

Fugitive Information: Essays From a Feminist Hothead

Kay Leigh Hagan, Harper Collins

Renee Risingsong

I arrived in my favorite bookstore, after driving for two hours. Good comprehensive lesbian/feminist bookstores are about as rare as hen's teeth up here in the North Country. (See the November 1993 issue of *Sojourner* re: *Feminist Bookstores: Do We Need Them?*) I had made a list from their mail-order catalog, of books for possible purchase (about twenty-five in number). I began the somewhat daunting task of locating, and skimming each book to see if it was one I'd like to buy. This was complicated by running across other books which did not appeal to me in the catalog listing, but did catch my eye as I roved the shelves. We planned to spend "the day" to purchase our winter reading material. The woman at the desk noticed what I was doing. She asked: "Can I help you locate some of those?" I handed over my list and she reappeared several minutes later with the titles on my list neatly stacked and ready for my review. I was amazed at this helpfulness! I sorted books into piles to "keep" and "re-shelve." Ahh!, but what is this? As my eye and fingers passed over the titles on the shelves I found a slim, hot pink volume: *Fugitive Information: Essays From a Feminist Hothead*. "I'm a hothead," I thought. My excitement rose enormously. I LOVE finding, slim powerful books--books that distill someone's thinking into crisp words and concise ideas that resonate with my own experience. Books that capture and organize thinking, I have done myself but have been unable to put into words or on a page. As I skimmed a few paces I was sure that I had found one.

Indeed, *Fugitive Information* is just such a book. Kay Leigh Hagan has captured my heart and my intellect with her in-

sightful analysis of her/our experiences, measured against and informed by such authors as Adrienne Rich, Dale Spender, and Marilyn Frye. As feminism is a collaborative effort, so has she opened her writing process to the community for whom she writes--her work has been refined and enriched by discussion with women around the country who have subscribed to her essay series. These two things--drawing upon the literature and talking, with women--make her book at once both scholarly and accessible. A contributor writes about the choice of title (which actually was selected from computer jargon): "I like the name 'fugitive information' because it sounds rebellious and because I feel like a fugitive in this world, given my beliefs and thoughts, but I also see a fugitive mentality as something very positive for women if it is developed self-consciously: like the underground railroad or the sanctuary movement or the Jane Collective in Chicago, which clandestinely provided safe abortions to women pre *Roe v. Wade*. If we can't 'recover' from oppression, we can strategize and organize to change things, and if we take seriously the need for this government to keep women 'in their places', and if we study the history of the government's counterintelligence activities against all movements for progressive change, we could start to believe that at times, it's a good thing to be a fugitive." Or a hothead I might add.'

The general theme of Hagan's work is internalized oppression and its intersection with topics including codependency, heterosexual feminism, and self defense. Her essay on codependency breaks new ground and I was astonished as I read it to think that in all

the time this concept has been "popular," I had heard no one else articulate this view. She answers questions concerning heterosexual feminism and arrives at a bottom line for living with men, whether in your house or on this planet. She examines many women's feelings that "the means are the end" with regard to peaceful processes in relation to the absolute war being waged against women on this planet. She explores a feminist analysis of questions that have, in her words, scared or intimidated her, of ideas about which she has felt uncertain. And in doing so, she reduces the fear and provides validation of our collective experience--her work is empowering. Her work empowers by celebrating the positive in feminist experience: women loving, women over time. It empowers by making suggestions for moving from theory to practice: develop the habit of freedom. Read the first essay and find out just what this hothead means by "falling in love with an older woman!"

Hagan's clarity of analysis and her wry humor alone make this book extraordinary, but imagine my surprise to find at the end of the afterward her electronic mail address!! An indescribable opportunity for connection and comment!! I was elated! It only took a day or so to find the opportunity to send a few of my words over the network and make contact with one of the hotheads of this century...▼

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