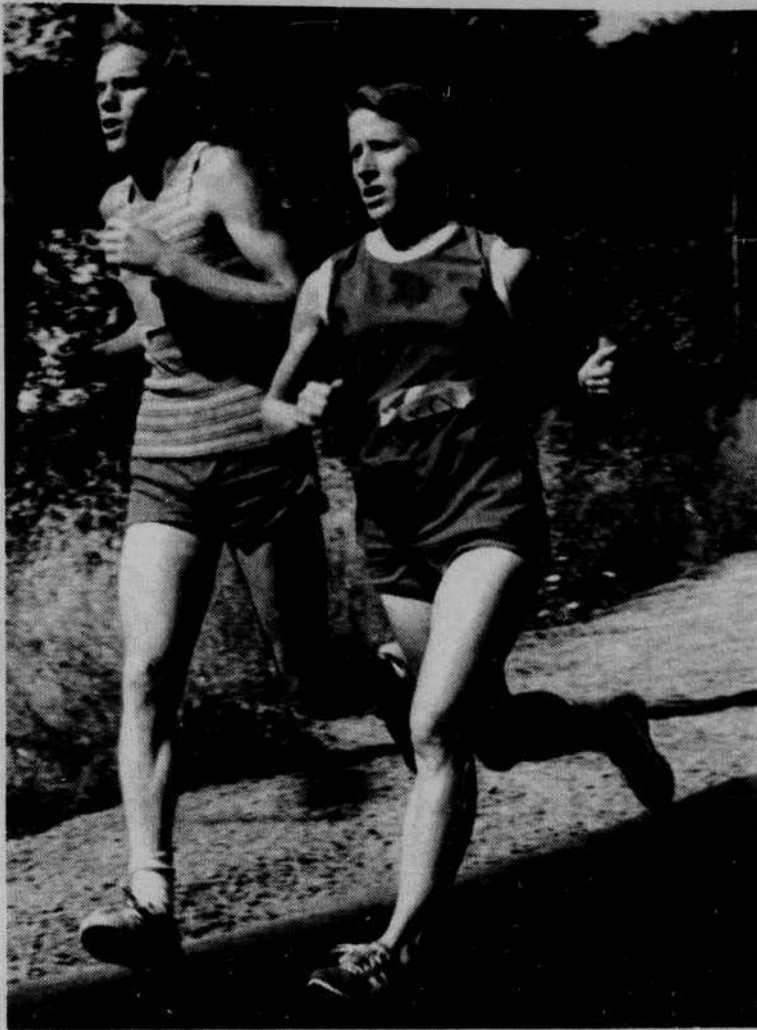




Ona Dobratz

The Runner

By ONA DOBRATZ

I am listening to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. I have seen the movie "Clockwork Orange," so I must think of violences—how they exist in my life, how I deal with them.

We are running along the track. Ray turns to me: "It's difficult to explain. I am working hard. It is painful but at the same time it gives me pleasure. It sounds contradictory. It's difficult to explain."

No, I think. There is in us that seeks the violent, and that seeks the beautiful. We want fast movement, hard, certain contact and we want Beethoven: flow, blend, harmony, grace. Alex is not so strange a hero then; only a man with his desires in separate fists.

Is it confusing? What I want is to talk about sports. I am trying to clear away, to work forward into some statement about sports that will get through all the irrational prejudices that have grown for years, through all the undiscerned stereotypes that have been built around the athletic woman—the woman who, ideally, has come to a joyful and harmonious blend of the desire for the beautiful and the desire for a violence: motion, bursting out, strength and physical freedom.

A woman: I laugh, cry, joke, hurt, am hurt. I have sexual frustrations, I'm lonely, I'm pretty, I'm ugly, I love, hate, seek refuges; I want understanding. I use my body, love its actions: skipping, bounding, throwing, dancing. Me moving through space, directing myself. In this realm of movement I have an opportunity to be intensely, to live more than a half-felt life, to know joy as well as pain: sometimes I even have a difficult time knowing which is which. I jump, run, twist, turn, throw, catch, hit, lunge!

This is the idea: Inside us there are the dozens of things. I feel my insides churning with love, hate, gentleness, lust, violence and despair. I want to shout. I want to do something about all of this! I cannot bear the uncertainty. I want to know what is happening, what it is I am feeling, how to bring it up face to face and grasp it—to either throw away or to keep within reach.

Clockwork Orange. Violence. But it's too one-sided; too much off center, as though it stood up and tipped over. And when Ray said to me "It is painful but at the same time it gives me pleasure." and I listened to the 9th over and over, I understood much more of Clockwork Orange, much more of myself.

I am violent. I am beautiful. I need to express: to yell and rend, hit, kick, fight—to sing, laugh, flow and I decide now that the need will not manifest itself destructively, it will be confined and blended with what is beautiful. It will be sport, and I will call it games and learn to love without hurting, set my hatred and frustration apart to a certain place and yes, even make them beautiful; a runner, a swimmer, a jumper, a hitter. I understand I am human: I can learn to make beautiful. I am human, a woman. Amazing!

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