

Lines on Lesbian Sex

The Politics of Representing Lesbian Sex in the Age of AIDS

by Gabriele Griffin

Cet article sur les représentations pornographiques/érotiques lesbiennes au temps du VIH/SIDA démontre, entre autres, la

Women are manipulated into heterosexuality through a discourse which exploits and re-directs their emotional needs away from the female and to the male.

confusion qui règne dans les communautés lesbiennes lorsque vient le temps d'aborder le sujet du VIH/SIDA.

Lesbian erotic, or if you like, pornographic¹ (re)presentation frequently bases the quest for the, or an, object of desire on precisely the combination of emotional attachment and sexual activity problematized by Adrienne Rich in "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." In that essay Rich discusses the power of convention which informs our choices of love objects. She takes up a point endorsed by psychoanalysis, both classic and feminist, that a woman (the female carer) is women's first love object. For this reason "heterosexuality is *not* a 'preference' for women" because "it fragments the erotic from the emotional in a way that women find impoverishing and painful" (216). The consequence is that patriarchy has to enforce heterosexuality through, among other things, particular forms of heterosex-supportive legislation, "the ideology of heterosexual romance" (224) which fuses the male demand for the satisfaction of his sexual, patrilineal procreative urge with the promise of emotional as well as sexual fulfillment for the woman. "Internalizing the values of the colonizer and actively participating in carrying out the colonization of one's self and one's sex" (225), many women submit to the enforcement of heterosexuality "in the name of love," and even "unto death." They do so because heterosexuality is not presented as a *choice* but as "compulsory," the "natural" outcome of a "normal" woman's psychosexual maturation process. Rich suggests that women are manipulated into heterosexuality through a discourse which exploits and re-directs their emotional needs away from the female and to the male.

In parallel with Rich's contentions I would argue that much lesbian erotica/porn—contrary to the common suggestion (akin to the one made by Rich as regards

heterosexuality) that such material, especially anything considered *pornographic*, fragments the erotic and the emotional—utilizes the imbrication of the emotional in the sexual as part of its construction. This acts as a palliative for the more problematic aspects of the material. Typically, Pat Califia for instance, an in/famous producer of sadomasochistic material, writes in one of her stories:

Even when correcting serious misdeeds, Berenice [dominatrix and mother] was not brutal. She loved helplessness, she craved the sight of a female body abandoning all decency and self-control. These things are not granted save in loving trust. Dominance is not created without complicity. A well-trained slave is hopelessly in love with her mistress.... (67)

This story, centring on a sadomasochistic mother-daughter relationship and recuperative of the primary love relationship between female carer and dependent infant postulated by psychoanalysis, presents a whole series of incest-taboo-breaking relations in which the emotional ties between blood relations (sisters; mother and daughter; aunt and niece), and the notions that they (therefore?) *care for* and *take care of* each other operate as a legitimating framework for their sadomasochistic activities.² Similarly, Califia's rather horrendous story "The Surprise Party" legitimates the sadomasochistic abuse of a lesbian by a group of men, supposedly "cops," by suggesting not only that she desires violent heterosex but also by indicating towards the end of the story that these men are friends of the lesbian protagonist giving her a surprise birthday party.

These are just two examples of what I perceive to be a common phenomenon in *written*³ lesbian erotica/porn: the conjunction of the emotional with specific sexual practices. This phenomenon is shared with popular (lesbian) romance which, according to Janice Radway, in its ideal version presents the heroine as "emotionally complete and sexually satisfied" (149). This conjunction raises issues concerning the impact of HIV/AIDS on erotica/porn some of which I shall discuss below.

The silence (?) of lesbian sex

My starting-point here is a quotation from Marilyn Frye's essay "Lesbian 'Sex'" (1991) in which she writes:

Lesbian "sex" as I have known it most of the time I have known it is utterly inarticulate. Most of my lifetime, most of my experience in the realms commonly designated as "sexual" has been prelinguistic,

noncognitive. I have, in effect, no linguistic community, no language and therefore in one important sense, no knowledge. (6)

The connections Frye makes between inarticulacy, absence of a linguistic community, and lack of knowledge are crucial here.⁴ They resurface in an interview between Sue O'Sullivan and Cindy Patton in which Patton links what she calls the "paucity of sexual imagery for lesbians" (132) with the difficulties of promoting safer sex among lesbians. I shall return to this point later. For now, I want to ask

The public depiction of lesbian sex reinforces not only the divide between the public and the private in the realms of sexuality but also the notion of silence during sex in the private context.

what Frye means when she talks of lesbian sex as "utterly inarticulate." What interests me here is that these comments are made in the context of a *proliferation* of discourses (see Singer) and texts on lesbian sexuality, many of these—if not most—written by lesbians. It is thus not exactly the case that lesbian sex is inarticulate.

There are a great many texts depicting lesbian sex. Let me quote briefly from two such very different texts. One is a short poem by Suniti Namjoshi entitled "I give her the rose":

I give her the rose with unfurled petals.
she smiles
and crosses her legs.
I give her the shell with the swollen lip.
She laughs. I bite
and nuzzle her breasts.
I tell her, "Feed me on flowers
with wide open mouths,"
and slowly,
she pulls my head down. (25)

The second quotation is from lesbian pulp fiction first published in the 1950s, Ann Bannon's *I Am A Woman*:

[Laura] clung wordlessly to Beebo, half tearing her pajamas off her back, groaning wordlessly, almost sobbing. Her hands explored, caressed, felt Beebo all over, while her own body responded with violent spasms—joyous, crazy, deep as her soul. She could no more have prevented her response than she could the tyrannic need that drove her to find it. (93)

Both texts depict lesbian sex and they do so in different, yet recognizably conventional ways. Made famous by

Gertrude Stein, the rose is a well established euphemism for what Jeanette's mother in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* calls "down there" (Winterson). Such natural imagery is commonly employed in the representation of lesbian sex; thus offering overt resistance to the heterosexist notion that lesbian sex might be "unnatural" while reinforcing the problematic notion that women are somehow closer to nature than men (see McMillan; Haraway). The scene from Bannon's novel presents sexuality as an irrational and irresistible force which renders the protagonist inarticulate: Laura groans "wordlessly." Fade-outs, not just, so to speak, of the visual, but also of the verbal, kind are very common in scenes depicting lesbian sex, creating a division between saying and doing and suggesting that you cannot do it and talk at the same time.⁵

It seems not to be the case then, as Frye suggests, that lesbian sex is "inarticulate"—there are, after all, plenty of depictions of lesbian sex available from good and not-so-good bookshops now. However, Frye talks of "my experiences in the realms commonly designated as sexual" (emphasis added); I take these to refer to actual experiences in her personal life. In the face of the proliferation of discourses and texts on lesbian sex, Frye's assertion indicates not only a gap between the private and the public here (private inarticulacy *versus* public verbosity) but also a discrepancy between the two: the fact that lesbian sex is verbalized in cultural production for consumption by a general public does not as a matter of course enhance articulacy in the private sphere. Rather, to judge by the excerpt from *I Am A Woman*, for example, the public depiction of lesbian sex *reinforces* not only the divide between the public and the private in the realms of sexuality but also the notion of silence during sex in the private context.

As is made evident in the two texts depicting lesbian sex cited above, one reason for this division is that the representation of lesbian sex operates within certain specific cultural and narrative conventions gleaned from romance which include, for instance, natural imagery and the "speechlessness" of the lesbian protagonists when they engage in sex. The latter convention of constructing action and speech as divorced from each other is particularly important here because that division is one of the main concerns in discussions about erotica/porn *per se* and about erotica and safer sex, specifically. As regards the former, the gap between articulation and action can surface, as it does in Sheba Collective's introduction to *Serious Pleasure* in the assertion of a difference between what is presented as text and what "real" people do in "real" life, as well as in an intratextual construction of an articulate controlling "doing" character whose sexual demands are made explicit and the passive, silent "done to" other who services those sexual demands.

As regards the relation between erotica and safer sex, the gap between articulation and action is indicated by Patton in her interview with Sue O'Sullivan, when she suggests that it is difficult to establish safer sex practices if no

discourse about lesbian sex is in circulation in the lesbian community. In discussing the difficulties of trying to create lesbian safe sex discussions, Patton explains:

What it really felt like was that even lesbians didn't know what it was that lesbians did in sex, so there was no way that we could come up with a formula for figuring out what lesbian safe sex was. (121)

Concerns about the presentation of lesbian sex and their relation to HIV/AIDS have surfaced in the context of lesbian

Publishers, writers, and editors have to respond to the question of how to deal with the issue of HIV/AIDS and whether or not to make the depiction of safer sex practices part of their presentations of lesbian sex.

erotica/porn because the latter depict sexual practices/behaviours that can heighten the risk of HIV infection. That such concerns have surfaced is not to say, however, that lesbians assume a unified position on this matter. In "Fairy Tales, 'Facts' and Gossip: Lesbians and AIDS," for example, Tessa Boffin cites a variety of lesbians' views on the issue of lesbian sex and AIDS, one of which is: "Lesbians worldwide are not a risk group. Lesbian sex is safe.... Only nuns show fewer cases of sexually transmitted diseases than lesbians" (1990, 156). In a parallel essay entitled "Angelic Rebels: Lesbians and Safer Sex" Boffin comments:

These women [i.e. lesbians who take that stance] also regard us as virgin angels, immune to infection by virtue of the fact that lesbian sex is somehow seen as purer, cleaner and safer than any other form of sexual practice. This view fails to acknowledge there are certain activities such as rimming, fisting, cunnilingus, and so on, which cut across the fragile boundaries of sexual orientation, and could put anyone, regardless of their sexuality or gender, at risk. (1990, 57)

It has to be said that HIV and AIDS are still not understood very well; the parameters of their definitions keep shifting (see Richardson). Two things that are pertinent here are: firstly, for a number of reasons lesbians appear to represent a low-risk group in terms of the likelihood of getting infected with the HIV virus (see Leonard; Richardson). Secondly, the virus appears to be transmitted through bodily fluids, specifically blood, including menstrual blood and vaginal secretions. Being low risk does not, however, mean that you are immune, and publishers, writers and editors of lesbian erotica/porn have had to and are having to respond to the question of how to deal with the issue of

HIV/AIDS in the contexts of representations of lesbian sex and whether or not to make the depiction of safer sex practices part of their presentations of lesbian sex. The responses are interesting.

A question of responsibility?

Alyson Publications, who publish Califia's writings, have, as Califia puts it, "a policy against eroticizing high-risk sex" (17), which means that Califia had to re-write any material which included the exchange of bodily fluids. Sheba, who published *Serious Pleasure* had no such policy. However, the Sheba Collective who edited *Serious Pleasure* felt as much impelled as Califia to discuss AIDS and safer sex in the introductions to their texts and to include "Notes on AIDS and Safer Sex" at the back. Despite Sheba Collective maintaining that "we do not believe that all fictional writing or visual representation of lesbian sex should immediately incorporate safer sex guide lines" (12), ignoring HIV/AIDS is clearly not an option.

In their discussions on whether or not to include safer sex practices in representations of lesbian sex, both Califia and Sheba Collective make distinctions, already referred to above, between saying and doing, fantasy and reality. Both use this distinction to validate publishing erotica/porn in the same way that feminist critiques of romance have used it to address issues around the "legitimacy" of popular romance as "fantasy fodder" for women oppressed within heteropatriarchy.⁶ Sheba write:

Serious Pleasure is in no way a lesbian sex manual. In the same way that fantasy is no indication necessarily of what any individual will do in "real life," neither are the stories in *Serious Pleasure* what either the authors or the readers necessarily "do." Safer sex is a case in point. Interestingly none of the stories submitted to us include safer sex as an issue either to be addressed in the context of the story or built into a sexual encounter.... Do lesbians in general still believe that AIDS is not a significant reality for them in terms of sexual transmission? We would guess that this is so and may be the primary reason for the absence of any mention of safer sex in these stories. (11-12)

Note Sheba Collective's own conflation of reality and fantasy here: first maintaining that there is no necessary relation between fantasy and reality, they then go on to suggest a direct connection between lesbians' practice outside and in the text. Similarly, and I would suggest without being aware of the ambiguity of her statement, Califia writes: "Images and descriptions are forever getting confused with live acts" (17). Precisely!

This leads me to the issue of the consumer of lesbian erotica/porn and her—and I shall just consider the lesbian consumer here—relation to that material. What does she want from it? Entertainment, escape, education? There

does not seem to be a simple answer to this question but it appears to be the case that at least some lesbian readers some of the time go to lesbian erotica/porn for information, education, to gain knowledge about lesbian sex. Jan Brown's "Sex, Lies and Penetration: A Butch Finally 'Fesses Up'" illustrates this. If it is the case that lesbian readers read lesbian erotica/porn for information, does this or should this mean that publishers and writers of such material have a responsibility to these members of the lesbian community to provide them with appropriate information concerning safer sex practices?

One could argue about this question in terms of the

fictional writing or visual representation of lesbian sex should immediately incorporate safer sex guide lines. However, we feel it is important that the issue of safer sex is always acknowledged in some way. We have included some information which you will find at the back of the book. (12)

What I want to highlight here is not so much the issue of the publisher's/writer's responsibilities as the fact that this issue, it seems to me, can only arise in a context where safer sex and the erotic/pornographic are seen as two discrete entities, uneasily coexisting as indeed they do in the texts



Images from the Rainbow Side of the Dark by B.A.N.S.H.I.I.

responsibility a publisher or writer has towards the community whom she serves and lives off. This moves the debate not only into the realm of the economic (to put it cynically and unceremoniously: what profit is there in promoting practices that kill the consumers of your goods?) and, more importantly, into the realm of the ethical. Sheba Collective and Califia both engage with the question of responsibility and find themselves answering with a qualified "yes." As Sheba put it:

We believe that all lesbians should think long and hard about HIV and AIDS and seriously take on the hows and whys of safer sex. For some, erotic stories consciously built around safer sex practices might be helpful. *Serious Pleasure* has not included that possibility in its brief. Even if unprotected lesbian sex was clearly a high risk behaviour we do not believe that all

under consideration. The fact that "Notes on Safer Sex" are separated out from the erotic/pornographic material which forms the main part of these texts suggests a split in cultural consciousness, reiterated in the introductions to *Macho Sluts* and *Serious Pleasure*, between safer sex and sexual practices which is reinforced by the fact that both are presented in very different forms of discourse, so that the erotic/pornographic texts are encoded in conventional narrative terms whereas the notes on safer sex display the characteristics typical of a discourse one would associate with information/instruction but not with romance.

The power of convention

I want to consider briefly some explanations of why Califia and Sheba Collective exhibit such reluctance in facing HIV/AIDS and safer sex in their texts. One of these is

associated with the earlier distinction between fantasy and reality and with the fact that depictions of lesbian sex are subject to cultural and narrative conventions. One of the sources of these conventions, romance, demands the construction of an object of love/desire which is perfect in a variety of ways including perfectly healthy—at least initially. To project such an object as—at least potentially—the carrier of STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) raises all sorts of questions about that object's sexual behaviour which would explode the very sexual ideology underlying romance on which the latter is founded.

Additionally the narrative structure of romance demands a closure which leaves the heroine intact and looking forward to a bright relational future.⁷ In terms of specific literary definitions, romance conforms to the conventions of comedy rather than tragedy—it requires life, not death as its ending (see Frye, N.).⁸ In western culture, and despite the conventions of Christian mythology which promise a great afterlife (though at the price of a horrible death—witness Jesus on the cross), death is not something to celebrate; it therefore cannot be a central part of comic or romance conventions. Not only does romance require life as its ending—it has to be unequivocal. Ambiguity in resolution would be the death of romance; the mere suggestion of safe sex therefore, which of course implies the possibility of death, would raise doubt, uncertainty, concerning the future of the heroine: what would happen if she or her partner was a carrier of HIV? Given the uncertainty of its incubation period, when would we, the readers, be certain that all was OK? One might thus argue that the inclusion of safer sex practices in lesbian erotica/porn would necessitate a radical revisioning of the construction of such material which could, after all, no longer utilize the formulae of romance as we know them. What is thus interestingly indexed is that on one level at least lesbian erotica/porn are fantasies, not representations of what lesbians do but presentations of imaginary scenarios in which the reality, namely that even lesbians can get HIV infected, is displaced in favour of a fantasy that either no matter what we do we cannot catch it, or no matter whether we catch it or not, we do not care.

Safer sex is not “sexy” in two senses of that phrase: it has not—as yet—been conventionalized as part of erotic/pornographic presentation, and it is not trendy to think of doing so. The latter may be because, as Gayle Rubin maintains, “in times of great social stress... Disputes over sexual behaviour often become the vehicles for displaying social anxieties, and discharging their attendant emotional intensity” (267). In other words, living as we do in dangerous times, riskier sex, meaning unsafe sex, becomes a way of displacing and discharging those anxieties for which we have no other obvious vent. It is also the case that in the 1990s we live in a society which displays an overt consciousness of violence, violence that can simultaneously be brought into our homes and is contained—inside the TV. The same is evident in other cultural forms such as cinema and books. Increasingly, we thus become inured

to violence but are also offered the notion that while it occurs, it will not happen to us. A parallel can be drawn to HIV/AIDS. We are thus left with the problematic of how to engage with HIV/AIDS in the context of lesbian erotica/porn. This difficulty clearly surfaces in Califia's writing which is fraught with contradictions about “safe” versus “risky” sex. It is also evident in Sheba Collective's stories where “safe” versus “risky” is frequently negotiated through making explicit that the events depicted are the narrator's fantasy.

Imaging HIV/AIDS

One other element which compounds the difficulty of presentation detailed above is concerned with the imaging of HIV/AIDS. Rejecting “feminist erotica” Califia writes: “This stuff reads as if it were written by dutiful daughters who are trying to persuade Mom that lesbian sex isn't dirty, and we really are good girls, after all” (13). Sheba in their notes on safer sex maintain:

Learning about safer sex is a way of collectively talking about what we do sexually. It is also a way of confronting the notion that if you decide to practice safer sex you are “unclean” or suspect your partner of being so. (200).

The words “dirty” and “unclean,” by association, surface the idea of contamination, illness, and social marginalization. Both Califia and Sheba seem to suggest that if, in doing lesbian sex, we are supposed to be “dirty” in the eyes of the world/our partner, then at least we want to decide what the nature of the dirt is: Califia seeks to appropriate and re-value the term “dirt” to index something positive; Sheba are looking to disarm it by questioning its appropriateness. Califia again: “I don't believe ‘unsafe’ porn causes AIDS.... Nobody ever caught a disease from ... a book” (17).

Lesbian erotica/porn, in Califia's book, are sexy (when unsafe) and safe (because only a text). Here we find, inversely expressed, the notion that by not incorporating—and note that word—safer sex practices, by not taking precautions into the body of writing, we might lay ourselves open to disease, that contamination may be the result of unsafe sex. Simultaneously, by taking it in, by incorporating safer sex practices in lesbian erotica/porn, we are taking it on—HIV/AIDS. Does “taking it on” mean being contaminated by it? This, I would suggest, provides another reason why Califia and Sheba Collective are reluctant to include safer sex practices into their erotica/porn, indicating a persistent question and anxiety about how we get it—HIV/AIDS—and what we should do about it.

It might be argued that through the denial of HIV/AIDS, as much as through the incorporation of safer sex practices in lesbian erotica/porn, we are romancing death.⁸ One thing seems clear to me: the emergence of HIV/AIDS has

called for a revisioning of lesbian erotica/porn which is not evaded by avoiding the issue. Lesbian erotica/porn means something different now from what it meant before the early 1980s. And that is not just a function of the emergence of "queer." The fact that lesbian erotica/porn has proliferated since that period makes a revisioning only all the more necessary. It is possible that the proliferation of this material constitutes an act of defiance, a refusal to be beaten by the public discourses around the disease not all of which are terribly accurate and many of which are homophobic. It could also be a romancing of death which resembles that associated with the decadence of the 1890s when "living for the moment" supplanted the orientation towards a future many no longer believed in (see Showalter, chapters nine and ten). Sarah Lucia Hoagland has called for a revaluing of lesbian desire which states that such desire need not be "a matter of being 'safe' or 'in danger,'" but is "a matter of connection" (169). She asserts: "Thus, we can come to embrace more fully both desire and difference as biophilic, not necrophilic" (169-70). The question, of course, is: who or what do we connect with? And how?

Gabriele Griffin is Professor of Women's Studies and Head of School of Cultural Studies at Leeds Metropolitan University. Previous publications include Feminist Activism in the 1990s (London: Taylor and Francis, 1995); Outwrite: Lesbianism and Popular Culture (London: Pluto Press, 1993) and Heavenly Love? Lesbian Images in 20th Century Women's Writing (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

¹The arguments about what constitutes the erotic or the pornographic are not going to be rehearsed here. I find the subtleties around mutuality/one-way interactions, whole-body vs. bit-parts presentations etc. as argued over in essays such as Gloria Steinem's "Erotica and Pornography: A Clear and Present Difference" or Audre Lorde's "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" unsatisfactory. I agree with Gayle Rubin's assertion that "Most people find it difficult to grasp that whatever they like to do sexually will be thoroughly repulsive to someone else, and that whatever repels them sexually will be the most treasured delight to someone, somewhere.... Most people mistake their sexual preferences for a universal system that will or should work for everyone" (Rubin 283). I would also argue that those who do distinguish between erotica and porn frequently do so on the basis of what they find un/acceptable: the acceptable is erotic, the unacceptable is pornographic. I shall therefore use "erotic/pornographic" throughout the text.

²The same legitimating framework is frequently used in cases of sexual child abuse and other forms of domestic and institutional sexual abuse.

³I think that visual and written material needs to be distinguished here, *inter alia* because visual material when it presents more than one person does not as a matter of

course make explicit the relational connections between the people it depicts.

⁴For another version of this problematic see Kitty Tsui's "Who Say We Don't Talk About Sex?" in which she considers the impact of her Chinese upbringing on her initial inarticulacy about sex, commenting, for instance: "Chinese is my first language. But I was fluent only in the words my parents deemed it necessary for me to know. I was certainly not taught the words for breast, cunt, ass, or orgasm. There were no words for sex; therefore, sex did not exist" (385).

⁵This is a convention much exploited in hetero romances such as those published by Harlequin, Mills and Boon, or Barbara Cartland's, which typically move from dialogue into euphemistic descriptions at the point of actual sexual intercourse; for example, "I love ... you! I love ... you!" she wanted to say, but the Earl was carrying her up on a shaft of moonlight into the sky" (Cartland 140). The idea seems to be to establish sex as belonging to the realm of the pre-linguistic, a "pre-social," instinctual phenomenon enacting an inherited "natural" behaviour. It also suggests automatic sexual response and success, the partner always knowing what you want and fulfilling that desire. All of this is of course contradicted by the reports on sexuality which became in/famous from the late 1940s onwards and which chart heterosexual women's frustration in heterosex (see Jeffreys, especially chapters two and three).

⁶See, for instance, Fowler; Taylor; Carr; Sarsby; Radford.

⁷In "A Case of AIDS" Mandy Merck offers an account of the way in which AIDS and its victims can be assimilated and subjected to the conventions of hetero romance in order to affirm the latter.

⁸In "Sexual Inversions" Judith Butler discusses the function of "death" in current debates on the relationship of the politics of "life and death" in the context of homosexuality and AIDS.

References

- Bannon, A. *I Am A Woman*. Tallahassee: Naiad Press, 1986.
- Boffin, T. "Angelic Rebels: Lesbians and Safer Sex." *Ecstatic Antibodies: Resisting the AIDS Mythology*. Eds. T. Boffin and S. Gupta. London: Rivers Oram Press, 1990.
- Boffin, T. "Fairy Tales, 'Facts' and Gossip: Lesbians and AIDS." *Ecstatic Antibodies: Resisting the AIDS Mythology*. Eds. T. Boffin and S. Gupta. London: Rivers Oram Press, 1990.
- Brown, J. "Sex, Lies and Penetration: A Butch Finally 'Fesses' Up." *The Persistent Desire: A Butch-Femme Reader*. Ed. J. Nestle. Boston: Alyson Publications, 1992.
- Butler, J. "Sexual Inversions." *Discourses on Sexuality*. Ed. D.C. Stanton. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992.
- Califia, P. *Macho Sluts*. Boston: Alyson Press, 1988.

Cartland, B. *A Circus for Love*. London: Pan Books, 1987.

Fowler, B. *The Alienated Reader: Women and Popular Romantic Literature in the Twentieth Century*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.

Frye, M. "Lesbian 'Sex.'" *An Intimate Wilderness: Lesbian Writers on Sexuality*. Ed. J. Barrington. Portland: Eighth Mountain Press, 1991.

Frye, N. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.

Haraway, Donna J. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Free Association Book, 1991.

Hoagland, S.L. *Lesbian Ethics: Towards New Value*. Palo Alto: California Institute of Lesbian Studies, 1988.

Jeffreys, S. *Anticlimax: A Feminist Perspective on the Sexual Revolution*. London: The Women's Press, 1990.

Leonard, Zoe. "Lesbians in the AIDS Crisis." *Women, AIDS and Activism*. Eds. The Act Up/NY Women and AIDS Book Group. Boston: South End Press, 1990.

Lorde, A. "Uses of the Erotic." *Take Back the Night: Women and Pornography*. Ed. L. Lederer. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1980.

McMillan, Carol. *Women, Reason and Nature*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982.

Merck, M. "A Case of AIDS." *Perversions*. London: Virago Press, 1993.

Namjoshi, S. "I Give Her the Rose." *An Intimate Wilderness: Lesbian Writers on Sexuality*. Ed. J. Barrington. Portland: Eighth Mountain Press, 1991.

O'Sullivan, S. "Mapping: Lesbianism, AIDS and Sexuality." *Feminist Review* 34 (1990): 120-33.

Radford, Jean, ed. *The Progress of Romance*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986.

Radway, J. *Reading the Romance*. London: Verso, 1987.

Rich, A. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*. Eds. A. Snitow et al. London: Virago Press, 1984.

Richardson, Diane, ed. *Women and the AIDS Crisis*. London: Pandora, 1987.

Rubin, G. "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality." *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*. Ed. C.S. Vance. London: Pandora, 1988.

Sarsby, Jacqueline. *Romantic Love and Society*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983.

Sheba Collective, eds. *Serious Pleasure*. London: Sheba Feminist Publishers, 1989.

Showalter, E. *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*. London: Bloomsbury, 1991.

Singer, Linda. *Erotic Welfare: Sexual Theory and Politics in the Age of Epidemic*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Steinem, G. "Erotica and Pornography: A Clear and Present Difference." *Take Back the Night: Women and Pornography*. Ed. L. Lederer. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1980.

Taylor, Helen. "Romantic Readers." *From My Guy to Sci Fi*. Ed. Helen Carr. London: Pandora, 1989.

Tsui, K. "Who Says We Don't Talk About Sex?" *The Persistent Desire: A Butch-Femme Reader*. Ed. J. Nestle. Boston: Alyson Publications, 1992.

Winterson, J. *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit*. London: Pandora, 1985.

PAULINE RANKIN

Adam and Steve

today on Geraldo
 they had this debate
 about homosexuality
 between
 the fags
 and
 the fundamentalists
 who knew
 God said
 gays were wrong
 after all
 he didn't
 create Adam and Steve

Made me think
 of a different Eden
 with Adam and Steve
 and Ada and Eve

they would ignore
 the tempting fruit
 they had better
 things to eat

Pauline Rankin is a 39 year old Jewish-lesbian-feminist-writer-poet, and disability activist. She is currently working with DAWN Canada: DisAbled Women's Network Canada, and studying part-time for an English/Women's Studies degree. Writing, disability rights, and fat liberation are among the things she is passionate about.