

Letters to the Editor(s) Lesbians on the Loose (LOTL)

Sister acknowledges that the quality of the original scans has, unfortunately, limited the quality produced here.

REAL NUN SPEAKS

To the Editors,

As a lesbian who actually was a real live genuine nun, I read with interest the article in the March edition of LOTL on Janet Fraser, also apparently known as Mother Jocasta, "a lesbian nun". I sought to understand the rationale behind her parody hoping that she perhaps had something profound to contribute to lesbian culture. To say the least, I was very disappointed.

I find Ms Fraser's mindless need to dress up as a nun in order to bring attention to herself and her startlingly unoriginal views on lesbian issues quite offensive. Her parody is as useful to the advancement of lesbian thought as Al Johnson's blackening his face, wearing a fuzzy wig and singing 'Mammy' was to the advancement of the 1920's black American identity.

The fact is that there are lesbians who have been or still are nuns, who may have something interesting and relevant to say about important issues such as lesbians and spirituality, the place and role of lesbians in the mainstream churches and the nature of the sexual and emotionally intimate relationships that women form in close knit communities.

Some readers will be aware of Rosemary

LESBIANS ON THE LOOSE

Curb's and Nancy Manahan's excellent work *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence*, (Bantam Books, New York, 1985), an anthology of real, personal stories of American lesbian nuns which reveals the often painful, often funny, often joyful and certainly almost always difficult experiences that lesbians undergo in religious life. There is something poignant and much more useful in these stories of real lesbian nuns than the pointless self promotion of Janet "Never Play Trivial Pursuit With Me" Fraser.

The humour, I always thought, in groups such as the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, is that there is no such thing as an order of gay male nuns so the juxtaposition of concepts is harmless nonsense. Janet Fraser's play acting is offensive rather than humorous because there are lesbians who have been or still are nuns just as there are lesbians from a wide variety of spiritual, religious, philosophical, cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds who would like to be treated with respect.

Can you imagine the justifiable outrage from the whole community if Ms Fraser and her friends were to put shoe polish on their faces and parody themselves as being "lesbian aborigines"?

As a lesbian who was also a nun I experienced oppression from my religious order and from the official Church. I do not appreciate being oppressed by my own lesbian community. If Ms Fraser is too insensitive or too immature to cease her pointless exercise then I at least expect LOTL to demonstrate that it is an inclusive magazine for the whole lesbian community by not reinforcing her meaningless need for publicity at the expense of offending others in the community.

It may be more useful for LOTL to use its limited space to ask real lesbian nuns or former nuns to contribute their experiences so that the whole community can grow in awareness and understanding of the struggle of all our sisters to gain acceptance.

Margaret Parmeter, St. Peters

PATSY NO SAINT

Dear Editor,

The LOTL "Snatches" page of April, 1993, appears to have three typographical (sic) errors concerning the Order of Perpetual Indulgence.

1. The Order in Sydney is presently composed of people who, regardless of gender, identify as gay male nuns and lesbian monks, in our tradition of "genderbending". We acknowledge that there are two women who dress in a similar habit, but they do not take part in the collective life of the Order and do not challenge the concept of gender assignation. We do not regard people as part of the Order merely because they dress up as nuns.

2. People canonised by the Order have contributed in a positive way to lesbian and gay life. Canonisation, because it happens so rarely, is a matter of great debate within the Order. There has been no such debate on Patsy Cline, whose life was marked by domestic violence engendered by her husband's alcoholism and sense of machismo.

Patsy returned over and over to this life of torment because, like most

victims of domestic violence, she felt that she had no other options. Her songs are indeed popular with the lesbian and gay community. They are also invariably about loss and betrayal, certainly not positive role models for women and men seeking to live outside patriarchal structures. Her death must have been a release to her, in much the same way as Azaria was saved from a life of Seventh Day Adventism through the merciful intervention of the dingo.

3. The Order of Perpetual Indulgence does not have a Precision Dance Team, and has no intention of initiating such a team. We are founded upon an image of enthusiastic collectivity, amateurism and levelling, of rejection of guilt, celebration of differences and joy. The thought of some of our members attempting precise movements is enough to make one's wimple turn blue, and would involve rejection of the rejection of stigma. In order to save us from such trauma, precision is not on the agenda.

We hope that the above clarifies the no doubt well meant mistakes in "Snatches", and send our blessing from the Hooy Dingo, all praise her ferainess.

Sister Marlene Dyketrick on behalf of the Sister Mary Editorial Collective, Order of Perpetual Indulgence

M. Jocasta and Sister Joy have informed LOTL that the canonisation of Patsy Cline will go ahead as planned on June 26 at Glebe High School. Eds.

TELL US WHAT

Please send letters with your (for verification purposes only) 2042 or fax to (02) 552 2280. Letters edited. Next deadline is May

LESBIANS ON THE LOOSE