

MODERN WOMAN: THE LOST SEX

Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia Farnham

The portrait of modern motherhood which Lundberg and Farnham presented in their popular advice book emphasized the responsibility of mothers for the neuroses of their children. The following passage, which is from a section entitled "The Slaughter of the Innocents," classifies mothers into five types, four of which are destructive. It is only the "fully maternal mother" who produces well-adjusted children.

MOTHER AND CHILD



The spawning ground of most neurosis in Western civilization is the home. The basis for it is laid in childhood, although it emerges strongly later, usually from late adolescence until middle age, provoked by circumstances and conditions encountered in life. And as we have pointed out, the principal agent in laying the groundwork for it is the mother. Many women classified as housewives and mothers are just as disturbed as were the feminists, and for the same general reasons. There are mothers, for example, who, although not neurotic, feel dissatisfied with the life they are leading. The home offers them few energy outlets. The work they do in it does not bring them prestige. Others, neurotic by reason of their own childhood upbringing and the failure of life to provide them with satisfactory outlets, suffer from the same general affliction as the feminists—penis-envy. It is more repressed than it was in the feminists, but it is at work in the psychic depths.

The feminists, turning their backs on a feminine life, lived out, expressed, their penis-envy, and obtained great satisfaction thereby. The neurotically disturbed women who find themselves mothers and housewives, however, have *consciously* accepted the feminine way of life, are not aware that deep within them they suffer from the same general affliction as the feminists. For they were reared in homes greatly resembling those of the feminists, and they were subject to the same cultural influences. They could not escape.

Unlike the feminists, they have made sure of libidinal outlets in their lives. But they have increasingly foregone ego outlets, and have been unable at the same time to utilize their libidinal opportunities. Many of them, even though not neurotic, cannot help but feel passed by, inferior, put upon by society's denial of ego outlets for them. When they are neurotic they feel the lack even more. To a certain extent a woman can derive great ego satisfaction from playing a fully feminine role, but there are dangers in it both to herself and to her children. Too many women today are forced to derive their entire ego-support from their children, which they do at the expense of the children, to the danger of society. A child can never be an adult plaything and turn out well.

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The mothers of neurotics and of persons with marked neurotic character traits, with very few exceptions break down into four broad categories, each susceptible of further breakdown until one reaches the great personal complexity of individuals. These categories, in each of which the mother carries out the pattern of her own upbringing and of the culture around her, are as follows:

1. The rejecting mother, who in various degrees from extreme to subtle, apes society around her and rejects the child. She ordinarily has no more than one, or at most two.

2. The oversolicitous or overprotective mother, who underneath closely resembles the rejecting mother but whose entire activity represents a conscious denial of her unconscious rejection.

3. The dominating mother, who is also very often a strict disciplinarian. This type obtains release for her misdirected ego-drives at the expense of the child. Denied other opportunities for self-realization, she makes her children her pawns, usually requires of them stellar performance in all their undertakings.

4. The over-affectionate mother, who makes up for her essentially libidinal disappointments through her children. Her damage is greatest with her sons, whom she often converts into "sissies"—that is, into passive-feminine or passive-homosexual males.

There is, on the other hand, the fully maternal mother, who fortunately accounts for perhaps 50 per cent or more of the births because she has more children than the other types. She does not reject her children, attempt to overprotect them out of her guilty anxiety, dominate them or convert them into lap dogs. She merely loves her children.

It is the first three types who produce the delinquents, the difficult behavior-problem children, some substantial percentage of criminals and persons who, although moving in socially approved channels, are a trouble to themselves, to close associates and often to society. Along with the over-affectionate mother, they also produce a large percentage of the confirmed alcoholics. Since somewhere around 40 to 50 per cent of the mothers are in the first three categories, the wide damage they do is obvious and warrants fuller discussion.