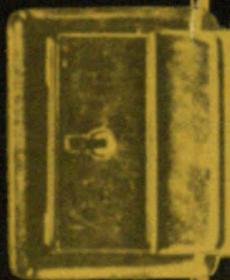

Diary of a Conference

on SEXUALITY



This diary belongs to

name _____

address _____

telephone _____

September 2, 1981

Dear Colleague:

I invite you to join with the planning committee and the Barnard Women's Center in working on "The Scholar and The Feminist IX" conference. Our purpose in the first and subsequent meetings is to explore "sexuality" as this year's theme and, through discussion, to identify the most pressing concerns for feminism. By refining the theme, defining questions and topics, and selecting appropriate speakers and workshop leaders, we hope to put together a conference which will inform and advance the current debate.

Feminist work on sexuality starts from the premise that sex is a social construction which articulates at many points with the economic, social, and political structures of the material world. Sex is not a "natural fact." Consistent feminist interest in sexuality is reflected in journals (Signs, Heresies, M/F) and newspapers, as well as in recent activism on pornography and sexual violence. All ask questions about the place of sexuality in our theory and in our lives. Published materials do not fully exhaust the range of women's experiences; it is likely that women of different communities (based on sexual preference, race, class, and ethnicity) have not only different things to say but different ways they want to say them.

Some of the questions which have been raised in these works might inform our first discussion:

- How do women get sexual pleasure in patriarchy?
- Given the paradox that the sexual domain is a dangerous one for women, either as an arena of restriction and repression or as an arena of experimentation and resistance, how do women of various ethnic, racial, and class groups strategize for pleasure?
- What are the points of similarity and difference between feminist analyses of pornography, incest, and male and female sexual "nature" and those of the right wing?
- Dare we persist in questioning traditional sexuality and sexual arrangements in the current political climate? If not, when is a "good" time for feminists to do so?
- What is the political significance of the position outlined by Betty Friedan, which would jettison gay and lesbian rights and sexual nonconformity as issues marginal to feminist goals?
- What is the nature of the current conflict between the "social purity" and "libertarian" factions in the feminist community? What can be learned from similar debates during the first wave of feminism in the 19th century?

These are just a few questions. I'm sure you've already thought of many more.

Looking forward to seeing you at the first meeting,

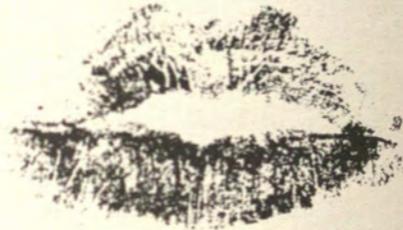
Sincerely,

Carole S. Vance
Carole S. Vance

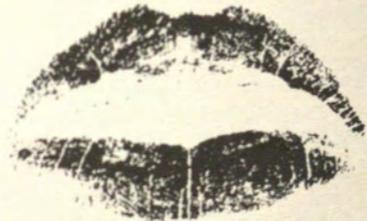
*For your pleasure
your thoughts...
consider sexual choices -
erotic possibilities, now
and for the future
with Love,*



Hannah Alderfer



Beth Jaker



Marybeth Nelson

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EDITORIAL WORK

Hannah Alderfer, Meryl Altman, Kate Ellis, Beth Jaker,
Marybeth Nelson, Esther Newton, Ann Snitow,
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production work and long hours this diary would not have
met its deadline
Carole S. Vance

THE SCHOLAR AND THE FEMINIST TOWARD A POLITICS OF SEXUALITY

Saturday, April 24, 1982

Carole S. Vance, Academic Coordinator

Conference Planning Committee

Julie Abraham, Hannah Alderfer, Meryl Altman, Jan Boney,
Frances Doughty, Ellen DuBois, Kate Ellis, Judith
Friedlander, Julie German, Faye Ginsburg, Diane Harriford,
Beth Jaker, Mary Clare Lennon, Sherry Manasse, Nancy K.
Miller, Marybeth Nelson, Esther Newton, Claire Riley,
Susan R. Sacks, Ann Snitow, Quandra P. Stadler, Judy R.
Walkowitz, Ellen Willis, Patsy Yaeger

Barnard Women's Center
Jane Gould, Janie Kritzman, Maria La Sala

Diary of a Conference on Sexuality

INVITATIONAL LETTER 1

In September of 1981, the Academic Coordinator issued a call for women to work on the planning committee for The Scholar and the Feminist IX conference.

MINUTES 4-34

Minutes of the planning committee meetings appear in edited form. They represent actual discussions which took place between September 1981 and December 1981. Informal minutes were taken at every planning committee meeting, for the most part to note the main points of the discussion for absent members and to ensure continuity from one meeting to the next. Minutes were written immediately after each meeting for rapid distribution, especially when the committee stepped up its meeting schedule to once a week. During this period, the Diary was not yet imagined, and the minutes were unselfconsciously written for the planning committee alone.

PERSONALS 9,25,41,71,72

Statements from members of the planning committee.

CONCEPT PAPER 38-40

The Concept Paper distills and summarizes the main points of the planning committee's ongoing discussions. It guided speakers and workshop leaders in regard to the conference's perspective.

OPENING SESSION 42

WORKSHOPS 44-67

Each workshop leader was asked to provide a description of her workshop, a postcard illustration with a brief inscription, and bibliographic suggestions for future reading on her topic.

CLOSING SESSION 68

BLANK PAGES 43,48,49,54,55 Your pages... 60,61,69,70

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igloo graphics
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DEAR DIARY!

WED SEPT 16

Jane Gould welcomed the committee and introduced this year's academic coordinator, Carole S. Vance. Carole stated that in light of the current controversy about pornography in the feminist community, sexuality is a particularly timely and appropriate topic. Furthermore, it is an issue of central concern to feminist theory...

Individual introductions were followed by questions and comments in response to the issues raised in the introductory letter. Initial points were:

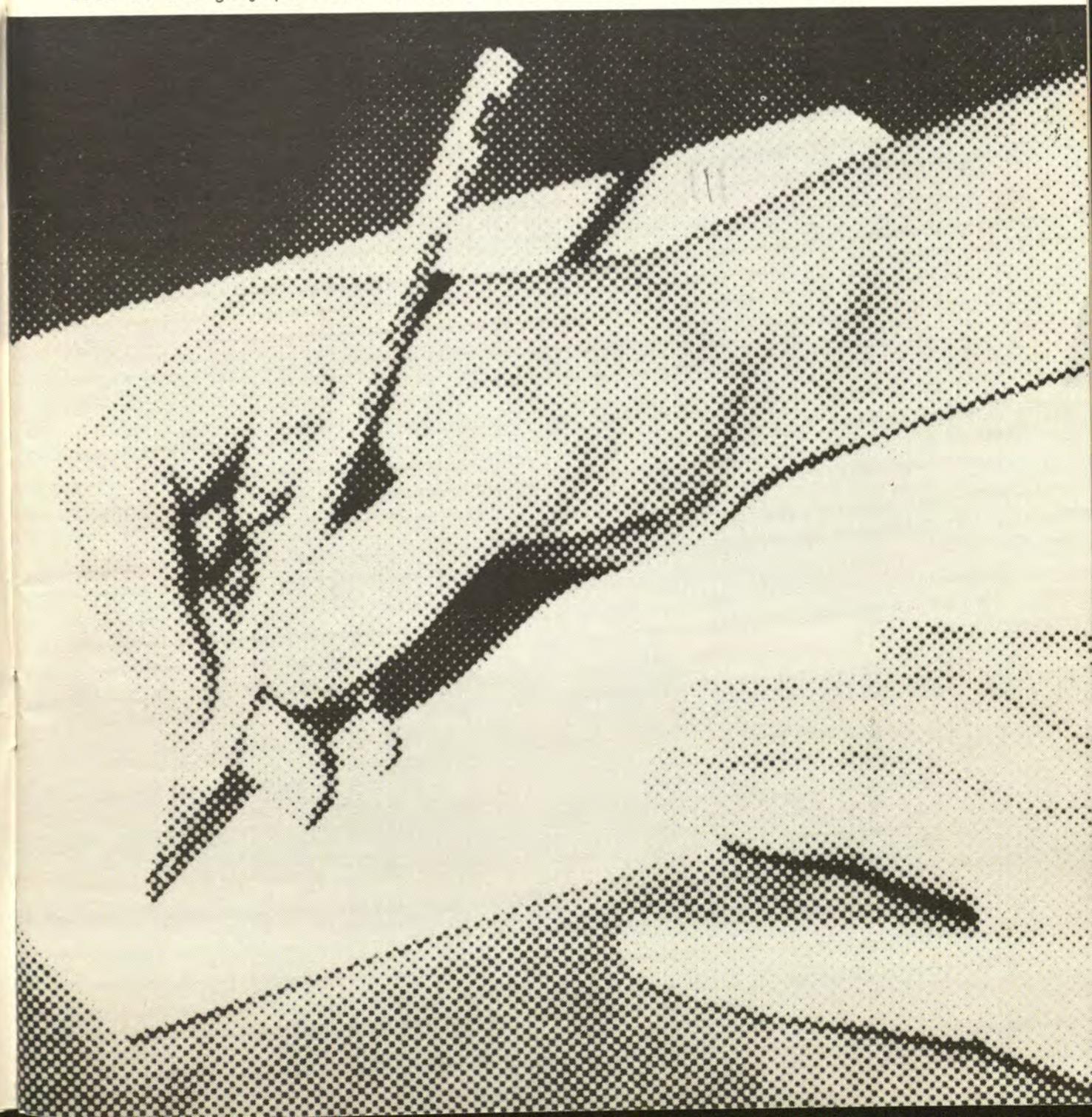
- 1) How do women get sexual pleasure in patriarchy given that if women venture out of the restrictive limits of patriarchy they are punished?
- 2) What is the relationship between the political, economic, and social structures and one's sexuality?
- 3) Does the identity of "femininity" cut across one's choice of object, sexual preference, and specific behavior?
- 4) What is the structure, function, and development over time of taboo?
- 5) Why has sexual violence become a feminist issue since the 1970's?
- 6) Has the issue of heterosexism replaced sexism as the focus of feminist debate?
- 7) Why do the criteria for determining whether artistic representation is or is not sexual vary from one medium to another and change over time?
- 8) What is the relationship between sexuality and reproduction, particularly the historical denial of sexual aspects of reproduction?
- 9) If, as some say, sexuality is a social construction, can the "social construction" be removed? If so, what remains? A natural sexuality? In the absence of a biologized and intrinsic sexual nature, social construction seems inevitable, although its form and content may vary. Therefore, sexuality must be understood in relationship to social structure.
- 10) How can we incorporate the heterosexual and lesbian problematic into the issues and questions we raise?

Following general comments there was some discussion about the potential explosiveness of a conference on sexuality, given the current polarization in the feminist community on the issue of pornography. However, many felt that the topic is too important to dismiss at this time, and that in grappling with these issues we ought to try to move beyond the level of current debate. One person suggested that we structure the conference so that women from Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) are asked to discuss pleasure and sexuality and North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) is asked to discuss violence and sexual exploitation. There was considerable discussion about the fact that many feminists had remained silent about their doubts or opposition to the anti-pornography movement. Why are so many grass roots women's groups sympathetic to the anti-pornography campaign and why now? What is the relationship between the anti-pornography ideology and women's sexual and economic lives?

Another issue discussed was that of the intense self-consciousness and silence among heterosexual women in recent years, particularly about personal pleasure. It was suggested that inadvertently the movement itself may have fostered a split in our thinking about what is politically correct and what is pleasurable for both gay and straight women. The possibility was raised that "egalitarianism" as an ideology may have dictated which pleasures were "correct" and "incorrect."

Throughout, several voiced concern about the absence of an appropriate language to discuss pleasure and whether this might hamper our analysis. Furthermore, could we handle a discussion of pleasure within the boundaries of the Scholar and the Feminist conference, which is heavily intellectual?

Others remarked about their difficulty in discussing the issue of sexuality because of internal and/or social restraints or ignorance about the current issues and debates. There is no question that talking about sexuality, and not even at a highly personal level, causes tension, hesitancy and anxiety.



Dear Diary,

Tues. Sept. 22

Carole described briefly the nature and development of her interest in the topic of sexuality. Following the round-robin method, each member described her responses to the first meeting and thoughts during the intervening week: comments flew thick and fast.

-A recent workshop on sexuality at the Communist University in London was dominated by the "politics of rage," not just an expression of anger, but the embodiment of the anti-intellectual premise that thought is not necessary to political action; feeling will suffice. This is a heritage of feminism.

-Important and interesting topics for further discussion: the question of "political correctness" in sexuality; the links between sexual "political correctness" and other forms of "political correctness" both on the Left and the Right; the silence of heterosexual women and reasons for it; implications of celibacy.

-What do we mean by "sexuality"? What is sexual? How can we have a conference without defining what it means? Who determines sexuality and for whom? Is all pleasure sexual? Is all sexuality pleasurable? What is the relationship between the two?

-Are the issues mentioned at our first meeting specific to a particular cohort or generation of women? Examples: the issue of orgasm (difficulty in obtaining an orgasm; vaginal versus clitoral) was a larger one for women over forty than for nineteen year olds today.

-What is sexuality? Is it defined by specific organs (the genitals) or specific physiological reactions? This definition would have no room for the prostitute, who may be experiencing little or no "sexual" sensation, yet the act is surely a sexual one in some respects.

-Without being totally utopian, what are feminists' expectations for sexual change?

-In our dislike of biological reductionism, have we been unwilling to consider biological or physiological features of sexual response? What about Masters and Johnson's work? Is it an error to think there is an irreducible physical bedrock to all or some sexual experience?

-Are we going to focus exclusively on genital sexuality? Scylla and Charybdis: sex is only the most orgasm-directed and genital behavior, which leads to talking about little but technique versus such a broad definition of sexuality/sensuality that it includes seeing a good movie. A discussion followed, with the following example offered as a rough guideline for our group: maternal sexuality

would include women's specifically sexual response to nursing and issues of sexuality between mothers and daughters but would not include viewing nurturance as a generalized form of sexuality.

-In the current debates within the feminist community and with the New Right, the issue is genital sexuality. The conference must address this issue.

-Why and how is human culture the agent of sexual repression?

-We need to include infant sexuality, which surely is continuous to some degree with adult experience.

-Observe the following contrast: feminists explain why women can't get any pleasure in patriarchy, at the same time a popular literature proliferates instructing women on how to get sexual pleasure. Who is buying these books? Are women succeeding in obtaining pleasure? If so, why don't we know much about their experience? On the other hand, who writes these books and, more generally, what does "popular culture" represent?

-What is the relationship between lesbian separatists and the anti-pornography movement? Do both groups share a vision of a world made safe for women? Why was "violence against women" (campaigns against rape, battering and incest) superseded by "women against pornography" (campaigns against pornographic visual representation)?

-The anti-pornography movement poses a problem regarding male sexuality, in that it is presented as "naturally" different from that of women. If so, what is to be done?

-Feminists' criticism of psychoanalysis and psychodynamic explanations has led to throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Feminists need to give more attention to psychological dynamics.

-What is the relationship between gender and sexuality? Why are women attracted to men? What creates attraction? Why women are attracted to women seems evident (Chodorow, Dinnerstein). What causes the exclusivity of attraction to men or women? Where does that leave bisexuals who are really violating a rigid dichotomy? Do sanctions against bisexuality (not only by moralists, but by those who find them politically disloyal) illustrate the point that taboo is always present in some form, even though it may move around from one area to another? Why do we in our categories always construct binary oppositions (female/not male)? (See Levi-Strauss, Mary Douglas.)

-The Women Against Pornography (WAP) Times Square tour featured a porno supermarket, the ultimate in capitalist production, display and consumption. What is the relationship between capitalism and sexuality? Pornography in past centuries had been the prerogative of the elite; now it is available to all for democratic consumption.

-Can one say anything good about capitalism? It permitted women, especially daughters, to get out of the family. It permitted the formation of sexual minorities.



-Sex as a commodity is a wonderful capitalist invention. If people are insatiable, it is due to an ever-expanding market. What are recent developments in the marketing of sex for lesbians and gay men? What is the future of the women's porno market? (See video disc, sex toy parties at home, etc.) Do we believe that people are insatiable?

-A theory about sexuality and capitalism: people have been aroused, although they remain unsatisfied; hence, they suspect something better is out there: they are willing to learn, spend, or whatever to obtain it.

-The relationship between mother and daughter in reality and in metaphor. Mother is the voice of caution: "stay inside, the world is dangerous, men will get you." The daughter can comply (good girl) or resist (bad girl). Ironically, mother was sometimes right and daughter falls into traps laid by men. What do we think of the "bad girl": resistance heroine? fool? slut? How is the mother/daughter dialogue being replayed in the anti-pornography movement?

-Can women, especially feminists, admit getting pleasure, or do we have too much invested in maintaining a victim stance?

-Hypothetical situation: a person can only obtain sexual gratification through utilizing a fantasy which she or others finds "incorrect," a source of discomfort, let's say a rape fantasy. Should this person renounce sexual gratification, or seek it? ("Stale bread is better than nothing when you're hungry" theory.) What sexual accommodations do we expect? In fact, we respond differently to this story, depending on whether the person is male or female. Men rape, women do not, etc. What is the relationship between fantasy and action?

-Sexuality is experienced as both power and powerlessness.

-We need to address questions of pleasure and pain in sexuality. One dimension: good sex available at the cost of reduced self-esteem.

READINGS

- Gossett, Hattie. "intro and 10 takes." *Heresies Sex Issue #12* (1981), pp.15-18.
Hollibaugh, Amber and Moraga, Cherrie. "What We're Rollin Around in Bed With: Sexual Silences in Feminism: A Conversation Toward Ending Them." *Heresies Sex Issue #12* (1981), pp. 58-62.
Nestle, Joan. "Butch-Fem Relationships: Sexual Courage in the Fifties." *Heresies Sex Issue #12* (1981), pp. 21-24.
Webster, Paula. "Pornography and Pleasure." *Heresies Sex Issue #12* (1981), pp. 48-51.
Willis, Ellen. "Lust Horizons: Is the Women's Movement Pro-Sex?" *Village Voice*, June 17, 1981.

The committee asked many more questions than it could possibly begin to answer, or find "experts" to address. Nevertheless the questioning was itself valuable.

One issue not overtly raised was that of the difficulties of a common lesbian and heterosexual feminist discussion of sexuality. Avoiding debate by assuming that an issue is recognised, and being recognised, settled, is not necessarily a good tactic. The debate goes on.

Julie L. Abraham

*MY SECRET DESIRE WAS TO WRITE IN A PERSONAL DIARY
YET WHERE COULD I WRITE WHAT I WANTED
BUT IN A DIARY THAT MUST BE MADE PUBLIC?*

WITH MUCH LOVE TO MY COLLABORATORS AND THIS DIARY Hannah

Why talk about "sexuality" and not "sex"? At the beginning, we had trouble even defining "sexuality" so that we could work with it. For me, sexuality is inseparable from its representation (visual, linguistic, psychic). We can only talk about sex across culturally-given metaphors that encode the dominant ideology, that mediate our own "experience" and are embedded in the very words we have to use because there are no others (yet). To say "sexuality," not "sex", is to acknowledge that our perspectives are partial.

/M. Altman

Being a part of the planning committee has provided new ways for me to see some important connections among the personal, political, feminist, social, sexual and academic parts of my own life - Jan Boney

HETEROPHILIA: ITS CAUSES AND CURES

A pioneering conference that removes the stigma from heterophilia by considering it as a clinical entity in the light of the most recent research. Originated and planned by the 192 St. John's Place Research Institute; Tee Corinne, concept; Alma Routsong, Frances Doughty, Tee Corinne, panels. THE SOCIAL WORLD OF THE HETEROPHILIAC: WHAT HETEROPHILIACS DO IN THE DAYTIME A CURED HETEROPHILIAC: A CASE STUDY HORMONE IMBALANCES IN HETEROPHILIA PROBLEMS OF SELF-CONTEMPT AMONG HETEROPHILIACS DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE HETEROPHILIA Closing Ceremony: Gala Banquet--The conference will feature reports from four heterophiliacs themselves: men and women who have the conscience and courage to appear, disguised by paper bags, as witnesses to the agony of heterophilia in today's society. Frances Doughty

Dear Diary,

Tues. Oct. 6

In attempting to articulate feminist visions of sexuality we raised many questions and discussed a broad range of issues and topics:

- Was the "sexual revolution" a fraud for feminists? How do we interpret widespread celibacy among women during the early days of the movement?
- Is monogamy a suppression of sexuality? What accounts for the recent "desexualization" in lesbianism (i.e., emphasis on lesbianism as a political and social choice, rather than a sexual, erotic one)?
- Is it possible the gay/straight controversy was so emotionally loaded that feminists backed off from the issue of sexuality, or chose to confront sexuality as a highly abstract, political issue?
- Are these two positions--advocating free sex versus attempts to control male sexuality and sexual coercion--responses which are defensive?
- What are the similarities and differences between sexual debates among feminists in the 19th century and now? In the 19th century, the rejection of heterosexual domesticity in favor of social and professional autonomy led to a rather puritanical attitude toward sexuality on the part of many feminists, although other feminists allied with "free love" movements. Recent discussions about pornography seem to repeat those early debates.
- How did women's emancipation as a political movement become connected with sexuality?

-Feminist views of sexuality presented by the women's health movement: in coupling sexuality with being "healthy" and having children, the health movement presents female sexuality as "positive" and "natural." Does the fact that a male health movement would most probably be unimaginable suggest that we believe male sexuality to be fundamentally not benign and not natural?

-What do we mean by compulsory pleasure? Isn't this a contradiction? Given the current power structure, must women's sexual pleasure always be in the service of men? For example, do orgasms by females in a heterosexual relationship merely affirm male power?

-What prevents men and women from having pleasure? Doesn't the current social structure discriminate against men also? It was agreed that we need to read more about male sexuality but there is a lack of good research.

-Why does it seem as if autonomy and nurturance are in opposition for both men and women? How is this acted out in sexuality?

-For some heterosexual and lesbian women, the ideology "the personal is the political" started out as liberating but became repressive, as women felt their personal lives were being scrutinized and judged by others.

-How can we insure within the movement a kind of pluralism vis-a-

vis sexuality? It was suggested there must be a continual dialectic between feminist theory and personal behavior, without degenerating into policing our own and others' behavior.

-We need to further understand lesbianism as political and/or sexual. For example, in the early days of the movement, separatist ideology proposed that all women are or could be gay; how then do we respond to heterosexual women who in fact discovered they are not gay? How do we respond to the fact that many gay women did come from a background in which they were heterosexual and extremely unhappy?

-How have the mores of lesbian sexuality changed from one generation to the next? For example, many in the younger generation opt for S/M with less conflict, or find it imaginable that self-defined lesbians have sex with men.

-Lesbian feminists have made tremendous gains: never before have so many women come out and has lesbianism been a political issue.

-On the issue of political correctness: no one feels politically correct. Who is politically correct? What is a politically correct sexual line?

-It is difficult to discuss sexual desire: risk of judgement; discussion becomes over-intellectualized and is not body-centered; possibility of feeling restrained unless one is in an atmosphere of intimacy and trust.

-In discussing sexuality there is a fine line between theorizing and setting norms.

-We need to have a conference which moves back and forth between the personal and the theoretical: on the one hand, depersonalized theorizing, barren of any personal referent, may be a defense against uncertainty and anxiety generated by the lack of an immediate answer to pressing questions; on the other hand, the revelation of personal experience, divorced from insight and theory, may lead to unwitting affirmation of gender roles.

-We need to know more about the variety of women's actual experiences. Present theory is based on our very narrow range of information about each other. Can the conference allow more information about the diversity of women's experience to emerge?

-Is it possible to have a "value free" space? Can sexuality ever be discussed apart from values?

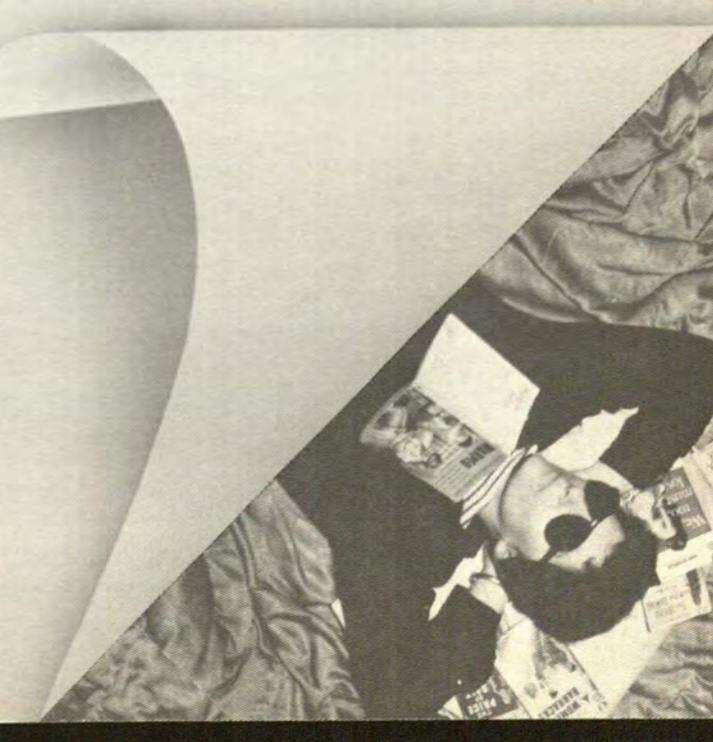
READINGS

Lorde, Audre. "Uses of the Erotic as Power." *Take Back The Night*, ed. Laura Lederer. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1980, pp. 295-300.

Rich, Adrienne. "Afterword." *Take Back The Night*, ed. Laura Lederer. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1980, pp. 313-320.

Shulman, Alix Kates. "Sex and Power: Sexual Bases of Radical Feminism." *Signs* 5, No. 4 (Summer 1980), pp. 590-604.

Walker, Alice. "A Letter of the Times." *Ms.* X, No. 4 (1981), pp. 63-64.



DEAR DIARY, TUES. OCT. 20

"What does sexuality mean?" is still a question. How do we define it? How can we put it on a conference, if we haven't defined it? Have we approached it too narrowly, treating it as a thing apart from the whole of women's lives?

Some have said that in our discussions there has been too much attention to experience and the personal, while others claim there has been too little. Is it possible we use these terms to mean different things? Let's clarify first, rather than assuming the other possibility that we are arrayed along a continuum of valuing/not valuing personal and experiential data, and our sense of too much/too little is simply a function of where we stand on that continuum.

Sexuality is an intersection of many levels of experience, political and personal. We come to this material trained in a particular discipline, with its own methods and concepts, aimed at one of a number of possible levels of analysis or domains. It is unlikely that any one of us succeeded in integrating all these disciplines. It may be unrealistic to look for the magic speakers to perform the integration of personal/social. It is more realistic to think that the planning committee can move toward an integration by thrashing it out in discussions. The vision of the conference is to move beyond the "equal representation" of different disciplines toward the presentation of an integrated way to recognize the simultaneous significance of all the factors (levels of analysis). We're unlikely to achieve it, but it's important to try.

A brief report was given by a few members who attended the discussion at the Lesbian Herstory Archives on "Censorship, Pornography, Feminism, and Sexuality" on October 16, 1981. The meeting was attended by a wide variety of women: women concerned about violence and pornography, lesbians involved in S/M, feminist pornographers and others. Some comments: is it possible that the meaning of S/M can only be understood when the question of the "right" to practice it has been seen as a separate question? The concentration on "rights" (to practice or to be considered a legitimate lesbian feminist) makes it difficult to think about other questions. What is the meaning of being a "sexual outlaw" as some women identified themselves? What does it mean to organize your sexuality around breaking taboos? The discussion raised important points about censorship, not only by the state and other external bodies, but also by the self. What about the role of the Right and Left, not only in the political scene at large, but also in the feminist movement? A woman made a number of interesting comments about feminist pornography and the need to appropriate for ourselves labels initially derisive. What has occurred in the lesbian community to create an environment for S/M? Is one of its main attractions about crossing boundaries of power and, perhaps symbolically, of gender? The meaning of sexual symbols, taken in and out of their normal context, is interesting as well.

We have side-stepped the issue of women's aggression in sexuality. Do we assume only men feel sexual aggression?

The sexual fringe groups have an interesting feature: they know what gives them pleasure and they are systematically going about getting it. That should give us pause. The appeal of indicating sexual desire via handkerchief color is its forthrightness and aura of automatic pleasure. Contrast this with the inability of some women to figure out what gives them sexual pleasure, let alone communicate this to others.

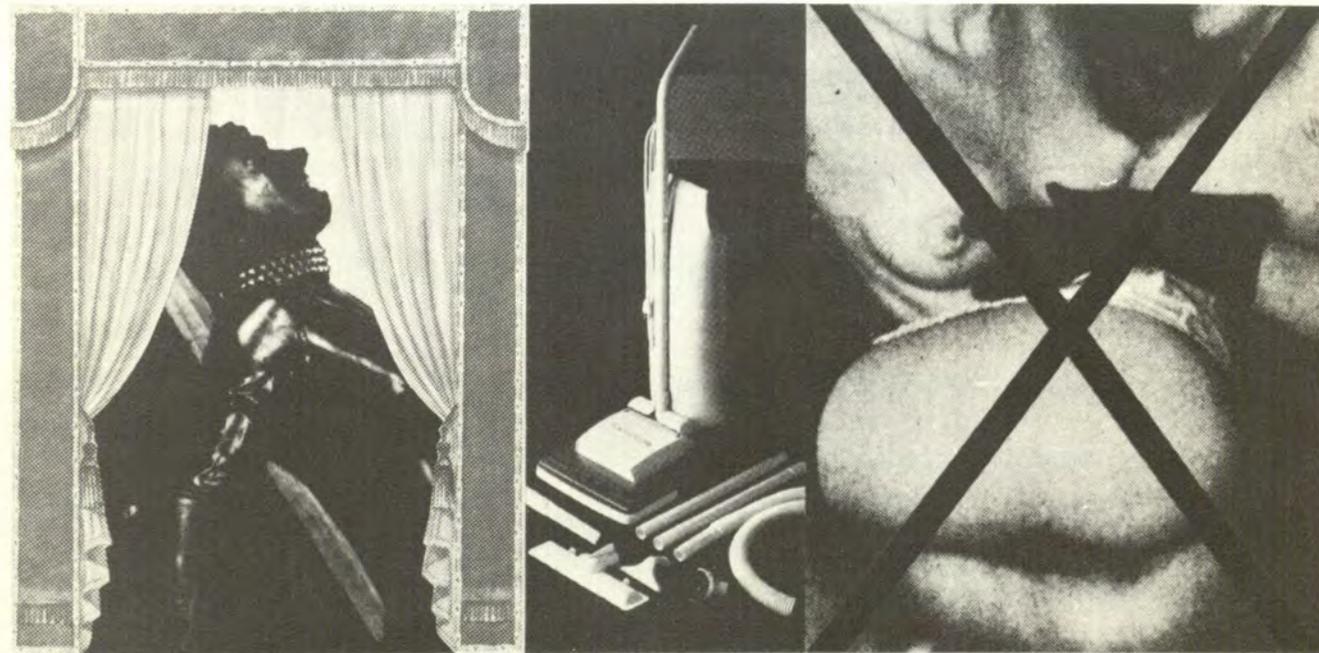


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COLOR	LEFT SIDE	RIGHT SIDE
Red	Fist Fucker	Fist Fucker
Dark Blue	Gives Anal Sex	Wants Anal Sex
Light Blue	Gives Oral Sex	Wants Oral Sex
Robins Egg Blue	Light S/M, Top	Light S/M, Bottom
Mustard	Food Fetish, Top	Food Fetish, Bottom
Orange	Anything Goes, Top	Anything Goes, Bottom
Yellow	Gives Golden Showers	Wants Golden Showers
Green	Hustler, Selling	Hustler, Buying
Olive Drab	Uniforms/Military, Top	Uniforms/Military, Bottom
White	Likes Novices, Chickenhawk	Novice (or Virgin)
White Lace	Victorian Scenes, Top	Victorian Scenes, Bottom
Crazy	Does Bondage	Wants To Be Put in Bondage
Brown	Shit Scenes, Top	Shit Scenes, Bottom
Black	Top, Heavy S/M & Whipping	Bottom, Heavy S/M & Whipping
Purple	Piercer	Piercee
Margen	Likes Menstruating Women	Is Menstruating
Lavender	Group Sex, Top	Group Sex, Bottom
Pink	Breast Fondler	Breast Fondlee

Despite their many points of disagreement, S/M and Women Against Pornography (WAP) are concerned with structure: S/M, in providing stylized and highly structured sexual interactions; WAP, in prescribing a politically acceptable framework for sex. S/M may gain ground in the lesbian feminist community, because a vacuum exists. Perhaps the bravado and excitement of coming out on S/M replaces the no longer attainable excitement of coming out as a lesbian in the feminist community 10 years ago. S/M may have great appeal, since it provides clear boundaries (the top, the bottom) with appropriate behaviors for each.



There is a vacuum about sexuality evident in feminists' theory and our lives. The feminist movement is in a political crisis, in part concerning sexuality. The Right has proposed a comprehensive theory of sexuality and the feminist response has been lacking.

We began discussing Rosalind Petchesky's article "Antiabortion, Antifeminism, and the Rise of the New Right." The article describes important features of the New Right: support for a return to the traditional family and opposition to social welfare under the banner of privatization of many aspects of life.

We discussed the attack on abortion as an attack on all women, regardless of sexual preference. At heart, feminism has tried to separate, or make possible the separation between, sexuality and reproduction. The Right wants to join these again, reducing women to reproductive animals. As such, it is an attack on women's autonomy and an eradication of our sexuality. Diminished access to or elimination of legal abortion also divides heterosexual and lesbian women, since heterosexuals are more easily placed into the breeding animal category, and divides women of different class groups, since some women will still have options regarding abortion while others do not.



One important feature of the anti-abortion movement is its attack on teenagers'/daughters' access to abortion; its goal is to put daughters back under the control of the patriarchal father. In this context, teenagers are called "children." The concern about children's sexuality is reflected in the abortion issue, as well as in both Right and feminist commentaries on "childporn," which has become an issue out of proportion to its occurrence in the porn market and is a buzzword, designed to set everyone off. Yet we are also concerned about the abuse and exploitation of children in all realms, sexuality included. The Right's concern with preserving the presumed innocence of children returns in the abortion issue, as the fetus is presented as a child, i.e., an innocent deserving of protection. Feminists have not confronted the issue of childhood sexuality themselves.



Although the Right and feminists disagree in so many ways, a close examination of their material on sexuality shows both share the concern about male sexual violence.

A question related to childhood sexuality, heterosexuality, and age-discrepant relations is: how do you view power relations? Some analysts view them as overwhelming, destroying any possibility of choice or pleasure (i.e., "50 percent of married women go to bed in fear each night"). Do we believe this? Does this correspond to our experience? Your understanding of the effect of power imbalance would seem to determine your view of adult-child sex, heterosexuality, S/M. In a situation of power imbalance, can the less powerful ever say "yes" or "no"?

Ironically, the Right campaign to protect the innocent confers enormous power on the protector. The powerless innocent, safe in the bosom of the privatized family, is completely at the mercy of the empowered protector.



The Right embodies an interesting inconsistency in regard to children: they are at the same time innocents to be protected and little savages requiring careful socialization to suppress their anti-social drives.

Picking up on the theme of power relations, what about infants' and mothers' reciprocal experience? How does that bear on sexuality? The mother is the slave to the infant's demands; yet to the child, the mother is the child's master.

Who is slave or master?

READINGS

Petchesky, Rosalind Pollack. "Antiabortion, Antifeminism, and the Rise of the New Right." *Feminist Studies* 7, No. 2 (Summer 1981), pp. 206-246.

DEAR DIARY,

TUES. OCT. 27

We continued last week's discussion of the New Right with the question: what is the appeal of the New Right to women in sympathy with it? Sympathizers feel that, as old protections for women have broken down, men have benefited from the women's movement. Women fear male sexuality and the threat of sexual anarchy, a spectre of male abandonment, rape, and pillage. The women's movement has weakened the old bargain women could establish with men: if they were "good," men would protect them; if they were "bad," men would violate them. By reducing men's responsibilities as protectors, women may feel more vulnerable. The old bargain opposed safety and freedom; women on the right and some feminists question whether freedom is a prudent choice, if it reduces safety. The old bargain is still a potent force in women's thinking and actions.



How do Right groups react to a how-to book which instructs its married female readers to titillate their husbands while deferring to their authority like The Total Woman? There is probably a diversity of reaction. The book seems like a total aberration, but it is an attempt to incorporate some aspects of anarchic or exciting sexuality into marriage in the recognition that domesticated sex is boring and husbands must be enticed to stay at home. These books attempt to redefine what the "good" woman can do in marriage and marital sex; however, the emphasis is still on women pleasing men rather than exploring their own sexual autonomy and agency. Lillian Rubin's book contains some interesting material on white working-class women who feel husbands' pressure to expand their own sexual behavior in more "liberated" directions; wives are uncertain whether this is within the sphere of "good" woman behavior, but are reluctant to alienate their husbands. Cosmopolitan is interesting, in that it recognizes women's sexual subject-hood, despite displays of cleavage on the cover and tips on pleasing men.

Traditional women are frightened, in that it seems that the prodigal women are getting rewarded (by good jobs, high pay, esteem, autonomy) while they are not; moreover, traditional women feel it is too late for them to do anything different in their lives. They are trapped, and the system of rewards and punishments has not operated fairly.

What is the position of women in the Right Wing? We can distinguish between women in significant positions in Right organizations and women in the grass roots. An additional distinction between hard and soft core Right Wing women is necessary: a substantial number of women do not directly support the Right but are ambivalent and confused, especially about issues of abortion. Why? There have always been two themes in feminism: to minimize or maximize sex differences. Abortion moves in the direction of minimizing differences, since it removes the burden of uncontrolled reproduction from women and in that way puts them on more equal footing with men. The anti-abortion movement maximizes sex differences, and also picks up the theme of the old bargain: men must protect women, subject as they are to uncontrolled pregnancy, women must also protect

themselves by not inciting and by controlling male sexuality (i.e., by being "good"). The reason for the Right organizational success was discussed: fanatically dedicated minority, well-funded, church backing, and ability to play on the ambivalence of many women, at least to the degree that women's defense of their own right to abortion has been weak. Argument followed. Some think that the hesitant defense results from framing abortion as an issue of health rather than sex and freedom. Radical versus centrist tactics are relevant here: do you gain more by finding a compromise position, not too offensive, or by finding the radical position, offensive but also compelling for others to act.



We turned to the development of the violence-against-women and anti-pornography movements. We are currently at the point of complete conflation of sex and violence. How did this begin in feminism? The women's movement linked rape and violence early; theoretical work suggested that rape was a political act, which terrorized all women and kept them in their place. Early efforts concentrated on the consequences of rape: legal and hospital reforms re treatment of victims, counseling programs, etc. Susan Brownmiller's book shifted the focus to the cause of rape, in that it suggested men raped because they had the ability to do so, an unsatisfying explanation as well as an ahistorical one. The rape movement at certain points shifted the focus from male supremacy as a system to individual men, and further suggested that all men were or could be rapists. Sexual harassment, sexual intrusion, sexist advertising, all acts of male supremacy, were symbolized as rape. This lumping was a common (il)logical technique in Left analysis in the 60's and 70's, not unique to feminism.

The question of continuum versus slippery slope came up repeatedly: are these acts arrayed on a continuum with no necessary progression from one to another, or does each small act lead to the extreme, to rape, for example? The question of transformation was also a prominent theme: feminist work transformed rape from a sexual act to a violent act. Pornography leads to rape; a metaphor of all male sexual action.

#1 in Erotic Dominance



Women Against Pornography (WAP) in some ways heightens women's fears of male violence and male danger. Danger lurks everywhere. Men are irredeemable. No political or structural change is possible in regard to men's essential nature. Those who have heard WAP lectures and presentations said their techniques were shameless and demagogic; there was no room for alternative interpretation or contradiction. They carefully selected pornographic material to screen out images not in keeping with their interpretative scheme (dominatrices, for example).

What about Irene Diamond's article? Is it true that pornography is associated with rape and perhaps causal? What is the evidence? In reality, men do rape women and newspapers report grotesque stories and crimes of male violence. However, the empirical evidence Diamond presents is flimsy. There are not adequate data to settle the issue. Diamond also joins in with the conservative analysis: male sexual nature is violent and must be controlled. By contrast, radical analysis suggests male sexual nature is the product of a repressive society, which

can be altered only by the elimination of sexism and the increase in women's freedom. Increasing women's freedom, and by extension men's freedom, makes women vulnerable during a time of transition. The issue is freedom versus safety; there's no quick solution for the problems associated with increased freedom. Is there violence in less sexually repressive cultures? Yes, there is ample evidence of rape, although this hardly contravenes the previous thesis linking repression to violence since "less sexually repressive" societies still have various forms of sexual control as well as sexism.

We keep coming back to sexuality and violence. An interesting article reported that in a rape counseling center, where counselors insisted rape was not sexual, trouble ensued since clients believed rape at some level was sexual. We are confronting the crossing and recrossing of sexuality and violence; they are not identical, yet there is a relationship between them. The conference needs to identify the places in our culture where they cross, as well as the places where they can be distinguished, since we've already agreed that gross lumping is not helpful.

The thematic question of whether or not we should be minimizing or maximizing sexual differences is relevant again. Most recent feminism has been built around minimizing differences (as through abortion). But the powerful taboo against crossing gender lines may cause people to waver about continued minimizing. The recent experimentation and controversy within feminism about butch/femme and S/M can be seen as maximizing (an attempt to reproduce male/female relationships among women) or minimizing (women have these wishes and fantasies just like men--we are not different). We need to examine the issue of minimizing and maximizing, both in our political relationship to the larger world and within our own community. It will be difficult for women to untangle the crossing over of sexuality and violence as long as they uphold their own socialization to femininity.

The society is gynephobic. Some said what appears in pornography is only an intensified form of gynephobia, perhaps the strongest weapon to legitimate the oppression of women; others, that concentrating on pornography and ignoring abortion isn't practical; still others said that all issues must be addressed, since they are related. Some agreed, saying that any feminist attack on pornography is a mistake.



About metaphors: when is a metaphor a metaphor? When does it provoke the real thing? How does representation work? What is the difference between a newspaper account of a rape and a fictional account of a rape; a porno account of a rape and our fantasies about a rape? In addition, what do we need to know about representations and how they work? What data are missing? Which are important? One important kind of missing data is men's account of their reactions to pornographic materials. The absence of this material is striking. Yet some men are made uncomfortable by pornography as women: they don't want to be reminded and made to confront their "bad" feelings and thoughts. Why are some willing to confront these feelings and learn from them, while others want to shut out painful self-knowledge?

Is it possible that abortion on the Right and pornography among feminists functions in similar ways as a metaphor? To the Right, abortion is a metaphor for moral turpitude (sexual licentiousness, no reverence for life); to some feminists, pornography is a metaphor for moral turpitude and repulsion (male violence, gynephobia). There are other parallels as well: the likelihood that if outlawed both practices will not be eliminated, but go underground. In each case, powerful emotions are aroused by these metaphors. We need to understand more about the content of the powerful and irrational material drawn on by the Left and Right. There are other parallels in the style of both activist groups: reliance on visual material to shock, no subtlety in discussion, no ambiguity, use of the slippery slope approach (abortion is the Holocaust, pornography is rape); the stripping away of context. Both are authoritarian in relationship to the audience. A fascinating workshop or audio-visual event: simultaneous showing of WAP and Right-to-Life slide shows. Actually, the ultimate meeting of these two groups is in the recently heard analysis that "abortion is violence against women!"



One recollection of the WAP tour is that viewers were supposed to be disgusted by the slides. One woman said some material turned her on; others greeted her remark with shock and denial. WAP delineates good girl/bad girl; good girls don't find this material arousing, good girls are different from men. Concern with defining and being the good girl underlies WAP and the anti-abortion movement; this concern derives from and shores up the patriarchal family.

Before dismissing pornography out of hand, let's remember that there were two literatures about sexuality in the Victorian period: the medical, which did not acknowledge female sexuality other than reproduction; and pornography, which depicted women as sexual actors. Of course, both were written by men and male controlled, but even so, pornography presented positive imagery (about lesbians as well).



Throughout the discussion, the importance of unexamined irrational feelings has been noted again and again: the appeal of the Right to a large group of confused, ambivalent women; the impulse to conflate or build false continuums; the hidden concern with good girls; the power of metaphor. Although psychoanalytic work attempts to explain how symbols mobilize irrational feelings, feminists have always been hostile to psychoanalysis. Why so? There are many reasons. Most obviously, psychoanalysis has been used against women and women's interests in theory and practice. It doesn't seem to permit women's autonomy. There are class differences regarding access to psychoanalysis: in the past, this correlated with middle class approval and working class disapproval (it is self indulgent, wallowing in your feelings). There have been shifts in middle class approval, however, in that recent feminist opinion has been negative, even among middle class women. Women wonder if understanding competes with action, if insight deactivates rage. Other reasons include a kind of anti-intellectualism, a wish not to know what goes on in murky realms outside politics, a restatement of the protestant ethic (work and act, don't wallow).

DEAR DIARY, TUES. NOV. 3

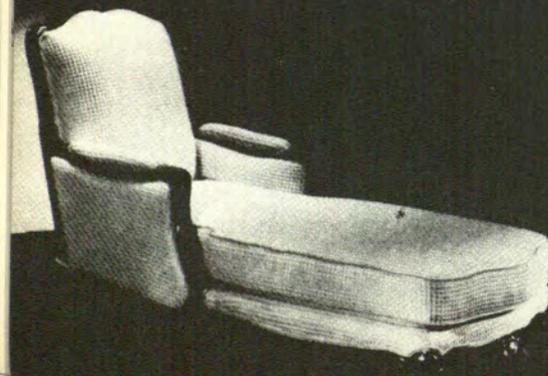
We began the discussion where we left off at the last meeting: the usefulness of psychoanalytic theory and methods to feminists. Whatever its shortcomings, Freudian theory describes relations in the patriarchal family, especially how undifferentiated infants are transformed into boys and girls. We say "psychoanalytic theory" but in fact there are a number of formulations, as well as different purposes to which they are put. Chodorow's article, for example, is typical of the object relations point of view, which does not take aggression as a given; rather aggression is created by frustration. Human "nature" is basically benign. Does her focus on equal male/female parenting of children ignore the need for changes in the external, social world? Does it keep nurturance privatized in the family?

Some find that recent feminist revisions of psychoanalytic theory don't confront hard questions. Others find their work really helpful, especially the emphasis on the pre-Oedipal period. Chodorow, for example, does not focus specifically on sexuality, but sees sexuality as growing out of reproduction (the social reproduction of the child in regard to its experience of differentiating from its mother and recognizing her as a separate person). What of a different model, which posits sexuality as a thing in itself, and not a derivative of more primary experiences? That resurrects a point made in an earlier discussion: does the relationship with the mother influence sexuality, i.e., is sexuality connected with nurturance? From the mother's point of view, her relationship with the infant is about mothering; from the infant's point of view, it may be about sexuality! We've noted the moralist strain in feminist thought: it may be incorporated in

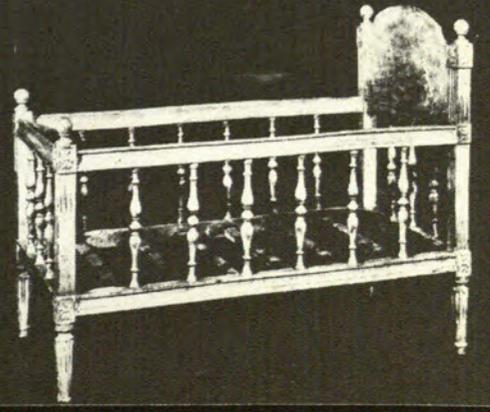
feminist analytic work in the terms describing correct/incorrect behavior: "healthy, whole, divided, split." Is this different from the more gross social control function evident in psychiatry?

What about the infant's experience? If sexual desire is present (are we thinking of it as a biological given), theoretically the infant could attach to any object? Initially, the child's sensory experience is not gendered: s/he does not know her/his gender, nor know her/his mother is a female. It is only later that the experience is recast and reinterpreted in light of new information about gender and its significance. Yet that information is flowing in at a rapid rate from the first day of life. The relationship of the mother and father to the infant is subjectively experienced as different: the mother sees the girl baby like she was once; the father sees a girl baby that is not-him, but a member of the opposite group in the great gender divide. Feminist psychoanalysts differ about the degree of change possible in regard to the instrumental role of the father: Dinnerstein suggests equal nurturance provides the solution, while Lizarre notes that the difference (mother breastfeeds, father doesn't) can have great impact on the infant's perception of mother and father. We might also note the acceptance of breastfeeding as a "good" activity and question our relationship to the "natural." How much can men be made parents? It's a hard struggle for everyone. Do we accept that sexuality involves questions about differentiation at its core, that sexual contact is about relating to the other, either in the form of another person (not-me) and in the case of heterosexuality in the form of another gender?

Is it impossible
to BE human
WITHOUT
gender?



...THEORETICALLY THE INFANT
COULD ATTACH TO ANY OBJECT...



...INAPPROPRIATE DESIRES

A persistent question has been how to explain heterosexuality, because some deflection from homosexual objects must be systematically enforced in the family. The dislike of "blame the mother" literature is interesting, since it ignores the fact that in the patriarchal family mothers treat daughters less well than sons, for which daughters are angry. It also de-emphasizes that the mother frustrates the child, as well as nurtures her/him. The desire to romanticize relationships between women leads to bad politics, in that one is not prepared for the many kinds of tensions which exist between women. It is also true that reading this material brings up a lot of memories and intuitions, some quite powerfully charged. It is likely that our intuitions differ, but comparing them and understanding similarities and differences is not irrelevant but can lead to theory. The mother is more important to the child than the child is to the mother; the mother is an umbrella object in the child's life, but the child is only one element in the mother's life. The mother is also different to each child and her experiences intersect with those of specific children in powerful ways: for example, the relationship between a daughter beginning to menstruate and a mother entering menopause.

The trouble with psychoanalytic theory is: you're damned if you do and damned if you don't. If you agree, fine; if you disagree, it's resistance or denial. Yet the theory is too charged to allow a neutral reaction. However, it does provide something that social learning theories don't. For example, one finds that in spite of efforts to alter a person's sexuality (lobotomy, castration), their sexuality persists. Social learning theories cannot adequately account for this phenomenon. Castration brings to mind the thought that women are castrated men; on the contrary, men can be seen as underdeveloped women!

If we posit some prior existence of a sexual/life force in the child, this force (dare we call it libido) is bent and shaped in the family by fear and threat and it is directed into some appropriate channels. The sense of inappropriate desires and powerful longings remain only as faint memories. What is the essence of what a baby wants? Is gender a primary category? Can it be a primary category and nevertheless mean much less than it does now? Is it possible to be human without gender? Or are we confusing gender identity and gender? Gender can exist (male/female) and individuals can be aware of it (gender identity) without gender differentiation necessarily being the major organizing principle of society. The "naturalness" and inevitability of gender seems persuasive, especially to those who are on top in any binary opposition hierarchy.

These questions about the primary-ness of gender bring to mind recent questions about the primary-ness of penis envy (assuming it exists) and the primary-ness of sexual aggression. Is penis envy merely symbolic of desire for male social power? Is sexual aggression merely the byproduct of frustration and repression? In addition, we question the benign quality of "natural sexuality," the outflowing of infant sexuality versus the infant's totalitarian desire to

AND POWERFUL LONGINGS

possess the mother and the rest of the world.

Another important question concerns the universality of the psychoanalytic model, in regard to women in different life circumstances (i.e., single mothers) and women in other cultures. Can an analytic hypothesis be explored in terms of other cultural groups in a way that does not simply impose the model on them? Is there contrary evidence? Do individuals have to assent to the model for it to be useful or true? Do individuals in the United States assent? Even the situation in the United States is very complex, in that theories about the unconscious are now part of most American people's cultural baggage. Yet, when psychoanalysis first appeared on the scene, its propositions were vigorously rejected.

Sexuality can be seen as a biological or social construct. Sexuality is often experienced by women as relational and not an imperative force, in contrast to the male experience of a sexual drive (see Taxi Zum Klo, in which the male protagonist keeps a taxi waiting in an odyssey of satisfying sexual desire around town). Do women experience this? If so, dare they admit it? Can they pay the taxi fare? Is there any truth behind the stereotype that women experience less sexual desire than men? However, we must examine the ways in which male and female sexuality is organized and constructed; not only is there a binary opposition, male/female, but there is also a binary opposition, male/female sexual style. It is conceivable that gender exists, without men and women differentiating in sexual style. The notion that male/female sexuality is essentially different is important as ideology, as illustrated by the popular assent to these ideas of basic sexual differences.

We've been saying that women's sexuality is repressed: what about men's sexuality? We can hardly accept that it is unrepressed, or the corollary that unrepressed female sexuality would be like male sexuality. Women need to deepen and elaborate their own understanding of what repression is and how it comes about. Repression appears differently in men and women: the mixture of desire and anxiety leads to male compulsion and female inhibition. Both have a sense that it could be otherwise, a sense of loss, of failure. Sexuality is not what it could be. On the other hand, do we expect too much from sex? Does this relate to Foucault's suggestion that sex as a category and an experience has been greatly elaborated?



REMAIN ONLY AS FAINT

MEMORIES

We want to address women's differences in regard to sexuality flowing from race, class, and sexual preference. Often this is done by showing how their experiences differ from the central "dominant" form, which loses sight of the necessary interrelationships between groups.

Many feminists have said that gender is the most primary difference. Some Black feminists think race is the most primary division operating now, or in any context of racial oppression. Yet Black women feel the force of both divisions operating simultaneously. If someone woke you up while sleeping and asked who you are, what would you say? Woman? Black? White women easily say "woman," since being white is a given, in the same way that straight women probably wouldn't say "straight" as their distinguishing characteristic. Yet individual consciousness or identity is not always the complete cue to significant social divisions, since few women so awakened would say "middle class," which is not to suggest that class is unimportant in determining options in people's lives. What would a man say if awakened--"a mathematician," "a dogcatcher?"

Males and females, though dichotomized, are thought to be complementary and expected to have intimate social contact. Race lines are more absolute, more distant, harder to cross. Yet the ideology of racism requiring racial distance is flexible in practice, since historically it has permitted contact between Black women and White men, while prohibiting that between White women and Black men. Part of the reluctance or difficulty Black women experience in talking publicly about sexuality, especially with White women, may stem from their experience of sexuality in a context of violence and oppression.

One experience: adult Black women students found a discussion of the Hite Report and women's sexual frustration to be interesting, but not about their experience. Does this mean that there is no problem, or don't they want to talk about it in public? Lillian Rubin's White working class subjects were willing to discuss it privately, but probably would not have talked about it in a class. Those working in the Black community feel there is a need for sexual information and education. Being "satisfied" is a very relative condition; getting new information, a different frame of reference may cause you to question your previous satisfaction. Groups may also promote the myth of their own satisfaction or lack of problems: what about lesbian sex manuals which suggest that lesbians don't experience trouble with orgasm? What effect does this information have on lesbians experiencing difficulty with orgasm? The interest in the anti-pornography movement has not been great in the Black community, in part because the anti-porn analysis does not include the experience and motivation of young Black women working in pornography or on 42nd Street.

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I've been interested in the history and theory of sexuality for a long time, but was afraid to speak or write publicly on the issue. I was afraid of inadvertently exposing myself and/or appearing ridiculous, and this shut me up. I assume similar fears have shut other women up, although it certainly hasn't stopped men who have been pronouncing on sexuality for years. Anyhow, being a member of the planning committee helped me to get over that fear and I hope that the conference does the same for women who participate in it. Once we start talking and thinking seriously about sexuality, women -- feminists -- will make great breakthroughs, I'm sure.

Ellen DuBois

I want to acknowledge insecurity as well as pleasure: the persistence of a grade school self that groups of women still bring out in me: the little girl who wonders who is best friends with whom, who's terrified of being left out. Talking about sex, if not false, is intimate. It turned me inside out at times.

Kate Ellis

Why this conference on sexuality? Because it asks us to look at the uncomfortable questions surrounding the issue. Most feminists in the N.Y. area support reproductive freedom. There is no controversy when CARASA draws the parallel between the struggle of White middle class women for abortion rights and the campaign of working class Blacks and Hispanics against sterilization abuse. Even the right to be lesbian (sorry Betty F.) is taken for granted. But when we talk about the possibilities for sexual pleasure under Patriarchy many of us, myself included, get nervous. While some of the most exciting theoretical work engaged in today explores this question, we still have no common vocabulary, no common commitment to the political importance of fulfilling our private desires. If not ready to resolve the problem, at least we will have the chance to reflect on the ways women have defined and experienced eroticism. When have we insisted on sexual freedom and when have we sacrificed it for other ends?--Judith Friedlander

Late at night in Fargo, N.D., ten degrees below zero outside, a farmer just jump-started my rental car, the "pro-life" women I spent the day with are all at home tending families. I summon up a split-screen in my mind. On one side, the Right-to-Life meeting I just attended at the Evangelical Free Church, on the other the last planning committee meeting I attended at Barnard and I wonder, "How can two groups of American women get together and have such different conversations about sex?"

Faye Ginsburg

It is exhilarating to look back over the past decade and note the changes in feminist thought and scholarly inquiry that make this conference possible. Each year we pride ourselves in selecting a theme for our annual Scholar and Feminist conference which is on the cutting edge of feminist scholarship. This may be a special moment in history, a feminist conference on sexuality which could not have been held ten years ago and may not have the same urgency or import five years hence.

Jane Gould

"DEAR DIARY,"

(TUES. NOV. 10)

We continued last week's discussion on race and class. The chapters in Common Differences suggest that sexuality has been a prominent feature in White feminist analysis and action, whereas it has been relatively unimportant among Black women. But what groups are we contrasting: White feminists and Black women? Why not White feminists and Black feminists? Or White women and Black women? To say it another way, what is the relationship of White feminist analysis to White women as a group; what is the relationship of Black feminist analysis to Black women as a group? Who speaks for whom? We have to acknowledge the enormous diversity in both groups of women, based on age, cohort, class, work experience, to name only a few factors. Is it perhaps misguided to talk in terms of Black women's sexuality as if it is totally distinctive and unique?

Putting aside for the moment the question of similarity/difference between Black and White women, how can the conference be structured in such a way as to not feel exclusionary? But whom do we want to include? Who usually comes to the conference? In fact, we're not drawing from the entire universe of women, but from a subgroup. This is so for White women attending the conference, who might be described as a mix of mostly middle class academic feminists, intellectuals, and employed activists. We're not trying to plan a conference for all White women, so it is unrealistic to try to address concerns of all Black women (or to think we could). It is more realistic to think in terms of the Black women who do usually participate and represent similar categories.

Returning to the question of similarity and difference, what is the nature of the difference we think exists? Examples follow: "the Black community is more homophobic than the White community." Counterexample: argument, rejection. Other examples follow and meet the same fate. Purported differences rest on slim evidence, frail evidence, and are easily disputed. Can we believe there are no differences? How could racism, powerful in structuring social relations and social experience, fail to have an impact on sexuality? Or is it the expectation that Black women's sexuality is different itself racist, derivative of characterizations of Black women as "exotic," "closer to nature," "more sensual." Yet some Black women themselves assert a difference, as in Common Differences. Yes, but that is on one level: the level of how you present yourself in regard to sexuality. An important theme for Black women has been "I'm hipper than you, more knowledgable." Yet that public stance is different, or may be different, from actual experience and inner feelings. We're really talking about different levels of sexuality which are confusing and hard to name but would include your actual experience, and the cultural images and projections about your (and your group's) experience. The discussion about the differences between Black and White women regarding sexuality has occurred on the level of presentation of self and public style, yet there are other levels which have not been discussed at all. Do we even have the information about what's going on for Black and White women at these other levels?

Consider the level, perhaps we could call it "political culture," that is: how can an issue be talked about in your community-at-large? What are the terms of discussion? Who sets the terms? How is sexuality perceived to relate to other political issues? There appears to be a difference at this level between Black and White political culture, for example, the debate in the Black Scholar about Michelle Wallace's book and the relationship between Black men and women. It was a passionate and painful debate which touched on how far



YOU, HERE WITH ME? YOU? HERE?
YOU?? HERE??



(I KNOW WHAT SHE THINKS... ANIMAL LIKE, HOT, CAN'T GET ENOUGH...)
(UH-HUH, I KNOW SHE THINKS I'M COLD AS ICE, A NYMPHO, DON'T FEEL SEX, TELL MY ANALYST ABOUT IT...)

dissension could go before endangering unity. The political culture in which sexuality could be discussed was different for White feminists, although they labored mightily to change the terms of the discussion previously used by the White Left. We also need to consider how the political culture of talking about sexuality changed historically for various groups: in the nineteenth century Black women from some groups had a stake in asserting their purity and respectability, rather than sexual knowledgability.

The gross manner in which we talk about Black and White differences is not satisfactory. It provides no specificity regarding class, age, and historical experience, factors which may be more significant than race. We need to deepen our analysis by talking about class and race in a more detailed and specific way that permits examination of both similarity and differences. This task appears closely tied up with specifying the levels of sexuality, neither staying at one level exclusively, nor moving from one level to another without knowing and indicating the transition. There are many analogies to gay/straight comparisons. Perhaps the overall question we need to ask is: how do women (of specific class, race, sexual preference, age groups) negotiate sexual pleasure? The answer to this question requires information about every level of sexuality before comparisons between different groups of women can be made.

Here are three suggested schemes to distinguish levels: 1) Private and public or; 2) What to do in bed/self-identity/lifestyle and community or; 3) Sexual behavior/inner experience, fantasy, psychological level/presentation of self, how you articulate your experience, public style/images and



(I KNOW, SHE'S
COME TO GET
MY MAN!)

(I WONDER IF
SHE'S GAY?)



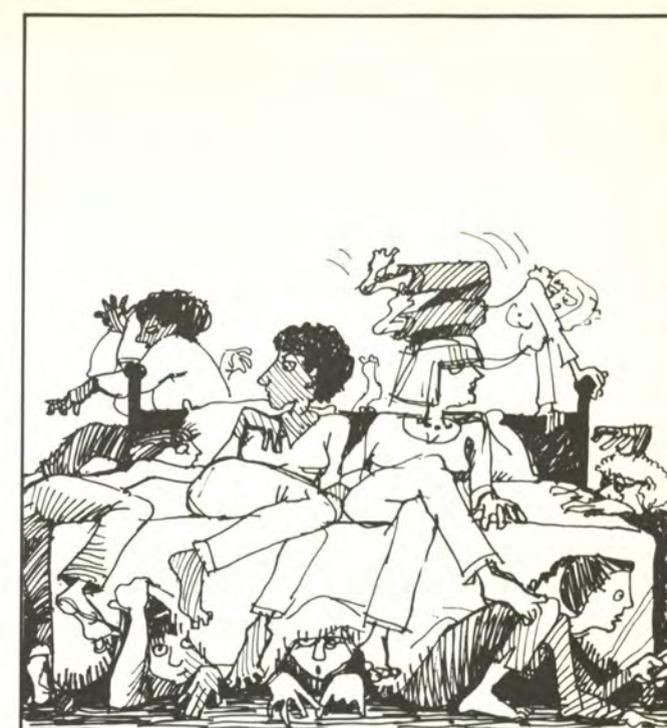
"WELL THEN, WHAT
DO YOU WANT?"

"THE SAME AS YOU?
I WANT TO TALK
ABOUT SEX."



"TALK ISN'T CHEAP.
DO YOU SUPPOSE
WE'RE ALONE?"

"PERHAPS WE'DE
BETTER LOCK
THE DOOR..."



READY?

representations available in the culture/political culture/ideology.

Our frustration with levels appears instantly: the arrangement of each list does not imply that the first item is the bedrock, necessarily, or that the first item is causal in determining later levels. There is an interaction between the levels, obviously. We also know that levels of analysis are at best heuristic devices to help us organize and think about experience and that each list embodies ideological premises which may or may not be true. Does our awareness of the arbitrariness of levels of analysis stop us from using them, equivalent to stopping us dead in our tracks? No. Yet, in terms of an audience, it is difficult to communicate our understanding that any list of levels is arbitrary and subject to questioning and revision at the very same time we are using a level-of-analysis scheme.

We tentatively agreed that any presentation about race and class must address the question of similarity, not only the question of difference, and that it must do so by differentiating between levels of analysis. Gay/straight issues probably should be addressed in the same way. We should anticipate that many groups, previously invisible, have organized around difference to assert their visibility and have an ideological stake in defending difference. We are thinking of the conference as a subversive undertaking, causing participants to question some of their understandings and consider the complexity of the sexual situation. Perhaps in some ways it might be thought of as a teach-in, although it needn't be called that; this term, however, suggests that we all are beginning at a very initial point in sexual theory. So rather than provide the

"answers," the conference should indicate that the answers don't exist and assert the importance of asking questions.

How can the theme of the conference be carried through the afternoon workshops? We want to avoid people choosing their pet topical workshop and coming out with the same ideas with which they went in. Perhaps this could best be done by working closely with workshop leaders and communicating to them the larger themes of the conference. Each topical workshop will be a window into the general themes of the conference. We briefly talked about ways of closing the conference and reviewed strategies of previous conferences.

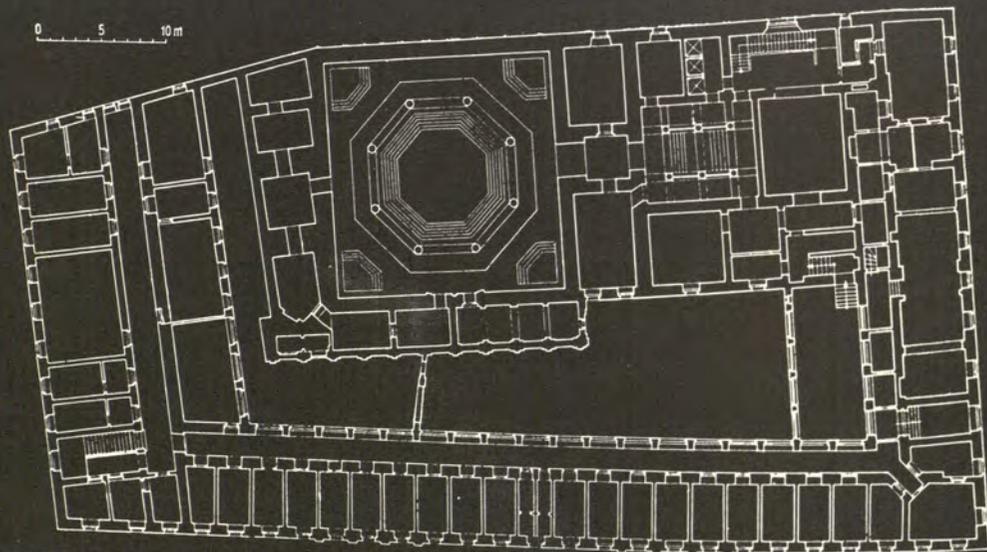
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DEAR DIARY, WED. NOV. 18

Our discussion today provided an opportunity to talk broadly about sexual style, biological issues, violence, male sexuality, and eroticism and pleasure. Some members thought the movie *Taxi zum Klo* raised some interesting points, as did the articles from *The Body Politic*. Our reaction to the possibility of divorcing emotion and sexuality is complex. On the one hand, we are envious, since it seems quite difficult for women to make this separation. Some are frustrated in response to the movie's positive portrayal of gay men's sexual possibilities, given that similar opportunities and institutions don't exist for women, gay or straight. This frustration and envy easily join the greater stream of women's resentment of men's sexual privilege, not infrequently conducted at the expense of women. On the other hand, we wonder whether separating emotion and sexuality emphasizes quantity over quality and leads to a super-market mentality. Is it necessarily a disadvantage that female sexuality is more relational? Some would even say that both gay and straight men's sexual style should be criticized, since both contain undesirable macho elements, as

RUDAS BATHEN SPRITZ TER
WOMENZ PLEASURITZ

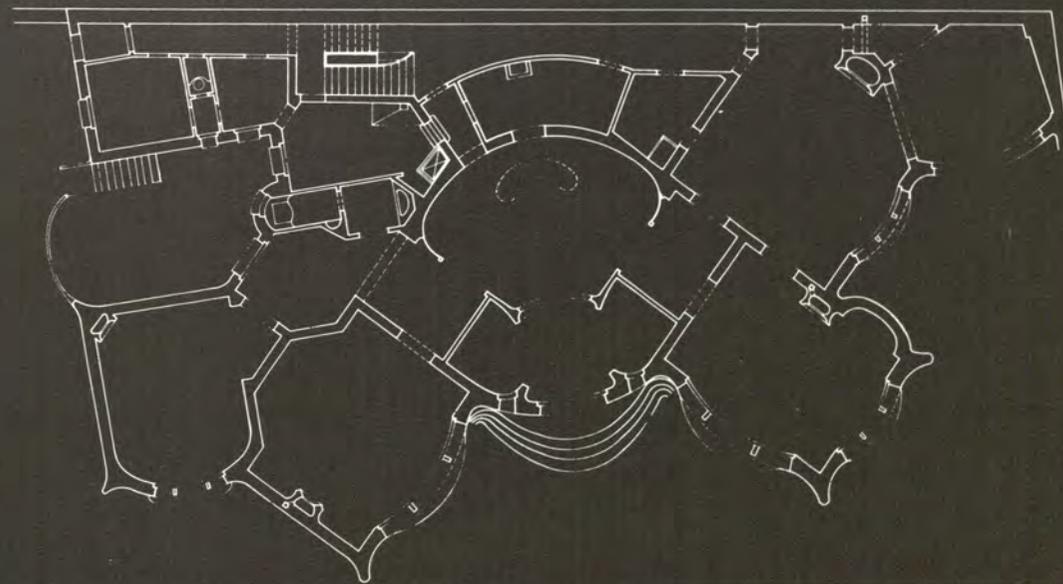


well as painful elements of rejection, alienation, disconnectedness and humiliation. But why do women expect that rejection at the baths would be a killing blow? For heterosexual women, male rejection is so linked at some deep level with male sexual contempt and female humiliation that the prospect of rejection by a man is very frightening, although this doesn't explain lesbians having strong concerns about rejection too. It is a fact that there are few institutions or safe spaces in New York to support or encourage women's sexuality: although there are lesbian bars (far fewer than their gay male counterparts), there is at present no lesbian equivalent of the baths. It is a mistake to lump gay male and lesbian experience, without acknowledging important differences. For straight women, there are singles bars and sex clubs, but it seems that these are hardly "safe" sexual spaces for women, given the pervasiveness of male sexual contempt. Even heterosexual women who have been adventurous in sexual negotiations say that sometimes the negotiations get humiliating and tiresome. We then project this experience onto gay baths. One author, Tim

McCaskell, makes an interesting connection: women know that heterosexual promiscuity often has occurred at the expense of women, which leads to a suspicion and resentment toward homosexual promiscuity and privilege.

What if you maintain the "radical" position that male and female sexuality are intrinsically the same, that sexuality is very much a shared human quality? Yet there is no question that they have been shaped in different ways, recalling a previous comment that women respond to repression by anxiety and inhibition and men by furious and compulsive activity. Neither men's nor women's fantasy and acts are free: that is, we do not regard current male action, gay or straight, as a model of "liberated" sexuality.

Question: Why are there no institutions to support female sexuality?
Answer: Women have less money than men. Nonsense, look at the money women spend in Bloomingdale's. Aha! Bloomingdale's is an institution which represents women's erotic fantasies! Why are there no baths for straight women? We've discussed external reasons (not enough money to warrant exploitation) but in-



Hotel Palacio, Remo
Suites Pro Femme Liberata

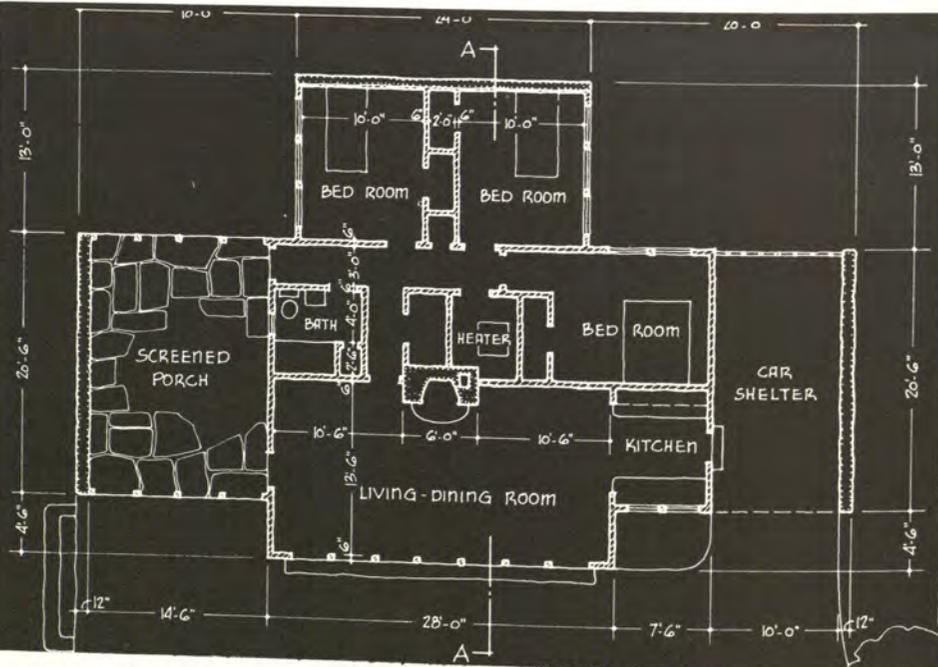
ternal reasons are important too: women's fear of rejection, fear of being the object, concern with subject/object relations. One can read this lack of strength, a fear of crumbling which makes the less-than-totally-personalized sexual interaction frightening for women. The connections with previous discussions about individuation for women are obvious (Chodorow). Women's sexuality remains on the correct side of the gender dichotomy: private, not public; plain, not elaborated. Perhaps sex is not the primary issue, but women's particular sense of self. Perhaps the baths are not really about sex for gay men (!), in that baths also provide and reinforce self-definition as an outlaw group. Do women want to be outlaws?

There is a potential for women to respond to new kinds of sexual support (pornographic home video, presumably more pleasant than a 42nd Street movie), as well as traditionally available, even male, sexual material (as in a gay male sex novel, in which the gender of the participants was not so salient). There is also a small pornographic literature by women writers. However, women could

immediately embark on all sorts of "male" sexual activities, without these activities being liberating in any way. What would women do? What do we think of it? What conditions would be necessary to guarantee choice and autonomy to women in their sexual lives? In addition, we should acknowledge that new information and ways of thinking about sexuality are being incorporated by women in a continuous way.

We keep returning to the question of a safe sexual space and what conditions promote abandon. Men informants report that they feel most free in public, impersonal places; for women, the opposite seems true, that is, only in highly personal, one-to-one, intimate relationships do they experience abandon. This is a striking polar opposition. Is it possible to synthesize these two positions? At least we want to avoid using the male pattern as the standard for judgement. This leads to interesting speculations about the origin of the male preference: do men feel the burden of being "sexually adequate," which is very specifically defined, and hence prefer situations where failure is not so memorable and not so threatening? Do men have a shared body of information and a

COZEE COTTAGES
INTIMATE AND AFFORDABLE
WE DO SEX CONFERENCES

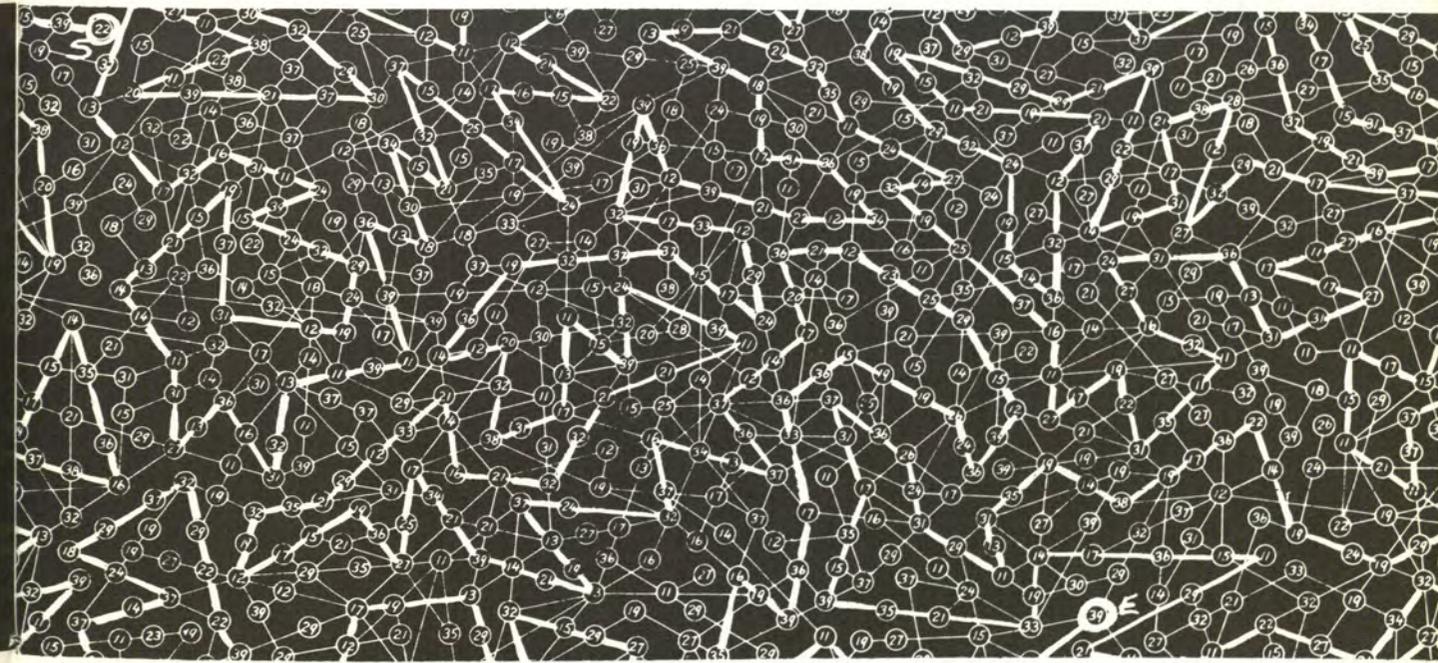


shared definition of "being good in bed"? We think so, and have the impression men talk about this. Do women? The definition of "being good in bed" seems unclear for women. The old male definition of "being good in bed" meant that the woman was willing to have sex, a fairly low-level definition. If women are evolving standards of "being good in bed," do these standards relate to pleasing men? Can these standards relate to women's own pleasure?

Our discussion of the burden of male sexual performance alludes to the importance of erection and penetration, that sex equals intercourse. The tie-in with birth control and its effects on women's sexual expression are obvious. The dichotomy between wanting sex for cuddling versus men wanting sex for penetration was noted, yet men's stereotyped disinterest in cuddling is to be questioned. A man's description of his cuddling proclivities as his "female side" is revealing.

The notion of women taking sexual pleasure is a novel one, in contrast to giving pleasure and receiving pleasure. Taking pleasure implies some autonomous

activity, although to some it also implies ignoring the other, using/abusing him or her. Is this necessarily so? Has objectification been unduly criticized, portrayed as a completely hostile and hurtful activity? Objectification at its worst means treating the other person as a thing, a non-person to be used for your own ends: not nice. We agree that the other person must be recognized, but it is unlikely that one subject (yourself) can fully act for the interest of another subject (the other) simultaneously. The other is seen as a subject and as an object. To imagine that the other not be perceived as an object in any way is unrealistic. Perceiving the object as such (including subjecthood) may be necessary for eroticism. The anti-object school of thought leads to an attack on erotic representation as well. The point is that women have never had a chance to represent themselves, i.e., they've been forever objects, never subjects. The corrective is self-representation, the mutuality of being subject and object, not the elimination of objectification. Perhaps the ability to have choice, to alternate between subject and object, is the key, analogous to a choice between joining or splitting emotion and sexuality. Perhaps it is most



exciting to experience variety through these choices, rather than aiming at the one ideal, best, true, and politically correct state.

The conference must emphasize sexuality. The women's movement has been challenged on grounds of sexuality: do we cave in ("we like the family, too"; "we really are not sexual deviants"; "we're nice girls") or do we use this opportunity for restating our goals and moving ahead? We also acknowledge that our approach can't be from left field (concentrating on sexual pleasure with no reference to danger and political attacks on women seems mindless); rather, we have to present the issues, fully describing the paradox of the movement: danger and liberation.

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DEAR DIARY, TUES. NOV. 24

We discussed organizing the papers according to disciplinary frameworks and their implications: psychology, sexology, biology and so on. Some liked this idea; others thought it might sound too pedantic and ultimately leave the audience frustrated, since each framework is unsatisfactory and would be criticized as such. Having rejected each in turn, we could then break for lunch! We discussed the possibility of focusing on specific issues as they were raised and understood in 19th century feminism and in 20th century feminism, with a third paper on current political issues (incorporating the New Right). Another model would have papers cover: 1) the historical placement of sexuality as an issue between 1890 - 1950, concentrating on feminist debates between free love and social purity; 2) the politics of current feminist debates; and 3) the meaning at the individual level of a politics of sexuality (including psychological issues). Each paper would explore both advantages and disadvantages of all positions taken by feminists.

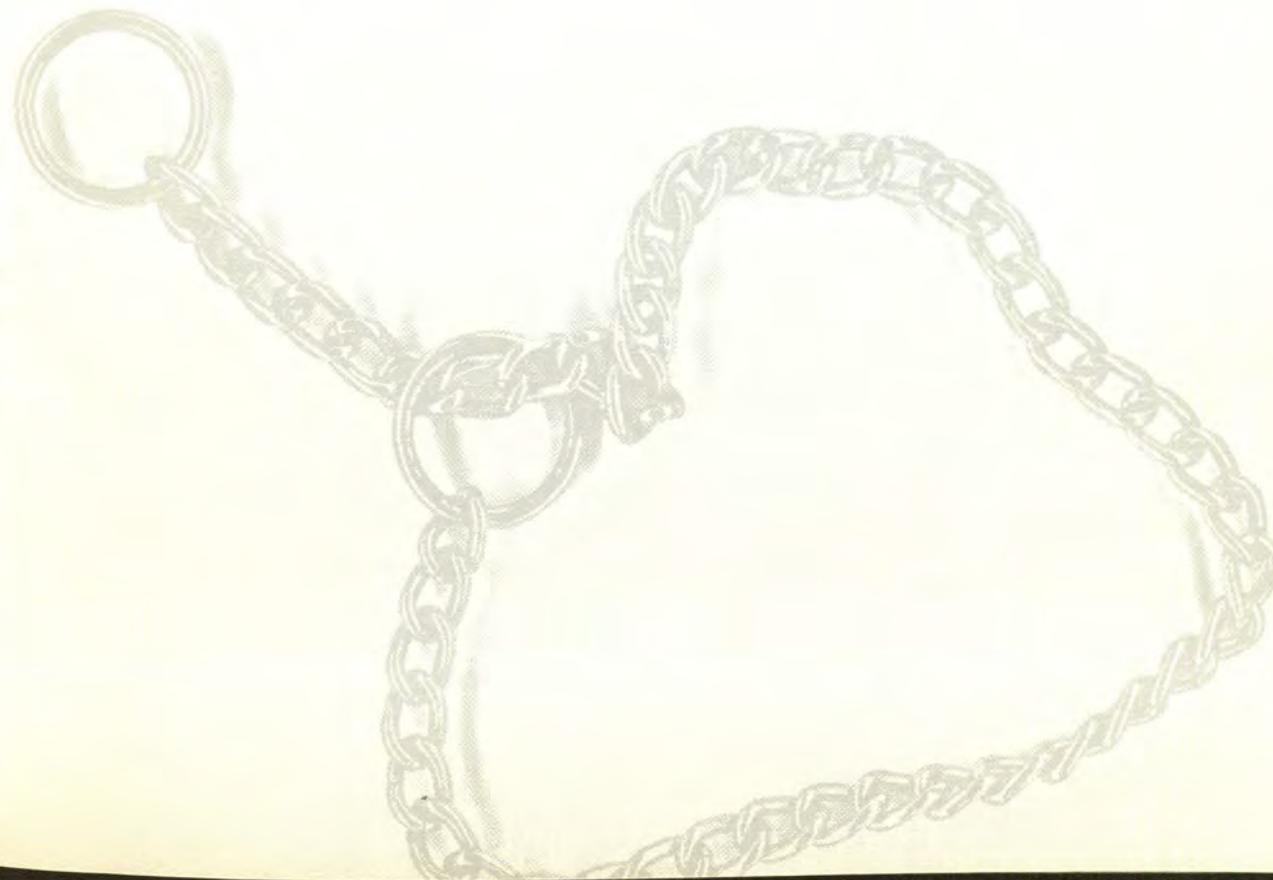
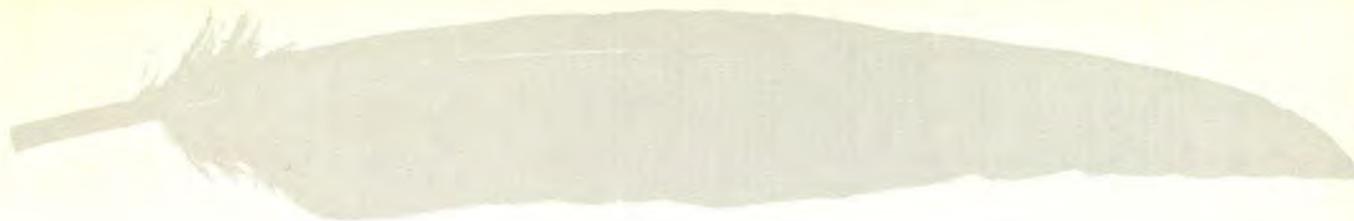
We also reiterated our intention to avoid setting off controversy in the ruts available to feminists now, i.e., either through papers entitled "Why WAP is Wrong and S/M is Wonderful" or "Why WAP is Wonderful and S/M is Wrong". It is not cowardice that motivates our choice; setting everyone off and side-taking is an obstacle to thinking about sexuality differently. However, we intend to explore the political ramifications of all feminist positions.

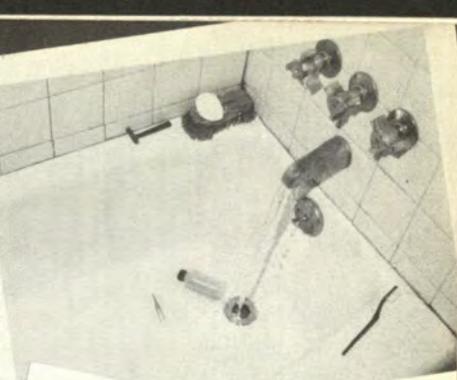
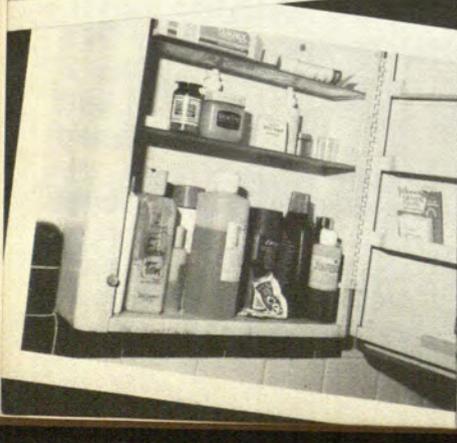
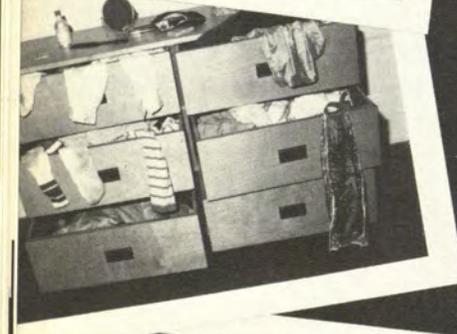
After a great deal of discussion, we tentatively agreed that a historical paper might be a good way to provide distance, with a companion paper analyzing current feminist issues. We thought these papers would include the following:

- 1) Feminist sexual politics during the 19th century. (Period needs to be specified more exactly.) Purpose: to show that feminist debates about sexuality are not new, and to examine the consequences (advantages and disadvantages) of particular feminist positions re sexuality.
- 2) Feminist debates about sexuality during 1965 - 1981: original feminist vision, later developments, violence as an issue, the role of the Right Wing, both external and internal to the women's movement (psychological dimension included here).

We suggested possibilities for the third paper, including: 1) similarity and difference in sexuality (gay/straight, Black/White, male/female); 2) the nature of women's sexuality; 3) the relationship between femininity and sexuality or gender and sexuality (psychodynamic focus). Another model suggested a past/present/future division of papers, so the third paper would look ahead and address the danger of not creating feminist sexual theory and what feminist sexual theory might be.

We agreed to consider the organization of these two topics during the coming week. Each paper would need to make a number of connections with the other; in a sense, both are asking similar questions but of different time periods. The question might be formulated: What is the status of pleasure in feminist theory and analysis and in the social world in which women live? What are the obstacles to autonomy and pleasure; how do women attempt to get pleasure?





CONCEPT PAPER: Towards a Politics of Sexuality



The ninth The Scholar and the Feminist conference will address women's sexual pleasure, choice, and autonomy, acknowledging that sexuality is simultaneously a domain of restriction, repression, and danger as well as a domain of exploration, pleasure, and agency. This dual focus is important, we think, for to speak only of pleasure and gratification ignores the patriarchal structure in which women act, yet to talk only of sexual violence and oppression ignores women's experience with sexual agency and choice and unwittingly increases the sexual terror and despair in which women live.

This moment is a critical one for feminists to reconsider our understanding of sexuality and its political consequences. On the one hand, the feminist community has been engaged by intense discussion about sexuality. The debate has moved from women's right to have sexual pleasure detached from reproduction to sexual violence and victimization. Most recent issues include: the meaning and effect of pornography; sexual safety versus sexual adventure; the significance of sexual styles, for example, butch/femme; male and female sexual nature; and politically correct and incorrect sexual positions. On the other hand, the Right Wing attack on feminists' recent gains attempts to reinstate traditional sexual arrangements and the inexorable link between reproduction and sexuality. In doing so, the Right offers a comprehensive plan for sexual practice which resonates in part with women's apprehension about immorality and sexual danger. To respond convincingly, as feminists we cannot abandon our radical insights into sexual theory and practice but must deepen and expand them, so that more women are encouraged to identify and act in their sexual self-interest.

Behind feminist debates and the Right Wing's focus on sexuality, we think are social and political changes wrought by capitalist transformations and the women's movement during the 19th and 20th centuries, most notably the breakdown in the traditional bargain women made, and were forced to make, with men: if women were "good" (sexually circumspect), men would protect them; if they were "bad," men would violate and punish them. As parties to this system, "good" women had an interest in restraining male sexual impulse, a source of danger to

women, as well as their own sexuality which might incite men to act. Nineteenth century feminists elaborated asexuality as an option for "good" women, using female passionlessness and male sexual restraint to challenge male sexual prerogatives and the characterization of women as intrinsically sexual. Recent gains in the second wave of feminism call for increased sexual autonomy for women and decreased male "protection," still within a patriarchal framework. Amid this flux, women feel more visible and sexually vulnerable. The old bargain, which opposed sexual safety and sexual freedom, is breaking down, but women's fear of reprisal and punishment for sexual activity has not abated. For this reason, the sexual problematic has commanded the attention of feminist theorists in both centuries.

Feminist work on sexuality starts from the premise that sex is a social construction which articulates at many points with the economic, social, and political structures of the material world. Sex is not simply a "natural" fact. Although we can name specific physical actions (heterosexual or homosexual intercourse, masturbation) which occurred at various times and places, it is clear that the social and personal meaning attached to these acts in terms of sexual identity and sexual community has varied historically. In light of a wealth of material, we restrict our analysis to 19th and 20th century America, while retaining the notion of historical and cultural construction of sexuality. Without denying the body, we note the body and its actions are understood according to prevailing codes of meaning. Believing that biological sex is conditionable, we return to the question "What do women want?"--a question we can entertain now that it is we who are asking it.

Sexuality poses a challenge to feminist scholarship, since it is an intersection of the political, social, economic, historical, personal, and experiential, linking behavior and thought, fantasy and action. For the individual, it is the intersection of past, current, and future experience in her own life. That these domains intersect does not mean they are identical, as the danger of developing a feminist sexual politics based on personal experience alone illustrates. We need sophisticated methodologies and analyses that permit the recognition of each discrete domain as well as their multiple intersections. Despite the many interrelationships of sexuality and gender, we do not believe that sexuality is a sub-part of gender, a residual category, nor are theories of gender fully adequate, at present, to account for sexuality.

Feminist work on sexuality confronts three problems: 1) multiple levels of analysis, 2) limited data about women's experience, 3) overdeveloped theory, in light of limited data.

1) We talk as if information about sexuality comes from a single source, but in fact it comes from many sources: for example, sexual behavior and acts; inner, psychological experience; the public presentation of our sexual selves; sexual style; images and representations available in the culture; the place of sexuality in the discourse of the political community to which we belong; sexual ideology. When we compare the sexual situation between and within groups of women, it is important to remember that no conclusions can be drawn by comparing only one layer of sexual information without considering the others.

Within feminism, we find it easier and more politically correct to talk about sexual differences between women than sexual similarities. This is understandable, given our wish to acknowledge real diversity of experience and to insist on our visibility through difference from dominant groups, the same difference causing our long invisibility. We think it is important to simultaneously discuss women's similarities and differences, questioning whether the ac-

quisition of femininity and the conditions for its reproduction affect all women in a distinct way, cutting across sexual preference, sexual object, and specific behavior.

2) We base our theories on limited information about ourselves and, at best, a small number of other women. Given the complex grid of class, race, sexual preference, age, generation, and ethnicity, our personal experience can speak to but a small part of the sexual universe. Yet we wish to develop a framework inclusive of all women's experience. (Sexuality must not be a code word for heterosexuality, or women a code word for white women.) To do so we must make a renewed effort to talk with each other, agreeing to break the taboo that denies us access to information that lies beyond the boundaries of our lived sexual experience. Such is the only way to remedy our ignorance and avoid a sexual theory circumscribed by the boundaries of individual lives and idiosyncracies.

3) We find it easy to say publicly: "Women want...", "Women hate...", "Women are turned on by...", "Women are afraid of...", "Women like..." However, we find it excruciating to say publicly: "I want...", "I hate...", "I am turned on by...", "I am afraid of...", "I like..." Clearly, our hesitation to make the private and personal become public and potentially political has significant implications. Our theory, as it stands, is based on limited facts marshalled by overdeveloped preconceptions. It is also clear that any discussion of sexuality touches areas of unconscious conflict and fear. Feminists have been remiss in failing to address the power of unconscious sexual prohibitions and the appeal of primitive myths and metaphors about the Child, the Good Girl, the Man and the Family. Unarticulated, irrational reactions wreak havoc in our own movement and at the same time are cleverly used against us by the Right.

Sexuality is a bread and butter issue, not a luxury, not a frill. Women experience sexual pleasure and displeasure in their daily lives, even as women in different communities and different situations may articulate and organize around these experiences in different ways. Sexuality cannot wait until other, more "legitimate" issues are resolved. The division between socio-economic and sexual issues is false; we reaffirm their intimate connection in domesticity, reproductive politics, and the split between public and private, fantasy and action, male and female. We cannot postpone the consideration of sexual issues until after the "revolution." Such a tactic implies a belief in a natural, unfettered sexuality which will emerge after more basic issues of production and redistribution are resolved. Feminists who oppose the biologized woman or man cannot put their faith in a biologized sexuality.

We see the conference not as providing definitive answers, but as setting up a more useful framework within which feminist thought may proceed, an opportunity for participants to question some of their understandings and consider anew the complexity of the sexual situation. Our goal is to allow more information about the diversity of women's experiences to emerge. In morning papers and afternoon workshops, participants will consider the question: what is the status of sexual pleasure--in feminist theory and analysis and in the social world in which women live? and by so doing, inform and advance the current debate.

Much has been written about women giving and receiving pleasure; the conference is a step toward women taking pleasure and a contribution to envisioning a world which makes possible women's sexual autonomy and sexual choice.

January, 1982

Carole S. Vance
Academic Coordinator

During the early planning committee meetings, it was difficult to participate in the discussion. I didn't know the proper words. What were we "really talking about?" When I eventually found my voice, it sounded strange. I wonder why? Diane Harriford

I questioned my participation in the conference's planning as an outsider to academe. At many meetings I was uncomfortable, felt out of place. Curiosity, commitment, desire for alignment, my own grandiose fantasy about the conference and its possible impact drew me in deeper and deeper... Feminist Politics considers women's sexual pleasure and sexual freedom as its goals... The diary... Happy Birthday Hannah! HAPPY BIRTHDAY Paula! Thanks Carole! — Beth Lake THANKS MARYBETH!

We have resisted the temptation to "rationalize" human experience. REMAINING QUESTIONS: Will a deeper understanding of women's right to sexuality apart from reproduction enable us to question the underlying meaning in the ideology of asexual motherhood? Will we finally be able to discuss the desire, pleasure, rage and aggression between mothers and infants - their impact on the development of women's sexuality? Must autonomy and nurturance remain split?

Janie J. Kutzner

One goal of the planning committee that I consider essential is the conference's emphasis on a sexual politics in which pleasure, autonomy, and freedom are central. Unless we, as feminists, articulate such a politics, we are vulnerable to political, social, and economic forces that exploit our fears, and promote repression, block autonomy, and inhibit intimacy and pleasure.

Mary Clare Lennon
Mary Clare Lennon

1) Sex, per se, is not the problem; 2) nor the articulation or satisfaction of desire; 3) nor the discussion of sxl. experience. 4) The developmt. of sxl. "subject-subject," "I-thou" rltns. is one problem: but such rltns. can't exist except in context of an overall "I-thou" rltnship btwn. 2 people. 5) Others are: the gov't's decision to link sex inextricably to reproduction, & to deprive homosexuals of civil rights. 6) "Free" sex is a form of repressive tolerancé: as Solanas warned, contemporary America, "if it's not deflected from its present course and if the Bomb doesn't drop on it, will hump itself to death." 7) This road leads to the Ramrod; stop the train, please!

Sherry Marasse

OPENING SESSION

9:45—12:00

Moderator, Carole S. Vance

We've been wanting to write something together for a long time and are grateful to the conference for giving us the opportunity. It was both easier and harder to collaborate than we anticipated. Since we live in separate cities, we worked mostly by mail, taking turns redrafting the speech, which we did 5 1/2 times. The challenge of the topic was to balance the distanced and dialectical quality of historical analysis with our strong political and personal feelings about the issues and how feminism deals with them.

Linda Gordon and Ellen DuBois

It is every teacher's nightmare--an analogy on every writer's dream of death: Suppose I got up there and forgot everything, or worse, could think of nothing to say? What would happen?

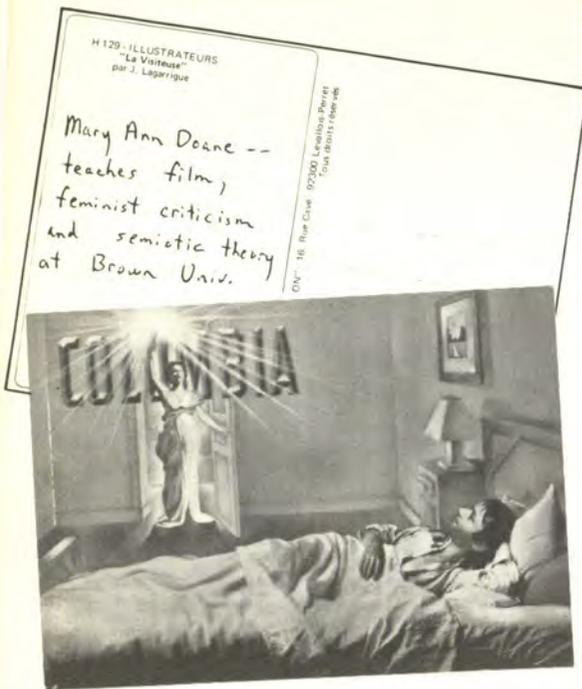
In preparing my piece for "The Scholar and the Feminist IX" conference, I imagined just that, and every time I did I read another paragraph or stalked another book, or jumped up from wherever I sat or lay and scribbled another note. Fragments shored against a possible ruin is what it is! Truly, we strive as much in the name of a "good name" as we do for our ourselves. Here's hoping. When I read this again, in a different context, under other lights, my "twenty minutes," a perfect solitude before 10,000 others, in effect, will be over, or nearly. I won't know until then...

Hortense J. Spillers

I channeled my initial apprehensions about the conference into a quest for the perfect title to my talk. Music freak and DJ that I am, I conducted an unsuccessful mental search through my record collection hoping to locate that line which would say it all. As the deadline neared I dreamt up lots of titles and developed a special attachment to the following ones:

SAVING OURSELVES FOR THE REVOLUTION
WALKING AWAY FROM THE WILD SIDE
MOTHER KNOWS BEST?
THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT GETS A HEADACHE

Alice Echols



H 129 - ILLUSTRATEURS
"La Visite"
par J. Laparrique

Mary Ann Doane --
teaches film,
feminist criticism
and semiotic theory
at Brown Univ.

0101 16 Rue Cassin 07200
Laval-des-Vignes
France



This work can be
seen at DOCUMENTA 7,
KASSEL, GERMANY,
The ANNINA NOSEI GALLERY,
NYC, in Screen Magazine
Spring 1982, in BOMB
MAGAZINE, Spring 1982,
+ soon on some
walls around the
city.

POWER, SEXUALITY AND THE ORGANIZATION OF VISION

A great deal of contemporary theory of film, representation, and processes of imaging has demonstrated how modes of looking are constructed along the lines of a sexual division. Classical systems of representation organize vision in sexual terms: the opposition male/female is aligned with those of subject of the gaze/object of the gaze and active/passive. Thus, the woman's relation to the camera and the scopic regime is quite different from that of the male. The cinema, for example, through its insistent inscription of scenarios of voyeurism, conceives of its spectator's viewing pleasure in terms of that of the Peeping Tom, behind the screen, reduplicating the spectator's position in relation to the woman as screen. Spectatorial desire is generally delineated as either voyeurism or fetishism, as precisely a pleasure in seeing what is prohibited in relation to the female body. This workshop will therefore explore both issues of the relation between the woman and the image and issues surrounding the possibility of female spectatorship. What happens when the woman appropriates the gaze? Can feminists use the visual in non-problematic ways or is the image so ideologically loaded that it can only be deconstructed?

Mary Ann Doane

Further, this workshop will investigate the dominant choreography of the image and consider the possibilities suggested by the removal of stereotype from the "natural." The preponderant definitions of sexual difference invade film, television, and the production of the art subculture. The notion of voyeurism and its attendant identifications structure the way in which we receive images. Perhaps we can begin to consider a practice which can interrupt the resonance of popular depictions with another definition of difference. My production, contextualized within the "art world," consists to some degree of replicating certain words and pictures and watching them stray from or coincide with the notions of fact and fiction. I am interested in the alternation between implicit and explicit, between inference and declaration. Thinking about assumption, disbelief and authority, I hope to strain the appearance of naturalism and to couple the ingratiating of wishful thinking with the criticality of "knowing better."

Barbara Kruger

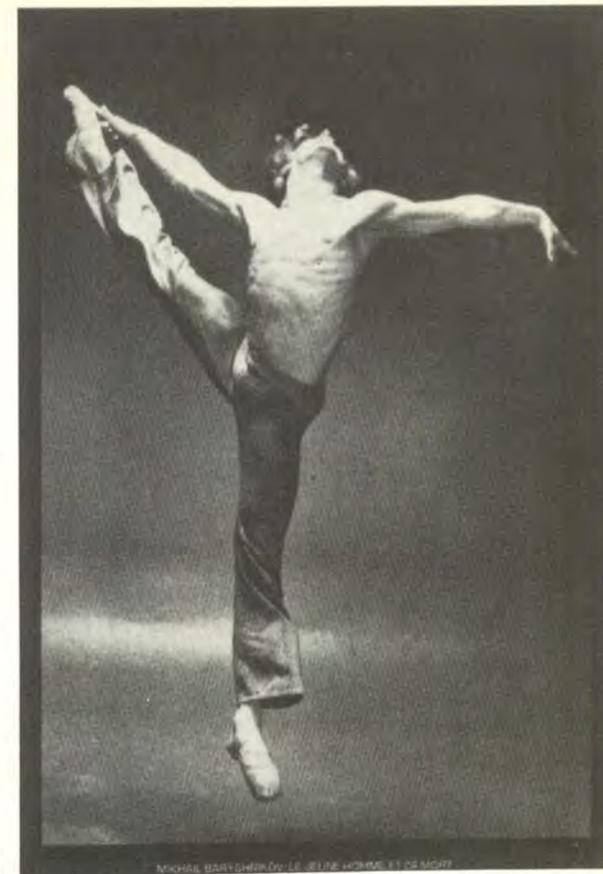
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MAIRE KURRIK

CARD #1 GEMINI STUDIO, 21 W. 17TH ST., NEW YORK, N.Y. 10011

A Question for Lacan:
Is the body articulate? Of what
does it speak? What can the
disciplined body say?
Freedom is pleasure, pleasure freedom - that
is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need
to know."



LACAN: LANGUAGE AND DESIRE

To bring everyone into the discussion, including those unfamiliar with Lacan, I will review and explicate his most basic concepts. My focus will be on his conception of the unconscious and how it differs from the nineteenth century conception of the unconscious. How does an unconscious structured like language work? What are the distinctions between conscious and unconscious discourse? How do the word and the flesh interact in the Lacanian system? What precedents do the imaginary and the symbolic order have in the philosophico-psychological traditions of the West?

The aim of our discussion will be to explore the implications, both positive and negative, of the Lacanian system for feminism. Is it possible to criticize this system as a totality? Is language the law of man? Is the word more powerful than the body? Is language more primary than perception? Can woman situate herself outside the symbolic order without paying the price of psychosis?

What is the position of woman within the system? Why is the phallus "the unparalleled signifier?" Is entry into the symbolic order necessarily synonymous with the Oedipus complex and its resolution: castration (separation from the mother)? Is desire reducible to the shift from being the phallus to having it, both for men and women? Is the baby a substitute penis? And is the baby woman's desire?

If it is the law of desire that it is repeated until it is understood, does literature evidence a woman's desire that has been repeated without being understood? Is the Elsewhere, the Other of desire only in the irretrievable past or does desire look forward to something that never was but could be—peace, reconciliation, intimacy?

Maire Kurrik

SUGGESTED READINGS

- de Saussure. *Course in General Linguistics*. McGraw-Hill.
- Freud. *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. Norton.
- Freud. *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis* or "The Wolf Man" in *Three Case Histories*. Collier.
- Freud. *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Book 1, Chapter 1.
- Lacan. *Ecrits: A Selection*. Norton.
- Lemaire, Anika. *Jacques Lacan*. RKP.



DO WE WANT TO GET ON THE BUS?
 OPTIONS FOR ORGANIZING AROUND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Noreen Connell was a member of New York Radical Feminists (1971), went on to be a co-founder of Women Office Workers (1975), became a president of the N.Y. Chapter of N.O.W., and is now working for Planned Parenthood of NYC. She will discuss options available in fighting the Right Wing assault.



WE ARE EVERYWHERE

POLITICAL ORGANIZING AROUND SEXUAL ISSUES

The workshop will review and analyze efforts to organize for civil rights for lesbians and gay men in the United States. Factors leading to the Stonewall Rebellion (June 1969) in Greenwich Village which marked the beginning of the organized struggle for protection from discrimination will be examined. Post-Stonewall development of the lesbian/gay movement will be traced and compared to the development of other social change movements. Strategies for the future survival and growth of the lesbian/gay movement will be discussed.

Cheryl Adams

In less than five years the Right has utilized traditional patriarchal methods of political organizing to influence traditional patriarchal centers of political power, such as state legislatures and the U.S. Congress. The Right is now positioned not only to reverse the gains made by the feminist movement in the last decade, but to impose by force of law patriarchal values that have been eroded since the early sixties.

This has created a double dilemma for the feminist movement: (1) How can we fight back effectively and (2) Does being "effective" mean also utilizing traditional organizing methods directed at traditional centers of power?

The radical feminist movement has relied on education and consciousness raising as a means of organizing women to act in their sexual self-interest. Clearly this tactic is not sufficient to the current crisis. Consciousness raising and education must be viewed as only the first step in the process of political action.

In 1982 Congress may attempt to make abortion a capital crime. This gives little time, but extreme urgency, to the development of effective political action. This workshop leader will explore the options available.

Noreen Connell

"No More Nice Girls," a small pro-abortion action group, was formed early in 1981 by a group of New York feminists to draw attention to abortion rights as the cornerstone of women's sexual freedom. We've tried to dramatize the issue through a kind of street theatre, using strong, visual images to communicate our message. I will discuss the goals and tactics of "No More Nice Girls," describe our successes and failures, and talk about the importance of this kind of activism.

Brett Harvey

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Abbott, Sidney and Barbara Love. *Sappho Was a Right-On Woman*. Stein and Day, 1973.
- Booth, Heather. "Left with the Ballot Box." *Working Papers*, May/June 1981.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara and Deirdre English. *Witches, Midwives and Nurses*. The Feminist Press, 1973.
- Katz, Jonathan. *Gay American History*. Thomas Y. Crowell, Co., 1976.
- Martin, Del and Phyllis Lyon. *Lesbian/Woman*. Bantam Books, 1972.
- Stamm, Karen. "Strategies for Reproductive Rights." Newsletter of the Committee for Abortion Rights and Against Sterilization Abuse, March 1982.
- Vida, Ginny, ed. *Our Right to Love*. Prentice-Hall, 1978.

My work in Film is largely concerned with the representation of women in narrative. Currently, I am involved in a film project.

"Pornography guarantees that no representation will ever fulfill desire while maintaining the desire for that representation"

The above quote expresses the terms of my film



Kaja Silverman is Associate Professor of Film and Women's Studies at Simon Fraser University. She is the author of *The Subject of Semiotics*, Oxford University Press, October 1982, and articles on *The Night Porter*, *It's A Wonderful*

Life, Kaspar Hauser, Splits, the female voice in avant-garde feminist cinema and *The Story of O*. She is currently writing a book on the female voice and body in both classic and experimental film.

Printed by Morgan Press

PORNOGRAPHY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A FEMALE SUBJECT

This workshop will situate pornography within the context of a number of other discourses which construct sexual difference and the female subject in similar ways, most notably advertising and dominant cinema. We will also argue that pornography cannot be isolated from a larger critique of the existing symbolic order, or from such seemingly diverse structures as the family or the church.

A number of current theories about pornography will be briefly summarized, and situated within the current debate about the female body. It will then be suggested that the pornographic discourse can best be read as a kind of allegory about how the female subject comes to maturity within a phallo-centric social order, and that its operations can help us to understand the operations of all of those other discourses which converge to produce what we currently call "woman."

We will propose that female subjectivity always begins with the zoning and inscription of the body; that "interiority" is an extension of that bodily organization; and that both of these operations—the mapping of the body and the articulation of a psychic economy—are the effect of discursive activities which often take quite concrete and material forms.

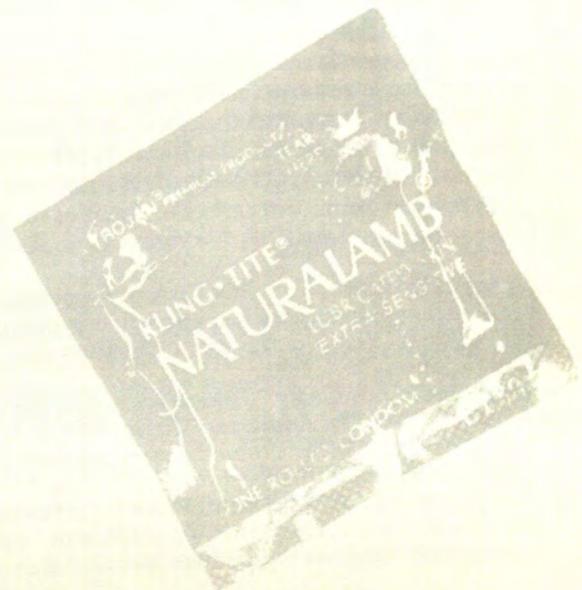
This workshop will suggest that there is a continuity from one dominant discourse to another, at least in so far as sexual difference is concerned. In other words, those discourses which make up the symbolic field overlap at the signifier "woman" so as to produce a stable and recognizable entity which seems both natural and eternal. That discursive matrix is determinative of the way in which women function not only sexually, but socially, economically and politically.

A brief theoretical investigation of these issues by Kaja Silverman will be followed by a screening of *Variety*, a super-8 film by Bette Gordon about a female ticket taker in a porno movie house. Gordon will expand upon the connection which her film establishes between pornography, advertising and Hollywood cinema either before or after the screening. The workshop will then be opened to a general discussion.

Bette Gordon and Kaja Silverman

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Brown, Beverly. "A Feminist Interest in Pornography: Some Modest Proposals." *m/f*, No. 5/6 (1981), pp. 5-18.
- Brown, Beverly and Parveen Adams. "The Feminine Body and Feminist Politics." *m/f*, No. 3 (1979), pp. 35-50.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
- Heath, Stephen. "Difference." *Screen*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (1978), pp. 51-112.
- Pajaczowska, Claire. "The Heterosexual Presumption: A Contribution to the Debate on Pornography." *Screen*, Vol. 2 (1981), pp. 79-94.
- Siles, Peter. "Pornographic Space: The Other Place." *Film: Historical—Theoretical Speculations*, 1977 Film Studies Annual: Part 2. Pleasantville, New York: Docent Corporation.



Thompson, Sharon: Co-editor of an anthology on the politics of sexuality to be published in the near future by The Sarah Eisenstein Series, Monthly Review Press; teacher, The Center for Open Education; currently gathering oral histories on teen romance.



Bristow, Camille A.: Currently doing research on sexually active, pregnant, and parenting teenagers in New York City.



Watercolor by Nancy Legge 1979

TEEN ROMANCE: THE SEXUAL POLITICS OF AGE RELATIONS

(Hetero) sexual activity among the nation's teenagers has attracted increased attention over the past decade. In their desire to determine its "causes," social scientists, service providers and parents inevitably look to behavioral and social research. Their hope is that the research will explain teenagers' motivation to have sex and suggest ways in which their sexual activity (and rate of pregnancy) can be quelled. While some of this research is useful, it is important to recognize and discuss the methodological and conceptual limitations that much of it contains. It is also critical to recognize the capacity of the research to extend the life of popular, yet inaccurate ideas about teenage sexuality. One significant area of research which has been largely unexplored is the confluent effect of age, racial identity, class position, and affectional preference on young women's sexual and social lives. Part of this workshop will be devoted to a survey of these and other issues raised by the current research.

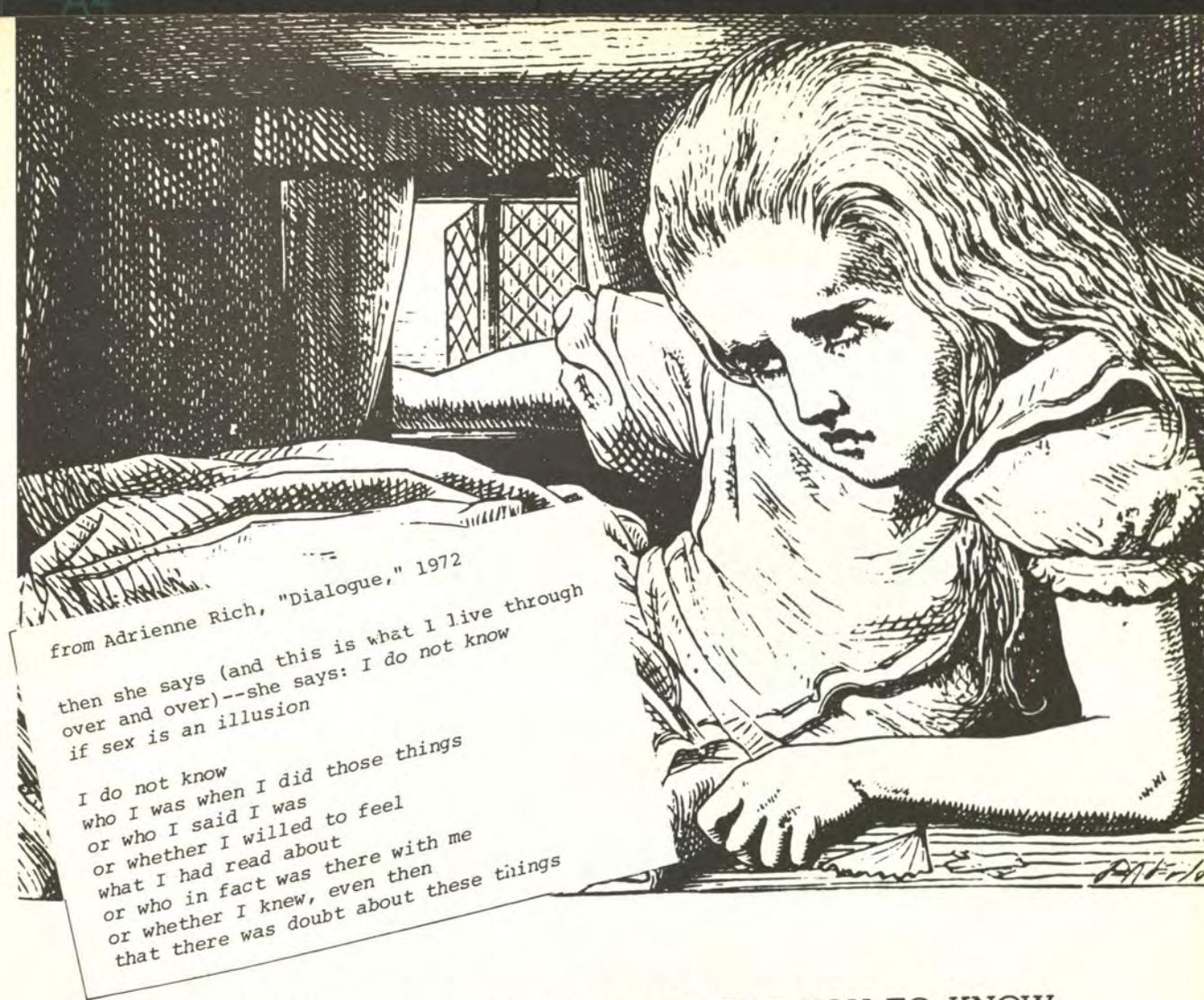
Camille Bristow

While adult discourse about teenage sexuality consists chiefly of disquisitions on promiscuity, exploitation, and the epidemics of teenage pregnancy and venereal disease, teenagers are absorbed, rather, in such questions as why they loved/cared/liked him or her, what happened, who hurt whom, and what they will do differently the next time if there is one. This workshop will present excerpts from oral histories about such questions in addition to critically surveying the statistical literature on teenage sexuality. These excerpts will tell stories about how I lost it; how he treated me like gold; how he stuck to me like glue; how he didn't stick when the going got rough; how I'm not one of those who can't live without it; how he broke his sister's jaw for love of me; how I never should have done it because how could I say no again; how he stuck after the baby came and that was how I knew he really cared. Teenage girls spend hundreds of hours telling each other stories like these as part of the process of constructing and reconstructing sexual and existential meaning for themselves, and we will explore their implications for feminist analysis and strategy.

Sharon Thompson

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Chilman, Catherine. "Possible Factors Associated with High Rates of Out-of-Marriage Births Among Teenagers." reproduced by Educational Resources Information Center, National Institute of Education, 1976.
- Gillis, John R. *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770-Present*. New York: Academic Press, Inc., 1981.
- Harvey, Brett. "Boy Crazy." *Village Voice*, (February 10-16, 1982), pp. 48-49.
- Konopka, Gisela. *The Adolescent Girl in Conflict*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1966.
- Newton, Esther. *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America*. 2nd ed. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979.
- Plonis, Betty Moore. "Adolescent Pregnancy: Review of the Literature." *Social Work*, July 1975, pp. 302-307.
- Ross, Susan et al. "The Youth Values Project." prepared for the Population Institute, Washington, D.C. and State Communities Aid Association. New York City, New York: 1978.



EVERYTHING THEY ALWAYS WANTED YOU TO KNOW: POPULAR SEX LITERATURE

It is a basic premise of this conference that the ways women experience their sexuality, the ways we represent our sexuality to ourselves and enact that representation, are heavily conditioned by the representations our culture makes available to us. This premise has made it possible to talk historically about changes in sexuality based on changes in what forms are in the cultural repertory, which ones are more highly valued, and what women's power relationship to such representation is. One way to attack the large question—was the "sexual revolution" of the '60's and '70's really sexually liberating for women?—would be to examine a new form of representation of sexuality that then emerged into popular culture: the sex manual, brought out of its brown paper wrapping and onto the mass-market shelf. In what ways was this new form of literature normative as well as informative? And what were the norms it set?

My workshop deals largely with books that had a wide popular circulation and thus presumably a wide influence: *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex*, *The Joy of Sex*, and *The Sensuous Woman* are just a few. Other materials which come in by way of comparison will include more overtly feminist approaches to sexual instruction; material written by and for lesbians; sexology as popular culture; and changing fictional representations of female sexuality.

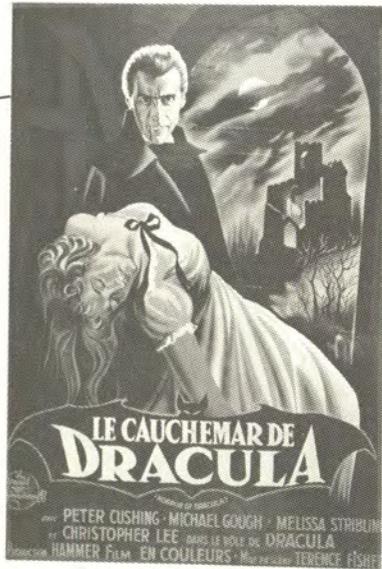
The overall question is this: how is an ideology of sexuality produced, transmitted, and absorbed? Some sub-questions: Who produces the ideology? Does the gender of the writer matter? How were/are these books read? Who read/reads them? Does the "genre" to which the representation belongs, or claims to belong, matter? How does a book purporting to present "information" become a conduct book? And finally, what is the relationship between sexual representation and sexual reality?

Meryl Altman

"But as time went on it got more and more mixed up who was really King Kong and who Fay Wray and though Linda's hair was still auburn it got shorter and shorter. All the time we were going separately and together to meetings where it was always said that there were no more roles, so there was 'heavy' that talk about our problem. And if I was the 'heavy' that was bad, but if Linda wanted to be King Kong in bed why couldn't I be Fay Wray? But I couldn't."

Excerpt from my unpublished novel, *Alice-Hunting*, written in 1974-75.

Esther Newton



"I have always felt that my body was a man's with slight differences... My breasts were small... it made me feel not a woman and not a man... I knew I was secretly a boy. My body was simultaneously a symbol of inferiority and superiority over other women. I could move without great globs of female flesh bouncing and wiggling -- I was streamlined and masculine. At the same time, I knew I was 'supposed to be' soft and round, but wasn't..."

-- Pebecca (Shirley Walton) from *WOMENFRIENDS*, OUR JOURNAL.



1982
 Shirley Kaplan
 writer, director
 Designer for Theatre
 taught theatre 1970-77
 SARAH LAURENCE COLLEGE
 now teaches
 MUSICAL ENSEMBLE
 Theatre - Barnard
 FW-11
 Mary Cassatt, sketch for mural *Modern Woman*
 Courtesy Sigurd E. Anderson II
 From *The Fair Women*, ©1981 Academy Chicago

Academy Chicago, 360 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60601

"When three women
 join together the
 stars come out
 in broad daylight."
 Talugo Proverb
 For a
 Women's Ensemble
 Workshop



BEYOND THE GAY/STRAIGHT SPLIT: DO SEXUAL "ROLES" (BUTCH/FEMME) TRANSCEND SEXUAL PREFERENCE?

Shirley Walton and Esther Newton have been friends for almost a quarter of a century. They began a joint journal in 1970 after each entered the Women's Movement. Published in 1976, *Womenfriends* is an exploration of similarities and differences between the two and how these affected the ongoing friendship. At the time, one was married and pregnant, while the other was just coming out publicly as a lesbian.

After years of living with the differences and remaining close friends, the two have just begun to discuss their sexuality more openly and specifically. The unspoken assumption was that Esther was "butch" while Shirley, because she is heterosexual, was "femme." But now it appears that each is most comfortable "initiating" and "orchestrating" sexual interactions. Does this mean that both are "butch?" If so, why does Esther play this out with women and Shirley with men? How and why do homo- and heterosexuality complicate, frustrate or facilitate sexual desire and power?

The workshop will attempt to open up the Pandora's Box of sexual styles, attitudes and roles banished from the Feminist Movement as "politically incorrect." Esther and Shirley propose that these styles should be examined and lived. Discussion will be opened up to participants in an effort to develop a more precise language for our sexuality, using butch/femme as a starting point.

Shirley Walton and Esther Newton

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Hollibaugh, Amber and Cherrie Moraga. "What We're Rollin Around in Bed With." *Heresies Sex Issue #12* (1981).
- "The Lesbian/Heterosexual Split." *Maenad*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Winter 1982).
- Nestle, Joan. "Butch-Fem Relationships." *Heresies Sex Issue #12* (1981).
- Walton, Shirley and Esther Newton. *Womenfriends*. New York: Friends Press, 1976.

SEXUALITY AND CREATIVITY—A THEATRE WORKSHOP

A workshop exploring techniques of creating original theatrical works based on ideas originating from the theme "Towards a Politics of Sexuality." Monologues, songs, dances and a mix of art forms, will be used in an exploration of methods for developing full expressiveness.

Working with each participant's interests and experience, the energy and passions of each individual, we will use these personal resources to make works that speak directly to women's issues.

The connections of ensemble theatre to alternate forms of learning and communication will be discussed, as will be the issues of choice and censorship.

Please wear or bring clothes you can move in and also bring a non-lined notebook. After the workshop a collective, suggested book list is given.

Shirley Kaplan





Wah-ah!

AGGRESSION, SELFHOOD AND FEMALE SEXUALITY: RETHINKING PSYCHOANALYSIS

How does our sexuality come to take the specific forms it does—forms which of course may vary and change within each woman's life? This workshop will focus on one factor which contemporary psychoanalysis encourages us to consider: aggression. We mean by aggression, not just hatred and rage, but the large issue of how relatively free we are to experience and express anger and assertiveness. The ways in which we learn to deal with our own aggression during the process of becoming a separate person, in very early childhood, affect our adult sexuality. We'd like to add the psychoanalytic perspective on this theme to recent feminist concerns. We'll also touch on some ways in which the feminist critique has fed back into current psychoanalysis.

Dale Bernstein and Elsa First

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Blum, Harold P., ed. *Female Psychology*. New York: International Universities Press, 1977.
 Kahn, Masud. "Intimacy, Complicity and Mutuality in Perversions." *Alienation in Perversions*. International Universities Press, 1979, pp. 18-30.
 Stoller, Robert J. *Perversion: The Erotic Form of Hatred*. New York: Pantheon/Delta Paperback, 1976.
 Stoller, Robert J. *Sexual Excitement*. New York: Simon and Schuster/Touchstone Paperback, 1979.
 Winnicott, D. W. "Hate in the Countertransference." 1947 paper in *Through Pediatrics to Psychoanalysis*. Basic Books, 2nd edition, 1975.

"We in the 'free' world...have long been familiar with introspection, metapsychology, psychoanalysis. It is true: we have another way of knowing ourselves, and we speak more freely of our emotional complexes than of our material condition or of our socio-professional milieu; we prefer to ask ourselves about the homosexual component of our characters than about the history which has made us and which we have made. We...are victims and accomplices of alienation, reification and mystification. We...stagger beneath the 'weight of things said and done', of lies accepted and transmitted without belief. But we have no wish to know it. We are like sleepwalkers treading in a gutter, dreaming of our genitals rather than looking at our feet."
 Sartre, Jean-Paul, "Czechoslovakia: The Socialism that Came in from the Cold", *BETWEEN EXISTENTIALISM AND MARXISM*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1974, p. 106-107.



COURTLY MANNERS: Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, the United States chief delegate to the United Nations, is kissed on the hand by Senator Jesse Helms before testifying on Nicaragua. Senator Charles H. Percy watches. Page A7.

CLASS, CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL INFLUENCES ON SEXUAL IDENTITY IN THE PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP

Third World women are victims of oppression, both external and internalized: oppression seen as a force in the daily lives of these women and thus affecting their sexuality. What a person does and who she believes herself to be will be a function of what society expects her to be. Psychotherapy for these women can be a force for liberation or another instrument of oppression. This part of the workshop will attempt to discuss the above ideas and their clinical implications, specifically in relation to Hispanic women.

Olivia Espin

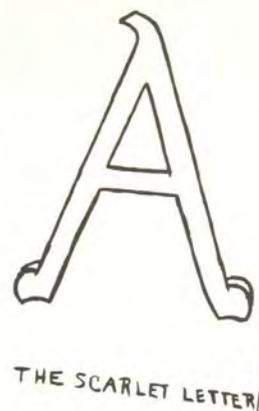
We are all submerged in an historical social reality that camouflages the fact that we all live, feel and work in the interests of others. This has been heavily and persuasively mystified by an idea called "democracy" and "the American Dream," meaning, in essence, we can all one day be absorbed into an elite "upper class" (never the term ruling class) and have dignity and worth therein.

In an effort to pierce through this miasma, I have centered my workshop presentation on an historical, economic and sexual analysis of a ruling class which dominates not only our lives and work but our sexuality as well, and in this way to set it apart for further examination. Social reality is made actively by all of us whether we are conscious of this or not; our reality as women is a limiting situation, not a static oppression. We can transform this situation by understanding it better and taking action. Pat Robinson

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Anonymous. *Lessons From The Damned*. New York: Times Change Press, Distributed by Publishers Services, San Rafael, California.
 Cox, Oliver. *The Foundations of Capitalism*. New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1959.
 Espin, O. M. "Psychotherapy for Hispanic Women: Reflections on the Past, Directions for the Future." *Minority Women: Social and Psychological Inquiries*, edited by P. T. Reid and G. Puryear.
 Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.
 Reich, Wilhelm. *The Mass Psychology of Facism*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970.
 Sturdivant, S. *Therapy with Women*. New York: Springer, 1980.

PC-254 Heads of Kids
Original around 1900
...and how could I tell
my mother I was having an
abortion? I'm getting the
aborted next to June and boy
finished sewing the baby
quilt before she started
on the wedding dress.
beautician from Fergus
Falls, N.D.
FRY E. GINSBURG



QUOTE: "Remember the day, August 11, that's the day you killed your baby. You're going to remember it the rest of your life."
Joseph Scheider, Chicago anti-abortionist, as patients evacuated Fort Wayne Women's Health Organization following bomb threat.

BIOGRAPHY:

Susan Hill
President, National Women's Health Organization, Inc.
Abortion rights activist (Ten abortion clinics)
National Board Member - NWAA, five years.
Past Board Member - NWAA, five years.
National Abortion Federation

THE DEFENSE OF SEXUAL RESTRICTION BY ANTI-ABORTION ACTIVISTS

In the last ten years, the controversy over a woman's right to abortion has emerged as a critical issue dividing American women. The battle has made public the existence of competing ideologies regarding the control of female sexual activity. The debate also reveals that sexuality, generally consigned to the so-called "private sphere," cannot be separated from the position(s) women hold in the larger social order. What are the conditions that have made abortion so powerful and divisive as a rallying symbol in our culture at this historical moment? Who are the women fighting for sexual restriction and what interests are they defending?

In discussing these issues, I will be using research material I am collecting in a study of anti-abortion activists in a small city in the upper Midwest, Fargo, North Dakota, where the recent opening of an abortion clinic has catalyzed intense local activity on both sides of the debate. I undertook this research because I think that feminists cannot afford to write off "pro-life" women as villains or victims without first-hand knowledge of the circumstances that shape their worldview. The objective of my work and this workshop is to understand the consciousness and social and historical conditions which lead women in our society to defend the inevitability of motherhood as women's primary role.

As part of my presentation, I will be showing segments from a documentary on pro-life women that I am working on.

Faye Ginsburg

Having spent the last nine years setting up and managing abortion services in non-metropolitan areas of the United States (Fort Wayne, Indiana; Columbus, Georgia; and Fargo, North Dakota), I have not only had to study anti-abortion activists, but also listen to them and learn from them. Our clinics have run the course from emotional public hearings of 500 people or more in tiny city halls, to bomb threats and bomb evacuations, to marches on the facilities by angry mobs. Always I have marvelled at the intensity of the anti-abortion activists' commitment, and wondered why it was there. Is it a religious or moral value? Or is it even more deep-seated than that? I have concluded and will discuss that many anti-abortion activists view abortion with what I term a "scarlet-letter syndrome," a feeling so deep many press for guilt and punishment for sexual activity with an intensity that they exhibit in almost no other part of their lives.

Susan Hill

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Eisenstein, Zillah. "Antifeminism in the Politics and Election of 1980." *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Summer 1981), pp. 187-205.
- Gordon, Linda. *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America*. New York: Penguin, 1977.
- Harding, Susan. "Family Reform Movements: Recent Feminism and Its Opposition." *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring 1981), pp. 57-75.
- Mohr, James C. *Abortion in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Petchesky, Rosalind P. "Antiabortion, Antifeminism and the Rise of the New Right." *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Summer 1981), pp. 206-246.

BEYOND POLITICS: UNDERSTANDING THE SEXUALITY OF INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD

Today my chosen term is "education for sexuality," meaning education for being a sexual person. I use this rather than the archaic and meaningless term "sex education."

Human beings are distinct from all other mammals in: the capacity to stand upright, leaving the hands free (for carrying and other activities); the capacity to communicate with words including all the functions of the human mind; and the capacity for separation of sex-for-pleasure and sex-for-reproduction, which means that human sexuality is unique to humans as part of a bonding relationship.

Every infant begins with an unknowable number of possibilities for her/his own sexual evolution. From the moment of birth, the person cannot be prevented from becoming and being sexual throughout life. As the person develops, her/his sexuality at any given moment is the result of the cumulative information environmental and interpersonal influences—and of the sexual experiences and sexual information which the person has experienced up to that moment.

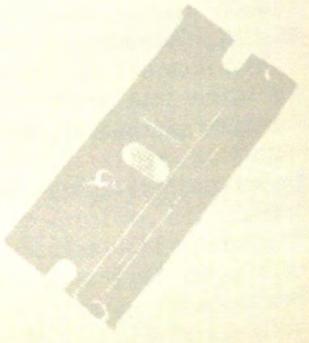
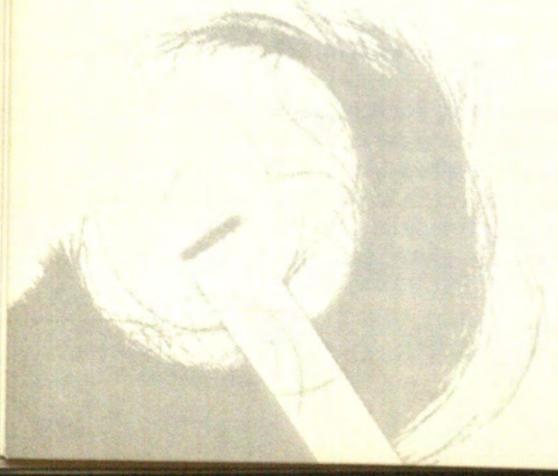
By puberty, when the capacity to reproduce begins, the body, mind and sexuality of the child should all three have been developed in such a way that the child has full information about others as well as about himself or herself as sexual beings, knows that he or she is in charge of that self, and understands and accepts the nature and realities of sexual pleasure and how to manage it responsibly. All of this is necessary in order to ready the child to accept the responsibilities that should go with the inevitable and important relationships of intimacy that will be formed with other adolescents.

Mary S. Calderone

It is very difficult to imagine the sexual emancipation of children without coming to understand how necessary are the other relevant forms of emancipation: economic, legal and social. Not only their emancipation but ours—for the guilt and shame imposed upon children for sexuality has been imposed upon us, even as we impose it again, a new generation perpetuating the wrongs of the past. All that was imposed on us is with us still, the wounds of our childhoods a slow cancer eating us through life. There is no end to it unless we make one. Not until the nineteenth century was any outcry made even against the brutalization of children. It continues in every parent who strikes a child. Terror, bullying, pain and injustice are all things we learn before the age of reason, before reading and writing, decades before any hope of redress.

As it now stands children are forbidden sexual experience with themselves, each other or adults. Yet at the same time, they are treated as a sexual resource by adults. The conditions now, children having no rights or autonomy, nearly preclude any sexual relationships between children and adults which is not exploitative. The natural realm of expression of sexuality in children and youth is with each other, with peers and not with those who belong to a class which dominate them, and however well intentioned, can hardly refrain from abuse of one kind or another. There is, in short, a great deal of sexual politics frustrating the sexual expression of children and the young. You and I will live to see this discussed, almost for the first time in history. Considering that we were all children once, and if we are very good, we're children still—we all have a stake in this. The emancipation of children is our emancipation in retrospect, and that of the future as well.

Kate Millet





Toto, I don't think
we're in Kansas anymore!

Dorothy

Galas' Exotic Novel Cards

PLACE STAMP HERE

Giant Post Card

The best thing
about sex—and New
York—is the
combination of
innocence and sleaze.

 "Butch-fem was an erotic partnership, serving both as a conspicuous flag of rebellion and as an intimate exploration of women's sexuality."

Heresies Sex Issue 12

I came out in the powerful Lesbian subculture of the 1950's as a working class fem.

POLITICALLY CORRECT, POLITICALLY INCORRECT SEXUALITY

Dorothy Allison, currently a member of the editorial staff of *Conditions*, has interrupted her studies in anthropology at the Graduate Faculty of the New School For Social Research to concentrate on her writing. For the past three years she has been working on an ethnography of the female-dominant s/m subculture in New York City. Her work emphasizes both the political nature of commonly held concepts of gender and deviance, and the class bias which dominates sexual theory in both academic and feminist communities.

Dorothy Allison

Is the idea of "Politically Correct/Politically Incorrect Sexuality" valuable? Does it polarize or does it unify? Does it engender change, or does it doom us to repeat the subjective and historical past? Does it answer, or beg, the question of how the personal and the political are connected?

Feminism is a struggle for sexual liberation. I hope this workshop can, in confronting these questions, advance us along the road toward savoring the ambiguity at the heart of all sexual experience.

Muriel Dimen

"Society and the Bedroom: Third World Women's Perspectives on the Politics of Sexuality." Paper by Mirtha N. Quintanales.

A critique of current feminist debates regarding the nature of women's sexuality, women's sexual oppression and the meaning of women's sexual freedom.

Mirtha N. Quintanales

"The fem part of Butch-Fem sexuality—a dramatic monologue starting in the fifties and raising questions about the seventies. An exploration of fem lust, love and power."

Joan Nestle

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Acker, Kathy. *Kathy Goes to Haiti*.
- Allison, Dorothy. "Erotic Blasphemy." *The New York Native* #26 (December 7, 1981).
- Buffalo Lesbian Oral History Project. Work of Avra Michelson, Liz Kennedy and Madeline Davis. Working papers at Lesbian Herstory Archives. Will appear as a book.
- Colette. Anything
- Griffin, Susan. *Woman and Nature*.
- Lorde, Audre. "Age, Race, Class and Sexuality: Women Re-defining Different." *Lesbian-Feminist Clearinghouse*, 1980.
- Michelson, Avra. "Some Thoughts Towards Developing a Theory of Roles." Unpublished paper, 1979. At LHA.
- Nestle, Joan. "Esther's Story." *Common Lives/Lesbian Lives* #1 (1981), pp. 5-9.
- Nestle, Joan. "My Mother Liked to Fuck." *Womannews*, February 1982.
- Moraça, Chérie and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds. *This Bridge Called My Back*. Massachusetts: Persephone Press, 1981.
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THE MYTH OF THE PERFECT BODY: AGE, WEIGHT, AND DISABILITY

The myth of the perfect body oppresses all women. Through the perfection of our bodies we are expected to earn power, love and self-esteem. Since all of us obviously have "imperfect" bodies, we may regard ourselves and other women as damaged, worthless, contemptible and unlovable. As fat women, disabled women and aging women, we each face some unique stereotypes and sources of oppression, especially in the area of sexuality.

The body of a fat woman is frequently the object of ridicule, scorn and contempt. She is seldom seen as a suitable sexual partner. She, herself, may be unable to distinguish her sexuality from her shame. The fat woman is driven by the hope that if only she could lose weight and have the "perfect" body, then her self would be perfect and worthy of love.

The aging woman's body is sexually taboo. It sags, wrinkles, greys, aches and can no longer bear children. With her menopause, she is expected to lose her capacity for passion, fantasy and orgasm. Such oppressive myths lead to the sexual isolation of the aging woman. She is the woman we shall become. Our own fears of aging cause us to shun her.

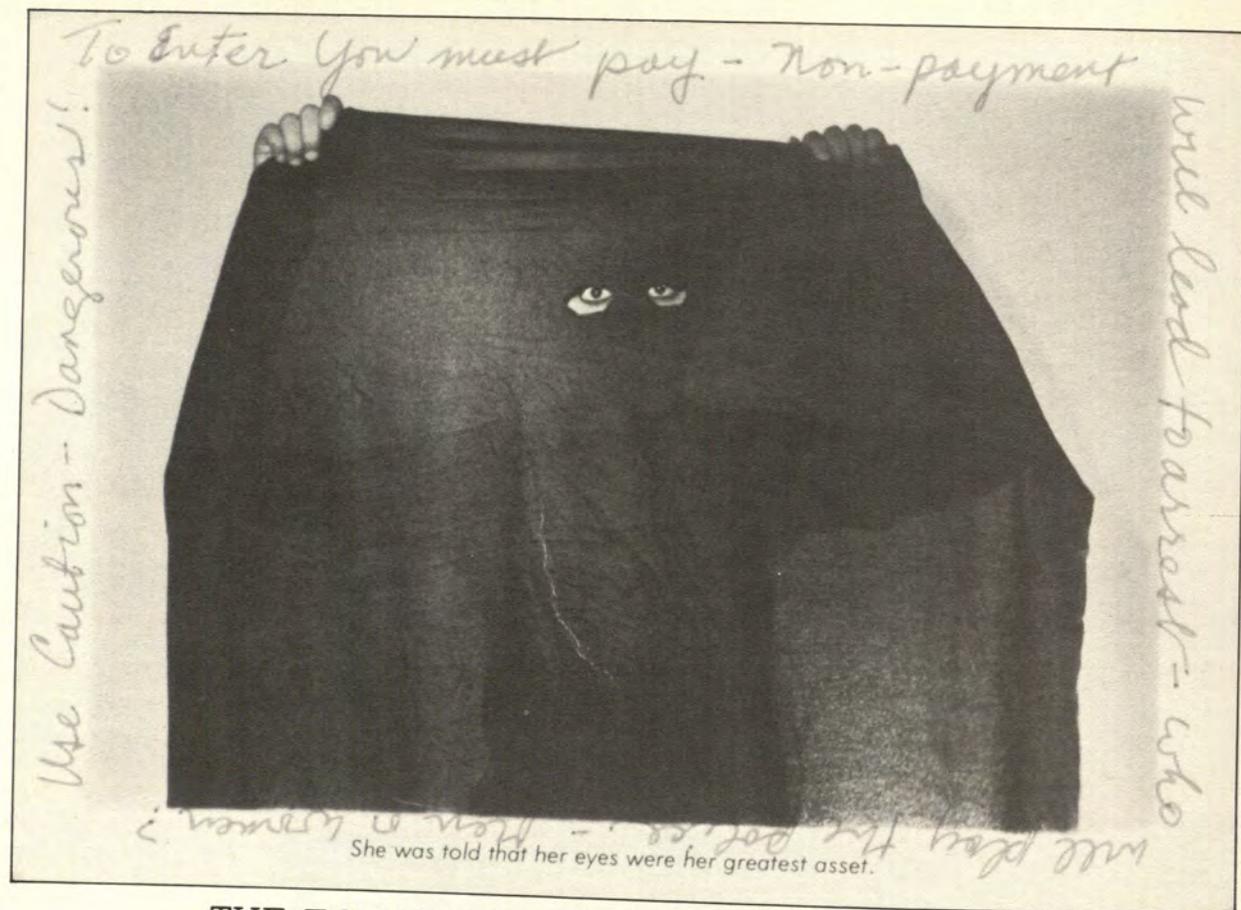
The disabled woman's body is not "perfect" in either image, form or function. She is not regarded as a woman at all but as a helpless, dependent child. She is the sexless object—asexual, neutered, un-beautiful, and unable to find a lover. Even when idealized for surmounting obstacles, she receives a distancing admiration, rather than sexual desire, intimacy, or love. Anxiety, identification and dread may cause others to respond to the imperfections of a disabled woman's body with terror, avoidance, pity and/or guilt. We may wish her to remain invisible and to keep her sexuality a secret.

Women equate lack of "perfection" with lack of entitlement to sexual life. Society's standards of beauty are embedded in our initial interactions with parents, caretakers and health practitioners as they handle our bodies. In this way, external standards become internal realities. Too frequently our own bodies become our enemies.

Even in our attempts to create alternatives, we develop standards which oppress some of us. The feminist ideal of autonomy does not take into account the realistic needs for help that disabled, aging, and most women have.

This workshop will attempt to raise consciousness about what we have perceived and experienced to be the unacceptability of our female bodies. Together we must become able to live and love in our "imperfect" bodies.

Roberta Galler and Carol Munter



THE FORBIDDEN: EROTICISM AND TABOO

As women begin to explore their desires for sexual pleasure it becomes clear that our choices are bounded by taboos that mark off the acceptable from the forbidden. Even fantasizing about crossing that boundary raises the spectre of unnamed dangers and acts of retribution. While feminism has helped us to feel more entitled to demand reciprocity in our social relations, when we act in our own interests to get pleasure our sense of entitlement fades away. We are afraid to pursue forbidden sensations lest we raise doubts in ourselves and others about our normalcy, our femininity or our loveability. This resistance is more internal than external: we find millions of reasons why we shouldn't break the taboos and enter the forbidden.

Some of us say we are reluctant to further mess up already complicated lives, some fear hurting others, many fear the vulnerability that comes with inexperience. Most of us have visions of newspaper headlines screaming our perversion or people shaking their heads at this pitiful creature driven by her unnatural, shameful desires. We are embarrassed by our curiosity, fearful of our "instincts" but obsessed by our desire to cross over, to be transformed by experiencing the taboo.

For the purpose of this workshop the forbidden will be defined broadly as those acts, partners, situations or forms of speech which lie beyond our personal, cultural and political erotic pale. The workshop format will enable women to examine the nature of eroticism and the taboos that surround it as we encounter them in our sexual lives. Together we will name the taboos that are embedded in patriarchy and feminism. We will question our reactions to these taboos: why are we drawn to the forbidden, why are we repulsed by it? What are the real and imagined dangers that follow from breaking taboos? Finally, we may consider who or what is served when women observe the taboos, and whether entering the forbidden has transformatory power.

Paula Webster

SUGGESTED READINGS

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SEXUAL PURITY: MAINTAINING CLASS AND RACE BOUNDARIES

During much of the 19th century, "good" women were encouraged to maintain their sexual purity by denying their bodies. Today, "good" women can achieve some degree of sexual pleasure within prescribed limits. They are expected to choose partners similar to themselves: members of the same class and race. An improper choice suggests that a woman's sexuality must have taken on a sinister quality or that it has somehow gotten out of control. This aberrant sexuality accounts for a woman's failure to choose someone more suitable, more like herself. Women who pursue sexual pleasure with individuals beyond these boundaries—the Ph.D. with the auto repairman, the factory worker with the corporate executive, the Black with the White—risk disapproval and loss of status. Thus, it is likely that women who do cross these boundaries often keep it a secret; while other women hesitate, even if they feel it may lead to sexual pleasure.

The workshop will examine the meaning of these boundaries in women's lives and the impact of maintaining or crossing these boundaries on women's sexuality. This exploration would deepen and broaden our understanding of one of the many ways women are kept in their "place" and the effect it has on attaining sexual pleasure.

Diane Harriford



"...there is no single locus of great Re-
fusal, no soul of revolt, source of all
rebellions...instead there is a plurality
of resistances, each of them a special
case: resistances that are possible, nec-
essary, improbable; others that are spon-
taneous, savage, solitary, knots, or
pant, or violent...the points, knots, or
foci of resistance are spread over time
and space at varying densities, at times
mobilizing groups or individuals in a de-
finitive way, inflaming certain points of
the body, certain moments in life, certain
types of behavior."
Michel Foucault, *The History of
Sexuality*, 1978, New York, Pantheon,
95-96.

Thought Crimes

Gayle Rubin
Dept. of Anthropology
University of Michigan

CONCEPTS FOR A RADICAL POLITICS OF SEX

The social relations of sexuality have always been as political as the social relations of class, race, gender, and ethnicity. However, at certain periods of time, in certain societies, the organization of sexual behavior is more actively contested, and in arenas more visible and centrally located. Since 1977, in the United States and in much of the western capitalist world, sexuality has become the locus of intense, focused, and bitter political struggle. A generation of political activists, veterans of the 1960's and 1970's, have been taken by surprise by attempts to reimpose tighter standards of sexual morality.

There has been a lack of conceptual tools with which to record, analyze, and position the events of the many discrete battles in the new sex wars. Many radicals have assumed that the body of feminist theory contained the necessary concepts. But feminist analysis was developed to describe and criticize oppression based on gender. While sexual experience is affected by the social relations of gender, sexuality is nevertheless not the same thing as gender. Just as gender oppression cannot be understood by an analysis of class relations, no matter how exhaustive, sexual oppression cannot be conceptualized by way of an understanding of gender relations, no matter how complete.

We need to develop an analytical apparatus specifically engineered to see, describe, and criticize sexual oppression. This workshop will propose some elements of a radical political theory of sex. The agenda for building such a body of thought about sexuality would include the following items: (1) It is essential to learn, albeit critically, the existing body of knowledge about sexuality. Sexological work contains useful empirical information, as well as material from which some of the structures of erotic oppression can be inferred. (2) It is important to get rid of the idea of sex as an asocial or transhistorical biological entity. (3) The persistence of the western (and especially Anglo-American) idea of sex as a destructive force needs to be explored. (4) The idea that there is a single kind of "good" sex that is "best" for everyone needs to be criticized. (5) Above all, we need to understand that there is systematic and serious mistreatment of people based on sexual behavior. Oppression generated out of sexuality is just as real, unjust, and barbarous as are the oppressions of class, race, gender, and ethnicity. Gayle Rubin

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- Califa, Pat. *Sapphisty*. Tallahassee, Florida: Naiad Press, 1980.
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Samois. *Coming To Power*. San Francisco, California: Samois, 1981.
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Weeks, Jeffrey. *Coming Out*. New York: Quartet Books, 1977.

Arlene Carmen is on the staff of Judson Memorial Church and has worked with Judson's Prostitution Project for the past six years. That first hand experience has resulted in repeated challenges to her pre-judices and preconceptions about prostitutes and their lives. Arrested in a 1978 "sweep" of Times Square, her class action suit testing the constitutionality of the anti-loitering statute has just been appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals.

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SEX AND MONEY

The issue of prostitution poses some of the most complex questions facing the feminist community. Many of us are caught in the dilemma of viewing the prostitute as the most exploited of women while others see her as the truest and most honest reflection of ourselves.

It is the goal of this workshop to seek to uncover some of the truths about the lives of women who work as prostitutes by peeling away the layers of mythology under which that truth is buried. In laying bare the reality of her life and eliminating the stereotypical views with which we are all burdened, we may perhaps be able to recognize and deal with our own relationship to and responsibility for the way this group of women is treated by society.

Arlene Carmen

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Cordelier, Jeanne. *The Life, Memoirs of a French Hooker*. New York: Viking Press.
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CLOSING SESSION

3:30-4:30

Dear Diary,

They've asked me to speak at Barnard. My ghosts stand up and scream. Somewhere i still harbor a belief that "The Politics of Sexuality" is a cover i use to hide a continual obsession with sex. Wrap it in fancy words, hold it in an upper class academy, give it a scholarly title but my desires have smells and textures which are often at odds with feminist orthodoxy.

I have to talk about passion in the future. But will there be a future after Reagan? Will there be sexual difference after feminism? It's an iffy race... Lesbian/old gay/a femme... Will our political theories hold a place for women like me in the future? Maybe i'll be an odd piece of history/old dinosaur bones that women in the future find facinating and bizarre.

The conference gave me Esther. My desire today has a body, a pulse, a start. That's how we all enter a dialogue with passion in the future.

Amber Hollibaugh

♀★ hattie gossett ★♀

born: central jersey factorytown
lives: northern reaches of harlem
enjoys: thinking conversating reading writing jazzing
and acting out against all the bigdaddies
work herstory: (partial) babysitter maid clerk annullee cleaning
person waitress badgirl
n.b: stay tuned to badgirls grapevine for news of forthcoming
collection of writings by miz hattie

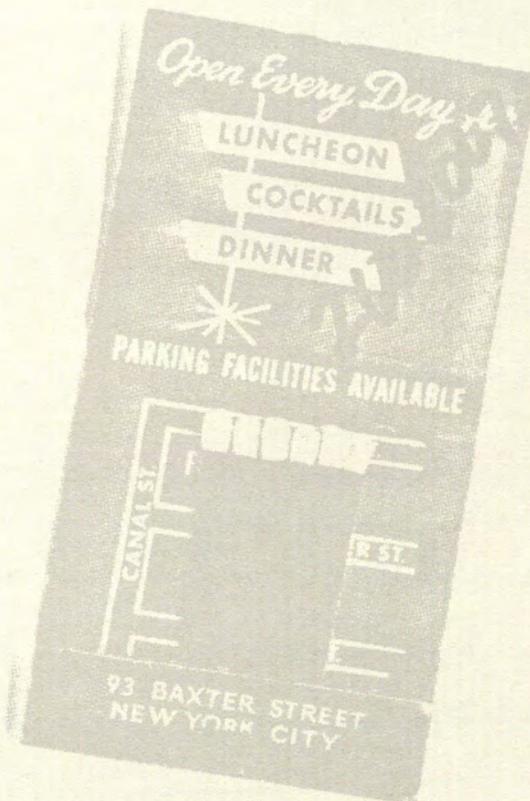
"i was born into this life the child of houseniggahs and i been struggling trying to get home ever since."

But what of passion? I hunger
to ask women whose
desire I can almost taste
like milk on the edge of the lip
rich in a kind of deep
sweetness opening the circle
of her lips on the edge
of curling up on me
going sour.

@ Cherrié Moraga, 1982.

Usually, when I'm selecting poems for a reading, I line a lot of possible poems up in piles -- a small pile of mother poems, one of war poems, then poems about the kids, city poems, father poems, and off to the side a big heaping stack of love poems. Then I take one or two from each pile, to create the appearance of balance: "O.K., a mother, a sex, a war, a sex, a father, a city, a son, a sex." What a pleasure for me at Barnard today not to do that balancing act, but to go directly to this most rich powerful mysterious and wonderful subject.

Sharon Olds



I have an oblique (perhaps slightly remote) take on the process set in motion by the planning meetings and that will soon culminate in the conference as an event. Looking back I find fragmentary but coherent recollections: of the initial struggle to find the words through which to speak (of) women's sexuality within the (mother) institution; the gaps to be bridged in language as a pre-condition to an intersection of discourses; the penultimate silence of the private in the face of an invitation (a summons?) to go public.

WKM

9:50 A.M. MONDAY, APRIL 12 - ON TWO HOURS SLEEP
DEAR DIARY,
HERE'S HOPING YOU LOOK AS GOOD ON PAPER AS YOU DO NOW ON BOARDS. BEST OF LUCK ON YOUR JOURNEY THROUGH THE PRINTING PRESS!
(PERSONALLY I THINK YOU CAN PULL IT OFF...)
LOVE MARYBETH

EXPLORED THE DREAM OF MY GIRLS AND

FOUND THE GIRL OF MY DREAMS.

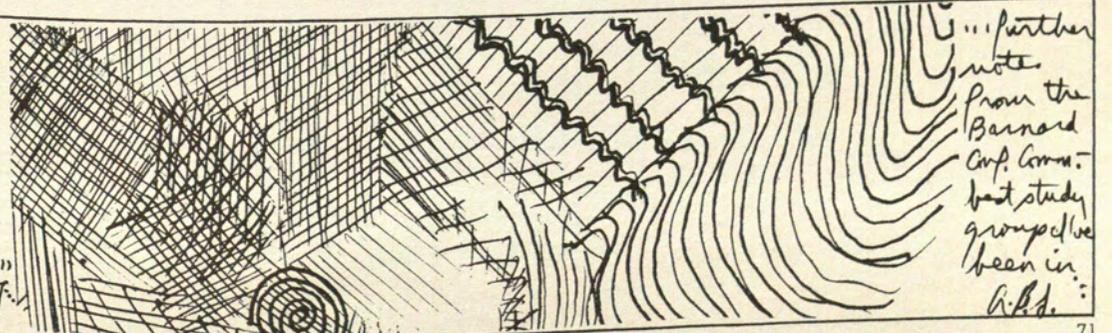
Thanks to the Planning Committee,
Esther Newton

Dear Diary, 

Scholar and Feminist IX...meetings and meetings, planning for nine conferences, coordinating number one, still involved in the evolutionary process of scholar and feminist conferences....Gradual, hesitant participation---efforts at linking, clear disagreement, not comprehending....What is sexuality anyhow?! Struggle to grasp complexity, to examine definitions, to remap thinking....Pensive, reflective, working to digest, working at understanding the explorations of others, celebrating silently the diversity, praising common bonding and all leading to a day where we risk to explore openly a range of thinking about sexuality.....
Excitement, challenge, exchange.

M.P.

"We are thinking about the conference as a subversive undertaking."
Nov. 10 '81



U... further note from the Barnard Conf. Comm. best study groups I've been in.
A.B.D.



PROGRAM

THE SCHOLAR AND THE FEMINIST IX: TOWARDS A POLITICS OF SEXUALITY

A conference sponsored by
The Barnard College Women's Center

*Saturday, April 24, 1982
9 am to 6 pm*

THE SCHOLAR AND THE FEMINIST IX: TOWARDS A POLITICS OF SEXUALITY

Check-in—9:00-9:45 am—Barnard Hall

Morning Session—9:45-12 noon—Gymnasium

Welcoming Remarks

Ellen V. Futter, President, Barnard College

How Feminists Thought About Sex: Our Complex Legacy

Ellen Carol DuBois, SUNY-Buffalo

Linda Gordon, University of Massachusetts-Boston

Interstices: A Small Drama of Words

Hortense Spillers, Haverford College

The Taming of the Id: Feminist Sexual Politics 1965-1981

Alice Echols, University of Michigan

Moderator, *Carole S. Vance, Columbia University*

Lunch—12 noon-1 pm—McIntosh Student Center

Afternoon Workshops—1:15-3 pm

Closing Session—3:30-4:30 pm—Gymnasium

Desire for the Future: Radical Hope in Passion and Pleasure

Amber Hollibaugh, Socialist Review

Poetry readings by Hattie Gossett, Cherríe Moraga and Sharon Olds

Introduced by Janie L. Kritzman, Barnard Women's Center

Reception—4:30-6 pm—McIntosh Student Center

Afternoon Workshops

1. Power, Sexuality and the Organization of Vision
Mary Ann Doane, Brown University
Barbara Kruger, Artist
2. Lacan: Language and Desire
Maire Kurrik, Barnard College
3. Political Organizing Around Sexual Issues
Cheryl Adams, Lesbian Feminist Liberation
Noreen Connell, NYC Planned Parenthood
Brett Harvey, No More Nice Girls
4. Pornography and the Construction of a Female Subject
Bette Gordon, Hofstra University
Kaja Silverman, Simon Fraser University
5. Teen Romance: The Sexual Politics of Age Relations
Camille Bristow, The Center for Public Advocacy Research
Sharon Thompson, The Center for Open Education
6. Everything They Always Wanted You to Know: Popular Sex Literature
Meryl Altman, Columbia University
7. Beyond the Gay/Straight Split: Do Sexual "Roles" (Butch/Femme) Transcend Sexual Preference?
Esther Newton, SUNY-Purchase
Shirley Walton, Djuna Books
8. Sexuality and Creativity—A Theatre Workshop
Shirley Kaplan, Barnard College
9. Aggression, Selfhood and Female Sexuality: Rethinking Psychoanalysis
Dale Bernstein, psychotherapist
Elsa First, psychotherapist
10. Class, Cultural and Historical Influences on Sexual Identity in the Psychotherapeutic Relationship
Oliva Espin, Boston University
Pat Robinson, clinical social worker
11. Beyond Politics: Understanding the Sexuality of Infancy and Childhood
Mary S. Calderone, M.D., Sex Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
Kate Millett, writer

(continued)

This conference is made possible by a grant from the Helena Rubinstein Foundation

12. **The Defense of Sexual Restriction by Anti-Abortion Activists**
Faye Ginsburg, Graduate Center-CUNY
Susan Hill, National Women's Health Organization
13. **Politically Correct, Politically Incorrect Sexuality**
Dorothy Allison, Conditions
Muriel Dimen, Lehman College-CUNY
Mirtha N. Quintanales, Ohio State University
Joan Nestle, Lesbian Herstory Archives
14. **The Myth of the Perfect Body: Age, Weight, and Disability**
Roberta Galler, Postgraduate Center for Mental Health
Carol Munter, Council on Eating Problems
15. **The Forbidden: Eroticism and Taboo**
Paula Webster, Institute for the Study of Sex in Society and History
16. **Sexual Purity: Maintaining Class and Race Boundaries**
Diane Harriford, SUNY-Stony Brook
17. **Concepts for a Radical Politics of Sex**
Gayle Rubin, University of Michigan
18. **Sex and Money**
Arlene Carmen, Judson Memorial Church

Academic Coordinator
 Carole S. Vance

Planning Committee

Julie Abraham	Julie German	Esther Newton
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