

## Number Ten



## NUMBER TEN

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ROBERT NEDELKOFF

### Pamela Moore Plus Forty

One afternoon toward the end of 1982 I happened across a trade paperback called *The Catalog of Cool*, compiled by a veteran music-industry publicist named Gene Sculatti. The book consisted of articles and blurbs by Sculatti and his cronies, among whom were some names—Ronn Spencer and Davin Seay, for example—familiar only to steady readers of music magazines, and a handful of names—Nick Tosches and Richard Meltzer—known in slightly wider circles. The book represented an early attempt to codify that species of 1950s bachelor-pad nostalgia that would finally catch on among “twentysomethings” more than a decade later, with heavy coverage given to Terry Southern, Frank Sinatra’s Rat Pack, Louis Prima, Robert Mitchum and others. Garage bands of the 1960s, Harvey Pekar’s *American Splendor*, and some other things only tangentially related to the 1950-63 archetype of “cool” were also included. One sixteen-page section summarized a few dozen essential “reads” for the aspiring hepster, including some obvious choices, like Richard Farina’s *Been Down So Long* and the works of Nelson Algren; some selections a little ahead of their time for 1982, like Jim Thompson’s *The Killer Inside Me*; some books by authors I’d heard of before, like Chandler Brossard and Bernard Wolfe; and one book by an author of whom I had never heard:

*Chocolates For Breakfast*, by Pamela Moore (Holt, Rinehart & Winston hardcover; Bantam paperback): This eighteen-year-old “answer to Françoise Sagan” penned the ultimate teen sophisticate fantasy in ’56. Her 15-year-old heroine first balls a gag actor in H’wood, then makes it with some hermetic, filthy rich, hotel-bound Italian count in NY, where she’s gone to swing at the Stork Club. At home, mom serves martinis at 11, breakfast at noon.

I noted the blurb and read on, assuming I would encounter Pamela Moore’s name elsewhere. I never did. Several years later, on a whim, I pulled down *Contemporary Authors* and found an entry for her in Vols. 1-4, revised. The sketchy story it told was of interest, but I did not look into it further.

The eighties rolled on. By the end of 1984, the success of Jay McInerney, Bret Easton Ellis, and Tama Janowitz had gotten the media talking about “young writers” and hailing the escapades of a bogus literary school called the “Brat Pack.” Reviewers and gossip columnists pondered which member of the gang would be the “new Salinger,” which chronicle of youthful anomie would turn out to be the authentic successor of *Catcher in the Rye*. Before long, though, it was clear that those anxious to discover another Salinger would do better to look backward.

In 1992, I encountered the work of Mary MacLane, the Montana-bred novelist whose work caused a sensation in Teddy Roosevelt’s America and whose vogue vanished as quickly as it had

come, leaving her to die in obscurity in Chicago a quarter-century later. (The opening words of her first and best-known book were reprinted in the front section of the November 1994 *Harper’s*; the book as a whole was included in the 1993 anthology *Tender Darkness*.) The episode made me recall the mysterious Pamela Moore, and after years of searching I was able to find copies of all four of her novels in a dusty warehouse answering to the name of bookstore just south of Oakland. I have also sifted through what facts of her life I could learn from the pages of old magazines and newspapers. The story I have compiled from them follows.

### I.

In the summer of 1956, the hottest thing going in American fiction publishing—as in the publishing industries of Western Europe and England—was the *oeuvre* of a 21-year-old Frenchwoman named Françoise Sagan. Her first book, *Bonjour Tristesse*, written at the age of eighteen, had caused a sensation in her native land in 1954 and had shortly been translated into English, climbing the American and British bestseller lists with ease in 1955, settling in at number one and making the title such a catchphrase that not even Hollywood could bring itself to change the moniker of the movie version to *Goodbye Soror* or even *Bye Bye Blues*.

During that summer it was clear that Sagan’s second book, *Une Certaine Sourire*, would do even better, as it piled up the largest advance sale for its publisher, E.P. Dutton, since the twenties. American houses, agog at the figures, were conducting an intense search for the domestic equivalent of the free-spirited writer famed for driving a sports car barefoot. Such a writer, given that her subject matter would be the problems and pleasures of youth, could also count on comparisons to J.D. Salinger, whose following had only just begun to exceed “cult” status. (It was in this year that the first censorship fracas involving *The Catcher In The Rye* erupted when a college professor was dismissed

for assigning it to his students.)

It fell to Rinehart & Co., publishers of Norman Mailer’s first two books, to find the American Sagan. She turned out to be the obligatory eighteen years of age—her book, in fact, came out three weeks before her nineteenth birthday. She was precocious in other ways as well, being a *senior* in college when the book came out, and having entered the world of higher education a month shy of sixteen. Her academic areas of interest, rather than the expected English and “creative writing,” were ancient and medieval history (with emphasis on military history) and, for her minors, Roman Law and Greek—with straight A’s in all of them. She had acted in summer stock, and, as the daughter of a magazine editor, could be expected to handle publicity with aplomb. Her college, Barnard, struck the right note of elitist bohemia. Best of all, her book was set in the world of the rich, spoiled haute monde—what had been called “Café Society” in the thirties, and which had only just acquired the title “Jet Set.” Her name was Pamela Moore, and her book was *Chocolates For Breakfast*.

Pamela was born on September 22, 1937, in New York, the daughter of two writers. Her father, Don Moore, was 32 at the time. He was the son of an Iowa newspaper publisher; in 1925, he had graduated second in his class at Dartmouth. In the late twenties he had edited Edgar Rice Burroughs and other pulp writers at the *Argosy All Story Weekly*, then signed on with Hearst’s King Features Syndicate as writer for a new comic strip drawn by Alex Raymond (who’d just finished doing a G-man strip written by Dashiell Hammett). The strip was *Flash Gordon*, and Moore wrote it, as well as *Jungle Jim*, until 1954, with time out for trips to Hollywood to work on the serial versions of the two strips.

Sometime in the early thirties, Don Moore married a young woman named Isabel Walsh. She already had a daughter, Elaine, who took her stepfather’s name. Isabel was a writer as well, specializing in syrupy women’s-magazine stories, and soon had work published in

Redbook, Hearst's *American Weekly*, and *Cosmopolitan*. For Rinehart, her daughter's future publisher, she wrote three novels in the early forties, with titles like *The Other Woman* and *I'll Never Let You Go*. About then Don and Isabel Moore split up. In later years Isabel devoted herself to supervising the show-horse riding career of her daughter Elaine, who won a number of championships in the forties before retiring to marry and settle in Florida. Pamela shuttled back and forth between parents: her mother in New York, where Isabel edited *Photoplay* for some years; her father, mostly in Hollywood, where he supplemented his King Features earnings by working as a story editor for RKO and Warner Brothers. Both of Pamela's parents moved in a world defined by Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons on one coast, and by Walter Winchell on the other. It was a world where childhood had to be cultivated like an orchid in a greenhouse if it was to happen at all. For Pamela Moore the situation was a tragic one: Childhood succeeded maturity, rather than preceding it. One of the most poignant aspects of her first novel, in fact, is the curious perspective of age with which the narrator describes her protagonist: "Years later, Courtney would remember..." or "As a grown woman, Courtney would realize..." The writer of the book herself was eighteen; the character ages from fifteen to sixteen in the book's course. Through the fictive and narrative personas of her first novel, Pamela Moore repeats this pathetic plea: *I don't understand how one endures these things now, but one day, when I'm older and wiser...* Her subsequent books show how far she was from ever reaching that status, as woman or writer.

## II.

Rinehart, as noted, snapped up *Chocolates For Breakfast*, and, following a careful publicity campaign, unleashed it on the world in September 1956. It attracted attention at once, and no wonder. The first chapter depicts Courtney Farrell, the heroine, and

Janet Parker, her best friend, sitting in their prep school dorm—in Janet's case, "with her clothes off" (as the novel's second paragraph pointedly informs the reader)—while arguing over whether Courtney is stumbling into a lesbian relationship with her English teacher. Before many pages have passed, Courtney is attempting to lose her virginity to a pretty-boy acquaintance of her fading movie-star mother at the Garden of Allah in Hollywood, the one-time home of F. Scott Fitzgerald, as Pamela notes in the book. True, Moore does prudently postpone the virginity-losing until Courtney has safely reached sixteen, but the book's impact was still enormous, given the moral climate of 1956 (the Legion of Decency condemned *Baby Doll* the same year, there were whisperings about a reputedly pornographic paperback from Paris labeled *Lolita*, and Otto Preminger was refused an MPAA certificate for the use of the word "virgin" in *The Moon Is Blue*).

"Not very long ago, it would have been regarded as shocking to find girls in their teens reading the kind of books they're now writing," wrote Robert Clurman in *The New York Times Book Review*—and that was before publication. *Newsweek's* reviewer, all too prescient, wrote: "She may well be also a part of a trend among publishers to start a new cycle of youth problem novels, as told by the young—a kind of literary parallel to the more overt delinquencies of the switch-blade hoodlums."

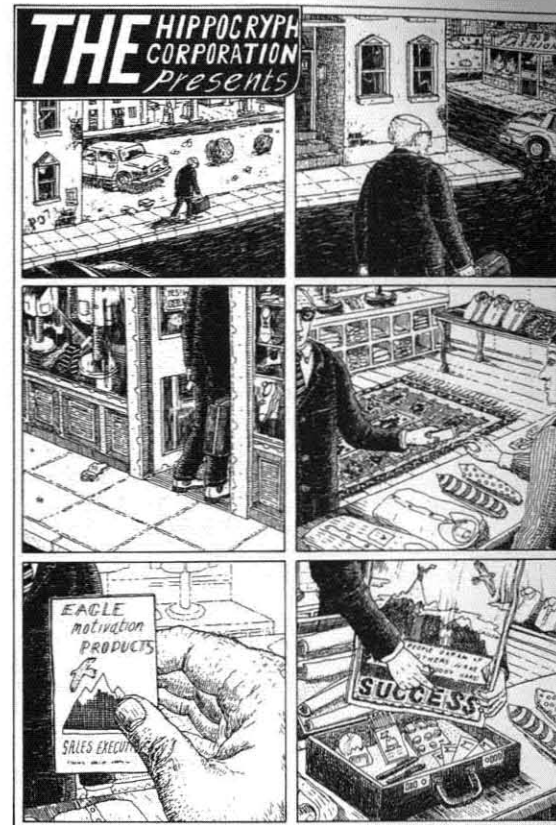
The novel went into two printings before publication, and scraped onto the bottom of the hardcover bestseller lists for several weeks in September and October. The comparisons to Françoise Sagan continued, though William Hogan of the *San Francisco Chronicle* noted that Pamela's "dabbings" in sex were not as "blatant" as the French writer's. He also remarked: "It would appear that Miss Moore had hoped... to become the female J.D. Salinger." The comparison has been made countless times since, for countless writers, but this was one of the first instances.

In the weeks prior to the appearance

of her book, Moore had, in Salingerian fashion, made herself unavailable for interviews. Instead, she busied herself studying the "strategy and tactics" of European warfare in a tour of battlefields, which fact struck the journalists of the time as an entertaining eccentricity in a young woman. But after publication, she juggled the studies of her final year at Barnard with being, in her words, "caught between the American public and journalists who wanted to know about my love life, and my college friends studying creative writing who condemned me as 'commercial.'" She often made the gossip columns when she ventured to the theater or a restaurant. Publishers were deluged with manuscripts by young women seeking to imitate her, as she had been thought to be imitating Sagan (although the Fitzgerald of *This Side of Paradise* was clearly her most important model). As much as the best-known of her counterparts in the eighties, she was a star. And, all over the country, young mothers and fathers began naming their daughters Courtney.

It seems worthwhile to note here that Pamela Moore's one permanent contribution to American culture was in the area of nomenclature. In all the half-dozen "How to Name Your Baby" books published before 1960 that I've seen, "Courtney" appears exclusively as a male name of French origin. Prior to 1956, it was a fairly common Christian name for men in England and the Southern United States. Every female "Courtney" that this writer has personally known, in fact, was born in 1958 or in a subsequent year—that is, during or immediately after the period that *Chocolates* began to sell in paperback.

When in high school and college I encountered a number of Courtneys born in 1958 through 1960; thereafter, for four years—the period the book was out of print—the name appears to have dropped off in frequency, then reappeared with a vengeance in 1964, the year *Chocolates* reappeared in print. The name has maintained its popularity since then, as a star of the nation's most popular sitcom and one of this mighty land's twenty-five most influential citizens (if *Time* be trusted) can respectively attest. *The Guinness Book of Names*, in fact, includes a survey showing that through the nineties "Courtney"





has consistently ranked among the twenty names most frequently given female infants in the United States.

Pamela Moore's reaction to her stardom, upon graduating in May 1957, was (quoting from her *Contemporary Authors* sketch) to "expatriate to Paris to find my identity." A month later, Bantam issued *Chocolates* in paperback. That edition sold 600,000 copies in the last six months of the year, and would have consolidated Moore's celebrity if she had stayed in America. (Another thing that would have consolidated her fame would have been a movie version of the book, but no such movie was made, undoubtedly because the moguls viewed her picture of Hollywood in much the same light as they regarded the depictions offered by Budd Schulberg, Horace McCoy, or Nathanael West.) Pamela's reasons for going to Europe were clear. Like the heroine of her book, she wanted to be taken seriously, not only as a writer, but as a person. In an America where the burgeoning cult of the nymphet was shortly to make a millionaire of an obscure Cornell professor, she was clearly not going to be allowed to grow up easily. Things were different in Europe. There, *Chocolates For Breakfast* not only made the bestseller lists but was favorably reviewed in both Italy and France, whose pundits warmed unexpectedly to a novel which was ostensibly an imitation of one of their own writers. In America, the public wanted to know about her boyfriends and eating habits; "in Paris," Pamela Moore observed, "they wanted to know my politics and metaphysics."

Her timing was fortuitous; the first stirrings of the Beat movement, in the form of "Howl," *On The Road*, and contraband chapters of *Naked Lunch*, were already before the public, and the "alternative" culture that continues to beguile aging columnists and sell running shoes was in its nascent stages. In Europe, Pamela Moore was perceived as a part of this culture. She spent the next year explaining herself on radio and television in France and Italy. She was even listed in a multivolume literary encyclopedia

published by the prestigious Milan house of Mondadori in 1961. The entry includes a photograph of her posing in what must have been a European TV producer's idea of a Greenwich Village coffeehouse, complete with guitarist, mazes of cigarette smoke, flattened paperbacks, and black-clad denizens.

In the spring of 1958, she returned to America. But she was not interested in resuming her career as a celebrity. She got married instead. Her husband, Adam Kanarek, was of Polish origin, and had very little in common with the people of Beverly Hills, the Westchester horse set, the habitués of "21" or the Stork Club, or any other world Pamela had encountered. The couple settled down in New York, and he was soon attending law school.

Meanwhile, Pamela's parents continued their literary labors. Don Moore published his only book, *The Naked Warriors*, about Navy frogmen, in 1956. And Isabel Moore began publishing novels again, with paperback houses—most notably (under the name Elaine Dorian) *The Sex Cure*, a version of *Peyton Place* set in Cooperstown, New York, her residence at the time. The book inspired her famously image-conscious neighbors to daub her house with paint. Isabel also studied for a Ph.D. at Columbia, traveled in Russia, and wrote, in 1961, *The Day The Communists Took Over America*, which, despite its Red Scare title and semi-pulp style, is an unexpectedly sophisticated treatment of a resurgent Klan and neo-Nazis stirring up homegrown genocide.

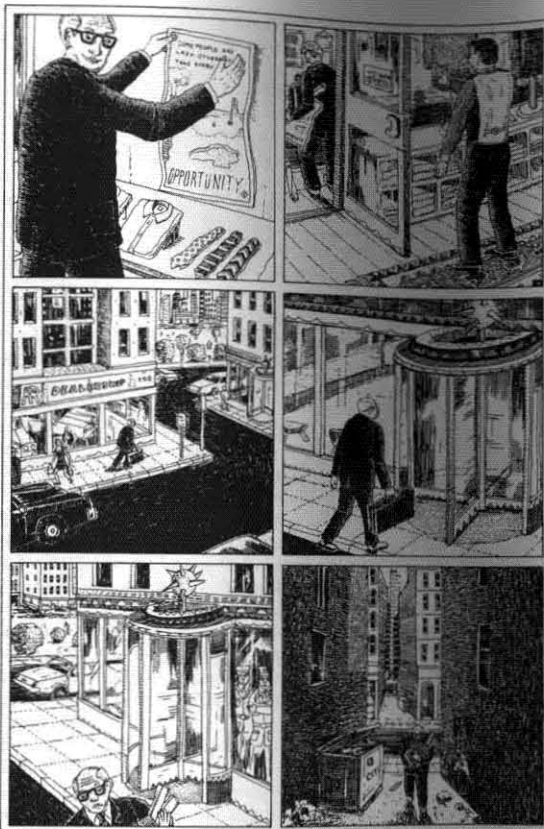
By early 1959 Pamela, with her husband's encouragement, had resumed writing. She completed her second novel quickly; the use of a diary in the book's final pages suggests one source for her facility as a stylist. It was submitted to American publishers and rejected—not surprising, since, in terms of theme, style, and characterization, it was very different from *Chocolates*, and none but the most understanding of publishers and editors are keen on such a step from a writer, especially when the earlier book has been the bonanza that

Pamela's was. Instead, it was issued by her French publisher, Juilliard, as *Les Pigeons de Saint Marc* in 1960, and as *East Side Story* by Longmans in the U.K. in 1961. The reviews were still favorable in France; in England, the book received a one-paragraph notice in the *Times Literary Supplement*, a journal where *Chocolates* had been reviewed at some length. When *Chocolates'* paperback sales began to slacken in America by the end of 1960, the awful truth was clear: Pamela Moore, a few months past twenty-three, was a has-been, as completely a relic of an era as coonskin caps or prime-time quiz shows.

Still, she was a writer, so she kept on writing. In 1962, *L'Exil de Suzy-Coeur* appeared, only in France, and she gave some interviews to *Paris-Match* and *Le Figaro Littéraire* that spring. Soon after this came what must have been hopeful news: Simon & Schuster accepted her fourth book, *The Horsy Set*. At the very end of the year she became pregnant. Things were going well, and given that Pamela Moore appears to have been suffering from bipolar disorder (her description of her heroine Courtney's mood swings in *Chocolates* is sufficiently precise that a modern-day psychiatrist reading the book would hardly refrain from an impromptu diagnosis), it would have been preferable for things to stay that way, given the absence of meaningful therapy for such a condition in that era.

But things did not continue to go well. *The Horsy Set*, a story set in the wealthy, decadent world of show-horse racing in which her sister was such a prominent figure, received no notice in *The New York Times*, nor in any of the major newsmagazines or literary and

cultural weeklies. What few reviews it received appeared in daily papers in those cities on the Gulf and Atlantic coastlines where show-horses were big news, presumably to let the locals know that they might figure as characters in a book. Almost no public libraries ordered the book, and hardcover sales were minimal. Dell issued a paperback *Horsy Set* in 1963, in what must have been a large printing—copies of it are almost as easy to find as *Chocolates*. But that one printing remained in stock for nearly five years. Years later Doubleday reprinted it, bound with a war novel by another writer, as part of



a series called "Stories for Men." Pamela's bid for recognition as a serious writer had failed utterly; the publication of her third novel as *The Exile of Suzy-Q* in March 1964 by the second-rate house, Paperback Library, served only to underline the fact. (No copy of this book is even in the Library of Congress.) The birth of a son, Kevin, in September 1963, and her husband's admission to the bar were all the compensation for this misfortune that she would receive.

She kept writing. Her fifth novel was tentatively titled *Kathy*. Its protagonist was a washed-up writer, contemplating her failure. Pamela's model, F. Scott Fitzgerald, had taken sixteen years to travel the path from *This Side of Paradise* to "The Crack-Up;" she had covered the distance in less than half that time. Through the early months of 1964, as *Chocolates* was reissued and as stray readers in news shops and drugstores discovered she had some new books, she continued to work. One of the characters in her novel, according to Detective Robert Gosselin of the NYPD, "talked about marital difficulties and suicidal tendencies . . . there was a reference to that guy Hemingway and how he died."

On Sunday, June 7, 1964, she reached the end of the line.

It was late afternoon. Her husband was out of the apartment. Her baby was asleep in the bedroom. She sat in the living room, at her desk, and wrote in her diary. "If you put it all together," Detective Gosselin told the press the following day, "the last four pages, under the date June 7, indicate that she was having trouble with her writing and intended to destroy herself." He said that the pages described the rifle barrel feeling "cold and alien" in her mouth, and continued: "She wanted the last four pages, the suicide note, added to the novel she was working on."

Pamela Moore finished writing, inserted a .22 caliber rifle into her mouth, and pulled the trigger. Her husband found her on the living-room floor. She was three months short of twenty-seven.

### III.

*Kathy* was never published. In September, Dell issued her second novel under the title of *Diana*; both it and *Suzy-Q* were out of print by the end of the year. Bantam reprinted *Chocolates* thrice more; it went out of print in America for the last time at the end of 1967, about when Dell pulped its last copies of *The Horsy Set* and not long after what would have been Pamela Moore's thirtieth birthday. In England and Europe, her books stayed in print until a little after the turn of the decade.

Since then, her work has never been reprinted. Apart from the 1982 reference that had first drawn my attention, the *Contemporary Authors* sketch (last updated in 1968), and an entry in *Who's Who of American Women* for 1965-66 (apparently compiled before her death), her name appears in almost no books or reference materials. She has been the subject of no articles since the newspaper stories immediately following her suicide. Nor does she figure in any academic discussions of feminist literature, despite the fact that some of her work clearly prefigures the great awakening of feminism in the late sixties and seventies.

Don Moore, her father, was "rediscovered" when the movie version of *Flash Gordon* came out in 1980, and he colorfully recounted his years on the strip and in Hollywood for movie and science-fiction magazines that year. He didn't discuss Pamela. He died in Florida in 1986.

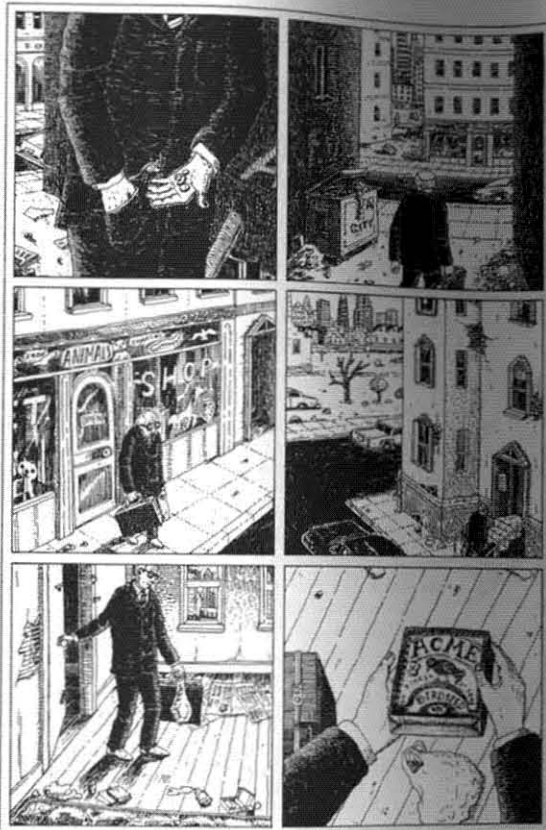
Isabel Moore continued to write. In 1965, under the pseudonym of Grace Walker, she published a biography of her surviving daughter, the full title of which is: *Elaine Moore Moffat, Blue Ribbon Horsewoman: The Complete Life Story of a Champion Rider Who Learned to Deal with Life by Learning to Deal with Horses*. Two years later, she published *Women of the Green Cafe*, a paperback novel about lesbians which was characterized in the leading bibliography of lesbian fiction as "exploitative." In 1970, she published *That Summer In Connecticut*, a smoothly written but

cliché-riddled account of a May-December romance that indicates just what difficulty she must have had understanding her younger daughter given the generational gulf that separated the women who came of age before the fifties and those who matured just as the implications of *The Second Sex* were beginning to resonate in this country.

### IV.

*Chocolates For Breakfast* begins with the protagonist, Courtney Farrell—described as a "slim, dark-haired girl of fifteen" with "green, large, rebellious eyes"—sitting in her dormitory at the exclusive, all-female Scaisbrooke Hall, arguing with her equally rebellious, pre-debutante friend, Janet Parker, over whether her crush on her English teacher is developing into something beyond a schoolgirl infatuation. Janet, while discussing Courtney's dilemma, eats a banana; a later chapter, in which Courtney visits a psychiatrist under the school's auspices, features enough Freudian jargon to establish that the symbolism is conscious and that Pamela Moore understood earlier than some of her contemporaries the inadequacies of orthodox Freudianism to explain the inner world of women.

Courtney is unable to interact very well with any of her teachers except the aforementioned English instructor, Miss Rosen, who informs her that they can no longer see that much of each other anymore; this well-handled scene was probably what earned the novel a positive citation in the aforementioned bibliography of lesbian-themed fiction. Nor does Courtney get along with any of her fellow students, save Janet. The reason is simple: Courtney, the daughter of divorced parents, does not come from the



well-heeled background of her peers. Her father, who is "in publishing," is a nebulous and ineffectual-seeming character, none too definite a presence in the book. Her mother, Sondra, with whom Courtney lives, is a once-popular movie actress now on the skids. Courtney's classmates are interested in her only to the extent that she has gossip to relay about Cary Grant or Tyrone Power. And after a trip to the shrink, the school sends her home for the summer, "home" being her mother's apartment at the Garden of Allah on the Sunset Strip, in what is now West Hollywood. All of this action, like that of her later book *The*



*Horsy Set*, is set in 1953, a year that bore some obscure significance for Pamela Moore: The Korean War had just ended, Eisenhower was in the Oval Office, Stalin had just died, and Joe McCarthy's influence had just peaked.

The chapters detailing life at the Garden, and at the small apartment in a *déclassé* section of Beverly Hills to which Courtney and her mother move after Sondra's finances no longer permit the hotel, are the most observant and entertaining in the book, though the subject matter itself is downbeat. Here Courtney meets Barry Cabot, a friend of her mother's and a onetime bobbysoxers' favorite now debilitated by alcohol and shame about his bisexuality. Courtney immediately takes a shine to Barry, but the consummation of their relationship must wait until after she's sixteen, by which time she's enrolled at Beverly Hills High and has discovered that she has even less in common with the forebears of Dylan, Brenda, and Donna than she did with the finishing school crowd.

So Courtney goes to Schwab's Drugstore, her old spot for trysts with Barry, where she finds the actor and decides that there are now no obstacles to...

Love. She had not known what it could be, and she would never live without it again. She had not known that she would know so much about love, the first time... she could never see life as she had seen it before, life with an entire sphere dimly seen.

Before the reader clucks at the evident influence of Pamela's mother's *Redbook* stories on her literary style, it should be noted that the passage—and the book itself—is still struggling with the mores of the prefeminist era. Whenever Courtney becomes really dissatisfied with the world around her, she thinks to herself that she wouldn't have these problems if she were a man—which may explain her male name. She thinks of her mother's career as an actress, for example, not as an achievement, but as training acquired in Sondra's youth not so much to build a career as to land a rich husband, and which is now to be used only because things didn't work out

with the husband. The novel itself proceeds to lead Courtney almost ironically towards the same dilemma: Can she or can she not acquire an affluent, ambitious husband? Pamela Moore is writing a *Bildungsroman* in a familiar tradition, but where a male protagonist would "find himself," Courtney ends up finding someone to whom she can subsume her identity—a familiar convention in romance fiction as it has developed from *Jane Eyre*, but disturbing to encounter in a book otherwise the product of a fairly powerful individual sensibility.

But, before all of this comes to pass, the book's second part closes with Courtney attempting suicide, her affair with Barry frustrated by the reappearance of his male lover, a character whose sympathetic portrayal contrasts with the homophobia with which male authors of the period—even one of the stature of William Gaddis (as *The Recognitions'* party scenes show)—would have treated him. Following a stay in a sanitarium (not depicted in the book), Courtney and her mother move back to New York, where Sondra pursues TV work and Courtney renews her friendship with Janet Parker, now expelled from Scaisbrooke and living with her father, an alcoholic Wall Street broker.

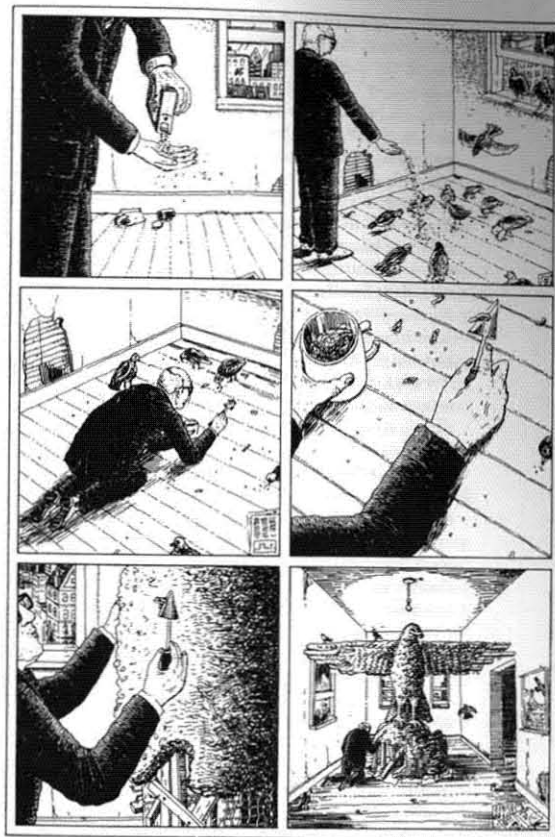
The daily routine of the two friends consists of endless evenings at the Stork Club (referred to as "the Bird"); P.J. Clarke's is once suggested as an alternate hangout. Janet and Courtney also crash parties on Long Island, in the company of lads recently suspended from Harvard or Yale for drinking or violating curfew. Before long, Courtney is introduced to an old flame of Janet's, Anthony Neville, a world-weary product of Boston Brahminism and old Italian aristocracy who affects a rather different persona from that of the fallen Ivy Leaguers:

"I've been writing a story," [Anthony] announced. "It's about two Lesbians who are married by a homosexual priest—" He paused and looked at Courtney. "You're Catholic, of course." She nodded. "—by a homosexual priest in a terribly floral ceremony in Switzerland. Up to

this point they have been living quite happily in sin, but now their idyll has been destroyed..."

Moore uses this touch of decadent Europe in the same manner as Henry James in his early works: to provide a foil for the clean-cut, upright American who will soon show up and do what the enervated preppies (all far more interested in drinking than sex) are unable to do. After Anthony has spirited Courtney to places like Chambord and the Hotel Pierre and told her precious parables about how she has lifted his blague, the responsible life appears in the person of Charles Cunningham, the son of a Boston lawyer who lost his allowance when he was suspended from Yale for drunkenness. Unlike the other Yalies in Courtney's crowd, he has picked himself up, gone back to Yale, worked his way through by ghosting study outlines, and is now at Harvard Law School. He sternly lectures Courtney on the importance of sobering up and getting serious about things, but she is not inclined to listen until one fateful day when Janet Parker has a nasty argument with her substance-dependent father. (Indeed, virtually every character in this book would be considered an alcoholic by current standards, but it so happens that Mr. Parker, as Pamela Moore so stringently observes, "no longer cared for the niceties of companionship or ice in his bourbon.") And then:

[He] set down his drink and walked across the living room to her. His eyes were cold and totally without emotion. For the first time in her life, Janet was afraid of her father. She held her ground, refusing to move as he came up to her. Coldly, with the full force of his body, he slapped her... He fell upon her and forced her onto the couch and lay above her as a lover might, and she was terrified. This was too strange and too



strong for her, her father lying on her body in control of her... As her body went limp in his arms he rose and walked over to the window. Thank God, she thought. Thank God he got up. He leaned against the window sill in shame and hatred of himself and buried his face in his hands. The intermittent and lonely sounds of the taxi horns and a train leaving Grand Central deep beneath the street rose to the window from Park Avenue. Dazed, Janet got up and ran into her room, locked both doors.

Janet puts on Stan Kenton's "Capital Punishment," goes to the window, and jumps. It is worth observing that scenes depicting father-daughter incest

were uncommon during this time in American fiction, except where they could be depicted as something that happened among the picturesque and brutish lower classes. Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night*, the most notable exception, may have been in Pamela Moore's mind when writing this scene.

Courtney reads of Janet's death in the *Times* the following morning, and goes into seclusion for weeks, refusing to speak to Anthony and Charles when they call. But, finally, it is time for her to meet Anthony for cocktails at the Plaza; to hear him out as he acknowledges that she has outgrown his act; and to proceed to Sardi's for dinner with her reconciled parents and the young, virile Cunningham. She is now ready to put in the requisite two years of college before dropping out to get hitched after he passes the bar. The tame ending was obviously tacked on to please the reviewers and pacify parents who otherwise would have been mortified with the heroine's escapades. But Pamela was not interested in repeating this formula.

## V.

Moore's two novels which were never published in hardcover in America—*Diana* and *The Exile of Suzy-Q*—are her two weakest, and may be dealt with briefly. *Diana* is an ambitious book, dealing with a dozen characters and following three plot lines, and concerns a situation of considerable sociological interest: the transition of St. Mark's Place in Manhattan from a Polish and Ukrainian working-class neighborhood to a playground of New York's Beats. Unfortunately, one of the plot lines is a sappy rewrite of *Romeo and Juliet* via *West Side Story* (hence the book's U.K. title, *East Side Story*) and the other two subplots, though less sentimental, are not handled convincingly. A trio of gay men living in the same building as the title character are treated more in the fashion of the "sterile, noncreative" stereotype of the period than in the manner of *Chocolates*. The descriptive passages are overwritten and contrast unfavorably with the spare prose of Pamela's

first novel.

*Suzy-Q* is Moore's longest and flimsiest book; its jacket copy cites *Lolita*, and like that novel *Suzy-Q* has a pubescent heroine, descriptions of the wide-open spaces of the West, and a sleazy Hollywood character or two. Pamela Moore, like Nabokov, also begins by making the reader think a comic romp is in the offing and ends by describing a homicide and the imprisonment of the heroine's would-be lover, while the girl herself, saddened and scarred, remains. The comparisons, unfortunately, end there. Moore's characters are hopelessly stereotyped, her plot jumbled and melodramatic. While the intentional humor falls flat, the serious passages, seemingly concocted by stirring together fragments of Steinbeck, Lawrence, and Graham Greene, are unintentionally ludicrous. The descriptions of horses and the landscape are occasionally well written, but such moments are rare. Both *Diana* and *Suzy-Q* conclude with ineptly handled death scenes; in Pamela Moore's final novel she moved on to the subject of spiritual death and was able to come much closer to echoing the tragic spirit of *Lolita*.

Any perceptive reviewer of *The Horsy Set* in 1963—that is, had anyone reviewed it at all—would have been obliged to point out that it had more in common, at least formally, with Françoise Sagan's books than did *Chocolates For Breakfast*. Unlike Pamela Moore's other books, *The Horsy Set* is more of a *résumé* than a *roman*, a first-person narrative in which the narrator details some traumatic experience which altered his or her perception of self and world. Again the book is set in 1953, and again Moore's central figure, Brenda Palmer, née Betty Baroszy, is troubled by all the usual symptoms of incipient existentialism: Kierkegaard's "fear and trembling," Sartre's nausea, and Dr. H.S. Thompson's "fear and loathing." Although the opening pages of the book—which were no doubt the basis on which Simon & Schuster took it—faithfully echo *The Catcher In The Rye*'s Lardneresque be-

ginning, the book's tone after them more and more resembles that of Jim Thompson's most furious paperback originals; or, more precisely, a Jim Thompson who had perused Blanchot's *Les Très-Haut* and André Baillon as well as Swift and E. Howard Hunt. J.D. Salinger's Gnostic theme of the inherent iniquity of the adult world is certainly present in Moore's last book, but the glorification of the child, especially the girl-child, that suffuses *Catcher* and "A Perfect Day For Bananafish" is quite absent.

We learn that Brenda, like Moore's other heroines, has really had no childhood and never seen her father, who, according to her mother, was a bisexual Gypsy circus performer. From the time she reached her eighth birthday, Brenda has been trained under the meticulous auspices of her mother, an ex-showgirl married to an investment banker, toward the goal of making the Olympic equestrian team. As the book opens, Brenda has just gotten her only A in high school, for a senior term paper titled "Training The Horse Trains The Rider." Again the Moore heroine is dating yet another ineffectual Ivy League dropout, this one an ex-Harvard mama's boy, Larry Harfield, who's breaking into the world of off-Broadway theater by backing productions, all the while working, he assures Brenda, on a play all about her. For Brenda, this promise compensates for Larry's extracurricular sexual activity that, he insists, has been brought on by her unwillingness to shed her virginity—a determination Brenda has announced on page two. Sexuality in *The Horsy Set* is not all soft lights and gentle music as it had been in *Chocolates*; nor does it conform to the phrase, seemingly alluding to Danae's conception by Zeus—"She was open to the world, and the sun entered through her thighs"—employed in *Suzy-Q*. Moore's new metaphor for sexuality, reiterated constantly through the book, reflects considerable distaste:

I mean there's a whole area of life that's muddy to me no matter how much I hear or read about it. So sometimes I

listen to people and I don't understand them and I know they're talking from that mud; they're talking about how it feels and tastes and smells, and I get dizzy thinking I'd know just what was going on if only I took one little step and sank into that sea of mud with them, because they're all in it together.

The book's early chapters describe a group of affluent couples in Westchester County, New York, whose lives revolve around the Silver Birch Stables. The wives, like mares around a steed, all sleep with Guy, the grizzled, amoral ex-cowboy riding master, and the husbands all play it cool. Brenda's problem is that her mother isn't bothering to put up a front to her stepfather, and the latter is about to storm out and get a divorce.

As the book's narrative develops, Brenda gets into a tiff with Larry over her interest in a Lieutenant Richard Kar, a West Point cadet who, the Korean War just over, has been sent to the stable to train for the Olympic trials. Brenda and her Harvard man then go to the Richard the Lionhearted bar, a Manhattan hangout for the kind of people who populated *Chocolates*. There, she meets Patsy, to whom she takes a liking—partly because the latter "look[s] too independent to be from a cloistered school like Wellesley or Smith," partly because the two look like each other. The overtones of narcissistic lesbianism, however, do not culminate in a happy bedding as they do in so many recent novels, but in a cataclysm harsher in some ways than that in the film *Single White Female*.

At the bar, Patsy proposes that everybody go back to her place for a party. Those invited include Brenda and Larry, Brenda's best friend Chrissy, and Chrissy's date, Lieutenant Kar, who has meticulously tossed back ten shots of scotch at the bar—each one for a schoolmate killed in Korea. He's a cad, but he proceeds like the rest to Patsy's apartment, which is not furnished in standard Radcliffe Alum: It has black-and-white tile flooring, "rosy" fluorescent lights, and mirrors. This is because Patsy is a \$500-a-night call girl. (The figure is still



a high one nowadays, but in 1953 dollars this sum would be improbable unless Patsy's clientele consisted of King Farouk and the cream of Palm Beach and Newport.) What follows, given Patsy's fondness for giving Harvard men a \$400 discount, is only logical:

"But listen—" [Patsy's] hand now gripping my shoulder—"don't you be scared about Larry. He's an artist and a real man. He's a hundred times better man, just man, than all those guys out there. And believe me, I know."

I turned to ice, staring at her sentimental eyes; I froze with a hate I couldn't control and she felt it. I didn't move but she pulled her hand off my shoulder and her face twisted.

"Oh, God," she moaned.

I wanted to hit her and I wanted to cry and I wanted to get out of there, and sixteen things that I should have said came to my lips but died there . . .

In the society in which they live, Brenda and Patsy are both property, the difference being that Patsy rents herself, while Brenda is to sell herself as a life estate. They are both obliged to see each other not as people who can share a friendship, but as competitive adversaries of Larry's whims.

What Brenda does next, less than an hour after being addressed as the "hundred-proof virgin" at the Richard the Lionhearted Bar, is to drag Larry into the call-girl's bedroom and lose her virginity—to enter the metaphorical sea of mud. And abruptly a metaphor describing another kind of sea arises as Brenda, now speaking as Betty Baroszy and addressing the last of Pamela Moore's absent fathers, says:

Yes, [Palmer] adopted me because he's a sentimental bastard, but I didn't care, all the while I was waiting to grow up so I would find you, Father. Now I'm a woman and I'll stay with you forever, won't I, Father? Yes, never leave you, never sail backwards across the crimson sea; it's over now Father, I murdered my childhood before she could murder me, I did it Father and now you will love me forever and never shall I return across that crimson bloody sea.

Following these lines on the most disturbing of all Pamela's pages, her characters abandon the crimson sea for one ugly roll in "the mud" after another. Brenda's subsequent encounters with Larry leave her and him unsatisfied; he dismisses her as a "frigid virgin." Brenda's mother counsels marriage. Lieutenant Kar waits in the wings, and for Brenda's eighteenth birthday takes her back to the Lionhearted bar, where Larry and Patsy are dallying. In the best tradition of the American military, the officer then: a) gets into a shouting match with Larry; b) falsely asserts that he has slept with Brenda; c) slugs Larry; d) takes Brenda back to the stable and, in the mud, "shows" her what a "real man" is "all about." The book ends with Guy the riding-master fleeing Westchester County, the "horsy set" screaming each other's most gossiped-over "secrets," Brenda ditching her riding career, and Lieutenant Kar sabotaging his last ride so that the two of them can go off to a base in Germany. The acid tone Moore takes might indicate that, like *Chocolates*, this ending is not to be read seriously, but still her character is unable to conceive of life apart from being a component of a man's life.

Had Pamela lived and continued writing, perhaps she would ultimately have proven incapable of serious literature and would have finished her career composing smart but schlocky bestsellers, stylish counterparts of Danielle Steele and Jackie Collins. (Indeed, Rona Jaffe, whose 1957 success *The Best of Everything* was compared to *Chocolates* by reviewers, has spent forty years writing such novels.) But her work frequently manifests a fairly sophisticated awareness of her society and its workings, whether satirically or melodramatically expressed, that is absent from the other three writers. This awareness gives her first and last books what lasting value they have. Moore's writing may have been polished, but still it was the work of a woman who either could not or, to some extent, was not allowed to mature as a writer, a woman desperately in need of the kind of social changes which the

feminist movement brought into being over the years that followed. From a purely clinical perspective, and given *Chocolates* description of bipolar depression and how *The Horsy Set* in its most frantic pages epitomizes a classic "mixed state," it is important to remember that

those years also saw the introduction of the first, rather ineffective, medications for depression. Her chronicles of an America still with us in some ways, and in others as distant as the world of Charlemagne, deserve serious critical examination and republication.

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