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10-11-1990

### The College News 1990-10-11 Vol.12 No. 2

Students of Bryn Mawr College

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# THE COLLEGE NEWS

VOLUME XII NUMBER 2

FOUNDED 1914

BRYN MAWR COLLEGE

OCTOBER 11, 1990

On Friday, October 5, "The Resistant Reader" was released. A copy of it and the editorial it criticizes are printed below. The *College News* responded by posting requests for any and all responses to the *College News* and/or "The Resistant Reader." The responses are printed exactly as received.

## 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 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 "Break-

fast with Bi-s" and Straight Support Group, and two workshops presented about and 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

Michigan Womyn'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 wimmin. 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.

The Resistant Reader  
The Resistant Reader  
The Resistant Reader  
The Resistant Reader  
The Resistant Reader

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 Womyn'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 heterosexuality, 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 disadvantageous 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 criticisms are 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 unaware of the other's presence and had each come away from it disturbed by some of the things we had witnessed.

I am bisexual, and have found it to be a difficult existence. My mother has always told me to not complicate my life. For two years we have debated the issue of bisexuality. She contends that I will hurt someone, that I will mislead them. She is aware of the invisibility that most gays and bisexuals undergo and knows that many people will assume me to be either gay or straight, and that as a result of this, they will be upset and hurt for whatever reason to find that I am bisexual. In an effort to prevent this sort of hurt or confusion, I have come out to most everyone I know, here and at home. I know all of the criticisms, stereotypes, myths and

misconceptions about bisexuals. Many have been said directly to my face, in full awareness of my sexuality. Some have even been said to me by lesbian lovers and friends. I have made an effort at debunking the most ridiculous of them, and the ones that seem only trivial, as all of them hurt me and have a capacity to hurt other bisexuals. At home in Connecticut it would be easier for me to be straight. Here at Bryn Mawr it would be easier for me to be gay. At both locations I try to present myself as I am, a bisexual.

I attended the 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 were she 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

I am one of the writers of "Where hypocrisy should have no place." I am a lesbian.

While I am disturbed 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 criticism

by the authors of the anonymous evaluation.

"The Resistant Reader" questions the appropriateness of the subject 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.

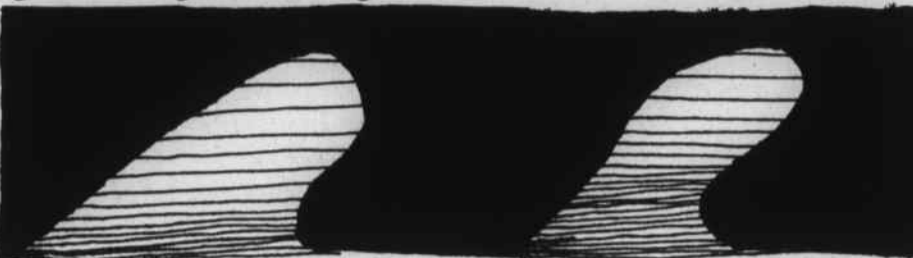
The authors of the flyer seem not only to object to the topic of the Festival

that a good 30% of them are gay. She is comfortable in that environment and enjoys standing with sisters and brothers undivided by sexuality. She loves women's music and the environment of strong, smart women who are proud to be women who love to be with other women.

My sister works for a paper in Ann Arbor where she now lives, and was 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 interviewed didn't want that to be revealed to the mainstream for fear of job discrimination and all else that might follow on the heels of a woman who had told friends, family and co-workers where she was going. In the

*continued on page 4*



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 woman 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 she may decide that she is a lesbian. She is anxious about alienating 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 make for a lifetime, but as a lifelong series of individual, contextual decisions of whom to love. She loves both men and women, and expresses that love in friendships and sexual/romantic relationships. Although the "flexibility" model at first seems the more affirmative model, we must acknowledge that anxiety is a normal reaction to confronting issues of sexuality, and that bisexuals in "conflict" are much in need of our support and sisterhood.

Although we do not usually refer to bisexuality in these terms, we are all familiar with these models. We are familiar with them through the pejorative terms and stereotypes that surface whenever the topic of bisexuality arises. We hear bisexual women referred to as "confused" or "indecisive" as if these were analogous to having a socially/sexually transmitted disease. These terms denigrate

the experiences of anxiety of bisexual women in "conflict." "She swings both ways" connotes that bisexuals are hyper-promiscuous and will fuck anything that walks. Again, the woman who is proud of her love of women and men is alienated and rejected for that love. "Four-year lesbian" is the most common derogatory term on this campus for women who resolve their issues of sexual orientation by deciding to label themselves heterosexual after experiences with lesbianism at Bryn Mawr, as well as women who while at Bryn Mawr express their bisexuality with women, and then express it in relationships with men after they leave.

Not only are bisexuals denigrated verbally, we are consistently isolated from both heterosexuals and lesbians on this campus. The homophobia of most straight women prevents us from feeling completely at ease to be open and honest about ourselves. "So exactly how gay are you? Can you give me a percentage or something?" we are asked. Meanwhile the "lesbian community" views us as "traitors" who "fraternize with the enemy." Instead of sympathy, we hear "Well, what do you expect 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 as viable. 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. 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 orgasms than we are now allowed to have. We must learn to open ourselves to the potential, the possibility for our desires to change and for our sexual activities to change accordingly. Because as the Chink says, "If it's messy, eat it over the sink." [Tom Robbins, *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*]

And bisexuality can be so messy. Loving men can be so different than loving women. And why do we do either at a particular point in our lives? Is it really just the individual person? Or do we enjoy particular sensations with one sex more than

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## THE COLLEGE NEWS

BRYN MAWR COLLEGE VOLUME XI, NO. 9 MAR. 7, 1990

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The deadline for the October 25 issue of *The College News* is Friday, October 19 at 6 p.m. Articles should be submitted to the box outside the NEW College News office (Denbigh 203, above the Language Lab). Submit articles in Microsoft Word on a Mac disk if possible; disks will be returned. Anyone interested in working on *The College News* should come to the Thursday night meetings at 9 p.m. in the Denbigh office, or call one of the editors.

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:** *The College News* seeks to provide a forum for the students, faculty, administration, and staff of Bryn Mawr. *The College News* welcomes ideas and submissions from all members of the community, as well as from outside groups and individuals whose purpose or functions are connected to those of the College. *The College News* is a feminist paper and an advocacy journal committed to diversity, women's issues, providing a space for women's voices and promoting pluralism. While letters from men are accepted, all articles in *The College News* are written by women. Each article represents the views of its author, not necessarily those of the paper.

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 the Resistant Reader was a confrontation that should happen more often in a community that is more adept at describing pluralism than experiencing pluralism. This is far from being a truly diverse community; as a "majority" person on this campus, I am surely among those whose views are the 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

Readers'" concern is that the editorial in the *College News* presented an opinion that was hurtful because it was misrepresentative of important feminist, lesbian issues. It seems to me, however, that the problem of misrepresentation is not rooted in the format of the *College News*. The editorial board is not a "hired" or selected staff. In fact it might be more accurate to re-name this group 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 the 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 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, 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 breadth of the paper; I do not think any feminist paper can remove itself from that.

Annick Barker

all the gay community is white. To discuss the "hetero-sexism of people of color" assumes that all people of Color are straight.

We grant that particular, difficult issues pervade the relationship between the bisexual community and both the Lesbian and heterosexual communities. In addressing these, however, it is important to recognize the intricacy of the position of bisexuals. This position cannot be adequately understood by using the same model that explains other minority/majority relationships. Pairing bisexual and straight women in the context of their status at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, certainly 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 "[m]uch of lesbian identity is dictated by experienced homophobia and heterosexism" is inaccurate. Lesbian experience is shaped by homophobia, but our identities are not dictated by heterosexual culture.

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, providing a space for women's 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 newsjournal, it must define its feminism. We argue that a centerspread 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 newsjournal, 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 no 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 and talking 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 could 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 'Boo' Price and Lisa Vogel. I 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 on.

The one thing that we have in common when we arrive is that we are womyn gathering here to share what we bring as womyn. Our bonds are exhilarating, and the comfort that comes from an annual reunion of that growing sense of family enriches 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 the strong lesbian identity. Lesbians have limited experience at being in the majority in this sense and can tend to exclude non-lesbian womyn. 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, some who are gay, some straight, and some, undoubtedly bisexual, I would have no problem in seeing the festival as a Lesbian Only space. No problem at all. All I ask is 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 argue that the environment should not be a hostile one for those bisexual and straight women who choose to attend.

If the lesbian attendance is estimated by the producers to be roughly 90%, I assume (thought I am not a math major) that that means that the bisexual/straight attendance is 10%. 10%. Somehow that figure seems somewhat familiar to me. I am not asking for much. I simply ask that when the emcee talks to the audience, that instead of saying, "WE ARE LESBIANS! LESBIANS BUILT THIS FESTIVAL!" she say something like "Lesbians and bisexuals and straights worked side by side in sisterhood to build this stage, this festival and this environment of women standing together." Or perhaps 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 are of 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 camps with a bisexual woman, and many of these conversations took place in front of her friend's face. I attended one of the two workshops about and for bisexuals, and found a fairly small group of 50 or so 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 agree with a lesbian who came to the workshop with her bisexual lover that silence equals death for bisexuals as 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 is not understandable, but it is inexcusable. I will not stop attending the festival, however, 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 bisexuality 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 that this is a worthwhile topic, nor is Maggie the only lesbian to feel the same thing. I think I recog-

nize 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 that 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 students who are unaware of the differences between bisexuals and lesbians and might be less homophobic and biphobic than when they first arrived. 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 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 as individuals must confront.

Prejudice is prejudice, wherever and whenever it occurs. Slamming a person who happens to be of an ethnic background or race or class because 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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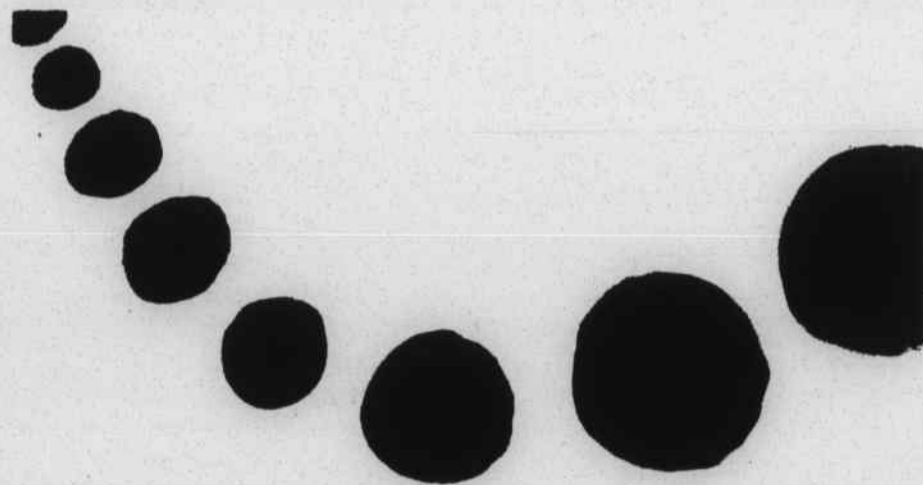


I believe that regardless of the fears expressed by the authors of "The Resistant Reader," anonymity is unacceptable in this kind of situation. Anonymity is an abdication of responsibility for one's actions. With a few exceptions, (for example when many other avenues of action have been attempted) anonymity has no place in a community where responsibility to ourselves and to each other serves as the foundation of mutual respect.

When I read the flyer I was upset and angry, and I had no one to confront. I took the remaining stack of flyers because I think the anonymity of the authors violates both the word and the spirit of the honor code. I also think that the content of the flyer walks a fine line between criticism and harassment. I realize that my action has made many people angry, and justifiably so.

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 anonymity on this campus which I think 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 tactics 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



## To the Community:

I don't know where to begin. I have so much to say to the writers of "The Resistant Reader" and to the entire community, and it's all caught up inside me, hard to articulate, hard to give out. I am hurt, I am angry, I am apologetic, I am questioning the validity of the *College News*, and of myself as one of the editors. To the writers of "The Resistant Reader": say what you will, I cannot help but take an attack on the *College News* personally. Many of the points that you make are valid, and it is criticism much needed and in fact hoped for. But the manner in which you chose to make your criticisms, and the suggestion that I and the other women on the editorial board simply resign leaves me feeling watched and judged and to a certain point harassed by people I can't even see to question. I feel as though I am standing essentially alone in a room with walls of one way mirrors, that I am being monitored and that my sentence has been handed down. I cannot even see my jury, let alone speak to them. This may seem melodramatic and perhaps irrational, but it is the way that I feel. And I won't take it without questioning.

The declaration that the *College News* is "an unapproachable institution" makes me immediately defensive, because I am implicated as unapproachable as well. Have you tried? Have you ever once spoken to me about the newspaper? Do you know that I have been troubled by many of the same things you seem to be troubled by? Do you understand that I have been anxious for criticism, for someone to point out our mistakes and to make suggestions? Do you even know who I am? To finally get such criticism along with a suggestion that the *College News* be completely dismantled simply makes me feel angry and violated. It feels like I'm being clobbered over the head by someone from behind.

I will not defend the editorial in question in this letter; I will leave

that to the writers of the editorial who should have been named in the newspaper itself. The point of "The Resistant Reader" on this issue is well taken. We have reconsidered the place of an editorial in the *College News*, and have realized that a broad, controversial, unsigned statement such as the one that is usually made in the editorial has no place in this newspaper; that while the views expressed are important for consideration by the entire community, they cannot represent a singular solid view of the entire editorial board. Each member must speak for herself, as every member of the community should. And any member of the community should be able to write an "editorial."

Just as any member of this community should be able to stand up and speak what she thinks, as any member should be able to write an article for the *College News*, as any member of this community should be able to publish without having to rely on the *College News*. Though the writers of "The Resistant Reader" say that "The *College News* monopolizes media communication," I think that they have proven thoroughly enough that nobody needs the space this newspaper offers to make their point. The statement "it is no accident that there are no long-lasting alternative papers at Bryn Mawr" implies that the *College News* is somehow responsible for this lack. I have been here since the fall of 1986, and I have seen no attempts made to begin another Bryn Mawr newspaper. Of course, it can be argued that simply the existence of the *College News* deters other students from the attempt; I argue that this is a copout, an excuse and not a reason.

We have made mistakes. We admit that. We have acknowledged some, and ignored others, and we should be made accountable for all. I personally have written articles without thinking through exactly what I was saying, articles I would not have written if I had. We want to hear what it is that we are doing wrong,

how it is that we can represent the Bryn Mawr community more completely. But far from having to define "our" feminism, I think that it should be acknowledged by us, the writers of "The Resistant Reader," and in fact the entire community that there is no one "brand" of feminism that each individual subscribes to; that in fact the very possibility of "the theory", a theory, one theory of feminism that the writers of "The Resistant Reader" support is oppressive and patriarchal in itself. That a woman should advocate this feminism, whatever it really is, or not call herself a feminist at all seems to me to invalidate the very foundations of a feminism that seeks to liberate women from oppression and exploitation. Saying that we are not representative of the community, a point made again and again, is to suppose that we actually can be, and implicitly, that "The Resistant Reader" is. I disagree on many counts.

First of all, it is impossible for any one paper on this campus to be "representative" of the entire student body without every single individual submitting her own article regularly. Our views are too diverse to be encompassed in an issue or even in a large collection of issues. If we have given the impression that we are an adequate space for expression, we have lied. That we are a space is undeniable, inadequate though it may be. Mandating what there should and should not be space for, as expressed in the statement "one would hope there would be no room to address issues as insignificant as straight women at Michigan," is to decide what should be important to other women, to make the assumption that you know best how the space should be used. I don't think that the writers of "The Resistant Reader," or anyone on this campus has this right. The flyer seems to advocate propaganda rather than an open space for women to write what they will. Perhaps the *College News* should in fact strike "a feminist paper and advocacy journal" from its state-

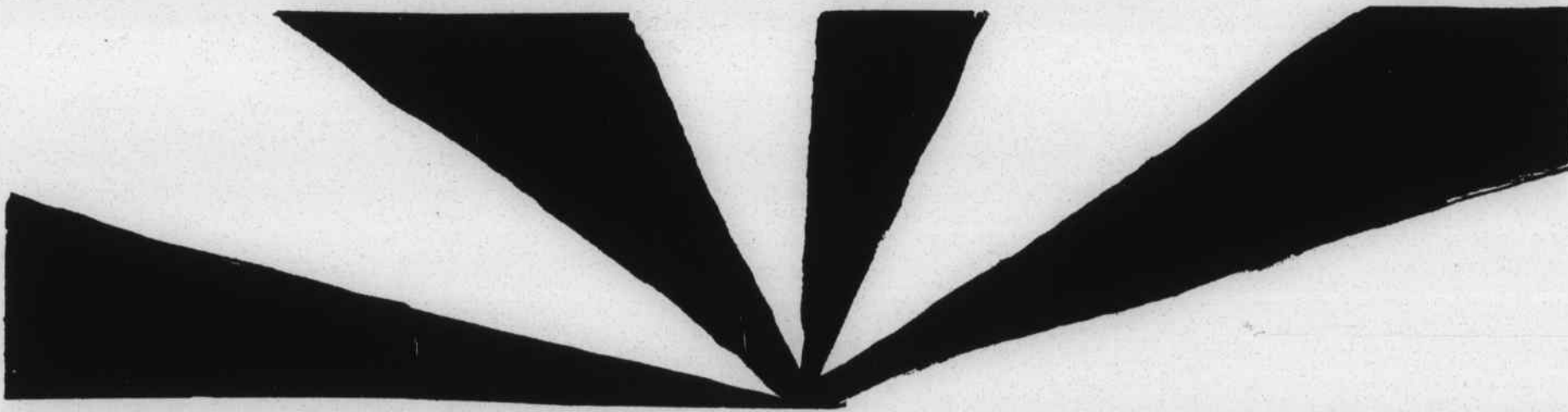
ment of purpose. But I think that it does reflect some of the "current campus needs," and to say otherwise implies that the writers of "The Resistant Reader" can define these needs for the campus.

It is undeniable that there is a division between the *College News* and some members of the community. But "The Resistant Reader" fails to acknowledge that some of these women feel alienated not because of "incidents such as the 'Black Herstory Month' posters," but because they feel their heterosexual voice can't be heard in the midst of the *College News'* obvious commitment to certain lesbian concerns. The repeated allegation that the *College News* does not speak for the community, and that "The Resistant Reader" does or can, completely discounts the voices of many women on this campus. Again, no one newspaper can be adequate. I resent the implication that one can.

The equipment and office space that the *College News* uses is already "available to any students wishing to publish." This is another instance in which I feel that the writers of this flyer have refused to attempt to communicate with the members of the *College News* editorial board, and then deemed us "unapproachable." We are willing and interested in offering any help that we can to anyone who asks us for it, help in the form of use of facilities, explaining the layout program, and contact with our printer. Cooperation on this level would be advantageous for everyone involved, including the student body who would not have to pay for additional equipment when what we have is sufficient to support more than one publication. Nobody who has asked has been refused.

I fail to see the need to dismantle the *College News* when what is in fact needed on this campus are, as the writers of "The Resistant Reader" say, "publications that reflect the interests of this community." I do not understand how you, or anyone,

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We are reconsidering the validity of an editorial which presumes to speak for the entire editorial board of the *College News*.. Just as the editorial board 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."



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tival, but also to the public discussion of the broader issues. They state that "Encouraging the idea that straight women can be silenced by Lesbians validates the fear that strong affirmation of Lesbianism poses and inherent threat to heterosexuality." We were not "encouraging the idea" that straight women can be silenced, but simply acknowledging the truth. Within certain closed situations straight women can be silenced by lesbians. I know the writers of "The Resistant Reader," and others of you, are cringing and/or swearing and saying someone needs to shut this woman up. There is a reason I persist. I deplore the suggestion that our weaknesses are dirty secrets and should be kept to ourselves. Only the most pathetic of homophobic minds would take the acknowledgement of the possibility of straight women being silenced in some situations to mean that "strong affirmation of Lesbianism poses and inherent threat to heterosexuality." Straight women always have the option of walking away from a situation within which they feel silenced; we lesbians do not. I am committed to the lowering of walls that divide women along the lines of sexual orientation. I believe more can be done to further that process by openly discussing reverse prejudice than by remaining silent out of fear of giving fuel to homophobia.

The writers of "The Resistant Reader" give a great deal of space to critical issues of power imbalance and oppression. I do not wish to claim for a moment that prejudice among minorities carries the same significance as prejudice among empowered groups. I believe, however, that it is crucial for minority groups to rigorously assess their own prejudices and work to avoid the perpetuation of oppression, prejudice and discrimination.

I strongly disagree with the claim that "to discuss 'racist strains in gay communities' assumes that all the gay community is white." People of Color, I believe, are capable of racism. (Likewise, I, even though I am a woman, can be sexist.) When we made the statement we were very conscious of the racially diverse nature of the gay community.

I also strongly object to the assertion that "To discuss the 'hetero-sexism of people of color' assumes that all people of Color are straight." First of all, the quote is incorrect. We did not write "the hetero-sexism of people of color," but "... we are all aware... of hetero-sexism among people of color." It strikes me that the writers of the flyer were looking for racist statement where none existed. If I had written either of "the hetero-sexism of people from my home town," or of "hetero-sexism among the people of my home town," it would not be taken to mean that there are no gays where I live. My point is that I suspect the writers of the flyer, and pretty much any thinking person, would acknowledge that all groups, communities or societies — aside, perhaps, from those defined by homosexuality — are heterosexist to one degree or another.

As for the upset cause by "The

lesbian community does not exist solely to have and talk about sex, exchange good books or sing about wimmin," we were clearly not attempting to dictate the purpose to the lesbian community. The sentence was written light-heartedly, and while it may not be funny, it is not patronizing. The anonymous writers ask what lesbian community we are talking about. We all know that any reference to a community is dicey. No community is completely unified. I do think, however, that the use of the phrase was and is helpful to the discussion of these issues.

"The Resistant Reader" says that "Lesbian experience is shaped by homophobia, but our identities are not dictated by heterosexual culture." No, of course our identities are not dictated by heterosexual culture. We didn't say that they are. However, as depressing and destructive as the reality is, we, lesbians, are not able to develop our identities without being influenced by the dominant and oppressing heterosexual culture. Internalized homophobia is not a myth and one of its chief sources is heterosexism.

I hope that my responses to the criticism of the editorial in the flyer have made clear that I willingly and apologetically accept some of the complaints about "Where hypocrisy should have no place." I hope that it is equally clear that I stand by and defend the ideas and some of the language of the article. I invite anyone with further questions or challenges to contact me by mail at C-146, by phone at x7581, or through letters or articles submitted to the *College News*. That the editorial in many respects was not well done is undeniable.

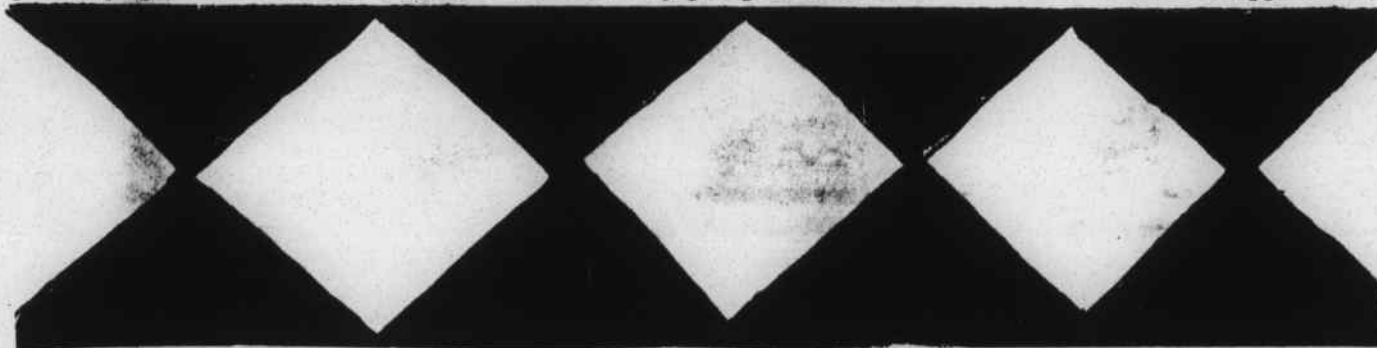
Equally undeniable is that the suggestion that because of the opinions of an anonymous few the *College News* should be dismantled is extreme and destructive. We were asked "what Lesbian community?" A much more pressing question, because of the

extreme, absolute nature of the criticism delivered and the action proposed, is who are the anonymous writers referring to when they write that "the division between the *College News* and the Bryn Mawr community is irreparable"? 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 possible. I recognize that it would be difficult for many women of Color to walk on to a staff dominated by White women, and that this is justifiably so. However, I think it is important to realize that we, too, are uncomfortable 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 to contribute in any way, no matter how large or small, to our efforts. I can hear those who would say the *College News* is the *College News* and the addition of women of Color to the staff could not change that. I have mixed feelings about responses along those lines. I would certainly understand, however, if a group of people preferred to create an alternative paper, rather than help us change the existing one from the inside. The staff of the *College News* would not perceive an effort to create an alternative as hostile; we have nothing invested in being the sole Bryn Mawr paper. We will gladly share our facilities with any group interested.

Given that the paper has no intention of dismantling itself at this point I would like to respond to several of the other specific criticisms of the *College News* in "The Resistant Reader." One helpful and valid claim of the writers is that the *College News* should not label itself a feminist paper. While we are committed to women's issues and diversity, and every issue of the paper will include some articles dealing with appropriate issues, we do accept and print articles written by women who have no interest in, or perhaps even reject feminism. I am dismayed, however, by the statement that "the paper supports a 'pseudo-feminism' using the label but not the theory." THE theory? The idea of a monolithic version of feminism is positively absurd. Also absurd is the criticism that the *College News* as it fails to be a feminist paper also fails to be a "solid campus paper, covering all campus events equally," because of "its selective coverage of events and perspectives." Are you, the anonymous writers, saying that there is such a thing as purely objective news coverage? Will you list for us all the events and perspectives existing on this campus? And please define equal coverage while you're at it. Selective coverage is inevitable for any paper. The *College News* acknowledges the inherent subjectivism of all writing, and 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 concretely respond to the content of the flyer. 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. Krall



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between people. All white women are not racist, all men are not sexist, and no, not all lesbians are not biphobic. But there are certainly more than a handful of each, and it was important to point out the biphobia exists and is another thing that people must be aware of.

As much as I feel that it was important that we write about biphobia, I feel that "The Resistant Reader" is very important to the *College News* and to the community. We are in no way unaware of our limitations and the mistakes have made, and continue to make in our struggle to recognize, work out, and eliminate our prejudices. We recognize that we are in no way as diverse as this campus is, and have been attempting for the past two years to become aware of the ways in which we are deficient.

We have reached a point, however, where we need those voices we are lacking to speak out. The *College News* is a collection of opinions. There is no way that we can cover all of the issues which are of importance to all the members of the community, and we can certainly not write from the point of view of all of the members of the community, which is why we accept all articles which the members of the Ed Board do not consider sexist, racist or homophobic.

If it seems that the scope of our definition of these 'isms' is too narrow, all that is required is that people show up on Thursday evenings at 9:00 to have their opinions heard. For the last three years, the Ed Board has been open to any and all who will show up for the meetings and will give four hours to layout every two weeks. We have tried to make people

aware of this by leaving a long-standing invitation for people to join the staff or write in the Ed box on the second page. For the writers of "The Resistant Reader" to call the *College News* "an unapproachable institution" is hurtful. Perhaps it seems a bastion of white feminism, but it is an image and attitude that we have been trying to change, and which we need help to change.

I have addressed only a few of the emotions and issues which "The Resistant Reader" evoked in me. Other members of the Editorial Board have covered what I have not. I can only hope that "The Resistant Reader" will bring about some of the changes that the Ed Board has been working for.

Thea Gray

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 denial 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 criticism and conflict into a reluctant acknowledgement 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,



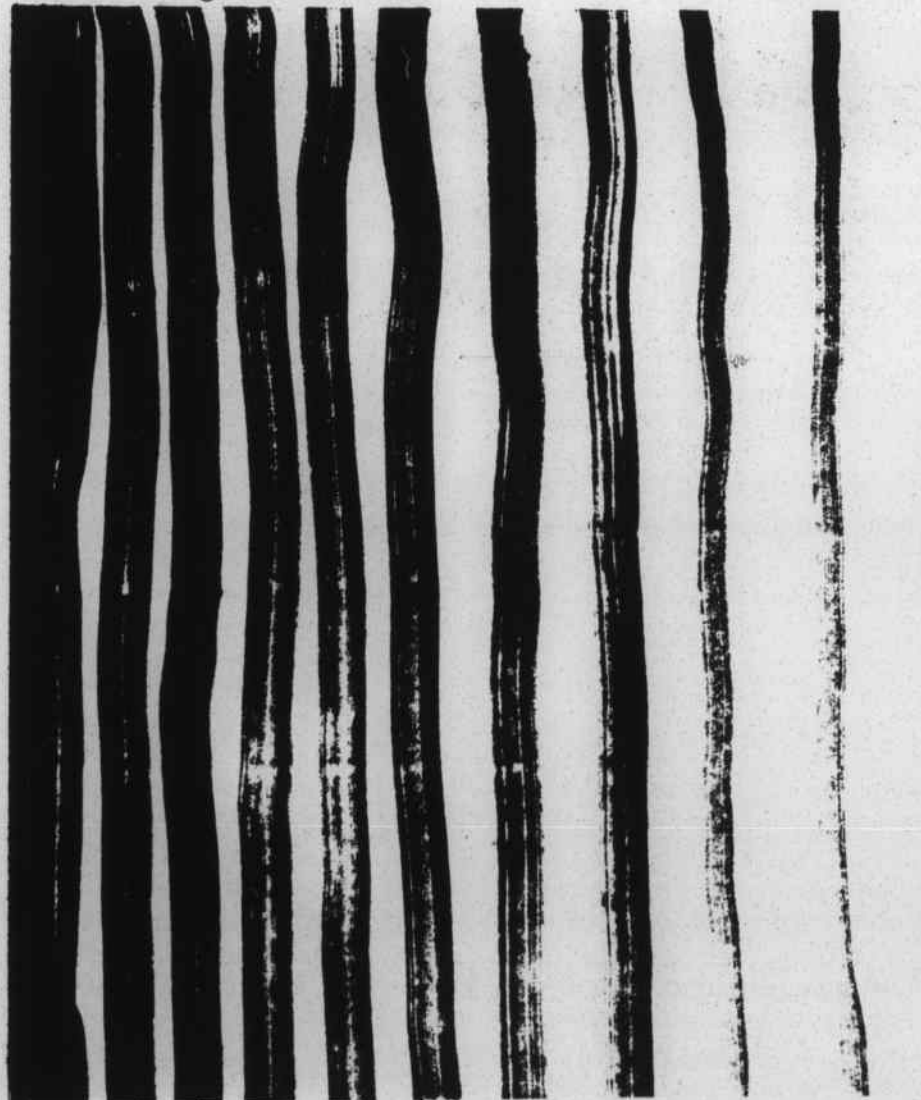
can decide for the campus that the *College News* is not one medium that reflects some of the interests of this community. Most certainly more publications are needed. How riding the campus of one will facilitate the addition of others is unclear to me. I just don't get your point.

I do think that there are many issues to be discussed. One idea touched upon briefly in the flyer that merits 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 "insti-

tution" 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



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.

As 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 centerspread on women in the military which barely questioned the military's devastating effects on people of color in the countries it invaded. The Black History Month centerspread comprised entirely of articles 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

be constructive, or it may be hurtful, and sometimes it's as if I'm reaching through a fog and won't know where I'm going until I get there. If I make a wrong turn, I won't go that way again; but my next step is just as uncertain. The public nature of writing for The *College News* compounds the uncertainty: I can't see where I'm going, but other people can see me.

Maybe my only way of continuing to grow without hurting anyone is to 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," write the authors of "The Resistant Reader." And their point is well taken. I am thinking hard about resignation; if I remain on the staff 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" which 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, *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.

Beth Stroud



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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 subversive? To challenge sexual norms? And how does this all relate to our relation-

ships with our parents?  
 So I'll be having a Bisexual-tea to discuss these questions and to celebrate love, sex, and the movement of the 90's! Food, drink, and titillating conversation promised! Come one, come all! That includes you, Ms. Resistant Reader — I'd love 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



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 contributor, 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.