

Environmental Issues
Lesbian Concerns

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Sinister Wisdom is a multicultural, multi-class, female-born lesbian space. We seek to open, consider and advance the exploration of community issues. We recognize the power of language to reflect our diverse experiences and to enhance our ability to develop critical judgment, as lesbians evaluating our community and our world. Statements made and opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher, board members, or editor(s) of *Sinister Wisdom*.

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A Journal by and for Lesbians

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Notes for a Magazine

Lesbians understand why Earth is called "Mother" Earth rather than father earth. As daughters of Earth Mother we honor our female bond through song and praise, and respect her as she cycles through our lives. We perform rituals, we raise our heads, hearts, and arms to her, appreciating her for her never-ending breathe of life-air, land, her seas, rivers, mountains, valleys and her deserts. We love her and honor her. We pray to her for continuance of her gifts to us. We pray that she not stop showering us with her feminine glory. Throughout the ages this has been our connection and Earth Mother has opened up and given us her essence of life like a mother breast-feeding life-giving milk to her child.

Like a daughter who is connected to her Mother, Mother Earth Lesbians throughout the world are sensitively aware of what is happening to her. Our praise has turned to desperate pleas and cries for mercy that she continues to sustain us. We see her being raped and mutilated by those without respect for her-continually. This is the catastrophe. Ruthless are the ones taking from her, abusing her with no regard to her ability to recover; they mutilate her beyond recognition. Our Earth Mother is getting sick, she "is" sick. Her skin is dry and cracking from lack of water, her bones are weak from mal-nourished soil and she coughs poisons due to pollutants in the air and in the earth. How long will she be able to withstand this onslaught of mercilessness?

Yes, Lesbians of Mother Earth are aware. We are letting our Earth Mother know our fears, concerns, anger and our need to take care of her for we are her. There are daughters, who like a mother, sitting quietly by her sick child gives energies of love for healing. There are daughters who fight the oppressors and slaughterers demanding of them that they stop this relentless onslaught. There are daughters singing the healing songs and daughters whose hands replenish Earth. Many of these daughters are represented in this 77th issue of *Sinister Wisdom*.

Because of the contributions of the Lesbians represented here, each of you reading this journal will be sending, naturally, with little to no effort-because we are women, your love to our Earth Mother. I would like to thank *Sinister Wisdom* for making this written forum possible.

Diane Foster
Albuquerque, New Mexico
June 2009

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WE ALSO APPRECIATE THE FOLLOWING
PUBLICATIONS FOR PRINTING *SINISTER WISDOM*
ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS:

Journal of Lesbian Studies

Just About Write

Maize: A Lesbian Country Magazine

OLOC Reporter (Old Lesbians Organizing for Change)

*Rain and Thunder: A Radical Feminist Journal
of Discussion and Activism*

Something Special: Dyke Notes

*WomanSource Rising News: An Ecofeminist,
Social Justice Publication*

Women's Review of Books

Ruth Zachary

Earth In Peril

Still blue-green and beautiful, the woman named Terra,
longs to slip out of orbit, and slide down
the long pale ring of the milky way, but she
cannot break the magnetic tether; attraction
to a radioactive sun. Gravity holds her captive,
as tightly as her self-defeating instinct to rescue
her feckless progeny from their own excrement

These offspring multiply like vermin
The woman fears they will smother in their own exhaust.
She too, breathes in heavy spasms.
Her tears rain down upon the just and the unjust.

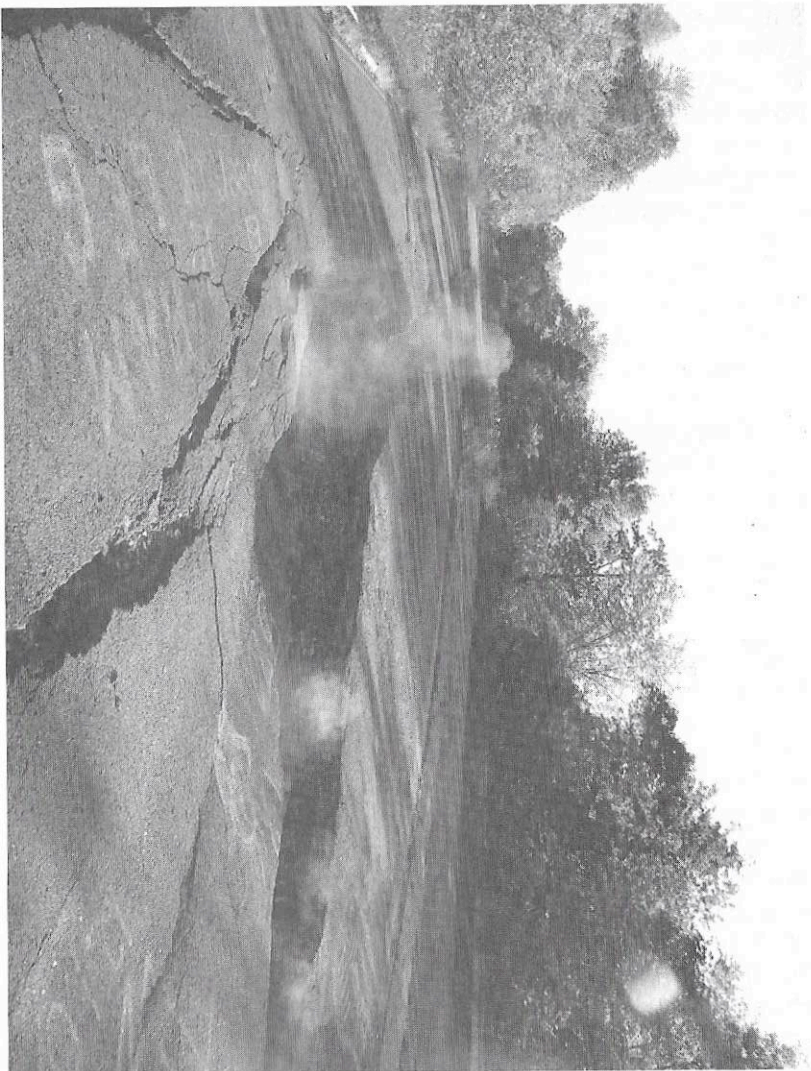
Heedless, they carve her flesh with bulldozers,
mining her organs for profit; filling her wounds with trash.
They cannibalize their siblings and indiginous life forms.
Like leeches, they suck their mother's energy to feed
their machines and incinerate what remains. Smoke
fills the skies with toxic haze settling low on the horizon.

The blue-green woman has a fever.
She is given to violent storms and thrashings.
Her children give her polluted waters to drink;

The sybils ask, "*What is wrong with our mother?
How can her cycles be so disrupted?
Surely she must be ill. What will restore
the balance of her seasons? She could die.
How will she recover from these infections?*"

But most do not notice at all, that she is sick unto death,
dismiss it all as climate change,
obsessed, as they are with their technology;
their dazzling inventions. They scoff at predicitions,
even by their own esteemed scientists.
"Progress must not cease," they say.
"How shall all this, our great civilization be lost? Surely...
a mother would not neglect us in her efforts to heal herself."

Former Road, by Judith Witherow



Jeanne Neath

First North American Serial Rights

Subsistence As Lesbian Revolution

I want to live in a society based in love and respect for women, the earth, and all of life, not a society based in domination. My life mission since coming out as a lesbian separatist in the early 80s has been to help end the patriarchal society I was born into. This industrial patriarchy has gone global and become a vast network of domination infecting all segments of society: economic, political and social systems as well as the psychological make up of all of us living in it. Global industrial patriarchy is in danger of killing off as many as half of the species on earth.

My secondary goal, if ending patriarchy proved impossible, has been to leave patriarchy. Therefore, when I adopted separatist politics I didn't see the separation as just from men. I wanted out of the whole patriarchal world around me (at that time Lawrence, Kansas, USA). I couldn't quite picture a way out though. I vaguely imagined myself walking across country by myself, eating stolen ears of corn from farmers' fields in what would need to be an eternal summer. In reality, I wasn't about to leave my lesbian friends where I at least had a small social arena where we were trying to develop alternatives to patriarchy. Spinsters Books and Webbery, a lesbian feminist bookstore and women's center was my passion.

Several years later I moved onto lesbian land with my partner, Paula Mariedaughter. Having read *Maize: A Lesbian Country Journal* and several books by Helen and Scott Nearing I was ready to attempt a greater separation from patriarchal society by growing some of our own food and living with the wild forest as my closest neighbor. Paula and I built a non-toxic, passive and active solar 800 square foot cabin with help and guidance from several lesbian carpenters. Part way through the building we ran out of money and Paula discovered she had advanced breast cancer (due to an earlier misdiagnosis of a lump). We spent the spring and summer gardening since we could not afford to build, Paula fully recovered after surgery, and we came up with the money to finish the house. We've been living on these 40 acres of Ozark oak-hickory forest for twenty years now.

In many ways we have been able to create a small lesbian feminist chunk of reality. Our neighbors, the white-tail deer, never run the leaf blower or lawn mower. The peace surrounding us in nature is an incredible gift. We are in a remote location and almost never have anyone show up here unexpectedly.

Yet we still are entrenched in the larger patriarchal society. We are far from self-sufficient in food, drive two vehicles, pay for medical care, telephone, Internet service and so on. We run a home-based web development business. Over the years as the lesbian feminist movement diminished nationwide our own vision of building lesbian community and self-sufficient women's land has also diminished, perhaps been beaten down.

But, lately I've been urgently dusting off that old desire for recreating matriarchy. The original impetus was Derrick Jensen's *Endgame*, a two volume book of readable and scary essays.¹ A radical environmentalist, Jensen calls for people to actively (including violently) bring about an end to "civilization" because "civilization" is destroying the earth. I found the idea of ending civilization pretty drastic, somehow more concrete and threatening than ending patriarchy. Perhaps we could end patriarchy and still keep some treasured comforts? Since I respected Jensen based on his considerable understanding of oppression and environmental issues, I needed to find out whether his assessment was correct. Has civilization's (or, I would say, global capitalist patriarchy's) assault on the earth reached the point where the entire project must be stopped immediately?

After a year's worth of reading about environmental issues and global warming I do agree that we are having an environmental emergency. Atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations are at 383 ppm and already exceed the "safe" level of 350 ppm suggested by studies of the actual past history of temperature and carbon dioxide levels over millions of years.² Recent hurricanes and wildfires demonstrate this at a gut level. Up to 30% of species are at risk of extinction if temperatures increase even a small amount and if global temperatures increase 4 degrees Centigrade over 40% of species are at risk.³ While some radical environmentalists would like to see an end to civilization, mainstream environmentalists like Al Gore or Lester Brown think that an effort on a scale with the U.S. mobilization for World War II can save both the earth and a modern lifestyle.⁴

I have my doubts that the practices of global industrial patriarchy can keep their basis in capitalism, consumption, and patriarchy and still be changed quickly and sufficiently enough to reverse global warming, habitat loss, pollution, and massive species extinctions. Having lived off the grid on solar electricity for twenty years it's quite evident to me how little electricity is generated by a solar panel and how drastically our electricity supply is reduced by even a short string of cloudy days. We have eight panels, yet sometimes in winter we are reduced to running one compact fluorescent light bulb and turning off the computers and super efficient Sunfrost refrigerator. Occasionally we have to turn to candles for lighting. When I hear that an all

electric car gets well under 10 miles per kilowatt hour I can't imagine where all that electricity for all those "green" cars will come from. I note that Barack Obama's energy plan (as of November, 2008) includes both "clean" coal and "safe" nuclear energy, both of which are highly questionable.

To understand more about the lifestyle I (and others in the "developed" world) need to adopt to reverse global warming and other ecological damage, I've been studying my ecological footprint. A broader assessment tool than the carbon footprint, the ecological footprint assesses the amount of land needed to grow, manufacture and transport the food, energy and consumer products that maintain your personal lifestyle (or the lifestyle of a nation or region). According to Jim Merkel, author of *Radical Simplicity*, the average ecological footprint in the U.S. is 24 acres, yet if the entire productive land and sea area of the world is divided equally among its 6 billion humans the average allotment would be 4.7 acres.⁵ However, that figure leaves no productive land for wild nature. Merkel budgets 3 acres for himself and has created profiles for what a lifestyle might look like for someone living on a budget of one, three, or six acres. At three acres (supports 6 billion people with some acreage for wildlife) Merkel budgets 150 square feet in a simple straw bale house with monthly expenditures of 10 kilowatt hours electricity, 8.3 gallons of fuel oil, 2.2 gallons of gasoline, 52 miles traveled by bus, \$10 of medical services or insurance, \$10 for telephone service, no air travel, adequate food supplies but no meat, dairy, juice or alcoholic beverages.

Although climate negotiations are proceeding toward an eventual equal allotment of carbon emissions to people in "developed" and "developing" countries, the idea of worldwide equity in all resource use is not in negotiation. Instead the myth that "developing" countries will catch up to the "developed" world continues to be widely accepted despite all evidence that important non-renewable resources such as oil are "peaking" and renewable resources such as soil, water, and seafood are in increasingly short supply. While equality of opportunity is given lip service in capitalist societies, equal distribution of resources is commonly regarded with horror. Democrat promises of a green future for the U.S. do not include an end to capitalism and an equal worldwide standard of living. Yet in a world where resources are becoming increasingly scarce the continued use of an unfair share by people living in the middle and upper classes in "developed" countries is clearly immoral.

Maria Mies, a German feminist, has written extensively to demonstrate that capitalism is dependent on the exploitation of resources that lie outside the capitalist system.⁶ Her work extends the ideas of Rosa Luxemburg

who pointed out in the 1920s that capitalism must conquer economies outside the capitalist system (i.e. colonies) in order to accumulate capital. Mies demonstrates that economic growth requires not just exploitation of colonies, but also the exploitation of nature and of subsistence workers in both the “developed” and “developing” worlds: housewives, women bearing or raising children, peasants, child laborers, and other workers in the informal sector. Capitalism is like a vampire, a dead and deadly economic system that can survive only by draining the lifeblood of nature and the subsistence workers who produce and reproduce human life through their own direct interaction with nature and each other.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, capitalism is commonly seen as the only economic option, i.e. “There is No Alternative”, according to Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen in their book, *The Subsistence Perspective*. Yet, as these authors explain, “Subsistence is the Alternative”. They say, “Subsistence production or production of life includes all work that is expended in the creation, recreation and maintenance of immediate life and which has no other purpose.”⁷ Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen do not envision a move “backward” into a subsistence economy, but rather a subsistence economy that will develop out of our current situation which includes large urban populations and technology. Not everyone in a subsistence economy is necessarily engaged in food production, but the purpose of all activity, including trade, is life, not moneymaking. Subsistence economies predate capitalism by thousands of years, were and are practiced world wide, and are the hidden and essential basis of all economies, including capitalism. For large numbers of women in the “developing” world, the subsistence economy is viewed as a source of great abundance, far preferable to capitalism. Only those women (and men) who benefit from capitalism’s exploitation, notably the middle and upper classes of North and South, view capitalism as preferable to subsistence. Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen view subsistence as a powerful act of resistance to global industrial patriarchy, and a far more trustworthy method of resistance than violent revolution.

Like many other lesbians who have moved onto the land, Paula and I felt that by living on the land we were resisting patriarchy as well as building an alternative. Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen’s analysis of capitalism and subsistence provides a strong theoretical basis for those perceptions. The act of even partially supporting oneself from the land or through personal and local market relationships reduces dependence on global capitalist patriarchy and increases the ability to resist. Understanding that subsistence is *the* alternative to capitalism and that it has been practiced by millions of people makes this alternative way of living both doable and central to

feminist revolution. When we engage directly with nature we return to the very basics of life and it is possible to slip underneath the layers of the patriarchal social system that normally surrounds us. In this subsistence relationship we have the earth and an animal member of the species homo sapiens. The earth, though impacted by global capitalist patriarchy, is not a member of that human social system. The human can approach the earth as a member of patriarchy hell bent on domination or as a simple human animal seeking to live with humility from the earth's bounty. When we approach the earth directly for our sustenance we move outside capitalist patriarchy. When we form communities of women who all relate in this direct way to the earth we begin to form new matriarchal societies, co-existing for now with the patriarchal system.

Despite living on the land for twenty years I am still largely supported by a food and energy lifeline from a small city 30 miles away. My ecological footprint — uncomfortably and immorally high — tells me I need to reduce my consumption. I now understand that my acts of participation in the capitalist economy tie me to global capitalist patriarchy while living in the subsistence economy sets me free of same. At our homestead we are taking action: weatherizing the house, planting apple trees, and getting the garden ready for spring. I am dreaming of life without work in the capitalist system. Subsistence is looking good to me. With the economic downturn, peak oil and global warming more and more people will be joining me as they lose houses, credit, and jobs in a failing capitalist economy.

Out on the land it is sometimes hard not to feel on the periphery of society. On our mountainside we cannot receive cell phone transmissions and connect to the Internet only via a slow dial up connection. Listening to the radio we've followed national politics as this country came closer to putting a woman in the white house than ever before. But, in reality, we are closer here to a real political power for women than Hillary Clinton. In Washington DC, women in power join an established male power structure and are severely constricted in what they can say, do, and even think by that structure. In traditional subsistence matriarchal societies power comes from the women's interconnections and natural consensus building as they work together in maintaining crops and daily life.⁸ Where women grow and therefore control the food supply male power structures are dependent upon women's approval. Women on the land living subsistence are not at the periphery, but are at the heart of feminist revolution, both in existing traditional societies and in the developed world.

A direct relationship with nature is central to subsistence living and is a critical means for moving both personally and as a society out of patriarchy

and into a life based on love and respect for women, the earth, and all of life. In global capitalist patriarchy many people have become so disconnected from nature they barely comprehend that their livelihood comes from nature. But in subsistence living our own personal interaction with nature becomes critical to our very survival and a much more authentic relationship with nature develops. The radical environmentalists, such as Jensen, who are calling for an end to civilization usually envision a return to a gathering-hunting way of life because that way of life is based in very deep relationships with nature. Although “modern” people are often highly prejudiced against a “primitive” way of life, anthropological research with bands of gatherer-hunters makes it clear that gatherer-hunters usually live the good life.⁹

Gathering- hunting bands are generally highly egalitarian with women securing power by bringing in a large portion of the band’s food through gathering (and sometimes hunting as well). Consensus style decision-making no doubt originated in similar bands of everyone’s ancestors. Usually gatherer-hunters live a life of abundance although today the existing groups are badly squeezed by modern society. Food is generally shared among the group and whole bands form sharing relationships with other nearby bands, partly as insurance against disaster. There is no monotheistic god for groups to fight over: intimacy and knowledge of nature is so great that spirit is directly perceived in nature making most religious trappings unnecessary. While “modern” peoples are usually hard pressed to name ten plants native to their home, gathering-hunting people often have in depth knowledge of hundreds of plants used for food, medicine, and tool making. Intimacy with nature comes from immersion in nature with a constant sensory awareness of the winds, weather, sun, moon, stars, earth, and plant and animal peoples, as well as cognition of how all of these interact. The intimacy with nature and intimacy among band members typical of gatherer-hunters provides an experience of connectedness that people living in global capitalist patriarchy can barely begin to imagine. The severing of connection to nature must be part of the trauma that originally produced and continues to recreate patriarchal societies.

Six billion or more people cannot live as gatherer-hunters since agriculture or, preferably, horticulture (large scale gardening) are required to provide enough food for so many people. As billions of people search for our own good life which can no longer be based in over-consumption, excessive energy use, and general excess, the lifeways of gathering-hunting bands provide an essential model: egalitarian relationships, consensus decision-making, sharing, deep and continual sensory awareness of nature, direct relationship with nature for sustenance, extensive knowledge of plants and

animals, winds and earth, daily contact living and sharing with a small group of people whose survival is directly tied to our own. The millions of people now living by subsistence largely in the South are likewise a model for the peoples of the over-consuming nations and classes, especially where matriarchal (i.e. matrilineal, matrilineal) social structures prevail. The subsistence societies that emerge from the eventual ruins of global industrial patriarchy will no doubt take many forms. Certainly subsistence societies can be and have been patriarchal in the past. As lesbians, it is a good time to begin building the matriarchal subsistence societies of the future. We have learned much about working together, using consensus, and loving women as we built lesbian culture. But it is now time to extend that knowledge to the active creation of societies that will live within the means of the earth. Our lesbian visions of the 70s and 80s were good in so many ways, flawed in some ways, but unable to fully succeed in part because our vision did not go far enough. What successes might we have had if we had built lesbian culture based on our own subsistence economy instead of being dependent upon capitalist economy?

Subsistence is not an all or nothing thing as the subsistence economy has never gone away, but exists under capitalism. Every day we each make hundreds of choices for which economy we choose. Eat out — capitalism. Cook dinner at home — subsistence. Drive to school to work on a degree — capitalism. Walk to nature study and restoration group meeting in the abandoned lot down the street — subsistence. Buy tomatoes at Wal-Mart — capitalism. Buy tomatoes at farmer's market — subsistence. Buy condominium downtown — capitalism. Move to women's land and build a small straw bale cabin and grow your own food — subsistence. Subsistence is life produced in direct relationship to nature, women, children (and men, to the extent you choose). Every step toward subsistence living is a step out of patriarchy and into the co-existing matriarchal present.

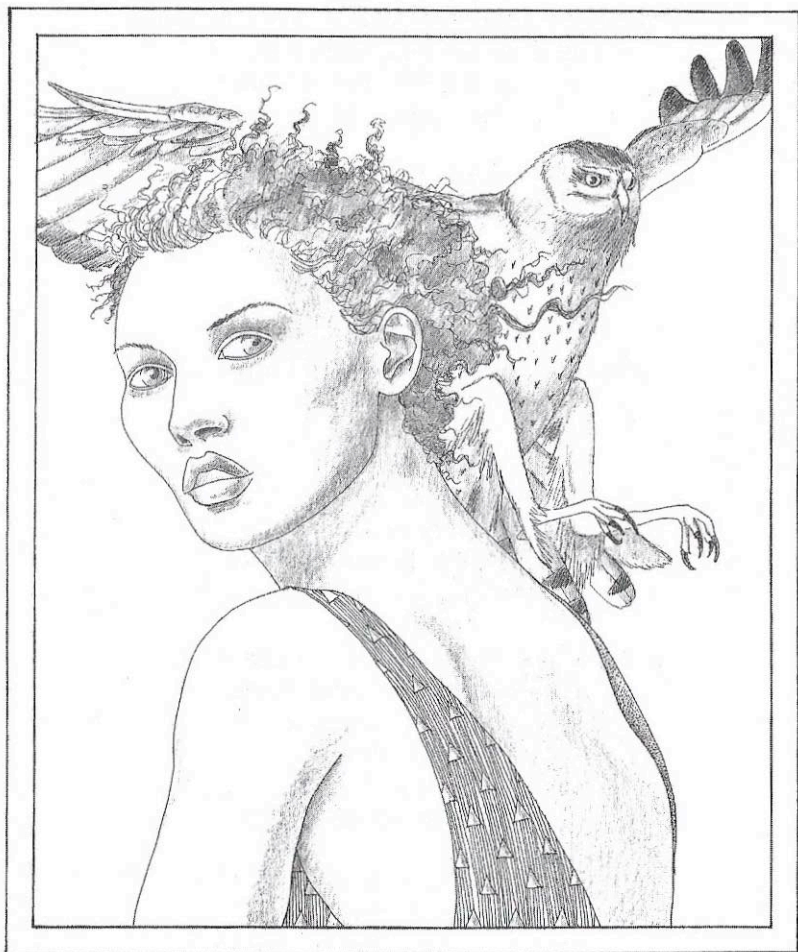
Footnotes

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2. James Hansen et al., *Target Atmospheric CO₂: Where Should Humanity Aim?* www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/2008/TargetCO2_20080407.pdf.
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8. Ibid. Also, Barbara Alice Mann, *Iroquoian Women: The Gantowisas*. New York: Peter Lang, 2000.
9. Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*. Chicago: Aldine, 1972.

Acknowledgements

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Companion 1 by Sudie Rakusin.

Ellen Williams

“she speaks”

In early morning dawn
When the leaves of grass are still moist
The Blue Jay searches between
Its blades for nourishment
She speaks to me

From her womb
Giving and giving
Abundantly
She speaks to me

Her stories ever unfold
How the curves of her mountain tops
Are burning
From the flames

Her shores
Receding
Her belly shakes the sea
Oh Tsunami my tears

I sit and listen to her in the quiet
As one of her eyes rises
Above the horizon
The redness
Of her fury
Her unquestionable pain

And yet she insists
Upon rising
Each red-dawn with passion
Never deciding to sleep-in

At night
Her all seeing moon-eye
Twinkles upon the Great Lakes
And mighty
Deserts

I cannot be
In all the depths and places
She takes me to
Tells me of
But she takes me other ways
Mysteriously
Truthfully
Soul journeys

Shows me of the dangers
Coming and coming
Listen...she says....shhh...listen
And I hear her womb rattle
With barren unborn

There are few seeds left now
They have eaten away
What is left

The Might Keepers have trashed
And I hear a great quake rumbling

A death about to be birthed



Erosion 1, by Sue Lenaerts

Brenwyn

Embrace

In the peasant villages of the Himalayan foothills, women believed that trees were sacred and could convey ancient wisdom. Each child of the village was given a tree to communicate with, but one day a new palace was to be built and the surrounding forest cut down. One brave woman Amrita Devi put her arms around a tree that was about to be cut. She was thrown to the ground and the tree sawed down. Angry, she and her daughters surrounded other trees. They were cut down like the trees. When word spread that the mother and daughters were killed, women from nearby villages came to embrace (*chipko*) the trees. This was in 1973, and the Chipko Movement continues to be a powerful force against commercial logging in India.

Several years later, in Kenya, Wangari Maathai decided to plant a few trees in her barren backyard. Her women neighbors were curious and decided to help. Then they wanted to plant trees in their own backyards. The idea of community tree planting grew to be a non-governmental organization called the Green Belt Movement which has now planted over 40 million trees to prevent soil erosion in Africa. Maathai was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004.

That same year, the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers formed to create a global alliance to rebalance the injustices wrought from an imbalanced world:

We are deeply concerned with the unprecedented destruction of our Mother Earth, the contamination of our air, waters and soil, the atrocities of war, the global scourge of poverty, the threat of nuclear weapons and waste, the prevailing culture of materialism, the epidemics which threaten the health of the Earth's peoples, the exploitation of indigenous medicines, and with the destruction of indigenous ways of life.

In 2008 they traveled to the Vatican to personally deliver a letter to Pope Benedict XVI asking for the revocation of the Papal edicts regarding the treatment of indigenous peoples. In October, they participated with Eli Painted Crow and Turtle Women Rising to drum for peace in front of the White House. Their 6th International Council will be held in Oregon in 2009.

The timing couldn't be more perfect. Southern Oregon currently faces a four hundred percent increase in logging as well as the threat of the liquefied natural gas (LNG) pipeline. A section of the LNG will cut through OWL

Farm on its way to California. OWL Farm has long been a refuge for lesbians, other women, and children. Like other women's lands throughout the world, it provides a place for solace and ceremony while protecting wildlife and natural resources from exploitation.

Women understand how deeply we are connected with nature. We flow with the tides and change with the moon. We can hear trees calling and hold power, individually and collectively, to make a difference. Author Susan Griffin refers to this transformative power as the *roaring inside her*. In *Woman and Nature*, she writes: "...all that I know speaks to me through this earth and I long to tell you, you who are earth too, and listen *as we speak to each other of what we know: the light is in us.*"

Despite the tendency to despair, we need to remember that we are women of power. And now is the time to embrace.

Mary Oishi

final station of the cross

She hangs suspended in space
 Her head bowed with a crown of
 carbon dioxide and CFCs
 Her side speared by stripmines
 abandoned drilling sites
 nuclear waste depositories
 Her faithful Whale children
 beach themselves in desperate protest
 but to no avail
 Her faithful mountain keepers
 come down from the Andes to
 warn their wayward brothers
 Her northern children cry out
 from their irradiated Reindeer,
 their disappearing Glaciers

and She cries out for Her lost children too
 oh Florida Red Wolf! oh Arizona Jaguar!
 oh Monk Seal! oh Heath Hen! She cries

where is my Mysterious Starling? my Great Elephantbird?
 my Red Colobus Monkey? my Laughing Owl?
 Clear Lake Splittail? Caspian Tiger?
 Mexican Grizzly Bear? Spanish Wolf? Dwarf
 Hippopotamus? Sumatran Lion? Eastern Elk?
 LabradorDuck?JapaneseSealion?NewZealandQuail???

why can't I find my Sea Mink? my Barbary Lion?
 my Ivory-Billed Woodpecker? my Hopping Mouse?

why have my children forsaken me?

but only silence —

[silence]

echoes from extinction's unmarked graves

and She dies more and more and more alone each hour
 with none left to forgive the offending human child
 judas to us all/ the mad marauder who

cannot wash his guilty hands in toxic waste
whose silver cities will be cast aside like sins whose
missile silos will no longer gleam in that dark hour who
too will die when She cries

IT IS FINISHED!

for he, the fool, is in his Mother's womb



Jan Shade

River

River so achingly beautiful and majestic
even in your most primal moments
ruiner of lives
destroyer of psyches
you have carved a deep canyon in my heart
which I have filled with love for you

my River who
sleeps in my bed
meanders through my head
encircles my spine

oh most maligned and abused River

Natasha Carthew

DEADWOOD

Deadwood
chained and sawn into unrecognisable
unaffordable gifts
deadwood shifts
from the red and the chalk of earth
hugged and rubbed into letters of love
journey backwoods
tripping three times for a wish
out of love.

Deadwood
buried in a bag of hip high regret
the wet and the dark
that sinking feeling
where are all the trees?
In the valley of contemplation
a constellation
down to ground
zero
the circle of dead calm
against stumps of smoking land
the empty warmth of stolen
fire up the wind
edging hope to a hole in the sky
and razored to a sharp shot of shock
the colour of moon
fades
to the dazzle of tiny dusts
shorn from the sides and faces of the living
the dying
dead
wood.

Carol Gale

Francis Eatherington, Forest Defender

Most people look at the edges of Pacific NW coniferous forests and see apparently endless trees lining the major roads for hundreds of miles. Fewer people walk inside amongst the trees where intricate forest layers and forms can reveal a bewildering complexity. Most of us tend to lump forest complexity into a general impression of greens, greys and browns, usually dimly lit, damp, looking somewhat tangled or shaggy with moss. Few of us can look at a modern forest and accurately judge its ecological health; Francis Eatherington is one of those who can. Francis is one of a small number of people who spend their lives watching the NW forest from both inside and outside, from both broad and detailed perspectives, who see how the forest works and what harms it. Now and for years, she works full time to protect the Pacific NW forest where she lives.

Francis was born and grew up in Illinois, and only moved to the NW as an adult, so she hasn't known these mixed conifer forests from childhood. On the other hand, she's been working outdoors in them from young adulthood through her prime and into her elder years, so she knows these NW forests by direct experience. Francis reads the Pacific forest landscapes accurately, not through mere book knowledge, but from clunking around in it, learning its steep mountain sides with bones, muscles, eyes, and senses, experiencing it day in and day out over many years. She worked for a decade as an independent contractor in a crew of young women planting trees. As a tree planter, she carried nursery grown, Douglas fir tree seedlings crammed in a pouch, and with a mattock tool to dig a hole with one motion, marched up and down steep, crumbling, denuded, clear-cut hillsides, and jammed a seedling every 3rd step into a hole. It was exhausting, punishing, back-breaking work, bent all day chopping the holes, and then leaning over to plant and tamp down each individual seedling. Yet I once heard her describe those years as some of the most fun of her life, working daily out in the forest together with a crew of young women, often camping there - her own boss. She earned enough money to help create and support a rural women-only land community, plus pay for the materials to build her own house there, which she lives in with her partner to this day.

During another decade, Francis worked taking inventories of tree stands in publicly owned forests. She read detailed topographical maps, found and walked boundaries, measured diameters, heights, and densities of trees, took

bores to count tree rings and discover tree ages, all according to standardized data collection procedures. Many other factors influencing tree stands like slope and exposure, or other species present — like wood-boring insects — were also recorded. She gathered basic information for use in evaluating the health of the forest ecosystems. Collecting cones for their seeds was another job. As an independent forest contractor, she could choose her jobs from those offered by government natural resource agencies, like the National Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This work gave Francis practical, on-the-ground familiarity with different kinds of NW forests, whether high Cascade, middle elevation, or coastal range forests, their rivers systems and overall watershed characteristics. She learned to read forest landscapes by walking their hillsides and stream banks, measuring their structures, camping in them for weeks during spring/summer months, tramping through their cold, wet fall/winters, absorbing through her skin and into her heart how forests live and support life in the temperate climate of the Pacific Northwest.

These days when driving along the main thoroughfares through miles of blurred green forest landscape, now and again a bare, ravaged, clear-cut hillside shows up in stark contrast, trees removed with only grey “slash” wood pieces remaining like bone fragments after a killing. However, most clear-cuts aren't visible from major highways and interstates. Ravaged, clear-cut terrain of bare mountain ridges and huge expanses of logged lands are hidden in Weyerhaeuser private land reserves with locked gates or out of the way public lands on cryptically numbered logging roads, not on usual car journeys. Where forests are visible from highways, groves of replanted seedlings, fast-growing saplings and re-grown trees fill in the logged holes, so the forest retains a nearly continuous cover of green trees despite, in truth, being drastically fragmented and ecologically impoverished. Clear-cuts are replanted into monoculture tree farms of Douglas fir seedlings - the single economic crop of fast-growing, straight, harvestable timber trees. But tree plantations don't ecologically replace uncut native forests — instead they are biological deserts of eroded soils and only one tree species. By contrast, native forests grow mixtures of tree and understory plant species, interact with living soil complexes of fungi and microbes, and sustain diverse animal species dependent on their ecological diversity of nest structures, nutrients and food sources.

When I first moved to Oregon 5 years ago, I saw forest everywhere near me and wondered about “the timber wars” between environmentalists and loggers. Frequently I saw big logging trucks laden with cut trees barreling

along the country highways and interstates but not where they came from. With training in plant ecology but of grassland, oak savannah and desert ecosystems, I knew my ignorance of the NW forest must be vast. Natural ecosystems are the most complex systems on our planet — self-repairing and self-reproducing — yet our culture doesn't value that living complexity nor educate its citizens with general ecological literacy. I began accompanying Francis in her work examining timber sales on public forest land. As we drove along country roads, turning off into labyrinths of dirt logging roads that cut into the green trees and go on for miles, crisscrossing countless other logging roads, I kept asking her, "Is this old growth?" and "Where's the old growth forest?" Sometimes she'd nod, and answer briefly, "This is mature forest." I often felt dissatisfied. I wanted clearer, definite answers, but it took many trips and accumulated observations for me to begin to sort the forest from the trees. The trees are everywhere and confuse the picture! Francis is a quiet guide, not given too much talking; she waits for good questions. Then she explains the NW forest like few others, as well as the corporate and institutional forces chewing it up.

Reading forest landscape is clear to relatively few people: those who cut and process trees, those who regulate public forest lands, those who study forests and those who work to defend the last remnants of old growth from corporate and government greed — such as Francis. Virtually all old growth forest has been logged off private land. The only original American forest left is on public lands and those relic, old growth forests are disappearing. Francis knows where old growth forest remnants are because she keeps looking for them; she studies timber sale proposals and goes to "ground-truth" those sales with the largest diameter trees. Since most old growth is hidden in a maze of dirt logging roads between clear-cut and re-planted hillsides, it's easy to log little known, native fragments without anyone the wiser...except Francis and her few, fellow, practical, forest-defender colleagues.

Although 95% of Native American forest has been previously logged, it's not obvious; to see how altered the forest is requires ecological, on-the-ground education and experience over time. In such a green world it's difficult to notice the differences between this patch of forest and that. Humans miss signs of continual change. One clue in a complex web is *shades of green*; brighter green needles reveal young replanting versus dark older needles. Another clue is different *heights* of sections seen from a distance, which requires mental effort as our minds prefer generalizations. Gazing from one hilltop at an opposite ridge top, I must concentrate to see

dim straight lines between one block of trees and the next, where varying tree heights tell logging history and different ages of replanted trees; or occasionally the tallest, native forest. *Spacing of trees* in uniform rows (tree farms) versus unevenly spaced trees is another indicator. *Composition* — either an artificial monoculture of only one species or a natural mixture of tree species — reveals whether humans interfered in nature's recovery process of ecological succession. The timber industry sprays copious herbicides to kill unwanted plants, leap over earlier ecological stages to favor artificially forced, late-stage, re-planted Douglas fir tree seedlings. As Francis says, "They know how to re-grow trees; they are very busy working out here — logging, hauling, replanting, spraying."

It took me a long time to "see" the old growth. For one, "mature" forests of 80-150 years look just as immensely tall as true "old growth" of 200-500 year old trees; and mature trees are more common. Conifer tree species grow fast in the rainy NW climate; the favored Douglas fir easily reaches 60-80 ft in 40 years. For much of the year, NW forests have a somber muffled character — dark needled trees, damply carpeted forest floor with spent brown needles and tiny delicate green mosses under tall grey trunks supporting dark green roof canopies under clouded, overcast skies. So the "feel" of mature forest approaches that of old growth. Moreover, mature trees are developing old growth characteristics — species diversity and complex structure — that could become old growth in another 50-100 years. So Francis is nearly as interested in saving mature forests as she is in saving old growth.

The key to old growth trees is not merely height; it's huge diameter. Individual old growth trees are well-spaced, with 5-10 inch thick, deeply fissured bark, sometimes fire-blackened from several hundred years surviving fires, and commonly supporting whole communities of multicolored lichens and mosses. Where age or rot causes decay, a great tree falls and its canopy opening allows non-dominant species to grow, so madrone, chinquapin, cedar, hemlock, and other conifers — as well as Douglas fir — make up older, native forest. Many replanted forests already have tall, 80 ft trees and are ready to be cut again. The timber industry forces as short a logging rotation as economically possible: every 40-60 years. Much rarer are the truly old growth stands with open understories, their huge trees taking most of the sunlight, and thereby restraining seedlings and shrubs below. Nowadays a 5 ft diameter is old growth; 75-200 years ago, Douglas fir trees reached 10 ft diameters, or greater. There are photos of a single felled tree overflowing the entire width of

an old logging truck, the giant diameter shortened to truckbed length, like an enormous wooden cube as wide as it was long. However, nowadays, after 150 years of logging, the Pacific NW's ancient forests are a fragmented patchwork of tiny blocks amidst a huge moth-eaten blanket of logged, replanted, re-grown, monoculture "plantations" of trees. Francis works to save the last old growth near where she lives in Oregon.

Many of the forests I've explored with her were a mix of both categories since she reads the public land, proposed timber sale specifications seeking both mature and old trees. She usually supports thinning sales of re-grown forest plantations, which often become too dense and artificially fire hazardous. Once at the end of a long day threading many miles of logging roads through dark green forests, Francis specifically pointed out forest we were passing, telling me, "That's a Late Successional Reserve (LSR) being managed for old growth characteristics," without further explanation. I looked out at the passing, evenly spaced rows of tall thin trees, each about 10-15 inches in diameter, then looked again, and then yet again. Finally I countered disbelievingly, "You kidding, aren't you? *That's* old growth character? It doesn't look old to me."

Thus I learned of a kind of fraud perpetrated by government supposedly protecting our natural resources. In the 1990s government agencies "fulfilled" a NW Forest Plan requirement for old growth forest acres set aside for endangered species like the spotted owl and the marbled murrelet birds, both gravely dependent upon old growth forest for survival. Our government forest agencies designated recently logged acres as "Late Successional Reserves" (LSR), because they "plan manage those acres for the next 200 years" to grow into old growth. Since then, BLM repeatedly claims, "80% of our forest is set aside as protected LSR or Riparian reserves for endangered species," yet fails to mention over half of that claimed 80% was recently clear-cut! Nearly extinct species like spotted owls and marbled murrelets must wait for suitable habitat — merely 150-200 years! These are foxes guarding the hen house. Francis was quiet but gave a small, wry smile and seemed to bask in my indignation.

Francis works hardest to save the best old growth, but she also cares about younger forests and negotiates to preserve aspects of natural ecology when a timber sale will happen no matter what she does. Once, we tramped with 4 BLM men through a thinning timber sale — called an "alder conversion" — where not all trees would be cut (unlike a clear-cut). We 'ground-truthed' which trees were marked with orange paint to save, leave uncut. Francis kept asking why in a thinning sale with the purpose of reducing early succession

alder trees in order to create space to replant with Douglas fir, were the already established, largest Douglas firs there going to be cut? "You are cutting these few moderately large Doug fir trees in order to replant with Doug fir seedlings?" she asked. They couldn't explain the paint markings, but it wasn't coincidence that Doug firs bring top dollar. She also objected to cutting one trunk of a double-stemmed tree. "Why is only one stem painted orange to save, when both trunks use the same root system, and cutting one opens up the 2nd to fungal rot?" Francis looks at forests with different eyes than government foresters who design timber sales to appeal to the timber industry. Francis likes unevenly spaced trees, different growth patterns, mixtures of tree species, whereas government foresters picture future uniform tree plantations easy for the timber industry to tend and harvest. The men shook their heads and rolled their eyes that this woman defended details; they thought forest micro-management impractical.

Reality shifts depending upon the eyes and outlook of the beholder. Government foresters who map proposed timber sales are straddling conflicting goals: 1) selling trees to the timber industry (to partly fund their agency despite running mostly on public tax dollars); while simultaneously, 2) practicing good forest management — in other words, protecting and conserving public natural resources. Selling timber historically has justified the agency's existence far longer than there's been an environmental movement, so it's no exaggeration to claim that our government agencies habitually cater to industry, not the ecological health of the environment. Yet we the public need the ecological services our natural environment provides: clean air and water, stable and fertile soil, habitat for our fellow species with their wild companionship, plus priceless slowness, quiet and beauty, for our hurried, busy human minds.

The most recent decade and a half, Francis's work has been to combine her forest experience with tediously acquired and extensive legal/regulation expertise so she can track and formally comment on or object to actions of government agencies meant to guard our public forests but which use every excuse to sell them off to the corporate private timber industry. In short, Francis Eatherington is a sleuth; for over 13 years she's been watching the government agencies charged with protecting publicly owned natural forests. She is paid by a conservation nonprofit to monitor and expose government tricks, lies and inadequate conservation of public resources. She must not only "ground-truth" or go look at the proposed timber sale sites and find those forests with old growth character, she then must cite the

agency's own rules against them to modify, protest or appeal in court against the sale. Francis has had to become very well versed in endless bureaucratic conditions, terms, language, double-speak, and rules. Nowadays, she spends more time behind a computer than out in the woods.

Despite nearly 2 centuries of massive forest ecosystem destruction by over-harvesting the biologically rich, old growth NW forests until a fraction of that original ancient forest lives today, private timber companies in partnership with US government agencies charged with good management and protection of public lands resources, still work to sell and log the last original forest.. Oregon may have as much as 15-20% old growth left, contributing to the overall USA 5%. Yet now the Western Oregon Plan Revision 2008 (WOPR or "the whopper") cooked up by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is the latest overlong, unscientific, and therefore fraudulent justification for why remnant old growth forest must be cut on public lands. It has "reasonable" suggestions of "saving" half the remaining old growth, and logging half. When there's only 15%, logging 50% of that is a death knell of extinction to already rare and endangered species. Francis has read all 2000 tedious pages of the WOPR and made step-by-step, detailed, informed objections to lack of scientific evidence for WOPR's unfounded conclusions and resulting proposed actions. Nevertheless, the BLM recently authorized WOPR to go forward. Given how much time this takes from her ability to "ground-truth" forests and train others with her forest skills, it seems a terrible waste of her irreplaceable forest knowledge and experience.

Francis Eatherington fights a terribly unequal, uphill battle, but she has won widespread respect — government foxes listen when she threatens them with lawsuits or appeals — tedious and costly legal exercises for all concerned. Francis has learned to pick her fights and conserve her energy and time. I wish she had a team of young ecology and law graduate students, energetic apprentices ready to work hard and learn her incredible forest knowledge and practical wisdom. She has more worthwhile battles than she has time, energy and resources to fight. Few can read the maps, translate them into the maze of muddy roads and find the timber sales far out in the forests, let alone ground-truth them accurately in order to check on our government agencies. More of us need to work with her, learn from her, fight with her, support her. Where is the next generation of forest defenders? Come and work with Francis Eatherington. She never gives up. She loses battles, but she also sometimes wins and saves whole great stands of giant old growth trees. She never gives up. Join her or give her your support! You can contact her at: featherington@wildblue.net.

Alma**A Mother's Plea for Love from Her Children**

What do you have in your life that is worth the destruction of mother earth? What do you do that affects her air that she gives us to breathe, her soil that grows our food, her water that keeps us alive?

She is our mother; she has given of herself, her life giving gifts, her resources, her beauty for us to love. Like a mother with her adored children, she waits for her children to love her back and give her thanks. To take care of her so she may continue giving to her children who sees her as the nurturing mother who loves them. She has suffered many wounds and has depleted herself of the strength to continue giving relentlessly and continuously to us.

Give back to mother, think of her when you take from her without care or concern for her depletion of resources. Replenish her with love and compost. Keep on receiving from her the gifts she has for us; keep on giving back what she needs to continue.

Remember to Recycle, Re-use, Re-plant, Re-duce. Share with others, consume less, she cannot sustain us any longer when we are wasteful for the sake of convenience, and egotistical motives. What you pay attention to grows, what you ignore goes away, pay attention to the earth, she is our home.

Judith K. Witherow

Hell Will Never Freeze Over

From an early age I had intimate knowledge of coal mines and abandoned mine shafts. Many of my family members lived in coal towns: places where you worked for a coal company, rented your home from the owners, bought what you needed from their stores, and used what little remained from your paycheck for survival.

Mines no longer productive became places where water trickled out to form streams that were used for everything life required. In the mountains everything was put to use. Questioning the harm much of this might cause didn't happen until decades later.

I've had a theory for years that the incidence of incurable illnesses occurring in our small town weren't a coincidence. I discussed this belief with my neurologist. He asked if I could give him the names and addresses of everyone with immune system diseases from my earlier residence. Later on he had me go to the National Institute of Health for countless tests. At no time was I given any information on what they had discovered. When I went there I was being treated for multiple sclerosis. Within a few years I was also diagnosed with Systemic Lupus Erythematosus-SLE. The diseases have continued, but the same can't be said of any ongoing research as to why the beautiful mountains are still poisoning its people.

Throughout the years, I've told my partner Sue, countless stories of what life was like in coal country. For some reason she has a keen interest in the people and places scattered amongst the Appalachians. We've visited many of the towns and its inhabitants. Whenever she reads about a place of interest we inevitably visit it to take photographs, and talk to people who sound a lot like me.

A little over a year ago she read about a town in eastern Pennsylvania. It was a nearly abandoned coal town with an underground fire that had been burning since May of 1962. The town's name was Centralia, PA. The fire was carelessly started over an open seam of anthracite coal. At the time it was thought the fire had been extinguished. However, it merely continued burning underground.

In July of 1962 the Department of Environmental Resources began to investigate the continued burning underneath the town. They didn't move anyone out of Centralia until May, 1969. At that time their attempt at control was to move three families from the area.

The attempts at containment were mind-maulingly slow to say the least. In 1980 the U.S. Bureau of Mines determined the mine fire was still burning. Still burning? Yep, still burning, and the next bright bulb idea was to relocate twenty-seven more families. Money was paid to the families. The price was less than fair, but at least more people were now out of harms way.

In 1983 the fire was burning under approximately 350 acres. By 1991, the fire had expanded by at least another three fourths in area width. It was estimated that in another one hundred years its width would be 3,700 acres. No number was assumed about what depth would be reached in that same amount of time.

Pennsylvania has the dubious record of having the largest number of underground coal fires in the United States. Some of these anthracite coal fires have been ablaze for upwards of forty years. It's incredulous they excrete an unbelievable amounts of carbon dioxide. Add to this one gas, numerous other gases, and we can't even begin to understand the level of pollutants steadily entering the atmosphere. These mines aren't even a part of the toxins steadily taxing the earth from automobile and other carbon emissions.

In April of 2007 we visited Centralia for the first time. It was appalling to look at the burnt trees above ground and the remaining houses that were being held up by bricks mortared to the rooftop. There was the stench of toxic fumes everywhere we walked. The fear of collapsing ground didn't bother either of us for some reason. Wasn't I used to these areas? It was the same vein of coal that had always run through my veins. The fact of how it had poisoned my entire system seemed of little consequence. Why it had no effect on Sue was a different matter. This wasn't her background.

We went to another close-by town, Ashland, PA, and decided to ride a coal car down one of the underground coal tunnels. Closed in 1931, in 1962 it was repaired and reopened as a museum out of respect for past coal miners. It was re-timbered and everything was returned to its former state. The tunnel went 1800 feet into the Mahanoy Mountain. You traveled with great speed down the restored tracks. Along the way you saw seams of coal, heavy timbers that held up the tunnel under the mountain, and various fossils. I saw a carbide lamp that matched one I bought years earlier as a token of familial identification. Don't ever believe that hell is hot. The further underground you go the colder it gets! The fact that they weren't handing out coats before the trip started as a joke. I thought I'd freeze my behind to the boards before the trip ended. I've been in many types of caves but this was not one of them.

Not once did it occur to me that we might be near an area that could collapse without warning. My thoughts were on the destruction I had observed above ground, but somehow that didn't seem within reach. That way of thinking is what has brought Mother Earth closer to the edge of her demise. My guilt hangs heavily as I write about my acceptance.

In October of 2008 Sue and I decided to make a return trip to Centralia. We wanted to see if there had been any improvement. We also wanted to arrive in the early morning so smoke from any fires would be more visible when we photographed the area.

If we were looking for improvement this wasn't the place to search. The gases filled the air so strongly that I was having trouble catching my breath.



Life Amongst The Ruins, by Judith Witherow

Lynn Martin

Weather is what she has to say

Everywhere the earth is speaking.
In L.A. it opens and drags down whole buildings.
Here, in Vermont, the woods resound
with the crack of trees under ice. No one is safe:

cars have been sliding off the road on broken bridges,
on slick roads black with cold. On gaps and slides
echoed in behavior from Texas to Bosnia.

Where do we hold on?

All day a nuthatch has huddled on my deck.
She flies to the birdfeeder, extracts a seed,
descends to a railing and husks it in seconds.
Orange bellied, she grows fatter
under the gray sky threatening even more snow,
oblivious to anything but need.

I envy her concentration, the ability
to shut out all but a kernel of nourishment.

Like those trees whose branches are brought to the ground,
I long to just give in and believe spring will liberate,
some good will come with its warm breath.

Just last year I believed in the robin
the most common of birds
who flew into a high tree
turned his breast to the sun and sang my heart afire.

His song still echoes.
It's not that I've lost faith in the earth.
Weather is what she has to say.
The trouble is, are we listening?

Lilith Rogers

Messages From Rachel Carson

In each of my books I have tried to say that all the life of the planet is inter-related, that each species has its own ties to others, and that all are related to earth. This is the theme of THE SEA AROUND US and the other sea books, and it's also the message of SILENT SPRING.

— Rachel Carson

For several years now, I've been performing a one-woman show that I created and produce myself, RACHEL CARSON RETURNS: HER LIFE AND WORK. In some ways, I suppose one would say I haven't been very successful at it. I don't perform in large venues, I don't get very many gigs, and I don't get paid very much money. But in other ways, I am highly successful. The audiences that do see my show are greatly appreciative, they appear to take in at a deep level the message I am hoping to give them, and — most of all — I am always transformed myself. After every performance, I feel more connected than ever to Rachel, to myself, and to the amazing life all around me.

Because I don't work with a script that I have written and memorized, each time I perform, I draw on different material from Rachel's life and writing. I take the audience into account — is it full of students or seniors, writers, gardeners or teachers, all Lesbians or mostly straights? But always, I strive to get Rachel's deepest message across to the audience and to take that message in to myself on the deepest level, that, as she says above, "*all the life of the planet is inter-related, that each species has its own ties to others, and that all are related to earth.*"

How is it that so many people either never learned or have completely forgotten this simple, vitally important message? As Rachel also says about the pesticides and herbicides that were developed and unleashed on the world during and after World War II, "*These sprays, dusts and aerosols are now applied almost universally to farms, gardens, forests and homes — non-selective chemicals that have the power to kill every insect, the good and the bad, to still the song of birds and the leaping of fish in streams, to coat the leaves with a deadly film and to linger on in soil. All this, though the intended target may be only a few weeds or insects.*"

When *Silent Spring* came out in 1962 — after the chemical companies that made and profited from these poisons tried to suppress it and ridicule

it — people did pay attention to her message. More studies were done, laws were passed, the Environmental Protection Agency was created, and some of the worst pesticides — like DDT (Dichloro-Diphenyl-Trichloroethane) were banned for use in this country. (DDT is still manufactured in this country and sold to other countries which use it on their fruits and vegetables and sell them back to us.)

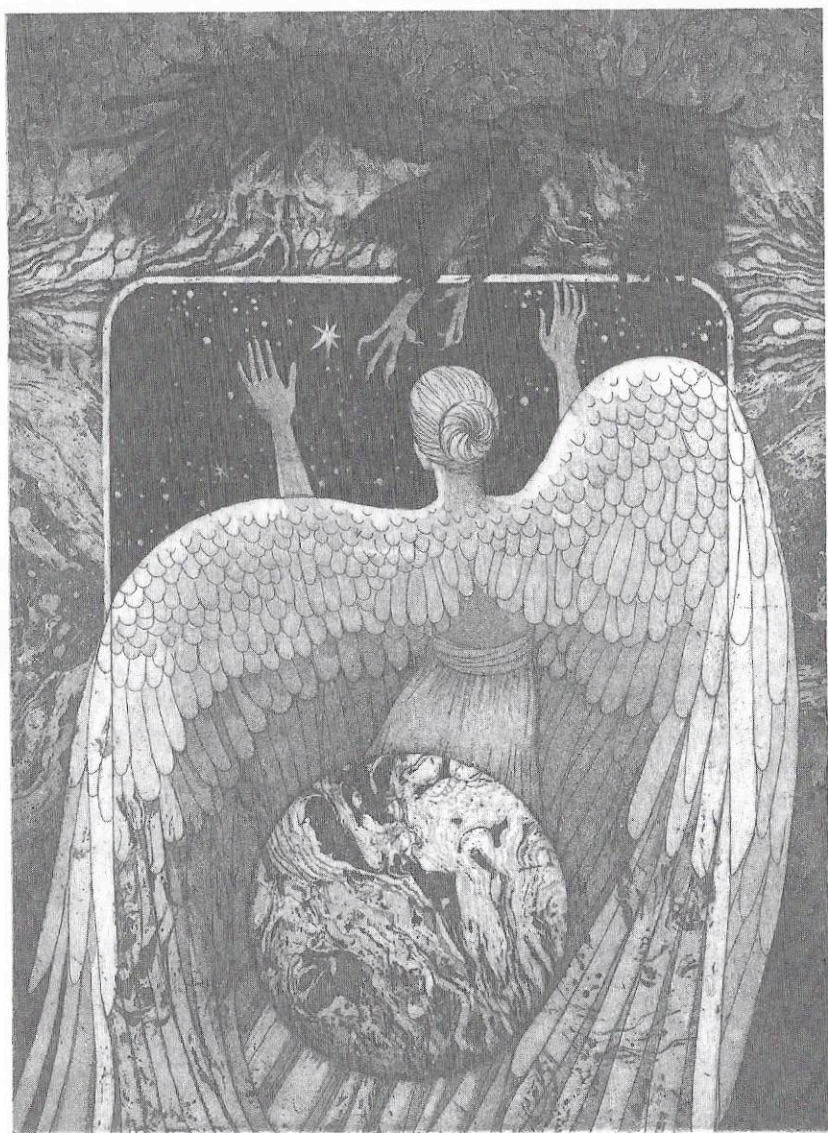
But, for the most part, business continued as usual. The war on bugs and weeds continued. As did so many other practices that demonstrate the vast majority of people's total disconnect from Rachel's basic, simple underlying message that it's all connected. The dumping of radioactive waste, sewage and garbage in the oceans continued, the cutting and burning of the forests continued, the emission of carbon dioxide into our air continued, the over-hunting and over-fishing continued, etc, etc.

Why? Rachel believed it was because as children, most of us are not encouraged to embrace the "sense of wonder" we all possess at birth. She said something like, *"If I had influence with the good fairy, I would insure that all children are given at least one adult to help insure their sense of wonder continues throughout their lives."* For herself, she had her mother. *"I can remember no time, even in earliest childhood, when I didn't assume I was going to be a writer. Also, I can remember no time when I wasn't interested in the out-of-doors and the whole world of nature. Those interests, I know, I inherited from my mother and have always shared with her."*

Truly, we all have to do our best to make sure that all children have the opportunity to keep that sense of wonder. And, just as important, we all have to find our way back to that "sense of wonder" which we as children naturally possessed. It is that sense that leads to the natural understanding that we are all connected, that everything is relative to everything else. And then we have to deepen that understanding through learning and experience.

For example, through reading Rachel's books about the sea, particularly *The Sea Around Us*, I learned about the evolution of life on this planet, of the billions of years it took for this amazing interaction of earth, air, fire, and water to create the myriad life forms — visible and invisible — that make our lives possible. This knowledge has served to increase my determination to help preserve, protect, and restore this wondrous earth.

I really do believe that it is not too late to find our way back, to love, protect, cherish, appreciate, and relish the amazing gifts we've been given. As Rachel also said, *"Those who dwell, as scientists or laymen, among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life."*



Eirene, Guardian of Peace. 9 x 12" Etching by Ruth Zachary.

Deb Friedman

Detoxing the Environment

For many years, our environment has suffered greatly from man-made pollution such as vehicle exhaust and industrial waste. Starting in the 1960s, anti-pollution legislation has helped slow the release of pollution into the air and water. Although far from being eliminated (and at risk of increasing as a result of the Bush administration's attempts to weaken regulation), air and water pollution are universally recognized as major problems. Only a small number of people refuse to accept the fact that global warming is largely due to CO₂ emissions from human activity, for example.

A "subtler" form of pollution has received less attention by lawmakers, however, despite being equally toxic and increasingly dangerous. There is now such widespread use of synthetic chemicals in our daily lives that studies commissioned by the Environmental Working Group (www.ewg.org) from 2000 to 2006 identified 455 different chemicals in the bodies of 72 individuals (including some 200 industrial chemical pollutants found in the cord blood of 10 babies). Toxic chemicals are found in many common products: pesticides, herbicides, cleaning products, body care products, cosmetics, food and water containers, preservatives, dyes, paints and stains, building materials, consumer products (e.g., carpeting, clothing, mattresses), food additives, flame retardants, and so on. Difficult to avoid, these substances create a toxic load on our bodies on top of the pollution we take in from the air we breathe and the water we drink.

That we may not get sick immediately from this exposure doesn't mean we aren't suffering a serious assault on our health. Only a small percent of these chemicals have been tested for their impact on health. However, recent research has linked pesticides, certain plastics, and other chemicals to a variety of chronic illnesses (including obesity), leading to efforts by companies that produce them to discredit the studies. Some of these chemicals are known to act like estrogens in our bodies (xenoestrogens). While our exposure to any one of these chemicals may be miniscule or even infinitesimal, we don't know anything about the combined effect of so many different chemicals on our health.

What can we do about chemical pollution? First, we can let Congress and the Environmental Protection Agency know we want them to do something about it. We can also join specific campaigns aimed at removing toxic chemicals from our environment and our stores. For example, the Organic Consumers Association (www.oca.org) has been running a campaign

against Monsanto's pesticide, RoundUp, which is sold at Home Depot and used widely. At the very least, we can choose not to buy these products.

We also need to protect our health by strengthening our body's ability to eliminate these chemicals or render them less harmful. We can do this by eating whole foods rather than processed foods, eating organic food whenever possible (not only to minimize pesticide and herbicide exposure but because non-organic foods are grown on mineral-depleted soils), and using herbal medicine to support our body's detoxification channels from time to time. It's also important to avoid microwaving in plastic containers or drinking water from plastic bottles that have been heated or frozen.

Whether we inhale toxic chemicals or ingest them, they become a burden on the body's detoxification channels. It's primarily the job of our liver to metabolize and convert to waste anything in our body that we can't use or is dangerous to us. (Pharmaceutical drugs also are metabolized by the liver.) When an overworked liver can't remove all of the toxins, they get stored in our fat tissue and are released when we lose weight, which is why losing a lot of weight too quickly can cause toxic symptoms. Whatever we digest is "sorted" by the liver, metabolized with the help of enzymes and other proteins, and either allowed to get into the bloodstream, eliminated in the bile, or sent to the kidney for elimination through urine. (The liver also filters out natural hormones that have outlived their usefulness and other natural chemicals in our body.) Other systems that are involved in detoxification are the lymph system, digestion/elimination system, lungs, and skin.

Besides eating well generally, you can eat certain foods that assist detoxification (e.g. beets, broccoli, kale, and flaxseed, among others) and foods that provide antioxidants (e.g. blueberries, beans, nuts, artichokes, prunes, etc.) which rid the body of free radical by-products. Taking herbs (as teas, tinctures, capsules, or powders) is extremely useful to support your liver and your body's other channels of elimination. Dandelion, burdock, artichoke, milk thistle, and turmeric are common herbs for liver support. (Make sure to use high-quality herbs from reputable sources.) Springtime used to be the time for herbal detoxification, but it makes sense to take these herbs more often depending on the extent of your toxic exposure. Milk thistle, in particular, is a great herb to take from time to time, to protect your liver.

Detoxification is less successful if the body is burdened with poor digestion or elimination. To help make sure your liver produces enough bile, drink a little fresh lemon juice in the morning, which stimulates the liver. Also,

make sure to get enough fiber in your diet. Constipation, not to put too fine a point on it, is counterproductive to eliminating waste. There are a multitude of herbs that can help with digestion and elimination as well.

Water is important to help with detoxification processes and with elimination, also. Drink plenty of it, but use a water filter instead of bottled water as much as possible. Bottled water is fast becoming a major environmental problem as well, with thousands of empty plastic water bottles being thrown in the trash every day.

Herbal medicine is preventive medicine, unlike pharmaceutical drugs, which, while sometimes necessary, are generally not able (or even intended) to strengthen the tissues, organs, and systems of the body. If you do use herbs, make sure you know what doses to use — it may not do you any good to use too little, and too much can sometimes be a problem as well. Also, make sure you understand what herbs are contraindicated if you're taking pharmaceutical drugs. For each of the few herbs that are contraindicated with certain medications, there are plenty of other herbs that can be substituted. And please make sure you know what herbs are okay to take if you're pregnant or breastfeeding — most are not.

For more information, consult a trained herbalist or a good herb book, preferably one written by a practicing herbalist. To find an herbalist, go to the "Find an Herbalist" page of the American Herbalists Guild (www.americanherbalistsguild.com) or the Tai Sophia Institute (www.tai.edu). Some good herb books include *The Family Herbal* by Rosemary Gladstar, *The Holistic Herbal* by David Hoffman, and *The Essential Guide to Herbal Safety* by Simon Mills and Kerry Bone

The following are recent books on toxins in the environment:

Toxic Overload: A Doctor's Plan for Combating the Illnesses Caused by Chemicals in Our Foods, Our Homes, and Our Medicine Cabinets by Paula Baillie-Hamilton (2005)

When Smoke Ran Like Water: Tales of Environmental Deception and the Battle Against Pollution by Devra Lee Davis (2002)

Our Toxic World: A Wake Up Call by Doris Rapp (2003)

Our Stolen Future: Are We Threatening Our Fertility, Intelligence, and Survival?—A Scientific Detective Story by Theo Colborn, Dianne Dumanoski, and John Peter Meyers (1997)

Living Downstream: A Scientist's Personal Investigation of Cancer and the Environment by Sandra Steingraber (1997)

Alix Greenwood

Strange Spring

Strange spring, the driest since I came here;
The winds that blow and burn in fall
Are scouring now. The air is dry, the plants uneasy;
And so I am — these days, you wonder,
Will it ever rain again? The days
When you can only live in early morning
And endure the rest are here already.
And the pale moon, a fleck, just a reminder
Of cloud, does not today evoke the cosmic order,
The arranged sequences in which we find home,
Or conjure the mysteries of light in night,
But pitiless spaces and cold irretrievable distance
As the universe moves on without us,
Saying only, when you learn from your mistakes
It's often too late to mend the damage done.

Ruth Zachary

August 29 Anniversary

On this anniversary
of Katrina's rampage,
when the old or ill were drowned,
while others, herded to promised shelter,
thirsted, starved, or died in excrement,
and children were whisked away
from their parents,
as our nation's leaders
safely flew over and neglected to help
or refused at gunpoint
to let people walk away,

far away from New Orleans,
it is quiet in this Colorado city.

Here, the dew refuses to dry
in the over-watered grass,
under this cool sun
who rises late and yawns,
with his wry smile, as autumn comes,
and views our future
over Earth's distant horizon,
sees...

perhaps a thousand sunamis, or
eventual global winter?

Shaba Barnes

Spring Cleaning

One of the most beautiful sights for me is looking at our beautiful planet earth from one of its more popular view these days, from outer space, among the stars. The planet so beautiful, and miraculous, so perfect and it looks in pristine condition. I get the feeling that all is right with the world and I accept my good fortune in being a part of it. The water is the bluest blue, the forest is a vibrant shade of green; I marvel at the majestic snow capped mountains and a glorious clear sky, with patches of clouds here and there. I imagine the world turning slowly on its axis, feeling wonderfully safe and fortunate as gravitation holds us connected; how thankful I am to be here now, during this time, on this planet I call home. Mother Earth, Gaia, Terra Firma, home of over 6.76 billion people.

The Sky ship that I am honored to be invited to experience, truly a ride out of this world, has made its final orbit. I hear the announcement on the ship speaker to prepare for re entry. Almost immediately I feel the magnetic pull as we approach the atmosphere. The serenity is gone. The vibration of our Sky ship is unbearable, the minute or two feel like an eternity to me. The pressure on my body feel heavy and uncomfortable, I am glad there is no pain. I hold onto my seat as if my very life depends on it. I attempt to say positive affirmations, something I do daily, but suddenly I cannot think of one. Although we are landing where the sun is shining, the skies are now grey and cloudy yet I do not see a cloud formation.

Our Sky ship lands in the water. Not the waters I saw from space surely, for this water has a brown grayish look with a slimy top coat that resembled oil, and what is that awful smell? Its beaches are so full of debris that it looks like the Sea Goddess is doing Spring Cleaning to rid the waters of the multitude of waste that has been housing it seemingly for eons.

I am shocked back into reality. We know about many of the concerns and problems facing our planet and its inhabitants, but it is still shocking when I see it face to face. How devastating to see our waters so dirty we cannot play or swim in it; to see the sea life, large and small wash up on the shores - lifeless. I am shocked at the reality of the changes that our planet and all life are going through. With the condition that the world is in today, with our landfills full of nuclear waste that has been disposed of inappropriately; some of our major cities are overrun with so much garbage that it is being outsourced, we can make a difference; Recycle, rebuild and

reuse. This metamorphous of decay, pollution and waste must stop. The ice caps are melting; Bees, Polar Bears, many fowls and other wild life are disappearing. It is difficult for some of us to breathe the air in some places because of pollution. You get the message. We must make a change. What can we do? What must we do?

We are at a critical phase of imbalance on our beautiful Mother Gaia. There are the dangers of genetically altered food due to manipulation of our food supply. I remember a time when the label on the food in stores would indicate when the food has been altered in some manner, even where it was grown if not locally. Now with sprays, seedlings and pesticides to make the size of animals, vegetables and fruits larger and last longer, much of this information is withheld; partly because some of the tampering is not known, and partly because it is not considered important enough to share, leaving the buyers and users to (beware) purchase foods without knowing all of the side effects. Some of us believe it is the responsibility of the government, of the food and drug administration to protect us, to make sure manufacturers are accountable and keep only the best quality foods on the shelf for our consumption. It would take regularly updated brochures or pamphlets to teach buyers, to track the process, the conditions, and the environment of foods that we eat these days.

We eat a million chickens an hour in this country alone. That is 10 billion animals killed a year. A large number are given growth hormones in order to be ready from hatching to your dinner plate in six weeks. Many animals eat grain and grass which have been sprayed with chemicals to kill pesticides that create a chemical alteration which may first spread the disease among the animals themselves. Sometimes, it is rumored, that slaughtered beef is fed to cattle along with grain and hay, then a new virus develops that may stay in the animal until it is slaughtered and sold to us as food. The mad cow disease is reported to have been created because of this procedure. This knowledge is not new. Just listening to the news recently, it was discovered that some peanut butter has been taken off the shelf because it was contaminated. The pain and distrust comes when we learn that there was prior knowledge by the manufacturer. How much tainted foods are we ingesting, how much gets by without our knowledge?

Did you know that small baby cocktail carrots you buy in the plastic bags were made from using the larger crooked or deformed carrots which are put through a machine which cuts and shapes them into cocktail size? They are then dipped into a solution of water and chlorine in order to preserve them (the same chlorine used in your pool) since they do not have their skin for

a natural protective covering. Check them sometimes after they have been refrigerated for a few days. Notice the white covering on them.

It is reassuring to know that many of the diseases that took lives in the early part of the last century has been contained, thanks to inoculation for TB, small pox and other diseases. Many of the diseases disappeared when we began sterilizing medical supplies and practicing isolations so germs would have no place to grow. Medical advancement has been successful, yet ironically germs and viruses are now being manufactured in some laboratories around the world, viruses that are mutating for which there is no present cure. Now our world is involved in germ warfare.

Some of us enjoy purchasing new appliances although nothing may be wrong with the older ones. We go for the bigger one, the style this year, the one with more gadgets; the one that we think makes us an informed consumer. These are our choices, but let's remember that the replaced items do not disappear. Many companies will not take the old one back to rebuild or recycle, nor will they send them to a country where they may be reused like some optical companies accept used eyeglasses. One of the reasons that the earth is being challenged is the number of human beings now inhabiting it. Did you know that human feces are one of the most difficult to break down? With the death rate decreasing and the number of births, it is a good time to discover ways to find a practical use for it.

There are many books on ecology; it is a popular subject on TV. The ex VP of the US, Al Gore won a peace prize because of his work on the subject and he also made a successful documentary which made many people aware of the multitude of serious problems that affect our planet; the film has been shown in movie theaters around the world, "An Inconvenient Truth." I am sure that you may also rent/purchase the movie now in rental stores around the country.

One of my greatest challenges is learning the truth about chemtrails or the Chemtrail conspiracy theory which began circulating in 1996, (see the Wikipedia encyclopedia or keyword chemtrail). The chemtrails conspiracy theory support the belief that some contrails are actually toxic chemicals or biological agents deliberately sprayed at high altitudes; an agenda reported to be dictated by the New World Order for the purpose of depopulation. Contrails, which resemble Chemtrails, are invisible vapor trail of condensed water made from the exhaust of aircraft engines and they disappear more quickly without leaving residue in the sky.

Many of us realize the poor condition our planet is in ecologically. Perhaps some cultures find the melting of the ice caps more devastating than the

changing rain forest of the Amazon; and some may think that the coral reefs in Australia Straits is related to the quickening of the disappearance of the Bees, or the Polar Bears or the Whales. Now I know the meaning of the saying, "A butterfly flapping its wings in China can be felt around the world". We are all One. We are each connected. We do not have solitary beings. Every creature, (each person) is, in some sense, connected to and dependent on others. Just by taking into consideration our awareness of our interrelatedness and interdependence of all phenomena, be it physical, biological, psychological, social and cultural — it transcends boundaries and disciplines. Members of the First Nation (Native Americans) have a memorable saying for it. "I am another yourself"

What can we do to make a change with the many ecological concerns that face us today? Well water is essential for life and since adults are approximately 70-80% water, I decided to do something to make my water purer, taste better and serve my body better. Most of us have already made the water bottle part of our dress code, but if there is anything to what I am hearing now, that some of the water in those bottles did not come from the mountain springs as reported, but is our regular tap water in our kitchen; the place where we are proud to let others know that we do not drink from. I use a water filter that I purchased for about \$25.00 which lasts me about three months. This way I do not have to carry water and the price is comparable. The water taste good and I use it for cooking and drinking only; otherwise, I turn the knob and voila, regular tap water. I also bless my water and add some rose petals before I store it in the gallon tank.

Sure, we are at the top of the food chain, all because we use our mind, we are the more intelligent species although we are the ones polluting the earth; we are responsible for many of the dying species including ourselves. There are so many problems, so many concerns, and so many opportunities. All is not lost. We can make a difference.

In conclusion, I suggest something that each of us can do to remedy the catastrophic decay of this bright star on which we live. You may wonder how is this going to help our planet, but remember this condition was created by neglect and thoughtlessness within the past millennium. We can confront and direct our emotions towards more love and inclusiveness, free yourself from the constraints of your fears. Raise these emotions by seeing our oneness and knowing that we are all on this planet together, that we are one organism, and if our planet die, we all die. Start by thinking, imagining us all pulling together in one effort. Start where you are by taking care of yourself. Watch what you eat, notice your waste material and how you

dispose of waste. Plant some veggies or some herbs in your garden or in a window box. Are we going to die in our shadows or grow in our shade? Day dream, night dream, records your dreams. Imagine; be creative; draw, paint, write, Art allows people to dream their way out of struggle. We must adapt to this changing environment. This is the time for you Earth keeper to accept more responsibility for our planet, stop using so much disposable material, care for our planet like it has cared for you. It is time for us to recognize the love and light within us. Speak up so those in the dark will be illumined by your light, so the lost, the fearful, the disempowered may know they do not walk alone. Demonstrate love as you challenge all thoughts of fear. Set your intention. We created our present reality. We can and will create our future. We cannot imagine what glorious wonders we are on the cusp of!



Daffodils, by Denise Brautigam

Zarod Rominski

Where We Begin

high back country
 where the watershed begins
 drips and trickles
 into rivulets and ravines.

green green canyon
 forest desert walls
 deep canyon creek
 growing growing
 towering fir
 stretching to a hundred years
 clear cut in the fifties
 now 2008.
 wild dancing madrona
 muscular, ravenous, red.
 our job:
 to protect them
 allow them
 to reach from canyon floor
 to yearning sky.

deep drinkers
 of drips and trickles
 thousands of acres
 an invisible netting
 of fluid light
 coalescing into tiny rivulets
 licking, slipping, dipping
 over/under rock, gravel, leaf and needle
 thickening and thinning
 the forest mantle floor
 alive, voluptuous, capricious.

mountain hillocks into ravines
 shedding, channeling,
 sucking, devouring,
 erupting quivering,
 releasing fluid light.

trees arching into canyon roof
 sheltering moist cheeks of rocky creek,
 beads of water rivulet down the sloping spine,
 over ground under ground;
 building into pools, momentary pools, cooling pools,
 wet handkerchiefs around our necks,
 dripping off our breasts into mother water
 tiny rivulets forming streams into creeks
 that flow into the Wolf
 that flow into the Graves
 that flow into the mighty Rogue
 and onto ocean plane.
 mountain high ocean of tiny little creeks
 running over surface, underground,
 bubbling into crystal pools
 where we sink a bottle of wine,
 chill, chill, chill,
 sink our hot swollen feet,
 chill chill, children

cacophonous splendor
 steep ravines
 hidden veins
 towering giants
 alters axed from ancient ones
 trails of beetles ants
 paths of elk and deer
 cougar kill
 squirrel nest
 gopher hole
 fox den
 lair of lesbos
 our job:
 to protect us
 allow us
 mother sister creatures
 all

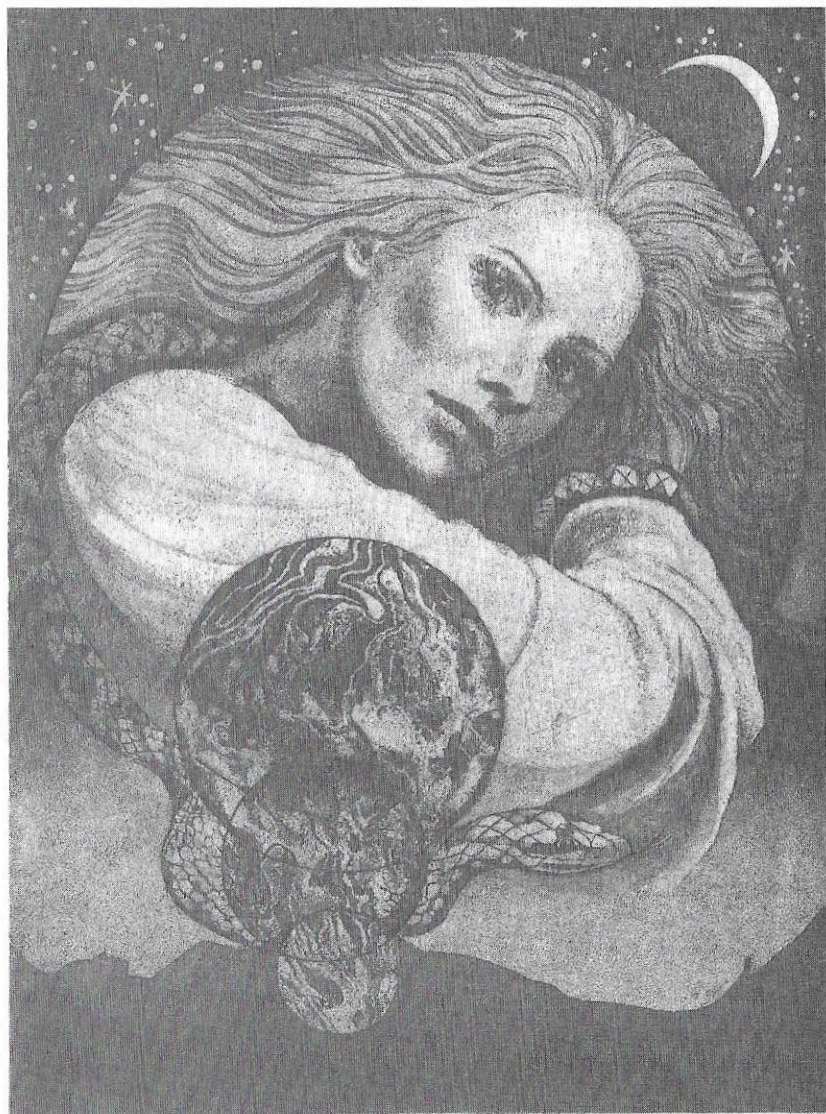
criss cross undersurface
 lacey streams of water
 tiny tiny streams
 begetting ferns
 wild ginger

tiger lilies
heal-all
scouring rush.
in the valleys of ravines
green, green, greening ferns
arched ferns
lady ferns
butter ferns.

women witness, protect and inhale
in ones, in pairs
in circling fire song
in silence, in laughter,
in hoot and spoken word,
in dreaming, in grieving.

meeting, mating,
in wilderness
beyond boundaries
before boundaries
wilderness
to quicken the soul
give grace to the bend
of the wild ginger stem.

high back country
where begin
in drips and trickles
the might Rogue
the mythic salmon
the Pacific Ocean
where begin we all.



Earth Woman. Etching. 9 x 12" by Ruth Zachary.

Diane Foster

Environmental Issues/Lesbian Concerns

Whether driving to the next city or across country it is my stomach that suffers the most as it becomes sickened when I look and feel the distressed nature of trees under stress from atmospheric chemicals. My soul sinks when I realize the cause of this slow death. The trails of chemicals from airplane fuselage and nuclear plants entering her veins, chokes and stricken the life she gives. Because of irregular seasonal changes her body is full of life-choking parasites. Her branches are dull, and bear no leaves like a woman robbed of her essence for child-bearing.

I see rivers and streams reduced to narrow passages because her water is redirected or drained for new development, with no concern to the consequences this diversion or drainage causes. Some of these areas are left on their own. Those who drain them care little of what happens to the life she carries while she is being drained. They leave her lying in her own slow death to be violated by disease and pestilence. I remember such a place as a child in Alabama.

For my brothers and I along with many other local people, this stream was a place to fish, play or sit and relax along her banks. Joyce, my best friend at the time and I would spend hours at that beautiful stream lying in the grass daydreaming of our future. Feeling the cool breeze coming from her waters was welcoming relief from an Alabama summer. There was a lumberyard nearby and word began to buzz that the nearby lumber company was going to drain that stream. Obviously the company wanted the water to manufacture lumber into whatever the economy required at that time. All of us noticed the lowering of the water level. Her banks became muddy. Algae began to grow rapidly in the southern heat — along with an abnormal amount of flies, and mosquitoes. Frogs that could not escape died along her banks creating stench and disgust. By summer's end there was nothing more than a small flow of life coming from that stream. Yet, today I look back into that time and reluctantly think how fortunate we were in that our only loss was the loss of a favorite place of recreation.

To see lakes and rivers dying from pollutants created from deadly runoffs of plants and factories that produce consumer goods is the real tragedy, for these lakes and rivers are sources of water and food. As consumers we are fed the illusion that by using these products of mass destruction our lives are made better and easier. The pages of this journal you are holding in your hand have

story and stories of pollutant-based disease and devastation created in the name of making the world a better place to live. A better place to live?

Sure, I like what plastic can do for me. Tupperware is great but I would rather wrap a loaf of bread in cheesecloth if it would mean keeping a community from acquiring a disease whose origins are directly related to chemical runoffs from factories that produce Tupperware, and other plastics. Plastics are a medical marvel for hospitals that use them for health procedures. Plastic forks, spoons and knives (I've even used the knives as a back-scratcher) are wonderful helpers when we want to eat on the go; and those plastic containers our food is contained in are convenient. When we are done we simply throw them away! No mess, no fuss. However, they are putting our environment at risk.

I remember not too long ago those little cups of ice-cream that were made of a cardboard-like paper lined with a protective coating so the ice-cream would not seep through. You can still find this method of containment in the ice-cream treat call "pushups", you know, the ones with the wooden stick in the middle and as you eat the ice-cream from the cylinder you push the rest of the ice-cream to the top by using the wooden stick? Those ice-cream cups came with a little wooden spoon. To me, using those spoons added joy to the ice-cream experience. After the ice-cream was gone I would continue to suck on the spoon. I also remember the wooden forks. This past weekend I had my taxes prepared at a local AARP Tax-Aide location. I noticed their inkpens were made of wood and cardboard! The clip was made of wood and the body of the inkpens were made of a tightly sealed, coated cardboard. Why are these biodegradable products not being used more? It probably boils down to cost.

How much it costs to produce these wooden products over the cost of producing them in plastic. But, which is safer for the environment, and when you make a comparative analysis the cost of producing wooden forks, spoons and knives for disposables is far less than the health cost of people sickened by the chemical runoffs produced by those plants that produce plastic disposables. This is not a simple reality. Take into factor the number of us who throw away plastic spoons and forks on a daily bases. And once again, though landfills may get full of wooden forks, spoons and knives at least they are biodegradable. It takes 1000 years for most plastic to decompose. This paragraph only mentions plastic forks, spoons and knives. How can Mother Earth withstand this infliction?

Because of the inadequacy of water more and more people are drinking bottled water. Americans consume 77 billion plastic bottles of water daily.

66 billion of these bottles end in landfills and incinerators. Billions of these plastic bottles are thrown into lakes, and rivers. They end up as debris or simply clog up lakes, streams and rivers. They are becoming an abscess on our land and water. Recycling is a fix. When taking into account that many drink water on the go, dumping their bottles in the nearest trash, or rural communities where recycling is not emphasized or urban communities where it is over looked and equally hard to enforce, only 10% of those bottles are actually recycled. Every little bit helps; no need to stop recycling; 10% is 10%, yet at this ratio the fix is like throwing out trash from one corner of the room when the entire room is filled. The need for drinking bottled water is a result of those poisoning the water. As early as 20 years ago the need for bottled water was not an issue. If water were not being poisoned we would have no need for bottled water—tap would suffice; and there would be no need to produce all the plastic necessary for the bottles.

Drinking bottled water has been made to be stylish. Many drink it to be “in” the latest trend. If their mindset were diagnosed that person would just as soon drink tap water. However, it is marketed as stylish to cover up the fact that most tap water is unhealthy. I make note that some companies bottle and sell tap water for economic gain. Environmentally, drinking water out of the tap filtered with a water filter is a lot less expensive overall and more environmentally safe. It would be nice to have a place to dispose of the filters — like taking them back to the stores where they are purchased who in turn will send them back to the companies that make them who in turn would recycle whatever can be recycled and environmentally dispose of whatever cannot be recycled.

As a student living a summer in Ghana, West Africa I remember standing on a beautiful beach, watching the sunset. As I stood there gazing upon Mother Earth’s glory I felt something braze against my foot. Upon looking down I discovered it was a discarded syringe. My first thought was that somewhere far off shore a ship carrying waste used this precious water to dump waste. Maybe a woman’s intuition; or perhaps they came from the hospital a few miles inland. And no, it is not just third-world countries that are dumping into the life-source of Mother Earth. Many would like to think that such things do not happen in America. Indeed America’s beaches are being littered with the same, if not worse destruction. Do a Google Search on how hospitals, clinics and nursing homes dispose of their waste — its’ scary. I read an article from a Google search that here in America syringes, medical plastics, and pharmaceuticals are flushed into regular drain systems on a daily bases. I will not name the article or reference it for there are many

such articles that exist on the Internet; do the search. Imagine how all those chemicals affect water and soil life.

The powers that affect this mindset are controlled by patriarchy. Is it matriarchy that makes decisions on how plastics, pesticides or any other chemicals can be made safer, and which cause no harm to land, air, sea and life?

I know; you are smiling that grimaced smile that gives the answer. Women are aware of the sacredness of Earth Mother. Patriarchy wants to conquer at all and any cost, woman want to protect and provide, peacefully in a way that is beneficial for all. There is no need to destroy a forest for paper and homes without replenishing (honestly) that which was taken away. Lesbians know that patriarchy is against women, nature and all living creatures.

Earth Mother is running out of room to house, shelter and provide for her children because her children have become too many. Women have always known their limitations. Sadly she has been used and abused by patriarchal dominance whose only concern is spreading seed rather than proper care of their seed. Over-population? There wouldn't be any. Women would have control as to the number of children she bears thereby eliminating hunger and sickness that occurs when so many cannot be provided for — not to mention her health. It would not be necessary to create chemicals to grow more food or (deadlier) chemicals to “cure” sicknesses that are created from the very same chemically laden foods that are grown for consumption. We are told that these things must be because of the amount of people that are on this earth. This is a contradiction.

Yes, Lesbians are concerned for Earth Mother's fragile ecosystems. We know we are earth too, and our lights must shine to sister Lesbians and indeed the world in whatever capacity we see fit to let it shine. When Lesbians become sick from drinking bad water or inhaling deadly fumes the establishment is less likely to address our health concerns. We have to beg, cry and fight for medical support simply because we are Lesbian. Let us teach one another to pay more attention to our Earth Mother. Let us learn to praise her Sun and Moon. Let us learn that we do not need all the consumables that “mankind” has conditioned us to believe we need. Let us be more aware of the policy makers and what they are doing or not doing environmentally.

As Lesbians we can become more aware of the needs of our bodies and teach our sister Lesbians the same. Herbs have been with us from the beginning for cooking and healing. It is an established fact that certain pharmaceuticals are made from the very herbs that we can grow in our

gardens, porches, balconies and windowsills. Doctors do not want us taking charge of our health. Health professionals do not want us to purchase life-saving herbs. They would rather we buy a prescription. There are herbs for menstrual cramps, liver cleansing, and fibrocystic breasts, to name a few. Let us remember the cleansing and healing nature of hyssop and dandelion root. If Cats Claw is good for insomnia, why take the PM pills? Reishi mushrooms lowers blood pressure as well as alfalfa, dandelion, garlic and ginger root. The herb goldenrod is good for the kidneys, and evening primrose for joint pain. The medical establishment does not want you to know the value of these herbs. Purchase a book on herbs and discover how easily you can take your health into your own hands. However, do remember just as you must read labels on products you buy at the store do your research to make sure they are right for you. Licorice is good for eczema, menopausal symptoms, psoriasis as well as diabetes, but should not be taken by people with hypertension. The medical professions would have us believe that since they have not tested these herbs they will not say if they are safe or not. Know this is only so that they may use these same properties in another form and sell them to us rather than teaching us how to use them ourselves. These herbs have been used by many, for many, many years.

I had an aunt who use to plant tomatoes in her driveway. There was a clearing of soil about 2 feet wide that ran between the driveway and the side her house. She also used whatever "patches" of ground available on her property to plant her fruit and vegetables. She gave them love and care and respect. I remember eating those home-grown fruits and vegetables and I remember how tasty they were — quite unlike those I purchase at the store. I am in process of preparing a place on my balcony to grow herbs. Certain spices can be grown in windowsills. The time spent caring for them is very nurturing and they will reward you in return. I am aware of how easy it is to pass a health food store, or that the health food store may be too far away or too expensive. This may not be "your" solution and it is only one alternative to ensuring you receive organically grown products. If you are able to grow your own, the cost of learning "the how's" of growing herbs, spices, fruits and vegetables is priceless. Once while visiting a Lesbian friend and her partner I became constipated. A couple of days passed by and I mentioned this to my friend. Her partner went outside and came back with a few dandelions and made me a tea. By that evening I no longer suffered with the misery that constipation brings — and it did not cost a cent! There are options.

Let us learn what Earth Mother has to offer. Let us not waste our money on patriarchal remedies. I am not an economist and therefore not aware of

what women spend annually on pharmaceuticals. I am sure it is ridiculously high. The healthcare system is a monumental force to fight yet we can fight back by taking charge of our health in other ways. If I had it to do all over again I would become a Lesbian herbalist growing herbs and spices on Womensland and making them available to other women and Lesbians. That would be my protest.

But as such I will share what knowledge I have to make other Lesbians aware of what is happening to our Mother Earth in ways I can. Every Lesbian reading these words has something to offer — it can be as simple as passing this journal on to another Lesbian to empower her to identify with our Earth Mother, to know we are her daughters and that she cares for our well-being. We can sign any petition that ensures her safety, complain to our legislatures, and send love to her four corners. Send love to her air, water, and land — she hears, oh yes, our Earth Mother hears.

Lilith Rogers

THE EARTH PLEDGE

I pledge allegiance to the Earth
on which I live
and to all Her Creatures
Large and Small
and to Her Water, Air, and Soil.
One World, One People
Undivided
with Food, Shelter, Health, Freedom
Love and Justice
for All.

Alix Greenwood

Choosing

Yes, the traffic reverberates around
 This land pinned between road and road.
 But don't compare one place to another –
 How can you say anywhere's better than somewhere else?

I hear the cars.
 But this tiny marshland ignores them.
 Redwing blackbirds call and sing
 Swallow hunt along the track
 Ducks splash in the pools
 Flowers and grasses come and go.
 The sun rises, it sets.

This scrap of marshland is marsh no less.

It too is a between place, like all marshes,
 Like estuaries, the tips of lakes,
 The shining sand between land and water, it is both,
 And luminous with sky.
 These are places of passage, of transformation,
 Meeting and mingling, opening and dissolving,
 Intensely inhabited, dense, airy, ambiguous, confusing,
 Potent as twilight, where the veil is thin.

And when they drain a marsh, to tidy it,
 And make it serve their purpose,
 When they leave the migrant birds suddenly lost and starving,
 When they make frogs, the reed, the seasons,
 Only ghosts and memories,
 The consequences comes –
 The flood, brown with ancient soil,
 And the floating carcasses, and the ruined homes.

This small marshland is marshland no less.

Yes, I wish the cars away, the sound of birdsong only.
 It is hard, this accepting of reality,
 How, to feel the marsh, I must feel the road too.
 No, I don't like it.
 But love lies here —
 Here, in the despised places.

It's not that I think it's all OK —
 That it does not need to be fixed,
 Or that it cannot be.
 Much of what is, is hell on earth —
 A world destroyed and re-made —
 Constantly, violently —
 Everywhere, from climate to cell to DNA,
 In giant, irrevocable, unilateral acts,
 And a billion small ones —
 Cruelly, greedily —
 And casually, heedlessly,
 As if all is other and inert,
 As if inert is not a fiction,
 As if we do not reverberate
 As all Being laughs, and screams.

It's that love lies here —
 Here, in imperfection, pain and injury,
 Here, in the soil beneath the concrete,
 In the smog-browened sky,
 In the pesticide drifting through the air —
 Here, in each little patch of earth we inhabit,
 And here, where the trail of our actions leads —
 The landfill, the sweatshop, the oilspill.

It is not in turning away.

It is not in escape to scenes of beauty —
 Beautiful escape, wonderful escape,
 Escape that is longing and coming home —
 And love — but not the core of love.
 Nor is it in the passive lie,

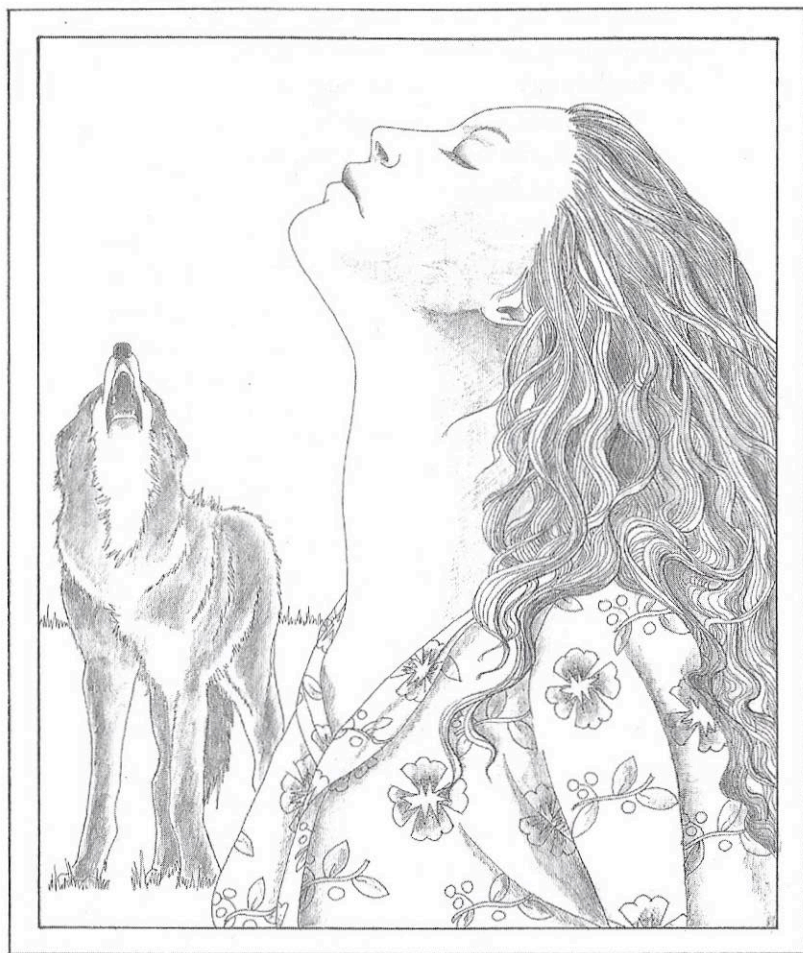
The shroud of endless self-forgiveness,
When we pretend that what we do does not count,
Or that things aren't really so bad.

It is – somewhere between seconds and particles,
In vast invisible spaces in the densest matter;
It is where all things are, simultaneously –
Dream, memory, loss, defeat, possibility,
Extinct species, murdered peoples, resistance,
Terrible gravity, soaring hope,
All that is within the heart –
The joy of the marsh, the pain of the road.

It is in working the ground of now,
Every grain and crumb of it.

It is in holding each choice, shimmering,
In our hands.

It is in knowing the peculiar paradox
That when you act as if you are all that matters,
You act as if you don't matter –
As if your choice is of no account,
And you are dead, in a dead world.



Companion 2 by Sudie Rakusin.

Sandy Tate

The Invisible Pollution

Unlike cigarette smoke, electromagnetic radiation (EMR) is not noticed by most of us. We don't smell it, see it, or taste it.

Many of the wireless industry studies that claim electromagnetic radio frequencies are safe are funded by the industry. They acknowledge that no proof exists that cell phones, towers and WiFi are safe, yet they claim there is no available scientific evidence showing problems from electromagnetic fields (EMF).

These safety claims mimic the tobacco and pharmaceutical industries in trivializing harmful effects to humans. Old people and children are particularly vulnerable to dramatic increases in allergies, asthma, cancers of all kinds, delayed reactions, sleep-attention, and learning behavior disorders and depression. Some argue that the risk is low. This argument is hollow because at present it is not possible to determine the magnitude of the risk. The situation is similar to our history of dealing with the hazards of smoking decades ago, where the power of the industry to influence governments, and conflicts of interest within the public health community, delayed action for more than a generation.

Wireless broadband Internet (WiFi), is the latest technology to place us involuntarily at risk. WiFi adds yet another layer (producing a condition called *electrosmog*), to the existing burden of radio frequency radiation. Governments in Australia, the Netherlands, France, and Sweden have found that long-term low-level exposure to RFR has cumulative health effects such as high blood pressure, blurry sight, loss of focus, memory loss, loss of appetite, fatigue, nausea, heart palpitations, brain tumors and other effects too numerous to mention here.

An often-repeated argument in favor of citywide WiFi is that it will help close the digital divide; the poorer you are, the more limited your access to the Internet and its wealth of information resources. Cities like Philadelphia and San Francisco are actively trying to close the digital divide.

Second-Hand Radiation

Second-hand tobacco smoke was not adequately researched, reported on or taken seriously years ago, or many injuries and deaths could have been avoided. Similarly, researchers today have found that the operation of a nearby portable cell phone exposes others to radiation, some of which will

make its way into the brain of the non-user, causing biological effects even though the phone may be more than ten feet away from the non-user.

Libby Kelley is Executive Director of the International Commission for Electromagnetic Safety and founder of Council on Wireless Technology Impacts (CWTI). She says, "Cell phones are regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration who sets an exposure safety standard, or Specific Absorption Rate (SAR), at 1.6 w/kg, based on avoidance of tissue heating." In other words, if it doesn't cook your tissue, it's safe. But some European governments are advising caution in the use of the millions of cell phones and the proliferation of cell and WiFi antennas. Scientific research from many nations has confirmed that even extremely low frequency radiation can potentially cause harmful effects on people, animals and plant life.

The sun bathes us in electromagnetic radiation energy, and the earth is a huge magnet with its own electromagnetic field, in timely rhythms with the moon, sun, and cosmos. The density of radio waves around us is now 100–200 million times the natural level reaching us from the sun. Too much electromagnetic frequency can lead to cellular changes in our bodies that can cause sleep disorders and tumor growth.

The Bioinitiative Report (2007) published by an international working group of distinguished scientists, researchers and public health policy professionals, reviewed over 2000 studies. Their final report raised serious concerns about the existing public exposure limits, and documented brain tumor risks and other health risks from exposure to wireless technologies.

The European Environmental Agency (EEA) has called for immediate action to reduce exposure to radiation from WiFi, cell phones and masts. The EEA warned that radiation safety limits, which are set by the industry, are much too high. The FCC safety standards are based on short-term thermal effects, not long-term chronic exposure. This enables the telecommunications industry to claim that low frequency radiation is safe.

In Europe there are many well-funded projects in RFR research. Citizens are more organized. Public figures have championed the issue. And the European Union has a much greater public health orientation than the United States. These days we have to rely on the Europeans for the science of wireless technology health risks.

In 2004 the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) decided to prohibit cell phone antennas on fire houses until further science demonstrated that cell antennas are safe. Slowed reaction times, lack of focus, severe headaches, sleep deprivation, tremors and vertigo are just some

of the health effects from cell phone towers, which emit radio frequency radiation (RFR).

The France National Library which serves one million users removed WiFi.

The Progressive Librarians Guild which provides a forum for the open exchange of radical views on library issues, called for precautionary measures concerning potential risks when working with wireless technology

A library director at a college in Santa Fe, NM, resigned because of WiFi in the library. She felt she was jeopardizing her health for the sake of employment. B. Blake Levitt is a medical journalist, author and researcher of the biological effects of non-ionizing radiation since the late 1970s. She says, "Once considered safe environments/professions, librarians and teachers are now in high risk professions."

The San Francisco Neighborhood Antenna-Free Union (SNAFU) is a grass-roots, city-wide coalition of individual residents and neighborhood organizations that works to prevent the placement of wireless antennas on or near residences and many other public places. SNAFU's work follows from the mounting evidence concerning the health and environmental effects of radio frequency radiation used by cellular phones, cellular antennas and other wireless transmitters.

SNAFU appealed a proposed municipal citywide WiFi system, and succeeded in getting a moratorium on the installation of antennas on or near public buildings.

Concerned citizens in Portland, OR, successfully convinced the Portland Unified School District to cease signing lease agreements to place wireless facilities on school grounds.

Concerns In Other Countries

In 2005 the Public Health Dept. of Salzburg warned that WLAN (Wireless Computer Networks) and DECT (digital electric cordless telephones) should not be put in schools and nurseries

A 2007 study from the Dutch Electrohypersensitivity Foundation found that DECT cordless phones increase the risk of brain tumors, headaches, fatigue, heart palpitations, concentration and sleep problems. The DECT phone's base station constantly emits pulsing microwave radiation at full power as long as it is plugged into the wall socket. These phones, usually at a worker's desk or on a bedside table can cause considerable distress to the person nearby

The Bamburger appeal from German doctors includes a warning about WLAN, and Germany has put out a soft warning on DECT phones. The German teachers union has told its members to resist the rollout of WLAN into schools on safety grounds.

Lakehead University in Canada has decided not to put in wireless computers as the technology they use has never been tested and so not proved to be safe.

The Vienna Chamber of Doctors has warned that WLAN emits high levels of radiation.

In the UK Prebendal School, Chichester, West Sussex has removed its wireless network after lobbying by concerned parents.

Ysgol Pantycelyn in Carmarthenshire, Wales has switched off its wireless network due to parents' and governor's concerns.

Stowe School, a Buckinghamshire private boarding school, removed part of its wireless network after a teacher became ill.

In a report from Project Censored, more than six million people have died in the Congo since 1996 as a consequence of invasions and wars sponsored by western powers trying to gain control of the region's mineral wealth. At stake is control of natural resources sought by U.S. corporations. Coltan and niobium are two minerals found in the region, and necessary for production of cell phones and other high-tech electronics. There are huge profits being made from high-tech electronics, but at what cost?

Precautions are advised if people use wireless technology. Don't sit or sleep in close proximity to a wireless device. Turn off wireless devices at night and when not in use. Avoid using a wireless laptop on your lap for extended periods of time. Notice any symptoms of short-term health effects you might experience.

Cindy Sage, environmental consultant, talks about the Bio-initiative Report, on a DVD she edited with a team of international scientists. To order this 58-minute documentary on the human health dangers of Radio Frequency Radiation (RFR), and Electromagnetic Fields (ELF), go to <http://eon3.net/pages/main.html>.

H. Madrone

EPITAPH

Death arrived today
on an updraft of leaves.
Yellow-gold butterflies
flit from the aged Black Walnut –
shedding her burden of summers' drapery
baring her branches
for the promised weight of winter.
The host of twigs give up their only fruit
the flock lifting above the tiered garden
as though the sky,
not the ground
was their destiny.

The tree's foliage climbs
with the wind
a brief foray into another element.
A quest for life
despite their loss of mooring.
Or a flight of spirit
before the gentle earth
welcomes their bodies
in an eternal mix
of matter.

The Black Walnut
older than my seventy years
stands four stories high
just below the garden.
Each year I watch her cycles,
her leafing out in Spring
her autumnal celebration of death.
When life needs shed of me
I'll glide on an updraft of release
and be welcomed of expectant death



Homeless Cries by Tina Freimuth.

Avotcja*Big Mama's Miniature Miracles*

It all began with a little drop of Dew
 As stupidity knocked down too many trees
 And the Rain ran away
 When the Clouds disappeared
 And arrogance lost its mind
 Next some big money Jerks come pay an unasked for visit
 Covered the beauty of Creation's Bounty with concrete
 And a heart broken Earth turned in on her self
 Brutally humiliated, the Old Girl was devastated
 As she was forced to watch
 Flowers fade, the silent spaces where Birds used to play &
 Bumble Bees hooked on Pollen followed the Flowers that got away
 She sat, had to watch the Leaves fall to the ground
 Feel the pain of seeing the plushiest of foliage get rotten & die
 Mother Nature was "pissed" & she cried
 Was furious, but she just cried
 She ate the hate & got sick from the steady diet of disrespect
 As she tried to be "cool" & get through this re-run cycle of strife
 Still under our feet all kinds of little Critters witnessed
 Strawberry Creek (like the Ohlone's Mission Creek) being driven
 Deeper underground looking for a safe place to hide
 As sniveling greedy hypocrites worked hard at looking all pitiful
 Boo-hoo'd & tried to look like they were pushing tears aside
 (In denial of their own treacherous handiwork)
 Then had the nerve to curse the desiccated blandness of the land
 And the Floods of madness
 That brought about the nothingness of Droughts
 A souless duplication of the dryness
 Of Arrogance's own lack of humanity & imagination
 A continuous saga, a bankrupt drama
 The arrhythmic Dance that comes from worshipping dollars
 And in complete disregard of common sense
 Greed wrapped itself from head to foot
 Masked the sterile suicidal shame in their own self pity
 And were so unbelievably busy feeling sorry for themselves
 That they completely lost sight
 Of the fact that they were only a small part of life
 They never even noticed
 The resilient reappearance of the beauty of Clouds

Or that little ignored drop of Water
 You know, the one that refused to give up the ghost
 Mama's stubborn little Dewdrop
 Cute little thing jumped up & gave a tiny blade of thirsty Grass
 Just the right amount of courage to break through the concrete
 And remind us all again, "this too shall pass"
 Mama Nature has already paid the cost
 And even though
 She sometimes gets confused, lets go & loses control
 She knows she's Mama
 She knows the Earth is her home
 And these days
 She's spending all her time getting ready to stay ready
 In anticipation of Mankind's next display of foolishness
 Regardless of whether we're ready to accept the ramifications
 Of humanity's actions or inaction
 Mama knows ... she's always known
 In no uncertain terms ... Earth is her Turf!!!
 And it's Nature's Nature to always reclaim what's hers
 Mess with just one of her Babies & even history won't miss you &
 There's nothing worse than an angry Mother's fury
 Nature is
 One of those over protective kind of Mamas that almost never plays
 A Mama that will always let you know
 She would much rather hold you, but
 If you push her too hard she'll fight
 Think twice before you act unwisely
 Unless
 You think your conscience is strong enough to handle the loss
 'Cause when Nature takes, she takes it all
 Big Mama's temper tantrums have been known
 To turn Heaven & Hell inside out before you can blink your eyes
 So while there's still a chance
 Find what's left of common sense in your heart
 Be an unwavering example of peace & harmony
 Moving productively & gracefully through life like a Dewdrop
 Or we're gonna lose big time ... this time we're gonna lose it all
 In the long run the Old Girl always wins
 That's the way it's always been
 That's the way the Story always goes
 She's Mama ... Big Mama
 And Mother Nature is always Boss!

Remembrances



Photo by Jen Doan.

Lynnly Beth Labovitz (1954 – 2008)

Tribute by Amy Epstein and Vicki Randle

Lynnly Beth Labovitz was born June 13, 1954 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and died August 4, 2008 in San Francisco, California.

She was a photographer, music lover, bad serial TV addict, champion of the less fortunate, and adopter of strays, both animal and human.

What you found beautiful, you fed and protected with all your heart.

You were the funniest person we will ever know. You swept us along with you, your ragtag crew of devoted friends, on your eleven year assault on breast cancer.

You wrung every last shred of life out of that failing body, thereby winning the battle. We are all stronger, more courageous and open-hearted for it.

She had a huge body of work, from portraits to landscapes to light painting. she used her art to help raise funds for causes close to her heart, from breast cancer survivors, to dog rescue and more, and has requested that it continue in this endeavor in perpetuity. or as long as possible. To view Lynnly's art go to www.lynnly.com.

Brenda Kay Henson 1945 – 2008)

Tribute by Wanda Henson

Brenda Kay Henson, age 62, Dumas, Arkansas, passionately devoted, loving, faithful, protective and courageous wife of Wanda Faye Reeves Henson, went to be with her awaiting family on the other side, at 11:47pm February 8, 2008. She died peacefully at home in the grateful arms of her wife and surrounded by family and longtime friends.

She is survived by her wife Wanda Reeves Henson; sister Barbara Ley, Chauncey, Ohio; daughter Andie Gibbs (and life wife Terri Valenti), Overt, Mississippi; daughter Terri Elliott, Omaha, Nebraska; son Robin Gibbs (and spouse Ann Miller), Jemison, Alabama; son Arthur Elliott, Reno, Nevada; grandchildren Vanessa Gibbs, Britney Elliott, Arthur Elliott, III, (and Brittney & Arthur's mother Leslie Melancon), Alexandria Elliott; greatgrandchildren Leighton Albin, Alyssa Albin; numerous nieces, nephews and self-identified 'children'.

Born September 25, 1945 in Lebanon, Ohio, reared in Loveland, Ohio, she was preceded in death by her parents Herman Oliver Brandenburg and Mary Eliza Brandenburg and her brother James H. DeBord.

She was beloved by everyone who knew her.

Proudest Moments:

1. Consecrating in holy matrimony her 20 year committed relationship with her wife in the Great State of Massachusetts on May 24, 2004; thus reaping the benefits of the social justice communities hard won rights and her life's work as an Adult Educator Social Transformationist.
2. Despite dropping out of school in ninth grade, she earned her GED in 1982, a Bachelor's degree and Master's degree by 1992 and an Education Specialist degree (Ed.S.) with emphasis on Teaching Displaced Homemakers, all from the University of Southern Mississippi.
3. She co-founded with Wanda in 1987, Southern Wild Sisters Bookstore, a feminist resource center, Gulfport, Mississippi; in 1989, the public charity Sister Spirit, Incorporated and in 1989, Camp Sister Spirit, a Feminist Education and Cultural Retreat Center, Overt, Mississippi.
4. After the local, primarily Christian Community held town meetings to run her organization out of town, she appeared on Oprah and other talk shows to defend her organization's right to own property as Lesbians.
5. She was a guest lecturer at 55 universities, speaking on the topic: 'From the Frontlines- Homophobia in the US Today; a First Person Accounting'.

6. In 2001, The University of Ulster-Jordanstown Students Union hosted the Hensons for a 2 week fact-finding and speaking tour in the North of Ireland. They were issued a Parliamentary invitation, were the honored guests of Eileen Bell (MLA-Alliance Party) and Patricia Lewsley (MLA-Social Democratic Labour Party), and addressed members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) at Stormont, discussing the exclusion of civil rights for Gays and Lesbians in America (Lesbian and Gay Irelanders are protected by their government in the Good Friday Peace Agreement).
7. Countless awards of recognition and achievement including 1994 Uncommon Woman of the Year from the Uncommon Legacy Foundation, Certificate of Tribute for courage and strength in the struggle against Bigotry and Discrimination by creating 'Camp Sister Spirit', from The City of Los Angeles: 1995 Entrepreneur of Year from Victory! Magazine: and a Commendation for Bravery from the Congress of the United States House of Representatives.
8. She cherished the friendships of Dr. Louise McFarland and Shirley Kirkconnell, US Rep. Barney Frank, (D-Mass); internationally acclaimed feminist author Phylis Chesler, and Lesbian Activist Pioneer Robyn Tyler. Her life's dream, to live in peace until her demise, was not accomplished but she tried until the end to enjoy happiness and love every minute with her devoted wife. And she did.

She survived recurrent colon cancer for 4 years, empowered by her belief in positive thinking and never stopped hoping for a cure for all colon cancer. The family encourages everyone to prevent colon cancer by getting a screening colonoscopy at age 50.

The family expresses gratitude to Dr. Tammy Young and all the Oncology nurses at Headerman Cancer Center, Jackson, MS; Dr. Stacey McCord, Oncologist Little Rock, AR; Dr. Sadeen Mahmood, Cardiologist, Pine Bluff, AR, attending physician February 4, 2008 at St. Vincent Hospital North, Little Rock, AR, and deep appreciation to Rev. Ayla Heartsong, Silver Circle Sanctuary, MS.

Memorial scattering of ashes were held at 2:00pm, Sunday, February 17, 2008 at Moses Pier, Hwy 49, Gulfport, Mississippi. Arrangements provided by Roselawn Crematory, Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be sent to SisterSpirit, Inc/Camp Sister Spirit, PO Box 12, Ovett, MS 39464 or Rainbow Law, RR 1, Box 266C, Wallace WV 26448; or to a social justice organization of one's choice.



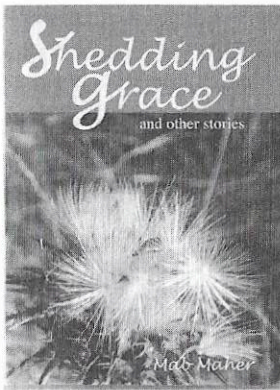
Photo by Alexa Young, executor of the Bernice Bing estate.

Bernice Bing (1936 – 1998)

Lesbian painter Bernice Bing had a catalyzing effect on a group of people who came together after her death to remember and honor her life, and who remain loosely connected. Lydia Matthews writes of Bing, “Hers was a powerfully sustained yet quiet career. This kind of artist can easily fall through historical cracks if we do not diligently keep her memory alive.” Indeed, Bing has largely fallen through the cracks, though in her time she was quite visible. There are so many dynamic facets of Bing’s life: A former student of California College of the Arts and San Francisco Art Institute and Abstract Expressionist, Bing studied with Sabro Hasegawa who introduced her to Zen and Chinese painting while being deeply influenced by her studies in Abstraction with Richard Diebenkorn and Nathan Oliviera; Bing was part of the early Bay Area Abstract Expressionist movement and prolific as a Beat Artist. She received early critical acclaim for her work with a 1963 and 1964 Artforum review and was among a number of young women during the 1950s who would make up the first generation of post-war women artists in California. Bing was deeply devoted to the process of abstract art while being involved in community-based activism and administrative duties such as her role as the first Executive Director of the South of Market Cultural Center, now known as SOMArts, and a founding member of the first Asian American women’s arts organization, AAWAA.

Thanks to Lenore Chinn for sharing this information.

Book Reviews



Shedding Grace and Other Stories by Mab Maher

Reviewed by Ida VSW Red

With the right word, the “telling” detail, and a well-made sentence, Mab Maher spins a fine tale. The *Shedding Grace* stories are scenes from life in which setting, character, and plot are smoothly handled as in a play or film.

If the reader suffers from “genre envy,” you’ll be puzzling over whether Maher’s new book contains short stories, autobiographical sketches, or chapters of a novella. But if you “go with the flow,” you’ll find a concise history of mid-to-late 20th century life (something like the five-minute university), a collection of superb character studies, a contemplative memoir, and much more. The author classifies her writing as “trans-genre.”

From the four-year-old’s need to understand her wolf-like grandmother’s blindness and moral requirements to the nun emerging from 20 years in convent dealing with the damage and learning to live in the open, every experience is alive and acted out, never merely described.

Maher’s extraordinary writing was practiced early as a 12-year-old cub reporter on her tiny hometown (population 103) newspaper and as the “poet-originator” of cheerleader calls. Further experience included a job typing the life stories from psychiatric exams, stories that she found always “irregular” despite being fitted into strict forms. Maher has been published in many journals and received awards for some of the stories included in *Shedding Grace*.

Some of the most fascinating themes woven through the collection are questions of “difference,” obedience, forgiveness, and the challenge of accepting joy in imperfect conditions. Her grandmother’s blindness, mother’s crippling arthritis, the rigors of a nun’s life, and a brief need to be “left alone to be crazy” -- all held the protagonist in. Finally, she breaks loose, expresses

her rage, and makes a rich, productive life for herself. She even embraces sensuality, a love of women, and sometimes overcomes the fear of joy.

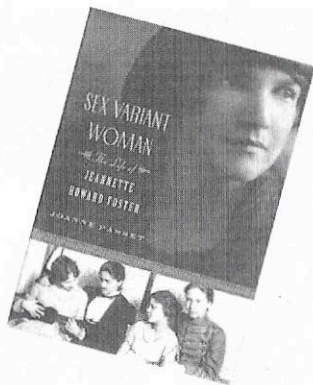
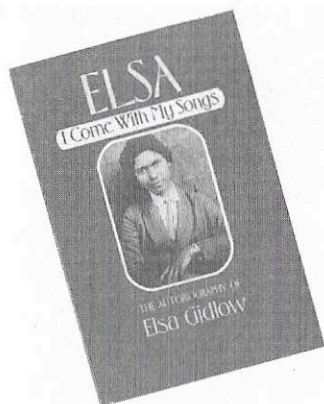
In addition to painful family portraits, there are wonderful pictures of Minnie, who danced for survival and the grandfather who danced to distract negative judgment from Minnie. The most moving scene (among many) is the abandoned applauding of the mother's severely arthritic hands in a medical illustration — hands of a Chautauqua pianist before the daughter's memory. Helga, the mother's caring neighbor, believes "all of us seem to just go on like rivers or creeks in life." Great Aunt Lizzie, also with a "difference," claims that not only god but "anyone could shed grace."

Certainly, Mab sheds grace with her stories. They particularly resonate with this reader, born about the same time, and taken down memory lane by shared experiences. The overhanging influence of the Great Depression and World War II are vividly illustrated. From Kate Smith singing "White Cliffs of Dover" in the '40s to Kate Wolf's "Across the Great Divide" in the '80s, and from pigtails to lesbian identity, Mab and I have much herstory in common. But the stories in this collection quickly lay out the mores and events of the second two-thirds of the twentieth century in a humorous and compassionate way that can inform those who come after us.

Cursed by an editor's eye, I see a few bits in the manuscript that could be improved, but little of consequence. Computers were supposed to cut down on the need for editing, but no. My rant: every good writer deserves an equally good editor. I long for one myself. But fewer and fewer published works — newspapers, magazines, books — receive good page editing so errors abound throughout. Drives the careful reader crazy. *Shedding Grace* is beautifully designed.

Maher exhibits a keen reporter's eye paired with a unique voice and an ear for the authentic dialogue of memory — all honed by her writer's craft and an understanding compassion for the human condition. The spare language of the 18 stories in 144 pages seems less like poetry that has been "pared down" — more like distilled essence of event, emotion, and effect simply illustrated. I heartily recommend *Shedding Grace and Other Stories* (©2007) as a wonderful rainy day inspiration that will resonate with the lives and life examination of many different kinds of readers.

Shedding Grace is available for purchase from the author for \$12 plus \$4 shipping and handling (check or money order): Mab Maher, 11 Pine Tree Circle, Cotati, CA 94931.



Julie R. Enszer

The Return of Jeannette Howard Foster in *Sex Variant Woman* and a Reprise for Elsa Gidlow

Passet, Joanne. *Sex Variant Woman: The Life of Jeannette Howard Foster*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2008. 353 pages, \$27.50.

Gidlow, Elsa. *Elsa I Come With My Songs*. San Francisco, CA: Booklegger Press & Druid Heights Books, 1986. 422 pages. Out-of-print.

Jeannette Howard Foster is a beloved foremother of lesbian literature. Foster is the author of the 1956 book, *Sex Variant Women in Literature*. In this wonderful and historically significant book, Foster both cited and analyzed 2,500 years of lesbian love in literature ranging from Sappho to Radclyffe Hall, including along the way writers as diverse as Ovid, Swinburne, and Verlaine. In fact, according to the new biography of Jeannette Howard Foster by Joanne Passet, Howard evaluated “an amazing 324 titles” including examples from, “English, American, French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish, and Portuguese literature, with the emphasis on works in English, French, and German, the languages she read fluently.” Howard dedicated over two decades of her life to the completion of *Sex Variant Women in Literature*. She published the book at the age of sixty with her own money and using her own name through the vanity publisher, Vantage Press. Now Jeannette Howard Foster’s life has the benefit of a complete biography.



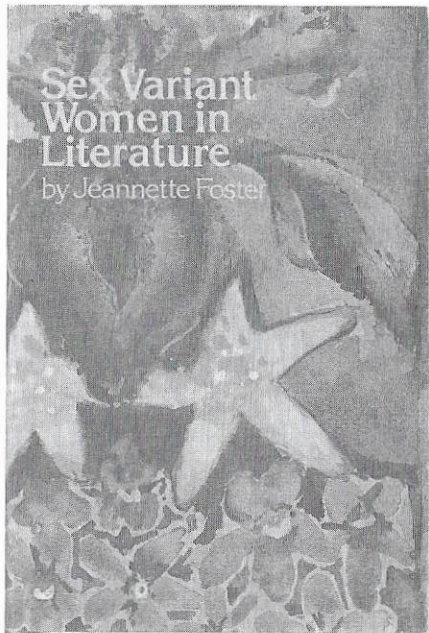
Photo of Elsa Gidlow by Marcelina Martin © marcelinamartin.com 1983

Sex Variant Woman is well-researched, thorough, and engaging. Foster was born to a middle class family in Oak Park, IL in 1895. Her “sexual variance” was evident to her and her family from a young age. As an undergraduate at Rockford College, a woman’s college ninety miles northwest of Chicago, Foster was able to find an environment in which she could thrive. Women’s colleges continued to provide an important space for Foster—personally and intellectually in her early life. Foster was among the first women to earn a PhD in library science from the University of Chicago and served as a librarian to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Advisory Committee on Education. Throughout her life, she read and researched lesbianism and sexual variance in science and literature. Foster’s evolutions from a woman with passionate friendships at her women’s college to the lead librarian for Alfred Kinsey at his sex research institute and finally to a beloved lesbian literary icon are traced by Passet with clarity.

Reading about Jeannette Howard Foster’s life in *Sex Variant Woman* is delightful; Passet crafts a compelling narrative from Foster’s life. Of particular interest are the stories about Foster’s friendships and relationships

in the early decades of the twentieth century. Foster's work as a literary researcher portends the explosion of interest in lesbian literature during the 1970s and 1980s; luminaries such as Barbara Grier and Lillian Faderman credit Foster and her book with inspiring their work, and both did a great deal to ensure that *Sex Variant Women in Literature* remained in print. There were, in fact, two additional editions of *Sex Variant Women in Literature* after the Vantage Press edition – one by Diana Press in 1975 and another, still available, from Naiad Press, first published in 1985. While the stories of Foster's life are more vibrant from her later years when Passet could avail herself of first-person interviews about Foster's life and work, the earlier stories are an important part of lesbian history and just as vital.

Another literary lesbian and contemporary of Jeannette Howard Foster is Elsa Gidlow. Gidlow, born in 1898 in England, was a well-known poet and "bon vivant" in the San Francisco bay area beginning in the 1930s. Gidlow's autobiography, *Elsa, I Come With My Songs*, was published in 1986 (the year Gidlow died) and, while out of print, is widely available online for just a few dollars. *Sex Variant Woman* in conjunction with *Elsa, I Come With My Songs* is an illuminating combination. First, there is a concordance between the two stories of lesbian life during the first half of the twentieth century. In many ways, Gidlow's rendering of her life from World War I



until the 1950s provides additional detail and texture to Passet's account of Foster's life during this same time period. It is in this early part of her life that Gidlow's story-telling skills shine. The information Gidlow shares about how lesbians found one another, or didn't, and how they organized their lives to meet other women is fascinating. At the same time, Passet's carefully researched account of Foster's life and the critical distance that she brings to bear as a historian are important counterpoints to Gidlow's autobiography, and they reminds us of the importance of biographies. Gidlow would certainly benefit from more scholarly attention and a biography of her life and work as Foster is sure to benefit from Passet's thoughtful and compassionate account of her life.

Sex Variant Woman is a must-read biography; it is certain to mint new fans of Jeannette Howard Foster and this is cause for celebration. While reading Passet's biography, it is worth the time and effort to find a copy of Gidlow's *Elsa, I Come With My Songs* as well as Foster's book, *Sex Variant Women In Literature*. Passet's biography is sharpened by reading Foster's voice in her *raison d'être*, and Foster's life is further illuminated by Gidlow's autobiography. Taken together, *Sex Variant Woman* and *Elsa, I Come With My Songs* begin to open up greater understanding about lesbian life between the World War I and the founding of the Daughters of Bilitis in 1955. It is a time period underexamined in lesbian literature and history and deserving of more attention.

The author would like to thank the *Lambda Book Report* where parts of this review were published initially.



Jeannette Howard Foster. Photo by Tee A. Corinne

Lesbian Theories/Lesbian Controversies,
 guest edited by Julie Enszer, *Sinister Wisdom* #75, 2008,
 Berkeley, CA, 112 pages, paperback \$6.

Reviewed by Ruth Mountaingrove

I never have liked the term queer mainly because it subsumes the word lesbian and its meaning. Lesbians are not queer, they are lesbians, who were born lesbians, women who love women. Women who chose to be butch, fem or dyke or none of the above. Just because gay men want to be lesbians doesn't make them so.

So I was delighted to read *Lesbian Theories, Lesbians Controversies* and find other women uncomfortable with the term queer. Queer seems to be defined as LGBT and I am not gay or bi or trans. I am sympathetic with those who are but do not wish to be buried under the term queer.

"Bite My Thumb" by Carolyn Gage takes on the question: can women masquerade as men and men as women using masks to disguise themselves, and wearing clothes to go with the mask as they did in the time of Shakespeare? Appropriately these two acting troops, one lesbian and one heterosexual are doing *Romeo and Juliet*. "Bite My Thumb" is a one act play, a skirmish with sword fighting. Gage is bringing up all the questions around queer.

"Gendercator" is a fifteen minute movie by Catherine Crouch set in the future in a world that is rigid, mandated by law. If you don't fit these designations you are medically altered to conform to what is considered the social norm. This short film called forth anger from the LGBT community. Cancellation by the Frameline film festival in spite of having been previously accepted, was due to the LGBT community calling it transphobic. Crouch says, "Our distorted cultural norms are making women feel compelled to use medical advances to change themselves rather than working to change the world." Robyn Epstein who interviews Crouch says that "Gendercator" doesn't fit the current categories of celebration or denigration of transidentity. The movie is a bit critique, a bit fiction, a bit satire valuing gender pluralism. Some fifty pages are given to this movie and this play by guest editor Julie Enszer.

Other articles of interest are three essays by Australian Lesbians. Jean Taylor writes about "When Lesbians Pay the Rent." When there is a lesbian event the money is given to the native women who are fighting for their own survival. An idea lesbians in this country might pick up in connection with our native American peoples.

Bev Jo sings the praises of her San Francisco Bay area lesbian feminists.

Chris Sitka, in “Hope Is At Hand” parthenogenesis which will allow women to have babies without male sperm. Gena Covina was suggesting this in the *Amazon Quarterly* in the early 1970s. I think she may have written a book about this. Sitka also suggests that back in the time of the Ancient Great Mother this was common knowledge.

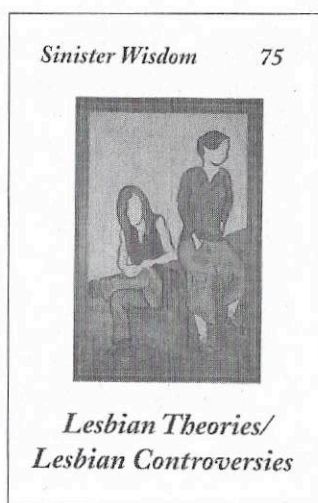
“Do Lesbians have Human Rights?” Susan Hawthorne asks in a paper given at the Rainbow Conversation at Melbourne, Australia. A thoughtful political analysis of 2008 human rights and what lesbians and others can do to insure these rights.

We been hearing lately of boy/girls, girl/boys being surgically altered at birth, only in adolescence when testicles descend and to learn that she’s been a boy all this time. Diana Post raises this question in “What’s in a Name?” Julie Enszer has done us a favor by being willing to bring these very important issues to our attention.

Additional note regarding Sinister Wisdom 75:

We would like to congratulate OLOC National Steering Committee member Alix Dobkin on her excellent article on Lesbian Culture in *Sinister Wisdom 75*. The article will make a great discussion base as we go about creating our own Lesbian Heaven. Thanks, Alix, for articulating so well what we are about.

Gloria Stancich, *OLOC Reporter*, March 2009.



Cover Art by Aline Albuquerque

Books Received

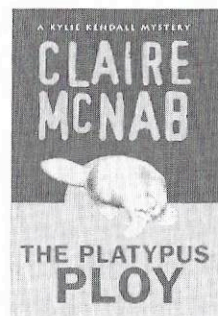
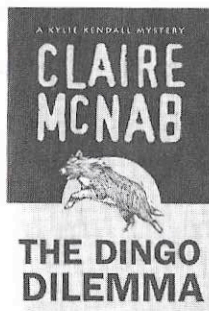
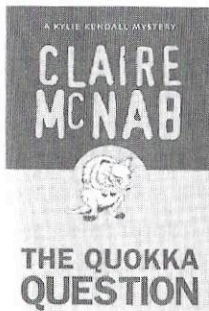
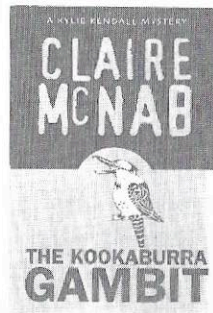
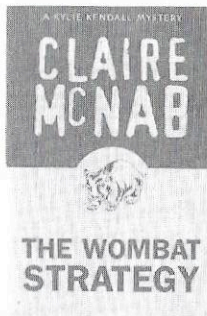
Kylie Kendall Mystery Series

By Claire McNab

Alyson Publications

1. *Wombat Strategy* 2004
2. *Kookaburra Gambit* 2005
3. *The Quokka Question* 2006
4. *Dingo Dilemma* 2006
5. *Platypus Ploy* 2007

Claire McNab, born in Melbourne, Australia, is best known for her crime novels featuring the highly popular Detective-Inspector Carol Ashton and undercover agent Denise Cleever. Her latest series features Kylie Kendall, an Australian transplanted to Los Angeles, who determines to become a private investigator in order to pursue her late father's business and his business partner. The Kylie Kendall series introduces humour into Claire McNab's writing.



More Books by Claire McNab

Lesbian Mystery

CAROL ASHTON SERIES

- *Lessons In Murder* (1988)
- *Fatal Reunion* (1989)
- *Death Down Under* (1989)
- *Cop Out* (1991)
- *Dead Certain* (1992)
- *Body Guard* (1994)
- *Double Bluff* (1995)
- *Inner Circle* (1996)
- *Chain Letter* (1997)
- *Past Due* (1998)
- *Set Up* (1999)
- *Under Suspicion* (2000)
- *Death Club* (2001)
- *Accidental Murder* (2002)
- *Blood Link* (2003)
- *Fall Guy* (2004)

DENISE CLEEVER SERIES

- *Murder Undercover* (2000)
- *Death Understood* (2000)
- *Out of Sight* (2001)
- *Recognition Factor* (2002)
- *Death by Death* (2003)
- *Murder at Random* (2005)

Lesbian Romance

- *Under the Southern Cross* (1992)
- *Off Key* (1992)
- *Silent Heart* (1993)
- *Writing My Love* (2006)

Non-Fiction

- *The Loving Lesbian* (1997) (with Sharon Gedan)

Music Review

Heartsongs

by Barbara Ester & Beth York

Released: 2008

Genre: Reflective Acoustic Music for Lesbians; Tracks: 13
 Independent distribution Send a \$15 check or money order to:
 Barbara Ester, 185 Boxwood Lane, Spartanburg, SC 29307

Reviewed by Kim Rivers

I had the feeling of going back in time when listening to this CD. The rich vocals of Barbara Ester interwoven with her own and Beth York's melodic instrumentals are delightfully reminiscent of early womyn's music. Together they weave for us a tapestry of living, loving, and introspection as Lesbians.

Although the CD may at first give a nostalgic feeling of early womyn's music, it is soon clear that Barbara and Beth give fresh and unique nuances in the making of their music. We as listeners are taken on a journey that has its roots in our herstory of womyn's music, but like great trees we send out our branches; so too do Beth and Barbara in this ever unfolding musical blossoming.

Barbara's voice beckons us to know we are entering a special place. The song 'Incantation' sets the mood for us by creating the sphere of Lesbian-only space. Further we are invited to delight in remembering the excitement we may have felt when we first heard music by, for, and about Lesbians. I imagined a group of dykes sitting around the campfire singing 'We Are Everywhere.' This song like 'Ode To A Gym Teacher' or 'The Leaping Lesbians' could easily become the next great Dyke anthem. I smiled with recognition to hear the familiar Alix Dobkin song 'Her Precious Love.' This added to the familiarity of this music and made me want to keep listening.

I was particularly moved by the lyrics of 'My Song', which was written by Bairbre "Living without yourself is lonely. Emptiness, not for me. I've got to let my voices fill me. I've got to sing for me." To me this song spoke so true to the struggles we face as Lesbians when we seek to be out most authentic selves in the face of everything else that tells us we are wrong. The pain of giving voice to our deep inner selves and the joy of letting that voice ring out. I have no doubt any lesbian would find her own meaning in this song, but likely we have all shared what Barbara and Beth try to share with us in

their version of this sadly sweet, yet uplifting song.

If you love the music that was characteristic of the early years of womyn's music both catchy and complex, reflecting all the moods we as lesbians have. If you want lyrics that speak to our experience then and now, deep and thoughtful, then you want this CD. It will be familiar, yet fresh and innovative, much like a long-time friend. "Remember all the stories we have shared along this journey..."



Announcements

OLOC Creates The Del Martin Old Lesbian Pride Award

OLOC, Old Lesbians Organizing for Change, announces The Del Martin Old Lesbian Pride Award, created to honor Del Martin, activist, pathfinder, and OLOC member who died at age 87 on August 27, 2008 in San Francisco, the city of her birth. It will be awarded to a Lesbian 70 years or older whose life and work has influenced and will continue to impact the lives of Old Lesbians.

Del was out, proud, and unapologetic when few were. She and her lifetime partner, Phyllis Lyon, forged an enduring image that continues to inspire generations of Lesbians around the globe. In 1955 they co-founded The Daughters of Bilitis, the first US Lesbian organization, and in 1972, co-wrote the equally groundbreaking, *Lesbian/Woman*. In 1976 Del's book, *Battered Wives*, first shattered the silence surrounding domestic violence. Her writing and tireless activism on behalf of women earned much praise, many awards, an invitation to the White House, and drew upon the great strengths of Lesbian tradition, advancing our visibility and pride and carrying that heritage forward.

Guidelines:

1. Nominations are not to exceed 500 words describing the outstanding accomplishments and/or achievements of the nominee to be received by email or regular mail to: OLOC.org, or OLOC's mailing address.
2. Nominations must be postmarked by December 31, 2009.
3. The Award will be given to an Old Lesbian over the age of 70.
4. Nominations are world-wide and for an Old Lesbian in any field of endeavor.
5. Nominee's life and/or work must impact the lives of Old Lesbians.
6. The first Award will be presented at the 2010 National Gathering in Cleveland OH, USA.
7. Nominee must be alive at the time of nomination.

OLOC : PO Box 5853 : Athens, OH 45701
1 888 706-7506 : www.oloc.org

Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project
Arden Eversmeyer, Director
www.olohp.org

The Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project is excited to announce that it's new website is up and running. It can be found at www.olohp.org. As spring progresses, we expect to add more and more content and smooth out any rough edges. When you browse the site, you'll see we are in the process of publishing the first of three books based on some of the 150+ stories in the OLOHP collection. The working title for the first volume is *A Gift of Age: Old Lesbian Life Stories*. We hope to have it available by mid-summer. When you visit the site, please take a few moments to use the Contact Us email form and let us know what you think.

Help us connect with Old Lesbians

If you know an Old Lesbian whose story would fit into the collection, tell her about the OLOHP and encourage her to contact us. **Order a copy of the first book based on this project:**

A Gift of Age: Old Lesbian's Life Stories

Make a Tax-Deductible Donation

Tax deductible donations can be made to the OLOHP by sending funds to OLOC, Old Lesbians Organizing for Change. Please indicate your donation is being made in support of this project. They can take donations via PayPal on their website, www.oloc.org, or donations can be mailed to OLOC, PO Box 5853, Athens, OH 45701.

Are you interested in conducting interviews or transcribing?

Conducting the interviews in a effective and respectful manner is a big challenge. It is important that the women being interviewed for this project are comfortable with and can relate to the interviewer, so we feel strongly that interviewers should be lesbians at least 50 years old, if not 60 or better. The OLOHP has trained several lesbians for the project.

If you are interested in interviewing, or have experience and an interest in transcribing the interviews, use the Contacts Page to get in touch with Arden Eversmeyer directly.

Contributors' Notes

Alma is a retired RN, after 22 years in the trenches working with inmates, homeless, cancer and Aids patients. She is a gifted artist, writer, comedienne, actor, photographer, and healer. She travels a lot, performing comedy, and reading her works and stories on stage.

"Avotcja is a unique voice among our poets, musicians, playwrights and other creative folk today. She combines a fierce, persistent and consistent passion for justice with a beauty of words, sounds and image that can take your breath away. To put it simply, Avotcja is a national and international treasure." Elizabeth (Betita) Martinez-activist, author, educator

Shaba A. Barnes has been a community activist most of her adult life. After moving to the West Coast in 1969 from New York City, Shaba joined the National Organization for Women and quickly became the secretary of the Los Angeles Chapter. She also joined the Feminist Theatre which was active doing guerrilla theatre as well as performances at Universities in California. Shaba has been active in theater, acting, and producing. She was instrumental in achieving Domestic Partner Rights for all members via the Lesbian and Gay Association at Kaiser Permanente Hospital in Los Angeles. She is a CO-Director for Old Lesbians Organizing for Change (OLOC), the only organization of its kind dedicated to combating Ageism; OLOC was founded by and for Lesbians over 60 years old. Shaba presently lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She enjoys poetry readings as she continues to seek avenues of expression by sharing insights on the spiritual and the power of being an Old Lesbian. She is still available to teach workshops and classes with a spiritual theme. You can reach Shaba at: smokeybee@comcast.net

Denise Brautigam. I like to call myself an artist but I am not a professional. I became "disabled" a number of years back and I couldn't leave my home and while I was stuck here I started doing more art. Even took up digital photography (I have many photos that were taken from my balcony!). My health has somewhat improved but I've learned I love creating and designing so now I'm thinking of turning it into a career. *Sinister Wisdom* is my first publication. Thanks SW for this opportunity to share my art and make new connections. I can be reached at: hummingbird42@verizon.net. Artist communities please contact me with opportunities for women.

Brenwyn is a writer and teacher living in Ashland, Oregon.

Natasha Carthew is a young lesbian writer from Cornwall in the UK. She has been published in numerous National and International magazines,

has won awards for poetry and has had three books of poetry published; her latest book being 'Flash Reckless' which was published by the internationally acclaimed lesbian/feminist publisher Onlywomen Press. Natasha lives in the country with her partner, where she is currently working on a new body of country poetry. Visit her website at: <http://www.natashacarthew.tripod.com>

Julie R. Enszer is a poet and writer based in University Park, MD. You can read more of her work at www.JulieREnszer.com.

Diane Foster – Guest Editor, *SW#77* is a 58 year-old lesbian living in Albuquerque, New Mexico with her partner of 8 years. She received a master of social work from the University of Alabama. While attending she studied in Ghana, West Africa as a Fulbright Student. Having seen, through her years the devastation taking place on and in Mother-Earth, grieves her. This gave her the impetus for the title of this edition. Her desire is to discover and share other lesbians' points of view and feelings about what is happening to our Earth-Mother. With this edition she hopes to bring either new or continued awareness to lesbians across the globe with hopes that in any small or large way we will pray, sing, protest, honor, respect, remember, protect, give back and not lose hope for our sick, ailing mother. For it is by these ways we are able, in some small or large way, keep her wanting to nourish and continue giving us life. Diane is published in *Spirited: Affirming the Soul and Black Gay/Lesbian Identity* - RedBone Press. Her book *Whosoever—Healing for the Lavendar Soul* is scheduled for release in June 2009.

Tina L. Freimuth, at age 47, is in the midst of re-inventing herself as artist, writer and deep ecologist. Since leaving her partner, her nonprofit, her business, her community and her land in southern Oregon, she finds herself deep in a redwood forest in northern California, seeking the still waters of balance and lightness of being. Tina can be reached at treesong@yahoo.com.

Deb Friedman is a clinical herbalist with a master-of-science degree in Herbal Medicine from the Tai Sophia Institute in Laurel, Maryland. (Tai Sophia's Herbal Medicine program is the first graduate degree program in Western herbalism in the United States.) Deb, who is also a martial artist, enjoys searching the woods and fields for medicinal plants and sharing information about herbal medicine.

Carole Gale Retired. Worked as a field biologist on both animal behavior, and plant ecology in Southern California as well as in Tanzania and Zambia. Currently she is writing about nature topics.

Alix Greenwood: I am an english lesbian, white, middle-class, 45 years old; I came out at 25. I work as an organic gardener.

Sue Lenaerts, a computer professional and photographer, was the first out Lesbian to serve on the Prince George's County, Maryland, Human Relations Commission. She designs and maintains websites, including www.sinisterwisdom.org, www.faar-aegis.org and www.welfarewarriors.org.

H. Madrone has been living on remote womensland in southern Oregon for over thirty years. With her animal companions always nearby, she is a woodworker, gardener, photographer, woodswoman, and writer. In addition to her chapbook, *Creation Story*, her poetry and prose have been published in *Womenspirit*; *Common Lives/Lesbian Lives*; *Natural Bridge*; *We'Moon:Gaia Rhythms for Women*, *Manzanita Quarterly*; *Lesbian Review of Books*; *Maize*; *Harrington Lesbian Fiction Quarterly*, and in the anthologies *Our Lives:Lesbian Personal Writing*; *The Poetry of Sex*; *The Wild Good*; *An Intricate Weaver*; *Gardening at a Deeper Level*; *Small-Town Gay*. Her memoir of life at Fly Away Home, *Weeding a Dawn: A Lesbian Country Life*, was published by The Haworth Press in 2000.

Lynn Martin. Recently, at the age of 72, I did a reading with the Queer Community which consisted of a body of work about being Lesbian that was connected and told a story. It has taken me a lifetime to trust my own voice. To me, it is about giving voice to those who are still voiceless. Thus I also write about HIV, the environment, adoption, death, grieving, the marginalization of minorities. My work has appeared in many Lesbian publications. My current love is collaborations. I have collaborated with a dancer, an artist, a photographer, and a song writer. I have been in a play which illustrated Lesbian life. In the future I hope to do more of this. I have just picked up a brush for the first time, and every painting thus far has a connection (of course) with poetry. The more I am visible as a Lesbian artist, the more I feel I contribute to the Civil Rights of all.

Jeanne Neath has lived on lesbian land in the Ozarks for 20 years. She and her partner of 25 years, Paula Mariedaughter, built their 800 square foot cabin with help from several lesbian carpenters. The cabin is solar-powered, heated with wood and passive solar, and has no running water. Jeann is currently focusing much of her life energy on transforming the environmental emergency created by globalized patriarchy, both through her political writing and by moving further into a subsistence and reduced energy way of life.

Mary Oishi, an “out” lesbian since 1982 is a poet, public radio professional and lifelong activist. She produces numerous poetry events in Albuquerque where she invites poets from the community to share the stage with her. Events she produced include Common Bond’s Queer Poetry Series, Mightier Than the Sword: Writers Address the Nuclear Age, and Some of My Best Friends Are Poets. Her poems have been published in numerous anthologies including the *Harwood Anthology* (Old School Books, 2006), *Looking Back to Place* (Old School Books, 2008), a Spanish translation of “women when we rise” on www.decirdelagua.com, Nuclear Resistance Calendar (2006, 2007, 2008). She served as adjunct faculty for the University of New Mexico (2005), serves as lead facilitator for an Under 21 Group for LGBT youth, and was an Honored Dignitary in Albuquerque’s Gay Pride Parade in 2007. www.maryoishi.com www.poetoishi.blogspot.com

Sudie Rakusin’s love for the Earth and concern for Her creatures influence all aspects of her life and art. Even though Sudie works in multiple media, her artwork explores the relationships between women and nature at every opportunity. Sudie paints, draws, creates in three-dimensions with papier-mâché, and crafts Journey Books using found objects, found phrases, and blank journals made from recycled paper. She has published *The Coloring Book for Big Girls* and the *Second Coloring Book for Big Girls: Spirits and Goddesses* for women, as well as four books in her children’s series, *Dear Calla Roo...Love, Savannah Blue*. Sudie lives and works outside Chapel Hill, North Carolina where she shares her home in the woods with two lively Great Danes.

Lilith Rogers is a long time gardener, writer, and lover of women and Mother Earth. For the last few years, she has been performing her woman show RACHEL CARSON RETURNS: HER LIFE AND WORK. To schedule a live performance or to order a DVD of her show, please contact her at Rachelcarsonreturns@gmail.com or write P.O. Box 2455, Sebastopol, Ca. 95473. She also has a CD Rom book of poems and photos *PERSIMMONS AND OTHER LESBIAN EROTICA*.

Zarod Rominski is a member of both the Council of Support and Administrative Committee of the Cabbage Lane Land Trust. Cabbage Lane is 80 acres of wild, mountain land in Southern Oregon held and protected by lesbians for over 30 years. For more information contact CabbageLane@comcast.net

Jan Shade is a hearty Norwegian transplant from Minnesota making her home in Sonoma County, CA for the past 30 years. She is a writer, and has worked for over a decade with *Sonoma County Women’s Voices* as well as other small monthly newspapers. She loves to read, write, sing and

play piano, and is passionately committed to her partner of 25 years, Stacey Shade, women, animals, the environment, and Love.

Sandy Tate. Being Lesbian I am committed to bringing light to the ravages to life that result from the patriarchal notion of conquering rather than nurturing. Being Jewish I adhere to the meaning of the Hebrew phrase, Tikkum Olam, repairing the world. Being Feminist I wrap all three identities into one hope for a sane and healthy world. Member of Old Lesbians Organizing for Change (OLOC), and member of the "Why WiFi" campaign, a Sebastopol, CA, group that was created to raise awareness about health and environmental risks of wireless technology and electrical pollution. They offer presentations to residents, schools, businesses and community leaders.

Ellen Williams is a poet and fiction writer. She has been published in *Kuumba* (a poetry journal for lesbians), *Gay Black Female*, *Poetic Hours in London*, *Short Stories* magazine, *Collage*, *Christianity and The Arts Magazine* (Chicago Ill.), as well as other magazines and journals — sometimes under pen names. She currently resides in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She is also an artist whose work has been displayed in galleries. Some of them were also featured and sold in Detroit Michigan at A Woman's Prerogative under the name Cello. Presently she is shopping her novel, *The Rock That Age Built* to publishers. Her most recent work is published in *Sinister Wisdom #72-Utopia*.

Judith K. Witherow, American Indian. Writer, photographer and artist. Writing and photography are now at one with her outlook on numerous political issues. At present she works recycling metal cans into various art projects. Awarded "Community Builder for Decades" Pacifica Radio. *In Our Voices* 2007. Board Member :*Sinister Wisdom*. <http://www.jkwitherow.com>

Ruth Zachary is an artist working in many visual arts media. Since 1977 she has created Women's Heritage etchings, mixed media collage and paintings, and vintage photo montages. She was a news reporter for seven years in a suburb of Grand Rapids MI. She now lives in Greeley, Colorado, where she continues to create art and write. Her art is exhibited at Madison and Main Gallery. See more of her work at <http://www.rzachary.com> or visit her blogs, <http://ruthzacharyart.blogspot.com> or <http://rzwritestuff.blogspot.com>

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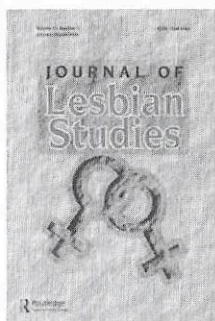
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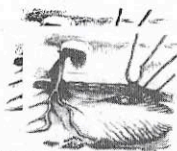
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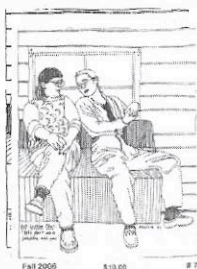
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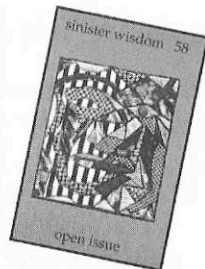
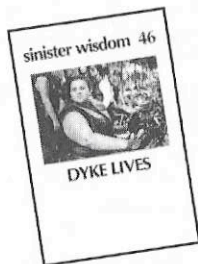
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This issue will be printed when we receive enough material.

Guest Editors: Chrystos (Menominee) and Sunny Birdstone (Ktunaxa)
3250 S 77th #8 Tacoma, WA 98409. Email: creeptoes@yahoo.com.

#78 Old Dykes/Lesbians II

Forthcoming

Editor: Fran Day

Special Request: Please send donations to help with printing and mailing this issue. We also welcome contributions to help us send free copies to Lesbians 80 years old and older. Make checks payable to Sinister Wisdom, Inc and mail to Fran Day, P. O. Box 1180, Sebastopol, CA 95473 – 1180.

#79 Willing Up and Keeling Over: A Lesbian Handbook on Death

Rights and Rituals. Editors Anah Holland-Moore, Ardella Tibby, Barbary Clarke, Cathy Wheel, Claudia Huber, Jean Taylor, Lorraine le Plastrier, Rosalinda Rayne, Long Breast Press, Melbourne, Australia, 2007.

Sinister Wisdom is pleased to announce that we will reprint this important book.

#80 Hope

Due November 1, 2009

Editor: Fran Day fran@sonic.net. P. O. Box 1180,
Sebastopol, CA 95473-1180.

Please do not send material before October 1, 2009.

Hope, Courage, Perseverance, Inspiration. How do we as Lesbians sustain ourselves and each other while living in this phallogocentric heteropatriarchy? How do we not become overwhelmed and flattened by all the horrors we know about and experience? How do we stay aware, present, hopeful and as activist as possible and not fall into debilitating fear, alienation, grief and despair? How do we cope with losses, health challenges, horizontal hostility, lesbophobia, and/or queer politics and focus on maintaining, surviving and even thriving? How do we cope with oppressions – ableism, ageism, anti-Semitism, classism, looksism, racism, sexism, etc.? How do we get through the hard times and find the energy and inspiration to continue building and nurturing Lesbian community and culture? What nourishes and sustains us? (Thanks to Alix Greenwood for suggestions that inspired this theme.)

#81 Call for Guest Editor(s)

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