



Radclyffe Hall and
Lady Una Troubridge, 1927.
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WW WHAT DOES A LESBIAN LOOK LIKE? VV

Until the last decade or three “lesbian style” might have been laughed out of court as an obvious oxymoron. The popular idea of the lesbian was precisely that of a woman with *no* style. For sure, the lesbian had an *image* – a gruff person in hairy tweeds and maybe a few whiskers on her chin – but that was a stereotype, not a style.

In any case it seems that more often than not lesbians were cloaked in invisibility. Historically there has been little certainty about just what a lesbian is or if she even exists. Terry Castle has described the way in which both today and in the past lesbianism is wished away and denied as the “ghosting” of the lesbian. Writing soon after the death of Greta Garbo, in 1993, she noted that “virtually every distinguished woman suspected of homosexuality has had her biography sanitised.” This has certainly been true of Garbo. Castle mentions a number of other stars, directors, and writers in 1930s Hollywood who were known to have erotic relationships with women. Paradoxically, Marlene Dietrich, who had many affairs with men as well as some with women, is celebrated in the Berlin Museum of Cinema as a totally lesbian icon (or was