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INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet contains the papers and discussion that occurred at a seminar on female homosexuality. This seminar occurred on the 22nd and 23rd March 1975 for International Women's Year.

The Agenda was as follows:—

Saturday 22nd

Session 1: How to fit a round tot in a square role.

Speakers: Claire Burton
Elaine Whiteman
Sue Collins

Session 2: Conform or Else

Speakers: Penny Short
Jozefa Sobski

Open Forum on Myths of Lesbianism

Sunday 23rd --

Session 3: Conform or Else

Speakers: Pam Waugh
Sylvia Martin

Session 4: Literature and Mass Media

Speakers: Tess Lee Ack
Dilys Kevan

The introductory speech was given by the female co-president of Camp (N.S.W.) who is a member of the committee set up to organize activities for International Women's Year within CAMP (N.S.W.).

In November 1974 a submission by CAMP (N.S.W.) was sent to the National Advisory Committee for International Women's Year. This submission was for a total of \$30,200 to fund six seminar-workshops, pamphlets arising from these workshops and a book on the position of the female homosexual in Australian Society. The introductory pamphlet was sent to all medical, legal, educational and political institutions who in their ignorance or fear have perpetrated the oppression and discrimination that the lesbian has experienced in the past and is still experiencing today.

The grant allocated was for \$4000.00 and a verbal statement that more money would be forthcoming if the first seminar-workshop was successful, was given. The workshops were set up to:—

- (a) research the position of the female homosexual in Australian society.
- (b) formulate and conduct an education programme to change current attitudes. This is the first programme of its type that has been undertaken in Australia.

The project will aim, through education at all levels, to change current attitudes which cause discrimination and suffering. The basic theme of all the workshops

is that female homosexuals labour under the double oppression of being a woman and being homosexual. This was exemplified in the graphics on the introductory pamphlet.

The research mentioned in the first aim, was to pinpoint the specific nature of the oppression of the female homosexual in order to formulate a programme to combat it. We hope that from this pamphlet you will gain a deeper understanding of lesbians and homosexuality in general.

The theme for the first seminar workshop was the conditioning process within education and the mass media. In the following part of the pamphlet there are the papers that were given at the seminar in the order in which the speakers are listed in the agenda. At the end of each session there is a summary of the discussions that arose from the audiences questions.

The following papers will elucidate the position of the female homosexual in Australian society. We hope that the pamphlet will be an instrument in changing the present attitudes of Australian society from discrimination and oppression to acceptance of female homosexuality as a valid alternative lifestyle.

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SESSION ONE

How to fit a round tot in a square role

Claire Burton
Elaine Whiteman
Sue Collins

CLAIRE BURTON

Socialisation is a process by which patterns of interaction in a society are learned. It is not a process restricted only to the new members of the society — that is, the young children — but occurs in different ways to all members as they are introduced to a variety of experiences and expected role patterns. The process assigns guidelines for what are regarded as “natural” or ‘normal’ patterns of behaviour. In every society these patterns are different but are treated as normal by the society’s members nevertheless. It is assumed that if the general direction of the socialisation process is deviated from, disruption will occur. However, for our purposes, the stress must be on its relativity in terms of time and place. For instance, in some societies homosexuality is accepted as a normal mode of behaviour on the part of males before and after marriage (although, as must be obvious, the expectation is that they be bisexual during their marriage). This is related to other aspects of the social structure — e.g. if the economy is geared to the need for close association and attachment between males as it may be in a fishing community where the men engage in long fishing trips away from home — then homosexuality is more likely to be an acceptable mode of behaviour. This is not necessarily the case with the females of the society. It may well be frowned upon if attitudes towards female sexuality do not recognise a parallel need on the part of women. It may exist but be hidden or it may simply be that it has not been adequately researched. We do have insufficient evidence in the area of sexuality generally, from studies of other societies, but particularly in the area of what women do and what women think, about themselves or about the behaviour of the males. Most anthropologists — even female anthropologists — have used male informants and have not shown particular concern to explore notions of female sexuality as expressed by females themselves. To put this general picture into perspective, Gagnon and Simon state that “there is no form of sexual activity that is not deviant at some time, in some social location, in some specified relations, or with some partners.”

I have referred to the ‘socialisation process’. This is in fact generally discussed in a vacuum, as something that occurs through the intervention of impersonal socialising agencies, the ones generally referred to being the family, the school, peer groups and the mass media, in something of that order of importance. But little mention is made of the specific situations under which it occurs, or in fact the specific people who are mainly involved in the process. In our society the main socialiser for a child up to the age of 3 or 4 or 5 tends to be the mother.

In fact, the mother, the main socialiser, is a *female* living under specific physical conditions, whether these consist of an isolated house in a suburb, in a crowded inner city house with no yard, in an outback rural area or a small country town, etc. These physical conditions are relevant to the process we are referring to. For most of these women the main contracts they have with the outside world are also relevant to the socialisation process. The mass media are becoming one of

the most important of these contacts and the images of roles presented in these, influence women's conceptions of themselves. This self image which is also derived from their own socialisation experience, is reflected in the way in which women bring up their children.

This process can be looked at more specifically – dissected, as it were. One of the first mechanisms of social learning is through imitation. We learn to act like human beings, or like members of a given society or subgroup of that society, or like males or females, by observing how other members of these *social* categories behave. The ability to reproduce the behaviour of others is based to a great extent on the responses of others towards the individual. We will come back to that in a moment. The next step is identification with another person who is seen to be significant. This tends to be encouraged along sex lines as this is a basic social category in our society. After this comes the internalisation of values and norms which means that they have become part of the personality and are intrinsic to it. What we are concerned with today is those occasions where the process is not perfect – that is, it does not go along as smoothly as might be hoped and the end product is not what society has designed for the individual. Systems of rewards and punishments are utilised in an attempt to produce the right effect. For example, approval, withdrawal of love, ridicule, praise, the ways in which individuals are made to feel guilt, shame, pride or satisfaction. These methods are used to reinforce particular ways of behaving and to stamp out others. They are mechanisms of social control. Many of these informal processes which are carried out within families are also carried out within small groups such as the neighbourhood, among peer groups and within schools. Within these social groups – where people all know each other – negative sanctions are applied to violations of norms that have been built up within these communities. These processes are significant in enabling children to learn the rules of the game. They also serve to keep parents in tune with community standards.

In modern complex societies like our own, these informal processes are added to by political officials: guardians of social order – who make rules and establish procedures for dealing with conduct thought to be deviant or disruptive. The existence of judges, police, psychiatrists, religious leaders and teachers as well as the expansion in the fields of child welfare, mental health, the number of probation officers and social workers can be seen as valuable in many ways. But it also points to the increasing socialising role of institutions in our society and reflects the extent to which social control has become a formally recognised function of society. The prominence of social control agencies makes our perception of 'deviant behaviour' different than it otherwise would be – more importance is attached to it when we are aware of the elaborate mechanisms that have been built up for detecting and dealing with it (whenever I use that phrase, or the word 'normal' visualise adverted commas).

Hence we need to look at the wider social context within which a parent socialises or brings up a child. A mode of behaviour socially labelled as deviant is unlikely to be placed positively in a socialising process by an adult, whatever the adult might otherwise think or feel. Fear of consequences for the child is part of this, but also relevant is the internalisation by the adult of this social categorisation.

To refer again to the specific mechanisms involved in the socialisation process – the idea of models being available to the child for imitation or identification is also relevant for the socialising adult. If the child does not have a variety of models, by the same token nor does the adult have a variety of models to present to the child. Parents have devised their own modes of living and children are in this respect restricted. This is a reason in addition to those usually given for

extending the contacts children have outside of their own household situation. And as long as certain forms of behaviour are regarded as deviant, they are hidden from view and the adult is not in a position, and is certainly not encouraged, to present them to a child as a viable alternative. A lot of fear is felt about bringing up a non-conforming child. Parental behaviour is based not only on how the parent feels, or in response to the needs of the child. It is also based on what the parent knows to be the social definitions of correct or acceptable behaviour. This is the case right from when the child is very young. When it occurs over things that may *appear* small, compromises may seem to the parent unimportant (that is, compromises between what the parent would like to do, or what the child would like to do, and what the parent knows the neighbours think she should do). But in fact these small compromises may have a profound effect on the child. For instance, questions of nudity, peeing on the grass, using swear words, segregating the sexes for various purposes — all can result in notions of impurity or pollution and produce attitudes towards oneself and those of the opposite sex which are distortions of the spontaneous reactions of the child.

When certain forms of behaviour are labelled by the society as deviant, rather than merely a variation on a theme — and ways of behaving are translated into deviant *roles* with either formal or informal negative sanctions attached to their expression, it is when this happens that the early socialisation process is affected, with adults fearful of the effects on their children if they present as 'normal' what most of the community regard as 'deviant'. For some of us — who can be referred to as 'deviant socialisers' — there is a disjunction between what we are doing and what happens when the child goes to preschool or school. Those children who come from single parent families or whose parents are separated, are reacted to in harmful ways from middle class teachers who not only regard the nuclear family as normal but also as good for the child. Think what would be the reaction to a child if she goes to school and proudly proclaims that her mother lives with and loves another woman. The child might be told, after the reaction comes home from school (and it might not come home from school — if the reaction is too bad the mother may never hear of it) not to talk about it any more. She might be told that by the teacher. If she is told not to mention it, then she is going to have some conception of deviance herself. Or she will have to cope with the conflicts engendered by the situation — not necessarily a bad thing but it does depend on many factors operating in the child's favour.

Not enough has been done within the schools to combat what would clearly be the repercussions on that child and the attitudes of teachers to a variety of family situations must change to acceptance.

Social control processes as they operate now, inhibit a broader, more flexible socialising process for individual children. On the whole, it does not develop in children a sense of *personhood* but teaches various role patterns, one of the most basic in our society being the sex role pattern and expectations of behaviour derived from that. In fact studies show that children's ideas of what behaviour is appropriate to each sex have hardly changed in recent years. Where it *has* changed, it tends to be in the direction of labelling more, and not fewer, characteristics as appropriate for a particular sex.

To break the circle, all sorts of changes on many fronts are needed. The media and the schools are important in this, for the change in attitude required in parents who do the initial socialising involves their acceptance of a variety of life situations so they can be presented to the children freely. Children need to come up against new situations themselves, as well. Studies also show that new ideas are not accepted as readily through information given in the media as when an

interpersonal relationship intervenes between the information and the recipient. Material must be reinterpreted in the light of new knowledge, as was done in the book, *Maternal Deprivation Reassessed*. In H. R. Schaffer, *The Growth of Socialibility*, sex-linked differences are discovered in babies at a very early age e.g. at three months boy babies cried and fussed more than girl babies and the maternal response to the two were different. Mothers tended to respond more to the fussing of their female children. His interpretation is that as boys failed to respond to their mother's pacification techniques, the mothers tended to give up earlier and let them cry. He states that perceived sex differences will affect a mother's perception of her child. But he fails to consider that the mother's assumptions about her child in relation to its sex will affect *her* responses – she may be leaving the male child to cry believing that boys should not cry and therefore she will not respond in the same way.

That the socialisation process has already begun would be an alternative interpretation of this data, and research needs to be done without this excluded as a possibility.

When stories are written they should incorporate as 'normal' a whole variety of ways of living. For example, in the recent spate of non-sexist readers and stories, the concentration is on showing that boys and girls are not as different as they are usually made out to be and the emphasis has been on portraying girls in an active, assertive way. But the restriction still exists, e.g. Eve Merriam's book 'Boys and Girls, Girls and Boys', she depicts cooperation between Mum and Dad and daughter and son helping both Mum and Dad. But this is a long way from depicting relations in variable form. Mother and father are *still there*. Love between men, or between women, or households of just women, or other variations, are not yet incorporated into feminist literature. More needs to be written about unmarried mother and single parent family situations as well.

Another thing we must be careful about is that such books are introduced into the official socialising channels – otherwise non-sexist readers and stories will only be read to, or presented to, the children of so-called 'deviant socialisers' and will never reach the so-called normal parents in normal family set-ups and their children.

I would like to mention one more example of the ease with which radical interpretations of such institutions as the family can still fail to see the significance of the sex-role pattern and its effects. R. D. Laing, well-known for his critiques of the family and the social definition of mental illness, wrote a book with A. Esterson called *Sanity, Madness and the Family*, which presents case studies of 11 families in which one child in each had been diagnosed as schizophrenic. He explores the ways in which the personalities of these children had been distorted by the expectations the parents had of them, as well as by the dynamics of the different relationships that were occurring in each family situation. What he does not mention himself, and I assume because he did not see the significance, is that in all cases, the schizophrenic was a girl child and assertive behaviour on the part of that child was one of the factors in each case that the parents were attempting to suppress – in each of these cases the child's response to the conflict between her own personality and the expectations of her family was to withdraw into a 'schizophrenic' state. The conflict was too great to handle in any 'rational' way.

If I am presenting a pessimistic picture I suppose it is because it is precisely those institutions which are resisting change that we are aware are in need of most change. And additional change generally – on the part of parents, teachers and other people who influence the ideas we hold, is a long, slow process.

Which is why we are here.

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ELAINE WHITEMAN

What is a square role?

Certain characteristics, behaviour, emotions, preferences, personalities are assigned to one sex and a different set are assigned to the other sex, allowing no exceptions. So that to be masculine is to be aggressive, independent, brave, strong, intelligent, interested in cars, guns, adventure, career and feminine women. And to be feminine is to be passive, dependent, timid, weak, dumb, interested in recipes, babies, home, appearance, marriage and masculine men.

In schools these stereotypes are institutionalised, and enforced in probably an even more rigid and inflexible manner than in the family and society generally. Schools deal in large numbers of children, divided up into large classes, and each class is divided into two distinct groups: boys and girls. What you are taught about how to behave and what to expect from life depends on which of those two categories you belong to.

Why should tots of any shape be fitted into a square role?

Supposed purposes of sex role stereotyping and conditioning:

1. To produce heterosexuals

This is the generally accepted reason for the stereotypes. In fact lots of people reckon that the masculine/feminine roles are necessary conditions for heterosexuality.

The process involves identifying with and imitating your same sex parent, and relating exclusively to your same sex peers throughout childhood.

But actually sex role stereotyping is

2. To prevent homosexuality

The fear is that if children don't adopt the assigned roles they will grow up homosexual.

I advocate the employment of men teachers in infants schools. *My* reasons for doing this is that it would help to break down the rigid stereotypes which say that men are incapable of caring for young children, that this is a feminine characteristic and therefore beneath them. However, I found that people who agreed with me on men in infants schools did so because they wanted to preserve the masculine/feminine difference. Their theory is that with all these one (female) parent families around little boys are in great danger of turning into poofers, and they need men teachers to identify with. Frankly I don't care if they all (children and teachers) turn into poofers.

Then there was the doctor's eleven year old son (definitely a sissy) who preferred playing with the girls to playing football with the boys. His father gave the

principal instructions to "make a man of him", which the principal did by hounding the boy out onto the football field, ridiculing him and caning him when he tried to escape.

I couldn't count the number of times I've had to listen to derisive teacher comments to boys who were seen holding hands or displaying affection towards each other.

(You might notice that those stories are about boys.)

Those are the supposed reasons for sex role stereotyping, but remember that this condition is achieved by segregating the sexes and imposing upon them two entirely different sets of behaviour and emotions.

The real purposes of sex role stereotyping are

1. To repress childhood sexuality in order
2. To instil social power roles

Males have to pass on the power which they hold in this patriarchal society to male children. Since they refuse to have anything to do with bringing the kids up they have set up this elaborate, incredible and illogical system of sex role training, which effectively gives boys the active personalities needed to assume the positions of power which await them; and gives girls the passive personalities which leave them powerless.

This could not be done if children were allowed to mix freely between the sexes and develop their personalities so that they were aggressive, brave, frightened, gentle as the situation, not the stereotype, demanded.

Homosexuality is especially repressed because that makes a lie of the myths about the naturalness of male aggression and female passivity. Males who give up some of the advantages of the masculine role are traitors, and females who demand some of its advantages are a threat to the exclusiveness of the patriarchy.

My theory is that, far from being prevented by sex role training *Homosexuality is the logical result* of the separation of and differentiation between the sexes.

Consider that logically, if you want to children to grow up to be heterosexual then you would encourage them to be heterosexual (i.e. relate to the opposite sex) all their lives. But we are brought up as two separate, distinct groups of people, from the moment of birth. Children are separated by sex in dress, handling, toys, language, friends, behavioural expectations, role models.

We find our friends among our own sex and so it seems logical to me that our sexual feelings should be directed towards our own sex. This is where that "normal" homosexual phase fits in. Having repressed our sexuality in childhood, society then says its okay to express it at adolescence, but we have been relating to our own sex for a dozen or more years, and it takes a while for even the most thoroughly conditioned to make the change to the opposite sex. But what sort of a relationship can it be between two distinctly different people who don't know each other. As Ingrid Bengis says in *Combat in the Erogenous Zone*, "All of us had an available model (in addition to our parents) for our relationships with the opposite sex. That model was based on our relationships with our own sex. And yet none of us made use of such a model. Instead, we depended upon an entirely new one, as if the gap between boys and girls was so great that nothing in our past experience could be applied to it . . . If friendship entered into our relationship with boys, it was by a freak chance." (p. 131, 132).

Those heteros who theorise about lesbians say that we are women who identify with our fathers instead of our mothers, (because according to them a girl who

identified with her mother grows up hetero). * I (with help from Abbott & Love p.52 and Radicalsians p.81) say that a lesbian is a woman who has identified strongly with her mother's discontent and sense of entrapment in her narrow hetero/feminine role and who rejects that role in accordance with her inner compulsion to be a more complete and freer human being than her society cares to allow her. *When there are only two basic models, then to reject one is to appear to take on the other. Lesbians are women who value themselves and other women as whole people.

The ones who get away

So what happens to girls who reject the conventions and are growing up lesbian.

1. Lesbians are invisible

One thing is for sure: they will be hard up for adult role models among their teachers.

Teachers and parents are always very worried about boys who don't fit the masculine role. Boys are encouraged to be consistently masculine from early childhood. Not only are boys more numerous in all stories and pictures, given more teacher attention, allowed more freedom in behaviour than girls, but also budding male homosexuality is more often disapproved of and condemned than female homosexuality. No one is much worried about girls who don't take to femininity because deep down they realise that no one in her right mind would accept the confines of the feminine role.

You may think it's a good thing that no one worries about girls, but we females are used to having life defined in male terms and translating, so we do the same with attitudes to homosexuality, and become paranoid waiting for explicit female reference. The fact that lesbians are ignored more than punished reflects the lower value placed on women in society.

Lesbians, (as Bev Kingston says in her article in *Refractory Girl* No. 5 p.5) must be the most desperately deprived persons in the whole society when it comes to models and ideas to which they can relate.

Females come in three models:

1. Heterosexual feminine

This is presented to girls as the ideal role, and in fact the only acceptable adult role. In children's books women are mothers who cook, wash up, make beds and care for children. They don't work outside the home, or even drive the car. The roles of women teachers and girls at school reflect the hetero/feminine stereotype. There are few women in promotions positions, infant staffs are exclusively female, girls wash up in the staffroom. Girls are taught that they will grow up to be wives and mothers, defined by the men in their lives.

2. Old maid

This is the only adult alternative to hetero/feminine. Old maids are sexless, miserable, unable to get a man. Their problems will be solved if they do get one. The threat of old maidhood is used to keep girls in the straight and narrow role. . .

3. Tomboys

Are acceptable. As I said, no one worries about a girl who shows no interest in the feminine role. They assume that she will grow out of her tomboy stage.

"In our society a girl who is assertive and rebellious is sometimes granted a period of immunity before she must acquiesce to the endless restrictions and conditions of the female sex role . . . The tomboy is tolerated and jollied along humourously.

She may even be admired . . . Girls going through a tomboy period are not imitating boys as much as they are experiencing a fuller range of activities that will be permitted until puberty brings an end to their freedom." (Abbott & Love p.21).

This is what makes tomboys acceptable: femininity wins in the end. Remember all those books you read as a child, about interesting, adventurous girls who gave it all up in the last chapter in preference for curly hair, pretty dresses and male approval. As with the homosexual "phase", the tomboy "phase" must end. So that thoughts, feelings, behaviour, and self image which were acceptable and normal today become taboo and symptoms of perversion tomorrow.

Elaine Whiteman

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SUE COLLINS

I am a Lesbian mother. I suppose that would be the best label for me.

In the socialisation of my children my main aim is to break down any concepts of role playing (between the sexes) they pick up from television, with every other ad. showing Mum doing her thing with packet cake mixes.

Little things can happen, such as I am busy painting some furniture and the kids might come and say, "Make us a drink". Their father might be sitting there, doing nothing, but if you say, "why don't you ask your father for a drink?" they give you a strange look, and you are obviously being labelled as "that funny mother down the end of the road".

Personally, I think the only way I'll cope with my children is to form a very strong framework of women friends, who have children in the same position as mine and to whom the children can relate.

If they know other kids in the same position it will break down the pressure a bit. Even with nice secure framework, I think they still need to relate to other kids in the same boat. I don't want the kids to stop talking about their parents at the age of about five, because their parents happen to be two mums, as my daughter refers to us.

But just last week my little girl came in and asked, "Who's the boss?" and when I didn't say anything she jumped on my back and wanted to play horsies. So, I imagine I was chosen as the boss.

The socialisation you are putting forward is obviously different from the rest of society's, and, unfortunately, because of the way it is, if you live in the suburbs you must maintain some level of "decency".

I find when the little boys come over to play it's almost like a class war. Obviously, they are being brought up in segregated groups of girls and boys. Even at this early stage they are not encouraged to inter-relate, and you get a war-like, aggressive chasm as a result.

Living on the North Shore, I seemed to spend half of my time trying to stop these incidents from occurring. The girls could never win. They would always finish up in tears, and going back into themselves, becoming passive little femmes. The only ones who seemed to win are the tomboys and even then they don't win very often.

There is a problem in finding a school which won't categorise the kids. So far, the best choice I've found has been from the progressive schools on the North Shore. But even they still have the girl's corner, with the fake stove, and, would you believe, an ironing board. The boys have a lawn mower.

If you are fairly vocal and can explain yourself, as well as being desirably middle class, you can take the teacher aside and say you don't like the role playing, and could they please cut it down. They might jokingly say "You're not one of those Women's Libbers?".

Or, of course, you can lobby for your cause at the P&C meetings. But I think you would have a very hard job, especially in some of the secondary schools where headmasters are there because they are very safe, very middle class and haven't said a word out of place for at least thirty years.

I think the main thing I've noticed is the way children are categorised at school. I think my eldest child has been really handicapped because she is always described as "that pretty little girl". and I know that if it kills them they are going to make her "that pretty little child". ●

Summary of Question Time: Session 1

Discussion indicated that there was a definite need for children of homosexual households to be given more tools to cope with the stigmatisation that they receive from society as it is at present.

Children of homosexual households that interacted with children of heterosexual households became more aware and also more confused because of the role-playing that children of heterosexual households had been conditioned into. Thus children of homosexual households tended to label certain activities as masculine and certain activities as feminine due to the influence of the peer group. This then leads to a confusion in the minds of children of homosexual households as they are existing in a one-sexed parent household. Thus activities which the peer group have labelled masculine or feminine are shared by the one sexed homosexual household. These divisions are not along sex lines. Activities carried out by one person are both the traditionally "feminine" and the traditionally "masculine".

Due to this situation lesbian mothers are forced into seeking out other lesbian mothers as a frame of reference for rearing their children. This then provides a recognisable secure framework in which the children can develop. Most problems arise with children of homosexual households when they reach the age of five. At this age children have extensive contact with peer group pressures and educational conditioning.

There is a need for parents whether they be homosexual or heterosexual to break down their own conditioning into certain roles. Children should be able to identify with all aspects of the masculine and feminine roles as it is laid down in our society at present.

Parents should realise that although there is a biological difference, children should be allowed to develop their own personalities without the restrictions of peer group, family or social pressures. There needs to be a distinction made between a child's sex and gender. It need not necessarily follow that a child born of the female sex will play or should play a traditionally "feminine" role. If children are pushed into one role, then it restricts their personality growth.

Within the context of Clare Burton's paper, she stated that there was a tightening up of society's opinion on what characteristics a female was said to possess. It was suggested that if this was the case then it might purely be a backwash. With any system of change, there is always a backwash, or an opposite move towards stabilisation of the existing system.

A clinical psychologist in the audience suggested that perhaps this was not completely accurate. Recent research had indicated that there was a leaning in the middle and upper socioeconomic brackets of society towards blurring the strict role stereotyping. She agreed that the statement was definitely pertinent to the lower socioeconomic brackets of society.

One of the questions asked of Elaine Whiteman was whether the family was the more influential socialising agent, in comparison to the school and peer group. Elaine felt that the school took a large part in the socialisation of the child. She felt that role-playing particularly, was a result of the conditioning processes in school.

Elaine remarked that having all female teachers in the primary school produced more aggression in the male students. This was due to the teachers over compensating for the lack of male identification models.

There is a move at present for more males to be included in primary teaching, but it was noted that out of a class of 26 students at Sydney Teachers' College, there is only one male student.

A Melbourne visitor related that when a male friend of hers had applied to the Victorian Education Department for a position as an infant school teacher, his application was refused on the basis that his maternal instinct would not be sufficient.

The conclusion drawn from this session was that parents and teachers should distinguish the difference between sex and gender. They should not pressure their children into acquiring gender characteristics which traditionally have gone with a certain sex. Thus children should be allowed to develop their personalities fully without the restriction of role playing. ●

SESSION TWO

Conform or else

Penny Short
Jozefa Sobski

PENNY SHORT

I agreed to present this paper today because I've been oppressed, as a lesbian, in a very tangible way by the N.S.W. Department of Education. In 1973 I wrote the following poem about making love with another woman. It was printed in the *Arena*, the Macquarie University Student Paper.

“Warm bodies entwined in love
soft kisses are not enough
stroking your breasts
my knee slides up between your thighs
feels soft, slippery, throbbing cunt
Tongue seeks tongue
breathing heavily and fast as
Desire ripples and trembles
then flows freely
as my fingers thrust inside you
warm . . . soft . . . wet feeling
Your moans excite me to a frenzy
my body writhes
spirit soars with love
At last your fingers
ease the longing into pleasure
which grows
swells unbearably and bursts
in ecstasy, in orgasm . . . colour . . . throb
I suck your clitoris until
your moans end in a gasp and
body spasm as you come
you stroke me tenderly
I'm floating as we lie fulfilled
feeling one with you
No time for remembering
that your love is thought wrong
– unnatural and perverted, they say!
You emerge from your floating consciousness
and look blue eyed with love
and my whole being knows it's not wrong.”

I wrote the poem, partly to remove some of the ignorance about Lesbian relationships which were prevalent even on campus. As a result of the poem's publication, I was asked to attend an interview with the Psychiatrist at the Medical Examination Centre run by the Department of Health. I'd already had an interview when I was first given my scholarship, and owing to some answers that I gave on the personality questionnaire, such as saying I didn't admire my parents etc., I had to go for a second interview with the same psychiatrist. At that interview I told her that I was homosexual, and she said: “Well that's

o.k., I know some bisexual people and they are rather nice; so that's o.k. by me, but don't let the Department of Health find out or you will be in trouble."

After I wrote the poem, I received notice to attend another psychiatric interview. At this interview I was informed that I would definitely lose my scholarship. It was stated that complaints about the poem had been made — I had also been seen relating to another woman on campus.

I asked the psychiatrist what I could do about it and she said there was nothing I could do. Several days later I received an official letter stating that I was medically unfit to hold a scholarship. I then obtained references from staff at Macquarie and presented them to the Department. I rang the head of the Medical Examination Centre and said I was going to get independent psychiatric reports. He said "That's terrific. You go to another psychiatrist. He will tell you what your problems are". I obtained two independent reports that testified I was stable and mature etc., There was no answer — these were completely ignored.

I think it is obvious that the Psychiatric Examination of the Medical Centre can be used by any public Department to get rid of anyone they don't want in employment simply by pronouncing them medically unfit.

Some people had doubts as to whether I really lost my scholarship because I was a lesbian. But these doubts were definitely cleared up about two months later when my friend (the woman that I had been seeing relating to on campus), also received notice to attend a psychiatric interview. She was half way through her fourth year at Macquarie and she had never been to an interview before; but her photo had appeared on the same page, of Arena, as mine. Later, she also received official notice to say she was medically unfit. It would have been good, at that time, if she had "come out". It would have verified the reasons whereby we lost our scholarships, but she was just about to start practice teaching and this was necessary for the completion of her Diploma in Education.

She went to the Teachers Federation but didn't get anywhere. I had a lot of trouble with the Teachers Federation myself, they weren't willing to take a stand on the issue of homosexuality.

It is obvious that the N.S.W. Department of Education doesn't want lesbians as teachers; at least not the lesbian who actually comes out and says anything about the subject. They only want lesbians who present a nice heterosexual image and they really use devious means to get rid of lesbians that do come out. They want to maintain a heterosexual norm as they don't want children to find out that there is another way of life. This is, despite the fact, that at least one in twenty children will find out, because they themselves are homosexual and the needs of this five percent are totally ignored; it is totally misleading to present a completely heterosexual viewpoint, but the Department of Education persists in doing so.

The Education Department is not only not interested in removing prejudices, it aims to oppress homosexuals, and it aims to continue to disadvantage homosexuals. In this difficult situation, children who are homosexual feel alienated and haven't anyone to talk to.

I think if there were known homosexual teachers, this would help the situation. The responsibility for education about homosexuality is the responsibility of the individual teacher. A sex education course giving full information about sexuality including talks by female and male homosexuals would be a good start towards removing ignorance and prejudice. ●

Many factors ensure the maintenance of the alleged heterosexual norm in a school community. These factors are similar to ones which extend and then compound the male/female dichotomy: parental influence, social pressure, the media, teacher models, peer group pressures and the curriculum content. These forces, in their devious and divergent ways, operate to reinforce what is commonly described as sex-typical behaviour. Deviations from such behaviour are characterised variously as: maladjustment, an arrest in normal psychosexual development, an improper understanding of sexual roles, impoverished gender identity, neuroses derived from a poor mother or father and child relationship, environmental deprivation, an adolescent phase and so on. (The psychological and sociological jargon is as endless as it can be confusing.)

I will not concern myself with an exhaustive analysis of all the factors functioning in innocent collusion to produce the heterosexual human. I will be concentrating on a small aspect of the curriculum which has recently been shuffled into schools — the Personal Development course, and that section of the course pertinent to the homosexual human.

The Interim Report on Sex Education was followed by a statement of principles in April, 1974. The importance of the Report and the resultant activities in schools should not be underestimated. The school now has the sanction of the Department to promulgate overtly, principles, attitudes and values with regard to personal and/or sexual conduct and behaviour. Although the Department's Statement of Principles avoids any rigid prescription, there is some implication of priority concerns:

... The prime task of educators is to emphasize ways of coping with new situations rather than qualities better suited for fitting into a stable society. Young people need a personal philosophy of life arising from an understanding of their own lives and society. They have a special need for ethical principles and civilized values which go beyond mere rules. (p.8.)

There is no elaboration on the point of ethical principles and civilized values that the Committee espouses. But, from an examination of perceived aims and objectives of the Personal Development course, it can be concluded that it views the nuclear family as the primary social unit. One of its aims states: "to develop in the student an appreciation of the importance of the family", and further, under the heading — Family Life — it is stated:

... No sex education course could be complete unless it included education for family life, parenthood and knowledge of the roles of each member of the family. (p.12.)

While I do not unequivocally support the inclusion of and subsequent emphasis on family life, I cannot accept at all, the gross negligence by omission of sub-cultures which manifest a different norm. There are other social units in our society and they ought to be allotted an emphasis commensurate with their present and future importance. For example, with a discussion of social units, the following should emerge as alternative ways of organising one's life:

1. Family life – the extended family, the nuclear family.
2. Communal life – mixed communes, single-sex communes, homosexual communes.
3. Homosexual life – the couple, the commune.
4. Single life.

Since I recognise that any Personal Development course must reflect, to some extent, the prevailing social situation, and hence, the needs of pupils, I do not think that discussion of family life is irrelevant or unnecessary, just excessive. Pupil needs are manufactured by social expectations and not, determined after lengthy hours of consultation. Pupils do not speak of their homosexual fears because they already have an in-built, incidentally reinforced warning system, which represses not only feelings, but any discussion of these feelings.

In the Statement of Principles, the teacher is urged:

- ... to have an understanding and tolerance of individual differences, a sympathetic and patient approach to pupils with sexual worries or deviant attitudes. Such an approach which avoids judgment need not be mistaken for approval or excessive permissiveness. It will be necessary to recognise the difference between isolated or experimental activity and unhealthy behaviour patterns. (p.15.)

The inference being that what the teacher ought to do is understand the odd incident, but frown upon any repetition; and that experimental activity can be ignored, but unhealthy behaviour patterns ought to be dealt with by reprimand.

In the outlined programme which follows the above statement of advice, there are five categories: biological aspect, personal development, family life, social aspects and health. Homosexuality appears under personal development together with such issues as: the problems of adolescence and puberty, promiscuity and masturbation. A categorisation replete with connotations, at best, tolerating, at worst, condemnatory – proscription by association. We avoid the issue of homosexuality by designating it, with monotonous, myopic regularity, the status of an adolescent problem or an adult maladjustment. And this is not to say that homosexuals do not have problems or that adolescent problems are not worth discussing.

The multipotentiality of most people with respect to sexual behaviour, provided they will not be subjected to differential treatment or cultural disparagement, seems a matter of fact. I believe people's capacity to love individuals of either sex is intrinsic. (See *Dissent*: Special Issue. Women in Australia. "The Biology of Sex and Sexuality", Janey Stone. p.32. No. 28. Winter, 1972.) How this love is expressed should be a matter of personal choice and not one of public or legal debate. The oft-articulated fear, that with the acceptance of homosexuality comes the fall of empires, is not only naive, but a very simplistic perception and analysis of historical events. For similar reasons, homosexuality cannot be equated with hedonism, anymore than hedonism can be equated with bringing up baby. While there may be some hedonistic homosexuals, all homosexuals are not decadent grape chewers, nor indeed are they those other stereotypes – Sapphic syrens, man-hating or woman-hating fanatics, or Freud's penis envy brigades. It is ignorance, misinformation and fear which leads people to such peculiar conclusions.

The present suggested course in the schools offers little comfort to pupils. They must remain reliant on the predispositions and prejudices of teachers in conveying information, to evaluate their own, often very confused emotions. I stress,

however, that attitudes probably vary across the spectrum and many teachers would not only be supportive, but possibly even encouraging in their advice to and guidance of pupils.

A fact which must continue to disturb, however, is that in reality in the classroom, homosexuality is treated with cautious objectivity or with severe warnings about social consequences. The persistence of such sexual behaviour in any pupils would be seen as unhealthy, and ultimately non-conformist and deserving of derision and not sympathy. Furthermore, very little or nothing at all, is said about the varieties and/or methods of expressing homosexual love. In this respect, there is a notable omission in the area of female homosexuality. There may be several reasons for this. One of them is undoubtedly ignorance. Another may be the distorted view of female sexuality which sees her as the passive receptacle for the man, unable to initiate or experience the heights of sexual enjoyment. In addition, as Altman puts it:

That lesbianism is stigmatized less than male homosexuality is one of the clichés about homosexuality, and to the extent that it is true, it reflects the inferior position of women in our society . . . Nor, despite apocryphal stories about Queen Victoria's disbelief in lesbianism exempting it from legal sanctions, is this lesser condemnation restricted to modern times. Derrick Bailey, in his book *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, points out that this difference was equally true of early and medieval christianity, and argues that it is due to the inferior position of women. . . Gay women are, after all, doubly oppressed, and suffer particularly from the social norms that expect women to repress not only their homosexual but even, to a considerable extent, their heterosexual urges. In some ways the equivalent of the compulsively promiscuous male who never dares know his partners may well be the woman who cannot admit the sexual component of her love for another woman; both are victims of the sexual expectations of a society that perceives masculinity as making it with a woman, femininity as preserving one's purity. (p.84.)

Any course, therefore, which purports to discuss the intricacies of heterosexual love-making must also include discussion of the homosexual counterpart. Myth-making of the kind which characterises homosexuals as failed or pretending women or men should be repudiated. Attitudinal changes will only come when there is authentic objectivity in the treatment of homosexual behaviour, and not the present bogus impartiality and dispassion which is nothing more than a kind of patronising tolerance.

In conclusion, instead of prescribing roles based on assumed and questionable differences and alleged biological restrictions, we should work towards establishing a society where all individuals have the opportunity or choice to develop their own potential and thus, to determine their own sexual behaviour. There ought to be a balanced awareness of all forms of sexual behaviour and their attendant problems; that indeed, as our Sex Education Committee might have wished to say, the individual may make an informed decision about her or his own life.

I am indebted to the following sources for stimulus:

Dissent: Special Issue. Women in Australia. No. 28. Winter, 1972.

Psychoanalysis and Women. Ed. Jean Baker Miller, M.D. Baltimore, 1973.

Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation. Dennis Altman. Melbourne, 1973.

Refractory Girl. Summer, 1974.

Our Bodies Ourselves. Boston Women's Health Book Collective, New York, 1971.

Various numbers of:

Women: A Journal of Liberation.

The Second Wave.

Off Our Backs. ●

Summary of Question Time: Session 2

Through questions and discussion arising from Jozefa Sobski's paper, the point arose that there was little opportunity for homosexuals to discuss homosexuality in the schools. Homosexuals were quite willing to be called on to talk in schools and had in the past advised department and independent schools of this fact. Schools should be making more use of the offers to talk, since homosexuality is included as a topic in the sex education course.

In Victoria Gay Liberation had been called upon by a few schools to discuss homosexuality but this was stopped when the mass media decided to sensationalise it.

A member of the audience suggested that the teaching of sexuality should not have been included as a course of study in the curriculum as "we all know what happens when there is a syllabus set down for a subject."

Since homosexuality is mentioned as a topic of study in the Personal Development Curriculum, as distinct from heterosexuality, it was felt that this would lead to repressive attitudes. It was decided that homosexuality should not be treated as a special unit. The curriculum should have as its basis sexuality. This would then eradicate the assumption that all people are heterosexual which the curriculum assumes by talking about families.

Jozefa Sobski suggested that there was a need to set up kits on feminism and sexuality. She also suggested that these topics be covered in the social science course to give a broader spectrum.

Penny Short reiterated the idea that society makes the assumption that everyone is heterosexual. She stated that when she was asked to complete a personality questionnaire, "normality" was defined in terms of heterosexuality.

Advice from the Teachers' Federation stated that there need only be one complaint about a teacher; for that teacher to be reported to the director-general of Education and then there are various ways of this being dealt with. One of the regulations gives the right to the director-general to call anyone for a medical examination. There is no appeal for a second opinion, allowed. The only appeal rests in going back to the same doctor for another examination. ●

Through questions and discussion arising from Louis Sobel's paper, the point arose that there was little opportunity for homosexuals to discuss homosexuality in the school. Homosexuals were finding it difficult to talk in the school. There had been in the past a divided department and independent schools. This fact, schools should be making more use of the offers to talk, since homosexuality is included as a topic in the sex education course.

In Victoria City, Victoria had been called upon by a few schools to discuss homosexuality but this was dropped when the state decided to set up a committee. It was suggested that the teaching of sexuality should not be a separate subject. A department of biology was to be set up. A member of the audience suggested that the teaching of sexuality should not be a separate subject as it was a part of the curriculum as we all know what happens when there is a syllabus set down for a subject.

That homosexuality is mentioned as a topic of study in the Personal Development Unit, that is, apart from heterosexuality, it was felt that this would lead to repressive attitudes. It was decided that homosexuality should not be treated as a special unit. The curriculum should have as its basis sexuality. This would mean, perhaps, the recognition that all people are heterosexual which the curriculum assumes by talking about family structure, etc. An education officer suggested that there was a need to set up a unit on feminism and sexuality. She also suggested that these topics be covered in the social science course to give a broader spectrum of subjects. It was felt that the social science course would be a better one to cover these topics.

Nancy Short reiterated the idea that society makes the distinction that everyone is heterosexual. She stated that when she was asked to complete a personality questionnaire, "normality" was defined in terms of heterosexuality. She also suggested that these topics be covered in the social science course to give a broader spectrum of subjects. It was felt that the social science course would be a better one to cover these topics.

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OPEN FORUM

MYTHS OF LESBIANISM

There was a session set aside on Saturday afternoon to explode the myths that are circulated about lesbians.

The following myths were mentioned as typical of those mentioned in a society fearful or ignorant of homosexuality.

- 1) All lesbians are man haters
- 2) Women who dislike men must be lesbian
- 3) Homosexual teachers are child molesters
- 4) Homosexual teachers convert their students to homosexuality
- 5) All lesbians are unattractive
- 6) All lesbians use dildos
- 7) All lesbians ape male behaviour
- 8) A lesbian is an unfit mother.

Myths (1) and (2) go together and seem to be a typical reaction of a male who has been conditioned into the aggressive Australian "ocker" image. He is unable to accept that some females are not interested in him.

These views are also endorsed by some women who have been conditioned well into their "feminine role".

Myths (3) and (4) were exemplified in the treatment of Penny Short when she lost her Teachers College Scholarship. Society when told someone is homosexual, immediately think of the sexual aspect. They do not think of homosexuality as a relationship between two people of the same sex, based on respect affection and love.

Myth (5) has arisen for similar reasons to myths (1) and (2). Lesbians are said to be unattractive so that the male can retain his ego. This is one method for the male to reject the lesbian before the lesbian rejects them.

Myth (6) that lesbians use dildos is based on a "supposed need" for the penis in sexual activity.

Myth (7) comes from the sex role stereotyping that exists in this society. Lesbians who are independent and self sufficient are seen as having traditionally "masculine" traits. There is not distinction between sex and gender in Australian society.

Myth (8) comes from the overprotective attitude that society has for children. Children must not see death, must not see unhappiness, must not see anything different from a heterosexual nuclear family. The child is thought to be deprived if she/he lives in a family with only one parent or parents of the same sex. There has never been a test case in the courts to show that a lesbian is an unfit mother, yet mothers are losing custody of their children because they do not fit into the prescribed heterosexual "norm".

Lesbians are people with feelings just like any heterosexual. They live similar sorts of lives, they have various jobs from university lecturers to working in shops, they amuse themselves by going to the opera films or pubs. There is just as wide a range of individuals that are homosexual as there are heterosexual. The only difference is that homosexuals relate to someone of the same sex and for that, they are oppressed and discriminated against. ●

SESSION THREE

Conform or else

Pam Waugh
Sylvia Martin

PAM WAUGH

Introduction

This is not going to be a very coherent talk because I have reformed my thoughts about a thousand times and have begun to feel rather like Theseus following the thread through the labyrinth.

I don't agree with some of the things people have been saying about us being trained to be heterosexual. I disagree, I think that we are being trained to be asexual, that we are desexualized and alienated from everyone but ourselves. I would rather speak on homosexuality than on homosexuals or heterosexuals.

Some of our anxieties about our homosexuality are based on actual facts and laws. They are not myths. The Teaching Services Act is one such fact. School Counsellors, like myself, are pretty frightened about what our role is with respect to the Act, and how it relates to what we are doing. The Teachers are frightened about what they are teaching and how much they can get away with. We are all frightened of the same thing – that part of ourselves may show and that we might cop a lot of shit.

Problems faced by School Counsellors

As counsellors we have a seeming confidentiality – I say seeming because we find that we can't actually protect anyone, because if a counsellor receives information about anything contrary to present laws, the counsellor can be subpoenaed to give evidence, they have no legal sanction to keep any information confidential. As most of us counsellors are low profile people this kind of thing is frightening to us. First we went to school, then left school and now we are back at school, so we are really just well trained children.

Counsellors are at present looking for something better from the Department because of the children's vulnerability. But we are not getting any support. It is very hard to even get the rules spelt out clearly, so that at the moment there is a movement within the Teacher's Federation to try and get these matters clarified.

That's the legal part, now let's consider the rest. It's very hard as a counsellor to know when you are actually treading on dangerous ground. As a result of being asked to give this talk I have come across all sorts of funny cases. The other day a Senior Public Servant told me there would be spies here today. I thought "Oh yeah!!!" but when I asked the Federation, they thought that there would be too. So if all spies will put their hands up I'll see you later.

The Teaching Services Act

The Act is a legal document and we have no excuse for not knowing it as we have all been issued with copies. I am only just beginning to understand it and

I am beginning to realize how necessary it is for us all to be familiar with it. The Act covers many vague things so, that under the Act, anyone who becomes a problem can be picked off. Regulation 6 states that: "Every officer and employee shall obey promptly all directions given to *him* (I think that this applies to us too though) under whose control or supervision *he* is placed." You can make a complaint about this, in writing, but you must none-the-less obey promptly any instruction. Now we school counsellors can be instructed, by principals, to report every interview we have with a student, and if we don't, we are in breach of the regulation. So that we continually have to be very careful, particularly if our principal is a difficult one who feels that he is entitled to know everything that goes on there (in the school). This is related to their problem, because if anything happens in the school they are vulnerable. So we are beginning to see the whole heirarchy of authority, which is dog eat dog, and responsibility is delegated to the top one man. And that man is appointed as a Minister in the State Government – a political person. So in the Act at the moment, we are all subject to the Liberal Party.

Breach of the Act

In Regulation 23 we see what can happen to anyone who breaches a regulation: "Such person may conduct any such enquiry without regard to legal forms and shall direct himself by the best evidence as the law would require or admit in other cases or not." This means that hearsay evidence is permissible and perjury can take place. The outcome of whether you are guilty or not is decided by the Director General or his appointee/s, this can be just one person. So someone can make an allegation against a Teacher and if it suits the system to have that teacher suspended, dismissed or disciplined then the outcome can be decided by one man on the basis of hearsay evidence. Punishments can range from fines, to demotions or transfers. In the case of a married teacher with children, a transfer to Bourke is a roundabout form of dismissal.

The only case in which you have right of appeal is in the case of dismissal. You can be dismissed summarily before the hearing as Tom Murphy was. This results in loss of pay up to the time of the hearing which can be up to a year after the dismissal. If one is a member of the union you might be able to get some form of legal aid – it depends on the Executive of the Federations decision. Some of us talking this morning doubt whether homosexual matters would get the support of the Federation. The Tom Murphy case cost \$10,000 in legal fees alone, and I'm told the Federation defends a hundred such cases a year, while there are thousands of punishments of one kind or another each year.

It only takes one case like Penny's or Tom Murphy's to frighten all of us. Of course many regulations are breached all the time and not all of them are dealt with in this dramatic way. A lot of humane things are done at a lower level by school principals and other people in authority who will also protect people at times. But of course each time they do they are acting in breach of the regulations themselves and making themselves vulnerable too.

Alienation in the System

I think that everything centres on alienation. We are all alienated from one another in this hierarchical system. Loyalties are very much threatened. The system splits all of us from ourselves, as well as splitting males from females. Schools do all this very effectively. Boys are split off from girls the moment

they set foot in the school. They are shown different playgrounds, different lines, different areas of all kinds, different toilets, different rolls, clothes and books. They are also given different activities and so the alienation begins.

The other day the chap up the road and myself went to school to complain because his daughter and my son have grown up together, bathed together, slept together, gone on holidays together, like brother and sister, and now at school they have learnt that they can't talk to one another because if they do the kids call them lovers and embarrass them. So they have to wait until after school to pursue their friendship. How long the friendship can last under those conditions I don't know. We tried to talk to the principal and I gave him something my husband had written about colour segregation in the south of the U.S.A., he read it and I think that he started to get the message, but whether we succeeded tis hard to tell at this stage.

Some people may have seen the photograph of my kids on the cover of this month's "Education". The trick is to work out which is the boy and which is the girl. You can't if you don't know the kids. The children were excited about having their photo on the front page, but when Hilary went to school and the kids at school said, "You've got your top off, we can see your boobs" (non-existent, she is quite undeveloped) in the classroom, it was not stopped by the teacher. In Guy's class the kids said "Now we know you're lovers", he was embarrassed and didn't want to go to school the next day.

This is the kind of alienation we are trying to break down. We are not just paranoid about homosexuality, not just paranoid about our difficulty in loving other people and ourselves and not just paranoid about our sexuality. We have every reason to fear when we think about the Teaching Services Act, the Crimes Act, and the Summary Offences Act. In this intimidating totalitarian system I think that it is important to know what we are struggling against. To be forearmed with advice against the kinds of things that can happen.

The Federation says never answer any questions about a breach by yourself. Always get a Federation representative there before you answer any questions or charges. Join the Federation so that you are not paying own legal fees.

Underneath the surface most of us counsellors and teachers are human. The inhuman practices come from the things super-imposed on us. I think that if all these Regulations were removed tomorrow, people would change and it would be easier to come out and be ourselves. We can't afford to ignore some of the methods used to control us.

Love is a dirty word. You cannot be seen to be loving. Touching is a political thing — you can touch people who aren't political, like children. Or you can touch your inferiors, men can touch women. But equals cannot, for a man to touch a man or a woman another woman is something else again.

Oppression

One of the things we have been talking about is our freedom to be human, which is denied to us. Some of the oppressive attitudes coming from people who are anti-homosexual are also, amongst other things, anti-feminist. People that I've talked to, who think that homosexuals are failed men and women also hate feminism because they want the rigidity of the sex role maintained.

They go on to say that homosexuality is selfish — that it is people seeking out their own pleasures when what they should be doing is becoming males and females.

Some homosexuals are oppressive in the same way. As I have been oppressed as a woman by homosexual men, I have some doubts about the necessity for having a homosexual counsellor for homosexual students. I think that we have to be a bit wary of being too rigid in that sense.

Sexual Politics and Human Liberation

I am starting to see that the Women's Movement has a degree of sexism. I know it has been said before but I am just beginning to be conscious of it. If there are men around who are trying to be more human and they find themselves rejected just because they have a prick, then that is a sexist attitude. I don't think that we can stop our development at this point, I think we have to go beyond and see it as human liberation. I know that seems like a cliché, but how does the male who is trying to pass muster with the Women's Movement, who turns away from other males for the same reason we do, where is his place? We have to start thinking again in broader terms.

In Education I am beginning to see what happens to girls at school. Some pretty horrible things happen to boys too. We have to think in new terms in Education, but we don't want girls to get the same Education that boys have always had because of what it has done to them.

We have unequal power — men have power, women haven't. Men use that power over women at the expense of women. But power is not the only thing we want. Men lose their capacity to sense themselves and feel their own feelings and that is a loss of power of a different type. I think we have to see that as a sacrifice by men, to the extent that most men are not even aware of what they have lost. We have to see that both sexes have been destroyed; and we have to try and understand the damage done to men by the system. We are all born O.K. in the beginning, but each of us has been destroyed in one way or another.

When you look at the sexes in the remedial classes for handicapped children, disturbed children, state wards etc., then you can see the casualties in those classes, and they are mostly boys. We, as school counsellors, have tended to think that reading difficulties or disabilities are organically based; but I am beginning to wonder whether this is caused by the impossibility of the masculine role placed on these tiny children. The stress placed on a boy when he sets foot in school and he is shown he cannot go near the girls' toilets because he is male, he has got to learn all those rough games, and learn how to defend himself, all this is traumatic. I am beginning to wonder how much this interferes with his capacity to learn the basic skills that girls are learning. Perhaps at this stage girls are not suffering the same traumas, maybe they come later.

Conclusion

So we need some kind of new concept, perhaps Humanhood, that those who want to can work for on a collective front, so that then we can discover our homosexuality. Our full potential as human beings. ●

THE SPIRITUAL RE-EDUCATION OF WOMEN

SYLVIA MARTIN

“Women and Spiritual Re-education” – To discuss this topic, let me, initially, let you know about a couple of assumptions I work on. The first one is that spirituality is a durable and necessary phenomenon to man.

First let me explain spirituality; spirituality to me is an attempt to understand and feel the universe and one's place in that universe in terms other than the purely physical ones. It is an expression of man's aesthetics opposed to intellectual desire to understand and to integrate and to reach self fulfillment. It can present itself in terms of personification, that is in terms of gods and this is the form that seems to be most popular with Man; or through Art, or through the current popular belief in the collective consciousness.

That it is durable, I think is obvious in the fact that if you read into History ancient and modern, you'll find evidence of gods, goddesses and various things like that and it seems to have been present since the dawn of man's consciousness, since the dawn of man's awareness.

That the presence of gods etc. is necessary, (and I suppose this is the controversial point: for purpose and to give structure in that realm beyond the conscious, beyond reasoning and for complete understanding and experience of the Universe. De-spiritualisation to me means sterilisation and for many I think it leads to an anarchy of the psyche.

My second assumption relates to my own personal view of spirituality. I see the Universe in terms of polarities, one of the main polarities being masculine and feminine. The masculine principle being logos, the reasoning powers, the powers of the conscious. The feminine being eros, the powers of the unconscious, the powers of art, of love, hate, creation and destruction.

Each to me is necessary to the other and each is present in every individual. Recognition of the presence, of the existence of these principles, I think shows throughout the ancient religions. If you read into the ancient religions you'll find this duality coming out. In the Egyptians you've got the myths of Asyris and Isis, the god and the goddess. The goddess by the way was the person who taught how to till, how to create out of the land.

And in pre-Hellenistic Greece you've got the myths of Orpheus and the Underworld, the man who goes into the Underworld after his woman. And you've got the myth of Demeter and Persephone, I don't know how many of you know that, it's a rather beautiful myth.

Persephone was Demeter, the earth goddess' daughter; she was taken to Hades by Pluto and Demeter followed to find her daughter. She mourned and the mourning led to the complete sterilisation of the earth. There was no more creation; there was no more birth; there was no more new life; until Demeter brought Persephone back and this tragedy has to be relived – this is the explanation for the seasons.

Although ultimate power in most of these religions lies in the male god Zeus and the top male followers, I think this can be explained in terms of physical

power, in the fact that in mankind himself man is superior physically to woman; consequently it has been accepted that the god would be superior to the goddess. Originally woman did have the power whilst an agrarian culture existed, but this was gradually taken away from her by the male with the invention of private property. I don't know how many of you have read *The Origins of Family and Private Property* by Engels – it's an extremely interesting book and goes right into this.

Although the male god did have the ultimate power, the goddesses were extremely powerful – this is shown in Demeter, the fact that she could stop all creation. She was an extremely powerful goddess and so was Isis.

The phenomenon of any god who is male and has all the male characteristics is, I think, a fairly new phenomenon. I see one reason is that man has attempted to suppress anything that might be a danger to this control – so he suppresses the unconscious; he suppresses all of those things which are related to the feminine principle. Today, in our present Western Society, we have a complete masculinisation of spirituality.

Our basic religion, which provides the values for our society, is a Judeo-Christian one. The Old Testament, the Jewish part, rests on a belief in one all powerful god who is male in gender and who has all the masculine characteristics, for example, unrelenting, punitive justice, a reasoning and unbending god, a god who is jealous of his position and territory and who has rather imperialistic tendencies, one who is only forgiving after a great deal of crawling and after a great deal of reassurance that he is right.

Now let's have a look at Christianity. What happened in Christianity? We have a slight variation, we have a triumvirate; we have the Son (male), we have the Big Daddy (male), we have the Holy Spirit (male), who is the impregnator of the Virgin. With the introduction of Jesus, although he was a boy-child, there was some promise of feminisation of the religion, because Jesus is shown to be compassionate, loving, all of the things that are associated with that other polarity. Also we have the presence of Mary the female in that religion. *But* Jesus is still the boy child – he is far more powerful than his mother, even as a baby. And also we had an abortion of the promise of feminisation with Paul – Paul's whole interpretation which seems to have become the basis of Christianity is a woman-hating, femine rejecting, type of thing.

In Catholicism we have a sort of deification of Mary but Mary is de-sexualised. She is also a sorrowing person and her identity and her importance come from the Son and not herself, and so once again there has been an absorbed feminisation, or almost feminisation.

So now I come to the formulation of the problem. There has been a split between masculine and feminine, into male and female. Masculine equals male, feminine equals female which I think is inaccurate, but this has been a traditional split. Originally we had the gods and the goddesses, the god being masculine, the goddess being feminine. I mentioned before the desire for control. The desire to control the environment, the desire to control the environment, and the desire to control the self. In order for that to occur the feminine was suppressed. In order for this to be complete, the female, because she had traditionally been the seat of the feminine, had to be suppressed. All of the aspects of the feminine including the feared aspects, that is destruction and hate, the opposites of love and creation were projected onto her, and these aspects have been trivialised and so the femine is completely stripped of power.

The results being that the male has all power centred in himself and the masculine values are seen to be the only worthwhile and true values.

What is the freedom to be human? Well I think it is actually the freedom to be feminine, the freedom to express femininity, compassion, love. I see our problems twofold. Firstly, the suppression of the feminine principle, and secondly, the suppression of the female, having traditionally been the seat of the feminine principle, as well as her once having had power — there is always fear that once again she will regain that power.

So what have we now? We have women bowing to a male god in more ways than one. She bows to him as the great Creator, as the essence of Spirituality. But she also bows to him in terms of her everyday living, in terms of the values that this religion has given. The danger is that even with liberation she will continue to bow to this god in that she has adopted the masculine values as being the only ones that are true and worthwhile. And it's actually very difficult not to bow. Look at the great heroes of this society — who is the hero? It is the psychopath — it is the man who is cruel, reasoning, capable of making a snap decision, who at no stage allows his emotions out.

It is very difficult to go against a whole society and to plead compassion and love, and so once again if the female in her attempts to gain liberation rejects the feminine and only adopts the masculine, then the problem is being skirted. The main problem is the conflict within the individual between masculine and feminine which can only be resolved when both are accepted in the person as equal.

Then basically I see the fight as being on two fronts — the return of rights to woman and the return and acceptance of the feminine principle, i.e. the return return of the goddess or an Androgynous god. ●

Summary of Question Time: Session 3

The comment that arose from Sylvia Martin's paper was that the Unity Church of America does not include sexism in their concept of a god. They see god as being internal to everyone and thus eradicate the idea that god is a person. By not seeing god as a person, they then do not have to see god as a male or female. They see the idea of a male god having arisen because of misconceptions or lack of knowledge.

It was also noted that Paulian Christianity debased homosexuality. A comment from the audience was that "Paul had a lot of misconceptions about a lot of things."

The conclusion that arose from the audience's remarks was that we need to move away from the idea of categorisation along sex lines. Our culture is based on the idea of a male god. This leads to people being defined along male lines. That is "masculine" traits of independence, self assurance, self actualisation are regarded in this society as "good" and "healthy" whereas traditionally "feminine" traits such as submissiveness are not regarded as "healthy". We have to realise that to be "masculine" is equally as human as to be "feminine". The two have to be combined.

There was a general feeling in the audience that true liberation will not come about until women liberate themselves in relation to men and then men liberate themselves in relation to women. It was emphasized that there was a need for more male consciousness raising groups. It was also pointed out that homosexuals were on the way to breaking down some of the barriers that uphold the connection between masculine gender and being male and feminine gender and being a female.

Pam Waugh stated that it was necessary to look for what is worthwhile for women in education. We do not want to obtain for females just what males have. She sees that males are crippled in their development of personality by being channeled into assertive roles. We must look generally at human goals and adjust the education system accordingly.

The idea was expressed that it is very hard for males to become liberated. Females, because they are oppressed have something external to fight, but males, as oppressors have to fight within themselves to become liberated. A male member of the audience who belonged to a consciousness raising group said that they found it extremely difficult, as they are not aware of having emotions, and if they are aware of them, they are not aware of what they are or how to express them.

We are living in a society that rewards masculine values and at the moment we accept these rewards as valid rewards. It is necessary to question these rewards and establish rewards that are not male oriented but people oriented. Women should also think of their own strengths and see that we retain some things of value if they are going to look at society's rewards as valid. ●

SESSION FOUR

Literature and Mass Media

Dilys Kevan

Tess Lee Ack

DILYS KEVAN

Despite having an honours degree in English, I am not a believer in literature as something above and beyond ordinary everyday life. Rather, I am a believer in a concept of literature that has a much wider base. I am interested in those "art-forms" which the general public has access to. In so far as they fall into the general category of literature, the thing they all have in common is their use of language — e.g. films and shows on television, plays and programmes on the radio that fall into a home entertainment grouping; films and plays that you have to pay to go and see; popular music; novels etc. Novels can well include pulp fiction, cheap "romances" and pornography (though I don't deal with these, the books I have chosen are available in most newsagents). These are the art-forms that help to feed people's imaginations and provide them with vacarious experiences. I have deliberately excluded poetry from my discussion, for although I feel it can be very important for exploratory definitions of self and even for polemic, I do not think it is very accessible — consequently it is (because of its limited audience) rather elitist.

The question of television programmes is special. A lot of theorising has been done relating to the fact that the outlet for the entertainment (if one can call it that) is right in people's homes. As someone who has led a culturally deprived life in never having lived in a house with a television, I think I am in a minority in having had very little access to that particular 'art-form'. However, I will be able to make some general comments. For instance, it is commonly known that people develop a relationship with serialised programmes so that if, for example, a flat falls vacant in *No. 96* then viewers apply to move in. This process of identification — accepting the reality of a fiction — may (and I can only speculate here) have particular repercussions with regard to sexuality. (I'll be looking at this possibility in more detail later.)

A great deal has been said in these lectures about sex-roles and one of the concepts that is continually reoccurring is that of stereotypes. A simple definition of stereotype in the context I am dealing is a character who is defined by a rigid set of characteristics that mark out his or her membership of a particular group. For instance, it is not so very long ago that negroes were always portrayed as happy, obsequious, simpleminded creatures or vicious sex-crazed individuals. Much of the writing coming out of the Women's Liberation movement has

concerned itself with the stereotyping of women in the mass media (which is only another term for my broad definition of literature.) The real problem with stereotypes is that they tend to reflect the so-called reality that they help to create and maintain. Because they become part of our view of the world they are very hard to question. As children grow up they look around to see what sorts of adults are being offered for their emulation. This does not mean they will necessarily follow them, but they are there as possibilities. Children's most direct access to role models is of course only to those people in their immediate circle. However, a much wider range is continuously offered to them through the media. The nature and range of the role models available to children (and possible adults, too) will undoubtedly affect their decisions. If certain life-styles appear as the only possible ones, surely this is the ultimate in stereotyping.

Although we may question the values underlying the roles offered to heterosexual men and women (and I do strongly) there is at least a form of security in their existence. Personality and behavioural models abound (albeit sex-stereotyped) not only around us, but also in these reflectors and creators of reality – literature and the media. But for the homosexual there is very little, males are a little luckier than females but both are very limited. Positive self-concepts are hard to develop if the media portray certain groups in a stereotypical fashion. Women are very much the victims of this (but of course men suffer, too). I wonder if homosexuals will suffer more with advent of *No. 96* and *The Box*. Under the guise of liberal tolerance gay *men* are being given prime viewing time. As usual there is a general tendency to ignore lesbians. Their special case seems to arise because of the general societal denial of women's sexuality. (Just compare the references to and glorification of male masturbatory fantasies with those of women – they are just not allowed to have sexual experience without men.)

One very important question that arises is – why *do* the media tend towards stereotyping people and relationships? It is crucial that stereotyping is not seen as a vicious plot. The images we have of men and women, gays and straights, are formed by history and ideologies *not* by the media. *They* operate more to preserve the status quo because too rapid change is seen as being dangerous. Therefore stereotypes act as retarding agents. It seems too, that society has a vested interest in maintaining seemingly monogamous heterosexual child-bearing relationships. Hence the desirability of portraying homosexuals and homosexual relationships in as unattractive a manner as possible – nowadays without being *too* offensive. As Shirly Castley and Kay Daniels say:

Homosexuals are discriminated against because their behaviour offends the conventional notions of gender appropriate behaviour in the same way that working mothers (or spinsters, unmarried mothers, sexually liberated women, transvestites, prostitutes etc) are discriminated against because they offend the conventional notion of gender appropriate behaviour. Homosexuals are often socially victimised, not only because of their sexual preference but also because their personality traits and lifestyles are thought to be inappropriate to their gender identity. (1)

I would actually like to draw a distinction between sex and gender i.e. between male and female, and, masculine and feminine. Most of us are born either male or female and in the course of our lives learn to associate an arbitrary set of characteristics with either one sex or the other. One of the most discriminated against set of people in our society are those who are male and have feminine characteristics or those who are female and have masculine characteristics. There are a whole range of values attached to the particular forms of gender behaviour.

The values are separated for males and females and what is seen as good for one sex is bad for the other. This value system is revealed in all its bias in people's attitudes towards homosexuality. What may seem "normal" in heterosexual relationships, to the non-homosexual appears at the best ludicrous, and at the worst sick, in homosexual relationships. A whole tradition of humour (usually pretty offensive) has been built on this reaction of people to effeminate men and masculine women. Numerous plays and films (not to mention novels) have relied on stock homosexual characters for laughs. Laughter is a very convenient way of showing the differences between acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour. Its not only found in fiction, but also in comedy shows like Dick Emory, The Two Ronnies, Benny Hill, Laugh-in and so on. That a lot of gays go along with this humour serves to demonstrate how well they have internalised the values of which society approves. There is also another factor revealed. In the reactions of gay and straight people to others who practise cross-gender identification can be seen people's attitudes to concepts of masculinity and femininity. Cross-gender identification occurs when a person no longer behaves according to the arbitrary rule that masculine and feminine behaviour belongs to males and females respectively. This is of course not necessarily related to homosexuality but because the stereotypes assume femininity for men and masculinity for women (a connection that is just as arbitrary as the male/masculinity and female/femininity link-up) it is necessary to discuss it. Another concept which comes up all the time is role-playing – the Foreword to *Masculine/Feminine* has this to say:

He is playing masculine. She is playing feminine.

He is playing masculine *because* she is playing feminine. She is playing feminine *because* he is playing masculine.

He is playing the kind of man that she thinks the kind of woman she is playing ought to admire. She is playing the kind of woman that he thinks the kind of man he is playing ought to desire.

If he were not playing masculine, he might well be more feminine than she is – except when she is playing very feminine. If she were not playing feminine, she might well be more masculine than he is – except when he is playing very masculine.

So he plays harder. And she plays . . . softer.

He wants to make sure she could never be more masculine than he is. She wants to make sure that he could never be more feminine than she. He therefore seeks to destroy the femininity in himself. She therefore seeks to destroy the masculinity in herself.

She is supposed to admire him for the masculinity in him that she fears in herself.

He is supposed to desire her for the femininity in her that he despises in himself.

He desires her for her femininity which is *his* femininity, but which he can never lay claim to. She admires him for his masculinity which is *her* masculinity, but which she can never lay claim to. Since he may only love his own femininity in her, he envies her her femininity.

Since she may only love her own masculinity in him, she envies him his masculinity.

The envy poisons their love.

He, coveting her unattainable femininity, decides to punish her. She, coveting his unattainable masculinity, decides to punish him. He denigrates her femininity – which he is supposed to desire and which

he really envies — and becomes more aggressively masculine. She feigns disgust at his masculinity — which she is supposed to admire and which she really envies — and becomes more fastidiously feminine. He is becoming less and less what he wants to be. She is becoming less and less what she wants to be. But now he is more manly than ever, and she is more womanly than ever.

Her femininity, growing more dependently supine, becomes contemptible. His masculinity, growing more oppressively domineering, becomes intolerable. At last she loathes what she has helped his masculinity to become. At last he loathes what he has helped her femininity to become.

So far, it has all been very symmetrical. But we have left one thing out. The world belongs to what his masculinity has become.

The reward for what his masculinity has become is power. The reward for what her femininity has become is only the security which his power can bestow on her. If he were to yield to what her femininity has become, he would be yielding to contemptible incompetence. If she were to acquire what his masculinity has become, she would participate in intolerable coerciveness.

She is stifling under the triviality of her femininity. The world is groaning under the terrors of his masculinity.

He is playing masculine. She is playing feminine.

How do we call off the game? (2)

Before I go on to discuss some specific details of various works, there are a couple of points that I have to make clear about my particular approach.

What I want to do is demonstrate an approach to literature (or the media if that term is preferred) that constitutes examining the sexual power relationships in the work as well as the portrayal of character. Behaviour stereotypes become important because they are usually sex-linked. People are intrigued by this business of which one of the sexual partnership does what. Mary McCarthy has captured this querying tone towards the end of her novel *The Group* (also made into a film). One of the women of the group, Lakey, has reappeared on the scene from Europe with her lover — a German baroness. The others generally accept them as a couple but many doubts still remain:

On the one hand; there were Lakey-and-Maria, as you might say Polly-and-Jim, a contented married pair; on the other, there was an exquisite captive of a fierce robber woman, locked up in a Castle Perilous, and woe to the knight who came to release her from the enchantment. But it was possible to see it the other way around.

Supposing it were Lakey, the inscrutable, intelligent Lakey who had made poor Maria, who was not very bright, her prisoner and slave?

The fact that it was possible to reverse the relation like an hour-glass was what the girls found so troubling. In the same way, it troubled them which of the pair was the man and which the woman. Obviously Maria, in her pyjamas and bathrobe, was the man, and Lakey, in her silk-and-lace peignoirs and batiste-and-lace nightgowns, with her hair down her back, was the woman, and yet these could be disguises — masquerade costumes. It bothered Polly and Helena to think that what was presented to their eyes was mere appearance, and behind that, underneath it, was *something of which they would not approve.* (3)

In this context what people *do* in bed does become important because it is part of the way they act towards each other. Hence; initiative, mastery, activity, passivity etc. become incredibly important. Another aspect which is worth looking at is the way gay men and women in the works I am examining see their place in society, and how society is shown as viewing them.

Much of what I am going to say may make me sound like an apologist for happy endings. I see no intrinsic value in the happy conclusion, especially given that most works (except serials possibly) have to end at some arbitrary point. A great many heterosexual love affairs end miserably but a lot end happily, too (and I don't necessarily mean marriage either). Why should homosexuals be denied resolutions to problems that involve a continuation of life and growth (maybe that excludes marriage?) rather than death or repentant separation? A couple of the novels I have chosen actually portray the homosexual relationships as having more potential than most of the heterosexual ones. (*Another Country*, James Baldwin and *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, Iris Murdoch) If this choice betrays what may be called a homosexual bias I feel this is a small counteraction to the heterosexual hegemony around us.

A little earlier I mentioned the special relationships that seem to build up between the serial and the viewers of that serial, and I speculated as to whether this would have any particular effect with regard to sexuality. I don't mean to imply that watching *No. 96* or *The Box* will induce people to become homosexuals, but maybe it arouses awareness. For lots of people, seeing the gay men of these serials would be the first time they *knowingly* had homosexuals in their loungerooms – not just once, but possibly *once* a week! Because of this Don, Dudley and Lee become objects of curiosity to viewers who want to know what homosexuals are like and what they do. We, too, should be concerned with the image of the homosexual presented. This should not be an idle exercise in categorising all the characters (homosexual and non-homosexual) into goodies and baddies – that *would* be fruitless. Some of the things that could be important are: to what extent do they conform to the stereotype of the homosexual? what sort of relationships do they have with other men *and* women? how do they view their own sexuality? how do the other characters view them? . . . ? and so on.

As well as in serials, comedy revue programmes and the occasional series and maybe the odd play written especially for television homosexuals are shown in re-runs of films that have already been seen on the commercial circuit. It is of interest how they have been presented. I think, too, it is important to realise that some of the viewers are gay themselves – consequently they are being presented with an image that may or may not bear any relationship to the way *they* perceive themselves. Two particular aspects may be highlighted in literature – an obsession with sex on the part of homosexuals and, a radically different way of viewing the world. Iris Murdoch in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* has one of her characters say, "being a homosexual doesn't determine a man's whole character any more than being a heterosexual does." (4) This is a truism that the stereotype of the homosexual (whether male or female) tends to ignore.

As far as films are concerned I cannot refer to all of them. Just to mention those that have at least one homosexual character in them, no matter how fleeting, would become ridiculous – but I do want to try and be reasonably comprehensive. Many of the ones I have chosen have been shown in Melbourne some time this year (up to about July 1974). One such film is Truffaut's *Day for Night*. In this film we only have a passing reference to homosexuality. Yves Montand (who plays the lead in the film being filmed) spends a great deal of time waiting at the airport for someone. Everyone (including most of the audience) assumes that he

is waiting for a woman. It is to the film's credit that the actual arrival of a man is underplayed. Only one character comments on it – something along these lines – “We all thought he was waiting for a Lolita and it turns out to be a Lothario.” And that's about it. Montand is shown going about his everyday business – and not shown as someone obsessed with his sexuality for the sake of sensationalism. Although equally unsensational, far more attention is devoted to sexuality in *Sunday, Bloody Sunday*. This film has been around for a few years now, and has possibly dated. But, when it first came out it impressed quite a few people with its frank and open approach. Essentially a very middle-class film, the three main characters are very nice. One of the most striking aspects is that the middle-class Jewish homosexual doctor (played by Peter Finch) does not need to face much pressure from society. He and his young bisexual lover can create their own little haven apart from the world. Despite this unrealistic attitude (though many people do try to live this way) *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* does have the merit of portraying the sexual relationship of the two men sensitively and honestly. Another important point is that they don't seem to be too heavily into role-playing – maybe this is the new trendy stereotype that we also find on television – respectable homosexuals who keep to themselves.

Bisexuality is commonly featured in films. There are the undercurrents in *Cabaret* which culminate in Michael Yorke's retort to Liza Minelli's cry of “Screw Maximilian!” He calmly says “I do”. Michael Yorke in *Something for Everyone* plays a social climber who sleeps with everyone including his mistress's (in both senses of the word) son. When asked by the boy if he is one of those people who *can* sleep with anyone – he replies “If I have to. But (and here he cuddles the boy) I *do* have my preferences.” This brilliant black comedy is slightly marred by the absurd stereotype of a very butch lesbian who strides around the castle with a riding crop and giving massages to the lady of the castle. The long awaited Mick Jagger film *Performance* probably comes very close at times to free exploratory sexuality. The affair of the two girls in Turner's house seems to be offered without comment, except as perhaps a sort of contrast to the violent homosexual gangsters at the beginning. From about half way through the film we are titillated by the ambiguous sexuality of Turner as he wanders around the house. Inside this house it seems that a lot of the societal pressures don't intrude and we can see some of the possibilities of androgynous people and their relationships. There have been a number of films around portraying lesbians – mostly pretty bad. *The Fox* (where a man “rescues” one of the women), *Theresa and Isabelle*, *Secret Ceremony*, *Bazza* (where a woman gets ‘converted’) – this is quite a common theme in works dealing with female homosexuals. The lesbian novel, Radclyffe Hall's *Wells of Loneliness* is possibly the classic example of this. Other films are *The Killing of Sister George*, Chabrol's *Les Biches* (The Does) and possibly one of the worst films it has been my misfortune to see – *Threesome*. Like a lot of near pornography one soon gains the impression that it's aimed at a male audience – using lesbians because that way you can show much more naked female flesh. As a corny romance maybe the film just makes it as the two women gaze into the sunset, while the pregnant one (from a heterosexual affair of course) swears to come back after the baby is born. Perhaps its only redeeming feature is that there doesn't seem to be any hint of masculine/feminine role playing. But it wasn't worth paying for that.

One film which is worth mentioning if only to can it, is *Deliverance*. Although perhaps no-one would really associate this film with homosexuality, the brutal rape scene is important because for quite a few people this would be their first contact with an actual sexual act between people of the same sex. Happier at least would be the amorality of the beautiful boys in *Satyricon*.

Several films have had glimpses of homosexuals — usually male of course. Historical films are interesting in this respect because of the distancing effect of the setting in the past. There were undercurrents of the love between Henry and Beckett in *Beckett*. Prince Richard in *The Lion in Winter* was definitely homosexual — and didn't particularly conform to the stereotype as far as appearance went. And, in *Mary Queen of Scots* we were presented with the humiliating of her husband Darnley by various people. *He* conformed to the stereotype at least. *The Music Lovers* became infamous because it let the cat out of the bag about Tschaikovsky.

Two other films that have been on recently are also plays (*Fortune and Men's Eyes* and *The Boys in the Band*) and I will be discussing them later. Several Andy Warhol films have also been around — in fact there were three on almost simultaneously.

One of the problems in talking about all these different forms of literature is that it is very hard to tell who reads or watches them — consequently it would need a complex sociological report to work out what sort of impression they make on people. Everyone has probably had the experience of people in the audience of a play or film nervously giggling (or in my case making vomiting noises during one of the love scenes in *Sunday, Bloody Sunday*). How much harder it would be to discover people's attitudes and reactions to something they're reading.

Did people laugh when you saw the Indian in *Little Big Man* who didn't want to fight, but identified more with women than with men and at one stage proposed to the main character? or were the audience able to show the same sort of acceptance as the other Indians? And what happened when you saw *If*? was everyone embarrassed? In this film a sexual relationship between two boys is presented without comment. Two particular scenes stand out. The first scene shows one boy doing exercises on the parallel bars while a younger one watches him and slowly puts on his jumper. It is an extremely sensuous courtship scene. The other section that stands out is the camera tracking down a long row of single beds in a dormitory and stopping at one with two boys asleep in it. Their love affair is accepted as a normal part of life.

The theme of an adolescent homosexual love affair was seen in a play that the Melbourne Theatre Company put on just recently, *A Hard God* (P. Kenna). One of the boys is eventually struck by the guilt of Roman Catholic morality (he actually confesses) and their brief affair ended. The playwright doesn't appear to condemn the boys and in fact has the other boys say that he can't see that they were doing anything wrong. Because the whole play seems to concentrate on railing against the harsh things that God demands of people the scales tip slightly in favour of the boys' love. The MTC have also had a run of Tennessee William's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* portraying a very guilt ridden homosexual who tries to deny his real feelings. He can't accept that his love for his friend was not asexual and we see him as a tortured alcoholic sometime after his friend's death. The MTC also produced a version of Shakespeare's *Pericles* with a very effeminate pimp in the various brothel scenes, something I felt to be a gratuitous piece of "humour".

Two other plays, that probably had very different audiences, have been on in Melbourne in the last year . . . *Norman, is that you?* and *Fortune and Men's Eyes*. The first was a commercially aimed comedy and the second was the Monash Player's version of Frank Herbert's prison play. The latter was put on mainly at universities and probably had a predominately university audience. The play is a study of sexual politics in a male prison — the sorts of things one has to

do in order to survive. Every man has his place in the hierarchy according to whether he is protected, or a protector or a loner. On this is built a complex set of rules and relationships. The newcomer to the prison has to learn the ropes before he can fit in. The choice is either submission or domination — some try both.

An area of public entertainment that cannot be neglected is rock/pop music. This month (August) saw Melbourne's first Lou Reed concert. "Vicious" and a censored version of "Walk on the wild side" are being played on the radio — but, you won't hear "Make-up" — with its chorus of "we're coming out — out of the closets and into the streets" — you need the record for that. There is a general confusion around about homosexuality and transvestism. So that we get the Beatle's "ob la di, Ob la da", David Bowie's "Rebel, Rebel" and the Kink's "Lola" who "walked like a woman but talked like a man". —

Girls will be boys and boys will be girls
It's a mixed up, muddled up, shook up world
Except my Lola . . .
Well I'm not the world's most masculine man
But I know what I am, and I'm glad I'm a man
And so's Lola . . .

Everything is kept very vague. The obvious songs don't get played. But they are *there*, like Van Morrison's "Madame George" on "*Astral Weeks*" and Elton John's "All the Girls Love Alice" from "*Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*":

Raised to be a lady by the golden rules
Alice was the spawn of a public school
With a double-barrel name in the back of her brain
And a simple case of "mummy doesn't love me" blues
Reality it seems was just a dream
She couldn't get it on with the boys on the scene,
But what do you expect from a chick that's just sixteen?
And hey, hey, hey, you know what I mean
All the young girls love Alice
Tender young Alice they say
Come over and see me
Come over and please me
Alice it's my turn today
All the young girls love Alice
Tender young Alice they say
I'll give you my number
Will you promise to call me
Wait 'til my husband's away
Poor little darling with a chip out of her heart
It's like acting in a movie when you've got the wrong part
Getting your kicks in another girl's bed
And it was only last Tuesday they found, in the subway, dead
And who would you call your friends down in Soho
One or two middle-aged dykes in A Go Go
And what do you expect from a sixteen year old yo-yo
And hey, hey, hey,
O don't you know.

This seems to be one of the rare songs about a lesbian — but it's not exactly sympathetic — its tone is more one of pity.

One song that *did* get a great deal of airplay "My Girl Bill" is actually rather offensive. When it was first played I was rather stunned as I didn't hear the last verse properly:

Bill walked me to my door last night
And he said before I go
There's something about our love affair
That I have a right to know
I said let's not stand outside like this
What will the neighbours think
Why don't we just step inside
And fix ourselves a drink.
(Inane chorus of "My girl Bill")
William's hands were shaking
As he took his glass of wine
And i could see we both felt the same
And when his eyes met mine
I said who we love and why we love
Is hard to understand
So let's just sit here on the couch
And face this man to man
(Inane chorus again — and, then we come to the cop out, if
it's worth calling it that.)
Bill, we just left her place
And you know what she said
She doesn't want to see your face
And she wishes you were dead
Now I know we both love her
And I guess we always will
But now you're gonna have to find another
'cause she's my girl Bill . . . (Chorus)

Aside from the lyrics the actual presentation of a lot of these songs involves hints of bisexuality and open transvestism. Whether this does (as I saw claimed somewhere) help to create acceptance of gay people, or not, I don't know. But behaviour previously labelled as deviant is accepted in the rockworld. Various degrees of drag, varying amounts of make-up and glitter — the whole glam-rock scene (as it is known) — are becoming standard. Mick Jagger, David Bowie, Lou Reed, Alice Cooper, Sweet etc. flaunt an ambiguous sexuality. Once again it tends to be very male, though there is a female rock group in Melbourne called "The Screaming Heap" whose members openly flirt with each other.

Up until now I have been concentrating on mainly popular culture, *now* I want to examine in some detail three plays and four novels all of which central characters who are homosexual (unfortunately only one of each deals with women). I want to forestall criticism at this stage by acknowledging that there are far more works around than this. I have neglected many of the so-called "Great" of literature — people like Genet, Proust, Gide etc. mainly because I want to concentrate on certain specific aspects and approaches and I've selected the works more or less to fit these. I am also aware that there are far more novels concerning lesbians — but most end in either rescue by a man, death or trauma . . . or varying combinations of the three — they rarely end happily. (And, I wanted to show some happy endings).

The three plays I have chosen are — *Slag* by David Hare, *Find Your Way Home*

by John Hopkins and *Boys in the Band* by Mart Crowley.

In *Slag* (5) we have the hilarious, or pathetic, (it depends on the actresses) portrayal of three women running a girls' school that had as a rapidly declining enrolment. The play purports to show how women cope when they are isolated from men — and they do a bad job of it. We are presented with three female stereotypes in complete isolation — we never see parents, pupils, tradesmen etc. Ann is the masculinised career woman, Elise is the one who defines herself by sexual relations with men and Joanne the naive idealist. In scene IV we see Ann and Elise play out a seduction scene where the former is the man and the latter a woman. Sometimes the identification is complete, other times they let their roles slip — for instance when they disgress onto the subject of breasts and Elise says that if Ann is the man, "Then no breasts. Breasts are out. You may comment on mine but you may not refer to your own." (page 52) After Joanne enters and asks if it is a "private game" she is told . . .

ELISE: It is for two players.

ANN: Elise and I.

ELISE: Love is not a game. The love of a man —

ANN: Here played by me —

ELISE: For a woman —

ANN: Elise —

ELISE: Is the yolk of the cosmic egg. The good bit. (page 53)

Then there is a much longer digression where Ann seems to get a little confused and thinks she is the woman, and Elise and Joanne have a bit of a slinging match about Elise's marriage. A final instance occurs when Ann slips again . . .

ANN: If I took you, if I took you inside me —

ELISE: Other way round.

ANN: Sorry, if you took me inside you . . . (page 56)

The rest of the time they play out this strange parody of an affair — which they have, according to Joanne, done time and time again. The result is the traditional "inevitable" — Elise gets pregnant. She regards it as her natural function and Joanne is triumphant — proclaiming Ann the father. Whether or not this is seen as a parody of a heterosexual or a homosexual affair, the implication of pregnancy (albeit hysterical) being inevitable, certainly secures women to their biological functions. As far as stereotyping goes, this play has the lot.

The crucial point in deciding who the masculine or feminine partner is appears to relate to their role in the sexual act. In *Find Your Way Home* (6) Julian Weston is undoubtedly the "passive" partner (he submits to David Powell and Alan Harrison) and his "feminine" role extends into the rest of his life. Julie (note his name) is "the little homemaker" who has been waiting for "Mr Right". He says to Harrison "I want to make a home for you." The identification with a woman is almost complete and it is up to Julie himself to draw the most obvious parallels between Jackie (who is his lover's wife) and himself, when he explains what Alan does to him.

Buggers me? Yes. Unless you would perhaps prefer to use some more refined and technical expression? Sodomy?

(Weston walks towards Jackie and isolates himself from Harrison.)

That's what he does to me. It gives him pleasure and it makes me glad.

I want him — using me. (page 56)

If sex involves Alan using Julie/Jackie for *his* enjoyment where is Julie/Jackie's enjoyment? Is it only to be derived from giving pleasure? There seem to be some rather damning assumptions involved here about "feminine" partners. (One can't

help but wonder if there is something implied by the oft repeated tableau of Julie sitting at Alan's feet.) Jackie Harrison is not only the outraged wife, but she also serves as the vehicle for societal attitudes towards homosexuals. (page 11) In one way her nastiest statement, revealing a great deal about "straight" attitudes to gays, is in answer to this question of Julie's:

WESTON: It would've been alright — yes? — if you'd found him with a girl?

JACKIE: It would've been normal. It's always been a girl before. (page 53)

Even her protestations of filth, retching and general carrying on, do not have the quality of this putdown of the love between Alan and Julie. For Julie is right when he says, "She has to know — you are in love with me — not 'cause I'm a fella — 'cause you're in love." (page 55) It appears that when Alan left Julie, the younger man (in a classic case of "feminine" masochism) blamed and then punished himself in the most degrading possible ways. He sought out real and imaginary painful, nasty and sordid situation. He implies that Harrison should have been around to keep them away. Once more the masculine/feminine rules appear. In this play, the specific relationship that is examined, is at least examined sympathetically — but there still seem to be very strong role-playing elements. There is a masculine and feminine partner even though they are both male — but we *are* presented with the proposition that gender does not have to be related to sex.

In *The Boys in the Band* (7) we are shown a male homosexual community where roles do not appear to be very important, because they do not really enter into the action of the play. Because no *one* relationship (with the exception of Hank and Larry) is highlighted, we do not get the close observation as in *Find Your Way Home*. What we *do* appear to get is the presentation of a life-style. In some ways it is important that this play is seen in its historical context. It is the earliest of these three plays that I am discussing and it comes a while before any movement for Gay Liberation. The homosexual life is being shown as to what it is like to be a homosexual rather than an investigation into gayness or role-playing. It will be a while before these men are able to proudly affirm their sexuality, as is being done by so many people today. There are at least two possible explanations for the reactions of Alan McCarthy (the "straight" man who wanders in to an unknown situation). The first is the one that is usually produced to explain "poofter-bashing" — that is, the attackers are afraid to admit their own feelings towards someone of the same sex. The second reason does not exclude the first — that is, the "masculine" man sees the "feminine" man as a traitor to his maleness. It seems as though someone is abandoning a position of power for one of dependence. This theory gains more credence when we look at the attitudes of the other homosexuals to Emory (the most effeminate of the characters). No-one is openly aggressive on stage, but there are indications that he is not totally accepted among most other homosexuals. This comes out when Michael viciously says "Why should anyone want to go to bed with a flaming sissy like you." (page 79) and ascribes his promiscuity to his mannerisms and lack of looks. The only sexual partnership portrayed is that of Hank and Larry. There is no clue as to which one of them is the feminine one. They both work (one isn't a housewife) and our sole clue to . . . their sexlife is that Larry is the promiscuous one. As both masculinity and femininity can be so this is no hint as to gender identification. What is so interesting about this particular play is the large number of different types of homosexuals portrayed. This precludes all gay men being effeminate. They are also variously concerned and preoccupied with their