

Things don't change and they don't stay the same.

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Helen Furr did not care about travelling, she liked to stay in one place and be gay there. They were together then and travelled to another place and stayed there and were gay there ... To be regularly gay was to do every day the gay thing that they did every day. To be regularly gay was to end every day at the same time after they had been regularly gay. They were regularly gay. They were gay every day. They ended every day in the same way, at the same time, and they had been every day regularly gay.¹

Barbara Hammer's photographic work asks: pleasure, lesbian pleasure in a community of lesbian pleasure.

The terms 'lesbian' and 'community' are relatively new. There's a barely-visible battle being fought about the loss of the terms lesbian, butch and dyke as personal self-identifying monikers, about the loss of such community; about the necessity of understanding and connection, of attraction and sensuality, of body politics forming a body politic.

we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking ... As Black feminists and Lesbians we know that we have a very definite revolutionary task to perform and we are ready for the lifetime of work and struggle before us²

1. Stein, Gertrude. *Miss Furr and Miss Skeene*. Vanity Fair Publishing Co., 1923 2. "The Combahee Rover Collective Statement" (April 1977). The Combahee Rover Collective, from *Home Girls, A Black Feminist Anthology*, ed. Smith, Barbara (Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983)

The current Western container of lesbian identity – one built upon Sapphic love—expanded betwixt the 18th–20th centuries, coming to fruition during first-wave feminism and indouchetrialization, weeding out competing terms such as uringin, tribad, homophile, homosexual, gay, invert. And so on. The lyrical poetess, something other than “woman”, won the day; something other than what lurks in the rigid and limited imaginations constructed by heteronormative standardizations and formulations of patriarchal rule. *Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into separated pigeon-holes. The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects.*³

The 14th century term ‘community’ = fellowship, of relations or feelings; society, friendly intercourse; courtesy, condescension, affability; common, public, general, shared by all or many. It is the utopic existing within the heterotopic, a wish fulfillment, a discovery, a possibility, a place. *In the late 1960s ... male filmmakers dominated queer experimental cinema and there was little representation of lesbianism in their work—and certainly when there was, it was not from a lesbian perspective. Hammer challenged and changed the landscape of queer experimental film by offering unseen images of lesbian lives and drawing upon lesbian-feminist theory and experience to craft a new cinematic language ... Unashamed and unconventional, Hammer’s early short experimental films ... pioneered a compelling new film language based on the cycles of the female body, womynist images of nature and vegetation, and women’s folklore and mythology ... Her work inspired a new generation of lesbian and feminist filmmakers.*⁴

The bodies, people, consciousness, conscience pictured in Hammer’s photographs refute the scarcity of space, the denial of a sense of place. The duochrome recordings present a world comfortable, known to only some. It’s a timeless place of sensorial engagement and accrued knowledge. It is *not* a form of knowing grown inside of heterosexist normativity; rather, these places are omniscient spaces that one can access, if so inclined; if resourceful; if privileged; if lucky; if open; if questioning. These are a continuum of celebratory places that are erased, suppressed, sumptuously volatile, expansive, most beautiful, beyond expectation. They can be hidden away forever at the behest of the user and/or by the suppression of hierarchies. What threatens such power more than emasculation – a place borne of unduly narcissistic gentiologic psychosis and sensory oppression; a place ordered, classified, pathologized, annihilated by crapitalist hysteria? *Feminist theory can no longer afford merely to voice a toleration of ‘lesbianism’ as an ‘alternative lifestyle’ or make token allusion to lesbians. A feminist critique of compulsory heterosexual orientation for women is long overdue ... what surely impresses itself is the fact that we are confronting not a simple maintenance of inequality and property possession, but a pervasive cluster of forces, ranging from physical brutality to control of consciousness, which suggests that an enormous potential counterforce is having to be restrained.*⁵ These places are more

than a simulacrum inside of an Earth, an Earth so beautiful, sensual, full, explosive with rabid delight. Resilient spaces, inevitable, invisible, elaborate, the persistence of supple invisible space. Articulation of uncertainty, an unknown reach. To be pictured was, at once, to be celebrated. *Maybe that will be the archive of the future: the women who revealed,*” she said.⁶

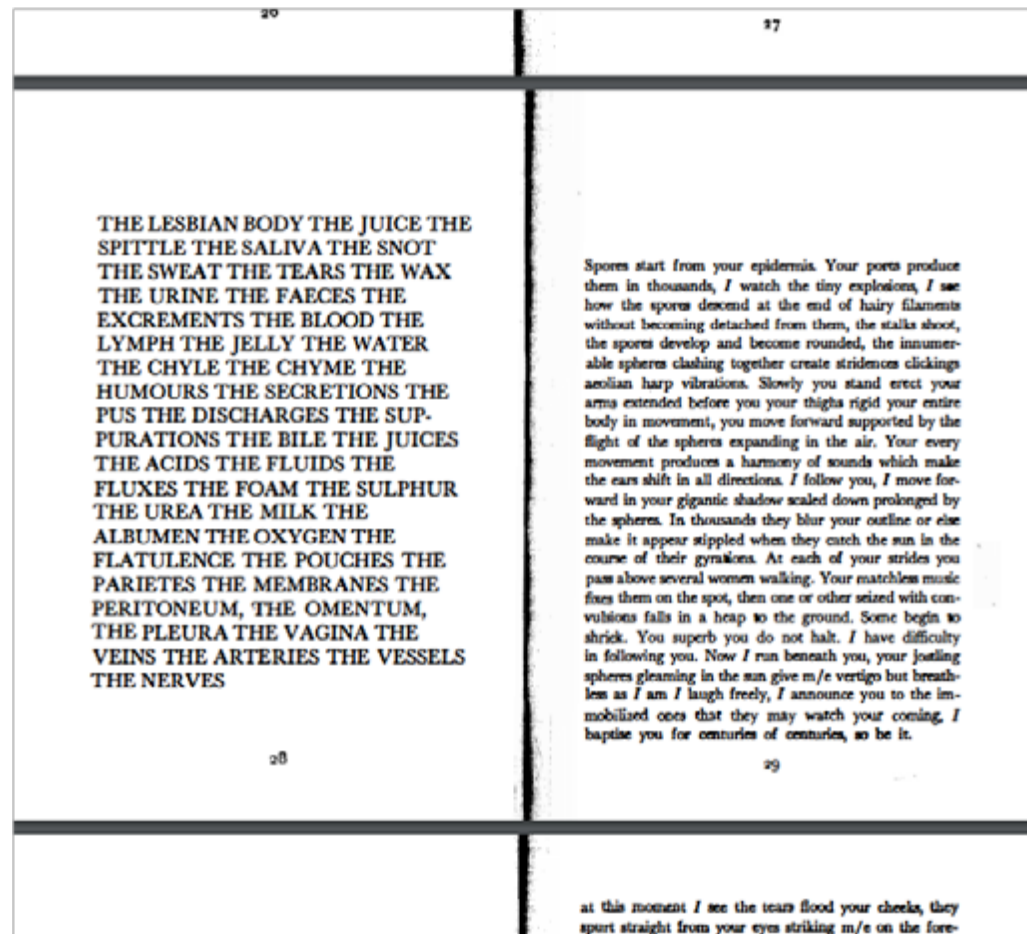
The conquest of utopia is impossibility, a place that does not exist, an etymological “not place”. Heterotopia is the place of Hammer’s photographs: other, another, different place. *We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein ... between private space and public space, between family space and social space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure and that of work ... In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates.*⁷ *On the women’s ship Orlando, the flags of attack, leather, weapons, lesbian love and death are raised with a beauty which dispenses with a total domination of the viewer’s gaze. The aesthetic is strictly stylized, exhibiting itself without overwhelming us.*⁸

I feel the scenic interconnection of my feelings with Hammer’s when I look at her photographs; I can’t differentiate my sensations, impulses, desires from theirs, impulses to *be* how they are *being* in the pictures, sensations in the picture; compulsions to hold capture of the light, all urgency of light and form, sin of the light, so light so easy, too perfect to perfect, to wondrous, shifting of sun in golden sun, light golden streaming over everyone in hair and fur flash flesh sinew, in the bark and smell of the green grass sun of womyn loving woman loving wimmin loving women, feeling, *falling free, you and me. I feel love.*⁹ *In Lesbian photography, where the muse is a woman, we strive for collaboration, not domination. This collaboration extends into something reciprocal, mutual, an exchange of inspirational energy;*¹⁰ *and, a lesbian has to be something else, a not-woman, a not-man, a product of society, not a product of nature, for there is no nature in society...lesbianism provides for the moment the only social form in which we can live freely. Lesbian is the only concept I know of which is beyond the categories of sex (woman and man), because the designated subject (lesbian)s not a woman, either economically, or politically, or ideologically. For what makes a woman is a specific social relation to a man, a relation that we have previously called servitude, a relation which implies personal and physical obligation as well as economic obligation ... a relation which lesbians escape by refusing to become or to stay heterosexual.*¹¹ *And of course I am afraid, because the transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation, and that always seems fraught with danger ... In the cause of silence, each of us draws the face of her own fear – fear of contempt, of censure, or some judgment, or recognition, of challenge, of annihilation. But most of all, I think, we fear the*

3. Kinsey, Alfred, Wardell B. Pomeroy, Clyde E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (W.B. Saunders, 1948) 4. Gregg, Ronald E., remarks, Leslie-Lohman Gallery, NYC, NY, June 20, 2017 5. Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence”, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5, no. 4 (Summer 1980): 631-660 6. “Time is an Emotional Muscle: Barbara Hammer with Jarrett Earnest”, *The Brooklyn Rail*, December 10, 2012

7. Foucault, Michel, “Des Espace Autres”, March 1967 lecture <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf> 8. Ottinger, Ulrike, “Madame X” (1977) <http://www.ulrikeottinger.com/index.php/789.html> 9. Bellotte, Pete, Wynter Gordon, Giorgio Moroder and Donna Summer, “I Feel Love” (1977) 10. Biren, Joan E. (JEB), “Lesbian Photography--Seeing through Our Own Eyes”, *Studies in Visual Communication* (Vol 9, Issue 2/Spring 1983), pp. 81-96 <http://repository.upenn.edu/svc/vol9/iss2/> 11. Wittig, Monique “One Is Not Born a Woman” (1979), published in *The Straight Mind: And Other Essays* (1992)

visibility without which we cannot truly live.¹² For a woman to be a lesbian in a male-supremacist, capitalist, misogynist, racist, homophobic, imperialist culture, such as that of North America, is an act of resistance ... The lesbian has decolonized her body.¹³ All women are lesbians except those who don't know it naturally, they are but don't know it yet ... A woman is herself is all woman is a natural born lesbian, so we don't mind using the name like any name it is quite meaningless, it means, naturally, I am a woman, and whatever I am we are, we affirm being what we are. Until all women are lesbians, there will be no true political revolution.¹⁴



12. Lorde, Audre, "The Transformation of Silence Into Language and Action", " paper delivered at the Modern Language Association's "Lesbian and Literature Panel," Chicago, Illinois, December 28, 1977; published in *Sinister Wisdom* 6 (1978) and *The Cancer Journals* (Spinsters, Ink, San Francisco, 1980) 13. Clarke, Cheryl, "Lesbianism: an Act of Resistance", *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, eds. Moraga, Cherrie and Gloria Anzaldúa (Persephone Press, 1981) 14. Johnston, Jill, April 30, 1971, Town Hall, NYC