

# A CAMPUS CULT?



"FROM THE NECK UP A WOMAN IS THE SAME AS A MAN."  
... will the real Venus de Milo please stand up?"

thing richer than what I can do on my own. I don't need to depend on a husband for sexual gratification. It does make sense to talk about sex and single girls."

She refused to elaborate.

Many girls fit poorly into the maternal role our society has assigned them. They just don't correspond to the cozy picture of the woman, radiant and maternal for the tenth time, who clutches her offspring to her generous bosom. Of course, there are the traditional types:

"I want children because I love them. They're a joy, not a duty."

And, "Women should have children as a duty to themselves. Having a child is a way of fulfilling a love in a woman that is different from the love she gives her husband."

But the overwhelming reaction to the question "Do you think it will be quite glorious to be a mother?" was either scepticism or outright dissent. "How are we to know until we have some kids? We want them—when we're ready. If you don't want them, don't have them. You can contribute to society even if you don't bear children."

#### BABY MACHINE

"I don't see how anyone can get satisfaction out of being a baby machine."

A third-year student planning to marry in May was rather irreverent. "A woman's mind is so little connected with the baby growing in her that it might as well be a cancer inside her. A woman is pregnant in spite of herself. Motherhood is not a creative thing, in the sense of being a total involvement. It's like calling digestion a creative process."

As for raising children, she added: "This is not a uniquely feminine capability. My fiancée handles children much better than I. But it's practical to leave

child-raising to the woman since she's at home pregnant anyway."

But once the children are produced, something has to be done with them. A education student pronounced this theory: "In marriage, children are the most important thing. We make all our contributions to our children."

Not very enlightening. Her friend elaborated:

"Being a mother is clearly a challenge—it's not just scrubbing floors. It's providing good aesthetics for your children, and making them good members of society."

Could you be a better mother if you were an educated one?

"The mother must stimulate diverse interests in the family. That's why we must have an education, so we can give our children a better, more interesting environment than we had."

#### INSTINCT HOGWASH

I did talk to one unorthodox young lady: "The maternal instinct is hogwash. It doesn't exist. Put a baby in an electric blanket and a mechanical set of arms and who needs a mother?"

I wonder how Dr. Spock would answer this girl—a heretic and so young?

At this point the crucial question came into focus. Could these girls, as university graduates, settle down as housewives and mothers for the rest of their lives? Were they not afraid of encountering acute boredom? Could they really share the enthusiasm of the busy little homemaker Betty Friedan describes:

"Sometimes she washes and dries her hair before sitting down at a bridge table at 1:30 p.m. Mornings she is having bridge at her house are the busiest, for then she must get out the tables, cards, tallies, prepare fresh coffee and organize lunch . . . She is thankful for her good health, her faith

in God, and for her two cars, her two TV's, and two fireplaces."

#### NEED CAREER?

Surely, with a university education, a clever woman would not be content until she had some sort of a career that would give her something to do other than having an annual baby. A home ec student was unimpressed:

"A woman cannot successfully combine a full-time career and a family—a family is her career."

Another girl became quite upset: "I won't waste my education. I intend to be an intelligent wife, not a dolt. There's a lot of bosh going around today. All this beard-growing, being intellectual, and discussing things is just part of the popular image of being a rebel. Everyone wants to be radical, and a girl who says she's going to be a career woman is just fitting into the role of university radical."

Puffing cigarette smoke every three seconds and slicing her hands through the air, a third-year student said agitatedly, "Women are all being fooled by the Mystique so that they're running around being 'happy housewives' and not doing anything more important than going to piddly meetings and wondering why they're unhappy."

"Or else people like Betty Friedan are fooling them into getting jobs and 'fulfilling' themselves. So then they wonder why they're raising grubby children."

"What they should really do is what they damn well feel like doing. Then they'd be fulfilled as individuals."

#### UNDER ATTACK

So Betty Friedan herself is under attack. Does it mean that even she doesn't have a rebuttal to the Mystique? A girl who switched from Arts to Science after reading *The Feminine Mystique* is sure she does have answers.

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"That book is my bible. It has changed my life. It brings into focus a problem which is very real and had me perplexed until I saw it analyzed in print. The problems—trying to fit yourself into the 'feminine' mold of sweetness and loveability when you know very well that this is cheating yourself from intellectual development."

"The whole purpose of life—according to the Mystique and one's friends—is to trap a man. I spent last year at Tuck boy-hunting. I dressed to please the boys. I wasn't stupid in class, but not so smart that I was a challenge. It was impossible to develop a profound interest in anything other than finding a man because that took up all my time."

The original antagonist was unconvinced. "I think it's a harmful book. It turns people away from the real problem, which is philosophical, not practical. What we're facing is not what to do with women, but what to do with a wholly automated society, when there'll be no more physical labor to do. People will have to achieve individual fulfillment mentally. This isn't a feminine problem. This is a problem facing all human beings."

#### SAME THING

We're back where we started. Whether they talked about being

educated mothers or studying for a career; refusing to be a mere baby-machine or wondering just how to go about being "feminine"; accepting or rejecting Betty Friedan; the women I talked to were all saying the same thing:

"As a woman, fulfillment will be obtained only when I have the integrity of an individual, not simply the function of a female reproductive organ with the implication of inherent inferiority."

And, in spite of their resentments, not one girl I talked to wished she could have been a man. Each one was quite excited living the life of these decades as a woman. Not that it is preferable to be a woman. That simply is not the issue:

"The most important thing is that I'm a person first, and secondly, a female. My biological role is secondary to my human one. I've never really envied a man, rejoiced in being a woman. Being a person is more important than being either."

Over and over I heard these young women trying to forge in their own terms, their identity, their place in the scheme of things. Over and over, they sought a definition of themselves as persons, which is more crucial than simply being female. They are looking for something more sublime than sex.



"ALL MY LIFE I'VE LOOKED FORWARD TO COOKING AND SEWING AND RUNNING A HOME."  
... fulfillment?