
BACK TO POLITICS

Putting the Politics Back into Lesbianism

Janice G. Raymond

SUMMARY. This article contrasts lesbianism as a political movement to lesbianism as a lifestyle. It addresses the current emphasis in lesbian circles on "sex as salvation," and maintains that this emphasis re-sexualizes women and de-politicizes lesbianism. The liberalism of lesbian lifestyle makes the male-power modes of sexuality, such as s & m, butch-femme, and bondage and domination, sexy for women. In the name of tolerance, difference, and lesbian community, many lesbians are dissuaded from making judgments and opposing such acts. Finally, the article describes the values of a lesbian feminism that has principles, politics, and passion. It proposes a context for what lesbian sexuality might look like rooted in lesbian imagination—not lesbian fantasies.

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We used to talk a lot about lesbianism as a political movement—back in the old days when lesbianism and feminism went together, and one heard the phrase, lesbian feminism. Today, we hear more about lesbian sadomasochism, lesbians having babies, and everything lesbians need to know about sex—what has fashionably come to be called the “politics of desire.” In this article, I want to talk about *lesbianism as a political movement*, but before doing that it is necessary to address *lesbianism as a lifestyle*—what has for many come to be a sexual preference without a feminist politics.

For one thing, this lesbian lifestyle is preoccupied with sex. Not lesbian sexuality as a political statement, that is, as a challenge to hetero-reality, but lesbian sex as fucking—how to do it, when to do it, what makes it work—in short how to liberate lesbian libido. Lesbian lifestylers and hetero-conservatives agree on one thing—that for women sex is salvation—something that will get us into the promised land, the afterlife, that amazing grace. For example, Marabel Morgan in *The Total Woman* teaches right-wing Christian women how to act out the fantasies of their husbands complete with all the accoutrements and sexual postures that would rival the lesbian libertarian warehouse. For the Marabel Morgans of this world, inside marriage, anything goes. A wife should act like a mistress. Samois, an American lesbian sadomasochist group, embraces whips and chains, “pain is pleasure, enslavement by consent, freedom-through-bondage, reality-as-game, [and] equality-through-role-play” (Meredith, 1982, p. 97). Outside marriage, in fact outside heterosexuality, anything goes. Lesbian liberation has become lesbian libertarianism.

In comparing Marabel Morgan to Samois, are we talking about the *difference* between a lullaby and heavy metal? Or are we talking about the *similarities* between those bumper stickers that read “sea divers do it deeper,” “sky divers do it higher,” “conservatives do it with conscience,” “lesbians do it with lust?” There seems to be little difference between a conservative world view which locates women in this world sexually for men and a lesbian libertarian lifestyle that is increasingly preoccupied with fucking as the apogée of lesbian existence. For all the perpetual talk about sex, libertarian lesbian discourse is speechless about its connection to the rest of a woman’s life and, therefore, it is speechless about sex itself.

In *The Sexuality Papers*, Margaret Jackson points out that historically, female sexuality has been defined, paradoxically, as both different from and the same as male sexuality. As different, female sexuality has been portrayed as difficult to arouse, more emotional, and less localized; as similar, it has been depicted as originating in the same biological drive. Traditionally, the *differentness* of female sexuality has been used to show how it complements male sexuality and thus legitimates heterosexuality as

the natural and normative condition of sexual existence for women; its sameness to male sexuality has been used to legitimate the forms that male sexuality has taken and to proclaim those forms as transcending gender. "To put it another way, female sexuality has been remoulded on the model of male sexuality, so that [women] are now held to equal or even surpass men in terms of our sexual capacity" (Jackson, 1984, p. 81).

The emphasis in the most recent lesbian lifestyle and libertarian theories of sexuality has tended to confirm the *sameness* of female sexuality to male sexuality—evidenced by the supposed "fact" that women act, or want to act, or should be free to act, in the same ways that men have been able to act sexually. Lesbian lifestyleers argue that female-female sexuality must be "freed up" to take on the forms of the male-power model of male sexuality, that is, the forms that have endowed males with the power of uninhibited sexuality in a patriarchal society. The various forms that male-power sex has taken—s & m, pornography, butch-femme role playing, pederasty, etc.—will supposedly release the so-called "repressed power" of female sexuality.

The libertarians and lesbian lifestyleers might protest that male sexuality has no corner on these forms. Many would maintain that these forms of sexuality have existed repressed in the very being of women, only waiting to be called forth by a different social context in which women are encouraged to express themselves with the sexual latitude that men have enjoyed. Several years ago, in the United States, a group called FACT (Feminist Anti-Censorship Taskforce)—composed of academics, lawyers, artists, literati, and many big-name feminists—joined forces with the pornography industry to do battle against feminist civil rights legislation that makes pornography legally actionable. FACT defends pornography specifically citing the need that lesbians have for it, and calling it "enjoyable sexually arousing material" which women must have the freedom to choose. "The range of feminist imagination and expression in the realm of sexuality has barely begun to find voice. Women need the socially recognized space to appropriate for themselves the robustness of what traditionally has been male language," that is, pornography (FACT, 1985, p. 31).

What is wrong here is not the assertion that women need more sexual latitude, but its confinement to the forms that male sexuality has taken. The sexual libertarians and lesbian lifestyleers, for all their emphasis on sexual fantasy, lack real sexual imagination. There is a lot of sexy talk in the libertarian literature about the necessity for women to be freed from the chains of the "goody-goody" concept of eroticism, from femininity posing as feminism, and from sentimental, spiritualized, and soft sex. Yet nowhere do we see the forms that this vital, vigorous, and robust female

sexuality would take articulated as anything different than the forms of the male-power sexuality model.

The modes and manifestations of sexuality that the libertarians and lesbian lifestylers hold up as liberating range from the innocuous to the injurious. The melange of forms that have been given equal status, and represented as rebellious sex for women, deserves analysis on these grounds alone. For example, Ellen Willis states, "It is precisely sex as an aggressive, unladylike activity, an expression of violent and unpretty emotion, an exercise of erotic power, and a specifically genital experience that has been taboo for women" (Willis, 1983, p. 85). Side by side, we see Willis equating "sex as aggressive" and as "violent emotion," with sex as the "exercise of erotic power" and "genital experience." All are represented as mere taboo. No slippery slope here; just slippery prose for slippery goals.

Judith Walkowitz has termed the libertarian perspective on sexuality the "advanced position" (Diary, 1981, p. 72). It is difficult to see what is so advanced or progressive about a position that locates "desire," and that imprisons female sexual dynamism, vitality, and vigor, in old forms of sexual objectification, subordination, and violence, this time initiated by women and done with women's consent. The libertarians offer a supposed sexuality stripped naked of feminine taboo, but only able to dress itself in masculine garb. It is a male-constructed sexuality in drag.

But more appears in this drag show than the male-power sexual actors and activities. De-politicizing is also in drag, disguised as the social construction of sexuality. When the social construction of sexuality entered the center stage of feminist discourse, the politics of sexuality and sexual domination were forced to exit—and so too were the politics of lesbianism. For example, the editors of *Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* argue that lesbianism has been *unsexed*—by a sexual consensus between lesbians and heterosexual feminists that "theoretically accepted each other's moderated, healthy sexual proclivities . . . in somewhat the same spirit that St. Paul accepted the inevitability of marriage for those weak of flesh and soul" (Snitow, Stansell, & Thompson, 1983, p. 27). The "advanced position" does not talk about political lesbianism and compulsive heterosexuality anymore. They have been relegated to a bit part in feminist discourse. And it's those extremist, anti-sex, repressed, puritanical radical feminists who insist on giving them even that much of a role!

There is the arrogant and patronizing assumption in libertarian arguments that those who make problematic the concept of sexual pleasure are themselves deprived of its more vital and vigorous delights. Sexual wimps! Problematizing the concept of sexual pleasure means talking

about male power. So the "advanced position" hardly talks about male power anymore—that's simplistic and grim. And as the FACT brief so facetiously phrased it, that only portrays men as vicious "attack dogs" and women as victims (FACT, 1985, p. 39). Instead, the libertarian position talks a lot about social conditioning to sexuality or the role of socialization in achieving a sexuality. So that when men act in certain ways, they are mere products of their socialization, as are women. These theories lack a concept of power that highlights that male sexuality is bound up with power—that there are positive advantages in status, ego, and authority for men in the ways they have exercised their sexuality. Women cannot uncritically bracket this analysis in order to revel in the joy of sex.

The scenario of sexual forms that mimic the male-power mode of sexuality is only one focus. Another, as Susanne Kappeler has pointed out with respect to pornography, is the *structure of representation* that must be taken into consideration. This means that somebody is making those representations, and somebody is looking at them, "through a complex array of means and conventions" (Kappeler, 1986, p. 3). The libertarians and lesbian lifestylers tell us that the sexual actors who act out certain roles, such as butch/femme and master/slave, are women who can be both subjects and objects in the sexual event. In other words, when lesbians, for example, take on butch/femme or master/slave roles, because they are two women—two lesbians—engaged in such sex "play," no one is objectified, hurt, or violated. Libertarianism and lesbian lifestylism purport to level the cultural inequality of male subject and female object. Let's look more closely at this claim.

Many libertarians and lesbian lifestylers, when they engage in various sexual acts, claim that they and their acts are resolutely sequestered from anything these acts might represent "out there." The privacy of the bedroom and what goes on there is separated, they say, from reality, in a "room of one's own"—the libertarian and lesbian lifestyle sphere of *fantasy*. In sado-masochism, for example, the whips, the chains, the swastikas, the military paraphernalia, the handcuffs, the dog collars, the masters, the slaves have no dimension in the real world. The master or slave roles for example, are treated in a world apart, in a sanctuary of sexual activity, where the game is played according to other rules, valid in that fantasy world. The artist insulates the aesthetic, often claiming it as a reality-free zone. The libertarian in the same insular fashion attempts to shelter the sexual sphere making her activities here independent of reality, independent of critique. The sexual actors and activities exist in a rarefied atmosphere. It's like playing in the sandbox, or more accurately in the kitty litter box.

The libertarians and lesbian lifestylers would have it that until women "deal with" the whole issue of sexuality, no true liberation will ensue. What this focus has achieved is the re-sexualization of women, this time in the name of women's liberation. The sexualization of women, of course, is an old theme that is common to both old and "new" sex reformers and sexologists, as is the theme that women need to be freed up sexually in order to be liberated. Havelock Ellis said it, as did Kinsey, and most recently Masters and Johnson. But this time the "new" sex reformers are women, and the theme is that the female sexual urge is enormously powerful, more so than it has been given credit for in the flaccid feminist literature that preceded this particular libertarian "sexual revolution."

The hidden dogmatism here is that sex is the source of power. Sex is central—not creativity, not thinking, not anything else but sex. Following a kind of Freudian line, the libertarians exert a re-conservatizing influence on feminism and lesbianism essentializing some vaguely defined "power of desire."

Sexuality seems to be at the base of everything in the libertarian and lesbian lifestyle literature. Here, the primacy of sex is reasserted, this time not necessarily as a biological drive, but as a propelling social force—a force that has not only influence but deterministic power. Sexuality takes on the tone of a new natural law theory in libertarian discourse, reversing the "anatomy is destiny" theory of sexuality into a theory of social determinism. Sex as a primary biological drive reappears in sex as a primary social motor, driving itself to fulfillment by utilizing all of the male-power modes of sexual objectification, subordination, and oppression. Like any motor, sex requires the assistance of tinkering and technique. The mechanistic model once more prevails.

Can we so readily believe that sex is our salvation? Haven't we heard this line before—that what really counts is the quality of our sex lives, our orgasms?

Our most recent wave of feminism has spent much of its time de-sexualizing the images of women in the media, the marketplace, and the cosmos in general. What the libertarian position has succeeded in doing is re-sexualizing women, using feminist and lesbian liberation rhetoric to assert that sexuality is a radical impulse. But sexuality is no more radical than anything else. There are certain forms of it that may be radical and there are certain forms of it that are not. It is ironic that the libertarians want to reassert the male-power forms of sexuality to empower women.

This was not always the case, however. There was a time when this movement called lesbian feminism had a passion, principles, and politics.

Without romanticizing that period as the golden age of lesbian feminism, I would like to recall for us what that movement was and what it stood for.

This movement was the strongest challenge to hetero-reality that feminism embodied. It challenged the worldview that women exist for men and primarily in relation to them. It challenged the history of women as primarily revealed in the family—a history that often in the best of accounts, rendered women only in relation to men and male-defined events. It challenged that seemingly eternal truth that “Thou as a woman must bond with a man,” forever seeking our lost halves in the complementarity of hetero-relations. It even challenged the definition of feminism itself as the equality of women with men. Instead, it made real a vision of the equality of women with our Selves. It defined equality as being equal to those women who have been for women, those who have lived for women’s freedom and those who have died for it; those who have fought for women and survived by women’s strength; those who have loved women and who have realized that without the consciousness and conviction that women are primary in each other’s lives, nothing else is in perspective.

This movement worked on behalf of all women. It wasn’t afraid to define rape as sex—not just violence but sex. It criticized prostitution and pornography as sexually hip for women and wasn’t afraid to speak out against the male sexual revolutionaries who wanted to liberate all the women they could get access to in the name of this fake freedom. It established centers for battered women and led the feminist campaign against violence against women.

But then something happened. Women—often other lesbians—began to define things differently. Pornography came to be called erotica and enlisted in the service of lesbian speech and self-expression. Violence against women came to be called lesbian sadomasochism and enlisted in the service of lesbian sex, that is, fucking. Prostitution came to be called necessary women’s work and enlisted in the service of female economic reality. What had changed was that instead of men, women—including women who called themselves lesbians—were endorsing these activities for other women. And other women, other lesbians, were reluctant to criticize in the name of some pseudo-feminist and lesbian unity.

Certainly many lesbians resisted these debasements of women’s lives. Certainly, many lesbians are still in the forefront of the anti-pornography movement. Many lesbians are fighting worldwide against international prostitution and sex slavery. And many lesbians have spoken out against lesbian sadomasochism. But whereas formerly, you could count on a political movement of lesbian feminism to fight against these antifeminist activities, the politics of lesbian feminism has diminished.

Lesbian feminism was a movement based on the power of a "we," not on an individual woman's fantasy or self-expression. This was a movement that had a politics—that realized that prostitution, pornography, and sexual violence could not be redefined as therapeutic, economic, or sexy to fit any individual woman's whim in the name of free choice. It was a movement that recognized the complexities of choice and how so-called choices for women are politically constructed.

Now I want to tell you a story—about choice, because every time radical feminists point out the political construction of women's choices, we are accused of being condescending to women and of making women into victims. Thus, my story.

Once upon a time, in the beginnings of this wave of feminism, there was a feminist consensus that women's choices were constructed, burdened, framed, impaired, constrained, limited, coerced, shaped, etc. by patriarchy. No one proposed that this meant women's choices were *determined*, or that women were passive or helpless victims of the patriarchy. That was because many women believed in the power of feminism to change women's lives and obviously, women could not change if they were socially determined in their roles or pliant putty in the hands of the patriarchs. We even talked about compulsory motherhood and yes, compulsory heterosexuality! We talked about the ways in which women and young girls were seasoned into prostitution, accommodated themselves to male battering, and were channeled into low paying and dead-ended jobs. And the more moderate among us talked about sex roles socialization. The more radical wrote manifestos detailing the patriarchal construction of women's oppression. But most of us agreed, that call it what you will, women were not free just to be "you and me."

Time passed, and along came a more "nuanced" view of feminism. It told us to watch our language of women as victims. More women went to graduate and professional schools, grew "smarter," were received at the bar, went into the academy, and became experts in all sorts of fields. They partook of the power that the male gods had created and "saw that it was good." They perceived the plethora of options available to them, and thus they projected to all women, and voilà the gospel of unadulterated choice. They started saying things like "... great care needs to be taken not to portray women as incapable of responsible decisions" (Andrews, 1987, p. 46).

Some women thought these words were familiar, that they had heard them before, but the feminist discourse analysts didn't seem particularly interested in tracing this back to what "old-fashioned" feminists labelled liberal patriarchal discourse. They said this was boring and outmoded, and

besides women had already heard enough of this, and it was depressing. Let's not be simplistic and blame men, they said, since this analysis "offers so few leverage points for action, so few imaginative entry points for visions of change" (Snitow et al., 1983. p. 30). Instead they began to talk about the "Happy Breeders," and the "Happy Hookers" and the "women who loved it" and those who would love it if they could only have "the freedom and the socially recognized space to appropriate for themselves the robustness of what traditionally has been male language" (read pornography).

This was familiar too, but then something strange happened. Those women who had noted the thread of continuity between liberal patriarchal men and FACT feminism, for example; began to notice that instead of women mimicking male speech, men began to mimic women. In the United States, along came a phenomenon called surrogate motherhood. A New Jersey court decision upheld the right of men to buy women-paid breeders-to have their babies for them (Superior Court of New Jersey, 1987). But one of these so-called surrogates decided to fight for herself and her child, recognizing that surrogacy exploits women. This was popularly known as the case of Mary Beth Whitehead versus Bill Stern. Gary Skoloff, the lawyer for Bill Stern in the New Jersey surrogacy case, summed up his court argument by saying: "If you prevent women from becoming surrogate mothers and deny them the freedom to decide . . . you are saying that they do not have the ability to make their own decisions . . . It's being unfairly paternalistic and it's an insult to the female population of this nation." Some women felt that "Imitation is the sincerest of flattery." They began to testify in favor of things like pornography and surrogacy so that they could imitate all the men who imitated them. It became difficult to tell who was imitating whom.

And then American legislators began to submit bills advocating surrogate contracts, with proper regulations of course, that mostly protected the sperm donor and the brokerage agencies, because feminism was in the best interests of men, and finally men had realized this. It was as the feminist humanists had always said, that feminism is good for men too.

Before this decision was reversed by a higher court, the judge, Harvey Sorkow, proclaimed that Bill Stern was overwhelmed with the "intense desire" to procreate and even said it was "within the soul." He said the feminist argument that an "elite upper economic group of people will use the lower economic group of women to 'make their babies'" was "insensitive and offensive" to the Bill Sterns of this world. A man of feeling himself, he said that Mary Beth Whitehead was a "woman without empathy." He was very

concerned that Mr. Stern experience his "fulfillment" as a father, and so he gave him Baby Sara whom Mr. Stern called Baby Melissa.

Shortly before this, the Attorney General convened a Commission on Pornography which heard testimony from women who had been brought into pornography. Howard Kurtz of the *Washington Post*, another man of feeling, questioned the veracity of these women by caricaturing their feelings. "... a parade of *self-described victims* who tell their *sad stories* from behind an opaque screen . . . Many experts on both sides of the question say such *anecdotal tales of woe* prove nothing about the effect of sexually explicit materials" (Kurtz, 1985, A4, emphasis mine). Not to be outdone in feeling, Carol Vance poured scorn on the testimony of these same women by quoting with approval a male reporter who would nudge her during the hearings and say "phoney witness" (Coveney & Kaye, 1987, p. 12).

To make a long story short, the men got this language of disbelief from feminists who are now telling us that victims of pornography choose their own beds to lie in. Mary Beth Whitehead chose to sign her contract. All men and women of feeling understand this. It's our right to choose, after all, which is at stake. Pornography and surrogacy protect that right of choice. This kind of freedom of choice, this kind of liberty is liberalism. And unfortunately, lifestyle lesbianism is also liberalism.

The liberalism of lifestyle lesbianism means that *we*—that is, lesbians—can't say *we* anymore. Instead, women say: "in my opinion," or "for me," or "as I see it" or "I have the right to what turns me on." So what are we left with? Certainly not political lesbianism which cannot even frame a sentence in the first person plural at this point in lesbian history. No, rather—an extremely self-centered lesbian worldview. And we are left with a tyranny of tolerance that passes for difference.

It is as if every individual desire has become a personal or cultural difference that other women must not only tolerate but also promote. So one woman's *desire*, rationalized as a *need* to free up her sexuality by engaging in s & m for example, must be tolerated by other women and/or lesbians in the name of promoting lesbian differences and fostering lesbian unity by making room for all such differences. In the name of some amorphously defined feminist and/or lesbian community, value judgments cannot be made because that's being divisive. What kind of unity can be built on an unwillingness to make judgments?

For example, many women vaguely "feel" that so-called lesbian sado-masochism is wrong but hold themselves back from translating that feeling into words and action. Other women tell them that no one has the right to judge the behavior of others or enforce one's own values. This is what I mean by a tyranny of tolerance—"doing your own thing." The tyranny of

tolerance dissuades women from tough-minded thinking, from responsibility for disagreeing with others, and from the will to act. This puts us in an extremely passive position. What is defined as value freedom, that is, not making judgments, may appear sensitive to and respectful of other women but in reality it makes women passive and uncritical since it stops both judgments and action. And active social and political life stem from values, choices, and activities that are defined with clarity and exercised with commitment.

Mary Daly has outlined several elements of radical feminism (Daly, 1984, pp. 397-398; Daly, 1987, p. 75). In a similar fashion I would highlight several commonly-held values of Lesbian feminism that allow us to say *we* again. If we are lesbian feminists, we have clear and present knowledge that the boys, and some of the girls, are not going to like us and that we just might run into trouble along the way.

If we are lesbian feminists, we are radically different from what the hetero-society wants us to be. It not a fake difference, but a real difference. For example, lesbian sexuality is *different*, rooted in the lesbian imagination. It is not the same old sexuality that women must submit to in hetero-reality. It is not pornography, it is not butch and femme, and it is not bondage and domination. It is for one thing, a sexuality that is imagination rooted in reality. As Andrea Dworkin has written, "Imagination is not a synonym for sexual fantasy . . ." Fantasy can only conjure up a scripted bag of tricks that are an endless repetition of heterosexual conformist practices. "Imagination finds new meanings, new forms; values and acts. The person with imagination is pushed forward by it into a world of possibility and risk, a distinct world of meaning and choice" (Dworkin, 1987, p. 48); not into the heterosexual junkyard of lesbian libertarian and lifestyle activities that get recycled to women as fantastic goods. Lesbian lifestylism puts fantasy in place of imagination. Have you ever noticed how everyone talks about their fantasies. and not about imagination?

If we are lesbian feminists, we feel and act on behalf of women as women. Lesbian feminism is not a one issue movement. It makes connections between all issues that affect women—not only what affects this particular group, class, nationality, and not only what affects lesbians. We feel and act for all women because we are women, and even if we were the last ones to profess this, we would still be there for women.

If we are lesbian feminists, we keep going. Even when it's not popular. Even when it's not rewarded. Not just yesterday. Not just today. Not just a couple of hours on the weekend. Lesbian feminism is a way of life, a way of living for our deepest Selves and for other women.

And those who think that the objectification, subordination and violation

of women is acceptable just as long as you call it lesbian erotica or lesbian sadomasochism—they're not lesbian feminists. And those who think that it's acceptable in the privacy of their own bedrooms, where they enjoy it, where they get off on it—especially sexually—they're not lesbian feminists either. As Mary Daly has said, they're lesbians "from the waist down."

And to those who say, how dare we define what feminism means, I say—if we don't define what feminism means, what does feminism mean?

For years, we fought against the depiction of lesbians in hetero-pornography. We said, "that's not us in those poses of butch and femme role-playing. That's not the way we make love. That's not us treating each other as sadists or as masochists. That's not us bound by those chains, with those whips, and in those male fantasies of what women do with other women. That's a male wet dream of what a lesbian is and what lesbians do," we said. And we didn't only say it. We fought it. So now what happens. We have lesbian pornography appearing in U.S. "women's" porn mags such as "Bad Attitude" and "On Our Backs." And we have the FACT Brief. And all of this "feminist and lesbian literature" tells us that straight pornography, that heteropornography, is right. We are butches and femmes, we are sadists and masochists, and we do get off on doing violence to each other. We've come full circle—unfortunately back to the same negative starting point.

So I want to end by talking about a vision and a context for lesbian sexuality. For those who want how-to-do-it guidelines, this ending will be a great disappointment. I want to suggest what sexuality might look like rooted in lesbian imagination, not in the hetero-fantasies of lesbian pornography. This is a vision, a context, an endnote that is really a beginning.

This vision of sexuality includes the "ability to touch and be touched." But more, a touch that makes contact, as James Baldwin has phrased it. Andrea Dworkin, building on these words of Baldwin, writes about sexuality as the act, the point of connection, where touch makes contact if self-knowledge is present. It is also the act, the point of connection, where the inability of touch to make contact is revealed and where the results may be devastating. In sexuality, intimacy is always possible, as much as we say that sex is sex—that is, simple pleasure. In sexuality, a range of emotions about life get expressed, however casual or impersonal the intercourse—feelings of betrayal, rage, isolation, and bitterness as well as hope, joy, tenderness, love, and communion (Dworkin, 1987, pp. 47-61). All, although not all together, reside in this passion we call sexuality. Sexuality is where these emotions become accessible or anesthetized. A whole human life does not stand still in sex.

Libertarian and lesbian lifestyle simplifies the complexity of that

whole human life that is present in the sex act. Abandoning that totality—that history, those feelings, those thoughts—allows for wildfire but not for passion. “All touch but no contact . . .” (Baldwin, 1962, p. 82).

Passion, of course, allows for love. Its possibility, not its inevitability. Passion is a passage between two people. Love is an extension of that passage. Passion can become love, but not without the openness to it. Sex as passion, and perhaps as love, not merely as wildfire is a radical experience of being and becoming, of excavating possibilities within the self surely, and within another perhaps, that have been unknown.

I began this talk by stating that, although the lesbian lifestylers talk about sex constantly, they are speechless about its connection to a whole human life, and, therefore, they are speechless about sex itself. The presence of a whole human life in the act of sexuality negates any reductionistic view of sex as good or bad, sheer pleasure or sheer perversion. Dworkin reminds us that when sex is getting even, when sex is hatred, when sex is utility, when sex is indifferent, then sex is the destroying of a human being, another person perhaps, assuredly one's self. Sex is a whole human life rooted in passion, in flesh. This whole human life is at stake always.

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