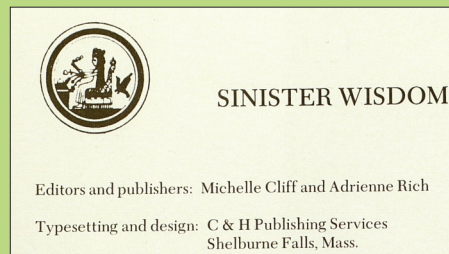


writing in the lesbian community reveals how deeply cultural white supremacy relies on anti-semitism and the shapes of the obstacles that come from viewing the world from within an anti-semitic white supremacist culture. Elly Bulkin's response to Selma Miriam provides a perfect example on the limitations of political critiques of literary work without context. Bulkin asks us to consider a question similar to Red Jordan Arobateau's: how do we read and critique across the uneven terrain of power?, and what do we owe each other in the lesbian-feminist political space? Through Barbara McDonald and Judith Katz, important lessons emerge on how to read each other's fiction for ourselves, without ever taking each other's work, knowledge, and empathy for granted.

As a current PhD student in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, I can't help but highlight the writings by lesbian academics who were fired during the neoliberal restructuring of the University by administration IN women's studies departments. Lesbian academics writing about losing their livelihoods due to a silent discrimination in academia name the risks involved, the risks taken, in forging an intellectual lineage and a shared language in the face of co-optation. As many of us feel in the 2020s a retrograde reminiscent of the 1980s, facing conservative, fascist backlash and a looming inflation, *Sinister Wisdom* 20 embraces acts of witnessing: seeing each other through windows, seeing ourselves in each other's feminisms, and breaking silos through the act of vision, re-viewing, and re-aligning at a critical juncture in lesbian-feminist political worlds. Rather than searching for something new to discuss, a new problem to address, Michelle Cliff and Adrienne Rich curated work that asks us to return and dwell.



the commodification of intimate life, South Asian diaspora and empire, and the co-constitutive structures of race, caste, class, and gender. In their life before graduate school, they were an anti-imperialist and abolitionist student organizer. Now they are searching for a political home after moving to Atlanta.

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RITUALS OF TRAVEL, DWELLING, AND SURVIVAL: READING 1982 in *SINISTER WISDOM*

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In *Sinister Wisdom* 19, 20, and 21, all published in 1982 editors Michelle Cliff and Adrienne Rich promote reading and writing across the emergent multiplicity of lesbian-feminist expressions, including Black feminisms, Chicana feminisms, Indigenous feminisms, Asian American feminisms, Jewish feminisms, anti-imperialist feminisms. These three issues are emblematic of the moment of their arrival in the Women in Print movement, following the 1980 formation of Kitchen Table Press, the publication of Gloria Anzaldúa's and Cherríe Moraga's 1981 anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Radical Writing by Women of Color*, and the 1982 anthology edited by Akasha (then Gloria) T. Hull and Barbara Smith, *But Some of Us Are Brave* inaugurating Black Women's Studies. Cliff and Rich curate work mindful of the atmosphere of these anthologies. They weave together original work forging a principled and shared language and ethics. Collectively, the work published in these three issues of *Sinister Wisdom* tend to the underlying uncertainties between self-determination and collectivity and interrupt the established habits of thought within the rituals of a women's movement naming and unraveling its embedded whiteness.

Each of the 1982 issues begins with a poem that elucidates the shared language of the issue. *Sinister Wisdom* 19 opens with the now iconic Anzaldúa poem, "A Woman Lies Buried Under Me." The last two verses plunge readers into the rest of the issue:

A woman lies buried under me.
I emerge covered with mud.
Twigs fall from my eyes.
I rise, smell every flower
touch the four corners
and the burning trees.

In my own hands
my life.

Anzaldúa breaks the ground to expose the submerged, cyclical histories of women subordinated. Her self-possession echoes in other pieces published in *Sinister Wisdom* 19. Writers in the issue name their situations, the intergenerational, cosmic, trans-historical traps in which they find themselves. These traps take the form of dominant narratives repeated by mothers, communities, the sisterhood, partners and exes,

relations, cultures of white supremacy, inter-generations of survivors, and often by the tempo of so-called progress itself. Women must escape these narratives through travels into their own life, interiority, and instincts. *Sinister Wisdom* 19 teaches readers how, under threat of patriarchy, genocide, white supremacy, to be resourceful even if all you have is yourself, your imagination, another Black girl in a sea of white students, your truth, your lineage.

Intertextuality, conversations between and among writers and readers, builds skills for a multiplicity of feminisms and contains tense moments when writers confront each other under the banner of lesbian (and most often, lesbian-feminist). One subtle confrontation comes in Barbara Smith's short story about Louise and Alice, and a group of Black girls, at a remote New England women's college in a sea of ominous whiteness. In contrast to Barbara Demings' "A Book of Travel" where she, a white lesbian writer, finds agency in the women's college, Barbara Smith's "The Convert" is an eerily familiar (for me) fictional narrative with the same setting haunting and punishing young Black women. More explicit confrontations happen between critics of lesbian separatists, ex-lesbian separatists, and practicing lesbian-separatists on the intersection of race, class, and sexuality. Reading today, I see competing theories of patriarchy, rendered by some as a universal rule of fathers or theorized by others as a volatile mechanism in larger systems of oppression.

Sinister Wisdom 19 also animates the struggle of naming and practicing lesbian-feminist ethics against anti-semitism, focusing on the failure to identify it and the imperative to become aware of the threat anti-semitism presents to lesbians. For Judith Katz's character Nadine in "Nadine Pagan's Last Letter Home," the magic and power of Lesbia waiting to be awakened in women is the source of survival that was present in her Jewish women ancestors; lesbianism is at the forefront of confronting the reincarnation of fascism in the '80s. Selma Miriam's "bad news" in a roundup of anti-semitism within the writing that circulates within lesbian spaces asks lesbian feminists to take uncompromising stances against anti-Semitism in the writing they read, edit, and produce. Miriam's bulletin includes a disorientingly ugly picture of how the hegemony of Christianity and its hegemonic antagonism of Judaism resurfaces in the passionate spirituality of lesbian Christians.

The second to last section of *Sinister Wisdom* 19 presents the writings of Paula Gunn Allen, Celeste Tibbets, Elva Pérez-Treviño, and Catherine Rising-flame Moirai, Indigenous lesbian-feminists seeking, observing, mending, and creating connections through poetry of the lesbian spiritual encounter despite Christian colonial religion. This poetry section arrives at radical departures into self-possession and anti-colonial politics and becomes an echo and a declaration of deep community in Chrystos' poems for Jo Carillo and Barbara Cameron at the beginning of *Sinister Wisdom* 20. Chrystos' declarative of love and connection in the face of containment and forced separation speaks to Joan Nestle's memoir "A Restricted Country." Nestle's memoir recounts how the

landscape of Arizona shares the violent anti-semitism swept under the rug by white supremacists and in close vicinity the classism permeating the safe haven for Jewish community. Nestle foregrounds how desire and sexuality lead her to find freedom within unfreedom. A connecting thread between Chrystos and Nestle, implied by the editorial decisions of Cliff and Rich, is an open meadow where desire and collectivity can be freely embodied. Chrystos writes,

Nestle writes, "I had dreamed horses all my sixteen years, [...] and through all the splintering agonies of my family I had galloped on plains that were smooth and never-ending" (4). Cliff and Rich publish work that centers lesbians of color, lesbians confronting anti-semitism, and the re-emergence of fascism in the face of financial recessions.

Vision: Bundle

for Barbara Cameron

within/mystery wrapped in torn deer hide
we cannot speak of
the sacred

one soul looking for a song that we might dream
a smooth place where we might dance together without
separation

Sinister Wisdom 21 returns to the provocation of being answerable to each other while building the anti-racist horizons of the lesbian-feminist movement. In "Bashert," Irena Klepfisz offers a poem and a ritual to confront grief and loss in ways that remind us that our politics are precious because our lives are precious. Klepfisz returns to an essential question for any coalition against violence – how do we claim each other and how do we claim the lives we have lost? As she writes,

Everything in me yearns to become transparent, to be everywhere, to become like the water between two vast land masses that will never touch. I desire to become salt water, to establish the connection (10).

While we are asked to remember, *Sinister Wisdom* 21 returns us to attending to the wounds that are caused from within the struggle for liberation when the question of claiming each other is elided. I see the work in *Sinister Wisdom* 21 returning to the set of conversations inaugurated in *Sinister Wisdom* 19 and 20 to continue to forge a lesbian-feminist survival without dismissing the deep spiritual, embodied, pain that exists at the source of survival. The sharpest example is Red Jordan Arobateau's "Nobody's People" and her interview with Ann Allen Shockley in "A Different Kind of Black Lesbian Writer," where Arobateau digs deep into the isolation and betrayal she has faced due to racism. These are stories of when survival feels the sharpest in the face of loss, a truth that requires careful metabolizing within lesbian-feminist politics against imperialism and white supremacy.

Sinister Wisdom 21 is a veritable treasure trove. It contains rich engagements from readers and contributors practicing critique. A troubling and convoluted defense from Barbara Mor against Selma Miriam's roundup of anti-semitic