

The **Amazons**, figures of Greek mythology rather than historical reality, are supposed to have lived in an all-female society, rejecting men and making war upon them. Aristophanes' play *Lysistrata* (411 B.C.) shows Athenian women seceding from their city in a "sex strike," but only temporarily—until the men agree to make peace. Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1935), a pioneering American socialist and feminist, wrote a novel, *Herland* (1915; reprinted 1979), depicting a utopia in Africa populated only by women. In her own life Gilman's closest bonds were with other women, and she transmitted her distillation of the women-centered aspects of the first wave of feminism to the second.

In 1971 the New York group Radicalesbians published an essay, "The Woman Identified Woman," coining an expression that was to have considerable resonance. Discarding the exclusively sexual identification of the word lesbian, the essay proposed to identify the concept with a woman who chooses to place her energies with other women.

Outsiders tend to label lesbian separatists as "women who hate men." In their defense, separatists often say that what they are opposed to are the domineering, aggressive aspects of male behavior, rather than men themselves. They wish to make a clear statement that will set them apart from the ambivalent stance of heterosexual women, even those who profess feminism. Separatists believe that such straight women enter too readily into complicity with the power structure of patriarchy; by continuing to meet the sexual and emotional needs of men, these women give aid and comfort to the enemy.

Some women choose to form communes on "women's land," setting themselves apart from all males, including male children and animals. In so doing they hold that they are creating liberated zones in which their natures can grow unhampered by the dictates of patriarchy. They also affirm their protest against the

practices of the society from which they have seceded. This solution, which never attracted large numbers of women, seemed to ebb in the late 1980s in the United States, though it has found advocates in other countries, notably West Germany.

Other women who identify as separatists have remained in physical proximity to men, while making their position known. They feel that, like members of ethnic minorities, they must be free to go anywhere, while remaining themselves. Some gay men, who assert that they are seeking to strengthen the feminine elements of their own personality, are drawn to seek association with lesbian separatists, but they are usually told that they can make their best contribution through educating other men.

Some women have entered lesbian separatism for a number of years as part of a process of personal growth, only to emerge later with a more complex position. This seems to have been the experience of a principal theorist of the movement, Charlotte Bunch, who remains a radical lesbian feminist.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.** Charlotte Bunch, *Passionate Politics: Feminist Theory in Action*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987; Sarah Lucia Hoagland and Julia Penelope, eds., *For Lesbians Only: A Separatist Anthology*, London: Only-women Press, 1988.

*Evelyn Gettone*

## SETTEMBRINI, LUIGI (1813–1876)

Italian patriot and writer. Born in Naples, Settembrini took an active role in the movement for Italian unity. In 1851 the Bourbon regime condemned him as a conspirator, first to death, and then to prison. In 1859 he was helped to escape by his son, who diverted to Ireland the ship that was deporting him and others to America. He became an exile in England and then in Florence, where he continued to write and work for the cause. After the 1860 proclamation of the kingdom of

Italy, he taught in the University of Naples. In 1876 he became a senator of the kingdom of Italy.

Settembrini was the author of the autobiographical *Ricordanze della mia vita* and many other works, including *Lezioni di letteratura italiana* and a translation of the works of Lucian of Samosata from the Greek, which is still used.

His homosexual side was first revealed in 1977, with the unexpected publication of a novella, *I neoplatonici*, a homoerotic fantasy set in ancient Greece. Written in 1858–59 while he was in prison, just after he completed the Lucian translation, he sent the manuscript to his wife in the guise of a translation of an ancient Greek text. Remaining in his unpublished papers at the time of his death, the text was examined by Benedetto Croce, who counseled against publication.

*I neoplatonici* is a short work, but one that conveys the author's intimate fantasies. Devoid of any real plot, it follows the experiences of two boys who fall in love with one another and become lovers, concluding with a double (heterosexual) wedding. The story includes descriptions of sexual acts (anal) which have no parallel in Italian literature of Settembrini's time. Although the modest ambitions of the work place it outside the canon of the author's major works, it is nonetheless a dignified and serious text, written in a fresh, lively style, and endowed with a certain elegance.

Also noteworthy is the wholly positive and serene picture presented of homosexual relations. The author deliberately returned to a pre-Christian concept of (homo)sexuality, presenting same-sex love as an element of human life that is capable of giving joy and satisfaction. Moreover, the novella treats the link as both emotional and erotic—a rare accomplishment for the period.

When the book was published a hundred years after the author's death, some hailed it as a "revelation" that Settembrini had homosexual relations while

in prison. This suggestion remains a hypothesis, which as yet has no documentary support.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Luigi Settembrini, *I neoplatonici* [with introductory note by Giorgio Manganelli and preface by Raffaele Cantarella], Milan: Rizzoli, 1977.

Giovanni Dall'Orto

## SEXISM

Sexism is the assumption that the members of one sex collectively are superior to those of the other, together with the resultant differentiation practiced against members of the supposed inferior sex, especially by men against women. The term is also used to designate conformity with the traditional **stereotyping** of social roles on the basis of sex (social sex roles).

*Conceptual Foundations.* Modeled on racism and racist, the terms sexism and sexist do not seem to have been used before the mid 1960s. Unlike racists, some sexist males profess to cherish and admire members of the other sex, with whom they have intimate and family relations. However, such admiration—the "pedestal theory"—is not incompatible with **discrimination**, as when it is held that women must be barred from certain occupations "for their own protection." The purported admiration of women by sexist men is also linked to **sexual objectification**—the reductive vision of women as simply bodies which are the object of lust rather than as full human beings. Although the matter remains controversial, some hold that overarching biological differences require difference of treatment in a few areas between men and women. Pregnancy leave is one example. More problematic is the question of differences in temperament, and even in styles of thought, between women and men. In any event, an increasing body of opinion in Western industrial society holds that women deserve equality of respect, to-