

LESBIANS AS BOGEY WOMEN

Any form of behavior that doesn't fit into the image that television and *Reader's Digest* believe the American people should be like, is usually categorized as either subnatural or supernatural.

The myths about homosexuals fall into both categories, depending on how close it is to being you.

Lesbians are subnatural when they live next door and supernatural when they live in Paris and write books.

Most people's ideas about lesbianism come from pornographic films and magazines, all of which are produced for and by men. It's a very strange thing to find your existence defined as a part of somebody's pornographic fantasy. *Hurray - sex spoofs No. 83.*

One night at my regular women's liberation group meeting, one of the women said, "You know, the first night you told us you were a lesbian, I sat in terror for the rest of the meeting, waiting for you to attack me or something."

Men who are obsessed with sex are convinced that lesbians are obsessed with sex. Actually, like any other woman, lesbians are obsessed with love and fidelity.

They're also strongly interested in independence and in having a life to do, but rather than that lesbians are not extra ordinary.

I once met a lesbian who had built her own house, with her own hands, to her own specifications. (She was about 4'11" tall.) But I have no doubt that any woman who wanted to build a house could - except she probably married an architect or a carpenter instead.

Homosexuality and other "bizarre" characteristics are associated with art and artiness partly so artists can be considered that much more supernatural. This keeps people in general from considering themselves as artists; they're not kooky enough. If you can't chup off your ear, you can't paint.

Gertrude Stein didn't write well because she was a lesbian; she wrote because she wanted to, and she had a disciplined, sensitive mind, and she didn't have to work in a trimstore eight hours a day.

The women in history who were the less fortunate counterparts of Gertrude Stein, unable to retire on papa's money, cut off their hair and joined the merchant marine; or sneaked out west for a life of adventure as cowboys. Some were never discovered until the most mortician ... all astonished ... came running out of the funeral parlor ... "My God, guess what I just found out about old Harry Willis ..."

And as a matter of fact, old Harry may never have thought about loving another woman in his life; but she still goes down in history as a lesbian. Every woman who steps out of line gets assigned a sexual definition - lesbian, whore, nymphomaniac, castrator, adulteress ...

Lesbians who dress and act in a particular manner, do so as a means of mutual recognition - that's how they know who is eligible to fall in love with, since you're not allowed to just ask.

If anybody was allowed to fall in love with anybody, the word "homosexual" wouldn't be needed: It's used now only to set people off in separate categories, artificially, so they'll know who to be afraid of - each other.

Bogeymen and bogeywomen function to keep people off the streets, and home watching television and reading *Reader's Digest*.

Lesbianism isn't something you are ... it's something you do.

Specifically, it's the love you give somebody who happens, also, to be female.

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FOR DEEDS UNDONE

for ourselves

Must we pay for celebration of life and love
With laceration? Life and love
are atrophied for us. The center comes apart
It cannot hold. Let go, Let go, Let go.

Must we throw ourselves on the great mandala,
Make it grind to a halt and let the healers
Take scalpel to that which could have been healed long ago?

What balm can assuage the guilt cast
upon us?
What gauze is thick enough to cover
our wounds?
What cord strong enough to bind up
our rage?

(On the afternoon of that day the moon passed the sun,
Millions watched, catching fleeting glimpses,
and paying prices of vision, yet to be told
Our trinity of planes intersected
for moments. Belying their obedience to any natural law,
That all might see law made manifest, theory bodied forth.)

Something rustled in the dead leaves at Sheridan Square,
A bearded general watched the armies of the night.

A mother cried for a son who could not reveal himself,
Who cried out in a foreign tongue of why he was forsaken,
And took him down from his pinacle.

The deposed St. Christopher of that street,
Of infinite numbers of cravills,
Relinquished his place, for St. Sebastian of the stings and arrows,
Let down the child from his back, giving birth
To an unfolding of lands, a cherishing of fias.

How much more blood of strangers is required,
To impassion us, to push us to take the leap
to faith,
In ourselves, and the gods we might become?

STANDING ROOM ONLY

It's spring again in New York City: my very first.
My coat is beginning to feel stuffy, and I'm
trying to think of buying a new shirt. Walked
down to The Marlboro Bookstore in the Village,
then to a smaller bookstore, where I asked for a
copy of *The Well of Loneliness*. I'm writing an
article about it. Young hippy bookstore clerk:
Yes, we have a LOT of people asking for it...
We don't carry it!
Well, what about GFI OUT!, our local gay
zhetto paper?
Noooo...

With a sarcastic smile

On my way over, 2 teen-age girls were running
down the train platform:

*Hey, How in the World do you get out of this
place? Is there a Way Out??*

Six months ago, I was asking the same thing.

And, coming up the steps from the subway, I
KNEW that it was spring, because two young
men were sitting at the top. The younger one
was rapping about:

*... And then, when THAT happens, you
really start to think - Maybe There ISN'T
a God.*

Then, on 8th Street:

Spare Change??

WE WERE VERY TIRED.

WE WERE VERY MERRY...

-Mark Giles

-Sandy DeWine

THINKING BACK LESBIAN

If I were to call upon the phoenix
to recover my late ashes
would I have come from the 'mysterious'
island of Greece?

Far flung as time through space
follows relativity must only be a wink
in that lady's eye -
The love of the arts was worth more
to her than the sharpness of Diana's
darts.

But I suppose we are all sisters of
some nature of those reincarnations...
But to them we are probably just incarnations.

However, Sappho you must have been
a 'Right On' woman.

-Sue Schneider

The Woman-Identified Woman

WHAT IS A LESBIAN?

What is a lesbian? A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to this point of explosion. She is the woman who, often beginning at an extremely early age, acts in accordance with her inner compulsion to be a more complete and freer human being than her society — perhaps then, but certainly later — cares to allow her. These needs and actions, over a period of years, bring her into painful conflict with people, situations, the accepted ways of thinking, feeling and behaving, and she is in a state of continual war with everything around her, and usually with herself. She may not be fully conscious of the political implications of what for her began as personal necessity, but on some level she has not been able to accept the limitations and oppression laid on her by the most basic role of her society — the female role. The turmoil she experiences tends to induce guilt proportional to the degree to which she feels she is not meeting social expectations, and/or eventually drives her to question and analyze what the rest of her society more or less accepts. She is forced to evolve her own life pattern, often living much of her life alone, learning usually much earlier than her "straight" (heterosexual) sisters about the essential aloneness of life (within the myth of marriage, physical and absent the reality of illusions). To the extent that she cannot equal the heavy socialization that goes with being female, she can never truly find peace with herself. For she is caught somewhere between accepting society's view of her — in which case she cannot accept herself, and wanting to understand what this sexist society has done to her and why it is functional and necessary for it to do so. Those of us who work that through and ourselves on the other side of a tortuous journey through a night that may have been decades long. The perspective gained from that journey, the liberation of self, the inner peace, the real love of self and of all women, is something to be shared with all women — because we are all women.

It should first be understood that lesbianism, like male homosexuality, is a category of behavior possible only in a sexist society characterized by rigid sex roles and dominated by male supremacy. Those sex roles re-humanize women by defining us as a supportive/serving caste in relation to the master caste of men, and emotionally cripple men by demanding that they be alienated from their own bodies and emotions in order to perform their economic/political/military functions effectively. Homosexuality is a by-product of a particular way of setting up roles (or approved patterns of behavior) on the basis of sex; as such it is an inauthentic (not consonant with "reality") category. In a society in which men do not oppress women, and sexual aggression is allowed to follow feelings, the categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality would disappear.

But lesbianism is a so different from male homosexuality, and serves a different function in the society. "Dyke" is a different kind of put down than "faggot," although both imply you are not playing your socially assigned sex role... are not therefore a "real woman" or a "real man." The grudging admiration felt for the tomboy, and the queasiness felt around a sissy boy point to the same thing, the contempt in which women — or those who play a female role — are held. And the respect meant to keeping women in that contemptuous role is very great. Lesbian is the word, the label, the nomination that honors women in line. When a woman recognizes this word honors her way, she knows she is stepping out of

