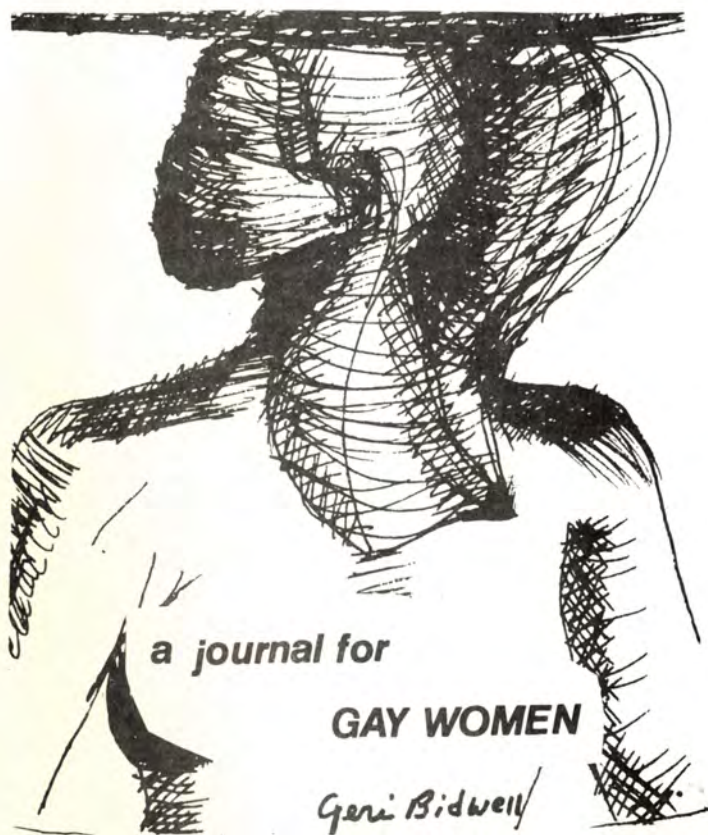


FOCUS

BOSTON DAUGHTERS OF BILITIS



a journal for

GAY WOMEN

Geri Bidwell

60 cents

MARCH

74

FOCUS: A JOURNAL FOR GAY WOMEN

March 1974

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DEADLINE for April: Mar.25

FOCUS welcomes contributions from everyone, including drawings. Include SASE for return. All letters must be signed, but names can be withheld for publication.

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Rubyfruit Jungle

a review

(Daughters, Inc., Plainfield, Vt. paperback \$3.00, copyright 1973)

Molly's story is the story of a lesbian-feminist Tom Sawyer. Self-assured, self-asserting, self-fulfilling, she moves with Walt Whitmanesque, almost mythological poise through Straight Amerika. She meets prejudice, intolerance, and persecution with impudent humor and undaunted rebelliousness. She knows who she is, has no doubts about her own self-worth, and embraces her own uniqueness -- including her sexual identity -- with exuberance. She tells the story of her growing-up with a wit that is often wry, sometimes bitter or derisive, but never defeatist. And she is very funny. She recounts anecdotes in the grand-braggy-deprecating style that has characterized the best of American story-telling humor since Mark Twain.

Just as Tom Sawyer presents the magical, Never-Never land of boyhood freedom, Rubyfruit Jungle depicts a strong and free female personality, a girl who grows up gay in the midst of a hostile environment, alone, but in her deepest self unscarred. If the novel is read on the level of psychological reality, it is probably a failure: who can identify with a heroine who has no tender places in her ego, who seems invulnerable to the kind of hurt we all experience daily, who knows, despite all the input to the contrary from her environment, that it is okay to be an illegitimate child, okay to want to marry a girl, okay to love women, okay to sleep with anybody you happen to want to sleep with...and so on. How many of us have known those things from the beginning, have truly felt that okayness, without having to fight against all kinds of hurts and lies? Who among us has ever worked her way towards lesbian self-affirmation completely unscathed inside? On the level of everyday reality, this book is an insult to the pain and the struggle we all know. Nobody does grow up invulnerable, in a magical land of unscathed egos, where self-affirmation and self-assertion are somehow god-given.

But Rubyfruit Jungle is evidently not meant to be read on the level of everyday psychological reality. In a few scenes where the author attempts to let us into Molly's consciousness and trace out her sense of self, the book

becomes flat and unconvincing. Molly's sense of self is simply too mythologically grand and wonderful to be expressed by the techniques of literary realism. For the most part we are wisely kept outside her thought processes, and thus the novel is successful in presenting a heroine whose charm for us lies primarily in her very unreality. Strong and impudent and untouched, she marches gayly through childhood and adolescence, stoutly maintaining her lesbian nature at every conceivable opportunity. She is more a folk heroine than a real live girl. She should be a mimesis, and her story enjoyed, on that level: it is good to think of her, strong and free and gay and proud, strutting confidently through the world, unafraid to be herself. It is about time we had our own Tom Sawyer.

An overdue review: Society & the Healthy Homosexual. review by Gerry Azzata

Society and the Healthy Homosexual, by Dr. George Weinberg (now available in paperback, Doubleday Anchor Books, \$1.95, copyright 1972).

I remember very clearly the feelings I had a year ago, when I first saw the brand-new book, Society and the Healthy Homosexual. The cover design (rising sun) was bright, cheerful, non-clinical. The title itself made a very nice assumption: that the words "healthy" and "homosexual" could appear together. However, having read more than my share of such gems as Dr. Edmund Berkeley's Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life? (guess which one he chooses), I approached this new book with caution. Who is Weinberg's "healthy homosexual", I wondered. Someone who has "adjusted" -- to a secret existence, to second class citizenship, to accepting feelings but not daring to act on them? And I remember my real joy as I read the book, discovering that Weinberg thinks that we are the healthy ones, the people who have defined ourselves proudly and positively.

With the American Psychiatric Association's recent (and possibly temporary) decision to remove the stigma of "disease" from people who are happily gay, I think that Weinberg's book deserves another look. It should serve as a guide for the many therapists who are struggling to overcome their own prejudices, as well as for those who have not yet taken responsibility for the harm that they have done to their gay clients. This book also speaks to our families and to our friends and to ourselves as we try to sustain positive feelings about our life style.

Weinberg's basic assumption is that we do not have to be defensive about love. Human beings are entitled to be happy:

"To produce this sense of entitlement to happiness, one must seize the belief that one deserves full rights and use it as a motivation for decisions wherever possible. At first, the belief may come only in moments, as an emotionless thought, an occasional whisper to oneself that one deserves fair play. But this is enough. So long as it exists in some strength on some occasions, there is the chance to nourish it by decisions based on it."

What better advice than this is there for a person who is just coming out?

The chapters that I think are best handled are those entitled "The Healthy Homosexual" and "Communication With Parents". The former deals largely with the right to happiness, and how we can move beyond our own "homophobia" -- the fear of our own sexuality, implanted by society -- to a sense of real personal dignity. "Communication With Parents" explores, in practical terms, how families can handle the reality of a homosexual daughter or son with a minimum of trauma. Although Weinberg does not give separate treatment to lesbianism, in these chapters he does mention many situations which confront us daily. For instance, "The Healthy Homosexual" opens with this dialogue:

Mother: You are doing this to hurt me.
Lesbian Daughter: That is egotistical. It has nothing to do with you.
Mother: But you might fall in love with a man.
Lesbian Daughter: Mother, no one asked you to consider the possibility that you might fall in love with a woman.

- March 10, Sunday, 5:30 pm Gay Speakers' Bureau Potluck Supper and showing of the award-winning filmstrip "The Invisible Minority: Homosexuals in Our Society", an educational project from the Unitarian Church. People interested in speaking with the GSP or in working on other support activities, as well as those who have spoken and want to help evaluate where GSP is at and see the filmstrip, and who want to EAT, are invited. Bring your dish in a pot it can be heated in or served from. St. John's Church, 33 Bowdoin St., Boston, near Government Center. 547-1451 info'
- March 12, Tuesday, 7:30 pm Open poetry reading as an alternative to the regular DOB rap. If you write poetry, bring it to read. Or just come to listen. The rap will also be held in another room. At the DOB office.
- March 15, Friday, 8pm Gay dance at the University of New Hampshire, celebrating the recent court decision in favor of the Gay Student Organization. Boston people invited. No literature may be distributed. The Witch will play. Granite State Room, Memorial Union, Univ. N.H., Durham.

NEW ENGLAND GAY CONFERENCE:

- FRIDAY, March 15 9--11pm Dance \$1.50 at the Charles St. Meeting House, 70 Charles St.
Preconference registration & housing
- SATURDAY March 16 All events at 69 Brimmer St. (Emerson College) unless otherwise noted.
- 8:30 - 9:30 am Registration, Housing, Childcare (all free).
 9:30 - 10:15 Welcome & keynote speaker, Wayne April, Gay Students Org, Univ. N.H.
- 10:15-11:45 Coming out as a continuous process (wkshp)
 11:30 - 12:00 Press Conference
 11:45 - 1:00pm Lunch. Women meet to discuss future lesbian conference
- 1:00 - 2:30 Workshops:
Mass. Legislation and Law Reform
Rural Gays and organizing them
How to set up a counselling and referral service
Gays in prisons

- 2:45 - 4:15 Workshops:
"no fats, fems, freaks, etc" Discussion with
 bisexuals, transsexuals, transvestites, S&M
 people, and others who often feel discrimi-
 nated against
Gay parents rap
- 4:15 - 5:54 Dinner, 150 Beacon St. \$1.68
- 6:00 - 7:30 Gay than thou, women only, discussing dif-
 ferent ages and backgrounds
Gay men's rap, men only
- 7:30 - 10:30 "History of Homosexuality in Film", present-
 ed by Vito Russo, N.Y. gay activist. Clips
 from "Sunday, Bloody Sunday," "The Boys in
 the Band", "The Children's Hour", and others.
- 10:30 - 11:30 Concert by Steve Grossman, first major gay
 recording artist, folksinger with Mercury
 Records

SUNDAY March 17

- 9 -10:20 am Breakfast at Emerson
- 10:20 - 12:00 Workshops:
Gay Media Action: how to use the media
Gays in religion
Third world/working class gays
- 12:15 - 1:45 pm Workshops:
Older gays, women and men
Gay youth (18 and under)
Gay parents panel (a psychiatrist, lawyer,
 and social worker will be there)
Gay courses and curriculum
- 2:00 - 3:30 Workshops:
Political mobilization & education: how to
 use all the resources of straight and gay
 communities to further gay liberation
Gay professionals: representatives from areas
 such as nursing, teaching, academia discussing
 their special needs.

NOTE ON HOUSING AND CHILD CARE: If you need or can offer
 housing, write by March 8 to N.E. Gay Conf. Planning Comm.,
 148 Beacon St., Boston 02116. Let them know how many and
 women or men and what nights. Give your phone # and address.
 If you want child care, let them know how many children and
 for what days, and give your address and phone #.

over!

MARCH 18, Monday, 7:30 pm D.O.B. Business Meeting at the
* below office.

MARCH 25, Monday, 7:30 pm Sharp Focus staff meeting at the
office.

* MARCH 19, Tuesday, 8pm Women in the Church, St. Clements, 1105
Boylston St., Boston.
Sister Anne Kelly, O.P.
Ms. Carol Bohm, campus
ministry at Harvard.



Announcing the DOB "Design A Banner" contest!!

///// We need a banner for Gay Pride Week/////

Prize: 1 year's subscription
to Focus

Send your drawing to DOB, Room
323, 419 Boylston St., Boston,
Mass. 02116. We can manufac-
ture it but need a design.

wanna join?

Membership in Boston Daughters of Bilitis is open to all women 18 years old or older. It entitles you to vote at business meetings, reduced admission to some events, and a subscription to Focus. The cost is \$10 per year, or \$15 for a couple (who get 1 subscription to Focus for both of them).

To join, just send your name, address, and phone # to the DOB office along with a signed statement that you are a woman 18 years old or older. You may use a pseudonym. You may also join without giving us your address, in which case you will have to pick up Focus at the office.

DOB welcomes all contributions of effort and money to help in its efforts to further the liberation of all gay people.

At the beginning, Representatives Barney Frank, Laurence Buxbaum, and John Businger, sponsors of the bills, led off, and Representative James Collins, also an endorser of the bills, spoke later. Near the beginning, the Homophile Union of Boston and Daughters of Bilitis gave each member of the committee a copy of Society and the Healthy Homosexual and Lesbian/Woman. At the very end of the testimony, Elaine Noble, a member of the Governors Commission on the Status of Women and a prospective candidate this fall for State Representative, told the committee they had better read all the stuff they had been given because she was planning a quiz.

The Commerce and Labor Committee will make a recommendation to the entire House that it either vote for or against the bills. The House will then vote to accept or reject this recommendation.

Therefore everyone's Representative in the State House will vote upon all the gay bills. Most of these people were not at the hearings. If they don't hear from the people in their districts, they will assume no one wants the bills. I.e. write your legislators! Barney Frank claims that 5 letters can make or break the way a legislator votes, because people generally don't write much.

We don't expect to win this year. But we do want to do better than last year in spite of the fact that this is an election year. No one is saying that by writing a letter we can achieve victory this year -- but we will get it next year or the year after that...and now is the time to BUILD.

Imagine the sun
Shining for the last time on
Your beauty.

Imagine the moon.
Kindness.

--Janet Cooper

a very short piece about kissing, or a small look at a particular sub- cultural behavior or termed paper

by Schel Paul

who's kissing who or whose is kissing whose kisser whose kiss is whose can it matter except to the kisser and the kissee of who it is possible to be both or just one depending on your pleasure. this is about our friendly lesbian formality kissing the kind we do with our relatives and since we love our sisters we kiss each one of them everytime we say goodbye and everytime we say hello sometimes on special occasions like going out to get pizza and also during everyday meetings whether they be perchance or not so perchance.

every kiss is different of course every kissee evokes a specific and personal response in the kisser and the kisser says a different hello or goodbye or nice day isn't it i love snow to each kissee. there's the oh i like you an awful lot kiss and the this kiss is pure formality but i do like you however i wouldn't usually be kissing you if this new sub-cultural tradition didn't call for it kiss and the i don't want to kiss you at all but you'll feel left out if i don't and god knows i don't want you to feel left out because you really are okay kiss and the i want this kiss to last forever but it's a secret that not even you know oh can you hear my lips i'm not sure how fluent they are and then there's the absent-minded kiss or the empty kiss inspired by the kissee but watch out for these they are never as empty as they feel also watch out for the this is just a kiss kisses because i doubt there is such a thing. there's also the maybe this is just a dream kiss which is extremely rare and tomorrow i'd love to ask you if that was a dream last night and you might not know what i was talking about and you might then again is part of the dream kiss.

these are the foundations of our formalities or gestures so watch out myself and you for i can't see your lips clearly for my fantasies or is that realities or is this all made up or is it sociological.

NEWS

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Equal Rights Amendment. The National Organization for Women is close to the realization of a primary goal -- ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment as the 27th amendment to the U.S. constitution. By the end of the first 6 weeks of 1974, Maine, Montana, and Ohio ratified the E.R.A. Ratification by only 5 more states is needed for the E.R.A. to become an amendment. N.O.W.'s legislative coordinators predict that Illinois and Florida will ratify in upcoming months, with Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Missouri possible.

A major goal nationwide of the over 700 N.O.W. chapters in the United States has been to achieve ratification of the E.R.A. before the nation's 200th year, 1976.

DOB-Ft. Worth. This chapter now has 21 members (dues are \$2) and a constitution which allows membership to "any biological woman over 18".

Gay Conference at University of Rhode Island. About 100 people, a number from Boston, went to this conference Feb. 15-17 in Kingston, R.I. Sidney Abbott and Barbara Love, authors of Sappho Was a Right-On Woman, spoke about what might be in store for us in the future. Vito Russo from New York presented a montage of pieces from movies of the past to show the treatment of homosexuality in films...a particularly effective sequence was the endings to these movies (Russo will be at the New England Gay Conference also). To top off Saturday evening Madeline Davis, author of "Stonewall Nation", sang her own songs to an extremely receptive and delighted audience.

A Gay Bibliography: 3rd Revision Jan. 1974, prepared by the Task Force on Gay Liberation of the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association. An excellent compilation of books, articles, pamphlets, periodicals, and audio-visuals and where to get them. You can have one free if you send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Barbara Hittings, Box 2303, Philadelphia, Pa. 19103. (If you believe in bibliographies you could send a donation too). In quantity they are 5¢ each.

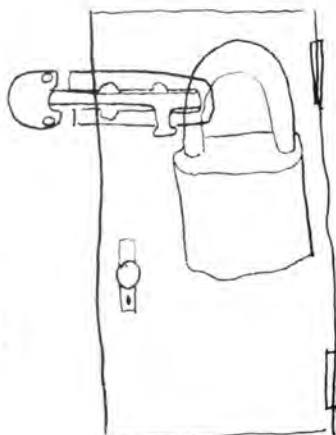
Defense Fund for Custody Case. In 1962 Lynda Chaffin was divorced and granted custody of her two children. In 1967 she encountered serious health problems and made an arrangement with her parents that they would keep the children during the school year and she would keep them during the summer until she was better. In 1969 she told her parents she was a lesbian. In 1973, when she decided she could take back the children, she found that her parents had gotten custody of her children (without telling her) on grounds that she had abandoned them. On December 12, 1973, a California court declared Lynda an unfit mother because of her lesbianism and ordered her to turn her children, who wish to stay with her, over to her parents. A fund has been organized to help in the appeal of this case. All donations and questions should be sent to: Lynda Chaffin Defense Fund, P.O. Box 3984, Torrance, Calif. 90510. The information about this case came from the Lesbian Tide (Jan. '74) and a letter from Lynda Chaffin, who is now evidently hiding somewhere in the southwest with her children. Her lover is behind in California handling the case.

National Women's Poetry Festival at Amherst. The dates are March 11-15. The poets will include Robin Morgan, Adrienne Rich, Marge Piercy, Margaret Walker, Shirley Kaufman, Fay Chiang, Carolyn Kizer, Gwendolyn Brooks, Tomia Arai, and others. There will be informal workshops led by the poets as well as readings. There is no charge and there will be free childcare (all this is paid for by the university). Information: Everywoman's Center, Goodell Hall, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Ma. 01002; 413-545-0003.

Boston Gay Bookstore and Library. To open soon at 419 Boylston St., Boston, on the 4th floor in the Homophile Community Health Service area. If you have materials relating to homosexuality, sexuality, or psychiatry that you would like to share with the library, bring them to Boylston St. (if the door is locked, ring 4 times).

Dream #5

Here is a door, and I wonder if it is my door. My hand is on the knob, and I am pushing, pushing, looking through the widening crack into the room beyond. Is this my place?



Everywhere I go I see doors: old doors crusted over with rusting locks, barricaded doors with bars and bolts, open doors that wobble and sway on their hinges. And sometimes I have spent hours staring at just one door, afraid to try the knob, unable to work the lock.

It is late now, getting dark. I do not sit in front of doors any more. I have unbarred barricades, and greased rusty locks, and I have pushed my way through. I have gone in those doors, and I have come back out. I am tired of opening doors and finding myself where I don't want to be. I am tired of walking through doors I have patiently unlocked and gently opened, only to be asked to leave. So embarrassing. I beg your pardon, I mistook this door for mine...not my home, no.

And now, here, this door. This door. This door I have looked at, bristling with locks and bolts, and put my hand to, and one by one I have slid back the bolts and felt the locks turn under my touch. No, this door I have not rudely kicked open; I am not battering ram against its privacy. Here is a door opening to me, and I do not know if it is my door.

Smile, gods, I am going in.



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