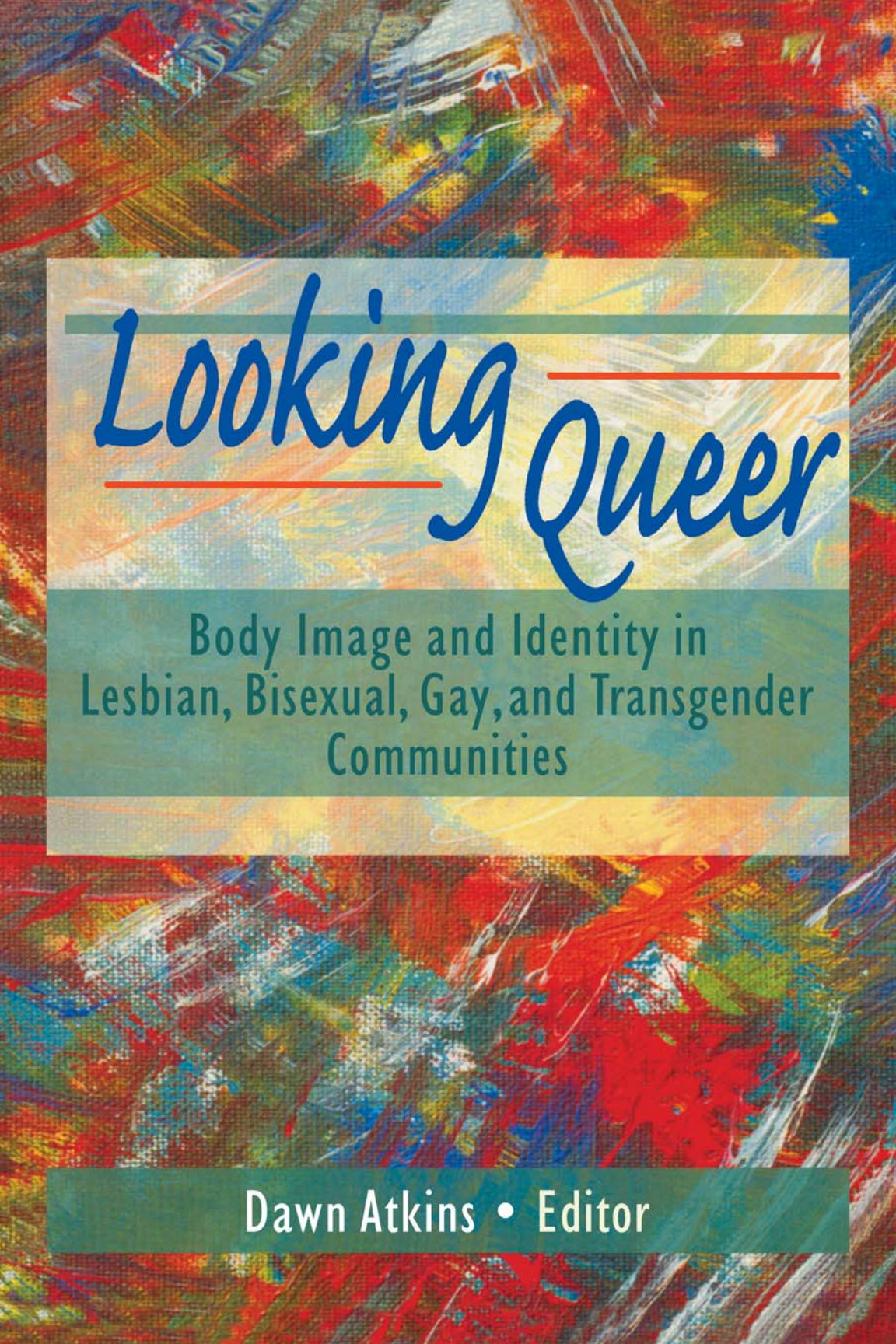
Looking Queer
Body Image and Identity in Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender Communities
Dawn Atkins • Editor

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Pre-publication
REVIEWS,
COMMENTARIES,
EVALUATIONS . . .

"In *Looking Queer,* Dawn Atkins has assembled an enormous collection of essays exploring the relationships between body form, self-reference, and sexual identity. Gender is very much a product of social action in these essays and the diverse racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds of the contributors show that gender is equally dependent on the details of social location. Both points are central points in the queer theory canon, but seldom has the truth of that canon been confirmed through such powerful and personalized means. *Looking Queer* may be the first collection to attack the demons of body fascism head-on. And if nothing else, these essays assure those of us unable to meet the expectations of these physical ideal(s)—we are not alone."

William Leap
Department of Anthropology,
American University,
Washington, DC

More pre-publication
REVIEWS, COMMENTARIES, EVALUATIONS . . .

"*Looking Queer* offers searing, gutsy, and political accounts of looksism in and out of queer communities. True to its roots in gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered activism, it includes articles from a remarkable array of writers.

This is a book you can read out loud to your lover—in bed or at the breakfast table; to a physician threatening to make a boy-girl one sex or the other; and to people who already know or want to understand the power of coming out and the healing power of touch. This book deserves room on the bookshelf with other writings on lesbian and gay life in the age of breast cancer and AIDS; with feminist writings that aim to account for race, class and sexuality; and with scholarship that keeps the body at the center of focus. As Dawn Atkins writes in her introduction, this book is about building a community that will look at our bodies differently and at different bodies with equal joy."

Becky Thompson, PhD
Associate Professor of Sociology,
Simmons College, Boston, MA;
Author, *So Wide and So Deep: A Multiracial View of Women's Eating Problems*

"Although one would never know it from examining the burgeoning queer studies literature, body image concerns are every bit as prevalent in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people as among heterosexual women. This powerful book presents body image issues in a refreshing mix of academic theory and personal account, and fills a glaring hole in 'queer' or lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender studies. The book is appropriate for a wide variety of audiences, from academic classes on eating disorders or body image, to courses on gender and sexuality. It is also a powerful read for people in LGBT support groups or reading groups, or for individuals who struggle with body image issues themselves."

Mickey Eliason
Director, Sexuality Studies Program,
The University of Iowa,
Iowa City, Iowa

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Looking Queer

Body Image and Identity in Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender Communities

HAWORTH Gay & Lesbian Studies

John P. De Cecco, PhD
Editor in Chief

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Looking Queer: Body Image and Identity in Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender Communities edited by Dawn Atkins

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Body Image and Identity in Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender Communities

Dawn Atkins
Editor

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To Michael Easton

Dearest little brother,
I wish I could have told you how much you meant to me,
how valuable your smile and your friendship was,
and how I wished you loved yourself even half as much as I loved you.
Maybe, if you could have seen yourself through my eyes,
seen how truly beautiful you were,
you would be with us now to read this book.
I miss you. Always.

CONTENTS

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Dawn Atkins is a thirty-six-year-old, bisexual, Wiccan, polyamorous, second-generation feminist. She has a BA in Anthropology and Professional Writing from the University of California at Santa Cruz, an MA in Feminist Anthropology, and is in a PhD program in anthropology at the University of Iowa. She is editor of upcoming special issues of the *Journal of Lesbian Studies* and the *Journal of Homosexuality* on sexual practices and identity. She worked for over ten years as a journalist, founded the Body Image Task Force, has given hundreds of presentations on body image, and is active in researching and writing about a range of body image and sexuality issues. She lives with her three partners and their young son.

CONTRIBUTORS

Andrea Askowitz has been, for most of her adult life, a student and an activist. She earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and a master's degree in public policy at the George Washington University. Her activism took her across the country when, in 1991, she organized and participated in the Reproductive Freedom Ride. Eleven bicyclists rode from New York City to Seattle educating and organizing for reproductive rights and women's health. Andrea now works as a freelance writer and an environmental advocate at the Natural Resources Defense Council. She lives in New York City.

Sara Auerbach studied psychology and women's studies at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. She currently works as a research assistant for the Departments of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science and Community Health at the University of Connecticut Health Center.

Michelle Bancroft is a graduate student/writer/artist living in Northern California. She holds a BA in Religious Studies and Women's Studies. She is an iconoclastic thirty-two-year-old stonefemme bottom. While not pleasing her Daddy butch, she is continuing her studies in religion, art history, iconography, mysticism, transforming arts, and the body. She has realized, thankfully, that the process of becoming is one that never truly ends.

Nancy Barron is a psychologist who evaluates changes in public mental health and substance abuse systems, teaches a course on self-image and body size, and practices as a psychotherapist. Her daughter cheers her on, and her son is making her a mother-in-law. She finds bell dancing, T'ai Chi, and outdoor activities, such as walking, canoeing, cross-country skiing, snorkeling, and scuba diving, delightful except for some rude aches in the joints. She was founder and board member of Ample Opportunity, a size-acceptance organization for women. Her new area of interest is an active, rural community for older lesbians.

Jay Blotcher has been a journalist, activist, and publicist in New York City since 1982, and has effectively intertwined these three lives by serving as media coordinator for the founding chapters of ACT UP and Queer Nation and by writing for *OutWeek*, *Out*, *POZ*, and several regional lesbian and gay newspapers. Blotcher was personal publicist for author Michelangelo Signorile for several years. He currently serves as Director of Media

Relations for the American Foundation for AIDS Research (AmFAR). A die-hard romantic Gemini, Blotcher still entertains notions of living happily ever after.

Boye is an Irish, working-class lesbian, raised in London. She now lives in Baltimore where she works as a healer and has a home with her master, to whom she is a lifetime slave. She is a published poet, an artist, and is currently completing a book of fine lesbian porn called *Letters to My Master.*

Rebekah Bradley is a teacher, therapist, and researcher. She is currently a graduate student in clinical psychology and in women's studies. She is also a student of guitar and biblical Hebrew.

Susie Bullington is a graduate student in anthropology and feminist studies at the University of Minnesota. She recently returned from southern Africa, where a recurring theme during her travels, and the source of many amusing stories, was the controversy that confusion about her gender inspired. For her thirtieth birthday, Susie bungee jumped 111 meters over the Zambezi River.

Wendy Chapkis is an author, activist, and educator. Her books include *Beauty Secrets: Women and the Politics of Appearance* and *Live Sex Acts: Women Performing Erotic Labor.* She is currently an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies at the University of Southern Maine, Portland.

Cheryl Chase is the founder of the Intersex Society of North America (ISNA) and editor of ISNA's newsletter, *Hermaphrodites with Attitudes.* Born in the late fifties with intersexual genitals and ovo-testes, she was raised as a boy for a year and a half, then clitorectomized and raised thereafter as a girl. She feels transgendered but leans toward the female end of the spectrum and identifies as lesbian. She formed ISNA after her 1992 "constructive breakdown," and it has been an important part of her healing process.

Greta Christina is a white, female, queer, bisexual, feminist pervert. Her work, including essays, columns, features, book and film reviews, and assorted ad copy, has appeared in *On Our Backs, Penthouse,* and *Ms.* magazines, the *San Francisco Bay Times,* the anthologies *The Erotic Impulse: Honoring the Sensual Self* (1992), *Bisexual Politics: Theories, Queries, and Visions* (1995), and *Pornosexuals: Challenging Assumptions About Gender and Sexuality.* Her fetishes include books, films, weird music, reference materials, baseball, food, sex, and writing irate letters to the editor. She lives in San Francisco.

Laura Cole was born in 1967 to a large, midwestern Catholic family and has identified as bisexual since her early twenties. She currently works as an administrative assistant for a public health organization in Seattle, Washington.

Loree Cook-Daniels is a forty-year-old, white, queer-identified feminist. She owns Word Bridges, a writing and conflict resolution consulting firm, and is currently working on a book of essays, *American as Apple Pie: Confessions of a Queer Suburban Wife and Mother.*

Marcelle Cook-Daniels is a thirty-seven-year-old, queer-identified, transgendered feminist. Marcelle is a computer geek who resides in Vallejo, California, with partner of fourteen years, Loree, and son Kai.

Christine Cress was previously a counselor in the Career Services Center at Western Washington University. Currently, she is a doctoral candidate at UCLA where she is studying the effects of self-concept development on educational outcomes. In particular, she is examining the impact of campus climates on the academic success of LBGT students. When she's not working on her dissertation, she escapes into the mountains and canyons for hiking and quiet reflection.

Diane Griffin Crowder is Professor of French and Women's Studies at Cornell College. She has published research on the lesbian body, lesbian utopian fiction, lesbian pedagogy, semiotics, feminist criticism, and the works of Monique Wittig and Colette. Current research interests include lesbian theory, postmodernism and identity politics, and ongoing work on Wittig. She lives with her partner Margaret and their two cats.

Ozzie Diaz-Duque was born in La Habana, Cuba, on September 17, 1951 and raised in the rural town of Guanajay, near the port of Mariel. The son of immigrants from Austrias, Spain (Catholic father), and the Canary Islands (sephardic Jewish mother), he arrived in the United States on January 3, 1966, and lived in a home for boys in Miami, Florida, for a time. He moved to New York City to live with relatives and attended high school and Queens College, CUNY. He arrived in Iowa in August 1973 to complete graduate studies in romance languages and translation. Currently, he is teaching at the University of Iowa and working as a cross-cultural health care specialist and interpreter/translator.

Ganapati S. Durgadas was born July 5, 1947, in New York City as Leonard Tirado of Jewish and Puertorriqueno parentage and is a bisexual. He has been an anti-Vietnam war protester, welfare rights activist, ACT UPer and Queer National, Buddhist, and psychotherapist. Published in the *Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out* anthology, *James White Review,*

and *Gay Community News*, he left Buddhism for Hinduism, changed his name legally, and was adopted into a South Indian Brahmin family. Nowadays, he looks critically at queer life from the perspective of this life experience.

Amy Edgington is a disabled lesbian artist and writer living in the South. Her work has previously been published in *Sinister Wisdom* (#39 on Disability), *Cats and Their Dykes, Wanting Women: An Anthology of Erotic Lesbian Poetry,* and other journals and anthologies.

Andrew J. Feraios has been a gay activist, AIDS activist, health educator, labor union organizer, student activist, and graduate student working on gay and lesbian issues. "If Only I Were Cute: Looksism and Internalized Homophobia in the Gay Male Community" is an adaptation from a larger work in progress called *The Adonis Complex: Homophobia, Patriarchy, and HIV Within the Cult of Gay Male Beauty.*

Kenny Fries is the author of *Body Remember: A Memoir, Anesthesia Poems,* and the play, *A Human Equation*, which premiered at LaMama E.T.C. in New York City. He is also the editor of *Staring Back: The Disability Experience from the Inside Out.* He received the Gregory Kolovakos Award for AIDS Writing and was Lambda Literary Award finalist for his sequence of poems, *The Healing Notebooks*. He has received a Ludwig Vogelstein Foundation grant and residencies at The MacDowell Colony and Yaddo. He teaches in the MFA in the Writing Program at Goddard College and lives in Northampton, Massachusetts.

Patrick Giles was born and raised in New York, where he still lives and where he came out while still a teenager. After years of participation in gay and lesbian and AIDS advocacy groups, he is now writing fiction and essays full-time and beginning to love working out at the gym and losing weight.

Amy Gilley has a PhD in Dramatic Art from the University of California, Santa Barbara. She has taught lighting design, set design, and theater history at the University of Georgia and Piedmont College. She left the South to teach creative arts and American literature at Concordia International University, Estonia. She has published fiction and poetry and presented papers on popular culture at a variety of conferences including the North American Studies Conference at the University of Tartu. A recovering victim of the fashion industry, she no longer thinks Kate Moss is the ideal.

Sandra Lee Golvin was born to Jewish parents in a Catholic hospital on Gabrielino land in the desert city named in Spanish by its founding African, Chinese, and European citizens for Our Lady the Queen of the Angels.

Her favorite childhood foods were tacos and brisket. S/he resists categories but will sign on for: writer/seeker/queer/femme/Sagittarius/lawyer. S/he has been published in the anthologies *Best Lesbian Erotica 1996 and 1997* and *Hers, Ritual Sex* and the journals *Fireweed* and *Spoon River Review.*

Paul EeNam Park Hagland is a gay Korean adoptee and an activist in LGBT Asian-American communities. He was the first chair and a founding member of Gay Asians and Pacific Islanders of Chicago (GAPIC) and was a board member of the Asian American AIDS Foundation (now Asian American AIDS Services) of Chicago. Currently he is a member of Gay Asians and Pacific Islander Men of New York (GAPIMNY), the Korean LGBT Group of New York, and a.k.a. (also-known-as), a New York-based organization of and for Korean and other intercountry adoptees.

Michael Hernandez is transitioning from lawyer to writer and is currently editing an anthology about transgendered men titled *Transgendered MANifesto.* Mike's sexual orientation is queer. In other words, as both woman and man are embodied in one, Mike is a lesbian as well as gay. Needless to say, this self-perception causes a great deal of dismay in a world and society that requires a choice between one or the other. Mike's hope is that one day labels will be no longer necessary and that just being will suffice.

Gene-Michael Higney is a transplanted New Yorker who spends far too much time defending the Big Apple from the spiritually tanned denizens of the Big Orange and far too little time worrying about his appearance. The time he does not spend in the gym affords him ample time for fun, frolic, and, when his back is against the wall, writing.

Morgan Holmes is a founder of the Intersex Society of Canada (ISCA) and considers herself a force to be reckoned with. Thus, she finds herself slugging it out to finish her doctoral studies with two goals in mind: to teach many hundreds of students that we come in more than two varieties and to stop the unethical pathologization and medicalization of those deemed "intersexed." Morgan is definitely bent, and she likes it that way. Morgan is not sure where she lives right now, but her partner and son are with her, and the ambiguity suits them all quite well.

Claire Hueholt is a dyke woman without a nation. She has lived in Iowa for most of her life and has been struggling to overcome the barriers placed before her in the Bible Belt, as well as the barriers she feels daily because she is not an "appropriate" lesbian in her community. Much of what larger society demands of her as a woman is reflected in her inner struggle to rise up and reject the chains that come from her inner voices and the careful lessons she has been taught in her thirty-four years on this planet. She writes to give

voice to her struggle and because she believes in the possibility of something better.

Sherrie A. Inness is Assistant Professor of English at Miami University. Her research interests include women's popular fiction, girls' serial novels, women's basketball, and lesbian fiction. She has published articles in *American Literary Realism*, *The Edith Wharton Review*, *Journal of Popular Culture*, *NWSA Journal*, *Studies in Scottish Literature*, *Studies in Short Fiction*, and *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, as well as in several anthologies.

Raven Kaldera is a pansexual, intersex, F2M shaman/activist, writer, farmer, SM top, joyously married to an M2F shaman, polyamorous, and the parent of one child. Raven is the editor of *Hermaphrodeity: The Journal of Transgender Spirituality* and has published stories in the anthologies *Blood Kiss* and *S/M Futures*. Raven does not have a college degree and does not need one, thank you very much. Get over it. Raven is a Sagittarian with a Gemini moon and a Leo ascendant, if you're interested.

Dean Kiley is a (young)(queer)(Melbourne) writer, PhD candidate, and theorist currently lecturing in creative writing and hypertextuality at Melbourne University. His work includes (and often combines) theory, social commentary, and several modes of fiction. He is the author of *and thats final*. Some of his interests are, in no particular order: the interfaces between theory, criticism, and fiction; rollerblading; graphic design; what happens to textuality when it becomes hyper; the depoliticizing of popular gay media; queer theory, theorizing, and straightening-up; and his beautiful lover Jonathan. As to body concerns, he has the muscular build of a sexy pretzel crossed with a fifteen-year-old girl and is entirely happy with it, thank you very much.

Alexa Leigh is a righteous cultural critic. In the years since this piece was written, she has earned an MFA in Creative Writing from Mills College. She would like to thank the supermegaevilconglomerateubercorporations whose products appear in this piece without their permission.

Frank Martinez Lester went straight from the grit and turmoil of an inner-city high school in Pasadena, California, to the tree-lined, rarefied, ivory tower elitism of Stanford and Oxford (he studied at the latter for a year). He graduated from Stanford in 1988 and now works as a legal assistant and freelance writer in San Francisco. He has written articles for several local gay newspapers on city politics, health, and AIDS issues. His writing is informed by two factors: his upbringing, which was as a mostly (but not completely) white boy in a series of mostly racially diverse, culturally conservative, and economically impoverished neighborhoods, and the

identity he has forged out of that mix. Lester seroconverted in January 1996. He plans to pursue a career in library and information science and, of course, to continue writing.

Catherine Lundoff is a white, bi-identified lesbian woman living in Minnesota with her long-suffering partner and cats. She likes tattooing, is a Wiccan, a women's festival organizer, a martial artist, and is just tickled pink to be writing this. She also doesn't have the social skills to sell out, so she's not too worried about the effects of law school.

William J. Mann is the author of the novel *The Men from the Boys* and the biography *Wisecracker: The Life and Times of William Haines*. His work has appeared in *The Advocate*, *The Washington Blade*, *Lambda Book Report*, and other publications around the country. His essays and fiction have been included in such anthologies as *Sister & Brother*, *Shadows of Love*, *Wanderlust*, and *Looking for Mr. Preston*. The winner of the 1994 Porn Press Award, he is currently completing a book of interrelated short stories involving ghosts, sex, our bodies, our souls, and small-town queer life.

Clancy McKenna is a lesbian who is surviving life with a fluid body image, as well as some gender nonconformity. She accepted the assigned label of "overweight" for about twenty of her forty-one years. These days she is described as big, not so bad, and she is an athlete, commuting daily by bicycle to and from work. In September 1995, she rode in the Boston-New York AIDS ride. Clancy lives in the West Village with her twenty-two-year-old son and their two cats. By night she is a student at Queens College, and by day she works for City University.

Jessica F. Morris is a PhD candidate in clinical psychology at the University of Vermont and a graduate of Vassar College. Her research, writing, and clinical work are focused on the psychology of women and particularly focused on lesbians. Her dissertation is titled "Lesbian Mental Health and the Coming-Out Process."

Anna Myers is a writer and a graduate student in the clinical psychology PhD program at the University of Vermont. She writes short fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Her professional research has focused on issues related to the psychology of women, obesity stigma, and community mental health. Anna has been an out queer activist for over eight years. She graduated with a BA in Psychology and Feminist Studies from Hampshire College in 1991 and has spent her time since then expanding her various identities.

Jill Nagle is a skinny, white, Jewish, bisexual, Virgo chick who lives in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco, where she experiments with, and cruises for: sex, gender, theory, Judaism, community, dance, social justice,

and occasionally performance. Some of her documentation to date has been published in the volumes *PoMoSexuals, First Person Sexual, Bisexual Politics,* and *Closer to Home: Bisexuality and Feminism,* as well as in the periodicals *Girlfriends, Black Sheets, Spectator,* and *Anything That Moves.* Her latest book is an edited volume from Routledge titled *Whores and Other Feminists.* Her second, *Girl Fag,* looks at how women inhabit gay male identities, practices, spaces, and orifices. She is currently writing about white supremacy, sex industry consumers, and interparadigmatics, and is working on a screenplay. Her interest in social justice is grounded in *tikkun olam,* the Jewish injunction to mend the world. All she really needs is a good question.

Mark O'Brien was born in Boston in 1949. In 1955, he contracted polio, which paralyzed his limbs and forced him to use an iron lung. He graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1982, with a BA in English. His journalism has been published by *Whole Earth Review, The San Francisco Chronicle, The Fessenden Review,* and *Pacific News Service.* His poetry has appeared in *The Sun, Margin, Berkeley Poetry Review, Rio Grande Review, Saint Andrew's Review, Spitball,* and *Saturday Museum.* He has two chapbooks, *Breathing* and *The Man in the Iron Lung.* He lives in Berkeley, California.

Conrad R. Pegues is a thirty-three-year-old, same-gender-loving black man. He completed his bachelor's degree (1991) and master's degree (1993) in English at The University of Memphis. At present, he teaches writing composition courses in the Memphis area. He is a Southerner born and bred in the buckle of the Bible Belt in Memphis, Tennessee. Living in the cultural milieu of the mid-South has fired an authentic vision of his racial and sexual identity while confronting the sometimes tyrannical powers of family, neighborhood, and church in Southern society.

Layli Phillips wrestles with and researches matters of identity. She is fascinated with words that begin with "i": inbetween, indeterminate, interstice, intersection, infiltrate, interrobang, and, yes, identity. She is Assistant Professor of Psychology and African-American Studies at the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia.

Jim Provenzano's fiction has appeared in the anthologies *Waves, Best American Gay Fiction 1996, Swords of the Rainbow,* and *Queer View Mirror.* An editor of *Hunt, Wanderlust,* and staff member of *OutWeek,* the former dancer and performer was born in New York and raised in Ohio. With a BFA in Dance from Ohio State and an MA in English from San Francisco State, he writes the weekly column "Sports Complex" for the *Bay Area Reporter.*

Drama Rose is a thirty-year-old, radical, feminist, dyke mom living in central California. She has been out as a lesbian since age eighteen and has loved every minute of it. She is a speaker on body image and the dangers of dieting. She is also a massage therapist who works mostly on large womyn. She is happily married to a beautiful womyn, and they are the proud parents of four cats and one baby girl.

Esther D. Rothblum, PhD, is Professor of psychology at the University of Vermont and editor of the *Journal of Lesbian Studies.* She has edited the books *Lesbian Friendships, Lesbians in Academia, Preventing Heterosexism and Homophobia, Loving Boldly: Issues Facing Lesbians,* and *Boston Marriages: Romantic but Asexual Relationships Among Contemporary Lesbians.* Much of her research has focused on women and the stigma of weight.

Sandip Roy grew up in India and now lives in the United States. He edits *Trikone Magazine,* the world's oldest surviving magazine for gay men and lesbians of South-Asian origin. His work has appeared in *Christopher Street, India Currents Magazine, Queer View Mirror, My First Time, Men On Men 6, Contours of the Heart, A Magazine,* and *Bay Area Reporter* and other anthologies and magazines. When the rent is due, he also writes software.

Jo Schneiderman is a middle-aged dyke who is a recovering bulemic, director of a statewide child abuse prevention program, yoga and aerobics teacher, and community access television producer and news writer. In her spare time, she sometimes writes. She has been writing fiction, journalism, and essays since the late 1960s. Her work has appeared in *Outrageous Women, Gay Community News,* and *For Crying Out Loud,* among others. She is a contributor to and co-editor of *All the Ways Home,* a collection of short fiction about parenting and children in the lesbian and gay communities. Jo lives with her lover of eighteen years, Chaia Mide, who gives her enormous support and sustenance, and their cat, Ruach, who cleverly knocks things off her desk.

Darrell g.h. Schramm is a feminist gay man, trim at fifty, but utterly blind in the left eye, whose work has appeared in the anthology *A Member of the Family,* as well as in such magazines and journals as *Alaska Quarterly Review, Americas Review, Carolina Quarterly, Frontiers, Iris, Rain City Review, White Crane,* and numerous others. He teaches poetry and writing at the University of San Francisco. Recently, he conducted a year of weekly poetry workshops for HIV-positive gay men.

Nina Silver, a bisexual feminist, holds a doctorate in Transformational Psychology from the Union Institute and maintains a bodymind psycho-

therapy and healing practice. She is also a musician, artist, and social change author whose writing on feminism, sexuality, political theory, and metaphysics has appeared in *The New Internationalist*, *Off Our Backs, Flatland*, *Jewish Currents, Green Egg, Gnosis*, and the anthologies *Women's Glib, Childless By Choice, Closer to Home: Bisexuality and Feminism, Lesbian Bedtime Stories, Transforming a Rape Culture*, and *Society: Readings in Women's Studies*. Her volume of poetry, *Birthing*, was published recently by Woman in the Moon Publications. She is currently finishing a book that integrates feminism, depth psychology, and the bodymind principles of Wilhelm Reich.

Anna Snoute is a bisexual woman in her twenties currently living in Seattle. She feels as if she has something to say to other women. She would like to thank her sister, who was her best friend throughout childhood and who continues to provide her with challenges and opportunities to grow.

Margo Solod is a thirty-eight-year-old, white, lesbian poet, songwriter, second-generation American of Russian Jewish heritage. Depending on the time of day, the order of these labels can be switched. All the facets are important, and none defines her. Her poetry and fiction have been published in over fifteen publications, both gay and straight. No one who knows her can understand how a stranger could call her sir, or how she could be worried about her weight/body image. No one who thinks they know her does.

Michele Spring-Moore is a switch-hitting, code-switching, semi-butch, bisexual feminist activist poet, a founder of the Rochester, New York, Bisexual Women's Network, and a former editor of *The Empty Closet*, New York state's oldest lesbian and gay newspaper. She received an MA in Creative Writing at the University of Colorado in Boulder, and her poetry has been published in *Bay Windows, Fireweed: A Feminist Quarterly*, and *Hanging Loose*.

John Stoltenberg is the author of *Refusing to Be a Man: Essays on Sex and Justice, The End of Manhood: A Book for Men of Conscience,* and *What Makes Pornography "Sexy"?*. He lives in New York City with the writer Andrea Dworkin.

Donna Tsuyuko Tanigawa is a *yonsei* (fourth-generation), lesbian poet and artist of Japanese ancestry from the sugar plantation town of Waipahu on the island of O'ahu. She received her MA in American Studies from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Her work explores the language and culture of her mother tongue, "pidgin" English. Her poems and essays have appeared in *Sinister Wisdom, Common Lives/Lesbian Lives*, *Hawaii*

Review, and *Asian Pacific Journal*, as well as several anthologies. She lives in Honolulu with her partner Lee Donna-Ann.

Jennifer Taub is currently a student in the clinical psychology PhD program at the University of Vermont. Her interests include community psychology, primary prevention, and children's services. Her other interests include bisexuality, constructions of desire, and politics within women's and queer communities. She also likes to play with her cat, brew beer, cook, travel, and waste way too much time on the Internet.

Silva Tenenbein, a fat, kinky, queer Jew who thinks a lot about power, privilege, and access, has been active in lesbian politics for twenty-five years. She lectures on a variety of topics, facilitates workshops, and teaches at a university in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Julia Dolphin Trahan is a crippled, queer, Hawaiian haole living in San Francisco. She earned her BA in Media Theory at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. She comanages BUILD, a queer performance space, and is an active member of Corporation for Disabilities and Telecommunications, as well as Wry Crips Disabled Women's Theatre. Her writings can be found in *The Disability Studies Reader, Virgin Territory 2, Frighten the Horses, Sinister Wisdom*, and *Mouth: The Voice of Disability Rights.* On the outside she's a pretty young girl-thang, on the inside (depending on the circumstance), she's a debonair gentleman, glam-girl, or ABC's Cripple-of-the-Week.

Susanna Trnka is a graduate student in anthropology at Princeton University and the mother of a one-year-old daughter. Having recently finished her first novel, she is catching up on her sleep before she attempts to write another.

Naomi Tucker works as a teacher and battered woman's advocate in the San Francisco Bay Area. Virgo supreme, and a proud, pushy, Jewish feminist, she is the editor of *Bisexual Politics: Theories, Queries, and Visions*. Her writing has appeared in journals and anthologies including *Bi Any Other Name, Anything That Moves*, and the *International Journal of Eating Disorders*. Naomi's healing work and community education/organizing efforts have focused on liberating women from the tyrannies of homophobia and biphobia, body image, and domestic violence.

Darcy Wakefield is a Maine native currently living in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, and is working with her grandmother on her grandmother's oral history.

Julie Waters has been active in various queer communities for most of her adult life. She was one of the founding members of the first Internet

resource expressly about bisexuality and has spent the last seven years maintaining one of the Internet's only free resources for transgendered people. She also has, on occasion, been known to compose music for classical and jazz guitar. She also devotes a great chunk of free time to maintaining Web sites on a wide variety of issues at http://drycas.club.cc.cmu.edu/~julie.

Kate Woolfe was born in Texas in 1969 and considers Austin her one true home. She has a BA in Anthropology and an MS in Community and Regional Planning from the University of Texas at Austin. She lives near the beach in California, with her lover, housemate, and too many cats. She has always wanted to be a writer.

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Thanks are also due the hundreds of people from many different backgrounds who have over the years listened, questioned, and explored body image ideas with me in workshops. From you I draw my experience and my dedication.

Introduction: Looking Queer

Dawn Atkins

> Darlin', I've been told all m' life that I'm goin' to hell 'cause I'm gay—but at least I'll be beautiful when I go!
>
> —*Michael Easton*

His Texas drawl was beautiful, and his smile contagious, but the pain was unmistakable. My brother and I had never talked about his views of his own body before, even though I had been doing body image education for several years.

It was 1990, I was chair (and founder) of the Body Image Task Force (BITF), a volunteer education and activism organization devoted to promoting positive body image and educating people about the dangers of eating disorders, dieting, and appearance discrimination. BITF speakers had talked to colleges, high schools, and community groups. Now, we had been asked to do a workshop for the Lesbian and Gay Community Center in Santa Cruz, California. Suddenly we realized that we had never considered the specific issues that would be involved with lesbian, bisexual, and gay people's body image. Every book on the topic presumed eating disorders and body image dissatisfaction were the problems of straight, white, middle-class, young women.

This struck me as strange when I realized that two-thirds of the active members of BITF identified as lesbian or bisexual. Many of the other writers and activists involved in body image work were not heterosexual either. Why were so many of the leaders in this work lesbian and bisexual women with our own painful histories. In addition, many of us and our audience members were not all middle-class, young, or white. Clearly something important was missing.

And what about the men? At the time, it was then estimated that 5 to 10 percent of people with eating disorders were men (Barry and Lippmann, 1990:161). We knew from reports and anecdotal sources that a significant

number of those men were gay or bisexual. One only had to be somewhat familiar with gay men's culture to see the emphasis placed on appearance.

Since we found academic and anecdotal sources scarce, we turned to our friends and families to prepare for the first couple of workshops. I sat down with my brother, Michael, to ask him about gay men and looks. After the initial camp humor, Michael explained:

> Women are bombarded with the idea that they must be slim, beautiful (blonde, blue-eyed—whatever the fashion is at the time). Men are given the idea that they should be attracted to someone who fits that stereotype. Gay men get this message from both sides "I should be attracted to someone who looks like this stereotype" AND "I must look like this stereotype if I want to attract other men because that is what they perceive as desirable."

What struck me most was that since he was my adopted brother, Michael and I did not share the same body type. He was tall and thin. Yet, he wore a girdle because his stomach "wasn't as tight as it should be." Michael said some people complained that he needed to "put on a few pounds," but he still worried about his figure.

I, on the other hand, was of average weight. But I was told by the weight charts that I was fat—even when I was anorexic. I ate little to nothing for months at a time. My rib and hip bones showed, and still I couldn't get within ten pounds of the supposed "ideal weight." Since I did not come out as bisexual until my mid-twenties, the pressures I faced to be thin came from "straight culture" and my family. It was feminism and the work of early size activists that helped me to break free of these pressures and to accept both my body and my sexuality. How had coming out helped me and not him?

Michael felt that internalized homophobia led to a gay men's culture that trapped him and others. He felt that many gay men have low self-esteem. "We are told that we are unnatural," said Michael, "so proving our sexuality and attractiveness becomes an obsession—a way of proving our worth." Michael also felt that much of gay life was centered in bars, a competitive environment where looks and money were the only things you could judge about people. Among gay men, how else was he supposed to meet someone to love and to love him except with his looks? I asked Michael how he felt it could change. He didn't think it would. For him, at least, it didn't. Michael died in 1991.

But things can change for the many of us—lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgendered—struggling with what it means to be queer and to live in these bodies that can bring so much pain and so much pleasure. I believe

they are changing. I hope that this book will add some resources and energy to the work ahead.

In the Beginning . . .

Well, maybe not that far back. Karen Stimson, a longtime activist, observes that in 1969, the same year the first human set foot on the moon, a number of events occurred that would come to shape a generation (Stimson, 1993:1). That year saw: (1) the founding of the National Organization for Women and the second wave of the U.S. feminist movement; (2) the founding of NAAFA (originally the National Association to Aid Fat Americans, later changed to National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance), which would be a leader in the size acceptance movement; and (3) the Stonewall Rebellion, which would ignite the lesbian and gay (later joined by bisexual and transgendered) rights movement. What has come to be called the "body image" or "size acceptance" movement in the United States began with a fusion of these three elements. The first fusion was called "Radical Fat Feminism" in which feminist women, many of whom were lesbians, began to make connections between sexism and weight discrimination.

Throughout the 1970s, these activists published articles on both feminism, in size acceptance publications, and on size discrimination and dieting, in feminist publications. Some of the writings on these issues became part of a literature package developed by the Fat Underground, formed in Los Angeles late in 1973 and active until some time after 1977. According to Vivian Mayer, the movement was a blend of radical feminism and radical therapy (Mayer, 1983:x). Some of these early works were later published in *Shadow on a Tightrope: Writings by Women on Fat Oppression* (Schoenfielder and Wieser, 1983). This book contained several personal narratives (some previously published in feminist publications), which addressed the issue of weight discrimination in general, as well as within the lesbian feminist communities.

It was a struggle, but by the late 1980s, feminism and size acceptance were firmly (if not always comfortably) joined. Dozens of books were published in the 1980s and early 1990s that addressed the social pressures on women to conform to a beauty standard and helped change both the personal relationship women have with their bodies and the culture's treatment of women's bodies. At the time, I found only one book that took a more multidimensional approach, which included issues of sexuality and race, *Beauty Secrets* by Wendy Chapkis (1986). Although fat lesbian and bisexual activists continue to be an important part of the movement through founding organizations and publishing newsletters and articles,

unfortunately, their unique experiences did not make it into the increasingly mainstream books and films on body image.

Homosexuality and Body Image

Meanwhile, in academia, most of the "early research on physical attractiveness consisted of studies of males perceiving females, reflecting researchers' implicit assumption that the phenomenon was limited to or most powerful when one of feminine beauty in the eyes of men" (Cash and Brown, 1989:362). In addition, reports of body image focused on women. Because of the focus on the male gaze as a prime motivator in developing eating disorders, men were not generally considered at risk for these illnesses. The heterosexual bias in these studies assumed that the only people interested in attracting men were women. The influence of body image disturbances on lesbians and bisexual women was not even considered by most researchers. This erasure can have a profound negative impact on the health of lesbian, bisexual, and gay people. They may face mistreatment by health care providers or avoid needed treatment because of neglect and prejudice in health care research and education (Stevens and Hall, 1991).

The first reference I was able to find to homosexuality and body image was a study on adolescent males' adjustment and self-image. Prytula, Wellford, and DeMonbreun found that homosexual males differed from heterosexual males in their "physical appearance, the perception of their physical appearance by others, and their perception of how their physical appearance was perceived by others" (1979:567). The gay and straight men were self-labeled. The same authors concluded that "homosexual males reported that they were significantly less adjusted during adolescence than heterosexual males" (p. 567). There is no discussion of the way in which societal factors, such as homophobia, may have influenced this result.

It wasn't until the early 1980s that psychological literature began to focus on males with eating disorders in an attempt to understand how and why these supposed female conditions were affecting them. In 1984, Herzog and colleagues published a report claiming significant "sexual isolation, sexual inactivity, and conflicted homosexuality" among their male anorexic and bulimic patients, unlike with their female patients. They reported that 26 percent of their male patients were homosexual but only 4 percent of their female patients. They cited "cultural pressure on the homosexual male to be thin and attractive" as possibly placing him at greater risk for eating disorders but did not elaborate on the cultural factors (Herzog et al., 1984: 990). Pope, Hudson, and Jonas followed in 1986 with a report that said they "found little evidence of increased homosexuality or 'sexual con-

flict'" among their male patients (p. 117). Both studies defined homosexuality as reported sexual behavior with another male, not by sexual identity.

In 1984, Kay Deaux and Randel Hanna published a report on the influence of gender and sexual orientation in personal advertisements (Deaux and Hanna, 1984). The personals have long been a popular way to meet, particularly for gay men. They looked at 800 ads, representing an equal number of male and female advertisers, heterosexual and homosexual, on both the East and West Coast of the United States. The identity of the advertisers was based on the gender given for the advertisers and the gender of the person they were looking for, not their stated sexual identity. Therefore, sexual identity was not explored as a factor, nor were they able to look at bisexuality. They did find significant differences by both gender and sexual orientation, as well as on the intersection of these. Men were more concerned with "objective and physical characteristics," while women were more interested in the "psychological aspects of a potential relationship" (p. 374).

Within gender, there were also significant differences by sexual orientation. Women looking for men were more likely to offer physical attractiveness, to search for financial security, specific occupational information, and sincerity. Women looking for women placed less emphasis on physical traits and more on personal information such as hobbies and interests. Men looking for men were more likely to place emphasis on physical characteristics of both themselves and their partners (Deaux and Hanna, 1984:374).

Another study also found emphasis by gay men on physical characteristics (Sergios and Cody, 1986). This study was done on a college campus among self-identified gay men. No description is given of how identity was determined or participants recruited. The participants were matched for "computer dates" through an "afternoon tea dance" arranged by the researchers. They found "the largest determinant" of how much a man liked the other man and would want to date him again was the partner's physical attractiveness. However, attractiveness did not seem to influence how often they actually did go out afterward (p. 71).

Fichter and Daser (1987) published a study on male anorexic and bulimic patients indicating "atypical gender role behavior" (p. 409). They reported that half of their patients felt they were less masculine than other men and that a quarter of them had had sexual contact with other men. The study confuses gender role with sexual orientation, reinforcing a stereotype of gay men as "feminine." The discussion section seems to imply that homosexuality and/or feminine mannerisms are "psychosexual development" disturbances, thereby pathologizing homosexuality and reinforcing

male gender behavior as "normal." It implies that it is the lack of proper gender conformity that leads to eating disorders in men. They include no discussion of how homophobia or sexism may have contributed to the problem.

The first nonclinical sample study that showed a link between the development of eating disorders and gay men was by Yager and colleagues (1988). This study compared self-identified gay men from a Gay Men's Rap Group at UCLA with groups of other students on campus. They found:

> The homosexual men had higher prevalence of binge-eating problems, of feeling fat in spite of others' perceptions, of feeling terrified of being fat, and of having used diuretics than other male students. They also scored higher on the Eating Disorders Inventory scales for drive for thinness, interoceptive awareness, bulimia, body dissatisfaction, maturity fears and ineffectiveness. (p. 495)

This study implies that there may be many more gay men with or at risk of developing eating disorders and other body image disturbances than are indicated by the studies of eating-disordered patients. This may be because male patients less often seek treatment than female patients (Barry and Lippmann, 1990:163-164). It is possible that with the added stigma of homophobia, gay men may be even less likely to seek professional help with their body image issues.

Another study comparing self-identified gay and straight men found similar results (Silberstein et al., 1989). They found that "homosexual men showed more body dissatisfaction and considered appearance more central to their sense of self" than did the heterosexual men (p. 219). They also reported that heterosexual men were more likely to exercise for strength, while gay men were more concerned with exercise to improve their physical attractiveness. This study is the first to specifically mention gay culture.

> It has been observed that the homosexual male subculture places an elevated importance on all aspects of a man's physical self—body build, grooming, dress, handsomeness. (p. 338)

One of the more striking things about these early studies is the lack of theoretical discussion. Except for the one just mentioned, the only causal explanation given for the correlations between homosexuality and appearance concerns among men was to pathologize homosexuality. Most studies offered no explanation. In addition, all these reports are clinical in nature, and I have yet to find a piece written by a gay man on the topic in these early years. In contrast, this is particularly interesting given that almost all the work on lesbians and body image has come from lesbians themselves.

Women at Risk, Lesbians Immune?

The first academic material on lesbians and body image wasn't published until years after much of the personal and political work. Laura S. Brown had a theoretical article in *Lesbian Psychologies* (1987). Drawing on her and her colleagues' clinical experience, Brown proposes not only an evaluation of lesbian body image but an analysis of cultural factors and possible solutions to change conditions. First, she states that "lesbians appear to make up a smaller percentage of women with eating disorders than of women in general. Most of the women with eating disorders who are described in the literature are either clearly defined as heterosexual or their sexual orientation has not been the focus of inquiry" (Brown, 1987:295). She also notes that lesbians have been very active among "fat activists, that is, people who define fatness as a normative variation and the stigmatization of fat people as political oppression" (p. 295). She continues by outlining parallels between societal attitudes toward fat women and those toward lesbians, including the rule "for women in patriarchy that states that women are forbidden to love other women, because that would lead them to love and value themselves, and perhaps break the other rules" (p. 298):

> My clinical observation is that homophobia and "fat oppression" . . . can and do intersect in very particular ways in the lives of lesbians. . . . Lesbians and fat women are both valued negatively and stigmatized in patriarchal culture. Fear of being fat/being perceived as fat and fear of being lesbian/being perceived as lesbian are used by the institutions of patriarchal culture as a means of controlling women socially. All women will internalize homophobia and hatred of fat during their socialization in patriarchal culture. Lesbians are at risk from fat oppression in different ways than are heterosexual women. A lesbian's own internalized homophobia is likely to determine the degree to which she fat-oppresses herself. Specifically, I hypothesize that the more a lesbian has examined and worked through her internalized homophobia, the less at risk she is to be affected by the rules that govern fat oppression. The more a lesbian shames and stigmatizes herself for her lesbianism, the more likely it is that she will also actively fat-oppress herself. (p. 299)

Brown explains that lesbian "fat activists, a nonclient population, seem to be women who are comfortable with their lesbianism" (p. 300). She gives examples of clinical work where the more homophobia the client exhibited, the more problems she experienced with her body image. She warns

that lesbianism is not a "magic cure for the problems with weight and eating" but does give us some possible explanations (p. 302).

Another theoretical piece by Sari H. Dworkin was published in *Women and Therapy* (1989). This work primarily draws upon *Shadow on a Tightrope* (Schoenfielder and Wieser, 1989) and other published lesbian fat activist work. She explains:

> Lesbians do not think of themselves as objects to be defined by male subjects. Therefore it seems lesbians ought to be able to escape from the negative body image and lack of self-acceptance that other women in our society suffer from. And yet as the lesbian literature suggests lesbians, even feminist lesbians, have bought the myth. Lesbians suffer from body image disturbance and discrimination against fat lesbians who do not fit the patriarchal standard of beauty. (Dworkin, 1989:28)

Dworkin reviews the lesbian body image literature (except Brown's work) and briefly explains fat politics. She concludes that lesbians suffer from body image problems because they "live and work within the heterosexual, patriarchal society" (Dworkin, 1989:33). She posits that the influence of the job market may play a major role in limiting lesbian self-acceptance.

The first clinical study on lesbians was not published until 1990. Ruth H. Striegel-Moore, Naomi Tucker, and Jeanette Hsu (1990) studied body image among lesbian and heterosexual students and found few differences in body esteem, self-esteem, and disordered eating. They did find lower self-esteem and other social difficulties among lesbians. They also found less dieting among lesbians but found more binge eating.

> Although lesbian ideology rejects our culture's narrowly defined ideal of female beauty and opposes the overemphasis placed on women's physical attractiveness, such ideology may not be strong enough to enable lesbians to overcome already internalized cultural beliefs and values about female beauty. Unlike other minorities, lesbians do not grow up with parental or peer models representing lesbian standards as an alternative to the majority culture's norms. (p. 498)

As they point out, age may also be a factor as the study included only women in their late teens and early twenties. The results might be different with a group of women who had been established in their lesbian identity longer and more comfortable with their lives. This study, similar to those with men, excluded bisexuals. According to Naomi Tucker (this volume),

the study originally included bisexual women, but they were later dropped from the sample before publication.

Two years later, a study by Herzog and colleagues found "homosexual women were significantly heavier than heterosexual women, desired a significantly heavier ideal weight, were less often concerned with weight and appearance, and had less drive for thinness" (Herzog et al., 1992:391). Women in both groups were heavier than the weight they perceived potential partners would find most attractive and heavier than the weight they considered ideal. Yet, heterosexual women were more likely to be concerned about their weight and to diet, even though they were more likely to be underweight. More homosexual women were satisfied with their bodies. This study included a greater age range, eighteen to forty-five. Bisexuals were simultaneously included and excluded. Those with an affirmed bisexual identity were eliminated from the sample. Only women who categorized themselves as "exclusively" or "primarily" homosexual or heterosexual were included. This allowed that some of these women may also have been involved with men but still identified as lesbians.

That same year, Brand, Rothblum, and Solomon compared lesbians, gay men, and heterosexuals with results that illustrate the complexity of the issues:

> Heterosexual women and gay men reported lower ideal weights and tended to be more preoccupied with their weights than were lesbians or heterosexual men. However, gender was a more salient factor than sexual orientation on most variables, with both lesbians and heterosexual women reporting greater concern with weight, more body dissatisfaction, and greater frequency of dieting than did gay or heterosexual men. (1992:253)

The sexual orientation of participants was self-identified. Bisexuals were again dropped from the sample. The age range was larger for the lesbian and gay sample than for the primarily college-aged heterosexual sample.

A 1993 study found gay men and heterosexual women "showed greater actual concerns with appearance, weight, and dieting, and were perceived to possess greater body image disturbances and dieting concerns" when compared to heterosexual men and lesbians (Gettelman and Thompson, 1993:545). The mean age of participants was in the mid-twenties and, once again, bisexuals were dropped from the study. The discussion section emphasized the importance of cultural conditioning including the differences within lesbian and gay male subcultures.

Michael D. Siever (1994) found similar results—heterosexual men were the most satisfied with their bodies; gay men were the least satisfied.

Heterosexual women were less satisfied with their bodies than were lesbians but more satisfied than gay men. Siever puts forward the theory that "gay men and heterosexual women are dissatisfied with their bodies and vulnerable to eating disorders because of a shared emphasis on physical attractiveness and thinness that is based on a desire to attract and please men. Although men place a priority on physical attractiveness in evaluating potential partners, women place greater emphasis on other factors, such as personality, status, power, and income" (p. 252).

One way to test Siever's hypothesis would be to look at the bisexual women and men and see what results their dual attraction had, if any. Unfortunately, as with all the previous studies, bisexuals were dropped from the study or lumped in with homosexual or heterosexual identities through the use of the Kinsey scale.

In 1994, Esther D. Rothblum, a leading body image researcher, published an analysis of lesbians and physical appearances. She listed six ways in which appearance affects lesbians:

> First, lesbians, as all women, grow up surrounded by institutions that value physical appearance. Second, lesbians are not in sexual relations with men, and this may lessen the importance of standard appearance norms. Third, research on stereotypes indicates that the dominant culture has extremely negative attitudes about lesbians, including lesbians' appearance. Fourth, the process of identifying with the lesbian culture may depend on the ability to recognize and be recognized by other lesbians, and thus on physical appearance. Fifth, lesbians who are also members of other minority groups may be invisible or may need to choose which group to identify with. Finally, the lesbian community itself has norms for physical appearance and these have changed over the course of the century. (pp. 84-85)

An important component of Rothblum's analysis is the effect of visibility and appearance norms. While some other works have pointed out the different appearance norms in the lesbian and gay cultures, none have explained how these norms may help as well as hurt. According to Rothblum:

> Appearance norms in the lesbian community have had two functions: (a) to provide a means for members of an often invisible and oppressed group to identify one another without being identifiable by the dominant culture and (b) to provide a group identity and thus separate norms from the dominant culture. (Rothblum, 1994:92)

In addition to helping members identify each other, privileging visibility is a tactic of identity politics whereby "participants often symbolize their demands for social justice by celebrating visible signifiers of difference that have historically targeted them for discrimination" (Walker, 1993:868). But the tactic has inherent problems. Those who do not fit the norm or are not visible such as a "femme lesbian" or an "invisibly disabled" person will sometimes be doubly marginalized by both the mainstream culture and the subculture. For those who have another visible marker such as race or disability, their less visible identity may be neglected.

A New Direction

So in 1990, when members of the Body Image Task Force began to design workshops for lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, the only books we had to draw from told us about straight women, their body image, and little else. We began by talking to people, surveying our workshop participants, and making connections with other issues.

We noticed several patterns. First, the cultural norm was (and still is) that women were valued for their beauty (appearance norms) and men for their power/money. Lesbian and bisexual women were brought up with these appearance norms, many even developing eating disorders as young women; it is noteworthy that some of us began recovery at or about the same time as when we "came out." We experienced a double freedom from having to be judged based on our appearance by female partners and the freedom from having to find a partner who "made a lot of money." For many of us, feminism and coming out combined to bring us into the body image movement or vice versa. Yet, people in my workshops showed me that many of us continue to struggle with body image even if we have been lucky enough to have this initial healing stage.

For men, this did not seem to be the pattern. In fact, many gay men's body image seemed in worse shape after coming out than before. It seemed that gay men were pressured to look for and be looked at for both their appearance and their money. They seemed to be taking on the worst of both mainstream ideals.

In my own workshops, I began to develop a "multiple axis" approach. I looked at how the six deadly "isms"—sexism, racism, ageism, ableism, classism, and heterosexism—all intersect in body image issues. I was increasingly frustrated in that there were no books which looked at these connections. So after a particularly powerful workshop as part of Pride Celebrations in June 1992, I began the process of soliciting and editing this book.

Since then, quite a number of works have come out that have begun to address these issues—though to date I have found no other book that tries to examine the way lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgendered people think and feel about their bodies.

In contrast to the pattern with lesbians, gay men have only begun in recent years to publish more personal accounts of their experiences with body image and discrimination. Patrick Giles published a commentary titled "A Matter of Size" in *Outweek*, October 24, 1990. That was followed with a feature length article on the subject by Jay Blotcher, titled "A Matter of Gravity: How the Queer Community Trims the Fat" in *Outweek*, January 23, 1991. The second article included some interviews with lesbians as well as gay men. Both these groundbreaking articles are reprinted here. These works, and articles similar to them, have offered a bleak picture of the conditions for gay men and their weight and appearance. These materials still lack the political analysis that the feminist materials have included and are often short on solutions, but at least the silence had been broken.

To date, I have only seen two works by gay men on body image that articulate any solutions for change. Darrell g.h. Schramm's "More Than a Sum of Parts: Rescuing the Body from Fundamentalism," published in *White Crane Newsletter* in 1993 (reprinted here), offered a vision of change that included a reconnecting of the body and spirit for gay men. In 1997, well-known gay writer Michelangelo Signorile indicted the gay men's culture for it's "body fascism" in his book *Life Outside* with an appendix that called for changes among gay men.

Meanwhile, the lesbian story has gone from the personal narrative to the quantitative study to a fusion of the two. In 1995, Becky W. Thompson's *A Hunger So Wide and So Deep* became one of the most important books on body image to appear in a long time. Thompson is a feminist sociologist who, in 1984, began to conduct workshops on eating problems. She too noticed that the diversity among the women she worked with did not match the presumption that only middle- and upper-class, white, young women have eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, and compulsive eating. She interviewed eighteen women, including five African Americans, five Latinas, and eight white women. All of the white women, and some of the women of color, were lesbians. By focusing on women who were not white and/or heterosexual, Thompson illustrated that women of color and lesbians can be affected by eating problems and body image distortions.

As Thompson's and other works suggest, women of color whose families or life situations promote assimilation into the "mainstream," or "white," culture may be even more prone to eating disorders, as they try to

cope with the stress of racism and the impossible ideals of beauty that make women of color invisible. As children, the women of color in Thompson's book experienced conflicts that negated even the body acceptance messages from their communities, when they did exist. Many attended all or mostly white schools so that they felt different. Some had families who internalized racism and passed it on in ways such as telling them that white women were more attractive. Some families were accepting at first but became caught up in the "culture of thinness" when they sought to move up socioeconomically. Over and over, it seemed that racism inside and outside the families was a key factor in these women of color developing eating problems.

Thompson also showed that "lessons about heterosexuality often went hand in hand with lessons about weight and dieting" (Thompson, 1995:39). In order to submerge or deal with their own and other people's homophobia, many young lesbians turned to food and fasting. Most found that "coming out" was a beginning, but not an end, to the healing process. Patterns started early in childhood did not simply disappear when they developed a positive lesbian identity. Feeling that this was expected, many had trouble talking about their eating problems with other lesbians. Coming out and healing was more of a "complicated maze" than stepping out of a closet, but it was a beginning. Thompson analyzes the cultural and personal situations that have perpetuated these women's eating disorders and makes suggestions for ways to change the problems.

Still, Thompson's book focuses primarily on women who have eating disorders—which doesn't tell us how some lesbian (and bisexual) women either recover from or never develop eating disorders. Nor does she address men at all, let alone gay men.

With the publication of *Looking Queer*, we enter what I hope is a new moment in body image. As with the early "Fat Feminist" movement, this book brings together feminism, body image, and sexual orientation—but with many more threads pulled into the weave. By looking at body image issues among lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgendered people and including other axes of difference such as race and disability, this book attempts to bridge gaps left by earlier works and to provide a step toward new works.

Weaving the Threads

This book explores the questions of what "looking queer" means. The double meaning of "queer" as both "different" and representing "lesbian, bisexual, gay, or transgendered" is intentional. While I understand the objections some have to the word "queer," I feel its power to be both

inclusive and evocative of the differences I felt were important to this book. Do we look different? What does it mean to "look gay" or "look like a dyke?" There is also double meaning in the "looking"—in both the seen and the see-er. How do we look at each other? What is it we are looking for? We are often both judged and judge—and by what standards?

When I set out to create this book, I realized that I could not write it alone; no one person could have the diversity of experience needed to explore what "looking queer" means. To do this, I would have to draw together as many different voices as possible. This collection is a large, often uneven, tapestry, drawing cloth from over sixty-five contributors from many different backgrounds, and the weave is not even nor smooth. It is pulled together from different types of cloth, tattered in places and rough to the touch.

The primary audience for this book are the subjects hereof—lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgendered people. I also hope that those interested in our communities professionally, especially academics and health care providers, will learn from our words. Because this is a mixed audience, I have used a mixed medium with a balance of personal narrative, poetry, journalism, and research articles with what I hope is an accessible language style. Some of the authors in this collection are well-established writers and academics; others are published here for the first time.

This book was collected at a particular time and place, namely in the mid-1990s in the United States (though contributors include people in Canada and Australia). It reflects not only a time period in queer cultures but in the lives of the contributors as well. Even by the time this book went to press, some contributors' lives and ideas had changed. Similar to a snapshot which captures a moment, yet is forever archaic as life continues, so are these ideals. Indeed, we hope very much that our lives will continue to move beyond these points.

This book is also contradictory—like our lives. You will find both overlap and disagreement in the pages here, and I have made no attempt to settle these contradictions (even when I disagree with them). Instead, I feel it is important to show some of the breadth of experiences and ideas present in our communities. I make no attempt here to come up with the final or definitive word in queer body image. Instead, this is meant as a call to dialogue. I hope that this process will continue with more focused books to follow.

Diversity has remained a high priority in this work; of course, even a work that sets out to be as diverse as possible has limits. A work such as this can only include people who write. While this sounds obvious, too often forgotten in these discussions are people who either are not comfort-

able with, skilled, or interested in writing. Also missing are those for whom body image is "not an issue," so they have no interest in writing about it.

This work is also limited by racist and classist conditions that have left some, particularly people of color, in marginalized positions. First, as a white woman, my access to and acceptance from people of color is understandably suspect. Second, poverty and insecure environments may leave many people unable to write for anthologies. For example, I find it particularly agonizing that of the five works that were lost because the contributor moved and left no forwarding address, four were by people of color. Intensive phone, Internet, and publication searches did not locate their authors. These pieces could not be included without signed contracts and are sorely missed in this collection.

This collection was also constrained by time and size. After several years of collecting materials, I had to set a final deadline. It seemed there were so many issues to be covered that we could never address them all. At some point, the book had to be finished so that you could read it. Even so, the original draft was almost a third larger—too large for most presses and probably too expensive for most book buyers. Some pieces were cut while many others were condensed and tightened.

I knew going into this project that there were major differences in experiences between queer women and men. There was some logic, and even encouragement from others, to create two separate collections—one on lesbians (and bi women) and one on gay (and bi) men. I resisted this pull from the beginning, not knowing how important this resistance would become later. I knew and have confirmed that we had something to learn from each other, that lesbian and bi women, while still struggling, have something to teach about resistance and healing that many gay and bi men could learn from. I also felt strongly that queer women need to listen to and judge less queer men's struggles with appearance and sexuality. We can be allies to each other only if we can learn from each other. What I was not prepared for was the way transgendered people would shake up our worlds and our divisions.

When I began this project, I knew little about transgendered issues. Very little had yet been published by or about transgendered people, and the move to inclusion was only just beginning. Early calls for papers did not list transgender. It was only after I received the first submission, and encouragement/reminder, from a transgendered person that I amended my call. In the time since I began this work, Kate Bornstein (1994) and Leslie Feinberg (1993), among others, have unsettled the clearly divided gender lines among queers. The contributors to this volume have also made me reexamine old

ideas. I always knew that ideals of body and beauty are shot through with gender ideals—so it should not have shocked me to find important explorations of these power dynamics in the contributions of transgendered people (transsexual, intersexual, and third-gendered). They did surprise me, and I am blessed for it.

Yet, among the gendered narratives, there emerged two other themes—race and ability. Some authors were focusing on the importance of other axes of difference in body image. Because these issues are so important, I struggled with a way to highlight them. The inclusion of another section would disrupt the pattern of gendered sections and threaten the potential marginalization of these works. Yet, I felt that these authors were addressing another focus other than reading gender and I wanted to ensure that they would not become invisible in other sections. I settled (uneasily) on the inclusion of another category that disrupted the neat pattern—which seems quite appropriate given the disruptive nature of much of this book.

Having looked at the threads that have been included (and those that have not), I now turn to the tapestry itself. What pictures appear in the work?

Tapestry

Section A is titled "Women, Wommin, Womyn" to reflect the struggle for renaming and recognizing gender differences by feminist women who identify as lesbian and/or bisexual. Part 1, "Constructing Ourselves," looks at the way queer women have deconstructed and reconstructed their sense of the female body. Poet Amy Edgington begins with the beast—beauty. Nancy Barron draws upon years as a fat lesbian activist to give us a brief description of body image basics before going into her own struggles with her body and her work to unite her feminism, size acceptance, and lesbianism. The next two works of original research take a more subtle and grounded approach than previous studies. Anna Myers, Jennifer Taub, Jessica F. Morris, and Esther D. Rothblum's study finds that many lesbians and bisexual women continue to struggle with body image issues even after coming out. Although many report that their views about their appearance changed dramatically after coming out, some struggle with lesbian appearance norms they might consider as restrictive as those of mainstream culture. Sara Auerbach and Rebekah Bradley found too that lesbians and bisexual women still struggle with body image issues and experience pressure from media, families, and friends; though, many have also received support from lovers, friends, and the lesbian community in working through these body image issues. Naomi Tucker follows them with a revealing look at her own previous research with lesbian (and bi)

women, and she faced both as researcher and research subject. And Diane Griffin Crowder brings the spotlight of theory to these issues and looks at cultural construction and deconstruction of lesbians and the female body.

Part 2, "Looking Dyke," explores questions of visibility and inclusion. Wendy Chapkis looks at the contradictory meanings of "dyke" and "beauty" as seen in lesbian and straight views. Weight, food, and sex are the humorous focus of Greta Christina's personal reflections and theories. Cristina Cress confronts the power and the problems of a workplace where "looking queer" can limit your opportunities. Anna Myers launches herself into the debate over femme conformity/resistance and lesbian standards with a personal story of femme self-expression as healing from weight obsession. Kate Woolfe explores questions of whether lesbian is "a look," an identity, or a sexual behavior and what the answers mean for her life and community. Hair, in all its political and personal meanings, is the focus of Andrea Askowitz's piece, including personal comfort, political meanings, and lesbian fashion. Michele Spring-Moore's narrative poem grounds us in the body as experienced in the midst of sexual politics and identity. Amy Edgington gives another look at beauty that we make and move.

Part 3, "Searching a Way Out," is about struggle and survival in the midst of pain, honoring the difficulty of healing. Margo Solod's poem evokes the trap so many of us are trying to break from. Amy Gilley explores struggles with food and sex, and the power, allure, and fear they generate in her. Alexa Leigh's story of fear and isolation experienced even after "coming out" is a poignant reminder of the danger in believing lesbians are free of body image conflicts. Clancy McKenna's story of her body's silent resistance to conformity, imposed on her most of her life, sees her finally freed through coming out. And tattooing as reinscribing and reclaiming of the body is the subject of Catherine Lundoff's piece.

Part 4, "A Woman's Love Heals," brings together stories from women for whom love shared with another woman was their path to healing. Nina Silver starts us off with a poem envisioning the mirror as a possibility for love. Drama Rose's story tells of how coming out did not heal her, only providing a place of self-hate and drug addiction with other lesbians—until a woman's love helped bring self-love. Susanna Trnka's ode to self-love through self-pleasuring shows that "the woman" can be oneself. Claire Hueholt shares the wounds of loving women in a world were women don't love themselves. The lesbian ideal, women's music festivals, and self-love are the focus of Susie Bullington's piece.

Part 5, "Coming Out, Leaving Behind," looks at the power of coming out into an affirming "women's culture" that, ideally, promotes the accep-

tance of sexuality and the body and rejects mainstream ideals of femininity. Darcy Wakefield's poem illustrates what, for many, is a route to affirmation. Silva Tenenbein asserts that, by refusing to serve men, lesbians are not women but a powerful force against patriarchal views of women. Anna Snoute explains how managing her weight was a way of controlling her attractions to women, so that coming out freed her from both. For Jo Schneiderman, coming out and recovering from bulimia went hand and hand, much to the fear of her mother. Michelle Bancroft's piece gives us precious moments in a process of discovery and healing that makes real the knowledge that coming out and healing are not a moment, but a process. Amy Edgington gives a poetic glimpse to the change of consciousness.

Section B, "One, Both, Neither," looks at the places both parallel to and outside the vision of "woman" and "man," where we see the inscription of the categories and the possibility for release. Part 6, "Crossing the Divide," contains stories from people who have crossed from one gendered body to the other. Julie Waters' struggle with weight and a belief in the thin ideal for women nearly brought *him* to suicide rather than face *her* life as a woman. Yet, her courage in facing her own fears has brought a new level of consciousness. Partners Marcelle and Loree Cook-Daniels explore, in this honest and compelling conversation, Marcelle's transition from living an unhappy life as a woman to the life and body of a man, complicated by ideals of both men and women and of black men in particular. Michael Hernandez takes on the journey of a young "girl" who knew she was a boy, to coming out as a butch lesbian, to a final realization that she could not be trapped by the expectations of *her* body. Living life as a man was truer to his self.

Part 7, "Square Pegs," brings to us the stories of three courageous people whose bodies have been altered against their will to fit the molds of female instead of intersexual (both). Cheryl Chase, founder of Intersex Society of North America (ISNA), takes a powerful personal and political look at the system that mutilated her body to maintain gender purity. The sexism, homophobia, and hidden shame that she documents is something everyone should know about and work to change. Morgan Holmes, also with ISNA, presents us with a personal story of how this mutilation of hir infant body tried to render her "not queer" but the same and robbed her and others of the pleasure of that difference. Raven Kaldera's story is one of rejection of the medicalization of hir "hormonal imbalance" and the celebration of the expression of "hermaphrodite" as sacred mystery.

Part 8, "Boyz, Grrls, Queers," looks at queers who take their difference into gender as well as sexual desire—and for whom the two may not be

separate. Sherrie A. Inness and Laura Cole give us personal reminders that, while butch/femme roles may seem to mirror, they also reject man/woman roles. Inness begins with the bathroom (the site of many gender wars) and goes on to show how butch is a "gender outlaw" breaking free of the ideals for women in both gender and desire. Cole reclaims femininity as a lesbian and rejects what she sees as restrictive lesbian ideals. Sandra Lee Golvin and Boye creatively use, subvert, and re-create gender in their own body expression. Golvin takes shame as a place of power as she rejects it, through coming to know herself as a femme dyke and a faggot. Boye's prison of early distortion of self and body as those around her tried to make her into a girl/woman is finally broken as she comes to know herself as the feminine boy—neither one nor the other, but something more.

Section C, "Beyond the Pale," takes as its metaphor the visible difference that challenges the construction of "diversity" in "queer" communities. Here the struggle with acceptance of multiple difference is brought into focus. Part 9, "Color Vision," looks at the impact of race, sexuality, and the body. Layli Phillips finds herself at the intersection of race and sexuality as she struggles for acceptance in this place. Conrad R. Pegues takes a strong stance against internalized homophobia and racism in the black man as embodied in the penis. Searching for himself in two worlds, Sandip Roy does not find the gay Indian man in the images of India or America, gay or straight. With a critical look at gay press, Paul EeNam Park Hagland looks at the simultaneous erasure and colonization of the bodies of Asian men. Donna Tsuyuko Tanigawa's personal experience directly debunks the myth that eating disorders affect only straight, white women. Her innovative language style reflects both her Asian identity and her struggle with Western assimilation.

Part 10, "Access to the Look," is a critical look at how people with disabilities are systematically erased from what it means to "look queer." Mark O'Brien's fiction shows more than it tells and allows us to see everyday prejudice. Julia Dolphin Trahan's struggles with disabilities, gender identity, and sexuality give hir strength but not the secret to overcoming prejudice among other queers. Through poetry and narrative, the personal and the political, Kenny Fries explores issues of visibility, relationships, community, and the body as a disabled gay man.

Section D, "Men, Boys, and Trolls," draws from the language of gay men to look at deep divisions in gay male body and community. Part 11, "The Uniform Doesn't Fit," looks at the gay ideal and its restrictive power for both those who don't fit and those who do. Dean Kiley brings to us "Mr. Dummy"—in his provocative exploration of the personification of the gay ideal and embodied theory in Australia. Unfortunately, the situation is just

as difficult in the United States. William J. Mann documents the hierarchy of beauty and self-hatred among gay men, including issues of AIDS and racism—with the thoughtful and provocative comments from leaders in the gay community. Reprinted here are the groundbreaking articles of Patrick Giles and Jay Blotcher. First published in 1990, Giles's essay is in the style of ACT UP: up-front and confrontational. He challenges that he had taken more abuse from other gays based on his weight than from the straight world in any form. Blotcher's article (1991) explores fatphobia and looksism among gay men and lesbians in gay New York and finds only moments of hope. Ganapati S. Durgadas notes the adoption of a mainstream "maleness" and the association of fat and femininity in gay male culture that brings together homophobia, misogyny, and fatphobia. Finding no acceptance in "community," he strives for self-acceptance.

Part 12, "Feeling the Burn," captures the pain embedded in the experience of the gay ideal. Gene-Michael Higney's tale of a fortieth birthday party, ageism, and looksism is funny, witty, disturbing, and empowering. Jim Provenzano captures the feel of "striving for the ideal" in his moment-by-moment account of what has become a common gay experience—working out in the gym. Frank Martinez Lester's poetic narrative is moving, sad, and courageous in its exploration of gay culture. John Stoltenberg, once part of the gay community, has become something of a pariah to many. In a deeply personal and painful account, Stoltenberg shows us the passage he took from fat kid, to unhappy gay man, to empowered feminist and gay outcast.

Part 13, "Reenvisioning Men," is a powerful look at a vision of what gay standards have brought us and where those with courage might lead. Ozzie Diaz-Duque starts us with a funny but troubled poem. Andrew J. Feraios takes us on a journey into the heart of the gay ideal. With experience as both an outcast and an insider, he now finds himself in the queer position of having escaped the trap and offers a kind of bridge for others. Reprinting Darrell g.h. Schramm's vision of reclaiming wholeness with mind, spirit, and the body presents a vision of the possible healing power of gay sexuality and community. Jill Nagle's vision of radical sex's power to enforce or challenge narrow ideals and dissociation from the body is powerful. She looks at her own position as "skinny, white chick," recognizing both personal struggle and cultural privilege but without giving over responsibility to guilt. What Feraios, Schramm, and Nagle effectively do is counter the stereotype that if you object to the gay or lesbian ideal, you are "sex negative." They show us a vision of wholeness, wherein sexuality is celebrated in all its forms with the power to heal all of us.