

liberation schools, alternative universities. The situation, however, is not a simple one of being "co-opted" by working in an established institution or being "revolutionary" in a free school, because the inner-directed orientation of the Women's Movement has the danger of "internal co-optation" in the creation of a "soft culture," a culture that says the best way to be a revolutionary is to become a better person by opting out of the system and living a pure life that will be a model for all after the Revolution.

The celebration of sisterhood—the euphoric sense of individual freedom gained from breaking out of an oppressive culture, casting off a stultifying negative self-concept, and releasing rage at having been judged an inferior object for so many years—is, like cultural nationalism, a necessary part in the process of liberation. It is needed to heal the psychic rift in women, to restore pride and sense of identity, so we can cease feeling guilty, inferior, and directing action against ourselves instead of outward. However, if the celebration of sisterhood becomes an end in itself, it is no more than fetishized liberation: the psychic or moral liberation, implicitly bourgeois like drugs, that makes you "feel good," but is closed off from real political action because it is directed *only* inward. This is "soft sisterhood," transforming from within, like Charles Reich's "Consciousness III"—individual alienation combatted by individual liberation which is ultimately a dead end; an island of liberated culture isolated from everything except itself and unable to affect the real centers of power in this country.

There is no liberated territory in the United States. Growing radishes in a commune in Vermont may make you happy, even a better person, but it has very little to do with taking state power. Likewise with Women's Studies. If we are content to be either an isolated program within the university, cut off from the larger Women's Movement and controlled by the corporations, or part of a soft culture that simply maintains an internal dialogue with itself, with no objective relationship to the rest of society, then we will become less powerful, incapable of responding to the real need for a struc-

tural change of women's position in society. In either case we will have been co-opted.

And the danger of this happening is very real. A purely academic Women's Studies Program or a politics devoted to healing the psychic rifts of oppressed groups is quite possible in the spaces left to us within capitalist society. It is testimony to the elastic strength of American democracy that we can create new kinds of personal relationships and write a bunch of books, poems, songs and plays in these "spaces" left us and not change the power structure in this country one bit. The cultural celebration of sisterhood can be a crucial stepping stone to radical political action, but not if culture becomes a surrogate for political development, and if our movement cannot criticize its own illusions.

Therefore, women who are serious about changing the centers of power in this country should stay in contact with these centers and not opt for the middle-class freedom of stepping out for personal liberation. If the polarization of external and internal co-optation is avoided, Women's Studies Programs have the potential for developing

into bases for the acquisition of knowledge and skills and development of cadres for the Women's Movement. The next step—the most difficult and crucial one—is linking the university-based programs with other areas in society. That is, forcing the educational institutes to allow sectors *outside* the university to use and benefit from their resources, and thereby creating what should be the ultimate goal of Women's Studies: a broad-based movement aimed at creating real social change. Women's Studies should generate not the kind of feminism that culminated in the right to choose between Hubert Humphrey and Richard Nixon, but the kind of feminism whose demands can no longer be granted by American society because they are demands for a socialist, non-sexist, non-racist society.

—ROBERTA SALPER

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Rainbow Farm

UNLIKE MANY COMMUNES, Rainbow Farm began by accident. During the summer of 1970, three people moved into this 200-year-old house. They would live here rent-free for the summer, in exchange for making the place a little more habitable. They came for different reasons and brought with them different skills and problems. The house was wired, some of it was insulated, and running water was put in. Not everyone got along and not everyone wanted to try to endure the winter here, but by fall a group of four, two women and two men, had decided to stay. They stayed not so much out of commitment to each other as out of lack of commitment to anything else. All loved the country and wanted to make some kind of life for themselves, but beyond that their common interests seemed to end. A fifth person came in October, a man asking to visit for two weeks, who stayed all winter. A sixth person, Fen-

nel, drove her VW bus up to the front door in November, looking for someone who didn't live here. She stayed and talked, and a few weeks later moved in.

Snow closed around the house, driving the people together into the only two warm rooms. Life began to exist mostly around the kitchen table, or in the new, blue-lit sauna room. Wildly different visitors, friends from the inhabitants' other lives, drifted in and out, shivering. And slowly Rainbow turned into a kind of therapy group. Who are you? What are you doing here? Who belongs together and who doesn't? Needs were matched only by paranoia, but people began to know each other. Winter brought the women of the farm closer together. The men, less able to deal with each other in emotional ways and often cut off by the women, grew farther apart. Spring 1971 brought Sarah, emerging from a long depression, tired of living alone in

the country, and disaffected by her life as a radical writer.

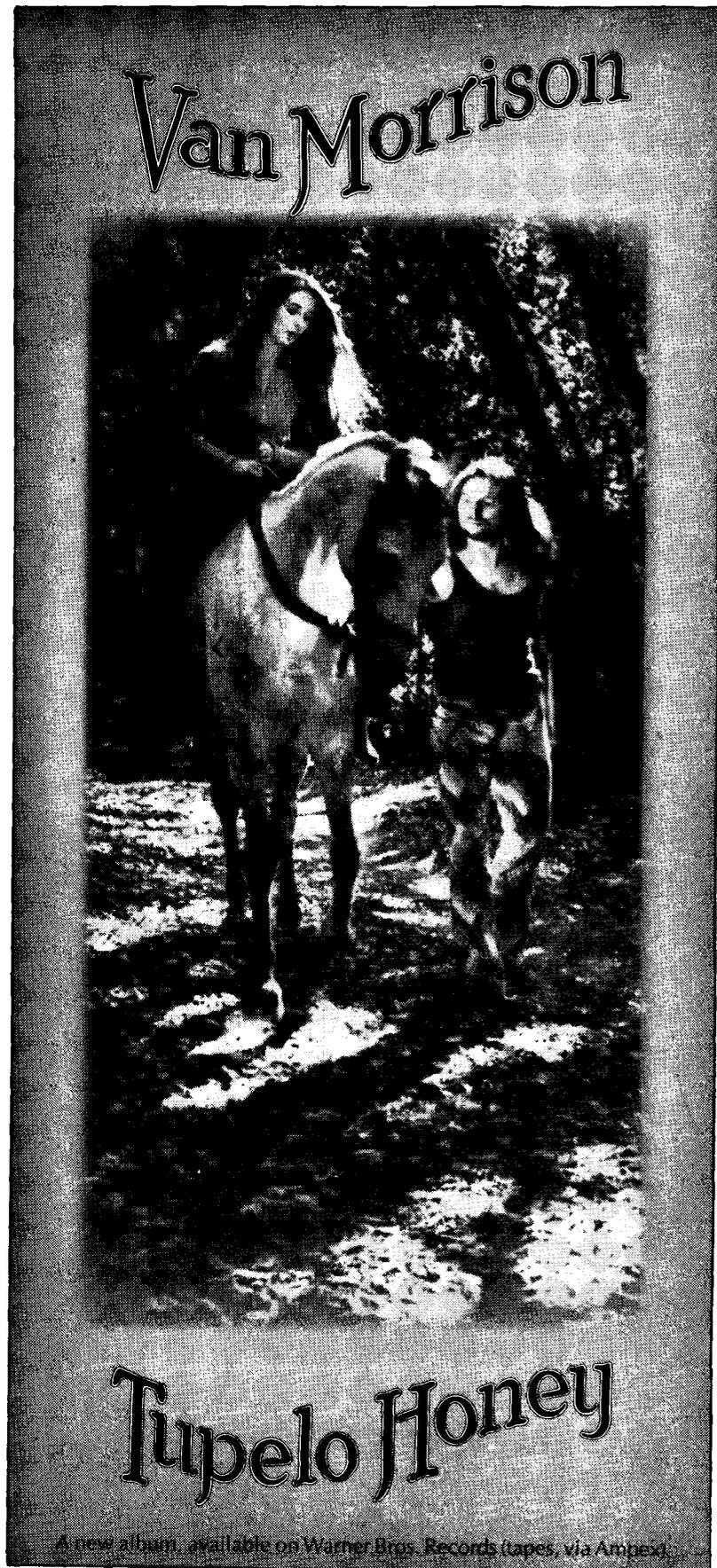
During the summer, splits between the men, and between the women and men, continued, but a garden was planted, and a rabbit hutch built, and pigs named Sweet and Sour were installed in a corner of the woodshed. We went swimming, and made a large batch of dandelion wine.

This summer the problem of ownership pressed us. No one who lived here owned the farm. Even if we wanted to stay, could we? An arrangement was made with the owner, a friend, that we could stay here another year in exchange for doing substantial improvements on the house, insulating the rest of it and heating it.

By the end of the summer, the original three men had left. One left to travel in the west. Another is looking for a life style that would include more emotional, open relationships with other men. The third man left with a short-term inhabitant named Louise. Jess is the only man staying here at present. He has been here for two months now.

Late in February I came here the first time, introduced myself by getting stuck in the snow. I walked up to the house huge with lights in the darkness and full of strangers. Fennel, the only person I knew who lived here, wasn't around. Almost before I said anything, I shoved an elbow through a window, and wasn't sure if it was me or the glass shattering. I'd heard of the place and the people via Fennel, and via Wednesday, who had visited once or twice. What I'd heard made me expect mythic figures embroiled in a non-stop encounter session and it scared me. But the car got moved by flesh and blood, and later we all took a sauna and felt very good and entirely human.

In the spring, I came up more and more often, staying longer each time. By June it was a toss-up whether to move into Rainbow or spend the summer in Europe. Fennel and I had had a long and tricky relationship and neither of us felt ready to live in the same house. I went to Europe. By the time I got back, all the men were gone or going. No one was really clear about what this



meant—whether it was coincidence or design. I moved in understanding that if the place was evolving into a women's collective, I would leave as soon as I could and meanwhile we'd just see how it worked out.

DESPITE THE FACT THAT Jess is staying here, Rainbow Farm has become more or less a women's commune. It is a peculiar evolution, not dictated by politics or ideology or sexuality. We seem to be a little more ambiguous on those

points. But when it got down to the hard questions, who likes each other, who can live together, who has the same needs and visions, those of us who really want to stay are the women.

Sarah, who has always lived either alone or with men, writes:

I am surprised at how good it feels. For the first time I feel that my understanding of the farmhouse's structural problems are as realistic—and my sense of how to handle them as complete—as anyone else's. I understand the problem of the rotting

beam in the basement, the dangers of the spot on the outside of the house where centuries of a gutterless roof have eroded the clapboard. For the first time I can begin to visualize how to put together old pieces of barn board to make a handsome wall in the room I am now sleeping in; a room that spent last winter with exposed insulation labeled Owens-Corning Fiberglass broken only by a dangling rich orange curtain that I once bought for a Washington apartment in a time that seems a hundred years ago.

Emarie has been here since Rainbow began:

It has been very freeing for us since the men left. The work we have set out to do is more equally shared and it feels as if our roles are more interchangeable. We are more open and honest with each other, and yet it's interesting to understand the levels on which we work things out. Last night Sarah came home from town, drove her car up into the front yard and bopped in, bearing extraordinary gifts of beer and ice cream. No sooner had she closed the door behind her when Fennel said, "Why didn't you park your car down the hill with the others?" Sarah exploded and threatened to hit the tactless Fennel over the head with a frosty beer bottle. Then she stormed out, presumably to move her car, yet was gone for three and a half hours. There we were—five women sitting around the kitchen making sundaes and drinking beer and wondering what the issues really were. Somehow we all became united in our curiosity about a usually reasonable (?) friend, plus we were all experiencing fear of the unknown and of ourselves. After we expressed what we thought of the fight, we settled down to a waiting period—Blyth and I drawing intricate pictures in black and white, Wendy, a visitor, writing impressions for a first novel, and Fennel and Wednesday just fiddling around; though the vibes were scattered and the moments lingered on. After a while the phone rang and it was another friend "warning" us about two strange station wagons parked near our road with an undeterminable number of people in



IT'S IN THE BAG



BARK/FRESH FROM JEFFERSON AIRPLANE

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them. It was then that we began talking about our fears, and it was enlightening to see who was scared of what. It's hard to explain, but there were five possible realities all mutually related around the problem of fear. I was being soothed by Mozart and someone else was already thinking journalistic while another concentrated on how to stand down brutality. And the dogs barked and the night grew cold, and later our sister arrived.

We talked a little about her anger and told her about our paranoia. We all felt we had experienced that fear with such purity because we had been conscious of ourselves as women alone, unprotected by any male presence. We always have male visitors—Sarah returned with Jess—and until that night there had not been a moment when there were only women in the house. We had also felt mutually responsible for dealing with our fear and its sources, responsible to each other and somehow full of trust that as a group we could handle the marauders or bogies of the night which might hang around outside the door.

Three or four bedrooms are unfinished and they need insulation, plaster and some heavy structural repairs before they will be habitable. It is important that this be done soon, both because of the winter, and because not everyone has a private space yet. Wednesday, who moved in only six weeks ago, has been sleeping in a sleeping bag in a room scattered with plaster dust and old boards, sometimes sharing Blyth's room. Wednesday (so nicknamed because she first arrived here on a Wednesday) is worried that living here will cut her off from other important experiences.

I dreamed one night that Fennel and I were working on a potato bin, and every time I would nail one side up, another side would fall off. I know that dream was about my life. I floated a lot this past year, and I went through some heavy changes. Quit a seven-year marriage, was high on freedom, being a woman, wildly in love with another woman, who lives in Boston. Now I want some stability. I know these things: want to live on a farm, want to live with

women or at least in a place primarily run by women. Want to write a book. Want to live with my friends, be good to them, and have them be good to me.

WE WORRY THAT OUR expectations of this place will turn out to be different. Still uncertain about each other's commitment, we get self-righteous when someone isn't working. (If I'm chopping wood, why are you sitting there smoking and reading novels?) We need nine cords of wood by winter and are considering fixing up a Righteousness Box to go alongside the Paranoia Box. Wednesday suggested a Reality Box as well, to be filled only with facts: Today I learned to run the chain saw; dug potatoes; helped make the damn potato bin; baked bread; cut up two trees; studied electricity. . . .

Blyth has lived here since Rainbow began. She is dreamy, witch-like, a painter:

My nightmares are too big for the Paranoia Box on the table. (So they are big, real, and dealt with.) One night last week we all cooked our yummy supper outside. We also played and sang like angels sometimes and also like starving horseflies. I was the last to get bedded down. My voice was goodly sore and cracked, my heart was calm. Only wonderful dreams rocked me through till morning.

Fennel wrote this poem last winter. That what it says is still relevant is (maybe) a tiny piece of stability in our fermenting lives:

*The oldest thing about us
is the house, built
near 1770, still growing.
Everything is worn
rotting, or tacked
on new. It's the color of
wood, hand hewn beams, New
England white. Inside, it seems to
float; the angels slant and run and
must defy
gravity to stand.*

*We insulate
one room with fiberglass
while old corncobs fall out
between beams
in the next room:
we let it be.*

*We live with ancient dust,
wood powder sifting
down around us. It's easier
to begin now, to build
a house; but this one
fits us, gives its history,
its place
on the land. We
form our lives
around it. Nothing
we could build now
would hold us.*

Records

GRATEFUL DEAD,
Warner Bros. [2WS 1935]
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF
COUNTRY JOE & THE FISH
FROM HAIGHT-ASHBURY
TO WOODSTOCK,
Vanguard [SD 27/28]

WHATEVER ENERGY-FLUX created the San Francisco music scene of the late 1960s, certainly two of the mainstays of that milieu were the Grateful Dead and Country Joe and the Fish. The other points of the pentangle were the Jefferson Airplane, Quicksilver Messenger Service, and Big Brother and the Holding Company.

Here are two double albums that seem to underline the demise of that parlay of five bands: all still exist in one form or another, but with the possible exception of the Dead all have lost the magic which transformed their listeners and elevated themselves during their heydays.

Big Brother is still struggling, but never did recover from the loss of Janis Joplin, before her death or after. Quicksilver was built on the brilliant musicianship and charismatic personality of John Cipollina, and, since his departure from the band, has reconstituted itself as a technically excellent but creatively trivial rock and roll band. The Jefferson Airplane flounders through sloppy performances and mediocre records, its energy seemingly having migrated into Hot Tuna. Country Joe is now a single act using occasional pickup sidemen while the Fish, now Barry Melton and the Fish, have yet to establish themselves as a significant band.