

What I have described here is the severe case. Some mothers aren't hit as hard but almost all new mothers suffer these symptoms in some degree and what's more, will continue to suffer them a good part of their lives. The woman who has several children in close succession really gets it. One child wakes the other, it's like a merry-go-round, intensified with each new birth, each childhood illness.

This lack of sleep is rarely mentioned in the literature relating to the Tired Mother Syndrome. Doctors recommend to women with new born children that they attempt to partially compensate for this loss of sleep by napping during the day. With one child that may be possible; with several small ones it's sort of a sick joke. This period of months or years of forced wakefulness and "material" responsibility seems to have a long-range if not permanent effect on a woman's sleeping habits. She is so used to listening for the children she is awakened by dogs, cats, garbage men, neighbors' alarm clocks, her husband's snoring. Long after her last child gives up night feedings she is still waking to check on him. She is worried about his suffocating, choking, falling out of bed, etc. Long after that she wanders about open and closing windows, adjusting the heat or air conditioning, locking the doors, or going to the bathroom.

If enforced wakefulness is the handmaiden and necessary precursor to serious brainwashing, a mother--after her first child--is ready for her final demise. Too tired to comprehend or fight, she only staggers and eventually submits. She is embarrassed by her halting speech, painfully aware of her lessened ability to cope with things, of her diminished intellectual prowess. She relies more heavily than ever on her husband's support, helping hand, love. And he in turn gently guides her into the further recesses of second class citizenship.

After an extended tour in that never-never land, most women lose all capacity for independent thought, independent action. If the anxiety and depression grow, if they panic, analysis and solution elude them.

THE RETURN FROM THE NEVER-NEVER LAND

Women who would avoid or extricate themselves from the common plight I've described and would begin new lives, new movements, and new worlds, must first learn to acknowledge the reality of their present condition. They have got to reject the blind and faulty categories of thought foisted on them by a male order for its own benefit. They must stop thinking in terms of "the grand affair," of the love which overcomes, or substitutes for, everything else, of the perfect moment, the perfect relationship, the perfect marriage. In other words, they must reject romanticism. Romance, like the rabbit of the dog track, is the illusive, fake, and never-attained reward which for the benefit and amusement of our masters keeps us running and thinking in safe circles.

A relationship between a man and a woman is no more or less personal a relationship than is the relationship between a woman and her maid, a master and his slave, a teacher and his student. Of course, there are personal, individual qualities to a particular relationship in any of these categories but they are so

overshadowed by the class nature of the relationship, by the volume of class response as to be almost insignificant.

There is something horribly repugnant in the picture of women performing the same menial chores all day, having almost interchangeable conversations with their children, engaging in standard television arguments with their husbands, and then in the late hours of the night, each agonizing over what is considered her personal lot, her personal relationship, her personal problem. If women lack self-confidence, there seems no limit to their egotism. And unmarried women cannot in all honesty say their lives are in much greater measure distinct from each other's. We are a class, we are oppressed as a class, and we each respond within the limits allowed us as members of that oppressed class. Purposely divided from each other, each of us is ruled by one or more men for the benefit of all men. There is no personal escape, no personal salvation, no personal solution.

The first step, then, is to accept our plight as a common plight, to see other women as reflections of ourselves, without obscuring, of course, the very real differences intelligence, temperament, age, education, and background create. I'm not saying let's now create new castes or classes among our own. I just don't want women to feel that the movement requires them to identify totally with and moreover love every other woman. For the general relationship, understanding and compassion should suffice.

We who have been raised on pap must develop a passion for honest appraisal. The real differences between women and between men and women are the guideposts within and around which we must dream and work.

Having accepted our common identity the next thing we must do is to get in touch with each other. I mean that absolutely literally. Women see each other all the time, open their mouths and make noises, but communicate on only the most superficial level. We don't talk to each other about what we consider our real problems because we are afraid to look insecure, because we don't trust or respect each other, and because we are afraid to look or be disloyal to our husbands and benefactors.

Each married woman carries around in her a strange and almost identical little bundle of secrets. To take, as an example, perhaps the most insignificant, she may be tired of and feel insulted by her husband's belching or farting at the table. Can you imagine her husband's fury if it got back to him that she told someone he farted at the table? Because women don't tell these things to each other the events are considered personal, the woman may fantasize remarriage to mythical men who don't fart, the man feels he has a personal but minor idiosyncrasy, and maledom comes out clean.

And that, my dear, is what this bit of loyalty is all about. If a man made that kind of comment about his wife, he might be considered crude or indiscreet; she's considered disloyal--because she's subject, he's king, women are domi-

nated and men are the instruments of their domination. The true objective nature of men must never become common knowledge lest it undermine in the minds of some males--but most particularly in ours--the male right-to-rule. And so we daily participate in the process of our own domination. For God's sake, let's stop!

I cannot make it too clear that I am not talking about group therapy or individual catharsis (we aren't sick, we are oppressed). I'm talking about movement. Let's get together to decide in groups of women how to get out of this bind, to discover and fight the techniques of domination in and out of the home. To change our physical and social surroundings to free our time, our energy, and our minds--to start to build for ourselves, for all mankind, a world without horrors.

Women involved in this struggle together will come to respect, love, and develop deep and abiding friendships with each other. If these do not thoroughly compensate for losses that may be ours, they will carry us through. For different ages and different stages there are different projects. Young married or unmarried women without children are sympathetic to the problems of mothers but do not pretend to fully understand them. In all honesty, as a middle-aged mother I cannot really grasp the special quality of life of an unmarried young woman in this generation. Her circumstance is too distinct from mine, and my memories of youth are by this time too faded to bridge the gap. Youth has available to it perspectives and paths not destined to be shared by many in the older generation. We must work together but not presuppose for each other. It is, then, the younger author who will speak to the young. Before this part of the paper is ended, however, I would like to mention briefly projects I think women my age must undertake as part of the overall movement. If they have any relevancy for young women, so much the better.

1. Women must resist pressure to enter into movement activities other than their own. There cannot be real restructuring of this society until the relationships between the sexes are restructured. The inequalitarian relationship in the home is perhaps the basis of all evil. Men can commit any horror, or cowardly suffer any mutilation of their souls and retire to the home to be treated there with awe, respect, and perhaps love. Men will never face their true identity or their real problems under these circumstances, nor will we.

If movement men were not attempting to preserve their prerogative as men while fighting "the system," they would welcome an attack launched upon that system from another front. That they do not shows how trapped they are in the meshes of the very system they oppose. Our vision must not be limited by theirs. We must urge in speech and in print that women go their own way.

2. Since women in great measure are ruled by the fear of physical force, they must learn to protect themselves. Women who are able ought to take jujitsu or karate until they are proficient in the art. Certainly they ought to organize and enroll their daughters in such courses. Compare the benefits young girls

would derive from such courses with those they attain from endless years of ballet. As an extra added goodie, we could spare ourselves the agony of those totally untalented recitals, and later, the sleepless nights worrying about our daughter's safety.

3. We must force the media to a position of realism. Ninety percent of the women in this country have an inferiority complex because they do not have turned-up noses, wear a size ten or under dress, have "good legs," flat stomachs, and fall within a certain age bracket. According to television no man is hot for a middle-aged woman. If she is his wife he may screw her but only because he is stuck with her. More important than that, women are constantly portrayed as stupid. The advertisements are the worst offenders. Blacks used to be left out of TV altogether except for occasional Tom roles. Women are cast on every show and always Tom. From such stuff is our self-image created, the public and accepted image of women. The only time my daughter saw a woman on TV who gave her pride in being a woman was when she saw Coretta King speak to the poor people's march. And as my son said, "It was almost like he had to die before anyone could know she existed." Let's not simply boycott selected products; let's break up those television shows and refuse to let them go on until female heroines are portrayed in their total spectrum. And let's make sure that every brilliant heroine doesn't have a husband who is just an eensy teensy bit more brilliant than she is.

4. Women must share their experiences with each other until they understand, identify, and explicitly state the many psychological techniques of domination in and out of the home. These should be published and distributed widely until they are common knowledge. No woman should feel befuddled and helpless in an argument with her husband. She ought to be able to identify his stratagems and to protect herself against them, to say, you're using the two-cop routine, and premature apology, the purposeful misunderstanding, etc.

5. Somebody has got to start designing communities in which women can be freed from their burdens long enough for them to experience humanity. Houses might be built around schools to be rented only to people with children enrolled in the particular school, and only as long as they were enrolled. This geographically confined community could contain cheap or cooperative cafeterias and a restaurant so that mothers would not have to cook. This not only would free the woman's time but would put her in more of a position of equality with Daddy when he comes home from work. The parents could both sit down and eat at the same time in front of and with the children, a far different scene from that of a conversing family being served by a harassed mother who rarely gets to sit down and is usually two courses behind. These geographic school complexes could also contain full-time nurseries. They could offer space for instrument, dance, and self-defense lessons. In other words, a woman could live in them and be relieved of cooking, childcare for the greater part of the day, and chauffeuring. The center might even have nighttime or overnight babysitting quarters. Many women will be totally lost to us and to themselves if projects like this are not begun. And the projects themselves, by freeing a woman's time and placing her in innumerable little ways into more of a position of equality, will go a long way toward restructuring the basic marital and parental relationships.

6. Women must learn their own history because they have a history to be proud of and a history which will give pride to their daughters. In all the furor over the Ramparts article, I have heard women complain of the photographs and offer unlikely stories of trickery. I've heard them voice resentment toward coalitions like the Jeanette Rankin Brigade and toward Ramparts for pushing them. But I have yet to hear a cry of outrage to the real crime of that article. It purposely, maliciously, and slanderously rewrote, perverted, and belittled our history--and most of us weren't even aware of it. What defense is there for a people so ignorant they will believe anything said about their past? To keep us from our history is to keep us from each other. To keep us from our history is to deny to us the group pride from which individual pride is born. To deny to us the possibility of revolt. Our rulers, consciously, unconsciously, perhaps intuitively, know these truths. That's why there is no black or female history in high school texts, Ramparts' reference to its location there notwithstanding. Courageous women brought us out of total bondage to our present improved position. We must not foresake them but learn from them and allow them to join the cause once more. The market is ripe for feminist literature, historic and otherwise. We must provide it.

7. Women who have any scientific competency at all ought to begin to investigate the real temperament and cognitive differences between the sexes. This area has been hexed with a sort of liberal taboo like the study of race differences. Presumably, we and blacks were being saved from humiliation by a liberal establishment which was at least in pretense willing to grant that aside from color and sexual anatomy we differed from white men in no significant aspect. But suppose we do? Are we to be kept ignorant of those differences? Who is being saved from what?

8. Equal pay for equal work has been a project poo-pooed by the radicals but it should not be because it is an instrument of bondage. If women, particularly women with children, cannot leave their husbands and support themselves decently, they are bound to remain under all sorts of degrading circumstances. In this same line college entrance discrimination against females, and job discrimination in general, must be fought, no matter what we think about the striving to become professional. A guaranteed annual income would also be of direct relevance to women.

9. In what is hardly an exhaustive list, I must mention abortion laws. All laws relating to abortion must be stricken from the books. Abortion, like contraceptives, must be legal and available if women are to have control of their bodies, their lives, and their destiny.

KNOW, INC.
P. O. Box 86031
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15221

tele. (412) 241-4844

