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Although sexual activity between women has been documented since ancient Greece, it is no longer a secret that nineteenth-century European men of science—sexologists, psychiatrists, criminologists—are responsible for "discovering" the modern lesbian.[1] Men of letters were no less assiduous than their clinical brothers in their devotion to portraying same-sex female eroticism. This was particularly true in nineteenth-century France, where nearly all fictions depicting female homoeroticism were male-authored. This body of literature includes such well-known figures as Honoré de Balzac's exotic Paquita (*The Girl with the Golden Eyes* [1835]), Charles Baudelaire's "condemned women" (*The Flowers of Evil* [1857]), and Emile Zola's Sapphic courtesans (*Nana* [1880]). Other texts, many forgotten today, flooded the literary marketplace after the midcentury, some becoming runaway best-sellers (such as Adolphe Belot's *Mademoiselle Giraud, ma femme* [1870] and Catulle Mendès's *Méphistophéla* [1890]).

If, to paraphrase Annie Lennox and Aretha Franklin, sisters had been doing it for themselves all along, what happened when, finally, at the turn of the twentieth century, they began writing about it? A very visible group of international lesbians gathered around the American Natalie Clifford Barney in Paris, and the culture that resulted came to be known as Sappho 1900. One of the most prolific writers associated with Barney and her circle, the Englishwoman Renée Vivien, trod on Baudelaire's terrain; like him, she wrote "lesbian poetry," but for the first time from a position of subjectivity. For critics attributing to Baudelaire the invention of Sapphic modernism, Vivien's work is merely derivative, insofar as it is indebted to the protodecadent lesbian poetry of *The Flowers of Evil*. Some go so far as to call Vivien's poetry, with no irony, an inferior copy of Baudelaire's. For those of us interested in questions of lesbian subjectivity, such suggestions raise several intriguing problems: How could Baudelaire author better or more authen-

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tic lesbians than Vivien? Did she in fact appropriate his representations, and, if so, how can we evaluate the presence of Baudelaireanisms in her text?[2]

More broadly, we might ask to what extent French literature, with its twin associations of high culture and lesbophilia, came to be an oblique but acceptable signifier for lesbianism in the popular imagination of the twentieth century.[3] By extension, we might consider to what extent Paris, famous for Barney's salon, for Gertrude and Alice and a whole host of French and expatriate lesbians, became a latter-day Lesbos for contemporary lesbians.[4]

While it is perhaps impossible to gauge fully the impact that men of literature have had on the lives and identities of women motivated by desire for other women, we can follow and analyze the impressions that male-authored texts have made on lesbian culture. In the following pages I propose a case study that confronts a pioneering lesbian father and pioneering lesbian subjects. I would like to pursue the thorny problem of lesbian authenticity by exploring the literary lineage that ties Pierre Louÿs's fin de siècle text *Les chansons de Bilitis* [*The Songs of Bilitis*] to the American lesbian group that adopted the name Daughters of Bilitis in 1955. Such a genealogical study can hardly hope to legitimate a lesbian family tree dating to Bilitis, since a male-authored lesbian makes for questionable maternal roots indeed. Rather, in exploring the literary heritage of lesbian self-representation, I hope to reevaluate the lasting power of masculine fictions such as Bilitis.

Fictional lesbian poet of ancient Greece, Bilitis first saw the light of day in 1894, when Louÿs published the *Songs*, a series of prose poems purporting to recount the life of their first-person poet-narrator. Although Louÿs presented the *Songs* to the public as translations of ancient Greek texts, in fact he authored them, setting in motion a literary hoax elaborate enough to dupe several eminent Hellenists (including one who claimed to have personally read all of Bilitis's work). Seemingly as concerned about Bilitis's offspring as her forebears, Louÿs dedicated his book "respectueusement aux jeunes filles de la société future" [respectfully . . . to the young ladies of the society of the future].[5] He preceded the *Songs* with a biographical essay, "Vie de Bilitis" [The life of Bilitis], in which the self-proclaimed translator, posing as a scholar, introduced the three phases of Bilitis's life, which correspond with the tripartite division of the work: "Bucoliques en Pamphylie" [Bucolics in Pamphylia], "Elégies à Mytilène" [Elegies at Mytilene], and "Epigrammes dans l'île de Chypre" [Epigrams on the isle of Cyprus].

The *Songs* might be called a poetic novel, whose section titles reflect the stages of its narrator's life while referring to three distinct poetic genres. It starts with the natural innocence of youth (bucolic poetry), progresses to the yearnings

and tragedies of love (the elegy), and ends with the mature, detached reflections of the later years (the epigram). The prefatory biography reveals Bilitis's illegitimate beginnings: "Elle semble n'avoir pas connu son père. . . . elle porte un nom phénicien que sa mère seule lui put donner" [She does not seem to have known her father. . . . she came to bear a Phoenician name, which her mother alone could have given her] (31; 13). Her fictional matrilineal roots are, of course, only a cover for Louÿs's literary paternity. Careful not to implicate himself, though, he describes from a distance his offspring Bilitis as not only fatherless but living in an exclusively feminine environment: "Elle vivait une vie tranquille avec sa mère et ses sœurs. D'autres jeunes filles, qui furent ses amies, habitaient non loin de là" [She lived a tranquil life with her mother and her sisters. Other young girls who were her friends lived not far away] (31; 13). This bucolic period ends in violence: Bilitis is raped and bears a daughter, whom she abandons when she moves on to Mytilene, Sappho's hometown on the island of Lesbos.

Thus begins the central, and only strictly lesbian, section of the *Songs*, which nonetheless came to be synonymous with sapphism. Sappho herself initiates Bilitis, who then falls in love with Mnasidika, a young woman whose name appears in the historical Sappho's poetry. They parody heterosexual wedlock with a marriage ceremony and mimic parenthood with a doll they regard as their child. True to the elegiac tone of a perfect love lost, the poems of this section recount the rise and fall of the union between Bilitis and Mnasidika. After being abandoned by Mnasidika, Bilitis flees again, this time for Cyprus, where we find her older and wiser, a courtesan whose love is no longer innocent or passionate but is cynically tied to financial gain. While the first two sections end in desertion of one sort or another, this final one closes with Bilitis's death.

Louÿs's text is meticulously structured. The three-part narrative of Bilitis's life is related in 158 prose poems written in the first person. Each poem has four stanzas, or paragraphs, thus resembling a prose sonnet, which betrays Louÿs's neoclassical proclivities and the influence of contemporary Parnassian poets who, like José Maria de Heredia and Charles de Leconte de Lisle, favored the sonnet. The Hellenic subject matter equally suggests the Parnassian influence, although Louÿs's classicism quickly morphed into orientalism.[6] In fact, he conceived of the work in North Africa, and the model for Bilitis was a very young Algerian woman with whom he was having an affair.[7] It is perhaps not surprising to find orientalist exoticism coloring Louÿs's representation of ancient Greece in a text where lesbianism plays such an important role: wondrous and mysterious both, the foreign excitement of lesbianism and the Arab world permeate each other. The lesbian becomes a figure of the stranger, the Arab is hypersexualized like the lesbian, and

both are rendered radically other in literature and in other cultural manifestations of the period.

Today's readers readily place the *Songs* in the tradition of lesbian texts written by men to titillate other men. Joan DeJean, for example, calls them "a popular source of voyeuristic thrills." Elisabeth Ladenson likens Louÿs's heroine to such popular male fantasies as Pussy Galore of *Goldfinger*.[8] Even the name Bilitis rings with lascivious associations—*libido*, *libertin*, *titiller*, *lesbienne*, *labial*. Yet earlier readers entirely missed or repressed the erotics of Louÿs's text.

Indeed, in 1955, some sixty years after the publication of the *Songs*, Del Martin, Phyllis Lyon, and six other women founded the first lesbian social-political organization in the United States, the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB). Relying on a reading of Louÿs's text that strikes us as inaccurate today, they embraced a name now associated with voyeurism and objectification. For the DOB, *Bilitis* came to signify secrecy, respectability, femininity, and romanticism, an interpretation that can be fathomed only in its midcentury context.

The DOB came daringly into existence during the McCarthy era, when homosexuals were persecuted alongside communists.[9] While bravely rallying lesbians in such a repressive climate, its founders were obliged to do quite a bit of coaxing to bring out other women who lived underground, anonymous lives and were fearful of being associated with a lesbian organization. Indeed, the DOB's history is fraught with marks of caution, clues to the group's choice of Bilitis as a foremother. In *Lesbian/Woman*, Martin and Lyon relate the discussion at the first meeting: "We thought that the Daughters of Bilitis would sound like any other women's lodge . . . like the Daughters of the Nile or the DAR. 'Bilitis' would mean something to us, but not to any outsider."[10] Given the relative obscurity of the *Songs* in the United States, the name could not betray the organization; rather, it functioned as a code word for women accustomed to living in the closet.

"Daughters of Sappho" would perhaps have been too obvious a designation and therefore was not an option at a time when the police frequently raided gatherings of gays and lesbians. The DOB's founding members also passed over names suggested by more recent, lesbian-authored texts, such as Radclyffe Hall's infamous *Well of Loneliness* (1928), whose main character was too butch and too abject to represent a group of lesbians advocating conformity to normative femininity in dress and manner. Moreover, Hall's novel struck dangerously close to home in its portrayal of societal rejection: "Daughters of Stephen Gordon" simply would not do. The DOB's geographic, linguistic, and historical distance from "Bilitis" (both the French poem and the fictional character of ancient Greece) provided a protective buffer against the too close realities of persecution.

It is nonetheless curious that the DOB consciously opted to be named by a male author. Indeed, from the start the group was well aware of Bilitis's status as a literary hoax: "'I ran across *this book by Pierre Louys* [*sic*] that has in it this long poem called *Songs of Bilitis*.' Nancy [a founding member] held up the volume she'd been holding in her lap."[11] The inaugural volume of the DOB newsletter, the *Ladder*, explains that

> the name "Daughters of Bilitis" is taken from "Songs of Bilitis," a narrative love poem written by Pierre Louys [*sic*] and published in 1894. Bilitis would seem to have been a contemporary of Sappho on the isle of Lesbos, and the poem is purported to be a translation from the Greek. Although it has been more or less conclusively established that the poem is not authentic, it presents a sensitive and searching picture of Lesbian love.[12]

Bilitis combined in one name references to France and ancient Greece, doubly but secretly signifying "lesbian" for the DOB's mid-twentieth-century founders. But for her to pass muster, they had to clean her up a bit, remaking her in their own image.

While protecting its secrecy, the DOB also promoted lesbian visibility, albeit of a quite specific kind. Its president urged women to "come out of the dark corner" and to "discard the hermitage for the heritage."[13] The DOB's stated purposes were to "sponsor public discussions," "educate the public," and, in so doing, promote the decriminalization of homosexuality. At the same time, the DOB "advocat[ed] a mode of behavior and dress acceptable to society." It urged its members to adopt a conservative appearance, one that conformed to cultural norms of femininity; in particular, it appealed to lesbians to shun "butch haircuts and mannish manner," which were called "the worst publicity that we can get."[14] The DOB went so far as to sponsor fashion shows to encourage lesbians to dress in a more feminine way.[15]

Disidentification with butch lesbians was typical of this early group's careful conformity.[16] Looking for middle-class respectability, the DOB confirmed the mainstream pathologizing of masculine women. This is one indication that the contributing editors of the *Ladder* had read the story of their namesake only superficially. Indeed, Louÿs's text depicts Bilitis as a cross-dressing lesbian: "Mnasidika portait le voile blanc et [Bilitis] la tunique virile" [Mnasidika wore a milk-white veil and I the virile tunic] (95; 76). Sappho herself is described in masculine terms: "Elle est certainement belle, bien que ses cheveux soient coupés comme ceux d'un athlète. Mais cet étrange visage, cette poitrine virile, et ces hanches étroites" [She certainly is beautiful, although her hair is cut in

virile fashion. But this strange face, this mannish bosom and these narrow hips] (88; 69).

In addition to overlooking Bilitis's masculinity, the editors failed to apprehend Louÿs's voyeurism. They took his *Songs* as romantic instead of prurient and saw tenderness in them instead of exploitation. Louÿs himself had boasted that his text was among the first to celebrate lesbianism rather than vilify it: "Jusqu'ici les lesbiennes étaient représentées comme des femmes fatales ou vicieuses. C'est la première fois qu'on écrit une *idylle* sur ce sujet-là" [Until now, lesbians have been represented as deadly or depraved women. This is the first time that an *idyll* has been written on the subject].[17] If one thinks of Baudelaire's "bétail pensif" [pensive livestock], Belot's sadistic temptress, or Mendès's degenerate lesbians, one might be inclined to agree.[18] In the *Songs* Louÿs allowed a lesbian to speak in a first-person narrative, perhaps for the first time, and refrained from the grotesque representations that one finds in other early lesbian literature. The DOB apparently agreed with his self-appraisal, appropriating Bilitis and reading her as an affirming representation of romantic, feminine lesbianism.[19] They took the *Songs* to be positive and approving rather than objectifying and manipulative.

Following their interpretation of the *Songs* as a "sensitive and searching picture of Lesbian love," these women created themselves as the daughters of a tender lesbian union and adopted a history, albeit fictionalized, dating back to an idealized ancient Greece.[20] In search of a heritage, they positioned themselves as offspring, but they also proclaimed their maternity in the inaugural volume of the *Ladder*, in an article titled "Raising Children in a Deviant Relationship." Overlooking Louÿs's troubled representation of maternity, they forgot that Bilitis had abandoned her only child and afterward had mimicked motherhood with a wax doll.[21] The DOB sought belonging, not abandonment, and authenticity instead of falsehood. They wanted to "add the feminine voice and viewpoint" to the discussion of sexuality, and yet they allowed an objectifying male voice to name them.[22]

It is difficult to agree with the DOB's analysis of the *Songs* or to imagine Louÿs either as an appropriate spokesman for the "feminine . . . viewpoint" or as a good daddy figure for American lesbians. Indeed, the *Songs* abound with examples of objectification. The copious notes and vocabulary lists that Louÿs compiled in preparation for writing his text show his obsession with body parts. He meticulously counts the frequency with which he employs given words. *Mains* [hands], thirty-two times; *cheveux* [hair], twenty-six; *seins* [breasts], twenty-five; *bras* [arms], twenty-four (306; my translation): these are among the most evident. The poems themselves include veiled but clearly prurient images, such as those of

"Pénombre" [Shadowlight], which reads more like soft porn than like the representation of a tender and true love:

> Sous le drap de laine transparent nous nous sommes glissées, elle et moi. Même nos têtes étaient blotties, et la lampe éclairait l'étoffe au-dessus de nous.
>
> Ainsi je voyais son corps chéri dans une mystérieuse lumière. Nous étions plus près l'une de l'autre, plus libres, plus intimes, plus nues. "Dans la même chemise," disait-elle.
>
> Nous étions restées coiffées pour être encore plus découvertes, et dans l'air étroit du lit, deux odeurs de femmes montaient, des deux cassolettes naturelles.
>
> Rien au monde, pas même la lampe, ne nous a vues cette nuit-là . . . (105)
>
> [We slipped beneath the transparent coverlet of wool, she and I. Even our heads were hidden, and the lamp lit up the cloth above us.
>
> And thus I saw her dear body in a mysterious glow. We were much closer to each other, freer, more naked and more intimate. "In the self-same shift," she said to me.
>
> We left our hair done up so that we'd be more bare, and in the close air of the bed two female odors rose, as from two natural censers.
>
> Nothing in the world, not even the lamp, saw us that night . . .] (87)

"Nothing in the world . . . saw us that night": nothing or no one, that is, but Louÿs's male readers peering with him inside the bedroom and under the covers, sniffing around the lesbian bed for a whiff of the scent of a woman.

Although the *Songs* were soft enough in their eroticism for mid-twentieth-century lesbian activists to close their eyes to their prurience, Louÿs's other works crossed over into the realm of explicit representations of lesbian sexuality. Indeed, his entire oeuvre betrays a fascination with lesbians, who prevail not only in his "official" corpus but also in the vast collection of erotica left unpublished at his death in 1925. In the pornographic poems of the *Chansons secrètes de Bilitis* [Secret songs of Bilitis], little, in fact, *is* secret.[23] For example, Louÿs offers his readers the sight of Bilitis going down on Mnasidika: "Et Mnasidika s'est couchée sur le tertre, sa tunique relevée jusqu'à la ceinture, et avec les doigts elle dis-

tendait les lèvres de son sexe blond, pour que ma bouche appliquée lui fît verser la libation" [And Mnasidika lay down on the burial mound, her tunic raised to her waist, and with her fingers she spread the lips of her blond sex, so that my assiduous lips made her pour forth her libation].[24] In another "secret song" he redraws Sappho's portrait; no longer the appealing soft butch, she is described as an aging witch: "Elle est vraiment horrible. Grasse et mamelue, les bras bouffis, les jambes rouges, le ventre plissé, la vulve noire et quelles ignominieuses lèvres!" [She is truly horrible. Fat with pendulous breasts, her arms are bloated, her legs red, her stomach wrinkled, her vulva black, and what ignominious lips she has!][25]

Louÿs authored an impressive pornographic corpus, including a substantial number of lesbian texts. Also an avid pedophile, at least on paper, he wrote the titillatingly parodic *Manuel de civilité pour les petites filles* [Civility manual for little girls]. One wonders if he envisaged the same young women to whom he had dedicated *The Songs of Bilitis*. The manual does not conceal the paternal role of Louÿs's speaking subject; instead, it offers rules of comportment for young girls. For example, the chapter "Au lit avec une amie" [In bed with a girlfriend] includes this advice: "Dès que vous êtes couchée avec une amie, mettez-lui la main au con; n'attendez pas qu'elle vous en prie" [As soon as you get into bed with a girlfriend, place your hand on her cunt; do not wait for her to ask you].[26]

The founding Daughters of Bilitis, while searching for a name for their group, whose stated goals included educating the public about lesbianism, could not have read this or other erotic works by Louÿs, given their late publication and their scarcity, even in France.[27] It is therefore only ironic that the father of Bilitis was also the progenitor of a pornographic manual of conduct that instructed young girls how to please their girlfriends. But the DOB's reading of the *Songs* was almost willfully inaccurate. The national president herself observed merely that "Bilitis first thinks of herself as a heterosexual woman, then drifts into a bisexual existence, and later becomes a convert to Sappho, living contentedly on the Isle of Lesbos with women exclusively."[28] Bilitis's final conversion from heartbroken lesbian to jaded prostitute was suppressed.

It is perhaps too easy today to criticize the choice of a nineteenth-century male pornographer as the forefather of a group of lesbians. Struggling for acceptance in a hostile, repressive era, the founders of the DOB were not bad readers as much as people who had few precedents with whom to compare themselves. At their meetings and in the pages of the *Ladder*, the DOB hungered for images and encouraged all manner of discussion, antagonistic or friendly, on the topic of lesbianism.[29] As if courting legitimacy or seeking respectability, they invited lawyers and psychiatrists, many of them antihomosexual, to address the group.

The monthly literary bibliography of the *Ladder*, titled "Lesbiana," was inaugurated with the *Songs* but listed numerous other objectifying texts (many of them French, such as Balzac's *Fille aux yeux d'or* and Théophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*) among the best Sapphic reads.

By overlooking tragic endings, whitewashing kinky allusions, forgiving objectifying representations, making over masculine characters, and disregarding heterosexual recuperation, the DOB recast Bilitis in their own image. Their Bilitis was romantic, feminine, committed to women, and G-rated. Indeed, the DOB pointed out repeatedly that lesbians were unfairly hypersexualized in popular images, and, accordingly, the *Ladder* insisted on representing the lesbian as everywoman.

The DOB therefore sacrificed lesbian sexuality to protect its members, tentatively venturing out of the closet into a hostile public arena barren of positive lesbian images. The lesbian in the public imagination of the 1950s was only whispered about; she led a shadowy, tragic existence, cut off from family and denied social acceptance. Her tragedy, both in reality and in melodramatic fictional accounts, was her invisibility. Thus, to achieve lesbian visibility by filling the void with images, the DOB stretched its reading of Louÿs to the limits of plausibility.

Fifty years earlier in Paris, Natalie Clifford Barney, one of Louÿs's lifelong friends, presided over a vibrant lesbian salon. Barney made no apologies for her sexuality, celebrating instead of hiding her many affairs with such notable women as Renée Vivien and Romaine Brooks. A wealthy expatriate living in a privileged, rarefied climate of acceptance rather than apprehension, Barney nonetheless responded to the *Songs* as the DOB later did. She found that Louÿs had gotten his lesbian right with his representation of Bilitis, who "m'a donné des extases plus éperdues et des tendresses plus tendres que n'importe [quelle] autre maîtresse" [gave me rapture wilder and tenderness more tender than any other mistress].[30] But while the DOB assiduously avoided the sexuality represented in the *Songs*, Barney reveled in it. Her relationship with Louÿs was assuredly more playful than that of the more distant DOB, and she was undoubtedly aware of his lesbian erotophilia.

Barney, responding to Louÿs's devotion with language echoing his own, dedicated her *Five Short Greek Dialogues* to him from "une jeune fille de la Société future" [a young woman of the society of the future]. Moreover, she wrote to him that "déjà il y a des jeunes filles de la société future qui apprécient ce que vous avez fait pour elles et qui veulent vous exprimer, toutes incohérentes et maladroites qu'elles puissent être, leurs remerciements" [there already exist young women of the society of the future who appreciate what you have done for them

and who want to thank you, however incoherently and awkwardly].[31] Such gratitude to Louÿs may well be incoherent to today's lesbian reader, who might smile in ironic enjoyment of, but never find herself in, his text.[32]

However, we must be less startled by Barney's felt indebtedness to Louÿs than appreciative of her and the DOB for providing what he could not: subjective lesbian representations. Although their raw material was of questionable origin, they read it as affirming rather than exploitative and refashioned it into something closer in spirit to their own lives. They remind us that we are all, to a certain extent, daughters of Bilitis, that our culture grows in part from man-made images of our sexuality that we cannot completely escape. They remind us as well that we are not entirely beholden to these images; indeed, lesbian authenticity is less a myth than a confrontation with and a remaking of myths. The conspicuous inauthenticity of Louÿs's text for today's reader reveals, in comparison to the work of the DOB, the newness and vibrancy of lesbian lives in the process of invention and of lesbian voices urging us—not unerringly, but with consistent courage and dignity—to capture embryonic identities.

Notes

1. Although seemingly more interested in male homosexuality, Michel Foucault first pointed to the role of medical men in the "invention" of homosexuality in his groundbreaking *Histoire de la sexualité* [*History of Sexuality*], vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1976). See esp. Karl Westphal's case of homosexuality in a woman, "Die konträre Sexualempfindung," *Archiv für Psychiatrie und Nervenkrankheiten* 2 (1869): 73–108; Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia sexualis: Eine klinisch-forensische Studie* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1886); Havelock Ellis, *Sexual Inversion in Women* (St. Louis, Mo., 1895); and Cesare Lombroso, *La femme criminelle et la prostituée* (Paris: Alcan, 1896). See also Carolyn J. Dean's analysis of the development of sexology and its impact on the perception of female homosexuality in *Sexuality and Modern Western Culture* (New York: Twayne, 1996), 25–31.
2. I explore Vivien's relationship to symbolist poetry in "Terms of Estrangement: Renée Vivien's Construction of the Lesbian Subject," in *Rhetoric of the Other: Lesbian and Gay Strategies of Resistance in French and Francophone Contexts*, ed. Martine Antle and Dominique Fisher (New Orleans: University Press of the South, forthcoming).
3. Cf., e.g., Radley Metzger's 1968 screen version of *Thérèse et Isabelle*, Violette Leduc's 1966 novel. In addition to calling for a highly voyeuristic camera, the screenplay adds a scene not found in the novel, in which the adolescent girls, embarking on an affair, read Baudelaire to each other.
4. On the importance of Paris as a center of lesbian culture see Marie-Jo Bonnet, *Les*

relations amoureuses entre les femmes, du XVIe au XXXe siècle: Essai historique (Paris: Jacob, 1995), eps. 239–63. On the lure of Barney's Paris for American lesbians see Bertha Harris, "The More Profound Nationality of Their Lesbianism: Lesbian Society in Paris in the 1920's," in *Amazon Expedition: A Lesbian Feminist Anthology*, ed. Phyllis Birkby et al. (Washington, N.J.: Times Change Press, 1973), 77–88. For an authoritative treatment of turn-of-the-century lesbian literary Paris see Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900–1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986).

5. Pierre Louÿs, *Les chansons de Bilitis* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 29; *The Songs of Bilitis*, trans. Alvah C. Bessie (1926; rpt. New York: Dover, 1988), 9. Subsequent citations give the page number of the French edition followed by that of the translation.
6. "Je me suis attaché à donner au livre un caractère moins hellénique qu'asiatique, selon mes préférences et la biographie de Bilitis" [I gave the book a character less Hellenistic than Asiatic, in accordance with my preferences and Bilitis's biography] (Louÿs to unidentified correspondent, 1898, quoted in Jean-Paul Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète, 1870–1925* [Paris: Seghers/Pauvert, 1988], 143). Translations from this edition are mine.
7. See Fathi Ghlamallah, *Pierre Louÿs, Arabe et amoureux* (Paris: Nizet, 1992), 25–38.
8. Joan DeJean, *Fictions of Sappho, 1546–1937* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 278; Elisabeth Ladenson, "Pussy Galore and the Daughters of Bilitis," introduction to *Proust's Lesbianism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 1–9.
9. On the history of the DOB see Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, *Lesbian/Woman*, 2d ed. (Volcano, Calif.: Volcano, 1991); John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); and Deborah Goleman Wolf, *The Lesbian Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).
10. Martin and Lyon, *Lesbian/Woman*, 219–20.
11. Ibid., 219. My emphasis.
12. Daughters of Bilitis, *Ladder* 1, no. 1 (1956): 2–3.
13. Daughters of Bilitis, "President's [Del Martin's] Message," *Ladder* 1, no. 1 (1956): 7.
14. Daughters of Bilitis, "The President's [D. Griffin's] Message," *Ladder* 1, no. 2 (1956): 3.
15. Jess Stearn, *The Grapevine: A Report on the Secret World of the Lesbian* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 270–71.
16. On the DOB's advocacy of femininity see Donna Penn, "The Meanings of Lesbianism in Postwar America," in *Gender and American History since 1890*, ed. Barbara Melosh (London: Routledge, 1993), 106–24.
17. Pierre Louÿs to Georges Louÿs (brother), 1897, quoted in Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs*, 142. Actually, Paul Verlaine's voyeuristic sonnet series, *Amies* (1867), preceded Louÿs's attempt to portray lesbians as harmless but titillating objects for male readers.
18. This is how Charles Baudelaire describes lesbians in "Femmes damnées," in *Œuvres*

complètes, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 113. Belot's Mlle Giraud inflames her husband but refuses to consummate their marriage. Mendès's lesbians are linked to faulty heredity and decadent living.

19. Cf. Wolf: "It was felt by the founders that Daughters of Bilitis was an appropriate name [since] it alluded to a poem in which lesbian love was depicted in a romantic manner" (*Lesbian Community*, 50).
20. "It's really quite beautiful love poetry, but what's even more interesting, Bilitis is supposed to have lived on Lesbos at the time of Sappho" (Martin and Lyon, *Lesbian/Woman*, 219).
21. "Je [Bilitis] lui [à Mnasidika] ai donné une poupée. . . . Quand nous sommes ensemble, elle la couche entre nous, et c'est notre enfant. Le soir elle la berce et lui donne le sein avant de l'endormir" [I have given her [Mnasidika] a doll. . . . When we are together she places it between us in the bed; it is our child. At eventide she rocks it and gives it the breast before putting it to sleep] (Louÿs, *Chansons*, 102; *Songs*, 84).
22. Daughters of Bilitis, "Raising Children in a Deviant Relationship," *Ladder* 1, no. 1 (1956): 6.
23. The *Chansons secrètes de Bilitis* were first published posthumously, in a deluxe illustrated edition of twenty-five copies, in 1929. Subsequent private illustrated editions were also very rare. Pierre Louÿs, *Œuvre érotique*, ed. Jean-Paul Goujon (Paris: Pauvert, 1994), includes not only the *Chansons secrètes* but also previously published "secret songs" and other poems hitherto extant only in manuscript.
24. Pierre Louÿs, "Le tombeau sans nom," in *Œuvre érotique*, 67. Translations from the *Chansons secrètes* are mine.
25. Pierre Louÿs, "Psappha," in *Œuvre érotique*, 66.
26. Pierre Louÿs, *Manuel de civilité pour les petites filles à l'usage des maisons d'éducation* (Paris: Allia, 1999), 96. My translation. Louÿs's pleasure in observing prepubescent sexuality is evident in a number of texts, from salacious depictions of childhood romps in the *Songs*—"Je me suis dévêtue pour monter à un arbre; mes cuisses nues embrassaient l'écorce lisse et humide" [I undressed to climb a tree; my naked thighs embraced the smooth and humid bark] (42; 22)—to hard-core confessions of a child prostitute in his novel *Trois filles et leur mère* [Three girls and their mother].
27. See "Bibliographie des érotiques de Pierre Louÿs," in *Œuvre érotique*, 1065–67.
28. Quoted in Stearn, *Grapevine*, 251.
29. At times the DOB seemed to be as much in the business of image making—of cultivating socially acceptable exteriors—as in that of image seeking. Their agenda sometimes oddly resembles that of the reparative therapists of today's "ex-gay ministries," but, instead of reprogramming homosexuals to accept themselves as functioning heterosexuals, they aimed to repackage butches in appropriately feminine dress. Of one early DOB member, Martin says: "When she first came to town and met us, she was in full drag. . . . A year and a half later, . . . she [wore] a dress, hat, gloves, the works. . . . She

was indeed proud of herself, but, above all, she was comfortable with herself. She had learned to accept herself as a woman, though gay" (quoted ibid., 275).

30. Quoted in Jean-Paul Goujon, *Correspondances croisées: Suivies de deux lettres inédites de Renée Vivien à Natalie Barney et de divers documents* (Muizon: A l'écart, 1983), 53. Translations from the *Correspondances croisées* are mine. Vivien echoed these words: "*Les Chansons de Bilitis* possèdent depuis longtemps la tendresse passionnée que je réserve à quelques livres inséparables de ma pensée, et de mon existence" [Long ago I bestowed on *The Songs of Bilitis* my passionate tenderness, which I reserve for a few books that are inseparable from my thinking and my existence] (*Correspondances croisées*, 87).
31. Ibid., 53.
32. Remarkably, Goujon asserts that Louÿs understood lesbians so well that he might as well have been one: "Il s'intéressait aux lesbiennes et était à même de les comprendre. Natalie Barney sentit donc intuitivement qu'elle aurait en lui à la fois un précieux conseiller et un défenseur prestigieux" [He was interested in lesbians and was able to understand them. Natalie Barney therefore felt intuitively that she would find in him a precious adviser and a prestigious defender] (ibid., 19).