entire female "biographies" articulated by pieces and stages in the culture, fantasies with some depth and significance about a particular phase or incident of the feminine biographical life cycle—a love affair, a job, a major life change—become available to art, popular and elite. That many men, and many women, are, and will continue to be, uninterested in, and even antagonistic to healthier female fantasy is both true and discouraging. Pornography is a phenomenon to be watche
porn,
preval ce cannot alter the fact that for the first time a strong base for a variety of popular feminine fantasies not based on female humiliation is being laid; it will be built on. The Republican party, our long-time provider of political soft porn, with its anti-abortion, anti-ERA platform, may be acting out the dream-life of part of the nation, but the UN is right: it is the Woman's Decade, and probably her century.

Moore: G. E. Moore and the Cambridge Apostles by Paul Levy

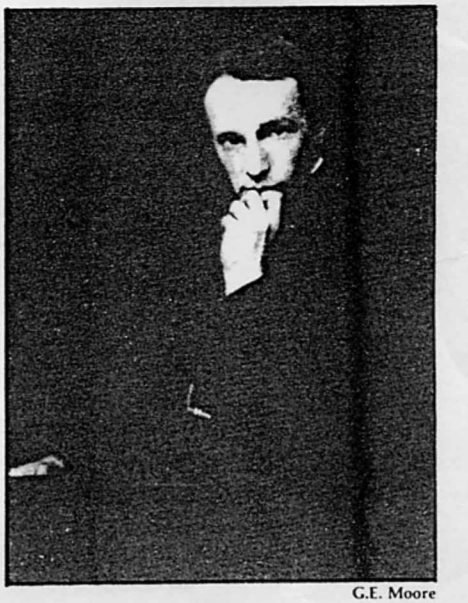
(Holt, Rinehart and Winston; $18.95)

Paul Levy is a young American who has moved to London and carved out for himself a respectable place as a *Bloomsburylehrer*. He is, in other words, one of those writers who is continuing to analyze (and promote) the fame of the wonderful generation of novelists, painters, economists, and artists, most of them living in London a stone's throw from the British Museum and connected with Cambridge University, who captured the attention of the English after World War I and of the Americans after World War II—Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Vanessa and Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey and Maynard Keynes, Roger Fry, Desmond McCarthy, E. M. Forster, and the rest. Paul Levy has become very well connected with English literary society, as the preface to his new book testifies, and he has made himself particularly expert on the life and writings of Lytton Strachey; but in this book his subject is the person to whom many of the Bloomsbury group themselves pointed as their inspiration, even though he himself was scarcely ever to be seen in the neighborhood of Gordon Square. This was the Cambridge philosopher G. E. Moore, who lived from 1873 to 1958, and published one book of extended philosophical argument (*Principia Ethica*, 1903) before settling down at Cambridge in 1911 to a career as the leading expositor and teacher of analytical philosophy.

The story Paul Levy has to tell is curious, intriguing, and also disturbing, particularly for anyone like me, who grew up in the shadow of Moore and has felt obliged to develop some psychological distance, both from him personally and from his philosophical techniques. (When I was first married, my wife and I lived in the coach house at the bottom of Moore's garden in Chesterton Road, Cambridge; and I retain vivid memories of Moore in old age, working in his garden, singing Schubert *Lieder* in a light, pure voice, or filling his pipe before his weekly conversation with Ludwig Wittgenstein, who had succeeded him at Trinity in the Chair of Philosophy.)

It is a curious story because, except for one thing, the name of G. E. Moore would mean no more to the general reader in America today than the name of his counterpart at Harvard, C. I. Lewis, means to the general reader in Britain. That one thing was Moore's connection with a longstanding and influential secret society at Cambridge University, officially called the Cambridge Conversazione Society, but generally referred to as the Apostles—a name first given in scorn but soon (like the name of Quakers for the Society of Friends) accepted with pride. From the year 1820 on, the Apostles had had a remarkably consistent record of co-opting to itself the most brilliant Cambridge undergraduates of each generation; and it did so with most notable effect during the decades immediately before World War I, which saw the election of just about all the (male) members of the later Bloomsbury group, and also of the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, the mathematician G. H. Hardy, assorted Llewellyn Davies, Trevelyans, and
ward Marsh,
notable in Cambridge a. (of whom
Presumably, too, the society figures
in its own clandestine way: Paul
speaks of only one current member—
Jonathan Miller—though he mentions
1970 as the year that saw the first
election of a female Apostle.

It is an intriguing story because Keynes, Strachey, and their Bloomsbury associates took Moore's *Principia* as their inspired text, while at the same time cheerfully misrepresenting its message.



G.E. Moore

The central point of Moore's concept of "intrinsic goods" was austere and philosophical: as contrasted with the classical utilitarians, he argued that material conditions (such as the state of drains) were not good in themselves, but only good to the extent that they promoted good human states of consciousness. Those states of mind alone were capable of being "good" without qualification. As illustrations, Moore cited the states of mind associated with human friendship and artistic experience; but there is no reason to believe that these illustrations were meant to be an exhaustive list, even of the most important "goods." Moore's Bloomsbury followers, however, understood him to be enthroning Art and Friendship—particularly friendship between men—as the supreme occasions for "good" states of mind. Hence there arose the odd spectacle of Lytton Strachey treating the chaste and unworldly Moore as a prophet of aesthetic homosexuality. And this, as Paul Levy makes clear, compels one to face the question: just what was it about Moore and his role in the Apostles that gave

Rachel: "His hands shot out and imprisoned her face, tightening until they were crushing her bones like matchwood. 'I could like hurting you, Rachel,'" he tells her.

Like hard-core porn and the male weepies, Harlequins are dramas of dependency. Dependency, or a shifting series of dependencies, becomes the *modus vivendi* of a person or a culture when the structure of the self in its more traditional Freudian incarnation has vastly weakened or collapsed. The Harlequin heroine guarantees the continuance of her initial youthful ignorance of life by her avid willingness to let the first chance at sexual bondage do the work experience is usually asked to accomplish. The idea of "growing up," of maturation, is the one most taboo in porn, and this taboo constitutes one of its great attractions. The Harlequin heroine averts the pain of not knowing who she is by courting the (only) apparently greater pain of addicting herself to a powerful and totally unknown male. He, in turn, prolongs her retardation in order to go on being his inscrutable self. They "torment" each other—a favored Harlequin word—by their apparently incommunicable love into facsimiles of the selves neither possesses.

The complete sexual stereotyping of soft and hard porn handily solves the confusion rampant in the more self-conscious works of Edwards, Benton, and Pakula. But in soft porn, hard porn, and male weepies alike, the male ego is preferred, protected, stabilized. In the world of shifting sexual identities in current films, female strength must be siphoned to the male or shown run amok; in the legends of hard porn, feminine self-reliance must be brutalized and broken; in the soft-porn fantasies of the Harlequins, woman's independence is made horrifically unattractive and unrewarding, her dependence presented as synonymous with excitement.

Admittedly incomplete surveys of readers suggest that Harlequins, concerned exclusively with the defloration and marriage of young girls, are consumed not only by schoolgirls but by "normal," active women in their 30s, 40s, and 50s. If true, this statistic hardly assures us that the Harlequins are harmless ("They must be all right if grown up middle-class women like them"), but provokes instead serious concern for their women readers. How can they tolerate or require so extraordinary a disjuncture between their lives and their fantasies? Probably the Harlequins are not written by men, although the bland WASP noms-de-plumes of the supposed authors tell us nothing; but the women who couldn't thrill to male nudity in *Playgirl* are enjoying the titillation of seeing themselves, not necessarily as they are, but as some men would like to see them: illogical, innocent, magnetized by male sexuality and brutality. It is a frightening measure of the still patriarchal quality of our culture that many women of all ages co-sponsor male fantasies about themselves and enjoy peep-shows into masculine myths about their sexuality as the surest means of self-induced excitation.

If these cultural phenomena constitute a backlash against the independent woman, it is an attack on an opponent felt as formidable. The voices of the opposition cannot drown out the refrain forming perhaps for the first time in the hearts of countless American women and perhaps of many American men: it is better today to be born female than male. The opportunities are at least new, the problems still interesting. Recently, male scholars and observers have commented profusely on modern man's post-Freudian destabilized "narcissistic" ego, what could be called the transfusion self. Yet one can wonder—the male observers and scholars usually do not—whether their observations hold equally true for the female psyche. Might it not be closer than the male's to the older Freudian ego model with its implications of a coherent narrative of the self and a predictable dynamic of conflict?

Women's best self-expression surely bears more affinities to Victorian precedents than does that of men. Non-porn cultural fare, of varying worth and popularity, more consonant with feminine and human as well as feminist needs than porn, is also burgeoning, if less rapidly. TV movies such as last year's "Like Mom, Like Me," contemporary films like Paul Mazursky's *An Unmarried Woman*, Adrian Lyne's provocative *Foxes*, Claudia Weill's *Girl Friends*, Fred Zinneman's *Julia*, Hal Ashby's *Coming Home*, Herbert Ross's *The Turning Point*, Ingmar Bergman's *Autumn Sonata*, Richard Brook's *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*, the important works of authors like Adrienne Rich, Marge Piercy, Gail Godwin, Marilyn French, Joan Didion, Margaret Atwood, Doris Lessing, and Margaret Drabble offer the first sometimes awkward, sometimes brilliant, strangely moving vignettes of women liking women. They suggest that power passes down the matriarchal line as surely as it does down the patriarchal line. They dramatize and detail portions of female experience—aging, so-called sexual abnormality, the long stretches of married life, maternity, the crisis of divorce—seldom before treated as subject matter.

In harvesting the material generated by the new freedom and the new roles open to their sex, women are able to regenerate, free from any effective charges of anachronism, the more traditional forms, like the novel, the memoir, and the narrative, whether in film or fiction, treated as passé by their male contemporaries. Because these forms are dependent for vitality on the presence of genuine social change, women, implicated willy-nilly in such change, need not abandon or violently reorder their structure as men, whose status is currently more static, apparently must. Women are able to use forms, in other words, that have long proved both their immense popularity in the marketplace and their place in the halls of artistic fame. Today women are creating an art, with all its shortcomings, genuinely their own, an art both traditional and bold, an art that contrasts with, more readily than it supplements, the work of its authors' male contemporaries.

Such works of feminine art, mass or elite, are constructing for the first time in Western history a complete visible biography for women: the maturation forbidden in porn is a possible subject here. A complete feminine biography in art has hitherto been impossible for the simple reason that, like male biography, it involves the acknowledgment that its subject is somewhere autonomous, is sometimes alone, lonely, whether terrified or independent, and yet survives.

This construction of a total imaginative feminine biography is critical because biography is the base fantasy life of "healthy" people, the product of the profound hope that our lives be complete and entire and, most of all, shaped—that they not be the series of random incidents and fatally reiterated mistakes terminated at some unknown and incomprehensible juncture we sometimes fear they are. From such