

Is that not what lesbianism is: our life? Does it not radically permeate into our words and actions, and into the art we consume and create? Into how we love or cry? *Sinister Wisdom 12: Bad Attitude* dives into this further, exhibiting through both nonfiction and fiction how sometimes our very own lives and day to day activities, like making breakfast with a lover or baby-sitting a niece in the summer, are considered radical and occasionally a “bad thing” to some heteronormative individuals. In reality, it is just *our* life. *Sinister Wisdom 12: Bad Attitude* calls us to action and tells us that part of being a lesbian is realizing that our community, through its happiness, misery, love and grief are living in the counter current, against the “right way” of life that is normalized in a binary, heteronormative patriarchal society. Collectively, *Sinister Wisdom 10: On Being Old & Age*, *Sinister Wisdom 11: Inside the Archives*, and *Sinister Wisdom 12: Bad Attitude* rejoice in the display of lesbian life and history.



**Nadine Rodriguez** is a queer, nonbinary Cuban-American writer and photographer born and raised in Miami, Florida. As a graduate of Florida International University with a BS in Journalism and an Art minor, they have come to know identity through a diverse, artistic lens. They are currently working on projects focused on gender expression and sexuality and are fascinated with writing, reading, and horror movies.

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# LESBIAN TIME:

CREATING, PRESERVING AND EXPANDING LESBIANISM

Nadine Rodriguez

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Forty years ago, *Sinister Wisdom* published three issues that together focus on the creation, exploration, and preservation of “lesbianness” through time regardless of medium. Time is a vital lens of analysis for *Sinister Wisdom 10: On Being Old & Age*, *Sinister Wisdom 11: Inside the Archives* and *Sinister Wisdom 12: Bad Attitude*.

Conversations that surround the word age often splinter off into facets. When someone says “for your age” or “when I was your age,” listeners might imagine an elder speaking to someone who is deemed “young.” *Sinister Wisdom 10: On Being Old & Age* flips these roles and common sayings on their head. The issue imagines a society in which age is treated as a component to the non-linear flow of time, rather than something stagnant or condemning. Through this issue, readers can imagine a young lesbian looking up to an older lesbian and proclaiming, “for your age, you sure do love,” and an older lesbian looking at a young girl who likes to hold hands with her classmate and calls it love smiling and saying, “for your age, you sure do love.”

Humans, *lesbians*, are not only the bones and flesh that make the composition of their bodies on Earth. We are also ideas, beliefs, and modes of thinking. Mentality and thought outlive the physical body. In Susan Leigh Star’s introduction to *Sinister Wisdom 10*, she explains this concept eloquently—and the way it can hinder a lesbian if they do not believe in it.<sup>1</sup> Star writes:

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1. For more about Susan Leigh Star, see her obituary by R. Ruth Linden in *Sinister Wisdom 87*.



*Between 10 and 17, I was in an agony of waiting, of feeling tortured, invisible, held in place by something which had no relationship to me. It became very important to me during this time that I remember later what it was like the nostalgic, sweetly-colored descriptions I read of youth seemed like sadistic burlesque...I often had to fight even to feel alive.*



photographs by Deborah Snow

Young women, particularly young lesbians, often ask ourselves, are we allowed to think? Too often, lesbians pause and

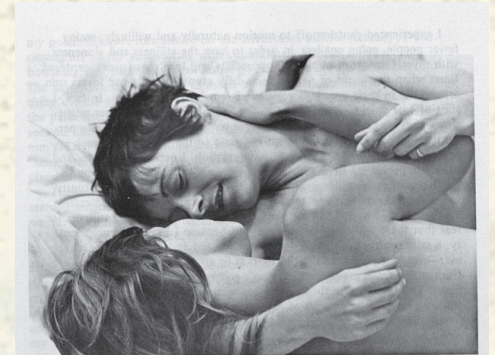
stifle thoughts and emotions and urges in order to decide if it is acceptable for a child to feel pain, and if it is acceptable for a teenager to feel love or questioning. Peggy Kornegger, in her essay featured in *Sinister Wisdom* 12, "COSMIC ANARCHISM: Lesbians in the Sky with Diamonds" states:

*Reclamation is part of the re/vision of our past with/in the present and toward the future...I learned to see time as not necessarily sequential, but simultaneous-it is we who move through time and space in our lives. I learned that if the past/present/future are seen as simultaneous, then it makes sense that we can time-travel.*

Viewing lesbian existence as non-linear is crucial to explore lesbian communities's histories and strive towards its futures. Are we not all time-travelers when we read a text published years before we were born? Or when someone in the future, once our own life has ended, reads something we wrote or sees something we drew? The word lesbian is immortal, it surpasses death as we exist in our words and art.

*Sinister Wisdom* 11: *Inside the Archives* aids us further in understanding the immortality of lesbian. The Lesbian Herstory Archives, although primarily a physical place, exists in the hearts and minds of those who have work collected in it, have visited it, and have heard of it.<sup>2</sup> The Archives are a space carved into reality for the word lesbian. It is one of the most radical, "bad attitude" things to exist, a space for ourselves to explore our history and culture in a society where our very own existence is questioned, doubted and dissected.

J.Z. Grover demonstrates the importance of collecting and protecting lesbian history in "BEGINNINGS: A Story." The story describes a college girl undergoing a form of grief when she finds out two of her mother's lifetime friends, and possibly her mother, are lesbians. She mourns the idea she had of her life before, where she believed the women around her to be heterosexual. However, she sobs in relief when she realizes the idea she had held onto was not the truth, and thus ultimately not what she wanted because she wasn't heterosexual either. If it were not for the history (books, photographs) that her mother's friends had collected over the years, the girl would not be able to understand or grasp how "lesbianism" was not just a term thrown around in gossip and in college courses, but a way of life.



photographs by Lynda Koolish

Simply put by Joan Nestle, featured in "An Interview with Joan and Deborah of the Lesbian Herstory Archives: by Beth Hodges," when asked what the archives meant to her, she says "It has meant life to me."<sup>3</sup>

2. The Fall 2020 issue of *Sinister Wisdom* is a tribute to the Lesbian Herstory Archive.  
3. Joan Nestle is now a member of the *Sinister Wisdom* board of directors.