the new women

A *motive* Anthology on Women's Liberation

edited by Joanne Cooke and
Charlotte Bunch-Weeks
Robin Morgan, poetry editor

THE NEW WOMEN

The contents of this book previously appeared in the March–April 1969 issue of *motive*, publication of the Methodist Student Movement, with the exception of the following:

"The Demise of the Dancing Dog" by Cynthia Ozick, which originally appeared in *Mademoiselle*

"Double Jeopardy" by Frances M. Beal

"A Broom of One's Own" by Charlotte Bunch-Weeks

"For a Brilliant Young Woman Who Lost Her Mind" by Rita Mae Brown

"Inside Outside" by Jean Tepperman

The editors gratefully acknowledge permission to reprint the following:

from *Women: A Journal of Liberation,* "My House in the Trees" by Joan Joesting and "Birthright" by Margo Magid

from *The Rat,* "The Pill—Radio News 2/24/70" by Marilyn Lowen Fletcher and "To My Friend Miriam" by Martha Shelley

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This book first appeared as a special double issue of *motive* magazine, March–April 1969, which seems rather mundane unless you know that *motive* is published by the Board of Education of the United Methodist Church, located in Nashville, Tennessee. "That issue," as it is now known, drew more letters, provoked more outrage and attracted more national attention than any other issue in the magazine's thirty-year history. It also put *motive* on the map for women all over the country, who began flooding the office with requests for extra copies for classes they were teaching, for conferences and seminars and study groups, for mothers and sisters, and "because mine keeps disappearing."

Most of the credit for this issue/book should go to Charlotte Bunch-Weeks. As one of the *motive* staff's favorite friends-and-relations, she knew we were planning a special issue on women, and she convinced the male editors that SOMEone should go to the women's liberation conference. It would be disastrous for *motive* to do a whole issue on women without at least mentioning the women's liberation movement, she said, and the conference would be a good place to observe it firsthand.

Right on. After the conference, it was clear to me as well as to Charlotte that the whole issue would have to be on the women's movement, still considered by the men of the staff to be a small, extreme lunatic fringe. In the face of two determined women, one of whom they had hired just six months earlier because she was "attractive, articulate and hip," the men finally agreed to let the two of us edit the issue. We called on Robin Morgan to select the poetry, and the whole thing became truly a "woman's issue."

As editors, we could see no reason to censor out the four-letter words. In fact, the words themselves were a political issue to us. The United Methodist Church found them a political issue, too. At that time, *motive* was operating under the implicit ultimatum that if any more of THOSE WORDS appeared, heads would roll. Charlotte and I assured the men that we would accept full re-

Preface

sponsibility, but the staff was still hierarchically organized then, and those higher up on the totem pole knew that they, and not two "foolish girls," would be held accountable. Still, it was "our baby" and the words stayed.

When the printers at the Methodist Publishing House refused to run the machines to print the issue, we knew we were really into something. Sure enough, no sooner had the issue come off the presses than phones started ringing, churchmen in business suits started coming to the office to demand an explanation, letters started pouring in, people started inviting me to speak to their church groups, and the issue started selling so fast we had to reprint it.

The letters were really incredible. Church people who had never heard of *motive* magazine had read that issue and were duly scandalized by the pornographic art, the dirty words and the suggestion that Eve was not inferior to Adam. We've included some of the best and most representative letters in the book, as much for fun as for your information. Almost all were addressed "Dear Sir" or "Gentlemen," and many went straight to the publisher for his "prompt attention to this matter." Sixty percent of the letters of congratulation were from women, while sixty percent of the letters of condemnation were from men.

When Bobbs-Merrill decided to do it as a book, Charlotte and I went back over the issue with an eye toward filling in the gaps we knew it left. Frances Beal agreed to let us use her article on black women, Robin selected some new poems, Charlotte wrote a survey of the development of the movement since the printing of the *motive* issue, and Sonia Jaffe Robbins held up Bobbs-Merrill's end by editing, polishing and prodding me with sisterly gentleness into doing this preface.

Power to the sisters, who are, after all, half of the people!

Joanne Cooke
August 1970

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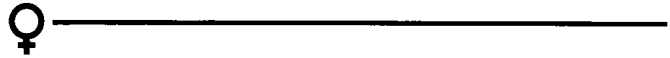

Here's to You, Mrs. Robinson: An Introduction

Contents

This book is about you and me. I don't know about you, but I'm probably pretty much like your sister or daughter or the girls you know. I wasn't born radical or found under a toadstool. My family is a perfectly normal American family—the kind that might produce an astronaut. Mother is an excellent cook and seamstress who has an R.N. and a beautiful laugh. I got my craving for magazines and my dimple from her. My father is a Methodist minister and a Lt. Col. chaplain in the Delaware Air National Guard who loves to sail. I got my crusading for social justice, my knack for getting involved in 99 causes at once and my double-jointed thumbs from him. My sister is a high school senior who's going to major in Home Ec. My brothers are a pre-ministerial college senior, a sports-and-art-loving high school junior and a nine-year-old Cub Scout.

I was a Girl Scout, myself, and I took piano, ballet, drama and swimming lessons, went to Scout and church camps, sang in choirs and choruses and folk groups, presidented the Methodist Youth Fellowship, helped edit the high school yearbook and worked in a department store. Two years ago I graduated from Randolph-Macon Woman's College, where I edited the newspaper and served on the College Council and the May Court, spending the summers as a waitress at the beach.

I'd been working for *motive* magazine for six months when I was sent, as token woman on the editorial staff, to the first national women's liberation conference, in Lake Villa, Illinois. Nothing has been the same since. Now every song on the radio, every magazine ad and TV commercial, every casual conversation, every store window is political. Not that I was that naive before, but politics didn't demand a change in lifestyle until I felt that I was being personally oppressed.

No one made more cracks about spending Thanksgiving weekend with a bunch of militant liberated women, no one thought it a bigger farce or dreaded it more than I. I was happy

By Joanne Cooke ♀

enough being a woman; what was wrong with *them?* Then they told me.

They talked about the Miss America contest. I had always resented beauty contests, but had never taken time to analyze why. I had considered campaigning editorially against the May Court at Randolph-Macon, but had talked myself out of it, only to have my motives confused by guilt upon being nominated for the dubious honor myself. These women clarified the whole thing. They *had* thought about it and had made a careful analysis. Their findings had, I think, surprised even them. All the evidence seemed to show that women in our society are still trained from infancy to entertain, to please and to serve—mainly men. Women are not yet raised to be just people—whole, fully participating individuals.

The women talked about everything that had ever bothered me, most of which I'd considered beyond discussion, having been told for twenty-two years that "that's the way it is." Here were two hundred women who had been meeting in groups in cities all over the U.S. and Canada to talk about the special problems women have.

What problems do women have that men don't? Why make women "another special interest group"? Why try to negotiate in the age-old battle of the sexes? What was so urgent that women would leave their families and friends at Thanksgiving to traipse off to some snowbound YMCA camp by a frozen lake to talk to *other women?*

So I listened. And I watched. The group was lily-white and seemed middle-class. The women ranged in age from about 17 to 60, and there were three or four small children running around. They talked about problems I'd known all my life. They filed the same complaints I'd heard at Brownie meetings, in the girls' room at high school dances, in dorm sessions, at bridge parties, in kitchen confabs, over back fences, at coffee breaks and cocktail parties. The only difference was that they were serious.

For the first time, I heard women discussing alternative ways of solving their problems. Not one woman said, "Well, that's how it is; what're you going to do?" Not one "Dear Abby"

platitude. Not one woman apologized for complaints about her lot. Not only were they going to *do* something about it, they were supporting each other, committing themselves to helping each other in the process. Every woman was a sister and no sister's problem, idea or question was too trivial to be dealt with sympathetically.

No one was in charge. No one was an expert. Women took turns chairing the larger discussions. We took turns driving to pick up late arrivals, we volunteered to take shifts with the children, and we shared responsibility for the phone. Anyone with an idea or an interest to discuss was free to speak up or to set up a workshop.

Why should it be unusual for women to cooperate with and to support each other? Why should women be accustomed to competing with other women—for the attention of men?

When I saw that they were serious, that they were not going to be content to bitch but were already committed to changing their situation—*our* situation, when I heard what they'd already begun to do in cities all over the country, when I felt that I could trust them not to build up my hopes and then leave me flat, I accepted the fact that I was one of them.

You'd almost have to be a woman to understand. We each have an elaborate internal security system, carefully developed to protect us from those who would pry into our most secret doubts, dissatisfactions and questions and expose us as "masculine, lesbian, castrating, bitching communists." But when someone asks the right questions, without supplying the old and inadequate answers, the safe door swings open and lets us out, free and laughing in the fresh air.

No, that's not an exaggeration. All women know the old answers are inadequate. Anyone who has watched Shirley Temple's face when Captain January tells her she can't grow up to be a sailor 'cause she has to be a lady knows how totally frustrating the old answers are. Any woman who has cringed when told she was "smart, for a girl" or who has wanted to be complimented—just once—for her ideas rather than for the arrangement of her features or her figure knows how unsatisfactory the old answers are. Any woman who has tried to raise

children alone—on a woman's salary—knows how little sense the old answers make.

What are the questions? Why do most expectant parents want a boy—at least, first? Why are little boys asked what they're going to be and little girls who their boyfriends are? Why do women have curfews when men don't? Why are we intimidated by the fashion and beauty industries? Why don't female executives have male secretaries? Where are all the female executives? Why do both women and men prefer male company? Why do we have to get married? Why do we have to have children? Why do women have the main responsibility for the care/feeding/education of the children men help them produce—even if both parents work? Why do we look to men for our definition, direction and strategy? Why do we have to live in pairs? Why do we pity/fear/ostracize lesbians? Why would anyone think we would want a cigarette of our own? Why do all the ads and commercials use women? Why do we spend all our time worrying about men when they spend most of theirs worrying about their work? Why do we not take our own work seriously? Why aren't women paid the same wages for doing the same work as men? Why do women distrust each other?

Why do we still believe that women are somehow different from men in ability, intelligence, talent and seriousness of purpose? If there are differences, why has no one asked "why" in the same tone that they have begun to ask why ghetto residents are stereotyped "shiftless and slow"? Why has no one dealt seriously with the ghettoization of women? Why are our problems considered insignificant or, at best, secondary? Why are we not organized to win and to protect our rights and interests? Whatever happened to our history? What would happen to society as we know it if we really worked at answers to some of these questions?

These are some of the questions around which a new movement for the liberation of women has grown. In this book some of the women involved in finding new answers by rephrasing old questions voice their concerns. The issue is primarily white and middle-class because it is mainly "Miss Ann" who has spoken out about woman-consciousness. So far, the women's

movement is a priority mostly for white middle-class women with some "higher" education. In part, this reflects the secondary position of women's concerns, historically. We have always been led to believe that something else—anything else—was more important than our own welfare. However, if we really believe that no man is free unless all men are, then we must work for the freedom of all women as well. Black women, mill women, mountain women, mine women, Mexican-American women, farm women and factory women are beginning to realize this and to move also. Almost any Saturday night on the Grand Ole Opry, you can hear the Willis Brothers sing "Hertz Rent-a-Chick" shortly before or after Loretta Lynn sings "Your Good Girl's Gonna Go Bad" or "My Mistakes Are No Worse Than Yours Just Because I'm a Woman." It's everywhere, and it's growing.

It has become clear to me that "the woman thing," perhaps even more than "the black question," "the student problem," "the war," "the draft," or "the bomb"—demands a radical rethinking of our present concepts of human interaction and responsibility. To deal with the problems it raises demands basic changes in our assumptions about the organization of society—from the family to the state. (Is "Miss Ann" really free if she has to hire a black sister to tend her children and clean her house while she works? Who tends the maid's house and children? Where is *her* freedom?) How can we continue to support an economic, cultural and political system that oppresses not only its minorities but a clear 53% majority?

The four-letter words have been used intentionally. Our society has permitted certain words to become weapons, often used against women and taboo to them. We have to learn to be shocked, not at "bad" words but at the "bad" concepts behind their use. Look at some of them: "bastard" means son of an unmarried woman, "bitch" means female dog or complaining woman, "shit" is one of a myriad of words for excrement which "shocks" mothers, and "screw" and "fuck" mean not intercourse but its depersonalized version, involving the physical use of a woman one cares nothing about. These last two words are being used increasingly by women to refer to the

male concept of impersonal sex. These words should all have been demythologized and disarmed long ago. And then there's the whole question of free speech. . . .

All this assumes brotherhood and sisterhood, with a radical call to mutual concern, involvement and commitment. It assumes working for justice and equality and dignity "on earth." And if fighting injustice, inequality and exploitation means a change basic enough to be called a revolution . . . Amen.

GOING DOWN HILL
Judith Stevens Sayfie

♀

The Demise of the Dancing Dog