A lesbian is a woman whose value system is such that she can be fulfilled spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and sexually only in a romantic relationship with another woman.

Winter 1975/76
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It's been a year now since we threw together the first issue of LESBIAN VOICES and rushed off to the printer with it -- all twenty-eight pages. By our fourth issue in September 1975, we had expanded to sixty pages, were doing halftones, and printing the magazine ourselves. Whew, what a year! And International Women's Year, too!

This is a good time to stop to thank some of the people who have made LESBIAN VOICES possible. First of all, we wish to thank Debbie Smith and Fran Perea for founding SISTERS OF SAPPHA and our predecessor SATIN two years ago; and we thank SISTERS OF SAPPHA (now called Lesbian-Feminist Alliance) for acting as a support group and individual Sistars for carrying LESBIAN VOICES out to women's fairs and Gay Pride Day and generally publicizing the magazine. Next, we wish to thank the many feminist publications that agreed to exchange subscriptions and advertising with us and offered us encouragement in getting started. We thank Laurel of AMAZON QUARTERLY for her article "How To Make a Magazine" which contained much useful information. A great deal of appreciation goes to our many contributors who have filled our pages with poetry, art, and ideas. A special thanks goes to our loyal advertisers, whose patronage helps support our magazine, and we thank our many retailers and distributors for getting the magazine out where women can find it. Finally, we thank our individual readers and subscribers, for their enjoyment of our efforts gives us the energy to do more. And, most of all, we thank our Fairy Godmother: we never could have done it so soon or so well without you, Fairy Godmother.

International Women's Year is drawing to a close now, and we are entering the last quarter of our century. 1976 brings us the Bicentennial of the United States. All this makes us very aware of time and history. I feel sure that we are living now in a period which will be of great interest to future historians -- particularly lesbian historians. We have seen great changes in the past five, ten, or twenty years. What changes are yet to come? Will we have legal marriages next year? Will "post-Christian feminism" become the culturally dominant ideology of American women? Will we have our own communities and economic base by the year 2000? Who knows?

Speculating about future history reminds us to look back to see where we have been -- but when we do, we become aware of how little we know about our history -- as women and as lesbians. As women, our history has been largely ignored, considered trivial and unworthy of serious study. As lesbians, we find that our history has often been suppressed, to the extent that our very existence has been ignored, denied, and censored. How often have we read of pronouns being changed in the works of lesbian poets after their death, or of letters and personal papers being burned by concerned (heterosexual) family members to "protect" an author's reputation from "tarnishment"? And we have no way of knowing in how many cases such "protection" was successful in destroying all evidence of some eminent woman's lesbianism. Lesbians apparently have existed throughout history and probably in the same numbers as now; yet, thumbing through Kraft-Ebbing or reading of witches' trials, we get only a glimpse here and there of some notorious and courageous outcast.

With the United States Bicentennial bearing down upon us, the patriotism, the nostalgia, the armchair history, and the sentimentality will no doubt reach a peak by July 4th. Since we can't stop the Bicentennial, LESBIAN VOICES thinks we ought to join it -- with a celebration of our own lesbian history. We would like to solicit material dealing with lesbians or single women from prehistorical North America up to the early 20th century. How did lesbian Indians live? What is known about black lesbians during and after the slave period? How did single women fare in the frontier? Were there any lesbians among that first shipload of women who were hauled over in 1609? We would be interested in anything and everything dealing with lesbians/single women in United States history. And to launch our celebration, we have in this issue (beginning on page 41) Judith Schwarz's paper on Old Maids in early 19th century America.
Defining Lesbianism
by Rosalie Nichols

Over past months, I have become aware of a controversy in the lesbian-feminist movement over the question of who is or is not a lesbian (or as some put it, reallesbian). This controversy has arisen because of the existence of bisexuals and political lesbians (women who are not lesbians but call themselves lesbians for political reasons) in the feminist and lesbian-feminist movements.

We all remember the antagonism of "old gals" in Sacramento toward a political lesbian who was giving talks on lesbianism to college classes and the feminist movement. The reason for their antagonism was that this woman had never lived as a lesbian, never had a lesbian relationship, never gone through the years of oppression that the "old gals" lived, and therefore, in their eyes, was not qualified to represent the lesbian point of view to an ignorant public.

Political lesbians and women who became lesbians through the feminist movement, on the other hand, were often antagonistic toward "old gals" on other grounds. Old gals, they claimed, were heavily into heterosexual stereotypes and stereotyped ways of behaving — in other words, "males and females" relationships, monogamy, sexuality, materialism, and so forth. Old gals, said the nouveaux lesbians, lacked a feminist and/or revolutionary consciousness. Old cherished institutions such as the yes man and Daughters of Nilitis the only two places to go twenty years ago were heavily criticized by the nouveaux neo-lesbians who had never been there. Gays who stayed in the closet were viewed with scorn.

Adding to this mutual antipathy were the experiences of reallesbians who were seduced into relationships with bisexual women or political lesbians only to find themselves playing second fiddle to some man. Often, in such cases, encouraged the "lesbian" relationships for voyeuristic purposes of their own, or in hopes of a more acceptable to society; and some bisexuals, so it turns out, have hid behind the "lesbian" label because they felt it was more acceptable to society; and some bisexuals, so it turns out, have hid behind the "lesbian" label because they felt it was more acceptable to radicals. And so on and so on. All very confusing.

But don't feel bad! We're not the first movement to have gone through something like this! It's all part of the growing pains that accompany social change! As an old-timer in another movement — the American Indian movement — I can see a lot of parallels. People denying their Indian blood to avoid discrimination. Later, people (usually blonde, blue-eyed) proclaiming their pride in their (almost always) Cherokee blood. Fights over who is Included and who left out by this definition? Once there were "reservation Indians" who were forbidden to speak their languages, remember? Only reservation Indians are real Indians. Reservation Indians have to have a separate organization. He's a BIA neo-Indian, and she's a BIA neo-Amerindian...

Sorry, but in my opinion, having a sex-change operation does not give a woman the feelings, experiences, attitudes, sensibilities, etc. of a woman, even though she may be very effeminate, gentle, and sensitive in her own way. A possible exception might be a transsexual-homosexual woman who has female biological characteristics and has been raised as a girl and who seek "sex change" merely to eliminate unwanted male characteristics. But feeling in general, however, is that transsexuals and hermaphrodites should form their own (founder-member) organizations to deal with their unique problems, and I would support them in such an effort. I would especially support them in their right to be hermaphrodites and not to be forced to choose between the categories of male and female simply because the majority of people fall in one or the other category.

Next, the emphasis on VALUE SYSTEM is necessary for several reasons. One is that, as in other social movements, we are tired of being judged by criteria that are merely a projection of our behavior. Having sexual relations with another woman does not make a woman a lesbian. On the contrary, it is the underlying value system (whether conscious or not) that makes a woman sexless or sexual. At least as a political fact, the women in this room are formed at a very early age — I would pay by far four or five. This leads lesbians to believe that they were "born that way." Because basic value systems (especially standards of normalcy) are taught from an early age to children and to be forced to change their "choice in the matter" (to quote the United States position paper, "An Attempt at Defining Lesbianism" — available for 25¢ from U.S.F. 0. Box 41, Rockford, I1 61107). This is not necessarily an infringement on personal autonomy and value systems can be changed, but only by settling down to very basic questions which were formed at an early age, raising them conscious, examining them, and shedding whether they are, making another choice of course, but that leads one to change their value system. I do think that we should become conscious of our value system as such an important, so that we do not set up in contradictions or leave ourselves vulnerable to attack by psychologists, ministers, social workers, and other cultural agents of the status quo society. Incidentally, it follows from the above that heterosexuals are not "born that way" either; Mother Nature didn't decree it, heterosexuals chose it, just as we choose to be lesbian, just as we choose not to be heterosexual. The heterosexuals are just as aware of their heterosexuality as it is for us to ask what "caused" our lesbianism.
In our definition of "can be PJLFTrjJ-lJ," whom do we include and exclude? The emphasis on PJLFIIU-lKMT is meant to draw a distinction between what people do (for one reason or another) and what is really satisfying to them. Contrary to the belief of the typical straight male ("The road never slips for him out!"), the vast majority of lesbians have had (intersexual) relations at one time or another or during some period of their lives — and found they were not satisfied. Many lesbians throughout history have been married and raised children, yet still turned to another woman for fulfillment of romantic desires. Even when a lesbian has been able to achieve orgasm with some knowledgeable and considerate male, she still feels unfulfilled emotionally and spiritually. Conversely, our definition would exclude those women who are able to have "good sex" with another woman but who seek emotional fulfillment elsewhere. Our definition also has the advantage of including those lesbians who, for one reason or another, never actually find the fulfillment they desire — whether they choose to remain celibate (from guilt or because of religious convictions, etc.) or whether they simply fail to find the partner who can fulfill them (as in the case of having a series of unhappy lesbian relationships), the fact remains that they can be fulfilled only with a woman.

The phrase "spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and sexually" was inserted to emphasize the various levels or areas in which fulfillment is desired and required — again, to counteract the sexual stereotype — also to indicate the totality of the lesbian as a human being and to emphasize the totality of the lesbian relationship.

The word "ONLY" is included for obvious reasons: it is intended to draw a distinction between lesbians and bisexual women. A bisexual woman, so I am told, can be fulfilled by either sex and makes no distinction in her romantic feelings between men and women — in the case of one bisexual woman I met, she recognizes the differences between men and women, but enjoys the unique attributes of each sex. A lesbian wants a woman for fulfillment, and that's that. She may or may not be a "non-heter." She may be friendly to men, she may be indifferent to them, she may feel repulsed by them — but she does not feel fulfilled by them. In my opinion, understandable as it may be, a bisexual woman should not call herself a lesbian; too many misunderstandings and painful situations can and do result. A bisexual woman should call herself bisexual.

Finally, the last phrase of our definition "in a romantic relationship with another woman" — why is it necessary to emphasize "romantic"? Well, Jill Johnston said "all women are lesbians" — after all, we love ourselves, don't we? And women who masturbate have come to regard that as a lesbian experience, so I'm told. And much of the warmth and sisterly affection in the feminist movement has come to be described as "lesbian," even when the only touching is on the spiritual level (and not the mental, emotional, and sexual levels). It seems to me that the word "lesbian" is in danger of losing all meaning. So I feel it necessary to reaffirm that lesbianism is a romantic relationship with another woman and not merely sisterly affection or self-love. The word "romantic" — in addition to referring to "a love affair" — also refers to the pursuit of values, which directly bears back to the importance of values in our definition. If love is an expression of our highest values, then it is a betrayal of those values to define lesbianism as something less than romantic.

I was very tempted, when formulating this definition, to write "in a romantic relationship with another lesbian." I would have liked to have written it that way because I don't believe that a lesbian can be happy and fulfilled with a straight woman or a bisexual woman. Since her love is based on values, she needs someone who shares and affirms those values. But the rules of definitions state that one may not use the word "lesbian" defined within the definition itself, so I didn't. Pretend I did, anyway!

Hooray for us. We are women! Complete women, without a need for men in a world of men. We love each other, all of each other. We laugh and cry, despair, fight, work and commune together. We make love to each other, all in a tangle of arms, legs and sweet fragrant body odors. Wet with love, we sleep in one another's arms, in sheer exhaustion.

Hooray for us. We are free! We know the freedom we have is not gentle freedom, we must be careful to whom we are with those who care, we don't have to be full of bravado and bullshit. We can relax, and be gay, because the others of us share our love and understand.

Hooray for me. I am a woman! I rejoice in me. I love my body, my mind. I love beautiful things. I touch soft flowers with my fingers, read lovely poetry with my eyes, and delight in the sensuous caresses I share with the woman I love.
Last issue was great, but the cartoon on bisexuality disturbed me. In writing this, I don't mean to turn LESBIAN VOICES into a forum on bisexuality; lesbians who choose to think a moment will realize that bisexual people deserve the right to self-definition just as lesbians, women, and other oppressed groups do.

Who oppresses bisexuals? First and foremost, the straight media. It wasn't your local drugstore radical but TIME and NEWSWEEK who first decided bisexuality was the new perversion. Did they do anything? They got the public and should therefore be condemned. Remember how they operate: they set you up in their terms so they can knock you down in their terms. They created the two-barriers to discredit the women's movement, and they created the sexual dilettante to discredit bisexuals.

Straights have been horrified by the "homosexual tendencies" of the bisexual, and now gays scorn the "cop-outs." The tendency to love shouldn't horrify anybody; yet the bisexual, seen as a threat to both sides, is routinely oppressed by both sides. Far from getting the best of both worlds, she is the target for such insecurity and hostility; in this sense, bisexuality will indeed "trip you up every time," but let me suggest that this is due to societal pressures rather than any innate non-viability of a bisexual lifestyle.

"Cop-out" is an interesting phrase, implying as it does that bisexuality doesn't exist — the idea being that the bisexual is really gay and won't admit it. Before you put your faith in this concept, consider the sources: It originated with those wonderful people who brought you penis-envy and the cunting female, yes, none other than Sigmund Freud and his Viennese Couch-Cruisers. From those rigid, noble males was born the theory that women are biologically, asexual; hence, they are being seduced, that there never was a problem of a biological nature in the first place. Yet, by not coming out, the bisexual is deemed as being biologically, asexual, thereby avoiding any possible problem of a biological nature. Indeed, not only does she appear "normal" from the outside, she is being seduced. And if it is true, by not coming out, the bisexual is indeed not a threat to society.

First, it assumes that gays are both stupid and oversexed, unable to resist the "cop-outs" of the bisexuals. I doubt it, but if you do, is it fair to judge an entire group by the actions of one individual?

The hope is that LESBIAN VOICES will no longer accept material derogatory to bisexuals.

The prediction is that when bisexuals finally get it together enough to come out of our closets and declare ourselves, lesbian feminists will be the first to extend us recognition as an autonomous, self-defined group within the liberation movement. And on that day, what with feminist pride, gay pride, and bisexual pride, I for one will be proud as hell!

Yours sincerely,

Mog Duff

REPLY FROM OUR CARTOONIST:

Your letter certainly calls for a response! I sat down with paper and pen and immediately found that there was no problem of a factual nature either. I gave up on that day, what with feminist pride, gay pride, and bisexual pride, I for one will be proud as hell!

I am sure you do not say you are a bisexual or write long letters in response to one anti-bi cartoon because you take yourself lightly. I see intelligence and sincerity in your letter.

I do not lightly say that I am a lesbian or write anti-bisexual material simply to test out my in-level!
Do not ask, who am I? What do I want? Simply go by whom you’re involved with at the moment and be an acceptable living creature — able to relate on any level. The lights went on — we all have free choice — “do your thing.”

For years, I called myself a lesbian. I put all my energy and commitment into women. I had stopped even the mental trips with men; finding much preferred intellectual discussions with women. And you too, I think, have found them too. Many others are beginning to look around, see, feel, and understand that something is going on! They are in transition. Others have chosen to be either male-oriented or female-oriented. Some decide to be homosexual, others heterosexual. It’s the logical follow-through of that is that, if we’re basically the same and only cultural conditioning has produced any differences, then anyone could combat those teachings and be an acceptable living creature — able to relate on any level. The lights went on — that’s BISEXUALITY!!!

I want to relate to men at all — the philosophy pushed on — we chose to be homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual. And that’s okay. They are two ways out. In other words, a mature process brought me to lesbian with a capital L.

The most recent front I had to deal with was a philosophical one. I considered myself a lesbian. I put all my energy and commitment into women. I had stopped even the mental trips with men, finding much preferred intellectual discussions with women. And you too, I think, have found them too. Many others are beginning to look around, see, feel, and understand that something is going on! They are in transition. Others have chosen to be either male-oriented or female-oriented. Some decide to be homosexual, others heterosexual. It’s the logical follow-through of that is that, if we’re basically the same and only cultural conditioning has produced any differences, then anyone could combat those teachings and be an acceptable living creature — able to relate on any level. The lights went on — that’s BISEXUALITY!!! I don’t want to relate to men at all — the philosophy pushed on — we chose to be homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual. And that’s okay. They are two ways out. In other words, a mature process brought me to lesbian with a capital L.

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THE VICTIM
by Camilla Decarnin

She had walked for an hour in the new high-heeled sandals, and now pain shot from the ball of her foot up through the arch each time the thin soles struck the concrete. Already the moon, a sharply polished disk, had traveled its term around the tenements all she could see of its path. She had no watch.

On the next corner she slowed, glanced at the last paper clamped behind the glass of a newstand.

MAC DOG VICTIMS!! It blared, attempted sensation under the exhausted bluing of the streetlight. Her lip lifted, but she pulled the change purse from the pocket of her raincoat, fed the dimes and nickel into their slots. A car whizzed past. When it had gone, she let herself slump a little against the lamp-post, resting her burning feet and reading. Second Tom Body Found in Alley. A man in an alley; she thought of the sick; of the man who had called to her from one the night before; of the man who’d clicked his tongue at her tonight as she’d hurried by his front stoop. But she’d quickened her step in the agonizing heels, and he hadn’t followed her.

With a hard breath she leaned away from the lamp-post, stepped off the curb. It must be nearly midnight; she must be over a mile from her apartment. After the brief rest each step seemed even more painful. A car honked two streets down, two feet, one noseed into a black alley.

"What’s a matter, think you’re too good for me?" He shuffled closer, one hand digging into his pocket, eyes darting. "Hey, baby— " Her breath caught in her throat, but she quickened her pace without looking at him. He bounded between two cars, cut her off, hands out from his sides, and, finally, she stopped walking.

"What’s a matter, think you’re too good for me?" He shuffled closer, one hand digging back into his pocket, eyes darting. "You’re no better’n anybody else, you can’t say hi to somebody?"

She took two quick steps back, came up against the car; the alley loomed black to her right. The street was deserted. She made a small sound in her throat, choked it back as he angled closer, maneuvering to cut off escape around the back of the car; there was still front. If he followed her... Her breath dragged in her throat and she leaped into the street.

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MARYBELLE COLLINS TYPES WITH HER TOES

by Judith Schwarz Freewoman

One thing about Marybelle is you sure couldn't call her a quitter. That kid had more spunk than all the rest of us put together. Every afternoon after we got home from school, we'd see her riding that special-made bike of hers, all strapped on tight and gritting her teeth. She didn't much care that she looked kinda strange, what with trainer wheels on the bike an' all...no, she'd just make a face or stick out her tongue if any of us laughed at her. An' honest to God, I ain't never seen nobody make a more awful face than she could. Her daddy would walk a few feet behind her, in case she fell, which happened a lot, even with the trainer wheels an' all. She never cried or nothing'. She'd just sorta smack at her teeth. She didn't much care that she looked kinda strange, what with trainer wheels on her mouth, an' red streams of juice tricklin' down her face onto her napkin. She looked for all the world like a mussle murderer had just finished butchergin' up her somethin' fierce! I couldn't help myself, I really, honestly, truly couldn't...that sight took me by surprise so bad, I let out a whoop so loud, I let out a whoop so loud, I let out a whoop so loud, I let out a whoop so loud, I let out a whoop so loud, I let out a whoop so loud, I let out a whoop so loud, I let out a whoop so loud...I mean, Marybelle Collins was a mess! My granny tolle Mrs. Walker that when Marybelle's momma first got a look at her, she like to died! The doctors had to shoot her up to get her to stop screamin'. Hell, I can believe that, 'cause it's hard to keep from hollerin' when you see her now...and figure what'd it be like if she was your own kid! Jeez how creepy can you get?

One afternoon a couple of years ago or so, my granny asked some pies for the American Legion ladies' auxiliary sale, an' I got elected to take 'em to the Collins' house, on account of me standin' around lookin' like I had nothin' to do. Boy, was that stupid of me! I shoulda known those pies weren't all for us to eat! Anyway, Mrs. Collins was headin' the bake sale, so I had to cart over the pies, an' I tell you, it was real hard work, what with them smellin' so good an' all. If my granny hadn't already called Mrs. Collins an' tolle her how rany I was bringin' over, I would have snitched one of 'em off my sister's wagon for sure.

The Collins' house is a big ole spooky-lookin' place down around the corner from our house. My cousin T.J., who lives in New Jersey an' don't know nothin', always calls It a "mansion," which just goes to show how dumb he is. I mean, It don't have a garden or nothin', so It's like a place with secrets. I always tell my kid sister if she don't shut up an' behave, she might end up inside that ressed-up body. I reckon she's gonna he somebody famous, an' one day I'll be sayin' I knew Marybelle Collins 'when all she could do was gurgle.'

Anyway, when Mrs. Collins answered the door, she looked mighty glad to see me, which was sorta strange since she hadn't never seen me before. She rattled on an' on about how she was "pretendin' near a death when all this business happened," an' she said she was gonna talk to the papers, now an' then talk to the papers, now an' then talk to the papers, an' her daddy got a new job up north, an' they moved away. The reason I was thinkin' of her today was Marybelle sent me a letter. It turns out she's been goin' to a special school, c'z they taught her how to type with her toes. All these years she's been readin' an' thinkin', an' now she write real good, real good, real good. I'm thinkin' she'll be somethin' real good, an' one day I'll be sayin' I knew Marybelle Collins when all she could do was murble.

Anyway, when Mrs. Collins tolle me to come back anytime, and there'd always be somethin' to eat. I did go back, new an', then, but not too often, 'cause after all, I deserved It, didn't I? Mrs. Collins came tearin' in, an' about died when she saw us both laughin' with trainer wheels on our clothes all ruffled up. So good an' scared that I was so scared that I was so scared that I was so scared that I was so scared that I was...I'm just yellin' about how she was gonna throw me out an' call my gramma to give me a lickin', when she stopped an' tolle "Marybelle's laughin'!" It sure shock her up some, I could tell, so it must of not been somethin' that happened regular-like.

After we ate ourselves slob, Mrs. Collins tolle me to come back anytime, and there'd always be somethin' to eat. I did go back on a couple of kids when they laughe at her after I had tolle them they better not.

Then her daddy got a new job up north, an' they moved away. The reason I was thinkin' of her today was Marybelle sent me a letter. It turns out she's been readin' an' thinkin', an' now she write real good, real good, real good. I'm thinkin' she'll be somethin' real good, an' one day I'll be sayin' I knew Marybelle Collins when all she could do was murble.

[Reprinted from IN WRITING, 1974 issue, New Colleen, Tex. State University, by permission of the author.]
PHOTOGRAPHS FROM WOMEN’S CELEBRATION DAY
October 27, 1975
BY ANN FRIAUF

Picture a clear sunny day in October, fine musicians and performers, and a lot of fine women out having a good time—and you might get some idea of the incredibly high energy level on this day of celebration. This event happened on Veteran’s Day in the Co-op parking lot in Berkeley, and in addition to fine singers, dancers, a theatre group and women's band, the parking lot was filled with women displaying and selling arts and crafts, handing out information about their groups, selling feminist posters and literature, getting petitions signed, and on and on. By the time Sweet Chariot started to play to wind up the day, women were jumping up and down with the first beat. I was having a fine time running around with my camera, capturing perhaps a little of the free-flowing joy and energy of this day to share with others.

OK SITTING BEHIND THE EQUITABLE-FEMINIST ASSISTANCE TABLE AT THE WOMEN’S FAIR

You human beings are so shy you walk past this table your smiles conceal your eyes skimp by without you hope, any change of expression—do you think I don’t know you? I’m you, little human beings, I’ve passed by and I remember: the crippled man (one so seldom sees the crippled woman) the foreigner, the new configuration that panics the blood’s ancestral images. So you pass for blind and I allow you to do this, by not staring at you, make no demands; but sit here with my hands folded graciously, trying hard not to alarm you. Even so you skirt me wary as squirrels, or sparrows. Don’t you recognize me? I know it’s easier to sit behind this table than to smile at me sitting behind this table.

Two women come I know, soundweavers, stop to talk to me and move away...ah, you two look so good, among the tables wandering hand in hand love gentle in your eyes— the way your shoulders turn slightly toward each other at each pause, in wordless oracle: you human beings look, look, look at us, and know that what you see you cannot fear.
In 1928, Radclyffe Hall, author of THE WELL OF LONELINESS, wrote as follows:

"...then, suddenly, they knew that she could not be deceived, could not be snared, could not outrun the snares of her own heart. They acknowledged, then, that she had never felt proud of her Lesbianism — if she felt conflicted, ambivalent, or wrong, it was only one thing that she dared not let pass unchallenged, and that was this terrible slur upon her love. And all that was in her rose up to refute it, to protect her love from such amoral snares. It was part of her, and unless she could save it, she could not save herself any more. She must stand or fall by the courage of that love to proclaim its right to toleration."

This paragraph may well have been the beginning of modern Lesbian Pride. Certainly the author meant what she said, as she fought to prevent censorship of her book, which was viewed by the censorship committees as the very essence of the world of moral doubts and self-reproach. Generations of Lesbians are steeped in the MILK OF LONELINESS since then, including those of my own generation who grew up during the conformist forties and the fearful fifties. We have seen the period of "hysteria" and the period of "normality" change, to be replaced by the period of "struggle" for survival. It was a vacuum, a pervasive enormity, which will accept and tolerate just about anything — since any form of normality, any standard of values, any code of right behavior is now regarded as a throwback to the oppressive Puritanism. Toleration reigns. In short, we have moved from believing that Lesbianism is wrong to believing that "there is no right or wrong" — "do your own thing," no matter what it is.

Gay Pride, as I see it, stands in ideological opposition to both extremes. Gay is not wrong, gay is not normal. Only many who have not been breed to know it. I have, in my time, met many Lesbians who were gay only because they felt they could not "help" it; at heart, they believed that straight was better and hoped ("someday") to marry and have children and live a "normal" life. I have met many more Lesbians (perhaps the dominant majority) who subscribe to the non-ethics of amorality, or to moral relativism. I have met not only a very few Lesbians who truly believe in their hearts that Lesbianism is good and right and healthy — and even power who would not add "for me, that is, not for you."

I believe that Lesbianism is OK. That is why, if I could, I would go back through time and erase that word in Radclyffe Hall's paragraph — "the word has worn away."

I do not wish to be "tolerated" or "accepted" by straights — any more than I would ask them to "tolerate" the fact that the earth moves around the sun. Galileo muttered under his breath while being forced by the Inquisition to recant from his heretic view of the universe, it doesn't change the facts.

Nor would I pay straights the compliment of holding their view and their judgment of me above my own judgment of myself. I know what I am, I know I am good, I know my love for a woman is as strong and real and true. How dubious I would be to plead for "toleration" or try to convince straights that my view of life and love can be "acceptable" to them.

On the contrary, I judge them for their judgments of me and of Lesbianism. Why, after all, is the field of moral judgment not made up of the self and the other?

This essay, therefore, is not directed to straights. This is addressed to gays, specifically to Lesbians.

If you are a Lesbian, yet do not believe that Lesbianism is GOOD, then you are in trouble. You are acting on desires you feel are wrong, and you are denying your integrity. The result is self-contempt and mutual contempt so prevalent in "gay life."

Self-contempt can and will ruin your chance for happiness. Do some introspection. If you do not feel PROUD of your Lesbianism — if you confide, ambivalent, or wrong, it is not that you need to discover Gay Pride. If you are a Lesbian and believe that Lesbianism is good, then you must face the question of having the courage of your convictions. In the past, most of us have felt forced — under threat of loss of employment, loss of career, social ostracism, even arrest and imprisonment — to remain in the closet. This is understandable. Yet it is hard to stay in the closet, to be deceptive (even though justified), without damage to self-esteem. Also, staying in the closet gives straights power over us — we thereby have a secret must live in fear of discovery and worry constantly about protection. Covering takes society's chief weapon away and forces us to fight back. You cannot experience the fullest extent of your Gay Pride while hiding in the closet.

If you are a Lesbian and are out of the closet, it's time to re-examine your values and your relationship to society. Is the battle over? Have we won? I don't think so. We have made many gains, particularly in civil rights. There have been legal changes. The social atmosphere has also changed somewhat — our antagonists find less support for their hostility toward us, and we are probably in danger of becoming the latest "moral issue" minority accepted and patronized by our "tolerators" as their badge of liberalism. As the real battle hasn't even begun Lesbianism is a moral issue. Tolerance of our "difference" is not enough. We must win a moral victory against a culture that has regarded us as unnatural, queer, freckled, sick, deviant, depraved, treacherous, cowardly, stabilize, perverted, possessed, sinful, obscene, filthy, evil, unattractive, irresponsible, illegible, and wrong. This victory must be won, first and foremost, in the soul of each one of us, so we learn that we are not wrong, we are right and good.

Our emotional reward will be the sense of Pride that comes with knowing that we have "won an integrity." And — if we must present ourselves with must straighten think of us (and I'm not convinced that we can), let it be for the sake of toleration. We will then demand the recognition and respect that is our rightful due.

This is why we need Gay Pride.

Oh Beautiful Woman!
by Carolyn Shama

Traveled to my heart — making it pound without reason — and my breath come short and spasmatic which —

Made me look from our hands to your eyes — and could only stare into them in bewilderment that —

I cried out with joy — Oh beautiful woman — that you could coexister with such deep feelings within me that —

I would want to kiss you — all over you — every soft curve, every gentle place, to bury myself in you to —

Want to love you as no one ever had before — or would could again — in joy, in wonder — my beautiful woman —
POLITICAL PRIMER
by Bonnie McGown

One measure of the extent of oppression is how well it is hidden from the oppressed. Often it is not a readily identifiable person or law that does the oppressing. Instead, it is the societal pressure to be alike which we all live under. Being "different" from the straight world is one thing. How well and how often you have to hide that difference is being oppressed.

Lesbians who claim that they are not political or have no interest in politics often have no understanding of their own oppression. Lesbians who claim not to be oppressed are also out of touch with the reality of oppression. The answers you give yourself to these questions can help you realize more about your oppression as a gay woman:

When everyone at work is recounting their experiences from the weekend, do you feel you can't tell what you did, or with whom?

Can you send the short story you wrote about meeting your lover in a laundromat to Ladies Home Journal? To Cosmopolitan?

Can a woman get credit? Could you and another woman buy a house? Can you file a Joint tax-return without hassle?

When you go out, can you go anywhere you want and dance with your women friends, or are you kept "segregated"?

Do you tell people you're gay apologetically — sorry for them having to "deal" with the oppressed.

Are laws against things like lewd behavior and disorderly houses enforced when it comes to you, but not when it's Mr. and Mrs. Jones?

Can you get couples discount rates?

Can you hold hands in church with your lover? In the ocean — toro?

Can you romantically at another woman over a lingering dimer in a restaurant without the waitress getting weird?

Are laws against things like lewd behavior and disorderly houses enforced when it comes to you, or not when it's *Mr.* and *Mrs.* Jones?

If you're an out-front lesbian, can you be licensed in a profession, or are you considered guilty of moral turpitude?

When you go out, can you go anywhere you want and dance with your women friends, or are you kept "segregated"?

Can you get credit? Could you and another woman buy a house? Can you file a Joint tax-return without hassle?

Are you invisible?

Are laws against things like lewd behavior and disorderly houses enforced when it comes to you, but not when it's Mr. and Mrs. Jones?

Can you get couples discount rates?

Can you hold hands in church with your lover? In the ocean — toro?

Can you romantically at another woman over a lingering dimer in a restaurant without the waitress getting weird?

Do you tell people you're gay apologetically — sorry for them having to "deal" with the oppressed.

And in the end (as in the beginning), what is personal and what is political are the same.
"The first candidate he objected to was a tax resister..."

"The second candidate he objected to was gay..."

"The Libertarian Party calls itself, 'The Party of Principle.'"

"The Libertarian Party's Statement of Principles recognizes the rights of individuals to their own lifestyles:"

"We hold that each individual has the right to exercise sole dominion over his own life, and has the right to live his life in whatever manner he chooses, so long as he does not forcibly interfere with the equal right of others to live their lives in whatever manner they choose.

"Yet, the party's presidential candidate has made his position clear: DON'T SEEK THE NOMINATION OF THE PARTY IF YOUR LIFESTYLE OFFENDS THE PRESS...."


"Homosexuality in the middle ages was treated as the ultimate crime against morality, and the standard definitions of it refer to the 'abominable' or the 'unspeakable' crime. For all this, it was no less prevalent than at any other period in history. The usual punishment was burning alive or, in Spain, castration and stoming to death. Under Ferdinand and Isabella the punishment was changed to burning alive and confiscation of property. Since the old Inquisition had exercised jurisdiction over sodomy the Spanish tribunal seems to have begun to do so, but on 18 October 1509 the Supreme ordered that no action was to be taken against homosexuals except when heresy was involved. Here a curious split in policy seems to have occurred, because although the tribunals of Castile never again exercised jurisdiction over sodomy the Inquisition in Aragon now officially adopted powers over this very crime. On 24 February 1524 the pope, Clement VII, issued a brief granting the Inquisition of the realms of Aragon jurisdiction over sodomy, irrespective of the presence or absence of heresy. From this time onwards the Aragonese Inquisitors kept their new authority, which was, despite all the physical complaints raised by the Cortes of Monzon in 1553. Aragon was rather unique in this matter, for not even the Roman Inquisition exercised jurisdiction over sodomy. The punishment prescribed for the crime of sodomy was burning, according to one description of the practice of the tribunal of Zaragoza, minors were whipped and sent to the galleys. But the penalty of death was not rigorously enforced by the Inquisition. Even when sentence was passed, it was sometimes commuted. Indeed, the humane treatment of the unhappy persons who were accused of sodomy, and the leniency of the Inquisition, contrasts sharply with the invariable execution of accused by the secular courts. Special leniency was shown towards clergy who sinned in this matter, and they were as a rule not burnt except after the failure of repeated warnings."


WEB, for M.H.

Words, the nets of your miracles I have learned to stretch are strung with the diamonds time distills from heat; so drink I catch; no meat; spider; 1 from myself unreel the chandeliers of dawn where hot wild light hangs, trapped in its own chill distillate, to make my meal.

-- Mog Duff

DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM vs. STATE SOCIALISM

by Barbara Stephens

[Submitted in answer to the question, what's the difference between democratic socialism and state socialism? Doesn't all socialism require a revolution? – Editor]

In discussing "democratic socialism" and "state socialism" and existing organizations, the question is "What faction do you belong to?" and eventually, if your faction is pacifist, libertarian, co-op-oriented and anti-state, doesn't your party or nation allow it to exist? In some nations, factions and alternate parties are not allowed to exist. The degree of repression varies in locality and time in history. There had been a time when poets and dissenters in one nation were "liquidated." Since then, they are merely placed in mental hospitals, or exiled to the West if their cases are too well known.

It is interesting that nations that do not allow political democracy also do not allow freedom of the press or freedom of sexual orientation. In Portugal, the nation's only independent newspaper released an item exposing the Communist Party's plan to purge the homosexual movement out of the government. When the editor tried to print the item, the Communist-dominated union of printers took over the publishing company. This is the source of the triangular battle taking place in Portugal between the democratic-socialists, the Russian-backed Communist Party and the Cuban-style military junta.

Socialist parties everywhere have had factions, including "liberal factions" who would nationalize industries only in name, thus keeping the original owners as profit-shares, the original managers as wages against the workers, and the same miserable work conditions as existed under capitalism. Also, there have been "revolutionary factions" who demand "workers' control" and "Soviets" with a cynical use of rhetoric. After all, Lenin's cry was "all power to the Soviets!" but when the Soviets voted for parties other than the Bolsheviks, Lenin had the Soviets dissolved. Finally, in most Socialist Parties, there have been libertarian factions, as exemplified by Mulford Sibley, and Erich Fromm in the American Socialists to the Libertarian Party, and an emphasis on independent cooperatives as an alternative to state-owned industries.

Bertrand Russell was so right when he cited the truth that when an individual offends the government in a State-Socialist nation, he is black-balled from every job in the land. Decades ago, when Ho Chi Min overtook North Vietnam, non-cooperating farmers have been burned with the original names as whips against the workers, and the same miserable work conditions as existed under capitalism. Also, there have been "revolutionary factions" who demand "workers' control" and "Soviets" with a cynical use of rhetoric. After all, Lenin's cry was "all power to the Soviets!" but when the Soviets voted for parties other than the Bolsheviks, Lenin had the Soviets dissolved. Finally, in most Socialist Parties, there have been libertarian factions, as exemplified by Mulford Sibley, and Erich Fromm in the American Socialists to the Libertarian Party, and an emphasis on independent cooperatives as an alternative to state-owned industries.

Indeed, the only just Socialist nations are those that allowed a mixed economy, with a strong emphasis on the cooperative movement. There had been freedom of the press, freedom of art, and freedom of sexual orientation in the Netherlands and in Scandinavia, plus a degree of social justice that would put the Americas to shame.

The faults of anarchy are:

1. Failure to differentiate between the benevolent states of Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands, versus such terrible states as Stalin's Russia, North Korea, and Canada.
2. No answer whatsoever to the evils of crime, exploitation, and pollution.
3. A tendency to overlook tyrannical and totalitarian states that characterizes so much of American industries. American Capitalism is no longer a realm of little Mom and Pop grocery stores.

Some individual corporations are economically larger than the countries in which they operate. Ford's sales are larger than the GDP of Austria.
The following excerpts from a white imperialist feminist (?) comic book were brought into existence courtesy of IT ALN'T ME BARE COMIX, a publication of Last Gasp Ecofunnies, Berkeley, California. I wrote a letter to them about their distorted view of history and their implicit identification with the oppressor back in 1970 or 1971, but it was never acknowledged, although it appeared in THE INDIAN HISTORIAN and THE BERKELEY BARB. This "comic" book is still around in women's bookstores. Please don't buy it.

What the happy, peaceful, little Pioneers did to the Indians to start this conflict is also not pictured.

And for the benefit of feminist theoreticians trying to trace the connection between racism and (hetero)sexism, it might be added that in the end, Oma is mystically reunited with her dead husband and baby.
**DID YOU KNOW?**

**by Crim**

**ORDINANCE NO. 17588**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF SAN JOSE. . . TO ADOPT "SEXUAL PREFERENCES" DISCRIMINATION TO THE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION**

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SAN JOSE:

That Topic 15, of Part 2, Chapter 2, Article II of the San Jose Municipal Code is hereby amended by repealing Sections 2235.1, 2235.2 and 2235.8, and adopting and adding new Sections 2235.1, 2235.2 and 2235.8 thereto, said new sections to be numbered and entitled and to read as follows:

2235.1. Policy. The Council of the City of San Jose finds that the population of San Jose consists of large numbers of people of different races, colors, creeds, national origins, sexual preferences, sexes and ancestry; that there exist in San Jose groups of people who are prejudiced and who discriminate against each other because of differences in regard to race, color, creed, national origin, sexual preference, sex or ancestry; that such prejudice and discrimination create and foster disorder and strife, seriously hinder groups of people from bettering their living conditions, promote disease, crime and juvenile delinquency, impede substantial financial and other burdens on the City to relieve or eliminate such conditions, threaten the rights and property privileges of the City's inhabitants, menace the institutions and foundations of a free democratic state, and thus endanger the public health, morals, safety and welfare. A City agency is created by this Topic through which the City of San Jose officially may encourage and bring about mutual understanding and respect among all groups in the City, eliminate prejudice and discrimination and disorder occasioned thereby, and give effect to the guarantee of equal rights as assured by the Constitution and laws of this State and of the United States of America. . .

On October 20, several women from the Lesbian-Feminist Alliance attended a meeting of the Gay Resource Group. This group has had representation from many professionals, book is a reality; and in final draft form.

The introduction to this attractive little book begins, "We are creating our past as women. We are unearthing our heritage from the hole where men have buried it. . . We can't imagine more because our imaginations are still crippled from the scurvy diet of male history we were fed in our classrooms. . . History is political. It has been a convenient, stereotyped, used for centuries to keep women in our place and to deny us any pride of past accomplishment. We are still force fed male supremacist, heterosexual myths about our past everyday. . ."

**REVIEWS:**

WOMEN REMEMBERED, a collection of short biographies of women who were "fighters," examines the lives of some of the past from a lesbian-feminist perspective. It contains articles, originally published in the lesbian-feminist newspaper THE FURIES, on such women as Queen Christina, reputedly-lesbian ruler of Sweden (1632-1654); Emily Dickinson, whose prolonged seclusion is believed by modern literary investigators to have been the result of unhappy lesbian romances; the "hoax" of the Trojan Women; the spinster feminist Susan B. Anthony; swashbuckling pirates Anne Bonny and Mary Read; and others. The articles are illustrated with photographs and engravings.

As stated in the introduction, "These articles examine some of the ways that men distort women's achievements and keep this fleeting heritage from us. Whenever possible, they attribute women's achievements to men. If they can't do that, heterosexually biased historians say that an accomplishment by a woman was inspired by a male lover or motivated by a male teacher. If there is no way to pass the credit over to a man, they belittle the woman—ridiculing her as a weirdo eccentric or trivializing her as an object of curiosity." This book provides the beginning of an antidote.

[Available from feminist bookstores or direct from Diana Press, Inc., 12 West 25th St., Baltimore, MD 21218. 89 pp. $2.25.]
AFTER THE RHETORIC IS OVER,

OR... SHUT UP AND KISS ME

By MARILYN G. FLEENER

Maybe it is the long summer I spent doing research and "hollowing out" that turned my head around. Or maybe it's getting in touch with my body down at the local "Y" that did it. It's not sure, but all of a sudden I am reaping the benefits of the work done by the Gay Liberation and Women's Movements.

Growing up Gay in the '50's was a grim beginning to my awareness, as I am sure many of you are aware. But I suppose it means that in a way, "paid my dues" so to speak. I am now entitled to reap some sort of reward. I mean something besides mere struggle and fighting and work.

This little piece is very personal and informal, but so is what I want to say. I think many women new to the Gay Movement for whatever reason are so hot for the "cause" (worthily as that may be) that they forget to enjoy some of the benefits of that work.

One big benefit is being able to have really fine friendships with "straight" women. Oh, you say, the poor thing has gone soft in the head, she will be used! Perhaps, but I will also be able to enjoy a special kind of friendship that I have longed for all of my life. I don't have to hide in a closet or protect my friendships with lies about myself. I don't mean that I want "acceptance," that I am asking to be tolerated. No, what I am talking about is the new awareness on the part of ALL women in the Movement that lesbians are an important part of the whole picture. That we are not green (or Lavender) monsters.

To experience that turn-around is exhilarating.

To me, to experience the love of "straight" sisters is to bask in a new-found source of light and warmth. They are women. Just like me, oppressed just like me, hopeful just like me. The fact that they choose to relate to men sexually, or at least not to relate to women sexually has come to mean as little to me as my sex life to some of them.

For those of you who have not followed this real closely, what I am saying is that separatism, while a good temporary, personal solution, is definitely out with me as a viable course for Lesbianism or any other movement.

I know there are problems working with men in the Women's Movement. I there are also problems working with "straights" in the Gay Movement. But it is not always so! It can have its good moments and fun times. We are so into the martyr role that it seems "sin" to have fun. Why is that? Have we started to believe the doomsday predictions? Well, I don't. I see a rosy side to this struggle that I am resting in right now. You might try it. After the Rally, the Parade, the Meeting, the Confrontation, I now come home to a cozy little home with a wonderful partner. Not a little place where we say we are "sisters" or "cousins" or whatever. Not a place where we have "men" over to show off to the next-door neighbor. Not a place to simply wrap our wounds. But a place of light and honesty and freedom.

I know that few have that right now. I know the struggle is far from won. But I know that my sexual life, as of the first of 1976, will no longer be of legal interest to this State. I know that there are now men and women in the legislatures of this nation and some States that are publicly out of the closet and doing fine. I know that every day I hear or see a new class, or workshop, or center, or book on film or counselor center that is dealing with my lifestyle in a positive way. I see that and rejoice! It is a step in the right direction.

Those things were earned by all of us. We have worked hard for it. All I am saying, sister, is that we should sometimes stem all the doom and gloom and celebrate what we have won so far. In other words, you sweet lady standing on your soap box, ... shut up and kiss me.
HEROISM REVISITED

My taut, heroic face is
Pulled motionless, trying
To understand the why, the how
Of the space left;
Blank air that you just caressed
And left empty.

Air that seeps through me
Reaching wet thoughts, and
My silent smile is evaporating;
Assaulted by streams
That carve my fading smile
Into something else.
-- Karen Gale

The first hard snap-break
is the most painful.
The splitting in two-
death-pregnant pain-rebirth.
The last is hardest to achieve-
living-out the pain, but using it!

Alone, the shock passes
leaving a question of bitter illusion.

A nation of two can "never" end-
I'm left to question the foundations.

Wanting to remember the sweet moments-
and left alone, pondering the last gasping moments of its life.

Finally, the hope of reunion withers away,
replaced by wisdom and practicality.

The questions, all unanswered
become as side-effects to the new life.

And the pensive waiting at the window
becomes watching the leaves turn.
-- Nora Lee

THE POLITICS OF RELATIONSHIPS #5

How am I to interpret
A phone call
You didn't make?
-- Barbara Lipschutz

THE HARDEST SILENCE

Now that you're gone,
The fall colors are a little different.
The first rain fell quieter.
My hands are a little confused, because I've so much to get used to.

Now that you're gone,
My painting wants some drastic advice.
My ideas need perspective.
Sometimes I don't think at all, because I've so much to get used to.

Now that you're gone,
You won't even deal with me.
God damn it woman!
I want it explained to me, because I've so much to get used to.

Now that you're gone,
You won't even tell me that you are no longer any of my business.
It's the hardest silence, because I've so much to get used to.

-- Karen Gale

Here it is:
The hardest test
Of lesbian-Feminism --
Can we still be sisters
Now that we're no longer lovers?
-- Barbara Lipschutz
No, I don't want you to be my mirror of life.
I want to put you in my backpocket sometimes, though,
and let you see what I see in the course of my day.
But, even that doesn't seem right.
Loving you has to come like living my life,
letting it come and learning what I can.
Yes, I do want to love you, I can't really help that.
You've gently lifted my tense fingers from their hold
upon my body and mind; I don't need that protection.
But, please, do stay and see the suns come up with me;
I'll share my hard edges with you.
And you can teach me to be tender.

--- Nora Lee

INVITATION SOUTH

Why don't you come
to Mexico with me
you look to be warm
and cuddly and soft.
We'd get you a pistol
and me a rifle
go shooting fox and rabbits
buy a horse and a mule
to go ridin on.
You'd cook over a wood fire
I'd tan the hides
you'd have rabbit fur to wear
against your skin
and we'd roll around in the hay
in some barn,
center of Mexico.
You'd get used to it
wearin serapes and those long dresses
out in the sun
you'd be brown as a berry
and mine, woman
I'd take care of you.

--- Barbara Lipschutz
--- Patricia Mooney

HOLDING ON:
Trilogy for a young couple
divided by uncertainty

I
You let go of a rock;
It falls.
You let go of a book;
It falls.
You let go of love;
You fall.

II
I hold you.
I hold you close and tight.
I love you.
But I am "open" --
You are "free" --
I'll open my hands --
See?
Others reach out for you --
My hands grab our love.
I grip our love with both hands,
But they are prying my fingers
Loose --
My hands are slipping,
I'm grabbing at space --
I'm falling,
Through infinite space.
My wrists tingle,
My head feels light,
I feel dizzy,
I feel sick --
Oh, help me, Love!
Save me!

III
It would be cleaner and kinder
to steal,
to take my values by force,
to rip our love from my hands --
than to persist
in this insidious prying at my soul
trying to get me to drop it.

--- Nikki

SEPARATION

Life pales,
A wan existence
Prevails,
While (our) separation
Continues.
Love grows,
Expands,
Reaches all levels
Of awareness,
While waiting
For (our) two hearts
To unite.
Sublime anticipation
Kept secret,
Holding excitement
At bay,
As life goes on,
Apparently undisturbed.

--- Dorothy Feola

NEVER GONE

The soft flesh of
Your femaleness
Brushes against
My mind,
Jarring loose
The gentleness
Of my heart.
My arms embrace
Your memory,
As you (almost) materialize
Under the tender caresses
Of my willing hands.
Then you leave,
Forever gone,
Remaining in the shadow(s)
Of my (constant) love.

--- Dorothy Feola
ALL OUR DREAMS OF WOMEN

It's nothing special, just another Saturday night in a local bar

a friend calls it "reaffirming the roots."

14 years, the faces change, the towns.
Me too I suppose: long hair now checkered shirt hiking boots -- the mountain look.

Guess I'm out of Long Beach for good

Those teachers I used to date. Did they ever get out of their closets? Out of their guilt?

Did they ever decide anything with their bridge games?

My friend -- that lovable queen with the penchant for cross-dressing-- made them nervous.

"You scare me," one said that night.
"You're too open."

I wrote John Cheever type stories about her.
Sat & watched her run serigraphs.
We made the bodies glow in bed. She was somethin'.

But not for me, I couldn't have sex in a closet, couldn't dig being "discreet."

How I hate that word. Even now.

The pricks & stings of growing up an unrepentant queer
All these years. All those women.

"...It gleams and is gone."

STRAIGHT LOVING WOMAN

your eyes wet glisten under fringe of lashes salty glitter drunk and weeping for your love of the circus performer travelling trumpet player south american poet high on caffeine all these words for him and your hot longing as I hold my need to touch everything about you what we have you say transcends the need to touch what we have you say is the need to talk you so tight in love with ever absent men

I am your listening sister I hold my own hand

— Annie Juliet

(copyright Annie Juliet)

MINDSONG

Heroes like Me would rather be Keenly aware rather be feeling a flowing of Meanings mouthing the mind-words Defining emotions hearing the song of Ideas in the words flowing and flowering and Blooming with pictures weaving the symbols in labyrinthine patterns telling of Wonders in worlds of My fancy of Heroes in Action who'd love to be Living love to be Laughing and keenly Aware

— MAIA
THOUGHTS
OF
YOU

Iron mesh containing tiny squares is brought to the attention of a reddish-orange glow.

The axed fuel crackles its surging flame, rearranging itself as it disintegrates into fluorescent ashes.

Soothing sensations caress my face, I radiate an illustrative tranquility in your eerie quietness.

I lie curled beside your hugging magnetism as you kindle the warmth inside me.

Blazing in gaiety, I ignite in your candescent offering, thoughts of a fire, thoughts of you.

— Pamela Derks

A STUDY IN LIGHT

Whose arms were whose? We were so tangled up there your legs all over mine (and under) your breasts and mine touching all our smiling lips together hair entwined and happy -- our bodies can say so much...

— Bonnie McGown

GYPSY

Gypsy has hair like the beauty of the silvery moon; Has a fragrance like baby roses in bloom; Has manners soft as a dove; Has a deep awareness which not many people have; Has a great inner strength of no other woman I've ever known; Has skin smooth as milk and soft as a kitten; Has eyes warm and comforting as a cup of hot chocolate when I come in from the storm; Has an imagination which resembles shiny, bright, shooting stars; She is bolder than the sun's rays; She has the courage of a lion defending her territory when necessary; She puts a fleeting and exciting joy in our friendship; She brings to me and to many others her beautiful and powerful love; And Gypsy has given me a NEW and STRONGER hope for LOVE!

— Mary Gennoy

I'm a SUN-BURST a human being so alive/no there

EXPLODING dreams/realty MERGER

I'm a fountain of energy spewing out ideas/desires/questions/joys

I am golden glowing it all in my sun face feeling it all in my light fingers

I'm a cartwheel SPINNING a star SHOOTING

I'm living within a kaleidoscope world breathing on spangled air walking/flying on comet wings tasting each new idea/hearing each not yet felt experience a gnawing hunger begins in the pit of my soul I greedily suck eternal knowledge creating more craving for more

WOMEN join hands join hearts join souls MAKE ENERGY make a moving meteor to KNOCK against resistant planets I am joining with you exploding with you

I'm a SUNBURST you have lit against the dark you taught me to shine loud & I am starting to ignite & burn a red hot fiery rocket/force

— Lisa Benton
First day of teaching. First job. I'm working at a school for emotionally disturbed children. The class size is ten. Each class is grouped according to some commonly shared problem.

Of course my class's collective problem is "inappropriate sexual identity." Of course.

Nine of the ten children have been at the school previously and I have read their case histories. The tenth, Terry Blakely, has just transferred and, as of yet, there are no records on file. I'm not sure whether it's the fact that she's an unknown quantity or the tough kid facade over the obviously fragile child who lives inside her body, but I instinctively like Terry the best. And Terry obviously likes me. Her eyes smile up at me from beneath her enormous bush.

Once during the morning she slips her arm around my waist and, then again, she graces me with her smile. Her body is straight — no hips or breasts yet. She has slender arms and lips that show the toothmarks of her nervousness. But she hasn't been biting them this morning.

When we get to arithmetic time, eager to catch their interest with my best tricks, I have the class help me demonstrate set theory. I put all the boys in one group and all the girls in another, telling them that each is a set. Terry puts an arm around each of the other two girls and grins broader than ever. She obviously adores my games. Then I ask the children to arrange sets. Terry composes the set of "Nice People." This is an example of a universal set.

By lunch break I was more than a little in love with Terry but I didn't understand why she had been placed in a school for emotionally disturbed children. I made it a point to sit with the school social worker at lunch. I asked her if she had seen Terry's records yet. When she answered in the affirmative I said, "I really think she's a great kid. She's bright, she's friendly, what's she doing here? What's her problem anyway?"

"You just put your finger on it," said the social worker. "Terry's a boy."

That afternoon I very coolly referred to Terry as "he." As I said, I thought I was pretty cool about it. Everyone immediately picked up on the change. "He," said Becky Jean. "I thought Terry was a girl."

The comments after that got worse. Mercifully I have forgotten them. (But someone else didn't forget.)

Then I saw the metamorphosis in Terry from a mischievous, intelligent woman-child to a sullen, devious, "slow" boy, who had a score to settle with the world. I saw the Terry who was indeed emotionally disturbed.

Terry never did forgive me for making her a boy. I blame her/him.
SPINSTERS & MAIDEN LADIES:
THE MYTH AND THE REALITY OF THE LIVES
OF SINGLE WOMEN IN AMERICA, 1800-1861
by Judith Schwarz

Few stereotypes of American women conjure up so negative an image as the one of "old maid." Look up the term in the dictionary, and you will find it defined as "a prim, fussy person; a spinster." (1) Spinster itself is defined as "an unmarried woman past the common age for marrying." (2) The definition perhaps assumes that society has set a time limit on how long a woman may remain unmarried, after which she deserves the description of spinster or old maid. Then look up the definition for bachelor, the only common term used to describe unmarried males, and you will find: "A person holding the first or lowest academic degree; a male who has not married." (3) No time limit has been set in the definition, so any unmarried male from six to sixty may well wear the harmless, even pleasant, badge of "bachelor" without undue embarrassment, and without feeling that it reflects upon his personal qualities in any way. He has simply decided not to marry, thus far. But what woman of any age cares to be called "spinster" or "old maid," especially when she knows the last term defines her as a prim and fussy person?

If this label still carries an onerous weight for single women in our own era, how much more so it must have been for single women of the first half of the nineteenth century, when marriage, home and family were considered by most Americans to be the only proper concerns for women. In such an overwhelmingly domestic climate, what kind of woman wore the label of "old maid" of her own free will? What circumstances in her life led her, willingly or unwillingly, to live her days as an unmarried woman? How did...
she support herself? How did the world view her as an individual woman, and how did she view herself? Was she accepted as a meaningful part of society once she had established her own pattern of life as an adult woman? How did the world view her as an individual woman, and how did she view herself? Was she accepted as a meaningful part of society once she had established her own pattern of life as an adult woman?

In attempting to even begin to answer these questions, I found it necessary to limit my examination to any woman who passed her thirtieth birthday unmarried between the years 1800 and the beginning of the Civil War in 1861. Although the length of time examined may seem long, it will be shown in this paper that neither attitudes nor circumstances changed in any considerable way towards single women up to the Civil War. Also, in order to examine the individual lives and accomplishments of single women in the early nineteenth century, I relied heavily on the biographies of women listed in the three-volume reference guide, Notable American Women: 1607-1950 (4). This necessarily limits my subject to the women found unusual and notable enough to be given space in this work. Nevertheless, I feel justified in such a limitation, since in all of the extensive research done for this paper, I found no primary sources, not one diaries, letters, or married women written about who was not already listed in the Notable American Women series. No doubt many single women were not notable, but since no record was left of their lives, I am forced to rely on the women whose lives I can examine.

Since Notable American Women became the backbone of this paper, the criteria used to select the women found important enough to be included should be reviewed. The 1,359 women included were selected thusly:

Only one group of women, the wives of presidents of the United States, were admitted to Notable American Women on their husband's credentials. For the others, the criterion was distinction in their own right of more historical significance. The subject was of primary importance to the purposes of this work: the changes in the status of single women during the period 1800-1840, states "Periodization always offers difficulties."(6) She therefore decided to present the history of American women's history under the label "Colonial," since she felt that any changes in women's lives between the American Revolution and 1800 were "transitional and possibly atypical." Her excellent summary of pre-1800 attitudes towards women would be hard to improve upon.

Throughout the colonial period there was a marked shortage of women, which varied with the regions and always was greatest in the frontier areas. This (from the point of view of women) favorable sex ratio enhanced their status and position. The Puritan world view regarded idleness as sin: life in an undeveloped country made it absolutely necessary that each member of the community perform an economic function. Thus work for women, married or single, was not only approved, it was regarded as a civic duty. Furthermore, the New England town council's expectations of single and unattached women to be self-supporting and for a long time provided needy spinsters with parcels of land. Colonial society, as a whole was hierarchical, and position in society depended on the position of the men. Women did not play a determining role in the ranking pattern; they took their position in society through the men of their own family or the men they married. In other words, they participated in the hierarchy only as daughters and wives, not as individuals. Similarly, their occupations were, by and large, merely auxiliary, designed to contribute to family income, enhance their husband's business or continue it in case of widowhood. The self-supporting spinsters were certainly the exception. (8)

Even after 1800, several of Lerner's observations still hold true for the vast majority of women, single or married. Women still found themselves considered second in importance to their fathers, husbands or brother's status in society. Few middle or upper-class women had the need or the drive to attempt to carve their own niche in the world outside their home. As for working-class women, they seldom had either the education or the opportunity to receive recognition for their efforts as individuals. The
time-honored occupations for poorer women, such as working as domestics, tavern maids, and farm laborers, effectively hid the woman worker from public consideration, except in a negative moral context.

Nevertheless, many women after 1800, especially women who for one reason or another remained unmarried, not only felt the expanded life outside their family homes, but they fortunately found new ways to satisfy the necessity of an independent income.

Writing poetry, short stories, and articles for the rapidly growing number of journals, magazines and newspapers helped supplement the incomes of many single women, including Margaret Fuller, Hannah Adams, and the sisters Alice and Phoebe Cary. While at first it was considered improper, modest, and outside the woman's sphere for a woman writer to sign her real name to her contribution, by the 1830's many women realized the advantages of using an easily identifiable name so as to build an audience of faithful readers. Women who wrote for her living often found she had a public as interested in her personal life as they were in what she had to say through her writing. Unaccustomed to the attention, many women writers of fiction and poetry were embarrassed in public, in self-confidence while losing in durability, as they sought to write for the sentimental and highly moral taste of their day. (10) On the other hand, they found the spotlight extremely distasteful or painful, and turned to other ways to earn their living.

Teaching had always been considered an excellent way to utilize a woman's "natural" moral goodness and child-nurturing instincts to the benefit of the students. With the growth of the public schools and the number of children in every town and settlement, single women found that society, in need of their services, sanctioned teaching as the most respectable and worthy occupation for unmarried women. Education was by far the most popular way for a single woman to earn her living (such as it was).

Professionalization of teaching occurred between 1820-1860, a period marked by a sharp increase in the number of women teachers. The spread of female seminaries, academies and normal schools provided new opportunities for the training and employment of female teachers. . . America was committed to educating its children in public schools, but it was inconsistent on doing so at a cost as cheaply as possible, and available in great numbers and they were willing to work cheaply. About 50% of the wages paid male teachers was considered appropriate. (11)

Ill-prepared in most instances for the task of teaching a room full of children of various ages and abilities, dependent upon the hospitality of the parents of her students for her room and board, with her meals, coming and goings, and teaching methods meticulously noted and openly commented on by the community she served, it is no wonder that many aging school teacher found herself becoming a stern disciplinarian in the classroom; a difficult person in her private life. The advantages of her own hard-earned money to spend, a fresh life far from the confines of home, and a professional job where she felt independent in her own classroom, were often outweighed by the harsh realities of her every day existence. If she stayed unmarried, and could not save enough to buy her own cottage, her personal worries and resentments over her treatment by the community led her into a bitter old age. More than one woman heard the derogatory epithet, "old maid schoolmarm" and knew the searing justice behind the stereotype.

If teaching was not the most favorable way of life for a nineteenth century unmarried woman, what other choices were open to her? Apparently, as Harriet Martineau noted on her tour of America in 1837, the choices were very few;

..."it is difficult, where it is not impossible, for women to earn their own bread. Where there is a toil that women do not labor, the encouragement and rewards of labor are not provided. It is so in America. In some parts, there are now so many women dependent on their own exertions for a maintenance, that the evil will give way before the force of circumstance. In the manufacture of goods there is a lot of poor women is sad. Before the opening of the factories, there were but three resources: teaching, needlework and keeping boarding-houses or hotels. Now, the women in the mills, and are employed in printing-offices as compositors, as well as folders and stitchers." (12)

The mills referred to are the textile mills of Lowell, Massachusettts, which in the 1830's replaced the traditional home methods of carding, spinning and weaving all cloth by hand. On the one hand, it freed women from these time-consuming chores, thereby allowing middle-class "ladies" more leisure time; on the other, the mills opened up a whole new field of respectable employment to New England women "who came to the mills from New England villages seeking respectable adventure and liberation from unpaid domestic servitude." (11)

Called "female operatives," the women workers controlled the huge new industrial weaving machines, and lived together in boarding houses.

The early days were good. The women were paid higher wages than they could command in any of the other forms of employment that were open to them. Moreover, they were from the same stock as their employers and the New England industrialists knew that in order to attract the daughters of Puritan farmers, certain standards would have to be met. Boarding houses with resident chaperones were provided and standards of moral conduct including mandatory Sunday church attendance, were established. . . .The most meaningful part of the experience for each of the women was being, for the first time in her life, in the company of a large group of women. The camaraderie kept the hard working conditions -- 12 hours a day, six days a week, 12 months a year -- from seeming like alienating labor. . . Being paid to produce goods gave the women a sense of dignity; nevertheless, they regarded the Lowell experience as a temporary occupation. Very few among them were "without some distinct plan for bettering the condition of themselves and those they loved." (12)

An English observer of the Lowell Mills recorded the following
In 1844 there were 10,000 people employed (at Lowell), of whom about 3/4 were males, wages of a male were then about 75 to 80 cents a day, or about $4.80 a week. Those of a female were from 15 to 20 cents a day, or about $2.00 a week. In many cases they were higher. The wages here specified, in both cases, received exclusive of board. A great portion of the wages thus monthly received is deposited in the Savings Bank, particularly by the females, who make their work at Lowell a stepping stone to a better state of existence. After lauding there for a few years, they amass several hundred dollars, marry, and go off with their husbands to the west, buy land, and enjoy more liberty and freedom than elsewhere, a wife is subjected to stricter obligations.

We have seen that it was possible for single women to support themselves independently if they had the desire to do so. A question still unanswered is: why would a woman remain single after the usual age when all around her were marrying? Many women, of course, had no choice in the matter; some were too homely to attract anyone (although if they were backed by a wealthy enough dowry, even this would have been no real barrier to marriage), and others were too crippled or mentally feeble to live outside matrimony; especially when she observed the fate of her newly-married sisters. Another foreign visitor, Alexander MacKay, commented on the fate of married women:

"Tocqueville's observations may furnish us with one answer: by a wealthy enough dowry, even this would have been no real barrier to marriage. The Englishwoman, Harriet Martineau, observed:"

"Of course, many of the women did not marry and go off with their husbands to the west. Many went on to become school teachers in western settlements, as the editor of the female operative literary magazine "The Lowell Offering," Lucy Larcom, eventually did. Although there is no real evidence they did so, others may have taken their savings and bought their own land, or set up shopkeeping as milliners or seamstresses.

Thus the vices and dangers of society are early revealed to her; as she sees them clearly, she views them without illusions, and braces them without fear; for she is full of reliance on her own strength... It is rarely that an American woman at any age displays childish timidity or ignorance. Like the young women of Europe, she is taught to survey the circle to married women. She may be young, beautiful, and accomplished to a degree, and may, indeed, but yesterday, have been the reigning belle, but, despite all this, from the moment that she submits to the matrimonial tie, the American woman is, socially speaking, as the common phrase says, "laid on the shelf.""

Another feature of American society which soon excites the surprise of the stranger... is the little attention which is paid in the social circle to married women. She may be young, beautiful, and accomplished to a degree, and may, indeed, but yesterday, have been the reigning belle, but, despite all this, from the moment that she submits to the matrimonial tie, the American woman is, socially speaking, as the common phrase says, "laid on the shelf.""

Another obstacle in the path of marriage for the unmarried woman were the strict social restrictions of the courtship ritual in nineteenth-century America, which were a trial in themselves. In her relations with the male, girls were advised constantly to play a passive role. The safest and happiest way for women, wrote one author, was "to leave the matter [of courtship] entirely in his hands."
to the evils of blighted love, fomented horrible physical and mental deterioration. (19)

What if the wrong man showed his intentions to woo a woman, while she actually preferred another, but was not allowed by courtship etiquette to let the favored man of the Southern lady, she could draw the attention of the man she preferred? As Anne Scott noted in her study of the Southern lady,

If the neighborhood failed to yield a Beau Ideal, or if the magic spell turned out to be inadequate to attract him, romantic images of love gave way to more pragmatic considerations. Proximity, a thoughtful consideration of land and family connections, or the painful fear of being an old maid were often the basis for marriage... In middle Georgia, an area inhabited by solid up-country planters, girls began very early to accumulate a hope chest. Marriages of fourteen and fifteen were common. The girl who had many beaux was envied, and families with a "houseful of old maids" pitied. (20)

How many women must have married the first man her family found reasonably acceptable who asked her, in the real fears and family pressures that made her marry at all, and then begin to think, "What an "old maid"! I might add that the entire courtship ritual was riddled with false assumptions and unreal expectations for both sexes. It is a wonder that there were any happily married couples at all, when the woman was supposed to passively await the attention of a man, without showing him whether or not he really attracted her. Also, once he did start courting her, she was repeatedly warned never to be alone with him under any circumstances, or trust him, or allow him to kiss her or caress her in any way until after the marriage bans were posted. (21)

Women who actually obeyed all those rules must have found it exceptionally difficult to get to know prospective husbands or family pressures before they were married. In such an unreal atmosphere, it is no wonder that the sentimental romantic novels with no basis in reality were so popular with women readers, both before and after marriage! The novels reinforced the marital ideal, and taught the woman to accept her lot in life:

A leading characteristic of the traditional family was the conception of women as passive members of the family. They were subordinate and inferior in all ways; their function was to serve men, and their only possible goal in life was marriage. Apparently this force was strong for traditionalist beliefs about women and families pervaded contemporary literature. Popular novels were replete with the joys of family living and preaching that the duty of women was to marry and then stay in the home. Submissively married women were the feminine Ideal, and winning helplessness was seen as women's greatest charm. These represented the cherished idealized beliefs of the generation to such an extent that almost nowhere did there appear the slightest hint of discontent or doubt. (22)

The above quote refers to the period 1800-1840, and the author states that women who read novels and magazines written after that period would have found a gradual change in the concept of women's role, which allowed for more freedom of choice in life roles for women. Yet, as women's reproductive organs were a child-bearer. In the nineteenth century, especially, women were defined by their reproductive organs. Physicians saw women as the product and prisoner of their reproductive system.

It was the ineluctable basis of her social role and behavioral characteristics, the cause of her most common ailments; women's uterus and ovaries constituted her body and behavior from puberty through menopause. A wise deity had designed woman as keeper of the hearth, as breeder and reaper of children. (23)

With sanitary provisions for the menstrual cycle as primitive as they were at the time of Eve, women were forcedly (and in many cases, painfully and distressingly) rendered every month their predetermined ability to become pregnant. Birth control in the early nineteenth century was virtually nonexistent, except for the most primitive methods of self-control. A study of the medical aspect of women's lives in this era remarks on:

...the frequency with which childbirth marred. For women pain and often illness, and often death from childbirth, term complies, fistulae, prolapsed uterus were widespread "Female complaints" in a period when gynecological practice was still relatively primitive and incomprehensible to any woman seen in 1840. Young women were simply terrified of having children. (24)

That was certainly not too surprising, when all around them, even the most conventional must have noticed sisters, cousins, or neighborhood women who had borne many children. In a very short span of 20 years, women out, old before the end of their reproductive decade of life was over, exhausted from their daily chores and perhaps already since the last baby, these wives and mothers were aside: advertisements against marriage for many young women... Surplus of married women who had bore children slowly die after childbirth, or of their ideals or women who were stillborn.
Death became romanticized in the magazines, and it was actually considered fashionable to die at an early age, while the woman still retained some of her youthful beauty. She would become a cherished memory, a symbol of grace and loveliness for her family and widower to pine over. Of course, how much appeal this whole image had for sensible, realistic young women in the prime of life and vitality, we may never know. I tend to believe that it was negligible.

Having seen some of the social pressures all women had to face in the period 1800-1861, and some of the realities of their position in American society, we now may examine the very special and even more concentrated pressures that women who chose to stay single endured.

III. THE IMAGE OF THE SPINSTER

Few stereotypes in American culture can possibly equal the myth of the "old maid" in its incredible hostility, viciousness, durability and prevalence, as shown through the popular artifacts of the novel, song, and magazine articles. In the period 1800-1861, the woman who was still unmarried past the age of thirty was uniformly depicted as a dries-up, wasted "old" woman; as usually meticulously neat in appearance and house-keeping; as a poor cook; as exceedingly homely or plain, if not downright ugly; as frequently near-sighted, either wearing glasses or else constantly squinting; as a abusive gossip and busybody; as possessing a mean, grudging disposition; and frequently, as the villainess in a romance.

With such an abundance of riches to choose from, it is difficult to decide which portion of the stereotype to concentrate on. A volume could be filled with excellent quotes substantiating each part of the myth. An important consideration to keep in mind, though, is that this is not a peculiarly American myth; in reality, it is a hold-over from English literary tradition.

. . . much of the disapprobation associated with the "old maid" in England was carried to America through fiction. The word, "spinster," meaning originally merely "a woman who spins," gradually came to be almost synonymous with the epithet "old maid," which from the beginning was a derogatory term. The latter. . . appears in its most disparaging form in the English novels of the eighteenth century and the earliest American novels were but feeble imitations of the English fiction formula. (26)

Also, much of the content of American magazines was simply reprints (often without credit being given for the original source) from the English press and magazines. Early examples of the English attitude towards unmarried women transplanted into the American literary tradition are Susanna Rowson's Charlotte Temple (1794) and Isaac Mitchell's vicious spinster aunt portrayal in The Asylum or Alonzo & Melissa (1811). In the latter, even the language and the upper-class worthy status of the Bloomfield family sound more old-world than one might expect to find in a genuinely American novel. The rather complex plot involves Martha Bloomfield, who is instrumental in abducting her young niece, Melissa, in order to keep her from marrying her penniless young suitor whom she loves.

Martha Bloomfield, Melissa's aunt, who attended her, was about 40 years old. She had been a relishing toast in her youth, but a coquette and a prig is precisely what she is. Hence, her numerous admirers relinquished expectations as she her beauty and graces deserted her. She had received the most flattering offers, some of which she had refused, and suspended others. Her family and fortune, she thought, connected with her personal accomplishments, would, at any time, ensure her a choice of among the humble devotees who signed at her feet, if she should condescend to make the selection. Like many calculators of superior wisdom and understanding, she did not discover her error until too late to rectify it. Still, she was not without consideration; her father had provided a legacy for her in his will. She possessed lands, the rents of which were more than adequate to her maintenance. They frequently visited among her numerous relatives, yet she principally resided with Melissa's father, who, by humoring her peculiarities, and sometimes adapting her advice, when it did not run counter to his own opinions, induced her to suppose that she held no small influence over him. He had an object in view by this; her fortune he hoped to secure in his own family, provided she should never marry, which, probably, would be the case. She was called Aunt Martha by the family, and Miss Martha by her other acquaintances. (27)

Martha is an excellent prototype of the stingy, close-fisted, hard-hearted old maid. If the rents of her land fail to agree with her, or are late in paying their rents, she made no scruple in turning them off at quarter-day. . . This, she said, was keeping a "sharp lookout," though in consequence of such sharpness, her lands were, generally in a bad state of cultivation. (28)

The author implies that what in a man would be deemed good business sense (at least over the non-payment of rents) is to be censured in Martha, since it shows a lack of Feminine compassion. In the end, of course, Martha Bloomfield receives her just desserts by dying (still unmarried), and the young lovers Melissa and Alonzo are happily reunited and wed.

Throughout the entire literary output of the early nineteenth century, sentiment and stereotype were the techniques of the day. Marriage—the result, always, of course, of LOVE was the haven of havens, the last refuge of the young and beautiful. The only form of happiness that the women of the day knew was marriage, and the only way for them to attain it was to marry. "Men Propose, Mama?" was a song that stated the common dilemma. (29)

Husband-hunting was celebrated not only in songs, but in novels and stories. It is especially blatant in the short comic story, "Leap Year: Or Woman's Privilege," the plot revolves around a family with four single daughters and a spinster aunt who resides with them. The mother tells her youngest teenage daughter:

Let me advise you and your sisters to exercise a portion of your sex's privilege sufficient to insure husbands before the year expires. Your papa finds business getting worse every day, and I am terrified of having a crowd of single girls filling up the table when there are so many young bachelors looking out for eligible wives. (30)

Notice that there is never any discussion of any of the daughters possibly going to work in order to help the family finances, or establish a career. The only choice is marriage. Notice also that the mother never discusses what her daughters should do with their lives when they are not married.

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warned quite definitely that any woman past the age of thirty is practically uramarrlage-
barrier and become automatically an "old maid?" In the "leap Year" story, the reader is
able, Witness the description of "Aunt Mllly":

stories, the above quote also points bluntly to the extreme differences in eligibility
as a figure of fun for daring to think a man nearly twenty years older than she would
active courtship of a woman thirty years younger than himself, while Mildred is portrayed
find her "wasted" body and soul attractive. We are left with this telling view of her
pigs ard his pipe. "(33)

A man such as Cremome may never think about marriage at all, until one morning at the
oldest (mid-twenties) sister, a widow whom Mildred had complimented "on her escape from
of 50), and for a time firmly hoped to achieve her share of the
joint resolution relating to Leap Year. "(Later) Creomone told Mildred, "I see what you are driving at, but you are too old to be
my wife." (Mildred replies) "Old! Become your wife... Why, you are ancient enough to be my father! Marry you! Old! I'm
sure!... " I repeat it, random, that you are too old, or I
should be proud to meet your views. A man is in his prime at fifty—a woman at 5 and 20, at the most; 30, consequently, I have
barely climbed to the top of the hill, while you have passed over it, and are very considerably down the wrong side." (32)

Besides being a prime example of the typical male character's attitude in these
stories, the above quote also points bluntly to the extreme differences in eligibility
for marriage between the bachelor and the spinster. Creomone finds nothing odd in his
active courtship of a woman thirty years younger than himself, while Mildred is portrayed
as a figure of fun for daring to think a man nearly twenty years older than she would
find her "wasted" body and soul attractive. We are left with this telling view of her
future prospects for happiness:

"Aunt Milly retired with her cookery books to Bucks County, and is, at this
moment, desperately engaged in an attempt to subjugate a Dutch Farmer, devoted to his
pigs and his pipe."(33)

The other four sisters are happily married by the end of the story, even the
oldest (mid-twenties) sister, a widow whom Mildred had complimented "on her escape from
the shame of celibacy, "(34) temporarily though it was. How odd society's standards were! A man may never think about marriage at all, according to Creomone, until the age of fifty he wakes up and decides to "take a wife," and obviously the Dutch farmer is
not terribly concerned over being a bachelor, whereas Mildred is obsessed by her single-
ness, and must spend a vast amount of time and energy "desperately" trying to snare a
man to cook and clean for. We are allowed to believe that she has no other Interest in
marriage, and will never find peace or contentment as her lot in life as long as
she stays a spinster.

Another image of the spinster is that of the self-sacrificing woman who gave
up her chance for marital bliss in order to care for her parents or other close ones
in need of her services. The martyr occurs frequently throughout the nineteenth century
as a stock character, usually in the background as a vague shadow tending to other's
needs and consistently neglecting her own.

And who that will take off the glasses of prejudice, look around, and
can, will not find stock character's in domestic life either, or in other close ones
in need of her services. The martyr occurs frequently throughout the nineteenth century
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needs and consistently neglecting her own.

and vexatious cares and economies which dependence and a narrow
in the family home,

... patiently fulfilling a daughter's duties and struggling with a
life-long regret. Nor did the filial obedience and filial respect
which had promoted the greatest of sacrifices, diminish or falter
during many years of severe privation and trial. ... Sahib's face
paler, and her domestic life either at home or elsewhere,
[women] who provided the greatest of sacrifices, diminish or falter
[over her ill father]. ... Sahib's health became feeble, and her
hair turned gray. ... Was it nothing, then, that for 10 long years
Sahib's domestic existence had been varied only by the petty
and vexatious cares and economies which dependance and a narrow
income entail? ... Was it nothing, that all her dutiful efforts
called house-cleaning, herself in the thickest of the fray; now
arranging wardrobes for the Spring and Autumn comfort of all the
household — save herself; ... in brief, menial and drudging spent
in the service of perhaps a sister, a cousin, or a niece, without
return for untiring, disinterested affection, is the selfish love
that considers its recipient invaluable, not as a gentle, unpretend-
ing associate, but as a reliable convenience. (35)

Prime examples of such selfless spinsters are found in Nathaniel Hawthorne's

The House of the Seven Gables actually is the first truly American novel with a spinster
as one of the major characters. Hepzibah Pyncheon, age sixty, is the epitome of all the
"wasted" qualities of the old maid stereotype. She has spent her life caring for the
ancestral home, waiting for her brother to return from prison. Nervous, constantly
talking to herself for want of better company, Hepzibah finds herself forced for the
first time in her ladylike life to earn a living in order to keep from starving, when
accepting the aid of a despondent relative. She manages (barely) to open a small shop in
her home, which turns out to be a single long, dreary failure, only to have to oversee for a
single long, dreary failure, only to have to oversee for a
young niece comes to her rescue and manages it for her. Hawthorne describes her as a
"poor thing" who "never knew, by her own experience, what love technically means." (36)

The author discounts Hepzibah's sacrifice and love for her brother:
How patiently did she endeavor to wrap Clifford up in her great,
warmth, and make it all the world to him, so that he might
retain no torturing sense of the coldness and dreariness without!
Her little efforts to amuse him! How pitiful, yet magnanimous
they were! (37)

The self-sacrificing spinster in Geneviève's Mabel Vaughan is Miss Sablah Vaughan,
the unmarried aunt of the title character. She had spent her entire life caring for her
invalid mother, and when her mother had died, she accepted her brother's invitation to
come and stay with him and his daughter.

We will take a glance at the history of her life. The life of an old
maid in a small, quiet village, a blank, an unwritten page to the careless, t
thoughtless, the underminded. But to the Initiated eye which
faithfully scans its past, its present, and its future experience, may
prove a world of strong affections, conflicting interests, anxious
cares, and busy memories, whose only register is hidden in
one human heart? (38)

The reader becomes aware that Sablah's strong-minded mother had once stood in
the way of her marriage to a poor scholar she had loved. After her family reacted viol­
ently to Sablah's engagement, the lover left the village and eventually married
another. Sablah, of course, stayed faithful to the memory of her lost love, and remained
in the family home,
and habitual sacrifices called forth no praise, while for every omission or neglect she was reproved as if she had still been a child? (39)

The sympathetic understanding shown in Maria Cummins' writing about the life of a spinster points up the contrast between the point of view of women writers and men on the subject of unmarried women. Cummins was only one of many women who wrote movingly of the plight of the "old maid." Invariably, they saw little humor in the spinster's situation, and found many reasons for explaining why her personality may have suffered throughout the years of neglect by herself and society. The portrayals were sometimes condescending; they were seldom cruel or sarcastic. An excellent example of the many essays and short magazine articles and stories written by women with the title "Old Maids" is Anna Cora Mowatt Ritchie's story which deserves quoting at length.

"Old maid! Was there ever woman so wise that she could hear the obnoxious title applied to herself without a suppressed sigh? Though few are the old maids who might not have been wives if they had so desired, the sense of incomplete development — of unfilled duties, unfulfilled hopes — will cause a passing pang. But who that knows Miriam Plesance feels that the life of an old maid is necessarily dreary, profitless, colorless? . . . But mark how men — intellectual, thinking, feeling men — hesitate to apply the unappallant epithet to sweet Miriam! (40)

Ritchie goes on to tell her readers that even though Miriam has "reached and passed the green ascent of thirty, and is calmly descending the verdant slope beyond," she is not one of your garden-variety stereotypic old maids. "Life has been all gain to her." (41) Ritchie also discounts the myth that a woman must live for love alone, as the main focal point of her life.

"Freedom" — a word never used and seldom hinted at in the literary works of male authors to describe the life of a spinster! Can it be that women in the first half of the nineteenth century actually found something admirable in the lives of their unmarried sisters? This conclusion gains more weight when one looks at two of the most popular American folk songs of the era which show a real reluctance on the part of the song-writers to have women marry. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the exact period the songs were written, much evidence would indicate they originated in the period we are examining.

The first, "Paper of Pins," is sung by a couple. The man offers his beloved several gifts through the song — such as a "paper of pins," a "dress of red," and eventually "my hand and heart" — "if you will marry me, me, me/Will you marry me," (3) The woman refuses to be bought answering; "that's not the way my love begins." In the last chorus, she tells the song-writers to "be a widdow old maid/and take my stool and sit in the shade" rather than marry him. (43)

The other folk song is a truer heartfelt wish of a married woman to be single again. It shows the dark side of the dream of marriage, and is called "When I Was Single."

When I was single, when dreamt no pins; Now I am married, go nag me all the time.
For more information on nineteenth century women writers, extensive material may be found in Ann D. Wood, "The 'Scarbhill Women' and Fanny Fern: The Women Write," American Quarterly XXIII (Spring, 1971): 3-25.


Ibid., p. 280.


Martineau, Society in America, 3:119.


Haller, "From Maidennood to Menopause," p. 54.


Ibid., p. 345.

III. The Image of the Spinster


Ibid., p. 97.

Ibid., p. 98.


QUESTIONNAIRE ON LESBIAN SEXUALITY

Ms. Pat Hardman is a lesbian woman compiling material for a book of information about sex for gay women, to fill a need that she sees for a sex book which is not written in implicitly heterosexual terms and does not relegate lesbian sexuality to a small chapter in the back of the book. The book is not being written for a degree and will not deal with "professional" questions such as "causes" of lesbianism. Rather, it will present concrete information for lesbians by lesbians, and it will be distributed through the lesbian community. If you would like to participate in the writing of this book by providing information, write to Ms. Pat Hardman, 1800 Market Street, P. O. Box 151, San Francisco, California 94102.
BOYCOTT

Dear LESBIAN VOICES,

The Mecca, in Santa Clara, has recently instituted a dress code requiring men to wear pants and women to wear dresses. In a gay bar, this is a transparent sexist ploy to exclude women (as well as transvestites). It's legal. But it's obnoxious.

We are starting a boycott of the Mecca immediately.

It is particularly important for gay men to urge male friends or acquaintances not to go to the Mecca. The policy seems aimed at creating a "he-man" atmosphere in the bar in hopes of attracting more gay men. It is important to show them that sexism doesn't pay!

Let them know you are boycotting (and your friends are boycotting) by phone or letter. Picket! Sit-in! Why not?

And most important, keep your money and the money of your friends out of the Mecca's cash registers.

If you can think of any way to publicize this boycott — do it! Get it in newsletters, on radio or TV — anything you can think of. The wilder the better.

In sisterhood,

Mog Duff, Lesbian-Feminist Alliance of S.C.C.

Editorial opinion: A consumer boycott of anti-Lesbian private businesses is not only one of the most practical ways of expressing disapproval, it is also the most ethical — because it recognizes the mutual, voluntary trade relationships involved. If a business, whether straight or gay male, doesn't want our patronage, then by all means, we shouldn't go there — and neither should our friends. Picketing and sit-ins, in my opinion, are a different matter because these actions interfere with the rights of the private business and of the customers who do want to go there. Spread the word — yes! — when you find out that a business is anti-Lesbian. We surely don't want our money going into the pockets of those who hate and oppress us! But why have so little pride as to force our way in where we aren't wanted? We want to be left alone and let's have a permanent boycott of such places! Finally, remember that someday the moocain may be on the other foot — some of us want to establish Lesbian businesses, Lesbian centers, Lesbian theatres, Lesbian private clubs — that's why we have a permanent boycott of such places!

In response to the June 1975 issue of LESBIAN VOICES' cover page:

In reference to the "Right to marry" in Colorado was prompted by the action of a license clerk in Boulder who issued a number of same-sex marriage licenses before being told by superiors to halt and desist. This made national news last spring. As far as I know, the marriages are so far legally valid. There was another case back East on a couple women getting married, and an Attorney General's opinion upheld the legality of the marriage. I haven't heard anything more about these cases lately, so am not sure of their current status. Legal marriage is one of the civil rights that Gays have been working hard on for several years now, and I expect that it is just a matter of time until our right to marry is recognized. Then we will have to face the question whether we want State-sanctioned and delineated marriages or whether we want to draw up our own private contracts. I think the legal right to marry will be of great symbolic value in our struggle.

Perhaps LESBIAN VOICES should carry more articles and information on legal changes and civil rights issues. As a literary magazine, we tend to leave this to the newspapers, but a periodic look at where we stand legally might be valuable. Thanks for bringing your questions to our attention.

— Rosalie Nichols, ed.

Dear J.K.,

I'm sorry if our cover was misleading. It was meant to be a summary of the main areas in which Gays have had to fight and are fighting still for rights which heterosexuals take for granted. Years ago, there was a dispute between the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis as to whether a separate Gay Bill of Rights was necessary or whether the rights of Gays are adequately covered by the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights and need only to be enforced. As far as I know, no actual Gay Bill of Rights was ever adopted by any representative gay organization. Ours was purely fictional.

The best sources for keeping up with Gay civil rights that I have found are generally Gay male newspapers (Lesbian newspapers tend to neglect Gay rights coverage, except for child custody and rape cases). One which I have been following recently and which has good coverage without all the porno stuff is GAY COMMUNITY NEWS, 22 Bromfield Street, Boston, Mass 02108 (see ad this issue). GCN covers both Gay male and Lesbian civil rights and news of general interest to Gays and in published weekly.

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In reference to the June 1975 issue of LESBIAN VOICES' cover page:

The GAY BILL OF RIGHTS — Is this fact or fiction? Is there such a document and where might one procure a copy? Also — and of importance to my lover and I was the "H.I. to marry" on the cover of this issue. Says — "Recognized in Colorado" on the cover. Do you know where we might get further documentation of this statement? Or possibly you could give us more details. No mention of the profound issues on your cover for June were elaborated on in this issue. Why not?

We'd like to know more. Thanks for your consideration.

— J.P., Arizona

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— Rosalie Nichols, ed.
I had begun to think that the Lesbian relationship as I know it was relegated to the over
life essay  I have found Nv^elf so ™ch in arjeenent with a publication as with your June 1975
issue. — marvelous. As for the two views of monofigi^iiv, thank the Goddess for yours. I
would like to subscribe to L.V. . . . I really enjoyed "I" by Ramona Roark" in the
June issue.

LesbifTouch Indeed!
— S.M.P., Homestead, Florida

You're fantastic!! Just realized "I" by Ramona Roark was a fiction, written by none
other. — FANTASTIC article. Would like to know if you have any other "published" works,
that I may find in a library, or . . .

Also, LESBIAN VOICES is the finest feminist publication I have seen yet. I loved Nikki's
Man-Hater's Page. Hope to see more of the same in future issues. Looking forwards to the
next lavender booklet!!

— D.M.P., Brighton, Massachusetts

A friend from Tennessee sent me a copy of your publication, and I was much interested in
it. I was especially pleased with the article entitled "I" by Ramona Roark" by Rosalie
Nichols. I've been in the Lesbian movement for a long long time, and I could not agree
with the sentiments of that article more — in EVERY way. To me, "I" is an important
word, in capital letters. I like me, and I am not ashamed to say so. Good luck on your
publication . . .

— A Friend from New Jersey

Just got the fourth issue of LESBIAN VOICES. I'm into it and excited! — taking time out
to share my enthusiasm and appreciation with you. Who is that Judith Trova?! I would
have enjoyed reading of her Interests and background as intro or sequel to her article —
which was beautifully done! It hits me where I live. And the short articles by women
reading reality beautiful gave me a peaceful sense of: all's-right-with-the-world. That's
the kind of inspiration I need when I'm most intensely aware, too often I focus on what's
wrong with my world.

I'm deeply impressed with your contributors. How satisfying it must be for you to have
the consistently high quality of your ideas and writing answered in kind! It's one thing
to have great ideas— but altogether another talent to be able to convey ideas clearly
through the written word. And, as I know all too well, still a greater level of integra­
tion to arrange one's lifestyle to get those first priority ideas into print.

— Maia Smith, Florida

Just a note to say thanks for being there when I needed you -- I know the timing of LES­
BIAN VOICES is accidental to the rough times of my life — but somehow it still felt
like you knew and held out a hand and support to me. I feel real alone but guess I'm
crazy enough to believe that love and community, working together to change a tired world
are possible goals. I'm an old romantic socialist but the magazine made me think beyond
my limited visions, made me laugh and cry. The first issue upset me — probably because
it's so hard for me to face and deal with how much and how often I hate men — but this
issue seemed to deal much more with what I think being gay is about — It has nothing to
do with my hate/love of men. It has to do with loving women. Feeling their support and
trust, realizing our creativity and strength and joy.

— M.G., Colombia

A.H. introduced me to your magazine. I like your "Monogamy" statement and "I" by Ramona
Roark." It's the first thing I've enjoyed reading in over a year. Thank you for writing
it. Best regards.

— K.N., Bakersfield, California

I've just finished reading Volume 1 Issue 4 of LESBIAN VOICES. You are doing beautiful
work!

— Annie Juliet, New York

I received my first Issue Sunday at the Lesbian-Feminist Alliance and was very impressed.
It was a very well put together and all-together magazine for Lesbians. It was finally
something I could read that didn't always put dirty slurs with mentions of Lesbianism.

— Carolyn D. Shama, California

I really like what you're doing. May you have all the energy needed to move forward.

— Tee Cordone, San Francisco, California

This is a quickly written fan letter. Your magazine gets better and better. I usually
read each issue at a woman's store or at the Sacramento Women's Center. Your June 1975
issue was so well put together, with so many fine and timely writings that I took a spare
dollar and bought myself a copy. Since I don't have much money to spare above essentials
like food, this represents my true happiness at reading/participating in your work.
I can't afford a subscription, so I'll get my copies at the Sacramento women's Center.
But I know that publications cost a lot to produce, so I am enclosing a dollar cash as
a donation.

Thank you, sisters.

And I'm sure that the spirit of Sapha, in her acicolic dress/tunic and flowers, smiles
somewhere, knowing that she now has more sisters than ever before.

— Ann PorFreedom, Sacramento, California

[Editor's Note: Thank you for your donation, Ann, and I'm sorry I didn't get around to
writing you a personal acknowledgement. We're glad you like our magazine. R.N.]

LESBIAN VOICES looks fine. Keep up the good work. Perseverance and patience is all.

— Ellen Hopkins, 12th Moon, New York

I would really enjoy seeing a copy of the magazine! Send it in a brown wrapper, would
you? The woman next door enjoyed reading your last issue so much, I'm afraid if she not
shod of this one before me, I'd never get to see it.

— Ann.

You have a nice magazine!

— Leslie Powell, Long Beach, California
We received our first copy of LgbTiAN VOICES (June issue), and we are delighted with the publication. Many of the articles had very personal meaning for us. We agreed wholeheartedly with Nicki Dark's separatist position, having come to the same conclusion in our own minds over the past two years. Your defense of monogamy was beautifully precise -- our experiences related in "If by Barbra" echoed situations we have both encountered in the movement. All this makes us feel as if we already knew you and like you very much indeed. . . May the eyes of the Great Goddess smile upon you and your endeavors.

-- Judith Trova, Ohio

ANNOUNCEMENT

Social Science 620. Ideology and Social Process. A course focussing on the Ideologies of Tertitarianism, feminism and lesbianism as they apply to specific contemporary issues in modern society -- including such diverse topics as gun control, property rights, and victimless crime laws. Offered Spring Semester 1976 at San Francisco State University -- MWF 11:10 a.m. - 12 noon. For further information, contact Dr. Lois Flynn at HLL 383A or phone (415) 469-1446.

CIRCLE OF SUPPORT FOR JANET ALPERT

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

We are women who support Jane Alpert and welcome her into the Feminist Movement.

In 1969 Jane Alpert was arrested for conspiring with others to blow up government property. After pleading guilty to a lesser conspiracy, she jumped bail and spent the next four years underground. During her years as a fugitive, Alpert discovered that she and other women revolutionaries suffered from hatred and discrimination against women in the male left. Her thinking evolved from the narrow ideology of Marxism to the larger, more vital concerns of feminism, a process which she made public in her open letter from the underground (Mother Right, Spring 1973). In November 1974, Jane Alpert turned herself in to the authorities, and is now serving a 27-month prison term.

There has been confusion and controversy surrounding these events. Jane Alpert has been accused by some people in the left of being an informer. She has been charged with revealing the whereabouts of other radicals in her writings from the underground, and in May 1975, it was disclosed in court papers filed by the government (United States District Court, Southern District of New York, 70 Cr. 230 (MR)) that Jane Alpert risks a prolonged prison sentence for perjury and contempt because she refused to give any information which might endanger Pat Swinton.

We want to explore and forge a new feminist ethic and philosophy; we want the participation of women who reject any form of male control.

-- Rosalie Nichols.
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