

THE NEW CULT OF SEX AND ANARCHY

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Mildred Edie Brady of Berkeley, California, economist and free-lance writer, has observed at close range the groups of whom she writes.

CALIFORNIANS are telling each other confidently that the bulk of our young people is sound and that the new bohemia in our midst is simply another manifestation of the fringe that has always seemed to cut a little deeper into West Coast communities than elsewhere.

Quite naturally, since the ways of bohemia furnish lively dinner table talk, there is a good deal of anecdotal conversation about them; but the talk is light, for the most part, and the socially accepted attitude toward the phenomenon is summed up in some such generalization as: "After all, it's only a small minority and this is the postwar. You've got to expect something like this after a war. It always happens. Remember the twenties." For their part, the young intellectuals and literati who are the beneficiaries of such an admirable tolerance agree heartily on their minority status. In fact, they insist on it. How could it be otherwise? Whenever was the vanguard of the artistic and intellectual world a majority?

Here in northern California they are shaping up the cultural mecca of the twentieth century. This is "the new Paris." No longer does the young writer head for New York or the Left Bank. This time the modern, the new, the truly creative, will ride out the coming depression in the coastal hills of California; and as you drive along the coast, up state highway number one, you can see, if you look for them, the shacks, even tents, where literary immigrants have already set up typewriters. They are scattered over a wide area extending some twenty miles or more below Carmel which is, in turn, two to three hours below San Francisco.

Their jerry-built cabins are not yet an obvious rash on the countryside, hidden as they are in shrubbery and scattered along such a long stretch of road. It is dramatically beautiful country they have settled in. The highway winds in and out along cliffs that drop sheer to the Pacific where deep arroyos, dark with evergreen, sweep down between the hills. Here and there the road straightens inward to cut under towering redwood forests. This is the Big Sur country, the *Continent's End* of Robinson Jeffers. It has long been one of California's many prides and the town of Carmel, just above it, has been host to the nation's retired, or vacationing, artists for years—the ones with money.

But these newcomers are a different crowd. They don't have money and most of them are young, with no clamouring public to hide from nor any agent to drum up a demand for their stuff. When you first come upon them in their countryside shacks they are a surprise. You recognize them instantly, for even here in this forest by the ocean the stamp of young bohemia is as unmistakable as a trade mark. But it is their apparent isolation that bothers you. Their beards and sandaled feet, their corduroys and dark shirts; the barren clutter in the one or two uncarpeted rooms: abstract paintings against rude board walls, canned milk and pumpernickel on a rough table, ceramic ashtrays and opened books on a packing box—all this is familiar. Except for the bright daylight and the absence of city soot and noise, you'd think you were in a Greenwich Village apartment of twenty years ago. But it is decidedly unlike young bohemia to turn hermit or to take upon itself the disciplined demands of rural self-sufficiency. It doesn't fit.

The key to this puzzle is simple, almost too obvious to grasp. It lies in that greatest of California boasts--the mild coastal climate.

These new settlers, it turns out, are as gregarious and dependent on urban services as their ancestors in Paris or New York. It is simply that they, with an enviable instinct that has characterized bohemia the world over, have been able to find *the* spot where, during a nation-wide housing shortage, a mild climate makes an amateur shack adequate year-round shelter, and where highways free of snow in an automobile-owning age offer year-round transportation via the thumb. Along the California coast a sweater and a fireplace will keep you warm in a cabin minus foundations, or even a floor, and the highway by your door is never stilled by snow or ice. Thus a rural, hitchhiking bohemia enjoys the beauty of a vacation country plus the services of the city and not so much as a nickel for subway fare is required to get to the center of town.

It does take time to get to San Francisco, but the few hours on the highway, once a week or so, are no hardship, and the generosity of the highway can usually be counted on. The town of Carmel is close by and in the city, either in San Francisco or Berkeley, there are concerts, bookstores, restaurants, and galleries to collect around. There are also kindred spirits there who haven't yet found a hut in the hills and whose apartments afford meeting places for poetry-reading sessions and parties. Also in the city are the girls, the seekers who have come west this time from Wisconsin or Illinois to read proof or take dictation by day; but to spend their evenings, and not infrequently their earnings, in earnest nurturing of new genius.

The parties are not plush affairs, as a rule. Neither food nor drink is lavishly plentiful. And the poetry-reading sessions are serious and solemn occasions. They are held weekly in both San Francisco and Berkeley, where thirty or forty at a time can be found crowded together listening gravely to language patterns that are all but incomprehensible to the uninitiated. Poetry is far and away the most

popular medium of these young writers, and their poems. make no compromise with old standards of communication. Poetry, they hold, “transcending logic, invades the realm where unreason reigns and where the relations between ideas are sympathetic and mysterious-affective-rather than causal.”

Remember that word “affective.” It, along with a few others like “fecund,” “orgastic” (*stet*), “magical,” “fluid,” and “natural,” reveal the distinguishing mark which binds them, ardent individualists though they are, into a group as definite as the bobby-soxers. For, while not all of them wear beards and some of them live in the city and still others live in the Russian River country (another vacation land about as far north of San Francisco as Carmel is south) and some of them write and others paint, and some just talk or listen, and others simply hang-on, and some pay the bills and others panhandle, and all are split into tiny, ingrown cliques--there is a substratum view of man and art and the nature of the world we live in that binds them into a fraternity.

You could describe it, in brief, as a combination of anarchism and certain concepts related to psychoanalysis which together yield a philosophy holding on the one hand that you must abandon the church, the state, and the family (even if you do it, as James Joyce preached, “by treachery, cunning, and exile”); and on the other offering sex as the source of individual salvation in a collective world that’s going to hell.

Your first reaction to all this is almost sure to be: “Anarchism! I suppose we’ll all be playing mah jongg next,” or, “Sexual salvation, heaven help us, this is where I came in a quarter of a century ago.”

But to dismiss it simply as nothing more than a stale replica of the twenties, a kind of intellectual measles that every generation has to go through, is to overlook some differences. If it is indeed true, as some are inclined to believe, that what we are witnessing out here on the coast is the characteristic pattern of the postwar bohemia of World War II then it is also true that bohemia has changed its party line to produce a somewhat different spirit from that which sent cultural pioneers after World War I to the grimy walkups in New York’s Greenwich Village.

FOR one thing, these builders of the new Paris in the nineteen-forties would profoundly shock their agnostic predecessors of the twenties with their sentimental mysticism; for bohemia today is proudly religious. Its creeds, however, would certainly terrify any good Methodist.

It is not their frank and frequent verbal testimonials of faith in a supreme being that would disturb the more orthodox, although such free and easy references to a religious faith fall strangely on the ear today. Nor would their use of such phrases as “the outer reality,” “the great oneness,” “the life source,” or “the vital core,” bother you unduly. For if you have ever been a part of any religious group,

if only a Middle Western Sunday School, you' can usually follow the deity through their synonyms without too much difficulty. But when they turn on the word "love" your Sunday School background falls down on you no matter how many times you may have sung "Love Lifted Me" in a Billy Sunday revival. Even less would a sojourn in the Greenwich Village of the twenties prepare you for love as "the ecstasy of the cosmos" or for "the sexual sacrament" as the acme of worship.

Back in the postwar of World War I, sexual emancipation was stoutly defended and practically furthered by the younger generation, to whom bourgeois morality was unquestionably a shameful stigma but it never got mixed up with the deity. Sex in those days was a strictly worldly affair and nobody's business but your own. "The great oneness," however, is an intimate participant in the sexual emotions of his worshippers. In fact, he reveals himself fully only in the self-effacing ecstasy of the sexual climax. This, they hold, is the moment of deepest spiritual comprehension of "the outer reality," the one moment when there is living communication between "the vital life source" and the individual.

And it is quite a different flavor from the revolt of the twenties—this lofty inner objective which turns every sexual encounter into a religious rite and gives us, in this day of scientific agriculture and contraceptives, a modern version of ancient fertility cults. It is not on behalf of the oranges and avocados, however, that "the source of all creation" is offered such intense pantomimes of worship. The fertility sought is an inward one and the fruits desired are those of personality—the achievement on the part of the worshipper of intellectual and emotional vitality, the status of a "fecund being."

HERE is where psychoanalysis comes in supporting faith with argument. The ultimate authority is no longer Freud, nor Jung (who stands high, nevertheless), but one who—in his own words now wears the mantle of Freud: Wilhelm Reich, whose *Function of the Orgasm* is probably the most widely read and frequently quoted contemporary writing in this group. Even at the poetry-reading sessions you are likely to find someone carrying a volume of his turgid and pretentious prose.

Reich's thesis, briefly, is that all physical and spiritual ills, from cancer to fascism, stem from "orgastic (*stet*) impotence"; and he is the creator of that phrase, which means inability to realize sufficient pleasure in the sexual orgasm. The pleasure paralyzing inhibitions which are responsible for this general sub-standard sexual gratification have their source, it seems, in "the patriarchal family" and its "compulsive morality." And the social and political institutions of the modern world are nothing more than a projection of this mass sex starvation.

Thus civilization itself—civilization as we know it today—turns out to be a kind of elaborate dog-in-the-manger device through which sexual starvation is foisted upon the young by the bitter old. Born into this self-perpetuating stricture, a man's chances of achieving orgastic potency (and that means the ability to

experience the full measure, biologically possible, of sexual pleasure at high quality) are, of course, slim indeed. But unless he does achieve it, an individual's creative energy goes down the sink of unavoidable neurosis, and he becomes prey to all the perverse evil that his own, and everybody else's, unconscious can generate.

And make no mistake about it, the dark forces generated in the pleasure-starved unconscious of the orgasmically impotent are as powerfully evil as any demon of ancient times. In this modern swamp of "sexual misery" only a few orgasmically potent ones do survive, but from their benign, pleasure-fed, subconscious there flows a stream of psychic energy as pliant and good as the obverse is demanding and diabolical. Quite obviously, then, a creative artist minus orgasmic potency is in a bad way and also, quite as obviously, if he has it he will be a misfit in a society fashioned by, and for, orgasmic cripples.

As matter of fact, for all its devotion to a supreme mystical force in the universe, the core of the philosophy of this new bohemia rests in the sexual thesis, from which their anarchism stems, not vice versa; and the emphasis on religion derives, in turn, from the anarchism.

It goes something like this: if by strange and splendid chance you happen to be one of the few orgasmic potent, you are (it follows) one of the few "normal, natural, healthy human beings" left in a world peopled by terrified and frustrated neurotics pitifully matching mass masochism to dominant sadism. How you determine your membership in this biological elite is, unhappily, not easy to demonstrate objectively. It is necessarily a subjective realization for the most part. It's something you know about yourself. But there are some guiding indications. First of all is your ability to surrender to love. Then you will note your unusual aliveness and physical well being, your high color, your moist and elastic skin tone, and the full blooded healthiness of your genitals. You will also be aware of your exceptional drive for creative work, your capacity to self-regulate your sexual behavior without dependence on "unnatural social or legal compulsions."

What's more, you'll find that you don't want to force these unnatural compulsions on anybody else; you instinctively grant the right to love to others without requiring that they follow any rules that interfere with a free expression. And finally, your healthy subconscious will automatically reject such neurotic activities as holding down a bookkeeper's job, or working like a dead cog in a machine on an assembly line or anywhere else, for that matter, where your living body and soul would be whittled down to the sick demands of a dying world.

In other words, you are very much all right if you are orgasmically potent. Your desires are good; your acts, beneficent; and your life is in tune with the great, cosmic, vital force that is the natural law of the universe.

The sad thing is the rest of the world. If everybody else were only as healthy as you, instead of suffering from the psychic plague as most of them are, there would be no need for artificial compulsions, legal prohibitions, or for any of the oppressive machinery of the state. Everybody would be wholesomely self-regulatory. All would respond to "the natural biological law" freely and spontaneously. In other words, through widespread orgasmic potency, through a gonadal revolution, we would achieve the philosophical anarchist's ideal world.

THE place of religion in this view of mankind follows easily. Once in tune with the vital force of the universe, who could help but recognize it and then worship? Then too, this young bohemia is a learned crowd--or, at least, a wide-ranging bunch of readers. Religion, like sex, they find as they read history or philosophy is a natural, ever-present, human striving. And religion seems to them a logical counterpart of political anarchism. They often quote Herbert Read on the point. He is much admired--not that he holds to the sexual analysis above, but rather that he is a leading spokesman for the intellectual anarchists in England and the California literati are free borrowers.

Read expresses the relationship between anarchism and religion as follows: "I call religion a natural authority...the only force which can hold a people together, which can supply a natural authority to appeal to when personal interests clash For religion is never a synthetic creation. . . . A prophet like a poet is born."

The fact that Wilhelm Reich spurns religion while Read preaches it matters no whit to these philosophical improvisers, who also toss into their pot, along with these two, D. H. Lawrence, Emma Goldman, Madame Blavatsky, Henri Bergson, William Blake, and even Ouspenski of *Tertium Organum*, to name just a few.

III

THERE is, of course, nothing especially new in all this except orgasmic potency, and even that is just another term for an idea that centuries ago the mystics of India expressed in more poetic symbols. But out of this mixture, various combinations and emphases allow room for individual embroidery and on this score some imaginative patterns have been worked out. There is, for example, one small group of Gnostic anarchists weaving together the elaborate mysticisms of the Gnostic heretics of the second century A.D. and the philosophies of both Kropotkin and Wilhelm Reich. The devils of the Manicheans and the devils of the subconscious race together in dream symbols through their writings; for this group, too, is largely made up of poets. They are currently preparing a magazine to embody their views which has been named *Ark*, and which they are slowly printing by hand on an old press housed in a San Francisco basement.

There are other groups who combine vegetarianism, ballet dancing, co-operative handcrafts" anarchism, and sexual mysticism. Still others are held together by a co-operative search for orgasmic potency in the closest approximation to a

primitive tribal group they can contrive, in which all social, economic, and physical attributes, assets, and liabilities, are shared in common, and the ultimate objective is self-improvement.

It might be presumed, logically, that while orgasmic potency is eminently desirable from one point of view, its possession in this sick world would confront the healthy ones with a problem. How can they fit in, what are they to do with their lives? It turns out, however, that it's no problem at all, for another benefit that flows from a relaxed subconscious is sureness of purpose and relief from tearing doubts. It is inescapably clear to the potent what their role in the present civilization is. In a doom-struck world, rotting in chain-reactive decay, it is their solemn mission to preserve the essence of man through the descending holocaust. And since it is the mysterious quintessence of humankind, the very seed itself, that must be spored through the deluge, art, and only art, is the business of those pioneers for the New Israel.

So they write poetry. They paint. They write philosophy. They go to galleries and concerts. Only in art, today, can the fettered, mechanically burdened soul of man speak out his revolt against the dead hand of rationalism. Only through art is it any longer possible to reach that all but buried spark of natural life dying under the intolerable weight of modern man's sadistic super-ego. And only through art will man find a path back to his spontaneous, natural creativeness.

Here again you are apt to hear Herbert Read quoted, though sometimes not credited, for he has put this part of their view most clearly. "Poetry," he writes, "in its intensest and most creative moments penetrates to the same level as mysticism... For this reason it may well happen that the origins of a new religion will be found in art rather than in any form of moralistic revivalism. It may not be without significance that the most authentic types of modern art--the paintings of Picasso or the sculpture of Henry Moore--succeed in creating symbols whose nearest parallels are to be found in the magical accessories of primitive religions."

An artist, of course, creates even his vision of the future out of the materials at hand; hence the writings of these young poets are studded with phosphorescent phrases reflecting the putrescence they see around them, as well as with mystical symbols translating individual ecstatic and erotic experiences. Lines about drinking "our father's blood or strangling our mother with her hair," or "chopping up the blood like the dice of onions," or "quietly the mothers are killing their sons; quietly the fathers are raping their daughters" are far more frequent, however, than references to "trees flowing within me" or "this act of vision is an act of love"--lines, that is, promising green growth out of decay.

But it is difficult for the ordinary reader to tell, with any precision, just what most of the poems are striving toward. Some few of them are written with enough lucidity for ordinary mortals to understand them, but most of them are

incomprehensible. For one thing, their figures and symbols are drawn deliberately from psychoanalytical dream symbols, so that if you haven't been psychoanalyzed, or at least haven't read a mountain of case histories, you are as much removed from their language as you would be if they wrote in the mathematical jargon of econometrics. And for another, their avowed intent is to speak to the living unconscious of their readers and by evocative word-moods to slip under the rational, super-ego fences that hold the subconscious in jealous jail. In any case, they seem to understand each other quite well enough to engage in hours of controversy over the value of a line and even the most obscure among them are held in high repute by their fellow writers, and their works are published in their local literary press, the magazine *Circle*.

IV

CIRCLE is local, however, only in that it is published in Berkeley, and it is theirs only because it is so easily available to them. *Circle's* editor, publisher, and total staff is one of the young poets (twenty-four years old) whose writings are no more lucid than the next one's, but who refuses to be catalogued within any ism--anarchism, surrealism, or sexualism. *Circle*, says its publisher, George Leite, hews to no line but the new arid vital in modern art. "*Circle* is eclectic."

Like the new bohemia it serves, *Circle* is a postwar phenomenon: It was started about two years ago and Leite, who is full of energy, drove taxis, tended bars, and begged continually to buy the press and paper to produce his magazine. Nine issues have been published and in the column identifying contributors the following item could sometimes be found: "GEORGE LEITE, in need of financial aid." But the baby--the magazine--was not allowed to reflect the parent's poverty. Almost from the start *Circle* boasted heavy white paper, expensive reproductions, and even luxuriant covers in color.

Although the local literati furnish a major part of its contributions, *avant garde* writers from all over the nation have appeared on its pages and not infrequently there are pieces from England, Australia, and France. And *Circle's* circulation, says Leite, is international. The timing of each issue is, like the material each contains, also strictly eclectic. *Circle* appears whenever Leite is ready for it to appear, but one part of the ceremony attending each new publication is tying up bundles of the magazine to be shipped to Paris, London, Mexico City, Glasgow, and Cairo as well as Chicago, New York, New Orleans, and Los Angeles.

Today, says Leite, "*Circle* has the largest circulation of any art-literary review in America." What's more, beginning with the first issue in 1947, *Circle* proposes to pay for the material it publishes, and that is certainly a milestone in *avant garde* publication history. On its 'home ground *Circle's* reception has been mixed. The young literati hailed it, naturally, and not a few of the oldsters interested in encouraging literary experimentalism gave it a hand. Joseph Henry,

Jackson of the San Francisco *Chronicle*, for example, has granted it generous mention in his book column and men like Douglas Mac Agy, director of the San Francisco School of Fine Arts, have contributed articles for its pages. And recently, no less an institution than the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, together with the San Francisco School of Fine Arts, joined *Circle* in sponsoring a showing of *Avant garde* films in San Francisco. For, whatever may be the philosophy by which its contributors understand the world of today, the young writers in *Circle* write with a non-commercial dedication to modern art as they see it and among them are youngsters whose industry, if nothing else, gives some promise.

The most widespread local reaction to the magazine, however, is one of tolerant mystification, and is probably best characterized by the comment of a reader who, on hearing of *Circle's* international circulation, remarked: "Well, I hope that the people in Cairo understand it better than I do."

And apparently they do, at least some of them. The English poet Lawrence Durrell, for example, who until recently published an *avant garde* poetry review in Cairo, called *Personal Landscape* not only understood *Circle* but published in it and still does now and then. And from other little magazines like *The Jazz Forum* in London or *Angry Penguins* in Sydney, Australia, have come such compliments as: "*Circle* is the best thing yet to come out of America." In Sydney, as a matter of fact, *Circle* was the beneficiary of no little publicity a year or so ago when the Australian Post Office officials banned it as "indecent" and stirred the intellectuals in the country down under to quite a flurry of defense.

THE international reception of *Circle*, small though it probably is, is nonetheless something of an indication that our new bohemia is not simply a local manifestation. Even more convincing that there is here something more than a California deviation is the similarity in tone and outlook between *Circle* and the many, many little magazines now springing up all over the English-speaking world. Not only are *Circle's* contributors' found in them, but the drift toward anarchism and the emphasis on salvation through sex is also obvious in their pages. For example, you can find the theories of Wilhelm Reich given serious and approving discussion in recent issues of journals like *Now* of England, or *Hermes* of Sydney, Australia.

Most local observers of the new bohemia, however, never see the counterparts of *Circle* which appear in the rest of the world and hence are inclined to account for the new phenomenon on the basis of local events. And they have, it is true" a sequence out of which a persuasive and logical story can be built.

V

THAT story starts with the arrival of Henry Miller in the Big Sur sometime late in 1943. Miller unpacked the canned goods, wool scarves, pants, and ties that he

had successfully panhandled through the *New Republic's* letter column and settled down in a cabin belonging to George Leite some twenty miles or so below Carmel. Although *Time* magazine could describe a book about Henry Miller, published a year or so ago (*The Happy Rock*), as a book about a man most people had never read, written by a group of thirty intellectuals of whom most people had never heard (Leite was one of them), Miller created quite a stir when he settled among us.

The little magazines of the West, and there are more of them than you might imagine, hailed his coming in extravagant terms. He was welcomed in *Motive* (then published in Waco, Texas, believe it or not) not only as the greatest living American writer, but as a great mystic, philosopher, and human being. Not long after his appearance on the coast, his books turned up in local bookshops with whole windows given over to them and the young surrealist-anarchist writers and hangers-on were called, for a time, Millerites.

There was considerable justification for the term. Miller's shack down in the Big Sur was the goal of many a cultural pilgrim. For one thing, there existed here, as in most other cities in the country, a select group among whom pirated editions of his *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn* had been handed around as something select and special. Many of these readers were curious to have a look at the writer who could crowd more four letter words on a page than any of his predecessors in pornography. Something more serious than a rakish curiosity; however, sent scores of earnest young conscientious objectors to sit at his knee and listen to his stories of personal sacrifice in the name of freedom, of how he rationalized begging in order to avoid the slavery of participation in a rotten society.

These disciples came to see him because he had written and published a booklet, through a local publisher, called *Murder the Murderers*. It was outspokenly pacifistic, and he published it during the war. He thus became for the conscientious objectors a symbol of literary courage and the only writer of any standing at all who dared to write what they felt. The coast had more than its share of the nation's CO's, for the Army had seen fit to settle three-quarters of the 5,500 "men against the state" west of the Mississippi; and because the coast offered isolated, forest-ranger work, better than half of these landed in coastal camps. They had lots of time to read and Henry Miller was one of the most popular contemporary writers among them. And these readers of Miller read, not for the titillation of the four-letter words, but for the philosophy.

They read his uncensored books published in the United States (*Cosmological Eye*, *Colossus of Maroussi*, *Sunday After the War*, *Air Conditioned Nightmare*, etc.) and from them imbibed an engaging potpourri of mysticism, egoism, sexualism, surrealism, and anarchism. By the very nature of the act which made them conscientious objectors, the CO's were conditioned to find an acceptable

rationalization of their position in anarchism and to seek for a path of personal salvation in defiance of the organized world they had opposed.

Thus there developed among them a core of loyalty, at one and the same time, both to Henry Miller and to certain churches like the Quakers and Mennonites which had stood by them throughout the war. They were young enough and bitter enough to find nothing disconcerting in so strange a mixture as Quaker pacifism and Miller sexualism. So, when they were given leave from the camps, and after the war was over, not a few of them made for the California coastal hills and a life of freedom devoted to the arts *a la* Henry Miller.

The Miller devotees are generally religious, or at least mystical, and Miller's friends today usually describe him, first, "as a deeply religious man." For the CO's who had no religious ties, or feelings, there was established in San Francisco a little weekly journal called *Pacifica Views*, which became a force of considerable influence.

Pacifica Views was openly anarchist and its influence was enhanced by the sympathetic representation of the CO's position in the community. Its editor, George B. Reeves, successfully accomplished this not only through the magazine itself but also in the Human Events pamphlet *Men Against the State*. Even in *Pacifica Views*, however, the anarchism-sexualism tie was aired by several weeks' discussion of Wilhelm Reich's thesis and the magazine's political position was embellished with a sure come-on for the young-sexual freedom for the adolescent and the deep political significance that lies in developing a healthy sexuality "among the masses of the people who are endemically neurotic and sexually sick."

ANARCHISM is, of course, nothing new to the West. There have been in both Seattle and San Francisco small anarchist groups ever since the first World War and before, and remnants of them have persisted. Some are hangovers from the days of the Wobblies. Others are made up of first and second generation European immigrants--like the San Francisco group, the Libertarians, which is largely Italian. All during the thirties these small groups existed without benefit of attention from young intellectuals who in those days were most apt to be thumping their typewriters on behalf of the United Front.

Not long after December 7, 1941, however, the poet Kenneth Rexroth left the ranks of the Communists in San Francisco and turned both anarchist and pacifist, Around him, as around Miller, there collected a group of young intellectuals and writers who met weekly in self-education sessions, reading the journals of the English anarchists, studying the old-line anarchist philosophers like Kropotkin, and leavening the politics liberally with psychoanalytic interpretations from Reich. It was and is, however, a decidedly literary group in which politics is all but submerged by art; where poems, not polemics, are

written; and where D. H. Lawrence outshines Bakunin--Lawrence the philosopher, of *Fantasia and the Unconscious* rather than Lawrence the novelist.

Nevertheless, the anarchism of this group is taken seriously enough to call forth tokens to the political as well as the sexual; and at meetings of the Libertarians, today, you will be apt to find young intellectuals sprinkled among the moustachioed papas and bosomed mamas who, until recently, had no such high-toned co-operation. In this particular group around Rexroth, the Henry Miller kind of anarchism is held to be irresponsible, for Miller goes so far on the lonely, individualistic trail as to sneer at even anarchist organization.

To the outside observer, however, the differences between the Miller adherents and the Rexroth followers are more than outweighed by their similarities. They both reject rationalism, espouse mysticism, and belong to the select few who are orgasmically potent. And they both share in another attitude that sets them sharply apart from the bohemians of the twenties. They prefer their women subdued-verbally and intellectually.

No budding Edna St. Vincent Millay or caustic Dorothy Parker appears at their parties. If the girls want to get along they learn, pretty generally, to keep their mouths shut, to play the role of the quiet and yielding vessel through which man finds the cosmos. Although there are a few women writers found now and then in *Circle*--Anais Nin is a favorite and Maude Phelps Hutchins (wife of Robert Hutchins, chancellor of the University of Chicago) has appeared--the accepted view of both the women and the men seems to be that woman steps out of her cosmic destiny when the goal of her endeavor shifts beyond bed and board. This doesn't mean that the women are economically dependent, however. Most of the girls hold down jobs. But the job is significant only in that it contributes to a more satisfactory board.

VI

DOWN in Carmel, where the new bohemia is a more noticeable addition to the community than it is in either Berkeley or San Francisco (because Carmel is a smaller and more closely knit community), the parties and functions attended by Miller and his followers are the subject of considerable discussion and sometimes a less relaxed note is discernible in the reaction to them. Although a live-and-let-live attitude toward human foibles is characteristic of that long established center for deviants, there is some murmuring about the threat to the beauty of the countryside, implicit in a colony of shacks and tents; and among learned liberals there are some who view with alarm the lure of this mysticism.

Needless to say, the young writer searching for a vision in the cosmos doesn't pay much heed to local elections, nor feel great concern over the price of milk. Furthermore, the mood and outlook of these mystics is hardly compatible with democratic tenets of equality. It is, in fact, uncomfortably reminiscent of the

glorification of instincts and urges, the subjective absolutism of the famed Stephan George circle in pre-Hitler Germany, where a number of Nazi leaders-to-be drank in that poet's songs of the divine power which manifests itself "not in the persons of the many, the all-too-many, but only in the creative personality..."

This is not to pin a tattered and over-used label on the California group; but rather to explain why, now and then, an unfriendly term like "neo-fascist" is sometimes applied to them. Certainly, anybody looking for similarities between these local poets and the German group can find a number of them. It was George, for example, who held the doctrine that, "the true standards and boundaries now disregarded by man shall be reinstated, for a select few at first; instincts must be reborn, a new spirit must arise out of the blood, and in time the healing of the few shall be extended to the many."

The mystics in the Big Sur are unquestionably confident of their membership in the select few and no less confident of the low estate of the many. Henry Miller is not so delicate but quite as positive as the German in the way he puts it: "A real man has no need of governments, of moral or ethical codes, to say nothing of battleships, police clubs, high powered bombs and such things. Of course, a real man is hard to find, but that's the only kind worth talking about. Why talk about trash? It is the great mass of mankind, the mob, the people, who create permanently bad times."

It is difficult at the present time, however, to project anything significantly sinister from the posturings of the real men in the Big Sur, or to carry the similarity to the George circle very far. There is no design or German orderliness in the mysticism of the California anarchists. Anything goes. Since Miller's sojourn on the coast, the bag of wonders he brought with him has even been stuffed with a number of local additions; for besides the CO's, the salacious curious, and the young literati, there were still other visitors to Miller's shack.

His appetite for the mysterious was soon widely known and a host of dealers in occult lore came to see him: astrologers, faith healers, sexologists, and spiritualists laid their experiences in the wonderful at his feet and marveled with him over the grandeurs of the Lost Continent of Mu.

AMONG the astrologers was Dane Rudhyer, an astrological philosopher who has lived near Los Angeles for many years. He and Miller now share the knowledge that the world today is passing through the watery age of Pisces, and in Miller's current writings in *Circle* you can run across such phrases as "Balzac is a born Neptunian, indeed, one of the most perfect examples known to astrology." Rudhyer himself is also a contributor to *Circle*, and in the contributors' column he is identified as "well known for his lecturing, painting and composing; is the foremost astrologer in the U. S. His book *The Astrology of Personality* is a must for the student of symbolism."

The fact that Rudhyer paints, as well as drawing up horoscopes and writing, brings up another facet of the life of these new literati--the widespread interest in painting among writers. Nearly all of them dabble in either water color or oils. In fact, painting has become the dominant hobby among them. Miller himself has done water colors for years. Their canvases are generally classed as "primitives" and while most of them make no attempt to exhibit, the Raymond and Raymond Galleries of San Francisco recently featured a show by Emil White, an intimate of Miller's and a recent settler in the Big Sur. White never held a brush in his hand until a couple of years ago when he took one up because Miller had said, "why don't you?" and because the California outdoors inspired him. In spite of his limited background his show received quite friendly reviews in the local press--the San Francisco *Chronicle*, not *Circle*.

THE interest that a good many professional painters in California have evidenced in both Miller and *Circle* is probably due, in part, to this interest that the writers have in their work. Not a little of *Circle's* publishing costs can be laid to its reproductions of the works of painters like Knud Merrild, Jean Varda, and Ellwood Graham, and the compositions of the photographer, Man Ray. And at any exhibition of modern painting hereabouts the new bohemia turns out in full force. Since the war, two new galleries have sprung up largely as a result of this interest. One of them is in Monterey (a town adjoining Carmel) and the other is in Berkeley. The Berkeley gallery is a second venture of *Circle's* energetic publisher. It adjoins his new bookstore, *daliel's* (always spelled with a little *d* and meaning, in Hebrew--according to Leite--"poor in the sight of God").

daliel's is described by its entrepreneur in the University of California's literary magazine, *The Occident*, as "the West's most modern bookstore and gallery" which "invites the discerning student and professor's perusal of the most extensive stock of foreign importations and hard-to-get modern writing in this area, as well as a complete stock of new and used books in the fields of art, poetry, psychoanalysis, and experimental writing."

daliel's is, of course, no vast undertaking but it has made, in the short time since it has opened, a considerable impression. It is, for one thing, such a tangible, physical evidence of this new group among us, jutting out as it does a good foot and a half beyond every other workaday store front along Telegraph Avenue, sporting its ultra-modern architecture right across the street from a big Lucky super-market and next door to a Shell gasoline station.

ITS length of life as a going venture may be one indication of just how true it is that we are destined to succor the nation's *avant garde* here on the West Coast. The idea that this really *is* the new Paris would come as no great surprise to many a Californian. Even the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce would probably agree that here above the beautiful, bay there rests the most cosmopolitan, tolerantly sophisticated city in the United States, ripe and ready to play generous host to the creators of modern art and literature; while New York

City, which copped the United Nations away from us, coldly neglects the world's diplomats and stuffed shirts. And don't forget that, after all, it was San Francisco which found Edmund Wilson's *Memoirs of Hecate County* a work of art, not pornography, when both New York City and Los Angeles had banned the book.

Anyway, the burgeoning young bohemians have already become acclimated to the extent that they share our booster spirit. They are full of stories of the intellectual migration westward and they will tell you confidently that "we are witnessing here a cultural revival like that around Yeats in Dublin."