impossible, yet "there is something comforting . . . about being in the regular presence of one person who can adapt to varying dosages of your capacities and incapacities and for whom you can do the same . . . . Being possessive about one's happiness is a natural thing . . . . One would be crazy to give away what has been achieved with so much effort in the first place." □

On Women—II: The Couch as Rack

BY SALVATORE R. MADDI

WOMEN AND MADNESS. By Phyllis Chesler, Ph.D. Illustrated. 359 pages. Doubleday. $8.95.

This is an extremely important book, a signal that the women's liberation movement is coming of age. Phyllis Chesler, an assistant professor of psychology at City University of New York, writes with high passion and compassion about the problems of women, but these emotions alone would not distinguish her book from several others. What is unusual is that the passion is firmly rooted in professional research. Based largely on interviews with mentally ill females and on statistics citing mental hospital admissions by sex, *Women and Madness* cannot be discounted by fearful or complacent supporters of the status quo on the grounds that it is merely one woman's angry opinion. And those just a bit more open-minded may find themselves quite won over.

One of Chesler's main tasks has been to chart the actual behavior of females considered mentally ill. What emerges from the interviews and the research of other psychologists is that the symptoms shown by women are either ludicrously humiliating exaggerations of the female sex role or destructive, though valiant, attempts to break out of it. According to Chesler, the female sex role in our society is that of a slave who must "lose" through infinite compassion, patience, nurture, compliance, and loyalty in order to "win" the rather aloof approval and protection of a man in marriage. When a woman, in desperation over this thankless role, deteriorates into excessive passivity, self-hatred, and malaise, she is termed depressed. And when, also in desperation, she attempts to fight back, declines unwanted responsibilities and chores, becomes belligerent and flaunts her sexuality, she is termed schizophrenic. Both reactions are considered actual sickness by Chesler but are small wonder, in her view, given the crippling sex role involved.

Nor can the sick woman expect much help from psychotherapy. One of Chesler's keener observations is the startling similarity between psychotherapy and marriage, in that both institutions support, even depend upon, the sex role of female as slave. Although most patients are female, psychotherapists are predominantly male. Most mental hospital admissions are females, and they tend to stay longer and are readmitted more frequently than males. Usually the committing relative is the husband, with the aid of a male psychiatrist. The upshot is that while troubled males are tolerated by society and perhaps given special attention by their long-suffering wives, troubled females are treated like slaves who have become useless—so they are packed off to psychotherapy or an asylum. Too often the aim of treatment is to reconstitute the useful slave as she was. Chesler seeks other means for beleaguered females to obtain the love,

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THE PIN-UP: A Modest History. By Mark Gabor. Illustrated. 271 pages. Universe Books. $15.95.

THE COMPLEAT LOVER. By Derek and Julia Parker. Illustrated. 256 pages. McGraw-Hill. $15.95.

Where does women's liberation end and nostalgia begin? Or men's liberation, for that matter—which, we are informed, is what inspired Mark Gabor to produce his pictorial history of the pin-up? Well, in the case of *Film Fun* covers, the Petty and Varga girls, and Betty Grable, nostalgia has it hands down. The cuties of yesteryear, particularly of the golden 1930s and 1940s, are still enticing, no doubt about it, but humor does enter in (in the best, of course, it was always there). How innocent they seem, these come-hither, chummy optimists! The sultry look came generally before and after; it went out with the Depression, returned with the boys who gave Hitler and Tojo the old heave-ho. The book, which contains some 500 illustrations (about 10 per cent in color, plus foldouts and a folded poster jacket), goes back to the Gibson Girl, forward to our own odd age of the all-engulfing breast and other forms of porn, and sideways (on the notion that fair is fair) into beefcake and the likes of Cary Grant, Tarzan,

"Oh, you would, would you!" Drawing by George Petty for Esquire *(1935)*

and *Cosmo* nude Paul de Feu—who is, of course, the ex-husband of Germaine Greer. So much for nostalgia; on to liberation. There are, in fact, two texts. In the main one Mr. Gabor traces history and tries to come to grips with the Meaning of It All. The other text—a publishing first—is an introductory attack by Joan Nicholson. It is called "The Packaging of a Rape: A Feminist Indictment," and in it Ms. Nicholson discusses "the exploitation of women via the cheesecake tradition." True, true, true. In fact, and in sum, the book is equally exploitive—also slightly arousing, a bit more winsome, and quite a lot of rather stupid fun, which is what pin-ups were all about.

In contrast, *The Compleat Lover* is totally current: very coy and gauzy, gussied up like some interminable TV commercial, and exploitive of everyone, regardless of sex. There are photos and paintings on various romantic subjects, prose and poems by such famous talents as Henry James and Anon., stories of great lovers (Tristan and Iseult, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor), and even astrology games to play (no surprise: the authors' previous book was *The Compleat Astrologer*). Much of this potpourri is given over to photos of a youngish couple (presumably models) who prance around looking intense or vapid and sometimes both. The particular cause of feminist independence is handled by this same couple plus pedigreed dog and a classic, supercharged Mercedes-Benz, which she pilots until she meets him (that's the feminist part—she's rich), and then he takes the wheel. In sum, soft porn in prime; true to the genre and its market, there will be those who think it's "nice."

Incidentally, there are five black girls in *The Pin-Up*; there are no blacks at all in *The Compleat Lover*. □

understanding, and freedom they desperately need and reluctantly concludes that they must band together as sisters and as mother-daughter units, at least until such time as sex roles are radically transformed.

Among the women interviewed who were in psychotherapy or mental hospitals were some who had been sexually seduced by their psychotherapists and some who had become committed lesbians. Chesler regards the seduced group as acting out the female sex role by submission to the dominant male, much as in marriage, and, in contrast, the lesbian group as clearly rejecting that conventional role. Lesbians, she found, are considered sicker, committed at an earlier age and more often to mental hospitals, and kept in treatment longer than their seduced counterparts. The psychotherapist-seduced females showed a dismaying fear of criticizing their seducers, even though these males were usually married, continued charging for "therapy," were surprisingly cold and inept as lovers, sometimes terminated needed therapy in pursuit of sex, ultimately rejected their "patients," and very likely were sleeping with several "patients" simultaneously. (As far as anyone knows, it is rare for female psychotherapists to sleep with male patients.)

Other analyses, though less dramatic, also show treatment to be based on acceptance of conventional sex roles. Is it any wonder that Chesler finds the institution of psychotherapy little more than another way of holding women down? Although forceful and sure in discussing the unfulfilled needs of women and the crippling effects of their present sex roles, Chesler has few definite solutions. This is not a weakness so much as an unwillingness to oversimplify. In raising more questions than she answers, she is always provocative, enlightening, and honest.

For example, should women seek Amazonian supremacy over men and control over the means of production and reproduction—or is this a transitory, though useful, developmental goal until they are stronger and men are more willing to grant equal status? Can society change sufficiently so that women may be heterosexual with dignity, or must they eschew marriage and look for sexual fulfillment among themselves? These questions are candidly posed and considered, but Chesler avoids pat answers, feminist or otherwise. Although she believes in the possibility of a society in which men and women can interact as equals, the role patterns of the past hardly incline her toward optimism about its early achievement.

In addition to interviews and hospital statistics, the book includes extensive quotes from feminist and nonfeminist literature written by women and from sympathetic and unsympathetic—but always revealing—writing by men and psychotherapists. Chesler also analyzes Western mythology and the lives of several notable women that ended badly, and she includes carefully selected poetry and illustrations. The book is an artistic and satisfying whole, the more so because the wide range of material testifies to the pervasive social and cultural roots of women's problems. It is remarkable, for example, to follow the deterioration of female power in mythology, from the tales of Demeter and her daughters, Persephone, Psyche, Athena, and Artemis, to the ultimately impotent Virgin Mary and Joan of Arc, and to see how consistent this decline is with the current powerlessness of women politically and socially. One could argue with the interpretation of a statistic here and the ambiguity of a passage there, but this would be hair-splitting, given the overall merit of the work.

Phyllis Chesler

Chesler is one of the new breed of social scientists, well trained, skilled, and literate in many fields, whose loyalty is to the public rather than to any establishment. Considering the painful, shocking nature of its subject matter, *Women and Madness* is more robust than bitter, more hopeful than desperate—in the best sense a consciousness-raising effort. □

Answer to Wit Twister, page 57: rulest, lurest, luster, rustle, result, sutler, ulster.

Uprooted in L.A.

TURKEY HASH. By Craig Nova. 197 pages. Harper & Row. $6.95.

BY JERRY G. BOWLES

One of the theories often advanced to explain the long-standing dominance of southern and Jewish novels in America is that only southerners and Jews have managed to retain that peculiar sense of place and historical continuity of experience which is so necessary for literary sustenance. People outside these cultural experiences are, the theory goes, uprooted not only in the physical sense but also in terms of spiritual connection.

Much very recent fiction, however, has taken place precisely within this void, and the condition of loss—with its subsequent impact on behavior—is rapidly becoming a literary tradition in itself. Major characters have even become interchangeable between novels. Thus, Craig Nova's Niles Cabro is Steve Katz's Astronaut, who is Ken Gangemi's Robert Olt, who is David Rhodes's Reuben Sledge, and so on.

Nova's first novel flows from Los Angeles (a city that has become a breathing metaphor for uprootedness) to San Francisco (failed promise) to southeastern Oregon (the new hope, close to the land). Niles Cabro, the protagonist, becomes more of a . . . well, psychotic, as the story unfolds. He leaves behind in L.A. his father, Hawkeye, who can never remember Niles's name and whose only contact with reality is his constant tinkering with the TV set; Burned, his mother, an incoherent epileptic, and Sis, a Lolita type with a bad skin condition whose major passion is masturbating her boyfriend, Rodeo-rider, while he drives the purple '56 Chevy. Niles runs away from home—although no one cares—and joins a sadistic band of young terrorists who manage a grubby existence by their wits. He escapes from them temporarily and is befriended by an encyclopedia salesman who sets him up in business with this blessing: "I hope you do better than I did, kid. In all those lousy years, I only got one blow job."

Niles meets a "nice" girl whom he either kills or doesn't kill, depending upon how you read it. Ultimately he rejoins Lophead, his fellow terrorist, to play the tragedy out to its end.

What distinguishes this novel from others dealing with the impact of up-

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