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Vol 5.4

Breaking the SILENCE

a feminist quarterly



LESBIANISM & FEMINISM

Government Response

The Ontario Human Rights Amendments
Lesbianism in the USSR

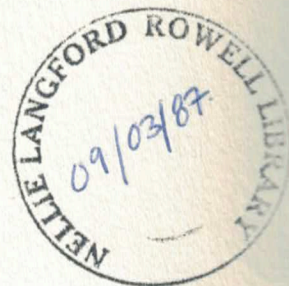
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collective

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about *Breaking the Silence*

For too long women's voices—our struggles, and joy—have been silenced. Living in a patriarchal world, we have been separated from one another and from the mainstream of society.

The *Breaking the Silence* collective is committed to giving women a voice. In particular, we provide a forum for discussion on the social welfare needs of women—needs such as support services for survivors of violence, affordable housing, sufficient and good daycare, adequate pensions and employment.

We are committed to moving toward a world absent of oppression: be it sexism, racism, classism, homophobia or ageism. We are committed to helping to build a peaceful and humane world where women's ideas, experiences and activities are heard and made visible.

from the collective

Ottawa's International Women's Week was a remarkable event this year. Remarkable, not because of the 221 events celebrating women's diversity. Or the participation of over 200 women's groups and community organizations. Even the addition of over 12 events for children didn't capture media interest. No, the real "news" in IWW was 12 events (3% of the program) organized by and for lesbians.

Why was 97% of the Ottawa International Women's Week program ignored by the media? Because, people have very mixed reactions to lesbianism; most people fear it. The week's organizers can testify to the wide gamut of emotions the word lesbian stirred. On the one hand many women and women's groups treated lesbianism as just another part of feminism. On the other hand, crank calls and statements made in the House of Commons by Members of Parliament clearly reflect ignorance, prejudice and hatred against lesbians.

Feminism is about self-awareness, and self-identification. Feminism, at its best, includes many diverse and wonderful identities, lifestyles and ideas women hold dear. Each woman must reach deep inside herself and find the identity that best explains her. Be it mother, lesbian or black, the label is designed to empower, to make her feel connected to her community.

Some of the articles in this issue are very personal. "Grace Under Pressure" describes the great risk and consequences for coming out as a lesbian in the church. "Deciding to Have Children" by Catherine Lambert and Julia McMahon is the painstaking exploration of a process to which most people give little or no thought, conception.

Government and social control is a main problem of lesbian life. N. Laviolette's article, "Lesbians in the USSR" dramatizes the consequences of the absence of any government recognition of lesbianism. In contrast, Cindy Moriarty's article examines the new Ontario legislation which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

This issue is a testament to the many women who live as lesbians. It is an opportunity for all of us to open our minds and hearts to hearing the voices of women who may be very dissimilar or very much like ourselves.

Real Protection for Lesbians ?

by Cindy Moriarty

On December 18, 1986, after a year of discussion, debate, vicious attack and spirited support, the Human Rights Code of Ontario was amended to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. The new legislation guarantees homosexuals rights to housing, employment, services, contracts, and membership in vocational groups such as trade unions and professional associations.

Design: Gabrielle Nawratil

As a lesbian working in the office of the MPP who introduced the amendment Bill 7, to Ontario's Human Rights Code, I was privy to a unique view of the lobbying that occurred beforehand. Across Ontario, there were equal numbers of proponents and opponents. Since my boss, Evelyn Gigantes (NDP, Ottawa Centre) introduced Bill 7, her support was guaranteed. Those supporting the Bill wisely chose to direct their lobbying efforts elsewhere. The opponents, however, were another story. Our office was inundated with calls and mail voicing fear, hate, distortion and, every once in a while, hostile civility.

Opponents saw homosexuality, at best, as unnatural; at worst, as the root of all evil, responsible for the destruction of society, and as the leading cause of child molestation. Among this homophobic insanity one thing was abundantly clear: people thought the bill concerned gays; they gave little thought to lesbians.

Over the years I have learned, personally and politically, all about lesbian invisibility, but it has never been so clear to me as during the lobbying process. As a feminist, I've been speaking and educating and rabble-rousing for years. I've dealt with all sorts of confrontations and attacks for my beliefs. As my life has changed, I have gained the "privilege" of dealing with issues on a quasi-intellectual level. Reaction to the Bill eroded my intellectual armour and everything was brought down to gut-level emotions. I was exposed daily to raw hate and fear that bordered on panic. The ugliness and distortion often made it impossible to comprehend the limits of human intolerance.

No knowledge, intellectual understanding or analysis hits

Reaction to the Bill eroded my intellectual armour and everything was brought down to gut-level emotions.

I was exposed daily to raw hate and fear that bordered on panic.

home like knowledge of the heart. For me that knowledge came with identifying myself as a lesbian. But the big deal wasn't lesbians. Lesbians are women, and women have never been a big deal (except to other women). Men were the big deal. Gay men. Depraved men assaulting young boys. Assaulting young girls and women has never been a big deal.

The lobby against the amendment was closely connected to the anti-feminist movement. In the Ontario Legislature, Evelyn Gigantes said:

"The sexual pecking order is intimately linked to the economic pecking order of our society. Any man who declares that he is not a full-blooded man of whatever macho notion is, simply, a traitor to the most important system. It is the

ultimate act of treason to the system. The system is one which connects the notion of men's "ownership" rights and role in the family structure, with the rights and privileges of owners in the economy... women don't rate as traitors. They can be rebels against authority, but not traitors because it's not their system.

...There are 125 elected representatives in the Ontario Legislature; 10 are women. If the sexual numbers and the social powers were reversed, I believe the clauses of section 18 relating to sexual orientation might not even be necessary. ... It is the maleness of economic and social domination of our society that is threatened by this reform, not the womanness or the childness, but the maleness that so profits by its domination through being male." (1)

From R.E.A.L. Women to religious and business coalitions, the opposition stormed Queen's Park, but like all storms their protest blew over and the skies cleared with the passing of the the Bill.

Does the new legislation mean protection for gays and lesbians under the Human Rights Code? I believe the legislation has provided us with a battle-ground and not necessarily a victory. The onus remains on us to complain against discrimination to the Human Rights Commission.

While the Bill provides a signal to employers, service deliverers and legislators, it does not solve an age-old problem. Rather, it provides a starting point for discussion and reform.

It brings the issue out of the closet, but a lesbian has to be pretty much "out" to lodge a complaint with the Human Rights Commission. The woman whose personal security is threatened

unless she keeps her lifestyle private, will not be able to walk into her office and ask that her lover be covered under the pension plan. Landlords and employers can always find other avenues of discrimination and other reasons for dismissal or eviction. The law does not protect us against exile and family outrage. Often, we will be on trial and we will still have to prove our "innocence."

EGALE (Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere) is a national lobbying group based in Ottawa that co-ordinated a tremendous campaign around Bill 7 and is continuing its efforts on the federal level. Debbie Hughes of EGALÉ expressed qualified optimism. She sees Bill 7 as helpful, but is not convinced it will change much without federal legislation. "You have to be out to use Bill 7 and in order to be out you have to be very vulnerable."

Ironically, Hughes says homophobic hysteria might ultimately work in our favour. She explains that legislators who might not normally have voted in favour of the Bill did so in reaction to the hatred and viciousness expressed by the opposition. The more hysterical and vindictive those lobbying

against the Bill became, the more apparent it was to the fence sitters where logic lay.

And what impact will Bill 7 have on the Charter of Rights? Speculators wonder about past provincial cases and the implications of Bill 7 before the federal courts. Federal government policy says that "sexual orientation is irrelevant to whether one can perform a job or use a service or facility." Further, "sexual orientation is not grounds for denial of security clearance, or basis for discrimination within federal jurisdiction." (2)

Discrimination continues in employment practices, particularly within the RCMP and armed services. Federal policy may not be law, but I would wager it's one of the few federal government policies that can be so blatantly ignored by its own ministries.

As the new legislation takes hold we can hope to gain true equality and a sense of freedom in the lives we lead. While the nature of the law will be muddy for some time, the passing of the Bill clearly signals an acknowledgement of and disagreement with homophobia.

The phones in my office are still ringing. A woman calls, outraged, trying to instill some

"sense" into my head and warning me of the dangers of homosexuality. "Would you want one of those people teaching your kids?" "Would you want one of those in your home?"

"You bet!!!"

bts

CALL TO ACTION: To support EGALÉ, you can donate your time or money (or both). Write or phone your MP and encourage her/him to support an amendment to the constitution that would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Call or write the Minister of Justice and the opposition critics to voice your support for the amendment.

For more information:

EGALÉ

P.O. Box 2891, Station D

Ottawa, Ontario

K1P 5W9

(1) *Hansard*, November 25, 1986

(2) *Toward Equality Report*, March 4, 1986

In addition to working as Evelyn Gigantes' constituency assistant, Cindy Moriarty is president of CARAL (Ottawa Chapter) and has been involved with International Women's Week for two years.

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Defining Myself as a Lesbian ... Finding my voice in a community



Illustration: Catherine O'Neill

Design: Evelyne Guindon-Zador

Interviewer: Joan Riggs

Defining as a lesbian has had many implications for me. I have been prejudged, labeled and named. I have been made invisible as people respond to me based on preconceived notions of lesbians. I wanted this article to begin to dismantle some of those myths, to step into the complexities and contradictions that make up the lesbian community. I wanted lesbians to define themselves. The women who agreed to assist me have all shown a strong commitment to visibility as they shared their

experiences and views and requested that their real names be in this article.

The interview is, in fact, three separate interviews and four hours of discussion. It has been edited to capture just a few of the highlights of the discussion.

Joan: *What is your definition of lesbian?*

Tamarack: A lesbian is a woman who somehow defies

everything that we are told as women in this society, undoing our conditioning which has led us to believe that our only option is to find a man, stick as close to him as possible and definately be sexual with him. Instead, we follow our hearts, our love and our lives evolve around women and the whole culture of women loving women. If we want to be passionate, we are passionate with women, if we want to be sexual, we are sexual with women. I keep adding to my definition the more I find out

about my original heritage as a lesbian.

Lynne: I think the definition is fluid and evolving. There are lots of groups or sub-communities or different kinds of lesbians. It's like any culture - it's a living thing, and it changes over time. We're in the process of emerging as a community or a culture. And, we have to do a lot of talking. We have to be careful that we're open to a lot of different kinds of voices but we should also be trying to show we have something in common.

Donna: I think that anyone who defines herself as a lesbian is a lesbian. Can we (the women in this room) really define what a lesbian is? What do we do with those people who don't fit into that definition but who call themselves lesbians?

Carmen: I agree. Lesbianism, like all identities, can't be decided from the outside. I can't decide if another woman is a lesbian. She must self-identify.

Tamarack: I know a woman is a lesbian because she is calling herself a lesbian. She has broken through that silence and she, in whatever situation that is safe for her, is managing to be and say I'm a lesbian. Living as a lesbian is very different than living in a heterosexual way. In recognizing a lesbian, I recognize a woman whose life evolves around women.

Lynne: The definition has so many different parts, there is the social, emotional, sexual and political. It's just a question of where you devote energy towards women, in which pieces and parts of your life. Maybe as more pieces come together you start to identify more and more as a

lesbian.

Louise: I realize that, no matter what we say, in my mind, when I think of lesbian, automatically I just think of women who sleep with other women. The definition remains sexual.

Carmen: That is a male definition. It is a definition that allows us not to have to look at meaningful relationships between

"She has broken through the silence, and she, in whatever situation that is safe for her, is managing to say I'm a lesbian".

women. Radical lesbianism is an awareness and willingness to give your best and, if possible, your only energy towards lesbians, maybe other women, and if you have other energy left over, to the few good men. Lesbianism is a commitment a woman has towards other women that can be expressed in a variety of ways, be it sexual or not.

Joan: These definition are extremely tolerant and inclusive. But I agree with Louise, even

though our intent is to be inclusive of women, I think the lesbian community and certainly the world in general identifies a woman as a lesbian once she had a sexual relationship with a woman.

There was a time in my life when I spent all my time in the women's community, all of my friends were women, I gave all of my money to women, I spent only one evening a week with my lover who was male, now what did that make me? It made me a woman loving women but in a heterosexual relationship. Yet I was only identified and self-identified as a lesbian once I had had a sexual relationship. The power was given to my sexual life to define me.

I think sex is the crux of the definition. I don't feel that I fundamentally changed my politics and my person when I changed from male lovers to women lovers - what I did change was my sexual partner- but all of a sudden it was legitimate to call me a lesbian. What was inside of me the whole time, my love for women, never altered. How I chose to express it changed.

Carmen: But, is sexual activity to be the threshold to lesbianism? If I had looked at the way I was living five years before I became sexually involved with women, and had I not had a strictly sexual definition of lesbianism, I would have just relaxed about the sexual dimension. I spent years, like most pre-lesbians, saying that I was not sexually attracted to women. I remember spending a whole summer having a male lover that I would sleep with at night. In the morning, I would join my women friends for breakfast, looking forward to my day with women. I wonder what would have happened if someone

had come along and said: "Carmen, it is not important that you are sleeping with a man." I would have just relaxed about the sexual dimension, about where you cross the line into lesbianism.

Lynne: It will be an important part of the evolution of the lesbian community to say that while the difference between heterosexuals and homosexuals is sexual activity, that is not the difference between lesbians and other women. The difference between women is in how much we involve women in our lives. The more parts of your life you devote to women, the more you feel comfortable with the word lesbian. If the sexual part is the first part or the last, it doesn't matter.


Joan: But, sex is the threshold. You can be as celibate as you want to be after you have had that initial relationship with a woman, after you have proved that you are a lesbian. No matter what you do, you are not part of the community until you have had your first sexual relationship with a woman.

Lynne: It might be a radicalizing political experience for women to start identifying publicly as lesbians and saying they sleep with men. They can use the more inclusive definition, the social, political and emotional ties.


Carmen: I agree. Sleeping with a woman doesn't make you a lesbian. It took me quite a while after I became sexually involved with a woman to self define as a lesbian. I spent a fair amount of time saying, "I'm not a lesbain but my lover is." It was my political awareness, not falling in love with a woman and not being sexually involved with a woman,

that made me feel linked to other women like me. That is when I felt I was lesbian, when my primary commitment was to women.

Donna: I also was sleeping with a woman and not calling myself lesbian. I was clearly stating I did not like labels and had no need to label, but if anyone needed labels, then probably the closest thing I could come up with was bisexual. At



"We have this fanaticism for labelling ourselves and each other. I just call myself a woman who loves women."



that point in my life, I was sleeping with a woman, in love with a woman, and very emotionally involved with her. I thought that if the relationship ended I would probably have my next relationship with a man. Part of me hoped that it would be with a man, because we were so isolated as lesbians, not part of a community. So part of my definition of lesbian, in a way, meant that you were very isolated.

Max: We have this

fanaticism for labelling ourselves and each other. I just call myself a woman who loves women.

Joan: Any word we use is in relation to a community, to the world. You can self-define that you are black but if the whole world doesn't see you as black, are you black? It's the same thing: you can say I'm a lesbian, but if your only reality is that you sleep with women but you don't identify as lesbian, then do you experience the political existence of being lesbian? Being part of a community makes you open to the privileges and vulnerable to all the forms of oppression, it demands that you react to lesbians being oppressed. Also, if we don't name things, like who we are, if women who identify as lesbians don't say "I'm a lesbian" then it's easy for the world to define lesbian and we know how flattering it can be about its definition.

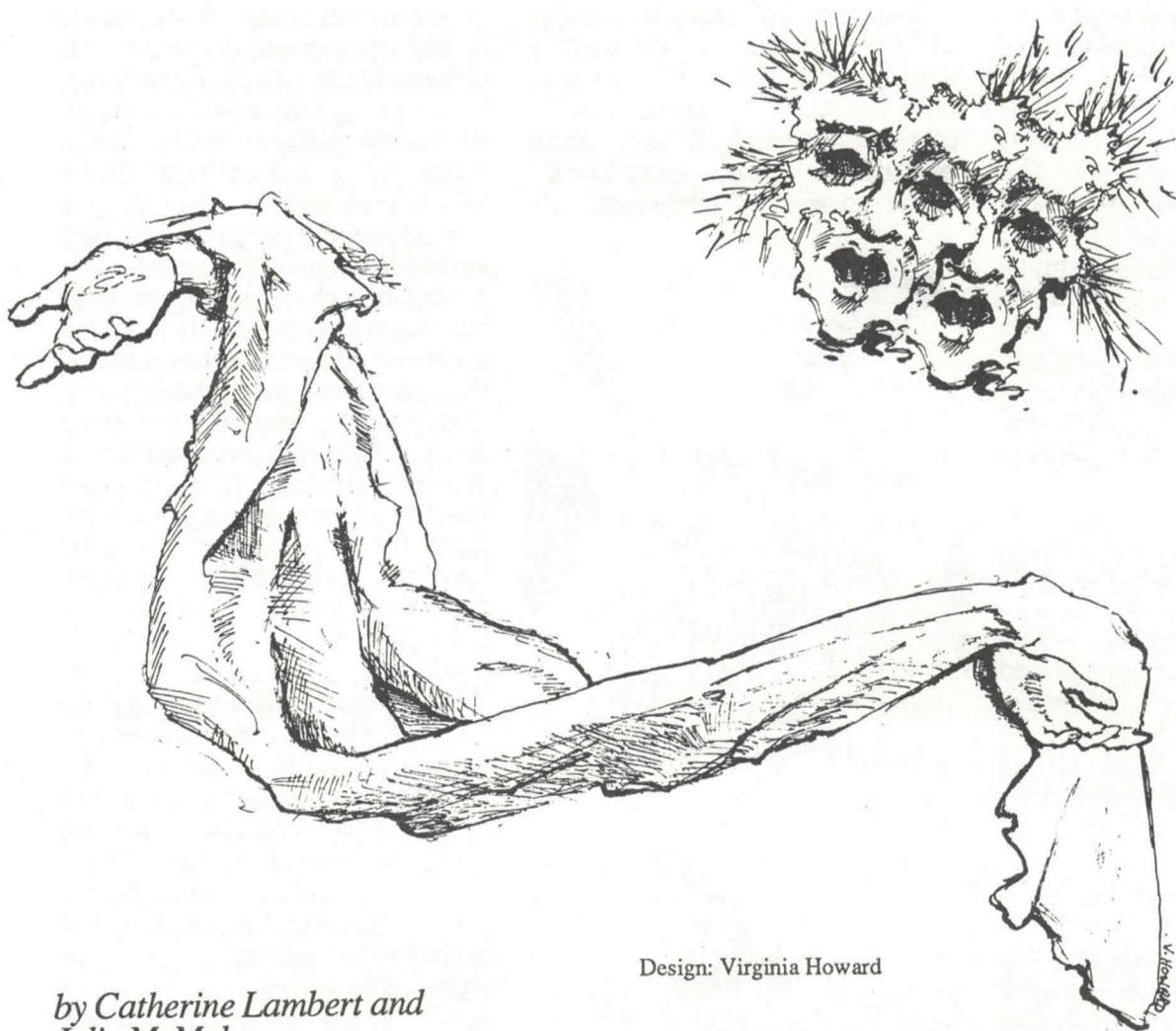
Carmen: If you keep on saying that you aren't lesbian you never have to answer the questions about your political and emotional responsibilities around nourishing other women. You stick by what the outside world says. You can have the sexual activity but you don't want the word. The word is a political word. Many women who are sexually involved with women don't use lesbian because they are afraid of it. It brings home to me how much being a lesbian is being out on a limb. You don't have the protection of other gay men or even other women. It is an incredibly challenging position to take in society.

Max: But I can't use the word lesbian because it means something else to me. I know more than one woman who finds the label lesbian offensive, not

continued on page 29

Deciding to Have Children:

A Lesbian Experience



Design: Virginia Howard

by Catherine Lambert and
Julia McMahon

Catherine: I have always wanted a child. I can't say why. I'm 38 years old and my biological clock is ticking away. This year, my lover/partner, Julia, and I decided not to put it off any longer. I had been waiting for the right time, when I would have a stable job and a good salary as well as a supportive relationship. I came to realize that I could wait for the rest of my life for those things to happen and might never have a child.

Julia: When Catherine and I first became lovers, she told me that she wanted to have a child. I was shocked. I was just starting a serious relationship and wasn't sure that I wanted to take on a baby at the same time. It was all too fast.

As it turned out, I have had more than enough time to come to terms with what my relationship to this child would be because, three years later, we are still struggling to have one. I have

passed through a period of passive resistance to passive acceptance to what I would now call active support. As much time as I have spent speculating about what our lives will be like with a child, I still feel unprepared.

For Catherine, it is now clear that having a child will not be easy. It has been far more work and far more discouragement than either of us had ever imagined. It has been difficult both because we are lesbians and because

Catherine has chosen to try to have a child by alternative insemination.

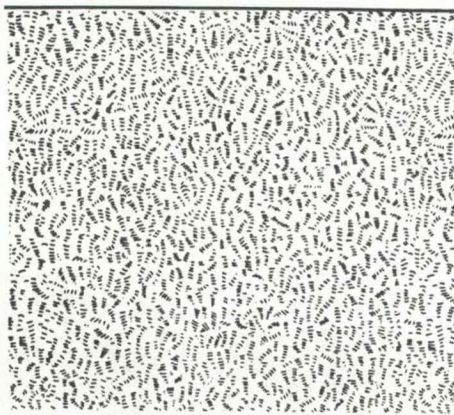
Catherine: In Halifax, I talked about my desire to have a child with my women friends who all supported me. However, the major problem was where to get the sperm. On two occasions, a man said he was willing to donate but then decided not to do it. My doctor, though sympathetic to my plight, did not know of anything available. Most lesbians I know have obtained sperm from gay male friends but I didn't know any.

Then I heard of a women's clinic in Vermont that did insemination, but the cost was exorbitant and their success rate was extremely low because the sperm available was frozen.

We moved to Montreal a year and a half ago and through a lesbian connection found a doctor who would inseminate women whether they were married, single or lesbian. At first, we could not believe it. We made an appointment and then carefully planned how to approach this doctor, trying to guess what kind of questions he would ask.

To our surprise, he had no questions but said that he assumed we were mature adults who had thought this out. He explained the process and provided the sperm while another doctor did the insemination. We thought it was all set. We were going to have a baby and were ready to buy the baby furniture.

Julia: Artificial (or more



positively, alternative) insemination is a difficult process regardless of how the sperm is introduced. Determining the time of ovulation means an endless round of taking your temperature and studying your chart. The first two weeks of the cycle you spend charting the ovulation date and getting over the depression of last month's failure. The last two weeks of the cycle you spend crossing your fingers and trying not to get too excited as you examine each small physical symptom.

When you know you are ovulating, you pick up the sperm, which has been collected from medical residents that morning at a fee of \$50 a shot. You then may have to wait all morning for your doctor to perform the procedure. Meanwhile, the sperm gets older and weaker and you become tenser and tenser as you wait. The moment of insemination becomes a painful medical event rather than a woman-controlled experience.

There are benefits to the clinic, however. You can be sure that the sperm donors are healthy and you know that you can receive drugs to help regulate ovulation. But the emotional and monetary costs are great. You may feel objectified by the medical system while your partner may feel angry and helpless.

Catherine: After going to the clinic for several months. I am still not pregnant. I don't

ovulate in the "right" way. I find this very disappointing. I hate going for insemination. The process is very humiliating.

On the prescribed mornings, I go off to one doctor's office to pick up the sperm and then down to another's to be inseminated. The inseminating doctor is usually late and I, along with other women, sit and wait. The tension in that ugly waiting room is awful; we sit there holding our little bottles of sperm in white envelopes. Some women hide them in their bags. We seldom talk with each other, but we sign and look at each other with the same hopeful looks.

One month, some of us did talk while we waited. We told stories about how long we had been trying. Those with husbands told how their husbands felt, while the single women talked about doing it on their own. I was the only lesbian. Each woman was accepted because we know how hard it is and how much we need to support one another.

One of the women and I have become friends. We call each other when we get our periods and let each other know the times of our appointments. It's good to be close to someone who is going through it too. I think it must be hardest for those women who sit in the office not able to talk about it to anyone. Some of the women talk about how they have to lie to their bosses about being sick because they feel they must hide what they are doing.

The hard part is the way it

begins to take over your whole life. I am either waiting to go for insemination or I am waiting to see if my period comes. Sometimes, my life feels totally absorbed by trying to get pregnant. I keep thinking that maybe I'm making a baby and I find myself wanting to say to people, "Don't bother me, I'm busy making a baby." But life isn't only baby-making. I have my school assignments, my classes, my field work, and I have my relationship as well.

Julia: Since it is Catherine who decided to have a child and since her decision predates our relationship, we have had to work on how we will see ourselves as a lesbian family. For me, this has meant figuring out my relationship to the child. Initially, when I was overwhelmed by the idea of a child (all those diapers, nights and jam on the sofa), I wanted Catherine to be the mother while I maintained a certain distance from the child. I know now that if Catherine has a baby I will fall in love with it. Yet, I persist in adopting a fairly conservative approach to the question of who will be the mother. She wants me to participate fully in bringing up the child.

Catherine: Julia and I are in a committed relationship and, therefore, it is important that the child be seen as a part of that relationship. The problem is defining Julia's role. Our language is so difficult, the labels are so inadequate. Julia is as much a parent of this child-to-be as I am. In my mind, she has the same power and responsibilities

that I do.

When we first talked with our respective parents about having a child, we met with some opposition. Our parents and other immediate relatives prefer to see us as wonderful aunties and wish we could be happy staying that way. It will not be easy for our parents to see us with a baby, especially because family friends and other relatives see us as unmarried, asexual women. We have decided that explaining this addition in our lives to our extended families is our parents' problem. Our child will be introduced as such to everyone.

I have become jealous of pregnant women. One morning at the doctor's office, while we were discussing our insemination difficulties, a woman who was obviously pregnant walked in. All eyes were on her expanding belly. She interrupted our conversation and told us that once she and her husband realized that she had to "do it" on the right day she got pregnant. None of us knew what to say. We just sat

there as she complained about the weight she gained, until finally one woman said for all of us: "If I could be pregnant, I would never complain about weight gain."

I grew up with the idea that having babies was part of romance, and that the baby came from two people who loved each other. Those images live on even though I know that baby-making is a biological process and that so many babies are conceived under circumstances which are awful for women. Julia and I now try to make the insemination days special. I try to come home after the insemination to rest and talk. Somehow that makes it better for both of us.

Julia: In this article, we have just touched the surface of the issues faced by lesbians who try to have children and by the partners of those lesbians. There are lesbians alone and in couples all across the country who are trying to have children. We hope that more of them will write down their experiences and that journals like *Breaking The Silence* will publish them. bts

Catherine Lambert is a social worker who has been active in the anti-violence movement. Julia McMahon is an aspiring fiction writer who has a special interest in women and language. They are both from the Maritimes.

The Unofficial Story: Lesbians in the USSR



«Journée de l'émancipation des femmes» Affiche de 1920.

by N.H. LaViolette

Design: Evelyne Guindon-Zador

My desire to visit the Soviet Union dates back many years; it intensified through several years of studying that country's social, political and economic systems. My opportunity to finally travel to the USSR came about through a one-month study program organized by the University of

Ottawa. Our journey started in Helsinki, then moved on to a four-day visit to Moscow, the Soviet capital. From there we took an Aeroflot flight to Leningrad and then to our final destination, Dyuny, a resort area on the Baltic sea, 40 kilometers north of Leningrad.

The Tolstoy night train left Helsinki in the late afternoon and arrived in Moscow the next morning. Most of the journey beyond the Soviet-Finnish border occurred at night, leaving passengers with a very limited view of the countryside. As the train pulled into the station in Moscow, I wondered if I would be able to see much of this country. Did the train ride indicate how invisible Soviet society would be to a foreigner? One thing that was clear to me before I even embarked on this journey was that lesbians and gays would be invisible in the USSR. In the darkness of the night, I was sure I was seeing more of the countryside than I could ever hope to see of Soviet lesbian and gay culture.

While very excited about my trip, I realized that for the first time in many years I would find myself in an overwhelmingly straight environment. Not knowing any of my travelling companions, I preferred to stay closeted until I had a better sense of what the reactions to my sexual orientation would be. I also felt safer concealing my lesbianism in general so that difficult situations would not arise with any Soviets I encountered on my trip. My knowledge of the country made it very clear to me that homosexuality is perceived in the USSR as a western sexual perversion and not a welcome lifestyle.

Homosexuality was not always viewed as a moral disease in the USSR. In 1917, the Soviet Union was the first country in the world to abolish all laws against homosexuality. Observations that appeared in the Bloshais

Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia in 1930 considered that "sexual perversions are not found any more frequently among homosexuals than among heterosexuals." (1) The Soviet government that was established following the Bolshevik revolution introduced several liberal laws which improved social relations. Women benefitted from legislation which aimed at granting them equality in areas of work, marriage and childcare.



Stalin's rise to power in the late 1920s brought an end to the social experimentation of that decade. His desire to modernize the Soviet economy required a large mobilization of human resources. To ensure that the country would have enough people for this modernization, Stalin amended legislation to strengthen traditional marriages and large families. Any lifestyle that deviated from this conservative model was no longer tolerated. In 1934, male homosexuality became punishable by up to eight years in prison. Sexual relationships between women older than 18 years were not punishable by law but the women faced the threat of confinement to mental institutions, loss of jobs and children, and other forms of harassment.

Except for my brief stay in Helsinki, I didn't plan to make any special efforts to meet gays and lesbians during my trip. A

gay underground does exist in the USSR but it is difficult for a foreigner to penetrate this subculture. There are bars, parks and benches, as well as a few bathhouses, where men can meet. Lesbian circles are even more underground and appear to consist mostly of a small number of trusted friends.

Artistic circles are often mentioned as an environment where a lesbian or gay lifestyle is more likely to be tolerated. But limits exist there as well. Gay authors such as Kuzmin and Trifonov and novels with homosexual themes such as Lidia Zinoveva-Annibals' lesbian novel *Thirty Three Abominations* (1907) are banned in the Soviet Union. Writing and poetry by lesbians and gays are circulated secretly among some dissident



circles and are sometimes smuggled abroad for publication.

A feature of Russian culture that gave me a lot of pleasure was the open affection between women (and to a lesser extent between men). (2) It was very common to see women walking arm in arm or holding hands. Russian women value their friendships with other women highly. However, close friendships between women don't appear to contribute to the breakdown of traditional roles between women and men. Even though women work in areas we consider non-traditional such as medicine, engineering and

construction, feminine qualities of passivity, timidity and shyness remain valued features of 'Soviet womanhood.'

The social pressure exerted on Russian women to engage in traditional heterosexual relationships is reinforced by housing shortages in the major cities of the country. Most young people live with their parents until they are married and sometimes even after marriage. Housing authorities give priority to families with children. Furthermore, many



apartments have shared kitchens and bathrooms. This does not allow for much privacy, thus making it extremely difficult for lesbians and gay men to live together, or even to have sexual relationships.

The well-known lack of consumer goods in the Soviet economy was a major factor in determining whom I came into contact with during my stay. The easiest people to meet were young Soviets looking to befriend a foreigner in the hope that they could acquire Western clothes and gadgets. Some of them were real hustlers, making a profit on the black market by selling items they acquired from tourists through trade or sale. I noticed most of these hustlers were young men so I asked two youths in Moscow whether any women engaged in this somewhat illegal activity. One of them replied that women who live on the fringes of society don't usually deal in the black market. Instead, they prostitute

themselves with foreigners. It seemed that women were much more limited to traditional female roles.

I spent some time with a group of young Russian students working at Dyuny for the summer. I could feel a certain connection with the young women, and I was quickly and warmly drawn into their circle. They asked me whether I had a boyfriend, why I didn't wear make-up, and what kind of life people lived in Canada. They giggled a lot when our conversation turned to anything related to sexuality. This confirmed for me that socialist Russia is as backwards on issues of sexuality as any other nation. Indeed, sex education was introduced in Soviet schools only a few years ago. Educational materials are not easily accessible and certainly not affirming of homosexuality.

The young students I met in Dyuny were very friendly and generous. On our first meeting, one of the young women, Lera, gave me one of her rings in friendship. I extended a similar gesture to her a few days later by offering her one of my ear cuffs. Before she would accept it, I had to reassure her that this was very fashionable in Canada. I forewent mentioning how popular they were with my lesbian friends!

Towards the end of my stay, I explored Dyuny on my own. I still didn't feel I could reveal my sexuality to the group and share my insights on Soviet society with them. I was therefore left alone to appreciate the sight of two women walking down a street arm in arm or men holding hands as they walked down Nevsky prospect, the main avenue of Leningrad. As I

observed people in the Leningrad and Moscow subways, I had fun guessing who might be lesbian or gay. I also spent many evenings strolling on the beautiful beach at Dyuny, watching the midnight sun descend upon the Baltic sea, longing to be able to share this with a lover. Although I enjoyed my solitude, it also gave me a taste of the isolation that lesbians must experience in the Soviet Union.

I finally did connect with someone gay two days before I left for Helsinki. I had worn a



double women's symbol for most of my trip, hoping that one of the other students might know its significance. During a banquet given for us by our Soviet hosts, Rick, an American studying in West Germany, approached me and inquired as to whether I had any trouble entering the country wearing my chain. I couldn't help smiling as I told him that not even my Canadian companions knew what the symbol meant!

It was a great relief to finally talk to someone gay. We shared stories and insights late into the night over a few glasses of vodka at the bar in Dyuny. Rick had been to the Soviet Union nine times and still hadn't met anyone gay. Although he was out to some of his Soviet friends, it was something they had great

difficulty understanding.

Having spent close to five weeks in the Soviet Union, it occurred to me that truth and sincerity didn't prevail strongly in this country. I thought of the lives lesbians and gay men were forced to lead, and how the desire many of us have to be true to ourselves was repressed by the state's efforts to homogenize the lives of their citizens into the narrow and traditional heterosexist model. A great deal of courage and strength is required to be lesbian or gay in the Soviet Union.

One day later I was in Helsinki where one can see lesbian and feminist graffiti and find a listing under 'gay' in the telephone book. Back in the 'West', I felt more secure and free as a lesbian. It became clear to me that I might never have discovered who I was if I had been raised under the Soviet system. The country officially claims not to have any lesbians or gay men and operates fully on that assumption. While I know this official disclaimer is not based in reality, I wonder how many women and men in the USSR have enough courage to claim a lesbian or gay identity in a country in which they don't even officially exist.

bts

(1) De Jong, Ben, "An Intolerable kind of moral degeneration: Homosexuality in the Soviet Union" *IGA Pink Book* (1985)

(2) The Soviet Union consists of 15 republics that contain very diverse cultures. As I only visited the Russian republic of the USSR I'm referring to the culture of the Russian people.

N.H. LaViolette est une québécoise en exil à Ottawa. Elle espère repartir bientôt à la recherche de lesbiennes socialistes mais cette fois en Europe de l'est.

Ensuring Lesbian Visibility in the Women's Movement

By Carmen Paquette

As a long-time community organizer, I have noticed that our struggles as lesbians are similar to our struggles as Franco-Ontarians or as women. There too, we have had difficulty taking ourselves seriously enough to feel that we had the right to identify and state our issues. We were encouraged to think of others first, not to be divisive, and to think of national family unity. The women's movement taught me once and for all that a society must not maintain unity based on the silence and oppression of some of its members. I've learned from the women's movement to question whenever women are silenced. My affirmation as a lesbian is based on this understanding.

I believe the women's movement is most effective as a vast self-help movement: that immigrant women are best suited

to help immigrant women; disabled women to help disabled women; upwardly mobile career women to help similar women; heterosexual women to help each other; and lesbians to help lesbians. Our strength comes from linking up and supporting each others' struggles, not from being a no-name homogeneous women's movement with no texture or diversity, where white middle-class anglophone heterosexual women usually end up as spokespersons.

A feminism which fights hard to ensure that each woman's reality is valued cannot conform to only one model of feminism. There must be acceptance of our differences and a commitment to make our diversity visible. What is feminism if it cannot include all women who are struggling with their self-definition? Yet daily, lesbians are asked or told not to state that they are lesbians, supposedly for the "good" of the women's movement.

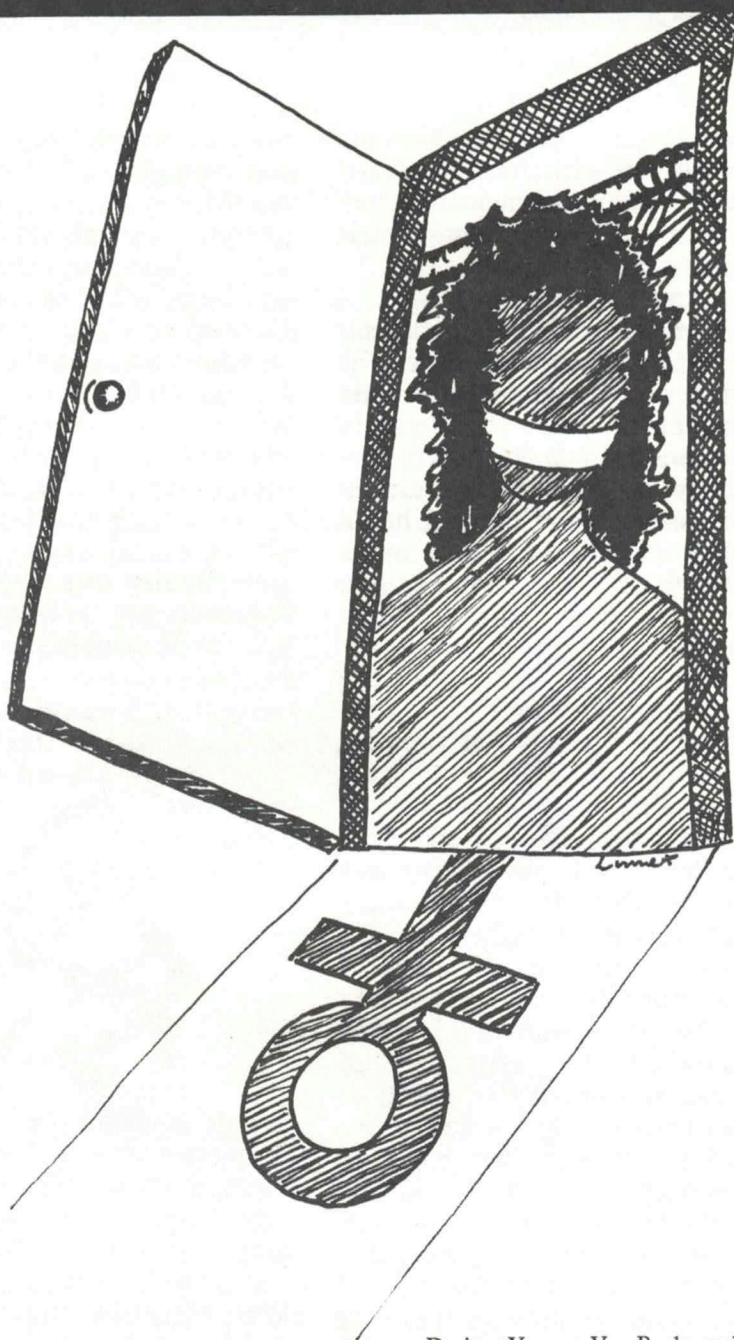


Illustration: Linnet O'Connell-Graham

Design: Yvonne Van Ruskenveld

One example of this subtle silencing by heterosexual women occurred when Women's Place, a women's centre, had its funding from City of Ottawa reduced through the lobbying efforts of REAL Women. A group of politically-skilled women wanted to do fundraising for Women's Place but, before they would participate, some of them wanted to be assured that there weren't many lesbians involved with the centre. I was outraged. I saw little difference between their attitude towards lesbianism and that of REAL Women.

I want to ask heterosexual feminists: Why are you so afraid of lesbianism? You work with lesbians so you know we do not 'seduce' heterosexual women. Is your fear based on an intuition that lesbianism is not about sex, that it is about love? That to love women so completely in a woman-hating society is to be totally out on a limb and you don't want to be there? As feminists, we try to overcome the woman-hating in our patriarchal society, learning to love ourselves and all women. As lesbians, we have reclaimed the right to love women in the fullest sense. It is impossible for me to accept that this movement which taught me to love myself and all women now wants to limit and silence its full expression.

The degree to which heterosexual women have relied on our commitment to women's groups has become clearer to me as we lesbians affirm our presence. To be asked why we no longer want to work for all women all the time or why we need to state our existence is aggravating and insulting to me as a woman who has spent the last 15 years in the women's movement, before and since becoming a lesbian. It also saddens me that women who have

become aware of the pitfalls of racism or classism fail to transfer that awareness of the links between oppressions to their reactions to lesbianism.

Would any feminist today dare ask overtly discriminatory questions such as these asked about lesbians:

Is it true that the women's movement is full of _____ (immigrant women, poor women)?

Why not work for all women and not just try to improve your situation as _____ (battered women, black women)?

It could really hurt the women's movement if you talk about and flaunt the fact that you are _____ (Francophone, disabled).

Some heterosexual women do challenge these inappropriate statements and I am exhilarated by their solidarity with lesbians.

Some lesbians discourage other lesbians from being open and visible and I am saddened. An example of this silencing of lesbians by lesbians was evidenced at a meeting of 20 lesbians hosted by Gays of Ottawa. The discussion was about improving the services to lesbians in the Ottawa area. The mood was cordial and stimulating as each woman outlined the services already provided or the services needed. As one of the co-ordinators of the first International Lesbian Week in Ottawa, I listed the kinds of activities and services lesbians were interested in developing as a follow-up to the week. Lesbians active in Pink Triangle Services, a gay organization, supported lesbian activities, while some lesbians involved in feminist organizations were ambivalent or reluctant to support activities that were clearly only for lesbians.

I do not want to force

lesbians out of the safety of the feminist closet. Heaven knows there are too few relatively safe places for us. But I want to help create a climate where lesbians and heterosexual women will encourage lesbians to be visible in the women's movement and also to be active in lesbian groups. Lesbians should be encouraged to become involved in the variety of collective actions available to us, be it working in a women's organization, gay rights organization or in a lesbian group.

I invite lesbians to question our assumptions about the "best" place in the women's movement for us to be active. For instance, I question whether our silence about our lesbianism is always appropriate in women's groups. If we fear scaring off women, we are feeding their fear of us. If we are to continue working on improving the situation of women as lesbian feminists or as heterosexual feminists we need to face the fear of lesbianism and not rationalize it away. If a woman will not accept my help because I am a lesbian, that is her right, but it is also my right to offer my energy only to women who accept me in my totality.

I know that I want to maintain my solidarity with the women's movement, which has nourished me as I have nourished it. But I am not ready to maintain this solidarity at all costs, especially not at the cost of myself and my lesbian sisters having to remain quiet about ourselves and our issues. As women, we have learned to stand proud. As lesbians we are superb when we stand proud!

bts

Carmen Paquette is a self-employed Ottawa native. She is a long-term franco-ontarian and feminist activist, and also works toward attaining gay and lesbian rights.

GRA

*My hand has been adventuring
i have reached to give you
pleasure
reached inside you to
the place where you carried your
son
the ecstasy carried you and i
to a place where all is irrelevant
save poetry*

They had all but shoved the contract under my nose, when I took a deep breath and said, "There's one more thing you ought to know about me: I'm a lesbian." At that point, the interviewing team of this rural United Church were all sitting across the table from me. One by one, each offered an excuse why ministry from a lesbian would not be accepted in this particular community. "We on this committee are very open, but we don't think the congregation could handle it," said one as she stood up and backed away, ostensibly to get a cup of coffee from the kitchen. The others followed suit with similar statements, similar forays to the coffee pot, until I alone remained at the table.

I was not surprised by their final verdict, but I was disappointed. I had never before been turned down for a job because of my sexuality -- or if I had, I had been given other reasons. I had sighs too deep for words, tears, rage, and, unexpectedly, loneliness. Much of the church does not understand what it is to be lesbian and Christian; neither does much of

the lesbian community. I am like a fifth generation slave contemplating freedom and not sure where to seek it: Africa is not my home, nor is the plantation. Where will I go to live my life? In the Christian left, we are fond of saying "the journey is my home," yet having roots no deeper than a tent-peg produces a terrible longing.

March 18/83

IMAGE: *the Kingston Women's Pen some crazy courage it takes not to be there.*

FACE UNDER PRESSURE



*i know God by her absence
she is waiting for me in the desert,
the land of unprotected
living*

Yes, there is the church's homophobia to be reckoned with. And from the outside looking in, it seems an unsurmountable force. Sometimes it seems that way from where I am too, on the inside, working as a minister in a rural town. Lesbian feminists ask me why I stay. I sometimes feel I may be denying the very real damage being done to me, to all

lesbians in the church, and yet, I love the church.

My situation as a lesbian in the church is not unlike my relationship with my parents. My mother is horrified that she has a lesbian daughter, and blames my sexuality on the fact that I was dropped on my head as an infant. My father says that there's little enough love in the world and, while he doesn't understand homosexuality and doesn't want to, he is insistent that I am and always will be a member of the family. My mother's position is stupid and wrong-headed; my father's, classic liberal. While it is painful for me that they do not want to know about some of the most important aspects of my life, my love for Mom and Dad will not allow me to simply walk away from them. A fifth generation slave cannot go back to Africa, the task is to make justice here in the cottonfield. My love for my parents seeks their transformation.

So, too, Christian lesbians seek to transform the church. We seek to bring the church to a place where it -- through word and action -- can divest itself of certain theological, ethical, and political practices in order to invest itself in the ongoing, creative journey with God (see Carter Heyward's *Our Passion For Justice*).

Omnipresence

*i feel your kisses in every drop of
rain
feel you rising like mist from the*

*concrete
see you smiling in halos 'round the
streetlamps
o love, my love, you are so
everywhere.*

This past fall, my lover and I ended/changed our relationship. Our decision to say "it's over" was no less painful than anyone else's. I am in a rural community, employed as a minister in the United Church of Canada (and, no, they don't know they've hired a dyke to preach the gospel). My lover is at the opposite end of this vast country. Over our three years together, we worked hard at our relationship, and played hard, too. But over and over, it boiled down to the same bitter grounds: either I stay in ministry and Joan is unemployed, and thus inexplicable, in a small town, or I leave the work I love. We fought the power inequities and the economic inequities of the relationship. We lost. It is one thing for an individual to agree to a certain amount of closetedness to maintain the economic security of a job; it is quite another to ask a partner to live in an already too-cramped closet with you. Two people simply don't fit in one closet.

COVENANT

*i withdraw my hand from you
stained with your wise blood
o, we are lovers.*

It is within the church that I first admitted to myself that I am lesbian. It was in that wonderful, supportive, and intimately-caring community that I felt secure enough to be the woman, the lesbian, that God created me to be. The sexual life and the spiritual life are friendly with one another. I cannot imagine myself coming out in any context but the religious one. The closer I have got to God/ess, the more I have

been able to celebrate myself as a sexual being, as a lesbian. And vice versa. In part, this has to do with the eroticism of scripture, whether it discusses same-sex love (Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan) or heterosexual passion (Song of Songs). But more, it has to do with my fellow-travellers in the faith who share with me a passion for justice and an identity as sexual outlaws: women who have had abortions, bisexual women, divorced women, single mothers, lesbian women, gay men, non-sexist men. It is within such a community that I am most unafraid, that I am most courageous with my sexuality. And I have only found such a diverse community within the church.

Untitled

My body has grown wild with loving you.

Hair unashamedly traces a line from my navel south.

*There are soft red tendrils in my pits
(politically correct)*

*although i still attck my jaw with tweezers
(probably politically incorrect)*

*My lower back cracks freedom
when i arch my hips a certain way
in the memory of your hands.*

Sex is a spiritual activity. Traditional Christianity comes close to grasping this in its doctrine of incarnation: "the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us." Radical Christianity pushes that doctrine further, asserting that our flesh is godly, that we know God/ess through our flesh. Once, when making love, my ear was on my lover's throat, and I heard the fluid sound of her pulse washing through me. It was a mystical experience, an experience of the holy. When I moved to look upon her, the dazzle of her smile showed me God's delight. Sex is a means of grace, just as surely as bread and wine.

This Wearisome, Worrisome World

*The stupid eyes of malnourished children
the men on Queen Street, too threadbare
to pocket the emptiest of dreams.*

*Once, while making love, i had a vision:
two women, lying on their sides,
facing in to each other, dresses askew
-- the bodies of murdered Latin American sisters.
It served to make my kisses more.*

Lesbian Christianity is a theology of coalition. Because we can count on so few to go this way with us, we must make alliances. And that is, I hope, only part of it. We also make alliances because we know what it is to be oppressed, and what it is to hunger and thirst for justice. In common with El Salvadoreans, South Africans, Francophones, Native People, Jews, gay men, we have a high stake in transforming the principalities and powers into a just and peaceable age. There is as much joy in dismantling the power systems as there is in that first blush of love when the heart beats puppy prints in new snow.

*Through many a danger, toil, and
snare*

*We have already come,
'Twas grace hath brought us safe thus
far,
And grace will lead us home.*

bts

*The author is a lesbian, a feminist
and a United Church minister
with a tendency to get hot under
the collar. Presently serving in a
single industry rural town, she
chooses to write this article
anonymously.*

O'Neill 83

ETRE OU NE PAS ETRE DANS LE MOUVEMENT FEMINISTE

Par Denise Veilleux

Cette question, de plus en plus de lesbiennes se la posent, seules ou avec d'autres, après avoir milité pendant de nombreuses années. Elles arrivent toutes à ce questionnement pour des raisons individuelles, bien sûr, mais elles ont aussi des frustrations communes que je résumerai ainsi: le silence et le mépris n'ont qu'un temps!

Dans ce bref article, je me propose de montrer que notre présence dans le mouvement féministe repose sur une fausse analyse du système hétéropatriarcal, qui nous a fait croire que nos intérêts coïncident avec ceux des féministes. En outre, notre participation au mouvement a été conditionnelle au travestissement de notre identité, ce qui engendre des contradictions qui deviennent tôt ou tard intenable. Notre décision d'y entrer, d'y demeurer, et d'en sortir est souvent vécue individuellement, mais elle a des répercussions sur toutes les lesbiennes. Je tenterai donc de démontrer pourquoi nous devons cesser de privilégier la cause féministe aux dépens de la cause lesbienne.

"Nous sommes toutes des femmes"

Cet argument est souvent invoqué pour expliquer notre participation aux luttes féministes mais il repose sur une analyse

faussée où nous confondons "sexe biologique" et "sexe social". Le premier correspond aux caractéristiques sexuelles physiques alors que le second désigne le marquage, matériel et psychologique, par lequel la société transforme les femelles de l'espèce en "femmes".

À l'intérieur de l'hétérosystème, "femmes" et "hommes" sont deux pôles indissociables d'un rapport asymétrique où les uns sont propriétaires et oppresseurs, et les autres appropriées et opprimées. Dans ce système matériel et idéologique, l'hétérosexualité est une institution qui permet à la classe des hommes d'exploiter la classe des femmes.

Les rapports entre les sexes sont présentés comme allant de soi, découlant paraît-il d'un "instinct sexuel" qui guide infailliblement la femelle vers le mâle. Le mythe de l'amour et de la complémentarité des sexes masque le caractère véritable des rapports où les femmes, en échange d'une fumeuse illusion, renoncent à leur individualité, à leur autonomie, pour se mettre au service des hommes.

Évidemment, ce résultat n'est atteint qu'au prix d'un long et pénible dressage dont toutes les lesbiennes gardent un vif souvenir; Elena Gianini Belotti a fort bien décrit les pratiques rigoureusement appliquées dès la tendre enfance pour susciter cette soi-disant "nature féminine" et,

surtout, pour réprimer tout écart par rapport à la "norme".

Où se situent les lesbiennes dans ce cadre d'analyse?

La condition *sine qua non* de l'existence d'une conscience lesbienne est la transgression de l'ordre social, présenté comme naturel, qui dicte le rapport à l'homme. Pour assumer leur identité, les lesbiennes se réapproprient tout le champs de l'expérience humaine en faisant sauter le carcan de la "féminité". Elles reprennent possession de leur destin d'individues, de sujettes. Dans un monde où les femmes sont définies en fonction des hommes (à preuve, les "vraies" femmes sont des "mères" ou des "madames", donc dans un rapport avec les hommes), les lesbiennes ne sont pas des "femmes" car elles habitent un "no-man's land", du moins dans leur vie privée!

Quel rapport y a-t-il avec le féminisme?

Le mouvement féministe dans son ensemble s'est contenté de réclamer des changements à la "condition féminine", des améliorations à la "situation de la femme" mais sans remettre en question le fondement même de l'oppression, à savoir l'appropriation des femmes. Que ce soit face au conjoint, à l'employeur ou à l'État, les féministes revendiquent un

traitement "plus égalitaire" (ce qui est un non-sens puisque liberté comme égalité est un absolu) mais toujours dans le cadre des rapports hétérosociaux qui ne sont pas perçus comme les rapports politiques d'une lutte de classes. Pour illustrer la position des lesbiennes, j'utiliserai l'analogie de l'esclavage: les féministes luttent pour un esclavage plus humain alors que les lesbiennes sont des esclaves fugitives qui ont échappé aux maîtres, du moins dans la vie privée.

Que nous partagons ou non cette analyse, en tant que lesbiennes nous occupons une place précise sur l'échiquier des rapports entre les sexes. Nous mettons en évidence le caractère coercitif de la féminité et de l'hétérosexualité, nous sommes un démenti à l'idée d'une "nature féminine" innées et immuable. Parce que nous nous situons en dehors des rapports hommes-femmes, nous pouvons formuler une analyse plus radicale car nous ne voyons pas la nécessité d'excuser ou d'absoudre les crimes de la classe des hommes pour épargner l'ami, l'amant, le mari "correct".

Le prix à payer est le silence

Toutefois, ce potentiel radical se trouve étouffé lorsque nous militons dans le mouvement féministe. Trop souvent en effet le prix à payer pour ce privilège est le silence, l'invisibilité. Silence que nous nous imposons parce que nous avons intériorisé le mépris que la société réserve aux déviantes, aux "contre-natures". Ou encore, silence complice que le groupe nous impose, à l'extérieur de celui-ci, pour ne pas nuire à la cause, pour ne pas faire peur.

Ce prix que nous payons individuellement pour être "acceptables" a hélas des répercussions collectives et politiques. En respectant la règle

du silence et de la censure, nous privons la classe des femmes d'un espoir, d'une stratégie de survie et de résistance à l'hétérosystème.

De plus, notre présence dans le mouvement féministe a pour corollaire notre absence du mouvement des lesbiennes. Pour défendre la cause de *toutes* les femmes, nous négligeons *notre* cause. La contrepartie de nos engagements ailleurs peut se recenser en voyant tous les manques qui caractérisent la collectivité lesbienne: manque de lieux de rencontre, manque de

groupes, manque d'organisation, manque de moyens financiers ou autres. Pendant que nous consacrons nos énergies vives à réparer tant bien que mal les dégâts de l'hétérosystème, nous ne développons pas notre conscience collective et notre solidarité *en tant que lesbiennes*. Pendant que nous luttons pour obtenir, faire fonctionner et conserver des lieux pour les "femmes", nous continuons de nous contenter des zones aménagées par le système pour les déviantes que nous sommes.

continued on page 33



Illustration: Nathalie Klym

The Best of Both and Still Nothing:

Bisexual Women Come Out to Talk

By Melinda Wittstock

Bisexuality. To many, the word conjures up an image of a decadent, cowardly fence-sitter, unable or unwilling to find her "real" sexuality.

To many, "real" bisexuality doesn't even exist.

Bisexual women often don't fit in anywhere. They are not fully accepted by either community, nor do they have a community or identity of their own.

Within the feminist movement, bisexual women are often treated with ambivalence by both straight women and lesbians. Many heterosexual women are quick to express their sometimes-not-so-subtle hatred and fear of any expression of love and affection between members of the same sex, whether those engaged in a lesbian relationship define themselves as bisexual or lesbian.

Meanwhile, the emergence of lesbian separatism as a political and personal alternative to a male-dominated society has precluded the possibility of bisexual women participating in some lesbian communities or organizations. Many separatists do not even associate with women who associate with men.

"There is this feeling among radical feminist lesbians that women who sleep with men cannot be as feminist as they are; that they are somehow betraying the liberation of women," says Jeannie Corrigan, a Concordia University student, who recently founded Bifocal, a Montreal group for bisexual women. Corrigan says she has "encountered attitudes like this as a bisexual woman in the feminist movement for too long."

"It's such a relief to talk about it," she says.

It's not surprising that few bisexual women assume a bisexual identity. Many bisexuals choose to integrate themselves into the homosexual or the heterosexual community, while others fluctuate between the two communities in different social contexts and periods of their lives, changing labels when appropriate. Rarely do bisexual women seek a sexual identity separate from lesbians or straights.

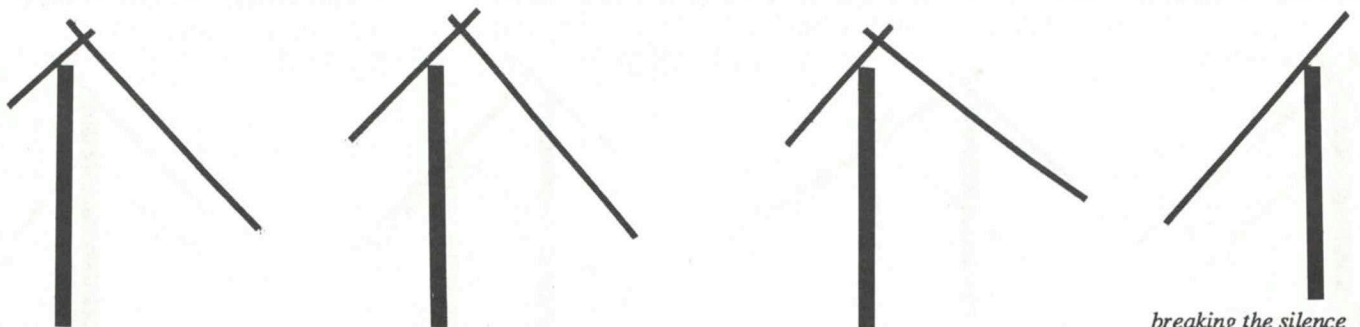
But, more and more bisexual women are speaking out about the discrimination they suffer at the hands of both 'established' sexual

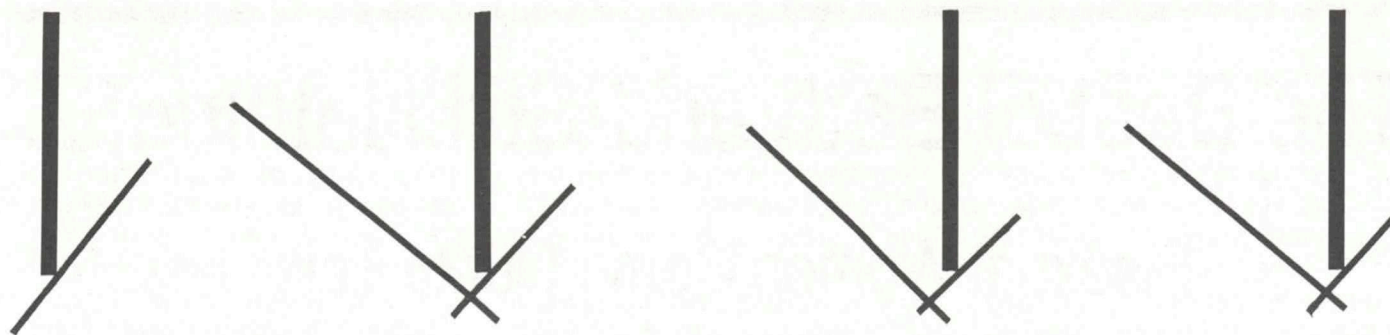
communities, as well as within some sectors of the feminist movement. "I think we are a group like any other," says Corrigan. "But I'm tired of being told we have 'the best of both worlds' or that we don't exist."

Madeleine Byrnes, a Toronto psychodramatist and bisexual feminist, came out as a bisexual during a workshop she had coordinated for a women's sexuality conference in Toronto just over a year ago. "At the workshop I gave, I was stunned by the number of bisexual women in the closet and how much we all had in common.

"I had had this love affair with another woman, but I had thought that unless I could be sure I'd be involved with another woman again, I couldn't call myself bisexual," says Byrnes. But, she soon found she wasn't alone; many women in the group said they felt the same way. The women also talked about the pressures both communities put on bisexuals to choose between either a strictly lesbian or straight lifestyle. "All of this and more came out at the workshop and we realized there were a lot of us.

Design: Annick Amyot





That's when I came out."

Many feminist bisexual women complain about the rigidity and homogeneity of the radical lesbian feminist community. "It's just another mirror of conformity all over again, where you have to fit into someone else's parameters," says Charlene Gardner, a Montreal feminist activist. "It just becomes another game of competitive political correctness and I have no desire to compete in feminism," she says.

But exclusive lesbian identification, for the sake of visibility in a society where heterosexuality is virtually compulsory, has been a political and cultural necessity for the lesbian community. In turn, human sexuality has been polarized. Bisexuality has been precluded, but not because it doesn't exist -- it is just considered socially unacceptable by each pole.

Given the systematic attempts of a homophobic culture to "cure" lesbians and gays of their "malady", bisexuality is also seen as a threat by many in the gay community.

"Lesbians often feel threatened by bisexual women because there's so little security within the lesbian community, so

little societal support for lesbians, and such strong pressure from the so-called heterosexual world to make lesbians become straight, that lesbians getting involved with men seems to undermine any security we may have," says Maggie de Vries, a full-time activist in both the lesbian and feminist movements in Montreal.

Mary Louise Adams, a Toronto lesbian feminist, says bisexual women can cling to straightness for the benefit of their families or jobs. "Although a bisexual woman going out with another woman gets the same oppression as a lesbian, it's important to keep in mind that too many bisexual women save their public long-term relationships for men and their private affairs for women.

"It's not that lesbians generally discount the existence of bisexuality," says Adams. "It's just that lots of lesbians have been burned by bisexual women. When the heat is on, they often go back to men."

Luba Szkambara, a Carleton University student who recently came out as a bisexual, says her politics don't dictate who she sleeps with. "I don't sleep with men for acceptance from male society nor do I sleep with women as a part of a rebellion

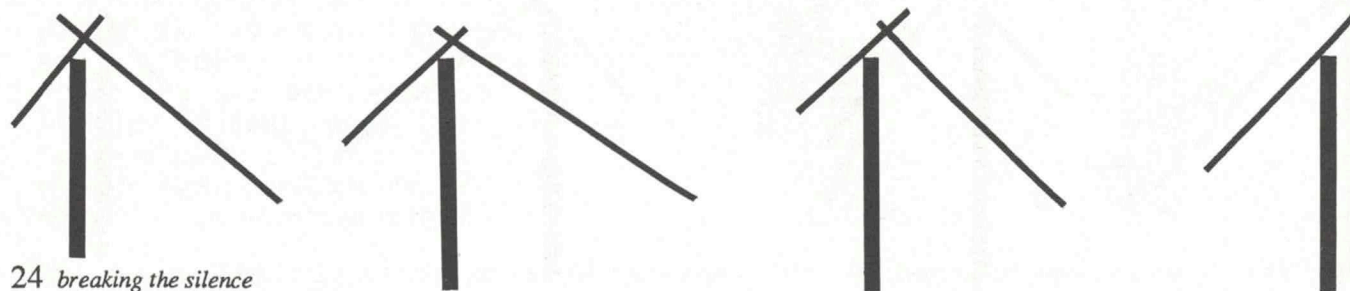
from that society. For me, desire cannot be determined by politics."

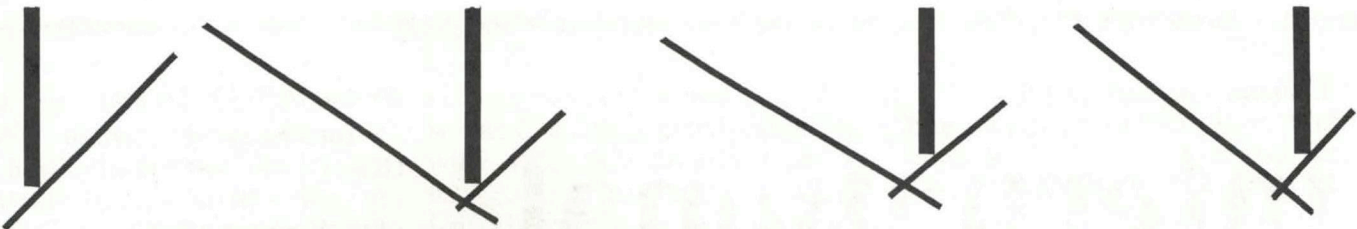
Jenny Beeman, a member of McGill University's women's union, says the "pressure from the lesbian community not to define yourself as bisexual is more overt than from the straight community. You get things like 'we don't know if we want to work with you' if you're out as a bisexual woman.

"There is also this feeling you won't stand up for gay and lesbian rights with the same conviction," adds Beeman.

But, writes Mariana Valverde in *Sex, Power and Pleasure*, "bisexuals who are aware of how gay oppression and heterosexism shape the contours of their own lives are in a good position to challenge these oppressive social forces, even as they make it clear that they are fighting as bisexuals..." Bisexuals who are aware that they can at times benefit from heterosexual privilege and at others suffer oppression as a lesbian or gay man, writes the University of Toronto professor and former *Body Politic* collective member, "are also those who tend to take up gay rights as a cause that affects them personally."

Although lesbians have a right to demand that bisexual women





don't fall into the "easy trap of being publicly straight and privately gay," writes Valverde, there are now more and more feminist bisexual women who are "resisting that traditional easy approach and are increasingly willing to be public about their gay side. They have to be welcomed and treated with respect for their sexual choice."

But many bisexual women say they don't believe they are any more or less privileged than lesbians. "Bisexual women aren't more privileged," says Paula Siepniewicz, a Montreal feminist who is officially "out" as a lesbian to both communities, but tells only her close friends about her bisexuality. "With all the hassles bisexuals have to deal with, it probably equals out."

Siepniewicz says her oppression as a woman is much clearer to her than her oppression as a lesbian. "Bisexual women lead more difficult lives," she says. "Because lesbians live their lives in such a closed space, they don't have to deal with sexist oppression as much as bisexual women because they refuse to have anything to do with men."

Bisexual women are put in the position of having the best of both worlds and still nothing. They may open themselves to greater and more diverse experiences, but when they inevitably suffer the same discrimination as lesbians, there's no support network, no community to turn to.

As Siepniewicz points out, "it's already hard to come out as a

lesbian. But for bisexuals, it's like coming out in a desert. For the time and energy that it takes, I often think it's not worth explaining my bisexuality to people." When Siepniewicz came out as a bisexual woman during a lesbian caucus meeting of the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre a few years ago, the women told her bisexuality didn't exist. "I evaporated," she recalls.

Madeleine Byrnes says many lesbians think bisexuality is just a coming-out phase because they went through a bisexual period themselves. "A lot of lesbians have come from a heterosexual base. Having relationships with women in this (bisexual) context is the avenue a lot of lesbians have come through," she says.

Faced with this kind of judgement, bisexuals can respond in one of three ways: They can be 'honest' and acknowledge their 'true' homosexual preference; they can revert to heterosexuality and reveal their bisexual activity to have been nothing more than experimentation; or finally, they can retain a bisexual identity and remain 'dishonest.'

Many bisexual women say they've had enough of both the straight and lesbian communities trying to force them to pick 'a side' and stick to it; many are also critical of the labels that appear hand-in-hand with such sexual polarity.

Carlene Gardner says she finds labels "really stifling. I'm not pigeonhole-able and I don't like feeling that I have to be. I'm

attracted to people as people, not for their genitalia. But there are emotional and political factors which cause me to relate better to women, so most of my relationships have been with women," she says. "My life works from a feminist, not a lesbian perspective."

Byrnes says there are times when labels have a positive function -- "when they are used to recognize and validate the full truth of one's sexuality. It means one is clearly making a choice one is proud of, despite the possible isolation and discrimination one may experience as a result."

"Our culture is so afraid and suppressive around the issue of bisexuality. There is more of a range of sexualities than our culture is willing to recognize -- that's why it's important for bisexuals to label themselves as such. It's a way of being visible and a way to validate one's own uniqueness," says Byrnes.

Labelling also has potential pitfalls, say both Byrnes and Siepniewicz. "There are so many ways in which bisexuality manifests itself. You can be attracted to both sexes," Siepniewicz says, "but that doesn't mean you have to be involved with members of both sexes all the time. You can be celibate and bisexual; you can be in the middle of a long-term monogamous relationship with a member of the opposite sex and still fantasize about members of the same sex."

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international lesbian week

In the spring of 1986, the women who had organized and attended the International Women's Week lesbian workshops created Lesbian Amazons, a radical lesbian collective. In October, this group and other lesbian or lesbian-positive groups such as the lesbian mothers, the Sporty Dykes, and International Women's Week created the first Ottawa International Lesbian Week.

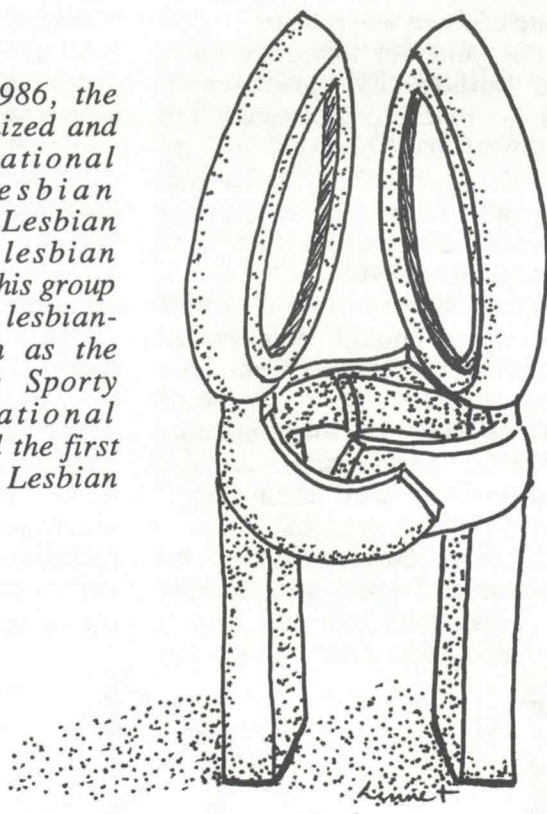


Illustration: Linnet O'Connell-Graham

by Carmen Paquette

International Lesbian Week (ILW) 1986 was the highlight of my year. I became a co-ordinator of ILW because I felt that Ottawa lesbians were ready to celebrate and strategize as lesbians. It was exciting to see our community consolidate, to witness its size and diversity, and to experience the exhilaration and frustration of coordinating decisions.

The significance of the week is reflected in many ways:

- About 40 activities, including pot luck suppers, workshops, a dance, a sports rally and a scavenger hunt, were held in 12 community centres in the Ottawa area. We are everywhere!

- Bernadette sang a lesbian song at the launching of the week. It was a fine song, and it was wonderful to hear her not fuzz over the pronoun of her lover or make invisible her joy in being with lesbians.

- Many women's groups have begun to strategize over the growing and persistent right-wing attacks on feminist groups. These attacks identify lesbians as being dangerous to funding and to credibility. Some organizations have responded by denying the presence of lesbians; others have discussed the issue internally; and others have publicly stated their recognition and appreciation of the work done by lesbians in the movement. During ILW we organized a workshop on lesbianism in the women's movement. In spite of a mailing to 200 women's organizations, only two straight women participated out of a group of 40. We know straight women are talking about this issue but why won't they talk with lesbians?

My reaction is to take a step back and consolidate with other lesbians, to create a solidarity among us, to raise this issue and to organize various events.

During International Women's Week, only six months later, we again saw evidence of the energy devoted by the right wing to dividing the women's movement. The seven lesbian workshops out of the 220 activities became a source of much controversy between lesbians and heterosexuals. Lesbians are in the women's movement to stay. It is time that we started talking.

The lesbian community, like every community, has different sub-groups, each with its own version of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Politically active feminist lesbians may not go to or admit to going to the Coral Reef, the local grungy Friday night lesbian bar, in order not to compromise their credentials as political lesbians. This stereotype showed up during ILW planning when some lesbians were reluctant to distribute leaflets to the Coral Reef because it was assumed that lesbians who would go to this type of place wouldn't also attend workshops.

It was good news for me to hear that most of the participants at a workshop on "The Role of Non-Political Lesbians" had heard about the workshop at the Coral Reef. The discussion at the workshop was stimulating and illustrated that opinions about "bar dykes" (lesbians who go to gay or lesbian bars) can be snobbish judgements based on class differences more than on ideological differences. These women were politicized but too blatantly lesbian for middle-class lesbianism.

Lesbians who had volunteered to write up some lesbian historical notes on flipcharts for ILW literally covered the walls with interesting and touching information on lesbianism throughout herstory, the situation of lesbians in the world today and explanations of lesbian symbols,

such as the labyris and lavender. It was absolutely breathtaking to walk into this clearly (albeit temporary) lesbian space. Unfortunately the joy was not shared by all. One woman wandered into our designated room at a community centre, looking for her macrame class, started to read the lesbian flipcharts and literally ran out of the room.



The seemingly endless discussion about whether or not to sell alcohol at the ILW dance was a microcosm of the ideological spectrum within the organizing group. Alcohol and drug abuse are the subjects of serious debate in the lesbian community. This debate has often been translated into a commitment to offering alternatives to socializing with alcohol. Some lesbians felt that we should not benefit from other lesbians' addictions or have activities that our recovering sisters could not attend; others wanted to avoid any judgements on ideal lesbian politics and lifestyles and resented the implication that all lesbians did not have control over choice in relation to alcohol. Still others pragmatically wanted to balance the budget and the programming

with a combination of chemical-free, vegetarian activities and other activities. A compromise was made...alcoholic and a variety of non-alcoholic beverages was available at the dance. But the underlying issue of the use of alcohol in our community has yet to be resolved to our collective satisfaction.

Lesbians who "came out" during ILW attended every single event with the energy and interest they have continued to show since October. One workshop on creativity during ILW yielded beautiful erotic art, playful drawings and all kinds of poetry. And the community continues to grow: one of the "new" lesbians offered her cabin in the woods for another creativity workshop for lesbians.

ILW also continues to have a ripple effect on lesbian visibility. A group of francophone women at an office party sang Christmas carols and introduce itself as a lesbian choral group.

Since ILW, there have been more workshops, creativity sessions, and pot luck suppers. A Lesbian Information Line is being planned. The maintenance and building of the lesbian community goes on. During International Women's Week 1987 lesbians were more visible than ever, with seven workshop and, at the Information Fair three lesbian booths - a first in Ottawa, although Gays of Ottawa had a booth for a few years.

Planning has started for the next International Lesbian Week: October of 1987 will be another opportunity for celebration and affirmation.

bs

Carmen Paquette is a self-employed Ottawa native. She is a long-term franco-ontarian and feminist activist and also works toward attaining gay and lesbian rights.

B O O K R E V I E W S

Dykeversions: A Dyke's Delight

Edited by the Lesbian Writing and Publishing Collective

Toronto: Women's Educational Press, 1987, 185p. \$9.95.

reviewed by Lee Fleming

Finally a Canadian anthology of lesbian fiction: something I had felt the distinct lack of over the years in my capacity as a feminist bookseller. I eagerly took home one of the copies out of the first shipment and delved into it as soon as I could finish feeding my cats and preparing my prerequisite bowl of popcorn and glass of gingerale with ice (must items for any serious enjoyment of lesbian writing).

Dykeversions is the first attempt by the Lesbian Writing and Publishing Collective of Toronto. The introduction, ostensibly written by the entire collective, is really a three-part preface. The first part gave me a general idea of how the anthology came to be and of the ideological and political ideas which shaped the final selections of the book. But the real framework for the book is in the two statements made by the caucuses.

The statement by the Lesbians of Colour Caucus addressed the problems that women of colour encounter: racism and tokenism are omnipresent when working as a feminist in Canada. The Lesbians of Colour made clear their position and needs. The

White lesbians' statement seemed to me to be an almost unnecessary exercise. Was the reiteration of the statement of the Lesbians of Colour a form of validation or a need to give it credibility? The White Lesbians were also confusing in their reference to themselves as "the three of us" in the last sentence of their statement, when only two caucus members had their signatures at the end. I found the third collective member making her own statement at the very back of the book. Clearly the process of developing this anthology had been difficult.

I read the anthology with the knowledge that a lot of struggle and anger had gone into the eventual shape of the collection. As a white Lesbian living in Ottawa, where issues of race and class can regularly be ignored, I felt especially aware of how uninformed I was of the process of creating a forum in which all women's voices are heard. I approached the anthology with an awareness of my own inherent racist assumptions and blunders.

As for the collection, I thoroughly enjoyed it. It felt distinctly different from the stories I had been reading up to this point, which have all been from American or European collections. I read it from beginning to end and many stories spoke directly to my experience of being a Lesbian. Others were appreciated for their illumination of never-felt (but secretly yearned-for) emotions and

experiences. The differing styles -- prose/poetry, short story, letter exchange -- made me constantly attentive and challenged me.

Anne Cameron's "Just Another Day" was a story of homey, comfortable, enduring love in the country. It appealed to my monogamous, earth-rooted self. I wanted to be out there with her, finding that harmonious existence with my special love.

Mary Louise Adams' story, "A Figure of Speech," was one of pain and fear not often heard, although lesbian battering is finally "coming out of the closet" within the lesbian community. This story left me knowing how truly important it is to talk, write and learn about this very real problem.

I enjoyed Ingrid Macdonald's engaging and humorous story, "Polished and Perfect," because she touched a chord in my non-monogamous self.

"The Haunting of Blue Lake" by Nora D. Randall is a moving and all too familiar story shared by all Lesbians: not fitting into heterosexual celebrations and family gatherings. Its ending statement made me want to laugh and cheer for Lesbians who are constantly made aware of how difficult it is to survive in a pervasively homophobic world.

It is not within the scope of this review to precis every single story in the collection nor is it necessary. Suffice to say that the anthology provided me with a slice of many different lesbians' lives. I heard voices of anger,

hope, boredom, lust, pain, joy, confusion, disenchantment and illumination. Mostly it left me yearning for more: more stories of women of colour, older Lesbians, differently abled Lesbians, Native Lesbians and Lesbian moms. The possibilities are endless, as are the themes, styles and viewpoints. I eagerly await a second anthology that moves toward a more inclusive population of all lesbian writers. I only hope that in the

process of providing these wonderful stories the collective finds opportunities for empowerment and growth.

bs

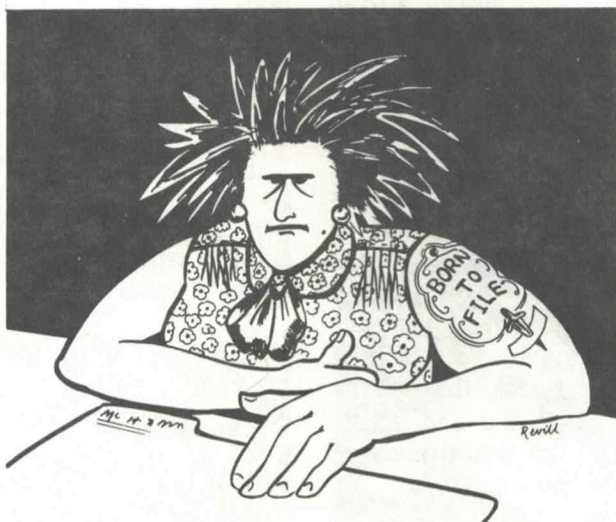
Lee Fleming is co-owner of the Ottawa Women's Bookstore and has recently moved from Ottawa to Prince Edward Island for rest, growth and love.

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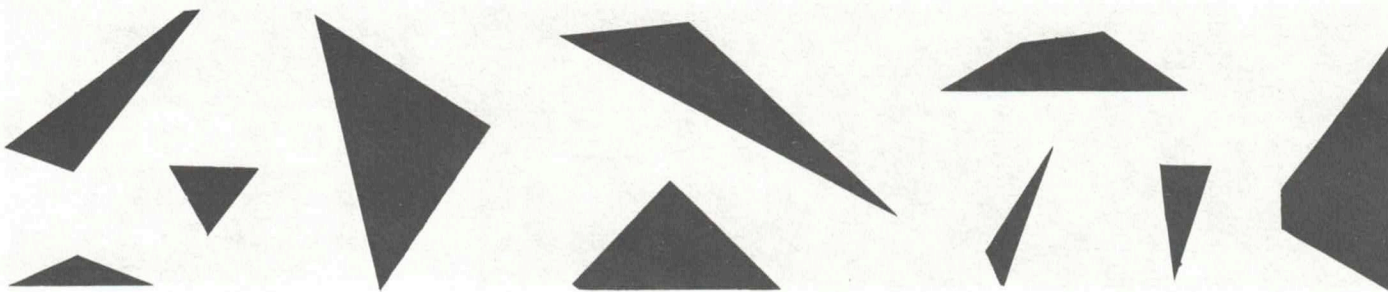
because of their refusal to align with women, but because of their refusal to align with Lesbos. The history of the word lesbian can be traced back to the Isle of Lesbos, and a lot of women find the history of Lesbos offensive. The whole society was very racist, very classist, it was a slave-embracing society, and I don't want to align myself with that. In the first book I read about Lesbos, the first scene was a slave auction. This was lesbians celebrating their culture? If it comes right down to saying who I align myself with, and I have to choose my label to prove who I align myself with, then some of us would have no label at all.

Tamarack: A lot of history has been rewritten to discredit women's culture. We should always investigate where things come from. My definition goes back to the Amazon tribes, and to Sappho. They did not live with men. Sappho lived with women and developed a whole culture, a whole school where women could come together and explore their whole womanhood together.

Max: Yet, in many ways, I have to choose to call myself a lesbian because it is a matter of choosing one's community. By having no label, it would mean that I would have no community. But the definition must be broadened to include my concerns. If every lesbian I know sees the fact that I won't call



Room of One's Own, a quarterly journal devoted to creative and critical writings by women, invites submissions for a special issue: "Working for a Living," to be published Summer 1988. Poetry, short fiction, graphics and reviews (query first for reviews) should be sent with SASE to "Working for a Living," Room of One's Own, P.O. Box 46160, Station G, Vancouver, B.C. V6R 4G5. Deadline: 30 November 1987.



myself a lesbian as a refusal to define myself separate from men, then they're undermining my political growth.

Joan: We are ignoring the political significance of the word lesbian. No one wants to call herself lesbian because of the negative consequences. The issue is not why women won't say that they love women but why when we love women in a profound way, all the words are negative and dangerous to our well-being. Feminism, as a word, is so inadequate to explain that loving connection between women and yet, when we use lesbian, we exclude women. Being identified as a heterosexual should reflect our love and commitment to women but it is seen as a derogatory comment. It implies that our political commitment isn't totally with women, that women are distracted. Why are the three labels we are working with in the women's community lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual?

Carmen: It is inevitable that there be a passage of time you go through when coming out. It is a period that may last one day or many years where you continue to sleep with men. When we as women are in that stage, I am not sure we need labeling. We are grappling, coping with our ambivalence.

Joan: But what if it is not ambivalence? I didn't want to

have exclusive sexual relationships with women but I wanted to have some expression of my sexuality with the women I loved. I didn't want to be that profoundly intimate with women. A lot of it comes down to how much I can trust women.

Carmen: I think that is one of the basic truths that some women can come close to. I know lesbian women who have gone back to sleeping with men because it is less dangerous... less of a high and less of a low. I can look at my decade of active heterosexuality and realize that I was just swimming on the surface in terms of how I related emotionally to those men and I suspect that that is what happens for most heterosexual women. Once you start relating to women in a variety of ways, you become extremely vulnerable all the time because they make you happy, they make you sad, they make you angry. There is a qualitative difference in your emotional life once you relate to women.

Lynne: We are working our way back to saying that the sexual relationship is a pivotal part of being a lesbian. It is the most intimate emotional commitment.

Joan: That wasn't the case for me. I implicitly trusted women. I didn't have to have a sexual commitment from them to believe that they would not betray

me, that I could let them inside of me. There is such a strong control element in intimate relationships. How far you want to go inside of yourself, how far you want to go inside of this other person, shouldn't have to rest on the sexual intensity of your relationship. At the same time, the parameters of the relationships shouldn't be set up by fears and prejudice. Very few people will be intimate if it is not connected to the sexual. I'll give you this part of me if you give me part of your body. It's that kind of tradeoff.

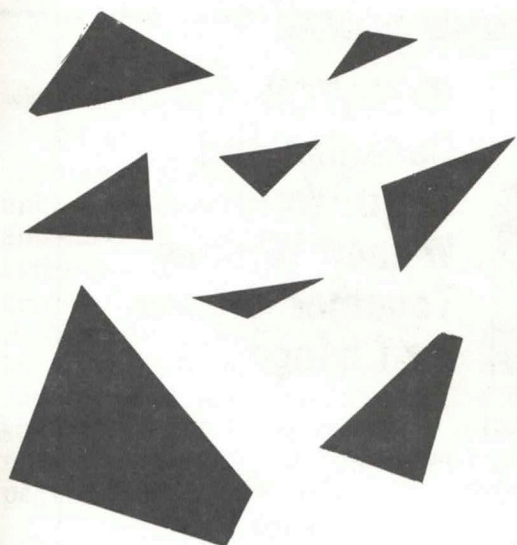
Lynne: I wonder if our perception of these relationships and our definition of lesbianism might not be quite ethnocentric. In fact, in other parts of the world, that level of intimacy with another woman has nothing to do with sexuality.

Joan: I think that is part of my reality growing up in a non-North American community. I grew up knowing that a normal part of life is one's sexuality and that it can be expressed in a lot of different ways. The real issue is how intimate we get and how it manifests itself.

Carmen: In our culture, openness and warmth, when manifested, become overwhelming, and immediately become associated with the sexual.

Lynne: What we are saying





is that the definition of lesbian is a profound emotional, trusting and intimate connection between women and that in this particular society, the only way it is possible for women to achieve that intimacy is to cross the sexual threshold.

Carmen: In other cultures and at other periods in history, there could have been a strong emotional sexual connection without it necessarily being lesbianism. We can have lesbianism in another society or another century without it being sexual. With this definition it is irrelevant whether the relationships were sexual. But we are here in North America in the 1980s so sex is part of our definition and in many ways the focus on the sexual component has isolated us from the other women we care about. Loving women has been identified only with lesbianism and lesbianism has been identified as scary and bad.

bts

Joan Riggs is an Ottawa activist and writer. She has worked for the Breaking the Silence Collective for the past five years.



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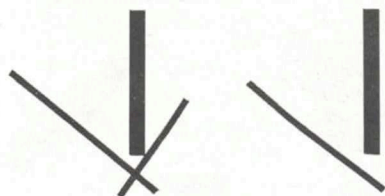


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Although Siepniewicz points out that "bisexuals are so different from each other, that a homogeneous sort of bisexual community could never exist," she acknowledges the need for a supportive community. This means a busy agenda for bisexual women and men, as they combat stereotypes, increase bisexual visibility, and create a legitimate place in society for themselves.

"There is a need for more honest dialogue between all sides of this issue," says Maggie de Vries. "Misunderstandings, resentment and a lack of trust between both communities will continue until lesbians and bisexual women start openly discussing and dealing with their concerns regarding bisexuality." And, adds Mary Louise Adams, "as long as bisexuals are invisible, their concerns will be ignored by both lesbians and straights."

Bisexual women hope that as more bisexuals speak up about their concerns, a new stage of liberation will evolve from both the lesbian and feminist movements. After all, as Mariana Valverde writes, "if the goals of feminism and gay liberation include the abolition of the gay/straight split, and its replacement by a social system which does not label and categorize people according to whom they are attracted, then bisexuality is an important part of the challenge to the status quo."

bts

Melinda Wittstock is a Montreal feminist activist who recently completed a term as National Features Writer for Canadian University Press.



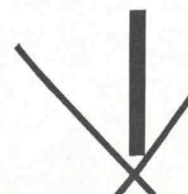
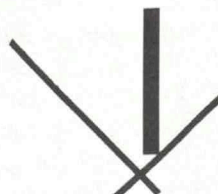
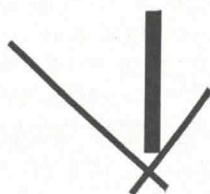
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10-YEARS



I used to think there was something wrong with me because I couldn't decide whether I was straight or lesbian. Most of my straight, lesbian and gay male friends had often told me I was probably confused; that I was just going through a phase of experimentation with both sexes so I could somehow figure out my "real" sexuality.

I began to realize there was something wrong with a society that puts so much pressure on people to limit their feelings of love and affection to only one sex. Deep down I knew I was -- and always would be -- attracted to both women and men.

But explaining my bisexuality has been such a hassle since I came out two years ago, that I have often wondered if the effort to explain myself has been worth

it. I felt I had a responsibility to challenge society's rigid definitions of human sexuality and its enthusiasm to call deviant anything which departed from the heterosexual status quo.

I had to speak out about the frustration and alienation I felt, from both straight feminists and lesbian feminists. And I had to do it without a supportive community of other bisexual women.

But other bisexual women must speak out also if such a community is to exist. We have to become visible if our concerns and needs are to be addressed. With this in mind, I decided to write this article to give other bisexual women a forum, not only because they must be heard but because there are as many views about bisexuality as there are bisexual women.

M.W.

Dans le mouvement féministe, nous sommes souvent isolées les unes des autres, ce qui nous empêche de pousser plus loin l'analyse de notre oppression et de développer des stratégies. Ainsi, toutes les lesbiennes paient le prix de cette priorité que nous accordons au féminisme; notre solidarité à l'égard de toutes les femmes se traduit dans les faits par une désolidarisation d'avec les

plus méprisées et les plus opprimées, les lesbiennes.

Conclusion

J'ai voulu montrer qu'à l'intérieur de l'hétérosystème, "hommes" et "femmes" ne sont pas uniquement des entités biologiques sexuellement différenciées mais aussi des catégories de sexe, créées

socialement et enfermées dans un rapport d'appropriation. Pour exister, ne serait-ce que dans leur propre conscience, les lesbiennes doivent rompre ce contrat social; ce faisant, elles cessent d'être des "femmes" non pas au sens biologique mais social.

Dans ce contexte hétéropatriarcal, les lesbiennes ont un rôle éminemment politique car elles sont la preuve vivante que la "nature féminine" et "l'instinct sexuel" sont programmés au profit des dominants. L'existence lesbienne a été occultée justement parce qu'elle représente une menace à l'ordre établi.

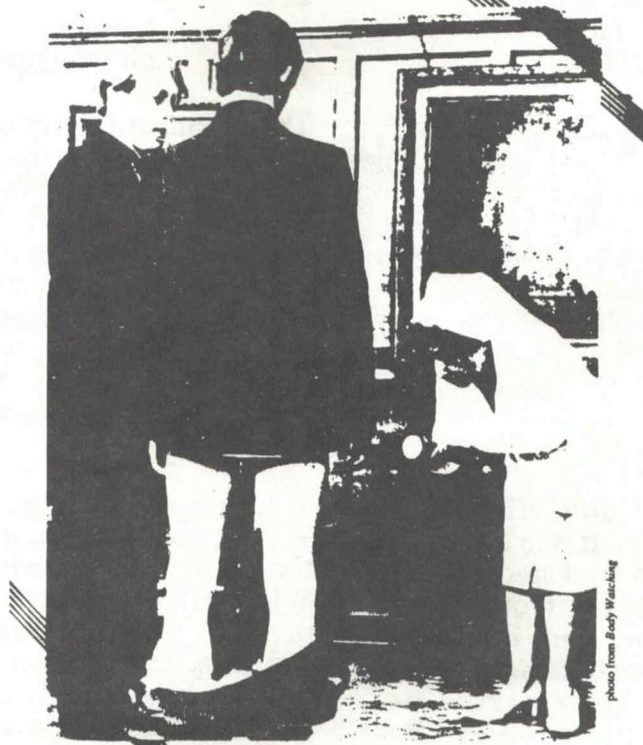
Le féminisme a sa place dans cet ordre des choses parce qu'il cherche à modifier le rapport de force (pour faire pencher davantage la balance du côté des femmes) mais sans remettre en question le rapport hommes-femmes. Pour cette raison, dans le mouvement féministe nous sommes condamnées au silence et à l'invisibilité. Même s'il s'agit à première vue d'une décision individuelle, j'ai décrit le prix collectif que nous payons en échange d'une solidarité à sens unique (nous sommes solidaires avec toutes les femmes mais pas elles avec nous).

Il nous faut renoncer à la nostalgie de l'acceptation et commencer à nous prendre au sérieux, à nous accorder au moins la même importance qu'aux autres luttes. Il y va de notre survie collective!

bts

Denise Veilleux a milité pendant 10 ans dans le mouvement féministe (garderies, avortement), a enseigné l'autodéfense pour femmes pendant quatre ans. Depuis 1981, elle travaille exclusivement avec les lesbiennes; collabore à la revue Amazones d'hier, lesbiennes d'aujourd'hui, à titre de traductrice.

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Reduced subscriptions available upon request. Free to prisoners. Distributors wanted. Bookstores receive 40% of selling price, copies left on consignment.

RESOURCES

Lesbian Fury/ Furie lesbienne is for lesbians only. It publishes essays, articles, letters, poems and resource information in English and French. It generally publishes two issues a year. The cost is \$2 per issue, or \$1 low income. It is available from:

Fury Collective
PO Box 2761, Station D,
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 5W8

Amazones d'hier, lesbiennes d'aujourd'hui. Pour lesbiennes seulement. Revue d'échange, d'information et de réflexion politique avec un emphase sur le lesbianisme radical. C'est une revue trimestrielle, 15\$/année.

AHLA,
CP 1721, Succ. "Place du Parc",
Montréal, (Québec)
H2W 2R7

Rites, a newspaper dedicated to gay and lesbian liberation, includes news articles, analysis, letters, and fiction, from a primarily Canadian perspective, with frequent international coverage. It is published 10 times a year, \$16. Write to:

Box 65, Station F
Toronto, Ontario
M4Y 2L4

GOSSIP, A journal of lesbian feminist ethics: From the editors: "We are all radical feminists who see lesbianism as necessary to radical feminism and feel a need for discussion of the ethical issues which affect our lives: the way we behave to each

other, and in the world at large. ... We want "GOSSIP" to be a forum for the statements, analyses, theories needed to create a lesbian civilization." It is published three times a year, £7.50 overseas (surface), £10.050 overseas (airmail).

Contact:
Onlywomen Press Ltd.,
38 Mount Pleasant,
London, England
WC1X 0AP

Lesbian Ethics is a forum for lesbian feminist ethics and philosophy, with an emphasis on how lesbians behave with each other. Three issues, \$14 in Canada. Available from:

PO Box 943
Venice CA
90294
USA

Lesbian Connection is for lesbians only. It is in a newsletter format, with brief articles, letters, news clips from other publications, and information about resource centres, events, women's businesses, etc., primarily in the U.S. It is published six times a year, suggested donation is \$18 US, payable to:

Elsie Publishing Institute
c/o Ambitious Amazons
PO Box 811
East Lansing, MI
48823
USA

Off Our Backs is a monthly newspaper of lesbian and feminist news, with excellent international

coverage, including suprisingly good Canadian coverage for an American publication. It is published 11 times a year, \$11US (airmail). Write to:

1841 Columbia Road NW
Washington DC
20009
USA

MATCH International, a National Organization that promotes and recognizes women's participation in development has recently formed a local Ottawa group to discuss putting feminism into a global context. For more information contact Yutta at 238-1312.

Call for papers

The **Canadian Journal of Women and the Law** is interested in receiving papers on **Women and Custody** by July 1987 to be considered for a special issue. The CJWL is a multi-disciplinary journal and we welcome papers from disciplines such as philosophy, social science, anthropology and history as well as law.

This special issue of the CJWL is an off-shoot of a conference on the politics of custody held in Windsor, Ontario in the summer of 1986. The participants of the conference agreed that the move towards joint custody is an anti-women backlash that is a direct attack on women's hard won right to custody of their children - a right that was acquired in North America only 90 years ago and a right which is central to redressing the inequality of women. If you want to participate, please direct papers or inquiries to:

Arlene Mayers,
7601 Bathurst Street,
Suite 901,
Thornhill, Ontario
L4J 4H5.