

Connexions

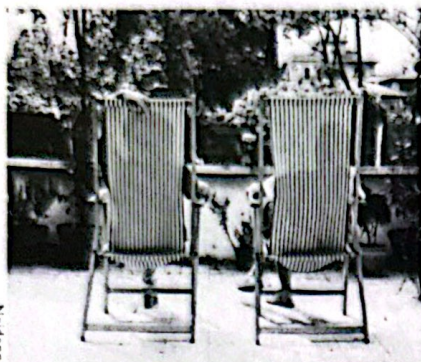
An International Women's Quarterly
Fall 1983 - No. 10



Global
Lesbianism
2



Global Lesbianism 2



Noelanne

2 Introduction

3 Algeria: Authentic Identity

Personal account of an Algerian lesbian "refugee"

5 Australia: Uma—

speaks out about being Black, feminist and lesbian

8 Venezuela: Zap Repression!

Young lesbian describes police repression against gays

9 Cuba: In Practice, Not Theory

Two Dutch women report on the lives of Cuban lesbians

10 Shorts

Lesbians in Surinam, on English T.V., archiving in Holland, meeting internationally

12 New Zealand: "Your mum's a lessy-bin!"

Lesbian family weekend

14 Brazil: "I am Everything"

Teca speaks about her development as a lesbian and a feminist

16 Japan: So Full of Longing

Several interviews with lesbians about feminism and culture

19 Malaysia: Into a Woman's World

Interview with a Malaysian lesbian

20 Australia: Out in the Outback

Women passing as men in 19th century Australia

21 Mexico: Demons, Duelers and Poets

A collage of lesbian voices hidden in Mexican history

22 Sweden: How to Remember Her?

Re-examining the life of Karin Boye, poet and lesbian

24 Spain: The Unfinished Story

Documentation from a Spanish women's conference on sexuality

26 Hungary: Another Way

A glimpse of lesbian life through film and conversations

28 Holland: Parliamentary Pink

Evelien Eshuis, first openly gay Parliament member

29 West Germany: No Love Songs

Lesbian punk band sings out against destruction

30 Letters

32 Resources

Contributors

Sigi Brauner, Jane Brecha, Inga Marie Carmel, Gisele Charlebois, Cris, Amy Edelman, Dee Elling, Patricia Estrada, Linda Fogel, Teri Gruenwald, Sara Helfgott, Iris, Mary James, Aloha Keylor, Karla Koop, Diana Kuderna, Sarah Levin, Robin Lipetsky, Kathy Marty, Rosalind Melis, Jenni Morozumi, Wendy Patterson, Isabelle Radsma, Ines Rieder, Shana Ritter, Marlene Rodrigues, Abby Rose, Patty Ruppelt, Carole Segall, Jody Stegman, Beth Stewart, Kathleen Tandy, Tevis, Clare Wellnitz, Julie Whipple, Christina Yoder, Ayse Yonder, Adelheid Zöfel.

Special Thanks To:

Lesbisch Archief Leeuwarden, Warren Reier, Center for Third World Organizing, and all the folks that helped us with mailing our promotional flyer.

Statement

Connexions is the collective product of feminists of diverse nationalities and political perspectives committed to contributing to an international women's movement.

We want to go beyond merely providing facts and information, and hope that by passing on—as directly as possible—women's writing generally unavailable in the U.S., we will be helping women here to understand and connect with the experiences and viewpoints of women in other parts of the world. We also want to contribute to the growth of a worldwide network connecting women working on similar projects by researching, establishing contacts and exchanging information with other women's organizations.

To a large extent, the economic and political conditions under which we live determine the issues to which we give priority. Women do not live in a vacuum, but in what is still largely a man's world. It is essential for us to understand the workings of that world if we are to understand each other. We hope that *Connexions* will be one step toward building an international women's movement.

Connexions is published every three months and each issue focuses on a specific theme.

Articles and photographs from *Connexions* may be reprinted free of charge by non-profit publications without permission. (Others please inquire for reprinting rights.) Please credit *Connexions*, including our subscription rates and address whenever reprinting our material, and please send us a tear sheet. *Connexions* is indexed in the *Alternative Press Index*, P.O. Box 7229, Baltimore, MD 21218. Subscription rates: Annual individual subscription \$10, Canada and Mexico U.S.\$12, Overseas—\$12 surface, \$20 airmail. Annual institutional subscription \$20. Send to *Connexions*, 4228 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, CA 94609.

Global Lesbianism 2

We are happy to provide a sequel to our most popular issue, Global Lesbianism, which was first published in Winter 1982 and recently reprinted. The first lesbian issue was a pioneer effort to "map the existence of lesbianism globally." We had little notion of how to go about getting information or even where to look. Gathering information for Global Lesbianism 2 was an easier task, since we were already familiar with those countries in which gay movements have been established. This time we knew how to begin our search. Although we had broken new ground with the first lesbian issue, we were unable to make contact with lesbians in many countries.

This issue demonstrates the diversity of lesbians' lives internationally. Our goal in presenting such a wide spectrum of lesbian experiences is to encourage and promote a heightened awareness of the variety of forces that shape women's lives. And that this greater understanding will serve to strengthen ties among women of different cultures, both internationally and within the U.S. itself.

As with the first lesbian issue, we see Global Lesbianism 2 as a catalyst for further thought and research, contributing to a growing support network of women worldwide. In order to expand this network, we depend on our readers to help us make contacts and to pass on information about lesbians' lives and organizations internationally. We welcome and solicit your comments and criticisms of the information presented in both this issue and Global Lesbianism 1.

Л'105	ميسر	婦	سائيه	ל'כ'כ'כ'
Libbianin		世	ЛЕСБИАНКА	
	lesbiër	同		lesbienne
madivina		性	lesbisch	pot
	lésbica	受	Libler	
warmi				gouine
	goudou		mati	
sevicí		lesboblainen		marimacha
	samtikim		lesbisk kvinde	
lesbica		lesbiana	PATLACH	
lesbisk	QHARINCHA		tortilla	

An Authentic Identity

(Translated from a personal testimony submitted to *Connexions* this year.)

Badra is an Algerian lesbian currently living in France. Like many women, she has a difficult choice to make—to remain in her country bound by the restrictions accorded to women, or to become a refugee of sorts in a society that allows more options.

Up until the age of 15, I thought of myself as asexual. I liked tenderness, was very affectionate and emotional, but despite a large family (eight brothers and sisters), I lived a very solitary life in the company of books. Around the time I turned 15, I began to attract quite a lot of attention from boys, but I wasn't drawn to them at all. But I did so want tenderness, and I began to suffer from this contradiction of wanting love, but absolutely refusing the love that boys offered me. My feelings for women were of passionate friendship, but I knew nothing of homosexuality. Naively, I told myself that I was someone who liked love, but not sex. I battled with this for many years, holding back the pressing desire that I had for women's caresses. I learned from my readings that it was indeed possible to have a relationship with a woman that was not only affectionate but also sexual. I wanted this love, but I did not dare express my desire openly; I was too afraid of being singled out.

I lived with my secret until the day I decided that I had to show my feelings, that I had to stop lying to myself. I had tried loving men, but it was no good. I had even tried forcing myself, but I was too unhappy. So I left Algeria, thinking that in a more open society I would finally be able to express my desires freely. And I did have homosexual relationships abroad, but something wasn't quite right. I wanted to connect my desire for women with the struggle for the liberation of Algerian women, especially since these were the women for whom I had felt my first emotions.

Back in Algeria, I tried to make this connection by beginning a dialogue with my younger sister, for I sensed her budding homosexuality. Alas, we both fell in love with the same woman, and this abruptly ended our relationship. It was especially painful, since homosexuals who recognize themselves as such are few and far between in our country. To fail to find a common ground between us is to condemn ourselves to a solitary struggle, with all the wrenching and despairing moments that that entails.

Five years later, my situation is still the same, without the satisfaction of having lived a full relationship with an Algerian woman. For so few accept to go all the way. They marry under social pressure and fall into traditional roles. I myself got married, but it didn't last long; I felt incapable of living a normal marital life. I had to leave Algeria again. I suffered too much from having to hide my homosexuality. Perhaps I lacked courage. But I was alone, and I didn't have the strength to take on that task by myself. But I still dream of my ideal, which is to have a relationship with an Algerian woman in Algeria, for the struggle for a women's liberation movement needs all our energies. Perhaps one day... □



Christine Yoder

Rainbow Solidarity

What follows is an editorial published in the first issue of *Lahzem* by the group of the same name. *Lahzem*, which means belt or rainbow, was formed in Paris in the fall of 1982. The group offers an alternative to North African lesbians and gays. There are about 20 in the group of which four are lesbians.

We are men and women immigrants in France of Arabo-Berber origin who have refused the marginalization our situation has imposed upon us. We have decided to come together, to weave between ourselves and others a veritable link, a *lahzem*, to express our solidarity and to live our sexualities.

Uprooted as we are, sometimes torn between two cultures and drowning in a society whose socio-cultural values are very different from our own, we felt the need to form a group in which we could express our realities, live our differences, our joys, our loves, our hopes.

The West's image of sexuality in the Arab world remains dominated by a neo-colonialist vision. A vision which hides our realities and transmits an image of Arab sexuality justifying and reinforcing the racist attitudes of many French gays and lesbians. For, despite a genuine willingness to be open to the reality of others and to accept differences in general, the French gay movement is not free of prejudice. Thus, we not only have to confront a way of looking at us, which strips us of our sensitivity, our culture and even our sexuality, but we also have to face the harsh realities of our exile, our shame at our curly hair and dark complexions, the racism we face as Arabs and immigrants. The confrontation we encounter is thus twofold and doubly painful: first, as foreigners within French society; then, as Arabs within the immigrant community who wish to live our sexualities freely and break with certain Arabo-muslim taboos, but still maintain our Arab identity.

It's not easy and we know this. But we have drawn the comfort and strength to continue from the contacts we have made by forming *Lahzem*, from the abundant correspondence we have received, and from printing this first bulletin. The close collaboration with our French friends (of both sexes), and the sympathy and support shown us, confirm that such a dialogue is not only possible but that it is necessary if we wish, we the oppressed victims of sexual, religious, racial, political and cultural discriminations, to revive ourselves. It is also necessary for the materialization of this ideal of justice, fraternity and love between all the men and all the women of this planet. Our greatest wish is that *Lahzem* be a modest contribution to the construction of this grandiose ensemble.

From the Women of *Lahzem* (Translated from the first *Lahzem* bulletin.)

Today we, the women of *Lahzem*, have a path to follow together with you, even if we still carry ever present in our guts that cry of suffocation brought on by your privileges as men.

You, as homosexuals (we will use this term until we have invented another to better express our realities, our specificities, our differences), through your choice to live your sexuality differently, have, in the eyes of this society which gave you full power over us, become less than men, no better than "half men." This society (of which you were the masters) thus confers on you a new role, to exclude and marginalize you, in order to better reject you since you no longer conform to its rules. But we are well aware that even in this exclusion which we share with you, we, women of a different desire, still only have a partial place. *We Are But the Half of Your Half.*

If there is a common struggle, it must thus integrate in its very essence this given which is so fundamental to us. It is on this condition, and this one alone, that we have accepted to take the first steps together with you in *Lahzem*. Once this first step has been accomplished, we will have several obstacles to confront together. First, we must break that heavy weight of the dominant (and dominated) morality of our own culture, which does not recognize us, but accepts us only at the price of guilt and humiliation. And let it not be forgotten that while there is a word, even if in the most pejorative of senses, for gay men (*atal*) no equivalent term exists at all as yet to describe women. At the same time, it is imperative that we denounce the mistaken vision that the West has of the Arabo-Berber world, based as it is on prejudices and unquestionable misconceptions of our values and sensitivities.

We have decided to come together, in order to relearn our love, away from the ghettos, the contempt and solitude. Let us relearn it against all racism and paternalism, whether these come from the Right, the Left or the center. Let us get rid of all schemas and stereotypes, stop being ashamed, refuse to be those who are eternally "aided" or assimilated. Let us stop a while to rethink ourselves. And if the struggle for the discovery of an authentic identity is a difficult one, we know (by feminine intuition?) that for us, as women who love women, it will be all the more bitter. Nawal el Sadaawi says, "If the price of freedom is high, we know from experience that the price of slavery is far higher still." □

Contact:

• "*Lahzem*," c/o Librairie les mots à la bouche, 35, Rue Simart, 75018, Paris, France.

Related reading:

• "*Algerian Women: Myths of Liberation*," from "*Connexions*," #2, Fall 1981.

• "*Beyond the Veil*," anthology focusing on muslim African women, by Fatima Mernissi, Schenkman Press, 1975.

"We all have to recognize and acknowledge that what we quite often are dealing with are concepts that simply do not exist for some the way they do for others."

Uma

(The following is excerpted from an interview with Uma, a New Zealander of Indian descent, conducted by *Connexions* in August 1983.)

My grandparents were brought from Rajasthan in northern India by the Chelsea Sugar Refinery and the British Commonwealth government as indentured laborers for the sugar cane plantations of Fiji. The goal was to create a concentrated population that they could keep in a slave-like way.

My parents were both born there and so was I. When I was two we moved to Aotearoa New Zealand. [Aotearoa is the Maori's own name for their land.] And as I am committed to Maori sovereignty, I call that country by their name. I grew up in a situation of domestic violence within a working class environment. We were also isolated and alienated due to such things as language and cultural differences.

So, my first awareness of oppression was that of the racism directed toward us. In retrospect, I realize I wasn't aware of the further oppressed, of the Maori in their own land, nor my role of possible oppressor of indigenous peoples. I was aware of gender oppression, but it was more like something that was unjust and unfair to me personally and to other women rather than the clear-cut oppression of racism.

I was always the family eccentric, for I spoke out about injustice, particularly directed toward women, and I said that under such circumstances I wasn't going to marry. My family, of course, wanted to marry me off. It didn't help that my mother is a matchmaker in the community. (She came from a long line of matchmakers.) When I traveled through India, if I ever said to any other Indians there, "No, I don't wish ever to get married," it was like I might be saying that I wasn't going to grow old. It's seen as an inevitable part of life. And people looked at me and thought, "Oh, she says she won't marry, but what she means is no one will marry her." Part of the reason marriage seems inevitable is because there are no other alternatives, because as a woman you often can't get a job, nor live on your own, etc.

By the time I was in my early 20s I knew it was time I moved, as my biculturalism and my growing political awareness had become an explosive need for "personal growth." I fled to Australia and lived in Sydney for about a year. Eventually, I also went to western Australia, where



I lived, worked and studied at a university for five years. I did a double major and completed my B.A. degree in both Communication Studies and World Literature.

"The label given to women who relate only to women is 'lesbian.' My first thought was, 'Oh no, not another oppressed group.'"

In the '60s, when you had the Civil Rights Movement here and Black liberation, that's when all the stuff in my head about racism was finally articulated. I had words for it, and I could call myself Black and be proud of it, instead of the wishy-washy "brown."

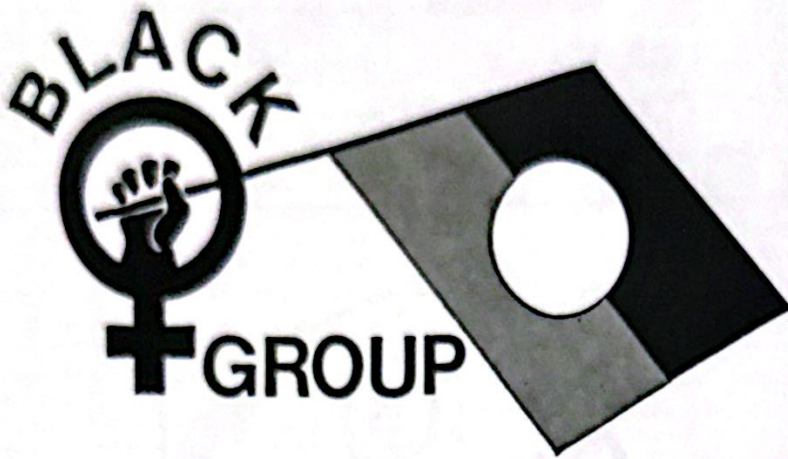
At the university in 1975, I discovered more about sexual discrimination, and felt myself validated at last about this form of oppression. It was so exciting! It meant I could read and find out what women around the world were writing—that women who were fighting against sexism call themselves "feminist." I then became a "Black feminist."

I returned to Aotearoa New Zealand and underwent a year of intense self-examination—the meaning of my life, my past and my future. I recognized that I had no desire to relate in any way with men. The label given to women who relate only

to women is "lesbian." My first thought was, "Oh no, not another oppressed group."

As an Indian woman I have always had access to women and to a certain degree their bodies, so it's been an easy transition for me to go from affectionate "sensuality" to lusty "sexuality." However, the way most of the lesbians around the women's liberation movement and the gay liberation movement, as well as in the feminist and gay sub-culture, define themselves and live out their lives has been the most difficult aspect for me to try and reconcile myself to. Now, I usually don't bother. I refuse to identify myself in the racist and middle class Anglo way that they do. They so often pursue their social lives in ways that I feel at times are so limited and limiting that I'm quite often unchallenged, unstimulated and definitely bored. But I'll explain this a little later on O.K.?

I think my sexuality came more through my politics than anything else. And, of course, because I am a political person, I made my sexuality a political act and came out as publicly as possible. At the time, this meant I became involved in the opening of the Sixth National Conference of Lesbians and Homosexuals in Australia, which took place in 1980. And more recently I came out on national television. I was discussing the activities of several groups at Liverpool Women's Health Centre, where I was working at the time, including the lesbian group. Mind you, I



think the fact that I was wearing a red sari and had a lesbian symbol painted on my forehead might have tipped people off.

So that's where my sexuality came from. And that's when I became a lesbian. At that stage, for very personal family reasons, I couldn't remain in Aotearoa New Zealand. I hadn't really come out to my family at that time. My mother found out the night before I left to come on this trip; it was really painful, and yet funny too at times. I'll tell you some of the things I thought were quite particular to Indians. One of the first things she said was, "What did I do wrong in my last life?" and "Don't you dare blame me for this." When she went through all this rejection of me, I kept saying: "Never mind, you're still my mother and I love you." But most of it was really heavy and painful.

I have been a full-time activist within the women's liberation movement and the gay liberation movement for about three years now. That means I've been in about 20 different collectives. And quite often, of course, I've been the only non-Anglo or identified non-Anglo. Often, within the women's liberation movement, I'm there as a lesbian of color; in the gay movement, I'm usually there as a feminist of color. In other words, I'm always representing other oppressed groups that I represent within myself.

In one of the groups I belonged to, the Black, Immigrant and Third World Women's Alliance, there were about 50 of us at one stage, and we spoke approximately 30 different languages between us. And that included women who were first generation (either who had lived in Australia for many years or were recent migrants), as well as second, third, or fourth generation of Italian, Greek, Lebanese, etc. backgrounds. Even if there were two women from the same cultural background, their class and where they came from could be quite different—so we included all those inter-differences too. Obviously there were disagreements, like

there are in any collective, and lots of different ways of looking at issues, but for me, the miracle was the fact that we actually had things we could come together on—the similarities we had experienced rather than the differences.

"We actually had things we could come together on—the similarities we had experienced rather than the differences."

It seems to me that one of the things that appears to be of prime importance within the women's liberation and the gay liberation movements in Australia is to create social/cultural situations. In other words, a lesbian culture, or a women's culture—women's music, dance and stuff like that. Well, I think all that may be a result of the patriarchy and how it operates

in your cultures—you don't have distinctly different women's culture. Of course, in third world countries we have entirely different priorities because, perhaps, we already have a distinct and separate women's community and culture.

It's like the thing about spiritualism that's become such an important concern in the western world. So many Anglo/white women are turning to ancient goddesses. If I really wish to pursue that, I could worship Kali or Lakshmi—goddesses that are part of our religion and culture right now. So that means that the sub-cultural context that we're in is so very much shaped by and reflects Anglo, middle class ways—just look at the comedy, the humor, the kind of entertainment and the bar scene.

If you're from a language and cultural background that differs from that and you're living in a place like Australia—a first world country—coming out as gay means that when you are perhaps establishing your independence and breaking away from your family, your family may be your only cultural reinforcement, or even support system within the racist environment you live in. Now at first it's wonderful to find other gays that you can be with! But it's another step to then turn around and recognize that, in fact, the gay sub-culture may not fulfill all your needs. And you then may have to settle, in some ways, for second best; dress to be like everyone else and accept the entertainment and social scene that's there, even if it does nothing for you!!

One of the things I've really enjoyed in the cross-cultural groups that we have succeeded in creating is that we can share each others' festivals and celebrations. We're able to involve ourselves in each others' cultures, but because of our feminism we can change our own rituals and celebrations for ourselves. For example in my case, take the festival of Diwali which is usually celebrated with family and friends. Because a large part of the ritual has to do with women and Lakshmi worship, I always celebrate it only with women.



Girls' Own

One of our battles has been the fact that feminist and gay media is only in English. But for the first time this year at International Women's Day in Sydney we were able to translate the speech that we, the Black, Immigrant and Third World Women's Alliance, wrote into 14 different languages. We then proceeded to deliver this speech, one after another, in these languages. It was a terrific learning experience, especially to mono-lingual women—to have to sit there and listen— *and not understand a word that's been said to them!* It's something I'm sure many of them never think about, not even feminist activists! Within the speech we talked about other oppressed groups including lesbians. Lots of our women didn't have a word for lesbian in their language, so we simply translated it to "women who love women." And that in itself was quite an interesting comment on some of our cultures.

"Women loving women is much closer to our idea of what you label as 'lesbianism' than purely sexual lesbianism. I keep saying, it's not a genital lesbianism."

Most third world women have always had lots of involvement with other women. It's hard to say to you western women that what happens is our sexuality is sublimated, and that we may not have that strong desire for sexual stimulation, i.e. genital sex, that you seem to have, or at least prioritize. Maybe one reason that this is so for us is because what we're getting is physical stimulation in other ways: from the food, from the affection, from the close body contact with other women. Women loving women is much closer to our idea of what you label as "lesbianism" than purely sexual lesbianism. I keep saying, it's not a genital lesbianism.

The non-western women that I've had the honor and privilege of living, laughing, loving and working with would most probably back me up when I say that in our cultures we have relationships of all kinds with people around us, and the people around us are women, and *they're* the ones who give us emotional support, they'll feed us, they'll nurture us, they'll care for us, and so we have incredibly deep emotional ties with each other. That has always been how it is and hopefully will continue to be so in the future.

I think to myself, now where does that leave something like clitoral orgasm? I don't know. We all have to recognize and acknowledge that what we quite often are dealing with are concepts that simply do not exist for some the way they do for others. Am I making myself clear? Do you understand what I'm desperately trying to communicate to you?

Our group has been very careful that we're not identified as a lesbian group because lots of our women are working in the community. Our work is most often at

the grassroots level. So that means if you are, for example, a Turkish woman and you're working with the Turkish community, the last thing you want is for people to know that you're associated with lesbians or are a lesbian, because the doors may all close on you. So there are times you can come out and times you don't come out—that's all there is to it. If my coming out as a lesbian meant that I didn't have access to the women in my community, I can tell you, *I'm not going to come out.* And people have got to really recognize that there are different ways of operating.

Because there were aboriginal women and Black-identified women who wanted to work together, whose main commitment is to the women of the land—*on their terms*, we recently came together to form the Sydney based Black Women's Group. We are a tightly knit, totally supportive group. We see ourselves as accountable to aboriginal women and to each other. It means that we challenge ourselves and each other. We

employ political tactics that are very different to that of many other women in the women's liberation movement in Australia. But we feel that this is vitally necessary for we are fighting for the liberation of the most oppressed group in the world—indigenous women. Yes, in that group we have lesbians and heterosexual women, but there is absolutely no disharmony. Not that we ignore the issue of sexuality. It just means, that for us, we have succeeded in creating a space where at last it is no longer an issue among us. And after all, isn't that partially what the women's liberation and gay liberation movements are trying to achieve? □

Related reading:

- "Lesbians of Colour: Loving and Struggling—A Conversation Between Three Lesbians of Colour," in *Fireweed*, Canadian feminist quarterly, Spring 1983.
- "Black Lesbians," annotated bibliography by J.R. Roberts, Naiad Press, 1981.

farewell from Uma

BAUBO



The Goddess of the belly-laugh, indecent gestures and lewd jokes. Like most ancient goddesses, a big, round woman. When she saw Demeter weeping, Baubo lifted up her skirt, showed her cunt to Demeter — and made Demeter smile.
Info from — *The Book of Goddesses and Heroines* by Patricia Monaghan.

Uma's farewell to *Girl's Own* Magazine, Australia

Girl's Own



Zap Repression!

(Translated from *Entendido*, Venezuelan gay monthly, February 1983.)

Fear, worry, nervousness...We're going out...We want to enjoy ourselves, dance, meet our friends, have a good time...But, the police?

—Don't forget your ID!

—For whatever it's worth, they'll take you anyway.

—Well, if worse comes to worse...

—How much worse could it be? If they treat you like an animal, they humiliate you, they beat you, and all this while they check your record.

—Shut up man, that makes me afraid...The more I think about it, the more I don't want to go out.

—Oh no! It's just as bad to lock yourself inside.

—What do you mean? I'm more afraid of the police than of the muggers.

—When are we going to live free in this country? When will the day come in which the police leave us alone? When will the day come in which the police work for our security instead of attacking us? When???

So we have heard hundreds of people exclaiming every day, every Friday and Saturday for more than two years, during which time the police repression has risen to levels without precedent in a "democratic" government. These fears and affirmations are not just felt by homosexuals, who nevertheless, are some of the principle victims of police operations, but also by young workers and students who struggle daily for the development of the country.

Evelyn, a 21-year-old Venezuelan lesbian, has been the victim of police repression on many occasions. This, however, has not shaken her self-respect, and she continues to be open about being a lesbian.

It would seem that in a society as macho as ours, lesbians would benefit from the "privileges" that women have, and would, therefore, experience little police abuse. Nevertheless, the police do violently attack lesbians who lead free and open lives. Those who, like Evelyn, have the courage to make their own reality. This is why the police consider them to be enemies of society and possible sources of delinquency.

Entendido: Have you personally suffered from police repression?

Evelyn: Yes, many times. Whenever they take me to jail, usually as a result of a bar raid, they ask me, "What are you doing at these discoteques? Are you a lesbian? What are you looking for there?" They don't accept us because they see us as "women-men." They want to force us to be women; they want us to look for men. But if we were to look for men, they'd call us whores.

Q: Have the police verbally or physically assaulted you?

A: Yes, both. When they pick up certain girls they insult them—call them dirty, immoral, wicked, drug-addicts—simply because they're gay.

Q: In the police station do they photograph you, book you?

A: In my case, no, thank god. But I do know many girls who've had their pictures taken, been fingerprinted, and have even had "observations" done on them.

Q: What are "observations"?

A: They open an official file on you. They ask you, "Why did we bring you here?" You answer, "I'm here because I was dancing, because I was with a friend; I'm here because I was sitting down." Then those same policemen tell you that you're lying: "We found you in a gay bar, with other women, taking drugs, stealing, etc."

Q: What do they put in these "observations"?

A: Well, what I just told you, that you're a delinquent, a drug addict, a swindler...many things, with no proof that what they say is true.



Q: Have the owners of the bars and discoteques done anything to stop the raids?

A: Often the bar owners have to pay off the police so that the bar won't be hit. We in the gay community are facing a very serious situation, because society still does not accept us as normal people.

Q: Do you think that the repression directed at lesbians differs from that directed at gay men?

A: I don't think so. They treat transvestites the worst, with more harshness and sarcasm. They say that a transvestite is the worst there is, compared to a lesbian or a gay man.

Q: Do you think that lesbians want to take action against this situation?

A: Yes. Quite frankly many want freedom of action, freedom to say what they think, the simple freedom to lead their lives openly, to be as they are.

Q: As a young person, as a lesbian, do you have any idea how to resolve this problem and end the repression?

A: Yes and no. There are some people who are secure, who aren't afraid of anything. But there are those who have not come to terms with the situation, who are afraid, who feel empty and caged-up. They appear to be locked in without a key.

Q: And who has the key?

A: I think society does.

Q: There is no lock. One must just open the door from within and come out. □

In Practice, Not Theory

(Translated from *DIVA*, a bi-monthly Dutch lesbian magazine.)

The following account was written by two members of the Dutch Venceremos Brigade, an international solidarity organization that extends moral and material support to Cuba. One of the group's activities includes the formation of work brigades that go to Cuba to experience first hand the realities of Cuban socialism.

The authors of the article participated in a recent Work Brigade to Cuba and went with the unspoken goal to seek out lesbians. While in Cuba, they found themselves swinging from one extreme reaction to the other, from admiration for the entire populace's involvement in the revolution and the nation's achievements in education, health and the socio-economic position of women, to strong criticism, especially regarding the prospects for homosexuals.

Within the Venceremos Brigade itself there has been much discussion regarding the extent to which they should criticize specific aspects of a country with which they are expressing and demonstrating solidarity. These discussions have led to the formation of a homosexual committee. The Venceremos Brigade has been consistently active in pressuring the U.S. to ease up on its aggressive stance toward Cuba. Recently they wrote a letter to the Cuban ambassador in the Netherlands expressing their concern for the untenable position and situation for Cuban lesbians and gay men.

When, during an interview, women of the Cuban Women's Federation (FMC) were asked how they stood on the issue of homosexuality, the answer—amid general merry laughter—was, "We're a women's organization, aren't we?" In principle, the FMC does not exclude lesbians from taking part and each individual group within the organization can have its own standpoint. But if it is specifically known that a woman is a lesbian, then she cannot become a member. And in Cuba, to be excluded from organizations such as the FMC, the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) or the Party is tantamount to being an outcast in society.

Fully 80% of Cuba's women over 14 years of age are members of the government-supported FMC. The organization fulfills certain societal functions,

such as social work (rehabilitation, for instance), keeping neighborhoods clean, getting the harvest in and giving educational assistance.

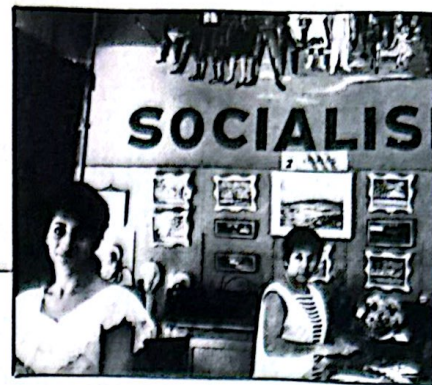
We attempted to contact lesbians through male friends. At first no one dared say anything for fear of being exposed. Because of increased aggression from the U.S., Cuba has been tightening the screws: the state of alertness and mobilization has been raised and more responsibility has been placed on the CDRs to prevent crime and clamp down on "counter-revolutionary elements." Anything considered the least bit abnormal—not in line with accepted "behavior"—is reported to the authorities. Lesbians and gay men run a great risk of being branded, which can mean expulsion from the socialist organization, three to nine months in prison or a fine.

A resolution forbidding the appointment of lesbians and gay men as teachers was passed at the First National Congress on Education and Culture in 1971. One woman student, who refused to give evidence regarding her classmates' lesbianism, was sentenced to several weeks of forced agricultural labor. (It is a person's duty to report "counter-revolutionary elements.")

Machismo reigns in modern Cuba. Women are still more dependent on family life than men are; only 30% of women work outside the home. The chance to live even a closeted homosexual life, the only option available, is more difficult for women than for men.

A happy accident gave us the chance to make contact with lesbians. We were in a bar with a gay friend we had made there. The bar was so dark that a waiter had to lead us to our table with a match he lit for that purpose. Soon two mixed couples came in; our friend whispered to us that all four were homosexuals. Despite the fact that they clearly knew each other, neither they nor our friend gave the least sign of recognition. It saddened us to see how the two women tried, surreptitiously, to come up against each other as they danced with the men. That evening we only made small talk. The women were especially reticent. Before we took leave of each other, we arranged to get together at the house of a woman friend.

We had to meet at a particular spot along the beach and were then led to a house, where there was a marvelous cheery atmosphere and people walking in and out.



Trans-action

When one of the Cuban women let the word "homosexual" drop, everyone suddenly opened up. It appeared that the house belonged to a lesbian who lived there with her brother who was also gay. Her mother lived in the back with a married daughter. To live independently like that is most exceptional in Cuba. The house is used as a meeting place for lesbians and gays. Everyone there was afraid of the CDR. The danger of being reported by a neighbor walking around on watch-duty is great. "My mother knows I'm a lesbian, but she would never talk about me. As far as the outside world is concerned, I'm living with a fellow; I always go out with a man—a gay man."

The shortage of housing means it is virtually impossible for a person to live away from the parental home. Houses are allotted only to married couples. Cubans as a whole spend much of their time socializing out of doors. While this has its positive side, it also means there is little privacy; gay people, for instance, have nowhere to conduct their relationship. Arrangements to meet at someone's place or in a summer-house especially hired for that purpose, are rare exceptions. Until now it has been impossible to set up any permanent meeting center because this would make it too easy to track them down. □



Trans-action

Further reading:

- "A Threat to Public Morality," interview with Cuban lesbian refugee in *"Connexions,"* #2, Fall 1981.
- "Off Our Backs," October 1980 and April 1981.
- "Gays Under the Cuban Revolution," by Allen Young, Grey Fox Press, San Francisco, 1981.

Shorts

Mati

(Translated from *Homologie*, Dutch gay journal, April 1983.)

Gharitje Choenni is one of the editors of the Surinamese women's newspaper *Ashanti*—the first and up till now the only feminist publication for Surinamese women. It is based and published in Holland, not in Surinam itself. The broad market coverage that *Ashanti* attempts, however, has resulted in other women now preparing to bring out *Nzinga*, a more radical-feminist periodical—one that is ready and willing to discuss subjects such as homosexuality.

In Surinam the subject of sexuality is still taboo. People possess little scientific knowledge about their bodies and there is very little chance to acquire it. Sex is rarely spoken of inside the family.

As Choenni explains, "Here in Holland sexuality is discussed with teenagers on the TV, but you wouldn't dare do that with Surinamese children. Only extremely progressive parents inform their children on sexual issues. When I was at school I was rather small for my age, and so when the girls were to be given instruction on sex, I was sent out of the classroom. Boys got absolutely no instruction at all: 'they don't get pregnant,' was the reasoning!"

"Sex is taboo, but you can do things—you certainly can have more than one sexual relationship going at a time, you just can't talk about it. Only in the upper layers of society is the subject open for discussion, but for the most part sex education consists of moralistic structures aimed at the lower classes. The latter are told that children are a gift from god, while abortions are carried out on the assembly line among the upper classes.

"There are many lesbian relationships. Everyone knows it and it's nothing new. Creole women often moved in together when their husbands were forced to go off into the bush to work the bauxite mines or the timber-felling stands way back in the jungle. Such women were given the name *mati*. *mati* were always women with children who lived together with a man. When the man returned, they would live together again. Relationships between women were looked on as interim activity; nothing at all threatening."

The women who belong to the organization of Surinamese Homosexuals in Holland, SuHo, call themselves *mati*. "It's a nice word," explains Choenni. "It means women friends—close friends. But those who have deliberately opted for a woman-to-woman relationship—and let it be known—have to put up with snide remarks. Most Surinamese people see homosexuality as a feature of Western affluence that has been taken over, copied, from the 'fair-skins'. Homos are spat at. They say, 'You're ugly; no man wants you. Why would God otherwise have made the separate sexes?'"

Choenni puts her hand over her mouth because she is giggling, laughing. She controls herself enough to say, "I think it's terrible; and still you find ideas like that among so-called developed people and professional workers in the social sector." □

Contact:

- SuHo-vrouwen, Postbus 390, Amsterdam, Holland.
- "Women in Post-Colonial States," women in Surinam, in "Newsfront International," September 16, 1981.



Veronica 4 Rose

(From *The Leveller*, English socialist/feminist monthly, February 1983.)

Veronica 4 Rose
Channel 4 [London]
Monday January 17 [1983]

The second gay programme to be shown on T.V. within a month, this was devoted solely to Lesbians, and certainly the producer, working closely with the women involved, had specific intentions as to what the viewer would see.

A group of young Lesbians talked about their experiences of coming out to the rest of society and what emerged was a highly personal account. Unlike *One in Five*, a programme on gay men and women shown previously on Channel 4, real problems such as parents and friends reactions, and school prejudice, fear of being "abnormal," and overcoming the image of the masculine, over-sexed dyke that heterosexual society has created were brought out.

We were confronted with a mixture of honesty, pain and humour. So, as the first Lesbian programme ever seen on TV, it was good; hearing women speak about themselves was an exciting break of taboos.

However, as one of the women said, the film saw through rose-tinted spectacles and illustrated through artificially reconstructed experience. When the women saw and discussed the film themselves, the sheer frustration that not enough time or space was given to voice anger and political Lesbian opinion became apparent. One sensed a rumble of more radical ideas beneath the innocent "coming out" stories that they were confined to. I felt they all had a lot more to say about themselves, especially when we were left with a last comment suggesting society needs to look beyond the superficial image of Lesbianism. This idea desperately needs to be developed in further women's programmes and in other media, to reach a greater audience. □

(*Veronica 4 Rose* is a Lusitania Film produced and directed by Melanie Chait, Lusitania Films, 7-9 Earham Street, London WC2, Telephone 01-240-2350.)

ILIS Action

(Compiled from *Nuevo Ambiente*, a Mexican gay bi-monthly, June-July, 1983 and the ILIS Conference Report on the Fifth ILIS Conference in Paris, France, April 1-4, 1983)

From April 1st to the 4th, 1983, the International Lesbian Information Service [ILIS] held its fifth international conference of lesbians in Paris, organized by M.I.E.L. [Lesbian Movement of Information and Expression. *Miel* is also the French word for honey.] ILIS is a lesbian coordinating body composed of groups of women who choose to work with lesbian-only groups, and/or with groups of lesbians/gay men. There were 220 participants, representing 21 countries, including Iran, Chile, Curacao, the U.S., Canada and New Zealand. Also, although there were no representatives, information was presented about lesbians in Cuba and East Germany.

During the conference, the representatives of all the countries expressed the need for an international lesbian movement. Until now, lesbians have not been sufficiently visible when working within the gay and/or feminist movements. For this reason, ILIS decided not to participate in International Gay Year, but to plan instead the International Year of Lesbian Action in 1984. They have also scheduled October 8, 1983 to be International Lesbian Day. The three aims of the International Lesbian Action Year are: increasing Lesbian visibility; fighting against discrimination; we don't want the cake; we want the bakery!—we want changes in our society so that the heterosexism which holds our lives in a stranglehold is rooted out and destroyed.

Ideas for achieving these aims were then further discussed. One proposal for



Shorts

Mati

(Translated from *Homologie*, Dutch gay journal, April 1983.)

Gharitje Choenni is one of the editors of the Surinamese women's newspaper *Ashanti*—the first and up till now the only feminist publication for Surinamese women. It is based and published in Holland, not in Surinam itself. The broad market coverage that *Ashanti* attempts, however, has resulted in other women now preparing to bring out *Nzinga*, a more radical-feminist periodical—one that is ready and willing to discuss subjects such as homosexuality.

In Surinam the subject of sexuality is still taboo. People possess little scientific knowledge about their bodies and there is very little chance to acquire it. Sex is rarely spoken of inside the family.

As Choenni explains, "Here in Holland sexuality is discussed with teenagers on the TV, but you wouldn't dare do that with Surinamese children. Only extremely progressive parents inform their children on sexual issues. When I was at school I was rather small for my age, and so when the girls were to be given instruction on sex, I was sent out of the classroom. Boys got absolutely no instruction at all: 'they don't get pregnant,' was the reasoning!"

"Sex is taboo, but you can do things—you certainly can have more than one sexual relationship going at a time, you just can't talk about it. Only in the upper layers of society is the subject open for discussion, but for the most part sex education consists of moralistic structures aimed at the lower classes. The latter are told that children are a gift from god, while abortions are carried out on the assembly line among the upper classes.

"There are many lesbian relationships. Everyone knows it and it's nothing new. Creole women often moved in together when their husbands were forced to go off into the bush to work the bauxite mines or the timber-felling stands way back in the jungle. Such women were given the name *mati*. *mati* were always women with children who lived together with a man. When the man returned, they would live together again. Relationships between women were looked on as interim activity; nothing at all threatening."

The women who belong to the organization of Surinamese Homosexuals in Holland, *SuHo*, call themselves *mati*. "It's a nice word," explains Choenni. "It means women friends—close friends. But those who have deliberately opted for a woman-to-woman relationship—and let it be known—have to put up with snide remarks. Most Surinamese people see homosexuality as a feature of Western affluence that has been taken over, copied, from the 'fair-skins'. Homos are spat at. They say, 'You're ugly; no man wants you. Why would God otherwise have made the separate sexes?'"

Choenni puts her hand over her mouth because she is giggling, laughing. She controls herself enough to say, "I think it's terrible; and still you find ideas like that among so-called developed people and professional workers in the social sector." □

Contact:

- *SuHo-vrouwen*, Postbus 390, Amsterdam, Holland.
- "Women in Post-Colonial States," women in Surinam, in "Newsfront International," September 16, 1981.



Veronica 4 Rose

(From *The Leveller*, English socialist/feminist monthly, February 1983.)

Veronica 4 Rose
Channel 4 (London)
Monday January 17 [1983]

The second gay programme to be shown on T.V. within a month, this was devoted solely to Lesbians, and certainly the producer, working closely with the women involved, had specific intentions as to what the viewer would see.

A group of young Lesbians talked about their experiences of coming out to the rest of society and what emerged was a highly personal account. Unlike *One in Five*, a programme on gay men and women shown previously on Channel 4, real problems such as parents and friends reactions, and school prejudice, fear of being "abnormal," and overcoming the image of the masculine, over-sexed dyke that heterosexual society has created were brought out.

We were confronted with a mixture of honesty, pain and humour. So, as the first Lesbian programme ever seen on TV, it was good; hearing women speak about themselves was an exciting break of taboos.

However, as one of the women said, the film saw through rose-tinted spectacles and illustrated through artificially reconstructed experience. When the women saw and discussed the film themselves, the sheer frustration that not enough time or space was given to voice anger and political Lesbian opinion became apparent. One sensed a rumble of more radical ideas beneath the innocent "coming out" stories that they were confined to. I felt they all had a lot more to say about themselves, especially when we were left with a last comment suggesting society needs to look beyond the superficial image of Lesbianism. This idea desperately needs to be developed in further women's programmes and in other media, to reach a greater audience. □

(*Veronica 4 Rose* is a Lusla Film produced and directed by Melanie Chait, Lusla Films, 7-9 Earham Street, London WC2, Telephone 01-240-2350.)

ILIS Action

(Compiled from *Nuevo Ambiente*, a Mexican gay bi-monthly, June-July, 1983 and the ILIS Conference Report on the Fifth ILIS Conference in Paris, France, April 1-4, 1983)

From April 1st to the 4th, 1983, the International Lesbian Information Service (ILIS) held its fifth international conference of lesbians in Paris, organized by M.I.E.L. [Lesbian Movement of Information and Expression. *Miel* is also the French word for honey.] ILIS is a lesbian coordinating body composed of groups of women who choose to work with lesbian-only groups, and/or with groups of lesbians/gay men. There were 220 participants, representing 21 countries, including Iran, Chile, Curaçao, the U.S., Canada and New Zealand. Also, although there were no representatives, information was presented about lesbians in Cuba and East Germany.

During the conference, the representatives of all the countries expressed the need for an international lesbian movement. Until now, lesbians have not been sufficiently visible when working within the gay and/or feminist movements. For this reason, ILIS decided not to participate in International Gay Year, but to plan instead the International Year of Lesbian Action in 1984. They have also scheduled October 8, 1983 to be International Lesbian Day. The three aims of the International Lesbian Action Year are: increasing Lesbian visibility; fighting against discrimination; we don't want the cake; we want the bakery!—we want changes in our society so that the heterosexism which holds our lives in a stranglehold is rooted out and destroyed.

Ideas for achieving these aims were then further discussed. One proposal for

pooling our efforts was the organization of an international lesbian tribunal to be held in 1984 in order to formulate international demands. One forum for such demands would be the 1985 U.N. International Women's Conference scheduled to take place in Nairobi.

During the plenary session it was made clear that not all of the women could identify themselves as lesbian-feminists for different political and historical reasons. Thus, in order to make ILIS an open organization for any kind of lesbian, such as nonfeminist lesbians, radical lesbians, or gay women working with gay men on homosexual rights issues, it was decided that the word "feminist" would be omitted from the defining declaration of ILIS.

An ILIS Action Meeting in Amsterdam in December 1983 will bring together lesbians involved with the mobilization of women in their own countries who want to devise and carry out lesbian actions during the coming years. A three year lesbian action plan will be drafted and activities will be organized to carry them out. The conference organizers can be contacted:

c/o Interpot
Rozenstraat 8
1016 NX Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Keeping Everything

(Compiled from a translation from *Diva*, Dutch lesbian monthly, May 1982, and a report by our Dutch correspondent.)

In April of last year a national association of lesbian archives, *Landelijke Overleggroep Lesbische Archieven* (LOLA), was established in The Netherlands. Two things prompted the move to establish it: the benefit had already been felt from the Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York [set up in 1976]; and lesbians in Holland realised they needed—and wanted—to preserve, document and make accessible to others the story of lesbian lives in the Dutch culture.

Meanwhile a woman, Henny Smid, in Leeuwarden, a town in north Holland, was making a private hobby of collecting all she could find that told of lesbian existence, gradually filling shelves in a room of her own house and inviting friends to see what she had and refer to it when they wished. Last year she and nine others (including her two daughters and their "partners") decided form a legal entity of the Archives and ask local councils for subsidies.

They decided that they would not publish their address and that visits would be made by appointment over the phone—so that local journalists, for instance, could not make unethical use of information from the Archives.

The project in Leeuwarden demonstrated the value of lesbian archives. Dutch lesbians gathered at the beginning of 1982 to discuss the idea of starting a national

archives, the outcome was an umbrella organisation with an association of separate regional archives. Premises were donated in Amsterdam, close to the International Women's Archives, which now houses an active project. Similar groups have begun in three other cities in Holland.

The constitution of the association has been carefully thought through, with legal provision made for such issues as the independence of and access to archives which are part of private residences, and takeover of possession by another associate in any emergency. The fundamental point is to ensure that lesbian lives will no longer be buried without trace—that future generations have easy access to the material that constitutes their own history. The material collected and being sought include published and unpublished works, diaries, letters, photos, announcements of events, buttons, expressions of plastic art, banners, clothing, tapes, film and any memorabilia and references to lesbian lives of every type and style. (Amen!)



Anzeige in „Frauenliebe“

Lila Nächte

The address for the Lesbian Archive in Leeuwarden is:

Lesbisch Archief Leeuwarden
Postbus 4062
8901 EB Leeuwarden
Holland

Jock Shorts

(Translated and reprinted from *Entendido*, Venezuelan gay monthly, by *Paz y Liberación*, international gay newsletter, November 1982.)

The Lesbians of the women's prison in Chorrillos, Peru' (near Lima) have formed a powerful soccer team that until now has defeated all of their masculine opponents, including the prison guards. □

"Why can't it be alright for mums to have lesbian friends? At least they can't get pregnant."

"Your Mum's a Lessy-bin!"

(From *bitches, witches and dykes*, New Zealand lesbian feminist quarterly, June 1982.)

We had another Lesbian Mothers', Lovers' and Children's Weekend on April 17-18, which all of our 26 kids and about the same amount of adults seemed to enjoy. The place we stayed at consisted of four huts set in the Waitakere bush, each with two rooms. There we planted the kids, while the mums, lovers and two child-minders all slept on mattresses in the dining/living area. The ages of the children ranged from 18 months to 15 years. The ages of the adults also ranged in all directions.

That first evening we wrote up lists of workshops for Sunday, which was to be a full day of serious discussion. Then a discussion started up—about kids, and our boy-children in particular. A couple of people became quite heated. "Kids are kids," they said. "How can you judge them, blame boy-children for the patriarchy and what it's done to us? Do you want to do to them what's been done to girls, make them bitter and twisted? Why is a girl who bashes a boy for annoying her praised, while a boy bashing a girl (or even another boy) for the same reason is put down for being macho? It's not fair." "I love my son," said one mother. "He's a very gentle, loving boy. But no matter what I do, how I teach him, maybe he'll grow up hating women if all my friends keep ignoring and rejecting him."

I thought cynically, it's like the brook, this one: never ending, no solution, people are entitled to feel how they feel—but oh, some mothers are hurt by what they see as rejection by other lesbians because they have sons. They have feelings, too, those mothers and so do the children. I've heard several non-mothers saying they favour any girl-children they know, and leave the boys out. I myself had long ago resolved never to go where my son wasn't welcome, but other women's pain and bewilderment hurts and angers me still. It's hard enough bringing up kids alone without the added burden of being ostracised because one or two of them are boys. It's especially hard when you've been struggling for years to escape from your marriage, finally do so, and you and your kids are just beginning to get yourselves together again, you discover your son is a male chauvinist. Until then you'd been congratulating yourself, saying, well, we've done it, the hardest

part is over. But it's not over and you are shattered. Then you realise, of course he is, he has to be. He's been modeling himself on his father all these years, learning from him, listening to him deriding women. (Not to speak of the socialisation he gets at school and from his peers.) And you know you have to fight and work with this son you love, to change all that. What you need is encouragement, even help, from other women. If you are lucky you get *some* of that. Mostly you receive criticism, or worse, you are ostracised.

Later that evening we played music and talked. Many women were thrilled with the peace—"Our kids aren't hassling us," they said. We decided this was due in part to our childminders, but also to the fact that the mothers were occupying themselves with discussing workshop topics and

their grouches. One was that their lovers didn't understand them. "They don't understand our need to get away, our need for independence," a non-mother said. "They demand too much of our time."

Well, I thought, the only thing a mother knows about independence is that she rarely has any, being totally responsible for the care and nurturing of other people 24 hours a day. And when she does have a little time to herself and seeks her lover out, the lover might say, "Oh, I'm feeling independent today, don't oppress me, let me have my freedom," and then complain that the mother always has her kids around when she (the lover) wants to see her. I myself haven't had the freedom to go out, just like that when I feel like it, for nine years. I feel excited that soon, in two or three years perhaps, I'll be able to—yippee!

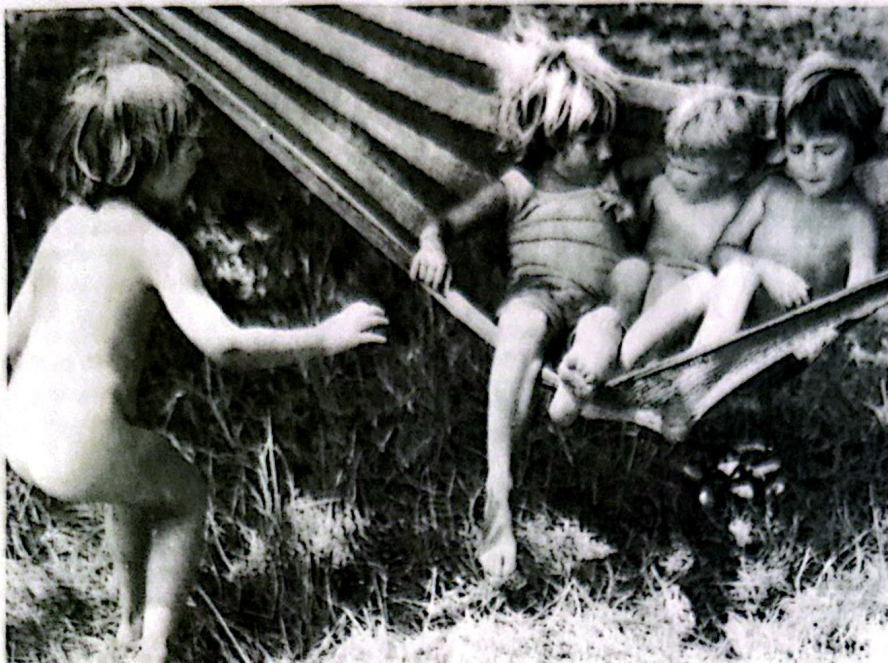


not with minding children. The workshop topics included: child/lover problems, wills, schools, grandparents, isolation, custody, coming out to your children, motherhood. (So far as I am aware, racism wasn't discussed, although there were black women and children at the weekend, my son included. I hope this topic will come up in the future, as I consider it very important for all of us—mothers, lovers and children.)

I listened or talked to several of the non-mothers during the weekend and watched them playing with the kids. They spoke of their realisation, now, of what it means to have children, although they had

I attended one workshop on living alone and was the only woman there with a child at home, so I had to explain what it was like—living alone with a dependent child and all the related problems. Most of the other women had lovers and no longer needed to live with other people. They wanted to have more time to themselves and were there to talk to those who felt the same way. Another woman didn't have her children at home—she lived with her lover and was looking forward to the future, to a time when she might like to live alone.

I later talked to a woman about a lovers' workshop she attended. She said a



Clu 007

mother turned up and they consequently couldn't talk freely about problems they have as lovers of lesbian mothers. I thought it was a pity they hadn't asked the mother to leave, or at least discussed the matter, talked about her reasons for being there. I felt the lovers had a right to get together by themselves and discuss issues important to them.

The day finished with us all getting together again, drinking and chatting while some of the kids were still at the beach. We read with interest what some of them had written on the problems and joys of being children of lesbians.

"Some of my friends who know tease me. They say 'your mum is a lessy-bin.' I feel embarrassed. My special friend doesn't tease me. She thinks it's alright. She thinks it's my mum's life and nobody else's business."

"Some people at my school think gay men are better than lesbians so that makes me feel like we come after heterosexuals, after gay men—right at the bottom."

"I wish it was as acceptable as marriage or being separated and having boy-friends. Why can't it be alright for mums to have lesbian friends? At least they don't get pregnant again."

"It gets difficult. When my friends asked where I was going for the weekend I couldn't tell them it was a lesbian mothers' weekend. I felt I was being unfair to my mum and to my friends but I don't feel I can tell them. I'll probably tell my best friend in a while but her mum is conservative and I'm worried that her mum would stop us seeing each other."

"Some of my friends know and some don't. I told the ones that are understanding and wouldn't do anything to upset me. They're the friends I trust. I know they wouldn't turn on me. We've known each other for ages and trust each other. I worry

about the others finding out. I'm scared they'd turn on me."

"I often feel jealous of mum and her lover especially when they don't want me around. I feel left out. Sometimes I kick up a fuss if they're together. I get mad if I want to do something alone with mum and her lover ends up coming with us without even asking."

"The person who lives with us is like a second mother. There's good bits and bad bits. When they boss us around it feels like they shouldn't because they're not our mum."

"There should be a book for kids of lesbians. It would be really helpful especially for kids whose mums can't talk to their kids. It's really lonely when you find out. It would be good to know there's other kids like me."

"I like my mum having women lovers because I get along with women better. I can talk to them easier and they're just so much easier and more considerate and more gentle than men. Lesbians will talk about problems."

"I like having two women in the house. I'm a girl. They understand my problems. It might be difficult for a boy because they might feel threatened. I'd feel terrible if my dad was gay."

"I'm a boy. I didn't get on with one of mum's lovers but now I get on with her present lover better than I'm getting on with her. I feel understood by the woman more than by my father most of the time."

"I'm a boy and my mum lives with two other lesbians. One of them is good fun and the other is all comfortable and cuddly. I like living with lesbians because you get to know lots of other women. And you get to know about sexism and racism. I know about sex between lesbians too because I asked and they told me. I thought it was alright and quite interesting. And I can trust

them, they don't put me down. A lot of my friends are children of lesbians, but some aren't and I don't tell them about my mum. I don't get to know a lot of nice men living with a lesbian mum, but I know some. And I'm not growing up to be sexist. If my mum was a heterosexual I might. Living with lesbians you grow up learning about the good and bad things in the system and you learn all about the opposite of the system."

Two women with four young children between them, told us they'd met at a day-care centre! They said how wonderful the weekend had been for them, and how nice it was to meet mums who were ordinary just like they were. Another woman, who had left her husband only a few days before, found the weekend good but very tiring, and even threatening. She felt an afternoon would have been enough for her at that stage. People said how much they'd enjoyed themselves, and that there should be another get-together soon, in fact that it was important, imperative even, so that women who normally felt isolated, could mix with other mothers like them, could see they were not alone. Lovers said it was important for them too, to have another weekend like this. □



Outwrite

Further reading:

- "Rocking the Cradle," by Gillian Hanscombe and Jackie Forster, Sheba Feminist Publishers, 1982.

"The fact that I am a lesbian does not make me the same as other lesbians."

"I am Everything"

(Translated from *Mulherio*, Brazilian feminist bi-monthly, September/October 1982.)

In São Paulo, they meet at the Ferro's Bar; they dance at the Moustache Night Club. They talk; they organize their soccer teams; they fight; they love; they form their couples; they live alone; they have someone to "protect" them during the solitary, violent São Paulo nights.

They can't appear on television. They are not topics in the major newspapers. Their families never talk about them. They are lesbians. Don't talk about it! This word sounds hard to Brazilian people's ears...

But from their ghettos you can hear the noise of their voices. When feminists took to the streets to protest against violence, they were there, because they know they are the first victims of the worst violence human beings can suffer—the violence of morality and hypocrisy.

The following interview is with Teca, a woman who is discovering herself all the time. She is 25 years old. When she was 21, she joined the gay liberation movement. Soon after she joined the feminist movement, which helped her to think about her situation as a lesbian. Very expressive and energetic, Teca is a computer technician. She studied physics for three years and afterwards, studied philosophy, but she never received a degree for any of it.

Mulherio: Teca, when did you start to feel the need to come out?

Teca: Well, in my adolescence I didn't have affairs, either with men or with women. My adolescence was very insipid sexually and I became very lost, mostly because I lived very far from the action. My father was a cabbie and my mother was a seamstress. I have worked since I was 14, so my relationship with the world has always been one of responsibility. This affected me a lot during my childhood, and was accentuated when this need to come out arose from inside myself.

When I was little my mother used to tell me stories about women being with women, which disturbed me for a long time. They were very ignorant stories about homosexual relationships. So, I was not a lesbian. I couldn't even hear this word. Later, when I was already in college, I started to feel the social pressures: to have

a boyfriend, to go dancing, to wear a bra. At that time I was a good Catholic. I didn't fool around with anybody. The world around me was very closed and the boys and girls in my neighborhood in Osasco [a working class city near São Paulo] were very limited. I first learned about sex from a woman who had been a nun, and she was very moralistic. Her moralism was so shocking that even I, who was religious, was shocked.

All these things pressured me to come out, but I didn't know how. I didn't know any lesbians. I found myself looking at women and this voice inside me was saying: "Come out and assume your identity." People thought that I was a strange person, but I wasn't; I was a conservative person and I still am. I think it will take 50 years to break all the morals I carry inside myself.

Q: Was this process a long one? Was it difficult for you to start breaking away from this moralism?

A: I spent a long time coming out. There was a period when I became extremely masculine. I started working in a place where there were only men and they were very macho. It affected me deeply. I didn't want to be an object for them, and without wanting to, I started to dress like a man. Also at that time I experienced a lot of aggressions directed against me in the Physics Department at the Catholic University in São Paulo. During the *trote* [an initiation in which the old students shave the new students' heads], they wanted to shave my head, but it was clear that I was a woman!

I started to be more like a man, not because I wanted to be a man, but as a reaction against my objectification as a woman. I unconsciously disregarded myself. This was my self-destructive period. At the end of this period, when my first serious relationship ended, I had my breasts partially removed. I wanted to reconstruct my life.

Q: Was this operation a negation of your woman's body?

A: No, it wasn't. I had gone on a business trip to Buenos Aires and there the men were always trying to touch my breasts. I had already had this experience here, but in Buenos Aires it happened everyday. During my adolescence I had to bandage my breasts to play sports because they hurt me. I financed the operation myself; nobody helped. My family was against it. They thought it was absurd—imagine, so much money. Really it wasn't that much.

Q: After the operation, how did you feel?

A: I was very satisfied. And I knew that I would be satisfied, because it was something that disturbed me a lot. I don't think it was an act of aggression against my body. I don't mind being a woman. I would never have an operation to change my sex. But I would have an operation again in order to reduce my breasts, because it really bothered me, and I think other women have the same problem.

Q: You were talking about your first relationship. What is a homosexual relationship like?

A: I think that homosexual relationships are very similar to heterosexual ones, because between the couple there is still competition as well as a sense of interdependency. Even if we are liberated, there is still that subtle interrelationship of dominance and passivity.

I hear some people saying that a relationship between two women can be more revolutionary than a relationship between a man and a woman, but I don't agree with it. So, the power is what? The phallus? The penis? No. In this way we go back to our biological slavery. I don't think that it is the phallus which destroys the relationship. What destroys it is the image of the phallus, its use and the ideological structure for this use.

Q: So are the problems in relationships different between two women?

A: It would be different if we had an understanding about what separates us as women, an understanding about competition and dependency. I think that feminism needs to develop a very strong, dynamic and deep understanding of the mechanisms of the relationships among women: such as my relationship with my mother, my grandmother, the woman I love, the woman with whom I work, the secretary, the maid. What happens is that these things are easier to see with people who are outside of our close circle. From the inside of our close circle, everything is so different, because other feelings arise (such as envy, jealousy, possessiveness), which we don't analyze within our restricted group. There is no discussion about it. I have only recently started to think about it.

Q: And what about heterosexuality? Are you also heterosexual?

A: Well, I was mistreated by some people in the gay movement because they thought I was bisexual. I do not consider myself

bisexual, because I am emotionally homosexual. However, I have affairs with men. It is rare, but I do it and I experience pleasure. But I have never been involved with a man. I could do it if it was someone very important to me, if he was a marvelous person with whom I connected strongly. But this is a very remote possibility.

Q: Does prejudice exist among lesbians towards heterosexuality?

A: There is prejudice everywhere: from lesbians against heterosexuals, from heterosexuals against lesbians. On the lesbian side it is not exactly a prejudice, but a kind of resentment, the resentment of the impossibility of being the object of a straight woman's desire. And also because of all the scars we carry from the process of coming out, which I think is a terrible kind of fascism. And I also don't know if there really is this category, of being lesbian. I am not a lesbian. I am everything. I am a woman, a worker, a daughter, maybe one day I will become a mother.

Q: Do you feel discriminated against at your job?

A: I consider myself a privileged person in my work, because I have always asserted myself and furthermore, I created a dialogue on the subject. I work with computers and, maybe because I am a super-specialized technician, I have my place. But I know lesbians who have terrible problems at work.

Q: Teca, lesbians are always seen as being very aggressive and violent. How do you explain this image? Is there some truth in it?

A: This is a reflection of men's profound misogyny, by identifying lesbians as their competitors and by never seeing women as being capable of aggression (a characteristic they admire in themselves).

But that stereotype is not totally false. It is obvious that there is violence among lesbians just as there is between men, heterosexual women, everybody. Motherhood, for example, can be a very violent institution. My mother beat me until I was 18. You listen to the radio in the morning and you hear about 200 cases of violence. So, the violence is not a "privilege" of any one class, sex, sexual choice or ideological position.

Q: But how does the specific lesbian violence appear? Does it come from the attempt to copy the macho image?

A: Violence among lesbians appears when they are living in an environment that requires them to emulate male behavior. For instance, in the ghetto it happens with the woman who is a pimp. She has the function of exploiting and at the same time defending the prostitutes. If the female pimp does not walk with a razor, if she does not speak gruffly, if she does not go to fight the police, the barman, the client, all of the forces outside the ghetto who represent a threat, she does not get the respect necessary to survive and can not support herself. You see, this rapport between the woman pimp and the prostitute is identical to the rapport that a man who is a pimp has with a woman.

Q: Are you a member of a homosexual group now?

A: Not now. I helped found GALF (Lesbian-Feminist Action Group) in São Paulo. I participated for two years and then left in October 1980 to join a feminist group. I am an independent person. I consider myself part of the gay movement because for me the gay movement is not just the organized groups, but the rapport that exists among the people in this world who are gay.

Q: How do you see the gay movement? What kinds of difficulties must it overcome in order for it to succeed in gaining access to public media, like the feminist movement in Brazil, which even has a program on television?

A: The discrimination against gay people is not uniform, while the case for women is the opposite. For women, class, age, origin don't matter. There is a link among us, the fact that we are discriminated against. With gays it is different because there are very clear divisions between who is butch and who is femme. You are gay first, butch or femme second; militancy is considered a third way. The fact that I am a lesbian does not make me the same as other lesbians, because they can be involved with many things, which have nothing to do with me. It is different from being a woman, because you can be many other things besides a woman and you are still a woman; there is no choice. I think we choose to be gay. Sometimes we do not perceive it, but we choose. Me, for example, I chose without perceiving it.

But there are other differences. The problem with the gay movement is that it is still involved with the question of identity saying "we exist, we have the right to exist." The gay movement does not have a vision for the whole society, does not propose a new universe of relationships, either to homosexuals or to heterosexuals. It speaks only to gays, or even to the established system, such as the demands for changing legislation. [Homosexuality in Brazil is by law considered to be a mental disease.] The feminist movement, on the other hand, has a vision for the entire society, by changing the relations between people.

Q: How is it for you, being both a lesbian and a feminist at the same time?

A: I find it very agreeable to be a lesbian and a feminist. I didn't like only being a lesbian because I felt very limited. My ideas could not reach my mother, for example. I don't think my ideas are useful for all women, but I have questions, doubts and desires which I would like to discuss with women who have experiences different from mine. And feminism allows it. □

Further reading:

- "Don't Label Me; I Label Myself," interview with Brazilian lesbian singer, in "Connexions," #3, Winter 1982.

Contact:

- Grupo de Ação Lésbico-Feminista, Caixa postal 62618, 01000, São Paulo, Brazil.



Mulherio

Kyoko is a Japanese lesbian who has been living in the U.S. for two years. During her last ten years in Japan, she had been involved with a women's center and a women's print collective in Tokyo. The following article is excerpted from an interview by Mary James for *Connexions*.

My involvement in the feminist movement began after I graduated high school. That was around 1970. I was only 18 and the student movement was quite strong, with student strikes taking place all over the country. But it was a sexist movement, and I got really frustrated. I was reading Simone de Beauvoir's book. Then the first women's demonstration was held, protesting sexism in both the student movement and society as a whole. I was really excited. I decided, "This is my movement."

I became involved with the Women's Center in 1971. It was the only such center in Tokyo. But eventually the Center folded because of financial problems. We were spending our own money to keep it going. We don't have the same access to funds as you do here. If you want to start a project, you have to fund it yourself.

When the Center broke up in 1975, some women from the Center, myself included, got together to start a business—a women's print collective. We all had experience with printing from our work at the Center. Most of our customers were commercial businesses. Sometimes on the phone clients would ask to speak with our boss and were surprised to find that we were it.

Besides me, there was one other lesbian in the collective. Sometimes there were tensions between us and the straight women. We were out—there was no problem about that. The feminist community in Tokyo is small. Still there was a gap between us. For instance, once a woman was having a lot of problems with her boyfriend. But she wouldn't speak up. She thought that since we were lesbians she couldn't talk about it with us. When I asked her directly about it, she only cried, and still couldn't discuss it with us.

There is a lesbian feminist group in Tokyo, which is called *Mainichi Daiku* [Daily Lesbian—the first lesbian feminist organization in Tokyo]. When I came out, I had lesbian feminist friends so I never got involved with *Mainichi Daiku*; I didn't need that kind of social network. We would have small, private women's parties where we could drink and dance together, because we didn't have a women's bar in Tokyo. We invited *Wakakusa-No-Kai* [Young Growth—a gay women's organization] to join our party. They came but it didn't work out. Most of them are butch-fem types. Some of them were totally male-identified. They stared at me and other women just like a man would. It was uncomfortable for us. Most of my friends have a strong feminist point of view. We didn't enjoy the party. It is a dilemma for us.

Of course, there are also difficulties being lesbian and being involved with the women's movement. When I was first involved with the feminist movement,

there were very few lesbians. But now some lesbians are visible in the movement. It seems the women's movement first came from the issues of how men treat us in heterosexual relationships, or issues like birth control. Lesbians knew of the feminist movement, but it was always the problems of straight women which were discussed. Even today I believe that many straight feminists don't take lesbians seriously. It is a different world.

Being a lesbian in Japan is completely different from being a lesbian here. Lesbianism gets no visibility in Japan. Even if you are living with a woman, no one imagines that you might be a lesbian. You live in the closet all the time and it's really hard. When I talk to my mother she asks me when I'll get married. I tell her I'm not getting married, that I don't like men. She doesn't think I might be a lesbian. But here people would begin to wonder.

Also human relationships in general are much different in Japan. When I was a young girl I had a close girlfriend. In Japan, it is not strange for children or teenagers to show some affection for each other, like holding hands. It's a way of saying that we are good friends. Not sexual, but really intimate, a nice friendship to enjoy. Here I was surprised by people's reaction to touching. Everyone takes it seriously, like it is something sexual. When we are friends, we really get close. It seems here when you get close to someone you have to be lovers.

I came out while I was involved with the feminist movement. I had fallen in love with women before, but never thought of myself as a lesbian. I had a relationship with a woman that I met at one of these parties. I thought, "This is really good." I could talk to her and be with her more openly than with men. Even though she is identified as a lesbian, she did not have a feminist consciousness. I myself cannot separate the two. So we had a hard time.

In many ways the "lesbian lifestyle" is quite different in Tokyo from what I have seen here. It is not so hard to live as a single woman in Japan until you reach the age of 30 or so. Then there are a lot of social and economic pressures on single people. It is difficult to move from job to job because most employers prefer to hire people who are younger and more easily influenced. And people living outside of the traditional pattern of life often have fewer opportunities for promotion within their field.

Two years ago, we had a lot of conflicts in our printing collective, but no one realized there was a problem. I got frustrated and confused trying to explain my ideas. I felt that I needed a change in perspective and in environment so I'm here in the U.S.

I feel more comfortable living here as a lesbian than in Japan, but I don't feel a connection with the lesbian feminist community. Also, as I am learning and understanding more English, I feel racism, which I never felt in Japan. I have felt isolated, frustrated and ignored by American society for a long time but now I am getting used to this society and finding a support system among other Asian lesbians. □

So Full of



Longing

(This interview was conducted in Japan by a *Connexions* staff member in July 1982.)

Q: Is it possible to be openly lesbian in Tokyo?

A: Not really. Most people never think about lesbianism, so they wouldn't recognize one. I used to be a school teacher, and this restricted my ability to be even somewhat open. Today, I have more freedom.

Q: On the street are you recognized as a lesbian?

A: Usually not. Occasionally I am harassed by passersby. "Is that a man or a woman?" or "There goes a lesbian."

Q: Have there been gay pride marches in Tokyo?

A: No.

Q: Would you be comfortable being openly gay at a women's march, say at an International Women's Day rally?

A: No, within feminist circles there is not enough recognition that lesbians exist. It is not something I am publicly open about; I only tell close friends that I am a lesbian.

Q: Where do lesbians meet each other?

A: They go to meetings and parties held by my group. There are lesbian bars, but they are very commercial and so over-priced that many women can't afford them.

Q: Sometimes in the U.S. lesbians are harassed by the police. Is this a problem in Tokyo?

A: No. There is no law prohibiting homosexuality in Japan, so police harassment is rare.

Q: Is there violence against gays?

A: This comes in the form of blackmail, mostly used against gay men. For instance one gay man, after paying three million yen [\$12,000 U.S.] to keep someone from exposing him, committed suicide. For men, there is great social pressure to marry. It is difficult for men over 30 to get job promotions if they are not married. Eventually they will be forced to resign—though they won't be fired.

For women it's different. Many women who have a profession choose not to marry because marriage means more work for them. They make a rational choice not to marry and some feminists who stay single just have lovers. But since men can only benefit from marriage, society is more suspicious of men who remain single.

Since arranged marriage is still not uncommon in Japan, groups have formed that arrange "marriages of convenience" between gay men and women. This then satisfies families and employers.

Q: Do your parents know that you're a lesbian?

A: I think my parents have some idea. A while ago, when my mother was sick, my lover and I lived with her, but we never discussed it. It is a common belief that lesbianism is just a phase. Every once in a

while, they suggest again that I should get married. Actually once I nearly did get married just to satisfy them. But at the last moment, I didn't go through with it.

Q: Are there well-known women in Japan who are "out" as lesbians?

A: Among athletes there are many lesbians, but they all hide it. Also some performers, actresses. There was a singer who was portrayed in the popular press as having an asexual image. Then one magazine published an exposé of her and her American girlfriend. After this she was blacklisted. Since almost all entertainment is syndicated, she has basically disappeared; now she can only work in private night clubs.

Q: Have there been legal battles for which lesbian groups have organized support?

A: There was one case in which a husband tried to get custody of the children because his wife was a lesbian. But he was unable to produce concrete proof. In general it is very rare in Japan that a man would ask to live with the child.

Finally this woman was awarded custody and the usual state child support payments, but she was in such financial straits that she had to become a prostitute to support herself and her child. Any mother can get child allowance from the ward office if she can prove that she has no partner. But the payments are barely enough to cover feeding costs for the child alone.

Q: Can you tell me more about the history of lesbian organizations in Tokyo?

A: Thirteen years ago I helped form a group called *Wakakusa-No-Kai* [Young Growth] as a meeting place for lesbians. Once we announced our existence in a weekly women's magazine aimed at office workers. We got a flood of letters from all over Japan, mostly from middle-aged women in their 40's and 50's, explaining that they were married but had never felt in love with their husbands or any men and that they were hoping to someday have a woman lover. These letters were so full of longing. Through these letters, all kinds of women got together. One woman living in a small town was exposed through this letter writing. She was forced to change jobs and later committed suicide. So, you see, in the small local community, oppression is very strong.

Q: What was your coming out story?

A: I was 13 when I fell in love with a classmate in school and that continued for seven years. We had sexual experiences so we knew we were lovers, but it was a Christian school, so we felt a lot of guilt. However, it is accepted that young girls are very close friends. It is very natural for Japanese girls to walk hand-in-hand. Even into junior college, office girls walk arm-in-arm and it's accepted. Fifty years ago, the girls' high school system was started and it was single sex, so it's natural that girls are intimate with each other. But as they grow older, societal pressure to marry forces women apart. There are many married women who are not that close with their husbands. □



Yoshia Nobuko

Lesbian Poets

(Translated and excerpted from an interview in *Chi 007*, Swiss French lesbian quarterly, June 1983.)

Eroticism and sensuality have always had an important place in Japanese literature. The irrational, the emotional are at the base of Japanese culture. Extremes of sensuality are not included in the realm of what is taboo. Historically, some lesbian authors have incorporated their lesbian experiences into their novels.

One such author, Miamoto Yuriko, was a leftist who wrote at the beginning of this century. After she divorced her hus-

band, a well-known progressive, she traveled to Russia with her lover Yuassa Yoshiko and was there influenced by communist ideas. One of her novels, *Nobuko*, hints at her relationships with women.

In a letter written in 1924, Miamoto Yuriko wrote to Yuassa Yoshiko: "What are you doing now? Come, put your head on my shoulder and don't move. It's raining very hard outside. The grass is yellowing as if it were autumn. I am hot where I am imagining that you are touching me but everywhere else I am cold. I cannot find the words to call to you and I am suffering for it..."

Hirazuka Raicho, a contemporary of Miamoto Yuriko, also wrote in a feminist style, honestly, from her own experiences. She was a member of the Blue Stockings, the first Japanese feminist group. Her work was published in the feminist reviews of that period, yet her novels are not well known. Her lover, Otake Kuokichi, was a painter to whom she wrote in a letter dated 1910: "My heart is full of you and the memory of that wonderful night. I am not able to say how violent is my desire to hold you against me and to kiss you...I want you all to myself..."

Then there was also Yoshia Nobuko. Her *Tales of Flowers* are the only short stories in which lesbianism is openly expressed. Well written, her tales recount stories of loves between students and teachers, which are similar to *Claudine at School* by Colette.

Although Yoshia Nobuko has been dead for ten years, her popularity has not waned. Her novels are often made into films and shown on television. She was loved by many heterosexual women and in fact, a heterosexual feminist, Yoshitake Teruko, recently devoted an essay to Yoshia Nobuko and also published some letters Yoshia had sent to her lover. The day the book was published, older married women rushed to buy it. There were many different types of women there and one couldn't help but get the impression that their heterosexuality was only a reflection of a societal facade.

Yoshia Nobuko mostly wrote historical novels that depicted the era when Japan was closed to Western influence. These novels take place in a heterosexual context, but her portraits of women are always strong and positive. This is true for *The Women of the Tokugawa Shogun* in which she retraces the lives and lesbian loves of a harem of 1000 women. □

Further reading:

- "Lavender Kimono," in "Connexions," #3, Winter 1982.

Contact:

- L.F. Center, P.O. Box 84, Nakano-ku, Tokyo, Japan.
- Men's and Women's Alternative Lifestyle Group, c/o International Feminists of Japan, C.P.O. Box 1780, Tokyo, Japan.

Elegy

You breathe quietly in sleep
undisturbed by even the wind crossing the stand of pines
and I...I want to gather, hold in my hands
this living moment

You face the dark depths beyond the window
muttering uneasily into the dusk
I pedal the bike harder
through a tunnel of violently trembling trees

You couldn't wait
You lived faster than time
Even so
I try to keep alive
the way we lived it
what lived between us then

Oku Ikuhara
from *Are You There?*
a collection of poems, © 1982
translated by Nancy Nakayama

into a woman's world

In the last 100 years, mass Chinese migration to Malaysia has resulted in at least 36% of the population being of Chinese descent. Although the ethnic Chinese dominate Malaysia's business sector, they are considered second class citizens by the Malays.

The following interview with Jivan, a Chinese Malay who moved to Australia at the age of 17, was conducted by Barbara Hammer.

Q: Jivan, have you ever seen any Chinese lesbians in Malaysia?

A: Yes, but not many. I've seen probably about three or four in my whole lifetime. But they stood out as lesbians, because of the way they dressed and the way they were. They were very male in appearance and they were looked on as something odd. No one ever said anything about it; no one commented about it. But I noticed a difference. I think it was later, when I found out more about sex, that I realized they were lesbians.

Q: Are they the ones who were spinsters?

A: No. The spinsters were a certain group of servants who were kind of adopted by a group of women and looked after. They were taught to be servants, this was their career. They are very rare now. Their whole lives were devoted to being good cooks. They had a kind of integrity, and they were very expensive to hire because they were very professional. [Beginning in the early half of the 19th century, there was a trend toward Chinese women resisting marriage. These women preferred to be independent, choosing to enter the labor market. Many of them took jobs in the silk industry, but with that industry's decline, they became domestics. The spinsters formed sisterhoods, which besides providing mutual aid and support, also offered their members training in domestic skills and an extensive job-locating network.]

Q: Did they just work for women?

A: No, they worked for families. They dressed in white and black.

Q: Was there any connection between these women and lesbianism? Were they extremely independent?

A: Yes. I didn't realize anything about them being lesbians. Then when I was studying at the university in Adelaide, I was taking Southeast Asian history from this guy who was especially interested in Malaysia. He told me that they were lesbians, that there was a sisterhood kind of

thing, that they had a code, a sisterhood code. He said that not much was known about them, but that they lived together.

While they were working they'd stay in the homes where they worked. When they would have a day off every one or two weeks, they would go to a room that they shared. And it would be all these women living in very congested areas. I went to one once when my mother went to hire a servant and I remember seeing a whole lot of these women. Some were old, and they were cared for by the younger ones. In a Chinese society it's the family that's important, because when you grow old, the younger ones look after you. These women didn't live within the traditional family system, so they had to look after each other. It was a very protective thing.

Q: Was there any other kind of job besides this for an independent woman, a single woman, in China?

A: There are very few single women in Chinese society. In my mother's generation matchmaking was almost the only way that they got married. Most women and men at a certain age were encouraged to get married. If you're not married by the time you're 25, then the whole family starts to worry about it. So it was very rare to be unmarried.

Q: When did you first experience a woman? You had moved to Australia when you were 17 and grew up in a fairly cosmopolitan, even upper class Malaysian society, and so I imagine you were also upper class in Australia, in your marriage?

A: Yes, I married a dentist.

Q: What are your own experiences as a lesbian or bisexual and what are the cross-cultural differences as a Malaysian-Chinese woman in Australia? Were there any cultural attitudes or behaviors that had anything to do with your woman loving woman experience?

A: Well I've thought about it a lot because when it happened it took me by surprise. I couldn't figure it out. For me falling in love with a woman is like falling in love all over again, like that first love that everyone goes through. And it was such a strong experience for me that I couldn't comprehend it.

I've always found it easier to get on with women, be more open with women, be more myself. The first time it happened with her I thought I was going crazy. She invited me over to her house to stay. My husband had gone away, and she said "come and stay with me." I felt sexually attracted to her and I thought "Oh my God no, this is all wrong, this can't be happen-

ing to me." I was very afraid so I turned around in bed and went to sleep, but I was shaking. I remember I was thinking "Oh shit, let me out of here, what's happening, I can't take it. This is too weird." And then the second night I knew there was no escaping it because we had a very lovely day together and we were always physically very close. She was always hugging and kissing me and I just took it as being really good friends. And then my first experience with her that night just completely took me to another place. I knew I was in love. I didn't think about it. There wasn't time. I was just kind of swept away by this whole emotional thing.

In looking back, I see that men have been remote in my life and in my culture. My father was a remote person, I have always felt unloved by him. I didn't have any boyfriends at all in Malaysia when I left at age 17. I don't know how to relate to men. And then in this love affair I realized something very crucial to me, which was that I had been trying to relate to men and found it very difficult and it was so easy with women. And from then on it was just going into a woman's world.

Q: Did you feel free sexually with her, about being touched and touching back?

A: Oh yes. I felt that always with the men I've had experience with, it was all kind of dominated by penis power. The whole drive was to have his orgasm and be finished with it. But with her and with women I always feel much more touching, loving at another level.

Q: Why don't you identify as lesbian then, why do you identify as bisexual? Everything you say is very lesbian.

A: I am still attracted to men. I have a male lover now.

Q: And you have a female lover?

A: Yes, I always have about two or three ever since I left my husband.

What do you get from relating to men?

A: Well, when I left my husband I didn't want to relate to men for about a year. I fell in love with three women. I don't really think a lot about my life. Things happened and I lived with it, and that was what happened with these women: I fell in love with them. And then I found a few men attractive and I started spending time with them and having sexual relationships with men again. My idea about myself is that in any human being there is the male and the female inside. My female aspect is ok. I love her. Maybe from the first time I had a woman lover I was saying no to men and that was in some way for me asserting myself as a person. I feel quite happy about where I am, what I say, where it stands for me. □

Related reading:

- "Marriage and Resistance in Rural Kwantang," by Marjorie Topley in "Women in China," Stanford University Press, 1975.
- "A Case Study: The Spinsters of Kwantang," in "Dimensions in Aging, Culture and Health," Bergin Publishers, 1981.

"Evans' wife stoutly maintained that she never knew the secret of her presumed husband's sex."

Out In The Outback

(From *Gay Community News*, Australian gay monthly, Feb. 1980.)

In 1879, it was discovered that Edward de Lacy Evans was in fact a woman, despite having lived twenty years as a man and having married three times.

Evans had arrived in Australia on the "Iris Monarch" as Ellen Tremaye in 1857. She had shared a berth with one of the female passengers, Rose Kelly, who when she caught cholera, was left at Rio de Janeiro. Tremaye then moved into the berth of another woman, Mary Ann Delahunty, and at the end of the trip Tremaye declared herself to be a man and announced her intentions to marry Delahunty.

The *Argus* (8/9/1879) reported: "During the whole of the voyage remarks had been made as to the peculiar habits and manners of Tremaye. Her fellow passengers would remark to each other, 'Don't that look like a boy dressed up in girl's clothes?' In fact she had every appearance of being a boy."

It was discovered when investigating a robbery on board that she had in her luggage a small trunk bearing the name Edward de Lacy Evans, that was filled with men's clothing—everything from underwear to boots and hat.

Her second marriage in 1859 was to Sarah Moore, who bore two children during their marriage. The two lived as Mr. and Mrs. Edward de Lacy Evans, farming in Emerald Creek near Bendigo. Later, in 1860, Evans took a job in a nearby mine, where she continued to work until 1879.

In 1867 her second wife Sarah died in childbirth and in 1868 Evans married another woman, Julia Marquand. Evans had a strenuous job breaking quartz, and no one suspected her as a woman, despite the fact that she was, for a man, effeminate. "(He is) feminine as regards formation of features, but carries a decidedly masculine expression, though the face is as clean of hair as that of an infant. He is of rather short stature, regarded as a man, being about 5 feet 4 inches height." (*Frearson's Weekly* 27/9/1879).

In June 1878 Mrs. Julia Evans gave birth to a child, and Evans' work deteriorated and she became lethargic. In July 1879 Evans fell down a mine shaft and suffered a severe head wound. As a result of the head injury she began to develop

signs of insanity and was transferred to Kew Mental Hospital.

One element in the story which remains a complete mystery is the story behind the wives' children. It is possible that Tremaye and her wives wished to have children to complete the picture of a "happy family" and thus the wives, by mutual agreement entered into "extramarital" sex. However, the depression that Tremaye fell into after the birth of Julia Evan's child may indicate the conception was without her knowledge. The wives remained insistent that they did not know their husband's true sex. It would seem unlikely if they had had intercourse to produce children, that they would have been unaware of the differences in their relationships with Tremaye.

The papers of 1879 show a fairly sympathetic portrayal of Evans/Tremaye. There is wonderment at the fact that she was able to deceive those around her, and the news did get front page coverage in *Frearson's Weekly*. As would be expected of that era, no mention was made of the fact that Tremaye's relationships were in fact lesbian, but a remark that her relationship with Rose Kelly was "very intimate" (*Australasian Sketcher* Sept. 27, 1879), and the sentence that "Evans had always been most industrious and attentive and affectionate to the women he married" (*Illustrated Australian News* Jan. 10, 1879) make the situation clear enough. Yet in the 1879 papers, no negative feelings are conveyed, but the positive aspects of her relationships, "attentive and affectionate" are stressed. The papers report visits by friends concerned for her health when she was admitted to hospital. The discovery does not seem to have made them turn against her. There is also a humane concern about the effect of the publicity upon Tremaye:

"The exposure nevertheless has so affected Evans that it is believed she will leave the colony as soon as her state of health will admit of her being allowed to leave the institution." (*Illustrated Australian News* 1/10/1879)

A century later, in 1979, the incident was again written up (in the *Sydney Daily Mirror* 20/11/1979), and it is interesting to see the change in slant. Sexual matters have certainly become more open, but the emphasis is on the sensationalism of the event as a type of "sex scandal". The *Mirror* starts the article by describing Evans' actions as a "sex masquerade," and has as



one of its sub-headings "Sex change" referring to the male impersonation. Another heading is "Ellen Tremaye's 'wives'." The first paragraph states she "became insane and was sent to the lunacy ward of the local hospital." Lesbianism/male impersonation is equated with insanity. Only at the end of the article do we discover it was the result of a head-wound.

It is also interesting to note the difference in treatment of the mystery surrounding the children. The *Australian Sketcher* (27/9/1879) merely poses the question, giving no answer:

"Some 15 months ago the woman between whom and the supposed man the form of marriage had been gone through (sic), gave birth to a child, and strange as the statement undoubtedly is, this woman passing as Evans' wife stoutly maintained that she never knew the secret of her presumed husband's sex."

The *Mirror* (20/11/1979), however, is determined to cancel out the possibility of lesbianism:

"If they did not know (that she was a woman) all three women must have been duped and been prepared to live with a husband in what was a marriage in name only."

Edward de Lacy Evans' wives do not seem to have been simply living with her in a lesbian relationship." There seems no evidence for this.

It is questionable whether the press has become more "enlightened" over the last century. □

Related resource:

● "She Even Chewed Tobacco," slide show about women passing in San Francisco at the turn of the century, by the San Francisco Gay History Project, distributed by Iris Films, Box 5353, Berkeley, CA 94705, (415) 549-3192.

Just as this book remained buried for half a century, so too were the lives of lesbians in Mexico clandestinely lived.

Demons, Duelers and Poets

(Translated from *Fem*, Mexican feminist bi-monthly, vol. 7, no. 26, poems translated by Shana Ritter.)

Some years ago my *compañera* found a book, *Lesbian Stories*, in her family library in the conservative city of Guadalajara, Mexico. The fact that the book had no date, publishing house or author reveals the social attitude towards lesbianism at that time. Just as this book remained buried for half a century beneath a mountain of innocuous titles, its spine covered by cardboard, paper and fabric, so too were the lives of lesbians in Mexico clandestinely lived.

Women were victims of a doubly oppressive tradition; one inherited from the indigenous people and one imposed by colonialization. The extremely rigid moral code that ruled Aztec women's lives was passed on from generation to generation, mother to daughter, through the oral tradition:

"...try to be good because if not, who will want to marry you? Wherever you go, go with modesty and decorum, never stare at those who come towards you, but keep your eyes on where you are going..."

Little is known of lesbians in pre-hispanic Mexico. Torquemada [a sixteenth-century Spanish-born historian of Mexico] relates that "women who dressed in men's clothes were hanged." From Clavijero [a seventeenth-century Mexican Jesuit historian] we know that "the *marimachos* [lesbian demons] were known as *patlaches* and given the death penalty."

When the conquistadors arrived in Tenochtitlán one of the prevailing judicial decrees was: "if a woman sins with another woman, they are both killed by strangling them with a garrot." It is probable that the women "sinned" among themselves or the decree that penalized homosexual relations would not have been found in the laws of different towns.

Colonial women did not have any more of a possibility of freely expressing their sexuality. In both cultures the manifest destiny of women was matrimony and motherhood.

Two women broke this system of submission and renunciation: Catalina de Erauso and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Catalina, poorly nicknamed "lieutenant nun", was known for her thousand brave adventures, her masculine clothing, and the



Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, 1651-1695, was a remarkable woman. At the age of three she demanded to be taught to read. She learned quickly and so great was her desire to learn, that by the time she reached a "marriageable" age, she entered the convent in order to continue her studies. She read widely and wrote on scientific and religious, as well as literary, topics. This offended her religious superiors who felt it was inappropriate that she should spend so much time on worldly matters. When Sor Juana was asked to give up her books, she replied that she didn't need the books. "I was not studying in books, I studied all the things that God created, and they served me as books. I saw nothing without reflection, heard nothing without consideration, even the smallest, most mundane thing."

speed of her sword which she frequently used in duels for the love of some woman.

The other is Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, our sublime poet, whose friendship with the marquesa of Mancera, the wife of the viceroy of Mexico, is filled with suggestions. "The impression that Sor Juana made on the *Virreina* [viceroy's wife] must have been quite profound because she was soon admitted to the royal palace with the title 'much beloved of the Señora Virreina'."

There is much evidence of Sor Juana's love for the marquesa, though critics insist it is only "poetic license" when she refers to her as "Lisi sweetheart" or "divine Laura." Can this poem make it any clearer?

Since that blessed day
that your beauty first I saw
so completely did I surrender
that my actions no longer remained mine.
With this, my lady, I show
and dare to tell my love....

Well I know it is boldness
but love is a witness
that I know not what I say
because I am aware of what I feel.

Or this one attesting to her great love
which would continue to grow, even in
death:

In the life that was yours always
divine Laura who always will be
upon the wild beast of death,
which continues to follow me
I wish to place my foot in
triumphant victory.

I admired death's audacity
Yet even under its power
it could not hold her
since with you myself I freed.

To cut the unspun thread,
I saw death's scissors open wide
Ah death, you stingy beast, I said;
Here Laura's commands preside.
At that moment in haste she fled
and left me here alone, for you to die.

Some years after the *Virreina's* death Sor Juana wrote the following poem:

So in love with Laura's beauty
heaven stole her away to its heights,
because it was not right that her pure light
shine on these unhappy valleys,
or because the mortals, so taken by
the beautiful architecture of her body,
admiring such symmetry
judged themselves unfortunate.
May they die with you, Laura,
now deceased,
the affections they still wish you uselessly
the eyes you no longer permit to see
that beautiful light you once conceded.
Have compassion
for that very death
that, so exacting, could not pardon you.
Lament the bitter luck of love
which, once anxious to delight in you,
wished for eyes with which to see you,
eyes that serve now only to cry for you.

There follows a silence of three centuries, broken only recently, when in 1978 lesbians organized, took to the streets, and demonstrated for liberation of women, ethnic and sexual minorities, and related issues. We now recognize ourselves as a political movement that struggles for the establishment of a new society, more just and free, in which no one has to hide or disguise themselves in order to enjoy a fundamental right of human beings—the right to love. □



How to Remember Her?

(Excerpted from an unpublished article written by Pia Garde, translated from Swedish by Pia and Irma.)

Born in the shipping and industrial city of Göteborg, Sweden in 1900, Karin Boye is remembered as a poet, novelist, critic and as a lesbian.

In all the articles and books written about Karin Boye, she is portrayed as an almost perfect human being. It is as if her contemporaries decided it was acceptable for her to be a lesbian considering the many tragedies which befell her. They talk about her as an "angel on earth" or they say, "Let's not touch this; this is none of our business, let her rest in peace."

Margit Abenius published a biography of Boye in 1950, nine years after her last and successful attempt at suicide. Abenius felt Boye was not to blame for the way she led her life. She was simply the product of her era—the war, the leftists, the uncertainty of world politics. Boye was seduced and confused; she was in the wrong place at the wrong time, being led there by bad influences who were drugged out of their minds by Freud or Reich. The idea that Boye might have liked her lifestyle was not considered. For the most part, she is viewed as an unhappy soul and this is unfair to her memory.

As a child, Boye excelled as a student. Her parents tutored her in world literature including Nietzsche, Tagore and Schopenhauer. At the age of 15, Boye became a Buddhist, studying Sanskrit and practicing meditation. A few years later she became interested in Christianity, and at the age of 20 entered a strict, institutionalized Christian seminary. At 22, Boye continued her studies at the university in Uppsala.

Boye was short, chubby and had long, beautiful hair. At the university she was looked upon as a Madonna-type. Without warning, she cut her hair off and joined the international worker's movement, Clarté. Boye began writing beautiful love poems that everybody thought were written to a male poet, but actually she was writing to a woman librarian, whom from a distance she loved intensely.

Through Clarté, Boye met Leif Björk, who was seven years younger than she and they were married in 1929. Boye was now working full-time as a critic, translator and

writer, receiving occasional grants from her publisher. Boye and her husband were at the center of leftist political activity; both were popular and seemed to know everyone.

Together with two others, Boye started an alternative magazine called *Spektrum*. *Spektrum* was something totally new, presenting among other things, the latest in psychological analysis, poetry and Russian literature. Boye wrote some of her most interesting articles for this magazine. Her personal life, however, was falling apart. Boye's marriage dissolved; she had two male lovers and a very stormy love affair with the wife of one of Sweden's most prominent poets.

After this affair ended, Boye went to Berlin. She was well aware of her attraction to women and she wanted to be cured through analysis. During her two months of therapy all she did was cry, and her doctor warned her friends that she would be dead within ten years. She had a deeply rooted depression, the doctor said, stemming from aggressions left over from her childhood. Boye was worried that if she were to work out these aggressions and thus be cured of her lesbianism, that she might be unable to write. She had also discovered the active gay life in Berlin. To solve her dilemma, she met with a Norwegian analyst who gave her the "go ahead" to be a lesbian. She was then able to make love with women for the first time without guilt.

It was in Berlin that Boye met Margot Hanel, a 19-year-old woman of half Jewish descent. From the day Hanel met Boye, she could not live without her. Boye probably loved her also, but in a different way. Boye left Germany without Hanel. Since times in Germany in the early 1930's were getting increasingly rougher for Jews and Hanel's situation was becoming more desperate, she left her family and moved to Sweden. Hanel told her family she was going to marry Mr. Karl Boye and after marrying for convenience, moved in with Karin Boye.

Hanel was a very loving person, willing to give herself over completely to Boye. She was the first person that loved Boye for what she was in body and soul, not just because she was a famous person. They seem to have had a beautiful sexual relationship, and that was important to Boye. Boye's friends, however, had no idea she

was a lesbian. The official version of their relationship was that Hanel was a poor refugee whom Boye was kind enough to take care of. To the outside world, Hanel was a very young woman with no occupation who spoke rather bad Swedish.

Having resigned from *Spektrum* and with lowered book sales, Boye began to have money troubles. She still worked as a critic from time to time and through her contacts with several organizations she earned a steady, but meager income. Boye decided to take a teaching post at a boarding school outside of Stockholm. This decision enabled her to get away from the little apartment she shared with Hanel in hopes she could begin writing again. So she taught and tried to write while Hanel went to school in Stockholm. The two women were able to visit on weekends and holidays.

What we know more about from this time are Boye's suicide attempts. According to her mother, she started thinking about suicide when she was around 14, during World War I, and it is rumored that she tried to commit suicide many times during her lifetime. According to her friends, death was special to Boye. When she was very happy she wanted to die, and she symbolically ended periods of her life by attempting suicide. She was always careful to give hints and warnings as to her intent, however, so her friends could rescue her. Boye also cried a lot, often without warning in the middle of laughter, joy, sadness, anything. At the boarding school she tried to commit suicide seven times, but her friends were always there to save her.

The school where Boye taught was the center of much activity and the pressure of the times began to affect Boye. In the midst of Hitler's march on Europe, the school served as a sort of refugee center for people from all over Europe. The headmaster hired them as teachers, even if they were not, to save them from Hitler. The school was also the site for several peace conferences.

Boye and Hanel's relationship remained relatively peaceful until 1931 when Boye received a letter from a long time friend, (a woman whom she had envisioned as her spiritual mother) Anita Nathorst. The two women had first met in 1918 during a religious summer course in the country. Nathorst was studying theology and was thought to have had a lesbian rela-

tionship with Boye's former headmistress, Lydia Wahlstrom, a well-known historian.

Nathorst wrote Boye telling her she had been diagnosed with cancer and had little time left to live. (She had had one breast removed and her wound failed to heal properly in the remaining ten years of her life.) Boye went to Nathorst as a friend and soon realized she had loved her from the very beginning. She wrote fantastic love poems which declared that all her feelings for Nathorst had been waiting, sleeping, and now were bursting out. Unfortunately, Nathorst did not share Boye's romantic feelings. She was very ill and was taking large doses of morphine. Boye wrote in a letter to a colleague, "It is damned! When you find the love of your life, she is so burned out by radium she does not have any lust left." Hanel knew that Boye loved Nathorst as she had never loved before, and she had no other choice than to accept this. While waiting for Boye's return, she had started to learn to be a bookbinder.

Boye's writing flourished during this period. In 1940 she published what would become her greatest novel, *Kalloccain*. The novel centers around a country in the future filled with all imaginable horror. It is a mixture of fascism and Boye's own inner landscape, and speaks aloud to the fears everyone holds inside. When Boye wrote the novel, the Germans were already all over—in Norway, Denmark—when were they coming to Sweden? So much was going on in Boye's private life, in being in love with a woman who was slowly dying, and the prospect of a life with only Hanel brought on an attack of paranoia. She started believing that the Germans would come and get her because of her book.

How realistic her fears were is hard to tell. But these fears and paranoia seemed to encourage her to write better poetry than ever before. They also drove her to her breaking point. One evening after Nathorst was too tired to go to a restaurant with Boye, Boye packed her things, gave all sorts of hints of suicide and went into the forest. There she sat down next to a big stone, opened up a bottle of soda water, took some pills and fell asleep. Her friends began searching for her and the police were notified. Hanel waited for Boye's rescue, reading the love letters she had received from her over and over again. Boye would have been rescued had there not been a change in the weather which brought snow and cold.

Boye was found days later after the snow had almost melted. The press exploited her death, describing it in such beautiful terms that it became almost natural that she had died. Quotations were used from her poetry as if to show that she had known about her death all along. One of her colleagues wrote a poem called "Dead Amazon" and made a connection between her death and the fact that the Germans reached Thermopoli in Greece the same day she died. And so myth became "fact"; she died because of the war, together with her Greek brethren.

Boye was given a large funeral arranged by her mother. Hanel was not invited, but she attended anyway sitting at the back of the chapel. Boye's mother must have known of her daughter's lesbian relationship with Hanel. In any event, she knew Hanel possessed love letters from Boye. Boye's mother went to the extreme of going to seances saying she received messages from Boye to have all her love letters and poems to Hanel burned. Hanel handed everything over to Boye's mother. This left her with nothing apart from the material things she had inherited from Boye. In a letter to a friend, Hanel wrote that if Boye only had told her that she could not live any longer, and asked her to go with her, she would have. About a month after Boye's death, Hanel wrote out a will and gassed herself.

Boye's life need not be seen as a tragedy. One can interpret her as a passionate soul, motivated by her desire to write. When she was writing, she was happy

because she was able to transform all her experiences, good and bad, into words. Much of her poetry is ecstatic, warm, sensual, but most of the time critics forget that element of her writing because they are too focused on her death.

In a letter to a friend, Boye wrote that she wanted it all: the pain, the heat, the love, the despair, the fantastic light, the spring. Whatever it cost her, she chose to pay that price rather than live a dull half life. She always thought it best to freeze to death, because it is said you see wonderful visions as you die. □

Further reading:

- "Drabbad av renhed", Boye's biography available only in Swedish by Margit Abenius, Stockholm, Bonnier, 1950.

- "Kalloccain", an English translation of Boye's utopian novel, University of Wisconsin Press, 1966.

FAREWELL

I would have wanted
to have awakened you to a
nakedness as a naked early spring evening,
when the stars swarm up above
and the earth burns under melting snow.
I would have wanted to have seen you just once
sink in the darkness of the creative chaos,
I would have wanted to have seen your eyes as
wide open space,
ready to be filled,
I would have wanted to have seen your hand as
open flowers,
empty, fresh, and in waiting.

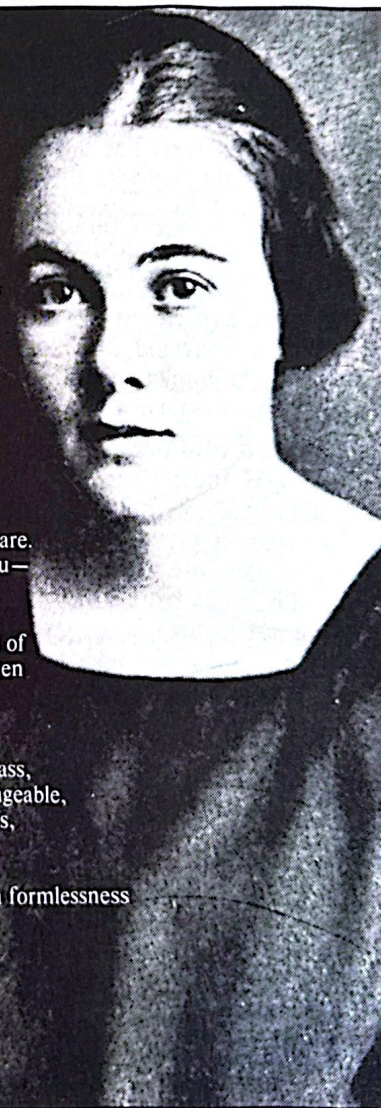
You leave, and none of this have I given you.
I never reached there to where your being lies bare.
You leave, and none of me do you take with you—
You leave me to defeat.

I remember another farewell: we were slung out of
the crucible as one in the same being, and when
we separated, we could no longer tell
which part was you and which part was me...

But you—you have left my hand as a bowl of glass,
so as finished as the dead thing and also as changeable,
and as without memories as the light fingerprints,
which are washed away by water.

I would have wanted to have awakened you to a formlessness
as a formless flickering flame,
which finally finds its living form, its own...
defeat, oh defeat!

—Karin Boye





The Unfinished Story

PREAMBLE/ANTECEDENTS

She was born one day, any day, in some place, any place. They looked at her from top to bottom. Yes, she was a girl. She had all of the things that little girls have and none of the things that little boys have. This was clear and evident.

She grew. Yes, like all other girls, she grew.

One day she looked at herself. She looked at herself and touched herself. "Yes I am a girl. And it's very nice to be a girl." But, oh the disappointment! She didn't like playing the way girls play. She was bored playing with them, but enjoyed watching them. And the boys? They were so insipid and foolish! They deceived themselves. The boys were boring to look at, but she could play with them.

She continued growing, growing like a girl, naturally. Soon they called her "*señorita*" because her breasts had grown, and "it" had arrived.

She had everything that there was to have: school and a boyfriend. She didn't like her boyfriend as much as the books on the shelves, and that was really a pain.

The girl, who was no longer such a girl, had, besides, by chance, a girl friend. When they looked each other in the eyes, yes, the two of them, —who else?—something happened that even they couldn't name. One day, also by chance, or perhaps it was spring, she kissed her on the lips. She knew that the lips were not enough.

Anita, who now—I don't know why—called herself *Lesbi-anita*, left her boyfriend. They say it was because of that bookshelf.

She didn't leave her girl friend. She submerged herself in her, looking and finding all that she wanted to find.

THE MIDDLE

What cannot be explained

As you can imagine, *Lesbianita* continued along this atypical, extravagant path. We cannot recount all the details here. Questions like: How did a woman's breasts please her? How many positions did she adopt when she made love? What were they? Where did she prefer to kiss? Did she play some special game? What did she caress with? Did she like to feel the skin of her lover? Was she ticklish on her feet? Did

she undress herself or did she let herself be undressed? During the day or at night? In bed or in some place else? Was she aggressive or passive or both at the same time? Did she smoke a cigarette "after"? Did she pay attention to the way she walked, gestured, smoked?...to her voice, her hair, her eyes, her ears...? Did she nibble?

No. Questions such as these are not proper in serious Conferences on Sexuality. Thus we will opt for discretion and silence, and we will leave this space open—as always—to the imagination.

What can be explained

One day she found a place she liked. It was a place where she could spend most of her time among women.

Here she learned a lot. She learned all about contraception and abortion. She was haunted. Never had these problems occurred to her. Then they taught her that she wasn't a lesbian, but just a woman. Naturally, then they decided that she had masculine characteristics, and that was already more complicated. A woman in a masculine role? It should be said that *Lesbianita* never understood very well what the heterosexuals label masculine/feminine.

There came a moment in which she felt uneasy: There were women who talked of going "beyond sexuality." But it seemed that this position didn't find too much favor.

One thing that made her laugh and that she didn't take too seriously was what they called "bisexuality," that is to say—if someone doesn't understand it—plainly and simply, "two sexualities."

Lesbianita always thought that it must be something like having two intelligences (bi-intellectual), two stomachs (bi-stomachic), two hearts (bi-hearted).

Never had she imagined that these things existed. But of course! You don't think that all women are the same.

Each one chooses what pleases her and has what she wants to have...

CONCLUSION

She was born, one day, any day, in some place, any place. She was a girl.

She kissed her on the lips. She knew that the lips were not enough.



In order to encourage discussions on lesbian sexuality, the preceding short story, *The Unfinished Story*, written by Gretel Ammann, and the following position paper were delivered at the Conference on Sexuality, which took place in June 1983 in Madrid.

For those of us in the *Colectivo Feminista Lesbiana de Madrid* [Lesbian Feminist Collective of Madrid], it is absolutely essential that the feminist movement not accept one day longer that sexuality, in capital letters, is heterosexuality.

We believe that the only defense of free sexuality is to resist the norms. The great danger is that in criticizing the dominant sexuality, the [straight] feminist movement indicates only the limits, the frustrations, and miseries of heterosexuality such as it is today, and does not take as a point of departure, rejection both of heterosexuality as a norm and as an imposition.

Defense of lesbianism is not only defense of lesbians' right to love. It is an effective way to destroy the prevailing myth of vaginal sexuality, to end the identification of sexuality with reproduction, to describe our own sexuality as women, not just as a function of men, and to question the patriarchal conception of sexuality.

During the first years of the feminist movement, 1975-76, sexuality was barely discussed. A general acceptance of the heterosexual norm prevailed. Statements concerning sexuality were of this genre: The recognition of the right to control our bodies requires the dissemination of information on contraception and the legalization of abortion.

Although a few magazines and papers presented more advanced positions, they still fell short. For example, *Dones en Lluita*, the feminist publication from Barcelona, included writings by lesbians in its first issue. Also, at the First Catalan Conference of Women in May, 1976, in the paper presented by the organizers, entitled "Women and Sexuality", the heterosexual norm was questioned. However, at the same time, they talk about coitus as the

sexual act and there is no questioning of the vaginal orgasm, no vindication of the clitoris.

When we began to meet as a group of lesbians in Madrid, more than two years ago, we were aware that the consciousness around lesbianism among the various feminist groups was very poor, so much so that lesbians working within the feminist movement were not open about their lesbianism. Outside the movement, there was total silence. We discussed it, and later debates with other feminist groups confirmed that puritanical attitudes abounded.

We thought that a good way to change this situation was to organize ourselves as lesbians, and that in this way the silence could not continue. Experience has shown us that we were right, and today we can say that things have changed in the whole movement in Madrid.

The Collective serves several purposes: (as we have repeated until we are blue in the face) to see to it that the feminist movement reject the belief that sexuality is heterosexuality; to help us live our sexuality in a satisfying way; and to be a medium for other lesbians to become feminists. Many women have come to us to meet and know other lesbians, women who otherwise might never have become feminists.

We choose to be an organization that is united by the fact that we are all lesbians, although we have diverse feminist tendencies. This is not always easy, but it has its positive aspects. If we are able to overcome the sectarian attitudes within our collective, and to appreciate and value all that we have in common, then we are consistent with the politics of rejecting patriarchal society. □

(Story and position paper translated from documents published by The Lesbian Feminist Collective of Madrid, May 1983.)

Contact:

- *Colectivo Feminista Lesbiana de Madrid*, Librería de Mujeres, calle San Cristobal, 17, Madrid.

FEMINIST ISSUES

A Publication of the Feminist Forum, Berkeley, California

Feminist Issues is a journal of feminist social and political theory, devoted to an international exchange of ideas. It includes articles by English-language feminists as well as translations of feminist texts by women of other countries.

Current and Forthcoming Articles By

Monique Wittig, Fatima Mernissi, Arlie Hochschild, Robin Lakoff, Paola Tabet, Colette Guillaumin, Barbara Christian

Published biannually, Founded 1980.

Subscription Rates: Individuals \$15/1 yr., \$28/2 yrs.; Institutions \$25/1 yr., \$47/2 yrs.; Domestic first class add \$3.50/yr.; Outside the U.S.A. add \$2/yr. surface mail, \$7/yr. airmail. Single copies (min. order \$10): \$7.50/individuals, \$12.50/institutions. ISSN: 0270-6679

Please address inquiries and orders to:
Transaction Periodicals Consortium
Department 7010
Rutgers - The State University
New Brunswick, NJ 08903



conditions

a feminist magazine

Now Edited By:



Dorothy Allison
Elly Bulkin
Cheryl Clarke
Carroll Oliver
Mirtha N. Quintanales
Aida Santiago

We are concerned that women's/lesbian publications have often failed to reflect the experiences and viewpoints of Third World, working-class and older women. *CONDITIONS* includes work in a variety of styles by both published and unpublished writers of many different backgrounds. We welcome submissions from all women who feel that a commitment to other women is an integral part of their lives.

Box 56A Van Brunt Station Brooklyn, NY 11215

Subscriptions (3 issues): \$15. individual: \$25. institutions: \$9. special "hardship" rate: \$20. or more - supporting subscription.

Single Issues: \$6. individual; \$9. institutions.

Back Issues (five & subsequent issues still available): \$4.50 each.

Overseas distribution: add \$2. for subscription, \$.50 for single issue.

WIN NEWS
WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL NETWORK
187 GRANT ST., LEXINGTON, MASS. 02173. U.S.A.
WIN NEWS. FRAN P. NOSKEN, EDITOR/PUBLISHER

WIN NEWS IS AN OPEN PARTICIPATORY QUARTERLY BY, FOR AND ABOUT WOMEN REPORTS ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN & WOMEN'S RIGHTS AROUND THE GLOBE

SUBSCRIPTIONS \$25.00 Institutional Check // \$20.00 Individual Check POSTAGE OVERSEAS ADD \$3.00 // AIRMAIL ADD \$9.00 ALL BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE FROM 1975 TO PRESENT

WIN NEWS started publication 1975-1976 International Women's Year & supports the IWC Women's Action Plan. WIN NEWS has ongoing columns on women and health, women and development, women and media, environment, violence, United Nations and more. International career opportunities are listed, an investigation on genital/sexual mutilations regularly reports, news from Africa, the Middle East, Asia & Pacific, Europe and the Americas are featured in every issue.

YOU ARE INVITED TO SEND NEWS AND PARTICIPATE!

"It is the first Eastern European film to deal with the subject of homosexuality, specifically a lesbian relationship."

Another Way

(Translated from *Lambda Nachrichten*, Austrian gay magazine, No. 1, 1983.)

In December 1982 we, four Viennese lesbians, went to Budapest to establish contacts with Hungarian lesbians. With the help of a gay friend we met Valie, who took us to Egyetem, Budapest's only gay bar. Egyetem could be a gay bar anywhere in Western Europe, but a little more fashionable. Sitting around a table, we watched all the women coming in. Each time a new woman entered the bar, Valie would shake her head no, not a lesbian.

That night, we and some of the employees were the only lesbians in the place. Valie knows about 60 lesbians, of whom 10 are good friends of hers. Valie is married to a gay man. There is heavy heterosexual pressure, especially at work, so getting married to another homosexual makes life much easier. Sometimes you can meet women at work, but it takes a lot of patience.

On another night a group of us got together at Marta and Szilvia's house. They've been living together for years. Marta recently fell in love with an East German lesbian, and she and Szilvia had stopped sleeping together. Steady relationships and faithfulness are highly valued, especially in an environment where it is difficult to find other out-of-the-closet lesbians. Marta told us that there are many women who are curious to try "it," once they find out that you are a lesbian. But they would never call themselves homosexual and might only agree to be referred to as "a little bit bisexual."

"It's fashionable to be bisexual," explains Lenke, a lesbian photographer, "among my circle of friends, radical intellectual types. I know some women who have had sex with other women without calling themselves homosexual. They would never think of calling themselves gay. I am the only one who calls herself *leszbikus*. I don't care if my lovers are bisexual. I have only heard about one lesbian couple who live together with children. It is much more difficult to be a lesbian in the working class than in my circle of artist friends."

While we were in Budapest, we went to see the film *Egymásra Nézve* [Another Way]. Even though it had been playing for two months at a fairly large movie theater, it was nearly sold out. All the Hungarian lesbians we spoke with had already seen the film several times. □

What follows is a description of the film based on an article which appeared in *Outrage* (June 1983), a new Australian monthly for lesbians and gays. Up until now, the film has yet to be distributed in the U.S., although it has been shown at a couple of film festivals.

Another Way is based on the popular novel, *Outside the Law and Inside*, written by the Hungarian author, Erzsebet Galgoczi, in 1980. Directed by Karoly Makk, it is set in Budapest in the politically volatile period after the 1956 Hungarian uprising. It is the first Eastern European film to deal with the subject of homosexuality, specifically a lesbian relationship.

Two themes are used throughout the film. One follows the issue of freedom of expression and political corruption and oppression in Hungary during this period. The other explores the dynamics of a lesbian relationship between two journalists living in Budapest. The film makes constant connections between the two women's love affair and the political situation. The individual power of choice is portrayed in both situations as being imposed upon from the outside, that is, by society and "the State," affecting the ability to make independent decisions.

One of the women, Eva, is a politically active journalist who comes to Budapest from a small country village in the early 1950s. After spending two years of political exile from journalism, Eva finally secures employment with the weekly newspaper *The Truth*.

Eva is presented as a vibrant, passionate and courageous woman who is very committed to her political beliefs, and is unable to make a compromise on any level.

Eva shares her new office with Livia, the woman with whom Eva forms a relationship. Livia is presented in a completely different way from Eva. Her traditional and stereotypical beauty is flaunted in the film, portraying her as an innocent, sexually attractive woman who is uncommitted and not passionately involved in anything. Livia is married to a conservative and emotionally dependent army officer, who offers her traditional security but little else. Their relationship begins to suffer once Livia meets Eva. Livia's lack of purpose through most of the film, along with her inability to trust her own instincts and decisions leads her to cling to the "security" and familiarity of male relationships.

Livia's beauty and sexual attractiveness is exploited by the fact that often she



Egymásra Nézve

Another Way
Hungary 1982

is wearing revealing clothes and displaying overtly seductive behavior. Eva's "passive" beauty, however is used as a subtle and effective contrast to Livia. Eva's character maintains a powerfully passionate attractiveness that is enhanced by the strength and conviction of her personality.

Responses to the film have been varied. Some women believe that the male director portrays lesbians in a negative and tragic light. Others have found that despite the ending, the women's relationship is presented in a strong and positive way. Eva's character especially explores her political convictions and lesbianism as a whole, treating each as important and integral.

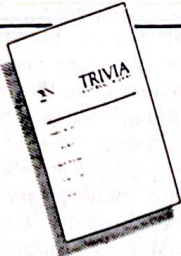
Makk, when asked by a male reporter whether some lesbian-feminists might see the film as "a voyeuristic male fantasy", responded that the novel on which the film was based had many autobiographical elements and that the author has declared herself "well satisfied with the film." He hoped that lesbian-feminists would ultimately find the treatment of the central relationship "sensitive and honest." □

Related reading:

- "Women in Eastern Europe," *"Connexions"* #5, Summer 1982.
- Women in Eastern Europe Group, c/o C.R.E.E.S., University of Birmingham, Birmingham, England.



Joliga Jankowska—Cislaik in *Another Way*
Outrage



TRIVIA
A JOURNAL OF IDEAS.

The new magazine devoted to radical feminist scholarship, theory and reviews.

Articles by: • Andrea Dworkin
• Kathleen Barry
• Janice Raymond
• Kate Clinton
• Natalia Malachowskaja

TRIVIA is published three times a year.

\$10 year—individuals
\$12 year—institutions
out-of-U.S.
\$ 4.50—Sample Copy

TRIVIA
P.O. Box 606
N. Amherst, MA
01059

THE LEFT INDEX

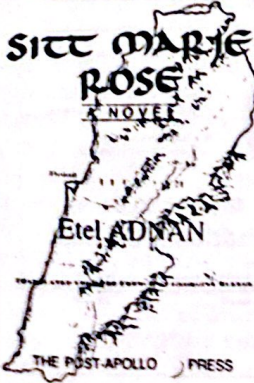
a quarterly index to periodicals of the left

- ... is a subject index to the contents of professional and scholarly periodical literature written from a left perspective
- ... includes an index to book reviews, a journal index, and a guide to new periodicals
- ... meets a major indexing need in college, research, and special libraries

PLEASE ASK YOUR LIBRARY TO SUBSCRIBE NOW.

Subscription rate: \$50/yr. Single Issue \$15/ea.

Subscribe to: **THE LEFT INDEX**
511 Lincoln Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060 U.S.A.



SITT MARIE ROSE
A NOVEL
Etel ADNAN

This is the story of a woman abducted by militiamen during the Civil War in Lebanon. The author, Etel Adnan, is a poet and writer well known throughout the Arab world.

Price: \$5.63 (includes postage)

Send orders to:
Peoples Translation Service
4228 Telegraph Ave.
Oakland, CA 94609

Orders over 10 copies—10% discount

THE POST-APOLLO PRESS

Social Change Tool for the 80's



... a quarterly subject index to over 150 alternative publications.

Get your library to subscribe to the Alternative Press Index if it doesn't already.

Institutional subscription \$90.00/yr.

Individual and movement group subscription \$25.00/yr.

For a free list of alternative and radical publications and for more information write:

Alternative Press Center
P. O. Box 7229
Baltimore, Maryland 21218
(301) 243-2471

This magazine is indexed in the Alternative Press Index.



Parliamentary Pink

(The following article was written by Rosalind for *Connexions*.)

Evelien Eshuis wears a little pink-triangle badge at the front of her right shoulder. She wants it to be seen that she sits in parliament as a member representing not only her party—the Dutch Communist Party (CPN)—but also women and lesbians.

"Not one minority group in this country is represented in top functions," she says. "I wear the pink triangle as a symbol: I want to be a focus of identification in parliament. I'm wearing it for all those women who can't, and can then at least know that there are lesbians in the political circles."

Eshuis, who had had practically no political experience, has been a member of parliament since September 1982. She was selected by her party as a result of a shift in party policy—specifically concerning feminism (something for which she had argued). Some of the "old guard" in the party find the principle of female equality all well and good but still consider that the class struggle in terms of production modes comes first. One or two have left the party because of this recent shift in emphasis.

Since last September publicity has so far come Eshuis' way mainly because of her Open Letter in the national press to the leader of one of the governing parties, Ed Nijpels. He is a member of the coalition cabinet. Nijpels was said to have been blackmailed by a fellow party member for being gay. Nijpels did an interview with a national paper (one which takes a Roman Catholic stand on issues) in which he denied being gay. Part of Eshuis' letter ran as follows: "I have a woman friend and lover. So do you. Years ago I had a boyfriend. People are saying: so did you. For myself I don't see any need to feel guilty about either the one or the other. No one can blackmail me. Nor do I therefore need to go making categorical denials."

Her letter received no answer. The parliamentary group of Nijpel's party, after "mature consideration" deemed an answer to be out of place. As much as the interview disturbed her, Eshuis is equally bothered by all the withholding of any reactions in the political world as a whole. "It's a typical example," she says, "of repressive tolerance. Every political party that wishes to be of any consequence nowadays has it's gay group but not one politician has taken a stand on the Nijpels business or stated that they themselves are gay. But it doesn't

interest me whether or not Nijpels is—he just should have said: that's nothing to do with you."

Evidently it is politically unacceptable that a representative (of a liberal faction, notice!) is connected with a "worse" group. On the one hand, they're drumming for gay votes ("yes, we're fighting for *your* rights!"). On the other hand, it has to be made clear that they, themselves, of course, are *not* "thus."

"I get so sick of all this talk about 'disposition.' The implication is that homosexuality is a biological datum, a natural aberration. But nothing is ever said about the heterosexual disposition, whereby one infers that a 'disposition' is a malforming, of itself something deviant. The whole impression is given that it is biologically determined but the point is that the fact that it appears to be some sort of problem, like a club foot or something, is *socially* determined."

It was during a period she spent in Ghana that she came to the conclusion that things could only improve for the Third World if the political system(s) in the "old" or Western world changed. A few years later she decided the Dutch Communist Party was the vehicle which most effectively carried her political ideas, and she became an active, enthusiastic member when feminism surfaced in the CPN.

Eshuis' parliamentary brief includes economic affairs, social health and the environment and, of course, women's emancipation. Asked whether it is frustrating to be a member of a small opposition party and know that all your effort is pretty well in vain, Eshuis answers: "A bit. The direct influence of the CPN is slight but that's not the whole story. You can achieve a lot indirectly. By being very active in a particular area you force the other parties to give fuller thought to the issues. You can open people's eyes to the consequences their austerity proposals will have for those who have absolutely nothing to spare, for example, effects which they just haven't thought of."


She is the only woman in the House Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, but despite its general aura of being "A Man's World" she feels accepted. "You've got to be sure you know your stuff, of course," she says, "and I do. And I only speak in the House when I have something properly new to remark. There's an enor-

mous amount of waffling for the mere sake of a party hearing the sound of its own voice. I don't contribute to that."

Phrases such as "the norms of the white, hetero, comfortably-off male" roll off her tongue in a way that betrays they are not exactly original communication, but she is being specific about the ruling stamp that, in her opinion, such men put on politics, parliamentary business and society. Those norms are what she is endeavoring to pull apart. She dubs it absurd that members of parliament fall in with the assumption that they work an 80-hour week; this automatically presupposes the existence of a mate who makes it feasible. Eshuis would like to maintain her own private life as much as possible but admits the pressures on it are great. "It's not nice to have to say no once in a while, to what's being asked of you. But if you didn't there'd be no private life left and you'd be caught up in the whole works/power cults you criticize."

"I won't ever get myself into the position Nijpels has got himself in—that you suddenly have to bare the fact that you're not as people always thought you were. I don't go through the day thinking, 'Gosh, yes, I am a lesbian;' or that my political life has got to be colored by this. I do think that it is part of contemporary political issues that you show up the oppression of the hetero world. It's a political responsibility to do that—which is why I wrote that Open Letter."

"I went along happily enough to take my place in the House and after a few weeks had to admit shock at discovering that the constraint of the ruling cult overwhelms the political world, so that it seems that no other alternative exists. It disorients you to the point that you wonder: are these actually the rules of the political game? At that point I deliberately made the decision to display my pink triangle. Not so much to confront people, but to let it be a back-stiffener for myself." □



- reports on the women's movement worldwide
- covers our struggles, victories, issues, campaigns
- brings you articles, resources, information about groups

a women's international bulletin

women & women's groups	US\$ 15
libraries & institutions	US\$ 25
for airmail add	US\$ 5

In Spanish from:
Via S. Maria dell'Anima, 30
00186 Rome, Italy
In English from:
P.O. Box 50 (Cornavin)
1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

never a love song

(Translated from *Diva*, Dutch lesbian monthly, July 1982.)

Not so many years ago you needed a flashlight, or better yet, a searchlight to find a woman's band. The situation has changed radically in the last years and women's bands are springing up like mushrooms. Women are not just strumming an accompaniment to themselves on the guitar any more; less "feminine" instruments such as drums and bass guitars are being taken up.

One of the new bands which made an appearance in Holland during 1982 was the Berlin group Lesbeton, performing in the newly-opened pub *de Del* in Groningen. Lesbeton not only has women who are new to the music scene, but also two seasoned professionals: Cillie, lyricist and keyboards, was previously with Flying Lesbians, and Christiane played bass guitar with Lysistrata.

Knowing the previous history of these two women, Lesbeton's musical style—strong, swinging new-wave—came as a surprise to the Groningen audience. A number of women called out at the end of the performance that they also wanted to hear *Wir sind die homosexuellen Frauen* [We are the homosexual women]. Lesbeton did not take up the request. Now and then the group's music is strongly reminiscent of Nina Hagen, especially since Connie, the singer, has had classical training and, therefore, can achieve the same sort of effects as Nina Hagen.

The interview we had on the evening of the performance did not, as was originally intended, cover the history of women's music in West Germany, but became a discussion of nuclear armament and the threat of war. The following dialogue will show that West Germany also produces something other than women heady with a little quota of liberation.

Q: With a name like Lesbeton you label yourselves pretty clearly as being a lesbian group. Is that lesbianism also expressed in your lyrics?

A: Not exclusively. We do sing a lot about the lesbian "lifestyle," but at the moment there's only one number about it left on the program. We sing about everything that concerns us, and that's a lot. Mind you, (laughing) we've still never actually written a love song—put that down! The fact of our being lesbian isn't the overriding issue for us now. Things like nuclear weapons, stockpiling, the threat of war and how the

environment is getting destroyed are far more important to us at the moment, and so those are the things we sing about.

Q: But then, why a lesbian band? Can't men be singing about these issues just as well?

A: No. Of course they can sing about them, but not in the way we do. We see things very differently from the way men do precisely because we're women. Take a song such as *Trummerfrau* [Rubble Woman]. It doesn't just call attention to the threat of war; we try to explain how and why things have gotten to this point. We see things as having gone wrong because the female element is missing from our whole society. Or, as we put it in *Fleisch* [Meat]: "Anthropologists tell us it's only men who are cannibals." Nevertheless, it's not only in males that the female element is lacking: "Women gobble meat down, too." But I think men wouldn't immediately arrive at that sort of explanation.

Q: Do you think you're going to achieve anything by singing about these subjects?

A: At the very least, we hope that the women we perform for will think about them. Whether we'll actually change anything? We can't prevent a third world war with them; too much else has got to change for that. People have destroyed themselves so many times already. Think of Atlantis, which we have also sung about. That was a highly developed culture, and yet it has been lost—wiped off the face of the earth. And people haven't become one wit the wiser. Just as Atlantis ended up at the bottom of the ocean, Europe will probably be blown up. □

WOMEN

&

MULTINATIONALS

A special issue by the Multinational Monitor

For individual copies, send \$2 to
Multinational Monitor, 1346 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 411,
Washington, D.C. 20036.



RUBBLE WOMAN
(HARDWARE, LIVWARE, WAR)
by C. Rentmeister

Hardware, hardware, hardware
liveware, liveware, liveware

was
the summer of '45
sunshine
stone upon stone
pails of water
dust in the air
and long shadows of ruins

chains of women
with evening gloves
dig in the ruins
their hands are going to pieces

the summer of '45

Here comes the next war
then there won't be anymore rubble
and no more women
no victory

Only the houses stand intact and empty
men's work, men's work
hardware, hardware, hardware

Women's work
all that lives
they let perish
liveware, only liveware
only liveware

Only the rats race over the highways
flags wave silently in the wind
which adhere to the oath
of fatherland and woman and life
and bla and bla and bla

There where their growth reigns
there grows misery
It is no doubt so: since they can't
give life
they give death

the summer of '84
sunshine
no rubble, no women
the weapon killed with perfection
and long shadows of

NOTHING

Related reading:

- "Indescribably Female," German punk rock star Nina Hagen, in "Connexions" # 5, Summer 1982.
- "Second Wave Feminist Meets New Wave Music," *Feminists and Punk Music*, in "Big Mama Rag," August 1981.

Dear friends at *Connexions*,

In connection to your remark on the *Tempo* articles [translated and reprinted in *Connexions* no. 3], it is interesting to point out that recently *Tempo* printed an open letter from three women writers in Jakarta defending Lesbians' right to their choice of sexual orientation.

Lesbianism in the rural areas is not unknown in Indonesia. But first let me warn you that same-sex relationships in Indonesia are already very warm and sensual to begin with, even more so amongst women than amongst men. This phenomenon called "homoaffinity" by someone (I can't remember his/her name), makes Lesbianism itself very invisible. Different from male homosexuality, Lesbianism has never been institutionalized in any of the Indonesian cultures, which is clearly the work of patriarchy. Exclusive Lesbianism is hard to detect, as is exclusive male homosexuality. If one can accept that sexuality is even less important for Lesbians in Indonesia (Indonesians being people with a low degree of sexuality in general), then maybe one can call all Indonesian women Lesbians? One has to play with semantics here, of course.

Moreover, one does not talk about women "marrying" or "being in love" with women, not in rural areas either. However, one finds cases of the overt Lesbian behavior (which usually means expressed verbally), such as the case of two women who would not be separated, were known to love each other, were discouraged by their families and committed suicide by lying on railroad tracks. This happened in Solo, Central Java in May 1982.

In 1940 there was a woman in West Sumatra, an Islamic stronghold, but also a matrilineal society, named Tinur who insisted that she would like to marry her companion, Raki. She went first to her parents, they refused her so she went on to the head of the district and asked to be married to Raki.

Regarding your question on the female *warias*, yes, there are women who behave and dress as a male. *Waria* is a recently coined term. The more common name, rather derogatory, is *banci*. *Banci* covers both sexes, i.e. a male in female appearance and vice versa. But again female *bancis* are never institutionalized, the exception perhaps being the Ngaju Dayaks of Borneo.

I hope all this would help you in your work. Let me wish you all the best.

Sincerely,

International Secretary
Lambda Indonesia
[Indonesian Gay Organization]
Kotakpos 122
Solo, Indonesia

Letters

Dear Editor,

We have been shown by a friend of ours a copy of *Connexions*, no. 4. Your publication is impressive, well thought-out, and giving an air to information which one rarely sees brought together into one journal. You obviously have worked very hard to reach this standard.

We were surprised to note that an article on SISTREN appeared in this issue. We did not know that this was to appear. We wonder if it is not your policy to at least inform those of us in the "developing" and third world that you intend to print/publish material about us!

We are of course glad to know that you have an interest in our work...In the case of the material that you printed, we were surprised at the headline "Street Theatre in Jamaica" because SISTREN is not essentially a "street theatre" group. We do of course include street theatre activities in our work, but this is a misleading description. We are a professional theater group which does theatre work of many kinds, from major production in theatres using sophisticated technical back-up, to community-based drama-in-education workshops in urban ghettos or way-out-of-the-way rural areas. Essentially we are involved in development education, using drama and theatre, and "street theatre" is a form of theatre we only use from time to time, since the analysis/discussion sessions that form an integral part of our workshops are quite distinct from anything that can happen in "street theatre."

Thank you very much, and we wish you all the best for the successful continuing of your very good journal.

Sincerely,

Hilary Nicholson
SISTREN
100 Hope Road
Kingston 6 Jamaica

[Ed: We were glad to finally make contact with SISTREN. While compiling the Creativity issue of *Connexions* we tried in vain to contact SISTREN. Our attempts included writing to *FUSE*, the Canadian journal from which we reprinted the article, as well as any contact addresses known to us in Jamaica.]

Dear *Connexions*,

I received this letter from a friend in Barcelona:

"...We are in the midst of a campaign for the right to abortion. You know we have a socialist government now; in their platform they favor decriminalization in only three cases: rape, malformation of the fetus, and danger to the mother's life. We feminists do not agree, for these cases affect only one percent of women.

"There was a demonstration on March 8 to commemorate International Working Women's Day in favor of the right to abortion. It was very successful, all the feminists and all the parties of the left (except the Socialists) worked together.

"We shouted: 'If the pope got pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament,' and 'Let the bishop care for the unwanted children.'

"On the afternoon of the 8th, there was a conference, open to all, very well attended. It was fascinating to hear the women speak of the experiences and motivations which had led them to decide to have abortions. At night there was a dance, women only, where we danced like *locas* till four in the morning. You would have loved it..."

Note: I met Nuria and her friends in spring, 1982 at the Catalan Women's Association, a venerable feminist organization in Barcelona. A buoyant and elegant woman in her fifties, she became a feminist in the mid-seventies during the general euphoria that followed Franco's death. She broke out of a 30 year, abusive marriage and joined the Association of Divorced Women—divorced in their own eyes, as legal divorce became available in Spain only in 1981. The Association of Divorced Women later merged with the Catalan Women's Association.

Beth
San Francisco

Dear *Connexions*,

Thank you for your letter and the copy of *Connexions*.

I have pleasure in enclosing the last issue of our monthly magazine, in Hebrew, of course.

Reaching Arab women (or men for that matter) is a problem. We do not know of any gay-lib organisations in existence in any other country in this region. And as yet, we are unable to attract to our Society any Arab residents or citizens of Israel—and there are of course thousands...We will keep trying, and if and when we succeed, and can offer you material, we shall do so.

Yours faithfully,

International Secretary
Society for the Protection
of Personal Rights
Tel Aviv, Israel

Dear *Connexions*,

Thank you for your letter. We would be happy to start an exchange with *Connexions*.

The Committee on South Asian Women (COSAW) has the following goals: to provide information on the conditions under which South Asian women live and work; to discover and act on issues that are germane to South Asian women settled abroad; and to support the efforts of women's groups in South Asia and establish links between these groups and their western counterparts.

COSAW is still in its first year of publishing but we already set up contacts with many South Asian women...I'll keep my eyes open for material related to your upcoming themes—in fact, I have a couple of people in mind whom I can ask to send their work.

Let's keep in touch,

Jyotsna Vaid
COSAW
Department of Psychology
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824

NETWORKING

If you have any addresses or contacts abroad especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America of feminist organizations and lesbian/gay groups, please send them to us. Our upcoming issues will be:

Women and Militarism
Women and Religion
Prostitution

Any information pertaining to any of these issues is greatly appreciated.

IF YOU'VE MOVED:

Please be sure to send us a change-of-address card. The Post Office will not forward third-class mail.

WOMEN IN THE BAY AREA

We need more volunteers to help with upcoming issues. If you are interested in working on our project, have language, editing, lay-out, or fundraising skills, we'd like to hear from you. See our address on the inside back cover.

PIECING IT TOGETHER: FEMINISM AND NONVIOLENCE

PIECING IT TOGETHER:
FEMINISM & NONVIOLENCE



Collectively written by the British Feminism and Nonviolence Study Group in 1983.

★ Women and War ★ Breaking the Chains
★ Feminist Nonviolence ★ A Time to Come
An excellent resource for both study and action groups!

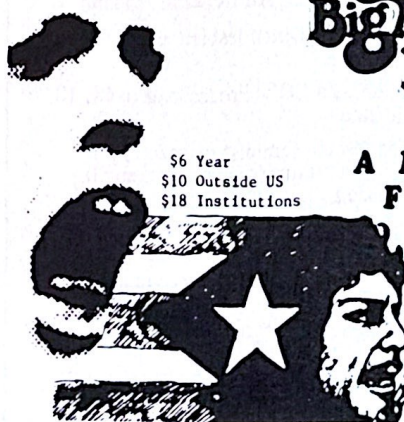
Available at bookstores. Distribution information and mail-order copies from:

Jennifer Tiffany
525 South Danby Road
Spencer, NY 14883
60 pp. with photographs, \$3.00

Big Mama Rag

A Monthly
Feminist
News
Journal

\$6 Year
\$10 Outside US
\$18 Institutions



1724 GAYLORD ST
DENVER, CO. 80204

Guardian

You're not alone!

You're demonstrating against U.S. intervention in Central America. You're organizing tenants to fight gentrification. You're fighting for safe, legal abortion for all. You're teaching students how to think freely. You're marching for voting rights in the South. You're struggling to change the system in your own way.

You're not alone. All these battles are one. And only in one place do they all come together: the Guardian, North America's largest independent radical newsweekly. Twenty-four pages of non-sectarian coverage of the issues and the movement every week. Incisive analysis and unmatched international reportage: the information you need about your own fight and the common struggle.

Try a free four-week subscription to the Guardian, at absolutely no obligation. Simply cut out the coupon below and mail it in today.

4 free

Send me four free issues
of the Guardian, at
absolutely no obligation.

Mail to:

The Guardian, Dept. CX, 33 West 17th Street, New York, NY 10011

name _____
address _____
city _____
state _____

Keep King's Vision Alive

WIN (Workshop In Nonviolence) Magazine brings the struggle for civil rights into the present with a special issue, **20 Years Later—King's Vision, Our Struggle**.

Activists discuss King's radical vision of nonviolent social change, redefine the peace movement, and explore the links between the civil rights movement, feminism and the particular struggle of Third World women.

Excellent organizing tool for the August 27 march for Jobs, Peace and Freedom. Also available special issue, **Gandhi and Nonviolence**.

Send \$1.50 each postpaid, 65¢ each for 10 or more (add 20% postage; 10% for 50 or more).

To subscribe: \$20/year; \$11/six months.

Mail your name and address with check or money order to:

WIN/326 Livingston St./Brooklyn, NY 11217



Lesbian Media

Chana com Chana—Publication of Grupo de Ação Lésbico-Feminista, Brazilian lesbian feminist organization, Caixa Postal 62.618, Cep 01.000, SP São Paulo, Brazil

Entendido—Venezuelan gay publication, Apartado Postal 3873, Caracas 1010, Venezuela

Nuevo Ambiente—Newsletter of Grupo Lambda, Mexican gay organization, Apartado Postal 73-130, Mexico 12, D.F., Mexico

Labrys—Greek lesbian publication, c/o Charoula, 5 Ivis St., Ekali-Athens, Greece

Bollettino del C.L.I.—Italian lesbian publication, c/o Felina Editrice, V.le B Vergine del Carmelo 60, 00144 Rome, Italy.

Lesbenfront—Swiss lesbian monthly, Frauenzentrum, Mattengasse 27, 8005 Zurich, Switzerland

Vlasta, French journal of amazon utopian fiction, Colletif Mémoires Utopies, Boite Postale no 130, 75663, Paris Cedex 14, France

Lesbia—BP 526, 75831 Paris Cedex, Paris, France

Espaces—c/o Les mot à la Bouche, 35 rue Simart, 75018 Paris, France

Centre d'Archive et de Recherches Lesbiennes Paris—c/o Association Les Feuilles vives, 62 rue Boissières, 75116 Paris, France

Homophonies—French gay monthly, 1 rue Keller, 75011 Paris, France

Madirlinh—c/o Gilda, 2, rue Durnée, F-69004 Lyon, France

Les Lesbianales—1 rue Herman Richir, 1030 Brussels, Belgium

Lesbenstich—West German lesbian publication, c/o Claudia Schoppman, Falenstein Str. 7, 1 Berlin, West Germany

Lesbenarchiv—c/o Gudrun Schwartz, Ziethener Str. 20, 1 Berlin, West Germany

DIVA—Dutch lesbian bimonthly, Postbus 10642, 1001 EP Amsterdam, Holland

Pottenblad—Postbus 10343, 1001 EP Amsterdam, Holland

Lesbisch Archief Amsterdam—Dutch lesbian archive, Postbus 10870, Amsterdam, Holland

Sek—Dutch gay publication, c/o COC, Frederiksplein 14, 1017 XM Amsterdam, Holland

Lila Perspektiv—Swedish lesbian-feminist magazine, c/o Lesbiska Feminister, Kvinnohuset, Snickarbacken 10, 11139 Stockholm, Sweden

Lovetann—Norwegian gay publication, Boks 3392, Sagene, Oslo 4, Norway

Torajyvä—c/o Akanat, PL 55, 00551 Helsinki 55, Finland

Outrage!—English journal for lesbians and gay men, 27 Davenport Road, London N19 3NW, England

Sequel—English lesbian newsletter, 49 Pratt St., London NW1, England

London Lesbian Newsletter—c/o Gay' the Word, 66 Marchmont, London WC1, England

Circle—almost quarterly lesbian-feminist magazine—Box 427, Wellington, New Zealand

Outrage—Australian lesbian/gay quarterly, P.O. Box 21, Carlton South 3053, Victoria, Australia

Fireweed—Canadian feminist quarterly, P.O. Box 279, Stn. B, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5T 2W2

Traces—CP 224, Succ. Beaubien, Montréal, Québec, Canada H2G 3C9

Paz y Liberación—international gay networking organization based in U.S., P.O. Box 600063, Houston, TX 77260, U.S.A.

International Lesbian Information Service (ILIS)—international secretariat/newsletter, PL 45, 00251 Helsinki 25, Finland

*Mixed gay publication/organization

Resources

Agora
twice-yearly Japanese feminist journal
c/o BOC Publishing
1-9-6 Shinjuku
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160, Japan
03/354-9014

Asian Women's Liberation
Japanese feminist publication
available in Japanese and English
c/o Asian Women's Association
Poste Restante
Shibuya Post Office
Shibuya, Tokyo, Japan

bitches, witches, & dykes
New Zealand feminist quarterly
P.O. Box 68-570
Newton P.O., Auckland, New Zealand

Broadsheet
New Zealand feminist monthly
Box 5799
Auckland, New Zealand

cahiers du féminisme
French feminist monthly
2, rue Richard Lenois
93108 Montreuil, France

Change
international reports on women and society
Parnell House
25 Wilton Road
London SW1V 1JS

Clit 007
Swiss lesbian quarterly
Centre Femmes
5, Bvd. Saint-Georges
1205-Geneva, Switzerland

Courage
West German feminist monthly
Bleibtreustr. 48
1000 Berlin 12
030/883 65 29/69

Dones en Lluita
Spanish/Catalan feminist bi-monthly
Apartado 2381
Barcelona-2, Spain

Emma
West German feminist monthly
Kolpingplatz 1A
5 Köln 1, West Germany
0721/21 0282

fem
Mexican feminist bi-monthly
Av. Mexico No. 76-1
Col. Progreso Tizapan
Mexico 20, D.F., Mexico
548 83 42

Girls' Own
Australian feminist bi-monthly
P.O. Box 188, Wentworth Bldg.
Sydney Univ. 2006, Australia

ISIS
feminist international quarterly bulletin
P.O. Box 50 (Cornavin)
1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland
022/33 67 46

Kvinder
Danish feminist bi-monthly
Gothersgade 37
1123 Copenhagen, Denmark
01/14 28 04

La Vie en Rose
Canadian feminist bi-monthly
3963 St. Denis
Montréal, Qué. H2W 9Z9, Canada

The Leveller
British feminist-socialist bi-weekly
52 Acre Lane
London SW2, England

Manushi
Indian feminist publication
available in English and Hindi
C1/202 Lajpat Nagar
New Delhi 110024, India

Mulherio
Brazilian feminist monthly
Fundação Carlos Chagas
Av. Prof. Francisco Morato, 1565
CEP 05513
São Paulo, S.P., Brazil

NOGA
Israeli feminist quarterly
P.O. Box 21376
Tel Aviv 61213, Israel

Opzij
Dutch feminist monthly
Kloveniersburgwal 23
Postbus 1311
1000 BH Amsterdam, Holland
020/26 23 75

Outwrite
British feminist monthly
Oxford House
Derbyshire Street
London E2, England
01/729 4575

Resources for Feminist Research
Canadian feminist resource quarterly
252 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M5S 1V6

Spare Rib
British feminist monthly
27 Clerkenwell Close
London EC1R 0AT, England
01/253 9792/3

Vrouwenkrant
Dutch feminist monthly
Postbus 18180
10012B Amsterdam, Holland
020/259 658



Lila Perspektiv

YES, I want to support *Connexions*!

- ☐ One year, \$10
Libraries and Institutions, \$20
Canada and Mexico, US\$12
Overseas Airmail, US\$20; Surface US\$12
- ☐ Sustaining subscription, \$25
(Donations are tax-deductible)
- ☐ One year plus a copy of Second Class Working Class, \$12
- ☐ Connexions T-shirt, \$8
Choose from Plum with Purple and White
OR Black with Pink and Green.
Short Sleeve & Sleeveless. SML.
State size, color and 1st & 2nd choice when ordering.
\$8.00 includes postage.

(Is this a gift? From.....)

Name.....

Address.....

City, State, Zip.....

**BACK ISSUES STILL AVAILABLE
(\$3.00)**

- ☐ #9 Outrageous Women
- ☐ #8 Culture Clash
- ☐ #7 Young and Old Women
- ☐ #6 Environment—From the Ground Up
- ☐ #5 Women in Eastern Europe
- ☐ #4 Creativity
- ☐ #3 Global Lesbianism
- ☐ Second Class, Working Class (\$3.50)

(Make checks payable to
Peoples Translation Service and send to

Connexions
4228 Telegraph Avenue
Oakland, California 94609
(415) 654-6725

CONNEXIONS
PEOPLES TRANSLATION SERVICE
4228 Telegraph Ave.
Oakland, CA 94609
(415) 654-6725

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Berkeley, CA
Permit No. 148

Cover Design: Kathy Tandy

Cover (clockwise from left):

Barbara Rosenberg

Jill Posener/The Women's Press Project

(124 Shoreditch High St., London E1 6JE, England)

Birgit Kleber

Gabriella Mercandini/Noidonne

