H Lesbian & Gay Concerns/
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Lesbian Feminist Theory

MARGINS

lesbian feminism

FOCUS: LESBIAN FEMINIST WRITING & PUBLISHING

Edited by Beth Hodges

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A REVIEW OF LITTLE MAGS AND SMALL PRESS BOOKS

SPECIAL FOCUS:
LESBIAN FEMINIST WRITING AND PUBLISHING
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MARGINS

A REVIEW OF LITTLE MAGAZINES
& SMALL PRESS BOOKS

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SPECIAL FOCUS:

LESBIAN FEMINIST WRITING AND PUBLISHING

edited by Beth Hodges

EDITORIAL

by Beth Hodges

Published criticism of lesbian literature is almost non-existent. In 1956 Jeannette H. Foster succeeded in getting her pioneering study, *Sex Devian Women in Literature,* published—Because of your work, Jeannette, and because of your courage in writing under your own name, some things have changed for us, your daughters who continue your work. One thing hasn't changed, however. Establishment editors are still as reluctant to print criticism of lesbian literature as they were twenty years ago.

Tom Montag, *Margins* editor, asked Louie Crew to guest edit a focus on gay literature. Louie, perhaps aware that criticism of lesbian literature is *not* published, insisted there be a woman to co-edit the issue, a woman responsible for represent ing the *lesbian* writing and publishing. I thank Louie for this. And I thank Tom for agreeing first to a woman co-editor and eventually to separate issues.

No other editor has been willing to devote an issue to lesbian writing and publishing. To date, editors have been more likely to respond as Richard Ohmann of *College English* did when Julia Stanley and I offered to guest edit an issue devoted to the lesbian perspective. Julia and I were unhappy with the issue of *College English* called "The Homosexual Imagination," because the issue was gay male. All graphics, all poetry, all articles (except two) were by and about men. There was no bibliography to indicate that a vital lesbian literature exists—no hint that lesbians even *have* an imagination.

Julia and I sent Ohmann a critique of the issue and a prospectus for the lesbian issue we offered to edit. Ohmann answered that they had deliberately *chosen* to do a gay male issue and would not consider a lesbian issue "unless we see more clearly than we do now that a lesbian issue would open as much new territory for readers as the November [gay male] one did." In other words, *they assumed* that the men's perspective is significant; *women must prove*—if we can, given the male editor's bias—that the woman's perspective is legitimate.

So I thank Tom Montag for this issue of *Margins.* And I hope to see a sequel to it. The issue is a significant one, but it's only a beginning. We are witnessing the renaissance of lesbian literature. And we have much to do, that is, develop a lesbian feminist aesthetic and validate, through criticism, our flourishing literature.

This focus on lesbian writing and publishing is far from being complete. A single issue could not possibly contain criticism of *all* current lesbian literature. And secondly, the contents of the issue were defined by the women who did the critical writing. Women wrote out of love for the work they criticized, and their writing was voluntary. I could ask, and I did ask, for specific articles—but I couldn't demand that they be written.

I wish there had been an overview of poetry, an overview of lesbian song lyrics, a review of *The Female Man* and of *Quest,* a look at all the Daughters, Inc. books, all the Diana Press books, and all the Women's Press Collective books; and I wish there had been a study of Pat Parker's poetry, of Lynn Strongin's poetry, of Sandy Boucher's fiction, and more. It is a fine issue, but it is by no means comprehensive.

I thank Julia P. Stanley for reading photocopies of the articles and making invaluable suggestions.

Also I thank Lois West for criticizing and typing this introduction.

* * *

Mary Daly makes the distinction between the "woman-identified woman" and the "lesbian from the waist down." When I use the term lesbian—in this introduction and in the title of the issue—I am speaking of the woman-identified woman, the woman par excellence.

I wondered why "lesbian from the waist down" is the popular image and why the woman-identified woman is invisible. This is how I explain it.

Woman's power is real. I see it in the phenomenon of the woman-identified woman. The woman grows up in an alien society, is constantly violated—physically and psychically, is taught that her sister is her enemy and her oppressor is her friend, is kept dependent on the man and isolated from her sisters. Still, some of us survive this daily rape of our spirit, retain somehow a sense of self and a will to be ourselves.

We are the woman-identified women, and our very existence is evidence of woman's potential, that despite all of man's efforts to break our spirits and render us docile and helpless, we insist on being our own women.

If man fears woman, he fears most the woman he can least control, the woman-identified woman. He has failed to break her spirit but there are ways to silence the uppity woman. 1) Keep her invisible. 2) Trivialize her.

Plan one: how to keep the woman-identified woman invisible and silent. Pretend that she is "gay", pretend that her message is not different from the gay male's message, ask the gay male to speak and pretend that he has said it all, that he has spoken for himself and for the woman-identified woman.

Plan two: how to trivialize the woman-identified woman. Pretend that "lesbian" is a sexual identity, a sexual aberration, and refuse to acknowledge that that woman's being self-identified is political.

Men pretend that lesbian sexuality is a threat to society. Lesbian sexuality is *not* threatening. Men claim that it is in order to mask their real fear, their fear of woman's power. Man is afraid of the woman in touch with her power, the woman claiming her power. The woman-identified woman *is* frightening—she knows man's secret, that he fears and hates her, and that he has structured an entire system to keep knowledge of her tremendous power from herself and to prevent her from actualizing her power. † † †

SISTER LOVES HERSELF: a lesbian photographic essay

The pictures I am now taking of women have never been taken before. The lesbian photographer today is a pioneer, entering and creating a new world. The development of women's consciousness and the turn history is taking is revealed in our bodies and spirits in tangible form. I catch the images with my camera only because they are really there. These images I am seeing and sharing with others will soon be recognized everywhere. Our vision, beckoning to us, is already growing faster than we can record its manifestations. I am talking about the revolution occuring inside of women that is already altering everything around us. It is not a fad; we are impossible to destroy or co-opt because our new culture is working in cooperation with the forces of life. Our bodies have gone through many revolutions and are giving birth to more. I feel us set into motion like the thousand spokes flying into and out of a giant wheel: self-perpetuating, gathering momentum, and inexhaustible. As one of our poets, Judy Grahn, has said

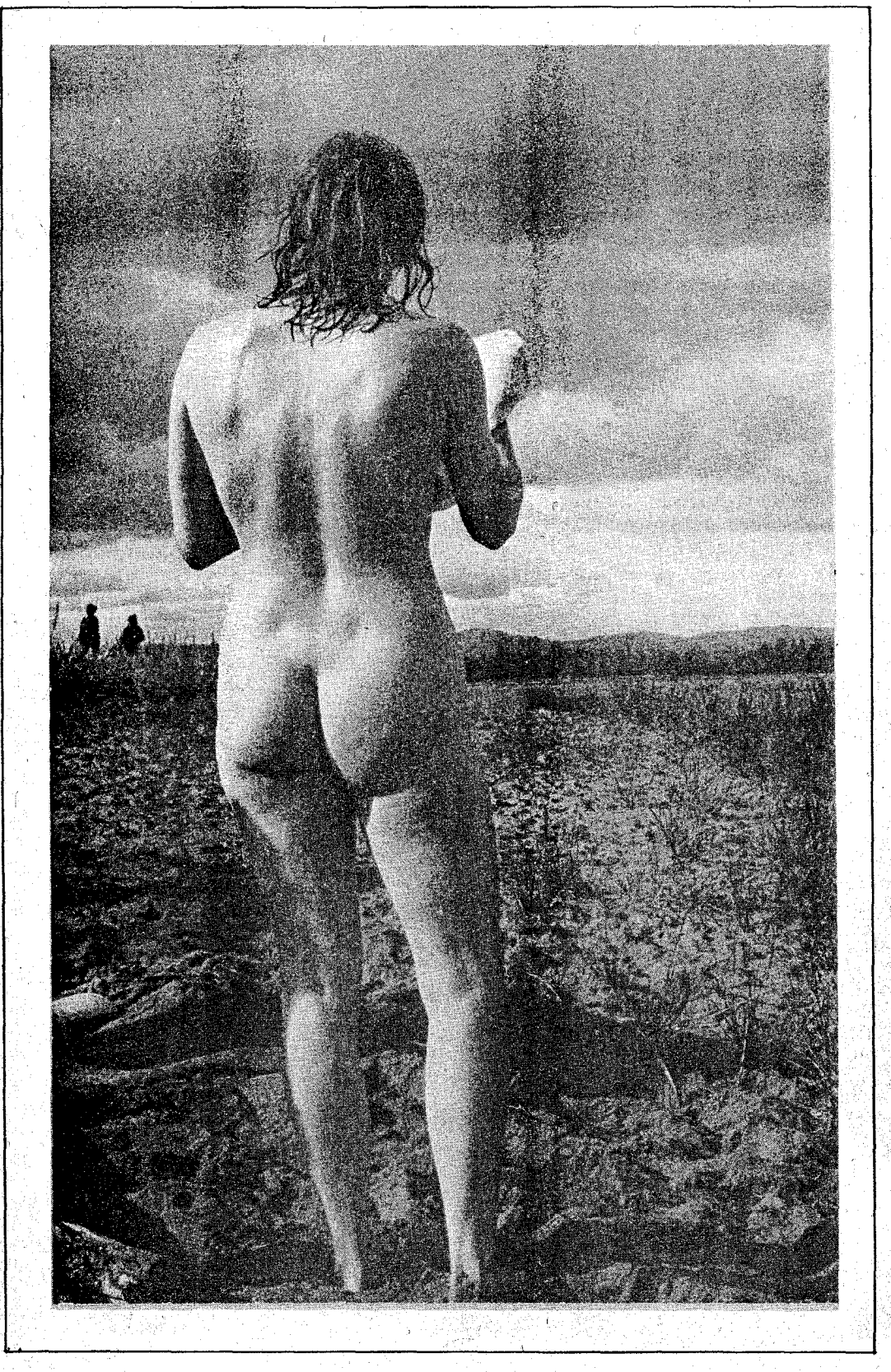
"I'm not a fool
I'm a survivor.
I'm not a pearl
I'm the Atlantic Ocean."

We are clearing the path for ourselves. Our voices never stop urging us on.

Nina Sabaroff, July 1975

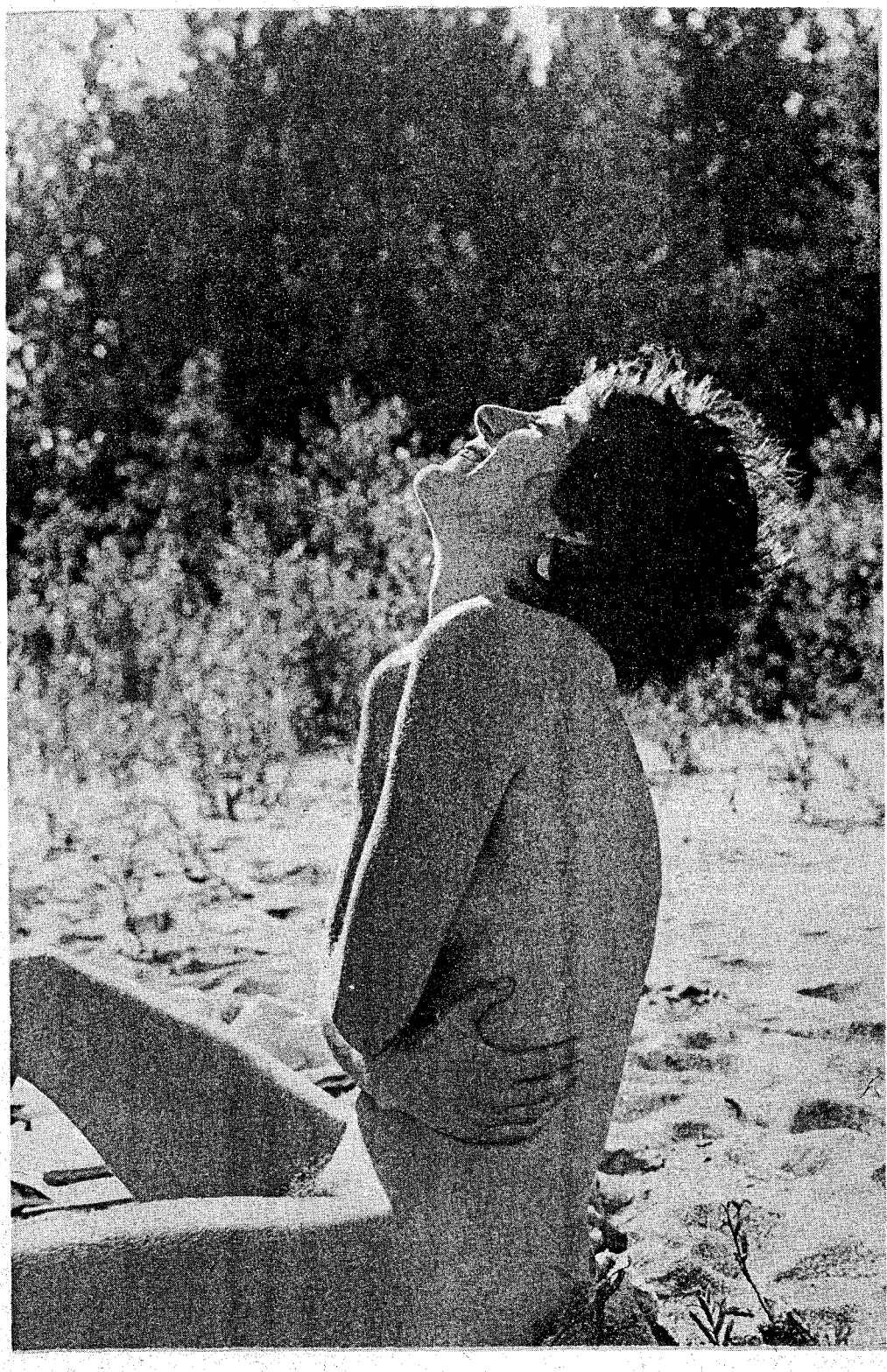
SELF PORTRAIT

Photograph by Nina Sabaroff



NAKED IN A NEW LAND

Photograph by Nina Sabaroff



SISTER LOVE YOURSELF

Photograph by Nina Sabaroff

UNINHABITED ANGELS: METAPHORS FOR LOVE

by Julia P. Stanley

In Lesbian novels, which I define as novels about Lesbians written by Lesbians, a uniquely Lesbian territory, in its outlines at least, has finally been charted and described. As far as I know, the twentieth century is the only century in which Lesbians have spoken for ourselves, describing the dynamics of our social topography. Of course, each description is an individual exploration of our simultaneous habitation of two worlds, and the conflict in Lesbian novels occurs at the interface of the Lesbian Otherworld, hidden, mysterious, submerged, and the external world of the heterosexual, that which we have moved beyond. To a largely hostile outside world, we are The Other, defined out of existence by those whose strategy for survival depends upon denying the reality of our lives. We can never be wholly Here nor There, being ourselves. By definition, we are Outside, and the world we inhabit encompasses the paradox of Utopia, from the Greek *eu topos,* that which is *nowhere* (the not-place), that which is *everywhere* (the all-place). We are nowhere and everywhere; we are an ideal; we are "unreal", even to ourselves. In *The Price of Salt**, Claire Morgan describes the utopian aspect of Lesbian experience: "Once they came upon a little town they liked and spent the night there, without pajamas or toothbrushes, without past or future, and the night became another of those islands in time, suspended somewhere in the heart or in the memory, intact and absolute" (p. 166).

Perhaps closer parallels may be found in Celtic mythology, in the Celtic Otherworld, a land in which "women are numerous and beautiful and they alone people some of its regions, so that then it becomes literally 'The Land of Women'. . ." (*Celtic Mythology, p. 123).* Closely associated with this happy Otherworld was the druidic teaching of "shape-shifting," the ability to undergo countless transformations, the soul passing from one body to another. Between worlds, constantly changing, shifting, seeking patterns, we are the monstrous innocents, the "uninhabited angels." We are Judith, who wanted to turn her back on all that made an alien of her, "to be free at last from the granite pressure of an external foreign normality into which [she] could never be absorbed" (*DSOV,* p. 79). We are Stephen Gordon, who could only ask, "What am I. . .–some kind of abomination?" (*WL,* p. 176). We are Carol who tells Therese, "In the eyes of the world it's an abomination" (*PS,* p. 154). We are Nora standing before a bed in Naples where she imagines that she and Robin Vote could have ". . . forgotten [their] lives in the extremity of memory, moulted [their] parts, as figures in the waxworks are moulted down to their story, so [they] would have broken down to [their] love" (*N,* p. 158). We are Saradove, who ". . .was not in a picture frame, lovely and at her ease before her father's castle; she was not fantasy, she was flesh" (*CS,* p. 69). We are Robin, who ". . . was outside the 'human type'– a wild thing caught in a woman's skin, . . ." (*N,* p. 146). We are Ellen, a sea monster, trapped in a room like ". . .the bottom of a polluted pond. . ., stagnant; with bunches of scum and dead leaves floating on top. . .," where "No one ever comes. . . to fish or swim" (*CC,* p. 27). Moving between worlds, inchoate, without definition, so our early novelists describe our existence.

We live in long halls of consecutive mirrors, seeing ourselves, not ourselves, everywhere. We are everything that everyone is afraid to be. We are the changelings. In a daylight world where the "real" is defined by the limits of men's imaginations, only the darkness is ours, and our lives are furtive scurryings at the boundaries of someone else's acreage. We are the dreamers. We are the dreamed. We inhabit the night, damp forests of wet leaves and improbable creatures. We *are* the improbable creatures. Novels about Lesbians, regardless of their quality, depict the Lesbian cosmology, a shadow-world in which each of us revolves about the central force of our love for other women, but none of us breathes for fear of annihilation. In the Lesbian Universe, there are two worlds: ours, where we move through "an undefinable disorder" in which there is an " 'odour of memory.' " We are *la somnambule* of *Nightwood,* "like a person who has come from some place that we have forgotten and would give our life to recall" (p. 118); and there is the outside world, the world of a carefully cultivated "normality", in which "pretty girls should find husbands and homes of their own" (*WL,* p. 484). It is the outside world that Saradove seeks in her flight, wishing that it would "hurry and catch" her, locking her up "in a neat procession of days, sleeping nights, a shining kitchen, hot ironed sheets, simmering stews, two-week vacations, spoons to polish, a little girl to beat and rock" (*CS,* p. 119); it is the world of which Angela Brossby reminds Stephen when she tells her to "get used to the world–it's a horrible place full of horrible people, but it's all there is, and we live in it. . . . So we've just got to do as the world does" (*WL,* p. 181). And, Carol also feels compelled to inform Therese, "you have to live in the world" (*PS,* p. 154).

Throughout Lesbian novels it is clear that THE WORLD is always present, just beyond a woman's arms, that *that* world pressures, prevails, demands, dominates. Reconciliation is never possible, and there is finally only an uneasy accommodation. Therese realizes that ". . .the whole world was ready to be their enemy, and suddenly what she and Carol had together seemed no longer love or anything happy but a monster between them, with each of them caught in a fist" (*PS,* p. 179). As a casual lover tells Judith: "Some homosexual women seem to manage marrying and fitting in" (*DSOV,* p.58). Most often the presence of the world is represented in men, self-confident in their condemnation, righteous in asserting their prerogatives. Julian feels it his duty to inform Judith that her love for Diana is "entirely evil", and assures her that what she is doing "isn't just an omission or a failure. It is positive, a grotesque denial" (*DSOV,* p. 167). Judith's "evil" consists of her denial of Julian's "right" to her body. After an encounter with a detective following her and Carol, Therese has this realization: "It was malice she had seen in his smile, even as he said he was on no side, and she could feel in him a desire that was actually personal to separate them, because he knew they were together" (*PS,* p. 179). The bookcover of *Catching Saradove,* not written by Bertha Harris, makes clear the only "acceptable" relationship between the two worlds: "Saradove Racepath is lost in Greenwich Village in New York, becomes prey to lesbians, but eventually has an affair with a young radical demonstrator." According to this interpretation of the novel, Saradove's salvation lies in the arms of the young radical, but within the book itself the affair is actually destructive for Saradove. Once Johnson (the young radical) has

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*Titles of the novels discussed in this section are abbreviated as follows: *Price of Salt=PS; Dark Side of Venus=DSOV; Well of Loneliness=WL; Nightwood=N; Catching Saradove=CS; Confessions of Cherubino=CC; Libido Beach=LB.* Page numbers for quotations follow the abbreviated title in parentheses.

slipped the brass ring on her finger, Saradove feels "in one, swift instant" L.E.'s body, "and Johnson's hand against her own went up like vapor against that memory" (*CS*, p. 196). Later Saradove tells herself that "In a moment, in just a moment, she would go back into the god's make-believe of reality, would become sane, solid true; would again love Johnson" (*CS*, p. 197). In the daylight world of men, the Lesbian cannot be real; she has no name, and she understands clearly that she can have no identity except that provided for her by THE WORLD.

In attempting to create herself, the Lesbian begins with the knowledge that she is different, not ordinary, the knowledge of those around her. We learn, through the perceptions of those around us, that we are alien, somehow extraordinary. Stephen Gordon's mother was repulsed by her daughter, for "she hated the way Stephen moved or stood still, hated a certain largeness about her, a certain crude lack of grace in her movements, a certain unconscious defiance" (*WL*, p.13). It is Saradove's fear of "being different" that causes her flight, a fear encouraged by her father: "Am I going to have to talk all night to convince just one of you that you're not different, you're ordinary?. . . Were you planning right then just to fly off through the ceiling and head toward some of them lovely people you know?" (*CS*, p. 45). He tells Olympia, Saradove's mother, "We'll just see how magical she is. You think you can rub me out, make *me* never happen! Little girl who got here by magic never had to have a daddy. . . ." (*CS*, p. 43). And, like Saradove, the Lesbian comes to believe that she's never real, that she is "the only lie, the only fantasy; . . . trapped in the real, remaking it, every moment making it more real through the lie of herself" (*CS*, pp. 196-7).

Out of the feelings of unreality forced upon her by the denials of the outside world, the Lesbian character creates for herself a mythology of darkness, a world in which she moves through dreams and shadows. Lesiban love becomes the habitation of another's dream. L.E. can feel only horror when she perceives that in Saradove "Some fairy tale she had made up was coming to life and trying to love her" (*CS*, p. 69). And Saradove, confronting Evelyn, L.E.'s other lover, thinks to herself: ". . . just let me have the dreams she means to change my life with" (*CS*, p. 80). As dreamers, twilight and the night become our only territories. As the Doctor in *Nightwood* defines twilight, it is "a fabulous reconstruction of fear, fear bottom-out and wrong side up. Every day is thought upon and calculated, but the night is not premeditated" (*N*, p. 80). And he tells Nora: "The darkness is the closet in which your lover roosts her heart, and that night-fowl that caws against her spirit and yours, dropping between you and her the awful estrangement of his bowels. . . . Night people do not bury their dead, but on the neck of you, their beloved and waking, sling the creature, husked of its gestures" (*N*, p. 89). He describes Robin as "sort of fluid blue under her skin, as if the hide of time had been stripped from her, and with it, all transactions with knowledge. A sort of first position in attention; a face that will age only under the blows of perpetual childhood. The temples like those of young beasts cutting horns, as if they were sleeping eyes" (*N*, p. 134). Robin is one of those who must go into the night, and it is the night through which she manifests her innocence. Her husband describes her as one of those who must get permission to live and, failing that, "she will make an innocence for herself; a fearful sort of primitive innocence. It may be considered 'depraved' by our generation. . ." (*N*, p. 117). And the Doctor later observes that "To be utterly innocent. . . would be to be utterly unknown, particularly to oneself" (*N*, p. 138).

These innocents have their own definitions for love, but they are not the safe love of convention. They are, instead, loves that must inhabit the dark, the unknown Otherworld. Margaret, after Ellen has told her of her affair with Sanctissma, thinks: "So that was where love was. At the top of the cragged mountains, hung with mist and spider webs and thick forests, . . ." (*CC*, p. 15). In Margaret's mind, love becomes a vampire from which she must protect Ellen. In the darkness, where we all become children, sleepwalkers, everything is transformed into the fantastic. Saradove, who does not "look like anything on earth," tells herself that she is a dragon (*CS*, p. 125), and she imagines that at a party she will meet "fabulous women, as real as unicorns" (*CS*, p. 126). And she writes to her first love: "You always want metaphors from me. I am your metaphor for love" (CS, p. 136). At the party, she finds L.E. under a table, and she sees that "L.E.'s face had become a motion-picture projector pointed into the dark rooms of her brain. . . . Fear began to turn her story into a fairy tale, making it cross the forbidden forest. . . . L.E. was making over her brain into a morning housetop burning with summer" (*CS*, p. 164). In the transfiguration, we come to inhabit each other's dreams. Nora realizes that she is only a shadow in Robin's dream (N, p. 145); Ellen, knowing finally that it is love for her that has driven Margaret insane, crawls "into Margaret's shaky wooden dream" (CC, p. 206). And in her insanity, Margaret becomes "the indulgence of as many secret dreams as there were passengers; at last the passengers could handle and kiss and violate their own dreams" (CC, p. 209).

And it is in this violation of innocence that the two worlds of the Lesbian meet. The role of the outside world in the Lesbian novel is that of destruction, of violence, the shattering of dreams, the making of "uninhabited angels." In *Libido Beach*, Dinny, cast as Peter Pan, describes the reason straight people come to the island. A group of them has tried to lure another Lesbian, Beth, to their table, and Dinny explains to her that such people invite drunk Lesbians out to their yachts for orgies. "Next thing you know, you find that you are forced to participate or get out at the risk of looking like a very small child." Dinny continues her explanation, and points out to Beth that when these pleasure-seekers are finished, "they've had their perverted little kicks and they can go home and spread the word that those queers are just a bunch of deluded degenerates that will do anything. . . . They're corrupt and they'll corrupt anything they can, . . . " (LB, p. 145). Stephen Gordon, contemplating the "cruel truth" of her love for Mary, fumbles for a way to tell Mary of the consequences of her love: "If you come to me, Mary, the world will abhor you, will persecute you, will call you unclean. . . . We may harm no living creature by our love; we may grow more perfect in understanding. . .; but all this will not save you from the scourge of a world that will turn away its eyes from your noblest actions, finding only corruption and vileness in you. You will see men and women defiling each other, ... You will see unfaithfulness, lies and deceit among those whom the world views with approbation' (WL, pl 347). When Saradove begins her affair with Johnson, she knows that "Not a growl or a footpad came to her. Even the summer birds had closed their throats, waiting for a new sunrise to sing. Saradove had been too crafty, too hard to catch; but a man had caught her and she was no longer fit for the beasts" (CS, p. 201). By entering into a socially-approved relationship with a male, Saradove has defiled herself; she is no longer innocent.

Once the spell of the enchanted forest is broken, innocence is lost, dreams are dissipated. The Outside World exacts from the Lesbian a sacrifice, a price that she pays because she has

chosen to be different. The sacrifice comes out of the innocence that is destroyed. Innocence creates the willingness to make the sacrifice, which may assume different guises, but it is always there. Stephen Gordon finally surrenders Mary to a man who could "win for her the world's approbation. . . ." (WL, p. 494). Diana marries a man she dislikes in order to protect Judith's estate. Ultimately, the women are reunited as lovers, but the book ends on a note of fear (DSOV). In *Libido Beach,* Gail drowns herself because she believes that Tinker Bell has come for her and that she's going to Never-Never Land. Moral-of-the-Story: Women loving women leads to madness and suicide. Saradove, after her "salvation" by the young radical, winds up on a park bench trying to love his child. (CS) For the Lesbian, NOTHING works. Ellen, in *The Confessions of Cherubino,* returns home carrying the insane Margaret in her arms. And in *Nightwood,* Robin Vote lies weeping on the floor of a chapel near Nora's home, barking and laughing. Carol and Therese finally wind up together, after Carol has lost the battle to keep her daughter. (PS) When two women dare to love each other, there is always some sacrifice exacted, even when there's a "happy" ending.

For Lesbians, the price of dreaming is devastation. The Lesbian is cast as a kind of "noble savage," living in primitive innocence. She is a woman so guilt-ridden by her identity that she will offer up even her love for destruction, thus assuring the reader that Lesbians are base creatures indeed. This representation manages to depict the Lesbian as necessarily evil, but so conscious of her "evil" that she transcends her depravity and attains a strained spirituality through her self-denial and mutilation. Thus, the Lesbian approaches saint-hood in the eyes of the Outside World through her Fall, by giving in to the demands and pressures of male society. In this way, we are corrupted through our own innocence. Such is the mythology created in early Lesbian novels, tellings of our failed utopias.

II

Up to this point, I have concentrated only on those novels written by Lesbians that appeared prior to 1970, and this division is based on an important shift in th conceptual structures of Lesbian novels. Since then, we have had seven, and perhaps more, novels in which Lesbians finally appear as human beings standing firmly on whatever ground we can claim. In 1969, Isabel Miller published *A Place for Us,* and it appeared in 1972, through McGraw-Hill, as *Patience and Sarah.* In 1973, Rita Mae Brown published *Rubyfruit Jungle,* our first novel with comic episodes. And 1974 saw the publication of *The Late Comer* by Sarah Aldridge (The Naiad Press), *Yesterday's Lessons* by Sharon Isabell (The Women's Press Collective), *Riverfinger Women* by Elana Nachman (Daughters, Inc.), *Loving Her* by Ann Shockley (Bobbs-Merrill), and *Flying* by Kate Millet. In spite of the diversity of style and story exhibited in these books, they all share one feature in common: None of the characters are anything but glad they're Lesbians. We are no longer beings transformed into "uninhabited angels" who are satisfied with the images created for us out of the darkness and fear of someone else's mind.

Only two of the books, *Loving Her* and *The Late Comer,* draw their content from the traditional plot structures of Lesbian novels. *The Late Comer* teases the reader, in much the same way as Jane Rule's *This Is Not For You* does, but this time we are spared the agonizing over the "rights" and/or "wrongs" of loving another woman, and the two central characters in the novel finally find their way to each other, on the last page, in the last sentence. The word *Lesbian,* as a label for the relationship, does not occur once in the novel, because what we see is the process of two women coming to love each other, through a maze of heterosexual political intrigues: an international kidnaping, adultery, and familial tensions. In the midst of social conflict, two women grow to love each other. The heterosexual world becomes merely the backdrop for the two women as they find themselves.

Loving Her, by Ann Shockley, focuses on the beginning stages of a relationship between Renay, a black woman, and Terry, a white woman, exploring the additional complications of a Lesbian relationship in a racist society. We see the two women struggling, not only with heterosexuals in stereotypical situations, but with racism within themselves and others. The conflict with the heterosexual world takes a particularly violent and tragic form in this novel. Renay leaves her black husband, Jerome Lee, for Terry, but Jerome Lee cannot believe that "his" woman has left him, and his revenge is brutal and painful. First he breaks into the home of Renay and Terry and, finding Renay alone, nearly beats her to death. Then he goes to Tilltown, where Renay has sent her daughter to stay for awhile, and takes the girl child for a ride in his car. He has an accident, and the child is killed. Renay, who is nearly destroyed by her daughter's death, leaves Terry, explaining in a note that she thinks "it's best for both of us." But she does return to Terry, and when the book ends Terry and Renay are in each other's arms.

Patience and Sarah, which has been called a "Lesbian fairy tale," has been one of the most popular Lesbian novels since its publication in 1969, with the title *A Place for Us.* Yes, the two women are depicted in their respective "femme" and "butch" roles, but I find it hard to reject the book for that alone, and it's conveniently set in the early nineteenth century. And the straight-forward simplicity of Isabel Miller's style masks a subtlety and wry humor that is at once appealing and disarming. For example, in one of her introspective moments, Patience things to herself: ". . . I'd never noticed that marriage made anyone else feel better," echoing the sentiments of Stephen Gordon, but without the anguish of her shame and bitterness. The novel consists of four alternating books, in which Patience and Sarah speak for themselves, offering us their perceptions and struggles in their own voices. It is the first time that we hear the first-person voice as Lesbians speak to themselves and each other. Although *Patience and Sarah* is not "autobiographical," it marks the turning point in the structure and content of Lesbian novels.

As our novelists have begun to reflect the restructuring and strengthening of our perceptions of ourselves, they have abandoned the "omniscient narrator" to heterosexual writers, who seem to still need the facade of objectivity made possible by third person narration. "We" are no longer "they", and our latest novels capture the shift of focus in diverse, but equally authentic, voices. Our characters no longer concern themselves with what we are to "them", the heterosexual world. Instead, the new "fictional" Lesbians focus on themselves and, since the heterosexual world is still "out there," the question has become, more appropriately, what are "they" to "us"? As we have grown into our own fantasies, we have come to inhabit ourselves, the utopia of our earlier novels. We are no longer "uninhabited angels".

Molly, in *Rubyfruit Jungle,* was the first to stand on our newly claimed territory, and, as a barely disguised Rita Mae Brown, she did so with force and wit. *Rubyfruit Jungle* is the first comic Lesbian novel, a novel in which Molly's encounters with the heterosexual world, and her living in it, are occasions for farce and laughter. For the first time, we have the space

and strength to be funny. Molly is no innocent or lamb about to be sacrificed for the "greater good" of anyone, and especially not the heterosexual culture that would have her deny herself to its own ends. Will any of us forget when Molly, cast as the Virgin Mary in a Christmas play, dropped "the baby Jesus" on the stage? In Molly, with irreverence and glee, we shed the last vestiges of our "strained spirituality", and claimed our own world.

Then, in 1974, Elana Nachman and Sharon Isabell moved in, Elana Nachman proclaiming, in *Riverfinger Women,* "these are our lives, these are our lives, these are our lives", and Sharon Isabell, as Sharon Isabell, riding out of her book on her yamaha 125, has this to say: "I begin to feel as long as I had that bike I had hope. No matter how many people laughed at me or no matter what anyone said they couldn't take that away from me. My Freedom!" Both novels record the struggles of occupation of our new territory. Inez Riverfingers the first makes it clear. "Let me try to make it clear. In 1967 we still wanted to repeat the same straight story. But we knew even then, in our careful duplications (toasters, laundry, feeding the cats, a whole inventory of living together), that we were pornographic because we were both women. . . . we knew that when men came to see the movie we would make, the men would come because it was pornographic, that's all, baby, sinful, immoral and certainly absurd, for women to think they could do it without them."

"Let me try to make it clear. There is Inez. There is Abby. They became lovers when they were seventeen. This is the story of what it means to be women and lovers when you are seventeen, with the years just behind (moving them toward it), and the years just ahead, with everyone waiting to say, un-huh, just as we thought!". . .

"There are all the places where these stories touch each other and make the start of a common life, the beginning of an idea about community. There are all the places where the story falls apart and something else shows through—an isolation, a terror, a hunger to shape that isolation and terror into some kind of love for ourselves." (*Riverfinger Women,* pp. 13-14).

Elana Nachman

"There are all the places where these stories touch each other and make the start of a common life." The beginning. The beginning of our construction of ourselves. The beginning of a new mythology, a new construction of reality. We have moved into our own lives, and in so doing, we have destroyed the barriers between so-called "fiction" and "non-fiction". We have destroyed the separation of "fact" and "fantasy". We are our own fantasies, at last, and we will set about creating ourselves. As Inez Riverfingers points out to The Committee:

"*Your* notions of what 'reality' is, gentlemen, seem based on a common error in the Western time sense: that there is in fact a past we can pinpoint, other than the shape our experience as a whole takes on in an immediate present, which itself drops from us continually, to the point where one would be hard pressed to take seriously any suggestions that the world has a precise and knowable form. I do not suggest that I am writing a complex antilinear tract—far from it. All I have ever said was that I was writing the pornographic novel of my life, for the sake of having something to do with my spare time." (*Riverfinger Women,* p. 89)

these are our lives
these are our lives
these are our lives

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abby, Alain. *Libido Beach.* New York: Avon, 1962.($.50)

Aldridge, Sarah. *The Late Comer.* Reno, Nevada: The Naiad Press, 1974. ($3.00)

Barnes, Djuna. *Nightwood.* New York: New Directions, 1961. ($1.50)

Brown, Rita Mae. *Rubyfruit Jungle.* Plainfield, Vt.: Daughters, Inc., 1973. ($3.00)

Hall, Radclyffe. *The Well of Loneliness.* London: Corgi, 1972. ($2.50)

Harris, Bertha. *Catching Saradove.* New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1969. ($4.95)

————. *Confessions of Cherubino.* New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1972. ($5.95)

Isabell, Sharon. *Yesterday's Lessons.* Oakland, Calif.: The Women's Press Collective, 1974. ($2.50)

MacCana, Proinsias. *Celtic Mythology.* London: Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1970.

Miller Isabel. *Patience and Sarah.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972. ($5.95)

Morgan, Claire. *The Price of Salt.* New York: Macfadden, 1969. ($. 75)

Nachman, Elana. *Riverfinger Women.* Plainfield, Vt.: Daughters, Inc., 1974. ($3.50)

Shockley, Ann. *Loving Her.* Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974. ($6.95)

Verel, Shirley. *The Dark Side of Venus.* New York: Bantam, 1962. ($.50)

AN ANNOTATED CHECKLIST OF LESBIAN FEMINIST RESOURCES

by Karen Vierneisel

Students of women's culture, especially of lesbiana, cannot rely on the conventional resources of the library. Before 1972 the Library of Congress subject headings did not even recognize lesbians. We were then filed under "sexual perversions". (Anything catalogued before 1972 continues to be cross-indexed under "lesbianism" and "sexual perversions".) Librarians contributed to the conspiracy of silence about lesbians. Fiction with lesbian characters and lesbian authors were buried; many lesbian works were simply not purchased. Often the holdings on a woman writer reveal the caprice of a librarian in the Acquisitions Department. The mainstream of literary criticism revealed a curious blend of naivete and censorship when it came to discussing lesbian relationships, fictive and real. The silence was observed. With the emergence of the women's movement in the 1960's, however, lesbiana slowly began to surface.

This checklist is intended to fill a void. Although not definitive, it is an attempt to list all known lesbian feminist resources. The difficulties of such a compilation frustrate even the most skilled researcher. Many of the materials are not found in the university library; those that are housed in the university are buried. The reference works which facilitate research in Victorian literature or Medieval studies have only begun to be made available in Women's Studies. The checklist is divided into six sections. Part I lists every known bibliography in the English language which includes entries on lesbianism. The numerous highly selective bibliographies appended to non-fiction works on lesbianism have been excluded because in almost all instances they are repetitve and owe their existence either to Jeannette H. Foster's *Sex Variant Women In Literature* (1956) or Gene Damon's *The Lesbian In Literature* (1967). Part II is a brief description of abstracts, indices, and resources which index lesbianism. Part III lists publications by and about lesbians. Part IV lists feminist publishers, identifying those who publish lesbian material. Part V is a guide to distributors of feminist and lesbian publications. Completing the checklist is Part VI which describes the three lesbian archives and the Women's Collection at Northwestern University Library in Evanston, Illinois.

I have made every effort to see at first-hand the materials listed. But it was not always possible to locate publications, especially those printed outside the U.S. As with all alternative movement groups, feminist and lesbian groups are more vulnerable to monetary pressures and are often dependent on volunteers. When people are exhausted working full-time jobs and volunteering after-hours to put out a journal, such efforts often collapse, if only temporarily. Thus, any listing of periodicals is out-of-date by the time it is printed. Any omissions are made in ignorance and will be corrected in a revised checklist.

The principal sources for this checklist were materials available in the Chicago area: The Women's Collection at Northwestern University Library, The New Alexandria Library for Lesbian Women, the files of Lavender Press. The standard reference works used included Besterman's *Index Bibliographicus*, *Choice*, and Ulrich's *International Periodical Directory 1973-74*.

It is my hope that this checklist will encourage research in lesbiana and that individuals having access to information not included will willingly share it in order that the revised checklist be yet more comprehensive.

I – BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Critchfield, Sue. *Synergy*'s issue on "Lesbiana". Bay Area Reference Center, San Francisco Public Library. 1972. Out-of-print.

A select annotated bibliography of fiction and non-fiction. Superseded by more recent listings. *S* is no longer published; the last issue was no. 42, March 1974.
[See Booklegger Magazine *in Part II for Critchfield's new endeavor.]*

Damon, Gene, Jan Watson and Robin Jordan. *The Lesbian In Literature: A Bibliography,* Second Edition. Reno, Nevada: *The Ladder,* 1975. $10.00.

Alphabetical listing by author of all known books in the English language concerned with lesbianism or having lesbian characters. Principally a bibliography of prose fiction, poetry, and drama, *LIL*'s second edition includes a considerable number of entries on biography and autobiography and substantial non-fiction works since 1967 that are accurate in their presentation of lesbianism. Approximately 2,500 entries. Coded for ease of use to indicate major, minor, and repressed lesbian characters and/or action, trash, and the quality of the treatment of the lesbian material. Brief annotations to make locating books easier. Like *SVIL, LIL* is an essential source.
[Order pre-paid from: The Ladder, *P.O. Box 5025, Washington Station, Reno, NV 89503. Also available: The Index to* The Ladder *($10.), the complete microfilm backfile of* The Ladder *($70.), and the first edition of* The Lesbian in Literature *($6.).]*

Foster, Jeannette H. *Sex Variant Women In Literature: A Historical and Quantitative Survey.* New York: Vantage Press, 1956. Out-of-print.

A comprehensive, if not exhaustive, study of lesbian characters and authors, *SVWIL* is the pioneering work in lesbiana. A brilliant literary history, tracing the social attitudes toward lesbianism as revealed in English, French, and German literature from ancient times to the 1950's and describing the literary conventions of lesbian fiction. Foster's prose style is refreshingly free of inflated literary jargon. An essential bibliographic source. A subject/author index facilitates use.
[NB: To be reprinted by Diana Press, 1975. The cost of this paperback reprint has not been determined. PLEASE do NOT order until it is formally announced. Inquiries should be directed after July 1975 to The Ladder, *P.O. Box 5025, Washington Station, Reno, NV 89503. Send self-addressed, stamped envelope.]*

Institute for the Study of Human Resources, The. *An Annotated Bibliography On Homosexuality.* In progress.

The usefulness of this bibliography is difficult to ascertain, but all indications suggest its focus is male. Card entries in hand at the end of 1974 total 1252: 876 non-fiction

titles of which 142 are articles not found in other listings plus 376 fiction titles. For information, write: W. Dorr Legg, The Institute, 2256 Venice Blvd., Suite 203, Los Angeles, CA 90006.

Kuda, Marie, ed. *Women Loving Women: A Select and Annotated Bibliography of Women Loving Women in Literature.* Chicago: Lavender Press, 1974. $1.50.

Alphabetical listing by author of select books in English or English translation limited to prose fiction, poetry, biography, and autobiography. Includes those works that show lesbianism as a valid, positive alternative lifestyle. Though Kuda's annotations do not always agree with *LIL*'s codings, *WLW* works well as a complement to *The Lesbian In Literature.* Order prepaid from Lavender Press, P.O. Box 60206, Chicago, IL 60660.

Lesbian Resource Center. *Bibliography of Lesbian Related Materials.* Minneapolis, Minnesota. January 1974. Free

Under numerous general subject headings, 60 entries alphabetically listed. Particularly good listing of poetry from lesbian presses. Presumably a serial bibliography which LRC will update at six-month intervals.
For additional information, send self-addressed, stamped envelope to LRC, 2104 Stevens Ave. S, Minneapolis, MN 55404.

Parker, William. *Homosexuality: A Selective Bibliography of Over 3,000 Items.* Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1971.

Divided into 14 sections including books, pamphlets, dissertations, articles in medical and scientific journals, articles in homophile publications, literary works, and articles in legal journals in English and English translation through 1969, Parker's bibliography is useful for the research specialist as well as the general reader. The forword by Dr. Evelyn Hooker, Chairwoman of the National Institute of Mental Health Task Force on Homosexuality, and the author's preface discuss the ignorance, fear and bias that have shaped much of what has been written on the subject and caution the reader to carefully evaluate whatever is read about homosexuality. An author/subject index facilitates use. 110 items expressly on lesbianism.

Rowbothan, Sheila. *Women's Liberation and Revolution: A Bibliography,* Second Edition. Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press Ltd., 1973. U.S. and Canada $.80; United Kingdom 20p.

Primarily a historical bibliography recording the history of the women's movement in its first years and listing those articles that explore the relation of feminism and revolutionary politics, WLR does not include material written in the women's movement since February 1972. Divided into general subject headings. 7 entries under gay liberation. Order prepaid from Falling Wall Press, Ltd., 79 Richmond Rd., Montpelier, Bristol, England BS6 5EP. Please include postage: U.S. & Canada, post free by surface; UK, 5p for single copies.

Sense and Sensibility Collective, The. *Women and Literature: An Annotated Bibliography of Women Writers,* Revised Second Edition. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1973. $1.50.

Alphabetical listing by author of select books of prose fiction in the English language, including biographical information on some of the major writers, WL is a useful guide for women's studies courses and for individual women studying the female experience as portrayed in literature. Twentieth-century writers account for 5/6ths of all entries. An index of topics lists 40+ entries on lesbian relationships. Although it is not exhaustive, WL is nevertheless an impressive compilation. Order prepaid from Sense & Sensibility, 57 Ellery St., Cambridge, MA 02138.

Sharma, Umesh D. and Wilfred C. Rudy. *Homosexuality: A Select Bibliography.* Waterloo, Ontario. 1970.

An alphabetical listing by author of over 2,000 entries on all aspects of male and female homosexuality including some literary works but limited to works in the English language and in English translation and to twentieth century publications. No index. No code for distinguishing fiction, non-fiction, etc. 300 items expressly about lesbianism.

Task Force on Gay Liberation, Social Responsibilities Round Table, American Library Association. *A Gay Bibliography,* Third Revision. January 1974.

A listing of non-fiction items including books, articles, pamphlets, periodicals, and films which support a positive view of homosexuals and homosexuality. For a free copy of the bibliography send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Barbara Gittings, Coordinator, Task Force on Gay Liberation, ALA/SRRT, Box 2383, Philadelphia, PA 19103. [*Financial assistance for the work of the task force is gratefully received.*]

Weinberg, Martin S. and Alan P. Bell, eds. *Homosexuality: An Annotated Bibliography.* New York: Harper & Row, 1972.

A listing of 1,265 entries on the sociological, psychological, and physiological aspects of male and female homosexuality. Excludes biography, autobiography, literary works and all popular magazines. With rare exception, also excludes material contained in homophile publications. A research project of the National Institute of Mental Health, this bibliography includes a lengthy preface which acknowledges that much of the thinking about homosexuality is confused, biased, and unverified. A subject/author index facilitates use. Primarily of interest to scholoars, sociologists, and psychologists. 100 items expressly on lesbianism.

II – ABSTRACTS, INDICES, AND RESOURCES

Alternatives In Print, 1975-76, The Annual Catalog of Social Change Publications. Glide Publications. 1975.

Useful as a directory to 800+ independent and movement publishers.

Alternative Press Index, Alternative Press Centre, Bag Service 2500, Postal Station E, Toronto 4 Ontario, Canada. $6/yr. for individuals; $10/movement groups; $15/high schools; $30/libraries and educational institutions; $60/ military & corporate institutions + additional $5 charge for overseas subscriptions.

A quarterly index to 150+ alternative and underground publications listed by subject. The editors are in touch with movement ideas as evidenced by their decision to cross-index lesbians under subject heading "feminism" rather than "gay liberation".

Booklegger Magazine, 555 29th St., San Francisco, CA 94131. $8/yr.; $1.50/copy. Edited by Sue Critchfield, Carole Leita, Celeste West, and Valerie Wheat.

A bimonthly magazine by/for library workers and feminists, BM publishes essays, resource lists, and book reviews (especially of books not reviewed elsewhere). Highly recommended. [*See Vol. 1, no. 1 for a free press bibliography.*]

Women Studies Abstracts, P.O. Box 1, Rush, NY 14543. $8.50/yr. for individual; $15/ library edition including annual index; $7/students. Edited by Sara Stauffer Whaley and Karen Caviglia.

A quarterly compilation of abstracts of articles about women from journals of art, history, law, literature. medicine, psychology, religion, sociology, black studies, and women's studies plus book reviews and occasional bibliographic essays on subjects of interest to feminists. To date, few references to lesbians. As coverage of feminist publications increases, this should change. Essential source for academic feminists.

III – PUBLICATIONS

A. SCIENTIFIC/ACADEMIC

Homosexual Counseling Journal, 921 Madison Ave., New York 10021. $10/yr. for individuals; $15/libraries and lesbian feminist organizations; Free to prisoners and state hospital patients.

A quarterly journal to the helping professions.

Journal Of Homosexuality, Haworth Press, 130 W. 72nd St., New York, NY 10023. $12/yr. for individuals;$25/institutions.

A quarterly journal "devoted to empirical research in social and biological science and its clinical implications on lesbianism, male homosexuality, gender identity and alternative sexual lifestyles." Scholarly.

[*See review in* Lavender Woman, *Vol. 4, no. 2 (April 1975)*]

B. GAY

Gay Literature, Department of English, State University of California, Fresno, CA 93740. $7/ yr.; $2/copy. Edited by Daniel Curzon.

A new quarterly journal publishing essays, fiction, and occasional poetry on specific issues and problems of gay men and women. Focus of the first issue is male–out of 14 contributors only two are women. No feminist or political perspective for the editor believes ". . . that most people are not very political."

C. LESBIAN FEMINIST [1]

Ain't I A Woman?, Box 1169, Iowa City, IA 52240.

The lesbian collective making up AIAW staff no longer publishes a newspaper. But they do print pamphlets on issues of concern to lesbian feminists. Send self-addressed, stamped envelope for subject list and prices.

Amazon Quarterly, Box 434, West Somerville, MA 02144. $4/yr.; $5/ in sealed wrapper or outside U.S.; $6/yr. for institutions; $1/ copy.

This quarterly journal publishes lesbian feminist fiction, poetry, graphics, reviews, and essays. Beginning with Vol. 3, no. 3, AQ will "say goodbye to lesbianism as a focus for discussion or debate. We will continue to take a lesbian perspective for granted, but encourage our contributors to write/create what passionately interests *you,*" say editors Gina Covina and Laurel Galana. Authors paid for their contributions.

Atlanta Lesbian Feminists Alliance Newletter, P.O. Box 7684, Atlanta, GA 30309.

ALFAN publishes news of local interest.

The Circle, Box 427, Waterloo Quay, Wellington, New Zealand. $4/yr.

A lesbian feminist magazine from the other side of the world. Inquire about U.S. rates and postage.

Country Women, Box 51, Albion, CA 95410. $4/yr. for individuals; $7/institutions; $.75/copy.

A bimonthly magazine, CW publishes practical information for rural women as well as essays, letters, and photographs. Each issue is organized around a theme.

Desperate Living, P.O. Box 7124, Baltimore, MD 21218. $3/yr.

A bimonthly newsletter.

Dyke, Tomato Publications, 70 Barrow St., New York, NY 10014. $5/for charter subscription available until October 31.

The first issue of this new lesbian journal is planned for September 1975.

Focus, 419 Boylston St., R. 323, Boston, MA 02116.

The monthly magazine of the Boston Daughters of Bilitis, F publishes local news, poetry, and occasional book reviews.

Gay Girl Quarterly (formerly *Arena Three*), Gay Publications, BCM/Seahorse, London WC1. England. L1.80/yr.

A founder member of the National Federation of Homophile Organizations, GGQ is mixed bag: articles on cookery, gay legal rights, some poetry.

The Ladder, Box 5025, Washington Station, Reno, NV 89503.

The first important lesbian magazine published in U.S. Begun in 1956 by the San Francisco Daughters of Bilitis, TL severed from DOB in 1970 to become an independent lesbian feminist journal publishing essays, short stories, poetry, and book reviews. Soaring postal costs put TL out of publication in 1972. But editor Gene Damon wants to revive it. If you would support a new TL with a pre-publication subscription, address your comments to Damon at TL.

Lavender Woman, P.O. Box 60206, Chicago IL 60660. $4/yr.; $.50/copy; Free to women in prisons and mental institutions.

A bimonthly lesbian feminist newspaper in its third year of publication, LW prints Midwest lesbian news with commentary on lesbian feminist issues of national concern, poetry, book and music reviews. "News from the Sisterland" is especially informative.

Lazette, P.O. Box 62, Fanwood, NJ 07023. $2.50/yr.

A monthly newsletter published by the New Jersey Daughters of Bilitis.

Lesbian Connection, Ambitious Amazons, P.O. Box 811, East Lansing MI 48823. Free in U.S., Foreign subscribers pay cost of postage: $2.50 air mail; $1.50 surface.

A remarkable new endeavor published bimonthly, LC is a newsletter printing information of interest to lesbians world-wide. Vol. 1, no. 3 published a listing of lesbian organizations throughout the U.S. as its first effort to create a lesbian network.

Lesbian Tide, The, 373 N. Western, R. 202, Los Angeles, CA 90004. $7.50/yr. for individuals; $10/institutions; $.65/copy.

A monthly magazine with Los Angeles area news, some national coverage, poetry and occasional fiction. The Tide collective suspended publication in Fall 1974 with a promise to resume in Spring 1975.

[1] This checklist owes much to Lesbian Connection's guide to lesbian organizations in Vol 1, no. 3 and "The Feminist Press: An Annotated Directory" in *Amazon Quarterly,* 3 no. 1 (Nov. 1974).

Lesbian Visions, Lesbian Collective, Box 8265, Stanford, CA 94305. Free.

A newsletter publishing information of interest to women in the Palo Alto area.

Long Time Coming, Box 161, Station E. Montreal H2T 3A7 PQ. $5/yr. for individuals; $7/institutions & overseas subscriptions; $.50/copy; Free to prisoners and those in mental hospitals.

Canada's only lesbian paper, LTC publishes news on Montreal gay women, book reviews, articles. Last issue December 1974. Collective defunct, but reorganizing. To resume publication by Spring 1975. Need women interested in handling graphics, news, and distribution. Inquiries to address above.

Mom's Apple Pie, The Lesbian Mother's National Defense Fund, 2446 Lorentz Place N., Seattle, WA 98109

Published irregularly, LMDF reports about lesbian mother custody cases and Seattle women's organizations. LMDF also publishes a series of educational pamphlets, the first of which is "Male Children—A Lesbian Mother's Perspective."

Off Our Backs, 1724 20th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20009. $6/yr. for individuals; $7/Canada; $13/overseas; $15/institutions; $.45/copy.

The grandma of feminist newspapers, OOB has a sharp eye on the national and international feminist scene. Thorough, thoughtful reporting written from an uncompromising feminist perspective. Excellent on the stories that establishment papers avoid: CIA spying on the women's movement, women in prison. The OOB collective takes for granted that lesbianism is an integral part of feminism.

Purple Cow, Columbus Gay Women's Peer Counseling, Box 3321, University Station, Columbus, OH 43210.

An occasional newsletter publishing articles about peer counseling and on news of local interest.

Sappho, Sappho Publications Ltd., BCM/Petrel, London, WC1V 6XX. L5.85/yr. overseas surface sealed; L4.45 unsealed. Payment must be sent in sterling by international money order.

A monthly lesbian feminist publication launched by the only lesbian organization in Europe

Sisters, 1005 Market St., R. 402, San Francisco, CA 94101.

A monthly magazine published by the San Francisco Daughters of Bilitis, S prints local news plus articles, poetry, and book reviews.

So's Your Old Lady, c/o Lesbian Resource Center, 2104 Stevens Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55404. $4.50/yr.; $.75/copy.

A bimonthly journal publishing poetry and essays.

Quest, A Feminist Quarterly, P.O. Box 8843, Washington, D.C. 20003. $7/yr. for individuals; $12/institutions; $8/Canada &Mexico; $10/overseas; $2/copy

Publishing feminist political analysis and ideology, Q welcomes manuscripts from feminists across the country and the world who will contribute to the process of seeking answers and asking questions about feminism. Each issue is organized around a theme announced well in advance of publication. Several of the editors are lesbians, all have been active in the movement.

IV – FEMINIST PUBLISHERS [2]

Alice James Books, 138 Mt. Auburn, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Canadian Women's Educational Press, 280 Bloor St. W., No. 305, Totonto, Ontario, Canada.

*Daughter's Inc., Plainfield, VT 05667.

*Diana Press, Inc., 12 W. 25th St., Baltimore, MD 21218.

Editions Des Femmes, 63 Avenue des Gobelins, Paris, France 70513.

The Feminist Press, Box 334, Suny/Old Westbury, Long Island, NY 11568.

**Lavender Press, P.O. Box 60206, Chicago, IL 60660.

Magic Circle Press, 31 Chapel Lane, Riverside, CT 06878.

**Naiad Press, c/o The Ladder, P.O. Box 5025, Washington Station, Reno, NV 89503.

United Sisters, 4213 West Bay Ave., Tampa, FL 33616.

*Violet Press, P.O. Box 398, New York, NY 10009

Virago, 27 Smith St., London SW3 4EW, England.

Wollstonecraft, Inc., 6399 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90048.

*Women's press collective, 5251 Broadway, Oakland, CA 94618.

V – DISTRIBUTORS

Compendium Book Shop, 240 Camden High St., London, England NW1.

An extensive selection of books, magazines, and pamphlets on feminism and gay liberation.

Feminist Book Mart, 162-11 Ninth Ave., Whitestone, NY 11357.

Granma Books & Periodicals, 2509 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley, CA 94704.

Special subject lists available. The one on gay titles is 3 pages. Send self-addressed, stamped envelope with inquiry.

Elysian Fields, Booksellers, 81-13 Broadway, Elmhurst, NY 11373.

Homosexuality in Literature, Catalog no. 7, lists prose, fiction, poetry, drama, biography, autobiography, literary criticism, bibliography, and scientific works. 281 entries in the lesbiana section. Many titles from Foster's SVWIL and Damon's LIL which are difficult to locate, out-of-print, or rare are available. Prices usually steep. EF welcomes requests for books not listed. Catalog costs $2.

First Things First: Books for Women/A Femail Order House, P.O. Box 9041, Washington, DC 20003.

A collective women's distribution house begun in January 1963; FTF offers approximately 2,500 titles plus posters, records, cassette tapes, buttons, etc. The 1975-76 catalog is divided by subject categories, including third world women, rediscovered fiction, lesbian fiction, women's music. Excellent source for feminist press books. Books must be non-sexist and non-rascist to meet the broad criteria for selection. Special orders welcomed. Catalog free.

[2]But for two additions, this list first appeared in *Booklegger Magazine,* 5 (July/Aug 1974).

* Publishes lesbian materials.

**Publishes exclusively lesbian materials.

Know, Inc., P.O. Box 86031, Pittsburgh, PA 15221.
Distributors and publishers, KI has compiled a list of current publications on the women's movement containing newsletters, magazines, newspapers, journals, and miscellaneous publications of organizations and women's presses. Reprints available at minimal cost. Especially useful for hard-to-locate articles. For free catalog, write address above.

Labyris, 2545 Seegar Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45225.
This lesbian feminist collective organized its book store in 1973. A book list of lesbian feminist titles available on request. Send self-addressed, stamped envelope with inquiry.

Women's Guide To Books, The. MSS Information Corp., 655 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10021.
Published three times a year, this catalog by women for women lists books on film, law, ecology, poetry, sexuality, politics, education, and marriage. A slick enterprise whose selections tend to be the bestsellers of movement literature. Catalog costs $2.

Women In Distribution, P.O. Box 8858, Washington, DC 20003.
Wholesalers for small press and independent publishers, WID offers bulk rates to retail outlets. A complete catalog of titles will be available September 1975. Brochure now available on request.

VI – ARCHIVES

The purpose of each of the archives is to collect and preserve lesbian culture–works created by lesbians, biographies about lesbians, autobiographies, journals, memoirs, diaries, news clippings from establishment, underground, feminist, and lesbian media, and emphemeral materials.

The existence of these archives is one of the most positive aspects of the women's movement. It will enable us to analyze and reevaluate women's experience as it is defined by women. Such collections are the foundation on which a feminist culture can build; they are essential to the healthy growth of women's studies, of feminist revolution, of womanspirit. Information found in these collections is unavailable in the public libraries and university libraries whose patriarchal bias has systematically denied our herstory. When university libraries do have such special collections, they are usually not available to the public.

It is the opinion of this writer that newspapers and journals should honor the archives' requests for free subscriptions or make it a policy to give preference to those which are open to the public. Collections housed in university libraries should pay the subscription rate for institutions.

Lesbian Herstory Archives, P.O. Box 1258, New York, NY 10001. Temporarily housed at Route 1, Dowelltown, TN 37059, while holdings are catalogued.
A collective of 5 women, LHA will collect and preserve any materials that are relevant to the lives and experiences of lesbians. Materials will not circulate. Individuals wishing to use the archives will be asked to present a statement of purpose in order to facilitate contact between women engaged in research. Contributions, monetary and material, gratefully accepted. For information, write LHA at NY address.

The New Alexandria Library for Lesbianwomen, 3523 Halsted, Chicago, IL 60647.
A collective of 4 women, NALLW serves the women's community. Holdings include 300 books in the lending library collection, 45 lesbian and feminist papers on file of which 23 are current subscriptions, approximately 200 subject folders, numberous regional folders on lesbian feminist organizations throughout U.S., and a reference collection. Contributions, monetary and material, gratefully accepted. For information, write J.R. Roberts.

Northwestern University Library, Special Collections, Evanston, IL 60201.
NUL has an extensive collection on the women's movement and gay liberation. Holdings include 50 newspapers and magazines, many pamphlets and a great deal of emphemeral material. The collection possesses materials from the Women's Suffrage Movement in England in the 1890's, although its main concentration is post-1960. Formed largely through the efforts of Ms. Roxanna Siefer who contacted persons involved in these movements and encouraged their donations, the women's collection at NUL–when put together with the serials from the Women's History Research Center–creates a women's history periodical collection of 839 different titles. NUL is open to the public. Materials do not circulate.

The White Mare Archive, Preston Hollow, NY 12469.
A small private collection, WMA's holdings include 38 titles of lesbian and women's movement magazines and newsletters, 20 titles of lesbian and women's movement newspapers (some of the serials date back to 1969 and *The Ladder* dates back to 1958), about 250 books by women, fliers announcing women's events (mostly from NY city dating 1971-1975), posters, buttons, a few biography files, a small audio collection, and the lesbian files from the Women's History Research Center at Berkeley. The subject index files are not yet in order. WMA is not open to the public. For information, write Liza Cowan.

For additonal women's collections in university libraries see Bonnie Thoreen's briefly annotated listing in *Booklegger Magazine 2 (Jan/Feb 1974).* †††

WHEN IT CHANGED
OR, GROWING UP GAY IN AMERICA WITH THE HELP OF LITERATURE

by Gene Damon

At twelve, when I finally got around to thinking out the fact that I preferred girls to boys, I decided to find out what the books had to say about such things. My best friend (a popular euphemism for the girl I was crazy about) and I discussed it for a time and decided a trip to the Detroit Public Library would, undoubtedly, provide all the answers. We had already discovered the multi-syllabic word ho-mo-sex-you-al, as it seemed to be pronounced, and I wish I could record here the reaction of the past-middle-age librarian on whom we sprang our query. Alas, it is lost to memory. Failing that, I told my mother, and after we went through the mother-daughter session, she remembered that she knew of possibly two books I might enjoy. One she clearly remembered as *The Well Of Loneliness,* and the other, for which she could provide only a very garbled description, turned out to be, years later, Marcia Davenport's quiet variant classic, *Of Lena Geyer.*

Five years later, at seventeen, I had become a collector on a very small scale with possibly a dozen fiction titles on the subject, and by age twenty-three I was well into what had become a lifetime passion, the collecting of Lesbian literature. I enjoyed what I was reading, and I could, sometimes, find a few parallels in the pages. But many of the books, even the better written among them, were often about things seemingly unrelated to the ordinary daily life of what I became fond of calling "the garden variety Lesbian". There were very few women in these pages who seemed similar to the women I knew. Luckier than many, I had something to read at least, but I was still without a basic historical literature about my own life. Even when my shelves held nearly 1000 titles, I had less than 100 books with personal meaning for me.

It is a popular conceit in gay liberation circles that the Stonewall Uprising of 1969 heralded the visible literature as well as the more visible life style. This may well be true for male homosexual literature and life styles, but I submit that while the changes for Lesbians and Lesbian literature date from the same period of time the changes have a very different impetus, the new wave of women's liberation. In 1967, when the first edition of *The Lesbian In Literature* was published, there were over 2,000 titles in it and it was fairly inclusive, as the subsequent years of searching have shown. Yet in all those titles there were four basic major areas that were not available. The non-fiction in the field was inaccurate and inadequate to the point that no single title could be considered worth mentioning. There were almost no major biographical studies available (despite the bits and pieces scattered through hundreds of books). In the biographical field—at least that published by regular trade publishers and discounting the obscure privately printed memoirs and autobiographies—there was a practice, ranging from the "subtle" handling of "explosive" material to a good deal of very plain lying or overlooking of relevant facts. The occasional scholarly attempt to deal truthfully with distinguished Lesbians, such as *The Riddle Of Emily Dickinson*, by Rebecca Patterson, met with alternate scorn and screams from the critics. Scholarly anthologies of poetry were seldom limited to women, and when they were, they did not deal at all with the privately well-known fact that a large number of women in the field of poetry are Lesbians. To suggest, in the days before 1970, that a book of literary criticism would appear dealing exclusively with major Lesbian writers and the ways in which this fact of their lives influenced their work and literature in general would have created laughter. No such book was possible.

These needs are beginning to be met, and in addition to strictly formal literary ways, by means such as readily-available pamphlets, magazines, newsletters, women's press publications of Lesbian poetry on an enormous scale and some small press publication of Lesbian fiction. Some of the new trade magazines, while not specifically directed to Lesbians, per se, are of enormous value to that audience. The last named include such items as the new magazine, *Womensports,* and even some portions of the debated and debatable *Ms Magazine.* There are even, praise be, a few books for teenagers dealing with women whose accomplishments are in no way connected to, or dependent upon, males. R. R. Knudson's *Zanballer* is an excellent example, as is the same author's teenage Lesbian novel, *You Are The Rain.* The more esoteric field of science or speculative fiction, long a pioneer in less-than-popular views, has made a giant stride or two, most notably through the author Joanna Russ, whose Nebula Award-winning short story, "When It Changed", provided me with the title for this article. This same story is the genesis of her novel, *Female Man,* —an unfortuante title but certainly the major and most delightful Lesbian science fiction novel to date.

Among the many mainstream titles in recent years there are four new publications that seem to me to epitomize the changes I've cited and to point up the difference in terms of available literature for the young Lesbian of today as opposed to the earlier literature about Lesbians.

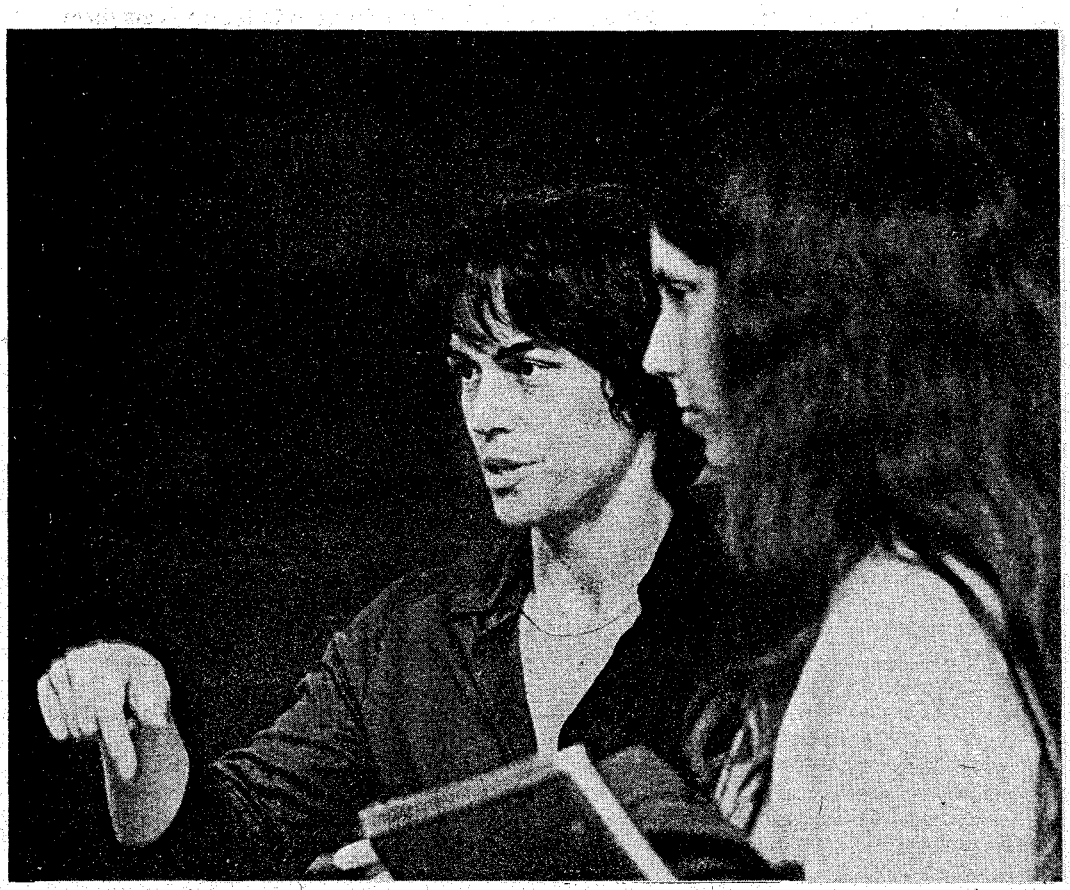
The most pressing need through the years, certainly, has has been for a non-fiction title that deals accurately with the ordinary Lesbian. Not until 1974, however, did such a title appear—Dolores Klaich's fine *Woman Plus Woman, Attitudes Toward Lesbianism.* Admittedly there were indications that such a book was likely when books like Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon's *Lesbian/Woman* and Bettie Wysor's *The Lesbian Myth* came out. But, *Woman Plus Woman* succeeds beyond most of our wildest dreams in combining accuracy, readability and thorough examination of the subject without special pleading or apology. Ms. Klaich includes a basic historical survey of Lesbianism as a cultural phenomenon, primarily using literary sources. She routinely examines and debunks the various "scientific" theories that have spring up through the ages and points out why they are of no particular use, even assuming they had validity. She examines a number of fairly typical Lesbians in various age groups, social backgrounds, etc., and culls from their replies to her own questionnaire a sampling of ordinary Lesbian response to queries. Here, clearly, is the book often wished for—one that could be given to one's parents to read.

Possibly the next greatest need was in the field of Lesbian biography. This has always been a rich vein to mine, but it has, indeed, involved mining, in-depth research to find the buried references to the many famous women who were Lesbians, whose past has been obscured or unmentioned so that, in effect, the heterosexual society could "enjoy" the rewards of whatever life work was involved without acknowledging the reason behind the woman's success in a world that is almost

wholly without opportunity for women as a group. I've never minded the work involved, personally, but this is no valid reason to make finding one's own heritage possible only by taking what one Lesbian publication recently referred to as "a scholarly trip". Meryle Secrest's scholarly, yet bluntly up-front, biography of Romaine Brooks, *Between Me and Life,* exemplifies the new look in Lesbian biography. Without any hedging or glossing over, Ms. Secrest presents her subject to the reader as she was—a brilliant, difficult, talented and troubled woman. Twenty, even ten years ago, a biographer dealing with Romaine Brooks might well have felt compelled to either soft-pedal her personal life or to take the opposite tack and to emphasize its more bizarre aspects. There is little question in my mind that without the influence of the "new view" of women directing their own lives, this would have been a lesser book, if indeed it had even been published. A measure of its complete and casual reception is its inclusion in the American Library Association's Notable Books List of 1974.

While the appearance of an individual biography of a noteworthy talent like Ms. Brooks is a genuine joy, even it pales beside the appearance of *Lesbian Images* by Jane Rule. This is a collective biography and literary examination of twelve writers who are all Lesbians. Ms. Rule introduces her subject with a summary of religious and social attitudes towards the Lesbian and a personal evaluation of criticism and its built-in cultural bias. She then goes on to analyze the works of these major Lesbian writers: Radclyffe Hall, Gertrude Stein, Willa Cather, Vita Sackville-West, Ivy Compton-Burnett, Elizabeth Bowen, Colette, Violette Leduc, Margaret Anderson, Dorothy Baker, May Sarton and Maureen Duffy. The book includes a brief overview of current novelists and a summing-up of some of the contributors of major works in the field whose entire body of work does not warrant (in Ms. Rule's opinion) a separate chapter. Among the women mentioned are Djuna Barnes, Anais Nin, Claire Morgan and Gale Wilhelm (and some readers might wish for more lengthy coverage of these four women at some future time), as well as relatively minor contributors, Joan Haggerty and Han Suyin, and finally the wunderkind of the 1970's, Rita Mae Brown, and her celebrated *Rubyfruit Jungle.* The great beauty and strength of *Lesbian Images* lie in the major chapters, those that deal in depth with their individual subjects. The truth-telling facets of the book are also delightful to the knowledgeable reader, though it is surprising to find Isabel Miller referred to as Alma Routsong, the well-established novelist, (though well-known for many years in the movement, this hasn't been in print in the past to my knowledge) and not to find Claire Morgan cited as Particia Highsmith (when this is both well-known and often in print). The final chapter of the book is a cursory look at non-fiction in the field, completed too early to include the Klaich book, *Woman Plus Woman.* Overall, though, this is a book that will be sought out for the sense of pride it provides as much as for its knowledge. A book of literary criticism and biography has come out, openly beginning with the salient point that the subjects of the work are Lesbians, no conjecture, no supposition or surmise. These writers did these things, and this is why, says Ms. Rule, in effect.

About two weeks after I had agreed to write this article for editor Beth Hodges, I received a review copy of the fourth title to be emphasized here. It is a standard type anthology,



Rita Mae Brown
Photograph by Laima Turnley
Copyright by Laima Turnley

familiar to all who deal with books, an anthology of poetry directed to teachers of literature in colleges and universities. But this one is different. It is entitled *The World Split Open: Four Centuries of Women Poets in England and America, 1552-1950.* The publisher is Random House; and it is a Vintage Book, a quality paperback, so that even at its inflated price of $3.95 it is not expensive. The editor teaches at Hunter College and her name is Louise Bernikow. Women owe her much for this book, primarily for her introduction which says a good deal about women poets. For the first time someone possessing the necessary nebulous "scholarly" credentials has dared to say publicly what we have all known privately—that a vast number of women poets are Lesbians.

And why such ado about books? Why care how a poet's life is treated as long as the poet's work is reviewed honestly? Because it diminishes the pride of the reader. In times not far enough past, alas, well-intentioned guardians of their reputation seemed to surround each famous woman's image to protect it from the frequently encountered and almost always unpalatable truth—that this woman was a Lesbian. We are beginning to see, in the feminist/Lesbian press, graphic accounts of the degree of damage it has done to young, would-be admiring Lesbians, to find such mind-bending labyrinthine lies and subterfuges covering over even the most obvious of models.

This is not to say that such things are all gone, all behind us. There is a covey of protective guardians surrounding the literary bones of Willa Cather in Nebraska land—still, with calm, assuring any and all that indeed, NO, that lady was not what she obviously, hilariously clearly, was—and it may yet go on another 100 years. But somehow, with the Klaich's, the Rule's, the Secrest's and the Bernikow's, I doubt it.

Radclyffe Hall's prophetic, chest-beating cry in the closing chapter of *The Well of Loneliness,* "We are coming. . . and our name is legion—you dare not deny us", was written about fifty years ago. A lot of denying is under the bridge but the acknowledging process has begun. The attitude in the main might allow a paraphrase of Hall's words, "We are here, we have always been here, and we are increasingly proud of it".

* * *

HEY! WHERE CAN I FIND THOSE BOOKS TO READ MYSELF?

All of the books talked about in this article can be found fairly easily. Following is a list of them, by author or editor, title, publisher (where that will help) and how to either send away for them or find them at your library. I have listed them in the order that they are mentioned in the article.

The Well of Loneliness by Radclyffe Hall has been issued in dozens of paperback and hardcover editions. Most libraries try to keep a copy or two, but it is a frequently stolen book. Your best bets are the feminist bookstores around the country, if your library doesn't have a copy. Failing that, your librarian may be willing to inter-library loan it for you. It is not now in print in the U.S., though it usually is re-issued every few years.

Of Lena Geyer, by Marcia Davenport, is a 1930's novel that is included in almost every library in the country including very small ones. It is also a title that can be obtained very easily by inter-library loan.

The Lesbian in Literature—(2nd edition, 1975), by Gene Damon, Jan Watson and Robin Jordan, can be purchased by mail from *The Ladder,* P.O. Box 5025, Washington Station, Reno, Nevada, 89503, for $10.00. It is a 96-page quality paperback with about 2500 books listed in it.

The Riddle of Emily Dickinson, by Rebecca Patterson, is in most medium-sized to large public libraries and in some university and college libraries. It is not in print, but it is another very easily-obtained title if you go to the trouble of asking that it be inter-library loaned for you. (There is nothing special about inter-library loan, incidentally. It is part of the service to which you are entitled at your local library.)

Womensports and *MS Magazine* are available as follows (or on any newsstand):

Womensports	*MS Magazine*
P.O. Box 4963	123 Garden Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50306	Marion, Ohio 43302
$12.00 per year	$10.00 per year

R.R. Knudson's books, *Zanballer* and *You Are The Rain,* are both in print and available from any bookstore. The publisher is Delacorte. You may also want to try the young people's section of the library if you have access to a large or medium-sized public library.

Joanna Russ's short story, "When It Changed", is in *Again Dangerous Visions* and will be available in many libraries. It is also in a paperback edition from New American Library and some stores may have it on the shelves (in the science fiction section). It is also in the book, *Nebula Award Stories 8,* from Random House (editor Isaac Asimov), which is still in print and can be purchased from bookstores or ordered by them for you, and also found in many libraries. Her novel, *The Female Man,* is a new Bantam paperback that should be in the science fiction section of many bookstores. It can also be mail-ordered from Bantam Books, Inc., 414 East Golf Road, Des Plaines, Illinois, 60016. Cost is $1.25 PLUS 35 cents postage and handling. PRINT your name and address clearly and allow at least five weeks to get the book.

Woman Plus Woman, by Dolores Klaich, published by Simon and Schuster, can be ordered from any bookstore and can be found in many libraries.

Lesbian/Woman, by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, can be ordered in hardback from *Glide Publications* in San Francisco by any bookstore, and it is also in paperback from Bantam Books (see above) for $.95 plus handling and postage.

The Lesbian Myth, by Bettie Wysor, is from Random House and can be ordered from any bookstore and found in some libraries. (It got bad reviews and is not in too many libraries, unlike the Klaich book mentioned above, which got good reviews.)

Meryle Secrest's book, *Between Me and Life,* has been a best-selling book which will be on the shelf in many bookstores and is in almost every library. It can also be ordered from the publisher, Doubleday, by any bookstore.

Lesbian Images, by Jane Rule, is also published by Doubleday and will be in most libraries, though there may be some bookstores that will shy away from the title. However, it is easily special-ordered from any store.

Rubyfruit Jungle, by Rita Mae Brown, can be ordered by mail from Daughters, Inc., Plainfield, Vermont, 05667, for $3.00.

Louise Bernikow's book, *The World Split Open,* will be in college and university bookstores and some large-city bookstores that carry literary material, but probably can be obtained most easily by your ordering No. V-72, *The World Split Open,* from Vintage Books, Random House, 201 East 50th Street, N.Y., N.Y., 10022. Cost is $3.95 plus postage and handling (not specified—about $.50). Count on delivery taking four to five weeks. †††

A LOOK AT LESBIAN MAGAZINES

by Karla Jay

The importance of Lesbian-run and owned magazines cannot be overestimated, for part of our oppression has been that we have been defined, explained, and written about by others—usually by straight, white males—and not by ourselves. This situation has left us deprived of our history, our culture, our psychology, and worst of all, of a true sense of who we are, for we never were permitted to see ourselves in our own eyes or in the eyes of our sisters; rather, we were presented and portrayed only as the male-dominated media would have us be seen, and the presentations of us were thus limited to sick, perverted villains or to masculine cigar-smoking truck drivers. Not a very nice choice at best and genocidal at worst.

Therefore, one of the finest achievements of the post-Stonewall (1969) Lesbian movement has been the creation of our own independent and vast Lesbian media network in which we present our own news with our own analyses of it, communicate with one another about our experiences, and present the world through our eyes. And yes, there *are* cigar-smoking, dyke truck drivers, but we are also professors, office workers, doctors, lawyers, factory workers, and welfare recipients. We are as myriad as the stars, we are everywhere, and we are probably in everyone: And it has taken our own media to get this message out to ourselves and to others.

But the development of this Lesbian media has been no easy task, and it is still an ongoing struggle. Probably there were some very early Lesbian publications (most likely privately printed and circulated) in the early twentieth century and perhaps even in the nineteenth or earlier. I know that such publications and underground books (such as Djuna Barnes' *Ladies Almanack*) existed in France, but again, one of the problems of the United States Lesbian is that our herstory has been buried by heterosexist *his*torians.

Nevertheless, the most significant pre-Stonewall Lesbian publication was *The Ladder,* which began publishing in 1956 and continued 16 years until it folded. How *The Ladder* survived and indeed seemed to thrive during the McCarthy era, one of whose features was a witch-hunt of homosexuals (who are of course un-American by virtue of the fact that we usually do not live in nuclear families), is a story which should some day be told in great length by *The Ladder*'s editor, Gene Damon. But whatever the difficulties, the results were beautiful, and *The Ladder* contained the best Lesbian poems, short stories, and book reviews of its era. In fact, there has not been a magazine since to rival *The Ladder* in the quality of its fiction. The stories of Jane Rule and Isabel Miller, and the poems of Martha Shelley still seem as clear to me today as they did almost twenty years ago when I first saw *The Ladder.* Then I was a teenager eagerly looking for something more positive about Lesbians than the sad portrayal of our lives presented in Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness,* a book which had been at one point by only evidence that I was not the only Lesbian in the entire universe.

But it was not only the fact that *The Ladder* was the only publication around (which it practically was) which made *The Ladder* an invaluable magazine for me, but also the fact that *The Ladder* almost infallibly showed exquisite taste in its selection of stories and poems—taste which proved to me that Lesbians were intelligent beings who could write magnificent, realistic, and positive stories about us, and that the regular, overground magazines, such as the *Ladies Home Journal* and *Cosmopolitan,* which wouldn't touch pro-lesbian articles, were really unjustified in their repression of Lesbian culture, and that for such magazines advertising overruled quality.

The Ladder is unfortunately defunct, but for those of you who missed *The Ladder* or who would again like to rummage through some back issues, there is good news: Back issues, including complete sets (for $100), are still available from *The Ladder,* P.O. Box 5025, Washington Station, Reno, Nevada 89503. A complete index to *The Ladder* is available at the same address for $10. Even better news is that *The Ladder* may soon begin publishing again!

The only post-Stonewall magazine which attempted to replace *The Ladder* has been *Amazon Quarterly,* P.O. Box 434, West Somerville, Mass. 02144, which predominantly uses short stories and poems, although this quarterly has also carried some essays, interviews, and book reviews. Although *Amazon Quarterly* is the best Lesbian fiction magazine around today (and it is certainly better than its straight conterpart *Aphra*), it somehow seems pale and less daring to me than *The Ladder,* but perhaps my eyes have been clouded by nostalgia!

As I read *The Ladder,* one of the things I thought about a lot was why the one national pre-Stonewall magazine (there were also some small newsletters around, mostly connected with organizations such as the Daughters of Bilitis) concentrated and survived on fiction rather than nonfiction. Was fiction safer to produce in a hostile world? Was the public more willing to tolerate positive fiction about Lesbians because the public could always say that it was fantasy, not reality? I don't know the answers to my own questions, but I always felt that while fiction is crucial to Lesbian culture, it alone is insufficient for the development of a total culture, perhaps because I came out of a leftist feminist background (Redstockings) which taught me that either literature or nonfiction without a strong class analysis was incomplete and insufficient. In any case, once I became a feminist and, soon after, a staunch worker for the Lesbian movement, I saw as my own personal goal the development of a strong and independent Lesbian press, one which would portray real Lesbians in fact and well as in fiction.

But as anyone involved in a small press or magazine will tell you, it's not easy to start, let alone keep running, a magazine catering to a Lesbian audience. The main problem then, as now, was circulation, since many Lesbians or even potential straight readers would not walk into a bookstore and buy something which said "Lesbian" on the cover. (Even recently *The Lesbian Tide* tried dropping the word "Lesbian" from its title in an attempt to boost circulation.) And to subscribe to anything with a "Lesbian" return address was often out of the question for most Lesbians. In addition, the new post-Stonewall movement, which stressed Lesbian visibility and out-of-the-closetness, did not want to use cryptic names such as *The Ladder* or to mail our magazines out in plain, brown closets (although most Lesbian magazines still are sent this way).

The result was that it was quite a while after the Stonewall uprisings before Lesbians started our own publications. Our first attempts were to join forces with the straight women's liberation movement or with existing gay male presses. For example, when women seized *Rat* magazine, which had formerly been a male left paper, Lesbians joined the straight women,

and Rita Mae Brown, Martha Shelley, and I made several contributions to what was otherwise a totally straight publication. But we all, I think, realized that their coverage of Lesbians was token at best and that we needed our own exclusively Lesbian paper. But still there was neither time nor energy nor womanpower nor money in our community. So we were content (not really content but we had no other choice) until around 1970 to write for male-dominated gay papers such as *Come Out!* (New York) or for feminist-run papers, such as *Everywoman* (Los Angeles).

Finally, in the beginning of the seventies, Lesbians started to produce our own magazines and newspapers. Several magazines appeared and perished after two or three issues, but four significant papers survived. The first of these is *The Lesbian Tide,* 373 N. Western Avenue, Room 202, Los Angeles, CA 90004. *The Tide* is a professional-looking magazine, which, until the most recent issue (marked by a switch to newsprint), had slick magazine paper and a well-done layout. What I like best about *The Tide* (and I must confess that I am prejudiced toward this magazine since I have been the East Coast Coordinator for over a year) is that *The Tide* presents feature articles with in-depth analysis, carries news and crosscurrents of Lesbian happenings all over the nation, as well as book reviews and poetry. In the last year, *The Tide* has also tried to center each issue around a different topic–for example, Third-world Lesbianism, sensuality, Lesbian music–so that each issue has a focus and depth of analysis which readers can really get into. In addition, *The Tide* also prints various opinions and has no "party line". *The Tide* has temporarily suspended publication, due to lack of commitment and energy in the collective, but readers can expect *The Tide* to reappear in the late Spring.

Another fine Lesbian publication is *Lavender Woman,* Box 60206, Chicago, Ill. 60660. This paper has also been around for several years now; and in the past year it has been improving greatly and has increased the number of pages in each issue. *Lavender Woman* is noted for its fine coverage of news all across the country. Recently, *Lavender Woman* has also had issue-oriented numbers, notably one on Lesbians and work. *Lavender Woman* also contains book reviews and some poetry.

Another venerable Lesbian publication is *Ain't I a Woman,* Box 1169, Iowa City, Iowa 52240. This paper has also been around for years despite the fact that it seems to disappear from time to time (whether because it suspends publication or my local bookstore doesn't get it in the mail I can't say). One of the wonderful things about *Ain't I a Woman* was its focus on Midwest news at a time when there was very little Lesbian news available from that area. *Ain't I a Woman* also printed extremely interesting feature articles.

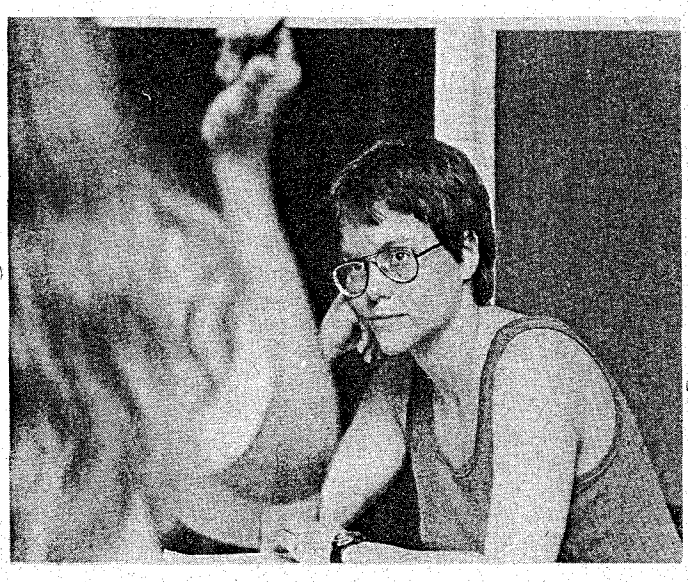
A final magazine which has been around for several years is *Focus: A Journal for Gay Women,* produced by the Boston Daughters of Bilitis, Room 323, 419 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116. I've always found this magazine too focused on DOB to be of much interest to me, and the articles have fairly similar viewpoints, but other sisters might find this magazine exciting. One other interesting magazine sponsored by DOB is *Sisters,* 1005 Market, Suite 401, San Francisco, CA 94103.

Much more recent than these four magazines is *Wicce,* Box 15833, Philadelphia, PA. 19103. Although this magazine has been publishing for only a year, *Wicce* is a significant arrival on the Lesbian magazine scene. The issues have been very professionally put together and laid out on tinted yellow paper, and the articles reflect a commitment to quality in their selection. Although most of the news centers on Philadelphia and on the people who filter through Philadelphia (there was an interview with Gina and Laurel of *Amazon Quarterly*), the paper has a fine emphasis on culture, and includes articles on literature and music.

Finally there are the newsletters on the Lesbian scene. The most exciting recent newsletter is *Lesbian Connection,* put out by Ambitious Amazons, P.O. Box 811, E. Lansing, MI 48823. The *Lesbian Connection* carries brief but informative announcements of events from absolutely everywhere, and the producers of this magazine are certainly ambitious! They hope to connect Lesbians all over the country, and if they are successful in what they are attempting, *Lesbian Connection* could turn out to be the most important publication around because Lesbian Nation has grown to such an incredible extent that it's hard to keep up with things, and centralized communication is becoming a crucial issue. I've found the mere number of announcements in *Lesbian Connection* to be amazing and exciting, and I'm sure other readers will too. (And even though it's free, be sure to send them some money for mailing and mimeo costs.)

Another interesting mimeo is *Long Time Coming,* Box 161 Station E, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2T 3A7. Although my subscription took such a long time coming that I almost gave up on it, its arrival was worth the wait. *Long Time Coming* is one of the only Lesbian papers in Canada, and I found it refreshing to get some news with a Canadian perspective (too often Lesbian American chauvinists tend to think of our Canadian sisters as American appendages). *Long Time Coming* carries predominantly Canadian news but also has reviews and poetry.

There are also several smaller but interesting Lesbian mimeos and newspapers which readers might want to tune in to. New York's only Lesbian newspaper at the moment is *The Lesbian Feminist,* Box 243, Village Station, New York, NY 10014. This mimeo mostly covers actions by New York's Lesbian Feminist Liberation but occasionally has an opinion article. One of my favorite newsletters is *The Purple Cow,* Box 3321, University Station, Columbus, Ohio 43210, which provides news of the Ohio region. Another good regional newsletter is *ALFA Newsletter,* which stresses southern news and is put out by Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance, P.O. Box 7684, Atlanta, GA 30309. From rural New York State comes *Dykes Unite,* issued by the sisters at the State University at



Charlotte Bunch: An Editor of **Quest** */ Photograph by Laima Turnley. Copyright by Laima Turnley*

Geneseo. You can write to them at SUC Geneseo, Fraser Box 354, Geneseo, New York 11454. And, for sisters who want to know what's going on in the international scene, there's *Sappho*, BCM/Petrel, London WC iV, England. *Sappho* is supposedly the largest Lesbian magazine in Europe.

Finally, for a slick-looking magazine with a totally different focus, try *Cowrie* (the name comes from the Community of Women), 359 East 68th Street, New York, NY 10021. This magazine focuses on Lesbian culture and recently had a marvelous three-part series on dyke fashion in history and in present times. The magazine also tries to be the first sensual Lesbian magazine, but since tastes in such matters vary widely, you'll have to judge its success for yourself.

I know I have left out several Lesbian magazines, but I am grateful for the fact that there are now so many dyke publications that I haven't got the space to review them all (or time to read them all!). What a beautiful fact. But before closing, I would like to list some feminist publications, which give some partial and usually fair coverage to Lesbian actions, issues, and events:

Off Our Backs
1724 20th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20009
(This is the best paper)

Majority Report
74 Grove Street
New York, NY 10014
(Fine news from all over)

Sister
The Women's Center
P.O. Box 597
Venice, CA 90291
(The best on the West Coast)

Whole Woman
1628 Winnebago
Madison, WI 532704

Her-self
225 E. Liberty
Ann Arbor, MI 48108
(Emphasis on health issues)

Quest: A Feminist Quarterly
P.O. Box 8843
Washington, D.C. 20003
(Long political essays)

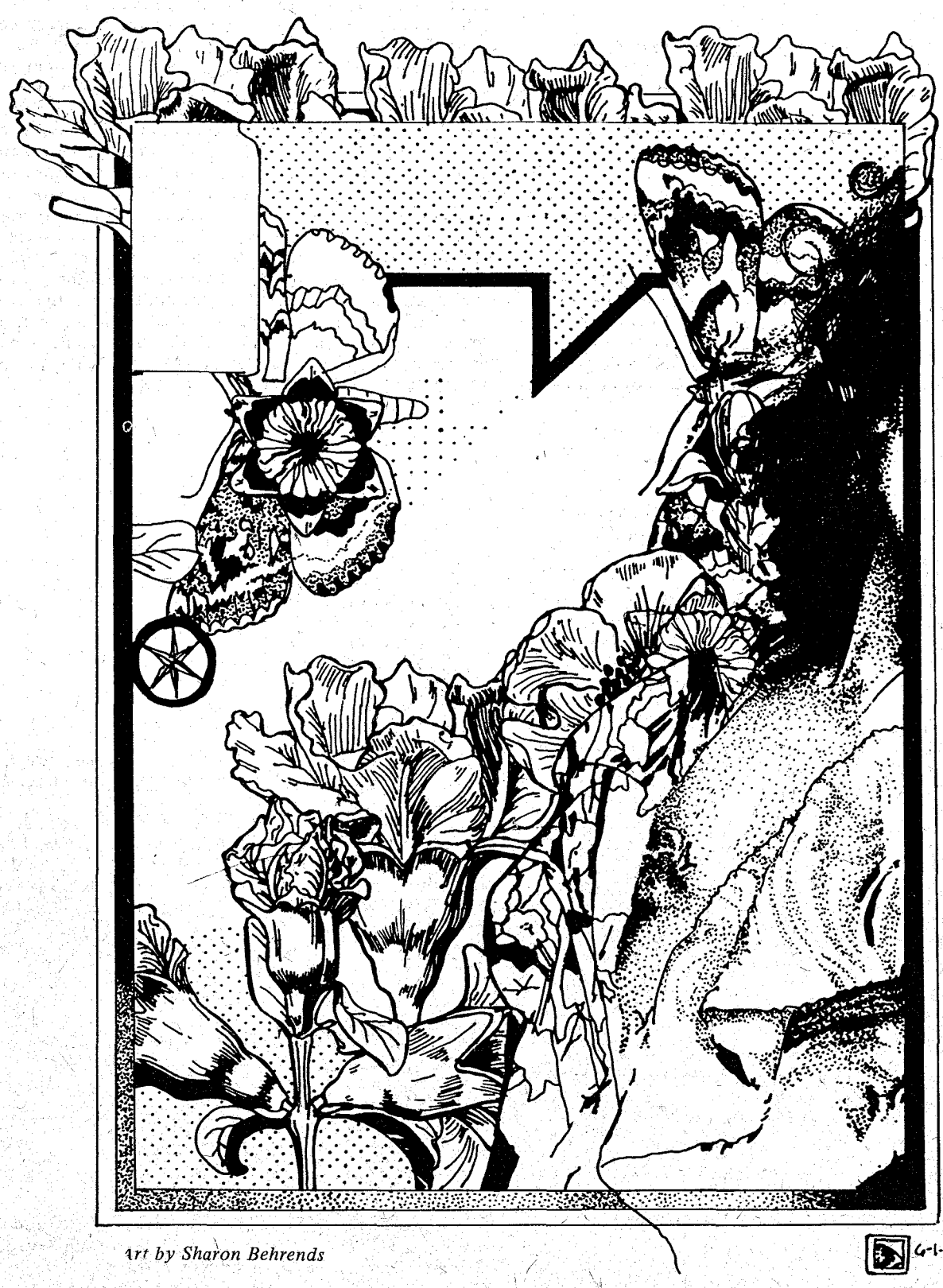
Gold Flower
P.O. Box 8341
Lake Street Station
Minneapolis, Minn. 55408
(Twin Cities news)

Big Mama Rag
1724 Gaylord Street
Denver CO 80206

Mother Lode
P.O. Box 40213
San Francisco, CA 94140
(Emphasis on motherhood)

The Other Woman
Box 928, Station XQ
Toronto 7, Ontario
Canada (Canadian feminism, emph. on media)

Albatross
82 South Harrison St.
East Orange, N.J. 07017
(Mid-East Jersey Radical Feminists)



Art by Sharon Behrends

IN THE NAME OF ALL WOMEN:
The National Book Award Speech
by Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich and Alice Walker

Statement read by Adrienne Rich at National Book Award Ceremony, Thursday, April 18, 1974:

The statement I am going to read was prepared by three of the women nominated for the National Book Award for poetry, with the agreement that it would be read by whichever of us, if any, was chosen.

We, Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich, and Alice Walker, together accept this award in the name of all the women whose voices have gone and still go unheard in a patriarchal world, and in the name of those who, like us, have been tolerated as token women in this culture, often at great cost and in great pain. We believe that we can enrich ourselves more in supporting and giving to each other than by competing against each other; and that poetry—if it *is* poetry—exists in a realm beyong ranking and comparison. We symbolically join together here in refusing the terms of patriarchal competition and declaring that we will share this prize among us, to be used as best we can for women. We appreciate the good faith of the judges for this award, but none of us could accept this money for herself, nor could she let go unquestioned the terms on which poets are given or denied honor and livelihood in this world, expecially when they are women. We dedicate this occasion to the struggle for self-determination of all women, of every color, identification, or deprived class: the poet, the housewife, the lesbian, the mathematician, the mother, the dishwasher, the pregnant teenager, the teacher, the grandmother, the prostitute, the philosopher, the waitress, the women who will understand what we are doing here and those who will not understand yet; the silent women whose voices have been denied us, the articulate women who have given us strength to do our work. † † †

NOTHING SAFE: the Poetry of Audre Lorde
by Joan Larkin

Audre Lorde, *The First Cities,* The Poets Press; *Cables to Rage,* Paul Breman; *From a Land Where Other People Live,* Broadside Press, Dept. M.O., 12651 Old Mill Place, Detroit, MI 48238, $1.50 plus $ .25 postage; *The New York Head Shop and Museum,* Broadside Press, $3.50 plus $ .25 postage.

I first heard the poetry of Audre Lorde on tape. Listening to a program on WBAI-FM produced by my friend Mimi Anderson for Mother's Day 1972, I heard a voice that stood out from the relative flatness of the rest, melodic and clear in all its definitions, and speaking in subtle lyrics of pregnancy, birth and of a daughter who was growing in her own way. This was Audre Lorde reading from her first book (*The First Cities,* published by Diane di Prima's Poets Press in 1968). From "Now That I Am Forever With Child":

. . . I thought
Now her hands
Are formed, and her hair
Has started to curl
Now her teeth are done
Now she sneezes.
Then the seed opened.
I bore you one morning just before spring–
My head rang like a fiery piston
My legs were towers between which
A new world was passing.

And from "What My Child Learns of the Sea" (about a mother's function as teacher):

. . .
She will learn in my twilight
And childlike
Revise every autumn.
. . .
One day a strange girl will step
To the back of a mirror
Cutting my ropes
Of sea and thunder and sun.
Of the way she will taste her autumns
Toast-brittle, or warmer than sleep
And the words she will use for winter
I stand already condemned.

This was a technically accomplished poet, her language severely lovely: plain statement fused with rich sensuous image, and phrased as speech.

I quote these early poems I love, because in them, as in the others in that first book (which contains some poems Lorde wrote over twenty years ago), are all the threads, carried through the other books, of her most recent, seeminly very different and astonishingly powerful work. These threads among others are there: birth, which in the second book, *Cables to Rage* (Paul Breman, London 1970), begins to extend the personal to become the global:

Shall I split
or be cut down
by a word's complexion or the lack of it
and from what direction
will the opening be made
to show the true face of me
lying exposed and together
my children your children their children
bent on our conjugating business.
("Bloodbirth")

and the contradictions of mothering, which by the third book, *From a Land Where Other People Live* (Broadside, 1973), has become a dominant subject and metaphor.

Both *From a Land Where Other People Live* and *New York Head Shop and Museum* (Broadside, 1974) contain several poems directly addressed to her children, her mother, other women and their children. But the poet's voice is different. It is explicitly concerned with power—woman, Black, human. Its context has moved from the generalized (and literary) landscape of earth, seasons, and time to our specific location in history. The images are urban: phone booths, graffiti, supermarkets, luncheonettes, TV's, toilets "made of glass/wired for sound". The environment is filled with the junk and shit—verbal and physical—that destroys our power and seduces and drugs our children:

Even though all astronauts are white
Perhaps Black People can *develop*
Some of those human attributes
Requiring
Dried dog food frozen coffee instant oatmeal
Depilatories deodorants detergents
And other assorted plastic.

Even the titles of the poems are more concrete and plain-speaking, full of sardonic humor: "The Brown Menace or Poem to the Survival of Roaches", "One Year to Life on the Grand Central Shuttle", "A Sewerplant Grows in Harlem or I'm a Stranger Here Myself When Does the Next Swan Leave", "The American Cancer Society or There is More than One Way to Skin a Coon." And there is the violence and terrible everyday pain of remembered individual lives, as well as the tragedies documented in headlines: Malcolm, Birmingham, the fruitless peace marches. In Lorde's poems there is no trustworthy rhetoric, no easy sentimentality; the comfort of mourning the singer whose death makes her safe and acceptable is disturbed by

Six Black children
burned to death in a day care center
on the South Side
kept in a condemned house
for lack of funds
firemen found their bodies
like huddled lumps of charcoal
with silent mouths and eyes wide open.
Small and without song
six black children found a voice in flame
the day the city eulogized Mahalia.

The Audre Lorde who writes to her daughter

I watch the hollows deepen above your hips
and wonder if I have taught you Black enough

or who says

I believe in love as I believe in our children
but I was born Black and without illusions

and whose fourth book begins and ends with poems of responsibility to children, has developed out of the poet whose first book included

How the young are tempted and betrayed
To slaughter or conformity
Is a turn of the mirror
Time's question only.
("Generation")

She is looking at the same phenomena now as then, but her voice and perspective have radically altered. The voice of the young Audre Lorde is lyrical but subdued, her will subordinated to the will of the poem. This relationship is reversed in her two recent books: the newer poems are the natural extensions of a powerful personality, no longer submerged in the poem but preceding it and necessary to it. There is greater assurance and sharper definition—all murkiness is gone:

. . . when I was a child
whatever my mother thought would mean survival
made her try to beat me whiter every day
and even now the colour of her bleached ambition
still forks throughout my words
but I survived. . .

Even when she writes of defeat or uncertainty, she gives the impression of strength. She can accept her children's separateness from her and the temporariness of her power because she is here for herself:

. . .
my children do not need to relive my past
in strength nor in confusion
nor care that their holy fires
may destroy
more than my failures
Somewhere in the landscape past noon
I shall leave a dark print
of the me that I am. . .

When she writes of her blood children or those who are her children by virtue of human connection, she expresses the ties we all have to the young—our obligation to tell them truly

Audre Lorde / Photograph by Jamie Davis

even what they will change or discard. The theme of the mother's lessons that will be transformed or forgotten by her children has developed into an acceptance of her own authority as poet, myth-maker, messenger. It is a role that fills her with dread:

I am afraid of speaking
the truth
in a room on the 17th floor
my body is dreaming
it sits
bottom pinned to a table
eating perpetual watermelon inside my own head

But she knows that her students are waiting

for what I am sworn to tell them
for what they least want to hear. . .
("Blackstudies")

When Lorde writes most personally, telling stories from her life, her experiences become parable-like occasions weighted with meaning for the rest of us, as when she writes, in "To My Daughter the Junkie on a Train":

My corrupt concern will not replace
what you once needed
but I am locked into my own addictions
and offer you my help, one eye
out
for my own station.
Roused and deprived
your costly dream explodes
into a terrible technicoloured laughter
at my failure
up and down across the aisle
women avert their eyes
as the other mothers who became useless
curse their children who became junk.

Or when a bus driver with a "captain marvel glance" slows down one rainy morning "and then speeded past without stopping when he saw my face":

SHIT! said the king and the whole court strained
passing
me out as an ill-tempered wind
lashing around the corner
of 125th Street and Lenox.

The mature power in Audre Lorde's voice is clear not only in the angers and pain she expresses, but in the love poems—rich, physical, sure of what they know:

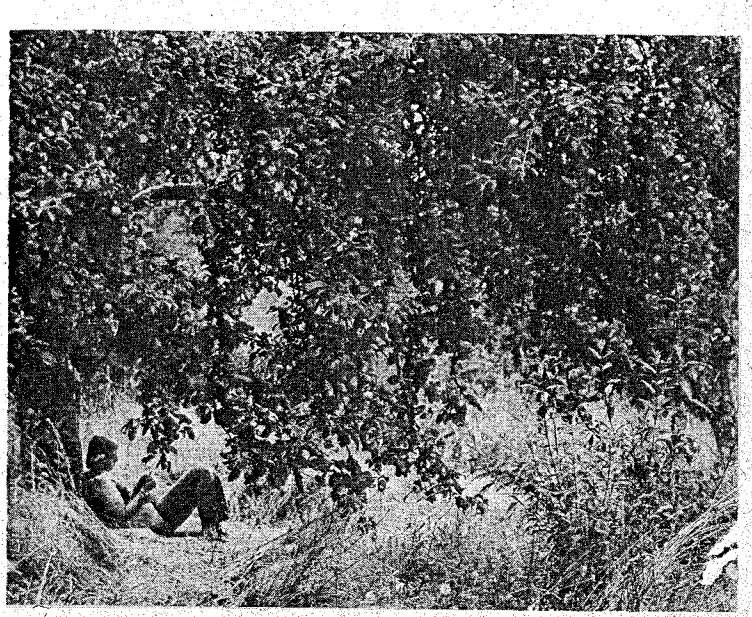
And I knew when I entered her I was
high wind in her forests hollow
fingers whispering sound
honey flowed
from the split cup
impaled on a lance of tongues
on the tips of her breasts on her navel
and my breath
howling into her entrances
through lungs of pain.

In a recent note for *Amazon Quarterly*, of which she is poetry editor, Audre Lorde describes many selves: "I am Black, Woman, Poet, Mother, Teacher, Friend, Lover, Fighter, Sister, Worker, Student, Dreamer, Artisan, Digger of the earth, Secret; also Impatient, Beautiful, Uppity and Fat. All these are in her poems: she has more than one song to sing and more than one voice to sing in. But the selves of her poems are one, because they never deny her feelings, however uncomfortable or unorthodox, however complex.

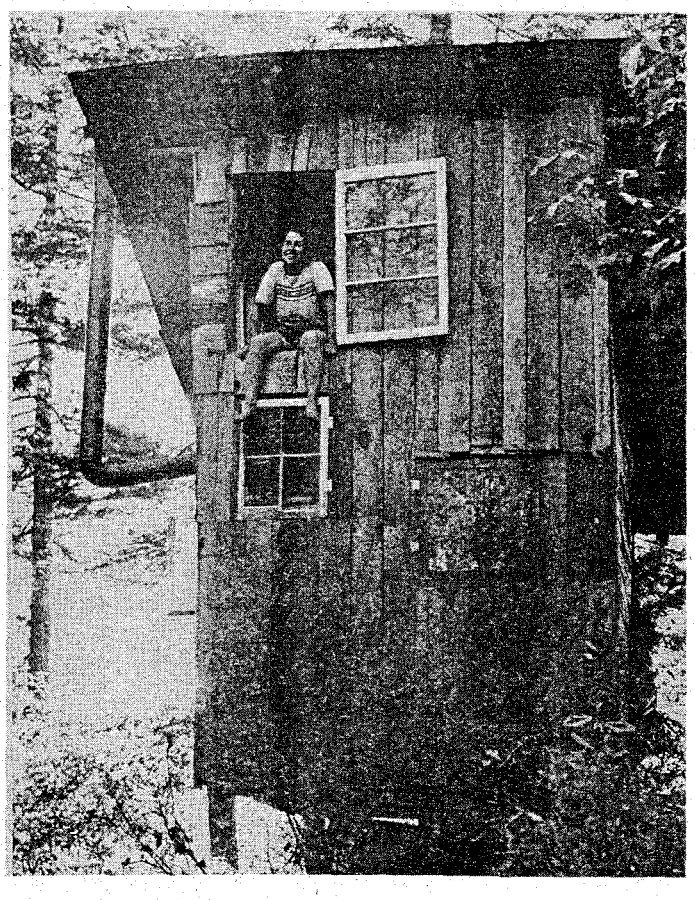
For how else can the self become whole
save by making self into its own new religion?
("New York City 1970")

Hers is the most difficult kind of poetry to write, and the kind most worth having: based in feelings and utterly honest about them. I think she might add "Midwife" to her list of selves. It's a role she's literally fulfilled (Diane di Prima's introduction to *The First Cities* says Audre delivered her baby); but it's also a metaphor for the way her poems come—delivered out of her body, in pain, in love, out of the real threads of her, moving through our time, through our places. And in her true delivery of her selves, her self become whole, she delivers us as well. † † †

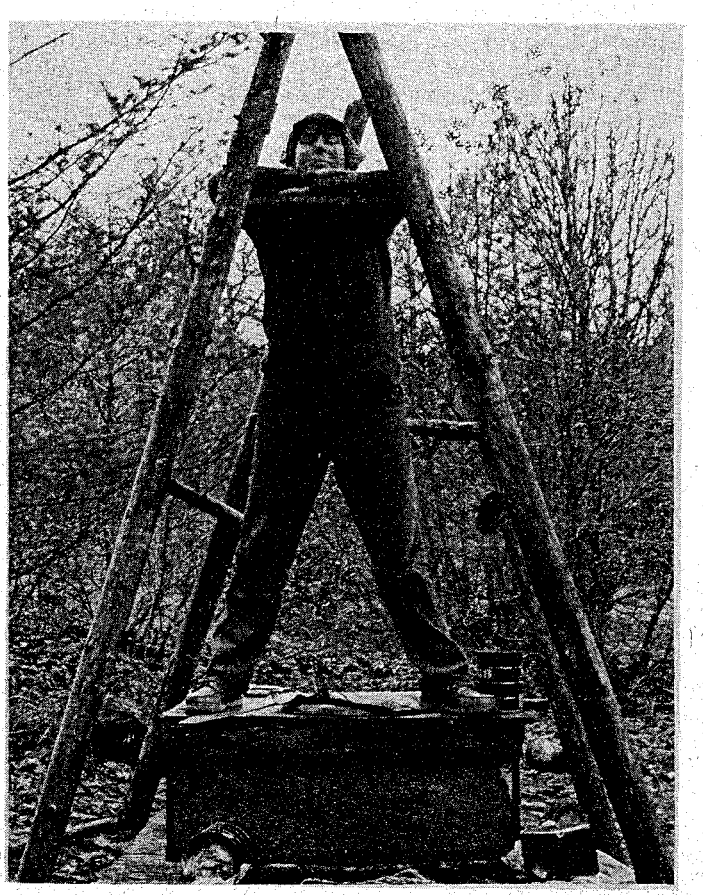
WOMEN IN THE COUNTRY
Photographs by Carol Newhouse



Writer under the trees.



Patti of Cabbage Lane at Indigo: a woman and the house she built.



Nelly has homesteaded for 3 years in the country.

THE FEMALE TRIBE

by Melanie Kaye

Monique Wittig, *Les Guerilleres,* trans. David LeVay. Avon Books: 959 Eighth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10019. $1.65.

". . . There was a time when you were not a slave, remember that. . . . Make an effort to remember. Or, failing that, invent." (p. 89)

Witting's astonishing book is not, strictly speaking, "Lesbian Literature." It's not about women loving women, at least not in two's or three's or any such predictably-sized relationship. It is about the female tribe, the collective woman, challenging culturally, sexually, politically, and–finally–violently the structures of the patriarchy.

The book is constructed in brief present-tense non-climatic paratactic sentences and paragraphs, richly sensual but simple, incantatory, depicting scenes, some of which seem to come from the prehistory of dominant female culture, some from a bizarre technologically-sophisticated future, some from the sturdy familiar present of oppression and struggle. The narrative (?) is determinedly non-linear, irresponsibly achronological, defying our attempts to locate cause-and-effect relationships. This makes the book difficult both to understand and to talk about. It also illuminates the tenacity of western male consciousness, warring in our heads with this material which will not fit its categories. Thus we confront the slack musculature of our own minds, trained to apprehend the world in only one of several possible ways.

On the other hand, though the book has no plot, it's not static. We participate in the evolving consciousness of the tribe from immersion in female culture, sensual pleasure (very pleasurable indeed) and vulval worship, to recognition of the necessity of seizing power, to a cathartic and terrifying rage ("The women say that they could not eat hare veal or fowl, they say that they could not eat animals, but man, yes, they may." –p. 97), to peculiarly calm flashes of victory ("The women say, whether men live or die, they no longer have power." –p. 115)

The vulval worship, antithetical stroke to the phallic culture we all grew up in, affected me curiously. How many passages have I/we read hymning male genitals? Yet the female counterpart made me feel naked, but exposed; my discomfort suggested the extent to which I am unaccustomed to literary attention being lavished on my genitals not as receptacle (*vagina*: lit., "sheath") but as organ. I also felt nervous about plugging female content into male forms (idealizing genitals), and as my nervousness grew, the consciousness of the tribe begins to change:

The women say that they perceive their bodies in their entirety. They say that they do not favour any of its parts on the grounds that it was formerly a forbidden object. They say that they do not want to become prisoners of their own ideology. . . . In speaking of their genitals the women do not employ hyperboles metaphors. . . . They say that all these forms denote an outworn language. They say everything must begin over again. . .They say that a great wind is sweeping the earth. They say that the sun is about to rise. (p. 57, 66)

Reading over the preceding passage, I realize it's a difficult book to quote out of context because the context demands that we re-define word, symbols, myths. Wittig tackled the problem of writing with words and symbols created by men and weighted with their history. "The sun is about to rise", for example, has from Apollo on (and earlier) been associated with male consciousness, power, light, and rationality, associations which god's own begotten son (sun) only reinforced. Is the alternative, then, to use only the symbols which have been granted or left us by them? This would be to recapitulate a mode of thinking which is itself product and agent of the very consciousness we need to struggle against: the polarizing consciousness of the partiarchy which divides the world into "x" and "non-x" (god/devil, white/black, male/female, think/feel, mind/body, mine/not mine. . .). Wittig insists on reclaiming all the symbols, on dissolving illusory opposition: "I say that that which is is. I say that that which is not also is." (p. 14) Reading the book, we engage in the process of reclaiming: "They say, If I take over the world, let it be to dispossess myself of it immediately, let it be to forge new links between myself and the world." (p. 107)

We experience these new links in the book's form, in the language the women use, in the new meaning with which they invest conventional symbols and myths–sun, serpents, gardens, round tables, even–especially–zero (from "nothing" to the vulval ring to "the perfect circle that you invent to imprison them and to overthrow them," p. 114). This then is the book's power and beauty and superb functionalism. It informs us that nothing less than total transformation of reality will free us, in case we hadn't guessed. It points to a harsh political fact which we who work with words sometimes ignore: "They say, let those who call for a new language first learn violence. They say, let those who want to change the world first seize all the rifles." (p. 85) Finally, because it is fantasy, and need not start from where we are, in the tired still-male-dominated politically-sluggish seventies, all its energy pours into constructing a consciousness and a community which we seldom get to imagine. That is, it gives us vision and a sense of possibility, even inevitability: "They say, does the weapon exist that can prevail against you?" (p. 137) † † †

WOMAN-IDENTIFIED

by Deborah Core

Birkby, Phyllis, *et al.*, eds. *Amazon Expedition: a Lesbian-feminist Anthology.* New York, Times Change Press, 1973. $2.25.

Come Out!: Selections from the Radical Gay Liberation Newpaper. New York, Times Change Press, 1970. $1.25.

(Times Change Press, 1023 Sixth Avenue, New York, New York 10011)

Bertha Harris / Photograph by Laima Turnley
Copyright by Laima Turnley

The name of the Times Change Press, its founders write, comes from the *I Ching* line, "Times change and with them their possibilities; times change and with them their demands." The statement is certainly borne out by the two publications of this press which are of special interest to lesbian feminists.

The earlier book, *Come Out!*, came out in 1970, and its material reflects the anger, defiance, and joy of the early days of the gay liberation movement. Writers write from their own experiences, free at last to articulate their lives, having at last a forum through which to share. *Come Out!* contains essays, poems, and photos (about half the writing, and all the photos, by women) from the radical gay newspaper of the same name.

These essays are almost all highly personal stories of hassles, discrimination, self-awareness, new pride. One of them, "Bitch: Summer's Not Forever", by a woman who describes herself as a 'drag butch', should be required reading for those in the movement who wish the 'old-line homosexuals' would quietly fade out of sight. Another, by Lois Hart, discusses the consciousness-raising of GLF women in early 1970. Hart's essay ends with the hope that GLF will be able to hold together and become "a truly nuclear community of the New World."

But the direction the movement has followed is suggested in "The Woman-Identified Woman", the Radicalesbians' 1970 essay which remains one of the best statements of the relationship between lesbianism and feminism:

> *As long as the label 'dyke' can be used to frighten women into a less militant stand, keep her separate from her sisters, keep her from giving primacy to anything other than men and family—then to that extent she is controlled by the male culture. Until women see in each other the possibility of a primal commitment which includes sexual love, they will be denying themselves the love and value they readily accord to men. . .*

Woman-identified women populate *Amazon Expedition.* This excellent anthology explores lesbian culture and politics. The book is neatly put together, beginning with Florence Rush's overview of Women's situation, "The Parable of the Mothers and Daughters"; the next essay is Ti-Grace Atkinson's "Lesbianism and Feminism", which expresses the relevance of lesbianism to the feminist movement. Other essays deal with misandry, women and madness, a feminist response to the sexual abuse of children, and lesbian motherhood.

Three of the essays help us reconstruct our past. "Emily Dickinson Feminist" by Rebecca Paterson will be a revelation to students of literature who have heretofore read and discussed Dickinson only in male-oriented classrooms. (Patterson is also the author of *The Riddle of Emily Dickinson* [1951], which suggests that the poet was a lesbian.) "The Vision and Persecution of Aurora Phelps" reveals, through 19th century newspaper articles, a woman committed to creating and defending a matriarchal community in Massachusetts a hundred years ago. A third essay, Bertha Harris' "The More Profound Nationality of Their Lesbianism: Lesbian Society in Paris in the 1920's," shows us beautifully a culture devoted to art, the good life, and lesbian love—the only real lesbian society since Sappho's. The culture, Harris tells us, had its flaws of elitism and passion for *mea culpa*; nonetheless, knowledge of these women and their world created a bridge we can use. Indeed, all the knowledge we can gather of our sisters three or fifty or a hundred and fifty years ago helps us to create our own lives. *Come Out!* and *Amazon Expedition* are welcome because they give us some of that knowledge. † † †

NOMADS OF REVOLUTION

by Julia P. Stanley

The dead are the only people
to have permanent dwellings.
We, nomads of Revolution
Wander over the desolation of many generations. . .

—Rita Mae Brown, "Epistle to Tasha"

Atkinson, Ti–Grace. *Amazon Odyssey.* New York: Links Books, 1974. Paper, i-xxiv, 226 pp., Acknowledgments and Afterword, ccxxix-cclvix, $4.95.

Jay, Karla, and Allen Young, eds. *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation.* New York: Links Books, 1972. Paper, 403 pp., $3.95. (Includes a selected bibliography of fiction, non-fiction, and media, and an International Directory of Gay Organizations.)

Johnston, Jill. *Gullible's Travels.* New York: Links Books, 1974. Paper, i-xv, 283 pp., $4.95.

. . .but more important I was more involved in using the image as a sentence vehicle than as a report from the wilderness which is still the idea and why even the slightest alteration of impression serves to expedite the generation of new sentences which in turn change our lives.

(Gullible's Travels, p. 79)

It is surely no accident that two of the books published by Links advertise themselves as journeys, *Amazon Odyssey* and *Gullible's Travels,* and the third, *Out of the Closets,* alludes to a journey familiar to many Lesbians. Each of these books is an invaluable record of the personal processes in which we are involved in the 1970's. Ti-Grace reminds us that "A book is the home of an idea," and, as such, we tend, too often, to see it as a "product", a static, concrete object that occupies a specific amount of space on our bookshelves (or the floor). For some reason, once an idea has been given expression and an existence in print, we are tempted to treat that idea as fixed, unchangeable, absolute. But the authors of these books refuse to allow us this self-deception, and they move us through the issues, events, relationships, and experiences that shaped their lives and, thereby, their ideas, so that we are caught up in those processes. To the extent that it is possible to encompass processes within the covers of a book, Links Books has made it happen for three of our writers. In her Afterword, Ti-Grace documents for us the process of creating her book, and, because of her telling of it, *Amazon Odyssey* is the more valuable to me. All three of the books offer something to me as a Lesbian, because they touch on different boundaries of my life.

Ti-Grace has been one of the most controversial figures in the feminist movement, primarily because she makes it easy to disagree with her, and disagreement can lead to dislike, and dislike can lead to attack. Whether or not you agree with her ideas, she certainly deserves respect and admiration, because she has a way of asking the questions that most of us would rather not hear. Her own odyssey began, as she has documented it, with the issue of abortion, and ends, in the book at least, with a "stockpiling of losses". Each of her papers is an attempt at defining the boundaries of the on-going Battle, exploring the "roots of the oppression of women", examining terms, their definitions, their referents, seeking methods and tools for ending our oppression. She has given us her own problems, her dead ends, false starts, the surfaces on which she has touched; and the entire design of the book, from its cover to the designs on each page (by Barbara Nessim), keeps us in touch, visually, with the area of the battlefield we are surveying. There is no way, in the course of reading this book, to forget that we are, in fact, engaged in a war. However covert, however disguised, however the rhetoric of non-violence may appeal to us, violence is a real part of the lives of women in a male-dominated society, and we will have to come to terms with that reality in order to get on with the creation of our own culture. If we find Ti-Grace's tactics and strategy-charts "distasteful", perhaps that is more the responsibility of the male war-machine and the Pentagon than it is Ti-Grace's. If we do not know where we are today, how can we possibly plan where we would like to be tomorrow? If we are unwilling to make a realistic assessment of the opposing forces, how can we hope to move forward in our own behalf? Ti-Grace does not pretend that her own probings approach "truth", in any sense that we might understand that. But she has at least begun the mapping and exploration of the territory that we occupy, and she has undertaken, with insight and care, the asking of uncomfortable questions. That she has no answers to her questions should come as no surprise. *Amazon Odyssey* documents the scope of one woman's political reach. There may be no end to that journey.

Gullible's Travels, by Jill Johnston, a collection of her articles from *The Village Voice,* is undoubtedly her best book to date. In her title, she promises us a travelogue, and that's exactly what we get, and, in a style that often gives me a headache, Jill speeds us along, from one country to another, across the United States, from the issue of leaders and "stars" within the feminist movement to her own controversial (and sometimes unreadable) self. During moments of acute motion sickness, I clung to one sentence: "S(he) who understands me finally recognizes my propositions as senseless." But I'm still not sure what Jill meant by "senseless". Which probably means I don't understand what she's saying, because a lot of what she writes makes sense to me. Among the essays I found absorbing are: "Women & Film," "Hurricane Bella Sweeps Country", and "R.D. Laing: The Misteek of Sighcosis." In "The Holy Spirit Lucid in New York," Jill observes that "Fantasy must be voluntarily entered." The same is true of her writing. It must be voluntarily entered. And she will take you through perceptions and associations so quickly that you will begin to wonder who is gullible.

In *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation,* editors Karla Jay and Allen Young have provided us with an anthology that covers the spectrum of the politics of gay liberation, from a Lesbian's letter to her mother, "Dear Mom," to a public forum on the Venceremos Brigade. Many of the struggles recorded in this collection—both personal, "Happy Birthday, Baby Butch", and collective, "Leaving the Gay Men Behind"—document on many levels the complexities of the gay liberation movement. As Karla warns us in her Foreword: ". . . we must reiterate that gay liberation offers no line, no pat answers: we offer only ideas and questions." Well, no one ever said that liberation was going to be easy, and these articles tell us where we've been, what we did while we were there, and what we discovered. There is an entire section devoted to "Lesbians and the Women's Liberation Movement", which includes "The

Woman-Identified Woman" by Radicalesbians and "Hanoi to Hoboken, A Round Trip Ticket" by Rita Mae Brown. The content of other sections in the anthology accurately reflects the peripheral, sometimes token, involvement of Lesbians in some of the struggles of the gay liberation movement. For example, in the first section, "Join Us!", and the eighth section, "Moving Together", Lesbian contributions outnumber those of gay men. But in those sections dealing with political conflicts with the larger society, Lesbians make only one contribution to each, for example, in the sections on "Gay People vs. the Media", "The Man's Law", and "Gay People vs. the 'Professionals' ", (in which there is only one Lesbian article out of a total of seven). In "Cuba: Gay as the Sun", there is only one Lesbian, Elaine, and she was a participant in the forum on the Venceremos Brigade, and in the section on "Sex and Roles" there are only two contributions by Lesbians, out of eight articles. In the final section, "Manifestos", no Lesbians are mentioned. I am left with the impression that the primary contributions of Lesbians within the gay liberation movement have been in the area of "togetherness' issues. If it were not for the section on Lesbians and the Women's Movement, there would be very few Lesbian voices heard. As I've said, I think this is an accurate representation, and it tells us where we weren't. We can learn something from our silences, too.

My own reading of these books has left me with a lot to think about. All three of them are books about "ideas and questions"; they are books about our past, albeit the recent past, but it's our first opportunity to *look back* from where we are. Lesbians have never had a "history", and now we have one. With our past recorded for us, I think we have a foundation for constructing our future in the present. We may not have "permanent dwellings", but at least we have places where we can pitch a tent every once in awhile. (Revolutionary tourists can park their campers.) † † †

PART III
THE
POINT
PARK
ISSUE

Art by Sharon Behrends

THE PLACES WE HAVE BEEN: The Poetry of Susan Griffin

by Elly Bulkin

Susan Griffin, *Dear Sky* (poetry; 1971, 1973). Shameless Hussy Press (Box 424, San Lorenzo, CA 94580), $ .60.
———. *Let Them Be Said* (poetry; 1973). Mama's Press; available from Shameless Hussy Press, or Serendipity (1790 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94709), $1.00.
———. *The Sink* (short stories; 1974). Shameless Hussy Press, $1.50.
———. *Letter* (poetry; 1974). Effie's Books/Two Windows Press; available from Serendipity, $3.25 (limited edition of 525 copies).
———. "The Song of the Woman with Her Parts Coming Out" (first appeared in *Amazon Quarterly*).
———. "Voices" (unpublished play manuscript; forthcoming from Feminist Press, Box 334, Old Westbury, New York 11568.

While some women with children give up serious work or relegate it to a poor second place, while others reveal their motherhood only on their books' biographical blurbs, Susan Griffin makes of it strong, moving poetry. Her ongoing conflict between mothering and work runs through her poetry. It determines when she can write, provides her with an infrequently explored poetic subject, and influences where she can publish.

Writing for—and increasingly about—women, she has published thus far with small women's presses (Shameless Hussy, Mama's, Two windows). She writes:

> With my first book I did some of the printing, arranging for typesetting, distribution myself, all of which I was glad to learn about, however. . . If one has children and has to earn one's living, well those two facts in themselves would seem to make it impossible to write, but, if you add to them, printing, riding your bicycle around the bookstores twice a month, automobile repair, and everything else the *new woman* is supposed to do. . . I say this because the number of women writing with children (about mothering) is still small and sometimes the demands originating in the women's movement are no more sensitive to that problem. There are a number of women's presses which require that the poet involve herself in the process and I have never printed with those presses and it is because I earn my living and raise a daughter. (a letter to Joan Larkin, 13 December 1974)

She feels as if she is "always neglecting, either [her] child, or [her] work." (letter to Joan Larkin, 15 November 1974)

This tension appears repeatedly in Griffin's poetry, sometimes central, sometimes as part of a background pattern. In a series of new poems wonderfully called "The Tiredness Cycle," she deals with many of the routine demands placed on mothers trying to work. A prose section begins "This is the story of the day in the life of a woman trying to write and her child got sick" and proceeds through a list of chores, babysitting and financial problems, diversions for a child who is sick and bored, and —constantly—her own tiredness:

> *And anyway, she had begun to think her life trivial*
> *and so it was, and she was tired writing the same*
> *words, or different words about the same situation,*
> *the situation or situations being that she was tired,*
> *tired of trying to write, tired of poverty or almost*
> *poverty or fear of poverty, tired of the kitchen being*
> *dirty, tired of having no lover. She was amazed that*
> *she had gotten herself dressed, actually, with thoughts*
> *like these. . . .*

Listening to Griffin read this on tape, a friend of mine waited for the "poem" to start—until she finally realized that it was in prose because no poetry could be written that day.

As she works and shops and cooks, Griffin cannot completely silence the knowledge of others' suffering:

> *and in the back of my mind*
> *somewhere*
> *is a woman*
> *who weeps*
> *for Chile*
> *and shudders at the*
> *executions.*
> *All along she*
> *has been*
> *pondering the social order*
> *and her worried thoughts*
> *slow*
> *my*
> *every movement.*

The juxtaposition emphasizes her political perspective. Harriet Tubman, Angela Davis, and Madame Binh, My Lai and Chile intrude on her everyday world. She learns of My Lai when the postman delivers a magazine filled with bloody pictures in the midst of her "morning eggs and toast and jam." She understands the implications of choosing to do other things "in the hierarchy of [her] life" as, guilty at the sight of her daughter's "goldfish/souring in a tank/ of ancient water", she thinks of the woman weeping for socialist Chile.

Her decision to mother necessarily involves a certain isolation from the world where people can struggle for political change:

> *And here is one more poem*
> *for the woman at home*
> *with children.*
> *You never see her at night.*
> *Stare at an empty space and imagine her there,*
> *the woman with children*
> *because she cannot be here to speak*
> *for herself,*
> *and listen*
> *to what you think*
> *she might say.*

A feminist, Griffin knows that mothers share this enforced inability to act, to make themselves heard.

The success of her political poetry rests in large part on her ability to connect women's present reality with a distant person, place, or event. She manages in "I Like to Think of Harriet Tubman" to make vital the link between Tubman and the contemporary women's movement. She communicates her strong sense of Tubman as a model:

> *. . . she was beat by a white man*
> *and she lived*
> *and she lived to redress her grievances,*
> *and she lived in swamps*

and wore the clothes of a man
bringing hundreds of fugitives from
slavery, and was never caught,
and led an army,
and won a battle,
and defied the laws
because the laws were wrong, I want
men to take us seriously.
I am tired wanting them to think
about right and wrong.
I want them to fear.

Tubman is Griffin's response to the

men who sit in paneled offices
and think about vacations
and tell women
whose care it is
to feed children
not to be hysterical
not to be hysterical as in the word
hysterikos, the greek for
womb suffering
not to suffer in their
wombs,
not to care,
not to bother the men. . . .

Tubman's militant defiance allows Griffin the poem's avenging conclusion:

there is always a time
for retribution
and that time
is beginning.

The two long poems that end *Let Them Be Said* mark a step in Griffin's work toward both a consuming involvement with women's issues as *the* central focus of her poetry and, at times, a greater complexity in structure and image. In "Nineteen Sixty-Eight," she returns continually to the birth of her own daughter—in a world of flesh burning, the arbitrary killing of a Black man by a policeman, and 1960's political assassinations. The poem picks up many of the protest themes of the Sixties and Griffin is overwhelmed by them; at the end of the decade they seem less soluble than ever.

Upset by the knowledge that she will eventually have to tell her daughter about this outside world, Griffin seems ready to concentrate on her more immediate reality as a woman. "Nineteen Seventy-One", the book's long closing poem, evokes the image of Tillie Olsen and women's "silences" as it affirms the need for "our stories" to "be said".

The depth of Griffin's empathy with women and commitment to "our stories" is central to her poetry. Writing recently about the rape of a Vietnamese woman, she communicates the woman's agony with her own distant pain at the same time that she connects us all by linking the scene briefly with an American rape—policeman and doctor in impersonal attendance.

She counterpoints voices and images to damn and lament an act of violation. She begins with a simple communion picture:

she is in a white dress
kneeling
K is for kneeling
in the breviary and
W is for woman,
women kneel,
small girls wear white dresses
for communion
for communion,
into the bread
the flesh,
the wine and the blood
and the women kneel. . . .

But the poem transforms these unambiguous opening words into a violent complexity in which "B is for bless, and bread and blood/ at the hand of a man."

Griffin accomplishes this by presenting a series of voices: the perception of the male army photographer, distanced from what he sees, is described in straightforward, "rational" prose:

In the other picture one sees a woman crying,
a small old woman, holding onto a younger woman
who is also crying. And under the picture the
cameraman's words tell us that moments later
the daughter was raped and then killed.
The photographer could do nothing. The photo-
graphs were what he did. He was certain he would be
courtmartialed or killed for taking them. He
could not stop the massacres. There was nothing
he could do;

the Vietnamese woman pleading for her life speaks simply and directly:

Do not let them kill me
before you speak to me
Touch me, hold me
And it might have been different if he had
been in his own country or this were not a
war because men act differently in a war.
for I am innocent

(echoing a poem by Meridel le Sueur);

the poet, shocked at the pain of the imagined scene, almost chants its emotion:

and she removed her blouse
she showed her white neck
she opened her empty palms
she kneeled
she wept
she carried a child
she squatted down
she cried
and left a child where she had been
and she whispered to her daughter, stand,
and whispered to her daughter, run. . . .

In her own voice, Griffin pulls together—in striking images—much of her previous description:

and a slow movement of her thighs
the red tongue of a tiger lily
the red blood of birth
the cry of a child between her thighs
her thighs down hard
birthing the new voice
which is the end of the old voice
blood on the palms of her hands
miraculous and sudden
blood on the sheet that was white
she was in a white dress
kneeling. . . .

Griffin's best political poems focus personally on a woman's pain. When they do not, the political poems in her first two books seem honestly angry, but somewhat distanced. Her damnation of "the revolution" ("I find your presence/ everywhere, but nowhere/ do I find you heart") seems more rhetorical than poetic. Her "Poem on the Public Reaction to the Capture of Angela Davis" seems a flat, occasional poem written too abstractly to convey her deep, personal outrage.

Her more recent poetry seems more organic, more consistently personal. The images in her Vietnamese rape poem possess an intensity lacking in Griffin's earlier poem about My Lai, where the focus is on a general massacre rather than on an individual woman's horror. Instead of the simple, direct juxtaposition of a California breakfast and a Vietnamese slaughter, Griffin presents a complex poem in which she is clearly in control of a number of voices, different levels of language, and an overall structure. She seems more willing here than previously to play with language, to experiment with thythm, to take chances with structure.

Some of her most recent poems about loving women reflect this poetic development. In "The Song of the Woman with Her Parts Coming Out" Griffin uses a compelling rhythm throughout, closing with a rush of words that underscores the sexual pun in the poem's title:

The song of the woman with
the top of her head ripping off, with
the top of her head ripping off
and she flies out
and she flies out
and her flesh flies out
and her nose rubs against her ass,
and her eyes love ass
and her cunt
swells and sucks and waves,
and the words spring from her mind
like fourth of July rockets,
and the words too come out,
lesbian, lesbian, lesbian, pee, pee, pee, pee, cunt, vagina,
dyke, sex, sex, sex, sex, sweat, tongue, lick, suck, sweet,
sweet, sweet suck
and the other words march out too,
. . . . . .
the word
no
the word
no
and the woman
the woman
the woman
with her
parts coming out
never stopped
never stopped
even to
say yes,
but only
flew with
her words
with her words
with her words
with her parts
with her parts
coming
with her parts
coming
coming
coming
out.

Her image of a cunt waving flaglike in the breeze—followed by a series of other traditionally "dirty" words used positively—signals a verbal reclamation of our own bodies and sexuality. As it picks up speed, barely slowed at the end by punctuation, the poem reaches an orgasmic end, which, at the same time, signifies the "coming out" of a lesbian.

The simple pleasure of this poem reflects Griffin's empathy with women as surely as when she writes about mothering or Harriet Tubman or rape. Her empathy stands quietly firm behind her love poems to women in *Let Them Be Said* and in her unpublished manuscript, "The Song of the Woman with Her Parts Coming Out," as well as in the short, bittersweet lyrics of *Letter.* It infuses "The Woman Who Swims in Her Tears" with gentle strength:

the woman
who slept beside the body of one
other woman weeping,
the women who wept.
the women whose tears wet
each other's hair
the woman who wrapped her legs
around another woman's thighs
and said I am afraid.
the woman who put her head
in the
place between the shoulder and breast
of the other woman and
said, "Am I wrong?"
the women who wept together
the women who pressed
their faces together
their hands together
their eyes together
their thighs together
who pressed into each other
who cried together
who cried
who cried out
who cried out joy
the women who
cried out joy
together.

Read slowly, the poem seems almost sad. Read quickly—almost chantingly, as Griffin reads it—it seems filled with a marvelous tenderness.

Writing about women, Griffin begins with their feelings—their anger, their joy, their pain, their warmth. To view women as distant, impersonal figures would involve a personal/political decision that she chooses not to make. She insists on her vision of them when, describing her classroom lecture on Sylvia Plath, she counterpoints her own intensely personal perception with the abstractly academic one of critic M.L. Rosenthal:

And the book read,
"Sylvia Plath
Sylvia Plath's range of
technical resources was narrower
than Robert Lowell's," and I stuttered:
"the one whose lovers
were frightened by her

children, the one who
wished her children,"
"Narrower than Robert Lowell's and so
apparently was her capacity,"
"her children would be,"
"for intellectual objectivity."
"would be still."

With her sense of connectedness, of the "places [she has] been" with Plath, Griffin chooses to approach her as a woman as well as a poet. She refuses to deny what is for her the overriding reality of Plath's life. The decision is political. So is her decision to make poetry of her own personal experience, not to separate her life from her writing or from her teaching. So, too, is her understanding of the link between herself and Plath as poets, as mothers, as women; like Plath, Griffin has to wait to write, to work, for her child to "be still."

Her political perspective is all-important. It provides the impetus for her work—influencing her choice of subject, focus, approach. Her radical and feminist stance is basic to her poetry and to our understanding of it. At times, it is directly political—protesting, urging the restructuring of an entire system. At other times, it implies an analysis that can lead beyond rage to action. Even at its most purely personal, her poetry stems from a deep consciousness of the interrelatedness of women's experiences, from her awareness that:

> *. . . the risks other women take in their writings, casting off the Academic shroud over their feelings, naming the unspeakable, moving with courage into new forms and new perceptions, make me able to write what before could not be written. In every sense, we do not work alone.*
> (letter to Joan Larkin; 15 Nov. 1974)

Writing about Susan Griffin, I am continually struck by her ability to make these connections. Waiting to write, like Griffin, for my child to "be still", I cannot suddenly disregard "the places we. . . have been" in order to step into a supposedly objective critical position. Reading her poetry, I am at times touched by the simple fact of this poet's being so much a part of my generation of mothers, of radicals, of feminists, of lesbians. Her poetry is an exciting, very necessary reminder that—even when no one else is present— "we do not work alone."

JANE RULE AND THE REVIEWERS
by Judith Niemi

Jane Rule is a novelist who is far too little known and appreciated, and for about the same reasons that lesbians in general aren't sufficiently appreciated. Lesbians are assumed not to exist, at least not in significant numbers or places, until they make their presence impossible to ignore. Then there's a whole body of lore and tradition waiting that confuses people, and it's just as effective as invisibility in obscuring a woman's or a writer's real qualities.

Since 1964 Jane Rule has published three novels and a number of short stories, the kind of intelligent, witty and serious writing that is a joy to discover. Her main themes are personal commitments and personal relationships, neither of which come easily to her characters. Her characters are, usually, strong people and self-aware moral agents, but their decisions need to accommodate contradictory moralities and definitions of reality. Her people are often observed skirting the edge of intimacy, protecting their sense of self, and reluctant to commit themselves to another. The situations and conflicts in Jane Rule's books are those of everyday life, seen with clarity and described with polish and restraint. Her characters are highly articulate, but so little inclined to dramatize themselves that I've often found myself realizing, pages later, how significant something was, and re-reading with the same attention I'd pay to my own life.

Feminists ought to value her novels for their keen insight into personal interactions and for realistic portraits of several whole, autonomous women. She is especially valuable because there are so few authors able to write of lesbian experience without being limited by it. Virginia Woolf described the great difficulty any woman has in writing out of her own woman's consciousness and in not being crippled by self-conscious womanhood. Jane Rule has been able somehow to achieve that, to take gay womanhood for granted as a valuable facet of life and write not about "the gay world" but about a complex human world that —for once—includes lesbians.

Unfortunately, too few of the readers who might really appreciate her sanity and her style know about Jane Rule. Almost everyone to whom I've loaned her books has shared my enthusiasm; but no one, including English professors, insatiable readers, and informed lesbians, had ever heard of her before. I was lucky to discover her by reading her stories in the now temporarily discontinued lesbian magazine, *The Ladder;* Elysian Fields, Booksellers, located her first novel, now out of print; her brilliant second novel I bought at a publisher's overstock sale; interlibrary loans managed to find her third book in a small town sixty miles up the road. The second novel, *This Is Not For You,* came out in paperback, but you can't find it in local bookstores or in feminist mail-order catalogues. The copies I back-ordered several months ago haven't appeared yet, so my worn copy is still the only one circulating in this part of the country.

Lately I looked up the reviews of her novels to find out how her obvious virtues could have been hidden so successfully that you can't find her books in bookstores or university or public libraries in major cities. It was an interesting excursion into critical ignorance.

Granted, it takes very special skills to read Jane Rule intelligently. One must know, or be able to consider the possibility, that lesbians are sort of like other people,—pretty diverse—and possessed of minds and other organs besides sexual ones. I suppose people find this hard to believe if they've read the old Gold Medal paperbacks about tortured twilight women, or the $2.98 dreadfuls written by and for straight men, featuring sophisticates in black silk trousers whose slightest touch inflames the previously innocent housewife. The less exotic real-life kinds of lesbians haven't helped correct the picture since we've mostly stayed under cover, to protect our unexotic lives.

Still, one would think that critics and reviewers have no business being quite so naive in confusing literary convention with life. They can read *Lolita* without claiming that Humbert Humbert defines all male heterosexuality. Bookish people do have a tendency to forget that the mirror of literature has only reflected certain classes of people with any accuracy, but it's startling how few reviewers of Jane Rule seem to be able to recognize a penetrating and realistic novel about lesbians when one comes along—they still think they're reading *Women in the Shadows.* Most of the reviews amount to nothing more than popular prejudice elevated to aesthetic principle.

I'll try to be briefly accurate about the books the reviewers describe rather luridly. Jane Rule's first novel, *The Desert of the Heart* (1964, Macmillan of Canada and Secker and Warburg; 1965, World Publishing Co.,), is a love story, lyrical, sometimes sentimental, and frequently humorous. The people trying to understand their unexpected and difficult courtship are Evelyn, an earnest middle-aged English professor leaving a disastrous marriage, and Ann, a cynical young cartoonist who has adopted the protective coloration of a life in the casinos of Reno. Their different patterns of semi-faith and adjustments to despair are skillfully suggested by the bleak and beautiful desert landscape which frightens Evelyn and supports Ann. How they learn to risk a relationship is an interesting psychological study, but either would be a person worth knowing quite apart from their lesbian relationship.

Jane Rule / Photograph by Betty Fairbank

Martin Levin, reviewing *Desert* for *The New York Times Book Review,* sees only a story of homosexuality. He seems amused that Ann—whom he identifies by her source of income as "a gambling casino employee" rather than by her vocation—is willing to give up her earlier casual loves for "this dynamic English teacher." Even this central relationship doesn't get descussed much because Levin devotes most of the review to several minor and off-stage characters—the men in the novel. Necessary, no doubt, to explain the otherwise unfathomable lesbian attraction: "Surrounded by such examples of male inadequacy, it is small wonder that Ann and Evelyn are ready to walk off into the sunset together."

Levin is being unfair to these men, whom he calls "faceless types, seen by her characters with contempt and hostility." The contempt and hostility are not Jane Rule's nor her characters' but his own, for men inadequate by his standards. Evelyn's husband George he characterizes as "a complete washout, a feeble scrounger on the G.I. Bill"; even George's hurt ex-wife sees him with more understanding and compassion, and makes a poor witness in the divorce court, impulsively defending him as "bitter and despairing and frightened. . . of the emotional responsibility." Ann liked her boss Bill well enough to at least consider marrying him; Levin hates his indecisiveness: "he goes from whore to homosexual and back to Ann again." Minor character Joe offends Levin by being "a wee fellow"; Jane Rule describes the marriage of Joe and six-foot voluptuous Silver with comedy and respect. Levin doesn't even mention the engaging teenager Walter for whom both women have deep affection—everybody knows lesbians are like that because they hate men.

Since neither of the characters is much surprised by her own lesbianism, the social deviance is more Levin's problem than theirs, and his summary "if Ann's name were Albert there wouldn't be any story at all" is inaccurate, and so inappropriate in a world which does include many Anns. Thus the only discussion of Jane Rule to appear in the *Times* says something about Martin Levin's ideas about acceptable sex roles, but almost nothing about Jane Rule; her later and better novels are not reviewed.

Well, I thought, the guides to current fiction will have to review her. The longest descriptions of her books occurred in a contemporary version of the Vatican index called *Best Sellers.* It's not the fiction guide most libraries rely on, but it certainly has helped keep Jane Rule out of some local school libraries, and it's the least disguised expression of the kinds of prejudices that afflict other reviewers as well.

Best Sellers warns off readers "who find sexual perversion an uncomfortable subject," as the reviewer of *Desert of the Heart* clearly does. Instead of literary criticism, she provides amateur analysis, but without acknowledging that her explanations are not the author's, nor that all her interpretations have been considered (and often discarded) by the characters themselves. The affair is said to be result of the failure of "normal sex relations" between Evelyn and George; Evelyn's feeling for Ann is, of course, "maternal compensation", and Ann is supposed to see in Evelyn "the mother she yearned for but lost." Worse, the physical resemblance between the women makes the relationship "ominously narcissistic."

Death is traditionally supposed to follow meeting one's doppelganger, and this reviewer ingeniously discovers it in "the form of the moral suicide of homosexuality" when the decorous professor's "social restraint gives way to compulsive lust." Shades of *The Blue Angel.* Actually this lust is so

uncompulsive that Evelyn is willing to give up Ann, afraid of taking her away from her creative desert world to the social restraint of Berkeley where they would "live among an army of special assistants to the Dean." Sensible woman. When Evelyn and Ann do overcome their failure of nerve, the symbolism they invent is, as any freshman in Intro. to Lit. might notice, the language of a new life rather than death. As they wait for Evelyn to receive her divorce decree, her "diploma", they exhange vows tentatively, "for the while then", while standing on the courthouse steps "in the warm morning sun." Death indeed.

In 1970 Jane Rule published her second novel, *This Is Not For You* (McCall and Doubleday of Canada; Popular Library, 1972). It is a witty, serious sustained reminiscence in the form of a letter never to be mailed, addressed to a friend in a cloistered order. With honesty, and without self-pity, Kate recounts a love she deliberately renounced, and a sexuality never wholly integrated with the other demands of her life. Kate has intermittent affairs, but refuses a relationship with her devoted friend Esther—"It's just not her world, not her sort of thing." Not that Kate's protectiveness seems to benefit Esther, who childlike drifts into several disastrous experiments with her life, and finally chooses God. Esther's and Kate's lives from college into their early thirties are seen in the context of a circle of friends also painfully working out their directions.

This description doesn't begin to suggest the fascination of this intense, understated book. Readers who have little sympathy with Kate argue endlessly over how to understand her; I always feel smarter after reading it; a highly critical literary friend pronounced it "the only gay novel worth reading". It's one of the rare books that fully lives up to the appreciative comments by other writers quoted on the dust jacket: "elegant," "narrative sweep, compassion, sensitivity and humor," "a beautiful, ironic, civilized novel."

What less perceptive reviewers do to this book is simply infuriating. *Best Sellers*, which called even *Desert of the Heart* "permissible for discriminating adults," consigns this thoughtful, moral book to the lowest circle—"IV. Not Recommended for Any Class of Reader." Leaving aside the quotations chosen apparently at random and cited inaccurately, a matter between the Sr. M. Marguerite and her conscience, some of the other misrepresentations are worth considering lest we forget how much lesbians are feared. Most of the review is a catalog of tired old stereotypes, of male homosexuals at that, written with total disregard for the facts of the novel.

1. Homosexuals are asocial and elitist. "Let them—the hoi polloi—marry and have children and lead deadly dull domestic lives." (So the reviewer imagines them saying. Actually, important characters in the novel marry, and their domestic problems are of great concern to their friends.)

2. They are all hairdressers, or dancers. . . "All the deviates . . . are gifted sculptors, or musicians, or writers. It seems that being a pervert. . . would make you a genius." (Kate, as a matter of fact, studies economics. Two of her lovers are in government jobs. Most of her artier friends are not "perverts.")

3. They think of nothing but sex. "So prevalent is this consciousness of sexualism one way or the other that a good, sincere friendship between man and man, or between woman and woman, is not thought possible." (I thought Kate's friendships with Esther, her sister Doris, her elderly boss Grace, and several others were one of the really attractive subjects of the book. Unlike many male writers, Jane Rule also considers possible, and portrays, a good, sincere friendship between man and woman.)

The reviewer deserves no sympathy when she claims to have conscientiously "ploughed" through what she imagined "a lot of earthiness." The novel is, if anything, rather abstract and intellectual, and she's hardly understood a word of it.

It would be a mistake to dismiss this attack as religious panic over a violated taboo. *Kirkus Reviews* is less hysterical but no more responsible. Several errors in identifying characters make clear this reviewer hasn't read the book either. However, since even a superficial glance reveals Lesbians, the book is dismissed with a couple of other inappropriate stereotypes: "Not so deep as a well of loneliness, this is an extended dormitory confidence." At least the reviewer is dealing with dyke rather than faggot stereotypes! Another difference is that this reviewer is disappointed by the absence of earthiness; the book is described as "deviating. . . without any really explicit details." Yes, what *do* they do in bed?

Rule's third novel, *Against the Season* (McCall and Doubleday of Canada, 1971; Peter Davies, 1972; Manor House, 1975) seems almost to be deliberately designed to disarm critical prejudice. It's a consciously old-fashioned, stylized novel about cycles of birth, growth, and death, in which attention is divided among a number of interrelated, rather ordinary and likeable people. An old woman comes to terms with her dead sister while reading her diaries; her young pregnant housekeeper teaches her shy grandnephew a little courage; a middle-aged banker and a librarian, a used-furniture dealer and an aristocratic social worker overcome together some fears and solitary habits; aged people court, braving ridicule. Two of these people happen to be lesbians.

Rule's respect for her characters, and her insight into the careful ways these people risk self-knowledge and intimacy make this book quietly very impressive, at least to readers without too much blood-lust. The lesbians are interesting in that the author begins with two types familiar in books and in any community, the tough-sensitive butch living outside accepted sex roles, and the nervous, well-turned-out, very private career woman. Within a few pages Dina and Rosemary are so individualized you forget they are also identifiable stereotypes.

If Jane Rule hoped this low-key book would avoid frightening people, it didn't work. All these nice characters, repectable citizens, are summed up by *Publisher's Weekly* as "all out of step. . . in their offbeat approaches to love." With surprised satisfaction the reviewer notices that the "homosexuals are shown to be neither irresponsible nor promiscuous." Paul Doyle in covering the novel for *Best Sellers* didn't bother to discover that Jane Rule had written two previous gay books, and he thinks that "the authoress" includes lesbians "just to show that she can be as up-to-date as the next writer." One of the most discreet, tentative romances to be met in fiction is described as "sensational materials" introduced "more in an obvious attempt to pander to the modern mode than to be genuinely artistic or meaningful."

The reviews that have been quoted are typical, not exceptional. Most reviewers of course prefer to avoid unsophisticated moral indignation, but their ignorant condescension isn't any better. *Kirkus Reviews* says, perfectly inaccurately, that Jane Rule's first two books were "about the anything but sisterly and not so gay liberation." *Library Review* says primly that "the Lesbian theme is of specialized interest at best." Just as Baldwin is read by a minority of blacks only, and who ever did buy all those copies of *Portnoy's Complaint?*

Even compliments are sometimes backhanded, based on the complacent assumption that lesbian experience is inherently inferior and insignificant. *Desert of the Heart* is cautiously

praised by Dave Godfrey in *Tamarack Review* as a "novel of womanly love. . . notable for the way it steers clear of the passion and sentimentality which such affairs often engender." Paul Levine, who thinks the book *is* sentimental, sums up gay life and literature in *Hudson Review* with an incredibly pompous statement: "I don't know if the limitations are inherent in the material, the treatment, or my imagination, but homosexual love scenes are invariably talky and mawkish, terribly serious and terribly dull."

In our society it is probably inevitable that the mere presence of lesbian characters startles the reader into not seeing anything else, and makes it hard for him to forget his prejudices. But since reviewers insist her books are all about lesbianism, a forbidden subject, it is odd that they aren't at least curious enough to stop talking a moment and listen to Jane Rule, who presumably knows a little more about it.

There are, of course, some good reviews as well, by which I mean not only ones that say nice things about Jane Rule, but those that can contribute to a reader's appreciation and perspective. Joyce Carol Oates in *Southern Review* briefly discusses *This Is Not For You,* "an intellegent and utterly believable novel." In *Canadian Literature* Donald Stephens on *Desert of the Heart* and Keath Fraser on *This Is Not For You* also discuss the books as literature rather than as social embarrassment. Stephens focuses on Rule's skill—"she has used the novel as a fine instrument and capably records a variety of experience that has rarely been explored before." Her humor, which reviewers nervous about deviant experience almost invariably miss, he recognizes as "a facet of her writing that is very strong and never wavers." Her consistently powerful style is one in which images and descriptions "all work together to *dissolve* eventually into a whole impression of the world as Jane Rule sees it." Fraser provides a useful framework for seeing the moral paradoxes and ironies which contribute to her work's "profundity and acute humanism." He ranks Jane Rule as a novelist of "classic talent and intelligence."

but, of course, too few American readers, and librarians, and professional literature teachers read the Canadian journals where most of the good reviews are to be found. Enthusiasm in *Amazon Quarterly* and *The Ladder* also reaches only a select audience. Even readers who know her books may be reluctant to put in writing requests for them, so it's not surprising if acquisitions librarians, following the trade magazines, leave Jane Rule out of the collection.

I wonder sometimes what Jane Rule thinks about being a kind of underground classic. Probably she'd have a wider audience if she translated her insights into sexually orthodox situations, as Gertrude Stein did in recasting part of *Q.E.D.* in *Melanctha,* but I doubt that she's ever tempted to do that. Almost certainly she isn't a bit surprised at being misinterpreted; it's too bad that the systems by which books are advertised and distributed make it difficult for readers to know her books at the risk of making their own misinterpretations. Depending on where you live, it won't be easy to get her previous books, but she has two more scheduled for publication this year. A collection of short stories, *Theme for Diverse Instruments,* will be published by a small Canadian press (Talon Books, Vancouver). *Lesbian Images* (Doubleday and Doubleday of Canada, July 1975; Peter Davies, September 1975) will be studies of lesbian writers, overviews of fiction and nonfiction, and a personal introduction. Finally, Jane Rule's own reflections on the relationship of the lesbian writer to an officially heterosexual society. Order the books now, and don't wait to see the reviews. † † †

THE SENSITIVE BLUE PENCIL:
One Journal's Approach to Feminist Criticism
by Peg Cruikshank

So's Your Old Lady. A lesbian/feminist journal. Lesbian Resource Center, 2104 Stevens Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55404. Subscription rate: $4.50 yearly. Six issues.

Eight issues of *So's Your Old Lady* have appeared since February 1973. The only lesbian-feminist journal in the Minneapolis area, SYOL is supported by the Lesbian Resource Center. It was begun, a month after the center opened, to provide a forum for lesbian writers, but the subtitle indicates that being gay is not a prerequisite for appearing in the journal. SYOL tries to stimulate communication among its writers so that works will not be produced in isolation and to offer an alternative to women who may not wish to be published in conventional, male-controlled magazines.

So's Your Old Lady was originally the work of one woman but has evolved into a collective project in the past year, a development with which the staff feels very comfortable. But there is still the problem that a handful of women do all of the work, and a certain fear that each issue may be the last.

In the Twin Cities, *So's Your Old Lady* is widely distributed to bookstores, co-ops, and women's businesses and is also sold in a few places on the coasts. Individual issues are $.50 in state and $.75 out of state. Limited contacts and a lack of capital hamper a wide distribution outside of Minneapolis. One writer describes mail distribution as "a wreck". But the staff hopes that as their production skills improve, they can devote more energy to distribution. The local emphasis of the journal will not change, however.

So's Your Old Lady contains drawings, photographs, poems, stories, reviews, hard-to-label creative sketches, and cartoons. Much of the material is autobiographical. The visual appeal of SYOL is strong in more recent issues. Some individual written works: a song, "Lesbian Rag"; a piece describing the fears of a woman meeting other lesbians for the first time; a country lesbian manifesto; a note on being bisexual titled "Up Shit Creek"; an article on women's music; a response to John Berryman's *Recovery* by an alcoholic lesbian; a piece on living alone; a letter arguing against lesbian separatism; a dialogue between a woman's head and her heart; a description of the pleasure of running; a poem about loving a nun; a note on the origin of the word "gossip"; a review of a novel about black lesbians; and a short piece on clothes, which says: "I never wear men's clothing. . .I'm a woman and once it's mine, honey, it's women's clothes."

I think this declaration conveys the tone of the whole journal—self-assured and gritty.

Since the development of gay consciousness and the articulation of gay pride are very recent, one might expect to

find in a lesbian journal a certain defensive s. There is none in *So's Your Old Lady*. A more positive sign of self-affirmation is that most women sign their full names to their writings and drawings. Another sign is the humor in SYOL, although not much humor can be found in the most recent issues. In the third issue there is a splendid shot of two nude women, arms around each other, getting into a gleaming Model A which looks like a car from the Great Gatsby film, and a small drawing of a woman with orphan Annie hair who says, "Lezzies are Grrreat."

On the other hand, some writers deal, appropriately, with the confusions and uncertainties which lesbians face today. A series of monologues in the April 1975 issue expresses, for example, a variety of ways lesbians can feel about themselves. "Patty Possible" is the speaker here:

> *I think I may be a lesbian. That's why all my friends are lesbians. That's why all the parties I go to and enjoy are attended by women who speak dyke. I am all prepared to know the realities of being a lesbian before I die. Closets? What's a closet? I don't know anything about closets. However I do know a lot about waiting. Lesbianism to me is a 'coming to' not a 'coming out'. I expect any day now some woman will come to me. She'll then take me in her arms, ask me home with her and finally we'll go to bed.*

A piece I especially liked, in the November 1974 issue, is a letter to Mr. Fixit from a country woman baffled by calories (the visiting nurse has told her of them), who needs to know "how many calries is in a good-sized possum and a pot of poke sallet with a chunk of fat-back in it." The gap between the concrete experience of women and the official world is neatly revealed in this imaginary letter. It also suggests the richness of the unrecorded experience of women.

The last three issues of *So's Your Old Lady*, typeset by Mardi Steinau, have a more professional look than earlier issues. The quality of the creative work has improved too. The poets whose works I liked best are Ethna McKiernan, Patti Suncircle, and Toni McNaron, and the artists: Lynette Wells, Barbara Davis, and Julie Zolot. Like other feminist journals, SYOL contains more poetry than prose. Staff members agreed with my suggestion that SYOL might be strengthened by more prose works. One would like to see many more reviews, for example, and another thinks lesbians should be encouraged to write coming out stories for SYOL. As every schoolgirl knows, modern fiction offers countless examples of the initiation story. Gay women ought to add their stories to this tradition or begin their own tradition. One good side effect of a flourishing lesbian literature may be a heightened appreciation of all modern fiction in which relationships between women are sensitively portrayed, for example in the works of Virginia Woolf and Elizabeth Bowen.

Exuberant self-discovery is a theme conveyed throughout *So's Your Old Lady*. The writers appear to be moving toward new ways of seeing, of which they have as yet only vague hints; in this sense the journal is lesbian-*feminist* rather than exclusively lesbian. When a poet describes herself as writing about "cabbages and queens", the line is arresting because the familiar original has been blasted away. There are no more "women's" subjects. But an implication of some SYOL writing is that the truths lurking behind certain stereotyped views of women can be rescued. The idea of woman nurturing recurs, for example, but the process does not require self-annihilation, as in the oppressive, Christian, male-centered tradition, but clearly flows out from a healthy and creative self-absorption. This paradox will have to be explored in the lesbian-feminist literature of the future. Scorned as an emotional cripple, the lesbian who is reflectively self-absorbed discovers that she is specially attuned to the possibilities of love between equals. To the extent that love between equals is a new subject, lesbians may have a special contribution to make to its imaginative expression.

An editorial in the November 1974 issue of *So's Your Old Lady* (No. 6) suggests that one of its aims is consciousness raising: "How many times must we have wished that we who are now sisters could have found each other [in the past]. . . . Every one of us can contribute some glimpse of our own lives to the women who are still looking for us." More directly and more urgently than most journals, SYOL seeks to create an audience. In addition, the editorial argues that lesbian literature should be very broadly defined. It is not simply love poetry but intimate talk "about all the world". Since the straight world sees gay people exclusively in sexual terms, the importance of this distinction can hardly be exaggerated, both for the developing lesbian writer and for her audience.

In the last two issues, January and April 1975, a "non-editorial policy" statement appears. It charts a middle course between two extremes: 1) the elitist tradition of judging creative works by "rigidly fixed criteria" and impersonally rejecting or accepting them; and 2) the view often expressed in the heady days of campus upheaval and anti-war protest that *any* expression of feeling merits publication. The SYOL statement says:

> *Many women. . . simply wish to share their feelings and ideas in a casual way. The printed medium is not always the most suitable form for such expressions. The vitality of those conversational kinds of messages would be better appreciated delivered orally and punctuated with gestures.*

Writers' forums at the Lesbian Resource Center have been started, therefore, to encourage women writers. Works are read and criticized. At the forum I attended, women responded warmly to each other's work but offered many suggestions for revision. After taking part in this session I had a new appreciation for a distinction made in the "non-editorial policy" statement between the "harsh red ink" of traditional criticism and the "sensitive blue pencil of careful evaluation towards improvement of technique."

The theory of the sensitive blue pencil leads to this question: is there an inevitable clash between 1) women who by temperament and training stress quality in a literary magazine and 2) women for whom the old exhortation to "look into your heart and write" makes any concern for standards irrelevant, if not oppressive? Thus far the issue has not divided SYOL writers, but some of them feel that it will have to be confronted and that it is hard now to predict whether attitude no. 1 or no. 2 would be reflected in the *So's Your Old Ladies* of the future. Since our present literary standards derive from a patriarchal culture, pre-occupation with quality can rightly be challenged as sexist. On the other hand, if our critical sense is insufficiently exercised, we may fail to ge the very best work women are capable of producing.

So far the women who put out *So's Your Old Lady* have not been deluged by contributions from straight and gay feminists in Minneapolis. An obvious problem is the reluctance of many lesbians to call attention to themselves. One guesses that many Minneapolis lesbians would feel uncomfortable merely buying a copy of SYOL, much less writing a piece for it. But SYOL writers readily admit that much good material might be contributed by lesbians who need to be anonymous. How to reach them is a problem. One writer would like to

see contributions from members of the Minnesota Gay Women's Alliance, a group made up of professional women who are not openly gay. The product of women in their twenties and thirties, most of whom are openly gay, SYOL has as yet little to say to older lesbians, lesbians in hiding, or career-oriented lesbians. I think this fairly obvious fact is worth stressing because a group which has been invisible for a long time, whose very existence was unthinkable to Queen Victoria, is easily assumed to be monolithic.

Writers for *So's Your Old Lady* do not aspire, however, to present a cross-section of lesbian opinion. Not all lesbians are feminists, they point out. Since SYOL has printed few polemical pieces, it is not explicitly a lesbian manifesto. Some Minneapolis women have wanted SYOL to become a stronger gay voice. But since many lesbians are closeted and since lesbian literary magazines are so new, it seems likely that all creative work by lesbians will have an implicit value as propaganda.

A poet in the second issue of *So's Your Old Lady* writes of severing ties with men ("foreign bodies") in order to "reclaim" herself. Since we don't yet know all we are capable of becoming, we can only guess what fully reclaimed women will be like. Thus one function of journals like SYOL is to help us find out. From the short history of feminist writing we have one clue: the varieties of women's experience will be better known and more triumphantly celebrated in the future than they have been in the past.

More specifically, the diversity among lesbians must become better known, both to ourselves and to others. That theme from the first eight issues of *So's Your Old Lady* is bound to survive, whatever changes occur in future issues. We are only beginning to grasp the manifold truths about ourselves, but once these are effectively communicated, they well never be blotted out. If journals like SYOL had not come to life, it would be much harder to make so bold an assertion. † † †

WOMEN TOGETHER
Three Photographs by Donna Pollach

LESBIAN LITERATURE: Random Thoughts

by Cathy Cruikshank

All women are slaves; being a lesbian is rather like being a field nigger. The lesbian is less likely to have illusions about the master, she is not allowed to touch his sheets or handle his food. She keeps to her own kind—that is, women—and consequently the stories she tells have to do with fusion between women. Any fictional work that presents women as human beings can be submitted under the heading, Lesbian Literature, because women cannot interact with the masters, men, on an equal basis, as human beings, while they continue to be slaves. It is only among themselves that women can have relationships characterized by themselves as opposed to relationships"as they ought to be", or as culturally produced and advertized.

Under the heading, Lesbian Literature, there is a sub-heading, Female Homosexual Literature, which categorizes that type of story about women which incorporates all the fairy tale aspects of heterosexual stories. The idea is that the flaw in marriage is man, that there is nothing inherently suspect in the concept of possessing another human being. Radclyffe Hall for example, saw the lesbian experience as a mirage and therefore quite naturally understood every aspect of it as inverted. She used *normal* vision. Jane Rule continues the tradition of *The Well of Loneliness* in her novel, *This is not for You.* In this work a familiar sense of moral superiority emerges. In effect, the main character asserts 'I, who know the cruel price exacted by a homosexual life style, decide for you that you shall not pay it.' This is what men often say to women, 'Listen honey, it's a real jungle out there, believe me you don't want any part of it!' The point of oppression is just this issue of decision-making. Female Homosexual Literature tends to prove women oppress women, which is of course true but completely beside the point at this time. It is like describing a fly on your nose while being stomped to death by a gorilla.

There are an increasing number of women who write lesbian stories, tales about women interacting with women. Books such as Brown's *Rubyfruit Jungle* and Nachman's *Riverfinger Women* are exciting because they present, anxiety and all, the girl next door. We follow the histories of women who beither behave as slaves nor imitate masters. As these stories unfold we discover that lesbians, too, have a sense of humor, which revelation elevates not only the literature but the popular image of lesbians out of the melancholic mire of adolescent experience.

Two authors that may be overlooked in the *library* search for fiction about women are Ivy Compton-Burnett and Colette. In her novel *More Women than Men,* Dame Ivy examines women working with women. One of her characters reflects, "To accept conditions that would not be your choice must be a disgrace." Compton-Burnett is an extraordinarily precise and witty novelist; the women she presents are powerful and refreshingly conscious of their power. All Dame Ivy's twenty

novels deal with the dynamics of influence-peddling in human relationships and all contain a variety of women, as does life. All her female characters are above their roles, and she treats children as people too.

It is difficult to cite a particular novel of Colette's to serve as a description of her work. There is in her novels a level of intimacy not often experienced in so detached a vehicle as the written page. It is as if she sits beside you and relates a piece of her biography. She details not only experiences among women but the interior life of individual women. She describes love between women—from school girl crushes to affairs, from friendly confrontations to betrayals—with an honesty of presentation quite unfamiliar in literature of any sort. About women and men she is without illusion. In *The Vagabond* she writes "You're giving me a friend who is young, ardent, jealous and sincerely in love? I know, that is what is called a master, and I no longer want one." Of her works more exclusively on women, *Claudine at School, Claudine Married, Claudine and Annie* and *My Friend Valentine* are especially warm studies. She too is a witty novelist.

Women embrace in the novels by Compton-Burnett. In some of the novels by Colette, sexual love between women is made explicit. Both novelists examine their characters under singularly personal lights but because Dame Ivy and Colette have such a firm grip on what Elizabeth Cady Stanton described as "the isolation of every human soul and the necessity of self-dependence," their novels are full of political consequence to women who recognize and no longer accept their status as slaves.

The absence of self-knowledge, the refusal to accept responsibility for one's actions, indeed, the refusal to act, is the key to the oppression of women. By studying ourselves, the dreams as well as the realities of our relationships to one another, we become familiar with ourselves and others like us. Lesbian Literature attempts to expose the opportune myths and celebrate the honest mysteries about women. By doing so, such literature presents not just another side of a coin but a new issue altogether. Lesbian Literature is threatening; it cannot be approached on the same plane as the literature by men about women, because the assumption is different. The assumption in Lesbian Literature is that women are human beings, capable of self-knowledge, long before they become somnambulant daughters, wives and mothers. That there are so few examples of Lesbian Literature is only one of the multiple reflections of the oppression of women.

There have always been women writing about women, in castles, in toilet stalls and—exceptionally—in published works. To dent expression of what one has discovered is almost impossible, to distribute that expression has been for women an equal impossibility. A steady increase in the quantity of Lesbian Literature, (question of quality can best be answered by the hierarchical institution of your choice, and are really questions of taste imposed to control expression rather than enhance its appreciation), depends primarily on the degree of power women are able to usurp in the field of publishing, as both enthusiastic producers and self-conscious consumers. †††

Photograph by Grace Starcke

SOME PULP SAPPHO by Fran Koski and Maida Tilchen

What am I then, some pulp Sappho? The library of cheap paperback Lesbian affairs full of sentiment I hoarded once because they were the only books where one woman kissed another, touched her, transported to read finally in a book what had been the dearest part of my experience recognized at last in print. Kept them hidden in a drawer so visitors would never spy me out. Afraid the sublet might find them, I burned them. . . Really I was ashamed of them as writing, the treacle of their fantasy, the cliche of their predicament, heartbroken butch murders her dog, etc. The only blooms

in the desert, they were also books about grotesques.

(Kate Millett, *Flying,* N.Y.: Ballan-Books, 1974, p. 202)

We collect dyke books. No, we don't mean the new lesbian-feminist ones fresh off today's woman's presses. Until just recently, writers on lesbian subjects had no alternative—like Daughters, Inc.—to the male-dominated publishing houses. During the 1950's and 60's, hundreds of lesbian novels were published—many as paperback originals—by companies like Fawcett-Crest, Midwood Tower, Beacon-Signal, and McFadden Bartell. Their packaging included lurid covers of pornographic appeal, bearing blurbs like "A Twilight Sin: Toni hid the truth of her physical craving under the surface of an attractive marriage and a successful career. It took a totally immoral and oversexed young actress to bring the truth into the open. . ." (Rhoda Peterson, *A Twilight Sin,* NY: Midwood Tower, 1965, back cover.) It is this exploitive packaging (which may or may not have anything to do with the contents of the book) that seems to be the reason many lesbians avert their eyes from our collection, for puritanical or political reasons. They don't know what they are missing. We've acquired and read over 200 pulp novels in the past year and feel like we've unearthed a fascinating heritage—a recent heritage which, in this era of Gay Liberation, is already being forgotten or deliberately buried.

It's true that there is much for today's lesbian feminist to object to in these books. You have to wade through stereotypes (seductive bitch, violent butch) for the rare and memorable strong woman. Then there are the unimaginative plots whose narrow scope restricts the lesbian to an ingrown isolated society: as likely as not, it's gay Greenwich Village in the 1950's, or the bored suburbs of the same era.

Ther's also the issue of *male* authorship, editing, and control. Though many of the author's names are unisex pseudonyms, it's not hard to guess when a pulp novel was probably written by a man for the titillation of men. Valerie Taylor, a (female) writer of several famous lesbian "pulps" and a speaker at last September's Lesbian Writer's Conference in Chicago, tells of a man named Paul Little who claims to have written over 500 such novels under the name of Sylvia Sharon. A publisher's machismo, Ms. Taylor says, was often satisfied by "happy" (i.e., heterosexual) endings; hence the proliferation of the dilletante-dyke-returns-to-her-husband plot. It also seems to us that some of the novels intended by the author to end in fulfillment for the lesbian protagonist have been changed by the (male) editor to "punish" lesbians and teach that perversity doesn't pay. And we suspect that some basically fine novels of lesbian love have been routinely injected with voyeuristic sex scenes for salability; e.g., *Chris* seems to have sex scenes written in two different styles (Randy Salem, *Chris,* NY: Universal Publishing and Distributing, 1959)—though Gene Damon, an expert on this subject, maintains that it's usually poor writers, and not the editors, that make a trashy lesbian novel trashy.

Most disturbing, the lesbians in many of the pulps hate themselves, or think they should. They've internalized the homosexuality-as-sickness attitude of their time, and are forever coming up with explanations, such as "Daddy always wanted a boy", (in *Beebo Brinker,* by Ann Bannon) and, alas, sometimes even cures, like "a *real* man to love" (as in *The Strange Young Wife* by Kel Holland).

In the '50's the enemy was one's own "abnormality" and the recourse was self-destruction; alcoholism, suicide and violence are rife in these books. Because their creators had no political vision, the lesbian characters are given none. The fact that lesbians are oppressed, that lesbians have the right to be themselves, that they deserve—as much as any other group—the rewards of this society or the chance to build a better one, are beyond the imagination of a character who says, "I'm a genuine lesbian, truly twisted, and I know it. . . oh God, why am I a lesbian?" (Ann Herbert, *Summer Camp,* NY: Softcover Library, 1966, p. 102). By the 1970's, lesbians have exchanged armchair psychology for political analysis; the enemy is now located *outside* the self, located in the oppressive society, and the recourse is positive political action. In *Small Changes* a lesbian says,

> *"What's best for us is not to let them use the courts to terrorize us. I believe in a separate women's movement so we can be in control of our own destiny and our own struggle."*
>
> (Marge Piercy, *Small Changes,* Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Crest, 1972, p. 493).

Books like *Small Changes, The Cook and the Carpenter,* and *Riverfinger Women,* in which lesbian feminists create alternative societies or fight the existing one, are of course more incisive and visionary than the '50's and '60's "pulps". They orient us toward structuralist critiques of the society that keeps us down, and they show us what we can be. But the pulps show us where we were, at least as far as literature reflects life. The historical accuracy and objective presentation of past lifestyles is always uncertain in fiction. We've unsuccessfully searched for, and someday hope to see, an opinion (by a lesbian who lived in the era and milieu) on the accuracy of the pulp presentation of gay life. Lacking comfirmation, we try not to take the books at their literal word about the past, though they contain enough common elements and descriptions (of gay Greenwich Village in the 50's, for instance) for us to consider them fairly accurate. But we don't expect them to be more accurate than any other fiction.

Within their narrow scope, these books have much to offer. We like the strong lesbian characters in some of them. Trapped though they may be in closety roles or preposterous plots, some nevertheless emerge as colorful, admirable, woman-identified women. The milieux, often the big city butch-femme bar scene of the 50's and 60's, revive for us—through the filter of fiction—a culture we've never experienced, we who came out in the 70's. Universal lesbian rites of passage like coming out or connecting with your first lesbian crowd are often told in sensitive ways. Finally, we turn to the "pulps" for pure escape. Lesbian characters may live on a houseboat, have an affair with a movie star, or inhabit the hermetically sealed world of an all girls' school.

The Bars and the Butches

Differences in style aside, we as history-seekers feel that there are no "bad" as opposed to "good" lesbian pulp novels of the 50's and 60's; though we have our favorites, all are revealing or interesting in some way. Even the trashiest ones—not necessarily the ones with the most graphic sex but the ones that present lesbians as disgusting or unnatural creatures (not always written by men: see Sheila Donisthorpe or Ann Aldrich) —are fascinating documents for a lesbian truly interested in our history. For these books shaped and also reflect the 1950's and 60's societal stereotypes of the lesbian, many of which survive today. If to become a revolution a movement must change *every one's* consciousness, then it is important for political- and change-oriented dykes to be aware of the progres-

sion, or lack thereof, in public attitudes towards lesbianism. Familiarity with the "pulps" can enrich such a study.

For lesbians coming out in the 70's, the old gay bar scene and the butch-femme role scene may be totally alien. If in the 1970's we want to forget the bars and the butches, then we are whitewashing our history as oppressively as the straights have rewritten it for us. We were curious about the recent past, and we found only the books of the 50's and 60's to explain it to us. When more lesbian groups see the importance of unearthing and examining our entire lesbian heritage, as Santa Monica's Lesbian History Collective does (Box 1564, Santa Monica, California) hopefully this heritage will become more readily available to today's lesbian.

Often the setting of 50's and 60's books includes a gay bar. The author's description of the bar can be part of the plot and theme of the book. In *Beebo Brinker* Ann Bannon lets Beebo find gay life a valid lifestyle for herself, so the bar scene is presented positively.

> *It was almost one in the morning when they left the co-ed bar and Jack asked if she was game for one more. "This one is just for lesbians," he said. She nodded, and a few minutes later they were being admitted to a basement bar saturated with pink light, panelled with mirrors, and filled with girls, more girls, more sizes, types and ages than Beebo had ever seen collected in one place. The place was called the Colophon and it was decorated with the emblems of various famous publishing houses.*
>
> (Ann Bannon, *Beebo Brinker*, Greenwich, CT: Gold Medal Books, 1962, p. 40)

In Valerie Taylor's *Whisper Their Love*, the protagonist decides to go back to men after seeing the ugliness of a gay bar:

> *The place, Club Marie, was a let-down. It looked like a dozen cheap joints she'd walked past, quickening her step, and turning her face away from the smell of stale beer, the bursts of laughter, the seamy-faced little old man who always seemed to be sitting on the doorstep. Only this one was brightly lighted. There were thin flourescent tubes in the ceiling, parallel rows of them picking out glitters on the bottles and showing up the spills and dirt on the bartender's apron and the gummy places on the tables.*
>
> (Valerie Taylor, *Whisper Their Love*, Greenwich, CT: Gold Medal Books, 1957, p. 123).

Fixtures in all bar scenes include the bar butch. In *Whisper Their Love* one bar butch explains herself:

> *She was nineteen, Bobbie said, and had lived on a farm in southeastern Missouri until her folks died, a couple of years ago. "I always liked to work in the fields, and fool around with animals and stuff. Pa always said I was the best hired man he had." She had never had a date when she was in school, never thought about boys much. . .*
>
> *It was while she was living with Karla that she decided to change over to men's clothes. She went to a man's barber shop and got her hair cut. "Real short, you know, he like to scalped me. Now I like this here D.A. better, it's got more style, I always wanted to be a boy from the time I was little. Boys get all the breaks. . . "*
>
> *Anitra asked, "Didn't you ever go to bed with a man?" "Sure, I'll try anything once. Didn't mean a thing to me," Bobbie said proudly. "If you're a real butch you don't get hot for men. Only sometimes they're okay to have around for buddies, like doc here. I could go for him in a strictly platonic way. Not for lovin' though—uh-huh."*
>
> (Valerie Taylor, *Whisper Their Love*, pp. 125-127).

Strong Lesbian Characters

Perhaps the greatest attraction these books hold for us is the lesbian character. Vicki Lennox in Dallas Mayo's *Silky* (NY: Midwood Tower, 1961) is one of many such women. A professional photographer on the staff of *Glimpse* magazine, Vicki is self-made and successful. ("*Glimpse's* circulation increased with every picture layout she did, and within recent years the judges of various contests had paid her full measure of tribute." p. 32). Almost entirely independent of men, strong and seasoned, Vicki is nevertheless not a stereotypical butch.

> *For all her masculine adaptation to hard work and her customary attire of tailored slacks, in appearance she was not an unfeminine female. . . There was a slim shapeliness to Vicki that was extremely fetching.* (pp. 33-34)

Vicki initiates Silky into lesbianism in a kind and loving way, after Silky has thrown herself at her. By the end of the novel Vicki has a fulfilling and stable relationship with Julie, a night-club singer who, though she is Vicki's femme ("Julie [was] completely feminine, while Vicki emphasized. . . mannish ways", p. 134) is also her equal as a self-supporting career woman. Vicki Lennox is a good example of the independent, positively drawn lesbian character leading a rewarding life. It is interesting to note that such good lesbian role models can be found in the works of authors like Dallas Mayo, whose generally lewd novels one might be inclined to dismiss wholesale.

A notable paperback fictional lesbian is Leo (Leonora) Lane in Mary Renault's exquisite novel *The Middle Mist* (NY: Avon Books, 1945). Leo leaves the sterile respectability of her parent's home for life on a houseboat with her lover, Helen. Quiet, capable, analytical, lanky and androgynous, Leo supports herself by writing cowboy novels. A complex and delicately drawn character, Leo is strong not only in her independence but also in that she is brave enough to question herself, face her own fears, and ultimately change her life at the cost of great pain. If the ending of *The Middle Mist* is ambiguous at best and anti-lesbian at worse, Leo nevertheless emerges as a marvelous and unforgettable lesbian character.

Rites of Passage

Art is supposed to be about recognizing one's self in a universal experience. There are experiences which, by their very nature, all lesbians share and only lesbians can experience. These include a woman's making lesbian love with a woman for the first time, admitting and seeing one's self as gay, and fitting in with a dyke crowd. In the novels of the '50's and '60's we have found many beautiful descriptions of these universally shared events. In the straight world, shared events are often validated and ritualized by ceremonies like weddings or club initiations. For lesbians, there are no ceremonies. Only through art can we share our experiences.

> *Her smooth belly rounded when she inhaled, hollowed as she exhaled. Her thighs looked sleek as marble and at the same time soft as a cloud. There was a small vein in her creamy throat which beat with the rhythm of her heart.*
>
> *I slid onto the bed next to her. My hands touched her belly, then came seeking upward toward a breast.*
>
> *"Penny."*
>
> *My hands stopped. "What, Bernice?"*
>
> *"Mark," she said. "He called you a lesbian."*
>
> *I said nothing.*

"Penny–isn't a lesbian a girl who likes other girls?"

"Yes," I said. . .

"So–" I could feel her body breathing beneath my palm– "if she wants to have sex, she must have it with another woman. Is that correct?"

"Yes."

"And if she wants to love somebody–wants somebody to love her–" The breathing became more rapid– "then that somebody must also be a woman. Is that what a lesbian is?"

"Yes," I said.

She shifted her shoulders, inched her body down the sheets, and suddenly a warm, soft breast had been delivered into my hand.

"Then I'm a lesbian," she said simply.

We fell together and spent the rest of the night proving it.

(Jesse Dumont, *I Prefer Girls,* Derby, CT: Monarch Books, 1963, p. 95.)

The other bars had been all male or mixed. In this one, Jack Mann and the two bartenders. . . were the only men in a big room solidly packed with women. It excited Beebo entensely–all that femininity. She was silent, studying the girls at the table. . . When she shook hands with them, a new feeling gripped her. For the first time in her life she was proud of her size, proud of her strength, even proud of her oddly boyish face. She could see interest, even admiration on the faces of many of the girls. She was not used to that kind of reaction in people, and it exhilarated her. But she didn't talk much, only answering direct questions when she had to; smiling at them when they smiled at her; looking away in confusion when one or another tried to stare her down. . .

. . . The floor was jammed with a mass of couples, a mass of girls dancing. . . There was no shame, no shock, no self-consciousness about it at all. They were enjoying themselves. They were having fun in the most natural way imaginable. They were all in love, or so it seemed. They were–what had Jack called it?–gay.

Beebo watched them for less than a minute, all told; but a minute that was transfixed like a living picture in her mind for the rest of her life. She was startled by it, afraid of it. And yet so passionately moved that she caught her breath and held it till her heart began to pound in protest. Her fists closed hard with the nails biting into her palms and she was obsessed momentarily by the desire to grab the girl nearest her and kiss her.

(Ann Bannon, *Beebo Brinker,* pp. 41-42)

Jean looked about them. A group of girls had entered, most of them in pairs. They seemed to be tourists–but tourists with a difference. They were all women, and obviously Lesbians. Several of them were very attractive. One blonde girl had the face of an eagle, with an aquiline nose and high cheekbones, her curly hair short-cropped against her head. Joan's arms and legs grew cold with desire. She did not understand her feelings, but they were so intense she wanted to faint. She felt, somehow, that she should be honest, that she shouldn't hide anymore, that she should somehow try to join the women who were to her so compellingly beautiful–the Lesbians.

(Artemis Smith, *The Third Sex,* NY: Softcover Library, 1969, p. 13)

These scenes and the many more they exemplify feel good to us. They record rites, necessary "firsts", we've all been through, validating and enriching our common and individual experience. We feel, as Kate Millet wrote, "transported to read finally in a book what had been the dearest part of [our] experience." That these passages predate the existence of women's presses and are often found between unprepossessing or lurid paperback covers makes them all the more precious to us. They are found passages about fictional lost women.

How We Get The Books

We've collected about 200 of these books this year. Almost none of them is still in print. We got our copies at used paperback bookstores. Finding books is like finding treasure, which is why it's fun. You look through thousands of books and find maybe ten you'll buy–but then you can have a great time reading those ten. We found all our books in central Indiana, so it's not necessary to look only in cities, although you'll find more used bookstores in a city. Prices are low, too–our collection cost an average of $ .50 per book.

For collecting, we recommend the fantastic bibliography *The Lesbian in Literature* by Gene Damon and Lee Stuart. With it you can know quickly if you have a relevant book or not–very few books have the word "lesbian" in the title. Also, in the last few years many essentially straight novels have had lesbian subplots or characters, for example, Jacqueline Susann's *Once is Not Enough.* The inclusion of lesbian subplots or characters is often not indicated by the title or cover blurbs, so this incredibly complete bibliography is very useful.

The 1967 edition of *The Lesbian in Literature* includes all lesbian books–known to the authors–that were copyrighted before 1967. A brand new 1975 edition, by Gene Damon, Jan Watson, and Robin Jordan, runs to January 15, 1975. It can be purchased for $10 from the Ladder, P.O. Box 5025, Washington Station, Reno, Nevada, 89503.

Some history of the bibliography seems in order. During the years 1956-1972, *The Ladder* was published as the magazine of Daughters of Bilitis. In *The Ladder* Gene Damon wrote a monthly column called "Lesbiana" in which she discussed newly published books relevant to lesbian literature. Ms. Damon gathered her information by reading publisher's review sheets such as the *N.Y. Times Book Review* and *The Kirkus Review.* She also received information from other book collectors and *Ladder* readers. The formal bibliography was begun in 1958 as a brief list called *Astra's Tower, Special Leaflet no. 2,* with *no. 3* appearing in 1959. The compiler was Marion Zimmer Bradley (who also writes science fiction and wrote lesbian pulps under various pseudonyms.) In 1960 Bradley and Gene Damon made up their first *Checklist,* an annotated bibliography that was privately printed and published by the authors. The *Checklist* was updated by two *Supplements,* in 1961 and 1962. Appendixes on movies and poetry were included.

The 1967 bibliography is a full-bloomed version of earlier efforts. It contains some 5000 entries. It is not annotated, but uses a rating system. Books are rated A:major lesbian characters or action; B:minor lesbian characters or action; C:latent, repressed lesbian characters (often called "variant" by writers on this subject); and T:trashy quality books. In the 1975 edition the books rated "T" were dropped for the most part, and many non-fiction titles were added. Since we believe that art and value are wherever you find them, we're sorry to see the "T" category dropped. Frankly, if we came across a copy of *Strange Nurse* by Arthur Adlon or *Darkroom Dyke* by Les Cooper (both T's) we wouldn't kick them out of bed. As we've noted in this article, you can find passages worth reading if you look for them. Although we regret the disappearance of the "T" catagory, we've found *The Lesbian in Literature* bibliography invaluable and we use both the 1967 and 1975 editions

when we go book hunting.

There's very little written about this genre of pulp lesbian literature. The Jeannette Foster book, *Sex Variant Women in Literature,* includes some discussion of paperback originals. (Foster's unique book is being reissued by Diana Press in 1975.) In Betty Wysor's *The Lesbian Myth* there is a brief mention of the genre. In preparing this article we had access to the library of the Institute for Sex Research (the "Kinsey" Institute) which allowed us to examine hard-to-find material like Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Checklist.* † † †

FOCUS: A NON-REVIEW

by Paula Bennett

Focus: A Journal for Gay Women, published monthly by Boston Daughters of Bilitis, Room 323, 419 Boylston Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02116, $6.00/year, sample copy, $.60.

I first came into contact with *Focus* in 1972 (the year after I came out). At that time it was a small sub-literary journal, filled with local news and local color and an occasional poem. Today it is more literary (the staff now harbors a number of dedicated English majors), but its essential nature remains unchanged: *Focus* is a local magazine designed to be read by DOB members or those interested in what goes on at DOB. Although it contains many things that might appeal to outside readers, it has yet to reach them.

Yet for me, *Focus* is home, the journal I have chosen to write for—why? Getting published is tough. It's nice to have your "own" magazine. There's a real sense of accomplishment in watching the baby grow. DOB is a good organization to work for. Any and all of these reasons will do. But very specifically, helping a magazine like *Focus* (even when, like me, you are not actually on the staff) is a labor of love.

Unfunded, devoid of advertisers, dependent upon volunteer help and,—cruellest of all—relying on what comes through the mails, *Focus* is a marginal operation typical of a marginal subculture in which everyone must scratch like hell to keep anything going at all. Unlike the sun, it is always possible that *Focus* simply will not come up.

I can't help but feel that would be a loss. For writers like myself, working with *Focus* is like speaking in front of gay groups. It's a place where you learn to relax, to express your feelings and thoughts in an atmosphere which is open and accepting. It is a place to feel good about yourself and the things you do—to know that your poems and essays will strike responsive chords in readers who are themselves just learning what it's all about.

It is, in short, a place where writers and readers meet face to face, learning from and giving to each other. None of this makes *Focus* a great magazine, of course—its literary quality is erratic at best, often atrocious, sometimes (we hope, more frequently of late) very good. But good or bad, *Focus* is necessary, more necessary, I'd argue, than a number of small literary magazines and journals and certainly, in human terms a lot more necessary than any number of scholarly journals I can think of. If *Focus* does not yield great literature—it does touch lives, directly and significantly—and that, perhaps, of one small volunteer journal, is more than enough to ask. † † †

SWEET AND POWERFUL

by Jan Garton

Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, *Lesbian/Woman,* Glide Publications, San Francisco, 1972; 0-912078-20-0, $7.95.

This book is a godsend, my candidate for Lesbian book of the decade. Perhaps it seems a little strange to write a rave review of a book at least three years old and one considered basic reading for every Lesbian. But time has not blunted or lessened the sweet and powerful message of *Lesbian/Woman.*

Simply, this book is a positive and compassionate statement about women who love women. It is a calm and reasoned indictment of antiquated laws and attitudes that perpetuate hatred and fear of homosexuality in the form of repressive social and legal sanctions. It is a history of the formation and growth of the Daughters of Bilitis, and the Lesbian movement within the women's movement. Finally, it is the personal love story of Del and Phyllis, the authors.

What tells the story are the lives and experiences of hundreds of women and men who in some way have been associated with Lesbians or Lesbianism. If there is any one point, I think it is this: Lesbians are persons—persons entitled to the same rights, the same freedoms as everyone else. What's more, there are as many attitudes, lifestyles, goals, dreams and purposes to Lesbianism as there are Lesbians to create them. "However women are depicted in world society, so may the Lesbian be. For the Lesbian is all women."

There is strength in this book; a strength that comes from nineteen years of living and growing as a Lesbian couple, of facing the accompanying social obstacles and ignorance, and not bowing, breaking or quitting. It is the strength of numbers. As you read *Lesbian/Woman,* your own world of experience broadens tremendously. You become caught up in the excitement of an awakening and expanding Lesbian community. It's marvelous.

While I'd hate to call this a "Lesbian handbook", it certainly performs that function as well; delving into myths and beliefs about Lesbians, revealing (at last!) what it is that Lesbians do in bed, talking honestly and frankly about Lesbian mothers, teenage Lesbians, Black and third world Lesbians—in other words, the whole gamut of the Lesbian experience.

Lesbian/Woman is a must book for all who wonder, who doubt, who ache and feel, and especially those who fear. † † †

PART IV ON A CLEAR DAY (YOU CAN SEE JILL JOHNSTON)

TWO (RE)VIEWS

by Elana Dykewoman (Nachman)

Susan Sherman, *With Anger/With Love.* Mulch Press, (P.O. Box Box 426 Amherst, MA 01002) $2.50.
——— *Women Poems Love Poems* Two & Two Press, (326A 4th St., Brooklyn, NY 11215) $1.25.
Susan Cavin, *Me And Them Sirens Running All Night Long.* The Print Center, (194 State St., Brooklyn, NY 11215).

The more I think about women's culture, lesbian culture, the more it becomes simple and clear. Our culture is not (just) the opening up of voice, art, science, history, dance, song to women—its what that voice art science history dance song are about.

I could go on about that itself for awhile, but talking about voices, I want to recommend two who are talking, telling us things. This review isn't meant to compare them, in any way—it's just that it's more economical to use one introduction for both. Susan Sherman and Susan Cavin, though they are both lesbians who live in New York and have the same first name (which may be a lot to share these days) are very separate women, speaking from different bands of the spectrum. Each of their experiences, their work, effectively and powerfully hits the nerves of where personal and political live. And the simple choice of writing about them both says more about me than them.

Okay then. Susan Sherman has published two books of poems, *With Anger/With Love Selections:Poems and Prose (1963-1972),* (Mulch Press, P.O. Box 426, Amherst, MA, 01002, $2.50) and *Women Poems Love Poems,* (1975, Two & Two Press, 326A 4th St., Brooklyn, NY 11215, $1.25. Two & Two Press has just been started by Susan Sherman and Martha King.)

These are beautiful books. They hold all the cadences of her commitments—to a different kind of world, to loving women, to fusing content with craft. You know, all those fine things you are glad to have the chance to say about a poet whose work you love, a friend you respect, a woman whose voice is a song which enters your own, gives a new richness to the hum you hum driving down the road.

It's very political. *With Anger/With Love* is much about the edge where art and action join, much about the insides of a woman who went to Cuba, to Chile under Allende, who was moved by the murders of Black Panthers and the rape of Vietnamese women, whose recreation of Lilith makes us remember that our myths have been stolen from us—but we can find them, we can take them back.

In the poem "Ten Years After", Sherman says

Love is a series of choices, by which we
include or exclude the world.

And in *Woman Poems Love Poems* she writes:

She is who is Who chooses being Who chooses
to choose

The choices Susan Sherman makes are not the same, always, as I make, but she's a woman whose certainty, honesty and power have made me understand how much I have to listen, to listen carefully, and answer with my own choices, as they become ready. She teaches how consciously, with what discipline, we must all prepare both questions and answers.

In the first essay in *With Anger/With Love* she begins with a section from "Love Poem 12/16/71" (included whole in *Women Poems Love Poems):*

if you were to ask me what defines me
how I place myself in the world
I would say this poem
is the center of it is the core
that I reach toward the world
as I reach toward you
as one who wants to reach out
endlessly who wants to open out
endlessly who wants to feel
endlessly that question
that is our lives

The essays and preface to *With Anger/With Love* are the best I've ever read about the connections between art, freedom, responsibility, change, oppression, process, the importance of relationships between things (not just 'things in themselves' or 'art for art's sake'), the revolutionary connections we need to make. The prose flows together with the internal coherence of each poem—making it as hard (if not harder) to excerpt a sample sentence—you'll just have to read what the woman says for herself.

Women Poems Love Poems is a shorter book, with beautiful collages (by Susan) interspersed. It's also a real 'coming out' book, beginning with a section from her earlier "Lilith" poem (which, whole, is what we used to call a "classic"—a poem which evokes the whole history of women, of lesbians, and the possibility of a future):

women women surround me
images of women their faces
I who for years pretended them away
pretended away their names their faces
myself what I am pretended it away

Susan Sherman's books, separately but especially together, are a beautifully, exactly-wrought journey of the passion for change, for revolutionary change so deep and lasting that nothing will remain as it is (no banks, no grand juries, no racism, no exploitation). The journey of that passion, a kind of coming out, a motion of opening more and more towards women, recognizing that the strength & energy of women loving women is powerful—and we who have that power can use it now.

There is no death in love only a
waiting I have heard of an image
no one can touch & not
be warmed

* * *

Susan Cavin's book, *Me And Them Sirens Running All Night Long,* (The Print Center, 194 State St., Brooklyn, NY, 11215) reminded me of my first reaction to Sylvia Plath when someone handed me her poem "Daddy" in high school: But (I said) that's not poetry—you can't tell me 'broke my pretty red heart in two' is gonna be the art of the future, I'm not buying it (having read only T.S.E. and the boys).

We've all changed some since high school, and I could tell by my first resistance that *Me And Them Sirens Running All Night Long* had a lot to teach me. This book speaks an immediate lesbian language. A lesbian language? We have one, or some, you know—crammed with all the double meaning and profanity of an oppressed subculture. All the most hateful (and some of the most hoped-for) things about our lives are here—the specific horrors and come-ons of our families (frequent rape of daughters by daddy), loving women who went crazy, going crazy ourselves alone in cities while we try to retain a sense of humor about it, anger seeing what the straight world and straight people do to us, keep doing, seeing how we play along.

The poem "Master John" (the enemy prime) goes:

you know I can't hear you talking through your pants no more
I been mistaken so many times for your pin ball machine
that my identity is seriously the answer at question
if you know what I mean

The lesbian culture of 20th c. Amerika (at least) has been up to now mostly pain, mostly brutal, often a brutality directed against each other where we've been kept away from our real enemies, coupled with all our submissive/slave training as women.

This is the introduction to part i, "Look Away Child":

To all the women I wanted and could not
have because of this thing that stood between
us called straight society.
To all the men who stand for that thing.
And to my family who stood between me and life.
Most of these experiences were not worth living,
much less writing about, but I wrote them down
anyway because it was my life. In some strange
way, I must thank all the brainwashed straight
women and psychopathic men who make up the
families of America; for the experience of them
and their political, legal, and social realities
made me
run needing toward a lesbian consciousness.

The majority of these poems are about relationships—with family:

and I'm in the closet
paralyzed
blowing my nose
singing do-dah daddy don't you corner me tonight
do dah daddy wants a virgin
he likes it tight
mama's in the kitchen cooking christmas
saying he's a sight
the way he wants virgin mary every christmas night

and lovers:

THE STORY OF ANNA

I tried to write it all down
your life
and mine
together.
It didnt work out
on paper, either.

The second and third sections carry you through the joy of beginning, the early tenderness; and the poem used as preface to the book, "Pisces in Aquarius is a Fish in Water", gives you the sense that Cavin has a warmth in her life now that makes it possible for her to continue to struggle—and has the faith in that warmth we each need to stay alive. But she has the most power when she reaches back to the awful times when it tears apart—she can bring that moment back whole—moment, hell, month, when you just don't know what good it is to go on being a dyke or alive if you're gonna do it alone. Those poems don't do it in 'good last lines' but with the whole surge of their weight, their anguish, their sarcasm—and you have to read them (I had to read them) a couple of times to know how much I liked them.

Cavin's poems rattle and shake, pun and twist syntax around outrageously—I love them for this. Sometimes, I gotta admit I don't get it, or the rhythm seems so broken to me it's hard to focus my attention (being still kind of charmed by what they call lyric poetry). But she proves that you don't have to pay homage to any tradition of lyricism, I admire that. It's possible, after all, to boil our speech to the bone and come out with something very alive & kicking. Some of the poems are followed by the word 'song', and those really are, songs, we could have a record of them called Bad Dyke Blues.

These poems talk to my gut, they bang at the shut windows of my resentments, they tell me I have not been alone when i thought I was most alone (& howling). They say that women can't (often, still) take each other seriously enough to be strong, to be honest, to build. And even so, that as we make our relationships and talk about what goes on in them for the first time, we are making a different world. Our connections with each other are, in fact, our love, and our anger about how that love has gone wrong. How 'the man' uses that love against us, enlists women as agents, how we need much more than a spiritual (but that too) awakening or civil rights. We need a whole lesbian revolution. † † †

WRITING-ON,
THE WASHINGTON, D.C.
AREA
LESBIAN FEMINIST
WRITERS' COLLECTIVE

From left, Lee Howard, Diane Wallace (musician), E. Sharon Gomillion, Adrienne Parks, Lee Lally. Center from left, Carol Anne Douglas, Wendy Stevens.

THE POETRY OF JUDY GRAHN

by Inez Martinez

Judy Grahn, *edward the dyke and other poems.* Drawings by Wendy Cadden, Brenda Crider, Gail Hodgins, Sunny and Susann.
A Woman is Talking to Death. Graphics by Karen Sjoholm.
The Women's Press Collective (5251 Broadway, Oakland, Calif., 94618), $1.25 each

Virginia Woolf threw a great shaft of light on the question of how to look at a woman writer. In *A Room of One's Own* she demonstrated, among other things, how to listen for tone, discriminate subject matter, detect reverberations of style, all in an attempt to gauge the development of the female tradition in literature. The contemporary writer I've read who seems to me most to require such an approach is Judy Grahn. She has a distinct yet tradition-rooted style, has freshly explored taboo subject matter, and, most importantly, has a unique tone or voice that I think suggests a significant development in the female tradition in literature, certainly in lesbian consciousness of the recent past.

Stylistically, Grahn is at her best in deadpan description or narrative. She manages to create the illusion of the objectivity of a tape recorder or camera, and then lambasts the reader with the power of the actual. In *A Woman Is Talking to Death,* for example, the narrator describes finding a corpse on a bridge:

> *. . . I found the tall young man*
> *who thought he owned the bridge, now lying on*
> *his stomach, head cradled in his broken arm.*
>
> *He had glasses on, but somewhere he had lost*
> *most of his levis, where were they?*
> *and his shoes. Two short cuts on his buttocks,*
> *that was the only mark except his thin white*
> *seminal tubes were all strung out behind. . . .*

The recorder effect of details such as the references to glasses and the "short cuts on the buttocks" provide a factual context that renders the existence and emotional import of "trailing seminal tubes" inescapable.

While deadpan description creates the most pungent effects in Grahn's style, it hardly exhausts her language wizardry. Rhythmically, she somehow combines both the effect of natural speech rhythms, and a tautness of sentences that suggest she'd rather waste blood than a word. In her poem about a Vietnamese woman and an American soldier in *edward and the dyke and other poems,* for example, she has the woman plead for intercourse in language echoing both the rape of Vietnam by American military force and the hostility and rapacity of the colonized female:

> *Stack your body*
> *on my body. . .*
> *press your swelling weapon*
> *here*
> *between us if you*

push it quickly I should
come
to understand your purpose
what you bring us
what you call it
there
in your country.

Many of the words, of course, carry a double valence, thus creating the effect of tautness. "Stack" not only means sexual mounting, but flashes TV newscasts of body counts on the reader's imagination; "Weapon" not only means the American male's penis, but suggests the American was machine perversely attempting to impregnate the Vietnamese people. In addition, an illusion of actual speech pattern is created by the horror-laden-line "what you call it" a stock phrase of people using English as a second language. The possible referents for the word "it" are dizzyingly many and all awful: prostitution, dehumanization, the substitution of force for love, etc. "Come" appropriately enough equates orgasm from intercourse with the American soldier to knowledge of the enemy.

Grahn's style is also blessed by music, used to emphasize the meaning of her lines and to thread them together. She creates refrains, repeats words, scatters internal rhymes, and plays with assonance and alliteration. The poem in which she most exquisitely writes thus is, I believe, portrait II in *The Common Woman,* "Ella, in a square apron, along Highway 80." A few lines should illustrate:

She's a copperheaded waitress,
tired and sharp-worded, she hides
her bad brown tooth behind a wicked
smile, and flicks her ass
out of habit, to fend off the pass
that passes for affection.
She keeps her mind the way men
keep a knife—keen to strip the game
down to her size. She has a thin spine,
swallows her eggs cold, and tells lies. . . .
The common woman is as common
as a rattlesnake.

The rhyme of *ess, ass, pass* and the repetition of *pass* in *passes* accentuate the meaning of the lines—Ella's reptilian manner of defending herself. In addition, the rhyme and repetition joined to the accumulation of *s's* in the passage prepare us for the rattlesnake simile in the last line. Further, the repetition of sounds and words and the use of internal rhyme knit groups of lines together. The use of *ed* and *d* i word-final positions links the first three sentences; the *ass* and *pass* rhymes, and the repetition of [f] sound links lines four through six; the repetition of [k], the vowels [ai] and [i], and initial and final [s], together with the internal rhyme of *size* and *lies* makes a unit of lines seven through eleven. Grahn thus guides the reader within the form of free verse description with a kind of musical phrasing that interlocks both with the thought of the lines and their rhythm.

All these deft manipulations of sound emphasize specific questions that Grahn raises. What is it to be a woman? To be a dyke? To live in a society sterilized by male supremacy? To be a dyke in that sterile society blessed with biological life and faced with biological death? *The Commmon Woman,* a pastiche of female experiences, is her most intricate reply to the first question, a reply insisting that to be a woman is to be an individual, but still be be an individual woman, and thus engaged, willy-nilly—through emulation, or defiance, or victimization, or self-sacrifice, or whatever—with the existence of male supremacy. The consequences of such engagement Grahn explores in "The Psychoanalysis of Edward the Dyke," "Elephant Poem," the Marilyn Monroe poem, and most subtly, in "A Woman Is Talking to Death."

Each of these poems, but particularly the latter, contains that previously mentioned seed of a new consciousness for the women's movement, and in particular, for the lesbian women's movement. That new note consists primarily of humor, and of abandonment of the position of righteous, helpless victim. There is anger in Grahn's poems—she describes the lesbian Carol, for instance, as "angry energy inside a passive form." There is even occasionally a flash of self-pity, as when the narrator in *A Woman Is Talking to Death* defends her not remaining to testify for the victimized driver of the car killing the cyclist; she (the narrator) defends her action by preaching:

Keep the women small and weak
and off the street, and off the
bridges, that's the way, brother
one day I will leave you there. . . .

But the dominant tone and voice of her poems consists of deflating male supremacy through humor, and of taking her place among the imperfect.

The humor is sometimes macabre, as in her vision of Samson-like, beating lustful male chauvinists—whose appetites have been whetted by the promise of seeing Marilyn Monroe naked—with Marilyn Monroe's skull. It is sometimes farcical, as in the poem in which she describes male supremacy as an elephant, a beast whose destructiveness can be made innocuous by sending flies up its trunk: "blue flies, shoo flies, and it's not true flies. . . can flies & do flies. . . rock flies and sock flies." And sometimes the humor consists of raucous caricature, as in the description of Edward's psychoanalysis. Edward says:

"Oh yes. My real date. Well I bought a dress and a wig and a girdle and a squeezy bodice. I did unspeakable things to my armpits with a razor. I had my hair done and my face done and my nails done. My roast done. My bellybutton done."

"And then you felt truly feminine."

"I felt truly immobilized. I could no longer run, walk bend stoop move my arms or spread my feet apart."

"Good, good," Edward's analyst replies.

But sometimes Grahn's humor is simply grim and desperately puzzled. In *A Woman Is Talking to Death* Grahn juxtaposes eight narratives and a conclusion all within the framework of testimony at a trial. She uses the refrain "that's a fact" as a means of parodying rules of evidence, the materialist bias of male supremacy, and of pointing to and undercutting the craziness in our experience. In describing the dead cyclist, the narrator says: "He died laughting: that's a fact." In section three, which tells of an event in World War II when crew after crew drove, under orders, faulty amphibian tank after faulty amphibian tank into the depths of the sea, the narrator asks:

did they. . . die laughing or what? what
did they talk about, those men,
as the water came in?

was the general their lover?

Grim, desperate humor, this, and it runs through the entire poem, trying to cope with cruelty, destructiveness, absurdity: the death of the laughing cyclist, the beating and framing of the hapless black driver, European witch trials, the narrator's expulsion from the military and betrayal of her female lovers, the narrator's foiling of heterosexist questions in a mock interro-

gation, ostracism of an unmarried pregnant black girl, medieval punishment of adulteresses, the physical beating of the narrator by a spanish-speaking homophobe, the raping of a 55-year old woman by a taxi driver, and the humiliating interrogation of that woman by hostile police. Grahn juxtaposes horror after horror in the poem, but, in integrity, refuses to divide the world into "good" and "bad".

Instead Grahn systematically suggests connection after connection between oppressed and oppressor. The dead cyclist might have been the rapist; the Spanish-speaking attacker might have been the illegitimate son of the ostracized woman; the narrator's fury at that attacker puts her in the same trap of sterility as the brutal cops—"no child *in* them," and "no child *in* me"; the narrator leaves the black driver to fend for himself just as her friends in the military deserted her; she betrays her lovers in the military as she deserts the raped woman, as the military sent 25 crews of men to their death, as feudal husbands let mice gnaw their way out from under cups placed on their adulterous wives' bellies. Grahn unflinchingly focuses on the lineup of oppressors and oppressed, each in his or her way worshipping objectification of self and other, destructiveness, death.

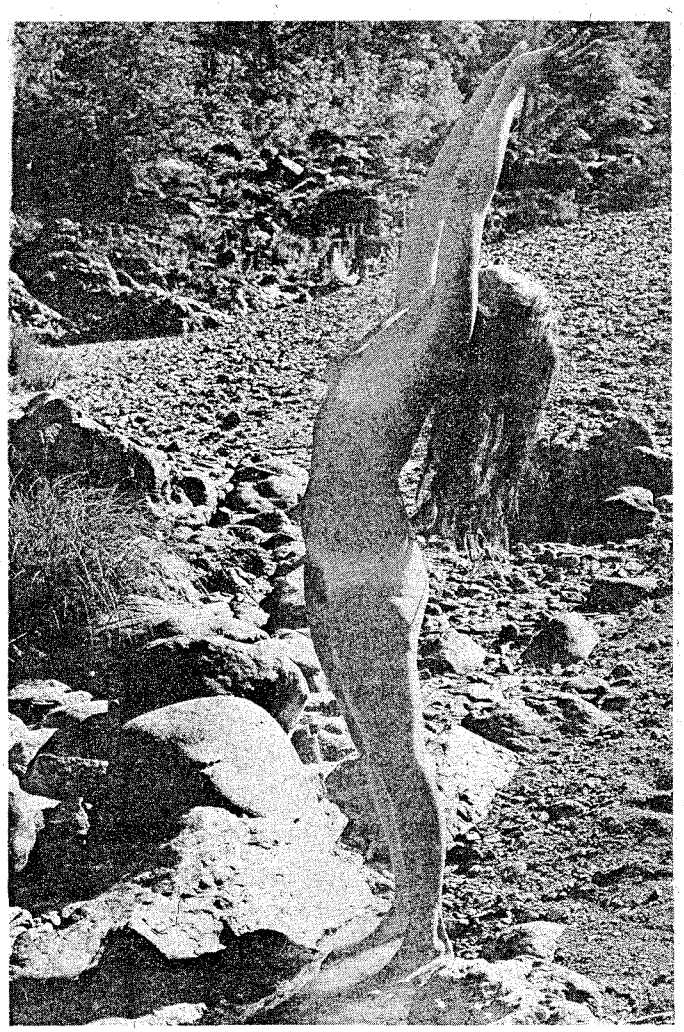
With one exception. Section nine contains the narrator's declaration of commitment to her lovers, to defiance of death, and to responsible autonomy:

to my lovers I bequeath
the rest of my life. . .
ho death
. . . us
who do not hold hands with you
who do not embrace you
who try not to work for you
or sacrifice themselves or trust
or believe you, ho ignorant
death, how do you know we happened to you?

whenever our meat hangs on our own bones
for our own use
your pot is empty
death, ho death
you shall be poor

The narrator has participated in death's cult by not loving or risking or living enough. More love—for the black "lover" stranded on the bridge, for the ostracized woman, for the brutal Spanish-speaking assaulter, for the raped 55-year old woman, and for the narrator's beloved woman whose "teeth are white geese flying above" and whose "muscles are rope ladders under my hands"—is the starvation of death.

And here the new note is clear. Women are no longer merely pathetic victims of male supremacy; lesbians are no longer claiming virtue in suffering; simple victims and offended innocence exist nowhere. Grahn provides no answers except a personal affirmation of courage, love, and consciousness of one's shadow side. Her poems explore with openness, attempt to embrace contradictory elements of experience and responsibility, extend lesbian ethical experience beyond the question of social condemnation of homosexual love. The abandonment of righteous defensive fury in a unique style still replete with heritage seems to me an evolutionary development in our literature, in post-50's lesbian consciousness. Judy Grahn's subject, voice, tone emanate a new level of honesty, passion, humor, and beauty. † † †



Ruth celebrates herself / Photograph by Carol Newhouse

A MATTER OF JOY

by Penny Green

Dolores Klaich, *Woman Plus Woman: Attitudes Toward Lesbianism.* Simon & Schuster (630 Fifth Avenue, N.Y. N.Y. 10020), ISBN 671-2169, $8.95.

Several books on Lesbianism have been published by the big presses over the past two or three years. These for the most part have been written for the general public rather than for an explicitly Lesbian audience. Their purpose has been to "educate". At least one of these (*Sappho Was A Right-On Woman*) was particularly concerned with bringing Feminism and Lesbianism together. Klaich's *Woman Plus Woman* is in many ways an excellent contribution to this contemporary body of work on Lesbianism.

Klaich attempts to demonstrate the heterogeneity of the Lesbian population through the use of interviews and a critical analysis of scientific theories about Lesbianism, which usually

postulate uniformity in the nature of the Lesbian and/or in the factors "causing" her "condition". Klaich also discusses the "cultural" contributions of Lesbians throughout history. This historical overview further documents Lesbian diversity.

Early in the book, Klaich expresses her view of Lesbianism: "I do not believe that lesbianism is a sin, a crime, or a sickness. I do feel that lesbianism is a way of loving, a natural possibility, and as such, like the other possibilities, it can be a matter of joy, a mutual growth, of constructive human interaction. But also, like the other possibilities, it can be a matter of mutual stagnation, even destruction." This statement along with the rest of the book leads me to conclude that her theme is that "there are as many ways of being a Lesbian as there are Lesbians." Lesbians are caught between the ghetto and the closet and each Lesbian struggles to create an identity that is uniquely her own. Two interviews with closeted Lesbians (both professionals) stress their struggle to maintain an identity and lifestyle that transcend both ghetto and closet. Unfortunately, given the upper middle classness of her two interviewees, it is unfair to compare their situation to the situation of other Lesbians. Class differences provde differential access to opportunities to transcend labels and roles, a sociological truth Klaich recognizes but chooses to evade.

The book is divided into three parts. The first, "Sex and Psychology", is an overview and critique of the psychological and social scientific perspective on Lesbianism. Klaich explains and discusses theorists such as Krafft-Ebbing and Freud. Her analysis of Freud is very balanced and points out his followers' distortions.

The second part, "Historical Voices", is a survey of Lesbian writers and Lesbian culture from Sappho to Virginia Woolf and Gertrude Stein. The greatest strength of the book lies in this section. Klaich provides an interesting description and analysis of the works of Sappho, emphasizing the artistic over the Lesbian: "Sappho was a poet who loved women. She was not a lesbian who wrote poetry." She reminds us that we often become so carried away with the sexual preferences of Lesbian writers that we understress their literary contributions. Klaich writes this somewhat apologetically because she devotes much of this section to describing the impact of the authors' Lesbianism on their own works.

Relatively few people are aware of the Lesbian society that flourished in Paris during the early part of this century. Klaich describes some of the major participants, e.g. Renee Vivien, Natalie Clifford Barney and Colette, and provides a good corrective for this neglected part of Lesbian history. If there is to be a "Lesbian Nation", it is imperative that Lesbian history and culture be re-discovered, preserved and transmitted. Klaich's work is certainly a part of this endeavor.

The third part of the book, "Contemprary Voices", is a survey of some contemporary trends and themes such as Gay Liberation. Also included is a discussion of Lesbian oppression in such areas as job discrimination and religion. She bases some of her observations on the results of a questionnaire distributed to a sample of Lesbians. This is the one glaring weakness of the book. She does not tell us anything about the nature of her sample and how it was selected, and I am skeptical about how representative of Lesbians some of her statements are. Klaich is aware of this and argues that her data are analyzed from a "humanistic" rather than a scientific perspective—that she is presenting impressions rather than hard data. This is consistent with her intention, stated at the onset, to present Lesbianism as a heterogeneous experience rather than to continue the depressing trend of describing Lesbianism as a uniform social phenomenon or "problem".'.

Klaich's *Woman Plus Woman* is well worth reading for its excellent overviews. Her approach and style are low-key and lack the stridency that has marred the work of some of her predecessors. The book is well documented without being pendantic and is a fine introduction to Lesbiansim. Give it to your favorite heterosexual! † † †

SERIAL MEDIA WITH LESBIAN CONTENT:
A Project of the Lesbian Herstory Archives

Ain't I A Woman?
P.O. Box 1169
Iowa City, Iowa 52240
$5 per year
(has stopped publishing for awhile)

Albatross
82 S. Harrison St.
E. Orange, NJ 07017
$4 per year

ALFA Newsletter
Box 7684
Atlanta, Georgia 30309
$2 per year

Amazon Quarterly
Box 434
West Somerville, MA 02144
$4 per year

Aphra
Box 893, Ansonia Sta.
New York, NY 10023
$4.50 per year

Big Mama Rag
1724 Gaylord
Denver, Colo. 80210
$5/yr. regular
$3/Fem. Inst.

Circle
Box 427
Waterloo Quay
Wellington, New Zealand
$2/6 mos.
$4/yr.

Coming Out
P.O. Box A-22
Oberlin College
Oberlin, Ohio
$.15 each

Country Women
Box 51
Albion, CA 95410
$7/yr.

Cowrie
359 E. 68th St.
New York , N.Y. 10021
$5/yr.

Desperate Living
P.O. Box 7124
Baltimore, MD 21218
$3/yr.

Dykes & Gorgons
P.O. Box 840
Berkeley, CA 94704

Dykes Unite
Frazer, Box 354
S.U.C. Geneseo
Geneseo, NY 14454
$4/yr.

Focus
DOB-Boston
491 Boylston St. Rm. 419
Boston, MA 02116
$5/yr.

Gay Community News
22 Broomfield St.
Boston, MA 02108
$2.50/yr.

Journal of Homosexuality
Institute for Human Identity
490 West End Ave.
New York, NY 10024
$12/yr.

Lavender Woman
P.O. Box 60206
1723 W. Devon
Chicago, IL 60660
$4/yr.

Lazette
DOB-New Jersey
P.O. Box 62
Fanwood, NJ 07023
$4/yr.

Lesbian Connection
Ambitious Amazons
P.O. Box 811
E. Lansing, MI 48823
$1/yr.

LEC News
Newsletter of Lesbian Feminist Center
3523 N. Halstead
Chicago, IL 60657
Donations urged

Lesbian Tide
373 N. Western, Rm. 202
Los Angeles, CA 90004
$7/yr. (suspended publication temporarily, but will begin again soon)

Lesbian Visions
C/O The Lesbian Collective
Box 8265
Stanford, CA 94305
Free

Lesbian Voices
Sisters of Sappho
C/O Kathy
P.O. Box 783
Campbell, CA 95008
$4/yr.

Long Time Coming
Box 161, Station E
Montreal HST 3A7
Quebec, Canada
$5/yr.

Majority Report
74 Grove St.
New York, NY 10014
$5/yr.

Mother Jones Gazette
Box 8460
U.T. Station
Knoxville, TN 37916
$2.50/yr.

NYRF Newsletter
Jean Grove
80 Thompson
New York, NY 10012
$3/yr.

New Women's Times
P.O. Box 1471
Rochester, NY 14603
$3/yr.

Quest: A Feminist Quarterly
P.O. Box 8843
Washington, D.C. 20003
$7/yr.

Secret Storm
CWLU Lesbian Group
2748 N. Lincoln
Chicago, IL 60614

Sisters
1005 Market St., Suite 402
San Francisco, CA 94101
$5/yr.

So's Your Old Lady
Lesbian Resource Center
2104 Stevens Ave., So.
Minneapolis, MN 55404
$4.50/yr.

The Second Wave
Box 303
Kenmore Square Station
Boston, MA 02215

13th Moon
C/O Embissert/Kathleen Chodor
30 Seaman Ave.
New York, NY 10034
$1.50 Each
(Long time before next issue)

Uva Ursi
RFD
Robbinston, Maine 04671

WICCE
P.O. Box 15833
Philadelphia, PA 19103
$3.50/yr.

Womanspirit
Box 263
Wolf Creek, OR 97497
$6/yr.

Women In Sunlight
6 R of W
713 Monroe Ave.
Rochester, NY 14607
$2/yr.

A NOTE ON THE SERIALS LIST

The compilers have tried to be comprehensive and accurate, but we may have missed a Lesbian journal or newsletter. For example, publications such as *Cries From Cassandra, Echo of Sappho, One-To-One, Portcullis,* and *Tres Femmes* were deleted from our list because our letters were returned as unforwardable by the post office. Since we compiled this list for the purposes of archives subscriptions, we would appreciate hearing from you if you know of new publications, changes of address, or serials that have definitely stopped publishing. Any definite information will help us to provide complete and accurate records of Lesbian magazines for the future.

Where possible, we have included the price of journals in the hopes that readers will subscribe to those journals and newsletters they can afford. We believe it is necessary to support Lesbian publications in order to promote and maintain a Lesbian information network. While not all of the publications listed here are strictly Lesbian, such as *13th Moon, Majority Report,* and *Country Women,* we have included them because they often contain news, poetry, and/or articles of interest to Lesbians.

The Archives Collective ♀♀

PART V SISTERS ALL

ELSA GIDLOW
by Karen Wells

In the quiet, almost sacred space we in the northern part of California call Muir Woods (named for John Muir, naturalist), there is a smaller, even more sacred, space called Camino Del Canyon, home of the Alan Watts Memorial Library, eight homesteads, more Eucalyptus trees and Douglas Firs than people, and the garden and comfortable house of Elsa Gidlow. Elsa (and several other families) moved to this corner of the State Park, before it was State-owned, and wrested living spaces from the windswept old farm that had been there; this was around twenty-seven years ago. Elsa's house, in near-shambles from neglect when she bought it, is now sturdily snuggled among the trees, most of the restoration work having been done by Elsa and her lover, over a 10-year period. Around the house is a huge garden where Elsa grows all her vegetables and greens, herbs and flowers—all organically tended. Elsa's Siamese cat Tiki keeps the gophers under control; Elsa herself is constantly experimenting with new ways of controlling insects, deer and birds; and she avoids resorting to any chemical fertilizers or violence to the balance of her garden. (She removes large ants from her kitchen by picking them up and tossing them unharmed out the window.)

Elsa was born in Yorkshire, England, in 1898. Her father moved her family to Montreal early on, and Elsa spent her childhood of quiet poverty in rural Canada. She began writing poetry at an early age and, though she was not educated beyond high school, spent the rest of her life giving space to her convictions that she was "different", that she needed no man in her life, and that poetry and love of women were the dreams most worth working for. At 18, she moved to New York alone, and began supporting herself through free-lance journalism, teaching herself painfully all the verbal and written skills others in this country had the good fortune to have been helped with. It might be mentioned that Elsa was a contemporary of Edna St. Vincent Millay; they both were writing poetry on the East Coast in the 1920's. Millay, however, had the good fortune to have had a friend to aid her publishing, and her education. Elsa had only an abiding commitment to her own life, and to other women, and very little time apart from surviving to write poetry.

In the '30's, Elsa moved to the San Francisco area, thinking that the atmosphere in the Bay Area was more conducive to her making her living, and that she could find here the open spaces she loved so much. She has lived here ever since.

Elsa has written far more than she has been written about. Her study in her home in Muir Woods is stuffed with scrapbooks she has collected over some fifty years of writing. In these scrapbooks are nearly every article she wrote for a magazine or newspaper, nearly every unpublished poem she has written, and precious few of the tiny poetry books she herself financed and distributed to special friends. Many of her articles, written in the '30's, illustrate some fascinating things about Elsa Gidlow—that she was a suffragette at age 13, a public smoker in the early twenties, totally committed to women at 18 years of age, that she was helping publish a small poetry magazine in the '20's, that her views on health, organic gardening, animals, the ecological balance of nature are just now being noticed by the general public. Elsa was and is a radical thinker, noting in an article published in 1936 that men depend on a woman's care to exist, and that if women stopped supporting men's egos, the world as we know it would collapse. This article was written facetiously, of course, but we all know now the truth of this observation. Elsa, at 75 years of age, is the dramatic proof of her own ideas, developed in the thirties, that one's diet is important to ones's thinking abilities and one's longevity. Elsa rises with her cat Tiki at 6:30 a.m. to begin tending her garden; she eats light meals of her own pure greens, very little meat, fruit (home canned); she makes her own yogurt, drinks no milk, and is sun-tanned and strong. She retires at 9:30—or later, if she has guests. She is beautiful to look at, radiantly healthy and alert. She is working now on her autobiography, as well as tending her garden, working with the Alan Watts Memorial, giving frequent poetry readings in the Bay Area, and has compiled a collection of her Lesbian poetry—some of which dates back to 1918—for which she is seeking a publisher.

With one exception, Elsa has always had to publish her own poetry, in limited editions. The exception is, actually, a remarkable one, because in 1923, a small book publisher by the name of Will Ransom, published Elsa's first book (with many overtly Lesbian poems). *On A Grey Thread* cannot be found today, but Elsa has collected some of the Lesbian love poems from the book for re-publication, along with many love poems written since 1923. So far, in spite of our efforts, it appears that those of us who feel Elsa's poetry is incredible and beautiful will have to help finance again a privately printed, limited edition.

In 1950 or so, Elsa had printed *Wild Swan Singing,* a tiny collection of meditational and love poems. 250 copies, signed by Elsa, were printed. In 1956, another slim collection, *Letters from Limbo* was made available to 300 friends as a Christmas gift. These collections are not available anywhere, although some poems were again printed in 1971 in Elsa's best-known (because more were printed and distributed) volume, *Moods of Eros.* Some one thousand copies were printed by Elsa's own "press", Druid Heights Press, which was really a group of her friends, including Alan Watts, who felt she should be heard. Since there were a few Lesbian and women's organizations then, where there had not been before, this book found a slightly larger audience. The San Francisco chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis (of which Elsa was an early supporter) made this volume available to many women outside the Bay area, and as a result, there are no more than 25 copies of this book now available.

In 1973, Elsa's friends helped her, with donated labor, to print two thousand copies of *Makings for Meditation* which has many of her earlier meditational poetry—some of it very like Japanese Haiku poetry—and some of her more recent observations on the nature of growing things and on growing in wisdom. This is her loveliest book, beautifully illustrated

with the line drawings of Deane Swick and the calligraphic art of Philip Bouwsma. It is also her latest, and copies are still available from Druid Heights Press, at a cost of $2.25, plus $ .25 postage.

Elsa has always printed her poetry in the most beautiful way possible. Her book of collected Lesbian love poetry will be illustrated with drawings she feels will not dominate her poetry, or be a mere adjunct to it. She feels that her book should be a combination of her art and the art of the woman (women) who illustrates it.

It is not easy to write about Elsa's poetry, since her writings span some fifty-five years. She writes several "kinds" of poetry which might be very loosely-grouped as meditational, lyric and dramatic. She has also written lyric dramas, some of which have been performed, and a historical drama about the California gold rush days. I find it most easy to focus on Elsa's Lesbian lyric poetry, since I personally relate to it, and since it is the group of Elsa's work most often ignored whenever she has had any critical attention (which has been seldom). And of course, since she is a Lesbian, this part of her poetic output most closely expresses the struggle we all have had in letting our feelings flow.

In about 1918, Elsa wrote the following poem, one of my favorites since it is so like Elsa herself in its delightful humor, and has become a rather prophetic statement about Elsa's life:

Episode

I have robbed the garrulous streets,
Thieved a fair girl from their blight,
I have stolen her for a sacrifice
That I shall make to this fleeting night.

I have brought her, laughing,
To my moon-enchanted garden.
For what will be done there
I ask no man's pardon.

I brush the rouge from her cheeks,
Clean the black kohl from the rims
of her eyes; loose her hair;
Uncover the glimmering, shy limbs.

I break wild roses, scatter them over her.
The thorns between us sting like love's pain.
Her flesh, bitter and salt to my tongue,
I taste with endless kisses and taste again.

At dawn I leave her
Asleep in my waking garden.
(For what was done there
I ask no man's pardon.)

The title of Elsa's autobiography (which is seeking a publisher, too) is *Ask No Man's Pardon* and is the story of her life up to the age of 21. (She is contemplating a "part two" of her life) The scene of this poem is a garden, which of course, Elsa ultimately found in Muir Woods, and to which she has brought many friends and several lovers. And those of us who have been treated to Elsa's garden (or to any garden of earthly delights) fully appreciate the awakening which Elsa describes in the poem. This, as I read it, is a "bringing a woman out" poem, the kind of bringing that many of us, as Lesbians, wish we could offer to women—the gift of roses, of love, and, especially, the removal of the need of "rouge" and the "kohl" so many women have been taught to use to attract a man. And when we consider the date of this poem, I find it remarkably radical. This poem was published by a man, Will Ransom, in 1923.

Elsa's "poetry teachers" were Shelley, Byron, Emily Dickinson; but early in her writings, Elsa struggled with the "traditional" rhythms and rhymes common to the so-called Romantic poets. The same rough battle is felt in most of Dickinson's and in many of Millay's poems. As a result of this struggle, Elsa's poetry changed somewhat from the traditional meter of her earlier poetry and became more like haiku. Of course, this style found little favor among poetry publishers, and so, most of the reflections in this mode were never published.

In the 40's and 50's, Elsa's friend Ella Young influenced Elsa's poetry in a rather significant way (and there were other influences, of course.) Ella Young was an Irish historian whose researches into Irish and Celtic mythology are still being used and appreciated (after her death, unfortunately). Elsa's volume, *To a Wild Swan,* contains many small poems dedicated to the loving presence of Ella Young in Elsa's life. One of my favorite poems from this period follows:

Where the earth groans with earthquake
I know you;
Where the waters boil black
And the dragons are
You are immersed in me;
Beyond pleasure, where terror is kissed
And the small I's die. . .
In that region of no birds
One does not speak prettily of love.

and

To Young Philosophers

Seek not to read the smile
Upon the waters' face. . .
Tread softly in that place;

Come not with wit nor guile;
The intellect's rude rape
Still lets what lives escape.

No web, no net, no wile
Will snare the gleaming wing:
Truth trapped, falls dead, a Thing. . . .

Be still a little while:
Reflect; be windless pool;
Be empty: very fool.

Reflect that Smile.

The first poem tells of that region of each of us where, somehow, no person can come. The second is typical of Elsa's wise reflection upon the nature of loving (living). How often has it been observed that the nature of Lesbian love is that of reflection, of the delight of sameness, of reflecting "that Smile", of quiet knowing, of being still with each other. And there is, with the pain of being in the region of no birds, the knowledge between women that in that deepness is our psychic linking, sometimes too terrifying to face, and yet too marvelous—for there is where we "know" each other.

There is a special glory in Elsa's poetry, a thrill which runs through her poems and dramas, the glory of living fully, freely, sure of herself, as sure in the pain as in the joy. Her poetry is a collection of affirmations of her self, and of other

women, and a process of growth into wisdom. Elsa's wisdom tells her, and those of us who have found her works, that there are specialnesses in life which distinguish the mundane from the wondrous—and the wonders appear through her poetry reflected from her life-long love affair with women and herself. Through her poetry, she has touched the very depth and height of woman-loving-woman, of a woman's learning to express herself fearlessly, and to live in complete harmony with the principle of creativity. The sheer volume of Elsa's work—the work of her pen, the works of her life as an independent and free woman—shows, to me anyway, that whatever women seek to achieve for themselves and for other women will happen, as long as we remain open to each other, and reflect the Smile.

You say I am mysterious.
Let me explain myself:
in a land of oranges
I am faithful to apples.

(Makings for Meditation)

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Copies of *Moods of Eros* and *Makings for Meditation* are available in limited numbers from:

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CAROL GROSBERG ON LESBIAN THEATER

An Interview
by Karla Jay

I met Carol Grosberg about five years ago. I first remember her as a dynamic force behind *Rat* magazine, on which we both worked after the women had seized it. Carol's real love, however, was not the magazine, although she worked hard and long on it, but the theater; and almost before I knew it, she had recruited me into doing feminist guerrilla theater. My career as a feminist actress was short-lived, unfortunately, as you will hear in the interview, but Carol went on to form other groups, and most recently she was one of the three members of the Womanspace Theater Workshop which produced, wrote, and performed the play *Cycles*. I and apparently the rest of the all-woman audience thought the play was marvelous. (My review of the play appeared in *Win* magazine recently.) Aside from the beauty and craft of *Cycles* itself, the play awakened in me visions of a feminist culture, in which the theater will have a large part. Therefore, I invited Carol to drop over to my apartment to rap about herself and about the theater, and I'm now inviting you to eavesdrop on our conversation, which I recorded with her permission.

Karla: What happened on your way to Lesbian theater?

Carol: I don't have any kind of background in theater. I think I was brought up like a lot of middle-class people in not having any kind of understanding of the arts. No one in the family was artistic, and I felt the theater was rather frivolous. Kids could paint and dance until they got old enough to do things that were more serious and worthwhile, and then they stopped.

And although I was always very interested in theater, I maintained that sort of feeling until I saw the Bread and Puppet Theater up at the Putney School with Peter Schumann (its director), and I was transported by it. They did a totem-dance (a death dance with Peter first had done on the streets in Germany) and from then on, it was completely magical. And then the next summer I saw them on the streets here, and I realized that politics and art could go together, and so then it was all right to do something which was considered closer to the field of art. I remember that first year too, after I had managed to help Peter sell some of his block prints, he asked me in his indirect way if I knew any people who might like to work with the Bread and Puppet Theater, and I thought and thought and thought, and I couldn't think of anyone who I thought was extraordinary and talented enough to work with them. As I realized later, that was his very indirect way of inviting me to do it, but it seemed like the furthest thing in the world from anything I could do. So I became involved with them off and on for eight or nine years and eventually I went to Europe with them for eight months.

While I was in Europe, I became very close to a British woman who was a very militant feminist, and she traveled with us for a while. Then I decided to get involved with the Women's Movement when I came back to this country, and I wanted to do women's theater, although I wasn't quite sure what that meant.. But I knew that I wanted to do theater with women, and I think it was in that Fall that the Burning City Women did a women's play, which was probably one of the first women's plays which was presented: It was episodes from their own lives. So that year, several women who were working on *Rat* got together for several sessions and didn't know what we were doing and didn't quite believe we should be doing it anyhow. And one of them broke her rib and went off to California (we won't mention names, but her initials were KJ), and I tried several times after that to start a women's theater group. A group Jeriann Hilderley formed from Burning City Theater called themselves Painted Women Theater and stayed together for about a year and managed to put together one play which we performed.

And then I ran into a Native American woman whom I had known from the Open Theater—I was close to several of the people in the Open Theater. I saw her in the street one day, and she said: "Do you know anyone who's doing women's theater?" And as I said in our play (*Cycles*), I said to her: "Can you imagine women's theater with Third-World and white women?" (Laughter) And that was the beginning of a collaboration between the three of us—Laura, who had been active in Weathermen and who came out of a Left background, and Muriel, who had very strong connections with both her family and Native American culture and who was managing to do the extraordinary thing of being a professional in the theater world without giving up in any way her claim and her attachment to her own culture.

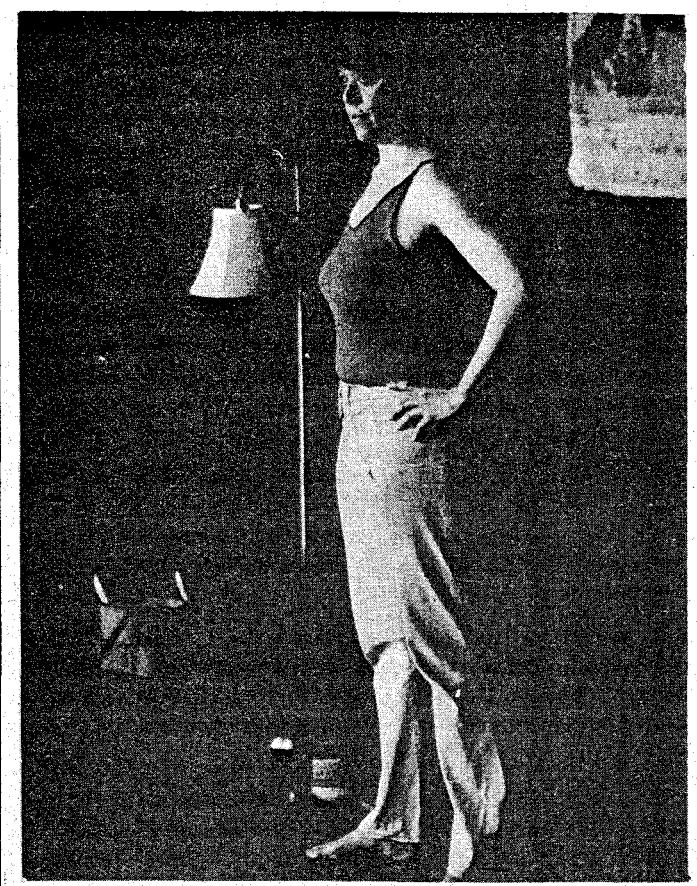
So we worked for a year together and didn't quite know what we were doing. Then Laura said that she had to leave soon, so we put together a piece before she left and we decided it would be about the first eight months we were together—juxtaposing things from our own lives (scenes of how we came to be who we are) with the development of our relationship with each other (how when one meets new people, one has fantasies about each other, and about how the others see us—beginning there, and breaking down the distance, that separateness, to a place where we felt a great attachment to each other and what the breaking down of those barriers means).

That's what *Cycles* was about.

We were very surprised how much it seemed to mean to women and how well it was received, and people thought that it must have been so difficult to put together. It was so intricate; it seemed to combine (which we felt it did too) a kind of standard of theater and art together with a very strong personal and political statement. And it was difficult to say to people: "No, you know it wasn't that we took months and months and months working out the intricacies of this." It was because we were working in a very organic way with the materials of our lives. It was a completely intuitive piece. It wasn't worked out—we went over parts and knew when things didn't feel right and we would take out things or rearrange things, but it wasn't a meticulous going over of each part that people thought it would have to be to create a work that finished.

Karla: The real struggle went on before you actually got to the piece.

Carol: That's right. The best material came from things that happened outside the workshop—misunderstandings that we had because of cultural differences, because of the places we each came from, the way we perceived each other from our own cultural differences, because of the places we each came from, the way we perceived each other from our own backgrounds, and beginning to talk those things through. I think that I would like any theater I do after this to be a little less literal, and more impressionistic. I'd like there to be more movement, more music and less verbal story-telling. I think there is a way in which the nonliteral can go deeper because you don't have those cerebral defenses set up.



Carol Grosberg / Photograph by Rose Jordon
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Karla: Are you aiming at what Antonin Artaud was talking about—theater as a complete experience? [I hate to quote a man!]

Carol: Oh, absolutely, in fact, one of the things we have to do is take valid experience from wherever we can find it, and then shape it as our own. I think that the greatest male artists were androgynous: in order to create great art a man has to have a very large element of feminine sensibility or feminine spirit, and I think it would be a terrible waste for us to think that we have to start all over again. I mean that there are men who have important things to say. We have to have enough confidence to take what's valid and throw away what isn't. I think that's the fear that a lot of women have—that we won't know how to separate out what's valid and what's shit, so the tendency is to say that it's all shit.

Karla: What kind of theater are you working on now?

Carol: Well, I want to do Lesbian theater—woman-identified theater. I think the latter term makes more sense.

Karla: There's really no good term for us. You moved from male theater to feminist theater and now to Lesbian theater. Is this shift a natural development of your lifestyle or were there some difficulties in working with straight women? Obviously, you're making a division.

Carol: I mean it's hard to tell. I do feel that there were some difficulties, although I wouldn't have traded the few years I worked with Muriel and Laura for anything. I can't say that if I had at all known, I would have worked with Lesbians. That was terribly important, and I feel a tremendous attachment to both women, and I always will. We were very honest in a lot of the things that we explored. But there was a lot of barriers, and I think that if you want to go very deep into an exploration, there's a very big difference between women who are male-identified and women who are women-identified, and that it gets in the way of so many different things. One of the obvious examples I can use is when we went to Purchase College, and they had really fucked us over there. I was really angry at the way they had fucked us over, whereas the other two women felt that it was over with and let's just do the best we can. For me, it was as important in a way to make those people see what they had done, and why they had done it, as to do the play. And for the other two women, that was a disruption—I was being confrontational again and it was rather tiresome for them. But for me, their refusal to be confrontational almost made me feel like the monster. I guess there's a lot of straight feminists who are confrontational, so I don't know exactly where those things divide up. I think the material we explore is where it's going to show up.

Now I want to work with women who have a sense of their own strength and their own value as women, who understand something of how we've been formed by a male culture, the ways we've reacted to it, and the ways we've been destroyed by it. We need to begin searching for a way not only of rebellion but of alternatives—how do we become stronger as women-identified women in a society that in every aspect tries to destroy any kind of independence or any kind of deviation from the norm?

Karla: And you're trying to express these politics in theater form?

Carol: Yes, and it's interesting. Yesterday I was driving a taxi (I'm a cab driver), and I happened to drive a customer, who was a male painter, out to the airport. And we got into this whole discussion about art and politics. And he said, "Well, if you have a direct political intention,you can't create good art." And I think that that's been true to a large extent, but that's because art's been defined as a male art within a whole masculine culture.

Karla: Then what you're saying is that a political/cultural split is a male trip; it's a false dichotomy.

Carol: That's exactly what I'm saying, Karla. (Laughter) I really believe that with all my heart. The deeper we can go into our private souls, the more universal will be the message or the communication that comes out of it. You take the simplest, most everyday kind of problem, which every woman has. For example, we were talking, before you turned the tape on, about paranoia. Paranoia pervades women's lives. I've just discovered it in my own life and in talking about it with other women. If we were to explore this sort of private hell of continual distrust and apprehension, I would find that my perceptions of it are something that are shared by most women. And maybe in beginning to explore it theatrically and nonverbally with music and dance, we would be able to exorcise some of the hold that that kind of paranoid way of looking at the world has.

Now you said before that a lot of the paranoia is justified, and I think that's true, but I think some of it isn't. For example, if I had a lot of conflicts about loving someone, some of those conflicts would come out as negative towards that person. If that person were paranoid, she could see it as a kind of malevolence towards her. In fact, it was really an expression of my own conflict about loving.

Karla: How are you going to get these feelings into theater? Will your new theater also be "organically grown"?

Carol: Oh, absolutely. I can't imagine working any other way.

Karla: And will it also be multi-dimensional—music, songs, and everything?

Carol: I think so. The group I'm going to be working with has a lot of feeling about music and movement. I certainly want to work with them myself.

Karla: What are some of the technical problems you have doing women's theater? Is it difficult to get a place? Would you rather work on a regular stage or do you just need an area?

Carol: I don't know wheather you'd call it a technical problem or not, but I think the most difficult problem comes back again to our contact with other women. Let me give you an example from *Cycles.* When we would go some place to perform, we simply were not taken seriously as a professional group, not only by the theater departments, but by the feminists themselves on the campus. I mean it's something we're all familiar with: we're angry and rebelling against the Man and at the same time we've bought some of the beliefs that the Man has about ourselves. So consequently women don't know how to get money from the campuses, and they don't really demand the same kind of standards from their own cultural groups. I mean they want good theater or music, but they often express contempt for any kind of thing which we'd call "professional". The anti-professionalism is really valid because professionalism in the old terms means *male* professionalism, but in a lot of places we haven't found an alternative and it's the old proverbial throwing out the baby with the bathwater. That sort of thing.

Or they want things for almost nothing. I think that's one of the really difficult questions within the Movement. How do we support our own culture? It's true that there's not much money within the community. Yet, our culture's going to flourish. Unfortunately, we live in a culture where money is needed. That's a big question: What kind of financial demands does a revolutionary Lesbian/feminist group ask of its audience?

Karla: Why do you think that now, in an era when Lesbian political groups seem to be floundering, our culture is flourishing so much?

Carol: Well, I think the first part of the Women's Movement was absolutely essential. But the beginning of things has a certain rhythm and euphoria of that discovery, and once that period is over, people find out that there's an awful lot of shit to deal with, and find, for example, that the fantasy of sisterhood is somewhat more complex and difficult that simply saying: "I love all my sisters." Working together, we're the children of 5000 years of competitiveness and distrust, and with two years in the Women's Movement that doesn't all fall away. And there was a kind of naive expectation the first two years that it would all go away, and it didn't, and I don't consider this a retreat at all but rather another step, this breaking down into small groups working with people whom you can trust and whom you know. I think an art begins to develop as a culture develops.

One thing I haven't talked about theater is how closely it is connected with the arts women are developing. It's really a sacred art and movement—it touches on the deepest and most universal experiences, and there's a way in which we're finding our way back to the origins of art which lie in a sort of religious expression.

Karla: Are you talking about rites of passage and so forth?

Carol: Yes. In a way, the political theater that is being done in the Women's Movement has brought a political purposefulness together with a creative, intuitive source for that political expression, and what's happening now is that theater is becoming a sort of exorcism—a recognition through participation in that theater. More and more the barriers won't be there, and the audience will participate.

And it does have to do with exploring our sickness and understanding it and exorcising it and finding new forms and in a kind of intuitive way of discovering them. The origins of myths is in ritual. The myth which was spoken was correlative of the rite which was acted out. It was only later that the myth became an explanation of the rite and it was completely separated, and that's supposedly the source of all literature and poetry. We're sort of coming back to that. It's not a going backwards, but it's a finding of those deepest places and finding them for ourselves in the context of Western society, of women in 1974 in a highly technological country, trying to find how to use that and not be destroyed by it.

It's important to see that we do have roots and a past. We can't survive if we live in that past. We have to find a way of bringing from that past what is relevant to us and combining it with our present experience. And that will be the new thing for our kind of place, and that's what our theater is about.

YESTERDAY'S LESSONS

by Janet Sergi

Sharon Isabell, *Yesterday's Lessons.* The Woman's Press Collective (5251 Broadway, Oakland, CA 94618) $2.50.

Taking my own advice, I read *Yesterday's Lessons* by Sharon Isabell. It is a novel written in the rhythm of the working class. A brilliant class analysis threads throughout the work using pithy dialoque and an utterly honest first-person narrator.

Sharon is a working-class dyke with hope in the face of many terrors, a brutal father, a poverty-stricken childhood and many false friends. Yet she has a burning desire to write and an innate love of woman, children, animals and old people. This novel is exciting because it is the beginnings of the new womansnovel: where form and content blend harmoniously into a new womanvision. The book reads like the private scribblings we all do for ourselves in our notebooks and diaries. Sharon tells us (herself) of her desire to write in the face of social ridicule:

"I showed my book to my English teacher. She said, I sure made a lot of grammar mistakes. . . I was going to keep on writing even if everyone thought I was crazy."

In this womansnovel a common scene becomes the testing grounds for bourgeois snobbing. A working class bar is created in the mind's eye by the subtle and skillful use of white lower class dialect. The dialoque is straight out of daily life, yet when endowed with a womansrevolutionaryconsciousness and poetic insight, it changes the ordinary into the extraordinary.

Insult becomes solidarity.

I used to go to this bar and sit. It was dimly lit and the people that went in there seemed to be singing this sad song together. It was a straight bar but I felt at home there. This one night everyone sat talking about their jobs and at that moment I found out another thing we all had in common.

"I work in a garage and people call me a grease monkey."
"I'm a bar maid and people think I'm a slut."
"I'm a truck driver and people think I'm crude."
"I work in construction and people think I'm tuff."
"I'm a Navy wife and people think I run around with other men."
"I'm on welfare and people think I'm lazy."
My mom told me that everyone has something something that someone can say something about.

True revolutionary art explains how theory and practice become one in the daily life of a new woman. Sharon's life flows in the wholeness of a womansworld. Her life is in touch with her womansoul and that soul speaks to the great social questions of our age.

"There was a cute little old lady that lived in the house behind us and even though Jan offered her a can of beer one night when we were having a party, she became our grandma. She was all alone and her family didn't come to see her very often. She was very lonesome and so we adopted her."

The new womansheroine is not of the male tradition—heroic in size or strength or ability. She is a fairly good ball player, with many bad days, very shy, has much rotten luck, doesn't have much self-confidence, but does have much love, courage and compassion.

Unlike male heroes of this century, the century of the ugly, Sharon hates ugly sights and outright questions why things are the way they are. She is active, not detached or cynical. She questions the ugly reality of her father's insanity and knows from the depth of her womansoul this is *not* the way things must be. But the way things are under the Great Male Systems of Capitalism, Imperialism, Sexism and Racism, symbolically presented as psychology.

"Dad was not very rational and my mom was really worried that the shock treatments wouldn't help him. We went to talk to the psychiatrist and I began to lose faith in psychology. The psychiatrist didn't ask anything about my dad's background or anything about him personally. It seemed like they didn't consider my dad a person but just a case to be experimented on without any understanding or care about the human being. I couldn't understand how shock treatments alone could straighten out a confused mind that had taken years and deep seated roots to finally bring to the breaking point. This wasn't anything like I studied in high school, but the world isn't anything like they teach you either. They tell you things that end up to be empty dreams and at first you think it must must be you and finally you realize that it happens to others too.

Sharon has womanfaith in the world despite much evil and rotten luck. This is why the novel breaks new artistic grounds. Sharon is a real heroine and not an anti-hero.

"Nothing in this world makes any sense. Why do I keep seeing all these things happening around me? I wish I could yell at the top of my lungs STOP! STOP! Stop letting me see all these things. My mom told me I was soft and that I had to get some guts. She said you have to be strong in this world because this world is rotten. I fought all my life against believing that."

She is heroine because she acts as if there is truth, honesty, and love in this world. And in this very act of faith, the higher wholeness and beauty which is our womansheritage become fact. We are our own heroines.

(Reprinted, by permission of Janet Sergi, from Dec.-Jan. 1975 issue of *Big Mama Rag* (1724 Gaylord, Denver, CO 80206). $5/yr.; monthly) † † †

AMAZON QUARTERLY

by Elizabeth Diggs

Amazon Quarterly, Gina Covina and Laurel Galana, editors (Box 434, West Somerville, Mass. 02144) $4.00/one year subscription.

Last December, after a day of seminars and meetings at the MLA annual meeting, I was having dinner at a Chinese restaurant with four other women—feminists and teachers of literature like myself. During the conversation, one of us wondered out loud what periodicals we were in the habit of reading regularly. Two of us had stopped reading the *New York Review of Books,* no one read *PMLA,* two subscribed to *Aphra,* two

read *American Poetry Review,* we all looked at several scholarly journals with some regularity, but the only periodical that all five of us read every issue was *Amazon Quarterly.* Last semester, a student in my literature class borrowed several copies of AQ for a report on lesbian literature. She asked if she could keep them an extra week to show to a friend. A student from another class ran up to me as I was walking across campus, "Do you think I could borrow a copy of *Amazon Quarterly* if Sue is finished with it?" I brought in another issue for her, and it was returned a week later by a third student.

What is it about this journal that elicits such a response? (It is read—as eagerly as if it were contraband under a censored press—by lesbians and straight women, writers and critics, drop-outs and Ph.D.s.) To answer that question, I'll describe the kind of material AQ publishes, and attempt to define what makes it exciting and unique and, in my opinion, the richest and most subtle reflection of contemporary women's culture.

Amazon Quarterly was initiated in 1972 as a "lesbian-feminist arts journal." Although the focus has never been limited strictly to lesbian issues, there is an affirmation of female experience that comes, I think, from the love of women for women. In the Spring 1975 issue (Vol. 3 no. 2), the editors say that "with this issue. . . we would like to say good-bye to lesbianism as a focus for discussion or debate," and specifically predict that future material will be anything "from poetry to physics," and will explore "universal questions about how to live." In fact, this is a good description of what AQ has done and been from its inception. Gina and Laurel, the editors, along with dozens of established and unknown women writers and artists, have asked "universal questions about how to live," and have searched for answers with integrity and an unmistakable authenticity of voice. It is the authentic voice of the female spirit.

It is a voice of fierce energy:

I fill my pen with my womb's blood
(Jennie Orvino)

and yes, we will be dangerous
to ourselves
(Adrienne Rich)

But I am the one who is simmering
already, and my god, I just got up.
(Robin Morgan)

and the woman
the woman
the woman
with her
parts coming out
never stopped
even to
say yes,
but only
flew with
her words
with her words
with her words
with her parts
with her parts
coming
with her parts
coming
coming
coming
out.
(Susan Griffin)

Images of blood and danger rip through the myths of shame. Words that have been kept safe and silent come gushing forth in voices that can be harsh and disconcerting, voices that shout.

The voice can be impatient and insistent:

Go back to Minnesota and toast an English muffin,
drive a cab, eat in restaurants,
do the turkey trot;
dig for sand crabs with your babies,
kiss your mother, run for mayor.

You arrange it.
(Ellen Bass)

So I write this polemic I
call a poem, say "Write poems, women." I want to
read them. I have seen you watching, holding on and
watching, but
I see your lips moving. You have stories to tell, strong
stories:
I want to hear your minds as well as hold your hands.
(Honor Moore)

Honor Moore's injunction has been heard. The current issue of AQ calls for "a moratorium on poetry submissions" so that AQ can catch up on the backlog. Poems have been coming in at the rate of 500 a month! For a journal with a circulation of 2000, this may be some kind of record.

In the non-fiction section of the journal, called "Exploration," articles have examined the most basic issues of the human condition, examined them with a woman's consciousness and not in terms of male-articulated theories. Here the voice is serious, reflective, incisive. Laurel's article on "Radical Reproduction" is a fascinating review of research on controlling the sex of the child, artifical insemination, gynogenesis, parthenogenesis, and cloning. She explains the sexist bias of reproduction research: little interest in parthenogenesis (which produces only female children) but great interest and much grant money for the artificial womb (which would give men more control). The point of the article is that the research now in progress will give human beings unprecedented control over the future of the human race, a future that could make contemporary sexism seem benign. But the voice here is not polemical or even strident; it is informative and careful, providing a valuable summary of "the potential (for good and/or evil) which is developing in the scientific laboratories."

In a fascinating series of articles exploring the question of female culture (Is there a female culture? If so, what is it? If not, will there be one?) the voice of *Amazon Quarterly* becomes reckless, challenging, puzzled, unsure or daring. This voice is clearly unlike any woman's voice we have heard before, with diffidence and arrogance sometimes painfully juxtaposed. "I want to describe how men come to hate women, and how they took over the world," writes Gina (in "Rosy Rightbrain's Exorcism/Invocation", Vol 2 no. 4), interrupting the essay every few paragraphs to let us know how she feels about writing it—"I don't like the way I'm writing this. . . . I'm feeling better about the writing of this now. . ."

Gina's subject and tone in this essay are refreshing for anyone trying to weed out the sexist assumptions from that person's own garden to allow room for more productive growth. Even the interruptions are less a plea for indulgence than an explana-

tion of assumptions: "I want this article to include all of the process I go through in writing it—all the despair and ecstatic vision, the boredom blocking fears, the fears themselves and then the vision again behind the fears. . . . And the wise lean Amazon I am who can say 'This is how it was 5,000 years ago, I feel it in my blood and that is proof enough.' I know that if I include all the parts of me I will have included parts of all of us, and what I say will be true."

This desire to include "all of the process," to describe something whole and not cut into pieces, to be there with one's whole self, is the yearning of women who have lived half-lives, in the shadow of possibility, carefully restricted to the right books and clothes and language, of women who have reflected propriety in the smug male mirror. And now that "proper" persona is shunned, the mask is torn off, and only the whole woman will do—brain, cunt, intuition, feelings, flesh and all. The insistence on the whole self can be confusing; it is difficult to follow the development of a thought when the woman with the thought keeps reminding us of who she is, of where the thought came from, and where it might lead 5,000 words from now. We are used to following straight paths. But these stops and detours and round-abouts are actually quite familiar, just the way I myself proceed, in fact. So the impatience disappears and I begin to get the whole idea, and feel exhilarated.

The exhilaration comes partly from hearing affirmed 1) certain realities of culture that I know to be true although they were snickered out of "reputable" scholarship years ago—e.g. that matriarchy once flourished, and 2) certain assumptions that are basic to my understanding of reality—e.g. that the symbol is more powerful than the sword or the word. Adrienne Rich has said that "the power to describe the world is the ultimate power." The many voices of *Amazon Quarterly* describe a world within each of us that has not been spoken of before, and the power of that representation you can feel in your own heart. † † †

PAT PARKER TALKS ABOUT HER LIFE AND HER WORK

by Libby Woodwoman of **Big Mama Rag**

BMR: Will you tell us something of your background?

Pat Parker: My parents always encouraged me to get a good education, and they made sacrifices for me. That's what the dedication in *Child of Myself* is about: my father had wanted to be a farmer, but he gave up that idea so we could have the things he wanted for us. I had a pretty strict upbringing.

BMR: Were you ever married?

PP: Twice. My first husband convinced me I was a fuck-up—he was a writer too, and although I was writing prose at that time, his writing was always more important than mine. He criticized my prose, so I got to writing poetry instead. After that I decided to get rid of the husband, not the writing.

BMR: Are you a separatist (a woman who does not work socially or politically with men)?

PP: No, I could never be a separatist. Black and 3rd World men suffer some of the same oppressions I do. I don't have much energy for men, but they're in the world and I don't think it's realistic to pretend they're not. It's like racism—it's not the blacks' job to teach the whites about racism. It's not the women's job to teach the men about their sexism. Men have to do that themselves. But when they get it together, I'll talk to them, sure.

BMR: How do you see your involvement in the black community?

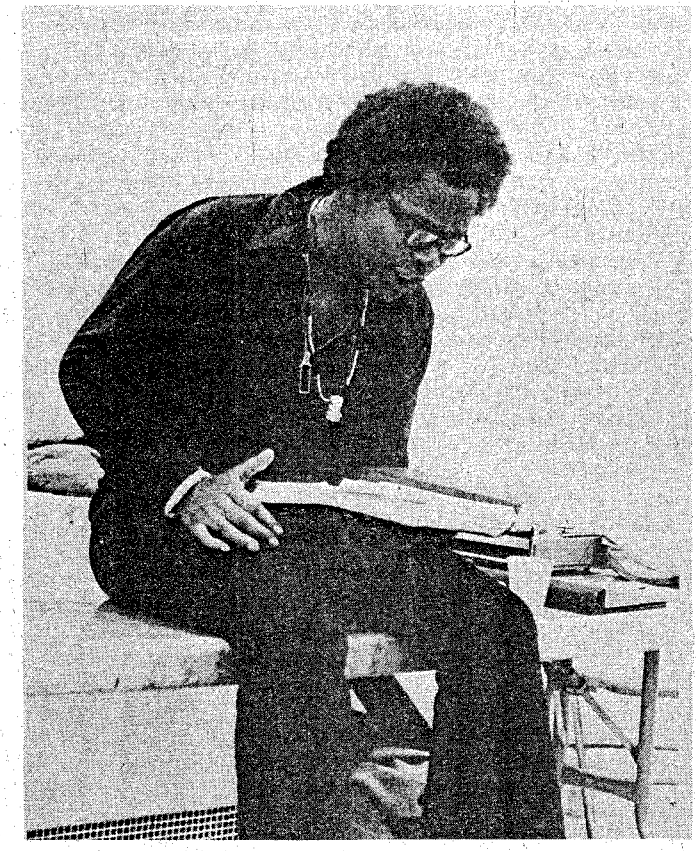
PP: I was involved in the Panther party in the 60's. Now we're doing a 3rd World women's group called Gente (pronounced Henta). In the late 60's we had a black woman's group that grew out of the Panther convention in D.C. You know, the official line was that the men were dealing with their sexism, but it doesn't work.

BMR: Do you see a conflict between your feminism and your commitment to the black power movement?

PP: There are political problems. A lot of folks say feminism is a divisive tactic in the black movement. I had doubts about that myself at one time.

BMR: Could you tell us more about Gente?

PP: We're a group of women trying to deal with racism as a feminist group. Gente grew out of the bar scene in San Francisco—we all get together and form basketball teams and play each other. The bars are run by white women, and they're just trying to make money. We formed our own 3rd World team, and then the shit hit the fan. Black people feel unwelcome in the bars—they don't cater to us, even the music on the jukeboxes is white music. When we come into a bar together, a group of black and 3rd World women, they



Pat Parker / Photograph by Paula Wallace

assume we're going to make trouble. So far we've been playing basketball and softball, but we're starting a theatre group too. We want to take the emphasis off sports. We've been together about a year now, 25 or 30 of us.

BMR: Could you tell us something about the development of your poetry?

PP: Well you know, first I wrote like they tried to teach me in school. You try to make it as obscure as possible. I think that's pretty crazy, but some people still try to do that. Then I got into writing love poems, but I was making them sound like they could be for a man. Finally I stopped trying to be so damned universal. I write out of where I'm at. Since I came out, most all of my poems deal with racism and me or sexism and me—and love poems for women.

BMR: Do you consider your poetry a vehicle for your politics?

PP: I write about what I feel. I don't hold back from saying what I think because of the audience. The way we publish a book (at the Women's Press Collective) is political. Not holding back is political. You live politics. I hadn't really thought of my poetry as political.

BMR: Will the Collective publish any woman's work?

PP: Some criterion is needed for what to print. Junk is junk. It's not fair to a woman to print her work if it's not good. Sometimes it's not time to print your stuff. It's not good to print something just because a woman wrote it. It's like going out too early and doing a reading. You can really get destroyed if people applaud when you're doing pure crap.

BMR: How do you deal with the question of standards?

PP: All standards seem to exist to obscure meaning. I just want to *say* what I mean. Poetry has been controlled by men for so long. They've set the standards, the criteria for what's a good poem. It's all a bunch of shit, academic wanderings. Children are still being taught that that's what they're supposed to write, and that makes me angry. It's a matter of where the control lies. There's so little poetry for us because look who sets the standards.

BMR: Has your writing changed now that you know you have an audience?

PP: Star tripping can really hurt you as a writer. But you can't help writing for an audience. That's what it's all about, communication.

BMR: Does the composition of the audience make a difference to you when you read?

PP: Yes, I feel different when it's all women. I get higher when I read to them. When there are men, I make assumptions that they're not going to like where I'm coming from. I try to blow them out of the room.

BMR: Why do people go to your readings?

PP: Because I'm advertised as lesbian poems, fuck poems, kill the whites poems. Sometimes I feel I'm not angry enough to be billed that way.

BMR: How do you respond to those labels?

PP: I guess I play with them more than anything. If I'm advertised as a black poet, I'll read dyke poems. When the audience is women, they're there just to hear the *poetry*. Sometimes when I'm reading with male poets, they'll try to get me to read first, so they can be the main show. I play their game, I know the game. I can be a very hard poet to follow on a program. I blow them right off the stage. They don't know it, but they help me do it, they make me so angry. I read best when I'm angry.

BMR: Are you planning to publish again soon?

PP: Yeah, I'll have another volume of poems out soon, *Womanslaughter*. The title poem's about my sister, who was killed by her husband. I'll be getting a novel to the press pretty soon, too.

BMR: You're working on a novel? Will you tell us something about it?

PP: Yeah, I can go back to prose now that my lover's a musician. . . it's going slow, though. I guess I'm lazy. It's a sort of autobiographical novel, with a few dreams and things thrown in. You can't write without a few fantasies, we sure need them.

BMR: Are there any poets who have particularly influenced you?

PP: Everything you read influences you. But you know, I worked on that poem, *Womanslaughter*, for three years; I couldn't do anything else until I got that one out. Then I read Judy Grahn's poem, *A Woman is Talking to Death*. I read it over and over. Then it hit me how to get *Womanslaughter* out. Judy's poetry is pure delight, it just goes on getting better and stronger, year after year.

That kind of communication with women poets gets me high. We need feedback from each other. Workshops are good for that. Be serious about what's happening. You're not there to receive applause or give it. Keep the shit honest. †††

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PART VI MORE VOICES, MORE VIEWS

LESBIAN PUBLISH LESBIANS: MY LIFE AND TIMES WITH VIOLET PRESS

by Fran Winant

I wrote many of my poems specifically for the open poetry readings that were considered important at the start of the women's movement. The knowledge that there was a place for my work to go, and an all-women's audience to listen to it, immediately made me able to write about my personal experiences and feelings as I never could before. Some of my poems talked about the past—perhaps grimly, but also joyfully, with a belief that lesbians would never again have to be martyrs to our isolation. Some of my poems looked to the kind of community we might create if we could be more open with each other and the society around us.

A woman I knew started a press to publish her own work and said she would publish other women if she ever found anything she liked, but she never did. When I realized that I would have to publish myself, I decided to start a press that would publish other women. I didn't really know how I was going to do this.

I drew the cover for my book, *Looking At Women,* myself, typed up the manuscript and took it to a woman I knew in the printing field. She helped me get it printed in pamphlet style with a stapled binding. She told me immediately that I was making a mistake in pricing the book at $ .50. But I wanted my book to be in the price range of every woman who wanted it. I didn't think of the high cost of postage, stationary, my labor—mailing books and doing publicity, which was, of course, unpaid, and which took many hours away from my writing. I didn't think about advertising costs because I naively thought the book could be sold through free mentions and reviews in women's and other movement newspapers and magazines. I expected movement publications to be enthusiastic about a book of poetry dealing with the movement, published by a woman active in the movement, and intended for a movement audience. In my work and the way I presented it, I was attempting to make a synthesis of art and politics. In the back of my book was an ad asking for women's poetry for an anthology. This was my way of offering others, as best I could, the same opportunity to be published that I was taking for myself.

I hadn't figured out how I was going to pay for the anthology out of the $ .50 price of *Looking At Women.* I hadn't yet learned to ask how much women who want to read Violet Press books or see a press like this continue are willing to contribute to its support. I had created another 'movement freebee', like many other women's 'alternative institutions', (food co-ops, women's schools and centers, groups putting on non-oppressive women's dances—groups in which I also freely gave my labor), who didn't know how to insist that their sisters pay enough to insure the group's survival.

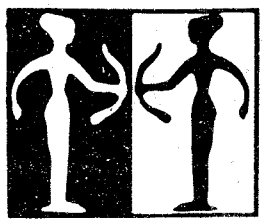
I sent out many free copies of the book. Some movement newspapers did mention it, but few reviewed it. Their review sections were always filled with long, eager discussions of whatever books about the movement were being put out by establishment publishers. When these papers did review non-establishment books, the reviewers seemed surprisingly interested in finding things to criticize. These reviewers, who ought to be making extra efforts to understand what their sisters were saying, seemed to make little effort at all. In one review, in which my book and another were discussed together, the reviewer said my poems were too long, the other woman's were too short; mine were too personal, hers were too general. This gave women reading the review little idea about what two lesbian poets *were* trying to say. Another review, though favorable, mentioned only that I talked about how it felt to grow up as a lesbian, as if *Looking At Women* was about my 'childhood', instead of my adult experiences living with another woman and being in the gay and women's movements.

Most movement papers that mentioned Violet Press at all did so once or twice and never again. By writing to bookstores and women's centers, I managed to get some orders. Violet Press joined COSMEP, sent leaflets to the stores on their list, sent books on consignment, and most often was never paid. My first objective was to distribute to women's groups and I was particularly hurt when women didn't pay for the books. One woman asked for 500 books for a conference. I sent her 50. She sold 6 and I was never able to get back the rest, despite the fact that I have been corresponding with her about this now for 2 years! When I tried to personally sell my book at women's get-togethers that I would have gone to anyway, I was treated as a peddler, out to get other women's money. One woman asked me if I was living on the money I made from the books. Few women were enthusiastic about the fact that I had gone to so much trouble to publish my poetry and start a press. Even the $ .50 price was too high for them. They weren't curious about what a sister had written.

One other woman, Judy Grepperd, worked with me, and a third woman, Dana, joined us to read and select the poems for the anthology. We discussed what the poems had to say personally and politically, and how they said it. It was amazing how long it took. We assembled a group of lesbian artists and asked them to illustrate the book. When the manuscript was finished it contained the work of about 35 women from across the country. The poets were the women who had read at the open poetry readings the movement once considered important. The strength of their feelings was what made their work poetry. The book was titled, *We Are Are All Lesbians.* Some of the artists who contributed to the book worked for weeks laying it out.

My friend in the printing business was tired of freebees herself; and when we got our bill, the printing costs were staggering. in the process, we got neither the ink not the paper we expected. We raised the price of *Looking At Women* to $1, and priced the anthology at $2. It was the only way we could hope to make back our costs and have money for future books. I began to get nervous about money. At last, I started asking myself: 'how much do women want women's literature, anyway?'; 'how much do lesbians want lesbian literature?'. I'm still asking myself these questions.

We sent out review copies of the anthology but, predictably, got few reviews from women's (or other 'alternate') media. One reviewer who liked the book concentrated on one poem which reminded her of an experience she'd had, told about her own experience, and recommended the book. Another



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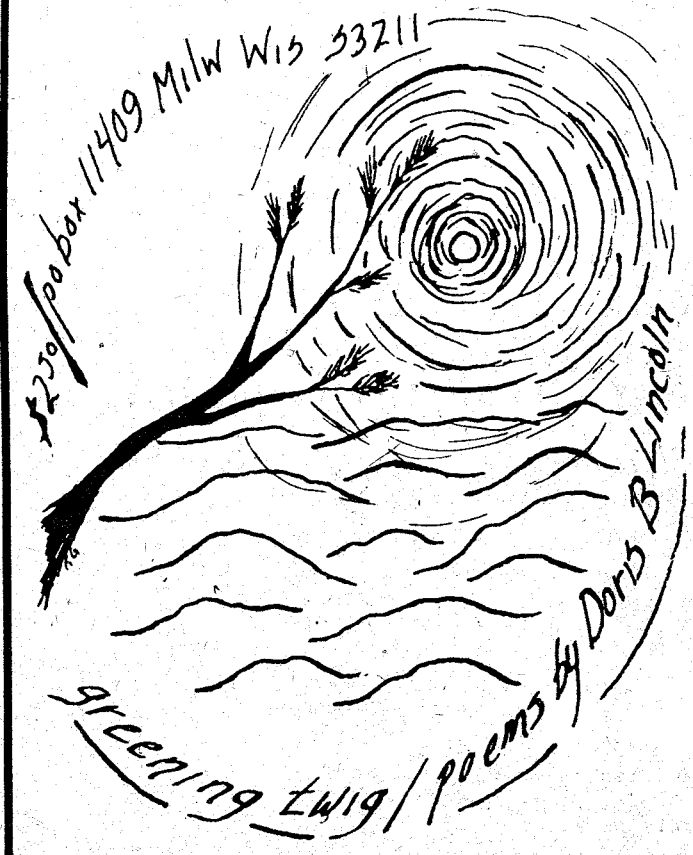

reviewer said that some of the poems were good, some bad, and complained that the book's format was 'unprofessional'. Why did we have a staple-bound book instead of paying several hundred extra dollars to have it square bound? Why did we have a book that was typed by the editors instead of our paying an extra hundred dollars to have it typeset? I wondered why this reviewer didn't 'intuitively' understand that we had done the best we could with the resources (and experience) we had, and that the alternative would have been to publish no book at all? How had so many women's energy and hard work vanished into the book itself and become meaningless, invisible? Would having spent an extra $500 ($500 we didn't have) have made this a better book, deserving of a better review?

As if to make clear to me the way movement women's values were changing, (or the way women had held certain values all along that I refused to recognize), the following incident happened. A lesbian group was presenting a "writers' panel," and I was asked to be on it. As both a lesbian writer and publisher I thought I had a lot to say. One of the women planning it, a friend of mine, told me I couldn't be on it because I was not a lesbian writer–I had not been published by an establishment press. I was only 'a small press person'. But if I liked, I could have my own 'Violet Press panel' at a later date, where I could speak about Violet Press in splendid isolation for an entire afternoon.

Instead, we decided to organize a 'small press panel', so that other women's presses besides ours would have a chance to speak. We called our panel, *Lesbian Publish Lesbians.* We worked endlessly, sending letters and questionnaires to other presse, phoning them long distance, printing and distributing leaflets for the panel. We also created a color slide show and script giving a retrospective of lesbian self-publishing, from the days when Toklas published Stein to the present–the newspapers, magazines and books of today. Women from Violet Press, Cowrie Magazine, Desperate Living, and Lavender Woman participated in the discussion. The question asked most frequently by women in the audience was, 'how can I get *my* work published?'

The irony of the original writers' panel from which I was excluded was that the writers who were allowed to speak talked about the importance of lesbian small presses. They expressed the hope that they would never have to publish through the establishment again! (But the irony of *this* is that they don't *have* to do it again–once is enough to establish their legitimacy as writers in their sisters' eyes).

The reviews our books received in Margins, (no. 12, 13), a magazine supposedly concerned with alternate literature, typify the struggle that is ahead of us as we attempt to communicate with a wider audience. Angela Peckenpaugh's reviews were incredibly insensitive, almost malicious.

Peckenpaugh likes my poetry for its 'complete honesty' but goes on to imply that I said things I never said, often the complete opposite of what I was saying. She describes me as, "Wondering if she is goddess-like, sane" –as if I am describing myself as a goddess–that image apparently inspired by these lines from the poem "Looking At Women":

I understand how long
each of us was locked up with herself
how each self became goddesslike
in dreams
compared to our real powerlessness

She further describes me as "Looking for leaders"–as if I am waiting for a new Joan of Arc or female Feuer–that image ap-

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parently inspired by the lines:

I am told
there are no leaders
our strength is in numbers
But I dont feel in control of my life
I see leaders everywhere

She then describes me as, "Ambiguous because she must be ambiguous. 'Her kind' are not yet accepted." What am I ambiguous about? And I certainly never used the expression, "my kind", as Peckenpaugh suggests by putting it in quotes; I find it offensive, a phrase off the covers of commercial gay novels. She says I make her feel my emotion, then states, "The irony is that as I read it, and connect with her center, she is no longer alone"—as if I said I feel alone or want to be alone, when the whole book is about how sisterhood has saved me from isolation. I was particularly disturbed by the way my description of lesbians hiding behind lesbian stereotypes reinforced the stereotypes in Peckenpaugh's own mind. She says about my poem, "Happy New Year", "She wonders if lesbians will ever get to mature in time, to be accepted [the comma is hers, placed at an ambiguous spot in this sentence] or if they must remain like Peter Pan, never grown up because society never grows up"—as if I have said lesbians are immature, for whatever reasons. That description comes from the following lines, which I find it hard to imagine as a statement of what I think lesbians are:

I am not a lesbian
Im just a young girl. . .
Im experimenting
I have a lot of girlfriends. . .
and I have a roommate
like a young girl a college girl
a working girl
Im Peter Pan
I'll never grow up

She says about my poem, "Christopher St. Liberation Day", "It is full of lesbian affirmation *but* succeeds as art" [italics mine]—as if lesbian affirmation and art were contradictory. And I think that is truly what she believes.

In her review of *We Are All Lesbians*, she begins by describing the book as, "generally celebration, almost like a religious movement with testimony by converts. . . the illustrations are almost all line drawings of women." In fact, the book contains 23 illustrations, 10 of women, including a woman riding a horse and a woman doing judo roll-outs. A partial list of other illustrations would go like this: (cover) a refrigerator with notes pasted on it and a flag with intertwined women's symbols behind it; (title page) hands clasped in solidarity; abstract form; window with plants; plubing pipes; pack of cigarettes; Fifth St. Women's Bldg.; flowers, etc.

Peckenpaugh goes on to question the book's dedication to Emily Dickinson. "To my knowledge, Dickinson was not gay"—Peckenpaugh doesn't like the idea of *other people* implying things that might not be true. For more information, she could read *The Riddle of Emily Dickinson*, by Rebecca Patterson, a powerful piece of scholarship, written over 20 years ago by a self-professed heterosexual. For a summary and discussion of the book, she could read the article on Dickinson in *Women Remembered*, (Diana Press).

She further comments on our attempt to create a lesbian literature: "I hope that this stage of awareness passes quickly because ultimately the matter of lesbianism will not matter except to historians and sociologists." The fact *is* that the matter of lesbianism matters *now*. There are those of us who can think of positive ways in which we hope it will continue to matter.

I'm sure Peckenpaugh will find women creating the literature she wants to read—published by the establishment. But for many of us, it is vitally important that we go on writing and publishing as we do. The alternative would not be a different literary style—it would be silence.

Violet Press is grateful for the support we have received from some women—the women's bookstores that are eager to carry our books, the publications that have given us exchange subscriptions, the individual women who have written to thank us for our work. We expected more support and even expected to be praised sometimes—when it turned out we were totally neglected.

I have asked myself many times to give up working on Violet Press, because it puts me in a position of being constantly in need of money and support, an unrealistic position to be in in the women's movement today. When I started Violet Press I hoped we would be one of many lesbian feminist presses. This hasn't been the case—I can certainly see why. A good listing of women's presses can be found in *The New Woman's Survival Catalog*, by K. Grimstad and S. Rennie, available at book stores. All letters to presses should be accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope. Women who want to see their work published should consider publishing themselves, (but not starting a press!) or creating publishing co-ops such as Alice James Press, 138 Mt. Auburn St., Cambr., MA. 02138, where writers bear the cost and labor of publishing their own books. For copyright info write for Circular no. 1, Copyright Office, Washington, DC. For cheapest printing info write The Print Center, PO Box 1050, Bklyn., NY 11202. If you can pay for a square binding you can probably get your feminist book distributed by Women In Distribution, PO Box 8858, Washington, DC 20003. If you want to advertise but don't like filling orders you can send them along to a feminist mail order group, First Things First, c/o Susan Sojourner, P.O. Box 9041, Washington, DC 20003. With this system, you can publish yourself and be almost as free from work as the author who only has to write.

Violet Press will publish 3 books this year. They will be square-bound, will cost $2.50 or $3 each, and will be advertised in the classified section of Ms. magazine. Our costs are high, so the price of the books will reflect that. I hope women will support us by buying and reading our work. You can write to us at Violet Press, PO Box 398, NYC 10009. (Violet Press books are *Looking At Women*, $1, and *We Are All Lesbians*, $2.) † † †

THE LESBIAN FEMINIST AS WRITER AS LESBIAN FEMINIST

by Adrienne Parks

The idea for this essay was suggested to me by Beth Hodges. Because I had been thinking about lesbian feminist aesthetics for a long time, I wanted to do an article out of my own need and the need of other lesbian feminist writers to have a better understanding of our art—where it has been and where it is now. The follow-up to this should be something we will all think about—where we are going to take our art.

The where we've been part of this article is necessarily brief. One couldn't possibly touch on everything. Where we are attempts to help us see our writing for the social/political phenomenon it is.

Any form of communication has a social and political basis, some more so than others. In the past. . . but let me first acquaint you with an herstoric fairy summing-up:

Once upon a time
and in the beginning
there was form
and there was content
and everything was traditional
and dull and boring until
the heterosexual writers said
"It is time for change" (political),
and they wrote about new concerns (social)
in the old form
or
they wrote about old concerns (social)
in a new form
and everyone applauded
and emulated
and they were studied
in the colleges
and everyone applauded
and emulated.

Heterosexual males
and those women who defined themselves
in terms of men
and the heterosexual male institutions,
universities, asylums, publishing conglomerates,
held power in their pens (*penis*)
for they were the only ones
allowed to write
and what they wrote served
to maintain their positions
and they polished their power-retaining skills
so that others could no longer define them
as blatent Hitlerists
but rather as degreed academicians and
professors with tenure and editors-in-chief and
literary guild masters and WASPS.

And so it came to pass that
the power-mongers grew fat and overly confident
and decided to let some of those
not in power
experience the bliss/of writing.

So the culturally poor were allowed
our of their chains
for two hours a day
if they agreed to write
the stories power-mongers loved
and they agreed
for they had to
or go back to their chains.

Those who followed the initial agreers,
disagreed.

They called themselves
lesbian feminists
and developed a culture
ourside the walls
of the power-mongers' camp.

Then. . . .

They rejected the power-mongers and
then
they rejected the imposition (political)
of traditional form and content (political) and
then
they developed new content (social)
to call their own
explored new formlessness
left after rejecting the old form (social)
to call their own
explored new formlessness
left after rejecting the old form (social)
found it creatively viable (political)
an alternative (political)
that needed to be (political)
further explored (social).

It seems to me that academe still regards women who write with a somewhat jaundiced eye. And lesbian feminists who write must cope with a multiple oppression—not only are they women, but they are lesbians and, my Mary, they are feminists.

The implications of this oppression are overwhelming. So in an attempt to put some order to my own views about academe and lesbian feminist writers, myself included, I would like to offer a few observations which might help us all to grow toward a new perspective from which to view the writings of lesbian feminists.

In the past, writers like Virginia Woolf or George Eliot subscribed to a given form. They were, in effect, handed the form for a novel. From there they tackled the huge task of trying to fit their thoughts, feelings and observations into this given form.

Did it work? For George Eliot and the Brontes, I suppose it did. But what about Virginia Woolf? And Gertrude Stein? And the more-contemporary writers like—well, if I said their names you wouldn't know them anyway so I see no point. It seems to me that if one experiments with form or the socially-approved content for "a novel" or "a poem" one faces all kinds of academic disapproval. The *straight* publishing world offers similiar disapproval.

But who cares? The lesbian feminists I know have written with disregard for "social approval" or "straight academic acceptance." Writers like Judy Grahn, Lee Lally, Rita Mae Brown and playwrights like Megan Terry and all those article, short story, and poem contributors in the hundreds of feminist publications have little or no regard for *The Sewanee Review*, and like institutions.

Interestingly enough, this disregard is born of exposure to, and experience with the given forms and institutions. Most lesbian feminist writers I know have suffered the stifling atmosphere of the university community as it existed in the 60's and 70's. Many dropped out of graduate school in total disbelief of the games academia plays—games like "This is a poem; that is not a poem," or "That is a good perception/observation/etc.: that is not." So lesbian feminist "disregard" is not due to ignorance of the given form, content, etc.

Could it be then that the mind which is forced to question the "system", as in the case of the oppressed minorities, is capable of going on to question the validity of the given forms and content of the system? The system, of course, is that power structure *erected* by males, predominantly heterosexual. We all know that there were many non-heterosexual males in on the system set-up; but we know too that their sexuality was of necessity toned-down. In fact, if we are still playing the game, we could pretend that Forster never wrote *Maurice.*

So I would like to suggest that lesbian feminist writers and writings flourish *because of their sexual orientation,* rather than in spite of it.

Next point:

When T.S. Eliot criticized Virginia Woolf, saying that her feminism got in the way of her art, he should have been corrected; "art" stood in the way of her feminism. But it was not *her* art which caused the great difficulty, rather it was *their* art—the power structure's—which she naively believed in, copiously schooled herself in, and sought to use as a base for her own creativity. *The Voyage Out,* her first novel, was more a voyage in, into the given forms and structures recommended by the powers-that-were. It did not take her woman-self long to realize the inanity of trying to impose her perceptions, woman's perceptions, on a foreign *form.* Thus, she experimented with what was branded "experimental" and "feminist". She dared to suggest in her "feminist" writings concepts which the power-mongers could not understand. It drove her crazy. The overwhelming realization that things are not as they seem, that there are alternatives to the *given* drove her to struggle with the concept of woman's place in a male world. *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* are excellent examples of this struggle. *Jacob's Room,* written before either of the two *feminist tracts*, was a transition piece between her acceptance of the given form and her rejection of it. It was also indicative of the enormity of the struggle necessary to deal with the power-mongers' given. One may speculate that had Woolf been able to reject the *given* totally, she would not have suffered and ultimately taken her life.

Today's lf's are carrying on the work of our foremothers. Similiarly, they are concerned with women's perceptions derived from women's experiences.

Lesbian feminist writing tends to be viewed by all concerned as being quite different both in form and content from the traditionally acceptable poetry and prose; and it is. Lesbian feminist writers are different from their heterosexual counterparts. However the differences are not based on the fact of dissimilar sexual orientation, rather they exist because of the dichotomy between the experiences particular to the orientations.

Contemporary lesbian feminist writers are not in hiding. Most refuse to be co-opted. As I see it, academicians and "critics" of lesbian feminist writing must certainly sense their own prostitution of values in playing the system's game. Sensing this sell-out, they scoff to their colleagues, and in their little journals, and thereby reinforce their own "never thought out" games.

The following paragraph is a heavy-duty radical lesbian feminist interpretation of the system's oppression:

> The male power structure rejects lesbianism, obviously because *the* structure is based on maleness. The penis is the personification of maleness. In neutral, non-political times, this power structure is soft and vulnerable to psychological castration; during revolt, it becomes erect, alert to and defensive of its vulnerability. It is then that multiple- and gang rapes are perpetrated against any who propose a more equitable distribution of power. Pseudo-democracy becomes anarchy. One has to define the male power structure in terms of force and violence because that is its base.

Admittedly, there is an art to comprehending this interpretation. But then it is a learned art, a skill if you will, learned out of trying to work within the system.

Lesbian feminist (lf) writers have had only male forms to emulate in the past. Women had little to say in the creation or maintenance of these forms, so it is only fitting that lf writers explore alternative "forms". Lf's have discovered that there are better ways of expressing oneself than through male-established, -defined and -perpetuated forms.

Actually, the historic poetic forms which lf writers refuse to work with are, for the most part, forms which impose an arbitrary structure upon the content. The arbitrary schema is part of the overall masculine game and is given an impressive name like "iambic pentameter" to validate its existence. If one won't emulate, one isn't a writer: As the game goes, if a cultural change in form is called for, one imitates satirically perhaps, or one develops, to replace the old, a new masculine form which everyone is expected to follow until that too becomes dated and yet another form is called for. Clearly, imitating form for form's sake is close to ridiculous; however it might be used as an example of how not to be creative. Paying homage to those who *choose* to emulate the given form is absurd.

Lf's do not pay anything (also known as dues) to the system. After rejecting the given form, one is left with a formlessness. This is a state of being, a state in which formlessness itself is a kind of form. It is here that lf writers utilize their individuality to create in the new state of "formlessness".

The only sign of individuality in many traditional writings is seen through the author's style. However professors still encourage young writers not to develop a style too quickly—*master* that technique first. It is really all a literary/academic game which says, "Do it my way first because it is obviously the best game in town (here it is on the college level); if you still want to do it your way (if we haven't managed to brainwash you by then), you may go ahead. But realize that you will probably fail."

This is rape and murder of the creative spirit. For the most part, educational institutions which are operated *under* masculine power-monger rule, serve to thwart creativity, subverting it and re-directing the ravaged energies into computer programming and secondary education (thusly providing for more subverters who will in turn process even more young minds). The lost creativity is never missed (except by those who struggled against the processing), for who can miss what they were never allowed to develop, in effect, never had. By virtue of their very existence, lf's have refused to be processed. In other words, their individuality will show through. What then does a processed society make of those who have refused the game?

The sad part about college courses which deal with women's writings is that many courses on "Women in Literature" are

instructed by "non-women", or those women who define themselves in terms of the male system, or power structure, in order to get ahead. A women-in-literature course taught by a non-woman is more damaging to women's identity than no course at all. Women, or non-women, who define themselves in terms of the male power structure are comparable to the coed who wears her boyfriend's letter sweater. She hopes to be perceived as equal to he who competed for the letter. Instead the sweater disfigures the female body. She *is* equal to him but perceives herself as less than equal.

The system's non-women can be most vicious, perhaps *more* than males, when threatened by alternative (lf) forms and content. This is usually because, in aligning themselves with the system, they sold their woman-selves out, and they know it. This being made aware of prostitution destroys the non-woman fantasyland they have made for themselves and others like them. Justification for mistreatment of lf's, or just other women, is usually as simple as: "I made it; they can too."

It is important to note that most critics of minority writings are not members of minority groups, or, importantly, do not perceive themselves as such. Just as the black culture has its Uncle Toms, the lf's have their non-woman Aunt Janes. Critics *his*torically, represent that body of thinkers who convince themselves that they are capable of reviewing creative work on the basis of their own formalized education (a non-creative, ritualistic system of learning).

One need not be a woman to understand the woman's experience; but it helps. Likewise, one need not be black to understand the black experience or a lf to understand the lf one; but it does help. The critic who brings with him- or herself academic "*form*ula", sans basis for experience comparison, might just as well write nothing. And preferably should write nothing. The criticism becomes a vendetta against semi-colons and rhyme, or whatever basis there is for criticism as perceived by the perhaps well-intentioned critic.

Lf audiences tend to understand lf writings, song, art, etc., without any difficulty. Their expectations of what is being offered coincide both with what is actually offered and with what their own experience tells them is "true to" the lf experience. General women's audiences will have a greater potential to understand the lf experience because they are all women. However their expectations are still encumbered with past experiences with artificial forms and content (artificial in the sense that women are only just beginning to be truthful to the woman's experience.) Male readers or audiences will be just as lost trying to understand women's experience, and the resultant creativity, just as lost as women have been for the past several thousand years or so trying to understand the power-monger form game.

The aim of lf writing as I see it is to put women back in control of our culture. Gradually, the matriarchical society allowed itself to be co-opted by the system, and in doing so, lost its culture.

The first step for regaining women's culture has been taken, for the most part by lf's. They take their writing/creativity seriously (women who write from traditional forms and content-values without questioning them cannot be called serious). Lfs have learned that they must rethink the traditional male values previously foisted on women. Besides the rethinking, lfs are busy exploring herstory, creating woman myths where herstory is incomplete (because of traditional male suppression), developing self-confidence in perceiving and recording woman's experiences and, perhaps most significantly, are relearning (and are willing to relearn) concepts of truthfulness to, vulnerability to, and love and respect for, the woman's experience. † † †

THE COOK AND THE CARPENTER

by Joan Peters

The Carpenter, *The Cook and The Carpenter.* Daughters, Inc. (Plainfield, VT 05667), $3.00.

Of the Daughters, Inc. books, *The Cook and The Carpenter* by The Carpenter (June Arnold) is most clearly about relationships between women. Or, more accurately, the primacy of those relationships is Arnold's given. Her novel is one of the most sophisticated "political" novels to come out of the woman's movement, in that it explores the lives of women involved in political action. It follows the political action minutely—the decisions, discussions, interactions, boring meetings, and cliches of group dynamics ("should we as a group. . . be able to seek out our own growth"). Arnold describes the painful working out of the political and personal sides of her woman characters.

The Texas woman's collective Arnold describes has a life of its own, but the women who form it are both whole individuals and representatives of the inevitable "types" in such groups. So Stubby is the pariah. She is "tough, old, efficient, well organized and certainly brave," but her personality has more force than her politics and finally, she is just an irritating pollyanna. The women, though they feel guilty about it, dislike her intensely.

The most compelling aspect of the book is the senstive portrait of the love triangle—The Cook, The Carpenter, and Three, a radical, lower-class revolutionary whose energy keeps her moving across the country to wherever the action is most intense. The Carpenter retreats from her love affair with the Cook when, sexually and emotionally, she cannot endure the Cook's gentleness and passivity any longer. Though she loves the Cook, she wants more:

> *I do want more; sometimes I want to lie soft as water waiting for the Cook's hands to set me into involuntary movement, to lie innocent as a child. . . but what happens then is the Cook caresses me like silk, as if na were bathing an infant and smoothing it with oil. . . . Unless I respond, na thought, the Cook can't act. . . and so I never get the excitement of being suddenly pulled into another's world.*

Restless and longing for a "passionate" relationship, she turns to Three, whose political agressiveness and emotional remoteness entice her. Their relationship is kinetic, but results in hurt and loneliness for the Carpenter.

The part of Three's character that makes her a revolutionary also makes her wildly disdainful of the Carpenter's aristocratic background and her need for love ("bourgeois possessiveness"). The Carpenter's ability to make Three cry terrifies Three. She fears the dissolution of her purpose, her anger, her ideals. Three's inability to love completely is rooted in fear but results in her turning all her personal need into politics. She is the totally political personality. The book ends with the Carpenter's reconciling herself to her own personal needs. She cannot be the politico Three is, and must leave the collective, but she leaves with her lover, the Cook.

The novel is not only a love story. As important as the examination of love is, the analysis of the collective is equally important. It is described with accuracy and often with

lyricism: "they were joined to each other like the petals of a five pointed flower. . .". The course of the group's "action" (the taking over of an abandoned schoolhouse) and its dissolution after they are arrested describes the shift from idealism to *realpolitik*. From the police's treatment of them, the women learn that there is no "human equality" in the real (sexist) world. To make this point clear, Arnold stops using the pronoun "na" ("nan")—which has substituted for she/he (her/his) and goes back to the conventional forms. The women are forced to function not as people, but as women. Part of the shift for the Carpenter—as for many individuals in group situations—is that she realizes she cannot function "collectively" and must find another balance between her personal and political needs. †††

BOOKS REVIEWED

Alain Abby, *Libido Beach.* Sarah Aldrige, *The Late Comer. Amazon Expedition.* Ti-Grace Atkinson, *Amazon Odyssey.* Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood.* Rita Mae Brown, *Rubyfruit Jungle.* Susan Cavin, *Me and Them Sirens Running All Night Long. Come Out!.* Elsa Gidlow, *Makings for Meditations* and *Moods of Eros.* Judy Grahn, *edward the dyke and other poems* and *A Woman is Talking to Death.* Susan Griffin, *Dear Sky, Letter, Let Them Be Said,* and *The Sink.* Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness.* Bertha Harris, *Catching Saradove* and *Confessions of Cherubino.* Sharon Isabell, *Yesterday's Lessons.* Jill Johnston, *Gullible's Travels.* Dolores Klaich, *Woman Plus Woman.* Audre Lorde, *Cables to Rage, The First Cities, From a Land Where Other People Live,* and *New York Head Shop and Museum.* Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, *Lesbian/Woman.* Isabel Miller, *Patience and Sarah.* Claire Morgan, *The Price of Salt.* Elana Nachman, *Riverfinger Women. Out of the Closets.* Jane Rule, *Against the Season, The Desert of the Heart, Lesbian Images,* and *This is Not for You.* Meryle Secrest, *Between Me and Life.* Susan Sherman, *With Anger/With Love* and *Woman Poems Love Poems.* Ann Shockley, *Loving Her.* Shirley Verel, *The Dark Side of Venus. We Are All Lesbians.* Fran Winant, *Looking At Women.* Monique Wittig, *Les Guerilleres. The World Split Open.* Bettie Wysor, *The Lesbian Myth*

MAGAZINES REVIEWED

Ain't I A Woman. Amazon Quarterly. Cowrie. Focus. The Ladder. Lavender Woman. Lesbian Connection. The Lesbian Tide. Long Time Coming. So's Your Old Lady. Wicce.

ABOUT US

SHARON BEHRENDS is sensitive to her cats, her plants and others' acceptance of her art. She enjoys the night air and is confused by politics.

PAULA BENNETT teaches at Northeastern University. Active in the gay movement for the last three years.

ELLY BULKIN lives in Brooklyn with her daughter Anna amid a clutter of papers, toys, books, and softball gear. When she can dig out from under, she co-facilitates a women's poetry class (Women's Center of Brooklyn College), reviews poetry for *Majority Report,* and is co-editing *Amazon Poetry: An Anthology* (to appear fall 1975).

DEBORAH CORE is a lesbian/feminist who lives and teaches in northern Ohio.

(Continued on page 72)

Introduction

Z, the last letter of our alphabet, was the sixth letter of the Greeks'. It stood for **zetesis**, a question; **zyme**, a leaven; and **zoe**, life. In the Library of Congress classification, Z is the classification for books about books, works on printing, and national, subject, trade and personal bibliographies. In writing about the alternative cultures today, I chose the title "The Living Z" to describe not only the LC class that many of the books about that culture would fall into, but also the life-symbolizing meaning of the ancient Zeta; and of course, the flowing celestial "sea" into which Aquarius pours his urn.

What follows is a sample only—for no bibliography can be complete—of sources for our contemporary culture. It is not a catalog of underground newspapers and little magazines; it is rather a collection of such lists, a guide to the literature. It also includes magazines and periodicals about the trade, some histories of the Movement and some technical books about how to get into the counter-publishing business.

It's only fair to say what's being excluded here, too. Don't look here for: the history of books and fine printing from ancient China to the Grabhorns; the non-print media and the McLuhan books; critiques of writers famous before (roughly) 1960; rock music and experimental education (each of which is worthy of a separate bibliography apiece); histories and defenses of the Third World, feminist or radical movements. They are fascinating topics, but space permits that these be mentioned only insofar as they relate to the business of small press and alternative **publication.** The emphasis will be on underground newspapers and little magazines.

There can be no mention, either, of the ultimate foundations of the alternative culture; no history of magic, no history of Africa, no general account of the philosophies of Asia. Again, we would drown in that sea. Nor is it a list of "what the young are reading", "what'll really turn you on"; so no Tolkien, no Castaneda, no Huxley or Hesse. There can only be room for books that show how **all** of these topics and **all of** these authors have flowed together to make up the Living Z in which we swim.

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A GUIDE TO THE LITERATURE OF THE COUNTER-CULTURE, THE ALTERNATIVE PRESS, AND LITTLE MAGAZINES

Noel Peattie

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About Us, continued

CATHY CRUIKSHANK. "Just now I feel we must learn to recognize the difference between magic and mystery, between what can be understood and what can only be appreciated."

PEG CRUIKSHANK is 35, likes reading, writing, and talking to stimulating women, three pleasures which her feminism and her newly developed gay consciousness have greatly increased. She prides herself on having emerged, relatively unscathed, from the academic jungle.

GENE DAMON is the pseudonym of Barbara Grier, an "up front" lesbian from 12 on, but, unfortunately, Barbara dates from the era when pseudonyms were considered a requirement, and by the time she was able to shed the pseudonym it was too well-known in the movement for her to change it. Active from 1957 on with Daughters of Bilitis, and connected with *The Ladder* from that time until its demise in 1972, Gene Damon has made her living free-lance writing and doing various clerical jobs. Two years ago she, and the woman she lives with, deserted cities forever and settled on a small farm about 40 miles east of Kansas City, where they raise trees, garden, and process their own food as much as possible, and enjoy the peace and quiet.

ELIZABETH DIGGS lives in New York winters and Vermont summers, teaches Women's Studies at Jersey City State College. Her life is enriched by Jungian analysis, a garden, and animals, old friends, and new ideas.

JAN GARTON is currently attempting to freelance natural history writing, and is exploring the Kansas countryside with a friend on weekends.

BETH HODGES. "Born 1974, daughter of my sisters. In the summer of 1975 the most pleasant things I can imagine are sailing, the ocean, good friends, Coors beer, and trees."

KARLA JAY is the east coast correspondent of *Lesbian Tide* and house dyke of *Win* magazine. This, in conjunction with co-editing *Out of the Closets* and *After You're Out,* has helped keep her in one of the poshest slums in NYC. Her current plans are to save 70 cents for a round trip to Coney Island Beach.

MELANIE KAYE. "Getting fired has made me realize that the closet I've been partly living in is transparent; so why pretend? I've worked with the women's movement in Portland for some years, am currently part of a women's poetry collective (putting out a book this summer, Out and About Press, Portland), and a feminist political study group."

FRAN KOSKI and MAIDA TILCHEN are lost, tormented girls caught midway between the sexes in a strange new world of forbidden desire where love is found in the smoky shadows of Village bars et cetera.

JOAN LARKIN is a poet, teacher (Brooklyn College), and lesbian mother. As such, while it feels as if there is never enough time, space, or support, she has one foot in the future. She and Elly Bulkin are co-editing *Amazon Poetry: An Anthology,* the first publication of Out and Out Books.

INEZ MARTINEZ teaches a course on Women and Literature at Kingsborough Community College, is doing research on mythology, and gets a lot of energy from dreams, plants, animals and conversation with friends.

ELANA NACHMAN. "Also traveling, on and off, as E. Dykewoman & S.P. Wonder; when not traveling, working at the Women's Film Co-op, into lesbian media guerilla warfare & a lesbian revolution on all planes, including economic. Mother Jones Press in Northampton will be publishing a book of poetry sometime in the fall."

CAROL NEWHOUSE. "I am living in the country with women and am working toward the creation of a new feminist culture. My photographs are an expression of that experience."

JUDITH NIEMI. "I recently escaped from academia, am deciding what to do next, meanwhile canoeing, and talking with my strong and smart woman friends."

ADRIENNE L. PARKS is a radical lesbian feminist poet, prose writer and playwright. She is currently teaching a writing workshop for Washington Area Feminist Theater, she guest led a playwriting workshop at the Great Southeastern Lesbian Conference in Atlanta, and was the organizer of "Writing-On," the Washington, D.C. area lesbian feminist writer's collective. She is also the Washington correspondent for *The Lesbian Tide.*

JOAN PETERS is a founder of Sagaris Feminist Institute. She lives and writes in New York City in a very small apartment with one friend and two afghan dogs (who look suspiciously like her).

JANET SERGI and her dog Lady Wolf are traveling around this summer to find new ideas and people to renew their faith in a feminist/socialist revolution.

JULIA P. STANLEY now lives on a farm in Tennessee (down in a holler) writing, thinking, mostly trying to live the revolution with the woman she loves. She has discovered that she might have a vocation as a "bum," just enjoying being alive.

(We have received an important notice from Gene Damon and Jan Watson and Robin Jordan, the compilers of the new 1975 edition of **The Lesbian In Literature** asking all publishers of Lesbian and Lesbian/feminist material to be **SURE** to send a review copy to **The Ladder, P.O. Box 5025, Washington Station, Reno, Nevada, 89503.** Damon, Watson and Jordan have already discovered a number of titles that they did not learn of in time to include in the 1975 edition. If you have issued such material in 1972, 1973, or 1974 or 1975 or plan to issue something in the next year, please let them know. . . every effort is made to include everything pertinent to help small press publishers reach maximum audience. A review copy is essential so that the book can be read and coded correctly for future supplements.)

BIG MAMA RAG VANDALIZED

On August 3, 1975, in mid-afternoon, the office of *Big Mama Rag* was vandalized. Our files were over-turned, and the contents were thrown about the office. The telephone was ripped out of the wall, the front door window was cut; and glue, ink and solvent were poured over the August 1975 issue of BMR. Money was in the office, about forty dollars, but was not taken. All three typewriters were temporarily ruined. Glue and ink was poured into the sets, the keys were jammed and our electric typewriter was also jammed and the wiring ripped out of the back of the set. The major item still missing for our office is our advertising file.

It is obvious to us that this attempt to destroy our office is a deliberate political attack. We are asking for a written statement of support from every community group in Denver, and also from every woman's newspaper and publication in the country. We also need financial support to restore our typewriters and buy security bolts for our doors. We need womanpower!

—*Big Mama Rag* Collective