



# pointblank times

a lesbian/feminist publication houston, texas

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50¢



As promised last month, this issue of *PBT* focuses on women's culture. Our readers responded to this topic with artwork, poetry and short stories, as well as commentaries on women's culture and the views of women artists. This month's magazine, with many of those submissions and our Meg Christian interview, hopes to open more discussion on the development of women's culture.

## LETTERS

Hi!

Although I live way out here in New Mexico, after the review of your publication I read in *Lesbian Connection*, I would like very much to receive it.

After living most of my life back east in New England, I have become a permanent transplant to the southwest. And working with the Indian people as I do, I find every day more interesting than the previous. After 3½ years here, that has not changed.

But I sure do miss the large gay community.

Love & Peace,

*Marge Parker*

To my sisters,

I am writing to you to have you place my name on your women prisoners' subscription list, which I understand is free.

I'd also like to know if you could help me find a sister I can write to and possibly create a relationship with after I get out.

Take Care,

*Kinnie Wright*  
Rt. 7 Box 1  
N. Wilkesboro,  
N.C. 28659

Dear Kinnie,

We're happy to welcome you as a new reader. I hope you'll feel free to use *PBT* as a vehicle if you have any experiences, or whatever, you'd like to share in print.

As for pen pals, we hear there is a lesbian publication devoted specifically to that. It's *The Wishing Well*, P.O. Box 1711, Santa Rosa, CA. 95403, and it's \$5 for 2 issues.

*PBT Staff*

*Pointblank Times* is published 12 times per year by the *PBT* Staff. Opinions expressed herein are those of the individual writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the *PBT* Staff.

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We welcome all contributions, including features, reviews, poetry, announcements, graphics and photographs. Please tell us how you would want your name to appear, and whether you want your material returned to you.

Staff: Amanda/Sharon/Cindy/Liz/Mary Ann/Nancy/Phyllis/Pokey Anderson/  
Sherry/Susan/Vicki/Clare

*PBT* is also available at: Abraxas, Big City News, Just Marion & Lynn's, Libran, Odd's Place, University Boulevard Book Store, University of Houston, Ursula's and the Women's Center.

# 'I am a Rather Solitary

# Artist...'

dear people---

here's one of my drawing-poems for you---hope you can use it!\* i read your last issue--on community--which, by the way, i thought was very interesting--i think *PBT* is "improving"! i hope to see lots of response to the next issue!! i have been in touch with the women who give us "womanspirit"---in fact, i did the front cover---it's a beautiful blue!--of this spring equinox issue! also i've had some illustrations published in "Women: a journal of liberation"..... i really enjoy doing "work" like this (actually, it's more like a true vocation--my work is seamless with my pleasure... ideally!) i am a rather solitary artist in many ways---i would love to see a space (a womanspace) here for art; a feminist art community!...it's difficult for me to verbalize intellectually what my work is about---i hope that it is "self-evident"...it is about the beyond within, a reaching into the roots and branches of my experience as a woman. for me, these drawings are teachers, healing sources...and they exist on many levels... they are roadmaps, telling me of where i have been, am, and have yet to go...they are deeply personal, or they address to the seer that part of ourselves which we only intuit, dream...what i aim for is this vital essence, the marrow of self... the old phrase comes to mind, "the way in is the way out is the way in"...to infinity...i want to touch the, what i conceive of as--spiritual--in us--that which to me transcends time, place... what remains is the eternal energy source, the one note of the song which continues on...i paint and draw states of being, inner landscapes (heartlands)...it is a geography which we are beginning to explore...i generally prefer to draw, as it's more immediate, my hand---heart can dance more freely...but i also like to paint. i am currently sharing a studio with another artist---but am open to sharing a studio (i'm poor, unfortunately) space with a feminist artist...know of anybody who might be interested in gathering together for a feminist art collective?

due to the fact that i am also employed 8-5 (yuck) and my evening hours spent painting---i have little time to get out and around. (maybe it's just me being weird, but i got cold vibes from ursula's...i find it difficult to project in a noisy group situation. don't like to drink much, or play pool, much to my chagrin!...but i have other pleasures!) but, the need is sincere and felt way deep---to share and communicate with friends...and i mean those who can accept the many facets of me...i have felt some rejection by the houston gay community because i'm married, to a male, horrors of horrors..., openly bisexual (the "old having your cake and eat the ice cream too" attack) and my cultural tap-roots are in, dare i use such a trite and well trodden phrase---"head" society...even tho i'm acutely (chronic, in that it's persistent!) poor, i believe in color!!\*\* anyway, i've gotten rude stares (mostly from women, curiously)...but, such is the price for wearing your heart on your sleeves and jeans! if you like the drawing, i hope you'll get in touch. i'm open to communication! do you have need of a "nonsalaried" artist---i'd be only too happy to contribute my dreams, hands, work if you would have them...i have felt for a long time that it would be a harmonious "mingling" ...(but haven't sent in before because of procrastination--which is getting cured!) i'd really like to learn about doing a magazine--i don't know lay-out, etc. and could enjoy discovering---even the shit-work.\* well..please get a copy of womanspirit---it's a good magazine... high spirits, all! beyond the words and lines, i hope our spirits melt together.. p.s. alison, are you out there? hello to you!! hope you are liking the country!! if it feels good, get in touch!!

"silver-in-the-grass".....  
*prairie*

(letter cont. on page 5)  
(\* drawing on next page)



(cont. from p. 3)

p.s.s. oh, I also wanted to say that the work i do (artistically) is to me a form of blues--an exultant song . . . if i can't sing it, i can still draw it!

ONWARD★!

PRITIC

we stand  
as trees  
in a forest  
we are arteries of the sacred  
heart  
we are one  
blood,  
sister . . .

## Finally Free

Jill Raymond was released from a Kentucky county jail on May 4, after being imprisoned nearly 14 months for refusing to testify before a federal grand jury. She is the fifth grand jury resister to be released from prison in the past few months.

In January 1975, FBI agents began questioning women and gay activists as to the whereabouts of fugitives Susan Saxe and Katherine Power. Several gays in Kentucky, including Jill Raymond, chose imprisonment over co-operation, because in the eyes of the FBI and the grand jury, being active and gay is an implication of guilt.

"We are overjoyed about Jill's release," said Ellen Grusse, who resisted

## O'Leary to Visit

Jean O'Leary, the first openly gay delegate to the 1976 Democratic National Convention, will be one of the keynote speakers at Texas Gay Conference III, to be held at the University of Houston June 18-20. Jean, who founded New York's Lesbian Feminist Liberation, is presently National Coordinator of the National Gay Task Force (NGTF). Also featured will be Vito Russo, who is bringing film clips showing the portrayal of gays on screen for the last thirty years. Bruce Voeller, Executive Director of NGTF, will also be speaking.



The conference is being jointly sponsored by the Texas Gay Task Force and the seven-state region of the Gay Academic Union. The opening event Friday night will be the transformation of UH's usually macho Cougar Den into a gay party and dance. Workshops will include several on sexism.

To pre-register write TGC III, P.O. Box 16041, Houston, TX. 77022.

a similar grand jury investigation in the New Haven Women's Community. "But, we will continue the fight until Joanna is freed and the FBI and grand jury witchhunts have ended." Joanna Le Deaux, a Native American woman, remains in a California prison for refusing to co-operate with a government investigation of the Native American movement in South Dakota.

For more information contact GRAND JURY Project, 853 Broadway, Room 1415, New York City, (212) 533-2299.

# BOWER BIRD

From the first,  
I wooed you with domesticity.

I lined my bower  
With baubles of neat sheets and shirts,  
Socks paired monogamously,  
And chrysanthemums from the grocery store.

I saw your fitful mind incline  
Toward towels regular as a Rothko,  
Canned goods platooned in soups and beans.

After dinner  
(I grilled your steak like any suburban housewife),  
The dishwasher whirred hypnotically toward cleanliness.

Shiny trinkets flashed for your attention;  
Slyly, I offered my bed.

Did you collapse into proposals? Not you.

I offered you a boy with apple-seed eyes.  
Then, almost as an afterthought,  
A lifetime lease on my faint heart.

*Cuyler Etheredge*

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# 'How do you like it?' (PBT, that is)

Have you ever sat in a group and heard someone introduce an idea with phrases such as "What the people want", "We feel", "Lesbians are concerned with" and "The readers are interested in"? I've done it myself and certainly have heard others do the same. What is happening at that point is that the speaker has made an assumption that what she feels is what others feel, what is important to her, is what is important to others. I suppose that it is quite natural to assume that we represent the majority, are in tune with others. Unfortunately, I think we often make such assumptions without having evidence to support our claim of being representative.

That is why I was so interested in the results of the *Pointblank Times* questionnaire about the contents of our paper. The feedback which I have heard in the past led me to believe that my ideas about what the community was interested in might be more indicative of my closet elitism instead of real knowledge of what lesbian/feminists were concerned with.

About fifty women responded to our questionnaire. I would like to take this space to share with you how *we* feel.

In the order of preference, the types of submissions which *PBT* readers would like to see are: News Accounts, Interviews, Commentaries, Short Stories, Reviews, Art, and Poetry. What was particularly surprising to me was that the readers who rated such submissions as News Accounts and Commentaries high, gave very low ratings to Interviews and Short Stories and vice versa. Almost everyone expressed either disinterest in Poetry in general or dissatisfaction with the poetry we have printed. The topic of Sports received the most heated responses. Readers either want to read more about it, or nothing at all, with about an equal number on each side. The topic of Relationships seemed to register the most interest in general.

What these results tell me is that *PBT* has basically two kinds of readers: those interested in the politics of oppression and those interested in literary efforts. The *PBT* staff is interested in both and will try to continue to provide our readers with articles that reflect those two areas. We are pretty good at taking a hint and you will see less poetry in the paper.

Probably the harshest criticism we received was not in the form of a questionnaire but a letter from one of our readers. She stated that "there is no quality without content." "The only thing which really keeps me sane is the knowledge that we are involved in a historical struggle, that there *is* a very real women's culture to relate to, that there are women everywhere breaking their shackles. This gives me courage to go on. The *PBT* does not. I urge you to direct yourselves to the *questions of substance*."

I appreciate this woman taking the time to share her frustrations with us. Her criticism is valid. While we have received equally strong criticism for taking ourselves too seriously and forever being angry, I accept the challenge of substance which has been presented to us. I would hope that you would also accept this challenge and share it with us. The *PBT* staff is interested in printing your articles on those issues about which you feel strongly. Feeling strongly does not always mean anger and rage. We would like to know what encourages you, puts you off, makes you laugh and sends you in a rage. To give you some specific ideas for topics, the next few issues of *PBT* will focus on Sports (July), Relationships (August), and Separatism and Anger (September). Material submitted for each of these issues must be received by *PBT* no later than the 10th of each month.

Barbara

## From A Friend Who Visited My Mind

The year is .040. The new civilization is 200 revolutions old. The new civilization began the day after the big Blam-Blam in the old year 2000. Calculated time-life of new civilization is 5000 revolutions.

Matrix is .150 and has lived 18 revolutions. She has recently started her ambitions at the Gallery of the Stars as a synthesizer. She is an ancientist studying the old years 1970-1980.

Karma is .200 and has lived 20 revolutions. She finds Matrix in a dome cube laughing her head up. "What the Bang are you reading Matrix?"

Matrix looks up, still smiling. "I'm reading artifact US 2697H12. It's called Point Blank Times. It's a discussion of lesbian culture in Houston, Texas, U.S.A., 1976. I was just thinking how nice it would be to visit one of their meetings."

Karma sighs, "Has anyone told you, you're a real rocket."

Matrix laughs, "Karma, just because you're a modernist, with no use for the old way is no reason to get insulting. Besides, what would we be except for them."

Karma lays down on the fondle mat and looks out at the stars. "I don't see that we would be any different. You would still be an ancientist and I a modernist. We would still have a high energy connection." She wraps herself around Matrix for better body hum. "My graphics aren't that good but as I recall that whole area is under water. It doesn't even exist as a productive area to date. What does an artifact by a group of dead or blown women have to do with us? They couldn't have had much effect or they'd be listed in Old Tilts and Progress: Culture Evolved."

Matrix rolls back into her arms. "They will be listed in Old Tilts by the time I'm finished."

"You are a rocket Matrix." Karma rises and strokes her hair. "On with time, I hope you succeed." She moves off toward Advanced Enhancements.

The mind dance was rediscovered by Moonsun in the year .011. It had been lost for three civilizations. It was first notated by Xara and translated from her own marks to mean: The filling of finite space with mind sounds in order to dance the meaning without feeling like a banana.

Matrix begins to mind dance. It's a little hard to start because she's still feeling the surface energy of Karma, but she finally begins

### The dance

- .1 Culture follows an erratic spiral pattern.
- .2 A culture does not exist unless it has an effect on some culture which follows.
- .3 Culture is individualistic and conglomerate.
- .4 One being can be a culture, 50,000 beings may not be a culture, and vice versa.
- .5 Culture redefines itself in every new civilization.
- .6 The last civilization defined itself in heterogeneous terms, where as our civilization is defined in multigeneous terms.
- .7 In order for a culture to have an effect on a progression it must satisfy both the old and the new definition.
- .8 The beings of P.B.T. notated or marked a connection and collection of attitudes and effect concerning lesbian culture in the year 1976.
- .9 They notated or left a mark which was discovered by our culture.
- 1.0 To mark in a following culture is to effect, therefore half is satisfied.

### The Dance

- .1 Known definition of culture in 1976: The sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another.
- .2 In the U.S. Culture of 1976, it was artificially estimated that 4% of the population were lesbians.

# THE PHENOMENON CALLED MEG

"Meg Christian" is more than a one-woman phenomenon. As Meg herself would be the first to tell you, her influence is the result of a tremendous effort on the part of five very dedicated women who together comprise the Olivia Records' women's music collective--Meg, Ginny Berson, Jennifer Woodul, Kate Winter, and Judy Dlugacz. If you could get to the core of Meg Christian herself, you would find an intense, very pure commitment to women. It's that commitment, combined with extraordinary musical skill and her recognition of the power of music, that have made Meg and Olivia Records a major pioneering force in the field of women's music.

The following is Part 1 of an interview with Meg and Ginny Berson that was recorded when they were in Houston during their recent concert tour. Part 2 of the interview, which will present more of their political views, will be printed in conjunction with our upcoming issue on "Separatism".

## ON WOMEN'S MUSIC

Meg: "To me, women's music is music that speaks honestly and realistically to women about their lives. It is a way to communicate ideas and real gut level feelings and bonds that women have in a way that nothing else can. What I generally try to do in my concerts is to make women think about all the different kinds of options, possibilities, responsibilities, and risks that it's crucial we face for us to really make a revolution. I try to present songs that make women feel good about themselves for the first time, or make women start thinking about feminism politically, or make a woman want to deal with loving other women, or putting all her different kinds of energies into women, or perhaps dealing with the fact that Lesbianism is political. Lesbianism is, for me, the crucial political step in women really supporting one another and making a revolution. As political women, we have the responsibility to work to make it easier for other women to come



*-Sundancer Photographic Studies*

out and put all their energies into women. We also have the responsibility to create a truly alternative living situation for women that will help us take control of our lives. Two other issues important for me to stress in my concerts are issues of class and race--how white middle class women have used class and race privileges to oppress other women, and how that's kept our movement divided. We really have to deal with that immediately. The other is the issue of separatism--understanding what male supremacy and male and heterosexual privilege mean, and how women putting energy into men perpetuates the oppression of women."

## MEG'S FIRST STEP

(Regarding lesbianism): "I have been literally lusting after women since I was five years old."

(Regarding women's music): "Well, there were a number of things that made me jump out on a limb. One was absolute and total disgust with the nightclub situation. I had gotten to the point where in terms of the physical environment and the financial situation, I knew I had as good a set-up in a nightclub as I could have. But I just got to a point where singing for all those men in a situation that was so totally con-

trolled by men, and where women who came to hear me were not comfortable, was just an odious situation to me. It seemed more and more irrelevant to where I should be putting my energies. Secondly, I had an incredible amount of support and encouragement from the women's community. They were coming in droves to hear me in the nightclub, and they would support me when I sang at other places like the women's center. I knew that they would come to hear me outside the nightclub situation, and that they were willing to pay some money. They understood that the only way I was going to be able to survive and continue to make music for women was if there was some money involved. I point that out because there are a lot of women who don't believe that women should pay money to other women. They are not willing to pay a dollar or two dollars to come to a concert, when they're willing to pay twice that much for some dope, or to go to the movies, or whatever.

Another large factor was that I had a good amount of privilege and financial security. I had had the privilege to study guitar for a long time and I was able to teach guitar lessons to bring in some extra income. I came from a family--my mother--who was making money, and I knew that if I ever really got into bad trouble, she would see me through the hard spots. Although I found that I didn't need to make use of her money, or fall back on her, because the women's concerts came in great numbers, that certainly gave me the net under the rope to get out there and try."

#### REACTIONS MEG RECEIVES TO HER MUSIC

Meg: "Mostly, the reactions are tremendously positive. And the negative ones have been, for the most part, specific comments about certain parts of our performance, or certain songs, in the context of a generally positive response. I've gotten some wonderful letters about just real amazing ways that women feel like their lives have been changed through the concert experience. I've gotten some political criticism, too, about some of the things I say. There's been a great furor over the whole issue of open and closed concerts."

Ginny: "In Austin, the concert that we did was for women only. In the workshop after the concert, somebody brought up the fact that Meg has done concerts which men are allowed to attend, because of the women that will come with them, or because sometimes it's legally impossible. I mean, it's always legally impossible, but sometimes it's logistically impossible to have a closed concert. And there were some women in Austin who were real upset about that. We much prefer doing



- The Leaping Lesbians -  
Ginny Berson (Olivia Records)  
and Alice Shrader (Houston)  
strike fear into the hearts  
of over 200 women attending  
Meg's Houston concert.

women's-only concerts. Sometimes it just isn't possible. And then we came to Houston, and wanted to do a women's-only concert, and found out that it wasn't going to be that way. This time we were the ones at the workshop saying that we should be doing women's-only concerts."

#### WRITTEN ANY GOOD SONGS LATELY?

Meg: "Olivia and I are very interested in hearing the music that women are writing. I'm just incredibly picky about the songs that I learn and so I'm not generally encouraging that I would

learn the song that they sent. But we would very much like to put their music in our library, to make it available to other interested women--to keep a representative body of the kind of music that women are writing. So they could send us tapes. We very, very strongly recommend that they send them on cassettes, and that it be something that we can keep. And that they copyright their material."

#### ON THE HOUSTON CONCERT

Meg: "It was real wonderful. I felt just fine at the end of the concert when everyone stood up and I could see everyone for the first time. There was really an amazing mix of different kinds of women there. And they were all standing up and swaying, with their arms around each other, and smiling. I've been in some situations where, when I did that, for the last song, you could see the women who were real freaked out and who weren't joining in--they were sort of hiding in various places. But you never knew what that meant. I did a concert in Bozeman, Montana, which was at their first women's conference, and I ended up with that song. I saw one woman standing over not participating, not standing up or swaying or anything, and I thought, well, that's a shame, I freaked her out. She came up to me after the concert, and she said, "Nothing has ever done to me what you have just done. My life has changed." So you never can tell about reactions.

That's what I love about these concerts. I've done hundreds of them and they still get me, in some way. I always feel the energy, and I always feel the support, and it always makes me feel terrific. It's just like life's blood, you know, you get used to that thing, and that sort of feeling, to sort of keep you going for the other parts of your life.

(TO BE CONTINUED...)

(continued from page 8)

.3 The mass population of women did not control the artifacts modes of communication. It is realistically estimated that 10-25% of those women were gay or would be before end-life.

.4 Most of their communication was done by word of mouth. (Matrix, being a student of oralology, is always tickled by such terms.)

.5 It was difficult for them to define their culture in relationship to their civilization because they produced few artifacts: Limited Televisations.

.6 They were individualistic and gathered in the concept of defining themselves. This individualistic gathering defines a group of human beings.

.7 The sum total of their ways of living was marked lesbianism. The building up process was marked lesbian culture.

.8 The lesbian culture of 1976 produced more artifacts about their culture than the previous generation.

Concept of sliding generationalism reinvented in .001. Both old and new definitions stand.

.9 To increase artifacts is to transmit to the next generation.

1.0 The lesbian culture as a group effected the sum total in a generational transmission, therefore half is satisfied.

Matrix lay there exhausted for awhile after the dance. Then she was off to Collections. Spark was milling through The Abridged Visions of Love, looked up, flushed and smiled.

Matrix blushed and smiled back. "I'd like to submit some marks to the Old Tilt."

Spark took the small etched plate from Matrix, and lay them on the Central Sense field. Central Sense reply, "It is a pleasure. Are there any personal marks?"

Matrix grinned, "One random individual passage to submitted marks."

Cy

Vicki Glasgow

# dear Ann Lavender

Dear Ann Lavender,

My women's group was discussing sexuality recently. We're a pretty mixed group, as I found out. There was quite a bit of argument and laughter on several points. Like, why is a woman gay, bisexual, or heterosexual?

*Jackie*

Dear Jackie,

I doubt that I can give you much insight, but I'll offer a few out of sight opinions. I don't believe sexuality is so easily defined by a word.

I came to my own conclusions, as we all must, and refer to myself as a genetic or natural gay. Here follows opinions, take them and leave them.

Start with a sexually free society and 100 baby girls. 48% can simply be compatible with anyone, male or female; so let's say 48% bisexual. 25% are born with a strong homosexual tendency and 25% a strong heterosexual tendency. 2% are just plain strange (undefinable). Take that same 100 babies and rear them in the U.S.A. Then ask them to define themselves after about 25 or 30 years of living. Don't forget that social influence can create a homosexual as well as a heterosexual and vice versa. It can also destroy sexuality altogether. How would these 100 women define themselves? I'd guess, 5% undefinable, 15% bisexual, 20% gay, and 60% heterosexual. If you asked each one why? This column is not long enough to list 100 different dialogues, but I'd like some feedback. So if you're out there and listening, write--I love to get mail.

*Ann Lavender*

Dear Ann Lavender,

Three years ago I fell for a woman. We lived together six months. Then she left me. She'd get involved with other women and when things didn't work out she'd come back for awhile, or write me constantly, or phone me. She shows up like a whipped dog and I take her in and love her. Then she's gone again, and I feel used and mad. Just when I'm ready to give her up for good, she's back somehow. She says she doesn't understand love, that she's not ready for commitments. How long do I have to wait!

*Torn Up in Lufkin*

Dear Lufkin,

Three years is too long to wait for someone else to decide your life. One of the hardest decisions anyone can make is whether the love she feels is good for her. If you can't accept the situation as is and you can't influence her, then find courage for yourself. Spend a little of that love and energy you've given to her on yourself. Building your own life strengthens your ability to decide your own life.

*Ann Lavender*

<i>Norma</i>	<b>L A M P O S T</b>		<i>Buffet</i> Wed. 8 pm
<i>&amp;</i>			
<i>Chara's</i>			<i>Pool Tourn.</i> Mon. 9 pm
<b>2417 Times - Houston</b> 528-8921			

# The Fierce Sound:

## Women's Poetry

"I say live, live because of the sun, the dream, the excitable gift."

Anne Sexton  
(poet) 1969

What is that sun, that dream, that excitable gift? It is writing; it is the unexplainable force of words; it is the flow of the language of the soul: poetry. For women writers, writing transcends art. It is universally personal. Women writing become the spokesperson for their sex. For centuries, only on paper (and often under a male pseudonym or anonymously) could a woman express her views and explore her visions. Consciousness-raising has always existed in the form of women communicating through words on paper their feelings about themselves, their work, their relationships, their lives; writing is the utilization of psychic energy and the foundation of a female culture.

The lack of acknowledged women in literature is not an indication of the shortage of women writing, but of the huge lack of encouragement that a woman receives. In her exquisite essay, A Room of One's Own, Virginia Woolf notes the obstacles: "...there would always be the assertion...you cannot do this, you are incapable of doing that... to protest against, to overcome."

What it comes down to is a question of value and self worth. We must come to a perception of the validity of what we have to say. An Austin poet, Nina, elaborates: "Aside from our objective lack of control over the means of production and distribution of the printed word, the biggest thing we are up against is the ingrained conviction that no one wants to hear what women have to say---this translates to 'Women have nothing to say' which translates to 'I have nothing to say' which results in the waste of a lot of things that should be said, both for the lost creator and the deprived audience."

It appears that women's writings have been suppressed for their straightforward honesty and examination of what women's lives are really like and what we actually feel. Men have depicted our lives and feelings as they would like to see them. In literature, women emerge as myths. Truth vanishes. The realities of what we are must be revived in our own words. Robin Morgan, activist poet, says, "Culture is breath, it is oxygen to us as an oppressed people who have never spoken before in our own words."

The first woman to earn her living writing, Aphra Behn, also earned the labels "one of the rakes of the time" and "not at all a lady". She wrote seventeen plays and much poetry. She was no doubt a phenomenon of her time working with a minimum of support and few avenues to submit her work. Today, however, women have risen up out of obscurity to offer support to each other. That support has given birth to one hundred and seventy-one women-written and women-produced papers in this country.

Writing is a process. How does it start? When does a poem first begin? What is its and its author's growth like? The process of writing is all the torment and joy of giving birth to oneself again and again. Nina speaks:

Creating something is many kinds of discovery---I find out what I am capable of, what I want to say. (I never know until the first draft is complete.) Gestation periods can be long and frustrating. Sometimes a poem springs full-bloom; more often, bits and pieces come to me at different times over a period of weeks and I rewrite incessantly.

How can I write about women and writing and not write of my feelings and experiences in the process?

It is as if I were running a quick race, a sprint! There is a mounting acceleration culminating in a huge rush of speed and then this long gasp for breath-----  
W-H-O-O-S-H!!!

It is a groping for something just-out-of-reach. It is mere inches away and I strain my fingers toward it; all my energy focuses on that one point. I stretch. I-am-almost-there...almost...Connection! My hand takes it!

It is a sensuous experience, an inner exploration of feelings, an explosion of emotions. Thoughts hover around me, all about me, through me. Products of those thoughts rise quickly to the surface; they are immediate responses to the stimulation of highly sensitive nerve endings. The stimulus heightens; it is electric. I am consumed. Madly, I search for the means to record all that is happening. Miraculously, all the tools are within my reach and I use them. An exhilaration hurries through me and with the last lines, the last verse, the very last word, I feel the humming of nerves roaring pleasure and then spent. I am profoundly relaxed, deliciously emptied of knots, engulfed in the glow of the now-filled page.

There are no other conclusions to draw about writing. It is as diverse as each woman's pen. What we all share is our new awareness, belief, and vitality in our writing.

"Now from the mouth of one dark and strong  
flies the sound...  
Listen have you heard it?  
It's true because I say it."

*Norma Funderberg*  
(poet/songwriter) 1976

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# Fathers' Day Latency

She looked at me  
furtively  
across the room  
like a spy at a cocktail party.  
No Mata Hari,  
she gave herself away.

Look!  
the weary lines of discontent  
chafe at the round, womanly face.  
Years of quiet conflict  
in spite of marriage  
in spite of children  
she carried a silent hunger deep inside.

Now,  
she stares across a room  
unsure why  
not admitting  
not knowing...  
but knowing  
the yearning pains she never accepted.

She glares across that room  
denying the facts:  
that She exists  
that I exist  
that Love can live beyond the weeds  
(husband, children, bondage/marriage)

The golden band cannot bind her.  
She Knows.  
She Fears.  
I only pray that someday  
she Accepts.

*Loretta Lotman*

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## Poor Vicki

I decided I had to tell her,  
because she was my friend  
and I didn't want to lose her friendship,  
but she was always  
trying to get me to double date with her,  
and she was bound to hear the rumors  
anyhow.

So, one afternoon,  
when there was a pause,  
I said quickly,  
"I'm a Lesbian."  
She was only the second person I'd ever told.  
She wheeled: "What?"

I was so nervous,  
and afraid;  
I guess that's partial excuse  
for what I did.

"A Lesbian. You know,  
a queer, a homo, a dyke.  
Also known as butch, femme,  
fluff, lizzie, Lesbo, tribade,  
bulldagger, gay. Someone  
who prefers women to men  
for emotional and sexual  
relationships.  
Would you like to see  
my volumes of Sappho  
or my dildo collection?"  
My eyes were glinting hard,  
waiting for the horror,  
the cold departure.

But good old Vicki  
just smiled and said,  
"I don't care what church you attend."

And after I'd laughed myself helpless,  
she asked  
"Do you smoke cigars or a pipe?"

*Meg Barnett*