

Kitty Tsui

Who says we don't talk about sex?

Portions of the following article, which has been greatly condensed for this publication, were presented in a keynote speech at the Horizons Lesbian Conference in Chicago, Illinois, in April 1990.

I was born thirty-eight years ago and raised to be a nice Chinese girl. But nice Chinese girls don't grow up to be dykes or rebels. And I turned out to be both.

I grew up in silence. Though I was part of a large extended family, we ate in silence. There was no conversation or laughter, just the sound of soup spoons and chopsticks against the rice bowls. I was not encouraged to talk, express emotions, or ask questions. I grew up with a heritage of silence.

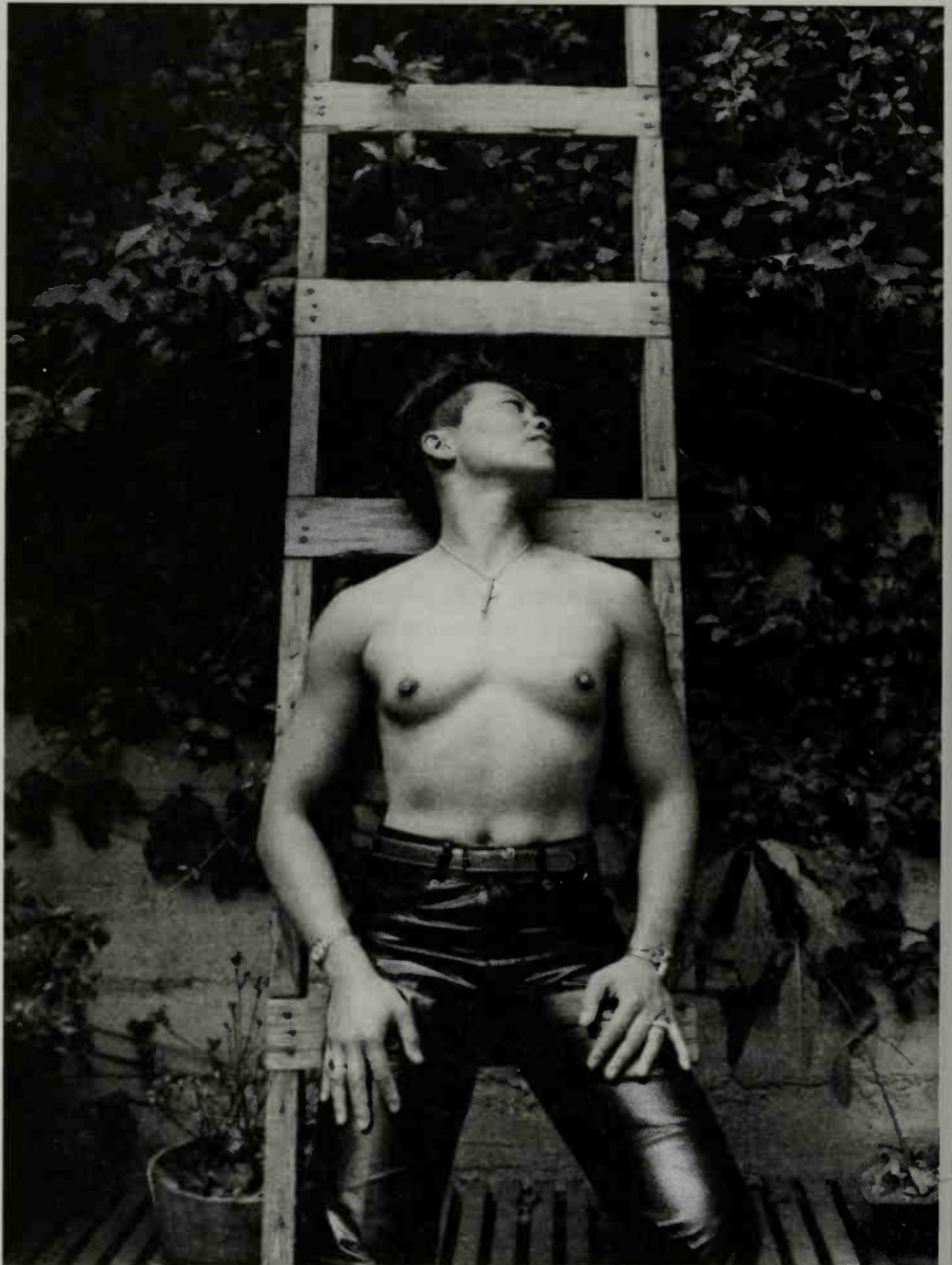
I was a girl child, the first born in a traditional Chinese family, raised to be seen but not heard, raised to excel in school but not to be curious, raised to be someone's wife but not to be a person of my own. When I was growing up in England, Hong Kong, and San Francisco, I read everything I could get my hands on, but none of the books spoke of my own experience. I started writing when I was eleven years old to fill the silence and to turn the years of rejection into affirmation.

You're probably wondering what the hell any of this has to do with lesbian sex. The answer is — plenty. What I write is shaped by my history and experiences both as a Chinese woman and as a lesbian.

Chinese is my first language. But I was fluent only in the words my parents deemed it necessary for me to know. I was certainly not taught the words for breast, cunt, ass, or orgasm. There were no words for sex; therefore, sex did not exist.

I came out as a lesbian when I was twenty-one, but I didn't start writing about sex until almost a decade later. Sure, I wrote love poems, but I never

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A Femme-Butch Reader

wrote about sex. I was, after all, a nice Chinese girl and we didn't talk about things like that.



I have always loved women passionately. I love the way a femme moves across a dance floor, knowing all eyes are focused on her. I love the hard eye-to-eye look from another butch as she sizes me up as competition — or her next conquest. I love the fluid seduction in a femme's eyes. I love the long line of her neck, her delicate earlobes and soft lips, painted some shade of red or unpainted but deeply flushed from having been kissed long and hard. Many times. I love the curve of her breast, the hardness of her nipples, the softness of her stomach, the fullness of her ass, her legs with a faint covering of hair or long and sleek in black silk stockings. I love the strength in her thighs, the firmness of her biceps, the feel of her forearms as she takes me. I love the smell of her heat and the place of pleasure between her legs. I love her ankles and her delicate toes and her soft instep where I run my tongue until my teeth are gripping her Achilles tendon. I love the smell of her, the taste of her, the feel of her, the sight of her. I love women passionately.



Some women do not attend my theater or literary events for fear of supporting my sexual politics. I have been accused of recruiting. Never mind that I have a long history of writing, community organizing, and activism. Now I am judged solely for my leather sexuality. It's never been easy being different, but I have always survived. I will continue to speak out, write truths, and make waves. My countryman Mao Zedong wrote, "Dare to struggle, dare to win." I say, dare to write. Dare to be different. And who says nice Chinese girls don't talk about sex?