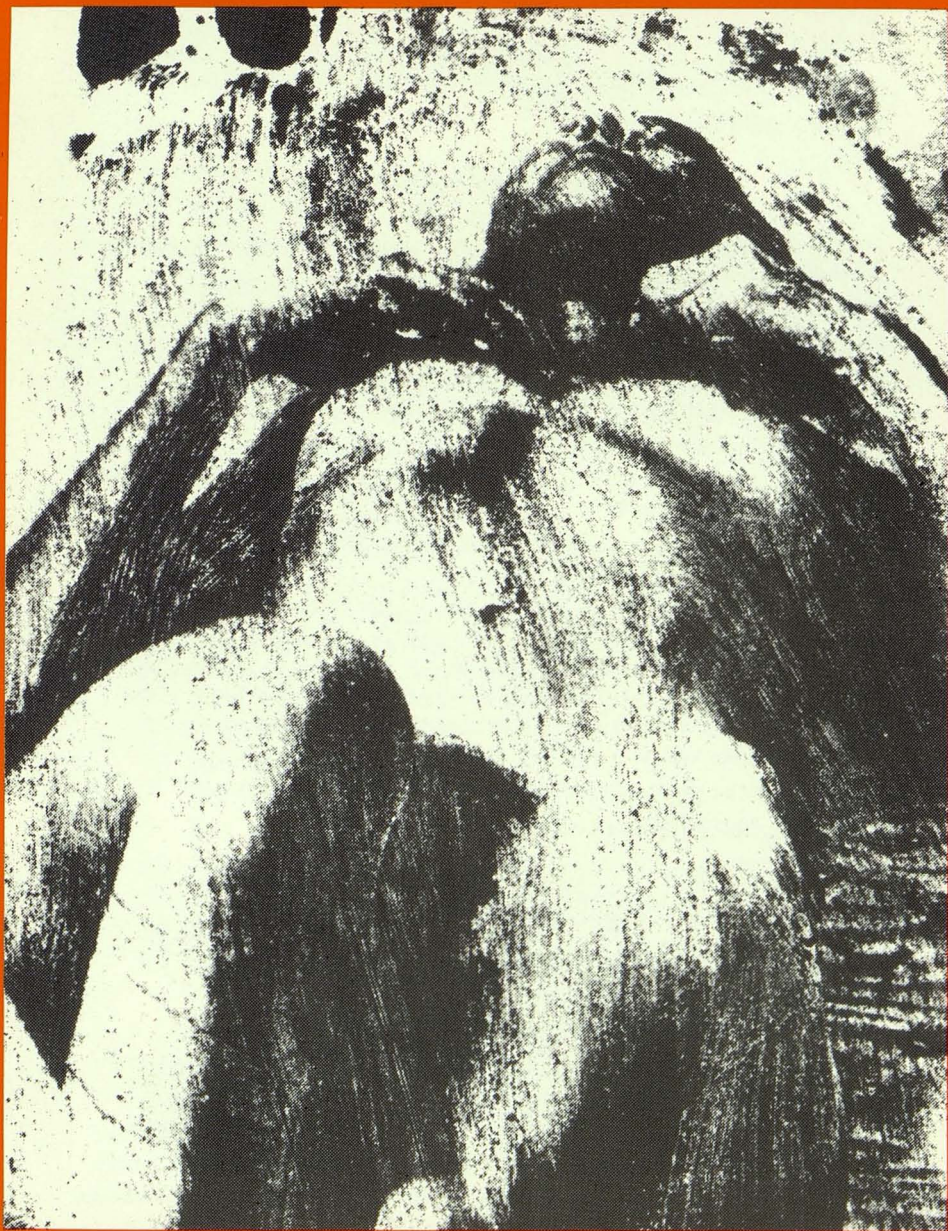


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On Language

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A Journal for Lesbians

Contents

-
- 3 Akiba Onađa-Sikwoia • *Notes for a Magazine*
 - 6 A. Miriasiem Barnes • *Notes for a Magazine*
 - 8 Kyos Featherdancing • *Notes for a Magazine*
 - 9 Upcoming issues
 - 11 Akiba Onađa-Sikwoia • *Giants*
 - 14 Diane Doumit • *Women on the Edge of a Very Steep Cliff Chapter Seven: Punctuated with a Tiny Dot*
 - 16 Diane Doumit • *Women on the Edge of a Very Steep Cliff Chapter Eight: Twisted*
 - 20 JBWiley • *I dream*
 - 22 Elisa Lucero • *Escucha! La Voz de Aztlan*
 - 26 Jennifer Tucker • *Growing Up in America*
 - 28 Margaret M. Pavel • *A Seed*
 - 29 Karla Nitchmann • *Bubbe's Reflections*
 - 34 Leatha Jones • *In the Kitchen*
 - 39 Pola • *The Kitchen Sink*
 - 40 Sauda Burch • *Like That, Like That, Like That That There: Art, Language and Culture; an Interview with Fan Warren*
 - 49 K. Linda Kivi • *Tabaganne*
 - 50 Annalee Wade • *Dominga is Speaking*
 - 52 April Citizen Kane • *Voices*
 - 53 Huda Jadallah • *For Those Who Ask Me to Talk Politics in a Calm and Rational Voice*
-

Sinister Wisdom is a multicultural, multi-class, born-woman lesbian space. We seek to open, consider and advance the exploration of community issues. *Sinister Wisdom* recognizes the power of language to reflect our diverse experiences and to enhance our ability to develop critical awareness, as lesbians evaluating our communities and our world.

- 60 Kyos Featherdancing • *In Remembrance*
- 62 Laura C. Luna • *The Making of an Amerikan Dream*
- 66 Shahara Godfrey • *Hot Comb*
- 68 Ananda Esteva • *My-Linguality*
- 73 Sandy Tate • *Holocaust Abused*
- 76 A. Miriasiem Barnes • *The Voices*
- 79 Liliana Slomkowska • *Quenching the Thirst*
- 82 Granete Sosnoff • *Hapa New Year*
- 88 Akiba Onada-Sikwoia • *the language that hates*
- 90 Annalee Wade • *Bar Notes: Eugene Oregon*
- 91 Henri Bensussen • *Masbata Loate*
- 92 Amber Garland • *The F Box*
- 94 Elizabeth Luciano • *love's acolyte*
- 96 Contributors' Notes
- 102 Books Received
- 106 Announcements and Classified Ads
- 110 Letter regarding Seventh International Feminist Bookfair

§

ART

- cover Franna Blaine Lusson • *Music Swims Back to Me*
- 13 Margarita Benitez
- 19 Julie A. Lawton • *Revived*
- 25 Cathy Cade • *Gloria Anzaldua*
- 33 Carol A. Johnson • *Crone with Child's Reflection*
- 38 Julia Youngblood • *Untitled*
- 48 Fan Warren • *"Made in America"*
- 51 Julia Youngblood • *Untitled*
- 54 Carol A. Johnson and Felicia Reim • *Opening*
- 72 Mary J. Kerr • *I Am Not a Fertility Goddess...*
- 78 A. Miriasiem Barnes • *Rhythm Equals Life*
- 87 Amazing Grace • *"Is it a man or a woman?" "What does it say?"*
- 95 Julia Youngblood • *Untitled*
- 101 Akiba Onada-Sikwoia • *Grandmothers*

Notes for a Magazine

Akiba Onáda-Sikwoia:

In the past six months, since taking on the editorship of *Sinister Wisdom*, I've faced every expectation one could imagine — both from myself and others. There have been times when my path shone crystal clear, when I soared far beyond my expected limitations. Magic on the rise, I marveled at my accomplishments. Thus now, for the first time in eight years, *SW* has an office. Several wimmin donated our much needed computer complete with desks. One month ago we successfully produced a 20th Anniversary Celebration and Benefit. Subscriptions have risen and, because of all the outreach, there are many new faces within the organization — including a new board of directors.

Transitions can be challenging and I have not been spared. There have been days when I've experienced fear beyond belief. Days when I found myself paralyzed by the ways in which this work renders me vulnerable. These are the times when I ask myself, "Is this really that important?" "Does it matter that this publication is here — that it survives?" "Why am I working so hard — who cares?"

I came to *SW* somewhat naive. Although I clearly held the vision of this publication as a powerful resource for healing in our lesbian/two spirited communities and believed I could further support this reality, I was not proficient in some of the practical skills which would have, no doubt, made my transition easier. As you may know, *SW* was to have been published by a group of us — each with our own expertise — but that fell through before I ever got started. Truly, I could not have imagined the enormous amount of time, hard work and constant focus required of me just to get my first issue out. Mostly, though, I was not clear about the condition that *SW* faced financially.

Unfortunately, my first task was to tackle Inland Book Company, our main distributor, who is not paying their bills —

unless I call them daily, and with that they continue to be six or so months behind. Their lack of commitment to pay has created a serious drain on our resources and my energy. A great deal of my time has been focused on community outreach and fundraising, part of which included the massive mailing I did back in March, explaining the financial situation that SW was in and continues to face.

My goal was to generate 400 new subscriptions but we fell way short of that. Today, we give free subscriptions to about 80 wimmin in prisons and mental institutions (worth \$1,500 per year) plus another 30 or so hardship subscriptions — this constitutes 15 percent of our subscribership — excluding educational and wimmin's institutions.

I've come to SW at a very crucial time for wimmin's publications and bookstores — some of you may have noticed your local wimmin's bookstore has disappeared — the larger chains are pushing them out. And SW may not be one of the publications that the larger chains choose to carry. It takes a lot to publish this journal. SW is in trouble — she can't continue without you. Buy a subscription for a woman who can't afford to pay. Get your friends to subscribe. Take out sustaining subscriptions.

I am honored to be caretaker of such a gift — our stories. As a Black woman, I've faced many judgments in this process. Assumptions have been made, about the direction of this journal, since I've gotten it. One assumption has been, since I am Black, perhaps SW will become a woman of color publication although no one thought that when SW was being published by wimmin who were European and Jewish it would become a European Jewish publication. Other concerns have surfaced because I am not a separatist. Some dykes question whether SW will continue to be a Lesbian only space — as though separatism and lesbianism are synonymous.

I'm 52. I've been an out-of-the-closet dyke since 1957, longer than many of the readers of this publication have been alive. When I came out the word lesbian was not being used. I've witnessed numerous transitions within our lesbian communi-

ties. I'm interested in publishing more writings by wimmin of color because I am a woman of color, our stories are important and our voices have been missing in *SW*. But likewise, there are other voices missing here — dykes who have things to say that we need to hear which can help us survive these critical times. I am concerned with bringing more diversity into *SW*

Finally, there has been so much love poured into me during these past six months. Without it, I could not have survived. I owe much to *SW*'s board, past editors and volunteers along with Elana, Ekua, Maria, Lynn, Kyos, Caryatis, Mariasiem, Heide, Jacqueline, Marianne, Gloria and all the wimmin who supported my efforts, held my hand, listened to my pain and shared my exhilaration. We, who edited this issue, came together with incredible harmony — amongst intense discussion — with a willingness to learn and feel, committed to holding a space of integrity when we didn't know if we could.

I am grateful to the wimmin who nurtured this publication before I came along. At least once or twice a week I get correspondence from wimmin who say *SW* is the only place where they feel safe. I've grown a lot through this process and learned again — there are no absolutes. I've witnessed another coming out of *SW*. Those days when I've questioned my vision have always been met with positive loving support. Again I'm asking you to support *SW* ... and yourself. This year is her 20th anniversary — make sure that she stays around for another 20 years.



We are quite proud of our first issue but submissions were way down.

Many wimmin have said to me, "I've sent my work to *SW* in the past and was rejected — they never accept my work". While it is true the publication takes on the tone of the present editor, the greatness of *SW* is she changes hands often — which means the tone also changes. Besides much needed subscriptions we need you to take that risk and submit your writings and your art. I know it can be scary. Our stories are our lives — they are precious and when they're rejected, it's hard. How-

ever, in this issue there are at least five or six first time published writers and even more who've never been published in *SW* before. This publication has survived because we've needed it to.

Because my process to becoming a writer and now editor of *SW* has been without formal teaching, it seemed the topic of language would be most appropriate for my first issue. I wanted to provide a venue to discuss the opposition we face as diverse lesbians/two spirited wimmin struggling to define our realities in a patriarchal language. Many of our structures are crumbling now. Our realities are constantly being challenged and language is the vehicle used to describe the whole scenario. This always brings to mind for me the current definition of racism and how its definition has been changed, over the years, by Webster and colleagues. Now it's inappropriately linked up with the definition of bigotry — so that people get to use terms like "reverse racism" against those of us who have been victimized. Although a racist is a bigot, the boundaries of racism — an institution — are far more vast, the effect of which is genocide.

We dedicate this first issue to the wimmin who kep' on yellin' and screamin.' We dedicate this issue to all of you who keep tellin' your stories so that we can live.

A. Miriasiem Barnes:

I came to *SW* at the time of ritual passing of the torch of editor of *SW*, from Elana Dykewomon and family to Akiba Onada-Sikwoia and family.

I had no idea what saying I'll do my part would really mean.

I soon found myself sitting with a group of women reading and re-reading writings from women all over the world. I felt and feel very honored to be given such a gift, such trust these many writers have in our collective process.

As a group we were multi-cultural, multi-class and multi-abled women who identified as lesbians, looking at how we use language and how our sisters world wide view and use language.

At times this process was truly overwhelming and yet we all hung in there. We shared laughter and tears, learned to voice our own fears and projections. Here we experienced a first hand

account of the usage of language.

This challenge was very rewarding for me as a writer and a human being.

The deeper process of thinking then speaking became very clear.

I've never edited anything — not even my own words before SW.

I didn't just stop at the editing collective. I chose to move on into the fundraising realm and worked closely with Akiba and SW's Board of Directors to celebrate SW's 20th year and to raise funds for her to move forward. This process really put a megawatt light on in my head.

In neon light I got how we as a community do or don't support our own.

SW was born of women, not just women but of lesbians for lesbians. She has always been women headed and woman steered. Twenty years ago a marriage took place between the lesbian community and the literary community.

As a community we must embrace SW to secure her survival. I've heard so many times: "We can only get back what we've put in!" So far I've found this statement to be true. We as a community must keep writing, keep submitting our writings and visual arts. If we live in the area where SW is housed offer your support. If SW is missing from your favorite bookstore request that they order and stock it. Please tell a friend to subscribe.

If SW does not meet your literary needs, write us with your feedback and suggestions. Don't just walk away. Mobilize, you could be surprised at what you might find.

SW can only be what we as a community would have it to be. As she grows so do her needs.

We as a community have been given a wonderful gift — let us all embrace her and keep her strong. Let us feed her with not only our gifts of creativity but with the necessities to survive in a materialistic, patriarchal society — shelter, upgraded office equipment (printer and fax), caretakers and monetary support.

By our silence and immobility we are saying we have no stories to tell the next generation of lesbians and we are willing to watch SW die a slow and painful death. Let's keep her alive and strong.

Kyos Featherdancing:

My name is Kyos Featherdancing. My friends call me Koyote. I am Caddo, Choctaw, French Canadian, Irish, Russian and German. I live close to my Caddo heritage. I am Two-Spirited, of two types of wimmin. A wild-dog-dyke and a Spirit healer medicine woman.

When Akiba asked me to be one of the publishers of Sinister Wisdom I got very excited but as time went on I realized I was not qualified to keep up with the pace of SW and Akiba. I'm a slow paced learner with some things. In time I had to decline but I remained on the board and decided to be part of the editorial committee.

Editing caused me to realize how judgmental I am of other people's opinions. Editing also made me look at the reason why I stopped reading. It was hard reading about so many different opinions because I have not read much for a long time, for fear of taking in other people's ways of thinking. This experience caused me to remember my childhood when I would come home from school crying to my grandmother about the lies that the history books told about Indun people. My grandmother told me then I didn't have to read history books if I didn't want to. She said, "Whatever you take in through your eyes you take into your heart."

As a child I had only two choices: read lies and lose my soul or close the book and survive — I closed the book.

Now, as an adult, I have many choices. I've made up my mind — I have my own truth and I cannot be swayed.

In conclusion, my prayer for SW while it is with Akiba is that it do more than just exist. That it be diverse, successful and abundant with new submissions and subscribers.

Upcoming Issues

#57 Healing — out in November — don't miss it.

#58 Open — a great time to send in any work in any style!
Deadline: October 1, 1995.

#59 Sexuality — What does this term mean to us as lesbians, dykes, two-spirited and queer wimmin? Clearly there have been, within the past decade, new definitions of sexuality. Quite often I've been angered by the ways in which my lesbianism is defined only in terms of what someone thinks might be my sexuality. That which gets the most attention tends to be the way in which lesbian sexuality is defined. Many closeted issues of the past that affect our notions about and experiences of sexuality are now the everyday topics such as sexual abuse, AIDS, prostitution, bisexuality, transexuality, celibacy, S&M, age, ableism and so on.

At 52, I am very aware that my expectations as a sexual being are quite different than they were at 32 and 22 — what about you? I would like to see serious discussion about our beliefs, experiences and realities about sexuality. Twenty years ago, stores like Good Vibrations were places where dirty old men went to and dildos were "pieces" that only butches carried and quietly bragged about. Today that is different. And how do those definitions of "roles" effect our beliefs about sexuality today? There are generations of us that have grown up in this "sexual revolution" while others of us have watched it come. How are we bridging the gaps between realities? What kind of language are we creating to speak to one another about our differences, about our experiences?

I experience great separation in our communities concerning these issues, we all have our camps and our own good reasons for being there but in my opinion we are not surviving, we are becoming more and more isolated.

This is not an issue on *Erotica* although it could be.

Deadline: February 1, 1996

Future Issues — we would like to do an issue on dykes in prison. I envision this issue to contain the writings of wimmin inside and to be edited by wimmin who have been inside. This could be very challenging because of the editorial process involved. However, there may be someone out there who has access to a group or groups — if so we would appreciate your support and wisdom. Those of you who are inside please feel free to share your ideas about how we can make this happen. It takes about a year to get guest editors lined up, contracts made and all of the kinks worked out. I've received several letters requesting this. The growing number of requests for subscriptions from wimmin in prison tells me it is time.

sexuality. I am not sure if the most attention should be given to the
of the past that should be in mind of old and young alike.
sexuality and the everyday life of the people who live in
WALDO PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT, TRANS-VALE, SOUTH AFRICA
ago. We have had to go to a great deal of trouble to
of the past. I am not sure if the most attention should be given to the
being the point of view of the people who live in the past.
knowing that it is not a simple matter of reading about our
but the people who live in the past are not really the same as
the people who live in the past. I am not sure if the most attention
men want to and did not want "pieces" that only give a distorted
and clearly defined about "today" but in different ways do
those definitions of "today" that are not really about reality
and the "today" of the past. I am not sure if the most attention
and the "today" of the past. I am not sure if the most attention
"today" of the past. I am not sure if the most attention should be
from the "today" of the past. I am not sure if the most attention
language and we are not really the same as the people who live
different ways. I am not sure if the most attention should be
I experience great enjoyment in our community, concern-
ing these issues, we all have our camps and our own good
reason, but being there but in my opinion we are not surviving.
we are becoming more and more isolated.
This is not to say we are not isolated although it could be
Death: February 1, 1990

Akiba Onada-Sikwoia

Giants

I have been
in the company of giants
your sight giving reason
to my insanity
i've used your stories
to journey into
and heal the crevices of my life

limbs far reaching
you've stood tall in the murk
being your own selves
not to be mistaken for idols
or martyrs
but human beings
wimmin
piercing into
the shifting forms
of shadows
tearing down
and re-telling
the myths of living

i have heard your names
spoken on street corners
in whispers and screams
of agony
of joy

your words
magnificent footprints
have carved rivers
through mountains
for me to swim
my life

i honor you
i honor us
teachers
visionaries
keepers of the way
giving voice
to the ancient ones
yelling hoarse
through the mist
riding the wind
while running
crawling
standing
sitting
lying down
dying
going
staying
coming back
again and again
to tell our truths

i honor
the sacred circle of voice
where we've dug
into our pain
rage
compassion
laughter
our hearts
where vision was fragmented
upheaval a consequence
and healing
an inevitable result
of the utterance
the telling of stories
no one ever
wanted to hear



Margarita Benitez

Born August 21, 1947 — Died June 8, 1994

Diane Doumit

Women on the Edge of a Very Steep Cliff Chapter Seven: Punctuated with a TinyDot

There is a book. There are pages glued to the binding of this book. There are horizontal lines across the pages of this book. There are names inked across those lines. And there are other names not inked across those lines.

The other names are the ones which have been swallowed down at the jail. And if they swallow your name, no one will know that you are there. And if no one knows that you are there, they could do anything to you. They could do everything to you. Anything. Everything. And when they are done, they could make up anything about what happened in there. They could make up everything.

They are in charge of the pens, the paper, the story. They are in charge of the alphabet. They are in charge of the way letters connect to form words. They are in charge of the spaces between the words. They are in charge of the phrases, sentences, paragraphs. They are in charge of the interpretation. They are in charge of your life. And they are also in charge of your death.

At any given moment, they can punctuate your life with a period. A tiny dot. They can erase all the commas, colons, semicolons, dittos. They can erase it all with just a tiny dot.

At any given moment, you can cease to exist. And no one will know that you are no longer there. No one will know that you are no longer anywhere. If they swallow your name, no one will know that you are no longer anywhere.

They are in charge of the pens, the paper, the story. They are in charge of the prologue. They are in charge of the epitaph. They are in charge of all the chapters which are written between the two. Between the beginning and the end. And they could make up anything about what happened between the two. They could make up everything.

Five or six women and me.

Thick, sliding door. Loud hollow echo. Too high, too small window. Other window too large

The sound of a woman's bloodcurdling scream.

The women in the photos laughing at the man's jokes about women.

The woman with the soiled black shoes and the very soiled hands.

The women sitting upon chairs beside a table in a restaurant eating breakfast and swallowing names.

The bullies guised as healers.

The arthritic, wrinkling, graying, balding flower children.

Women on the edge of a very steep cliff

All about to fall.

About to fall. To be punctuated with a period. A tiny dot. Erased. Swallowed. Buried beneath a pile of wilted petals. A tombstone not engraved with a name.

They are in charge of the pens, the paper, the story. They are in charge of the alphabet. They are in charge of the way letters connect to form words. They are in charge of the spaces between the words. They are in charge of the phrases, sentences, paragraphs. They are in charge of the interpretation. They are in charge of your life. And they are also in charge of your death.

Another jail cell. No pen. No paper. No prologue. No epigraph. No chapters between the two. No beginning. No end. No name inked across the lines of their book.

No one will know that you were there. No one will know that you are no longer anywhere. If they swallow your name. If they punctuate your life with a period. With a tiny dot. No one will know that you are no longer anywhere.

Diane Doumit

Women on the Edge of a Very Steep Cliff Chapter Eight: Twisted

Things are very twisted here. Things are very, very twisted here. In this very white city. In this courtroom. Things are twisted.

Things are in knots. Things are in nooses. One noose is around our necks. And if we tell them truth, they will tighten that noose and hang us. While if we tell them lies, they will loosen that noose and free us.

Truth is the electronic lock. Thick, sliding door. Loud, hollow echo. Too high, too small window. Other window too large.

Lies are the keys. Are the Sun. Abbey's Arches. Lies are the again and again.

Things are very twisted here. Things are very, very twisted here. In this very white city. In this courtroom. Things are twisted.

The stripes on the flag are black and white. They are not red and white. They are black and white.

The stars on the flag are black and white too. They are not blue and white. They are black and white.

And the white is where the black should be. While the black is where the white should be. And nothing, nothing at all is gray.

There are watches on the wrists of the very white. There are handcuffs on the wrists of the women. The arms on the watches are ticking counterclockwise. The handcuffs do not tick at all.

The women swear to tell the truth with their right hands. They do not swear with their left hands. They swear with their right hands. The others swear to tell the truth with their left hands. They do not swear with their right hands. They swear with their left hands.

And left is where right should be. While right is where left should be. And nothing, nothing at all is gray.

The words are coming out of the lawyers' mouths backwards. They are not coming out of their mouths forwards. They are coming out of their mouths backwards.

The juror is handing the verdict to the judge. He is handing the verdict to the judge with his left hand. He is not handing the verdict to the judge with his right hand. He is handing the verdict to the judge with his left hand.

The judge is reading the verdict that the juror handed to him. The judge is reading the verdict with his left eye. He is not reading the verdict with his right eye. He is reading the verdict with his left eye.

The justice scale is tipping to the left. It is not tipping to the right. It is tipping to the left.

And left is where right should be. While right is where left should be. And nothing, nothing at all is balanced.

The courtroom is swaying back-and-forth. It is swaying back-and-forth on the edge of the truth. It is swaying back-and-forth on the edge of the lies. It is swaying back-and-forth on the edge of the black. It is swaying back-and-forth on the edge of the white. It is swaying back-and-forth counterclockwise. It is swaying back-and-forth on the edge of the right. It is swaying back-and-forth on the edge of the left. It is swaying back-and-forth backwards. It is swaying back-and-forth forwards. It is swaying back-and-forth in reverse. It is swaying back-and-forth on the edge of a very steep cliff.

The women are hanging upside down. The rules are hanging downside up.

The very, very white are in charge of the way things hang here. The man who stinks of alcohol, shouts orders, and tells jokes about women is in charge of the way things hang here. The women in the photos laughing at the man's jokes about women are in charge of the way things hang here. The woman with the soiled black shoes and the very soiled hands is in charge of the way things hang here. The women sitting on chairs beside a table in a restaurant eating breakfast and swal-

lowing names are in charge of the way things hang here. The soldiers on the other side of the door are in charge of the way things hang here. The bullies guised as healers are in charge of the way things hang here. The arthritic, wrinkling, graying, balding flower children are in charge of the way things hang here. And all the arms on all their watches are ticking counterclockwise.

Things are very twisted here. Things are very, very twisted here. In this very white city. In this courtroom. Things are twisted.

Things are in knots. Things are in nooses. One noose is around our necks. And if we tell them truth, they will hang us rightside up. While if we tell them lies, they will loosen that noose and free us. If we tell them lies, they will free us rightside down.

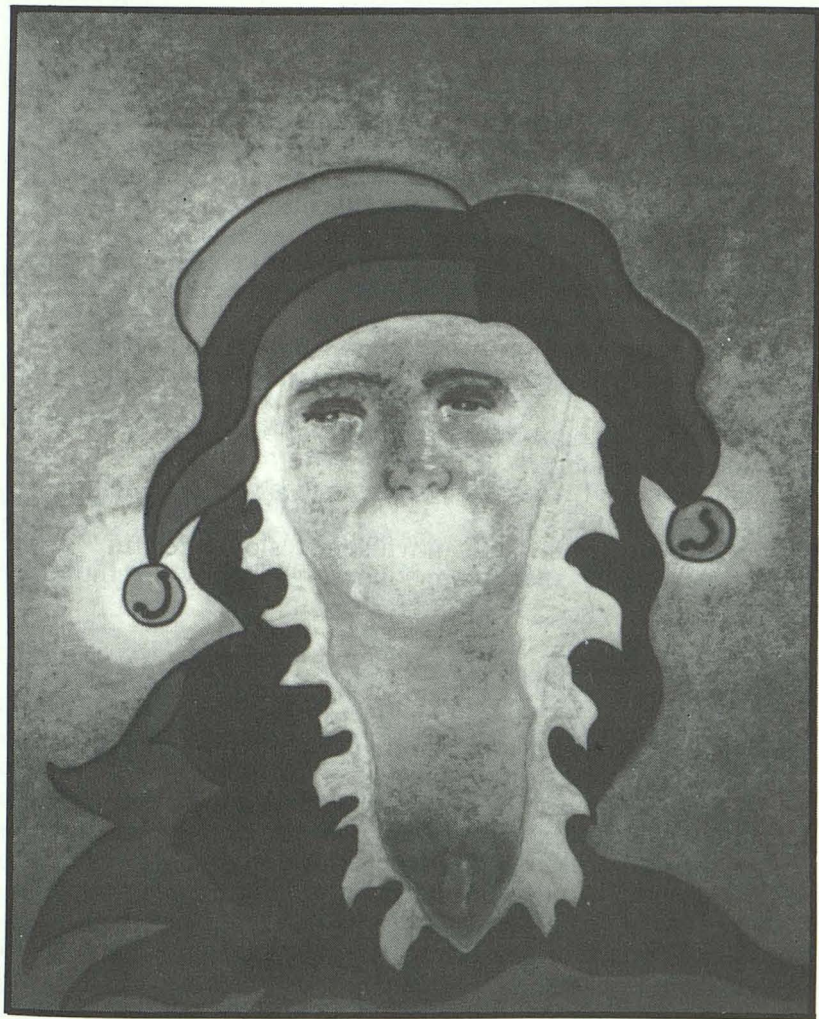
Truth is the electronic lock. Thick, sliding door. Loud, hollow echo. Too high, too small window. Other window too large.

Lies are the keys. Are the Sun. Abbey's Arches. Lies are the again and again.

Things are very twisted here. Things are very, very twisted here. In this very white city. In this courtroom. Things are twisted.

Everything is hanging here. Everything is hanging downside up. Everything is hanging upside down. Everything is hanging on the edge of a very steep cliff.

There are watches on the wrists of the very white. There are handcuffs on the wrists of the women. The arms on the watches are ticking counterclockwise. The handcuffs do not tick at all.



Revived
Julie A. Lawton

JBWiley

I dream

I dream I be an Island

Me hair so wispy white eh too fine to pull comb true.

Me neck n shoulders feather-green mango wid lime
cassava n olive fans oh coconut n palm tree

Me breasts smooth an roun wid bark fi purple, black, red,
gold, orange, green, yellowgrey, silkcotton, turpentine
an soapwood wash green wid me dew.

Me moun n hips bush n forest — catch-and-keep, monkey-don-
climb n tamarin tree — knotty knobby n smooth hard ...
protectin de sweet fruitness inside.

Coral grow ova me toes n feet ... sugarsand ring wid black
rock trowed out feh me Mumas heart when she cry long
time go.

Her waters mix wid mine soft turquoise green n
mid-night blue.

Whelk n abeng n turtle play tween me toes wid more fishes
den I kyan count.

Stimes me waters sigh an whisper ... slow n restful

Oder time dem be crashin n rockin me — like fi wash sinting
way.

I dreamed I be violated.

By lil bwoy-mens wid nuh hearts n empty eyes.

Dem come fi me pan me waters like tuh drop from de sun ...

First one, den noder one, den tree, den many — like de fishes
roun me toes.

Dem be tired from dem journey n feed n res dem.

Dem play like children in me bounty, dem sey me praises,
dem quick fe mek friends wid picknie dem.

Dem mouths is full fe promises.

But ... *Cho!* dem lie tuh me!

Speakin outta side of dem mout ... trick picknie dem ... saying dis
an duhin sinting doda.

Dem tek n tek n nuten gi me back!

Dem use n beat picknie dem.

Dem slash n burn me breasts n mound, crack open de smooth
n hart n teef me sweetness den trow eh way on de ground.

Dem dirty ... dem mean.

Lil bwoy-mens builds dem houses ... pan me breasts ... me tighs
... me shoulders.

Dem trow up high walls all roun ... nobody kyan see dem, or talk
wid dem if need help
or sinting.

Lil bwoy-mens chase de birds away, strippin me tuh de sun till
me blood, me dews, nuh run nuh moe.

Salt blind me eyes ... dem wake n ol membry.

Ah cry wid de hurts but dem don lissen.

Me waters rise up n howls wid me Mummas voice.

Me waters crash n poun n smash dem houses dem high walls
down.

Little bwoy-mens cry n curse me ...

Me skin grow back where dem burn me. Mango n cassava grow
n crush de stone

fe dem houses. Cottonwood push her roots n crack deh
roads n factories. Picknies stop wukin n gwane home.

Lil bwoy-mens don see nuttin wid dem empty eyes.

Dem los sinting me kyan nuh gi back fi dem.

But Ah me be Muma's chile,

Wid me Mummas heart n me Mummas voice.

Ah dream ah be an Island long afta dem be gwane.

Glossary

abeng, conch

ave, have

deh, be

eh, it

gwane, gone

mek, make, allow, let

nuh, no

ova, over

picknie, (my) child, children

sinting, something

n, and

bwoy, boy

eberyting, everything

fi, feh, tu, to, of

kyan, can

mout, mouth

oh, of

pan, upon

seh, say

teef, to steal, thief

*This poem is dedicated to the womyn and men of the Caribbean Islands and to Audre Lorde. Many thanks to Opal Palmer Adisa for *Bake Face and other Guava Stories*, Marion Gerlind, Abimbola Adama and our writers group for listening to this *many* times.

Elisa Lucero

Escucha! La Voz de Aztlan

For years now I've been imagining myself composing an essay so profound and insightful about the subject of language that it would relieve me of all my angst and suffering. To finally put on paper the joy and empowerment and the agony and embarrassment.

Yo soy Chicana. Born and raised in Aztlan, still living in Aztlan, with a vision of reclaiming our lands. My indigenous roots are in New Mexico and Colorado. With one exception, mi Abuelita (mom's mom), she is from Mexico City. Her people are from Teotihuacan. It is known for the great pyramids that our ancestors built for us to remember them by. She is from the Anáhuac people and speaks Nahuatl.

Being raised in the Chicano movement in Denver I was immersed in pride for my culture. To call oneself Chicano is to say that you are Mexican-American who identifies with your Indian roots. It is a militant term that, in essence, reclaims our indigenous roots to this land — Aztlan. "The borders crossed us, we didn't cross the borders."

My Father's family came from the San Luis Valley in Southern Colorado and Northern New Mexico areas. We've lived on this land since its beginnings and have adapted to many changes and have struggled to hold on to our traditional ways. We are survivors of Spanish colonialism and continue to survive in Anglo-American colonialism.

Chicanos look at the Conquistadores with pain and anger. Defiantly accepting our Spanish forefathers who raped and slaughtered our Grandmothers. Therefore creating a new Raza. The Spaniards were a brutal people, they enslaved the Indians, forced their religion on them, wiped out millions of nonbelievers and exterminated them with their diseases. It's sobering to think of this dichotomy that runs through our veins. In general, we Chicanos don't take much pride in our Spanish ancestry.

Ironically, there is one thing that the Spaniards brought with them that to this day, "Indian identified Chicanos" embrace with pride and ownership. This is the Spanish language. It is said that losing one's language is the first step toward genocide. The Spaniards were extremely successful in dividing and conquering the people of this land. From the first encounter, Spaniard to Indian (Cortez y Montezuma), language was the key element. Little did the Indian woman who translated these insidious meetings know that her name would be dragged through the cosmic gutters. Malinche the translator/traitor, has become more than a person or a name. Her name is used as a curse or expletive. It is a word that is spit at someone who lies or deceives.

Today the Spaniards' language has come full circle. We Chicanos take much pride in speaking Spanish and to some extent even ridicule those who don't speak it. What status would Malinche have today? We now embrace the language that Malinche has been brutally stigmatized for using. However, there is more history to Malinche than just being a translator. She was also said to have been Cortez's lover, or was it slave?

Knowing this history and seeing this dichotomy, I can still understand the importance of claiming the Spaniards' language and teaching it to our children. Perhaps it's one way of showing our strength and advantages. Even though it is the language of our conquerors, it identifies our cultural heritage and we can take pride in its beauty. For us there is no other language that can speak of love and pain with such a flowing humbleness and dignity. A language that can touch your heart in such a way that it enables you capable of speaking to God in song and prayer.

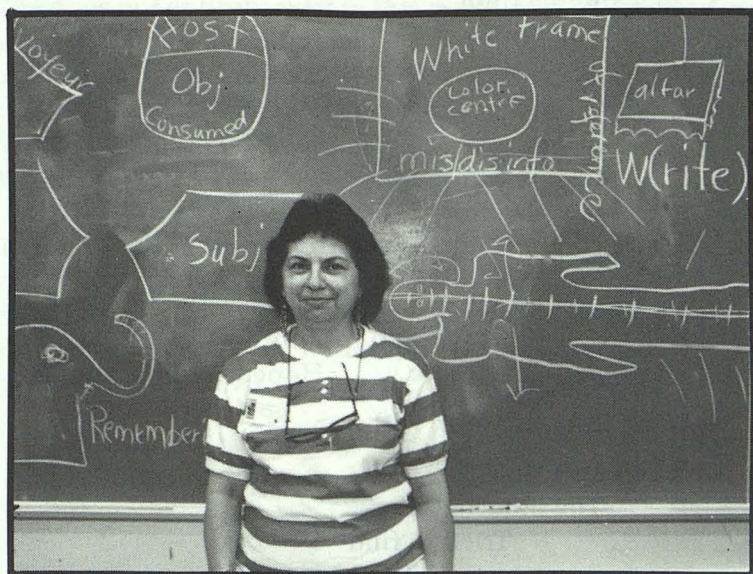
Many of us Chicanos in Denver do not speak Spanish. I don't speak Spanish. Sure I can speak a little. There have been times in my life when Spanish has come easy to me and sometimes I can't understand a thing. It's perhaps, the most painful thing in my life. It's a delicate and embarrassing subject for me, a wound that runs very deep. It runs deep because losing one's

language is part of the pathology of genocide. It divides our people and in many ways it separates us from the beauties of our culture. It can be a vicious circle.

Growing up, I never felt guilty or ashamed for not speaking Spanish. I was much more inclined to speak my broken Spanish without any embarrassment. Of course I felt sad and frustrated, but I never felt guilty or ashamed until I got older. I've allowed myself to feel this way because of other people's expectations. I know, I look like I should speak Spanish. People have told me that I have no right to speak of pride for my culture when I don't even speak my language.

The Spanish language identifies our culture and has transformed itself into a beautiful gift that our Spaniard ancestors have given us. Even though, we Chicanos, have tried so hard to resist our identification with the Spanish, perhaps their language and the desire to maintain this language will help us acknowledge the Spaniards blood that runs through our veins. The ancestors of my Mother's Father were among the first Spaniards to ride into the Rio Grande Valley at Bernalillo, New Mexico in the 1600's.

I know that the Spanish language will not die at my hands. It will be carried on through me to my children. I place it as one of the most important tasks on my life's agenda. Because, even though it was easier for my parents to speak English in my home they still taught me about cultural pride and roots. I lived my culture and was taught to honor my ancestors. It is important for our survival to remember our people's ways. It enhances all humanity.



Gloria Anzaldúa in front of her drawings presenting her book:
Borderlands at the Montreal Feminist Book Fair, 1988.
 Cathy Cade, 1988

Writers who read their work aloud know the issue of translating the written word into the spoken word. To get a book of photographs published, I must translate the photographs into words so word-people feel comfortable. Imagine my great pleasure experiencing Gloria Anzaldúa presenting her book *Borderlands* — in which the issue of multiple languages is central — by talking, reading and drawing about the concepts in her book. With great energy, Gloria treated the audience to spoken words, printed page, and images as a continuous revelation.

Jennifer Tucker

Growing Up in America

Once upon a time,
The innocent one
Climbed mountains
Traversed deserts
Sailed sea upon sea

But she forgot to pack her bags

Once upon a time,
The innocent one
Asked for help
Sought forgiveness
Hoped for liberations

But she forgot to look within

Once upon a time,
The innocent one
Tried to find
Tried to know
Tried to learn

But she never quite understood

The innocent one
is swallowed
The innocent one
is digested
The innocent one
is excreted
In our not so innocent land.

Our generation, the post "X" generation, has played spectator to the attempts of American mediator, and has seen how America strives to "come clean," and look innocent after intervening in foreign affairs.

I wrote this poem in lieu of the times America has spent playing the supernatural hero. But we have only played a role that does not entirely exist in this real world. Politicians promise new policies tempting under noses, but when a further step is taken back, one might agree that America needs to "get out," and smell the fresh air. Not only for cutting expenditures, but for the purpose of our country's morale, do we need to take a more serious look at foreign affairs.

In my poem, I speak of the "innocent one" who strives for feat, but winds up in a cyclical path to her fate. The stanzas speak many languages, in that there is no "one" meaning to the words. The variety of meanings that this poem has for me alone, is endless. If you notice the parallels between the "innocent one," and America, you are on the right track.

Margaret M. Pavel

A Seed

“A seed, Margieschek, what you are holding in your hands is a seed.”

I don't remember if my grandmother said those exact words or just transmitted them ... Czech accent, brown arms pulling me close to her plaid apron ... She communicated in sign language and through touch, no sounds needed ... kneading my tiny hands in her large hands and placing the seed firmly and gently, just so, in the center like the poppyseed filling tucked in the middle of the kolatchke rolls.

Especially in her garden, my grandmother spoke so clearly with little English, without words really. “Too crowded, more water, more air” as she did the thing needed, with reverence ... thinning carrots.

She knew lots of practical things about providing the conditions which support life ... growing food, making clothing, staying warm, getting well, and repairing anything. And in her spell the world spoke ... carrots, dill, everything unfurled and spoke back ... no English needed, and meant what it said.

Karla Nitchmann

Bubbe's Reflections

Lottie's gone to Florida
 Now who should I speak Yiddish with?

What Jew believes in God?
 So not even will I go to synagogue
 to speak Hebrew.

How is it I should survive
 the stench and deaths of the camps
 and
 neither, my children, nor my grandchildren
 can talk with me?

Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian even,
 but English,
 and English only.

I ask
 what survival is this,
 that we gave them?

Who would have told,
 you, my eldest daughter,
 wouldn't even be literate
 in your one American English language.

Carol, your daughter came to visit,
 she called me Bubbe.
 Oh Lottie look,
 she speaks Yiddish!
 Oh a joy it was,
 a fleeting moment, though I knew.

I sat her down, I
 told her who she was,
 where it was she came from.
 Who it was that survived, so few.
 Who it was that died, so many.

The tears streamed down her face,
 the loss filled her eyes,
 a deeper loss than her youngness
 could know.

How should I tell her,
 our language,
 it holds so much!
 How could she know, when we didn't tell?
 Our language is our culture,
 our religion is our language.
 The way we Jews talk,
 the way we move,
 are the language.
 She should know.
 Our humor is in our language.
 Our ancestors are in the language,
 Our secrets, they are in the language.

Lottie's gone to Florida,
 New York seems so bare.
 Without you here, next door,
 just a Shalom Chavera through the walls away.

You and me, Lottie,
 We didn't have to share,
 to remember, there was
 an unspoken knowing of the past horrors,
 always there, behind our eyes,
 our presence soothing to each other.
 Our aliveness a gift, a burden,
 our Yiddish a delightful embrace.

But the young,
 now they want to know the past,
 Why I ask?
 now they want to go back,
 How I ask?

Such a price we paid,
 for their lives,
 for their assimilation,

their education,
their success.

Why should we drag it up now?
The smell of dead flesh,
how should we ever express it?
In English?

My granddaughter, she calls me regular,
every so often.

And gone are my old questions,
Are you in School?

Who are you dating? Is he Jewish?

When are you getting married?

Is your sister still divorcing her husband?

Oh, that's right, you're not Kosher are you?

Now only,

Are you happy?

Are you eating?

Her yeses, they are enough.

If I had it to do over,

I tell her,

I'd live more like her,

free! Without a man,

even with a child,

without a man.

She called to tell me of my great grandson.

Another non-Jewish father, I knew

I said nothing.

She named him Izayah,

a nice strong Jewish name,

and I was so pleased.

I sent a gift,

I knew she'd be happy.

Always searching for approval.

It's the Jewish way.

When will we be good enough again,

When will God create miracles for us once more?

When will we love ourselves?
How is it we should trust this world?
When will we accept God,
When can we go home?
When will we speak our own language,
tell our children?
How is it we should live?

My granddaughter called again,
she's with her sister in Jersey.
How much your sister reminds me of my Carol,
Her skin darker, her hair the same thickness,
her features so Jewish. I call her Carol,
and when I can,
I see the disappointment in her eyes.
She wants to be herself,
and so she doesn't call,
she doesn't visit anymore,
like you.

Your grandfather died I tell you.
I just don't understand him, the son of a bitch,
everyone is walking on top of the earth,
and he lays below it.
You know no one cusses like a Jewish woman.

How should I stay in New York now?
How could I ride the bus alone,
my eyes fail me,
the bastard doctor said the operation would
remove the cataracts.
He lied.

You don't know I know,
how you believe me, a hypochondriac.
My failing health, merely an exaggeration.
It's the camp's fault, our lack of breath,
the breaking down of our spirit.

Lottie's gone, your grandfather died,
you'll return to California.

Maybe I should follow Lottie to Florida,
we'll speak Yiddish together,
and silently share our secrets,
remember our relatives.

* Bubbe - Grandmother

** Shalom Chavera - A warm greeting for a close
woman friend



Crone with Child's Reflection
Carol A. Johnson

Leatha Jones

In the Kitchen

The kitchen was warm with laughter and the smell of sweet hickory smoke. The yellow chair, hard, weak, from supporting the weight of my one hundred pound body. Seem's like I ben' sittin' here all morning watching the lonely strands of my hair fall to my knees. I always be whimpering and whining too much, my Aunt Martha said as she stood nearby checking on my cousin little Michael. The smell of burnt hair stings my nose as another tear rolls down my round cheeks. I can feel my head being jerked to and fro' like when I gotta get my doll Temeka to sit straight when I'm doing her hair cause she forever hard headed. Ouch.

The blue green grease caked around the edge of my hairline makes me even sweat more. I look like the before and after permanent relaxer pictures in Jet. One side beautiful, tamed, silky, straight, black. The other nappy, standing straight up like some kinda wild peas'y headed jungle African. Ouch. Can't curse. Just gotta keep sitting still.

It wouldn't be so bad if my mother didn't have to put so much of that grease. Scorching my scalp with the punishment of nappy hair. My cousin Lay Lay got good hair. The kind that only need water and grease to keep straight. It's shiny and red. But kinda orange like fall. She wears it in curls that lay up against her light skin, making her look like a model. My plump little sister over there grinning cause she done for the day. Pressed, curled, and painted with my Aunt Martha's kiss on her cheek. She teasing me Mommy. Tell her to stop. Laughing at my skinny dark legs all cramped up. Ouch, that ain't funny. She over there with her new birthday dress on. Pink trimmed with yellow edging gazing out of humorous soft brown eyes, lashes so long when she grow up she won't need no mascara. She won't have ta stare squinting into the mirror to paint a sparse lash like my cousin Riva. Both of them have that glow of

sun baked peanut butter cookie skin tone. Look so pretty. Ya, I'm jealous.

Everyone likes my sister better 'cause her brown skin wraps her so deliciously that mine can never get that kinda praise. But there is one thing wrong with 'er. Uncle Jerry says "She need to stop eating so damn much. Just look at how fat she getting" he say. "No man want no big ole fat woman." I felt sorry for her that day, but I laughed too. I didn't want to get teased next. She still my only sister even if she is fat. Who care about no ole man anyway. She just eight years old. I don't like him much no way. He always drunk, breathing all in my face, and he got the nerve to talk about somebody. Don't treat the woman he got good so any man I'm gonna want better not be one like him.

It's so hot in this kitchen from the blue flame under that hot comb on the stove to my Uncle Big Michael on my father's side, back in the yard tending to his grubb'n barbecue. Ouch. I see everybody eating 'cept me. I'm hungry too. "But ya still nappy headed. Your Mama ain't even really started working on your head yet!" my cousin Lay Lay snapped. I brace myself for the next coming of the hot comb. Now orange from retaining all that heat. My mother waves it in the air to try to cool it down. Clouds of smoke trail behind, I'm sure some curious flies are suffocating in the process. I relax. I cough. Look up again to see it coming. My eyes all closed up so tight, only three tears manage to get through. Ouch. "My butt hurt. Can I go get some Kool-Aid?" "Child, I ain't even hit the back of your kitchen yet" Ouch. She mad at me. I can tell the way she drawn that sentence out like I den asked her to let me go out 'en play with those filthy neighbor kids.

My cousin little Michael takes pity on me and gives a contemplating look in my direction. I bet he glad he ain't no girl. I saw him coming towards me, so I sheltered my heart from another joke but instead while smoothing his hand over his naked scalp, he offered me a small taste of some of his Kool-Aid. "At least the front's done" he said as he sauntered out the back door to be with his father. Ouch. I bet he going to get some of those ribs. Ouch Mama.

The grease smells clean and fresh. Can't swang it yet, Momma'll get mad. Mad like the time we wanting to go swimming. Me and my sister. But only Daddy takes us swimming so we got into the tub of warm water with our bathing suits on. She never quite liked for us to go swimming. When we go swimm'n at the Albany indoor pool we be the only Blacks. I hadn't thought 'bout it before. About how we use to come back soggy and wet with hair that went back. It just reminded me that our hair has to be straight all the time. Even when we go swimm'n.

Our father don't live with us no more. I don't know why. I don't even remember when he left. They so secretive. All I know is he lives with Grandma now. One day on a car ride I asked him, "When you coming home?" He said "If your Mama let me I will." I'm smart for my age and I know Mama didn't want him back so I wondered why he holding on to lost hope. I miss him. Ouch. "Leatha, what you staring at?" my cousin Lay Lay asked, shocking me back to reality. "Noth'n" I say. Nobody likes him. Daddy. Nobody but me. So I don't say I'm thinking about him. He is short, got short hair, and a short imagination. But long cash. He buys us stuff all the time. 'Seem like anything we want. Some people say that's whats wrong with us now. Ouch.

I hope I will be done soon. I always like to toss my hair before she puts those ponytails in it. What's equally bad is when I get my hair corn rolled and braided by Lay Lay. Her bony fingers pull at the few strands of hair I have left into designs on my head. I wear my hair in plaits my Grandpa calls them, to school everyday in blue, yellow, red and green rubber bands. Sometimes my Mama lets me pick what kinda style I want. But she won't let me wear it down in the back. Ouch. Say it look too grown. I wonder how she gonna put it today.

At school all the people who look like me sit in the back. No I don't be act'n a fool at school. None of us do. All the white kids sit in the front. I guess 'cause that old knarled up white woman wanna be close to her kind. She be up there talking to us like we ain't got not sense. I know. My Mama's a school teacher. Anyway,

Mrs. Keller got brown hair rolled up in a bun like Old Mrs. Hubbard. Her ole wrinkled up face don't smile at us. Her clothes look like they from, ah, ah, ah, ah, 1970. She probably can write a book about the Civil War she so old. Plus ugly. I don't talk much in school 'cause she never calls on us anyway. We practice our letters on grey lined dotted paper. I already know how to write my name. Thank You.

There is one girl, I can't stand in class. Caroline. She lives in the hills. And so does all her friends. Mrs. Keller would ask her to go get her mail out the box outside. Well, I don't know if it was mail 'cause Mrs. Keller never asked me or anybody else Black to run her special errands for her. I also don't like Rebecca, Emily, Emma, Jennifer, the other Emma, Rachel, Heather, Simone, and Nina. I don't need to tell you their last names 'cause it seems they all sprang out of the same thin blond haired rich white woman in the Berkeley Hills. Mrs. Keller loved them though. No I was never friends with any of them. Everyday I wait for one of the Black kids names to be called to escape. But no. While we practicing the shape of the alphabet, those white kids be learning something else. Ouch. This starting to get me mad. I wish I could cuss out loud 'cause if I could, I would shout, — "Damn I hate those white girls." All they got to do is swing their long blond hair and they get an A. But even when my hair pressed and curled, it don't swing like that woman on the commercial.

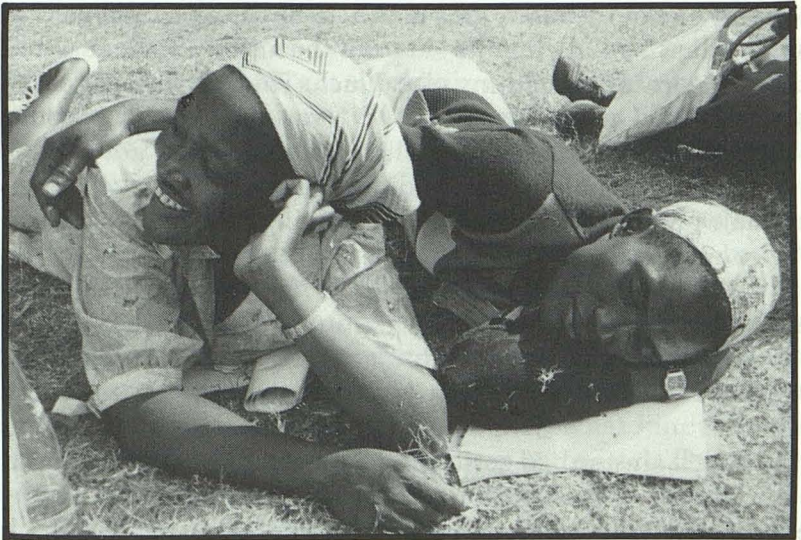
I don't know why I get treated so bad 'cause of the way I look. Once in the bath when I was young. I was six then. I tried to see if the black would rub off my skin but it wouldn't. I scrubbed so hard some skin came off though. 'Cause I saw blood.

Now, it ain't so bad getting my hair done. I can do more stuff with my hair than Caroline or any white girl named Simone ever could. I can braid, put it into ponytails, curl it, or wear it down. I know I can't wear it down now 'cause of Mama but when I get old I will.

The touch of the hot comb on my small ears wakes me up. I start to cry. Aunt Martha comes over to me, with a breath

smelling of grown folks drank, and kisses me on the cheek. She fussing at my Mother whose arms are tired. Oh no, I think Aunt Martha going to do the rest of my hair. She more brutal than my Mother. Well, I know I best be still now. I touch the burned wrinkly black skin near my neck where she burned me the last time she did my hair. Oh, I wish I could take off my head and lay it on the table so they can just fix my hair while I go outside to play with my cousin little Michael. I wish I could. That would be awesome. Or to be able to peel off my scalp like a wig and let them tangle with it, so I can run wild like a boy.

"Leatha, I'm done with you." "You can get up now," my Mother lulled me out of my daydreaming. "I'm done now."



Untitled
Julia Youngblood

Pola

The Kitchen Sink

hot water, wooden
spoons, pots, pans
dishes, cords
knives, hangers
hands, hairbrushes
fly swatters, feet
brooms, eyes, forks
little red wagon
handles, cigarettes
fishing poles, green
limbs, weathered
boards, fingers
tongues
belts, bottles, dicks
good tools to break
fragile spirits.

Sauda Burch

Like That, Like That, Like That That There: Art, Language and Culture; an interview with Fan Warren

I walk into the Oakland studio Fan shares with her partner and sister artist Celia Rodriguez, and Celia's granddaughter Camie. I have known Fan since we both lived in Chicago, but this is the first time we have talked about her art. Fan is sitting in a chair against a drawing/painting of a slave ship, casually putting on her shoes. She stands and walks toward me, smiling, her stride characteristic of a woman who is always on the verge of doing something, or needing something to do, torso forward, confident. Her southern sensibilities are evident. She asks whether I would like something to drink, motions me to a chair... The painting of the slave ship is at least seven feet wide and seems near as tall. I have seen many drawings of the vessels that hauled millions of Africans from their continent, but it is the enormity of this image, the white painted bodies against the heavy seemingly aged black paper, that pulls at me throughout the entire interview. The ship is one of several pieces that Fan has done on the Middle Passage. This stark and somber painting is an ironic backdrop to the spirited energy in the studio. Fan and Celia have been commissioned to do an art installation at the Gorman Museum in Davis, CA. Before I arrived, they had been discussing their individual concepts for the installation.

It's trippy to be doing this installation now. Celia went back into her files and found notes from two years ago about this particular collaboration. This installation is about the relationships between Africans and the indigenous people on this continent. About Blacks and Mexicans, the intersections of ancient and contemporary culture. I have more opportunities to do installations now. An installation allows me to work with the physical environment to create or provoke a certain mood, get my concept out. It's more challenging when I work with some-

one else, especially someone of another race. When Celia and I work together we discuss what we have in common and also the stereotypes we hold about each other's races. We say things to each other — things that happened with a person of that race, that racial edge between people of color. Then we figure out how we can make art together.

What do you think people think of your art?

I think my art evokes something in people that they don't quite understand. I remember this Black woman once came up to me at an opening and told me that she loved my work. She was talking about how my work made her feel. That's exactly what I want my work to do, to provoke some feeling, touch some deeper memory that your subconscious locks in on. You start smelling something from your past or you have a flashback or *deja vu* — especially for Black people — that's what my art's about, a message for them. If other people get something from my work, that's cool too. So, this woman was saying to me "I remember when I was in the kitchen ..." She talked about things that resonated with my life. I just ate it up. As she was talking, I went back into my own memory and I remembered sitting in the kitchen, and the fried chicken, the burning hair ... That's what I want my art to do. Remind you where you come from, connect you with the times you got certain information that allowed you to survive. We were two black women about the same age. I was raised in Alabama; she was probably raised in the South. Our sensibilities seemed similar. The way that piece made her feel took me years to accomplish. I see a piece of material, a scrap somewhere in the street. I think, "that reminds me of when I was seven and my cousin was combing my hair," or "that reminds me of a time in my life when I felt secure or when I was learning something about my culture." I save it to use in my art. It takes a while to get all the materials I need to finish a piece. What I liked was that this woman didn't just talk about my work in art terms. When people talk about my art like that I go, "huh."

You're not comfortable with art terminology?

The way you learn to talk about art in art school is Eurocentric, presented from a structural, intellectual point of view. We didn't discuss how the work makes you feel. No one encouraged us to work from our cultural backgrounds. My art

comes from my culture and I want people to feel something when they look at it. I opened this art magazine once and there was this huge review on Celia and me, a show we had been in called "Home Girls." The reviewer was writing about my art like she knew me. "African altars provoke ..." blah, blah blah. It was strange the way she was going on and on. The particular piece she reviewed was one I had worked on for two years. That piece was full of medicine. The people who it was meant for would get the medicine when they saw the piece. The reviewer was throwing around this popular art terminology. I was trained traditionally, I know what these terms mean, but that wasn't close to what was going on in my piece. I don't throw words around to flower things up. I like to edit, edit, edit.

It seems you strive to achieve the same "just enoughness" in your art as well.

I may use only one image in a piece but I pay a lot of attention to building upon that image. For example, the piece on that wall is of a house on legs with a chain (she points to a recent drawing). If you diagrammed it, it would seem simple. But once you consider the textures I use, the fact that there is a chain (and you know what that chain has been used for), then add to that the image of a house on legs, the piece has become more complicated. Once, while on a reservation in Montana I found these little pieces of burned linoleum. The linoleum reminded me of the floor we had when I was a little girl in Alabama. It not only reminded me of that kitchen floor. I could go further and say that particular pattern was used in the 1950's. Now I have certain feelings connected with the 50's and everyone a certain age, from a certain class background might have a similar relation to that linoleum. Let's take it further. In the 50's I was a Black child living in the South. Now I have a connection to that scrap of linoleum that takes me back to what was happening at that time, the Civil Rights Movement. That's how provocative a small piece of material can be. So a person looks at a piece of my art, they look at the crumbly paint and they are thrown back into their personal history. Exactly what I'm trying to achieve.

Tell me about your creative process.

I get a spurt of energy that lasts two or three months. During that time I come up with thumbnail sketches of images. I

take the sketches and decide which I want to build or draw. Whether I build or draw depends on where I am. I can't make sculpture right now. I don't have the space or the financial means. But I can draw. When I'm in a place where I can make sculpture, I make sculpture. I have always used basic images, the house, the cross, the square, the chain. Every culture has them. I take my sketches through a factory process. I work and rework the drawings to refine them. While I'm working, I'm thinking, "What do I want this piece to provoke? What is the story behind this piece?" I keep notes and work the piece until I get a final sketch. Then I decide which materials to use, how to further express what I'm trying to getting across.

You use a lot of wood in your work; what does that material mean to you?

Wood has been abundant. Not in California. But in Chicago wood was accessible and most times free, at least the wood I wanted. I could walk outside my door and find something I could make art with. As someone poor trying to get an education, I used a lot of materials that were accessible. Chicago is a manufacturing city and there was lots of metal lying around. When I was doing the Cross Series in my last year of graduate school I passed a house that had burned. I took the stairs out. I used that burned wood in my crosses. People dumped stuff in lots and I would go through looking for material. I took discarded store signs off the street. Most of my sculpture is made of materials I found in the streets, in Chicago, Alabama, Alaska, wherever I've been.

Are you creating the art you would if you had more financial means or access?

Things happen the way they are supposed to happen, coming at times when I'm in a better place to receive them. I don't think there's anything I've missed out on. I've pretty much accepted that I have what I have. I enjoy the material I work with. Wood was abundant and it also resonates with me. I like using materials that have aged, rusted, deteriorated. At some point in graduate school I realized I didn't have the privilege to complain about what I didn't have. Here I was with a private art school education, no matter how I got through. My challenge is to make art with what I have wherever I am. I've learned to 'milk' those 101 classes. I took a basic photography

course. Now I take the pictures and make the slides of both Celia's and my work. I have enough.

What kind of art do you like?

Bill Traylor, Sister Mary ... Black Folk artists. The art is so honest, and pure, and I don't mean naive. The art doesn't hide, doesn't make excuses. When I first walked through my first exhibit of Black folk art, I felt like I was entering an inner sanctuary. I took off my shoes.

Tell me about your Middle Passage series.

I'll tell you why I'm in the Middle Passage now. I went on a "vision journey". I had sat in a lot of Native American ceremonies and everybody was always talking about what tribe and nation they were from. We had to declare what tribe we were from. I had mixed feelings about it because I can remember Black people who didn't want to say they were Negro and would brag about being part Indian. That always bothered me. Over the years I learned there were and are Black Indians and that there was a lot of mixing of indigenous people and Blacks in the South. That changed my thinking a bit, but I still went to these ceremonies as a visitor. During this particular ceremony the medicine man suggested I pray about where I came from. No one in my family ever talked about where they came from, and I never particularly wanted to know. But I decided to try and I started praying and eating medicine. I went to the Middle Passage. It was incredibly intense. Words don't give justice to what that experience was like. All the while I knew my ancestors were with me, helping me out. I went back to the ship. I went back as the *feeling*, a gaseous state, part of the atmosphere. I could see only as much as I could experience. I felt the grief and the confusion on the ship. I felt the moaning, the despair. The inside of the ship was dark and smoky, like thick fog over the ocean. Thin streams of light came through the wood. I felt I was being buried alive. I was crying and moaning, in deep distress. Celia brought me back. My emotions had been taxed in a way I had never experienced. Think about the despair you have had in your life, and take that and magnify it exponentially. Now imagine how that might feel like in your body. I was gasping for air like I was being held down under water. It was horrible. I know I have to go back but it will be years before I do.

Go back for your art or for yourself?

For my healing. From that journey I realized why it's hard for Black people to talk about the Middle Passage. The scar it has left on our souls is big. To me it explains all the despair you see in our people today. It is a disease deep inside of us, the self hate, all of it. As Black people, the Middle Passage was the beginning of life as we know it. I am also very interested in what was going on in Africa at the time to support the taking of millions of Africans from the continent.

When I walked in and saw that ship on your wall — "Boom!" Being closed in and not being allowed to speak, to be taken away from everything familiar and to be plunged into nothingness. It unnerves me every time.

If you let yourself open up and look at it. It's interesting to see people stare at the image of the ship and not know what it is, Black people included. I have seen white people get visibly upset when they were around it. Subconsciously they know what it is, but denial kicks in overdrive. I told you about the installation in Cincinnati. Everyone had to go through an installation of the Middle Passage to get to the other installations. The majority of the audience was white and they didn't know what the Middle Passage was. They had a very hard time going through, falling and stumbling through a well constructed path I had built.

The emotions that come up are those that we like to push down.

Nothing cute or sweet. I am interested in making art that comments on our reality and leaves something useful behind. The issues we deal with daily, the structure we live under and that we will continue to live under as Black people. We need to talk about how the Middle Passage has scarred us, get it in the open and deal with it. Begin to heal from it so we don't take that pain into the next generation. I don't have the privilege of doing art for art's sake. Otherwise I could take that wood I'm using and give it to somebody that needs a house.

So how has your Middle Passage series changed you? Is it part of your personal healing?

When I came out of the vision journey I felt that I needed to learn how to pray better. How to ask the right questions to get the answers I'm searching for. Doing the Middle Passage is

certainly part of letting the pain of it out. When I first started the series, I took one image of a slave ship and enlarged it 300x. The first time I painted a ship Celia was helping me to paint in the people. She commented how hard it was to do. It was painstaking. I paint in each of those bodies and as I paint I understand more. I am emotionally and physically close to this work. I can smell the ship and feel the energy of the people. It has changed the way I interact with my own people. I feel more connected to Black people, regardless if they want to be connected to me. I am more open and accepting in general and lot less cynical. I figure now that we are doing the best we can do considering what we have lost. I understand more about the pain and see the disease. I'm interested in creating solutions to move towards healing

How does being a lesbian inform your art?

I don't hold anything back. I don't care if somebody has a problem with my art. Straight women artists (not all of them) have to have their men okay what they are doing. Their men have to be secure. I have noticed with straight women artists that the woman usually respects what the man is doing, but she isn't given the same respect by him. Nobody is going to come in and build my thing — I 'm going to build my thing. I have had some people say that they thought I was a man after they looked at my art. A man of color maybe, but definitely not a woman. I've gotten that a lot from white men.

Why do you think that happens?

Because my art is bold and they attribute that to men. The materials are strong. The images are bold. It's so sexist. They don't ever have to go past their own limited idea of art and culture. They have decided what art is and who does what and who uses what. The materials I use don't have race and they don't have gender.

Once you start welding there will probably be more of that.

Yeah. Last week was my first class. I am the only woman in the class, the only Black in the class. I might well be the only artist. I'm taking the class because it's time to enhance my pieces. I'm interested in doing public art and welding will make me more employable.

You mentioned that you were raised in Alabama. How has your experience in the South informed your art?

I left Alabama when I was about seven. That was the best part of my life. I was totally at ease. I grew up with my elders. My great, great aunt Francis had raised my mother, my grandfather and me along with some other relatives. I traced that type of rearing back to certain west African cultures where the parents would take a child and give it to the elders. The child would get what it needed so it could be human by the time the parents got her back. My experiences in the South constantly feed my work. It's the fire behind everything I do. I was so young and my relatives were so old. I know they implanted information in my psyche that allows me to be where I am. Anytime I go back into my past that's where I go. They taught me lessons through stories and folktales. I did a lot of listening. The language I heard growing up and that I speak are a lot different. I use the language that I remember in those stories in naming my pieces or even in my concept — the story a piece tells.

How do you name your pieces? Your names are in themselves art.

I'm lucky with titles. I keep a little book of titles. Words and phrases I find appealing and describe my work. When I begin to build a piece a certain dynamic develops. I talk to the piece and it talks back. A conversation. Then I write what comes out of that conversation. As I'm building, the piece becomes more physical and the materials enter the conversation. Then I'm like a director. I try to direct that title with the conversation.

I like the way you talk about your work, your approach, your respect for the art itself.

I respect the materials. I make as few cuts into the wood as possible. I treat the materials as if they are precious — they are precious. No matter how hard I try, I can't duplicate what nature, time can do. When I come upon a piece of material I try to preserve as much of its character as possible.

I'm curious. What was the name of the installation you were part of in Cincinnati?

We called it "Like That, Like That, Like That That There." But that's another story ...

"Made in America" from "Bridges and Boundaries: Chicago Crossings"

Fan Warren



K. Linda Kivi

Tabaganne

The French borrowed it
 a word for getting
 somewhere from weather
 wizened Algonquins took it
 for a ride
 wooden and waxed
 westward push and pull lent it
 to me and my neighbors
 on a slippery road
 to the place we call home cast it in
 glistening aluminum
 in fat dictionaries
 so that we could move
 faster, always faster
 squealing with our new found
 delight of an old word
 an old world
 and I laugh as I use it
 toboggan gathers momentum
 speed throws powder
 in my face pushes
 my tongue into somee
 else's heart.

When will we return it
 say thanks — in Algonquin — for this
 word, this world this
 wise wooden sled
 curl carved by Algonquin
 ghosts to bend aside
 the snow to hold
 slow — slow loads that
 made centuries
 of winter possible?

Annalee Wade

Dominga is Speaking

Here in the Arid Zona one could imagine brown was the first color. Squash, beans, corn, chilies, and marijuana grow with some coaxing. My husband, Jack, calls the desert his first wife. I'm not jealous. The rocks, saguaro cactus, and too blue sky are my lovers as well. We are Yaqui, decendants of those Sonran dwellers with, a hint of Aztec in their language.

I tease my old man for becoming slow but he's still a pretty good dancer. His small feet can still perform the intricate steps of the graceful matachin dance alongside men half his age. The matachin dance is of great religious significance to the Yaqui and is performed by men. Jack, an elder in the society, is proud to take his place among the matachinis on religious holidays. They show him a lot of respect.

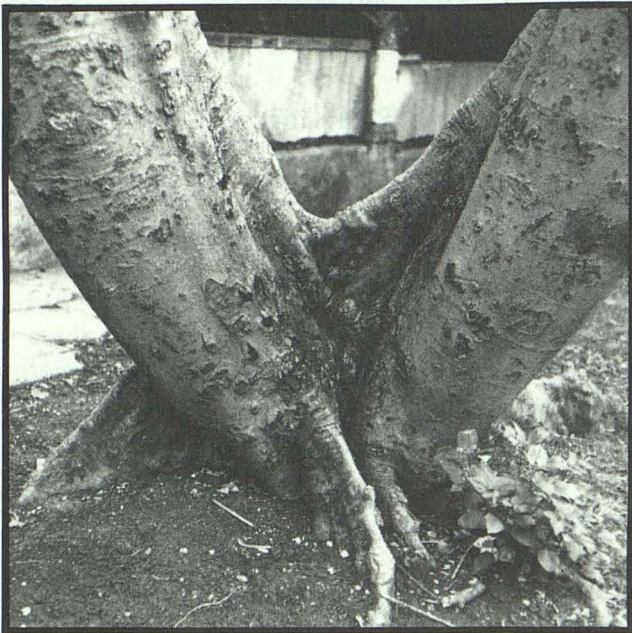
Early in our marriage I told my husband to quit drinking or lose me. He knew I meant it and so began a practice he stuck with for 45 years. Every payday he handed me his uncashed check from the railroad. I paid the bills, bought our necessities, and stashed a little in savings. In this way he had no money to buy alcohol. The Mexicans at the trainyard ribbed him for allowing a mere woman to control his finances. One day after work he told them as they headed for the bar: "My money can buy a lot of mescal, but not another Dominga." I wonder if he knows how happy he has made me. We are a race of few words.

We never had children. This fact perturbs the busybodies in our community more than it does us. With no living kin to lay us in Earth's arms, we have talked about walking to meet our Mother. When we are very old and can no longer work in the garden or clip our toenails it will be time to chew the sacred peyote and walk into the desert as far as we can to have our final vision together. Many old Indians died this way by choice. Indians don't fear death the way white people do.

Since Jack has retired we find there is so much to say with our hands. Between my palms I crush dried leaves for our Indian tea. Mint and manzanilla flowers are good for the stomach. Jack

shows our old cat she is still loved by holding her in his lap and scratching her neck. She purrs so loud it sounds like construction is happening in the neighborhood. In the garden we pull weeds, water and hoe, mostly in silence. Mother Earth loves the gentle language of our hands and tools. Every day the same motions, the same ceremonies ...

At night a ceremony as ancient as our blood begins when Jack takes me in his arms and calls me his medicine bundle because I make him feel so good. The drum inside his chest beats faster as I part the slit of his boxer shorts and touch his clitoris.



Untitled
Julia Youngblood

April Citizen Kane

Voices

We are the voices who had no body,

We are the voices who swam in ice
walked on fire
danced on bones
chewed pebbles in our teeth
and spit them out as powder.

We are the voices who were abused
who became abusers.

We are the voices who cried alone
who clothed ourselves in shame
like a wet wool cloak.

We are the voices tired of starving
mutilating, silencing ourselves.

We are the voices reclaiming
our body, our language, our breath.

We are the voices who cast out the demons
the parasites, the ghosts.

We are the voices who learned to sleep at night
to speak without anger
to cry without shame.

We are the voices whose will is strong
how strong is your will
how strong is your will
how strong is your will to survive?

We are the voices who chose to be present
who fought for consciousness
who spoke without being spoken to
who learned to sing without music

dance without shoes
 play without playmates
 fly without wings.

We are the voices who sometimes love by letting go
 who learn from goodbye.

We are the voices who dreamt of daylight
 who sang in the dark
 who picked flowers from concrete
 who wove words out of stone
 who painted roses with the color blue
 who dreamt of the ocean
 miles away from the comforting sound
 who made invisible walls of air.

We are the voices that make up the chorus inside of us.

We are the voices who learned to turn away
 from an offered hand
 who listened cautiously to the wind
 who wept sometimes when others were happy.

We are the voices who rolled words over and over
 in our heads until they were as smooth as sea glass
 we are the voices who made poetry
 out of fresh baked bread
 who made wishes out of snowflakes
 promises out of autumn leaves.

We are the voices who tripped on the cobwebs of the
 past who had courage enough to ask for help
 who were brave enough to weep.

We are the voices who are feathers of the same wing
 telling stories which are true
 and dreams which are found waking.

*inspired by a public reading by poet Al Hunter



Opening
Carol A. Johnson and Felicia Reim

Huda Jadallah

For Those Who Ask Me to Talk Politics in a Calm and Rational Voice

Tuesday July 30, 1991 — Journal Entry

Must've been around third grade. I remember mama's voice resounding in my ear on the playground at school, repeating in my child's mind as the other children play, trying to make sense out of something insane, "If anyone asks where you are from you say Palestine. But if you write a letter to the old country do not write on the envelope Palestine, write via Israel. Ya Huda, I remember when I was a child, a teenager and the refugees came to Ramallah, they stayed in our yard, camping out. We made big pots of soup to feed them. An old woman came. I sat with her and she taught me how to sew.

"Your father, he died stateless. He left in 48, one month before the creation of Israel, so he didn't become a Jordanian citizen nor an American citizen. Stateless and dead."

My mom and dad owned a grocery store. I remember when the Arab store owners in San Francisco were being shot. The news you remember as a child is different than the news I remember: the devastation with the Camp David treaty, the old TV in the old house, the stories of bombs.

"What did you have for dinner?" The neighborhood kids asked me. "Mahshi," I answered. I didn't know why they didn't know what it was. "You know Mahshi. Cusa. It's green and long and grows in your garden in the back of your house. You fill it with rice and meat. It grows next to al nana, al bundura, al teen wa al lamoon."

Mama reminded, "You can't keep going to school. You must settle down. Marrying a Palestinian man with a grocery would be a good life."

You told me just a few weeks ago that you went to market with Umpty Zahia as a child, selling the vegetables you grew.

You remember how you planted and worked with your hands. You cannot use your hands any more. Arthritis. You cannot roll the grape leaves nor can you stand for hours making magic with your hands creating maftool like your grandmothers did. So now you open the grape leaves and set them gently on the tunjara so that I can roll them while we talk. We always have good talks rolling grape leaves.

We used to drive the cars with brown grocery bags always in the trunk because you never know when you will drive by a tree with fruit on it. There is always time to stop and ask the people if it's in their yard if we can pick some fruit. Mom used to make us kids do that. "Get out of the car, knock on the door and ask them if we can pick some." We were embarrassed. We used to hide if we saw other children we knew. Teen, escadina, lemoon, zeitoun, charoub. And if it was in public space such as a shopping center or a tree on a public sidewalk, you just kind of kept an eye out for the police just in case.

May is grape leaf picking season. The women and girls go for the day on a long drive to "wine country" (as you call it), grape leaf country (as we know it). We ask the farm workers. Many of them are Mexican. Mom speaks Spanish with an Arabic accent and asks if we can pick leaves. They say ok. They bond. The rich white owners and managers are not around. Mom always warned before we started picking, large brown bags in hand, "Pick the soft, tender young ones and never pick the leaves that protect the grapes from the harsh sun." It's an art — grape leaf picking.

We pick row after row sweating in the hot Napa sun until our arms are too tired and the babies start to cry. Then we find a large shady tree and open the bags of food. We pull out the butich wa jibna wa chubza arabia wa zeitoun wa al mu imsaqa. Our throats are parched. We drink the cool water. We relax and tell stories. We laugh. The babies fall asleep, and we drive home. But it's not over yet. We have to pour all the leaves in a giant mound covering the entire dining room table. We must let them breathe the cool air because they get hot in the car and they are so delicate and burn so easily. Then we must sit at a

table and stack them. Leaf upon leaf, stack upon stack, and cram them into the jars for winter. Tonight we'll have a fresh pot of grape leaves. As fresh as it comes, with cool yogurt that mom made yesterday.

Zahia. Umpty Zahia, I remember you in Filastine and in Amrika. I wish I could talk to you now. I remember how you wore your thobe and shaal and how you hid your money somewhere under your thobe near your chest. You never married, Umpty. They kept you in a mental hospital for a year. They called it a nervous breakdown. They said you needed a place of your own when they released you. I remember your tiny old stone home in the ancient part of town, a small room. I wish I could speak with you now.

I remember when you came to Amrika and you were you, and you sat in front of our house drinking kahwa arabia and eating bizzer, just sitting, reading your fortune in your cup with mom. I was embarrassed that the other children saw you. You were so foreign to them. They made fun of us. I feel so sad, Umpty, when I remember that.

In Filastine you built fires each day in the yard to cook our food. It was like camping out. I remember taking the dough on the seniyas to the furun. We carried the seniyas on our heads, but we were just visiting and had to hold onto the trays with our hands unlike the other children who balanced the trays beautifully. I looked in the oven, so big to my child's eyes, so deep, so hot. We caught lizards in the sun and drank the fresh goat's milk when the man came door to door. I watched Umpty kill the rabbit we ate for dinner. Red blood at the throat. I remember looking into al beer. Umpty pulled water from it each day and I watched as she transferred the water to al jarra in the house — the drinking water for the day. The water was always so cool, and we used al tosse to dip right into the standing clay jar full of cool fresh water.

The memories are so many, and so deep, and so much a part of who I am today. It's kind of indescribable why I get angry. Why I don't talk politics in a quiet voice like you do. I don't have the luxury to separate my experience from my politics. I cannot live in my land of olive trees on ancient hills.

A few years back, guns pointed at us from rooftops as we walked along the streets. Soldiers making sexual comments as they walk past us (guns and dicks). A man is shot in front of us and mom tells the soldiers to FUCK OFF. They are surprised she speaks English. They threw you to the ground mama. Knocked the glass of water out of your hand. The young man had a strength that shocked you. They strip searched me, completely naked, and the soldier had a gun. I shook. I looked into the soldier's eyes. Security. Security of Israel. I ask another soldier why and he says, "I just follow orders." They confiscate most of my gifts and personal items. Toothpaste could be a security risk.

And you say to me that my beef is that I'm Palestinian and you want to talk rationally, calmly about the politics. I can't. I don't have the luxury to. Our lives are on the line. You see, my brother was supposed to go back and be a Palestinian guerrilla — fight for our land. I was scared as a child when mom said my baby brother should go and fight on the earth with the rest. I got angry. He will die mom. He will die. Please don't send him. How can you do that mom? I was afraid. And now I understand her. And sometimes I want to kill. Sometimes I get scared because I think I must kill and yes I fantasize about it and it is terrifying because I understand the motivation behind the acts you call terrorism. It scares me because I feel it and you ask me to speak calmly and rationally.

Glossary

mahshi: squash stuffed with rice and meat

cusa: squash

nana: mint

bundura: tomato

teen: figs

lamoon: lemon

umpty: paternal aunt

maftool: a dish similar to couscous

tunjara: large pot

escadinia: loquats

- zeitoon: olives
charoub: carob
butich: watermelon
jibna: cheese
chubza arabia: arabic bread
mu imsaqaa: cold water
Filastine: Palestine
Amrika: America
thobe: traditional garment for women
shaal: shawl
kahwa arabia: arabic coffee
bizzer: roasted watermelon seeds
seniya: tray
furun: town oven
beer: water well
jarra: big clay canister
tosse: metal cup

Kyos Featherdancing

In Remembrance

I am
a caretaker
of the Earth
my relationship
to the earth is
my relationship
to myself, my ancestors

all my relations
show themselves to me
through the ways
I listen
to the Earth

all of the elements are
my tools and
my protection;
my dreams and visions
are my allies
in great times of need

my gut feeling
keeps me in line;
my choice is the results;
either I listen,
or I don't

the Earth is
keeping me alive;
it is
my inspiration to live

I pray
for the Earth and
all living things,
dance

for our survival

I sing in her honor;
she heals me;
as I heal,
she heals

I sit on a rock
I feel as solid;
I hug a tree,
I am as rooted;
I gaze out at the ocean,
my mind clears

I make a list of things
I want to change
and I burn them,
I am transformed

I honor
all my relations;
I pray
for the ones
who lost their way
so I don't do the same

I am a reminder
to people,
wherever I go,
of older ways of being

I walk
in the path of
the Red Way,
the Earth Way

this is the language
I speak;
I am committed

remembering is
the work I practice
when I forget
who I am

Laura C. Luna

The Making of an Amerikan Dream

Hello, Miss Garcia, I'm Dr. Starlite. Now, why don't you tell me what happened?

What difference does it make?

I want to hear your side.

Why?

Because, I do.

You have it all there — *she glances towards the folder on the psychiatrist's desk*

Yes, but it doesn't include your side. Your side matters.

Why? It never has before — not to them anyway.

I know. That's what I'm here for. To help you.

But I don't need any HELP. It's them not me who's the problem. Send them to a shrink.

Why don't you tell me what happened so I can clear up this matter.

What do you care anyway?

I care that you've been expelled from school and you're locked up here.

Okay, okay, fine — *and against her intuition that had been mauled beyond recognition she began* — **I never had any trouble in school. All you have to do is to look at the records, look at 'em, from my elementary school. It wasn't 'til I got bussed to that school. It's mostly the history teacher Mrs. Franchot and the math teacher Mr. Smith. First it was her. On my first test she gave me an "F" and accused ME of cheating! She wrote on it "you shouldn't cheat off others and she wrote on my friend's paper, you shouldn't let others cheat off your paper!" She had no proof! I don't cheat. How come she didn't accuse Anne of cheating, huh? I'll tell you, it's 'cause Anne's white, that's why.**

Mrs. Franchot says, you threatened her.

Threatened her? I stood up and told her she was a liar. It's the truth. I told her to prove that I had cheated. AND I told

her she had no right to treat me that way.

He began his scribbling. Okay, now tell me about your friend Anne.

What do you mean?

Tell me about her. You know. How close you two are.

Well, we're best friends. Even though her mom doesn't want her mixing with Mexicans from the "flatlands." That's what they call where we live you know.

So, tell me more about Anne and you.

I don't know what you want to know — *she shrugged* — we're friends.

Yes, but how CLOSE are you?

How close? I told you. We're best friends.

Well, what's this about your physical contact after school?

Physical contact? What do you mean? Ohhh — you mean when we got busted for wrestling out in the hall? Shit, what's everyone making a big deal out of that for anyway?! So we weren't suppose to be HORSE PLAYING, big deal!

So, how close are you?

I don't know what you're getting at. I told you, we're best FRIENDS!

Do you have any romantic interest in boys?

Hahahahaha! — you gotta be kidding! Heck no! Why? Should I?

Does Anne?

Hell, I don't know, ask HER!

(Scribble, scribble) Okay, so tell me about Lincoln Jr. High.

What about it? Washington Jr. High kicked me out and I got bussed all the way to Lincoln. I wanted to go to Downing where I should've gone to begin with. It was near my home, you know.

Right. But why didn't you mix with the other students from Lincoln? It says here you only associated with the students you were bussed with.

Well, shit. Of course! They're from my side of town, we ride the bus together! Why shouldn't I?

Why did you strike Heather and knock her to the ground?

Because, she ASKED for it. That's why. I got tired of her

and her friends always trying to scare me and threaten me. When she called me a “spick nigger lover,” well, she called me out and I punched her out! I won’t have anyone calling me or my friends names.

Okay, good. Very good. Now, it says here that you threw a chair at your Spanish teacher, Mrs. Jones. Why?

Why? Why? (*She leaned forward*) Because I was FED UP. SICK AND TIRED. She always blamed me for talking when it was the white guy who sat in front of me. Look, neither of them schools wanted Black or Mexican kids bussed to their schools. She yelled at me, ridiculed me in front of the class. I got tired of it. I’ve had it with all them prejudiced assholes!

Okay, okay, don’t get too excited. Now, tell me what happened when the police picked you up?

What happened? They arrested me that’s WHAT HAPPENED! Now are you gonna help me get outta here or what?

We’re not through here yet. It says here that you struck an attendant. Why?

You mean hit? Yeah, I hit him. Hey look, they come up to me and try to make me take pills. I didn’t even know what they were FOR, so I said what are they? And he said never mind, just take them. NEVER MIND? JUST TAKE THEM? Bull shit! I have a right to know what I’m taking. Shit! it could’ve been fuckin’ POISON for all I know! So, I refused. Then he grabbed my arm and said if you don’t cooperate you’re coming with me. Ain’t no one got no right to grab on ME!! So I popped him one. Really, it was more like a push. I don’t need no drugs and if I did, believe me, I know where I can get some, and they’d be better shit than any institution could ever give me. So hey, can you get these fuckin’ shackles off my ankles and take these fuckin’ straps off my wrists? I can’t even pick my fuckin’ nose, y’know?

Okay, hold on. He put his pen down and leaves the office to call for the attendant. As the attendant wheels her out he says, “We’ll be in touch”

Psychiatric Intake Summary:

13 year old Mexican-American female admitted to hospital under 51-50 for violence. Intake findings as follows:

Continue hospitalization as Miss Garcia is a danger to others. She has no insight into her behavior and blames others for her acting out.

She is anti-social as is evident by her failure to mix with her peers either at Washington or Lincoln Jr. High Schools.

In addition, Miss Garcia has homosexual tendencies as is evidenced by her lack of romantic interest in boys and her "special" relationship with a female friend, Anne. I suggest that contact between the two girls be cut off so as to thwart any further deviance.

Furthermore, Miss Garcia is a rebellious and angry teenager as is evidenced by her behavior towards teachers at both Washington and Lincoln Jr. High. Although Miss Garcia was somewhat cooperative in this interview she is of an uncooperative personality type as is evidenced by her behavior with hospital personnel.

In addition, Miss Garcia is delusional and paranoid as is evidenced by her suspicions of being "poisoned."

But, until we have her full cooperation in the testing phase, it will be difficult to determine the exact nature or cause of her disorder. When administering the Rorshach test, Miss Garcia would sarcastically respond, "ink blot" when asked what the blots suggested to her. At this time she proves detrimental to society as well as herself. Her delusions of persecution support these initial findings. I recommend that until Miss Garcia cooperates in taking the tranquilizers of her own volition, she should remain in four-point restraints and be given the medication through injection. This will also serve to protect the attendants from her hostile behavior and ensure manageability.

Addendum:

Miss Garcia's course of treatment could be extremely difficult as she believes she has no disorder. As you well know, these are the most difficult cases to treat. Therefore, I recommend the first phase of treatment to focus on breaking down her denial so that we can make her see how sick she is.

Dr. Starlite, Psychiatric Intaker

Shahara Godfrey

Hot Comb

hard

back

chair with
metal legs.

black comb,
brown brush,
red can
with a
silver top,
royal crown.

white stove,
white rag,
black burner
with
blue, yellow flame.
hot kitchen.
hot comb.

smells of burnt hair
mixed with royal crown.

sitting
between
her legs,
trying not to cry ...

nana
spits
the comb,
cooling it down.
pulling
my head,
back.

trying not to jump ...
she says,
"hush,
be still,
don't move your head,
now,
hold your ear."

soft,
gentle,
brown,
fat fingers,
brushing,
combing,
parting
my hair.

twisting,
yanking,
one strand,
over another,
then
over another,
pulled,
tight,
a braid.

black bobbi pins
hold in place.
this daily ritual.

nappy
hair,
now straight.

for who?

Ananda Esteva

My-Linguality

My preschool teachers forbade me from participating in group activities when I spoke in Spanish. (One teacher told me, 'ants would fly in my mouth' if I didn't speak English.) I spent so long with my tongue in my pocket, I forgot I could talk. They wanted me to speak just like them so I shut up.

We moved from Chile to San Francisco when I was three. On Sundays, we opened the door joining our apartment with our Mexicano neighbors and threw big dancing parties. We spoke Spanish with our friends — political refugees from Guatemala, Argentina, El Salvador. I remember the smell of black beans boiling in pots bigger than me while hearing the sounds of salsa y cumbia rhythms and shuffling feet across the linoleum floor. Mama used to sing with Valenzuelo from Argentina and everybody clapped to their ritmo.

After a while, the parties stopped. We quit talking about our times back in Chile. We ignored the growing dolor we held in our chests. Too many of my parents' friends had been tortured. The newspapers said they were disappeared. Isn't that a safe verb, "To be disappeared," as though it occurred magically, when, in fact, the disappearances were calculated and intentional. Intending to erase the voices of el pueblo, the Chilean government dragged people from their homes and killed them!

My Mama worked with the leftist/art community in Chile, the primary targets of the military regime, she sang strong folk songs through the night and day with her comradas. Even after we moved to S.F., her voice could hold her soul in Chile, but then she stopped singing.

I missed her voice and the golpes she struck on the guitar. As time passed I felt sure she'd lost these songs, that they'd dry up dead without renewal, just as I'd lost my native tongue. I didn't expect to conjure up their spirits again, but when Poetry

for the People demanded we write from urgent moments and in our own languages, I began to write myself home.

I sat in my cheap closet-room trying to recapture the part of me with something to say! I started rummaging my brain for memories but they all seem dumb. Then I threw my favorite records onto the turntable the ones we brought from Chile. I sang and listened as the sun set in the sky.

Atahualpa Yupanqui's song "El Aromo" seeped out of the speakers and invoked shivers in my body. I let the lyrics germinate inside me. I sang loud as I could, holding tight to the spirit thundering through that song. I started to remembering the stories my parents used to tell me of how I came to be: how my Mama lost hope in her body after the doctors forced forceps and experimental drugs in her body, how fear snatched her voice when she lost her water two months early, how I was drying up inside her for twenty-five hours before they cut open her belly and she didn't say a word. I knew I had to write a poem to remind her how strong she is.

My poem, called "Mama if you only knew your strength," wove in vital strands of Atahualpa's song. It had to; his song gave me breath! My song-poem tells of how my Mama would sing his words as she walked along the water's edge searching for strength and place.

She cried when I sang her my words. I didn't withhold any breath. I gave it all to the words, tones and memories living inside it. I gave it to her. After that, I kept on singing my poem. I sang it to the poetry class and at public readings. One night, I read at a bookstore, Booklover's Haven in Vallejo and a bunch of friends from our first years in San Francisco showed up. Wow! Seeing them was shocking enough. After the reading, folks lined up and hugged my Mama, tears dripping, teeth out and smiling! The last line sounded: "Mama,/ if you only knew your strength/ perhaps today/you'd dance!"

Some nights
she'd walk along the water
and sing the song of Atahualpa Yupanqui

Hay un Aromo nacido
en la grieta de una piedra
parece que la rompio
por salir adentro de ella
(an aromo bush is born
from the crack of a rock
it appears that it broke her
passing through)

Her first child
melted in the heat.
Gloved, White hands dug into her
like overworked miners
full of brisk and business
to rid her of the body.

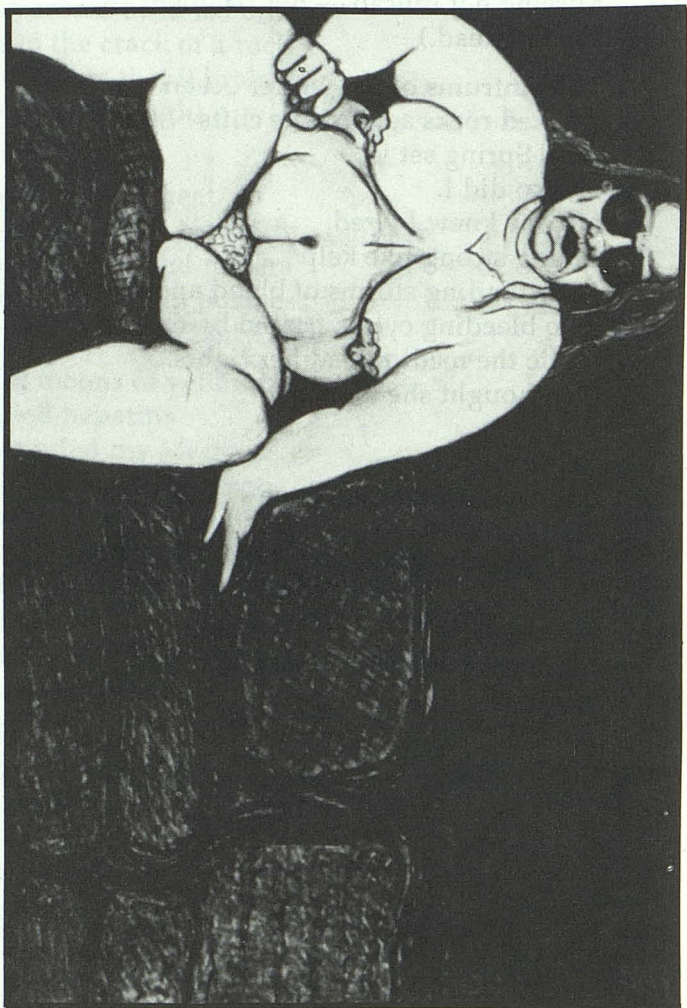
Full moons of yellow death
called hepatitis
shrouded my Mama
the Meica, the Shaman
starved
and the doctors wouldn't touch her then.
Such a long winter within her belly.
The neighbors left food by the door on Sundays
Papi boiled eucalyptus leaves
but my brother
didn't breathe.

After her fever died
doctors labeled her a dust-bowl,
plowed by forceps
dry through drought
Doctors claimed her land infertile
with regal script.
She relived the colonial songs of
women caught between
the old way and the new.

La pericona se ha muerto
no pudo ver a la Meica

Le faltaba su milcao
por eso, se cayo muerta.
(the woman died.
She could not see the Shaman.
Missing her milcao — her payment —
she fell dead.)

The tantrums of the winter ocean
cracked rocks against the cliffs
until Spring set in
and so did I.
No one knew I lived.
I hung strong like kelp
withstanding storms of blood and fear.
Two bleeding cycles passed by me,
while the medics read her rights.
She thought she owned
only
half a body.
She cried along the water's edge,
many mornings too.
She threw my brother's ashes there.
She thought
her thirsty body crumbled there.
Mama, if you only knew your strength
perhaps
today
you'd dance.



I Am Not a Fertility Goddess ...
Mary J. Kerr

Sandy Tate

Holocaust Abused

Through the years I have heard the word holocaust used, abused and misused. "The Holocaust:" the original name given to denote the death and destruction that befell mostly Jews, but also Lesbians and gays, Gypsies, people of anti-Nazi sentiments, disabled, and numerous others; the concept we conjure up as death camps; the period of time in Europe just before World War II and ending sometime in 1945 when the last of the death camps was shut down; that period of atrocities continues to be called to mind when we want to describe something horrible, something unspeakable that occurs in society. I think the word holocaust is used because we simply don't have a good enough word to describe the particular horror of which we speak at the moment.

It is common to hear people referring to the specter of nuclear devastation as a "nuclear holocaust." One can hear reference made to the centuries of witch burnings as a "holocaust." And in a final twist of irony, anti-abortionists refer to legalized abortion as "America's holocaust," their own particular bigotry in misnaming what a woman *should* have the right to do, and what men *would* have the right to do if *they* became pregnant. The AIDS epidemic has been described as a "holocaust." It may well kill more than six million people before a cure is found. But it is not "The Holocaust." Slavery in our country is a disgrace and a shame we must never forget. But it was not "The Holocaust."

All of these references serve to water down the memory, the meaning and the concept of "The Holocaust." It serves well the purposes of those Jew-haters that attempt to deny the existence of "The Holocaust," dismissing the torment of millions as lies and exaggerations. The Holocaust is not a comparison of numbers (although six million is a formidable amount). Some people think that if more than six million are involved in death and destruction, that signifies a *worse* catastrophe than "The Holocaust" and can somehow be seen as *more* heinous, therefore deserving of that

awful label. The burning of witches, numbering 13 million, is yet another unspeakable tragedy, not to be compared or placed in a "one-upmanship" juxtaposition if you will, to the horrors of the death camps of Nazi Germany. Witch burning, spurred on by patriarchal church dogma and hatred of women, reflected the attitudes of the time. But it was not "The Holocaust." Comparisons, conceived and wrought by males, are for the purposes of power, greed, and belittling others so that they can feel better about themselves. Comparisons are used in war games and sex games (my gun/toy is bigger than your gun/toy so I win the territory and the women); in sports (I can hit a ball further than you and am therefor, better than you); in business (mine grossed more than yours so I'm smarter and deserve more).

Comparisons confuse the issue and invalidate all but the chosen winner. This is a deadly game, not to be used when describing nightmares that individuals have suffered through at different times. We're not in a contest to see whose tragedy is the worst.

Wilma Mankiller described how the United States government forced tens of thousands of Cherokees, and tens of thousands of other Native Americans from their homelands in the Eastern United States to the Indian Territory west of the Mississippi from 1830-1850. Mankiller refers to this "Trail of Tears" as the Cherokees' holocaust:

It was not a friendly removal. It was ugly and unwarranted. For too many Cherokees, it was deadly. The worst part of our holocaust was that it also meant the continued loss of tribal knowledge and traditions.¹

Nuclear annihilation is a real threat because of male-defined attitudes and hatred. The end of all life on our planet is more of a possibility than we care to admit or think about. But it is not "The Holocaust."

Every time the word "holocaust" is used to describe yet another tragedy we become desensitized to the horror it describes. We become more *comfortable* with the term holocaust, and so it serves to trivialize and render less potent "The Holocaust" visited on us by Nazi Germany.

I am not saying that Jew-haters started this or perpetuate this.

Many Jews themselves parrot "The Holocaust" model for crimes and atrocities, unaware of the power of language to undermine and belittle events.

The epidemic of breast cancer suffered by women in the United States has not been sufficiently addressed by our society and our government. One could call this a "holocaust." The large numbers of women and girls in our society who are incested, battered, kidnapped, mutilated, raped and murdered are far greater in numbers than "The Holocaust," witch burnings, AIDS or breast cancer statistics combined. Yet past and present violence against women is not considered a "holocaust."

Anti-Semitism, a euphemism for Jew-hating, is another distortion of the language that slides off our tongues so easily. No one ever asked me if I was a Semite before they leveled a Jew-hating remark at me.

The decimation of Eastern European Jewry and the disappearance of the Yiddish language are part of the legacy of "The Holocaust."

My grandparents, fleeing the pogroms of Rumania and Russia, emigrated to the United States at the turn of the century, bringing with them the universal Jewish language, Yiddish. Their children, one of whom is my mother, grew up hearing mostly Yiddish in the home. I regret that I can't speak the language except for a few words and phrases that rubbed off on me from my grandparents. It saddens me that a language that goes back to my ancestors' origins is dying out.

We need to use language in a way that respects the experiences of others. We need to be reminded of "The Holocaust" so that it is not repeated.

We need to remember that the next time they come for the Jews — they're going to come for you!

1. Mankiller, Wilma and Michael Wallace, *Mankiller: A Chief And Her People*, New York. St. Martin's Press, 1993. p. 47.

A. Miriasiem Barnes

The Voices

The orchestra of voices
nah...

the mass choir plays
over and over in my head

Even the dead
take lead solo
planting seeds in my head

Babies

y'all think babies don't know
y'all be sadly mistaken
babies know
they sing solos in my head

The voices
an orchestra
a mass choir
singing in my head

If you plant a seed in fertile soil and tend it carefully it will grow

They been singing all my life
baby Barnes girl
no name
poor, poor, poor
no money
damn she small
2.5 lbs

Don't do this
don't do that
take that look off your face
better straighten out them eyes girl

You ain't got no right
can't you stand up straight

sit up straight
straighten up girl

You ain't gonna get nowhere in life
acting like this

Slow down and speak english
how you speck me to understand

"Ain't," ain't no word girl
listen to me when I be talking
what you standing there looking in my face for
get your behind out of my face
get back here I ain't finished with you yet

And the choir sings on
 and then
 the ensemble appears
 sings sweet
 sweet songs of peace
 strength and confidence
 over and over in my mind
 even the dead take lead

And the solo voices of
 Witches
 Crones
 Amazons
 Wild women

play on in my mind
 they now plant the seeds
 of the Oak and the Willow
 which they are ever so careful to cultivate

I am a Black woman	roots
I am free	wings
I am a healer	roots
I am healed	wings
I am an artist	roots
I now make the music	wings

And the orchestra plays on
 the mass choir sings on
 now the ensemble lives on in me



Rhythm Equals Life
A. Miriasiem Barnes

Liliana Slomkowska

Quenching the Thirst

I. Some Names

For a long time I had the following fantasy: On her death bed my mother would turn her head towards, us her children, lined up at the bedside, leaning forward anxious to hear her last words — the possible long awaited link to her past. Then with that telltale gleam in her eye, which always told us she felt secure enough, safe enough, happy enough she'd say, "Yes, yes, I'm Jewish after all."

Such an admission would certainly tie up a lot of loose ends, i.e.: How a *Polish Catholic* woman became a *Holocaust*, or the term I prefer, *Nazi genocide*, hard-labor camp survivor. It would give me, at long last, the ready answer so many people expect: So, you're *Jewish*? The right word. The more readily identifiable identity.

Another fantasy I nurtured for some time was that my mother was a *lesbian*. It, too, was false and was added to my growing list of lesbian oxymorons: *Lesbian Polish*, *Lesbian bigot*, *Lesbian classist*, *Lesbian racist*, *Lesbian anti-abortionist*. Over time each one of these assumptions has been proven wrong. In the proving came growth, a letting go of a naive and idealistic self and a letting in of community. Also, came a deepening of identity, a naming of the self: *Polish-American*, *raised-Catholic*, *homosexual daughter of a female Nazi genocide survivor*.

II. Using Language For/Against Us

I've often thought of language as a vehicle. Writing an article on language feels a lot like riding a train without a designated stop. The ride meanders. The destination is known only when we get there. So it is with my relationship to language/identity. Each word becomes a journey.

Having been raised in a multilingual home, I learned early on that a perfect synthesis of language and object does not exist. A cup remains a cup, something from which I drink, whether it is a Polish *filizanka*, a German *tasse*, an American-English cup, or a French *tasse*. Linguistically, what matters is the cupness of the cup — the word — while in reality the objective is getting the drink, quenching the thirst.

All these languages were spoken in my home, but not equally. Though closely allied linguistically, the German cup and the French cup delivered markedly different tastes. My mother made her way in German with a superficial ease born out of terror. German left a bitter aftertaste, tinged with hatred and unresolvable diminishment. French was inspired by my father's familiarity with the French-Canadian culture. In my ninth grade classroom it was developed into Parisian French. But neither French nor German nor American-English evoke or quench the emotional, psychological or intellectual thirst that the Polish *filizanka* stimulates and, oftentimes, satisfies.

Polish, my birth language, is the language in which my mother sang lullabies, told stories and taught me The Lord's Prayer. It is the language most closely associated with security and nourishment, protection and support. Polish, more than any other grouping of sound and recognition, is at the core of my identity. Though the security and nourishment often turned into abandonment, and the protection and support into betrayal, by taking Polish out of Poland and bringing it to America — insisting on it in America — some wonderful alchemy occurred. What was, and still is, essentially a male-driven language became my mother's language, my language — a language owned by women.

In the forty-one years I have shared my mother's language, I have witnessed her speech and accent being insulted, ridiculed, mimicked, dismissed and discounted by a variety of antagonists. The most emotionally lethal was my father. Others were less predictable, like the inattentive drug store clerk who sent her to the produce section of the grocery store to seek a remedy for the corns on her feet.

I never thought such dismissals or diminishments would

happen to me. After all, I was born in America. I speak and write in American-English with no discernible accent. Though I translate Polish poetry into English, I rarely speak in Polish and when I do, it is to my mother, my sister or the rare Polish speaking friends. However, similar dismissals have happened to me, and when they do I feel as humiliated, diminished and enraged as I imagine she did.

My rage and the occasions of my rage have taken a variety of forms. I will mention three.

When my older brother was turned away from public school, sent home to learn English, I felt the repercussions. I was torn by the knowledge that the words I had spoken for several years were not adequate and were to be left at home with the other remnants of infancy and early childhood. This changed the course of my relationship with my mother and language forever.

Like the cupness of the cup, what mattered here was my Polishness. In order to survive in this hostile environment my identity, like my mother's, went underground. In the first grade, I learned and employed a tool, a weapon, which to this day remains in my writing/language arsenal. That weapon is *irony*.

The second and third occasions of my rage exemplify a staple of linguistic bigotry: The *Ethnic* joke. Last year, while, I was in the hospital with suspected pneumonia, an x-ray technician took a cursory glance at my chart and greeted me with the following "joke:" "Do you know why most Polish names end in "ski?" The inevitable answer stereotypes the Polish race as ignorant, this time as evidenced by a lack of spelling skills (*Because they can't spell toboggan*). As a matter of fact, I am a deplorable speller. But the issue here is not the mechanics of writing, but bigotry.

A stranger's ignorance hurts and diminishes, but bigotry is more painful still when it comes out of the mouths of those you love and trust. When my lover (Yes, the one with whom I thought I was going to rock my way into the sunset) left me, she did it with a Polish joke.

Granate Sosnoff

1/22/93 1:00 am (Lunar New Years Eve)
Before my mother died.

Hapa New Years

It's not even the way I look
although that's part of it.

Without a clear reference point
of racial and cultural identity
I am drawn to many cultures.

Try to appreciate the parts I can
try to imagine what it feels like
to be all one thing

All Korean

All Asian.

My mother is the Korean one
so maybe that's why I find comfort
in Black hair,
compact bodies
fingers smoothly peeling an
apple

Silence

and one liners that keep on
describing my life.

"The universe is so large, you are so small."

My mother taught me all the important things.

That Asian was still Oriental
No matter what word you use
And

that she was
indeed
a dragon,
always a lady
but no
dragon lady.

She taught me
how to move.

I pattern her ordinary, familiar movements.

On a long drive I bring my left leg up, bend my knee and rest my foot on the seat. I sleep with the same bent knee, face down, arms around my pillow. And so does she.

A child of my mother's

Eurasian to her, for lack of a better term. Not something that she has really thought about much.

I'm just an American daughter

third born

thick

mix of two

bloods.

Nine years old and my cousins in Korea stare at me. They are unsure of my relationship to them. Where has all the Asian gone. Where is the hair, the eyes, the skin, the tongue.

When I was young I thought I had my mother's hair, wavy, wanting to curl, long, once dark brown, now lighter each year I swim in chlorine. I imagine one day that I will wake up with bleached out dirty blonde hair down to my ass and

I will still be who I am.

'Cause it's not just what I look like, though that's part of it. I always thought I had my Mom's hair and then I found out that she's been perming it since the beginning of time. And now she dyes it jet black.

When I visited his home for the first time my hair scared Uncle Yong Kee's small dogs. He asked someone to translate this to me. And I told him, "Sorry, Uncle, didn't mean to scare the dogs:"

In Korea, my arms seem big and burly next to the young women in my family. The older women have more substance though they all kind of lean forward at the waist some — their backs bent from squatting and washing vegetables and rice and clothes all day.

Like everything else, they prepare kim chee on the floor. And Connie and I join them as we try to be good Korean daughters during our two week stay. I feel clunky, another species, undelicate, ugly, American. Some of the women stare at me, want to touch my hair, tell me that I look like Lindsay Wagner, the bionic woman.

It's not really necessary when they add that I do not look Korean. Though they expect me to act like one. At least in front of them.

Even Mom has a hard time in Korea. Everyone is talking, talking, talking. Kim doesn't care. Doesn't care that adjumoni is angry at sister-in-law because sister-in-law said something to oldest son. Kim came to Korea to eat and relax. Not to fix all the small town hurts in Seoul. A city with over ten million people, and somehow about fifty of them, relatives of mine, know our every move.

Since I've done it once before I no longer go to Korea on my own. I need a buffer, some of my American family around me. Or else one wrong move and bang, it's one big telephone broadcast all over town.

Let me treat you like family in Korea. Watch me weave this misunderstanding all around you. Tight in the web of your homeland, let's see if you can remain unbroken, whole. Let's see if you can leave at all.

I spent three months in and around Seoul, and other parts of Korea, by myself. It is a tiny country. Even smaller cut in half like it is. Appalled at not having the right to go to North Korea, I am told I have no relatives there. Only perhaps the ghost of my Uncle In Kee, my mother's youngest brother, abducted as a teen during the war.

I imagine that the villages and landscapes of the two Koreas are the same. In the hilly countryside of South Korea there is no sign of crashing waves of rapid economic growth. Traffic, that rude monster, is nonexistent. Five star hotels, international shopping, cheese, Olympic Stadiums, are all gone.

Golden green, tiered rice patties encircle the hills one upon another. An old man bent from doing the same thing forever, carries a weathered basket on his back. Its shape and design is traditional, unchanged since the beginning of rice.

I didn't expect it to be so beautiful.

One cousin of mine, a very bright, sometimes drunk, young man, tells me that "you could spend a lifetime exploring this country." And this makes me pause and feel a familiar sadness because I know that it is true, and not for me.

I know that I want to go home. Want to leave the arms of these hills that root me to this ground. This beautiful land where all the ancestors lie buried. I take a small stone from the gravesite of haraboji and halmoni and try to remind myself where this place is.

Through two rice fields, around a bend, east of the big mountain.

The path to my grandparent's tomb, my great grandfather's remains, this countryside where they all have come. Where they all have been for five thousand years.

I want to leave it.

Even though there are no words to describe the longing and loneliness I have for this peninsula.

Buddhist temple where I remove my shoes, bow low and mean

it; gorgeous lake of red peppers drying in the sun; colored silken strips of fabric; taste and feel of everyday.

Even though they are unlike me in so many ways.

I know I will be back again. And though I will still speak little Korean and some of them will speak no English at all, we will know each other. Our kinship has become simple, a fact.

We are descendants of the last King of the Silla Dynasty

And though I have not always had a good name for all ow who I am

I know that I am and always will be part of this clan.

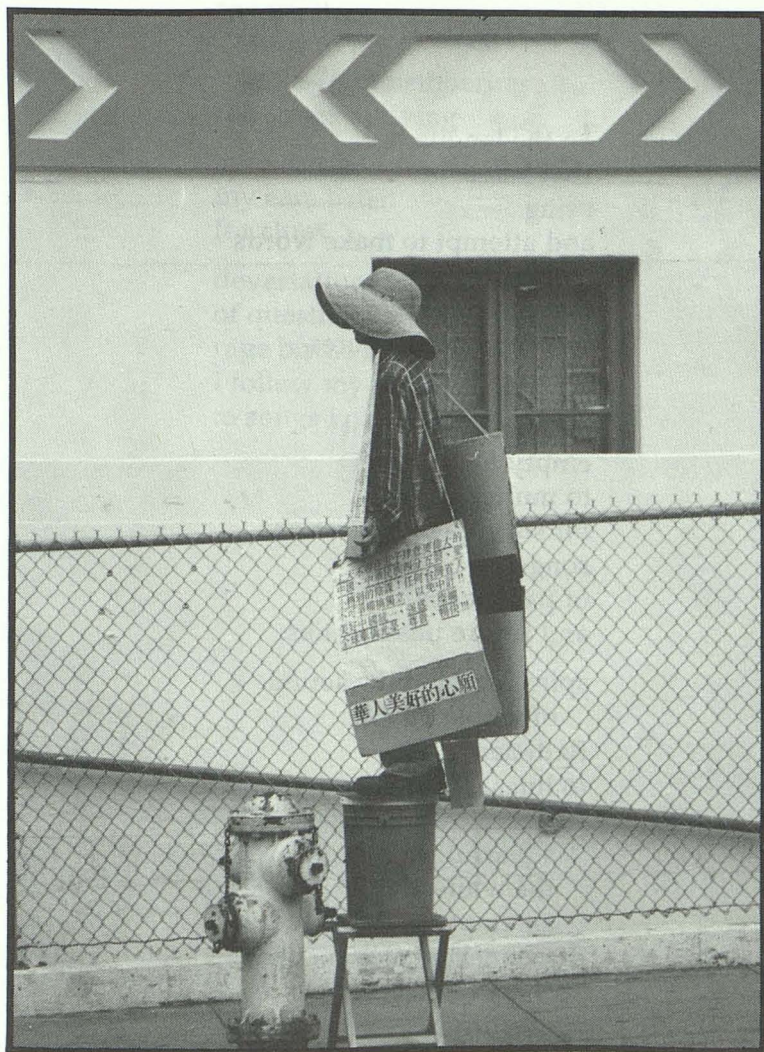
Glossary

adjumoni: aunt

haraboji: grandfather

halmoni: grandmother

hapa: a Hawaiian word meaning "half."



"Is it a man or a woman?"

"What does it say?"

Amazing Grace

Akiba Onađa-Sikwoia

the language that hates

İn the language
that hates me
i sing
and attempt to make words
to articulate
loss of tongues
severed from cultures
my people
tongues ripped out
empty mouths left
to mutter
for surviving generations
songs
of past deeds
and future possibilities
spiraling rainbow sounds
of whole people
flattened
to linear form
replaced by a language
a fearful way
the white way
an empty way
disconnected from origin
seeking to conquer
its destiny
death
intention diffused
through complexity
by theory
and facts

millions died naked
 stripped of connection
 to ancestors
 ways to pray
 paths to remembering
 the songs of living
 eyes turned inward
 my ears listen
 for clues

devastation lines the edges
 of questions unanswered
 rage births my sounds
 I follow my screams
 to songs i can't sing

Annalee Wade

Bar Notes: Eugene, Oregon

Behind the bar, Gordon pours. His hands are a pair of miniature angels — swift, calculating. This queer hole in the wall loves my need. Outside the street is satan's own hot skin. The town simmers in apathy ...

Growing up in southern California, I found the heat of Mexican kitchens quite tolerable. Cumin smelled like sweat, tortillas plumped on iron griddles like bald pudenda. In the desert the sun isn't a pitchfork — it's a stoic reminder of what was: In the time of four genders parents didn't fret over their daughter's mannish ways. They knew a good thing when they hugged her. Today some handsome brown dykes come of age in bars. Pitchers of gold beer replace council fires. Modern corn women flirt wordless — their white teeth cut their smiles open. Meanwhile the desert is surviving, not thriving. Does the desert remember caresses of moccasined feet?

The language of moccasins is ancient, we no longer speak it — we pale Mexicans of the big cities. If we could decode the silence of our longing, we would become Indian again and feel connected to everything in nature — the lizard, the coyote, the moon and sun.

Joan Baez still sings out for justice. She was my first secret crush. "A beautiful Mexican role-model" my grandmother said. "A communist" my mother said. Today many strong women sing out for justice. I like to think Joan paved their way.

The language of guitars is revolution but I'm not listening anymore. Have I grown too cynical for hope? Bury me in the desert with my best friend, Stillness. The old ones believe, once in the ground, you dream. If this is true, I'll dream a past I never lived — a past before alcohol when queers were vital like water.

Henri Bensussen

Masbata Loate

She was jailed five years
for treason
in her South Africa homeland,
sentenced by white judges
for leading student uprisings.
Released at 29,
she returned to her family
in Soweto township.
She spoke then
against "necklace death" —
young men of Soweto
pulled burning tires down
around the necks of people
suspected of working with whites.
She said there are better ways to resist
than killing one's neighbors.
The young men of Soweto
did not want to hear.
Enraged, they
hunted her in the streets
slashed her with knives
clubbed her with axes
stabbed her till she died.
Masbata Loate, woman of courage.

Amber Garland

The F Box

I am furious that there are always only two boxes: M or F. Pick one. Pick only one. Pick it or have it picked for you, for life. It is your most crucial definition.

I am joyous in my femininity, my voluptuosity, my round breasts, long hair in the wind, delicate graceful movements, the jewelry of seven queens and my ability to build masonry walls and clean up the mess.

I am furious that my lovers are stared at in women's rooms and stared at in men's rooms and that all that piss goes into the same putrid sewer instead of returning drop by drop, gently, into the Earth.

So many of my lovers have had scruffy chins three days after shaving and I have loved that scratchiness against my face. Whether they were men or women, or some other category never offered, is really none of your business; and whether they were born or chosen or would have chosen otherwise is a question each one of them would have answered differently.

I am joyous in my lesbian, two-spirit, dyke, queer, women's, womyn's, wimmin's, yin-shaped, Earth-toned, cunt and amazon sisterhood community; and I claim the right to be a mother, daughter, maiden, crone, nurturer, provider, healer, teacher, dancer, lover, father, brother or strong and gentle son if I choose to. Don't tell me I can't. By definition.

Define this: My friend was born a hermaphrodite. The parents were offered a choice: Do you want a boy or a girl?

They chose to leave the male genitals. Is he a man? How do we define gender? Are there only two? Would he, this same person, have been a woman if his/her parents had chosen to amputate the penis? Is he a woman now? Who should choose our gender for us? Parents? Doctors? Elders? Whoever knits the first pair of booties — pink or blue?

My friend thinks they picked wrong.

Define this: My brother and I both chose to adopt children.

They give us different names. I am a mother, they tell me. He is not.

Why? They tell me men can't be mothers because they can't give birth. I didn't give her birthday parties when she was four or five. I didn't put bandaids on her scraped knees. I adopted her when she was fifteen years old. They gave me a piece of paper. It says I am her mother. My brother will hold his little child, bottle feed it, take it to the playground. He will be far more mother than I by the bonding definition. There's no word for the adult who loves the individual child, no word for the daughter of my partner's ex-lover. There's no word for the relationship I have with the child crying in my arms.

Define this: I loved a lesbian who discovered he is a man. I made love with her as a woman. I made love with him as a man.

Am I bisexual now? Did I make love with a man? He still has a uterus.

Were we out of place at the gay 12-step meeting? Were we out of place at the straight 12-step meeting? Can he pray in women's space? Can he pray in men's space? Is my womanhood my culture? Is it his? He was raised woman. He will never lose that no matter how many male hormones he takes, no matter which operation he does or does not have. I will tell you this: twenty years later, I made love to my ex-lover. He was the same person who had been my lover. He says he has always been the same gender. Yet I know that I made love with a man. I know I made love with a woman before. I know neither one of us is incorrect.

You should see him. You would understand that he is male now. You should talk to him. You would understand that his thoughts were formed in a woman's mind and experience.

He checks between the boxes when they ask for gender. He is brave.

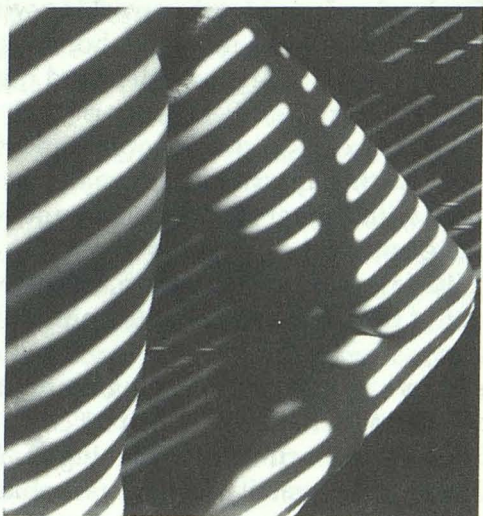
Is it necessary for everyone to know whether or not I have a vulva? If I have one does that make me a woman?

The boxes are very small. M or F. No time or space for explanation, exploration, no allowance for growth or change. They want an answer. And it's always the first question, sometimes even before "Name."

Elizabeth Luciano

love's acolyte

Many have loved you with lips and fingers
 and lain with you till the moon went out
 many have brought you lovers' gifts
 and some have left their dreams on your doorstep
 but I, youthful among your lovers,
 come as an acolyte to worship
 my thirsting blood restrained by reverence
 my heart a wordless prayer
 the candles of desire are lighted
 I bow my head before you
 a mendicant who craves your bounty
 ashamed of what small gifts she brings.



Untitled

Julia Youngblood

Contributors' Notes

A. Miriasiem Barnes — 35 year old Afro American Lesbian. Born on the east coast transplanted to the west. She lives with multiple physical challenges. Her joys and talents include music, writing and doodling. Currently working on a major doodle collection (okay girls — a drawing). She plays alto saxophone with the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay Freedom Band. Her current dream is to look up one Tuesday night and see many more women of color at band practice.

Amazing Grace Harwood was born on Cinco De Mayo, 1947, in Galesburg, Illinois. At 23, published her first book of poems *One Half a Loaf at Half the Figure*. At 28 she founded the worlds first human right's journal, *Match Box*, a publication of Amnesty International in the U.S. At 38 she bought her first camera and has devoted herself to photography since then. She practices yoga, meditation, studies Vedanta, and looks after her cat, Sita, when she isn't working evenings at a big ass San Francisco law firm.

Amber Garland — I am a teacher working with drug addicted youth who are often gang involved, homeless, abused and or abusive. These children are my elders and my main teachers. I am full-blood North Sea People, born and raised on Turtle Island. I am 12 years into recovery from addiction and my daughter is getting married. This year I have begun a new relationship with a lover and I am surrounded by dear friends and a strong spiritual community.

Annalee Wade — 36, good union job, I write when I can. Before the advent of the Christian Right the only thing I truly feared was cancer.

Ananda Esteva just started speaking up for herself and hopes her voice will carry her far ... it better!

April Citizen Kane is currently finishing her Masters in Literature at Hamline University. April is a lesbian poet, stand-up comedienne, and performance artist. April recently won a Loft McKnight mentorship award, and was invited to study with poet/novelist Claribel Alegria for one month. April is currently trying to publish her first manuscript of poetry, and

trying to get her motorcycle running in time for Gay Pride.

Carol A. Johnson is a lesbian visual artist exhibiting work within California. She has exhibited at spaces including Luna Sea, ProArts Gallery, Orange County Center for Contemporary Art, Red Dora's (Bearded Lady Coffeehouse) and Brick Hut Cafe. Currently her work is included in Mission Sole at Collision and VulvArt Show at 848 Community Space in San Francisco. Her work is in painting, drawing and mixed media.

Cathy Cade has been a lesbian feminist photographer since the early 70's. She is working on a photo book about lesbian mothering and she lives in Oakland with her two sons.

Diane Doumit — Author of *Women on the Edge of a Very Steep Cliff* (oppression of women by patriarchal mental constructs), includes "Twisted" and "Punctuated with a Tiny Dot." Four more books beckoning publishers: *I Know of a Road* (search for calm, order, and fulfillment in a kinetic, complex, and clock-oriented world); *Imaginations* (woman's romantic travels across deserts, canyonlands and mountains); *Journal of Roads* (introspective); and *Women in Flames* (oppression of women healers).

Ekua Omosupe is a professor of English at Cabrillo College in Aptos, California. She teaches writing, Women's Studies and American Lit. Ekua lives in Santa Cruz. She is a single mother for three children and is a business woman. She and partner, Maria Davila, are co-owners of an ethnic jewelry, arts and crafts business known as MAKUA PRODUCTIONS.

Elisa Lucero — I'm a 31 year old lesbian revolucionario. I live in a little adobe house in the village of Corrales, New Mexico which is in the Rio Grande bosque. I am accompanied by my constant companion, my puppy dog Rasta, who is 11 years old. Union carpenter by trade. I sit on the Board of directors for New Mexico's Public/Community Radio station, KUNM, and I'm also on an advisory board for the New Mexico Commission on the Status of Women.

Elizabeth Luciano is a poet living in Tucson, Arizona. She believes that the personal revelation becomes the universal communication filling the silences that connect us to each other. It is in this spirit she creates her work.

Felicia Reim is a creative spirit who manifests her creations in a range of forms. She has focused her talents on photography, painting and writing. Currently she is also studying

Environmental Science in Santa Cruz, California. Her favorite imagery is nature and people in portrait form.

Franna Blaine Lusson — I work with fragments and pieces, which become a metaphor for life as I experience it. These images are a collection of symbols, a language used to express the great confusion and loss I experienced after my mother's suicide and my grandmother's death. They also explore what it feels like to be the only surviving member of a family.

Granate Sosnoff is hapa, Korean and Russian Jewish, living in the East Bay and currently working on a longer piece on aspects of hapa experience.

Henri Bensussen spends most of her free time co-editing *Entre Nous*, a monthly newsletter for lesbians. Her poems have been published in *Blue Mesa Review*, *Garden Variety Dykes*, *Dream Machinery*, and *Wilde Oaks*. "Masbata Loate" is based on a newspaper report.

Huda Jadallah is a Palestinian lesbian. She was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay area. She is the founder of the Arab Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Network, P. O. Box 460526, San Francisco, CA 94114. She is currently compiling an anthology of writings by and about Arab lesbians and bisexual women.

JBWiley is a Lesbian-of-Color living in Berkeley. She is a writer, artist, environmentalist and an activist for womyn's and immigrants' rights. Currently she owns and operates DRAGO Design, a graphic design and computer consultancy.

Jennifer Tucker — I am a senior in high school, and attend Idyllwild School of Music and the Arts (known as ISOMATA). I am a "creative writing major" at my school, and am an avid short fiction and poetry writer.

Julie Lawton is a freelance artist who has been producing artwork for over twenty years. Her recent works represent the women's community, reflecting the energy and life from within. The colors are brilliant and the figures are sensuous. Collectively, they provide a depiction of women and a lifestyle she wholeheartedly embraces. Julie resides in the Albany, New York area.

K. Linda Kivi is an Estonian-Canadian country dyke from BC. She lives on women's land in the woods with her carnivorous

cat, Aya. Her books include *Canadian Women Making Music* (1992), and a novel, *If Home is Not a Place*, and a collection of lesbian stories, *Living at Random*, which are due out in 1995. She is currently in a poetry phase.

Karla Nitchmann is a happy woman to be writing again. I am especially pleased to be able to write this piece about my Grandmother's deep thoughts on her (my) people's culture and spirituality. I have written two unpublished books that I am currently considering bringing out for view. In the mode again, I am preparin ag piece on death row, (one of my books is about mothers in prison and what happens to their children).

Kyos Featherdancing AKA Koyote — 44 years of age. I am Caddo, Choctaw, German, Irish, Russian and French Canadian. I am a writer, poet, singer, drummer — performing artist. I am a survivor of many abuses. My story and a poem is published in *The Courage to Heal*. I, with a lot of help, have turned my life around. I am living proof of a woman walking her power, surrounded by love because of my native Grandmothers' influence. I am also a visual artist. I make sacred objects of healing. They contain my prayers, my heritage and the different medicines I walk with. I am a lover of life and tradition — true ways of old.

Laura C. Luna — I've been writing since I was a child and my words have been used against me. My writing went hidden packed away in boxes and my voice silenced. With much support, I now feel strong enough to share and speak my truth. Although at times I wondered, I know that the years of violence and "treatments" bestowed upon me failed to extinguish my spirit. Of the many labels tagged on me, my favorite is "borderline personality disorder," considering that I'm a Chicana living in the U.S. For now, I live in Northern California with my two girl dogs, Yogi and Hodgi. This is my first published piece.

Leatha Jones is a 21-year-old African and Blackfoot Indian womanist raised in the diaspora of United States of America. She was a founding member of Berkeley High School's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and questioning support/social group. She served as Editor in Chief of the international newsletter, *Inside/Out* produced by and for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender

and questioning youth based in San Francisco, California. As a board member of The Women's AIDS Network she is developing her skills as a community activist. Under the leadership of author Jewelle Gomez she is currently studying the genre of creative writing and working on composing more short stories and poetry. **Liliana (Lusia) Slomkowska** is a Polish-American lesbian who has lived, taught and been an activist for lesbian-feminist issues in the United States and Eastern Europe, particularly Poland. My writing seeks to explore my identity as a Polish-American lesbian writer and that of a daughter of a Nazi Genocide survivor (my mother). Within the last several years I have translated approximately fifty Polish women poets and poems. For this work, I was awarded a grant from the Barbara Deming Foundation. With that support I hope to continue to widen the circle.

Margaret M. Pavel — Dr. Margaret Pavel has been pioneering new work in the field of eco-psychology. She has recently returned from Finland where she co-led an expedition to the Arctic Circle. In August she is participating in the 50th anniversary of Hiroshima and teaching ecology and peace-making for four weeks in Japan. She is co-author of *Random Kindness and Senseless Acts of Beauty*, with Anne Herbert, and *Handy Tips for How to Behave at the Death of the World*.

Marianne Hewitt is a 38-year-old poet, student, tutor, waitress, mother and lover. She is currently engaged in writing-a-work-in-progress, *The Poetics of Motherhood*.

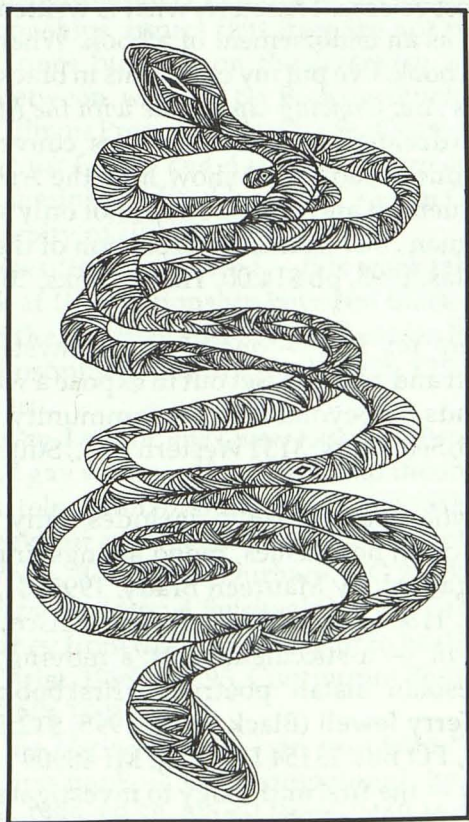
Mary Kerr — I was born in Youngstown, Ohio and moved to Philadelphia nine years ago to be with my partner. I have a BA of Fine Arts from Youngstown University and a MSA from the University of Miami, Florida. Right now I am a District Art Coordinator for the Department of Recreation, City of Philadelphia.

Pola is a member of the Osage Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma and a student of the human condition. She loves the sun, sky, water and things orange. She uses writing to get to the truth of her experience.

Sandy Tate — I am 60 years old, Jewish, working-class and a Dyke Separatist. I dream of living someday in a Separatist community at the ocean.

Sauda Burch is a thirty-four-year-old Black lesbian writer and activist originally from Chicago. She has lived in Oakland for seven years and is currently at work on her first novel.

Shahara Godfrey is African-American, completing her doctoral studies in Counseling Psychology and lives in Emeryville, California. She quotes Diane Reeves, "I am an endangered species, I am a woman, I am an artist and I sing no victim song."



Grandmothers
Akiba Onađa-Sikwoia

Books Received

About the Books Received List: I've listed most of the books we get in the mail. Unfortunately, there is never enough room or time to review everything we'd like to — although, in the future we plan to do many more whole book reviews. If you're interested in reviewing books please let us know. I've listed all the books of one press together. While I feel all of the books listed here are important — our perspectives need to be heard — we have not actually reviewed them. Many of my comments are taken from the publisher's press release. Therefore, what is written here should not be viewed as an endorsement of a book. When I have read parts or all of a book, I've put my comments in brackets. — Akiba

Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media — deciphers the decidedly mixed messages conveyed to girls over the last four decades and show how the American mass media has influenced and helped shape not only society's perception of women, but women's perception of themselves, by Susan J. Douglas. 1995, pb \$14.00, Times Books, 201 E. 50th. St., NY, NY 10022.

We Know Where You Live — one of a new mystery series. PI Maggie Garrett and assistant set out to expose a web of corruption that extends far beyond the Gay community, by Jean Taylor. 1995, \$9.95, Seal Press, 3131 Western Ave., Suite 410, Seattle, WA 48121.

Midlife: Meditations for Women — includes daily affirmations and sage advice on hot flashes, mood swings, innocence lost, and wisdom gained, by Maureen Brady. 1995, \$12.00, Harper San Francisco, 1160 Battery Street, San Francisco, CA 94111.

Succulent Heretic — a succulent feast, a moving and diverse collection of lesbian "sistah" poetry [her first book — real good reading], by Terry Jewell (Black poet). 1995, \$12.00 ppd, Opal Tortuga Press, PO Box 23154 Lansing, MI 48909

Lesbian Erotics — the first anthology to investigate the cultural constructions of sexually charged images of lesbians in film, law, literature and popular culture in general, essays by 16 lesbians edited by Karla Jay. 1995, pb \$17.95, New York University Press, 70 Washington Square So., NY, NY 10012

Solution Three — a thought experiment in the psychology and ethics of tampering with gender and genetics. Another science fiction work by Naomi Mitchison. 1995, \$10.95, The Feminist Press, 311 E. 94th St., NY, NY 10128.

Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls — a clinical psychologist's look at the dangers facing adolescent girls today by Mary Pipher PhD. 1995, \$12.50, Ballantine Publishing Group, 201 E. 50th St. NY, NY 10022.

On Intimate Terms: The Psychology of Difference in Lesbian Relationships — this provocative exploration of the internal logic of lesbian relationships argues that they are not patterned after heterosexual ones but rely on the interplay of psychosexual differences between women, by Beverly Burch. 1994, \$12.95, University of Illinois Press, 1325 So. Oak St., Champaign, IL 61820.

Provoking Agents: Gender and Agency in Theory and Practice — essays by 15 feminists edited by Judith Kegan Gardiner. 1995, \$18.95, University of Illinois Press.

Double consciousness/Double Bind — this work takes an unprecedented look at the relationship between Black literature and criticism and the complex ensemble of western literature, criticism and philosophy by Sandra Adell. 1995, \$25.95, University of Illinois Press.

Out Culture: Gay, Lesbian, and Queer Essays on Popular Culture — 30 lesbian and gay writers offer critical and theoretical perspectives on film, television, popular music and fashion, edited by Corey K. Greckmur and Alexander Doty. 1995, pb \$22.95, Duke University Press, Box 90660, Durham, NC 27708.

Odyssey With the Goddess: A Spiritual Quest in Crete — depicts a spiritual journey from death and despair to healing and rebirth by Carol P. Christ. 1995, \$18.95, Continuum Books, 370 Lexington Ave, NY, NY 10017.

Songs From the Native Lands — an exquisite "ceremony" of poetry [her first book — very compelling], by Victoria Lena Manyarrows. 1995, \$9.95, Nopal Press, 2440 16th St. #146, San Francisco, CA 94103.

When Women Stop Hating Their Bodies: Freeing Yourself From Food and Weight Obsession, by Carol H. Muntter and Jane R. Hirschman.

1995, \$22.00, Ballantine Publishing Group, 201 E. 50th Street, NY, NY 10022.

The Woman-Centered Economy: Ideals, Reality and the Space in Between — 28 women of multi-class and multi-culture (some lesbians) identity — including Minnie Bruce Pratt and bell hooks — present a diverse collection of essays and interviews exploring economic aspects of the culture that has grown up around the Women's Movement in the United States since 1970 [interesting reading], edited by Loraine Edwards and Midge Stocker. 1995, \$15.95, Third Side Press, 2250 W. Farragut, Chicago, IL 60625.

Healing the Whole: The Diary of an Incest Survivor, by Yvette M. Pennacchia. 1995, \$14.95, Cassell, 215 Park Ave So., NY, NY 10003.

Talking Black: Lesbians of African and Asian Descent Speak Out. The first anthology by black lesbian writers in Britain. Powerful and important works celebrating the lives of 12 dykes of African and Asian descent living in Britain [I find this book exciting and quite thought provoking]. 1995, Cassell.

Separatism and Women's Community — reviews, debates in separatist theory, historical narratives by members of separatist collectives and utopian novels that envision how collectives might be formed by Dana R. Shugar. 1995, \$30.00, University of Nebraska Press, 312 No. 14th St., Lincoln NE 68588.

Upside Down in the Dark — a deep and sensitive collection of poems about being woman, mother and lesbian [good reading], by Carol Potter. 1995, \$9.95, Alice James Books, University of Maine at Farmington, 98 Main Street, Farmington, ME 04938.

Ransacking the Closet — blends snapshots of daily lesbian life and ironic self-portraits with sketches of challenging subjects, like safe sex and therapy, filtered through her quirky lens, by Yvonne Zipter. 1995, \$9.95, Spinsters Ink, 32 E. First St., Duluth, MN 55802.

Hangdog Hustle — the third Nell Fury PI mystery, set in San Francisco's Castro District, part of Spinsters Ink's feminist mystery series by Elizabeth Pincus. 1995, \$9.95, Spinsters Ink.

Martha Moody — a fantastical western embracing both the ordinary and magical details of women's lives in the west of the 1800's — an old fashioned love story [fun reading that challenges

- notions of size], by Susan Stinson. 1995, \$10.95, Spinsters Ink.
- Journey to Feel: A Collection of Poetry and Artwork* — a visual and poetic journey of healing and reclaiming of self [first published book], by Laura Irene Wayne. 1994, \$15.00, JORA Publications, PO Box 221850, Sacramento, CA 95822.
- There Will Be No Goodbyes* — a story of contemporary lesbian life and love and friendship, by Laura DeHart Young. 1995, \$10.95, Naiad Press Inc., PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302.
- Forever* — a sensuous, passionate love story, by Evelyn Kennedy. 1995, \$10.95, Naiad Press.
- Someone To Watch* — the fourth book in the Robin Miller Mystery series, by Jaye Maiman. 1995, \$10.95, Naiad Press.
- Greener Than Grass* — both asks and answers questions about friendship, love, intimacy and lust, by Jennifer Fulton. 1995, \$10.95, Naiad Press.
- Whispers* — a mystery by Kris Bruyer. 1995, \$10.95, Naiad Press.
- Cabin Fever* — third in the Laney Samms Mystery series by Carol Schmidt. 1995, \$10.95, Naiad Press.
- Open House* — fourth in the Helen Black Mystery series, takes Helen from Berkeley to Mississippi to face her past, by Pat Welch. 1995, \$10.95, Naiad Press.
- Night Songs* — the second in the Gianna Maglionne/Mimi Patterson series which leads the two unexpectedly into a high echelon of government, by Penny Mickelbury. 1995, \$10.95, Naiad Press.
- Getting To the Point* — an authentic indelible portrait of a family in today's south and how they come to terms with a lesbian daughter and her very out lover, by Theresa Stores. 1995, \$10.95, Naiad Press.
- Once More With Feeling* — where you will find the challenges as well as the joys of love and friendship, by Peggy J. Herring. 1995, \$10.95, Naiad Press.
- Devotion* — a film and now also a novel of romance and drama, by Mindy Kaplan. 1995, \$10.95, Naiad Press.
- For Love and For Life: Intimate Portraits of Lesbian Couples* — interviews with 10 couples of varied ages, ethnic and economic identities, who have been together from 15 to 37 years — five of the women are over 70, by Susan E. Johnson. 1995, \$14.95, Naiad Press.

Announcements and Classified Ads_____

PUBLICATIONS

CONMOCIÓN, revista y red revolucionaria de lesbianas latinas, a new national publication with 100% Latina lesbian vision, seeks writings and art by Latina lesbians in Spanish, English or Spanglish, any form. Subs: \$13 for 3. Info: 1521 Alton Road #336, Miami Beach, FL 33139.

ESTO NO TIENE NOMBRE, revista de lesbianas latinas en miami, is a forum for latina lesbians with a Miami twist. Open to all forms (Spanish, Spanglish, English), \$10 per year (checks to: Tatiana de la Tierra). Guidelines, subs to: 4700 NW 7th St. #463, Miami, FL 33126.

MAIZE, A Lesbian Country Magazine. Land dyke networking since 1983. Sub: \$10/4 issues. Single issue \$3.50. MAIZE, POB 130, Serafina, NM 87569.

WE ARE HERE — national resource guide for lesbian and gay youth, by Gay Youth Comm. Coalition of the Bay Area, \$5 (pay to We Are Here) from: 2215 Market St., #479, SF, CA 94114.

TEEN VOICES — by, for & about teenage and young adult women, sample \$2: Women Express, POB 6009 JFK, Boston, MA 02114.

DYKE REVIEW MAGAZINE — "We don't judge it, we just publish it." Looking for features writers from your area; all publishable forms of dyke expression. Call 415-621-3769 or write: 584 Castro St., Ste. 456, SF, CA 94114.

LESBIAN CONTRADICTION seeks non-fiction from women who've experienced the Far Right around lesbian/gay & women's issues. Ongoing column. LesCon, 584 Castro St., Ste. 356, SF, CA 94114.

SHORT FICTION BY WOMEN, new guidelines available — SASE to: Rachel Whalen, ed., Box 1276, Stuyvesant Sta., NY, NY 10009.

VAMPIRE JOURNALS, a new lesbian & bisexual quarterly, seeks writers and readers. Send SASE for guidelines, info to: The Queen, P.O.B. 681, San Leandro, CA 94577.

VIRAGO, a new quarterly for lesbian veterans, seeks all forms of writing. Queries: POB 1171, New Market, VA 22844.

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

Lesbian couple constructing anthology based on FIRST-TIME EXPERIENCES OF LESBIANS. Interested? Write for info: POB 458, Monroe, MI 48161.

BLUE COLLAR, WORKING CLASS AND POOR LESBIANS' identity anthology: who decides who's a lesbian? What a real lesbian looks, acts, sounds like? What we call ourselves? For info, send SASE to: POB 8939, Minneapolis, MN 55408.

BLACK LESBIAN CULTURE: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE — let's be honest and claim ALL we are, have been and will be for centuries! For guidelines, info: SASE to Terri Jewell, POB 23154, Lansing, MI 48909, running deadline.

RIPENING LESBIANS, an anthology, seeks all forms from all dykes on growing older. Queries, submissions w/SASE to Tirzah Gerstein, 85 Newbury St., Hartford, CT 06114.

RISING TIDE PRESS, a new lesbian publisher, seeks full-length lesbian novels. For guidelines, send SASE to: Rising Tide Press, 5 Kivy St., Huntington Station, NY 11746.

SPINSTERS INK is seeking feminist writing by women of color — novels and non-fiction works. For more info: POB 300170, Dept. C, Minneapolis, MN 55403, (612) 377-0287.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

THINK IT'S NOT WHEN IT IZ (TINWII) is a theater company dedicated to promoting positive gay and lesbian imagery in the media. The company's first play, SENSUALITY, examines the catharsis that many lesbians experience in coming to terms with their sexuality. The company's second play, CHOICES, is a lesbian soap opera based on lesbian life in the 90's. For information or to book a show in your area please contact Sonya M. Hemphill at (718) 949-3864.

LESBIAN VISUAL ARTIST (LVA) a promotional & networking organization whose purpose is to network among lesbian visual artists and to promote their work. For more information

contact Happy/L.A. Hyder, 870 Market Street #618, San Francisco, CA 94102, (415)788-6118.

EVENTS/ORGANIZING/CONFERENCES/RETREATS

THE LIFE AND LEADERSHIP OF ELIZABETH CADY STANTON: A Centennial Celebration of The Woman's Bible, keynote by Gerda Lerner, Oct. 6-8, 1995. Info: V. Fowler, Dept. of Religion, Columbia College, 1301 Columbia College Dr., Columbia, SC 29203.

THE FATE OF FEMINISM: IS THERE A NEXT GENERATION? S. Conn. State Univ. 5th Annual Women's Studies Conference, Sept. 30-Oct. 1, 1995. Info: V. Neverow, Women's Studies, SCSU, 501 Crescent St., New Haven, CT 06515, E-mail: neverow@scsud.ctstateu.edu.

LESBIAN NATURAL RESOURCES (LNR) is a new organization dedicated to developing rural lesbian community, providing grants & assistance with land purchase, establishing land trusts, tax exemption & land skills. Emphasis on making this resource available to lesbians of color. For more info, write: POB 8742, Minneapolis, MN 55408-0742.

OLOC — Old Lesbians Organizing for Change helps form new groups of lesbians over 60, provides ageism education, stimulates existing groups to confront ageism. OLOC, POB 980422, Houston, TX 77098.

COTTAGES AT HEDGEBROOK — A Retreat for Women Writers grants cottages and meals for writers for a stay of up to three months. Application deadlines: Apr. 1 and Oct. 1. For applications: 2197 E. Millman Rd., Langley, WA 98260.

NORCROFT — A writing retreat for women provides space and food for up to four weeks between May & October. Write for 1995 applications: POB 300105, Minneapolis, MN 55403.

AD(VENTURES)

JOIN US ON BEAUTIFUL WIMMIN'S LAND! Cabin, campground, furnished outdoor kitchen under roof, firewood, solar shower, swimpond, bookstore. Women only. SBAMUH #SW, PO Box 5853, Athens, OH 45701 or (614)448-2509.

SUPPORT

AILEEN WUORNOS DEFENSE COMMITTEE postcard campaign to demand a new trial for Wuornos. Postcards to: Florida Supreme Court, 5th Judicial Circuit, 300 S. Beach St., Daytona Beach, FL 32114. Call 415-995-2392 for more info.

LAVENDER L.E.A.F. is the Lesbian Emergency Action Fund of money given anonymously, available to any S.F. or Alameda County (CA) woman-born lesbian of poverty or working class background who needs it. Lavender L.E.A.F.'s long-term goal is to diminish economic disparities among lesbians. Send checks, queries to: L. Leaf, POB 20921, Oakland, CA 94620.

SPINSTERHAVEN, INC., a retirement haven for older women and women with disabilities, promoting physical, cultural and spiritual well-being of women. Membership info and donations, POB 718, Fayetteville, AR 72701.

WHIPTAIL WOMYN'S COLLECTIVE provides a womyn-only dyke-identified, drug-smoke-alcohol free space in S.F. & needs all the help it can get. Send \$, questions, energy to: 3543 18th St. Box #29, SF, CA 94110.

PEN CENTER USA WEST is offering grants for writers with HIV/AIDS. Applications are available from PEN Center USA West, 672 S. LaFayette Park Pl, #41, LA, CA, 90057. App. deadline Sept. 29, 1995.

LESBIANS IN CRITICAL NEED have been sending us increasing numbers of requests to run announcements for their personal funds. Instead of printing these individual appeals, we urge you to contribute frequently and generously to local organizations. Imagine if we just told you your childhood best friend, your favorite gym teacher, an admired dyke activist or your first lover had metastatic cancer and couldn't pay the doctor bills; or had developed E.I., could no longer leave her house and had no way to get or pay for groceries. Then make a contribution to Lavender L.E.A.F., The Dykefund, the Charlotte Maxwell Clinic, The Women's Cancer Resource Center (these are S.F. Bay Area resources, find the ones in your community). We need full support networks as well as money — dykes willing to shop, drive, talk, listen, organize.

February 8, 1995.

To:
International Advisory Board of the
International Feminist Book Fair, 6th IFBF,
Friends and Supporters:

It is with great sadness that the Organizing Commission for the Seventh International Feminist Book Fair announces its dissolution. Our Commission resigns as a whole. We wish to communicate the events which have led us to this decision.

Although we are very different in many respects, (such as age, profession, academic, ethnic background, political party and worldview), as feminists we all shared the dream of holding the Seventh ICBF here in Brazil, and invested work and money toward that end. As we stated in our presentation of July 1994 "In Amsterdam (1992), we proposed to organize the Fair here in Brazil, considering that we are experiencing a fertile period of feminist and women's literary production, and now is the time to try to shift the axis of emphasis from the Northern Hemisphere to encompass the South, and from the predominance of Anglo-Saxon writers, to be more inclusive."

After a year and a half of work, we were surprised and taken aback to learn by reading the program of the Melbourne Fair that the decision to hold the IFBF in Brazil in 1996, made in Amsterdam in 1992, had been called into question and a new decision was to be taken during the IFBF in Melbourne.

We believe that a feminist manner of proceeding would have been to have confidence in the group originally chosen; any questioning of this decision would need to have a stated reason, clear procedural outlines for taking another decision and clear indications of what was lacking in the information we provided. We experienced the communications from Melbourne as unclear and impositional, and they interfered in our work at a time when it was necessary to accelerate our efforts.

During the Fair, we received a fax stating: "... but many questions have been raised about Brazil 1996 that no one here can answer. At the same time, the Phillipines, who were well represented here, have presented a strong bid. This, combined with the fact that your funding depends on the upcoming elections has moved the group to a consensus in support of the Phillipines' bid for the 7th IFBF in

1996." We were told to try again in 1998. (fax from the 7th IFBF Location Group, 29 July 1994).

Another major difficulty was the withholding of information crucial to affirming (or not) the decision that Brazil would be the site of the Fair in 1996. Only after the Melbourne Fair did we learn extra-officially that there were questions involved which had never been communicated to us: to wit, a supposed split within our commission (this was never the case); a requirement that the elections in Brazil have a predetermined outcome (we would have worked successfully with whichever government had been elected and never did our project "depend on the upcoming elections" as alleged in the 29 July fax), and an issue over the extent of lesbian participation in the organizing of the Fair. The withholding of information regarding the REAL concerns of the organizers constituted an effective barrier to our REAL participation in any decision.

One of the strong points of our bid, was the commercial aspect: never has a Feminist Book Fair been staged inside an event with public attendance of the dimensions of the Sao Paulo Book Biennial — a public of 3 million in 1994. Further members of our commission were, and are, perfectly capable of organizing large scale events and have the track record to so demonstrate.

After the site was summarily removed from Brazil in July, we received indications of renewed interest on the part of the international organizers in December and January. What happened to the proponents from the Phillipines? We hope that their experience has not been as difficult as ours.

With sincere hopes that these problems can be corrected, we caution that treating each other with mutual respect based on the assumption of credibility is an essential operating tenet of feminism. We do wish you success with your next efforts.

Sincerely,

Zuleika Alambert
 Miriam Bottassi
 Nelly Novaes Coelho
 Silvia Cintra Franco
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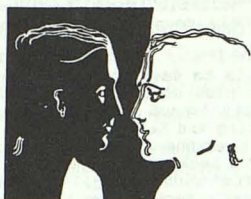
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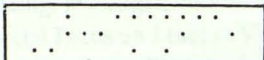
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- #55 **An open issue** explores issues of racial identity and sexual identification
- #54 **Lesbians & Religion:** explores questions of faith and community from many directions (Elana Dykewomon's last issue as editor).
- #53 **Old Lesbians/Dykes:** guest edited by 9 old dykes, features the work of 38 womyn over 60, including Del Martin, Phyllis Lyon & Sally Miller Gearhart.
- #52 **Allies** includes 10 interviews by Jamie Lee Evans with lesbian activists.
- #51 **An open issue** where lesbians lay claim to our lives.
- #50 **Not The Ethics Issue** we had planned (read it to find out why). But there is great work on ethics & more. Guest edited by Caryatis Cardea and Sauda Burch.
- #49 **The Lesbian Body:** here's where flesh and theory meet — includes lesbians of color, roles, disability, body image, fat, sex, menopause and more.
- #48 **Lesbian Resistance:** investigations into the activist heart of our courage — including messages from dykes in prison.
- #47 **Lesbians of Color: Tellin' It Like It Tis'.** Special 160-page issue edited by lesbians of color, includes new work in all forms — essential reading.
- #46 **Dyke Lives.** New, international fiction and poetry.
- #45 **Lesbians and Class.** The first issue edited entirely by poor and working class dykes includes analysis, personal narrative, poetry, fiction & a graffiti wall.
- #43/44 **The 15th Anniversary Retrospective.** 368 pages, over 90 lesbians' work from the second wave. An amazing, indispensable source collection!
- #42 **Lesbian Voices.** Our first intentional all-lesbian issue.
- #41 **Italian-American Women's Issue.** Guest edited by Denise Leto & Janet Capone.
- #40 **Special Focus on Friendship.** Essays, fiction, editorial discussion transcript.
- #36 **Special Focus on Surviving Psychiatric Assault/Creating Emotional Well Being in our Communities.** Includes testimony, prose, poetry and essays.
- #35 **Passing.** Investigations into trying to appear other than we are.
- #34 **Special Focus on Lesbian Visions, Fantasy, SciFi.**
- #33 **Special Focus on Wisdom.** Lesbians of Color, non-violence, war stories, incest, leaving a will, assimilation & The Real Fat Woman Poems.
- #32 **Special Focus on Illness, Death, Mourning, Healing, the disappeared, hunting season, dealing with suicide, cancer, new ritual observances.**
- #31 **Special Focus on Sex and Fiction, coming out in the south, found goddesses.**
- #28 **Special Focus on Women & Work; Body Image, Size & Eating.**
- #26 **Special Issue: To Go To Berbir** by Jill Drew, a book on being in Beirut in 1982.

We recently found a case of slightly damaged copies of #39, **On Disability** (\$5 ea.). *Sinister Wisdom* #1-19, 27, 37 & 38 are out of print. Photocopies can be provided — \$5 for the first article, \$1 for each add. in the same order (\$17 for a whole issue). Allow one month for delivery.



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"Voices"

— April Citizen Kane