

volve "the phantasy of self as a pure perceiving being," but the viewer must also draw a line between itself (more about the neuter form anon) and the object so that it can be a voyeur. On this subject Ellis says, "Voyeurism implies the power of the spectator over what is seen. Not the power to change it, but the knowledge that the actions being undertaken are played out for the spectator." Is this why slimy types use binoculars to peer into distant buildings and drill hard-to-spot holes into rest-room walls?

According to Ellis, a *film* is commonly defined as being something like the Hollywood productions from 1915 to 1950. He is correct. But then he tries to define what these movies are. He claims that they are simply examinations performed by men who try to determine what women want. In his words, the whole genre of entertainment films "depends on the assumption of a masculine norm and the restless demand to know what the female counterpart to that norm is." Now, it might seem that Ellis has painted himself into a corner: if films only exist so that men can figure out what the female norm is, then why should women bother going to the movies, as they already know? He simply intones, the "processes of identification (narcissism) involve bisexual positions that are not the exclusive prerogative of either socially defined sex." In other words, women (which I always thought were biologically defined) forget that they are women when they go to the movies. Presumably, then, out-of-work androgynous persons have great opportunities in Hollywood: oh, how they would ease the identification processes.

According to Ellis, "Many people feel a profound sense of shame at watching a film alone." Given the psychosexual rigamarole that he applies to the activity, it's surprising that anyone has anything to do with movies, alone or in crowds. If he is correct, everybody might as well make a one-time investment in binoculars and trench coats and let themselves go wandering through parks in the dark. (SM) □

On the Motherhood Maze

by Kathy L. Werner

It was with a sinking feeling that I read Kathi Waite's laudatory review of *Through the Motherhood Maze* by Sanford J. Matthews and Maryann Bucknum Brinley in the February 1983 issue of the *Chronicles*. The piece is scarcely more than an apologia for absentee motherhood. Motherhood is treated in the piece as a malaise which often causes "near-total emotional collapse." Motherhood is not to be enjoyed and relished, but rather endured or escaped. Mrs. Waite implies that (1) only a rare and exceptional woman ("the wonder and envy of her peers") can tolerate the full-time mothering of her children; and (2) a mother's love of herself and pursuit of her own fulfillment will assure happiness for her children.

In answer to Mrs. Waite's first point, according to Rita Kramer (*In Defense of the Family*), Selma Fraiberg (*Every Child's Birthright*), the accepted wisdom of the centuries, and ordinary common sense, it is unlikely that anyone will love or care for children better than their own mother. (The exceptions to this rule are the abusive or neglectful parents—still a very small minority.) I would suggest that it is a peculiar phenomenon of post-Friedan America that so many young mothers opt for success on men's terms (money and careers) rather than staying home to care for their infants. In their stampede for self-actualization they often ignore, discount, or rationalize the needs of their children. And the "quality-time" argument used by so many women is essentially invalid during a child's first three years, according to Kramer.

The right response to Mrs. Waite's assertion that "[t]o attempt to become the be-all and end-all to a child is, for some, self-destructive" is Kramer's wise observation: "of course, no mother can be

Mrs. Werner is a full-time mother in New York.

there every single moment, nor can any mother provide constant and complete satisfaction, an expectation that is not only unrealistic but not even desirable. Little disappointments and minor frustrations are as much a part of experience as pleasures and fulfillment. They shouldn't be sought out on principle or used to rationalize arrangements clearly not a baby's advantage when they're avoidable, though, because nature and necessity do a good enough job of providing them for us."

Admittedly, there are many women who do not have the economic option of raising their own children. However, Mrs. Waite made no mention of financial considerations, but spoke of the woman who returned to work out of a perceived emotional need. Mothering one's own child full time is not something to be chosen impartially from a list of "Things I'd Like to Do." It is a challenging responsibility for every woman who wants her baby to develop to his full potential. To flourish, a baby needs his mother far more than he or she needs the latest learning toy or the costliest nursery schools.

Possibly Mrs. Waite's most misleading claim is that a "woman who before motherhood led an active life in a responsible job may not be able to find unconditional happiness in 24-hour mothering." Is mothering, therefore, an inactive, irresponsible task? What job could be more momentous than the rearing of competent and caring human beings? To her statement that unconditional happiness is not a given of motherhood, I must agree. But one is unlikely to find "Unfettered Bliss" listed on any job description. Motherhood, like other adult occupations, requires the postponement or sublimation of certain personal desires. And just as it takes patience, self-control, and hard work to love another human being on a continuing basis, so it requires an act of the will to learn how to mother one's offspring. But in learning to serve

them one can discover a true and deep joy far more enduring than happiness.

Full-time mothers are the key to the survival of the traditional family in America. The very nature of their "un-compensated" jobs makes them an endangered species in our affluent nation and an anachronism among a people hell-bent on "finding themselves." At-home mothers and children both deserve much more thoughtful treatment than that accorded them by Mrs. Waite. □

Mrs. Waite Replies:

While Mrs. Werner makes some interesting observations, she has (A) missed the point of my piece and (B) simplified motherhood to a degree that overlooks not only its delicate nuances, but also an obvious state of affairs. Her constant referral to the *child* as an "infant" or "baby" leaves the impression that she is a fairly new member of the Society of Motherhood. She seems oblivious to the fact that the term *child* also encompasses 7-, 11-, and 16-year-olds, as a more seasoned mother can readily attest. Some of these children, dependent on age and degree of maturity, are well able to take care of themselves for varying periods of time and do not need to be constantly coddled, nor do they regularly coo.

The responsibility of being a mother never ends; as I stated before, it is "a career spanning a lifetime." However, responsibility is not the same as parental control. As parents, our most important function is to instill in our children a set of principles and sense of decency. As time diminishes control, we must trust our children to draw on what we have worked so hard to teach. The constantly "mothered" child is not always a "better" child.

Mrs. Werner states that motherhood is to be "enjoyed and relished," and I quite agree. However, the fact remains that not all women will agree, for the act of giving birth insures that a woman is a mother only in a biological sense. The

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