

The Regulation of Desire should be read by all those interested in the history and sociology of sexuality. It synthesizes, systematizes and gives new theoretical direction to the literature on the history of Canadian sexual regulation.

¹John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

²On the non-disappearance of hunter-gatherers and the difficulties anthropolo-

gists have had in interpreting changing social relations among native peoples, see Eleanor Leacock and Rich Lee, eds., *Politics and History in Bank Societies*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

LESBIAN PASSION: LOVING OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER

JoAnn Loulan with Mariah Burton Nelson. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987.

Janice L. Ristock and Margo Rivera

Passion is a source of greatness within each of us. This is true of great works of art, great deeds of service, and the ordinary greatness required to love ourselves and other people on a daily basis...passion is not only about sex but about the life force that energizes us. (p.2)

In her new book, JoAnn Loulan describes some of the passions of lesbians and offers suggestions for removing the barriers that keep women from living fully and from freely loving ourselves and each other.

The first chapter, "Healing the Child Within," sets the stage for exploring the central issue in the book. Loulan is a licensed psychotherapist with a practice in California and a sex educator who presents workshops for the lesbian/feminist community and training seminars for mental health professionals throughout the U. S. and Canada. According to her, no matter what our personal histories, we all have a broken-hearted child who lives inside of us and needs to be nurtured and healed so that we are free to meet our adult needs for work, socializing and sex. The book proposes a number of practical ways for focusing on the child within from imagery exercises ("You can do it in your car at stop lights — something to do instead of taking it personally that the light turned red" p.19), to looking at old pictures of yourself as a child, to getting a baby doll and taking good care of her.

One of the reasons that it is so important to take care of the child inside of us, Loulan insists, is that she tyrannizes us if we do not, constantly trying — often successfully — to run the show. This can be a real problem when you are attempt-

ing to present yourself as competent and sophisticated in a job interview, for example, or when you are making love. Loulan sees one of the central problems in lesbian relationships as the tendency for women to nurture others as a substitute for giving ourselves the care we need:

One of the ways we lesbians sabotage our relationships is to say to each other, "Aha! Childcare for life! You take care of my baby, I'll take care of yours, okay?" It's all unspoken, but it's a deal that we frequently make. Then, of course we hate the way our lover takes care of our kid, and we tell her so as often as possible. (p.17)

The table of contents provides a good overview of the range of topics *Lesbian Passion* covers, including the following:

- "The Lesbian Date": There are two possible outcomes of the lesbian date: either the two women never date again, or they get married (p.83).
- "Lesbian Self-Esteem": No matter how much fun we have, no matter how proud we feel, no matter how in love or loved we may be, we all internalize the homophobia that surrounds us (p.27).
- "Celibacy": Often a woman who has

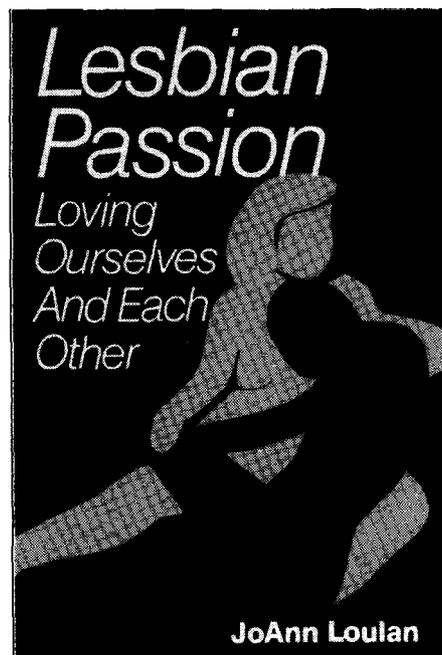
been celibate is actually much better equipped to be fully present, to be loving, warm and caring about others, because she has tapped into a source of self-love, (p.64).

• "Fanning the Flames: How Couples Can Keep Their Sex Lives Exciting": Sex is supposed to be romantic. She's supposed to want you. But after a while she doesn't want you. She wants you to pay the rent on time. That's what she is passionate about. Keeping love alive is perhaps our greatest task. Not companionship and camaraderie. Not roommate energy or best friend connection. The love that is difficult — but important — to keep alive is the kind of passion we have for our lovers (pp.116-117).

Other chapters include "Sex Toys and Other Hot Ideas" (with the 19th century quote "It doesn't matter what you do in the bedroom as long as you don't do it in the streets and frighten the horses" as the tone setter); "After Incest: The Road to Recovery"; "Partners of Incest Survivors"; and "What Do Lesbians Need to Know About AIDS?"

In her chapter "Passionate Friendships," Loulan suggests that the passion for friendships seems universal among lesbians and that friendship itself is a lesbian act, since it is an act of loving between two women. But women are generally less ego-invested in their friends than in their lovers and therefore allow them more room to be themselves — to eat what they want, to wear what they want, to hold the political and spiritual beliefs that they want. Also, because women friends are not discriminated against as such in this culture, they are freer to express their love more openly. Loulan talks about walking arm-in-arm with a close friend in a setting where she would not necessarily consider it safe to do so with a lover, realizing that she felt secure because she was sure that everybody would know that they were "just friends." For many women, friendships are the only way they allow their love for women to shine through.

In the last chapter of the book, Loulan describes her research on the lives and sex practices of the 1,566 lesbians who completed the detailed questionnaire for her study. There are some interesting findings. For example, 38% of the women



experienced sexual abuse, either within or outside the family, before they were 18 years old. This is exactly the same figure that Diana Russell uncovered in her general population sample of 930 women (see *The Secret Garden: Incest in the Lives of Girls and Women*, 1986). Loulan's study not only replicates Russell's findings, but it also explodes the myth that lesbians are more likely to have suffered childhood sexual abuse than other women.

There are three sections in the research chapter: demographic information, such as race, class, age, religious background, years identified as lesbian; background factors, such as sexual abuse history, alcoholic family history and correlations between these factors and present circumstances; and current sexual activities, including relationships, celibacy, masturbation, frequency of sex, orgasms, sex practices and satisfaction with sex life. One of the most poignant findings was that 80% of the respondents reported that they held hands with their lovers, but only 27% of them held hands in public.

GEOGRAPHY AND GENDER

Women and Geography Study Group of the IBG. London: Hutchinson & Co., 1984.

Ron Bordessa

Geography and Gender is designed for students in introductory geography courses in degree programmes and written co-operatively by nine members of the Women and Geography Study Group of the Institute of British Geographers. Indeed it is the first undergraduate text on feminist geography.

An introductory section of explication and justification establishes the feminist perspective as essential to a realistic understanding of the structure of social and spatial relations. Feminist analysis is persuasively argued to be more than just another critique of established modes of thought. Marxist and humanist critiques are discussed and their relationship to feminist perspectives noted, just as their inadequacies are shown to offer fertile ground for cultivation by feminist thinking.

Feminist geography itself is conceptualized as a geography "which explicitly takes into account the socially created gender structure of society; and in which a commitment both towards the alleviation of gender inequality in the short term and towards its removal, through social

That the majority of lesbians in this survey keep private even the most innocuous act of sexual expression — holding hands — is a statement about the oppression of lesbians in our culture.

JoAnn Loulan wrote *Lesbian Passion* with Mariah Burton Nelson. Nelson describes the collaboration process in the forward "On Pretending To Be JoAnn Loulan While Simultaneously Trying Not to Let Her Get Carried Away." The book was created from tapes of a series of Loulan's lectures, edited and transformed by Nelson. We found *Lesbian Passion* to be better-written than Loulan's earlier, and also important book, *Lesbian Sex*: it has more reach and more pizzazz. This collaboration is an example of how women can work together creatively, drawing on each other's differences and enhancing each other's strengths.

Lesbian Passion would be valuable reading for many women. Lesbian women will recognize themselves in Loulan's often ironic, always warm portrayal of their living and loving. Heterosexual women will see themselves in their

change towards real equality in the long term, is expressed." The dual focus on the need for understanding and for action is presented lucidly with barely a trace of the polemic which the subject could easily have engendered.

Class, patriarchy and power are identified as concepts essential to an understanding of the structure of society and the subordinate place of women within it; likewise the duality which characterizes the lives of many woman as they perform both domestic and wage-worker roles is shown to be an important distinguishing feature between men and women.

The middle section of the book consists of four substantive chapters which are intended to be examples of the feminist perspective in geography. The organisation of life in the city and particularly the impact of the changing role of women on spatial structures is examined in a sweeping essay. It is not always easy here to assess what developments can really be attributed to women and what to the changing demands of capital. A narrower chapter on women's employment and its linkage to processes of economic change is less ambitious and more successful. Adjustments in employment characteristics and women's participation in the labour force underline the crucial place of women to an understanding of the re-structuring of the British economy. Also the impact of work experience on the lives of women and their families is

own relationships with themselves and with other women and will learn about the lives of their lesbian friends. The book is particularly important for therapists and health professionals who are working with women.

Lesbian Passion is not only mandatory reading, it's also lots of fun. Loulan has a light touch, and the book is witty and readable. These are its strengths and, to some extent, its weaknesses as well. Sometimes depth is sacrificed for accessibility. The book emphasizes a psychological analysis of lesbian relationships which is sometimes a little thin. Lesbian relationships are celebrated, but some of their complexities are not explored very fully or deeply. The roots of multi-leveled and thorny problems — such as the difficulty of sustaining passion over the long haul — are glossed over, and simplistic behavioral solutions — such as making sex dates — are applied. There were times when we were left wanting more. But, for all of that, *Lesbian Passion* is an affirming and informative read, and it makes a significant contribution.

discussed, albeit in less detail. Problems of access and time, the norm for working women, are considered to be "an essential part of feminist analysis of women's employment, industrial location and regional change."

A third empirical chapter focuses on access to facilities and particularly to public sector services. Health service provision is used as a case study in which it is clearly demonstrated that women's experiences in this area are often unsatisfactory. One reason for this is that men occupy the power positions and women, although they constitute the majority of workers in the National Health Service, are relegated to more routine positions. Again this chapter exposes general questions and laments "the lack of research within geography directed at the problems women face in gaining access to services and facilities." Finally, a chapter on women in third world countries makes a valiant attempt to rescue women from their virtual invisibility in the literature and put them in their proper place — as active and often leading agents of change.

Part three of *Geography and Gender* outlines the current status of geography in degree-granting institutions in Britain from the perspective of gender bias. The old story is documented anew — while women constitute 45 percent of geography undergraduates, they are grossly underrepresented in graduate schools and on teaching staffs — and the imbalance is