

## ***Modern Woman: The Lost Sex (1947)***

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It is becoming unquestionably more and more common for the woman to attempt to combine both home and child care and an outside activity, which is either work or career. Increasing numbers train for professional careers. When these two spheres are combined it is inevitable that one or the other will become of secondary concern and, this being the case, it is certain that the home will take that position. This is true, if only for the practical reason that no one can find and hold remunerative employment where the job itself doesn't take precedence over all other concerns. All sorts of agencies and instrumentalities have therefore been established to make possible the playing of this dual role. These are all in the direction of substitutes for the attention of the mother in the home and they vary from ordinary, untrained domestic service through the more highly trained grades of such service, to the public and private agencies now designed for the care, supervision and emotional untanglement of the children. The day nursery and its more elegant counterpart, the nursery school, are outstanding as the major agencies which make it possible for women to relinquish the care of children still in their infancy.

All these services and facilities produce what appears on the surface to be a smoothly functioning arrangement and one that provides children with obviously highly trained, expert and efficient care as well as with superior training in early skills and techniques and in adaptation to social relations. This surface, however, covers a situation that is by no means as smoothly functioning nor so satisfying either to the child or the woman. She must of necessity be deeply in conflict and only partially satisfied in either direction. Her work develops aggressiveness, which is essentially a denial of her femininity, an enhancement of her girlhood-induced masculine tendencies. It is not that work is

essentially masculine or feminine, but that the pursuit of a career (which is work plus prestige goal) is essentially masculine because exploitative. The statement may cause enormous protest but it remains a fact.

Work that entices women out of their homes and provides them with prestige only at the price of feminine relinquishment involves a response to masculine strivings. The more importance outside work assumes the more are the masculine components of the woman's nature enhanced and encouraged. In her home and in her relationship to her children, it is imperative that these strivings be at a minimum and that her femininity be available both for her own satisfaction and for the satisfaction of her children and husband. She is, therefore, in the dangerous position of having to live one part of her life on the masculine level, another on the feminine. It is hardly astonishing that few can do so with success. One of these tendencies must of necessity achieve dominance over the other. The plain fact is that increasingly we are observing the masculinization of women and with it enormously dangerous consequences to the home, the children (if any) dependent on it, and to the ability of the woman, as well as her husband, to obtain sexual gratification.

The effect of this "masculinization" on women is becoming more apparent daily. Their new exertions are making demands on them for qualities wholly opposed to the experience of feminine satisfaction. As the rivals of men, women must, and insensibly do, develop the characteristics of aggression, dominance, independence and power. These are qualities which insure success as coequals in the world of business, industry and the professions. The distortion of character under pressure of modern attitudes and upbringing is driving women steadily deeper into personal conflict soluble only by psychotherapy. For their need to achieve and accomplish doesn't lessen in anyway their deeper need to find satisfactions profoundly feminine. Much as they consciously seek

those gratifications of love, sensual release and even motherhood, they are becoming progressively less able unconsciously to accept or achieve them.

First of their demands is sexual gratification. . . . This is the core of the goal - sexual, orgiastic equality with men. These women have intellectualized and rationalized their sexual lives, determining that they will have for themselves the experiences and, therefore, the satisfactions that men have. So far as the experiences are concerned, they can carry out their intentions, but where the gratifications are concerned they meet with abysmal, tragic failure. Sexual gratification is not an experience to be obtained through the simple performance of the sexual act. To a very great extent the unconscious exertions of these women to obtain absolute parity with men have resulted in crippling them precisely for this much desired objective.... It is precisely in development of femininity that capacity for female sexual gratification lies. The greater the denial of the feminine, in childhood and later, the surer and more extensive is the loss of capacity for satisfaction in both tenderness and sensuality: love.

. . . The woman who is to find true gratification must love and accept her own womanhood as she loves and accepts her husband's manhood. Women's rivalry with men today, and the need to "equal" their accomplishments, engenders all too often anger and resentfulness toward men. Men, challenged, frequently respond in kind. So it is that women envy and feel hostile to men for just the attributes which women themselves require for "success" in the world. The woman's unconscious wish herself to possess the organ upon which she must thus depend [penis envy]' militates greatly against her ability to accept its vast power to satisfy her when proffered to her in love.

Many women can find no solution to their dilemma and are defeated in attempts at adaptation. These constitute the array of the

sick, unhappy, neurotic, wholly or partly incapable of dealing with life. In a veritable army of women, the tensions and anxieties make their way to the surface in physical guise. They have always been known and dimly recognized for what they are - the miserable, the half-satisfied, the frustrated, the angered. Unable to cope with the disappointments that they have met in their emotional lives, they become ill . . .

So it is that society today makes it difficult for a woman to avoid the path leading to discontent and frustration and resultant hostility and destructiveness. Such destructiveness is, unfortunately, not confined in its effects to the woman alone. It reaches into all her relationships and all her functions. As a wife she is not only often ungratified but ungratifying and has, as we have noted, a profoundly disturbing effect upon her husband. Not only does he find himself without the satisfactions of a home directed and cared for by a woman happy in providing affection and devotion, but he is often confronted by circumstances of even more serious import for his own emotional integrity. His wife may be his covert rival, striving to match him in every aspect of their joint undertaking. Instead of supporting and encouraging his manliness and wishes for domination and power, she may thus impose upon him feelings of insufficiency and weakness.

Still worse is the effect upon his sexual satisfactions. Where the woman is unable to admit and accept dependence upon her husband as the source of gratification and must carry her rivalry even into the act of love, she will seriously damage his sexual capacity. To be unable to gratify in the sexual act is for a man an intensely humiliating experience; here it is that mastery and domination, the central capacity of man's sexual nature, must meet acceptance or fail. So by their character disturbances these women succeed ultimately in depriving themselves of the devotion and power of their husbands and become the instruments of bringing about their own psychic catastrophe.

But no matter how great a woman's masculine strivings, her basic needs make themselves felt and she finds herself facing her fundamental role as wife and mother with a divided mind.... Thus she stands, Janus-faced, drawn in two directions at once, often incapable of ultimate choice and inevitably penalized whatever direction she chooses.

By Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia F. *Farnham*. *Excerpts from Modern Woman The Lost Sex*, pp. 223-41. Copyright 1947 by Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia F. Farnham.