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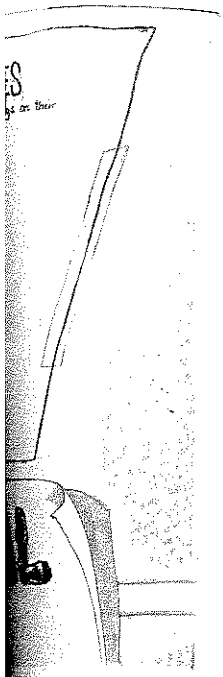
Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick: A Special Section



LESBIAN ARCHIVES

For this *Moving Image Review* we brought together lesbian and queer artists, academics, activists, and archivists who look to and save media objects and practices of the past and present, using a range of methods and vernaculars, in the name of marking, sharing, and preserving lesbian culture. If we think of this collection about lesbian archives as itself an *archive*, that makes us the archivists, *GLQ* the institutional home, and you the researcher. We invite you, the reader-researcher, to join us in activating and perusing this lesbian archive. You might consider why these eclectic writings were made, saved, grouped, and presented and what this tells us about queer media, archives, and lesbians past and present. The same questions were asked when one of us (Juhasz) gained access to the Women's Building video archive or when another of our contributors, Catherine Lord, delved into and across the covers of lesbian pulp fiction. Our other contributors study or practice media archiving itself—Kristin Pepe of the Outfest Legacy Project for LGBT Film Preservation; Yvonne Welbon, who speaks to Julia Wallace and Alexis Pauline Gumbs about their *Queer Black Mobile Homecoming;* and David Oscar Harvey, in conversation with Sarah Schulman about the ACT UP Oral History Project, which she creates with Jim Hubbard. They bring to this lesbian archive their individual and communal reflections of the will to save and preserve via media (this print archive, videos, films, interviews, websites, books, RVs) so as to remember lesbian love, death, activism, and generation. In this sense, then, perhaps *queer archives* is an even more fitting title, given the tenuous—if gendered, raced, generational, and sexed—forms of authority, connection, and interest that hold us.

The history of our queer archive—the quasi-academic regulations of its shaping, the varied nature of its objects, and the multiple conditions of its reading—is bound by contemporary assumptions about identity, community, and media and how these are, in turn, shaped, understood, and connected to media from the past. Lord suggests that "culture requires memory. Memory requires an archive." Yet

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lesbians' lack of material resources ensures that our "moving images disappear," according to Pepe—that is, until we save them. And so ours is a project of salvage, and then a giving and receiving of the many media forms that hold our memories. Perhaps not surprisingly, the activities and processes that take place at the lesbian archive (a community-based salvaging, giving, interviewing, connecting, separating, reading, and receiving) become (as for feminists most generally) the important thing, more than the archived materials themselves. According to Welbon, the black lesbian archive is a "spiritual journey full of lust and discovery" for some and "social organizing . . . surviving and thriving together," for others. Juhasz sees it as "allowing for multiple and conflicting looks between feminists of the 1970s and their progeny," while Schulman believes that her "oral history project lays the groundwork of data" for others. And for Pepe, and this archive, this is in the end about more than "a film negative, it represents the courage, passion, and guts of the gay rights movement."

—Alexandra Juhasz and Ming-Yuen S. Ma

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IMMERSION IN LEGACY

Coming Home to Ourselves and One Another

Yvonne Welbon

We know that the grit, striving, brazenness, and foresight of our elders already lives in us. We will use this process of study, interview and collaborative creativity to make it plain.
—Julia Wallace and Alexis Pauline Gumbs

In the words of French historian Pierre Nora, "Modern memory is, above all, archival," relying on "the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image." For Nora, the responsibility of "remembering" has been delegated to the archive and "requires every social group to redefine its identity through the revitalization of its

own history."[1] Filmmaker Julia Wallace, the daughter of a Baptist preacher, and her poet-writer partner, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, have taken up the responsibility of remembering their own history: the social-organizing stories of nonconforming black women who began their work in and prior to the 1980s. Together they set out on a journey to create a queer black *Mobile Homecoming*, an experiental archive project gathering the stories of black lesbians, trans men, and the gender queer by traveling across America in a mobile home, the RV they see as a *Revolutionary Vehicle* that they call Sojourner. When asked about the project's name, Wallace said, "Homecoming came to us as we brainstormed about our mobile home and love and what the project meant to us and what we believed it would mean to our community. At the center of that is coming home to ourselves and one another because we are one."[2]

In May 2009 Wallace and Gumbs, then aged thirty and twenty-seven, respectively, found themselves to be the youngest women at the *We Are One Conference* hosted by the Infinity Diamond Club in Durham, North Carolina. Hired by the conference organizers to document the event, the women were witness to a living history they found inspiring. Mandy Carter, the cofounder of the National Black Justice Coalition, who began her activism in the 1960s, led a workshop in which participants shared their stories of victory. In another session Wallace was paired off with Carolyn Gray, and Gumbs with Gray's partner, Harriet Alston. In the time they were paired, Wallace and Gray made a connection, and Gumbs became enamored with Alston, one of the founders of the third world lesbian woman's organization Salsa Soul Sisters. Gumbs had learned about the organization while doing research for her doctoral dissertation at the Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York City. She was surprised that she was actually speaking to one of the founders. Soon all four were bonding over lunch. By the end of the day, Wallace and Gumbs sat in their car in the parking lot and made a commitment to each other to dedicate the next few years of their lives to nurturing and documenting black queer intergenerational community. For Nora, just this "will to remember . . . to stop time, to block the work of forgetting" is the purpose of an archive, a site of memory.[3]

"We value what we call social organizing as a deeply political process," said Gumbs, who was named as one of the *UTNE Reader*'s "50 Visionaries Who Are Changing Your World."[4] "For us, social organizing is a process of surviving and thriving together, whether it happens through softball games, or marches in the streets, or dances or a literary magazine."[5] Gumbs and Wallace are interested in how the women they are interviewing created their own social institutions. On their website they state:

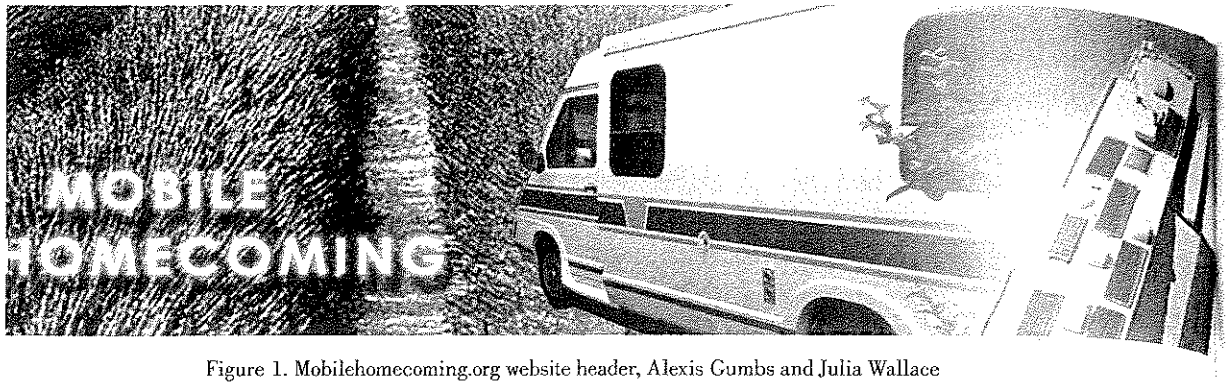


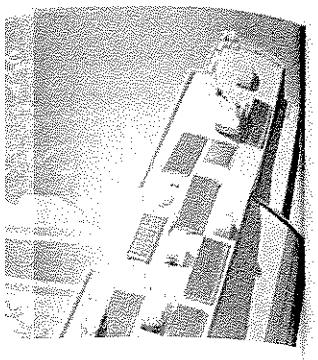
Figure 1. Mobilehomecoming.org website header, Alexis Gumbs and Julia Wallace

> This means we are not only interested in how these black feminist radicals attempted to smash the state. We are also interested in how they made strides towards REPLACING the state by creating their own methods of childcare, health and wellness, spiritual eclecticism. We are interested in how they fed each other, loved each other, raised children together, created publications, created jobs for each other, supported each other's endeavors. We want to know how they created the societies they needed, because we believe that their inventiveness holds the seeds to the society we ALL need.

Gumbs and Wallace also make the society they need through their spiritual mentors and artistic advisers: the scholars M. Jacqui Alexander (*Pedagogies of Crossing)* and Akasha Hull (*Soul Talk*; *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave*), the author Randall Kenan (*Walking on Water: Black American Lives at the Turn of the 21st Century*), the creative duo Climbing Poetree (Alixa Garcia and Naima Penniman), and the gender-queer poets of color, Mangos with Chili. They are also in conversation with Maylei Blackwell and Alice Hom with their Queer of Color Oral History Collective in Los Angeles and with the sociologist Mignon Moore with the Black Queer Elders project.

Gumbs and Wallace began their journey in June 2010. So far they have conducted interviews in over thirty communities. The website, mobilehomecoming .org, allows everyone to take this archival journey with them. There is an interactive map. Videos are posted throughout the trip. Audio is transmitted through podcasts. Updates are posted on Facebook, Twitter, and in blog and vlog entries on the website. Eventually, the entire project will become a two-part documentary and be archived in a repository.

Support for the project has come through grassroots fund-raising. So far over $28,000 has been raised from individual supporters. The Mobile Homecoming website has a donate button that allows donors to contribute once or become



monthly sustainers. Donations are tax deductible through their fiscal sponsor SONG (Southerners on New Ground). Contributors may also make in-kind donations or provide equipment, materials, and time. With their wish list readily available, donors have sponsored several items for the 1988 Winnebago LeSharo RV: everything from a AAA membership to a tire pressure gauge to a GPS system have been provided with community support. In addition, organizations and colleges have invited the archivists to present lectures and workshops and paid them fees that have been funneled back into the project.

Their innovative model of multimedia social entrepreneurship networks them to several communities not usually working in collaboration: the media, RV, green, queer, and allied communities. "We want our project to be directly accountable to our fellow visionaries and allies," said Gumbs. "The time that some other projects spend filling out grant reports and reporting outcomes, we spend writing thank you cards and love letters and having people over for dinner to thank them for how much their support means to us."[6]

Nora notes that no society has ever produced archives as deliberately as our own. "The less memory is experienced from the inside the more it exists only through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs—hence the obsession with the archive that marks our age, attempting at once the complete conservation of the present as well as the total preservation of the past."[7] In deliberately creating a queer black *Mobile Homecoming* archive, and the online archive of their process, Gumbs and Wallace are acting on their desire to retrieve the past, to better understand themselves, and to create an intergenerational connection for the future. The project is "an intimate embrace with a living herstory, a celebration of how boldness survives the moment of its need . . . how we know who we are . . . how we live forever."[8]

Note

1. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire [1984], *Representations* 26 (1989): 13.
2. Julia Wallace, e-mail interview with author, September 7, 2010.
3. Nora, "Between Memory and History," 19.
4. www.utne.com/2008-11-13/50-Visionaries-Who-Are-Changing-Your-World.aspx
5. Alexis Pauline Gumbs, e-mail interview with author, September 7, 2010.
6. Gumbs, e-mail interview with author.
7. Nora, "Between Memory and History."
8. "About Mobile Homecoming," mobilehomecoming.org/?page_id=481 (accessed May 10, 2011).

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A LA LA LA ARCHIVE

Alexandra Juhasz

In the seventies, at the Los Angeles Woman's Building (an international center for the feminist art movement), video played a central role in a unique education organized around the dangers of female representation and its associated pleasures of self-realization:

> "I'm Joy. I'm from Kansas. I came here because I heard about it, and there's nothing like it where I'm from. No feminist support community and I'm anxious for that." "I'm Lyricon Jazzwomin McCaleb. This is my second year. I'm nervous. I quit smoking. I hate microphones and now I have a camera to go with it. I think I'll die. I'm a visual artist. I came here because I was a grape turning into a raisin." (*First Day Feminist Studio Workshop*, dir. Nancy Angelo; 1980)

At the Building, video would initiate a process, then enhance and record it, which could allow for a new type of seeing and knowing of the self. And there was more. These documents of developing radical selves were salvaged for later generations. For it was the video that lasted, even as, and precisely because, the processes were mostly shelved or perhaps unshelvable. At last this huge archive of process is pinned down in the patriarchal digs of the Getty Research Institute. There, the Building's haphazard records of radical feminist change enjoy a contradictory state of stasis as well as preservation.

The archive establishes how women at the Building engaged in collective video practices developed to acknowledge simultaneous points of view. Today, their video salvage creates yet another simultaneity: allowing for multiple and conflicting looks between feminists of the 1970s and their progeny. I return to *First Day Feminist Studio Workshop*, which captures two exercises experienced and relayed over two unedited hours. The first, a Building requisite, is the personal introduction around the circle of all participants and teachers to the group and the camera:

> "I'm Cheri Gaulke, core faculty in the workshop. I came five years ago. The reasons I came then are the reasons I'm here now. I want to do my work in a community and get feedback and have my work grow from the experiences of feedback from other women."

"I'm Deirdre Beckett. I'm here to do this sort of thing we're doing right now. I find it very difficult. I find it very difficult talking in a group. But I came here after going to art school. I got confused about whether I was being produced by the institution or I was the producer. The question of my being a person or not was unclear to me."

The tension, fear, excitement, and unstated drama in the room is palpable in the women's comments, faces, and gestures (and it is also greatly exacerbated by the camera): they are saying out loud things they have never said before (as a personal and political act) and taping it for their own later viewing and also for posterity.

As a feminist professor and artist myself, I have been in many such rooms, enjoying our matrilineal inheritance of videotaping introductory exercises around a circle. I know personally the power of this process. It came as something of a surprise, however, to find that *watching* such process so many years later proved to be another matter entirely. I will be frank: *Feminist Studio Workshop* is basically unremarkable, tedious, and somewhat inscrutable when watched thirty years later in the Getty's hushed special collections reading room. While its reel-to-reel black-and-white 1970s feel, as well as the haircuts, are initially entertaining, watching uncountable hours of other women's unprocessed process is, well, boring. What is the meaning and purpose of process video for others once it is archived? The many contradictions inherent in gathering and saving evidence of something that is most critical in the doing and living of it, in its present, and within its community, pale in comparison with those raised by the ensuing, deferred process of sitting alone, so many years later, watching evidence of others' once daring development.

Take, for example, the tape *la la la Workshop* (1976) listed as follows in the Getty's catalog: "[produced by?] the Woman's Building, 1976. Video documentation of the second day of the la la la workshop held at the Woman's Building, June 5–6, 1976, 10 mins." The video opens and closes to black and is without identifying titles of any sort. The body of the tape is composed of two real-time segments where two groups of three women sit in semicircles facing the camera and camera-woman with whom they are openly interacting. They pass a microphone between them: "This is Sheila Ruth at la la la speaking with Linda and Marilou. I'd like to ask you two lesbians several questions." How did they tell their mom, dad, best friend, and boyfriend that they were lesbians? It seems that they are casually taping lesbians saying out loud what had never been made public before. No small thing. Then, a new group of women pops into place. They have decided that for their part of what now seems an exercise (but toward what and for whom, the tape does not tell *us*), they will answer the question, "What is la la la?" The answers

are multiple, uncertain, and passionate, including "Being with a lot of women. It's all a celebration," and "Lesbians are living and loving Amazons." Then we hear about la la la. One woman explains: "I would love access to Ruth Iskin's slide show. I wish that had been videotaped. I'd like to see a book of the photo exhibition to be available for future reference, for future study." But we have run out of time to finish her thoughts . . . From off-screen: "We're winding up. Good-bye."

What and who is this tape for? Why was it archived? This is no document for the sisters of posterity. While there is a direct-to-camera address, this serves as an acknowledgment of the videographer in the room rather than an outside, or even future, viewer, who would certainly need more context, background, and a more coherent structure to be able to engage meaningfully with these vaguely structured fragments of video. The tape's primary value is in the act of its taping, giving these lesbians coming into both art and voice a structured activity around public speaking and its record. The videotaping serves to formalize and give shape, as well as make public and permanent, this small and private action experienced within one sparsely attended workshop, itself part of a larger set of events and activities that we will never see (or remember) because they were not videotaped.

And yet . . . there *is* more. Yes, this video, like many of the others in the archive, was originally for process. But it was also carefully saved, meaning that someone (or many) deemed it of value for an intangible future. Remember how the la la la participant ends the tape by imagining herself, or a feminist like herself, wanting to revisit and reuse all the ephemera produced at the Woman's Building, particularly the stuff experienced during la la la? She expresses a radical (lesbian) (future-oriented) video fancy: that others in her present, as well as the future, will be as lucky as is she, turned into tape, and made easily accessible again. "I'd like to see a book of the photo exhibition to be available for future reference, for future study." And this she and this exercise *were*: videotaped, archived, made available for future reference, by me, feminist media scholar, myself the middle-aged daughter of a 1970s feminist, Suzanne Juhasz, herself a first-generation women's studies professor and one-time visitor to the Woman's Building, there to talk about feminist poetry about which she was an early expert.[1] And for you, diligent student of lesbian/feminist art history. We are that woman of the future, referencing and studying, yet sadly, so little like *her*, what with her ungainly lesbian fashion and heart-wrenching enthusiasm for the endless, mundane exercises and events of la la la. Let's face it, that was *her* process.

la la la Workshop is only the first example of the heartbreaking failures and unimaginable successes of this archive of feminist process. So moved were they by their own present that it seems they planned for a future littered with

Figure 1. Feminist Eye and Film Video Conference, March 29–30, 1975, Maria Karras. Courtesy of Otis College of Art and Design, Women's Building Slide Archive.

the documents that they needed *then*. Women at the Building carefully, conscientiously, and diligently shot and preserved the archive that *they* wished to study: an archive of all of their process. "But if you don't do these sortings, these purges, and you allow the flow of paper to engulf you, considering it impossible to separate the important from the unimportant—wouldn't that be insanity?"[2] I attest to how exhausting and confusing the post facto sorting of an undifferentiated archive can be. Yet . . . I see that this engulfing saving was not simply insanity, for the Woman's Building had an articulated feminist rationale behind its incessant archiving. There was something critical and revolutionary defining this archival impulse. These women believed in their archive's consequence, as well as the worth of every woman who made video there, every tape she made, and every word recorded.

But important to whom, and important how? For there is the rub in all this: the taping and tapes actually *worked*. The women at the Building understood that video would enable them to enter the archive, thus ensuring their own power, and they did, and it *was*. Writes Jacques Derrida: "There is no political power without control of the archive, if not memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation."[3] They made the work and it *has* been archived, and not simply because the women from the Building saw value in

it, and in themselves (the ultimate feminist act), but because the *Getty* did as well (the ultimate patriarchal fact).

Which finally raises the related question as well as the associated matter of (my) tone. Given their preeminently housed archive, and its related visibility and power, why do the women from the Building, and feminists from the 1970s more generally, continue to feel so unseen and undervalued? Are they in or out of history? And who is the best judge? In the end, the interrelations between the previous generation's insatiable anxieties about invisibility in the face of their own consistent visibility (video) project (what Hal Foster calls "the paranoid dimension of archive art") and my own, somewhat contradictory, responsive resistance, as I make this and other small gestures toward their ongoing visibility, seem more noteworthy. "Perhaps the paranoid dimension of archival art is the other side of its utopian ambition—its desire to turn belatedness into becomingness, to recoup failed visions of art, literature, philosophy and everyday life into possible scenarios of alternative kinds of social relations, to transform the no-place of the archive into the no-place of utopia," Foster explains.[4] And so, with this return to a la la la archive, I attempt to enact alternative social relations across and between lesbians in celebration and thanks for a commitment to salvage.

Notes

This essay is extracted from a longer work commissioned by the Otis College of Art and Design as part of its Pacific Standard Time (PST) initiative, focusing on postwar art in Los Angeles. The full piece will be published with four others in the catalogue for the art exhibit *Doin' It in Public: Feminism and Art at the Woman's Building*, to be held at Otis October 2011–January 2012 as part of PST.

1. Suzanne Juhasz, *Naked and Fiery Forms* (New York: Octagon Books, 1977).
2. Ilya Kabakov, "The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away, c. 1977," in *The Archive: Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Charles Merewether (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 33.
3. Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever," quoted in "Introduction: Art and the Archive," in Merewether, *Archive*, 13.
4. Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," in Merewether, *Archive*, 146.

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AN ARCHIVE OF INTIMACIES

A Conversation with Sarah Schulman

David Oscar Harvey

Sarah Schulman is the author of fifteen books, including plays, novels, and works of social criticism. Her impressive corpus might be said to constitute an archive of its own—with each of its constitutive works addressing queer lives and politics. For example, Schulman's most recently published work, *Ties That Bind: Familial Homophobia and Its Consequences*, draws on her research, personal experience, and activism to argue that the home is the foundation for heterosexist prejudice. In the conversation that follows, I speak with Schulman about the ACT UP Oral History Project, an archive she founded, collected, and continues to run with the filmmaker Jim Hubbard. The archive seeks to establish a comprehensive and multivalent record of the AIDS activist coalition ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power). It comprises 120 interviews with members of ACT UP and continues to grow. These interviews as well as full transcripts are available for viewing at the New York City and San Francisco Public Libraries. Additionally, five-minute clips of each interview, as well as full transcripts, are available online at www.actuporalhistory.org.

David Harvey: Can you talk a bit about the origins of the ACT UP Oral History Project?

Sarah Schulman: I was driving in Los Angeles in 2001 and NPR was having a program about the twentieth anniversary of AIDS. On that program someone said something to the effect of, "'At first, America had trouble with people with AIDS but then they came around,'" and I almost crashed my rental car. I pulled over, enraged, called Jim Hubbard, and we mutually decided to do something. It just couldn't be the case that all our friends died for nothing and that everyone was going to naturalize it, deluding themselves that Americans, out of the goodness of their hearts, decided to do the right thing when it was quite the opposite. America was forced against its will by us and our friends to do something about AIDS.

DH: In your book *Stagestruck: Theater, AIDS, and the Marketing of Gay America* (1998) you mention an exchange with photographer Nan Goldin regarding possible avenues, in art and activism, one might take in light of the enormous loss of

life surrounding AIDS. To what extent is the oral history something of an answer to that question?

SS: I've been spending a lot of my time trying to understand what my responsibility is under these conditions of the tremendous loss of life. So, a lot of the project is about making a record and a lot of it is about the consequences of AIDS, a topic that has not been widely broached, although my book *Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination*, which comes out in February 2012, attempts to do so. For instance, in New York City eighty thousand died of AIDS and they are never mentioned—the death, suffering, negligence, indifference, rebellion, victories, which are very significant, and the consequences on the individual and the collective society—none of this has been grappled with in a public way. The oral history project lays the groundwork of data for people to begin to struggle with these questions.

DH: Did you have any other oral history projects in mind when determining the contours of your project?

SS: We looked at Holocaust oral histories. Jim and I didn't want to focus exclusively on the trauma, and the Fortunoff Video Archive at Yale was a better model because the interviews discussed who the person was before the violation. So the first forty minutes of our interviews are about who the subject was before AIDS. This allows you to see that ACT UP members actually had very little in common, no real continuity of values or politics. For years I had tried to understand the common thread: it's characterological, people who cannot stand still and allow another person to be violated in their presence. The reason that ACT UP worked is that each person was doing what they could do based on who they were and where they were at. Ultimately, all these individual trajectories occurring at the same time is what created the movement that became the counterculture around ACT UP. This changed the way queer people see themselves around the world. ACT UP was a vanguard for cultural transformation. It shows you that it doesn't make any sense strategically to make people act and think in unison.

DH: One of the difficulties with quite a few archives is access, yet via the Web, the ACT UP Oral History Project, at least the transcripts and portions of the taped interviews, are immediately accessible around the world. Can you speak to the importance of accessibility in defining the contours of the project?

SS: Jim and I have a long history of working together. We're about to celebrate our twenty-fifth anniversary as collaborators. And we share similar value systems. One of our big things is wanting material to be accessible. When we started the MIX

festival in 1987, no one was ever turned away for inability to pay. With this project, I've personally been on the road for eight years, going to colleges and encouraging faculty and students to use the archive. And now the archive is becoming the central database for ACT UP research.

Over eighty thousand people have downloaded hard copies of the transcripts for free, some of them from Asia and Eastern Europe. Perhaps these are people with HIV/AIDS in countries that don't have AIDS activist movements. Perhaps they are also activists in other movements, but they would have to overcome their own homophobia in order to learn about successful social movements from queers and people with AIDS.

DH: Can you tell us something about your process as the interviewer? Do you think your own integral involvement with ACT UP plays a role in the interviews?

SS: I don't understand how people do oral histories who are outsiders. Because I possess so much inside knowledge and have relationships with the participants, it allows me to achieve a depth that I would be unable to reach with a questionnaire. Also, we reconceptualize our approach constantly, so the questions change.

No one has ever refused to answer a question; that's because there's a relationship and a place of intimacy that I can't imagine with a professional. I don't know what academics think about our methodology and whether they approve of it. I do know that no one has come away from being interviewed feeling bad about it. And I'm very happy about that.

DH: Somewhat related to access, it's quite disheartening how little attention our culture, queer and otherwise, currently affords HIV/AIDS or the legacy of AIDS activism. How do you see your project encouraging a more attentive dialogue with the topic, perhaps especially for people who are saying, "'AIDS is over; AIDS is dealt with?'"

SS: Well, I don't think they're saying that. They're saying, "'AIDS? What's that?'" Or they're not saying AIDS. They're not saying anything. Younger generations don't really know what ACT UP is. If it was part of their education it would be another story. In traveling to various universities, Jim and I realized that twentieth-century US history survey classes across the boards do not include AIDS. One of our side goals is to try to get this material into mainstream US history. After all, ACT UP was the most successful recent social movement in the United States.

Fortunately, Schulman and Hubbard's project is drawing increased attention to the significance of ACT UP. Recent work on the world-making and life-changing

activist coalition should rightfully be attributed to the existence of the oral history project. But the project is far from complete. Over one hundred former ACT UP members are waiting to be interviewed and included in the project. The status of the archive as decidedly ongoing, a field of practice rather than a hall of dead letters, testifies to the nature of the archives in this special section, as well as the institutional figure of the archive itself.

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OUTSIDE THE HOLLYWOOD CANON

Preserving Lesbian Moving Images

Kristin (KP) Pepe

Four years ago I worked in a film restoration lab, spending hours hunched over a film bench and a light box and painstakingly restoring every frame of dozens of classics starring such icons as John Wayne, Shirley Temple, and Mae West.

That year I was invited to the restoration premiere of *Parting Glances* (1986), one of the earliest films about AIDS. I remember the chills I felt as I sat with the teary-eyed audience of gay, lesbian, and transgendered people. I saw firsthand that studio films were being taken care of, but films made for and by the people on the margins of the Hollywood canon were in danger. I realized that night that I wanted to focus on work that meant something more to me, and soon after I began working for the people who restored *Parting Glances*, the Outfest Legacy Project for LGBT Film Preservation, a partnership between Outfest and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Film & Television Archive.

Poof: The LGBT Moving Image Crisis

Moving images disappear. At the lab, I was often the first to open rusty old film cans that had been sealed shut for years. You can imagine the dismay you would feel deep in your gut when you finally pry open the can, hoping to discover a neat roll of film and instead—poof—nothing fills the can except dust.

In full disclosure, that scenario is rare. Nitrate, acetate, and polyester have proven to be durable media for preserving the thousands, or millions, of frames containing the photographic evidence and record of our shared and disparate history, culture, experience, and fantasy. Moving images have radically altered how we study and see ourselves. Even so, across cinema's history we keep losing images.

The first film archive in the United States was created in 1938, and others followed. At first these archives were established mainly to collect Hollywood movies. Since then, a wide variety of institutions have seen the value of saving distinct image histories. However, the preservation and collection of LGBT moving images have historically posed unique challenges for traditional archives. The nature of LGBT films—the how and why they are made—is intrinsic to the lack of support for archiving and restoring these films. Many of them are made from personal experience by people trying to figure out both their sexuality and the world around them. They are films documenting milestones of the gay liberation movement. They are attempts at creating images of love that are different from what we usually see. Minorities thirst for images of themselves. These images are instrumental in dispelling myths and squashing homophobia.

Furthermore, many of these filmmakers, since their films are generally personal and produced outside the constraints of commercial demand, make only one or two films. This is especially true of work by lesbian filmmakers of color. Historically, queer film festivals have been a mainstay for showcasing independent and avant-garde LGBT film and video, as well as providing a safe space to view these films. But after these films have completed their festival run, there is no home for them and no system in place to restore or save this work. Often forgotten, the film and director remain a footnote in a festival catalog.

The Outfest Legacy Project for LGBT Film Preservation

The Legacy Project was founded to address this crisis. Several years ago, in the back of a dark theater during the twentieth anniversary of Outfest: The Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Film Festival, then executive director Stephen Gutwillig and the actor Steve Buscemi stood watching a faded, deteriorating print of *Parting Glances*. The print was the best copy available at that time. On the other side of the country, the producer and independent film consultant Robert Hawk curated a tribute to Peter Adair, including a screening of *Word Is Out* (1978); that print was also scratched and missing scenes. The film's directors, as well as Peter's family, were in attendance, and all were discouraged by the condition of the only

known print. Equally distressing was the discovery that the original elements were missing. As these people witnessed the destitute state of these seminal films, a collective awareness became clear: as these movies were deteriorating, part of our LGBT history was deteriorating with the film.

By joining forces, Outfest and the UCLA Film & Television Archive have been able to take the networking and publicity force behind one of the longest running and widely recognized LGBT film nonprofit and blend it with the academic reputation and strength in preservation and conservation of a formidable archive and educational institution. As of June 2011, Outfest and UCLA have established the largest publicly accessible and comprehensive collection of LGBT moving images for research and study (over eighteen thousand items and growing). To address years of neglect in this field and keep the damage from spreading any farther, the Legacy Project educates filmmakers and audiences about the importance of LGBT film preservation. Beyond actively collecting LGBT film and video media for permanent conservation and preservation, the Legacy Project funds the restoration of damaged films and videos to their original release quality (to date, 16 films and over 150 videos).[1] I'd like to highlight several of the restoration projects that contain lesbian images.

Christopher Street Gay Liberation Day (1971)

In 1971 Kate Millett, the pioneering feminist writer of *Sexual Politics*, joined the artist Susan Kleckner and others to form the Women's Liberation Cinema. Their focus was the creation of the documentary *Three Lives*, which opened nearly forty years ago at the Bleecker Street Cinema. During the making of the film, the all-woman crew shot hours of footage that did not make it into the film's final version. One such event was the 1971 Christopher Street Gay Liberation Day in New York, an event from which very little known footage exists. Historian and filmmaker Jenni Olson discovered this extremely valuable documentation of one of the earliest events of the LGBT Rights movement in Kleckner's storage locker in 2006 when the filmmaker delivered her reels to the Legacy Project.

Word Is Out: Stories of Some of Our Lives (1978)

This film was one of the first documentaries made about LGBT people by LGBT people. The documentary challenged stereotypes of the gay experience and became an icon of the emerging gay rights movement of the 1970s. The stories shown in the film are a record of LGBT people's struggles, dissent, joys, loves, and lives. The Mariposa Group, the directors, was made up of six people: Nancy Adair, Peter

Adair, Andrew Brown, Rob Epstein, Lucy Massie Phenix, and Veronica Selver.

Choosing Children (1984)

Choosing Children is a groundbreaking film about lesbian parenting directed by Academy Award winners Debra Chasnoff and Kim Klausner. One of the first representations of lesbian families, *Choosing Children* is an emotionally powerful film that challenges society's definitions of family by exploring how lesbians raise children in couples, alone, with gay men, and in extended families of friends. "It may be hard to remember the time when it was nearly unheard-of for lesbians to have children by choice," said Chasnoff and Klausner, "but before 1980, if you came out, you assumed that the possibility of becoming a parent was nearly nonexistent. We made *Choosing Children* to challenge that prevailing societal assumption, and look what happened in the past twenty-five years!"[2]

The ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives Collection

Community-based LGBT mixed media archives are the guardians who protect our heritage and culture, but they do not usually have the resources to fully support their film and video collections for access, conservation, or preservation. The ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives deposited its rare collection of film and videotape with the Legacy Project in 2007. Since the early 1980s, ONE has engaged in an ongoing effort to record oral histories. Two such tapes that have since been preserved are lectures given by Evelyn Hooker and Lillian Faderman as part of their Culture Series. Hooker's deeply personal lecture about her groundbreaking work with gays and lesbians in the 1950s and about how she began to relate to the oppression felt by her clients is touching and adds a depth to the woman that her papers cannot. Faderman's lecture "Lesbian Chic in the 1920s" included excerpts from her book *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America*. As Faderman reads, she adds flirty winks and nods while enunciating certain phrases that bring her research to life.

Mona's Candle Light Footage (1950)

Home movies are an often-overlooked but important source of pre-1960 images of LGBT people. The handful of LGBT images in early narrative films, in which LGBT characters are often stereotyped and isolated, are slight compared to the LGBT images that exist on home movie films from the 1920s through the 1960s. The great strength of amateur films is the window they offer into ordinary LGBT life, what we did, how we lived, our homes, vacations, hobbies, pets, parties, friends, and all that is often invisible in film history.

Figure 1. Jimmy Reynard, *Mona's Candle Light Footage* (ca. 1950)

Mona's Candle Light Footage is a home movie found by Geoff Alexander of the Academic Film Archive of North America. Alexander approached Academy Film Archive curator Lynne Kirste, who alerted the Legacy Project about this valuable footage documenting performances from a lesbian bar in 1950. The performers are the well-known drag king Jimmy Reynard and the singer Jan Jensen. In the footage they sing well-loved show tunes, such as "I'll Remember April," "It Was Just One of Those Things," and "Tenderly." Many of the patrons sport 1950s butch-femme clothing and hairstyles. The bar has a tiki motif with a male piano player onstage with each of the women. There is little drinking, smoking, or talking among the patrons on-screen, and no dancing, kissing, or overtly "lesbian" behavior. Perhaps the patrons are self-conscious about the camera. I had read about this era and seen the photographs in Nan Boyd's book *Wide-Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965*.[3] It is one thing to see a photo and read about something. It is quite another to see them come to life and see them move, dance, and in this case—sing.

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Problem Solved?

Hardly. The preservation work by the community-based archives, the institutional archives, the studios, and the Legacy Project are significant steps to ensure the survival of important and endangered LGBT works, but the work still left to be done is endless. The amount of material coming into the Project is seemingly overwhelming at times, and both institutions try to be wary of oversaturating an already stretched-thin infrastructure. The current economic climate will affect the ongoing decline of resources and staffing with which to oversee such a quickly expanding collection. Because of this economic reality, historically important collections run the risk of oblivion if not processed correctly.

The Legacy Project has received generous support from many funding institutions, including the National Film Preservation Foundation, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, the David Bohnett Foundation, the Andrew J. Kuehn Jr. Foundation, and the Women's Film Preservation Foundation, and in-kind support from the Bay Area Video Coalition. The group of people working at Outfest and at the UCLA Film & Television Archive and those who volunteer as part of the Legacy Project Advisory Committee conceive ways to save these films that would otherwise fall through the cracks. Behind this group there are hundreds of Outfest members and people in the community who stand with us and donate to fund individual projects. Gay male couples generally have the most disposable income, making them the target of many fund-raising efforts from many LGBT organizations; they have extensively supported our preservation efforts. Outfest and the UCLA Film & Television Archive have made it a priority to restore a range of projects that are diverse in terms of gender and genre, but the most challenging projects to fund have been lesbian and transgender work.

During the past four years, I feel like I have been chasing the chills I felt during that premiere of *Parting Glances*. I love talking to filmmakers, artists, and activists about preserving their work, although at times it can be challenging to convince filmmakers to part with their film and entrust its well-being to the archive. I get it; this work is often more than a film negative: it represents the courage, passion, and guts of the gay rights movement.

Notes

1. Completed projects are *Parting Glances* (dir. Bill Sherwood; 1986), feature film restoration; *Word Is Out* (dir. Mariposa Film Group; 1978), feature documentary film restoration; *Choosing Children* (dir. Kim Klausner and Debra Chasnoff; 1984), feature documentary film restoration; *Queens at Heart* (unknown dir.; 1967), short documentary film restoration; nine Avant-Garde short film restorations; *Tom Chomont Collection* (1967–71), *Mona's Candle Light Footage* (unknown dir.; 1950), short home movie; *First Los Angeles Gay Pride Parade* (dir. Pat Rocco; 1970), short documentary film restoration; *One National Gay and Lesbian Archives*, over eighty hours of video preservation of historic interviews and footage; and *Legacy Project Collection*, one hundred feature-length titles of video preservation. Upcoming projects are *Different from the Others* (dir. Richard Oswald; 1919), narrative feature film; *Christopher Street Gay Liberation Day* (dir. Kate Millett and Susan Kleckner; 1971); *Harvey Milk's "Hope Speech"* (dir. Pat Rocco; 1978), short documentary footage; *Silent No More* (dir. Pat Rocco; 1977), short narrative film
2. Debra Chasnoff, conversation with the author,
3. Nan Boyd, *Wide-Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

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MEDIUM

Ink on Paper

Catherine Lord

It has come to be my feeling, thinking of queers, thinking of time, thinking of archives, thinking in particular about lesbians, muddling again and yet again through the same old stories about their visibility, or invisibility, as you wish, that something is not being read. A metaphor, a trope, has gone missing. A text has not been transcribed. A fault line has sunk beneath the earth. A nuance has been exterminated in translation. A page has been turned too roughly. The font is unfortunate, the point size insufficient, the inking miserly. Details have been obliterated in the passion of arguments that have exhausted not only their proponents but themselves: essentialism versus social construction, sex versus gender, good versus bad, complex versus simple, universal versus contingent, and so on.

We were there. We know we were there. We were always there. We fucked, we fist fucked, we butt fucked, we cruised, we started movements, we marched, we fucked some more, women and men, we cross-dressed, we threw beer bottles, we made porn, we fought sex panics, we tended the ill, we changed our minds and our bodies, we made visual our culture, we spoke it and we danced it, we played it and filmed it and wrote it. We ran presses and galleries and museums. Some say we ran almost everything from behind the scenes.

Culture requires memory. Memory requires an archive. If, as Jacques Derrida proposes, the archive is a structure that exists because it is under house arrest, where did lesbians domicile their culture?

Two or three things, at least, we might say to each other on this subject. Many of us, one way or another, are bibliophiles. We find our archive between the lines. We sample. We stare. We make lists. We collect language. Heartlessly, we confess. Constantly, we distract. We also obstruct. We skirt the cringe factor. We lie. We cite. We copy. We read footnotes. We underline. We speak across generations and genders and nations. We fashion lesbian culture from whatever we find, and we insinuate it wherever we can, whenever it is needed.

We give.

And we take. We run with what we can use—*The Gift*, for example, from Lewis Hyde, who set out to explain the very existence of the gift in capitalist soci-

eties.[1] Rather than accept the proposition that gifts are best explained as a form of barter that facilitates, even produces, the movement of commodities and the production of value, Hyde interests himself in ceremonies that preclude calculations of equivalence. Such practices do not ask the recipient of a gift to do anything so unimaginative as to offer a gift in return. Indeed, they prohibit it. The recipient's obligation is not to the giver but to someone else in the community. Hyde opens our thinking to a choreography of gifts nuanced by needs more graceful, more intricate, more coded, more "queer," shall we say, than an offering of this for that, the expectation of that for this. Hyde proposes a circular series of transmissions. The giver does not receive a reciprocal gift from the object of her generosity but from another member of the group. The exchange is indirect. When commodities travel in this style, acts of consumption dissolve the boundaries between individuals. The circle understood to be the social body enlarges.

In queer culture, the most vivid inscription of such a relay is the book dedication—those words slipped between the frontispiece and the table of contents that tender the gifts of labor and love. In the museum of lesbian feelings the dedication serves as a kind of wall label. A token of affection, a mark of esteem, a sacrifice of one's time (and, it must be admitted, especially these days, all too often a sucking up), the dedication also carries the connotation of binding oneself to a cause, to a tradition, or to another. Dedications are often proffered at the last minute, in homage, in thanks, in love, in repayment of a debt, in caprice, or as a surprise. To dedicate a book is to place irrevocably upon the page a sentiment that is almost never indexed. The gift is retrieved only through friends, accidents, donations, and the kindness of librarians, who notice these things. A dedication is a speech act in J. L. Austin's sense. Like saying "I do thee wed," to write "I make you a gift of the words I have written" is to cause to be true the statement uttered, to tender oneself to another upon the material support that makes writing itself possible, and with it narrative, logic, and wonder.

To compose the type that allows ink to bite paper is to join a tradition of recognition and generosity. To say it is to do it. Our notion of audience shifts. If in actuality most books and works of art are made with one or two (maybe five) people in mind, the staying power of a work is a function not of numbers but of setting in motion a chain of recipients who understand a gift as something other than an invitation to barter, a tracery of those who will forward the gift, who will keep it in motion rather than being consumed by it. This code queers can speak. This code does not assume the reproduction of culture to be inseparable from personal property.

These few diptychs from the exhibition prints that comprise the extended series "Lecture" are gifts slipped between the title page and the frontispiece of books written by lesbians — in other words, offerings made between the sheets. They are at once intimate and irrevocably public. Some are tendered to initials. Some aim to rewrite not only the past but the future. Some aim to incite. On one side, in the exhibition prints, the book cover is printed actual size, battered and scarred, bruised and stained, presenting the record of its own queer travels, perhaps the record of a collaboration in resistance between designer and owner. On the other side, grossly enlarged, is the author's dedication. The images are photographs, not scans. They have volume. Magnification transforms the paper into a surface that resembles skin. The pigment suggests a tattoo. It bleeds. Though the marks beg for translation, an attention to code, practice in the theatrics of memory, there is no obligation to engage in archival conservation. The beauty of the story lies precisely upon the surface of these eddies of desire, upon the skin of the gift.

Note

1. Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York: Vintage, 1983), 16, 11; reprinted as *The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World* (New York: Vintage, 2007).

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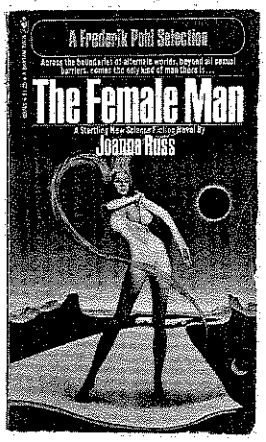
Following pages:

642–43: Catherine Lord, *Untitled (1975/2009)*, diptych from the series "Lecture" (two inkjet prints, wood frames, 24 x 49 in.)

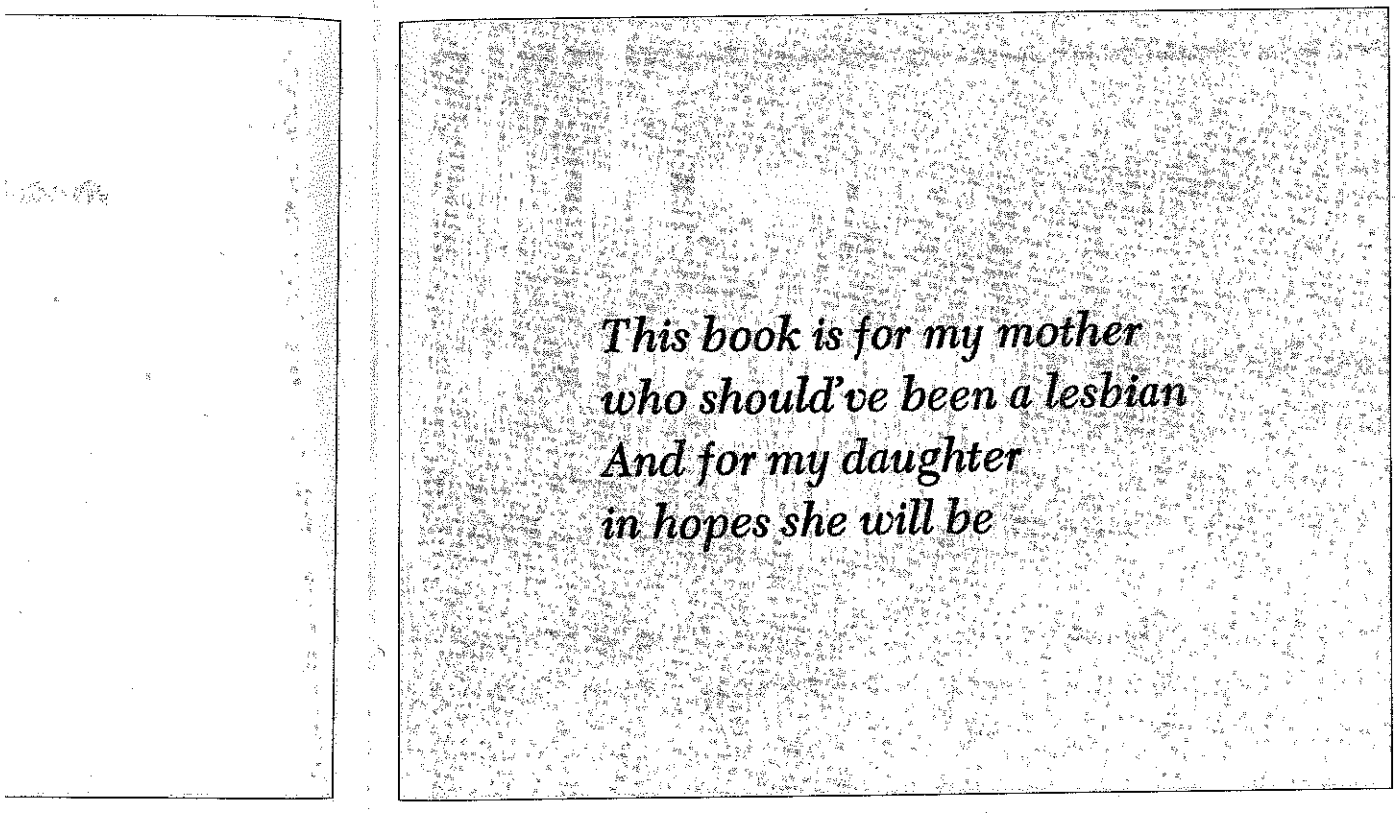
644–45: Catherine Lord, *Untitled (1973/2009)*, diptych from the series "Lecture" (two inkjet prints, wood frames, 24 x 49 in.)

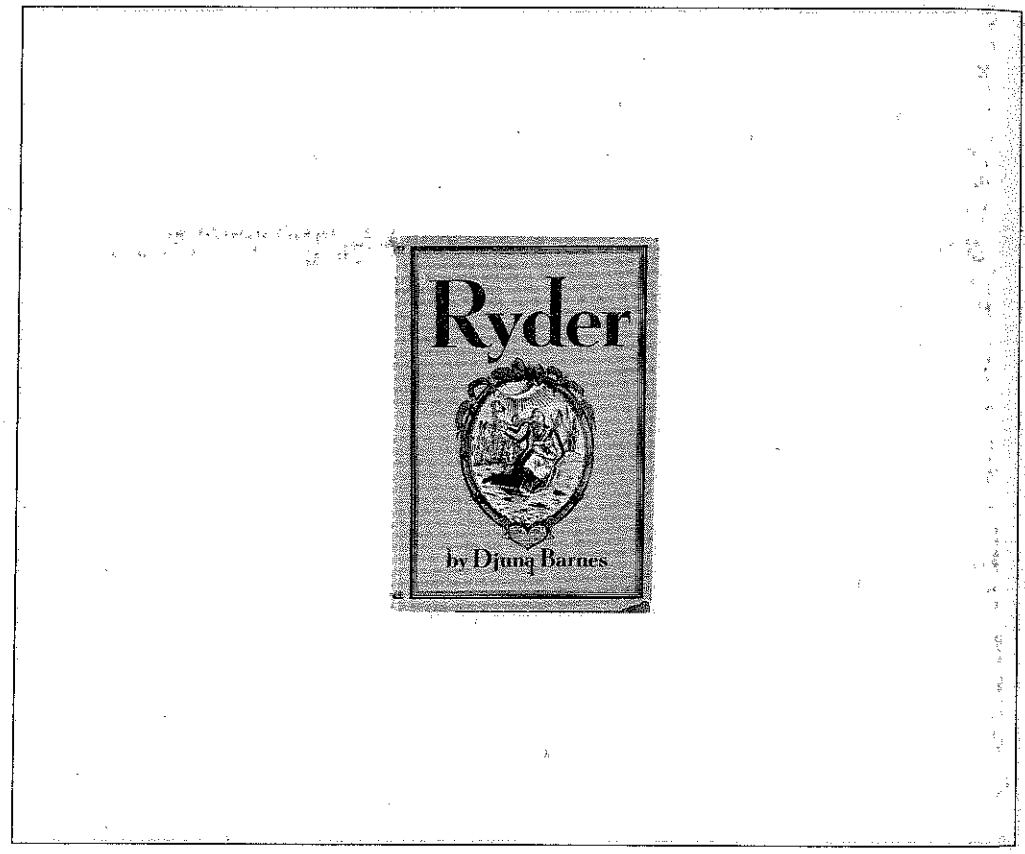
644–47: Catherine Lord, *Untitled (1928/2009)*, diptych from the series "Lecture" (two inkjet prints, wood frames, 24 x 49 in.)


A Frederik Pohl Selection
The Female Man
A Startling New Science Fiction Novel by
Joanna Russ

This book is dedicated to Anne, to Mary and to the other one and three-quarters billions of us.


LESBIAN
NATION
The Feminist Solution
JILL JOHNSTON


This book is for my mother
who should've been a lesbian
And for my daughter
in hopes she will be


Ryder
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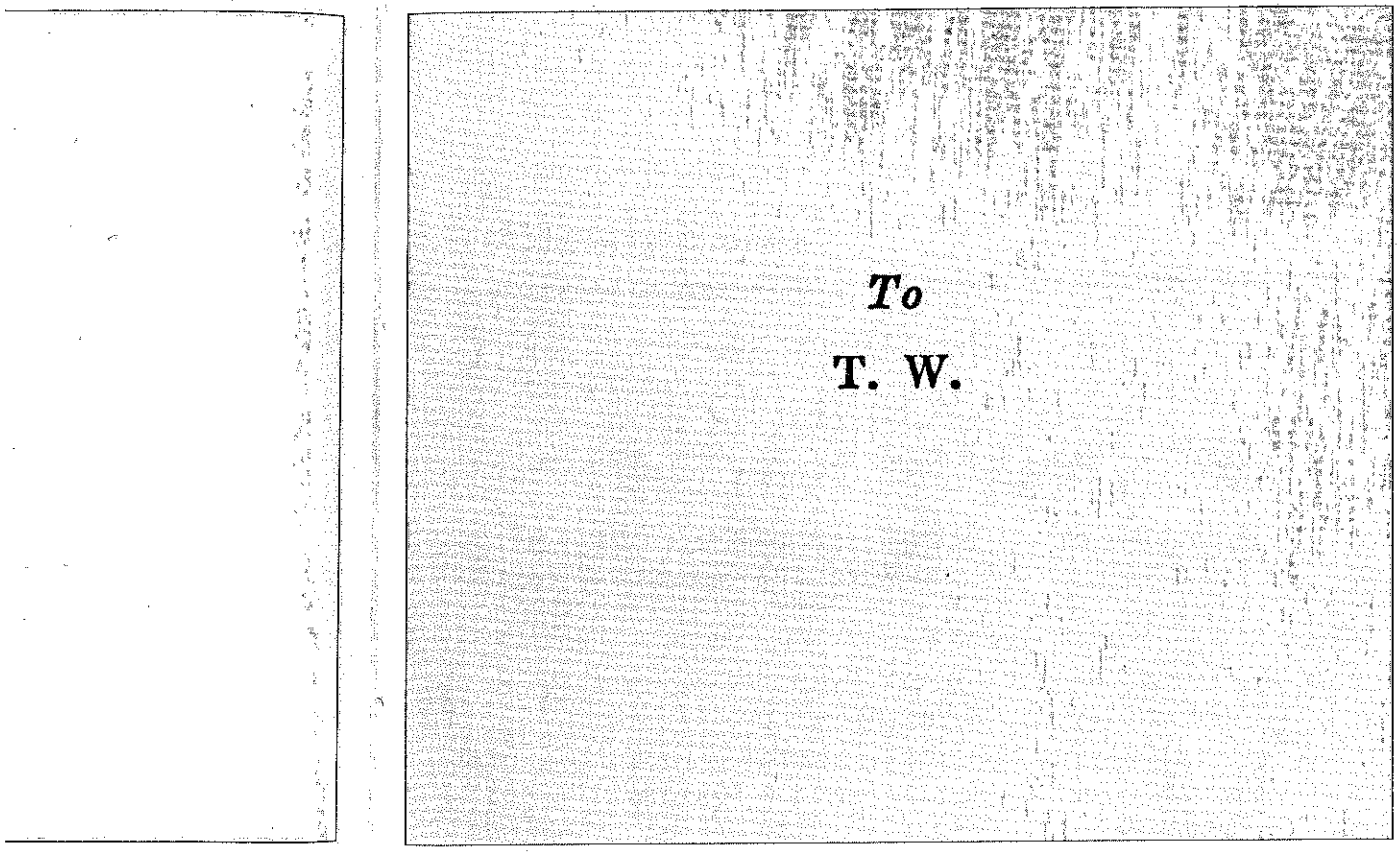
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