Intellectuals, put together by Fredy Perlman (whose emphasis was on the printing process) provides an analogous achievement.

Secondly, the array of material may amaze the reader who expects surrealists to be concerned wholly with painting or poetry. At the end of ARSENAL, Rosemont has introduced a running commentary on such varied figures as Clark Ashton Smith, Lenin, Reich, Magritte, and CLR James. He has also written, of more vital and direct importance, an extensive essay on "Position & Direction of the Surrealist Movement in the United States": an exposition of accomplishment and intent. Paul Garon has added a brilliant commentary on the Blues, with surely one of the most-astonishing illustrations (of the sheet music for "Rabbit's Foot Blues") ever to have emanated from black popular culture. And there is a variety of other material, mainly from surrealist writers, indicating the many-sidedness of the surrealist critique.

Finally, however, the American reader will note how much of this journal (as of the "Surrealist Number" of Radical America) is sheer documentation, especially from French culture, of the surrealist thrust forward decades ago. Rosemont evidently feels that such documentation for or against certain individuals (such as, in the latter case, Salvador Dali, seen as a turncoat, or various critics of Surrealism, to whom Rosemont devotes a full article) is necessary to clear the way for the rebirth of the surrealist movement. This writer has argued, on the contrary, that Americans scarcely know anything of what surrealism is, let alone what it is not; and that, in short, the dead (like those of the Stalin-Trotsky debate) must bury the dead.

Rosemont's virtue, even during his entanglements with ignoramus critics, is that he argues with a tremendous vivacity. (Pablo Neruda,

a reprinted surrealist leaflet tells us for example, could make a worthy contribution by dying "as soon as possible" and having "all editions... of his cretinizing books reduced to ashes and buried with him in his grave".) Even more brilliant is his attack on bourgeois society proper, of which his indictment (calling Nixon a "sniveling weasel", for instance) is purposefully more excessive and obviously more valid than the many cautious condemnations offered by more "rational" critics.

The status of ARSENAL is linked decisively with surrealism's status in the United States, and indeed all over the world, where signs of that revolutionary current have been reappearing in recent years. One can fault the surrealist movement with various errors or limitations — especially with regard to American culture, in which no significant tradition of artistic revolutionaries has ever existed, and above all with regard to the broad movement of "Youth Culture", respecting which the Surrealists have no apparent analysis (or at least only a negative one). Still, Surrealism promises much, if only because it has a total critique of the society and an untarnished fantasy of apocalyptic and complete revolution. There have emerged, and will emerge, brilliant critics here and there on this and that subject. But only surrealism retains an unremitting hostility toward middle-class culture, together with an unembarrassed eagerness to explore and revivify the power of the unconscious mind. To this writer the strains of the surrealist symphony sound, at times, a bit dated; but those sounds may be the noises of a tomorrow which was dreamed a half-century ago, but will be born only in our futures. Surrealism above all is innocent of the compromises intended and unintended, the cynicism and the hypocrisy, in short all the opportunistic and despairing sins of others who have hoped for total revolution and settled for something less.

Libertarian Analysis, Volume 1, Number 1 (Winter 1970) (available from Post Office Box 210, Village Station, New York, New York 10014, quarterly, $1.25 per issue)

A brand new journal of the Libertarian Right / Left is born, in part replacing Left and Right, a journal edited by Leonard Liggio and Murray Rothbard which appeared last in 1966. The editors evidently are young people, some former YAFers, some former SDSers, who came together through an interest in Right-wing economics (Hayek, Van Mises, et cetera) and Left-wing political struggles (anti-war, anti-university, et cetera). The single most-important point of their synthesis is hostility toward the State in every form, whether state capitalist as in the US or state socialist as in the USSR.

The first number is largely documentary, including an anti-Bolshevik document from the Russian Revolution introduced by Paul Avrich; a reprinted speech by Noam Chomsky on the "Tasks for the Student Left"; and this writer's own introduction to the 1920s-1930s anarchist paper The Road to Freedom (reprinted by Greenwood Publishing Company). However there is also considerable material of historical interest. Murray Rothbard's study of early American anarchism turns up some new material on Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century communitarians previously ignored by writers on American anarchism. And Joseph Peden's "Courts Against the State" comments on three struggles by boards of independent inquiry (the international inquiries into Britain's Roger Casemont case, the Reichstag fite, and the Moscow trials). In the future Libertarian Analysis promises to be more strategic and even tactical, but hopes to maintain deeper studies.

At worst, Libertarian Analysis bears some signs of a doctrinaire anarchism. While Steve Halbrook, in The Abolitionist, struggles to show the similarities of Lenin's thought to previous anarchism, and while such writers as Leonard Liggio (especially in the Liberated Guardian) have indicated the meeting points of Marxists and anarchists (such as Mao's theories and actions with regard to Chinese society), Libertarian Analysis chooses to drag out the anti-Bolshevism which has become reflexive, a kind of second nature to established Anarchist journals (especially Anarchy, of Great Britain). At best, the new journal offers the vitality of a critique which transcends much of the "Right" and "Left", following up the discussions of Karl Hess and Leonard Liggio, breaking with old paths and pointing toward a social theory and practice which can appeal to the communitarian spirit of Old America while declaring for absolute Revolution. For such a hope alone, Libertarian Analysis is worth purchasing and encouraging.

PB

GRAPHICS CREDITS

Wisconsin State Historical Society Collections, pp. 10, 36, 41, 44-45, 51-52, 60, 66-74, 80, 91.
E. Leonard, Dear-Bought Heritage (1965), p. 20.
Godey's Lady's Book, 1868, pp. 26, 29.
B. Rudofsky, Are Clothes Modern? (1947), p. 31.
Harper's Bazar, 1868, p. 35, 39.
Private Collections, pp. 48, 66.
F. Perlman and F. Gregoire, Worker-Student Action Committees (1970), pp. 98, 107.
CAW, p. 103.
ARSENAL, p. 117.

LETTERS

Dear RA:

I have been following your discussion of youth culture with interest. Allow me to make the following observation: The questions of youth culture separate themselves into this general framework: What is the culture of resistance, and what is the culture of despair?

It seems that the culture of resistance is marked by its ability to reveal desire (the unconscious) in objects of the real world, and thus transcend the limitations of both those objects and the real world; the task is to manifest the hidden (and now revealed) in the real, and thereby negate the rule of the real (objects) over the hidden (desire, the unconscious). The culture of resistance permeates the object with the movement of human consciousness. For example, these lyrics from the blues (music being the most-fundamental expression of culture):

> Now I'm a cross-cut saw, drag me across your log
> Now I'm a cross-cut saw, drag me across your log
> Babe I cut your wood so easy
> You can't help but say "Hot Dog!"

(See Paul Garon's "Blues and the Poetry of Revolt", in Arsenal.)

Here, the blues transcends the realm of logs and saws as objects, devoid of human movement. The culture of resistance makes wood dance in its new relationship to desire.

The culture of despair (which, prejudicially, I define as youth culture) is a sacrifice of desire to the immediacy of what is, leaving the rule of objects, supreme over human consciousness, untouched. Here object consciousness permeates humanity as an ultimately-passive surrender to the world — a surrender perhaps hidden in the intensity of its fantasy but a surrender nonetheless. Consider the Door's Light My Fire, the youth culture song. This song has always been thought of as a song of liberation, yet it is a product (intense) of repression (intense). Even the choice of fire as the representation of human sexuality contains the truth of repression. Fire, with its sudden bursts, immediate intense heat, and sudden death, leaving a vacuum of dead ash, the vacuum to be filled by more immediacy and disappearance. Fire occurs without any manifestation of the movement of human consciousness. The people of Light My Fire are estranged from their own sexuality, as that sexuality takes the aconsciousness of immediacy. And, of course, fire appears as (existential?) mystery. But the gaze of mystery on the world leaves everything unchanged — and repressed.

What a triumph for bourgeois society when the liberating potential of the human consciousness (conscious and unconscious) is defused by the substitution of a culture of repression that the "Left", unable to distinguish between appearance and essence, embraces.

David Schanoes

NOTICE TO READERS

In the fall of this year Radical America will relocate its main operation in the Boston area. Those interested in working with RA in any capacity should write to us at the Madison address.