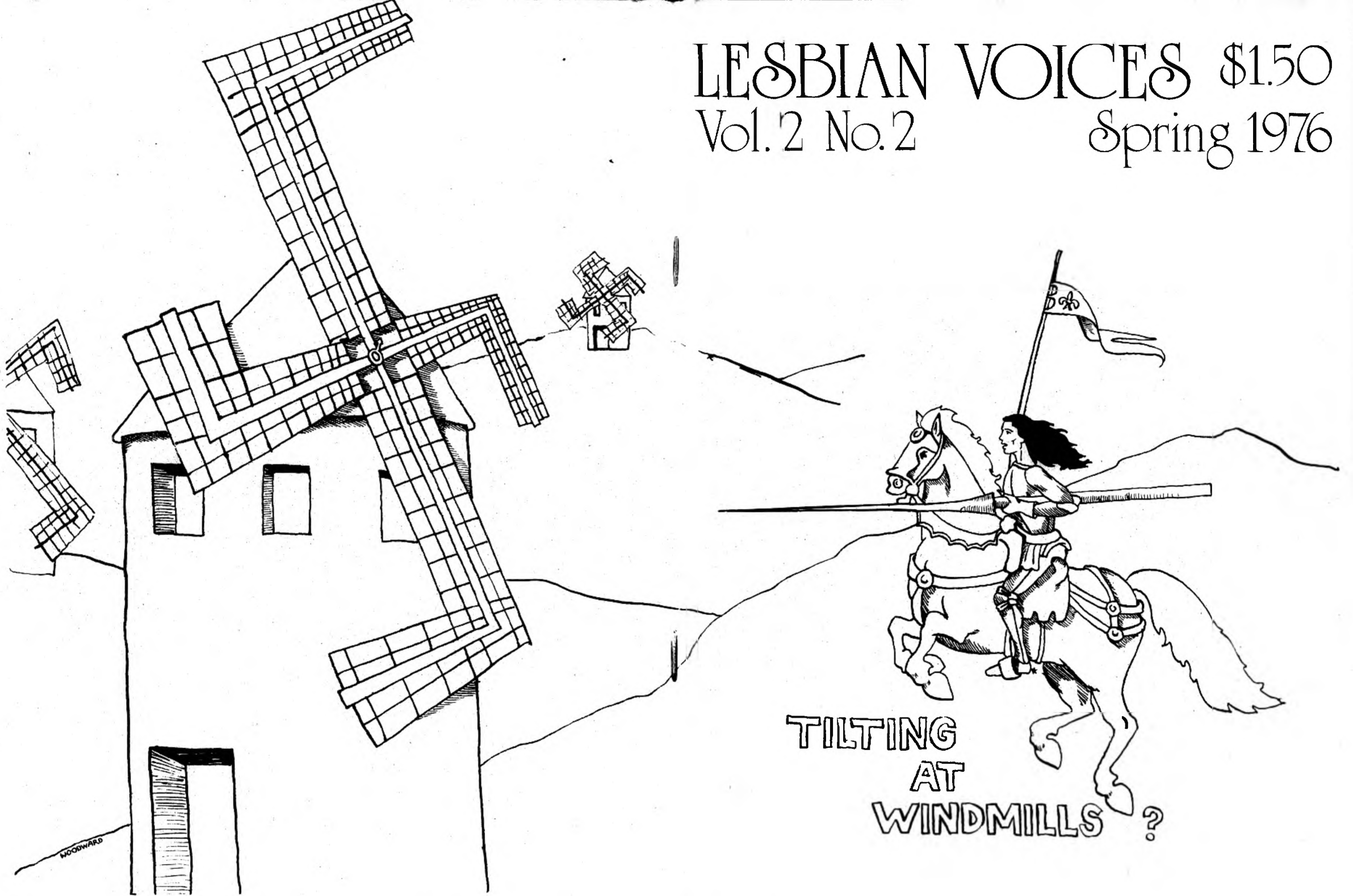


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# LESBIAN VOICES \$1.50

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AT  
WINDMILLS ?

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# Romanticism vs. "Realism"

by Rosalie Nichols

The age we are living in is not merely unromantic, but actively anti-romantic. It is a time of disillusionment with progress, with human effort, with invention and innovation, with human aspiration and human destiny, and with romantic love. Our age is marked by a lowering of standards, which goes by the name of "realism."

The father of "realism" may have been Cervantes, whose book DON QUIXOTE was published in 1615 at a time when knighthood and chivalry, as social and political institutions, were already becoming obsolete. In his book, Cervantes equates romantic adventure with mistaken zeal, extravagant enterprises, and imaginary foes, and establishes the "mad knight" as a lasting symbol of the alleged foolishness of romantic notions and the inevitable personal disaster to which they must lead. What, after all, could be more foolish than imagining windmills to be evil giants, and what more humiliating than, by attack, to end up on the ground with broken lance?

Another "mad knight" of an earlier century didn't even escape so lightly: She ended up burned at the stake. If the Maid of Orleans had had any "sense," she would have stayed home at Domremy, been married, raised children, and lived to a ripe old age.

Romanticism is a value-oriented philosophy; it is based on a belief in woman's ability to choose her own values and to achieve them. The attack on romanticism is an attack on the pursuit of values, on moral ambition, and on achievement--not on any particular values or any particular achievement, but on values and achievement, *as such*.

One symptom of our anti-romantic age is the prevalence of the slogan, "Nobody Is Perfect." It has become our national motto; we should stamp it on our coins. When one hears this slogan ritualistically repeated, with a shrug of indifference at human volition and human effort, one suspects the presence behind it of the intention to be *imperfect* and to grant permission for *imperfection*. [Note that it is never, "Nobody is perfect -- so let's try harder and do better." What the slogan implicitly means is, "Nobody is perfect -- so why bother trying?"]

The current attack on romantic love is a corollary of the attack on romanticism in general.

When one feels romantic love for a woman, it is in response to her basic values and her basic view of life -- to those values and to that sense of life which form her character and unique identity. Romantic love is a recognition and response of one *soul* to another.

The person who denies the validity of romantic love because of the real or imputed existence of minor, peripheral, or irrelevant "flaws" in the personality or behavior of a morally admirable individual is not dealing in fundamentals -- and is in the same category as the person who "falls in love" with a woman because she has money, is a good dancer, has dark eyes, is popular, or has "big boobs." Those who hold such things as important are saying more about their own value systems than about the facts of "reality."

There are, in fact, worthy individuals who can be loved and admired not just for a night but for a lifetime. But before one can experience romantic love, one must not only *find* the right person, one must oneself *be* the right person -- that is, one must develop one's own character, choose and be loyal to one's values, and earn self-esteem. One who begins by denying the *existence* of ideals does not end by *achieving* them.

Romantic love (along with commitment, faithfulness, and loyalty) is often attacked by Lesbians as being heterosexual in origin. Without granting that an idea's origin determines its truth or falsehood, I would like to point out that Morton M. Hunt, who wrote a whole book on THE NATURAL HISTORY OF LOVE, credits none other than Sappho with the beginning of the Western concept of love:

Sappho wrote a great deal of poetry (about twelve thousand lines, of which only five per cent survived the pious book-burning of Christian zealots), and had an immense influence on subsequent erotic literature. And on life, too: most of the symptoms from which lovers have suffered for nearly twenty-five centuries were first set forth by Sappho. . . Her most concise statement of the lovesickness syndrome appears in an ode she wrote to one of her favorites. . . This [Ode to Atthis] is something new, something not to be found in primitive life, poetry, or stories. This is the beginning of Western love. . . (Knopf, 1959, p. 45)

The same author further states, with reference to the emergence of courtly love in the Middle Ages, "Only in Greece had love been even vaguely allied to the ennoblement of character -- but there the relationship was a special type of latent or overt homosexuality." (p. 144) And there is more in the same vein, from which it might well be inferred that romantic love originated from homosexual, rather than heterosexual, feelings, experiences, and philosophy. Add to this the fact that so many (perhaps most) heterosexuals regard sex primarily as a mere means to reproduction -- rather than the expression of shared values, emotional and spiritual union, and romantic passion, the fulfillment of which our healthy, sane Lesbian recognizes as an end in itself.

Romantic love is one of life's greatest rewards; and as a reward, it has to be earned. Romantic love does not come automatically; and, given today's culture and the lethargy of our social atmosphere, it is not surprising if it does not come to many. But this is no reason to doubt its very existence and possibility, as so many Lesbians are now doing. If and when individual Lesbians begin to discover or rediscover a sense of personal purpose -- a desire to do something important and to be something important, within their chosen value system -- romantic love will become more prevalent; for it is what one *makes of oneself* that makes one *able* to love another and *worthy* of being loved in return.

To do this, one needs romanticism in all spheres of one's life. But the "realists" try to convince us that Romanticism Is Dead -- Great Causes are only windmill jousts, one's Beloved is only another woman after all (and replaceable), and there are no Knights in Shining Armor.

Ergo, our cover drawing of "Joan of Quixote": I submit that the windmills are giant Swastikas -- symbols of Evil, of the desire for Power over others (and they could as well be Hammers and Sickles, Holy Crosses, or even clenched-fist woman symbols). I submit that the struggle against dictatorial Power, the fight for Individual Freedom, is a Great Cause. Our Joan in Shining Armor is poised for action, ready to fight, come what may. It remains to be seen whether she will be thrown to the ground, or go to the stake a second time. But this much is certain: If she is thrown, she will pull herself up by her own spur-straps; and if she goes to the stake, she will burn with a clear conscience and unaltered convictions.

The "realists" regard Romantics as persons who live in fantasy and do not see "things as they are." I submit that a "realist" is a woman who not only sees, but *accepts* things as they are. A Romantic is a woman who *sees* "things as they are," but also has a vision of how things might be and ought to be. A Knight in Shining Armor is a woman who has a vision of how things ought to be and takes *action* to achieve her vision. By this definition, a few Knights in Shining Armor exist even today. I am one. If you have the courage, the conviction, and the vision, you can be one, too.





## The Seasons

Wake Up! Wake Up!  
Look at the dew on the grass  
See the Lilies in bloom  
And the lake smooth as glass  
It's Spring

Wake Up! Wake Up!  
Look at that Sun in the sky  
See the shade of our tree  
And the birds as they fly  
It's Summer

Wake Up! Wake Up!  
Look at the leaves, scarlet and gold  
See the days growing short  
And the nights crisp and cold  
It's Autumn

Wake Up! Wake Up!  
Look, it's snowing outside  
See the lake bound in rime  
And then I remembered, beloved, and cried  
It's winter.

Carolyn Shama

## Hardly A Day Goes By

Hardly a day goes by  
But I'm glad for us.  
First, I'm glad for all the things that,  
put together, make you.  
Even though each small part, by itself,  
sometimes doesn't please me.  
I'm growing to like most of the little pieces that  
go together to make me,  
even the disturbing and strange ones.  
But I especially am glad for the way  
the pieces  
of you  
and of me  
fit together  
To make Us.  
Hardly a day goes by  
But I'm really glad for us.

Gayle

## i would rather be fire than water

fire heats that which it  
touches to an all-consuming  
glow

fire destroys the old to  
build a better new in its  
place

fire causes fusion and  
yields an uncompromising  
steel

but you say  
water cools  
water quenches  
water cleanses  
i want water

oh, lover  
... i cannot bring you what i am not

Joey Vaughn

I'm spinning  
spinning  
circling  
can't slow down  
music is fast baroque  
but silence makes room for faster thoughts  
heart is throbbing  
want things right  
more things, more rights  
wrong  
I want to sleep  
to stop  
for once and relax  
slow and nothing  
Please to stop

All my lovers have merged  
(my mind's images are indistinct)  
I'm seeing double  
I can't tell them apart  
can't remember which one  
laughs such and such  
a way,  
which one throws her head  
back this way and that  
which one gestures with  
hands  
meant for music

Heien Woods

## I Know

You never know  
(I know)  
Someday you'll meet a nice man  
(I'd rather meet a nice woman)  
And you'll fall in love  
(You're right there)  
Then you'll get married  
(No, I won't)  
And be happy  
(Yes, but not with your man)

I don't like men  
(Come on)  
There is nothing I want they can give me  
(Nothing?)  
I like the way I am  
(What way is that?)  
I'm Gay!  
(I'm happy, too)  
I thrive on womanspirit, womanlove  
(Someday you'll meet a nice man)  
No I won't. I know!  
(You never know)

Do you know?  
Do you care?  
I know.  
I care.

Carolyn Shama

Darsheeli, she goes forth in colors  
With her hair a-falling down.  
He has given her a necklace  
When I thought that she was mine.

Ah Darsheeli, faithless woman,  
I was wrapped in innocence;  
But another of your sisters  
will now find her tricks offend.

I give my love a golden ring that she may know her worth.

it's in my eyes,  
don't you want to see it?  
it's in my touch,  
don't you want to feel it?  
it's in my voice,  
don't you want to hear it?  
it's in my soul,  
don't you want to know it?

if i put it to words,  
if i make it a sound,  
would you need it any more than you need it now?

Alix Stone

at a table for two, you said  
love doesn't exist  
and stopped my breathing.

now, i say to you  
ours no longer exists  
and stop my hurting.

Alix Stone



# JUDAISM

BY BARBARA LIPSCHUTZ

When she was thirteen she met her first Jew at music camp. It was her first music camp also, held on the campus of a University, and she was prepared to have an Experience.

The Jew's name was Phyllis and she was brilliant, beautiful and talented. The first night Phyllis appeared at the get-acquainted square dance and devastated the entire population.

Phyllis had black hair flowing down, down her back, down over her shoulders, covering her spine, and stopping, finally, in curls at the curvature of her buttocks. She had dark endless eyes and a red to her cheeks which all would have sworn was rouge, had they not seen her turn from the faintest suggestion of pink to a violent crimson during the exertion of the dance. No one could say afterwards whether or not she could dance well.

All anyone could remember was her black hair flying and flying and the red of her cheeks flushing deeper and deeper. Had the Most Popular Girl award been given that night, instead of the last night of camp, there would have been no contest. Even the other girls, that first night, were too spell-bound by Phyllis's beauty to be jealous.

That night after the dance she discovered that Phyllis was a Jew when the counsellors told them where in town the Catholic church and all the brands of Protestant churches were located. Girls made tentative alliances on the basis of religious affiliation. (Are you Catholic? Gee, I'm Catholic, too. Which mass do you want to go to? or Remember that tall boy with the red hair, the one without the braces: Well, somebody told me he's Baptist!)

Phyllis asked if there was a synagogue. No one seemed to know. So Phyllis looked it up in the phone book and found out that there was. She asked Phyllis if she could go with her when she went to synagogue. Phyllis asked why and she said it was because she was interested in Judaism but it really was because she was interested in Phyllis. Phyllis said yes and thereby she became Phyllis' first friend at camp. Most of the girls said that she was hanging around with Phyllis because Phyllis was popular with the boys. Most of the girls at music camp don't have much imagination. Not that she wasn't interested in boys — it's just that the only boy half as interesting as Phyllis was black and that seemed a little too adventurous for her first summer at music camp. However, by the second week she was hanging around with him. But Phyllis was always her first love. Phyllis spent hours and hours going over with her decorous behaviour in synagogue. It was decided that nothing in her wardrobe was suitable to wear to synagogue so she would have to borrow something.

(This enchanted her — she would always dream up excuses to borrow clothes from people she loved. Somehow she felt some strong connection was transmitted through the wearing of the same clothing. Once she and a friend bought a blouse together. From then on, whenever they met they would exchange the blouse. Also, whenever either of them wore it, she would think of the other. Conversely, she suffered terribly when she had to wear hand-me-downs from some wretched, despised cousin. You could wash away the dirt and part of the smell from the clothing, but you could never wash away the Presence of the original owner. She believed in communal clothing — so long as the bond of commonality was love. Sharing clothes for her was like sharing caresses and kisses.) So she borrowed Phyllis's wonderful blue dress and waited for Saturday morning.

The synagogue was far from music camp and Saturday morning transportation seemed precarious, so Phyllis arranged for the violin teacher's son (But how did you know Mr. Rosen

is Jewish???) to escort them that morning in his convertible. He was a tall, curly-headed, ethereal cellist. Could it be that all Jews were golden and gifted? Oh wondrous race! So Joe Rosen (whose sloe-eyed beauty made some of the other girls seriously consider conversion) took them to synagogue in his convertible.

With the top down. He and Phyllis talked in Yiddish on the way and she felt horribly, monstrously excluded. Here Phyllis and Joe were, just met, and they had this Bond. This Warmth. This delicious history of thousands of years of oppression.

And when they got to synagogue, everyone spoke to Phyllis. They all just seemed to engulf her. They smiled and laughed and kept saying what were most certainly delightful things in Yiddish. Such camaraderie never existed in the Methodist Church. It broke her heart to think of what she had been missing out on all these years. But now she would make up for it. She resolved, right then and there, to always be special, for the rest of her life. For that was the core of the appeal that Judaism had for her, its specialness. Its sense of being the chosen, the elect. Extra-ordinary.

The service was not memorable except for the fact that people walked in and out and talked a lot during it. Although this was a bit disconcerting for her at first, she found it quite exhilarating. Not at all stuffy like the Methodist church. If they wanted to socialize that was perfectly alright, holy thing to do, because after all, weren't they the Chosen People? At one point she asked Phyllis when the offering would be? Phyllis looked at her and said "We don't do that here. The Messiah hasn't come yet so why should we offer anything to anybody?" Why, indeed. She thought she was wonderful. She resolved to never give money to any Christian organization again. They had a nerve, thinking Jesus was the Messiah. If the Jews didn't accept Him, how could He be? How could people be so blind, anyway? She would never forgive her parents for not being Jews.

The most exciting thing happened after synagogue. Joe introduced them to Sandy, a girl with blue eyes and blond hair, who had converted from Congregationalism.

Congregationalism might as well be Methodism. And the fantastic thing was, Sandy was accepted. Sandy was One of Them. So if you had an unlucky Accident of Birth, but still believed, you could join the Chosen People. Sandy spoke Yiddish, and while not beautiful, not that same haughty, golden look on her face as Phyllis and Joe. Yes, Sandy was definitely One of Them. Which meant that the universe wasn't so cruel after all. There was hope.

She was very subtle and waited until they got back to campus before she started firing questions at Phyllis about how one goes about converting. Phyllis said it was highly irregular, very unusual.

So she embarked on her Jew project. The Jew project went strong for the next year and vestiges remained for the next four. She read up on Jews. She hitchhiked fifteen miles on Friday nights, when she was supposed to be out on dates to go to the nearest synagogue. That was pretty tricky but she managed to convince her parents that she had to meet her date on the corner because he was so painfully shy. They even seemed to believe it. But after awhile it wasn't enough; she wanted to go on Friday night and Saturday morning, too. She had to have more. So she had to come out to her parents on Judaism. No more sneaking around. No more being Jewish in the closet. No more going to synagogue behind their back. She was proud of her Jewish tendencies and she was not going to hide them any longer. She was going to affirm what she was, what she desired to be. She was going to be free. Surely they would be glad for her, happy at her happiness. Surely they would!

She told the parents she was going to convert. They said what's wrong with the Methodist Church? She said she wanted to Belong, to Part of Something. They said what do you want to be part of. She said Judaism. They said what's that. It was hopeless. When she explained what it was (you know, Jews) they were even more against it than they were when it was just some mysterious word. Finally they said give us a while to think about

about it. Here is what they came up with: "We don't insist that you be Methodist. If you would rather go to the Presbyterian church, the Congregational church, the Lutheran church, (the mother had been a Lutheran but had switched to the father's religion when they got married so as not to confuse the children) or even the Episcopalian church, as long as it is low Episcopalian, it's alright. So you see, you really do have a choice." She felt like screaming. She felt like running away.

She tried using logic with them. She suggested that they all go to synagogue so they could see what it was like. (Surely, when they got there, and felt the wonderful Warmth, they would understand. Maybe the whole family would convert.) They said they didn't need to go, they already knew all about it.

So she stopped talking about it. But she started wearing a Star of David. And she started keeping kosher (which, in a small town in Michigan, means practically starving.) And she still snuck off to synagogue whenever she could.



### Semantics

"People might turn around once to see a fairy;  
they'll turn twice to see a lesbian."

—heard in conversation

Lesbian.

It rolls off the tongue adult and formal.

No impish fairy, flit, or pansy for it,

No image of children's lawn party, egg hunt, gossamer curtains.

Lesbian.

It is a word to be reckoned with.

No fear of IT sliding daintily off the page;

No coy pirouettes to the reverse side

Of the sheet for THIS word;

It holds its ground, syllables spread.

There is nothing of the afterthought about it:

It cannot be discreetly shoved

Into a corner and abbreviated.

It is hostile to hyphenization.

No communal spirit here: it creates

Its own spotlight;

Erects its own capital;

Allows of no red-faced apology

for lapsus linguae: it points

To premeditation;

It resists anonymity: there will be no

Shy asterisks with this word,

No demure sotto voce for it.

Lesbian.

You cannot say it and be done with it.

It is immortal

It lingers.

Leslie Powell

# The Woman Within

by Rochelle Holl

How long did they stand there? Both, as it were,  
caught in that circle of unearthly light, under-  
standing each other perfectly, creatures of  
another world, and wondering what they were  
to do in this one with all this blissful treasure  
that burned in their bosoms and dropped  
in silver flowers, from their hair and hands?

"Bliss" by Katherine Mansfield

What was she doing in this strange country anyway? Octavia wondered. She had never been to the South until now. Yet Mr. Oliver assured her, amid the orange fruit and lush palm trees of southern California, that she would like the change, the slow pace of a small town with all the rural flavor of William Faulkner whose *Wishing Tree* had restored her faith in fantasy once again. Teaching drama at a private Black college would make her feel human once more, would challenge her mind and her body, he said, and she speculated on the ramifications of what he might mean.

Could she teach theatre to "poor, culturally disadvantaged" students? The dean's words left a distasteful flavor in her mind. Octavia did not like labels since she herself had been classified and filed too many times in her thirty excessive years. She was not an actress. Only once had she played any major role in graduate school, the distinctly typecast part of Flora Meighan, wife of a cotton-gin owner in Tennessee Williams' *27 Wagons Full of Cotton, A Mississippi Delta Comedy*. It all came back to mind like a lucid nightmare, Flora swinging on the porch and holding on to her huge white kid purse.

Jake said grinning, "A woman not large but tremendous! That's how I liked her -- tremendous! I told her right off, when I slipped th' ring on her finger, one Satiddy night in a boathouse on Moon Lake -- I said to her, Honey, if you take off one single pound of that body -- I'm going to quit yuh! I'm going to quit you, I said, the minute I notice you've started to take off weight!"

With that on her record, she signed the contract and began her work in Holly Springs, Mississippi. At least she would not be totally alone having known Mr. Oliver at UCLA, but then Mr. Oliver never really made time for Octavia. He was always busy with his violin, and if ever he took a woman out for dinner, she would always be the tall, lean, aesthetic type, sometimes intellectual in her sophistication, sometimes shy in her solitary world of the piano, harp, or oboe. But Octavia had managed this far, and her spirit was basically adventurous, even if her body alluded to a more Roman attitude towards life.

Octavia, an Amazon of a woman, a buxom and overly-endowed Sophia Loren who liked to hide her curves in long batik-printed Indian dresses. Highly visible, her dark shiny hair and gold-tinted complexion drew stares from students on campus or people in town, as though she might be a wandering gypsy from Greece come to tell fortunes instead of teach fine arts. She wore dangling hoop earrings, rings and bracelets from the Middle East. Her image was that of an eccentric artist who loved flair in costume, makeup, and elaborate hairstyle, curls atop her head framing a strawberry fruit-shaped face like Medusa's strange crown. Some might note her Bohemian appearance as a disguise masking feelings of basic insecurity. Perhaps not as proud of her full bosom, round hips and large buttocks as others would imagine she ought to be, especially foreign men or young Black women, thinner than lampposts, Octavia knew in the core of her heart that her penchant for food and wine was gratification for want of a true and fulfilling love not satisfied by admiring looks. The bright colors she displayed like national flags, elements of a wild expressionistic painting, did not mirror the pastel palette in her inner



being. Not fire engine red, lemon yellow, or tangerine orange signalled Octavia's real personality but sky blue, rose pink or delicate lilac expressed the authentic hues, the nature of her shy and questioning soul.

No doubt that was why Octavia soon became the most well-liked character at Rust College. As an instructor she did not set herself on a throne and consequently taught and learned at the same time with equal success. One of her favorite persons was a young Black beauty who resembled Nefertiti in Octavia's opinion. Derya, a gentle revolutionary, epitomized all that Octavia desired to have been in her undergraduate days. Derya appeared taller than she actually was in her high-platform sandals, and her posture, that of a ballerina on toeshoes, added to the illusion of height. Although her body type tended towards slenderness, her figure was rounded and curvaceous; breasts like gentle mounds; hips sloping like the outline of a pear; buttocks like two firm tangerines. However, her head was the most captivating part of her total beauty.

She wore her hair in a short, close-cropped Afro natural that made her look like an Ethiopian queen. Her eyes were childlike in their bigness with very curly lashes. Her nose was ever so small, as though perhaps there could have been some unknown mixture in her family background. Her lips were inviting in an African Clara Bow way. The more she gazed upon Derya, the more Octavia became involved in her shadowy life. Derya tried out for the part of Ruth in *Raisin in the Sun* at Octavia's insistence. Octavia thought it would help take Derya's mind off her problems; she had been separated from her husband for almost a year and now lived with her two small children and her parents in Potts Camp. She confessed to Octavia that she experienced an inexplicable pleasure from her daily walks and runs in the natural area around her home. She like to imagine herself some kind of mythological gazelle with the human ability to think while leaping free among friendly trees. Derya drowned her sadness in ways foreign to Octavia. Oh to be able to substitute sensations for spaghetti or sugar cookies.

Octavia couldn't actually pinpoint when she became a food-addict and subsequently a woman who sought costumes, masks, to hide her flesh, her body, to disguise her real self within the apparent and visible one. No doubt, her solace in calories flourished in childhood in the city when father disallowed her from going to the park to play or from riding her bicycle on the street. "There is too much danger and evil in this world," he constantly warned her. And the child, crying deep behind a smile or a too steady laugh, ran to the refrigerator for a slice of chocolate cake or a piece of apple pie. The child became a woman who remembered the cool taste of soft, smooth vanilla ice cream or cherry soda. The woman entered the world of the theatre not out of love but because the greasepaint, the false stage, offered one escape route, one way away from loneliness and fear. Octavia sewed costumes, helped construct sets, acted as publicity manager and even sold tickets. Rarely was she cast as the star though. Usually she posed as a grandmother, matronly aunt, mother or some type of clown, soldier or even the back part of a large animal. Sometimes, following the run of a play, she would distribute gingerbread men baked by herself in the silence of her own apartment kitchen. To the tune and rhythm of contentment, of happiness, Octavia proclaimed her love of life, her joviality, her fondness for cheese fondue and her devotion to the bizarre in attire. But, in the South, while the rain continued to fall like a veil of sadness, Octavia was mellowing, and one person, Derya, saw the grey isolation in those sparkling cat's eyes but did not read the significance behind that sadness.

Derya liked Octavia because in her soul, this mother of two was more white than black. She envied the richness of her velvet dresses and satin lined capes, the richness of Octavia's visible life. She admired the many different earrings, bracelets, pendants that hung like medals on every part of Octavia's soft and luminous body. Derya watched how easily her teacher floated in this new and different world and wondered whether she could do the same. Not only the externals that appealed to Derya, but the shows of affection, the trips to an opera, a play, a Chinese restaurant, a sonnet written especially for her, the gift of a good book or record album, the little silver necklace that was her symbol in the Chinese lunar calendar. Did Derya's "change" balance Octavia's "understanding?" But the words were unsaid. There was no marrow within the bone. The meanings beneath the actions were not wholly read.

Derya sensed only that she was a favorite of Octavia. Octavia was not sure what she herself felt about Derya except that in the second semester of her teaching, after she had been in Holly Springs for almost seven months, something started to happen to her. She noticed that she wasn't turning to pastries or triple servings of dinner any more. She took less time putting on makeup and often used only powder, eyebrow pencil and lipstick. She began to wear the sashes that came with her Indian dresses, as though she no longer wanted to hide her waist which after all wasn't really that expanded. Octavia smiled more sincerely too. She showed her anger with students who came late to class and who didn't do their assignments. Now she seemed human, real.

On Friday with everyone exuberant and excited about spring break, Derya came bounding into Octavia's office. She could barely contain herself and her strange news. "I wanted you to be the first to know." Derya's eyes beamed. "I'm going away for a while." Naturally Octavia wondered where and with whom as she imagined herself to be Derya's closest friend and was going to invite her student to travel to Mexico City for the one week vacation.

Octavia asked, "Where are you going? Are you taking your children? Tell me all about this turn of events." Derya explained how she had fallen in love with a student, and Octavia remembered that she had seen a bearded white man in her company at least on three occasions. The world was whirling inside both women but for different reasons. Octavia had hunger pains and yearned for the Hungarian goulash that the French teacher had prepared for her one night. The only words that echoed through her head as Derya left so abruptly were, "Don't rush into another marriage. Live with him for a while." Later, in the afternoon when the campus began to take on the look of an abandoned ghost town, Octavia yielded to her urge to phone Derya.

Derya informed her teacher that she might not be returning to school after the week. The phone allowed Octavia a convenient distance in conversation, a smoothness in exchange of doubts and thoughts. "Why must you decide now? Why not come back after your week in the cold north of Minnesota and finish your studies, at least this one semester. Then you would know whether your head and your heart have been in communication with each other. And then too you're not legally divorced yet from your first husband."

Derya was curt, "That process is already underway. I didn't realize you cared so much about me."

"I know I don't always express my true feelings." Even now Octavia was not making herself understood, for she was not clear as to what she knew she was experiencing in the center of her emotions, at the core of her mortal heart. A half hour on the telephone would not change Derya's stubborn mind. She was already packing for a five o'clock departure to Squaw Lake. How ironic, Octavia thought.

Approaching the end of the school year, Mr. Oliver invited Octavia to dinner. Spring was in the air. A melancholic feeling attached itself to Octavia's spirit like a bluejay to a favorite tree, like a bee to a magnolia flower. She felt lonelier than she ever had before. The play had not come off as well as it might have had Derya played Ruth. There was an air of something lost pervading Octavia's life, body, mind. When she arrived at his trailer, Mr. Oliver announced that the art teacher, Mr. Damon would also be joining them. Octavia had learned from the registrar that Mr. Damon was the reason Derya's lover, the strange white "hippie-type" character, had come to Rust College in the first place. Her flesh was goosepimpily. In the middle of the music teacher's southern-fried chicken, Damon broached a new topic of table talk. He said, just as if he were a character in a Eugene O'Neill drama, "I have been an alcoholic, a drug addict, a bouncer, and what have you. But what I miss most is my homosexual companion. He went back to Minnesota with one hell of a beautiful lady."

"What was her name?" Octavia asked in a weak voice.

"Derya," he paused. "Derya."

# WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?



## A COMMENT ON THE DILEMMA OF THE GAY PROFESSIONAL WOMAN

by Jay Brighton



And so you decide that you are gay and you find that the world is straighter than you ever imagined. It never looked that straight before, but that was way back when -- when you were just simply a pillar of respect in a hypocritical community.

It can, and does happen to countless women everyday. And when it happens, temptation nearly tears them apart as they struggle to stay what they are, and not just "be" what society dictates.

The women are "professionals" -- ranging from social workers to nurses to teachers. These women occupy positions that have been acceptable careers for women for decades. Who else should solve the everyday problems of the poor, mend the wounds of the fallen, or teach history to the young? Who else, but a nurturing, compassionate woman?

Years ago, women who struck out on their own to take these positions were thought of as a bit "queer." Until the feminist movement of recent years, only "strange and aloof" women took and permanently held these jobs. With the slow, step-by-step liberation of American society more positions are becoming available to all American women. But this job availability still does not free in any way the professional woman who is in contact with society's children and has chosen "loving women" as her life style.

A lifestyle of loving women can be minimally upsetting to a woman with little responsibility to the system which surrounds her. Particular sects of people, such as artists and musicians in transit, have established a society of their own where they are not required to answer to "straight" societal pressures. But these people constitute only a fraction of the employed women.

So there you are. An adolescent counselor. A public health nurse in a young women's clinic. A gym teacher in a high school. All in contact with the youth of our society, to mold, shape and form the "better" Americans politicians and prophets have talked about for years.

Your basic philosophies may not be the same as society's in general, but you think you can get around that. Little-by-little you can integrate feminist-socialist-humane philosophy into your daily teaching. It doesn't appear to be an obstacle, not at first, anyway. But . . . "what about the use of 'Ms.'? What about advocating open-marriages? Yes, Miss Smith," your Boss-Man may ask, "just what does all this mean? Are you a Communist? Are you a Man-Hater? Just what does this mean???"

How long would it actually take them to ask, "Are you (cringe) a (gasp) homo, uh, homosexual?" What would it actually take for the pot of sin in which you float to boil all over the board room table? But then again, remember last year, as you pushed your lover-partner-in-crime against the filing cabinet and felt her body against yours and held the kiss too long and there was a footstep outside? It might have been then. Or it might have been when your lover forgot where she was and slipped her arm around your waist at the school carnival. Or positive proof might have been the love letter you forgot to tear up, the one that was in the pocket of your purse the day your boss went searching for your car keys.

Did you ever think being a responsible pillar of respect in the community would ever paint you into such a hellish corner? It can, it does and will continue to do so. To

thousands of women in our purported "modern society," being a proverbial pillar and being gay do not mix. Being one means hiding the other.

As the few aware and fair legislators break their backs to push through laws to free all minorities, gay professional women, for the most part, sit silently back. They sit and wait for civil service to take a stand or for their tenure to be approved. They sit and wait to be assured and recognized. They know that they dare not venture out and take a stand. The screams of "don't touch my child!" and sighs of "I always thought she was strange" remain in the minds of these women, forever.

Where do we go from here?

Where can they go and what can they do, these professional "pillars?" Affirmative action is slowly being implemented by a few brave women, usually as an off-shoot of an established organization. As an example, in gay-haven San Francisco a group of gay public school teachers have formed a coalition. A straw vote would probably show that most of the members are already tenured and have established positions which would be difficult to challenge. But teachers in Smallertown, U.S.A. are still floundering, and they know that job-scarce San Francisco can't be their haven if they wish to remain employed. What good is a teacher from Smalltown who can't find work? What good is an Iowa City social worker who fears for her job each morning as she kisses her lover goodbye? What good is a nurse who can't invite her patients to dinner without asking her lover to leave? What good can any of these women be when they are being only half of what they are?

Hopefully brave professional women will continue to tread the shakey line between practicality and affirmative action. Slowly they will push through the pleas for equal protection and understanding that women have moaned so often.

On a more individual level, gay professional women must begin to reach out to each other and enjoy the strength that only group affiliation can bring. "Sisterhood" is powerful and sisterhood can be one of the answers to the many problems facing the woman who stands to receive total destruction if and when her woman loving lifestyle is revealed to the public.

The buoyant strength that comes from group understanding and affiliation will make the pain a little smaller and the end a little closer. In time, with slow lawmaking and attitude-changing, gay professional women will be able to be judged on the quality of their work and not their sexuality.

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# BOOK REVIEWS:

## SURVIVING AS A WORKING-CLASS LESBIAN:

### A Personal Review of Sharon Isabell's Book YESTERDAY'S LESSONS

by Judith Schwarz Freewoman

It is amazing how few reviews of this incredibly honest book have been published, even in our feminist press. *Yesterday's Lessons* was first printed in 1974, yet *Lesbian Images*, that marvelous new book on lesbian literature by Jane Rule, doesn't even mention it at all. One of the few reviews I have managed to find was written a good year after Isabell's book was published, and printed in the lesbian-feminist focus issue of *Margins* magazine (August, 1975). This review by Janet Sergi is quite favorable, and states that *Yesterday's Lessons* "is the beginnings of the new womansnovel: where form and content blend harmoniously into a new womanvision . . . the dialogue is straight out of daily life, yet when endowed with a womansrevolutionaryconsciousness and poetic insight, it changes the ordinary into the extraordinary."

I would definitely agree with that statement, and would have to say that when I first read this book, I was incredibly emotional about it. All throughout the reading, I laughed, I cried, I stormed in rage both at Sharon's relatives and at Sharon herself, and I felt the pure joy inside me that for the first time in my life, I could say about a book: "Hey, I could have written that! That's me and my experiences she's talking about!" For the first time in the many years of reading everything I could get my hands on, I had found a book that spoke about the pains and pleasures (but, unfortunately, mostly the pains) of growing up as a poor white working class kid in a society that only recognizes the working class as something to read about and study in sociology classes or their daily newspapers. Even poor blacks are at least given some sense of being interesting and valid enough as people to be written about in novels, plays and autobiographies. (In fact, the book I most identified with previous to *Yesterday's Lessons* was Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.) Strangely enough, the only other poor-white that comes to mind as having written about her experiences is another lesbian — Rita Mae Brown in *Rubyfruit Jungle*. Beyond these two honest and remarkable women, few other writers have dealt with poor working class whites as real people. We have simply been labeled ignorant, bigoted, stupid, inbred, drunks, bums, ill-mannered and filed away in some textbook on the South or slums or miners or factory laborers, and forgotten. One of the first lessons I learned as a kid in the South was "even dogs ain't lower than ole' white trash folk."

After reading *Yesterday's Lessons*, it's easy to understand why we so seldom see any first-hand reporting on the lives, hopes, dreams, and realities of a working class white. Even I have become so used to middle-class standards and writing that I had a hard time at first trying to decide if all the grammatical errors, misspellings, lousy punctuation, etc., etc., were simply a chosen writing style, or actually the way Sharon Isabell wrote. Thank Goddess, the women at Women's Press Collective who printed the book had the great good sense to recognize that how Sharon Isabell writes is as important a statement of her life as what she has to say. I tremble to think of this book on an establishment editor's desk as he madly flails away with his red pencil, ripping the guts out of her style and destroying the very essence of Sharon Isabell herself (as if we'll ever live to see the day that anything so real and honest as *Yesterday's Lessons* comes off an establishment press!)

Where to begin with a book whose every page demands from me an intellectual and emotional response? . . . At the beginning, I suppose. Sharon Isabell was born in 1942, and raised in the San Francisco Bay area near Martinez and Concord. Her father worked as a miner and construction worker, and her mother coped with him, five children (of which

14 Sharon was next-to-youngest), and the daily hassles of trying to survive on next-to-nothing in

a world of ugliness, emptiness, and hopelessness.

One of the main themes that I see running through Sharon's childhood is her horror and anger at the typical male sick humor she grew up around. As early as age three, she witnessed an example of this when a man was told to put acid water on his hand to cure poison oak, and the acid ate away at his hand. Another time, her father and brother killed her pet duck Zeekie, who she felt was "her best friend." "My dad and my brother killed Zeekie and then they wanted me to eat him. I really hated them for that." (p.3). The thoughtlessness and offhand cruelty of such "jokes" are contrasted with the harmless humor of her mother, who laughed with joy over shooting at the menfolk's wine bottles (p.8), and the simple face-saving social subterfuge in calling the Salvation Army thrift store "Sally's, an expensive women's store in Oakland." (p.25).

Sharon, like many lesbians I know, spent most of her childhood fighting a long, brave battle against being socialized into the sickeningly sweet little girl-child her mother wanted her to be. Her first day at school ended with the other children recognizing instinctively a subtle difference in her strong young personality and looks. They called her names.

I was always fighting after that first day and I would come home with my dress torn and all messed up. My mother would get really mad. "I can't afford to buy you clothes and have you tear them up. Look at all the washing and ironing I have to do. Oh, Sharon, I had your hair looking so nice. Why can't you be good?" The teachers did not know what to do with me and I spent most of my time in the office. My Dad said, "If anyone says anything to you, slug them in the mouth." So I did. (p.6).

Sharon's father was a constant source of fear and pain. His values are expressed loud and ever clear:

Your ma is always gettin' mad at me for fightin', but I ain't gonna let no s.o.b. run over me. I've layed away many big s.o.b.s that thought they were tough. Sharon, I'm gonna tell you somethin'. If you ever come home and tell me you lost a fight, I'm gonna beat the shit out of you. . . . I don't care what any of my kids did, even if they murdered someone, no one better try and do nothin' to 'em around me. I don't care what you do, you're my kid." (p.20-21).

On the other hand, he tells Sharon "There ain't nothin' worse than a god damn queer." So Sharon is left with a double message: her dad, as fearful and violent as he is, will always love her in his own way, except of course, if she becomes a "queer," in which case she is worse than being a murderer.

My own personal reaction to *Yesterday's Lessons* was strongest over the section on her teenage years. I doubt if anyone recalls their high school days with any great nostalgia, especially if you had already had a hint or two that you might eventually become a lesbian, but I think this is an area of life where it might have helped somewhat to be anything but poor working class kids. The peer group pressure to conform is a universal trait at that age, but when you are conforming to working-class "black shoe" group standards in school while that group is rebelling against the larger society or powers that be, you've got twice as many hassles growing up. As Sharon says:

I did not want to smoke because I did not like it, but I was not chicken. To be chicken was to lose all your friends and you would be laughed out of school. (p.28).

I was definitely a "black shoe" in my high school. Not taking up smoking at that point in my life was one of the bravest things I've ever done. The pressure to smoke, to drink until you got drunk, to be the "easy lay" you were automatically labeled even if you weren't interested in guys, to create a nuisance in class, even if you were interested in what



the teacher had to say - - - all of that took guts to stand up against. It wasn't as if you had a great deal of choice about who would be your friend, either. Romeo and Juliet never had it so rough as two girls in high school trying to be friends or really caring about each other if one of them was middle-class and the other was from the (literally) other side of the tracks! I remember the worse thing about high school (other than the horrendous sexual pressures and name-calling) was trying to hide my natural desire to read and study, so that my friends wouldn't desert me if they found out I was actually a bookworm or a "Miss Goodie Two-Shoes." I fought against the school authorities when they tried to place me in the business English and standard trade-school classes instead of college prep classes, and when I won (surprisingly, since it was definitely an unwritten rule that all lower-class children automatically went into those classes, but never once can I recall any middle-class kids being placed in them), I had to lie constantly to my friends and say the school must have made a mistake and thought I was the daughter of the Mr. Schwarz who owned the town furniture store. At least then, though, I could be a little more comfortable in my classes and show my own intelligence more, since none of the classmates would be likely to talk to a member of my social group and tell them that I was the class "brain." There again, I was a fish out of water: caught between middle-class values on one hand, and a more natural level of comfort socially among my own people. Sharon Isabell expresses that emotional see-saw effect over and over:

"The white shoes" were kids whose fathers were the town society and businessmen, or ones that just plain had money. "The white shoes" ran all the school clubs, dances, and offices. They wore nice clothes and knew the right things to say . . . . "The black shoes" were the kids that were supposed to be tough and that smoked and said cuss words. Some of them were really hoodlums, but a lot of them weren't. Their families didn't have much money . . . . I grew up with these kids and I always felt at ease with them. I never had any fear when I was in the company of so-called ruff people because I could understand their feelings and thoughts. (p.36-37).

As for her lesbian experiences, Sharon writes with warmth and humor about her "butch" role in lovemaking, and her intense feelings for women. She deals with the lesbian period in the Army with insight into the power trips service people invariably get into. In many ways, the whole book is much more about power games and "who gets screwed" (figuratively and literally) than it is about lesbianism per se. Her jobs are the dregs of society's pecking order: working in the kitchen of a convalescent hospital, cleaning out a movie theatre, being a janitor. So many of our gay sisters work at jobs other people won't do, or that pay poorly, simply because at least then they won't have to wear the skirts and high heels and other drag of the typical office or professional job. We will make a hell of a lot of sacrifices to keep as much of our individuality as possible.

Sharon Isabell ends the book while she is going through a bad and lonely period of her life. She drinks too much and has just lost her lover to another woman. She hasn't got a decent paying job, but she does have a brand new motorcycle.

When I got on that bike it did something to me. It gave me a freedom I never experienced before, The wind blowing in my face and being free under the stars. . . . I was flying and I was free, and when I was on that bike I was happy. I began to feel as long as I had that bike I had hope. No matter how many people laughed at me or no matter what anyone said they couldn't take that away from me. My freedom!

For all her self-pity, much of which is certainly justified, you have to respect a woman who survives all she has gone through in her life and yet can still come up with an emotion like that. Even more important, Sharon Isabell had the courage to tell it like it truly is, sometimes at the expense of her own good name or self-image. Thank Goddess, we are allowed to share her pain and glories with her. It's a great book.

BOOK REVIEW: RADCLYFFE HALL AT THE WELL OF LONELINESS

"MOVING, CLEAR-EYED, SYMPATHETIC, AND ALWAYS FASCINATING"\*

Radclyffe Hall's novel, *The Well of Loneliness*, was one of the great literary scandals of the 1920s. It captured the pain and passion of lesbian love, and it is still one of the most eloquent pleas for understanding and acceptance of homosexuality. Banned in England, battled in the courts of the United States, defended by such literary luminaries as E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, Desmond McCarthy and Vita Sackville-West, it remains one of the most famous causes célèbres of literary censorship. Transparently based on her own life and her long-term love affair with Lady Una Troubridge, Radclyffe Hall's novel transformed their loving, passionate life together into fiction. Now, in RADCLYFFE HALL AT THE WELL OF LONELINESS: A Sapphic Chronicle Lovat Dickson tells the whole story of these two extraordinary and notorious women, whose reputation spanned continents, and whose lives defied all convention. RADCLYFFE HALL AT THE WELL OF LONELINESS, which Charles Scribner's Sons will publish on March 22, 1976 (\$7.95, illustrated), has already been praised by Morris Ernst, the well-known champion of freedom of the press who defended *The Well of Loneliness* during its censorship trial in the U.S. He writes, "Lovat Dickson's biography greatly increased both my understanding of these two talented, highly unusual individuals, and my support for the bond that held them together for 28 years against the rigidity of their society."

"Lovat Dickson, author and publisher, has written a fine and sensitive account of the two women, Radclyffe Hall, the novelist, and Lady Troubridge, the wife of a noted World War I naval officer," writes *Publishers Weekly*. "Their lives were extraordinary, and their courageous and seemingly flamboyant protest against attitudes toward sexual inversion culminated in the stormily received novel, *The Well of Loneliness*. Based on Dickson's own recollections, the lovers' letters and 19 volumes of Lady Troubridge's diaries, this chronicle is moving, clear-eyed, sympathetic, and always fascinating in its portrayal of two who went against society's grain, and for a while at least, flourished thereby."

Lovat Dickson, who is Canadian, established his own publishing house in London in the 1930s, and remained a well-known figure in the publishing scene for many years as editor and director of Macmillan of London. Even before they met, Una Troubridge chose him as her literary executor, and when they finally did meet in the 1940s, Lady Troubridge also asked Dickson to write a biography of her beloved "John" and their life together. Although Dickson and Lady Troubridge corresponded until her death many years later, he was unable to write the biography. "Something in the middle-class consciousness, and I was exemplifying it, still took instant alarm at the plea *The Well of Loneliness* explicitly makes for understanding and acceptance of inversion . . . . At 45 my mind still harboured these inhibitions. Una was able to help to shake me free of them before there was a general discarding of them everywhere."

\**Publishers Weekly*

[Editor's Note: Book reviews published in LESBIAN VOICES are the opinion of the individual reviewer and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or constitute an endorsement by this magazine.]

# MANY MANY WOMEN

## Rochelle Holt

She was exciting if being excited in feeling, in enthusiasm, in coming, in going, in moving, in staying is exciting. She was excited in enthusiasm. She was feeling in staying, in coming, in going, in feeling, in enthusiasm, in moving. She was enthusiastic in being one who could be exciting if feeling in enthusiasm, in staying, in coming, in going, in moving, in listening, in walking were exciting. She was one feeling, she was one walking and listening and going and staying and coming and moving, she was one having enthusiasm, she was one being exciting, if one were being exciting in feeling, in walking, in listening, in staying, in moving, in coming, in going, in having enthusiasm.

Many Many Women by Gertrude Stein

Rain was falling in Chicago as Delta 606 from Memphis landed at O'Hare Airport. Rain was falling like a dancer's veil revealing the sensuality of young flesh. Echo of a vignette, the rain falling, dramatically, musically, spiritually and Moira, radiant as the sun who decides to walk on earth for some days, solely for a change, a new experience, a caesura, as in **know then thyself || presume not God to scan**. Bouncing like a birthday child inside, Moira's step was sunshine, brilliant, bright, light while the rain continued to fall all around her. As though she had come from an exotic foreign land to her first city. The rain was falling as Moira walked towards the airport's entrance and two friends never before met except through letters on Japanese iris-stamped stationery on scented tissue on multicolored typing paper. The rain was falling, and the atmosphere was filled with a birth-giving mist, a renewing dew; Moira's wide floor-length cape enveloped her friends in a smooth rose-velvet friendship with peace.

Valery was tall and thin like bamboo. Long ago she had changed the spelling of her name to be like that of the French poet and philosopher. She was a calligrapher and yogini who lived in Serendipity City, the happiest, most creative part of Chicago, the bohemian Northside near Fullerton and Clark. She had learned sumi-e from an Oriental teacher, and her letters were always imprinted with some indelible Valery symbol like a sun or moon or fish or butterfly or bamboo in the wind. Valery was a Nordic queen, as though in her other life she might have been a valkyrie, her long shining yellow hair flowing quietly and powerfully behind her. Moira drew strength from the sight of Valery while the rain was falling outside, falling intentionally, mystically, intrepidly.

Cassandra was small and rightly proportioned for her size. She appeared to be Greek or Italian with dark haunting eyes that contacted all those around her and seemed to warn or predict some impending danger. She worked for a publishing company in the advertising division, but she also had taken up writing, an interest inspired by a new subject in her life who was older, more beautiful than other men she had known. Cassandra rarely smiled, and perhaps that characteristic added to her enchantment, her ability to draw listeners into her chamber of mystery and foreboding evil. Moira related to Cassandra's erotica because she was never able to put that experience into such poetic language, the act of love; she wondered why not and when this would ever come to pass, this lack of all inhibitions.

18 They were three Fates meeting in the rain. Moira spun the thread of destiny because she was the most imaginative, the most creative, and she was both Pisces and Power since

her necklace and oracology calendar had arrived shortly before her weekend departure to Chicago. Valery measured the thread of life, for she was still cautious and had married a cardiologist who loved the murmur of the heart and yet also the heartbeat of the universe, archaeology. Cassandra was Atropos for only she alone of the three goddesses, could sever the thread without batting an eyelash, in the wink of an eye, in the flash of a blink, in the twitch of a lid, in the blindness of a momentary tear, only she could change the sunshine into gloomy clouds. As the rain fell, the three artists headed towards Northwestern University library in Evanston where they intended to peruse some of the manuscripts of Djuna Barnes, their idol.

It was Cassandra who first expressed anxiety and fear. "What if we're not allowed to read them?"

"Why shouldn't we be? We are serious women. Moira has come from Mississippi for this specific purpose."

Only Moira showed no signs of despair. A confidence radiated from her translucent skin. Were they not part of the Barnes Circle? Was Divina not writing a critical book on Djuna Barnes as a woman and as a writer? They climbed the stairs with a mild serenity until a young, bearded man sighted them and interrupted their reading of the card catalog with an upturned finger. Cassandra motioned her friends to follow, and what ensued was a rude encounter with the Special Collections Director who assumed the three were high school girls, too young to be scholars. Only Moira did not shrink from his stare, for she reminded him of the newsletter, of the books she had sold by mail to his library, of her connections in the widening circle, and in the end, he apologized feeling most foolish and embarrassed, but only Valery heard him, for the others were already at work searching the bibliography for the best folder to absorb their time while the sensuous rain kept falling lightly outside, tapping the windowpanes like lost children who wanted to come inside to read or talk to people.

Moira read handwritten pages in her folder.

And what of our own sleep? We go to it no better-- and betray her with the very virtue of our days. We are continent a long time, but no sooner has our head touched the pillow, and our eyes left the day, than a host of merry-makers take and get. We wake from our doings in a deep sweat for that they happened in a house without an address, in a street in no town, citizenized with people with no names with which to deny them. Their very lack of identity makes them ourselves.

Cassandra made notes and showed them to Valery and Moira.

... searching the world for the path back to what she wanted once and long ago! The memory past, and only by a coincidence, a wind, the flutter of a leaf, a surge of tremendous recollection gives through her, and swooning she knows it gone ... Love of two things often makes one thing right. Think of the fish racing the sea, their love of air and water turning them like wheels, their tails and teeth biting the water, their spines curved round the air.

Each woman, buoyed up by the words of another artist, another woman, glowed with a deeper understanding of her talent, her power, her being. Moira had not eaten anything the entire day, and still there was no hunger, but Cassandra's stomach growled, and Valery drove to The Loft so they could ponder the gravity of their recent involvement with a writer's soul while the rain continued to punctuate conversation with soft question marks and exclamation points.

Moira was one who was in love with words, the words in letters from friends never met, 19



from strangers, the words in books, in the pages of yet unprinted editions, in the letters handset by her own fingers, type to form the words that she loved, the skeletons of emotions and feelings. Moira was in love with the words in manuscripts stuffed in boxes in old libraries that believed they owned the writers because they bought their words, was in love with the look of words, on a page it's looking like fish (X) directed towards heaven, was in love with tiny petite script or large fat alphabets, print that scrawled, sprawled, languished across the pale virgin paper. Not just the sight of such words either but their sound, the tone in the rhythmic combination of certain prefixes, compounds, syllables or participial endings. Moira was one who was in love with the soul and echo of words, their savor too, the taste and touch of language substance, written down for the sake of preserving joy, tradition, reality, dream. Moira, an artist, a wordmaker, a designer of language paintings and books, a poet, one who was loving the day and the night because of the rain, in spite of the rain, because of her own birthing power, her artistry, her humanity, her life.

In the past when she had been younger, Moira had depended on men in particular to make her happy and ebullient. Then the rain would be a curtain of sadness weighing down on her colorful, musical stage. Every time it rained, she would become lonely, remembering an ominous dream. In the dream she was a passenger in a car. The day would be lovely and filled with sunshine as the car sped past summer scenery, tall trees and colorful forests. Almost magically, other cars vanished from sight as the one car carrying her drove fast, faster across a long and low bridge spanning the entire width of a calm and peaceful river or lake. Suddenly the car would run out of bridge and disappear into the blue tranquillity of water, water, water. And Moira would drown quietly without a sound, without a scream. The falling rain would recall this dream to Moira, and she would seek companionship, escape in the warm, pulsating arms of a man who could assure her of her aliveness, of the beating of her heart as real and not a wild fancy. But that had changed; the strange pattern of that period of her life had been altered by a personal invitation by the author to read at the Djuna Barnes Festival.

In those years, when the invitation arrived, Moira had been living with a photographer, a man who was twenty years her senior. She had seen everything in Jerome that her father lacked, a serious grasp and understanding of the tragedy as well as comedy of life. Jerome's humor was not like Groucho Marx or Milton Berle or Sid Caesar, her father's favorites. Jerome cared about his health and appearance and photographed beauty as well as dreary reality. He had given up smoking during their live-in arrangement, because the smoke irritated Moira's tender sense of smell. All the ramifications of the invitation from the woman who had responded to Moira's youthful letters with large Daliesque postcards that looked to be handwritten in crayon or multi-colored eyebrow pencils. Moira was ten years younger then, a maiden, a nymph, a delicate innocent child who wrote poems with an unsteady hand, precious jewels ready to be encased in ornate frames. Too excited and nervous to fly alone to the ocean, she asked Jerome for guidance, and he inspired her that this moment would be a peak in her life. He would accompany her, photograph the entire Celebration, share in the fire and water and sun of the luminous event.

When they entered the cavelike auditorium on the day of her reading, Moira was blind to the hundreds of people waiting for Djuna Barnes and her chosen circle tangents to whirl onto the stage, to set Berkeley ablaze with mysticism and occult power. They did not disappoint, the youthful circle guests. Moira had first met Divina there, a woman whose encounter was a stepping stone since the day of the Celebration, a light musical rain fell from violet clouds, and always in the past Moira's dream would intrude on her day and inject sadness into her spirit like some venomous snake, like some modern medicineman in a sterile Doctors' Hospital. But not with Divina at her side and Leann on the other side, whose poems she would print two years later. Now the river was bubbling, and Moira was dancing over smooth ivory-grey stones like a frog princess who sings to the waterlilies in the pond for her wedding to nature. The years had been passed exactly like that buoyant day. Moira had lived with a scientist and a sculptor following Jerome who had left her for a wraithlike painter introduced to him at the California Celebration. She had printed members of the circle on her own private press, Moira had. Divina had become absorbed in writing criticism: Even Djuna Barnes had changed, gone into seclusion, become a hermit in her Greenwich Village apartment in

New York. Moira's dream had vanished also into her deep sub-conscious or inner consciousness but the strength gained from that joyous experience had never left Moira; as though each time she remembered the occasion, a new light would shimmer through her pale skin, instilling energy into her frail birdlike body. Moira was thin but she was vibrant, powerful, strong, bold like a bird of prey, like a majestic eagle, like a kingly peacock. And when it rained, the rain was beauty and happiness and peace. It always rained too whenever Moira would take a monumental stride, whenever she was invited to show her rare books, to discuss her blossomed career as a small press printer, to read her poetry, to travel to meet friends known only on the page. The rain was a symbol of success, a Ponce de Leon fountain, eternal contentment spraying smiles on Moira. For Moira was one loving herself ever since that Celebration when myriad souls had reached out to her to share their own portrait poems of her, to throw her bouquets of seashells and flowers and oceanspray. And whenever the clouds would appear and there would be no mountain to climb, Moira would bask in the glory of her memories and breathe in energy for future commitments, future ordeals. Even the rain could not depress Moira. Never again despair.

For that reason it was not very unusual that when she reached the age of seventy-five in her dream, Moira saw herself as more beautiful than in her twenties. People would marvel at her timelessness and ask her to what did she attribute such "joie de vivre," such ageless wondrous sensuality. Moira's answer was always the same, a welcome to rain. For when it rained the world was reborn, and every time the rain came, birth, rebirth, rejuvenation came on the tail of a glimmering cape, a duplicate of her very own, a welcome to rain, she said, the rain that fell all around her. A welcome to rain. Rain. Rain. Rain.

#### for the common woman's poet and all Edward the Dykes

stroking his beard  
playing psychoanalysis  
he asks what does  
homosexuality bring  
to mind:

Edward sweet misguided  
6'4" dyke  
i see you with warm  
brown eyes  
tremulous shy anxious smile  
answering;

love flowers pearls  
(soft lips and white teeth)  
pink petal roses  
(those succulent other lips)  
warm sweet bread  
(your warm sweet smell)  
cinnamon toast poetry  
(me watching you come)

Edward  
bold lover  
like no other  
your mouth whispers poetry  
your hands light fires  
you kindle desires  
the doctor tells you  
to ignore

listen to me instead  
Edward  
do you know what i  
have to give?

warmer days than sunshine  
more burn than ice  
a strength to hold up mountains  
more love than a mother  
for her child

gingerbread  
melting vanilla wafers  
independent angel song

think of what you could leave  
behind

no more doctors  
no more being freak  
no more dues to pay

share my bed and board  
know the fullness of a  
woman's love



# THE REINCARNATION OF MY PRIDE

BY JESSICA AMANDA SALMONSON

I had a wonderful Winter Solstice this last year. We decorated a tree to celebrate the Earth Goddess and exchanged gifts. I received a new jacket, walkin' shoes, a t-shirt with the Parrish print "Waterfall" on it, a dykie blouse from a straight cousin bless her heart, Baby Yourself Cologne from a small niece I babysit sometimes, a hardbound copy of a book I'd wanted for ages, a French Rosé which I gave away because I'm a teetotaler, some mexican pot holders (no, not roach pipes, silly), a black umbrella with one nice sharp point on it, a women's calendar, and an attempted suicide.

It is my fondest hope that the levity of that statement shocked you in some small manner.

Everything was going so well. Everything was as beautiful as it had ever been. My lover gave me a key to her apartment and the use of her car if I needed it and wanted me to come and go as I pleased. She was a college professor and beautiful to behold. I hadn't known her long. There were also many cheery Solstice letters from friends, and hardly any trite christmas cards. There were many good reasons to laugh and live and be a part of the joy of winter, of mountain snow, of women gathered around fire places (even if some had to be gas fire places). So how do I top all this happiness and joy? I swallow about thirty sleeping pills.

Obviously, something wasn't as wondrous as it seemed.

We all write poetry. Don't we? We never tell, because we rarely know, what it says about ourselves, our lives, the momentary situations that make us free our souls in whispering secrets of verse. These words I wrote to my beloved professor:

There came to me a thousand lovers  
winged and shining and shimmering  
like angels all adoring me  
Then like fire flies turned to gnats  
their lights had all grown dark  
and only you were left to see.  
Your eyes, your eyes  
reveal your mother France  
and make me dream Romance  
and rue the circumstance  
that wrote, "Where lovers dance  
it dies, it dies."  
These tears  
wrung dry for you  
This song  
a bell rung true.

It had been a long time coming, this play for death. I was triggered by my new lover, the most incredible woman I'd met in four years, who only made love to me while I was in love with her. I say that she was the trigger, but I in no way mean to imply it was her fault.

The whole community was at fault. And, of course, I was at fault.

I'd been going around a full year with this smile on my face that kept blurring the words, "Lesbian Pride!" Somehow, though, this was not translating "Self Pride." I could only have as much pride in myself as I had in the lesbian community at large, because I was not thinking of myself as an individual but as a part of something big and beautiful and important. I was chock full of \*IDEALS\* about what it meant to be a lesbian. We are all One, and united, sharing love and joy. I had pride in myself only for so long as I could believe that kind of bullshit.

So over that year I saw women hating women, dividing into factions, battling politically with each other rather than against the oppressors. I saw man-hating too (and felt some) when woman-loving would have been better. There was more energy being expended on hating than on loving. I also saw women hurting women emotionally. I did not see a single relationship or couple that had lasted or been together any longer than three years. I saw fast cruising in bars and one night stands and cat fights.

I got scared.

By living on my lesbian pride rather than culturing some self pride, I began to feel smaller and smaller the further and further women drifted from my expectations. I had heard of one couple who'd lasted ten years, by moving into the mountains and being snowed in three months out of the year, renting cabins to hunters, and doing nothing in the lesbian or feminist community. They had no pressures, so they lasted. Ten years. Is that so long? Is that some kind of record? What happened to the life-long pairings I had heard about? Was that one of the many myths of what it means to be lesbian?

Some gay males can have five minute affairs in bathroom stalls and come away satisfied. Gay women need more. They need emotional involvement. They need about three weeks of intense love, and then a painful hurtful separation full of bitterness or tears or clinging or running away.

I couldn't take pride in that.

Political factions battling, belittling one another, enemies within the community, lack of unity, lack of respect for differing views, failure to communicate, refusal to listen, demands to be heard.

Affairs burning upward and out like presto-logs.

Sexism and racism, hair pulling and screaming, grudges and attacks.

I should have faced right there that my Ideals were some kind of crutch. I was thinking, "I'm okay, I'm better," because, "Lesbians are better." But lesbians are people like anyone else. That was hard to realize and face, possibly because somewhere inside I was somehow disappointed in myself for being a lesbian and it wasn't good enough to be just as good, the same but different. I had to be better, or the difference wasn't tolerable.

I had no more lesbian pride.

December twenty-fifth I asked my lover to take me home though I was supposed to spend the night with her. She did so, reluctantly. I sat in the doorway crying my heart out, alone, wondering why I had blown this fantastic and perfectly hedonistic affair. No, not wondering that. Wondering why it had to be hedonistic and couldn't just be natural and forever. Wondering what would ever become of me if the most I could hope for is ten years if I find someone willing to isolate herself with me in the mountains and knowing that if I remain an active feminist and am surrounded by friends who were also potential lovers, and and my lover's potential lovers, three years was the most I could hope for, and even hoping for that much was vain and egotistical when all everyone around me was experiencing were three week affairs.

I took the pills with a glass of milk.

Now, this is weird, but before I had taken the last pill, I already had the telephone to

my ear calling the crisis clinic. I didn't really want to die. But I didn't do it for attention either, because I had one big bundle of attention already. I had a grand lover, and ten more waiting in the wings. That was a bummer, but I didn't want to die over it, and I didn't need still more attention. So why did I take the pills?

I left a trite little suicide note. It said, "If I die, who will miss me?"

It was a game of russian roulette. I thought maybe I would die. The "If" in the suicide note tells that.

My lover brought me home from the hospital. I was physically and emotionally weak, without resistance. I was talking very slowly, understanding very little. She and I went to bed together, but she did not say she loved me because that would have been a lie. I got up in the middle of the night and took about forty pain pills and went back to bed, thinking melodramatically that it would be wonderful to die in her arms.

This time I intended to die. I was not rushing for the phone. But unlike the sleeping pills that brought on a pleasant nothingness, this new effort (atop the first full glass of wine I'd had in my life) was painful. And I mean PAINFUL.

"What's the matter, Jessica?"

"Nothing, nothing. Hold me. Good-bye."

"Good-bye! Jessica! What did you do! Did you take something!"

"Nothing. No. Hold me. Oh. OH!"

Ambulance. Pain. Blackness. Confusion. Vomiting. Head-ache. It wasn't supposed to hurt. It wasn't supposed to be like this.

Four days later, they let me out of the psyche ward.

I have no intention of ever trying it again. I hope my mind never gets to that point of despair and disillusionment again. I am still sad, somehow, that my ideals were shown so false. But now I must work on Self-Pride, and be proud that I am a lesbian, not cry too hard that not all lesbians are people I can be proud of. Needless to say, I freaked out my lover. I no longer have her apartment key or free use of her car, but we still see each other. It remains to be seen if something less sudden and more lasting evolves, something more sane than the instant commitment I was subconsciously pleading for. Perhaps we'll drift apart as lovers, but remain friends. Perhaps we'll never regain that special magic I still think of as lesbian-trust. I still hope very deeply that it builds into a forever thing.

But I won't make that hope my whole life, and I won't end my life if it doesn't work. I'm going back to school; commercial arts; a career in my future. I hope to become the strong, self-reliant, together woman my lover is, self-assured, independent, as capable as ever of giving my love and wanting the love of another, but not needing in a taking, leeching, clinging manner.

I've changed my environment. Gone is the dreary small apartment, here is the vast living room with a bay window for plants, large dinet and bedroom, grandmotherly kitchen, in a part of town overflowing with lesbians. Here, I will work on my independence and my school, and continue to see this woman I love, or another if it comes to that, and begin to grow. I still want so much for the lesbian community at large. I dream of that unity I once believed in. It may yet exist, in our future. I would like to continue in whatever ways I can to build that unity for womankind everywhere, but I can't hope to get all your heads together until I get my own head together. I will grow, and I'll urge you to grow, and some of us will grow faster than others, until someday we all meet at the top and we'll find individual Self Pride as lesbians.



## BETWEEN FRIENDS

### BY DOROTHY FEOLA

Jill: she looked slightly paler than usual. Her light brown hair had grown back into the shag style it used to be when we first met. (Only two years ago?) She didn't look quite as 'butch' as with the short hair she had more recently sported. In fact, once you got beyond the clothes-denims and cotton work shirts and heavy construction shoes for casual wear/cor-duroys and ivy league or man-tailored shirts and leather boots for dressy wear- there was nothing classically butch about her at all. ("I'll be anything you want me to be," she would smile, invitingly.)

She could really be aggressive, it was true. She could also be gentle. And tender. And loving. For a while. While it suited her purposes. If she had nothing better to do.

The grounds around the hospital were nothing special, but it seemed very pleasant at this particular time of the year: a spray of color here and there, amidst an abundance of freshly cut grass; small, comfortable looking benches that reflected the sun as it filtered through the neatly stationed trees, giving the impression of almost waxed sterility.

No matter what happened, families always seemed to come through when one of their own was in real need of help; no matter what the financial situation was, they offered the best that their money could buy. - - - Even when appreciation was doubtful.

Jill, slippers, denims, short terry cloth wrap-around over a pale blue shirt. She nodded, half smiling, inclining her head slightly. "Well, come on -- nothin' to be scared of. -- I won't bite." Ha, I thought, not the slightest bit amused. (There are bites and there are bites.) "I'm not really crazy, you know. Well -- not much more than usual, anyway."

Everything had started to come together, falling into place, as soon as she had opened her mouth, all the pain, agony, and torment that I had kept buried all these months. What was I doing here anyway? I had promised myself I would never again play interception between her capriciousness and my own emotional (self?) destruction. "You haven't changed much." In six months --? But it was all I could think of to say.

"Nervous breakdowns bring out the best or worst in people. In my case it's all the same, huh?"

That almost abstract clarity of insight at work again. ("I inflict pain on everyone who means anything to me." "I can't help taking the easiest way out for me, no matter who it hurts." "Just don't fall in love with me -- I can't deal with it -- and it's not worth the effort for either of us.") Why hadn't I listened to her when she tried to warn me? -- while there was still a chance to save myself -- before the trap had completely sprung shut. Why do we too often listen with our hearts and not our heads? Why do we prevent ourselves from accepting the facts as they are -- and not as we'd like them to be? And why do we always feel that we can change someone for the better just because we love them enough to gladly submit ourselves to all kinds of sacrifices? And, perhaps most of all, what was the use of re-hashing it over and over again, trying to figure out what you had done wrong?

"I wasn't sure you'd come."

"Neither was I." Admittedly, it had been a struggle. But hadn't I actually surmised what the outcome would be? We know ourselves only too well. -- If we really want to stand still long enough to admit it.

She started to reach out, as if to touch me, but seemed to change her mind before completing the gesture. Her arm fell to her side, a bit tired and dejectedly. "I remember when we were friends, really friends -- It was nice -- you know --"

Friends!? God, what can be said to that --? Was it possible that even now she couldn't 25

see how ludicrous the whole idea was? Surely, if nothing else, she was no fool. How could she begin to understand the true meaning of friendship when she was incapable of even appreciating the natural fundamentals of 'give' and 'take.'

"I guess I messed it up pretty badly," was her answer to my silence. "Sorry about that."

"Are you?" I asked, totally unimpressed.

She dropped her eyes, her head bobbing slightly, her hands thrust deeply into the pockets of the robe. I turned away, hoping to spare myself memories of instant replays. Doesn't anything ever change? — All the time and effort I had put into getting through that natural reaction of hers — when she chose not to face what was rigidly, stubbornly before her: me. It was just too much to relive again. The memory was all too real as it was. (And the dreams still hung around somewhere, invading my sleep in the dead of night — the whole reasoning behind them seeming to be that if I could get her to look directly into my eyes, she would see the love I felt and — And what? No matter. The dreams always ended before that happened anyway.)

"Come on, I'll show you around — then we can get some coffee and doughnuts — It's free even to visitors — and they're pretty good, man," was the peace offering this time, accompanied by the abrupt change of spirit. ("I don't want to talk about it anymore — let's go to bed — we'll make love and forget about the whole thing.") "The food's not half bad here." ("I can't get to bed and make love, leaving things like this, Jill — Men can do that; women can't. I can't." "I can. And I'm not a man.")

A quiet laugh, almost like a snicker. "It's a nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live here."

"Amen."

"A-Woman. Always." She winked. "Some things never change. Thank God."

I followed her. She turned back to make sure. I wanted to smile assuringly; I couldn't.

"Will you come back?"

"I haven't left yet."

"I'll be here for a while. Not too long. Never too long. You know me — even institutions can't hold me for very long." Significant pause. "So — will you come back?"

No, I thought. "Yes," I said.

"I knew it!" She actually seemed elated. "When the chips are down, you're always there." She shook her head, incredulous. "That's heavy, you know."

"Yeah, heavy." I must be out of my mind, I thought. But, unlike Jill, I just couldn't separate myself from my heart. Or my conscience. Or my pain. — Only my rationality, it would seem.

She started to turn away again, all smiles, apparently well satisfied with the situation at hand. I felt a spark of anger; I knew, from experience, that it wouldn't last. "Jill —" She turned back. "Where in hell are you going —? And why, for chrissake?"

The smile slipped off her face in slow motion as the reality of the questions began to dawn on her. "I guess I'm going where I belong — wherever the hell that may be. Why —?" She shrugged, dusting away the seriousness of whatever realities she was feeling. "Why not?"

Why not indeed, I thought, wondering, not for the first time since I had met her, who were the real survivors in life. "Lead the way," I told her. I guess I smiled for the first time since I had arrived. Why rehash it all?

I followed her, trying to stay just behind, thinking about escaping through the trees. — Knowing it was just a thought to be played with. What was the use —? I could never escape where Jill was concerned. Not where it really counted: inside. But why rehash it now —? There was plenty of time for that later on. Like the rest of my life.

# THE HERONS & THE GULLS

## A Fable for the Birds



by Barbara Stephens

We walked to the beach, Karma and I; my hands holding silken hands, her slenderness beside me, smooth, satiny and warm. The mist encircled the trees, white birch gleaming by the stream, dark pine trees at the bridge, and beyond - the silver sea.

"take me on a trip

In your magic swirling ship,

Down the foggy ruins of time . . .

Past the haunted frightened trees

To the windy beach,

Far from the reach

of crazy sorrow" 1

We walked by the waves, my arms enclosing magic and wonder, and we kissed. Gulls screamed overhead, tossed on wafts of fog; wind blew spray as the organ roll of ocean welled into my mind.

"Karma, we must go to the ranch, and watch the great blue herons. It's nesting time, and they gather in the Redwood canyon . . . There is something I want to show you."

We left the beach and walked up the road. The lagoon on one side of us, forests of oak and sycamore on the other, bare branches jeweled with the opening buds and flowers. We came to the ranch, down a dirt road and a winding path up the hill. The woods were thick with lichen and ferns, fairy-bells and Douglas Iris. At one point, a doe rushed ahead of us, and then, silence. We were at the look-out. Across the ravine were the tall redwoods — - sombre, majestic; remnants of another age and time.

"See, over there — that is their courtship dance."

Slender, on frail stilts, the male heron presented a twig to his mate; she accepted. Slow motion, they nodded and bowed to each other. He flew away, floating down the canyon, and returned with another twig, the ritual repeated. Other herons were building nests, in exquisite harmony and motion, dancing a slow gavotte, a shadow minuet, forty or fifty herons, gliding between the branches, passing each other yet not touching. Hoarse cries of joy echoed down the canyon: soft, windblown, and scarcely audible.

"Perfect harmony, grace, and sensitivity — - as life could be under anarchy" I said.

"But you refuse to believe; you're such a skeptic."

"I am. Then, there's my age, and my experience. Yes, there have been communities guided by outer harmony and inner direction. Like the Island Indians off the Northern



coast of California. They had never known of war, and hadn't even a word in their vocabulary for conflict. Well, the fur hunters came, and wiped them out. Now recently, scientists have discovered the Tasaday. I wonder how long they can survive before being tainted or destroyed by our snivelization."

"Then, you think that people can't be changed? Isn't it possible to start a special community, a nucleus of love, spreading outward to embrace the world?"

"It's been tried over and over again, with the noblest of purposes, & purity of motives in their beginnings. 'Christianity is love' - as we learned in history, with its records of pogroms and thirty-year wars. 'Socialism is love' - have you ever witnessed a faction fight? And 'Marriage is love' - oh Wow!"

"You'll never be able to love with that cynicism - Honey!"

"Ein mädchen oder weibchen  
Wunst Papageno sich"<sup>2</sup> I hummed.

Karma smiled, and we walked together down the hill. We flagged a bus and returned up the Mountain of the Gods to the seaport of San Anito. Evening fog draped the redwoods; spectral trees, gaunt in the pale golden light. At the seaport, we purchased some bread and pop-corn, and waited for the ferry. The water glistened green and copper, waving broken images of a rusty sun. Great Western Gulls soared around us: black wings, ivory breasts and cruel curved beaks. The darker ones, dusky all over floated towards us, crying. I said

"These are the 'babies' - immature gulls in their juvenile plumage. We must feed them."

We threw pieces of bread on the waters, which erupted in a screeching, flapping fury. Mature gulls crowded out the youngsters; one seized a morsel that one juvenile had taken. I threw pieces into the air, wherein several gulls collided, while the bread fell down below to be torn apart by a dozen floating fighters.

"And darling" I said "this is anarchy too."

"No honey - it might be chaos, randomness - . . . but, seagulls are not Anarchists!"

"Then, let us call it another name. Rugged individualists, kapitalists, free entrepreneurs doing their thing."

The ferry arrived and we rode the upper deck, accompanied by an escort of a thousand gulls. The setting sun echoed in the waves weaving bronzed mirrors, broken by soft flapping wings.

"Hi, bird, Come here, bird" the passengers shouted. Food tossed into the air as the birds pirouetted and danced, catching pellets on the wing.

"They do have a grace and beauty, and even some direction. They fight, yet never kill one another; some instinct prevents this. And their's is a world of scarcity, perennial famine; a world without justice, equity or social order."

"Darwin's world. Red in tooth and claw? And your alternative - is it an anthill society? Or some police state with guards monitoring the food-markets?"

"No, I would think not - yet I am searching for answers. I've experienced a real Utopia when I worked in an archaeological expedition, headed by Mark Red Hawk, curator of the Miwok museum. Of course, isolation, insularity and protection helped us a lot. Darling, have you ever lived in a ghetto - like the white ghetto of South Los Angeles, or the black ghetto of West Berkeley?"

"I don't see the connection."

"And you've never worked in the shipyards. Ever been to the Continentale?"

"Where's that?"

"A gay bar operating during the 1940's. Straight men would come at closing hour when people were leaving, waiting for a chance to rape or beat up a Les. One night I left the bar with a pair of friends and we stopped at a filling station - half a block away, a mob of sailors

surrounded a trio of fighters. Two burly sailors were beating the tar out of a little guy. The victim was screaming 'I tried to be decent.' I recall Willie the shipfitter, who'd brag about how he and a bunch of guys from the Union hall would go out on Saturday night to Maxwell's to 'beat up some queers.' Even the police are beyond the law in this stage of 'anarchy.' Some friends of mine, Jill and Jackie, were picked up by the vice-squad in a bar, taken to an alley, beaten up and 'left for dead' . . ."<sup>3</sup>

"Oh, how awful!"

"You've lived a sheltered life. Me, I've been to the dark side of the moon."

"But, you won't try to change this?"

"I'd like to, but feel impotent. I can only provide ideas. Some liberal ideas such as full employment, equitable food distribution; some anarchistic ideas such as Summerhill schools, worker-controlled cooperatives, decriminalization of victimless 'crimes'; and some form of men's liberation projects to lead them away from the cult of violence and cruelty. My one worry is that some 'woman-liberationists' might take up the machissimo banner and imitate the worst kind of man."

The ferry came to port and we walked to the terminal to wait for the bus. Large drafty barn, pigeons sleeping in the rafters, and one fledgling on the floor, close to my feet.

"I work as a loner, honey, being that I have such a distrust of existing organizations. I've been through them all - like the demo-clubs which weren't really so democratic, but functioned mainly to promote the pros. And the Anarchists - some were loveable sentimental humanitarians, while others were out organizing totalitarian communes. Freedom for many of the 'individualists' meant merely the freedom to dominate people, exploit people, rip them off, or to own themlike property. They even had a mentor - The Ego and His Own by Max Stirner. The Communitarian ones had a party line for sex, meaning that if you refuse a guy because you don't like him, you have hangups. The Commune would cure us all of our hangups - like privacy, homosexuality, monogamy, or plain cussed stubbornness - with their own form of brain-washing. I wasn't too surprised that these elements became Maoist revolutionaries. I studied the history of anarchism and found - a few saints, and a chamber of horrors. Anti-semites, antifeminists, anti-homosexuals, and more than a sprinkling of berserkers, terrorists and mad-bombers. Some Libertarian meeting I've been to were all too much a game of King of the Hill, actually a reincarnation of scrambling seagulls."

"Oh look honey! It's after the pretty one - the baby with bronze feathers and pretty golden eyes . . ."

I saw it leap, and I jumped in between the two. The leaping cat hissed at me as it ran away, and Karma picked up the pigeon, caressing it tenderly.

"I see, life is beautiful, but it needs protection to survive."

"Karma, we'll have something other than the Third Reich, or the 'Law of the Fishes'<sup>4</sup> But we need privacy, insularity, protection and justice for our love . . . Honey -"

"Yes, I want to keep it, we'll name it?"

"Karmalita, my love."

I held her hand and closed my eyes. I was dreaming of the herons.

Notes: 1. Bob Dylan - lyrics from Mr. Tambourine Man. 2. Mozart - Papageno's aria - from the Magic Flute: "A maiden fair and slender, is that what I would own, Like turtle dove, and tender; for me, and me alone." 3. Episodes cited are true happenings during the late 1940s. 4. Hindoo proverb - "the big fish eat the little fish" translated, the strong bully the weak, or the rich exploit the poor.





*(Portrait by George Nichols)*

KATIE BURNETT NICHOLS

December 4, 1905 - January 30, 1976

Artist, Intellectual, Classical Music Lover  
 Freethinker, Humanitarian, Realist  
 Individualist, Civil Libertarian, Crusader  
 Native American, Feminist  
 Mother and Mentor  
 Loved and Mourned

# WILD GOOSE MESSAGE

Lament not yesteryear's spring  
 Gone ne'er to return again;  
 I have heard the wild goose o'erhead --  
 On descending air, this he said:  
 "Bury your heart at Wounded Knee, you say?  
 Take you a new heart, I pray you!  
 All honor to the noble brave and gone!  
 Be not less, or they may not rest!"  
 Into the cerulean distance they disappeared;  
 From cliff to cliff, faint echo rebounded,  
 "Say an orison for the wild goose!"

-- Katie Burnett Nichols,  
 a Miwok woman, elder of DQU



## Ode To Diana/In Full Lunar Eclipse

A rounded sphere suspended in the night,  
First orange then gold, with flame's pure light  
You draw me with such power that ere I'm in your sight  
I'm left with no defenses; yours without a fight.  
So please, my love, be gentle; you own my soul tonight.

Do you find it very funny hiding in that tree  
Watching while I chase you, trying to be free,  
Running, dodging people, now down on bended knee.  
Please don't make me share you, tonight love only me.  
You'll have anything you ask for, my own mortality.

I have a bed of roses, so come into my room,  
And with my harp I'll play you a sweet caressing tune.  
Be my true love Diana, my warm and smiling moon.  
Put down all your arrows, feed me nectar from your spoon.  
Then suckle at my bosom, flow gently to my womb.

The earth will lend a shadow to fill your empty place.  
She'll hide it from your brother and bring you no disgrace.  
While riding in his chariot, he'll not even miss your face.  
The morning star will warn us before he ends his race.  
Then I'll give you up forever to wander out in space.

Cathy Crowl

## Brave Unicorn

A horse with but a single horn,  
With what grace, what sinewed form  
That lovely beast: Brave Unicorn.

Elusively you hide in space  
The power and glory that's in your face,  
Now missing from our human race.

Yet those with faith can see thee still,  
A starry night, a far off hill  
Though we must die, you never will.

A child is born to laugh and cry,  
To dream and fight and reason why,  
To move with stars and finally die.

Still dreamers seek you ever more  
Far out at sea and near to shore,  
Upon high peaks at heavens door.

And I now lost in this my life  
Immersed in pain and worn with strife  
Seek from you a golden wife.

The courage that I find in you  
With faith and hope will see me through  
To that new place I wander to.

When I find what in fear I lost  
At morning dew or evening frost,  
I'll know the end was worth the cost!

Cathy Crowl

## Poet

I grow slowly  
like a plant kept out of light, all stem.  
Let the bright burst adhere to me  
the white ray refract through clear cell  
to clear cell, strain, break  
and shatter its colors among them.  
They will be fertilized in the crossfire, they will put  
forth the thought of new leaves.

Mog Duff

Oh fragile woman  
play your lovely instrument  
and serenade me to sweet  
calm  
languish for me in the  
valley of love  
let me listen to your labors  
let me soothe your frustration  
with my eyes and ears  
upon you  
Play for me  
Oh my love

H. Woods

## Do You Love Me?

Do I love you?

I love your face, when you sleep, so calm and trusting  
I love your hair, the way it falls on the pillow  
I love your body, stretched freely over and under mine  
I love you in the first morning light, still half in shadow

I love your mouth, so soft and warm  
I love your ears, so tender and fun to nibble  
I love your gentle shoulders, when I need them to cry into  
I love your strong and noble chin

I love your smile, coming when I need it most  
I love your breasts, soft and erotic in the moonlight  
I love your stomach, gently round and comfortable  
I love your juices of love, now sweet, now salty, always you

I love your laughter, so quick and happy  
I love your sense of humor and satirical wit  
I love your grasp of things that elude me  
I love everything that is you

But woman I love,  
why did you ask?

Carolyn Shama





# OLD MAIDS

## SPINSTERS & MAIDEN LADIES:

### THE MYTH AND THE REALITY OF THE LIVES OF SINGLE WOMEN IN AMERICA, 1800-1861

by Judith Schwarz

*(This is the concluding part of Ms. Schwarz's thesis, the first three parts of which appeared in our Dec. '75 issue. The author is continuing work toward an M.A. in Women's Studies at San Jose State University and will be doing research at Radcliffe College this summer in the area of woman-to-woman relationships among "spinsters" of the 19th century. She would be happy to hear from other feminist scholars, who may write her in care of LESBIAN VOICES. -- Editor.)*

Any attempt to draw conclusions about spinsters from the careful examination of the lives of 143 nineteenth century women must necessarily begin with the disclaimer that:

One must distrust any approach which fails to recognize that human beings, in any culture, come in assorted psychological shapes and sizes. No analytical strategy which assumes that the behavior of groups can be explained by considering them as undifferentiated individuals writ large can prove intellectually satisfactory.<sup>45</sup>

While acknowledging the vast individual differences in the personalities, lives and goals of each woman, my analysis showed an astonishing pattern of similar backgrounds, character traits and attitudes towards life among the women who remained unmarried. Since my purpose was not to compare their lives with a similar cross-section of married women from the same era, I must leave it to other researchers to determine if any of these conclusions fit most nineteenth century women, or if these factors actually had a bearing on whether a woman remained single.

In examining their childhoods, I found that many of the women were the first-born of their families, or at least the eldest surviving daughter. This one small factor later determined the course of the woman's life. Elizabeth Peabody was the eldest of seven children, Catharine Beecher the first-born of eight surviving children. Jane Aitken, Mary Lucinda Bonney, Mary Booth, Frances Victor, Dorothea Dix all found that the dubious distinction of being the eldest child placed an enormous amount of responsibility on them. They often became the surrogate mother to the younger children when their real mother was busy, ill, or in the process of adding another sibling to the family. Dorothea Dix had an unhappy childhood, "marred by the frequent absence of her improvident father and the semi-invalidism of her mother, which threw upon her the care of her two young brothers."<sup>46</sup> An even better example of the strong sense of duty and responsibility which has often been noted in first-born children was the educator, Catharine Beecher.

As the oldest child, Catharine assumed many responsibilities and became accustomed to dominance. When her mother died, the sixteen-year-old Catharine felt she had to take her place in the lives of the younger children. When her father married the elegant Harriet Porter in 1817, it was Catharine who penned the children's dutiful letter of welcome. Three more sons and one daughter were born of this second marriage. The household, with its aunts and cousins, boarders and servants, with its talk of the Christian Observer, of Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth, and Sir Walter Scott, was the center of her life.<sup>47</sup>

As the above quote shows, many of the women who remained unmarried, such as the Grimke sisters, Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell, Lucretia and Susan Hale, and Mary Moody Emerson, came from large families with extremely strong family bonds or heritage. As they grew up, these women found it difficult to give up their proud family name and loyalty and the familiar comfortable relationships with kinfolk and siblings in order to establish close ties with outsiders. At the age of twenty-four, Catherine Sedgwick wrote a particularly telling letter to her brother Robert:

I am satisfied, by long and delightful experience, that I can never love any body better than my brothers. I have no expectation of ever finding their equal in worth and attraction, therefore -- do not be alarmed; I am not on the verge of a vow of celibacy, nor have I the slightest intentions of adding any rash resolutions to the ghosts of those that have been frightened to death by the terrors of maiden life; but, therefore -- I shall never change my condition until I change my mind. You will acknowledge, dear Robert, that, notwithstanding the proverbial mutability of a woman's inclination, the probability is in favor of my continuing to stamp all the coin of my kindness with a sister's impress, particularly when you consider that every year depreciates the coin in the market of matrimony.<sup>48</sup>

Another strong influence on the developing personality of the girl-child who later became an independent, self-supporting woman was the economic situation of her family. Time after time, the record shows that many women were forced in their childhood or early adolescence to find ways to help add to their family budget. No life of ladylike leisure awaited them, in fact, in many cases their fathers had lost the family business, or died unexpectedly, leaving the family literally penniless. Every member of the family was forced to work, and if the future spinster was the oldest child, she felt even more responsible to help the younger children continue their education as much as possible. The early loss of their father also meant that the mother had to either become stronger and more self-reliant or else sink with the rest of the family into oblivion.

For instance, Zilpah Grant's father "died in a farm accident when she was two, and until her early twenties she lived with her mother [and four other children], who kept farm and household together."<sup>49</sup> When Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell's father died, their large family of nine children was left poverty-stricken. Elizabeth was 17; Emily was 11.

The next ten years were hard, as the older Blackwells set about earning a living and educating the younger members of the family. For four years Elizabeth maintained a private school with her mother and two elder sisters, Anna and Marian, and then went to Henderson, Ky., for a further year of teaching.<sup>50</sup>

The Blackwell family, which provided America with so many strong and unusually independent leaders of social reform, especially showed the effect of parental influence. The father, Samuel Blackwell, was deeply religious, kind, tolerant, respected and a very liberal social reformer of his day. They were also blessed with an exceptional mother.

The beautiful and spirited Hannah Blackwell played a strong supporting role to her husband but was also a mellowing influence. She was of a family of rich merchants, and the scale of living familiar to her had to be sternly modified upon her marriage, but music, books, and other amenities made their home bright and comfortable. Discipline was provided by Samuel's four maiden sisters who lived with them. Their home life thus nourished in the young Blackwells seeds of individuality, social consciousness, and resilience of mind and character.<sup>51</sup>

The mention of four maiden aunts who were part of the household brings to mind Catherine Sedgwick's description of her bachelor uncle, who was a permanent member of their household, and "might have had some influence in the formation of our character . . . familiarly known to all the children of the village as 'Uncle Bob'."<sup>52</sup>

. . . in his scoffings at womankind, he covered, under a privileged

ridicule of the sex, a real liking for them . . . he lived till he was 54 in Benedict railings at the sex, and then-married. He made no demands and gave no trouble. He loved the children, and laughed at us all. He was so unobtrusive of his society that he seemed unsocial. He preferred the smallest room, into which no one ever intruded, and a corner seat at table, where he had elbow-room without annoying or being annoyed . . . He was not one of those convenient single people who are used as we use straw and cotton in packing -- to fill up vacant places. His claims were always attended to and his rights respected.<sup>53</sup>

As the girls grew into young womanhood, almost all had a choice of several suitors. Since all were literate women, they must have read in magazines and books the standard values of their era which urged them to fulfill themselves by marrying at a reasonably young age. Few social critics were as blatantly honest about the society's standards as Mrs. Sarah Hale, the editor of *Godey's Ladies' Book*. She stated:

The axiom, as a self-evident truth, is never called in question, that all women are made to be married . . . It is true that the inner life of home is for woman, and that the wife should reverence and obey her husband.<sup>54</sup>

A statement such as that struck terror in the hearts of many an independent, happy, self-reliant young woman. Catherine Sedgwick recalled vividly her first impressions of what marriage meant to her:

My sisters were both married when I was still a child. I was but seven when my sister Eliza was married, and I remember that wedding evening as the first tragedy of my life. She was my mother-sister. I had always slept with her, and been her assigned charge. The wedding was in our "west room." I remember where the bride and groom stood, and how he looked to me like some cruel usurper . . . When the long consecrating prayer was half through, I distinctly remember the consciousness that my sister was going away from me struck me with the force of a blow, and I burst into loud sobs and crying . . . Then came my new brother-in-law -- how well I remember recoiling from him and hating him when he said, "I'll let your sister stay with you this summer." He let her! I was undressed and put to bed, and I cried myself to sleep and waked crying the next morning, and so, from that time to this, weddings in my family have been to me days of sadness, and yet, by some of them, I have gained treasures that no earthly balance or calculation can weigh or estimate!<sup>55</sup>

Many of the women, such as Elizabeth Blackwell, Catharine Beecher, and Margaret Fuller, felt that their special talents or genius set them above society's demands on women. Let the average woman marry and have children -- they had too many abilities to accept a domestic role by the hearth.

From a very early age I have felt that I was not born to the common womanly lot. I knew I should never find a being who could keep the key of my character; that there were none on whom I could always lean, from whom I could always learn; that I should be a pilgrim and sojourner on earth, and that the birds and foxes would be surer of a place to lay the head than I.<sup>56</sup>

One of the most annoying misconceptions about unmarried women is that they are sexual zeros, who neither experience sexual feelings nor act upon them. Nineteenth century unmarried women were considered "unplucked buds on the ancestral tree,"<sup>57</sup> and therefore virginal and asexual. Nevertheless, in the sex manuals of the time, society foresaw one area of sex which was available to all people -- masturbation.

The proper training of girls, their personal hygiene, their relations with other children, their reading habits, and the embarrassing problem of



masturbation (variously called the "solitary vice," "self-pollution," or the "soul-and-body-destroyer") dominated a major portion of the sex manuals of the day. Girls were cautioned never to handle their sexual organs, for, while it gave a temporary pleasure, the habit left "its mark upon the face so that those who are wise may know what the girl is doing." The misuse of the sexual organs brought an inevitable threat of disease and severe complications in later life.<sup>58</sup>

Obviously, there is no way to know how many, if any, of the unmarried women in this study practised masturbation. It was considered the "master vice" of the nineteenth century, and viewed with horror by medical and religious leaders.

A central issue, of course, is . . . control of women's sexuality. Masturbation is, as a few of our 20th century contemporaries have argued, the ultimate in femal autonomy; to mid-19th century physicians, perhaps not coincidentally, it threatened to result in either frigidity or nymphomania . . . <sup>59</sup>

Leaving aside the whole issue of masturbation, there was another sexual and emotional outlet available to the single woman, and that was love for another woman. Whether it was overt lesbianism or not is of less importance than the fact that several women found themselves drawn to another person of the same sex. Margaret Fuller, the Cary sisters, Charlotte Cushman and her friend Emma Stebbins, Mary Grew and Emily Blackwell all shared the same ability to develop deep and lasting relationships with other women. I repeat, there is no earthly way to discover at this late date if any of these women acted out their love sexually, but there are several mentions of "a close and devoted companionship," or a "lifelong friendship" between two women. Society may have unknowingly helped foster such friendships, since all the caressing and kissing deemed unsuitable between unmarried men and women was seen as "womanly" and acceptable between two women. Also, the new female academies and schools which formed during this period placed middle-class girls and teachers in close daily contact. It would be surprising indeed if some of them did not form deep attachments to their favorite friends.

Certainly, the entire subject of women's relationships with other women in the nineteenth century deserves more attention than can be given it within the limitations of this thesis. It is fascinating to speculate about the hidden meaning behind many of the euphemisms used in Notable American Women. The article on the abolitionist and suffragist Mary Grew goes into great detail about her many professional and political accomplishments, but as for her personal life, we are simply left with: "She never married, but lived for many years with a close friend, Margaret Burleigh." \* Many of the single women are described as having "masculine" minds, or a "masculine" manner. Could it be that the woman so described was simply being more assertive, self-confident, and direct than was usually the social norm for a "lady" of the nineteenth century?

A third group of women seems to have completely repressed their sexual feelings to the point where they preferred celibacy. Many of these women had deeply religious backgrounds, and their religious beliefs led them to dedicate their lives to serving God. From Anne Ayers, who founded the first Episcopal sisterhood, to Mother Catherine Spaulding, a Roman Catholic nun, I found sixteen of the 143 women had become actively involved in their religion as missionaries, Quaker preachers, or members of Roman Catholic and Episcopal sisterhoods. Many other women reformers, nurses and teachers saw a divine inspiration in their choice of a mission in life. Besides having society's blessings as an acceptable reason not to marry, the other benefit of a religious sense of duty to God and humanity was to make all the toil and heartache here on earth of no consequence, since the believer would eventually find her reward in heaven. The religious sect called Shakers carried the idea of celibacy one step further, by separating women and men as much as possible when they joined the order, even if they had been married and had children before they converted to Shakerism. A tract by the Shakers on their views against marriage stated, rather erroneously, that the Shakers did not forbid

marriage. However:

We do believe in "mortifying the deeds of the body and crucifying the flesh, with its affections and lusts," as being indispensable to the highest spiritual progress and development.<sup>60</sup>

Such an attitude towards sexual relations was surprisingly appealing to many nineteenth century people, and the Shaker communities flourished. Many women were overjoyed to discover a way of life which combined financial security with a freedom from childraising. Also in a society which frowned on women who worked to support themselves, Shakerism offered a religious alternative which could support a woman who preferred not to marry.

Luckily, there were other alternatives in the working world for a single woman, as I showed in Chapter II. It was simply a matter of choice. But what a choice to have to make!

The American woman had her choice – she could define her rights in the way of the women's magazines and insure them by the practice of the requisite virtues, or she could go outside the home, seeking other rewards than love. It was a decision on which, she was told, everything in her world depended . . . . If she chose to listen to other voices than those of her proper mentors, sought other rooms than those of her home, she lost both her happiness and her power . . . . forces were at work in the nineteenth century which impelled woman herself to change, to play a more creative role in society. The movements for social reform, westward migration, the Civil War – all called forth responses from woman which differed from those she was trained to believe were hers by nature and divine decree.<sup>61</sup>

All of society warned the young woman against stepping out of her family home into the larger world.

Yet this was a period when change was considered a self-evident good and when nothing was believed impossible to a determined free will, be it the conquest of a continent, the reform of society or the eternal salvation of all mankind. The contrast between these generally accepted ideals and expectations and the real possibilities available to American women could not have been more sharply drawn. It is not implausible to assume that at least a minority of American women would find ways to manifest discontent with their comparatively passive and constricted social role.<sup>62</sup>

Many of that minority were unmarried women. Some of them had already spent their teenage years teaching at village schools, or helping run the family farm or business. Now, as they realized the need to become self-supporting, possibly for the rest of their lives, the majority of the 143 women in this study turned to teaching, writing, or the newly-forming reform movements. Women born at the end of the 18th century who lived out most of their adult lives before 1850 had less choice in their work roles, but they, too, had to find ways to survive. The writer, Hannah Adams, described the distressing financial circumstances she found herself in as she approached old age:

The tenor of my life at this time [1804] was very monotonous. It was enlivened, however, by gleams of happiness, from the society of a few friends, and the pleasure I derived from literary pursuits . . . . A number of benevolent gentlemen had settled an annuity upon me, to relieve me from the embarrassment I had hitherto suffered . . . . I had not been able to make any provision for my declining years, and had not a place on earth which I could call my home.<sup>63</sup>

Later, it became easier to blaze new paths for women in the realm of work. The single women of the early nineteenth century were the first of their sex in many fields. Clara Barton became the first regularly appointed woman civil servant in Washington, Elizabeth Blackwell was the first American woman doctor, Rebecca Gratz was a pioneer Jewish social worker. The anti-slavery movement, the Women's rights movement, and the other social reform movements gradually called out the most vigorous and dedicated single women, who

were willing to take incredible risks with their lives and their reputations for the sake of what they believed in. They faced the censure of newspaper cartoons and angry mobs with nothing more to protect them than their own iron fortitude. After the Civil War, many of these women became even more involved in public tasks; and were joined by other single women who saw these pioneers as role models.

As noted in the appendix, 36 of the 143 "spinsters" married after the age of 30, most of them while still in their thirties. Therefore, it seems it was not true that all women were unattractive and unmarriageable after a certain age, as the "old maid" myth would have it. As for the women who married in their 40's or beyond (one at 72, another at 87!), my own personal conclusion is that several waited until after childbearing years were over before marrying. It is easy to see why when:

Fifty percent of the children died before the age of five. In truth, by the end of the 1830's the commonest phenomena in life was death. Even among the upper classes, the maternity mortality rate was double that among the lower classes who were deprived of fashionable accoucheurs.<sup>64</sup>

Another conclusion I arrived at was that several of them may have feared the spectre of the poor house in their old age. It was easier to marry and give up the hard task of being self-supporting than to attempt to set aside money for old age from their meager earnings.

Some of the women who chose not to marry eventually regretted their decision, even though their life had been fairly happy. Catherine Sedgwick summed up the reasons why the life of a single woman gave cause for regret.

It is difficult for one who began life as I did, the primary object of affection to many, to come by degrees to be first to none, and still to have my love remain in its entire strength, and craving such returns as have no substitute. How absurd, how groundless your complaints! would half a dozen voices exclaim, if I ever ventured to make this complaint. I do not. Each one has his own point of sight. Others are not conscious -- at least I believe they are not -- of any diminution in their affection for me, but others have taken my place, naturally and of right, I allow it. It is the necessity of a solitary condition, and unnatural state . . . . From my own experience I would not advise any one to remain unmarried, for my experience has been a singularly happy one. My feelings have never been embittered by those slights and taunts that the repulsive and neglected have to endure; there has been no period of my life to the present moment when I might not have allied myself respectably, and to those sincerely attached to me, if I would. I have always felt myself to be an object of attention, respect, and regard . . . . yet the result of all this very happy experience is that there is no equivalent for those blessings which Providence has placed first, and ordained that they should be purchased at the dearest sacrifice.<sup>65</sup>

Fortunately, others looked back over their long lives of singleness and breathed a happy sigh of relief. The poet, Phoebe Cary, once said:

"Believe me, I never loved any man well enough to lie awake half an hour, to be miserable about him. I prefer my own life to that of the mass of married people that I see . . . ." It was a perfectly characteristic reply that she made to the person who asked her if she had ever been disappointed in her affections: -- "No; but a great many of my married friends have."<sup>66</sup>

One of the primary concerns of this thesis has been to prove that women who did not choose to marry in the early nineteenth century were still vital, productive, and essentially loving human beings. Most of them could take great pride in their individual achievements, and look back on useful and reasonably happy lives. All of the 143 single women in this

study accomplished an enormous amount in their lifetimes, and left an indelible mark on American society, and on the individuals with whom they came in contact. The "spinsters" of this era proved beyond a doubt that a woman could be a happy, fulfilled and necessary member of society, even though (and often because) she never married."



## Footnotes

45Charles E. Rosenberg, "Sexuality, Class and Role in 19th Century America," *American Quarterly* 25 (May 1973): 132.

46James, *Notable American Women*, 1:486.

47Ibid., 1:121.

48Mary E. Dewey, ed. *Life and Letters of Catherine M. Sedgwick* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1872; American Cultural Series, Microfilm, Reel 468), p. 98.

49James, *Notable American Women*, 2:73.

50Ibid., 1:162.

51Ibid., 1:161.

52Dewey, *Life of Catherine Sedgwick*, p. 71.

53Ibid., pp. 71-72.

54Sarah J. Hale, *Manners; or Happy Homes and Good Society* (Boston: J.E. Tilton, 1868; American Cultural Series, Microfilm, Reel 532.11), p.72.

55Dewey, *Life of Catherine Sedgwick*, p. 69.

56Margaret Fuller (Ossoli), *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli* (Boston: Phillips and Sampson, 1852; American Cultural Series, Microfilm, Reel 155.3).

57Elizabeth Oakes Smith, *Woman and Her Needs* (New York: Fowlers and Wells, 1851; Women in America Series, *Liberating the Home*. New York: Arno Press, 1974), p.43.

58John S. Haller Jr., "From Maidenhood to Menopause: Sex Education for Women in Victorian America." *Journal of Popular Culture* 6 (Summer, 1972) :51.

59 Rosenberg "Sexuality, Class and Role," p:147

60C.E. Sears, *Shakers: A Short Thesis on Marriage* (Rochester' New York: Daily Democrat Steam Publishing House, 1867; American Cultural Series, Microfilm, Reel 513.6), p. 11.

61 Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966): 173-174.

62Carroll Smith Rosenberg, "Beauty, the Beast and the Militant Woman: A Case Study of Sex Roles and Social Stress in Jacksonian America," *American Quarterly* 23 (October, 1971): 564.

63Hannah Adams, *A Memoir of Miss Hannah Adams, Written by Herself* (Boston: Gray, and Bowen, 1832; American Cultural Series, Microfilm, Reel 580.7), p. 37.

64Perry, "Sex and Sentiment in America," p. 35.

65Dewey, *Life of Catherine Sedgwick*, p. 198.

66Mary C. Ames, *A Memorial of Alice and Phoebe Cary* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1873; American Cultural Series, Microfilms, Reel 46.3) pp. 201-202.



## Appendix

Names, Occupations, Marriage, Birth and Death Dates of All Women Unmarried Until After the Age of Thirty, Living as Adults Between the Years 1800-1861, as Listed in Notable American Women.

### A

Adams, Hannah; writer	1755-1831
Aitken, Jane; printer	1764-1832
Anthony, Susan B.; suffrage leader	1820-1906
Ayers, Anne; Episcopal sisterhood pioneer	1816-1896

### B

Bacon, Delia Salter; author, lecturer	1811-1859
Barton, Clara; nurse, founder of Red Cross	1821-1912
Beecher, Catherine; author, educator	1800-1878
Blackwell, Elizabeth; first U.S. woman doctor	1821-1910
Bodley, Rachael Litter; chemist	1831-1888
Bonney, Mary Lucinda; educator, Indian rights advocate (M. age 72)	1816-1900
Booth, Mary Louise; author, translator	1831-1889
Botta, Anne Lynch; author, teacher (M. age 40)	1815-1891
Bradley, Amy Morris; educator, Civil War nurse	1823-1904
Bridgman, Eliza Jane Gillet; early missionary (M. age 40)	1805-1871
Bridgman, Laura Dewey ; first educated blind deaf-mute	1829-1889
Bruce, Catherine Wolfe; patron of astronomy	1816-1900

### C

Cannon, Harriet Starr; Episcopal Mother Superior 1815	1823-1896
Carroll, Anna Ella; military strategist	1815-1893
Cary, Alice; author and poet	1820-1871
Caulkins, Frances Manwaring; author, historian	1795-1869
Chandler, Elizabeth Margaret; author, abolitionist	1807-1834
Chapman, Caroline; California actress (M. age 44)	1818-1876
Collins, Ellen; philanthropist, house reformer	1828-1912
Colman, Julia; temperance writer	1828-1909
Cooke, Rose Terry; author (M. age 44)	1827-1892
Cooper, Susan Fenimore; author	1813-1894
Cowles, Betsey Mix; educator, reformer	1810-1876
Crandall, Prudence; teacher (M. age 31)	1803-1890
Crocker, Lucretia; educator	1829-1886
Cumming, Kate; hospital administrator	1828-1909
Cummins, Maria; novelist	1827-1866
Cunningham, Ann; invalid Southern clubwoman	1816-1875
Cushman, Charlotte Saunders; actress	1816-1876

### D

Davis, Rebecca Harding; (author (M. age 32)	1831-1910
Dickinson, Emily; poet	1830-1886
Dix, Dorothea; crusader for the mentally ill	1802-1887
Douglas, Sarah Mapps; Negro teacher, abolitionist	1806-1882
42 Dupey, Eliza Ann; author	1814-1880

### E

Emerson, Mary Moody; New England intellectual	1774-1863
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### F

Farley, Harriet; mill worker, editor (M. age 41)	1813-1907
Farrar, Cynthia; first single woman missionary	1795-1862
Farrar, Eliza; writer (M. age 37)	1791-1870
Ferguson, Elizabeth Frame; writer (M. age 35)	1737-1801
Ferrin, Mary Upton; women's legal rights leader (M. age 35)	1810-1881
Finley, Martha; author	1828-1909
Fishe, Fidelia; missionary, teacher	1816-1864
Follen, Eliza Lee Cabot; writer, abolitionist (M. age 41)	1787-1860
Foster, Abigail Kelley; abolitionist (M. age 35)	1810-1887
Frietschie, Barbara; Civil War heroine (M. age 40)	1766-1862
Fuller, Margaret; author, critic (M. age 39)	1810-1850

### G

Gibbons, Abigail Hopper; Civil War nurse (M. age 32)	1801-1893
Goddard, Mary Katherine; printer, publisher	1738-1816
Goodridge, Sarah; miniature painter	1788-1853
Grant, Zilpah Polly; educator (M. age 47)	1794-1874
Gratz, Rebecca; pioneer Jewish social worker	1781-1869
Greenfield, Elizabeth Taylor; Negro singer	1817-1876
Grew, Mary; abolitionist, suffragist	1813-1896
Grimke, Angelina; abolitionist (M. age 33)	1805-1879
Grimke, Sarah Moore; abolitionist	1792-1873
Gurney, Eliza Paul Kirkbridge; Quaker minister (M. age 40)	1801-1881

### H

Hale, Lucretia Peabody; author	1820-1900
Hale, Susan; author, artist	1833-1910
Hall, Anne; miniature painter	1792-1863
Hallowell, Anna; welfare worker, educa. reformer	1831-1905
Harper, Francis Ellen; Negro lecturer (M. age 35)	1825-1911
Hawthorne, Sophia Amelia; artist, writer (M. age 32)	1809-1871
Hemenway, Abby Maria; Vermont historian	1828-1890
Holley, Sallie; abolitionist, lecturer, teacher	1818-1893
Hosmer, Harriet Goodhue; sculptor	1830-1908
Howland, Emily; educator, reformer	1827-1929
Hunt, Sarah Augusta; physician (M. age 32)	1808-18--?
Hunt, Harriet; physician, reformer	1805-1875

### I

None

### J

Jeanes, Anna Thomas; philanthropist	1822-1907
Johnston, Harriet Lane; belle (M. age 36)	1830-1903
Jones, Jane Elizabeth; women's rights lecturer (M. age 33)	1813-1896
Jones, Rebecca; Quaker minister	1739-1818

<b>K</b>	
Kennedy, Kate; San Francisco teacher, reformer	1827-1890
<b>L</b>	
Larcom, Lucy; mill worker, author	1824-1893
Leslie, Eliza; author, editor	1787-1858
Lippincott, Sara; journalist (M. age 30)	1823-1904
Livermore, Harriet; evangelist	1788-1868
Lyon, Mary; educator, founder of Mt. Holyoke	1797-1849
<b>M</b>	
McBeth, Susan Lane; Indian missionary	1830-1893
McDowell, Anne Elizabeth; editor, journalist	1826-1901
McGroarty, Sister Julia; Nun, educator	1827-1901
McIntosh, Maria Jane; author	1803-1878
Mann, Mary Tyler; educator (M. age 37)	1806-1887
Martin, Maria; painter (M. age 52)	1796-1863
Marwedal, Emma; pioneer kindergarten leader	1818-1893
May, Abigail Williams; reformer	1829-1888
Miner, Myrtilla; educator	1815-1864
Mitchell, Maria; astronomer	1818-1889
Moise, Penina; poet	1797-1880
Mortimer, Mary; teacher	1816-1877
<b>N</b>	
None	
<b>O</b>	
O'Connell, Sister Anthony; Nun, nurse	1814-1897
<b>P</b>	
Packard, Sophia B.; teacher, church worker	1824-1891
Parsons, Emily Elizabeth; Civil War nurse	1824-1880
Peabody, Elizabeth; teacher, author	1804-1894
Peale, Anna Claypoole; painter (M. age 38)	1791-1878
Peale, Margaretta Angelica; painter	1795-1882
Peale, Sarah Miriam; painter	1800-1885
Pierce, Sarah; educator	1767-1852
Porter, Sarah; educator, founder of school	1813-1900
Preston, Margaret; poet (M. age 37)	1820-1897
Pugh, Sarah; teacher, abolitionist	1800-1884
<b>Q</b>	
None	
<b>R</b>	
Remond, Sarah Parker; anti-slavery lecturer, doctor	1826-1887
Rhodes, Mary; Nun	1782-1853
44 Riepp, Mother Benedicta; Nun, founder of order	1825-1862

Rodges, Elizabeth Ann; Anglican sister, educator	1829-1921
Russell, Mother Mary Babbist; Nun	1829-1898
Ruthledge, Ann May Lincoln's legendary sweetheart	1813-1835
<b>S</b>	
Sage, Margaret Olivia; philanthropist (M. age 41)	1828-1918
Sedgwick, Catherine Maria; author	1789-1867
Shattuck, Lydia White; naturalist, botanist	1822-1889
Sill, Anna Peck; educator	1816-1889
Smith, Abby Hadassah; suffragist	1797-1878
Smith, Julia Evelina; suffragist (M. age 87)	1792-1886
Smith, Eliza Roxey; Mormon (M. age 37)	1804-1887
Smith, Sophia; founder of Smith College	1796-1870
Spaulding, Catherine; Nun	1793-1885
Starr, Elza Allen; writer	1824-1901
Stebbins, Emma; painter, sculptor	1815-1882
Stone, Lucy; feminist, suffragist (M. age 36)	1818-1893
<b>T</b>	
Thompson, Mary Harris; physician	1829-1895
Towne, Laura Matilda; educator of freed Negroes	1825-1901
Turnbull, Julia Anna; ballerina	1822-1887
<b>U</b>	
None	
<b>V</b>	
Van Lew, Elizabeth L.; Federal agent in Civil War	1818-1900
Victor, Frances; author, historian (M. age 36)	1826-1902
<b>W</b>	
Walter, Cornelia Wells; journalist (M. age 33)	1813-1898
Warner, Susan Bogent; author	1819-1885
Warner, Anna Bartlett; author	1827-1915
Way, Amanda M.; temperance, suffragist	1828-1914
Whitcher, Frances Berry; author, humanist (M. age 36)	1811-1852
Whitney, Anne; sculptor	1821-1915
Wilkinson, Jemima; religious leader	1752-1819
Wolfe, Catherine; philanthropist	1828-1887
Woolsey, Abby Howland; Civil War nurse	1828-1893
Woolsey, Jane Stuart; social worker	1830-1891
Woolsey, Georgeanna; Civil War nurse (M. age 33)	1833-1906
Wormeley, Katherine Prescott; Civil War nurse, author	1830-1908
Wright, Frances; Writer reformer	1795-1852
<b>Y</b>	
None	
<b>Z</b>	
None	

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you'll like . . .

you'll like gramma nan  
she's got a big, big house  
you can have your very own room.

you'll like aunt lou  
she's got two little girls  
just like you, two new sisters to play with!

you'll like gramma node  
she's got chocolate-covered cherries  
you can have all you want.

all i want is you mommy  
you've got everything i need.  
don't leave . . .

mommy?

Alix Stone

# COUNTRY LIFE

## (Or, SURVIVAL IN THE BOONIES)

by Barbara Stephens

I was wearied, sickened, and burnt out . . . I had to leave Berkeley, with its riots, noise, and pockets of political-racial-sexual bigotry. I made exploratory excursions to the country-side -- to El Sobrante, Canyon, and Castro Valley, and found an entirely different world.

"Country road, take me back  
to old Hayseed, home again."

There were paradisaical ravines, grown with big-leaf maple, buckeye and oak, and graceful horses on the slopes. The people were friendly, and I loved the teen-aged equestriennes, riding everywhere in the hills. I knew that the areas, far south and far north of Berkeley were "redneck territories," but paid this no mind. After-all, some of my ancestors were hillbillies, and some of my friends in Los Angeles were the same. I got along fine, with most of them, that is. My love-hate affair with hill-billies had been a life-long thing, dating from a childhood laced with sweet mournful music, and summers down at Granpa's farm in Southern Indiana. I grew up to the twang of Geetar and auto-harp, and pine-covered hills in the moonlight. The hill-women were magnificent: self-sufficient and independent, and a damn sight better than their men-folk. The men, -- pore shiftless, drunken curs, something right out of Snuffy Smith, or Li'l Abner.

So, I moved out to Hayseed, a cosy little town, between Oakland and Livermore, and settled in a cabin, high up in the hills. The Landlady looked me up and down.

"What do you all do for a livin'?"

"Chemist"

"Huh . . . uh, have you ever been married?"

"No."

"What kind of a housekeeper are you . . . I mean, are you neat and clean?"

"Uh huh."

"Well, here's the lease -- look it over carefully."

I read it in full, and signed it, agreeing to: no roommates, children, or relatives to live with me; no dogs, cats, or birds; no illegal or immoral activities on the premises; no structural changes to the house or grounds. I reckon she had had some trouble with them hippies; like having a hippy girl move in a tribe of 30 hippy men, plus a dozen dogs, a goat, and a flock of honkin geese.

Well, the first few weeks were pleasant. Not as quiet as I like, for at sunset, the chop-pers came roaring up the hill. But I got along fine with the neighbors, like the old hill-billy retirees up the slope from me, and the Portugese families down by the creek. Early Sunday mornings, I awoke to soft chicken-music: the claw-clawing of hens, and the clarion calls of roosters. A new dawn, a new life: "Country road -- take me home."

There grew a sinister note to my surroundings, something at first I was only vaguely aware of. One evening in Hayseed, I stopped at the Chuckburger Cafe. A horde of bikers dropped in: hurly-burly, feet stomping, muscles bulging, as they lumbered to the counter. I saw the Hitlerian werewolves and Storm-troopers, swastikas dangling, the battering ram of future Amerika. Then, one evening at the Bayfair, I witnessed the "strip." Thousands of

scruffy teen-agers in front of the bike-shop watching the highway. Eight bikers were off with a VAROOM! Sparks flying, 100 miles a minute. Wow! Big choppers, swell dudes! Manhood in its flower, its finest.

I tried keeping a low profile, to be inconspicuous. My front lawn was kept immaculate, and my wardrobe grew more conservative. The hill was full of dowdy dressers, like the bare-foot man who kept dozens of chickens in his front yard, and old Zelma, who grew corn and pumpkins in her backyard. I thought I passed for a square, and a respectable one at that. Until, I became lonesome, and sought new kinds of friends.

This was my downfall, when I joined a bird-watcher's club, a rock-hunters' club, and a wilderness exploring and hiking group.

"Ain't she a quare one, goin' around with all that stuff." I guess they meant my hiking boots, canteen, back-pack and binoculars, plus a few expensive cameras, light-meter and tripod attached to my side. I went out on group trips, and solitary ones on my own. It was something to be walking up the highway, and be howled and hooted on by a gang of country toughs chugging up the road in a truck.

Coming home from work one day, some girls asked me "Why do you dress so messy on Sundays?" and "Why do you like to take pictures?" I explained as nicely as I could, about photography being an art, about the beauty of the surroundings, and it being something I liked to do. No comprehension. Only, the harassment escalated, reaching to a tough gang of hot-rodders who barraged me with obscenities. I saw in a flash, the inner-city ghetto that I recently had escaped from. Berkeley during the late 1960s: a hippy man with long auburn hair and silken beard, walking with a beautiful dark-eyed, longhaired girl. Jesus Christ, and the Virgin Mary, followed by a mob of 10-year old boys shouting: "Queers, faggots, suck my dick!"

My land-lady resumed her questioning about my love-life.

"Why don't you ever get married?"

"I don't want to. I like privacy, and I like being free."

"Don't you have any boyfriends?"

"Not any more. Never found one good enough for me. They were all bummers . . . good riddance."

"But that's not normal!"

"It's normal for me."

And then, next month:

"Haven't you had a meaningful relationship with a man?"

"Oh yes. My granpaw, he was a beautiful man, And my nephew, he's only two years old, and adorable."

"I mean, a sexual relationship."

"Well, I'm old-fashioned. I don't believe in extramarital affairs. It's against my religion."

"What religion? I never saw you go to church."

"My religion, ah, I'm Episcopalian, and we believe in morality and decency."

"Piscopalian? Neverheard of that. Bet thereain't such a church. But I gotta do something about your hangups. I've suspected for a long time you're sexually abnormal . . ."

It's then I've made up my mind -- I have to move. Take exploratory trips to fairer pastures, to the more tolerant and sophisticated areas where people are kinder, and rents more dear.

"Country road, take me back -- to the city --  
Any place but here."

## Creation

God did not create Adam & Eve

God created Sappho & women!

Sister Mary Gennoy "Sunshine"

# FEMALE RAGE

## --BARBARA LIPSCHUTZ

How many times have I heard a sister say, "I was so mad I could have screamed," or "I was so angry I couldn't speak," or, especially, "I was so furious I didn't know what to do?"

A woman-child (particularly if she is middle-class) learns very early in her life how unacceptable her anger is. An angry woman is portrayed as ridiculous or evil. Clearly not someone to emulate, regardless of how justified her anger is.

In order to get love, a girl learns to cut off the expressions of her anger.

And, as a result of her early conditioning, when she feels rage as an adult, it paralyzes her. She freezes.

Women are taught that we are weak and that we need protection.

In order to get protection we must be lovable. We must get along with men.

Being lovable means "not coming on too strong." Men don't like "ballsy" women.

And so it goes. The old cyclic (that's our nature, right?) mind-fuck.

My fear of my own rage and violence comes from the message I internalized as a child: if I act like I'm mad, no one will love me.

The "nice girl" in me knows that her rage is not acceptable.

It is mandatory that we reclaim our anger. In order to be adult women, we have to stop being nice girls.

To this end I advocate the following tactics:

1. Get in touch with and legitimize feelings of rage.
2. Externalize rage.
3. Direct rage at appropriate targets.
4. Use sufficient force for the situation.

We must learn self-defense. At present the only territory we as women really own are our own bodies. This territory must be defended from outside (male) attack.

By self-defense I mean appropriate force to deflect male violence and to insure our personal and our sisters' survival.

Many women say that castration rather than killing is the appropriate response to rape.

But castration is not practical as self-defense. It is practical as retribution. But the attacked woman's immediate need is not revenge, but to stop the rapist.

Every woman must be prepared to use sufficient force to stop an attack upon her body.

Rape and wife-beating are cornerstones of the institution of sexism. Women cannot afford to rely on the good will of men to end these atrocities.

An effective counterweapon (in addition to personal violence on the part of woman facing rape or beating against her attacker) might be the institution of terrorist squads who would assault wife-beaters and castrate rapists as retaliatory measures.

I am not advocating kamakaze squads. I want for us to win!

The point is to increase our own and our sisters' safety, not to diminish it. We should not be suicidal but we should be able to consider female violence as a tactic against male violence.

Those of us who believe ourselves non-violent, should look carefully at the roots of our non-violence. Have we put aside violence because we believe that it is per se "male?" Do we advocate passive resistance because that's what nice girls are supposed to do, respond to a dangerous situation passively? So long as we are too frightened by violence to even get



in touch with our rage, with our fantasies of retribution, our potential to hit back, we cannot hope to formulate any kind of a strategy. We have not rejected violence, we have refused to consider it.

Perhaps physical violence will not be a viable or desirable response to male attack. But for many of us, it isn't even an option. I hope that I would have attempted to wrest the ice pick from my jailor-rapist and further more, would have stabbed him to protect myself. But I can't be sure that I wouldn't have passively let him rape me because I couldn't imagine myself successfully resisting.

★ Until violence is a possibility for us, it is meaningless to talk about non-violence. Being paralyzed by one's own fear is not passive resistance, but rather participation in one's own destruction.



### What the 60's Said . . .

In San Francisco the flower hordes  
chanted liberation  
while the dope dealers on Castro St.  
performed their hip lustrations  
by mugging queers.

In the decade of freedom  
it was hip to be bi, but  
who could admit  
even in the land of levis & acid  
they were homo? Who  
could be that way & survive?

Keepsakes:

—a Mexican boy of 21  
beaten & left for dead:  
straights. Long hairs,  
high on grass  
& Mailer's dream.

—Thrown off a public beach  
the four of them, in '62.  
—they looked like queers.

—Heterosexual woman poets  
who cry injustice  
& then lump 'fairies' in with rapists  
and term them  
"winners all."

In a dark season  
in a dark time  
there are no ceremonies  
for the scapegoat.

Leslie Powell

## DISCRETION IS: A Warning

by B. Stephens

Discretion is the greater part of valor. Yet the Anarchist in me seeks an open humane society where I can honestly declare myself, be myself, and live my own life without fear, or harassment, . . . or sudden meaningless death.

I live a double life: a sober, puritannical existence in a square neighborhood of South Hayward, and fantastic adventures as a "hip-photographer." It started during the Beat-era, when I became an activist in the peace-movement and civil rights marches. I participated and photographed, and met some far-out people. Such were Jon and Bette, who soon became fast friends of mine. Jon, a handsome white man who did marvelous silk-screen art; Bette, a beautiful black woman who specialized in Batiks. Psychedelic batiks with floating cobwebby designs, crimson arabesques right out of a hashish hallucination. Their crowd was a bit too wild for me: I attended one of those "artists' balls," and found the Fascists and Fidelissimos, and swastika bearing young men not quite my types. I still like Jon and Bette, had them frequently over to my house, but avoided any more parties.

After 1965, I withdrew from politics and moved to the mixed hip and black ghetto of West Berkeley. The late 1960s caught me in the "Flower-Children Revolution," which became for me, a photographers' mecca. This amounted to a seven-year adventure in San Francisco and Berkeley, attending rock concerts and festivals. It was at Provo Park that I again met Jon and Bette, and told them my new address. We had wonderful times together, up and down Telegraph Avenue, wining at the Steppenwolf, and slide shows in my rambling Victorian house. At one time, I told them I was gay, but they didn't pay me any mind. We still remained friends.

One evening in late 1968, they paid me a surprise call, and brought over a friend. Jimmy was his name; he was an artist, and was interested in what I was doing by way of slide projections. I can never forget Jimmy: a tall thin black youth, fine, sharp features and a pleasant euphoric personality. We all drank wine, except Jimmy, who said:

"No wine for me, I don't want to come down. I'm way too high on stimulants. I could go for a light-show, however. What do you have? like strobe lights? Lasar projection? Some lightening and thunder, projected figures dancing on mist?"

"No," I answered "I've only got an ordinary projector, and a few far-out slides."

"How do you take your slides — I mean, do you smoke grass, or drop acid to get the effects?"

"Huh uh. I'm always sober when I photograph, I need my reason to work out techniques and for my imagination. Creativity is a trip in itself. I don't need acid to reach my subconscious."

"Then, you've never taken LSD?"

"Nope. I've been drunk on booze a few times, and you ought to see the awful photography I've done under it."

"Booze? That sounds too tame for me. I want to see your slides though."

I led Jimmy to the study, and pulled out an album of prints. He wasn't interested, having had other ideas in mind. I resisted his advances and shoved him away.

"No! I don't dig that -- NO!"

"Ain't you normal? Huh"

"I'm gay. I don't dig men at all!"

Jon and Bette walked into the room, and Jimmy grinned.

"Let's all of us take off our clothes and have an orgy!"

"No!" I yelled, "Not in my house! This is not a Sexual Freedom Club."

"So, you've got hangups! A typical frigid white woman! You're some bitch . . . .  
A castrating female, a cold cunt . . . ."

He carried on like this for five minutes, and picked up a sketchbook lying on my desk. Rapidly, he drew a caricature of me and left it on my table. I glanced at it, and it was a remarkable attempt of what he was trying to portray. A "castrating Lesbian Witch"

"Do you want me to leave?"

"Yes - - Get out!"

He walked out into the night. The rest of us drank wine, and danced to the rock music of Country Joe. We were somewhat relaxed yet not completely, my own mood turning slightly paranoid.

Three hours later, Jimmy came back. I opened the door, but left the chain-link fastened.

"Oh," he apologized "I thought everyone else had gone . . . Bye, take care" and he was gone. I have never seen him again.

Now, seven years have passed, and I might have forgotten the episode, but for an article in the January 19, 1976 Chronicle. The Gay Killers, it was titled, one suspect described as a tall lanky black man, who would draw cartoons of his intended victims before killing them. I am not reassured that his victims have been male homosexuals. This cat also digs women!

I have changed a few names and details for security reasons. Other than that, this story is true.



### Grail

Everything is tidy,  
I feel  
the approach of ruin  
the tonguing kiss of the a.m.  
a hovering of men with guns.  
Tensor lamp throws off the black  
ghosts of objects,  
their other realities,  
and in the mirror  
terrorist coincidence  
has strayed my hand with the long-stemmed glass  
aslant its beam:  
radiant in the phantom of my hand appears  
a goblet of frozen  
incandescent  
light.

Camilla Decarnin



## OPEN LETTER TO PLEXUS

Dear Editor,

I commend your stand favoring non-violence as a method in the Women's struggle for freedom and justice. Please add my name to the Circle of Support for Jane Alpert.

However, I was disturbed by the divisive tone of many responses and articles to your editorial. I am also disturbed by the intolerance of so many so-called "third-world" and "radical" spokesmen who would push so many oppressed groups against each other. For example, Negro men (ie Stokely Carmichael, and Eldridge Cleaver) who are Sexist and anti-homosexual, Chicanos who hate all whites to the point of breaking up a multi-racial peace-march, "leftists" who are anti-Semitic - - the list could go on endlessly.

Afterall, a civil-rights movement is ineffective and discriminatory when it omits or opposes any one segment of the down-trodden, whether they be Orientals, Latins, American Indians, Negroes, Women and Homosexuals. Perhaps many ethnic spokesmen do not see the connection between racism, and sexism and gay-baiting. Women have been repressed every bit as much as Negroes; Lesbians are doubly repressed as homosexuals and women. During the Reformation: nine million women burned as "witches" - - for being independent, for being gifted, and for refusal of a heterosexual life-style. Today, women make less than half the wages of both blackmen and white men. An average college graduate earns about \$6500 a year, in contrast to a \$12,000 for an average male, highschool dropout. Women have always been raped, but not necessarily by strangers. Marriage too frequently is a bout of legalized rape in addition to unpaid domestic slavery, some assault and battery, and a measure of calculated mental cruelty.

I agree with Ms Reynolds that economic issues are paramount, but not to the exclusion of other basic rights. Socialism wears a Fascist face when it excludes Democracy, freedom of the press, freedom of creative expression, freedom for the mind, and the right to choose one's life-style and sexual orientation. Ms Reynolds must realize that a creed of compulsory marriage and child-bearing is not liberation; it is Sexual-Fascism!

Child-bearing is meaningful only when it is voluntary and wanted, rather than being a measure forced on women by traditional folk-mores, or by a totalitarian government. Marriage is meaningful only when it comes as a choice, instead of mandatory child-marriage to a stranger (as in India), or shot-gun weddings fashionable in the USA a century ago. Forced sterilization is indeed a Fascistic measure (Hitler had done this to Gypsies and Jews for a time, preceding the "final solution.") But equally Fascistic are the enforced pro-natal policies practiced by Hitler, Stalin and their modern imitators.

So, I appeal for a common struggle for economic justice under the auspices of Democratic-Socialism that would include the right for all women to make choices and have full control over their bodies and life-styles.

Yours in love and sister-hood,

Barbara Stephens  
Oakland, California.

PS - 1 In answer to Leya Steiber's letter, I have this to say:

1. Violent revolutions usually have created repressive, totalitarian societies: the Okranah is replaced by the Cheka, which in turn gives birth to the Gay-Pay-U and KGB. Lenin sowed the seeds of political totalitarianism despite the great personal freedom of the early Soviet era. Stalin completed the task by liquidating homosexuality (killing homosexuals as well), abolishing divorce, contraceptives and abortions. The present semi-"liberated" USSR does



allow divorce and birth-control, yet still pursues a relentless pro-natal policy. Show me a Fascist or Communist society that gives justice to the independent creative man or woman, or to homosexuals and Lesbians. To date, I have never found it.

2. Bread is basic, but bread is not everything in human needs. There are places in the USA, where one receives bread and shelter and some form of "employment." To name a few: Vacaville, San Luis Obispo, Folsom, Lincoln Heights, and our own Santa Rita. It may be that prisons elsewhere are more "sanitary" and "well-lighted;" perhaps diets of rice, caviar and sugar-cane are preferable to our all-American beans? But then, I am opposed to all prisons and strait-jackets in principle.

Yours for Bread, and Roses,

Barbara Stephens  
Oakland, California

PS - 2. I have submitted a questionnaire to the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, concerning attitudes on Homosexual rights, and freedom to alternative life-styles, religions and philosophies. The chairman, Michael Harrington has recently performed some heroic acts concerning roles of the CIA, the ITT, and the Amerikan government. I am anticipating an equally heroic response in behalf of those gay brothers and sisters who prefer a democratic alternative to the Fascistic Right and the male-dominated violent Left.

The name and address is:

Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee  
853 Broadway - Room 617  
New York, New York 10003

I would welcome correspondence to this group from those sisters who cherish certain values and freedoms; my political future as a free-floating quasi-anarchist-semi-Socialist may depend on whatever answers the Democratic Socialists, the CDC, certain Pacifist and Libertarian groups give to my questioning.

Barbara Stephens

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Sister Mary Gennoy "Sunshine"



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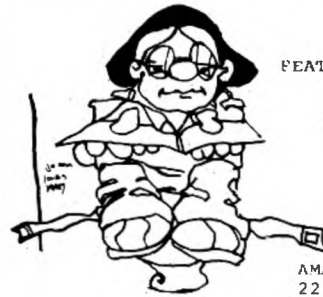


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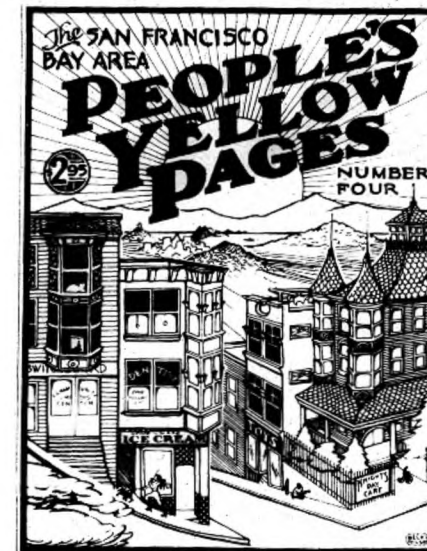
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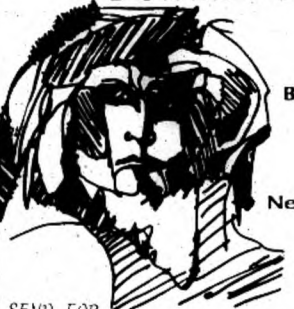
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