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# Liberation in Literature: Lesbian Ecofeminism

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Class of 2016

### Liberation in Literature: Lesbian Ecofeminism

I made a goal for myself the summer before college. I swore that after my long journey from home in central Nebraska to what has now become my home, the Pacific Northwest, that I would find myself. I would figure out what defined me, my special pieces that make me my own person, unlike any other before or after. Wow, was I in for an adventure! Seek and you shall find, a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step and more conventional wisdom guided me. This journey to my identity is at least a thousand miles (my hometown is 1,567.3 miles away), and I am so glad I have started such a rewarding process questioning why I am here on this planet and what my purpose is.

I have a thirst to understand myself and my place in society, this interest being both very personal and also academic. To accomplish this, in the collegiate spirit, I have been doing research. I find books that speak to my heart and I keep them. That is how my book collection has grown. I have acquired books about the history of women, queer or not. If I don't know the history of people like me, I cannot understand the present nor anticipate the future. I have also gathered quite a few books about feminism. I am a gender and queer studies minor. Through my studies I have learned that aspects of my identity determine my place in both the classroom and in society. This work that I accomplished resounded with me, and I have continued that learning in my personal research at home. My collection has since grown to include many books on feminism. I was not sure what feminism was before I came to college,

and now I am so please to identify as a feminist: an individual that believes in and strives for gender equality.

I have particular interest in the second wave of feminism and that time period of the 1960s and 70s. A few of my books either are vintage or reprinted originals from this era.

*Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers* and *Grow Your Own; an Introduction to Organic Gardening* are two examples of vintage books printed in the 1970s.

Some of my books, especially *Manifesta* and the two written by Douglas, are about feminism today. These are especially helpful in understanding how sexism is still prevalent today in a less clear manner and what work is still to be done to achieve gender equality.

After coming out as a lesbian in college, I wanted to know as much as I could about lesbianism, and what it means to be gay, for fear of doing it the wrong way. I even picked up a handbook, *Lesbianism Made Easy*. Since then, with the help of this book and some others in my collection, I realized that all I have to do is be myself, love who I love, and do wrong to none. While it is easier to be a lesbian in our country now in 2015, it has still been challenging to find myself within the sexual orientation of my identity. I have done a lot of that work by observing the natural world and seeking my place there.

While society can be a man-made, and therefore patriarchal, place, the natural world is a haven for the feminine. Another connection that speaks to me from ecofeminism is the drive of our modern world to tame the wild. Animals have been domesticated and caged, their natural habitats destroyed, and their bodies trained for our entertainment. There are similarities I see in the taming and control of women, the use of female labor for menial tasks,

and the obsession with the female form. The woman has had their claws and fangs removed to not be a threat to masculine power. A way to liberate myself from this oppression is by joining forces with nature, in solidarity. Advocating for a world where the natural environment is not inhibited by greed and human desires as well as a world where women are free to be their own individuals, as wild as they want, is the work of ecofeminism in my eyes.

I have made significant progress with my self-discovery, however I will be soul-searching for the rest of my life. Some core pieces of my identity may stay the same, but I, like everyone, will change my values and interests over time. The beauty of my liberal arts education is that I will be able to learn about myself and the world that surrounds me for life, because I have been given the tools to do so. That is crucial to finding my evolving place in the world. Priceless.

### **Making My History no Mystery**

1. *Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book*. S.I.: BN Pub., 2006. Print.

This is a handbook for being a member of AA and overcoming alcoholism. I have a unique copy, it is a reprint of the very first edition, complete with the vintage dust cover. Many LGBT individuals turn to the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol to escape living as their true identity. In honor of those who have come before me and succumbed to addiction, I have a reprint of the first edition of the alcoholics anonymous big book. May their memory live on and may many more individuals find the hand of AA. I am sober.

2. Beno, Mike. *Tough Times, Strong Women*. Greendale, WI: Reminisce Magazine, 1997.

Print.

This book honors women of the past by showing their pictures and telling their stories. History tends to ignore a lot of the accomplishments of women and their side of history. This book does its part to right this wrong. I am interested in a complete telling of history.

3. Joyce, Rosemary A. *Ancient Bodies, Ancient Lives: Sex, Gender, and Archaeology*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2008. Print.

This book takes a look at the difference between sex and gender in the specific field of archaeology. It was only 35 years ago that this field started to consider the implications of sex and gender in their findings. Through this explanation, a lot is discussed about sex and gender in many ancient cultures. This has shattered my perceptions built by our society alone and opened my mind to other possibilities of living in communities. I am in kinship with humans of the past.

4. Miles, Barry. *Hippie*. New York, N.Y.: Sterling, 2004. Print.

This book is a colorful summary of what life was like in the United States for young people in the 1960s and 1970s. I like the way it shows the cultural and political landscape which brought forth the feminist movement I relate to the most. It empowered me as well, because many of the protestors and activists in the full-page pictures are my age. I am politically active.

## **Feminist Features**

5. Baumgardner, Jennifer, and Amy Richards. *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000. Print.

This book is about feminism today, and how it will be carried into the future. It initially grabbed my attention with the bold title, where the o in manifesto was changed to an a, making it feminine instead of masculine. The content helps me imagine what my future as a feminist will be like, and what work there is to do. I am a feminist.

6. Douglas, Susan J. *Enlightened Sexism: The Seductive Message That Feminism's Work Is Done*. New York: Times, 2010. Print.

Douglas presents a much-needed analysis of media portrayals of girl power and women's strength in the last 30 years. She argues that these images give the impression that feminism's goals have been accomplished, and women are all liberated, celebrating this fact by wearing tight pants and getting the material goods they want. She then challenges the portrayals and demonstrated that feminism is still necessary. I am media-literate.

7. Douglas, Susan J. *Where the Girls Are: Growing up Female with the Mass Media*. New York: Times, 1994. Print.

This book is similar to the other one by Douglas in that she analyzes media images using a gendered lens. Her concrete examples and clear analogies make her ideas seem realistic and grounded. I appreciate her work on the subject, and I am going to follow her lead and try to look deep into meanings imbedded in imagery presented to me.

8. Ehrenreich, Barbara, and Deirdre English. *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers*. 2nd ed. Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1973. Print.

I am very proud of this book. It is published by the feminist press. An outline of the history of alternative medicine is given, showing how medicine was dominated by the patriarchy over time by discrediting midwives and healers. Today, nursing is one of the most common professions for women, but doctors are mainly male. I am a descendent of healers.

9. Henley, Nancy. *Body Politics: Power, Sex, and Nonverbal Communication*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977. Print.

This book is an examination of body language used by men in positions of power in order to maintain the social hierarchy that benefits the patriarchy. Body language is one way that individuals communicate on a personal level every day and surely influence how cultural structures are maintained. I am more observant and aware now.

10. Orenstein, Peggy. *Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self-esteem, and the Confidence Gap*. New York: Doubleday, 1994. Print.

Because I have spent so many years in a classroom, and still have one more to go, I choose to include this book. Orenstein provides a story of a young girl's experience in school, and interjects her gender-related analysis of events. This has helped me examine my experiences in school and notice when my gender makes a difference in my treatment in the academic world. I am a scholar.

11. Warloe, Constance. *From Daughters to Mothers: I've Always Meant to Tell You: An Anthology of Letters*. New York: Pocket, 1997. Print.

The relationship between a mother and daughter is very precious. This book shows the oneness and diversity of these relationships. Reading about these other experiences helps me value the unique aspects of my own mother. I am a daughter.

### **Lesbian Lit**

12. Bechdel, Alison. *Post-dykes to watch out for*. Print.

This is a book of comics. It is the ninth in a series by the author, whose work also appears in about 60 publications. The strips follow single lesbians and couples in a fairly normal comic strip style. I appreciate the way that everyone is represented as not flamboyant, but just an average person. There is a lot of humor that is exactly my cup of tea. I am funny, too.



13. Cavanah, Claire, and Rachel Venning. *Moregasm: Babeland's Guide to Mind-blowing Sex*.

New York: Avery/Melcher Media, 2010. Print.

This book has a ton of information about sex-positivity, safe sex, and relationship advice on topics like consent. It is nothing like the sex education I received in high school. Sexual liberation is part of the feminist movement, and was an important step for me as well. I am in control of my own body.

14. Egloff, Z. *Verge*. Oceanview, T.H.: Bywater; 2009. Print.

*Verge* is a novel about a female student that falls in love with a nun after shooting a documentary that she was in. It is hard to find fiction that I can specifically relate to as a lesbian, especially romantic fiction. For that reason, I include this representation of a character I can see myself in. I am not alone.

15. Eisenbach, Helen. *Lesbianism Made Easy*. New York: Crown, 1996. Print.

This book is a guidebook on what lesbians do, say and how they act. It is meant to be humorous and for a wider audience than only lesbians. It isn't really made to be taken seriously, and it taught me not to take myself too seriously. I am a real lesbian.

16. Protzman, Ferdinand. *Love*. Washington, D.C: National Geographic, 2008. Print.

This book has beautiful, full-page photographs that demonstrate the title of the book, *Love*. These pictures mean a lot to me and my identity because they show without words a very intense emotion that we all are driven to feel. I am a lover.

### **Earthy pages**

17. Bartholomew, Mel. *Square Foot Gardening*. Emmaus, Pa.: Rodale, 1981. Print.

I have a reprint of this classic gardening book, which is a treasure trove of tips to maintain a large, household style garden in a small, college style living space. Gardening is an extremely empowering way to provide for oneself and also to get in tune with nature, by nurturing it at home. I am a gardener.

18. Darlington, Jeanie. *Grow Your Own; an Introduction to Organic Gardening*. Berkeley:

[Bookworks], 1970. Print.

This book is from the 1970s, and I got it because I love the vintage cover and contents. It is important to me to garden sustainably for environmental concerns. This is one tenant of ecofeminism, and I believe that it is necessary to treat the earth with respect. I am a nurturer.

19. Riordon, Michael. *Out Our Way: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Country*. Toronto: Between The Lines, 1996. Print.

A collection of personal stories in this book shows different perspectives from gay individuals about why they choose to live in rural places. I grew up in a rural town, and my dream would be to have a farm on Vashon Island or out by Puyallup. I have wondered why I am so drawn to that kind of life, and by relating to other people's stories, I can understand my own better. I am a lover of the outdoors.

20. Robertson, Robin. *Vegan Planet: 400 Irresistible Recipes with Fantastic Flavors from Home and around the World*. Boston, Mass.: Harvard Common, 2003. Print.

Vegan recipes really make me feel like I can feed myself in a sustainable way. I have a garden and can grow my own ingredients for many of the recipes. It feels great to eat sustainably when I can, though I am not completely vegan. However, I am a person that can grow their own food.

21. Sams, Jamie, and David Carson. *Medicine Cards: The Discovery of Power through the Ways of Animals*. Sante Fe, N.M.: Bear, 1988. Print.

This is a set of animal cards, which are used in Native American spirituality. There is a deck of 52 animal cards, which are drawn in a similar way to tarot cards, however have a more

spiritual connotation. There is also a book that tells Native American parables for each animal and explains the guidance they offer. I drew my spirit animal card; I am an owl.

22. Sparrow, Giles. *The Natural World Close-up*. Richmond Hill, Ont.: Firefly, 2011. Print.

This book has bright, glossy, full page photos of magnified pieces of nature. They offer a viewpoint that human eyes cannot attain. This taught me that we are part of something greater, and also contain smaller parts that are self-sufficient and purposeful. I am an incredibly detailed life form.

23. *We'Moon 2015: Gaia Rhythms for Womyn: Wild Card*. 34th ed. Mother Tongue Ink, 2014.

Print.

This is my current favorite book in the collection. It is a day book that has pictures of artwork and poems that reflect the relationship between femininity and the natural world. It also includes the lunar calendar. The name We'moon represents the unity of women, and the second half, moon, defines women or females not in terms of men or males, but instead in terms of a celestial body, the moon. I can find myself in the paintings and woven into in the lines of the poems. I am wild.

**What would tie it all together? (wish list):**

1. Mies, Maria, and Vandana Shiva. *Ecofeminism*. Halifax, N.S.: Fernwood Publications, 1993.

Print.

This book is written by an economist and a physicist/philosopher who interviewed women to find a connection between patriarchy and environmental destruction. It would be a wonderful book to add to my collection, because it focuses on the relationship between feminism and ecology. I love books that consist of many subjective pieces, because I find them easier to relate to and also they escape scientific positivism. I am excited to read this one.

2. Diamond, Irene, and Gloria Feman Orenstein. *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*. San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1990. Print.

This book contains passages from a very diverse group of people including scholars, poets, and novelists on the topic of ecofeminism. They discuss how to help restore our society's value in both nature and women. I am ready to reweave the world.

3. Grey, Mary C. *Sacred Longings: Ecofeminist Theology and Globalisation*. London: SCM, 2003. Print.

This book ties ecofeminism to religion, which is another interest of mine. It again is a book that really focuses on ecofeminism, which would help unite my collection. I am spiritual.

4. Price, Rodger, Leonard Sloan, and Karl Marks. *We're Here, We're Queer, We're Mad Libs*.

N.p.: Price Stern Sloan, 2013. Print.

This is an entertaining activity book created to bring queer friends and straight allies together with a silly activity from our childhoods. It would be so fun to add this book to my collection. I would fill it in very quickly. I am getting nostalgic just thinking about it.

5. Marcello, Patricia Cronin. *Gloria Steinem: A Biography*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004.

Print.

This biography tells how Gloria Steinem became the poster child for the feminist movement, her contributions, and her life story. I would like one signed copy please. I am a big fan.









