

Masculine Mystique

a reply to the feminine mystique

"The Feminine Mystique: A Campus Cult?" appeared in *The Gateway* Oct. 23; comments have ensued. Campus erudite, Jon Whyte, adds his two bits worth to the feature's rebuttals.

by Jon Whyte

Everyone knows the fable of the farmer and his wife who exchanged their jobs for one day.

Inside of eight hours he had all the pots boiling over, the cow hung from the chimney, and the baby bawling.

The moral was clear: let the woman do the woman's work, and let the husband keep his job.

That, however, was before the day of the suffragettes, Betty Friedan and *The Feminine Mystique*. Man



JON
WHYTE

has made the household such an easy place to manage for his wife that she is killing herself to get out and into his world.

COCKTAILS, NO!

Mrs. Friedan states, though she is never so explicit, that housecleaning, husband-keeping and family raising are no longer meaningful jobs, and that every woman who has the intelligence to do so should get into the more meaningful world of bookkeeping, account managing, card punching and cocktail drinking.

The college educated female is no longer suited for the home, we are led to believe. And only the "feminine mystique", which insists that woman is to be feminine, frilly and chained to the house and garden, husband and family, keeps her there. The masculine mistake would be to believe Mrs. Friedan.

It would be a mistake because what this Medusa with a typewriter really desires is the apotheosis of Mom. Philip Wylie foresaw Mrs. Friedan over twenty years ago, but his protests were not loud enough. And what the two of them rail about in common is better done by Mr. Wylie, who, I think, has more respect for the female of the species than does Betty Friedan.

BACK TO THE LOOM

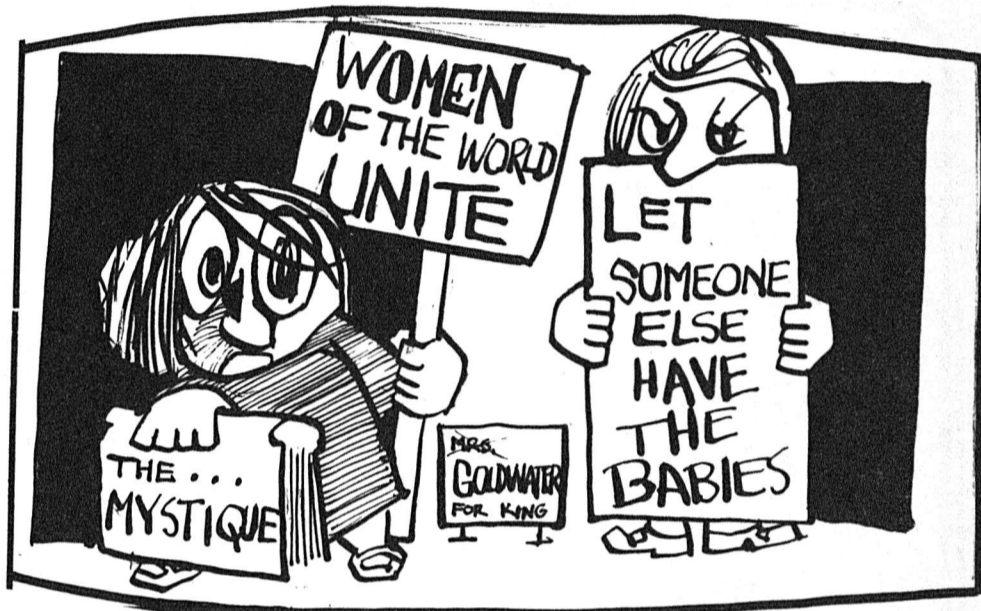
Ever since Tennyson's Lady of Shalott "left her loom" and took

those three treacherous "paces through the room", Woman has been dissatisfied. Unhappy because she is not biologically suited to do everything a man can, and is still better equipped than he to do a number of necessary, be they somewhat awkward, operations such as bearing children. Bookladen and thought-weary as the modern woman is, she can cope with neither the tedium of the business world because she is a woman, nor with the utility of managing a household because Betty Friedan told her so.

The modern man has a problem as well, but not a "problem without a name." Her name is Betty Friedan.

Philip Wylie in his pro-feminist stabs at "Mom" in *Generation of Vipers* was as cognizant as Mrs. Friedan of the dangers of emancipating the female. But he didn't confuse the malaise of the modern world with sexual dissatisfaction in Suburbia as she does.

It should certainly be clear that freedom is one of the severest loads we of the human race are to carry,



whether we are male or female. And it should be equally clear, evidenced by the writing of Fromm and Camus, that few of us are capable of carrying it. But the problem is a political and philosophical problem, not a sociological problem is Mrs. Friedan seems to indicate.

TRIBE ATTACK

The author of *The Feminine Mystique* seems to be another of the tribe of social scientists which has run out of problems to discuss, and which is setting out to create new problems for us. (I have a feeling that one of the prime reasons for our sensation of being in "a lonely crowd" or "in search of a soul", is the creation of these terms by social scientists.) In fractionating the results of the Liberal, Scientific and Technological Revolutions no real clarification of the problem is made.

The problems of how to make one's education continue to be meaningful and how to live freely in a free world are the unstated themes of Mrs. Friedan's book, and she is not a good enough philosopher to begin to supply solutions.

Simone de Beauvoir, the French author, is by far a more telling writer. *The Second Sex* is concerned with "the feminine mystique" far more frequently than is the book of that name. The philosophical grounding of the French author is probably what puts her in such good stead.

The biggest danger in the American book is that it will be read by thousands of young women who are not experiencing anything like "the problem without a name" yet who will feel they should if they are to be modern women. Mrs. Friedan can be a very convincing writer. And those same thousands of women will start a new revolt against the house and home with no definite goal in mind.

They will rebel but not for any good reason.

HOW HIGH THE IQ?

It should be fairly obvious that rebellion should be underlined by intelligence. Mrs. Friedan's exhortations are not aimed at merely the intelligent.

I do not disagree that there are wise and well educated women in the world, women who are vastly better equipped to teach or buy and sell than to wash dishes. And I don't doubt that they are in a higher proportion than in practice.

For them I have sympathy. But with the average housewife who wants to write the Great Canadian Novel or be an intellectual sales clerk, I have none, and it is to her that Mrs. Friedan shouts. I believe she'd probably be happier in the house.

If we believe Betty Friedan and her deification of the housewife, we endorse a Dale Carnegie course for the emancipation of an already emancipated group, and ignore the major problems of the world we live in.

Already we have seen that women do endorse her. Let not the male make the same mistake. Or we shall find that Orwell's major mistake in 1984 was to misname Big Sister.

EDITED BY
JANIS KOSTASH
ILLUSTRATED BY
BILL SALTER
LAYOUT BY
BILL MILLER