Where hypocrisy should have no place

The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival is advertised as a festival for all women, regardless of their sexual orientation. The atmosphere is overwhelmingly lesbian, as one would expect, given that 75-90% of the attendees label themselves as gay women. For lesbians, the feeling of euphoria that goes with finally being in a majority is wonderful; many self as gay women. For lesbians, the feeling of euphoria that goes with finally being in a majority is wonderful; many women describe those five days in August as the best in their year.

Many dykes find it liberating to be in a place where everyone assumes that they are lesbian. Unfortunately, this assumption leaves bisexuals and straights invisible. There are such offerings as "Breakfast with Bis" and Straight Support Group, and two workshops presented about for bisexuals, but while the presence of these services is significant, and appreciated, it is not sufficient to make bisexuals, much less straight women, feel welcomed. Frequently performers open their sets with, "Welcome Lesbians," or laud the festival as a lesbian creation. Many workshops implicitly or explicitly exclude non-lesbian women. Conversation is also exclusionary. Not only is homosexuality assumed, but straights and more frequently bisexuals are condemned. This marginalization of bisexuals and straights at the Lansing Women's Music Festival is symptomatic of the hypocrisy that is present in the lesbian community at large and on this campus. This type of hypocrisy is not limited to the lesbian community. Victims of racism oppress other minorities with racist behavior, for example. And we are all aware of the racist strains in gay communities, and of heterosexism among people of color.

The hypocrisy of the lesbian community is, however, particularly troubling to us. The lesbian community does not exist solely to have and talk about sex, exchange good books or sing about women. Lesbians need each other for shelter from the mainstream world; need to come together to organize against the oppression founded in homosexuality. Much of lesbian identity is dictated by experienced homophobia and heterosexism. Part of the community's responsibility is to resist the perpetuation of stereotyping and oppression based on sexual orientation. When bisexuals and straights are made to be invisible at Michigan, when bisexuals on this campus are involved with men and lesbians stop talking to them, the community is guilty of the perpetuation of the exact form of oppression from which it has suffered.

This week's College News featured a questionable editorial, "Where hypocrisy should have no place." There are many important issues facing students at Bryn Mawr today. Nationally, our country's war on the Middle East and Souter's Supreme Court nomination are of great concern to some students. The commencement/Shavuot conflict and overcrowding of classes are critical campus issues. Why focus on something that is outside the campus and not of significant national importance? How many people even know (or care) what the Michigan Women's Music Festival is?

Aside from the poor choice of topic, one premise of the article, that straight women can be oppressed by Lesbians, is flawed. To focus on the invisibility of straight women, at a festival which they have freely chosen (and paid) to attend, makes at best a weak connection with the invisibility of Lesbians in mainstream society. The editorial also does a disservice to the Bryn Mawr community by playing on already existing homophobia. Encouraging the idea that straight women can be silenced by Lesbians validates the fear that strong affirmation of Lesbianism poses an inherent threat to heterosexuality. It is unacceptable for the College News to be a channel of hatred of Lesbians.

The editorial revealed ignorance of basics of oppression. The Lesbian community is not "guilty of the perpetuation of the exact form of oppression from which it has suffered." There is no such thing as reverse oppression. Straight women who choose to attend the Festival are a minority for five days. They are marginalized, i.e. not at the center of attention or focus, for only five days, and only in that one place. Lesbians are a minority every day everywhere except for those five days in a special environment where some Lesbians have the chance to come together in celebration of their community. To claim the "oppression" of straight women at one music festival, when all of our societal structures are geared toward the support and encouragement of heterosexual behavior, denies the overwhelming power imbalance in the relationship of the straight community to the Lesbian community.

The ignorance of oppression dynamics is further demonstrated in this quote: "Victims of racism oppress other minorities with racist behavior, for example. And we are all aware of the racist strains in gay communities and heterosexism among people of color." First, prejudice among people of Color is not parallel to prejudice against straight women by Lesbians. The power dynamic between different U.S. minorities is not the same as the relationship of a dominant group to a minority group. Secondly, people do not fall into neat, convenient categories to be easily separated for simplistic comparisons. To discuss "racist strains in gay communities" assumes that...

Anonymous action has its purpose. There are times when identification is disadventurous to specific political goals. Like graffiti, writing unnamed allows for a one-way statement, as opposed to forums that typically overwhelm minority opinions.

We also write without names for another, symbolic purpose. The views expressed in the College News purport to represent this community. They do not. Our concerns have been left unnamed and invisible to the College News; so will we. Names, labels or group affiliations are not needed to justify the validity of dissatisfaction with a publication.

How many of you rely on the byline of an article when deciding whether or not it is worth reading? Another reason, then, for maintaining our anonymity is that all opinions should be given equal attention regardless of the writer's position in the public eye.

Our criticism is not directed at any one individual; they are aimed at a weak and failing institution that should be dismantled. We do not want them to be taken personally.
Maggie Krall and I began to talk about the issues which became the focus of our editorial at the beginning of the semester. We had both attended Michigan Womyn's Music Festival with my sister, who is straight. She went to Bryn Mawr, and was very happy to be with women, straight, gay, and bisexual. She was open to the possibility of being gay, and felt that if she were to be gay, she would have realized it here. She is still open, but considers herself straight. Having visited her and met her friends, I would estimate that a good 30% of them are gay. She is a lesbian.

I am one of the writers of "Where hypocrisy should have no place." I am a lesbian. While the discussion caused by the sensationalistic, destructive way in which the opinions in "The Resistant Reader" were expressed to the community I will contain my response to the content of the flyer.

Much of the criticism levelled against the editorial is justified. I would first like to apologize for the sloppiness of the piece. I do not think it was well written. We tried to touch on too many issues in too small a space and ultimately failed to accomplish our goals. While I agree with several of the claims made in the flyer I disagree with others, and so would like to address point by point some of the specific criticisms of the authors by the anonymous evaluation.

"The Resistant Reader" questions the appropriateness of the inclusion of the editorial for the College News. I quickly grant that a piece focussed on the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, something known to only a few of us, did not deserve a prominent place in the paper. I feel very strongly, however, that the issues of prejudice and misunderstanding among lesbians, bisexuals and straight women are extremely important and need to be addressed on this campus, and that the College News is an appropriate place for discussion.

The authors of the flyer seem not only to object to the topic of the Festival, but to object to the Festival itself. This is the first "conflict" model of bisexuality. In this model, the bisexual woman identifies herself as bisexual, privately at least. She perceives her sexuality, not as a decision to label herself, but as a lifelong identity that has changed, and to go with the flow of feelings, to accept that they do not always fit into a pretty box, all wrapped up, tied with a bow labeled "straight" or "gay." Being bisexual states blatantly that sexuality is not fixed at birth, that sexuality can be messy and complicated. Acknowledging bisexuality forces us to recognize our feelings, to accept that they do change, and to go with the flow of our desires. Just as gay liberation did in the seventies, Bisexual Liberation says there are more options, more flexibility for us to choose from. Can we be "straight," "lesbian" or "bisexual"? From a man? From our lesbian sisters?

We remain invisible, silenced at Bryn Mawr. Bisexuality presents far too much of a challenge to our conceptions of sexuality, for us to recognize it. In our society, we want sexuality to be easily definable, fitting in a pretty box, all wrapped up with a bow labeled "straight" or "gay." Being bisexual states blatantly that sexuality is not fixed at birth, that sexuality can be messy and complicated.

Because of a debate which was tearing her apart. Many of her friends thought that in an effort to curb invisibility the festival should be described as it is, attended vastly by lesbians. Other women who she interacted with had revealed to the mainstream for fear of job discrimination and all else that she was bisexual, and had found it difficult reporting on the festival. During the course of the festival, she often regretted having taken the assignment because of a debate which was tearing her apart. Many of her friends thought that in an effort to curb invisibility the festival should be described as it is, attended vastly by lesbians. Other women who she interacted with had revealed to the mainstream for fear of job discrimination and all else that she was bisexual, and had found it difficult reporting on the festival. During the course of the festival, she often regretted having taken the assignment.

Dear Ms. Resistant Reader,

Thank you so much for facilitating the open expression of opinions in this community. So good of you, being self-defined lesbians, to finally speak up for us bisexuals. After how many years of perpetuating the silence on bisexuality at Bryn Mawr, have you now become the champions of prejudice against bisexuals?

After the College News does us some justice by exploring our issues! I would very much like to respond and continue the discussion on the issues you have raised, but cannot afford to make 500 copies of this. So, please, forgive me for using this "pseudo-feminist" journal as a medium for my opinion. At your request, I am dedicating this whole article to the issue of bisexuality.

Using psychological theory, there are two kinds of bisexuality. The first is the "conflict" model of bisexuality. In this model, the bisexual women is in conflict about her sexuality; she is exploring her sexual orientation, and has anxiety about how to label herself. She may decide, after an affair with a woman, that she is heterosexual or may decide that she is a lesbian. She is anxious about alienating her heterosexual friends, being rejected by her family, and stepping outside societal boundaries. The primary characteristic of the "conflict" model is that a resolution is reached by the woman; she eventually defines her sexual orientation. The second theory is of "flexible" bisexuality. In this case, the bisexual woman identifies herself as bisexual, privately at least. She perceives her sexuality, not as a decision to label herself, but as a lifelong identity that has changed, and to go with the flow of feelings, to accept that they do not always fit into a pretty box, all wrapped up, tied with a bow labeled "straight" or "gay." Being bisexual states blatantly that sexuality is not fixed at birth, that sexuality can be messy and complicated. Acknowledging bisexuality forces us to recognize our feelings, to accept that they do change, and to go with the flow of our desires. Just as gay liberation did in the seventies, Bisexual Liberation says there are more options, more flexibility for us to choose from. Can we be "straight," "lesbian" or "bisexual"? From a man? From our lesbian sisters?

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I am very saddened by the fact that I wasn’t sensitive enough to consider that the latest editorial might be so hurtful to someone. I also think that there was a confrontation that should happen more often in a community that is more adept at describing pluralism than experiencing it. This is far from being a truly diverse community; as a "majority," I am surely among those whose views are most frequently represented. I have been hesitant to write this letter for the very reason that the Resistant Reader suggests that I and others leave little room for others to speak. At the same time I think it’s important that confrontation lead into dialogue. So, carefully, I proceed...

I think the fact that I have no right to speak for others is painfully obvious and yet I know I do it all the time. My understanding of "The Resistant Reader" concern is that the editorial in the College News presented an opinion that was hurtful because it purports to act in the interest of the college. The editorial board is not a "hired" or selected staff. In fact it might be more accurate to refer to this group as the "editorial discussion group." It is the concerns that people bring to these discussion group sessions every Thursday night at 9:00 that go into the paper. Yes, coverage is by all means selective and subjective. But in a feminist newspaper, how can coverage and discussion of articles not be subjective? It seems to me that it’s not unusual for one person’s "pseudo-feminism" to be another person’s "solid feminist theoretical grounding." I very much believe that any feminist agenda is highly subjective and, for this reason, virtually impossible to define. I also think that a newspaper is feminist because it prints the varied, contradicting, shared opinions of women who want to be heard. "The Resistant Reader" suggests that the College News is not and can not be committed to this purpose. My response is that this group, currently, only a handful of women write for the College News; how can a handful of people accurately represent views and issues that touch them differently than they might touch others? Is there a feeling that the current members of the ed board exclude certain members of the community from ed board discussions? If that is so, then it is symptomatic of a much deeper problem that goes beyond whether or not the College News exists.

The College News could be a very useful forum for student dialogue. The current non-hierarchical discussion group format of the ed board was initiated two years ago in hopes of facilitating equal and open-ended participation in editorial decision making. I wonder if and hope that "The Resistant Reader" will lead to greater student participation with the College News. I urge, urge anyone to participate in Thursday night sessions before judging whether the College News is inadequate. Individual input, bias, priorities are what ultimately determine the tone and content of the paper; I do not think any feminist paper can remove itself from that.

Annick Barker

"The lesbian community does not exist solely to have and talk about sex, exchange good books or sing about wimmin." Why do the authors feel justified in dictating the purpose of the Lesbian Community? And what "Lesbian Community" are they talking about? We agree that we need to organize for self affirmation and against oppression. But that does not mean we are responsible for coddling straight women as they deal with the implications of their sexual identities. Furthermore, the assertion that "much of lesbian identity is dictated by experienced homophobia and heterosexism" is inaccurate. Lesbian experience does not do justice to the complexity of prejudice against bisexuals. This topic deserves a thorough article of its own.

As Lesbians, we are angered by the patronizing attitude shown in statements like this: "The lesbian community does not exist solely to have and talk about sex, exchange good books or sing about wimmin." Why do the authors feel justified in dictating the purpose of the Lesbian Community? And what "Lesbian Community" are they talking about? We agree that we need to organize for self affirmation and against oppression. But that does not mean we are responsible for coddling straight women as they deal with the implications of their sexual identities. Furthermore, the assertion that "much of lesbian identity is dictated by experienced homophobia and heterosexism" is inaccurate. Lesbian experience does not do justice to the complexity of prejudice against bisexuals. This topic deserves a thorough article of its own.

The editorial "Where hypocrisy should have no place," has no place in a Bryn Mawr college paper.

The editorial "Where hypocrisy should have no place" is symptomatic of the gradual decline in quality of the College News. The paper proclaims: "The College News is a feminist paper and an advocacy journal committed to diversity, women's issues, lesbian voices and promoting pluralism." The paper has repeatedly violated its own statement of purpose and has questionable legitimacy in defining "women's issues" on this campus. Who are the women it is committed to? Does the College News address the diversity of Bryn Mawr? Or is it only interested in the "herstory" that complements its political agenda?

If the College News is a feminist newspaper, it must define its feminism. We argue that a commitment on the advancement of women in the military is not coming from a feminist perspective. Lack of solid feminist theoretical grounding leaves most all articles in the paper floundering for direction. Instead, the paper supports a "pseudo-feminism," using the label but not the theory. If it were a real feminist newspaper, one would hope there would be no room to address issues as insignificant as straight women at Michigan. There are a wide variety of important issues that concern feminists and other women on campus that have not been addressed thoroughly. Some have not been addressed at all.

The College News, by its very name, purports to act in the interest of the college. Since it is not an adequate feminist forum, it should at least be a solid campus paper, covering all campus events equally. However, it fails to achieve this by its selective coverage of events and perspectives. One example of this is the College News' treatment of pluralism workshops. It does not require skilled analysis to criticize the pluralism workshops. On the other hand, constructive suggestions for the workshops themselves and for other ways of facilitating pluralism would demonstrate seriousness of purpose on the part of the College News.

The College News has ceased to be a forum for student voices on campus. It has become an unapproachable institution, neither a dynamic publication that reflects current campus needs, nor true to its vibrant, feminist history. The College News monopolizes media communication; it is not an accident that there are no long-lasting alternative papers at Bryn Mawr.

We propose that this institution be dismantled. The division between the College News and the Bryn Mawr community is irreparable. With incidents such as the "Black Herstory Month" posters, the paper has alienated too many people. The disproportionately high amount of SGA funds awarded to the College News should be rechanneled to better serve the community at large. We suggest that the entire editorial staff resign. The equipment and office space should be made available to any students wishing to publish. Drastic changes are necessary to create publications that reflect the interests of this community.
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course of talking to women about the various issues she was covering, she was interested in seeing what the reaction to straight women to see what they thought of the festival, and what had brought them there. She eventually dropped that angle of her story, as some of the women she asked knew of a straight women who had attended, but did not pinpoint her whereabouts.

I suspect that for fear of harassment, many of these women would not want to be pinpointed. In the course of the festival, my sister had an interview with the two producers, Barbara von Roos Price and Lisa Vogel. Attended these with her, and listened as she asked Boo why the festival was not exclusively lesbian. Boo answered that in light of the fact that there are a significant number of existing lesbian-only events, she felt that it should remain open to all women. In the program for the Festival, in a section titled, “Honoring Our Diversity,” the thought was elaborated.

The one thing that we have in common when we arrive that is were womyn gathering here to share what we bring as womyn. Our bonds are strong, and the fact that comes from an annual reunion of that growing sense of family and sustains our lives year-round. The rest we bring are differences in age, race, class background, religious and cultural heritage, physical abilities, lifestyles and sexual preferences. . . . The reversal of minority/majority positions of lesbians and heterosexuals: challenges lesbians not to fall into defining womyn’s culture as lesbian, and heterosexual womyn from moving away from womyn’s culture because of these positions.

Lesbians have limited experience at being in the majority in this role. This is due to the history of same-sex marriage. Lesbians have experienced this as a minority.

Lesbian heterosexual women have limited experience of not being in the majority and so can feel excluded from the community due to their unfamiliar minority vantage point. . . . The challenge, both here and in our other communities, is to be sure that womyn represents all of who we are.

Although I would miss the opportunity to see these performers, someone who are gay, straight and some, undeniably bisexual, I would have no problem in seeing the festival as a Lesbian Only space. No problem at all. All I ask that it be identified as such. I know that for many women who choose to remain closeted, attending a festival with the moniker, “The Michigan Lesbian Music Festival” would not sit right. All women who attend the festival receive information about the festival, and I think it would be entirely possible to alert straight and bisexual women to the fact that it was exclusively lesbian in the brochure. No fuss, no muss. Were it to be argued that the festival should remain open to all women, I simply ask that when the emcee talks to the audience, that instead of saying, “WE ARE LESBIANS,” say “WE ARE LESBIANS BUILT THIS FESTIVAL!” I say something like “Lesbians and bisexuals and straights work together by side in order to build this stage, this festival and this environment of women standing together.” Otherwise nothing at all. I realize that the names ‘straight’ and ‘bisexual’ might seem to muddy the good name of ‘lesbian,' but I am sure that there are a few straight women and a few bisexual women that make up the village of 550 workers. In the program for the festival, in a section about the workers, it says, “The Worker Village is at least as diverse as the rest of the Festival. We celebrate all races, cultures, ages, sexual preferences and points of view.” Maggie told me that she heard many conversations in which bisexuals and straights were slammed. She camped with a bisexual woman, and many of these conversations revolved around questions of whether or not her friend’s face. I attended one of the two workshops about and for bisexuality, and found a fairly small crowd of women hesitant to be there. One woman said that she was so glad that the workshop was the farthest away from any traffic because she was worried about being seen there. She was worried about being harassed, or perhaps worse yet, being ignored if her sexuality was discovered. I am sure that many other bisexuals did not come for those very reasons. I have been involved with a lesbian who came to the workshop with her bisexual lover that silence equals death. She was afraid, or much, or more than it does for gays. Bisexuals are a doubly oppressed group. This was the focus of our editorial, on the hypocrisy of an oppressed group oppressing another.

The scope of an editorial tends to be wide. One technique of writing one is to start with a specific point and to make a larger statement, another is to do the reverse. Maggie and I pulled an example of biphobia from a national scope into the Bryn Mawr community to make a point that it is present everywhere, and that this sort of kicking the dog is inexcusable. I will not say that it is not understandable, but it is inexcusable.

I will not stop attending the festival, however, it is because it is an environment which I feel has the capacity to grow, and I will not stop attending Bryn Mawr simply because I feel it has some problems which need to be worked out.

In my life, I have worked from a small scale to make people aware of my bisexual nature and of bisexuality at large. Editorials are usually the place to raise issue that are of concern to people in the community. I know I am not the only bisexual on campus that feels this is a worthwhile topic, nor is Maggie the only lesbian to feel the same thing, I think I recognize the intricacy of the position of bisexuals. I have lived it first hand. I have, however, only lived it as a white upper middle class bisexual, and I cannot pretend to know how it feels to be a black middle class bisexual or an Asian working class bisexual, or any other variation on the theme. We wrote in fairly broad generalizations. It is often hard not to. We even poked fun at ourselves and at our particular experiences as dykes (including bisexuals in the category of dyke as I like to do), and at the fact that the lesbian community is as diverse and broad in its definitions as the individuals who call themselves lesbians. Maggie and I both have groups of friends who spend much of their time, having and talking about sex, exchanging good books and listening to and singing ‘wimmin’s’ music. It is obvious that this is not all they do, just as obvious as it is that groups and individuals exist who do little or none of this (except, perhaps, have sex).

I recognize that this editorial might have come at a more opportune time, perhaps later in the semester, when first year student who are unaware of the differences between bisexuals and lesbians and might be less homonormative (hetero and biphobic) are the first to arrive. I also think that presenting it as an editorial might have been a mistake, because the members of the Ed Board do not have one mind, one perspective. I do, however, believe that the choice of topic for the College News was entirely appropriate.

I recognize the importance of standing together as women, but I feel that if there is no criticism, no growth will occur. We did not define our frames of reference, part of which are our sexualities and that on the whole we support the women's community. I assumed that would be obvious. It seems I assumed too much. I would not criticize Bryn Mawr if I did not love it and care about it, and wanted to see one injustice that seems to have been overlooked addressed. We may present a strong and unified voice to our families, to the town of Bryn Mawr, to the government, but it is important that within Bryn Mawr, within a fairly liberal environment, and in a newspaper which presents all of the feminist voices that come to speak through it, there be criticism and dialogue. There are countless other important issues to be addressed, however I feel that the existence of biphobia should be recognized along with all of the other prejudices that we as a community and individuals must confront.

Prejudice is prejudice, wherever and whenever it occurs. Slamma a person who happens to be of an ethnic minority, or a bisexual, or a black woman, or from a lower income family, or one has been oppressed by someone else of that same background is senseless. There will never be unity if there is not a measure of even guarded trust, cooperation or understanding.

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To the authors. I took the stack to prove a point. I was and had no one to confront; now you are probably angry at me and you are in the same situation. Can you point a finger at me? Can I point one at you? There has been a growing trend of anorexics on this campus. It is dangerous because it makes face to face communication impossible. I am a dyke, a feminist, and a member of a racial minority. I am not your enemy. I am your sister. We probably know each other at least casually if not well. We can communicate without hurting each other. I realize that by trying to make you tactic appear in a questionable light, I have cast that same light on myself. So be it. I hope my point will be well taken and that we will be able to talk face to face sometime soon.

Unsigned

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The College News

October 11, 1990
We are reconsidering the validity of an editorial which
premises to speak for the entire editorial board of the
College News... Just as the editorial board itself does not
begin to reflect the diversity of voices and perspectives in
the Bryn Mawr community, neither can all the views of
the members of the ed board be represented in one unified
voice in an "editorial."
conscious of the racism. (Likewise, I, even though I am Color, I believe, are capable of rationalizing Lesbianism poses and inherent threat where none existed. If I had written the statement we held that "the division between the College News and the Bryn Mawr community is irrevocable. The College News in many ways falls short of its goals, but the staff is unquestionably committed to "diversity, women's issues, providing a space for women's voices and promoting pluralism." In my mind the most important component of our statement of purpose lies in providing space for women's voices. WE WILL PRINT ANY LETTER WE RECEIVE. WE ENCOURAGE ANY STUDENT WITH AN INTEREST TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE EDITORIAL BOARD. Anyone can participate in shaping the College News. An "unapproachable institution" the College News is not. Structurally we are as open as the paper. We would not be difficult for many women of Color to walk on to a staff dominated by White women, and that is backwards. I have no problem with the underrepresentation of women of Color on the staff. We would very much like to see that change. We do what we can, and encourage those who would like to see the dynamics of the paper shift. It is possible that we could encourage some of the anonymous writers, saying that there is such a thing as purely objective news coverage, and that one of its greatest strengths lies in not pretending to be objective or all encompassing. My responses, intellectual and visceral, to "The Resistant Reader" are deep running and lengthy. I could easily have written twenty or thirty pages over the last two and a half days. I have much more to say than could possibly fit into a letter for the paper. I have tried to completely respond to the content of the paper. I hope I have left nothing ambiguous or confusing, and once again, encourage anyone who wishes to continue this dialogue to do so.

Maggie J. Kral

The College News

October 11, 1990
When I first tried to put my reaction to "The Resistant Reader" into words I could speak out loud, I stumbled and sputtered and finally burst into tears. The same thing happened when I first tried to write a response: I wrote and deleted paragraph after paragraph before I finally started crying and switched off the computer, weighing the possibility of quitting the Ed Board.

This is my fourth year of working on The College News. Last year, I started out as a member of the five-member editorial collective, and eventually, as the other members resigned, became the editor. This year, I had hoped to continue as a member of the Ed Board while others took on the primary editing responsibilities.

In these three-and-then-some years, I have seen two processes going on, taking oddly divergent paths. The divergence frustrates and frightens me. One process has been—and still is—my own growth. I have come from the tense denigration of my freshman year into a strong and joyful affirmation of my own lesbianism. I have come from a need to assert, over and over, that I am not racist, into a willingness to confess and work on my own racism. I have come from a deep-seated fear of conflict and criticism into a tolerant acknowledgment of its importance; I hope to reach a point at which I can celebrate conflict. This growth has been closely tied to my work on the paper. There are many realizations I never would have made, lessons I never would have learned, and challenges I never would have faced if I had not been writing for The College News and hashing out all kinds of questions, defining and redefining feminism, and changing my mind a thousand times over at Ed Board meetings. Recently, someone told me that I shouldn't use the paper as therapy; I had to disagree. Feminist work ought to be challenging and healing, and therefore therapeutic. The College News has been strong medicine.

This is a process I have grown, however, a second process has been taking place: I have also felt less and less able or willing to speak in this community. Some of my most important lessons have been from mistakes, and the mistakes stay visible behind me like huge, bloody footprints in the snow: The headline that referred to "Asian Domestic Violence" as if there were some special, separate category of domestic violence in Asian communities. The article in which I consistently misquoted a woman who had referred to battered women as "we"—I quoted her as saying "they"—the centrerspread on the women in the military who barely questioned the military's devastating effects on people of color in the countries it invaded. The Black History Month centrerspread comprised entirely of stories by white women.

I would never do any of these things again, and I would not let anyone else do them if I had the power to intervene. At the time, however, I was blind to their implications. And I know that I am still making big mistakes I can't see.

I want desperately to speak and think and grow. On the other hand, I don't feel I have any right to inflict the mistakes I make on other people; in that sense, I agree with my friend after all. Feminist work should be challenging and healing, but it shouldn't be so messy and hurtful and contradictory. At the very least, there ought to be some way of accomplishing that growth alone, in privacy, where nobody has to see or hear or be affected by the mistakes I make along the way. The College News is such a public forum that any mistakes are immediately seen and evaluated by people I don't even necessarily know.

Any speaking and writing that I do in this process of growing and learning is, almost by definition, a blind groping. Because I see so much that I couldn't see three years ago, I know there are all kinds of things I can't see now. In speaking and writing, I reach out for possibilities. What I say may—or may not—be constructive, or it may be hurtful, and sometimes it's as if I'm reaching through a fog and don't know where I'm going until I get there. If I make a wrong turn, I won't go that way again; but I'm left with the uncertainty. The public nature of writing for The College News compounds the uncertainty, in that I can't go, but other people can see me.

Maybe my only way of continuing to grow without hurting anyone is to stop speaking for a while. That frightens me. It terrorizes and silences and makes me sit down, stop speaking for a while. To be utterly silent and listen to the other voices in the fog, and wait until I can judge from those voices which way I should go. "We suggest that the entire editorial staff resign," writes the author of "The Resistant Reader." And their point is well taken. I am thinking hard about resignation; if I remain on the mast of The College News, it will be with a renewed sense of commitment and a changed sense of purpose. Given "The Resistant Reader," I cannot simply sit on the Ed Board out of inertia.

I take "The Resistant Reader" extremely seriously, perhaps because it articulates all of my worst fears about The College News, and about my own ability to do any work that is useful and healing. The one sentence in "The Resistant Reader" that I cannot accept or understand at all, however—and this should be clear from the comments I have already made—is the statement that "We do not want [our criticisms] to be taken personally." I fail to see how it is possible not to take these criticisms personally. As so much feminist theory asserts, the personal is political—and the political is intensely personal. There can be no separation between my feminism and the feminist work that I try to do, between my own consciousness and the sensitivity of my writing and editing. The College News is not a disembodied "institution" with a life of its own; issue after issue, it is the product of the subjective and sometimes passionate thinking, writing, working and mistake-making of a constantly changing group of people. Last year, my College News work was my most intense and passionate commitment. It represents my best efforts and my biggest mistakes. If the division between The College News and the Bryn Mawr community is irreparable, I must take it personally.

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can decide for the campus that the College News is not one medium that reflects some of the interests of this community. Most certainly more publications are needed. How riding the campus of one will facilitate the addition of others is unclear to me. I just don't get your point.

I do think that there are many issues to be discussed. One idea touched upon briefly in the flyer that merited consideration and dialogue is the possibility that the College News has in fact reached the point where it is an "institution," that it has become an entity divorced from its members, and as such is "unapproachable." I am not yet convinced of that, but would like to be challenged. If it is in fact the case, then there can be no doubt that the campus is better without it, that we should tear it all down and start over again. Such an "institution" could only perpetuate and strengthen the status quo, would only encourage stagnation, and should be destroyed. I think that the College News can still be a source of new ideas and strength for members of the Bryn Mawr community. But I want to talk about it.

I wish to thank the writers of "The Resistant Reader" as well. Though I am extremely upset about the manner in which you chose to voice your opinions, and with some of them as they were expressed, I am glad that someone has finally made a public attempt to communicate with us. In some ways you have made me feel more isolated, but at least other students are thinking about the issues you've raised, and in this respect you've helped us in a way that we alone could not.

Patricia Savoie

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the other? With whom do we give up control? With whom do we become vulnerable? And which emotional/sexual needs do we satisfy with each sex? With whom do we have more intimacy? With whom do we feel more animalistic? Is it the physical feeling or the emotional that motivates us? How does it feel to express your sexual relationship openly? To be societally condoned? And how does it feel to be submissive? To challenge sexual norms? And how does this all relate to our relationships with our parents?

So I'll be having a Bisexual-Tea to discuss bondage with you before I write my next column. I'm sure you could take me to new heights of "pseudo-feminist" sexuality.

Kalyani Broderick

Beth Stroud
In spite of the fact that the College News requested responses to the issue at hand, all but one here printed are by editorial board members. There are several possible reasons for this; we fear that it may mean that this newspaper has indeed ceased to function as an accessible space for voices on this campus. We need to hear the opinions of Bryn Mawr students, faculty and staff. Please contact any member of the editorial staff or send a letter to the College News at C-1716.

Although the College News respects the views of the unsigned contributer, we wish to make it clear that the College News does not condone the removal of "The Resistant Reader" from the campus center and was not involved in this action.

The next meeting of the editorial board will be Thursday, October 18 at 9pm in the College News office in Denbigh 203 above the language lab. All are welcome.