

The piece obviously triggered a reaction from somebody—either her advisors or her subjects, or both—because she's de-emphasized the rhetoric significantly. If anything the tone of the book has been weirdly flattened out. Where previously, quotes came in small bytes and without much context, now they spew out largely undigested, and multiple points of view mingle in such a way that one wishes Ross would cut through it all with some of the hard analysis she's known for.

And though Ross reports that most of us were in our late 20s, she cannot possibly appreciate how young we all were at the time. I don't mean that our ideas had that passionate and angry teenage edge, which they did—but that we as women, as beings in the world, were about as developed as our emerging politics—which is to say, not much. Though Ross does ask a few activists what they're up to 20 years later, a more thorough survey would have shown how involvement in LOOT set the stage for a lot of career choices and pursuits. Many of those who staffed the phone lines at LOOT, like Rosemary Barnes, for example, went on to become skilled professional counsellors either in hospitals or women's services. And while Ross laments that only two of the hundreds of women who passed through LOOT's doors were out lesbians, that's changed now, as was readily apparent from the panel at the historical board. I've written a play about lesbian motherhood, Eve Zaremba is the high-profile creator of the dyke detective Helen Keremos and both Amy Gottlieb and I, as lesbian mothers, are organizing to empower lesbian families. We wouldn't have done it without our LOOT background.

But did I mention how first books about neglected subjects can't be all things to all people? *The House That Jill Built* makes a huge contribution, honouring lesbian history and making vivid moments that would otherwise have remained only in our collective memory. So do have a look.

Because, if you were around at the time, you're probably in it.

## LESBIAN CHOICES

Claudia Card. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.

by *Philinda Masters*

*Lesbian Choices* is Claudia Card's philosophical exploration of the meaning of "choice" in lesbian self-determination. However, far from being an exercise in abstraction, Card's work is firmly grounded in the actuality of lesbian lives (her own included). In discussing the meaning of choice for lesbians, she also looks at the implications of various choices and, in the process, explores the meaning of "lesbian," lesbian culture, and lesbian ethics. She draws on, and builds on, the work of other lesbian philosophers (Sarah Hoagland, Marilyn Frye, Janice Raymond, Adrienne Rich) as well as some eminent patriarchs (Aristotle, Hegel, William James, Foucault).

The book is organized into three sections: "Constructing Ourselves," "Lesbians in Relationships: Ups and Downs," and "Coming Out: Issues in a Wider Society." Although only one chapter (in Part One) is entitled "Lesbian Ethics," Claudia Card is concerned throughout with the ethical considerations of, among other things, lesbian separatism, homophobia, horizontal abuse, and the politics of outing.

Card begins her exploration by discussing a course she teaches at the University of Wisconsin on lesbian culture. "Teaching lesbian culture," she says, "means teaching detecting work... teaching how to identify what has been deliberately censored or encoded." She presents several historical models for lesbian identity, or "essence" (Amazons, Sapphists, and passionate friends), which helps students understand the varied meanings of culture and lesbian choice. Drawing on theories of genealogy and "family resemblances," and looking at the essentialist *vs.* social constructionist nature of identity poli-

tics, Card concludes that the principles around which lesbians organize our lives are those which distinguish us as lesbians and the integrity of the relationships we choose to create.

What distinguishes us as lesbians, according to Simone de Beauvoir, is that we are not "women," who are by definition heterosexual. De Beauvoir saw lesbianism as a choice, a radical position for the time, but she was unable to recognize a basic contradiction in her thinking, that if lesbianism is a choice for women, what about heterosexuality? Going beyond de Beauvoir's notion of "attitudinal" choice ("an attitude chosen in a certain situation"), Card discusses the meaning of choice within the current discourse of lesbian ethics. Card asks if it is possible for some women *not* to choose to be lesbian, given a particular moral and philosophical (or political) understanding of society, and suggests that social construction adds complexities to the question of "choice," in particular the interaction of individuals with institutions which both create and restrict individual options.

With respect to lesbian ethics, after reviewing the work of Sarah Hoagland and Marilyn Frye in particular, Card asserts that lesbian ethics is not a blend of politics and ethical values (Hoagland), although the line between politics and ethics is a fine one, nor is it simply a theory of agency (Hoagland, Frye). Rather, lesbian ethics concerns itself with what promotes the establishment of healthy lesbian communities and defines the conditions for women-loving.

In looking at models for those communities and conditions, Card adopts an Aristotelian approach to friends and relationships (friendships of pleasure, utility, and excellence), and suggests that lack of community roots and traditions creates a problem for lesbians in establishing a healthy social environment. So too does the denial of deep hostility which is the product of a misogynist culture, and which results in a society, both lesbian and mainstream, that has not adequately dealt with lesbian batter-

ing and stalking. To describe horizontal violence in abusive lesbian relationships as "mutual abuse" is to ignore the power imbalances and dominance patterns which abusers seek to impose. Since the justice system does not deal well with instances of horizontal (particularly lesbian) abuse, it is left to the community to find difficult solutions to the problems.

Some of the solutions Card reviews (though she would not necessarily define them as "solutions") include responses to homophobia, resistance to "passing" (as heterosexual), and consensual sadomasochism. Homophobia is, she reminds us, by definition an irrational fear. Yet the homophobia we experience is hostility, not fear, and "internalized homophobia" is not a pathology but often an appropriate response to, or real fear of, hostility. The politics of "outing," or bringing others out of the closet, while based on the belief that there is strength in numbers in resisting oppression and hostility, presents ethical problems for women who do not want to serve other women up to the patriarchy for further hostilities: "It is probably no accident that outing seems to be a game played mostly by privileged white men."

With respect to the assertion that, in addition to being a playful exchange of power in an erotic context, consensual sadomasochism plays a cathartic role as a "safety valve" in redirecting anger resulting from a previous history of abuse, Card fears that in fact s/m may sublimate desire for real political power (as Hoagland also suggests) and undermine resistance to oppressive models of domination and subordination: "What is required to make sadomasochistic contracts unattractive to lesbians and unprofitable to oppressors may be nothing less than a restructuring of society, or the creation of a new one."

*Lesbian Choices* is a closely argued book that looks at the realities and contradictions of lesbian lives, and tackles with aplomb the difficult issues we face in the context of a misogynist, homophobic world.

## PLURAL DESIRES: WRITING BISEXUAL WOMEN'S REALITIES

The Bisexual Anthology Collective (Leela Acharya, Nancy Chater, Dionne Falconer, Sharon Lewish, Leanna McLennan and Susan Nosov). Toronto: Sister Vision Press, 1995.

by Karyn Sandlos

What about those, for example,  
with hyphenated identities and  
hybrid realities?

(Minh-ha 1990, 374)

Four years ago The Bisexual Anthology Collective gathered for the first time to discuss the realities of their lived experience as bisexual women. The six members of the Collective came together with a shared interest in exploring the personal and political significance of bisexual identity in the lives of women in a way that honours difference as a source of strength. Emerging from this collaboration is *Plural Desires: Writing Bisexual Women's Realities*, a polyvocal anthology which is powerfully significant for all of us concerned with questions of identity, coalition building, and sexual freedom, both as individuals and members of larger collective struggles.

In keeping with the (wo)mandate of Sister Vision Press, women of colour represent half of the contributors to the anthology as well as half of the editorial collective. In addition to the inclusion of the voices of a diverse group of women, the contributions themselves are as rich in creativity and content as they are varied in form. Through this collection bisexual women write/speak powerfully of their unique struggles both personally and within relationships with friends, loved ones, and political allies. Poetry, prose, photography, paintings, cartoons, interviews, and experimental fiction become the medium through which we are invited to engage critically and creatively with these lives lived at the place where

identities intersect. The editors and contributors to *Plural Desires* succeed in "...recognizing (sic) the necessity of speaking from a hybrid place, hence of saying at least two, three things at a time" (Minh-ha 1992, 140).

*Plural Desires* also finds historical significance as the first written work on bisexuality to be published in Canada, preceded by the 1991 U.S. publication of *Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out*, and *Closer to Home: Bisexuality and Feminism*, in 1992. The importance of this publication cannot be understated, occurring as it does at a time when a Canadian bisexual politics is in the early stages of its definition. The publication of *Plural Desires* represents an insurgent moment in the ongoing struggle to carve out a political space which would "...integrate a politicized interpretation of bisexuality with other empowerment struggles." For as the members of the Bisexual Anthology Collective attest, it is not enough to add the word "bisexual" in the naming of political movements in their critique of institutionalized heterosexism and other forms of oppression. What is called for is a reconfiguration of sexual politics toward a reimagining of the identity categories which simultaneously serve to define and to socially constrain.

To suggest, however, that the editors and contributors to *Plural Desires* find agreement on the issues arising in the struggle to define a "bisexual identity," would undermine what I believe is the political objective through which the collection came into being. As readers, we are invited to enter into a discussion which honours the immediacy of the questions it raises while refusing to reduce their inevitable complexity. An engagement with *Plural Desires* is unavoidably an engagement with a multiplicity of personal and political experiences and perspectives on bisexuality, many of which have previously been silenced within a sexist, racist, ableist, and homophobic society. Other "silences" have also been effected when sexual choices transgress the boundaries defined by and