

"Playboy Isn't Playing," An Interview with Judith Bat-Ada

Laura Lederer

Judith Bat-Ada has earned a doctorate in Mass Media and Speech Communications at Case Western Reserve University. She has conducted research on the influence of sexual media, such as *Playboy* and *Penthouse* magazines, on female identity. Her work revolves around trends in pornography, changes in the portrayal of females and female sexuality in the industry, and the effect of those changes on women and men. She has focused on big pornography producers like Hugh Hefner, Bob Guccione, and Larry Flynt, examining their use of advertising techniques, slick tricks, and cartoons to break down sexual taboos and to further exploit and objectify women.

Laura Lederer (LL): Judy, what kind of work are you doing?

Judith Bat-Ada (JB): We have placed what we call the *Playboy* genre in a systems-analysis perspective, viewing it not as a collection of disjointed "girlie magazines," but rather as an integrated whole. We have been examining the evolution of the so-called soft-core pornography, whose images pervade the media—from the 1950's "38D" fantasy to the present trend toward pedophilia (the view and use of children as sexual objects). Our analysis has revealed a "hidden agenda" which is different from the overtly expressed aims and goals of the particular pornographic magazines. *Playboy's* successive manipulations and distortions of the image of women typifies the pornography-conditioning process. As the most influential and pioneering magazine of its kind, it laid the groundwork for the whole media sexploitation movement which we are in the midst of right now.

LL: Can you talk more about the trends you mention? What do you see happening and why is it happening?

JB: In sheer numbers, newstand pornographic publications have increased from zero in 1953 to well over forty in the last five years.

Historically, male culture has devised techniques to keep women powerless and to shut us out of mainstream society. It is not a casual coincidence that *Playboy* began eight years after the end of World War II, when women were getting restless; *Penthouse* and the rest of the pornography industry merely followed the path *Playboy* had blazed. They picked up steam in 1965, right after the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. These magazines began by peddling the female as "other." They are now unabashedly peddling the dehumanization of women, and, as a result of cultural conditioning and pressures, young girls and women are buying the images.

LL: What does this mean for women?

JB: A decade ago Gloria Steinem said, "A woman who has Playboy in the house is like a Jew who has Mein Kampf on the table." The Playboy genre is programming a female identity which features female masochism during our youth and early twenties, and female obsolence when we have barely achieved womanhood. This programming is based upon the dehumanization of women, and the "object" eroticization of homo sapiens. In other words, as the commercial establishment inundates us with images of women as "objects," the rewards for women who grow and become strong decrease, while the rewards for women who present themselves as sexual objects increase. There is a strong female tendency to "be" whatever the male society demands at the time: Victorian in one period, and explicit and erotic objects in another. The process of identity is a learned one, and millions of women are accepting the culturally preferred, dehumanized sex-object symbols of themselves.

LL: Do you think this is really happening?

*JB: There is ample evidence for this transformation in the past few years. One of the more telling instances is the *Hustler* magazine competition, which offers prize money (or just instant fame) for the "best" or most pornographic photo of a wife, sister, or girl friend. Some daughter photos have been submitted as well.*

LL: You talked about a trend from "38D" to "pedophilia." Can you explain that?

JB: Saturation with straightforward female sexual stimulus leads slowly but inevitably to the need for, and the acceptance of, such things as child molestation, incest, and sexual violence. Hard-core pornography is like any other marketed product—it needs to be revamped periodically to stimulate flagging sales. We have made women easy and accessible targets for sexual violence, so there are very few final taboos left to break—children and incest are the last.

The American media have moved into an acceptance of pedophilia, and are progressing very rapidly toward the endorsement of incest. I believe the final taboo now being breached is child sadism. For example, a recent edition of *Forum* magazine, published by Bob Guccione of *Penthouse*, carried no less than twenty accounts of adult-child sex (the children being from eight to twelve years of age) in the first quarter of its pages. The issue then moved on to incest, which it has cozily familiarized under the title "Home and Family Sex." *Forum* claims it is simply reflecting readership views, but I think the selling of incest is part of a process whereby a particular kind of pornographic imagery percolates through all the media until it has saturated them, and then a new level of degradation begins to become acceptable.

The May/June 1977 issue of *UCLA Monthly* magazine ran an article entitled "Help for the Child Abuser." One paragraph in particular caught my eye: "Adolescents have been the primary targets of sexual abuse, but there is a recent sharp increase in oral venereal disease among children under five years of age, who have been infected by their fathers, older brothers, or boyfriends of the mother." This "sharp increase" is a national phenomenon and can reasonably be related to the breaking of taboos against incest. The *Playboy* genre has been the original educator in this breakdown from a broad social perspective.

LL: How does this breakdown of the taboos work?

*JB: Taboos are broken by the use of advertising techniques and slick tricks, which *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, and *Hustler* have learned from the major marketing industries of this country. Patterns are visible when these magazines are studied over a period of years. We first began to realize this when we noticed a spate of what I used to call "incest" cartoons and features. I now call this trend "male-cest," since it is almost always males who commit incest. *Playboy* began its malecest push with joking little features. One I remember distinctly pictured a girl sleeping on Mickey Mouse sheets holding a Raggedy Ann doll. The caption underneath read: "Baby Doll. It's easy to feel paternalistic to the cuddly type above. Naturally she digs forceful father figures, so come on strong, Big Daddy." That was in November 1971. Since then there have been hundreds of short pieces, letters, and cartoons which poke fun at the taboos against father-daughter sex, and rhapsodize about adult male-little girl sexual relationships.*

According to sociologist Donald Johanson, human beings have a biological need to care. The roots of pornography are in hostility and

violence. It must attack and negate the caring sentiments of its consumers in order to maintain its readership and attract potential customers.

The language used in *Playboy*-genre magazines is emphatically negative toward the loving aspects of human beings. In cartoons, photographs, drawings, and text, there is a clear isolation of the male from the traditional view of male-female, father-child relationships, which, although patriarchal, at least involved some norm of responsibility and concern. *Playboy* readers are conditioned by text and images to disavow their sentiments of caring, and to abdicate their social responsibility for respect in female-male relationships and for nurturance in adult-child relationships. The *Playboy* way of life portrays men as play-boys—boys forever playing. A boy plays, and women are his toys. Woman cannot be mate, companion, lover—she must be his thing, his pet, his chick, his "bunny," as *Playboy* puts it. Boys cannot produce children because children mean responsibility—they make a boy into a man. That is why the realities of everyday life are hidden in *Playboy*. You rarely see a father and children, you rarely see a man and his wife or woman friend having a good nonsexual conversation. You rarely see mothers, daughters, mothers-in-law, or sisters engaged in nonsexual family relationships. You rarely see a recognition of women menstruating, you never see people growing old together. All this MUST be invisible in the *Playboy* way of life because it threatens the isolated, mechanistic, aggressive male life-style the magazine is promoting.

The idealized *Playboy* man, the "winner" male, is depicted as reasonably, pleasantly sexually exploitive. This stance requires the dehumanization of woman and the ridicule of family members, relatives, and children. Thus, a staple joke image of the *Playboy* genre is the devalued wife. In thousands of repetitions over and over again, females are depicted as nonhuman, as whores, as animals—thereby removing any obligation on the part of the male to treat them as equal beings.

By socializing the view of women as unreal sex objects, *Playboy* and the magazines that have followed its lead have contributed to the increasing antagonism and subsequent violence between males and females, methodically helping break down the ability and need to care which, if Johanson is correct, human beings are born with and which, as social animals, we need in order to survive.

This breakdown in social relations between women and men is directly attributable to the current pressures being exerted by men against the incest taboo. Up until now this taboo has offered some

protection to children in our country against sexual exploitation by adults. The acceptance of pedophilia requires the blurring of age distinctions between mature women, teens, adolescents, and children. Thus, if *Playboy* conditions men to consider females as sex objects, then children as sex objects, eventually and naturally female children in our own homes become sex objects as well. This completes the *Playboy* family: a sexually exploitive father; a dehumanized, ridiculed mother; and a sexually precocious and eroticized child. This "family scene" has become the repeated vocabulary within the *Playboy* game plan.

LL: How do magazines like Playboy and Penthouse get men to accept this view of females and female children?

JB: Getting readers used to the forbidden requires subtle but clever devices. Playboy uses what I call "groundbreakers" for the construction of new attitudes. These groundbreakers include cartoons, skillfully contrived photographs, and an extensive use of symbols which are aimed at invading both the conscious and unconscious mind. A few examples will help the reader understand how it is done:

One favorite technique is to publish photographs of women simulating children, or imitating children and their behavior. For example, the April 1976 cover of *Playboy* magazine featured a very young-looking female seated on a stool surrounded by Teddy Bears, Raggedy Ann dolls, and wearing patent-leather Sunday-School shoes and a "virgin-white" petticoat, while the word "virginity" appeared to the right of the picture in another context. Pictures of women in these childhood trappings combined with glaring erotic exposure gave the way for real sexual abuse of children.

Another favorite technique is the use of fairy tales in cartoons. I believe this technique is carefully planned. Fairy tales take us back to our childhood, and unconscious childhood memories short-circuit our conscious, rational thinking processes. Thus, cartoons about fairy tales can be used to disarm the reader. Common themes in *Playboy*-genre fairy tales are the wolf molesting Little Red Riding Hood, the Seven Dwarfs raping Snow White, Goldilocks sleeping with Baby Bear, etc. Fairy tales are exploited by pornographers in order to block out objections to rape, molestation, and violence by defining the imagery as "fantasy." Many men, if confronted directly with a violent sexual image would reject it—and the magazine! The idea is to put these vicious crimes into a context which infers that it is "just a joke" or "all in good fun." After all, who can object to that—except a woman without a sense of humor?

LL: Why would pornographers want to do this?

JB: A chief concern of pornographers is the social availability-acceptance factor. Men are using mass media to break apart old values and create new cultural patterns. In addition, our legal system is put under pressure and is changing, as are this generation's lawyers and judges, nursed at the *Playboy* nipple.

Men want women to be available to them sexually, and in order to make younger and younger women available, it is necessary to change the existing laws. In Sweden, where there are liberal laws concerning pornography, the age of consent has recently been lowered to fifteen years of age, and now a bill is being considered which would eliminate it altogether! This would make small girls legal adults, and it would also leave them open to sexual exploitation without any legal reprisals. Such legal change can hardly be brought about by the power lobby of little girls.

LL: Do you think this violent pornography reflects a trend toward sadomasochism in our society?

JB: When the media talk, they always label grossly sadistic pornography "S and M" (sadomasochism). But it is not S and M, it's just sadism—no cutesy letters or hyphens and no "masochism" either because it is being foisted on us. By labeling violent and degrading depictions of women "sadomasochism," the media-makers cleverly take the onus off themselves and make it sound as though we participate by mutual agreement. But we have no say in the matter. In fact, healthy, self-respecting females do not want to see *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, or any other pornographic magazines in drug-stores, grocery stores, and markets. The pornographers know this and have devised insidious methods to accomplish their ends. For example, there is something called the "high-percentage" rule in distribution and display terminology. This refers to an agreement between the store owner/manager and the distributor in which extra money is paid to the storeowner to display pornographic magazines. In other words, storeowners are given an extra percentage to put pornographic magazines in the front racks instead of behind the counter. Moreover, in some cases storeowners get a 100 percent return rate on pornographic magazines. They buy them for a dollar and sell them for two dollars. Lately we have seen a large increase in front-track displays of *Playboy* and *Penthouse*.*

* Ed. Note: A small-bookstore owner in San Francisco told us that he is forced to carry *Playboy* and *Penthouse* if he wants to get any magazines at all. His distributor will not deliver other publications unless he includes pornographic magazines as a "package deal."

LL: Many people claim that "soft-core" pornography is passé. I have read that *Playboy* is having trouble with its circulation, and that *Hustler* has more readers now than either *Playboy* or *Penthouse*. What do you think of this?

JB: I don't believe it for a second. I have read all those figures too, but this is not an accurate interpretation of them. Generally, men are not abandoning one pornographic magazine for another. They are now reading two or three instead of just one. You get different types of violence to women in each of the leading magazines. I consider *Playboy* the most dangerous because it is the leader and the "philosopher," precisely as Hugh Hefner likes to claim. The hatred of women in *Playboy* is much more insidious and evil than in the other pornographic magazines. *Hustler* is simply the gross exaggeration of *Playboy* and *Penthouse*. It is filled with hate, but at least it is hate you can see. *Playboy* has made its fortune on creating a soft focus for the hate.

LL: You have referred to the *Playboy* philosophy as "sexual fascism." Can you explain that term?

JB: Well, let us begin with the term fascism. The psychology of fascism is a view of people as "others"—as less than you. It is a belief that you can take control—to secure whatever power you want without regard for how that may affect other human beings. It is a belief in one's own superiority, and that feeling of superiority allows you to hurt and sometimes destroy another person without feeling sympathy, or human compassion. It is a total divorcing of oneself from other human beings, and a glorification of power, violence, and aggression.

Sexual fascism is the fascist mentality applied to our sexuality. *Playboy* (and the *Playboy* philosophy) makes woman the "other" just as the nazis made the Jews the "other," and just as the white men made Black People and American Indians and migrant workers the "others." For women, sexual fascism means that men, and in particular a few powerful men, control our behavior, attitudes, fantasies, concepts of love and caring, integrity, that in which we believe and hope, as well as the ways in which we love and to whom and how we make our genitalia available. In this society we have no choice but to follow these dictates. In the case of sexual fascism there is a triumvirate—Hugh Hefner, Bob Guccione, and Larry Flynt—who are every bit as dangerous as Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito, the political fascist triumvirate of World War II.

These men can be held clearly responsible for a great deal of the current desperate, sick, and cruel trends in sexuality and human

behavior. Just as the nazis built prisons around the Jews, and the white man put chains on the Black women and men, so pornographers have put women into equally constricting "genital service" structures. The only trouble is that the contemporary fascist form is more insidious because we cannot see the bars or the chains. When we insist we are chained and barred, we are told—no, it is only our imaginations, our "repressions" at work. Nonsense! We are longing for the freedom to be human. But we have no freedom, no language, no behavior to call our own. All the special glitter that this male society produces for women—the makeup, the high-heeled shoes, the tight little dresses—single us out as women as effectively as did the yellow stars on the coats of the Jews in nazi Germany. Only today it is all done in the name of "fashion." It is interesting that one high-fashion trend is getting more and more constricting and more and more violent-looking—blood-red nails, spike heels, black leather jackets and suits, actually aping the nazi costume as "style." What's more, by adopting such a costume as "style" one intrinsically adopts its ideology as value.

The *Playboy* genre is given enormous assistance by television, magazine, and film magnates of a similar fascistic bent, of course, but I think it is important to name Hefner, Guccione, and Flynt for what they are: the philosophical leaders of this view of woman as "other." Recall Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito—one need not have the best interests of the human race at heart to be "der leader"—they were simply sufficiently psychotic to inspire fear and a following of frustrated men. It is vital to recognize the inherent danger of accepting the idea that women are alien just because we are women. We must realize that we are being groomed by a male power elite for "object" or "other" status on this earth. This male power elite is currently assisted by an unconscionable, female, elite, professional force, which acts as lackeys for the established "instant gratification for men" power structure.

LL: *What do you think about the idea that today's woman has reaped benefits from the sexual revolution (of which pornography is a part), so she can now be "freer sexually"—less hung up, etc.?*

JB: I think we are being sold a lie. As women get societal rewards for offering themselves up as sexual objects, we communicate and receive the message that a "real woman" is one who will take off her clothes at the drop of a hat, who will perform sexually, who is "ready anytime," who will sell (or rather rent) herself. We can be said to be breeding a nation of whores. If we accept the fact that the media directly affects behavior in today's world and we note that

they are selling women the concept of the glamorous woman as whore, then the whole idea of pornographic modeling or prostitution as a "choice" women can make becomes a lie, because for a young girl to function, to be liked, it is important to be an accepted part of our culture. And if the culture encourages her to be a sexual object, that is what she will be.

In its November 1979 issue, *Playboy* published an interview with Masters and Johnson. In it Masters and Johnson (funded to the tune of \$300,250 *Playboy* dollars, incidentally) talk about sexual trends, and mention that some heterosexuals as well as homosexuals perform anal intercourse. They add that although there is "discomfort" upon "initial penetration" and "thrusting," women can enjoy anal intercourse. But this article neglects to mention the homosexual men who are in hospitals receiving treatment for acute or chronic problems related to anal intercourse. That such intercourse is generally uncomfortable at best and dangerous at worst is obfuscated by their carefully worded "scientific proclamations."

Later in the interview, Masters and Johnson are asked about the size of the male penis, and they decline to comment. When pressed as to why they refuse to specify penis size, Masters and Johnson replied that such a statement would have a direct impact on male readers! They felt that "everybody would have been using a measuring stick," resulting in complexes and even impotence!

But though they observed only seven heterosexual couples engaging in anal intercourse, they refer to it as a "dimension of erotic stimulation" and encourage such "variance" in sex. This in a pornographic magazine dedicated to measuring and cataloging of the female in minute detail. Masters and Johnson know very well that their statements have a direct impact on women who read the magazine, and on men who read it and then try to push their wives and lovers into having anal sex with them. None of the pornographic magazines help to "free women sexually." They only make heavier the burden of male-oriented and male-identified sex which we already carry around inside us.

LL: *Does this sort of sexual propaganda force women to pretend to themselves and the world that they are something they are not?*

JB: It does more than that. Women hate themselves for not being like the magazine models they see men panting after. We don't measure up to the measurements touted by the magazines, and we know it. We despair (as Masters and Johnson worried that men might about penis size), but because there is nowhere to go with that despair it turns inward and becomes self-hatred.

I have been conducting a field study now for six months. I carry a measuring tape around with me, and I measure the bust, waist, and hips of every woman who will cooperate. My findings are very interesting: *Not once* have I encountered a female who measures the 38-22-34-inch size that *Playboy* used to claim its centerfold was. I have not come across one female with a natural 22-inch waist! For example, you are almost as thin as my thirteen-year-old cousin. Let me measure you—but, first, what size do you think your waist is?

LL: Probably 24 inches, but I don't know—I haven't measured it lately.

*JB: Here. See—your waist is 25 inches, and that's with your stomach sucked in. Everywhere I have found the same sort of statistics: The average slender young female aged sixteen to twenty-six has a waist of 26 to 27 inches. Many are significantly larger than that. And these are not fat women! A two-month-old baby already has a waist of 16 or 17 inches! Yet *Playboy* would like us to believe that the perfect woman's waist is 21 or 22 inches. I suggest that *Playboy* has a tendency to lie about its models' measurements.*

My field study is composed of two parts. After asking a woman what her measurements are and recording her answer, I ask her to take the tape measure and measure herself. Every woman who did this gained an inch or two in the waist and hips and lost an inch or two in the bust (from what she had originally stated her measurements were). Every woman expressed embarrassment at this, and many apologized to me saying things like, "Oh, I didn't realize how fat I was," or "Gee, I must have gained weight since the last time I measured myself." Next I say, "Here let ME measure you now, and don't suck in your waist or push out your chest." I hold the tape measure loosely around all three areas—not loose around the bust and tight around the waist and hips like most women do when they measure themselves. When I measure them naturally, I get gains of up to 4 inches in the waist and 1 to 2 inches in the hips, and losses of 1 to 3 inches in the bust from the original figures these women quoted to me. This field study, in conjunction with three years of survey data covering over 700 women, has established that we do a great deal of wishing we were something we are not—a lot of covering up of the facts of how we look and who we really are, and a lot of lying to try to measure up. In other words, a lot of self-hatred. This "perfect female body" concept also stimulates male hatred of women—their wives and lovers especially. Readers feel short-changed when a woman does not look and act the part of the *Playboy* model. It is an insult to their masculine capacity to get what they want be-

cause in this society the female is, after all, a reflection of how much he can get. He cannot seem to attract the good-looking model in *Playboy*; instead he is stuck with a woman who has borne three children, gained weight, grown older with time. It makes him hate her. And it makes him turn to the younger female daughters in the family, which is why *Playboy* is cleverly exploiting that lust now.

*LL: You spoke earlier of a "hidden agenda" in *Playboy* magazine. Do you believe this agenda is conscious?*

*JB: Yes. Absolutely. *Playboy* is an outstanding success in the sale of products. One of the magazine's biggest claims is that readers heed the advertisements more than other magazine ads and purchase products they see in the magazine. *Playboy* knows that the exploitation of women's bodies is what keeps men buying the magazine. Billions of dollars are involved in this industry. People say *Playboy* is "just an entertainment magazine for men," but much, much more than that is at stake. *Playboy* is selling a way of life, and its way of life is not love and respect of human beings, but love of commodities—and women and children are regarded as commodities.*

Nothing *Playboy* does is accidental. The publication of a successful magazine is big business, and you must plan ahead if you are in a big business or you go under. You plan not just for a year or two but for five years, for decades. Hefner knows marketing techniques inside out. He is advised by some of the sharpest people in the country: for example, Philip Kotler of Northwestern University, a major marketing figure in the United States. In addition, *Playboy* paid Yankelovich, Skelly, and White, Inc., in New York City, one of the biggest and most famous marketing research companies in the world to do a wide range of psychological services, surveys, and tests.

Playboy is moving into film, video, and TV. It has its finger in every liberal political pie in the nation. It has even been funding many women's organizations and women's issues in order, ultimately, to gain control of our issues and our political organizations, three of the most important of which are NOW, ERA, and abortion! The Hefner empire is not interested in publishing "girlie" magazines. It is interested in becoming more and more powerful, and the more dependent people become on the *Playboy* way of life, the more powerful *Playboy* is. That is why I like to say that *Playboy* isn't playing.

LL: What should women do?

JB: There are many things I feel women must do.

First: We must recognize our leadership role and our own personal expertise in the matter of what is offensive and pornographic. The research conducted until now overwhelmingly confirms women's re-

jection of commercial pornographic materials, despite the pressures to conform by their loved ones and by society. Even research which finds sexual arousal in females toward pornographic material also finds rejection of the same material by the women responding. Interestingly, most researchers have tended to explain this contradiction in typically sexist language, e.g., *women* are out of step due to "cultural conditioning." This is hardly the case. I contend this rejection is simply a still-functioning survival instinct—the instinctive recognition of the danger, hate, and unbridled violence inherent in pornographic ideas and images, however well they are designed and sugar-coated. Anger toward this female hate propaganda is a healthy sign for women in contemporary society. Women must understand that and sense it, feel it, believe it before we will feel comfortable challenging (often) husbands, friends, colleagues, and other women. We must understand that it is not we who are out of step. Indeed, it is the male-dominated world which is out of step, as it has been before so regularly.

Second: It becomes vitally important to speak out clearly regarding the rejection of pornography in your private spheres, with those close to you at home, at work, and in organizations. We should practice in these areas as it were, to get our voices, our courage.

Third: Although single voices do carry weight, group action is the best, the speediest way to be effective. NOW has established a boycott of national significance to help win us Equal Rights Amendment. This kind of action must be imposed on all pornographic images. Pornography is a hate campaign; make no "liberally sophisticated" mistake about that. It is a campaign to humiliate and brutalize all females, women, and children. If it continues to succeed, we will be back at the bottom of the barrel—all of us—and for generations to come.

Fourth: A coalition of all women needs to be established, regardless of race, color, creed, religion, or political persuasion. No discriminatory "radicals-only" concept will do. The idea of divide and conquer is still effective. Women have been divided; we must reunite throughout the nation on this one basic issue. A coalition is central to our survival . . . all women who refuse to accept the contemporary sexualized definition of women must agree to work together on this issue. Disagreements on other issues can be dealt with when fewer of us are being murdered, beaten, tortured, and raped. There will be that many more votes to count.

Fifth: Pressure must be put on NOW and *Ms.* magazine, and on other women's organizations and magazines, to advertise a national

boycott of any media materials and supporting products which we believe in any way, shape, or form demean women. I find it disturbing that literally nothing has come out of any liberated women's magazines which squarely treats the *Playboy* ethic for what it is—a threat to our very lives as human and humane beings, ERA notwithstanding. The opportunities for communication and education on this issue are enormous due to the number of women's periodicals and their outreach. With this in mind, all women's magazines should be encouraged to sanction and publicize as one unified body, such national boycott action or risk the loss of female readership.

Sixth: Legal action must be taken wherever possible on a national organizational scale. So much needs to be done on the legal front. There must be protection for women and children from pornographic hate propaganda.

Seventh: Now we get to a rather touchy and controversial point: Our problem is not just *men* in power. All oppressors worth their salt have employed members of the exploited class to do their dirtiest work. This is just as much a reality for women today. The 1976 April cover of *Playboy*, which featured the clearest emphasis on malecece and pedophilia, was photographed by a woman. The publisher of *High Society* magazine is a woman. Women are being offered excellent opportunities throughout the mass media to serve as collaborators, producing vile sexist propaganda. This is to be expected. As the tempo of exploitation is increased, more confederates are hired to create the soft patina of credibility.

There are always those who need to dehumanize others and who will exploit the weakest group at hand. Since contemporary culture prohibits exploitation and denigration on the basis of race, creed, color, or religion, it would appear that the only "group" now legally at hand is sexual—the female sex specifically. We have to take very seriously the treatment we and our children are receiving in the mass media. I believe current media trends are destroying female sexuality and the male-female relationship. It is time that we stop serving the worst of the male culture, and make our own definitions of what being a woman and being female means to us. This is not a pretty time. If my assessment is correct, it is a time of war. We are dealing with a fragile hold upon humanness. Let us also remember that we are up against a powerful media industry which encourages pornography in order to fulfill its own present and future interests. We must demand a society which protects women from this exploitation and violence.