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


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 (w)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 politic 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
through identity categories, which are often inadequate in their efforts to contain the realities and contradictions of our lived experiences as sexual beings. *Plural Desires* provides the forum in which these realities can be both shared and affirmed.

Trinh T. Minh-ha's notion of "leaky categories," one of the subtitles through which the collection is organized, poses the paradox which underlies the struggle to define a bisexual identity/politic, and which bears resemblance to the struggles faced by many other collective political movements. Naming ourselves "bisexual" can imply the attainment of shared agreement over the very definition of the term. But as the contributors to *Plural Desires* reveal, definitions of "bisexuality" are as diverse as the women who construct them. How then, to emerge collectively as agents into the political sphere, in ways that honour difference, is the articulation of bisexuality.

The task of reordering a new sexual politics based upon expanded and more fluid notions of sexual identity is one which challenges bisexual women, lesbians, and all of us to remain open and committed to the complex, shifting, and relational nature of who we are in the world. In an interview with Zelie Pollon, June Jordan remarks, "I'm not sure that what I call an honest human body and an open heart can make an irrevocable commitment, to anybody—let alone a commitment along genetic lines. That's like going through the world with half of it shut down to you, isn't it?" The political imperative might then be realized if we imagine that "Identity has now become more a point of departure than an end point in the struggle" (Minh-ha 1992, 140). In its courageous and eloquent expression of "identity" within the indeterminate space of its complexity, *Plural Desires* invites us to remember,

It is an unimagining world.
But we can imagine it differently.


Minh-ha, Trinh T. "Not Like You/


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