

into two zones has some validity, but is due to folkways, morality, and economic factors rather than the weather. This essay has sometimes been mistaken for a "gay lib" apology ahead of its time, but a close reading reveals that Burton looked upon sodomy as a lurid vice suitable for shocking Mrs. Grundy when Burton was in a mischievous mood. There is no proof that he ever had sexual relations with any woman (including his wife) or boy, although the visit to the brothels of Karachi has naturally led to suspicions that he did more than just look at the catamites.

The final years of Burton's life were spent in Trieste, working on a massive erotic masterpiece which supposedly included much information on homosexuality, information supplied to him by Symonds, Ulrichs, Henry Spencer Ashbee, and Guy de Maupassant. However, the manuscript was destroyed after Burton's death by his widow as part of her sanctification plans for her husband's memory. This work was supposedly an annotated translation of the *Perfumed Garden* of the Sheikh Nefzawi (or Nafzawi), but the French translation had no references to pederasty. *The Glory of the Perfumed Garden* is a recent work claiming to be the "missing" half of this work, with chapters on pederasty and lesbianism, but this may be a fraud.

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Stephen W. Foster

BUTCH-FEM (LESBIAN) RELATIONSHIPS

Butch-fem(me) relationships are a style of lesbian loving and self-presentation which can in America be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century; historical counterparts can be found even earlier. Butches and fems have separate

sexual, emotional and social identities, outside of the relationship. Some butches believe they were born different from other women; others view their identity as socially constructed.

While no exact date has yet been established for the start of the usage of the terms "butch" and "fem," oral histories do show their prevalence from the 1930s on. The butch-fem couple was particularly dominant in the United States, in both black and white lesbian communities, from the 1920s through the fifties and early sixties.

Basic Features. Because the complementarity of butch and fem is perceived differently by different women, no simple definition can be offered. When seen through outsiders' eyes, the butch appears simplistically "masculine," and the fem, "feminine," paralleling heterosexual categories. But butches and fems transformed heterosexual elements such as gender attitude and dress into a unique lesbian language of sexuality and emotional bonding. Butch-fem relationships are based on an intense erotic attraction with its own rituals of courtship, seduction and offers of mutual protection. While the erotic connection is the basis for the relationship, and while butches often see themselves as the more aggressive partner, butch-fem relationships, when they work well, develop a nurturing balance between two different kinds of women, each encouraging the other's sexual-emotional identity. Couples often settle into domestic long-term relationships or engage in serial monogamy, a practice Kennedy and Davis trace back to the thirties, and one they view as a major Lesbian contribution to an alternative for heterosexual marriage. In the streets in the fifties, butch-fem couples were a symbol of women's erotic autonomy, a visual statement of a sexual and emotional accomplishment that did not include men.

Butch-fem relationships are complex erotic and social statements, filled with a language of stance, dress, gesture,

and comradeship. Both butches and fems carry with them their own erotic and emotional identities, announced in different ways. In the fifties, butch women, dressed in slacks and shirts and flashing pinky rings, announced their sexual expertise in a public style that often opened their lives to ridicule and assault. Many adopted men's clothes and wore short "DA" hair cuts to be comfortable and so that their sexual identity and preference would be clearly visible. As Liz Kennedy and Madeline Davis, authors of a study of a working-class black and white butch-fem community in Buffalo, New York, 1940-60, have pointed out, the butch woman took as her main goal in love-making the pleasure she could give her fem partner. This sense of dedication to her lover, rather than to her own sexual fulfillment, is one of the ways a butch is clearly distinct from the men she is assumed to be imitating.

The fem woman, who can often pass as a straight woman when not with her lover, actively sought to share her life with a woman others labeled a freak. Before androgynous fashions became popular, many fems were the breadwinners in their homes because they could get jobs open to traditional-looking women, but they confronted the same public scorn when appearing in public with their butch lovers. Contrary to gender stereotyping, many fems were and are aggressive, strong women who take responsibility for actively seeking the sexual and social partner they desire.

Community Aspects. Particularly in the fifties and sixties, the butch-fem community became the public face of lesbianism when its members formed bar communities across the country, and thus became targets of street and police violence.

In earlier decades, butch-fem communities were tightly knit, made up of couples who, in some cases, had long-standing relationships. Exhibiting traits of feminism before the seventies, butch-fem working-class women lived without the

financial and social securities of the heterosexual world, caring for each other in illness and death, in times of economic depression, and in the face of the rampant homophobia of the fifties. Younger butches were often initiated into the community by older, more experienced women who passed on the rituals of expected dress, attitude, and erotic behavior. This sense of responsibility to each other stood the women in good stead when police raided their bars or when groups of men threatened them on the streets.

Bars were the social background for many working-class butch-fem communities and it was in their dimly lit interiors that butches and fems could perfect their styles and find each other. In the fifties, sexual and social tension often erupted into fights and many butches felt they had to be tough to protect themselves and their women, not just in the bars but on the streets as well.

Butch-fem is not a monolithic social-sexual category. Within its general outline, class, race, and region give rise to style variations. In the black lesbian community of New York, for instance, "bull dagger" and "stud" were more commonly used than the word "butch." A fem would be "my lady" or "my family." Many women of the lesbian literary world and of the upper classes also adopted this style of self-presentation. In the 1920s, Radclyffe Hall, the author of *The Well of Loneliness*, called herself John in her marriage to Lady Una Troubridge. Butch-fem style also shows the impact of changing social models and politics. Feminism, for instance, as well as open relationships and non-monogamy, have been incorporated into butch-fem life of the seventies and eighties.

With the surge of lesbian feminism in the early seventies, butch-fem women were often ridiculed and ostracized because of their seeming adherence to heterosexual role playing. In the eighties, however, a new understanding of the historical and sexual-social importance of

butch-fem women and communities has begun to emerge. Controversy still exists about the value of this lesbian way of loving and living, however. Members of such groups as Women Against Pornography depict butch-fem as a patriarchal, oppressive, hierarchical way of relating. The American lesbian community is now marked by a wide range of relational styles: butch-fem is just one of the ways to love, but the butch-fem community does carry with it the heritage of being the first publicly visible lesbian community.

Related Terms.

"Stone butch": a butch woman who does not allow herself to be touched during lovemaking, but who often experienced orgasm while making love to her partner. This was a sexual style prevalent in the forties and fifties.

"Baby butch": a young-looking butch woman with a naive face who brings out the maternal as well as sexual longings of fem women.

"Kiki": a term used from the forties through the sixties for a lesbian who could be either butch or fem. A publicly kiki woman in the forties and fifties was often looked upon with suspicion though in the privacy of butch-fem homes, different sexual positions were often explored.

"Passing woman": a woman who works and dresses like a man; this style of self-presentation was often used in the past to transcend the gender limitations placed on women. Many working-class women "passed" in order to hold down the jobs they wanted without harassment; in earlier decades passing women often married other women. Passing women have their own sexual identity.

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Joan Nestle

BYRON, GEORGE GORDON, LORD (1788-1824)

English Romantic poet, born in London. The most influential poet of his day, with a world-wide reputation, Byron became famous with the publication of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-18), an account of his early travels in Portugal, Spain, Albania, and Greece. The proud, gloomy, guilt-ridden, alienated Harold defined the "Byronic hero" who was to reappear in various guises in Byron's later poems, notably in "Manfred," "The Corsair," and "Lara." The type became a defining image for European and American romanticism. Forced into exile in 1816 because of the scandal caused by his wife's leaving him, Byron settled in Italy, principally in Venice. There he wrote his sparkling satire on cant and hypocrisy, *Don Juan*. He spent the last months of his life in Greece, trying to help the Greeks in their struggle to gain independence from the Turks.

Notorious in his lifetime for his many affairs with women, Byron at 17 fell in love with a Cambridge college choir boy, John Edleston, two years his junior. This love is expressed in such early poems as "To E—," "The Cornelian," and "Stanzas to Jessy," but most fully in the "Thyrza" elegies written after Edleston's death in 1811 and published (in part) with *Childe*