

intimately, the others saw me as a Dresden figurine, a clockwork ballerina, a pink flower, a sugar-plum fairy and god knows what else: all symbols not of the female, but of the feminine, in the most novelettish terms. As I listened, it seemed to me that they were describing not me, but my graceful, actressish, over-feminine mother.

It was a blinding revelation. In the process of growing up, of adjusting to the demands of a sexist society, now that I reached the age my mother was when I first took notice of her - I had become my mother.

But, I told myself, it's not too late; I can still back-pedal and let people see the troubled, vulnerable, sincere person that I really am. (Is there anyone in this whole wide world who does not think of himself or herself as troubled, vulnerable, and sincere?) Anyway, next autumn I enrolled in another group, and I resolved there to be myself. To show what I felt, even if it was only boredom; not to try to be attractive or pleasant, not to win hearts or charm people; just see what I could learn. Just relax and let it wash over me.

It was terribly boring. Without my private game of appealing to a diversity of tastes, there was nothing much to do. In any case, it was a less successful group all round - too large, less homogeneous in outlook and education. The exercises repeated those of the earlier group, but people held back and, on being examined for 'how you feel now', refused to be drawn out or else, became exhibitionistic. After four or five sessions I dropped out. Besides, I was beginning to put on weight again. Problems of growth or fulfilment are dwarfed by the daily, hourly battle against over-eating. My one free evening a week is now devoted to the meetings of weight watchers, where there are thirty to fifty women exactly like Leah and me, who found that humanistic psychology seldom enters the field of obsessions and compulsions. But we all hope that somewhere, somehow, we shall find some conundrum, even some Eysenckian conditioning machine, to enable us all to cope once and for all with the self-destructing curse of bread, cakes, biscuits, bananas, chocolates, peanuts, wine, whisky or almond fudge.

WOODEN HORSE

All day long

Voices have beaten about me -

Spear-blows

On the side of the Wooden Horse.

R.G. Hampson