

to "real man" Cary Grant, while the 'predatory instincts' of lesbians are shown in such classics as *The Vampyres*, *Dracula's Daughter*, and *All About Eve*. The lists go on and on. Russo sketchily but colorfully describes the evolution of film censorship offices in reaction to explicit films of the 1910s and 20s, and follows their development and eventual relaxing of standards as societal attitudes changed. Referring to films of the '70s such as *Deliverance*, he writes that the "love that dared not speak its name became the lifestyle that didn't know when to shut up."

Some space is devoted here to non-fictional film, such as the early German Gay Liberation film *Different From The Others* (1919). Russo mentions *Word Is Out* near the

end of the book, but many more documentaries about lesbians and gays have emerged since *The Celluloid Closet* went to press. One wonders what Russo would have made of films like *The Life and Times of Harvey Milk*, *Choosing Children*, and *Before Stonewall*, not to mention semi-fictions such as *Entre Nous*, *Personal Best*, and *Privates on Parade*.

The value of this book is not only in its research and readability. Russo gives us also a political perspective which views the film scene critically but hopefully, examining the attitudes, actions and reactions of directors, producers, actors, reviewers, and audiences. One of the most disturbing findings of the book is expressed in his introduction, "The

Closet Mentality": the expectation of people, lesbian, gay, and straight alike, that his book was intended to be an expose of gossip-column dimensions.

"Are you going to use real peoples' names?" was the question which Russo heard most often when the subject of his book was mentioned. This book is emphatically not a who's who of lesbians and gays in Hollywood, or of their work, although Russo acknowledges the importance of recognizing such figures and productions without the stigma of libel (how long, o Movieland?) Yet given that we have seen a general right turn in this country since *The Celluloid Closet* was written, Russo's observations are the more relevant for big-bucks movies, even if the

marketable topic of gayness is being brought up in new releases such as *Mass Appeal* (which after all deals with a 'reformed' gay character who is celibate). Hollywood and much of the film world is revealed as a paranoid place beset with internalized homophobia: "Almost all the people I spoke with reacted as though they had never considered a discussion of homosexuality as anything but potential gossip... To see homosexuality as a dirty secret is something we learned as children, both gays and straights. In Hollywood closeted gay people are among the most uptight and uncooperative stumbling blocks in the path of positive gay projects."

by Sarah Koehl

With *The Sophie Horowitz Story*, Sarah Schulman, known for her articles in publications such as *Womanews*, and *Gay Community News*, has written a superb mystery spiced with humor, paralleled only by Rita Mae Brown in lesbian fiction.

Sophie is a reporter for the *New York Feminist News*, who turns down an assignment on go-go dancers taking over the sex industry to investigate the arrest of Germaine Covington, a radical feminist leader framed for a bank robbery.

Laura Wolfe, Covington's accomplice, goes underground and cannot be found. But Sophie, our tough-girl lesbian reporter, does not say die! On the trail of a "scoop" Sophie finds herself in more hot water than she had anticipated.

Disguising herself as a male New York caddy and then cruising her suspect in an all mens' leather bar with her lover, Lillian, she finds that her lead has led her far over her head. Readers will laugh, giggle, and, yes, even chortle, as Sophie is followed through the streets of N.Y.C. and propositioned in a bathroom at Pizza Hut.

Sophie Horowitz is a completely believable lesbian detective. She's down to earth, she drinks beer, lusts after her girlfriend, puts up with an obnoxious male houseguest who won't leave her home and writes gay male pornography, so she can eat.

Schulman is not P.C., (politically correct). In fact, her writing pokes fun at everything — feminist politics, lesbian relationships, and the detective story itself. But her best "Spears" lie in the dramatizations of women's issues, personified by Laura Wolf, the fugitive. Laura is a member of "Women against Bad Things," which pickets all feminist events (as well as non-feminist events) with long leaflets. WABTers don't seem to like anyone. But interspersed with Schulman's acid quips there are serious comments about what it is like to be gay; be a woman; be poor, and be Jewish. These small, yet necessary insertions are what make the story believable and positive.

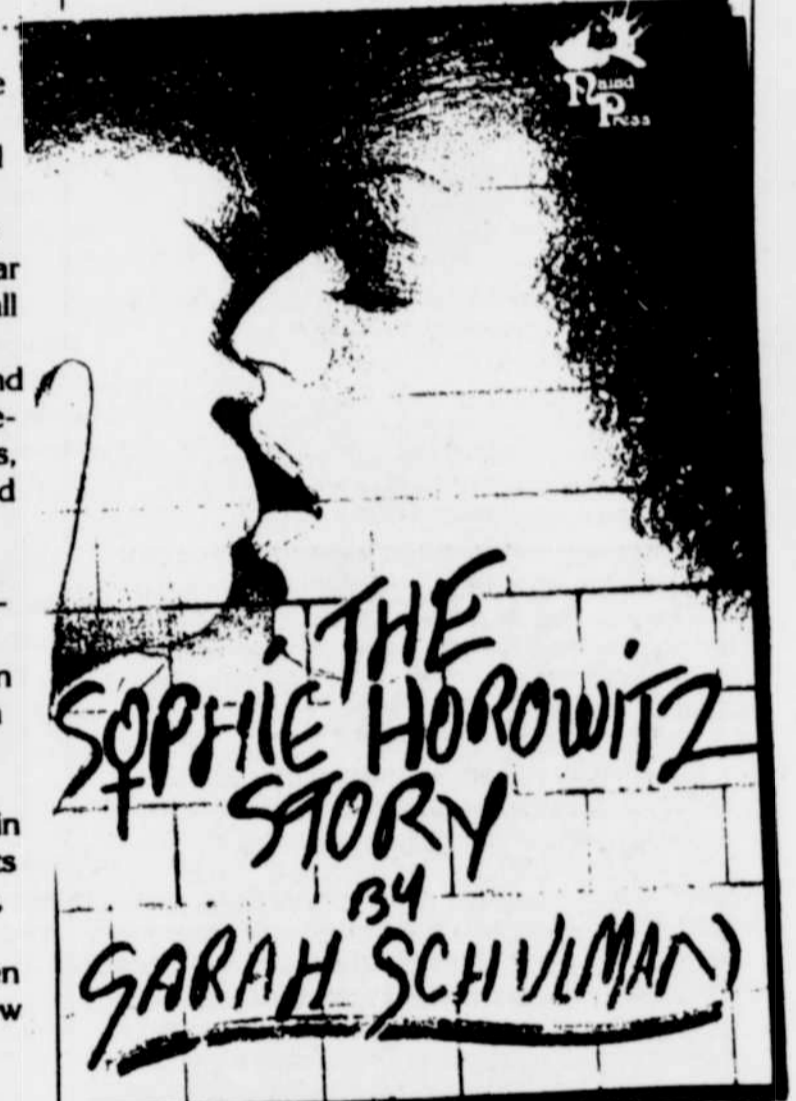
Schulman has mastered the style of the detective lingo and feeling. "My eyes glazed over. My cheeks flushed. My skin turned cold. My palms began to sweat. Germaine Covington — it must be her!"

Included in the novel are some sensual lovemaking scenes often absent from lesbian

fiction and detective novels. A classic scene in the book finds Sophie and her lesbian photographer friend doing a story at a local synagogue. However, as it is an Orthodox synagogue, the women are only allowed to seat themselves behind the curtain in the rear of the room. To their amazement they are all alone and when the elderly devout Jewish men begin their hypnotic prayers, Sophie and her friend make love quietly (somewhat) behind the curtain. Sophie exclaims afterwards, "I have found my place in Judaism — behind the curtain making love with girls."

There are references to places in N.Y.C. that were lost to a country hick like me, especially specific comments about the lower East Side of N.Y., but natives will enjoy them immensely. New York humor rides through this story's humor, sarcasm and even the politics.

What is it that detective novels bring out in people? Is it the detective in us all who wants to figure out the clues, track down the killer, "crack" the case, and "get the girl," in the end? A new genre of lesbian fiction has been born; the lesbian detective, and it's a hot new story no one will be able to put down.



Kids read books, too

by Sarah Koehl

How many times have adults faced shelves of children's books and wondered how to choose the right one for a child? Will the children's book that makes an adult laugh, appeal to a child? Is there anything besides Dr. Seuss?

Good Morning Franny, Goodnight Franny, by Emily Hearn (Women's Press, \$4.95) is a full color illustrated children's book, ideal for five to eight year olds. Franny, the books' main character is wheelchair bound, and in her rush to enjoy the beautiful spring weather, bumps into the pigeon-lady by the grocery store. A little girl nearby helps Franny put the groceries back into the pigeon-lady's sack, and they become best

friends. They play ball together at the park and fly a kite. The next day Franny has to go into the hospital to get some tests done, and when she gets out she goes looking for "Ting" her new found friend, but she cannot find her. She finally finds a secret message left by Ting in the sidewalk pavement, made just for her. *Good Morning Franny* is an exceptional story for youngsters to dispel myths about disabled children, as well as providing multi-ethnic characters.

Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin, by Susanne Bosche (Gay mens Press, \$5.50) is about Jenny, a girl of about six or seven, Martin, Jenny's dad, and Eric, Martin's lover. They all live happily together and this is a story about how they spent one of their weekends. On the cover of the book the author explains, "When you are grown-up you can live together in different ways. Sometimes women may fall in love with a man, and then will live together with him, and sometimes a man will fall in love with a woman and they might live together. But women do also fall in love with other women, and men do fall in love with other men."

Originally translated from Danish, the story incorporates actual photographs of the family's day to day projects, and conversations. At one point Jenny's mother comes for a visit, and they fix a picnic. At another, Eric and Martin have a small quarrel and they explain after their fight to Jenny, how they still love each other, even if they get angry. At the end of the story they are all returning home from the laundromat and Eric and Martin accidentally bump into Mrs. Andrews who lives

across the street. She angrily shouts, "Sorry? You Gays! Why don't you stay at home so the rest of us don't have to see you?" And she marches back down the street. Jenny is hurt and upset, and asks Eric and Martin to explain why Mrs. Andrews doesn't like them. Eric and Martin draw a story on the sidewalk in chalk of how they love each other, just as Mrs. Andrews loves her husband. Jenny understands, and tells them she wants to help Mrs. Andrews understand their family. *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* is a beautiful illustration of gay men's commitment for each other, and their commitment of raising a child. It also eliminates the myth so often heard, that gay men and women, when parents, will molest, convert and otherwise abuse children in their care. In all honesty, this book might be ahead of its time — it's excellent.

Just Us Women, by Jeanette Caines (Harper and Row, \$3.95) is a full color illustrated children's book for ages four to eight. Warm cheerful pictures illustrate the story of a little black girl and her favorite Aunts' trip to North Carolina. This is a very special outing, with no one to hurry them along, the two travelers can do exactly as they please... stop at roadside markets, and buy all the junk they want, take pictures in front of all the statues, stop at fancy restaurants, pick mushrooms for an omelette dinner, with coffee, and have breakfast at night, instead of the morning. This story is a little girls' dream come true... she is treated for the first time as an adult, as an independent person, with her own dreams and wishes.

A Very Touching Book — for little people and big people by Jan Hindman (McClure Books, \$8.95) is my favorite of the bunch. Without fear or dishonesty this book teaches children the correct terminology and correct responses to touching and other physical contact. Through this book we can learn to talk about sexual abuse, a very hush-hush subject, with children in an open and easy way.

The Book begins with a dictionary definition of touching and what it means. Each paragraph in the book is beautifully illustrated with a child and a description of the paragraph. The book goes on to talk about feelings and touching, and good versus bad touching. Bad touching is described as stubbing your toe, being kicked, and-or touched where and when you don't like it. Two pages of illustrations describe women's bodies in all shapes and sizes, as well as men's, with specific names for body parts children (and adults for that matter) may not be familiar with. The book then talks about good secrets and bad secrets and relates this to good and bad feelings and touching, and why grownups wear clothing covering up their "secret" body parts. Finally, the book describes various situations where the child reading the story has to push a make-believe yes or no button as to whether the situations in the pictures involves good touching or bad touching. It finishes with a note to tell all the readers what to do if "secret touching is happening to them. This is an excellent book and a must for all boys and girls over three.

These books are available at A Woman's Place Bookstore, 2349 SE Arkeny, 236-3609.